



THE

TRANSGRESSOR  
THE COMPLETE SERIES

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
ASHLEY AMY

# The Eighth Transgressor

Ending Omen

Deadly Omen

Silent Omen

Mysterious Omen

Envious Omen

Cruel Omen

Final Omen

Forever and Ever Omen

Our Omen

Ashley Amy

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# Ending Omen

Ashley Amy



## Dedication

To all the readers I gained when I first released this series.

Thank you!

(And to Cheyenne because she refuses to go unnoticed)





## Book Summary

### **B** ook Summary Beast or Man.

Friend or Foe.

Truth or Lie.

Everything had a counterpart. Another side always revealed—like a coin—when we least expected it.

Though, with these boys, I wasn't sure if any light remained in them. Maybe once upon a time they had a tender side, but something snuffed it out.

That traumatic thing never allowed mercy to lead their judgment. Kindness didn't exist within them anymore. I wanted to know what it was.

They were the most stunning kinds of men within the world's standards, but I saw what the jaded eyes didn't. Under their façade of beauty lie beasts of suffering.

I noticed, so my bullies made me their target. They lashed their anger out on me. My pain excited them.

I should've run. I should've been smarter than this. Yet, I couldn't back

down. I couldn't let them win. With how messed up I was, part of me craved their cruelty, longed for their attention—even if it was only negative.

Whether this mistake ended me or not, I'd never felt more alive. Now, it was just unraveling their secrets to help me win this sick and twisted game.

**WARNING:** Readers should be 18+ for explicit content. Trigger warnings for sexual and physical abuse in this series. Sexual situations happen outside the harem in this book.



## Prologue

**F**<sup>ear</sup> A simple four-letter word. Easy to spell, but not easy to live with. How could something that rolled so easily off my tongue cut sharper than a fillet knife?

Something so short in the English language was able to embody our deepest, darkest thoughts and all too easily to be consumed by it. Fear was a motivator, a scare tactic, and a way to hold power over someone else.

I spent my whole life facing my fears so no one could overpower me. No one would gain the upper hand because I had accustomed myself to this life.

Plus, my monsters weren't fictional, blue, furry things that said 'boo'. They were the men walking the broken streets I had memorized. They were homes I had been placed and tortured in after every move.

I might get scared, I might know what cold sweat dripping from my brow felt like, a fretful chill running down my spine meant, but I didn't let it devour me.

I faced my fears to show I wouldn't cower from them. I wouldn't live as a

shadow or be consumed so much by my qualms that I forgot how to live.

Yet here I was... In the one compromising position I swore no one would get me in. From feeling encompassed by all that was evil, I knew fear held me at gunpoint. Fear had bested me because the person controlling this game finally used the one thing that I couldn't lose against me.

My legs shook as I ran through the withering forest. My muscles tensed under the foreboding pressure of my future, my heart hammering like the war drum for my upcoming battle. My thoughts were blank as my mind switched into survival mode.

They found my weakness, one I had been foolish enough to gain besides my mother.

Hurrying, I had four minutes and thirty seconds to make it in time to save the person they took. Tears tried to blur my vision, but I fought off that weakness like the plague it was. Even though I began crumbling apart, I couldn't let them see how much their actions affected me.

My fingers clutched the riddle scribbled in ink over the torn parchment from one of their notebooks. Balling it up, I didn't need it anymore because I had the shattering words memorized.

*'She's alone, and she's afraid. Will you be the one to give her aid? At this time, wishes are made. Your favorite place is where we'll make the trade. Be on time, or she'll pay by blade. Consider this game still being played.'*

My mother taught me friendships were dangerous. I never planned to care so much for a friend that I made behind her back, but that didn't matter now. She didn't deserve their wrath and violence. She didn't deserve to be the pawn in a game I caused. I'd end this tonight. The games they played with me, the fear they spiked, no more. Tonight, they'd meet the real Octavia Clarke.

They thought they could win by that simple little word hanging over my head, but it gave me power too. I knew right from wrong unlike their devious integrities. I knew the true meaning behind fear, and I knew what that word meant to the brutes I was about to face. Fear was one of the main culprits behind sin and deceit. And now, I was about to face the seven deadliest sinners of them all.

## Chapter 1



**O** *ctavia*  
(A few weeks earlier...)

“Please,” she begged. Her words pleaded through a deep frown on her lips. Pinched, her eyebrows drew together over her sealed eyelids. When she opened them, I could see her desperation for it to end.

I wanted to help. When her pulse pounded, mine did too, but not for the same reasons. She wanted to be saved, but I couldn’t save her. Physically, I wasn’t there, seeing with only my eyes. No, I saw this nightmare through his stare, feeling with his repulsive touch. The hands of the man skimmed over her soft skin as I felt his exhilaration.

These nightmares I suffered had me standing in the place of the male killer. Through his eyes and his excitement, I helped him take lives. Not just him, but there were other murderers as well. I was a woman who saw herself in different male shoes, but only in my darkest dreams did this occur.

This man and I merged as one person in these moments, but I would never call us the same. I kept myself separated even though I felt everything he did.



I never tried to explain it to anyone. How would they understand I literally saw through other people's eyes? That's right, this man wasn't the only one I bonded with for this, or that I felt their joy and anger when they committed their kill.

The young girl before me couldn't be much older than seventeen. Too young and naïve to know the truth that I did. A truth that harbored my most hated thoughts. Things I wish I didn't know or could conceal from my present mind.

I couldn't help her, being along for only the ride. I had to play the angel of death in these ruthless daydreams of mine. With a swift hand, I just hoped her end would happen soon. My fingers crossed that I wouldn't vomit after like I generally did because she was about to die.

The man that I seemed to be in this dream had her pinned against a tree. Naked as the ground they were on, I watched her smaller breasts heave. Her gasping breaths of suffering turned her killer on even more. Her long legs were wrapped around his middle. I could see where they connected from our shared point of view.

Bound, her wrists were knotted to the branch above her head. I noticed the telling sign that they were beginning to become raw against the grain. From the harshness of the rope, no doubt. I could feel the exact moment when her pleasure veered into a more painful complexity. It wasn't the pleasurable pain that it started out to be, losing the desire that she planned to enjoy with this man.

This was sickening and cruel. Her pinched face slipped tears as the mystery man's hands clamped her hips. His grip felt like he might snap her whole pelvis in half. He loved this part. The point where he knew she no longer

enjoyed it. The moment where she realized she had been dancing with the devil, and she wasn't going to win.

"Please," her cries were met with growls. His hand slipped up to grip her slender throat. I felt the flutter of her pulse below his calloused fingers. The heat of her skin flared against his, causing my fist to tighten.

The tattoo of seven circles making a target sat on his veiny forearm. This mark always called to me to tell me which version of a man I would become in the dream. The fourth ring filled with crimson, leaving the other rings were blank. I hated seeing that mark of ink. I knew what it meant for this innocent girl. She would get to the point that even though she knew it was killing her, she couldn't deny him.

I called him *Ender of Pleasure*. Ender, for short.

There seemed to be something about the fulfillment of lust he offered that still had her begging for more. She couldn't be done until she sated him. Forced to sit back, I watched it all, knowing it would be her death that would make him reach his climax.

In between her lean thighs, I watched the pooling blood now spill from her core. I witnessed the flush of her heated skin become ashen. The coldness of death began to take over. She signed up for a night with this lover. Though, she didn't know Ender would kill her to fulfill his own sickening needs. She didn't know she'd die while basking in the pleasure that so swiftly switched to pain.

The hand gripping her neck held it tighter. It cut off her oxygen more. From the hold, I felt her pulse weaken. Parted, her mouth had a small trail of blood trickling down. The streak turned watery from the blood mixing with tears. Groaning, this would always be his favorite sight. It was this heightened

moment he needed to finish himself. Once his seed spilled into her gory sex, it ended.

She died, and I woke up...

Gasping, I realized I sat in my last period at school. Everyone in the classroom stared at me in a new light I hadn't wanted. I just moved here a week ago when the new school year started and had already made a name for myself. Being the weird girl with the creepy vibe, they avoided me because I had a dream my very first day. Nothing like a psychotic breakdown to show where you belong on the social scale.

I wasn't rich, and I didn't play sports, which left me in the lonely loser category here. It would be fine. From my early years, my mother taught me to never form bonds with people. Never build friendships because we'd move too fast to keep them, and they were also a weakness. Not knowing fully why, it still didn't matter. I couldn't make friends if I tried. Keeping to myself was better than what the mocking 'friends' said and did behind my back.

The last bell rang, so I sagged in relief. Some sweat still glistened over my brow line from what had happened inside my head. These daydreams were getting worse. I've had them since I turned thirteen but in different scenarios. Sometimes it's a jealous partner killing the other, people fist fighting to their deaths, or killing over money.

Each had a different colored ring in the same tattoo as Ender. The violent one had the middle ring filled with black. He held the title of Punisher. I hadn't seen all of the colors in the seven rings because some of them never revealed their mark to me while I shared their view. The two aggressive ones were always using their hands, so I saw. I knew their torment like I knew the sky was blue.

I also probably had some complex personality disorder that made me know a little about my inner demons. Though, I had been tested a few times by actual doctors when my mother couldn't catch me. The results showed there were no voices or personalities besides my own.

I still didn't want to believe I was the one conjuring these volatile thoughts. Believing the doctors made an error would always be easier for me to grasp because the dreams were so taxing on me. Everyone thought I was the crazy girl who saw things that weren't really there. I wanted to believe their diluted truth that I was simply not right in the head. That maybe my exhaustion beat me into this frame of mind.

I just wanted the dreams to go away. The nightmares started out slow when I was a preteen and only increased since then. Instead of a few a year or one every month, I had them weekly. Sick trauma of watching people die in the most ludicrous ways, but another issue became my lack of caring anymore. How could I when I could feel the enjoyment of the killers in those dark moments?

Watching that woman be humped to death wasn't something that made me jump anymore, but I felt for the loss of her innocence. I became desensitized to the gore after I had seen so much. My issue now, I did feel slightly horny from viewing it. That's how sick in the head I honestly had gotten...

My mind remained too warped beyond fixing, from conjuring up these crazy thoughts and stories, but I had no control over it. They took over—day or night—and I grew powerless until I watched the scene unfold.

Blinking out of the numbness, I noticed everyone around me was already out the door. My teacher just surveyed me like the odd duck of the class. Sometimes, I wished I could tell others about what I saw. Have them give me sympathy instead of judgment, but I knew better. Pity made me weak, and I

couldn't afford the luxury in the shabby end of town we lived in. "Are you alright, Miss Clarke?"

Mrs. Charleston asked as I stood and gathered my things in this crumbling classroom from lack of funds. I gave her a passive smile to make it look like I had been just lost in my thoughts. "Yes. Sorry. I just didn't get much sleep."

I shuffled out of the classroom in my dingy sneakers and worn jeans. Proper clothes took money I didn't have. Walking out of the building, I found everyone huddled in their cliques while they all whispered about me as I passed. Some made jokes. Some encouraged the degrading names.

*The Screamer*

*Misplaced Girl*

*Ghost Whisperer*

They weren't very original, but they still struck me hard as I ambled my way down the cracked sidewalk. They had no idea the things I'd genuinely faced or the demons that weren't locked inside my head or in my dreams. No one needed to know those, though. I already knew these inane thoughts stemmed from what happened to me. The memories that were blocked deep within me never to be remembered.

They say your mind can distort the trauma you've been through. That it's easier to find peace with what happened. My brain decided to make worse situations to show me mine wasn't as bad. One thing you learned when you talked to anyone who knows trauma. No matter the severity, everyone deserves to find peace. A peace I hadn't been offered.

It really sucked. I couldn't see someone to help me, but I found ways to help myself.

Running now, I needed to release the pent-up aggression school always fed me with. Making my muscles cry helped block the pain in my heart. Turning

on my block a mile down the road, I found two new motorcycles in our parking spot.

We didn't have a car, so my mom let her grisly men use it when they came to get high and fuck her. Usually, I sat out on the couch or would go to my safe havens if they occupied the main space. I sought out secret places every time we moved to a new town. Still too new to this area, I hadn't found anywhere here yet. Groaning, I opened the door and prepared myself for the smog of joints, alcoholic fumes, and dirty bikers using my mom. She was stunning, and she did have a great body that hadn't aged even with the drugs.

I found two men sandwiching my mom on the couch as she sat in her red lingerie. Ample cleavage and curves, my body was just the same. Though, I got the short-end of the stick, literally. I only broke five feet by two inches. We matched with our raven hair falling in long curls, heart-shaped faces with sharp cheekbones and chins. Full lips and exotic eyes that were large but tilted up just a little on the ends, and little straight noses that were small. The only thing I got from my absent father had been my tan skin and height. I was assuming that last one from not having that knowledge. I didn't know who my father could be. Just like my mom now, she had been around the block when she conceived me.

“Well now, who's this little beauty?” a burly man whistled while eyeing my young body. These pigs were all the same. They wanted the fast and easy from my mom, but they wanted the hot little thing who lived with her too. My age didn't matter. No, my perky tits and adolescent frame turned them on. Even though my mother didn't look thirty, she wasn't a forbidden, underage teen. It was sickening how many men came in here desiring me so openly.

“Via, you're home?” My mother slacked against the back of the couch.

“Yes, mother. You need to get dressed. We’re meeting with people in thirty minutes. If you gentlemen don’t mind, we need to be on our way. I’m sure she can call you later.”

I hated playing her role as the parent. Still, I’d protect us while she was under the influence. We didn’t have anywhere to go, but I didn’t want something to happen again. Until I found somewhere safe to sneak away to, I’d pretend we had appointments to keep them away.

The two men stood and fixed their tiny erections like they were some prized stud. I had to keep from rolling my eyes. They thought it’d rev my engine, but they thought wrong. One stopped and brushed my hair behind my ear before his foul stench wafted into my nose. “Call me if you need anything, Darlin’.”

They chuckled. I had to swallow the bile rising in my throat. Once the door slammed, I moved to my mother, knowing I would be cleaning her up again. Helping her lethargic body to the shower, I made it cold to wake her up a bit. I knew this would only give me a few minutes of her sobriety from the shock, but I needed it to feel like my mother might still be in there.

Like maybe I wasn’t alone.

She shrieked with wide eyes when I twisted the handle on and then she turned to see me after a few heavy breaths. As she blinked a little with the gloss still over her hooded eyes, tears formed. It was like this every day. Guilt ate at her from how bad her addiction was, but we couldn’t afford to get her the help she truly needed. Instead, I had this single moment every day of her apologies to live off of.

“Baby...” Her bottom lip quivered. Her whole body shook as she fell into me, standing behind her to support her. I held her crumbling frame against

me as we both sank into the freezing water that was building up from the drain not working well. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry...”

‘I deserved better.’

‘I shouldn’t have to live so poorly.’

‘She wished she was stronger.’

Her words never changed. They were just different disputes of the same thing. Sometimes she mentioned the evil devils finding us, but I knew that had to be the men she couldn’t stop from using her. She cried into my hollow chest while I stared up at the falling water. It was ice cold, spilling down our soaked bodies. My clothes were heavy from the wetness, but it didn’t matter anymore.

I felt nothing.



## Chapter 2



**O**ctavia

Another week went by since the last dream. Tonight, I woke up from the most recent. My murderer had the sixth ring filled with orange in his target tattoo. This marked the first time I saw his color and ring, but I knew his work. Consumption stayed his signature because I had watched someone eat food to death. Literally, their stomachs ruptured from the continual eating.

Then there had been the time I watched two women making out. Nothing too weird, until they were biting each other's faces off. Things like that used to give me chills, but not now. Not until tonight, that was. Tonight, hurt me a little more—like had I suffered in the beginning—from not expecting his dirty play. He walked into the bathroom of a club and found a young girl cutting herself. Her loneliness bonded me to her as I watched the absent look in her eyes meet this man's—or rather mine from perspective. Even though I remained trapped in his body, I liked to keep us separated. I didn't want to think about sharing his joy. No, I always called them their nicknames or their gender.

He stood back, putting our viewpoint across the room. The girl picked up the razor she just finished with. Trembling, she didn't understand why she started doing it again right after she had just finished and hidden her marks. She wasn't because this act would be against her will. Her agency held no power as she began making deeper slices. Blood spilled severely from her veins, but she didn't stop there.

All up her arms, the marred flesh oozed what would kill her. I called her monster the Grim Reaper. With Ender and Punisher, they both craved their personal taste of violence. Reaper relished in watching the life leave his victims. He didn't do anything physical with them. Had he not opened the bathroom door, I wouldn't have seen his orange ring.

"Please," she sobbed. "Please make it stop." My dream-body propelled us forward until we kneeled before the girl. My smooth, masculine hand caressed her cheek.

"Keep going, and all the pain will go away." He kissed her temple. He stayed in his crouch before her. She caught on, knowing the only way to leave all the pain would be to end her life. Just as she realized it, her hand already sliced her jugular.

When I woke up, I cried for the first time from a dream in two years. I mourned my connection to her, understanding that loneliness burdening her shoulders. I was still weeping when my mother came in. She started crying too, and she appeared the most lucid that I had seen her in a long time. Moving to the couch I was sleeping on, she nestled down with me. She held me as my emotions won this round. I relished in the feeling of her arms swaddling me like the mother I've wanted for so long.

My overkill of emotions happened often. I either felt too much or nothing at all. There was no middle ground on my spectrum. My mother hated finding me like this, but she rarely saw anything else through her haze. “I know it’s a lot, Via. I know it hurts, but you have to keep feeling, Baby. Remember, pain means you’re alive. Don’t go numb, or you’ll lose yourself completely...”

I wanted to ask her a million things while she was coherent, but as my body shook from the tears, I just embraced the moment of having my mother’s warmth. To smell her soft skin without the lingering drugs burning my nostrils. I could also sense she was telling me the truth. Maybe she feared what I’d become if I just turned it all off, or she knew something she wasn’t sharing.

With her drug addiction, my built-in lie detector didn’t work half the time. I never knew if what she was seeing during her high was real. I quit trying to read her a long time ago especially when she rambled about the monsters hunting us.

“I know it’s two in the morning, but how about we go get some pizza?” Seeing my mother’s eyes when she stayed lucid made me look away. They were always full of grief and pity. Nodding, we gathered our things as she called an Uber. I wasn’t not sure where she had the money, but I wouldn’t worry about it tonight.

The death of the girl in my imagination lingered. I barely felt my feet dragging on the sidewalk. Once in the car, we drove on, and I nestled into the crook of her shoulder in the backseat. Traffic lights and streetlamps barely worked in this area. There wasn’t much to look at in this impoverished town, but I found the silence comforting.

As we went through the next light, two bright lights flashed through my mother’s window. Her small intake of breath told me all I needed to know.

We were about to be hit. By the deep horn, it would be a truck. The jerking of my body was unstoppable as my head whipped around from the car flipping. It all happened so quickly, I wondered if it even did.

Had it not been for my rapid heart and tender throat, I didn't know if I could believe I got in an accident. Once the car stopped rolling, I could barely open my eyes as we hung upside down. Viewing the front, I found the driver dead with his head hanging at an odd angle. Even with the blood pooling down to my brain, I knew to be scared. I knew things weren't okay.

Afraid, I grabbed my mother's limp and cold hand. Too frightened to see she might also be gone, I let myself remember her responsive eyes moments ago. I was too terrified to be wholly alone. Shadows surrounded us as my vision swam. My own eyes closed as I sent a silent prayer that maybe they wouldn't open. A selfish thought, but I wasn't ready to face this life without her.

The darkness came. I welcomed it like I had finally found my home.

~

*Beep. Beep. Beep.*

The annoying noise brought me to consciousness. I found something white over my face. A gasp filled my room. Then someone screamed. "Doctor! She's awake!" Some shuffling happened, but I could only see this weird whiteness.

Oh. The doctor pulled the sheet down from my face. I found a room filled with a full medical team. *I must be in the hospital...* My thoughts slowly came back as I finally remembered the wreck. The flashbacks had me heaving my breaths. The truck. Our car. The driver...

“My mom?” I croaked, but no one moved. That made me panic more.

Did she die? Were they too afraid to tell me?

No, they were looking at me like they were seeing a ghost. That’s when I comprehended the sheet laid over my face. They only did that to deceased victims. I had died and now I...

Leaning over the side of the bed, I barfed all over the floor. That’s what rushed the nurses to come to my aid finally. My doctor cleared his throat while talking to the other people. Do head scans for damage and a psychological evaluation. Yeah, I understood that part.

“Hello, Miss Clarke,” He smiled while sitting beside me on the bed to check my pupils. “I hate to remind you of the trauma you just went through, but you were in a car accident.”

“How long was I dead?” I asked with no shame. He reared back, knowing I understood what happened.

“Not even two minutes.” His hand took mine in comfort and in understanding as he told me what the possible side effects might be. I gulped while nodding.

“My mom?” I asked as his face hardened.

“She’ll be fine, but we tested her alcohol levels and for drugs when she went into surgery. She shouldn’t be alive or caring for a minor in her state.” Crap. I hadn’t thought about that part of this, and I comprehended social services would be coming for me. I swallowed hard and closed my eyes before the tears could come. This was it. The end of my life with my mother.

I let my gaze cross over to the window as I watched a cloaked man walk by. I blinked, and he was gone. What the hell? Did he run down the hallway? The window sat about three feet long, and he was in the middle of it.

The doctor reminded me of our conversation, seeing my bleary eyes trying

to concentrate. "Get some rest. Later, we'll take you to be examined." I thanked him. My mind still tried to make sense of everything as I stared up at the fluorescent light fixture above my head. Sighing, even this pathetic light was comforting to see. There had been no light where ever I just came back from. Nothing but coldness seeped into the marrow of my bones.

My mood swings were getting worse as the dreams got darker. Something about me wasn't right, and I had a feeling this event would only set me back more.

I remembered wanting to die in that car with never having suicidal thoughts before. The depression ate at me, just like the girl who died in my mind. Though, I'd never suffered like that before. Maybe, it was a new version of my personality problem growing a new head. Knowing I had no desire to kill myself, I had to find a way to not get so affected because the emotions were spilling over from my dreams. I also knew change would be coming whether I liked it or not. I rolled over to try and fall asleep. Nothing would be the same after today.

## Chapter 3



**O**ctavia The sterile smell of my new environment burned my nostrils more than the smoked drugs I grew used to in my houses. The bright florescent light above only added to the open curtains showing the noon sun. Birds chirped with the melody of the wind, but nothing around me registered. Well, the chilly flesh of my mother's hand did, but that had been from my fingers clenching hers for dear life now that I was allowed to visit her room. Any minute now, someone would come to gather me to be processed into the foster care system.

It almost didn't seem real. Some might look forward to the 'better life', but I knew how older kids like me were treated. It wouldn't be much different than the bikers who occupied my mother's bed. The biggest difference between the two scenarios? My mother.

Losing the only connection that I'd ever made with another human being, they made me say goodbye. She might be a druggy, but she was the only person who loved me for me. All my personality problems and mood swings,

she accepted without judgment. She took me to the doctors when I thought I was insane because I asked. She didn't see anything wrong with me like the world did.

My chin quivered with my puckering bottom lip as tears spilled. She looked so pathetic like this, it ate me alive. I loved her too much to leave her so helpless. Not even the drugs compared to how frail she looked now. They said she sustained too many internal injuries, keeping her in a coma would be the best option.

I didn't think so. I wanted her to wake up now. I wanted my mother to tell me I wasn't about to be taken. That we'd find a way to escape, just like every town before this one.

Not having freedom to choose dealt in my cards, I sobbed harder. Crawling onto the little sliver of the bed beside her, I craved physical contact. My wet cheeks dampened her neck where I snuggled. Her breathing remained forced from the tube I avoided.

“Why did you have to be an addict, Mommy?”

My chest burned. My lungs ached. I couldn't get a good enough breath to fill them. Not from the invisible weight forcing them to constrict. Plus, my own injuries didn't help. Two broken ribs, a fractured collarbone, and cuts and bruises covering me from head to toe. I should be in a lot of pain. I should feel the broken bones after two days of lying in a hospital bed. I should hate the way my clothing sat on the cuts of my skin, the fabric snagging the scabs.

All the physical damage became nothing because the pain in my heart outweighed it all. My mother called me an empath on more than one occasion because I felt other people's feelings while feeling too much of my own. When my switch flipped to nothing, that's when people needed to worry.



Mostly because I didn't know how to flip it back. I didn't understand why my emotions teetered in the first place.

It sucked sometimes.

Just as I stared blankly out the window, the door to my mother's room opened. I couldn't even face the nurse who would be doing her rounds.

"Ah! Octavia, look who came to get you!" Dr. Wheaton gleamed as I finally sat up and saw the attractive man beside him.

He looked late twenties, but his jade eyes showed his true age. He was not young with the stories they told. I just blinked repeatedly while both men watched my vacant reaction. I had no idea who this stranger could be. The blonde man with vibrant green eyes turned back to the old geezer who had been taking care of me.

"Might you give us a minute? I think the shock of this whole ordeal has her pretty shaken." Ah, so he could be charming and wealthy, if that Rolex meant anything.

My doctor just smiled. "Of course, but I wanted to let Octavia know her collarbone scan came back in. Looks like our machine had an error from your first scan. This morning showed the bone is bruised, but not broken." Dr. Wheaton nodded while leaving the room.

How was I to take that? My collarbone sure felt broken when the nurse helped me dress earlier. Putting the weirdness of my scan aside, I witnessed the stranger. Once the door shut behind the doctor, this man's phony smile fell. He set those hardened, green eyes on me. A wave of alphaness swept over me. From it, I sucked in a hard breath.

"I am an old acquaintance of your mother's. Lilitana and I go way back." He waved dismissively while pacing the room. He made it seem like we were in a board meeting, and I became the client he wanted to win over with stats

instead of compassion. “The authorities think she is my wife from the paperwork I had made up yesterday. When I saw the news, I knew I had to act.”

What the hell had he just said to me? Maybe I was dreaming all of this. Yup, I’d wake up soon because I think he just told me he forged legal documents.

“Not a dream, dear.” *Oh good. I spoke out loud.* “I’m going to get your mother in the finest rehab there is. In doing so, you’ll be moving in with me. They now think you are my stepdaughter. With the proper papers, it was easy enough to trick them. You’ll be attending a prep school that’s very exclusive. My maids will need to measure you for your uniforms by tonight, so we need to hurry.”

“Why?” I couldn’t help but ask the obvious. “Why help us? I’ve never met you.”

The large man of muscle moved to stand on the other side of my mother. In a small moment of letting his walls down and watching his eyes soften, I saw it. Without his words, I knew this man, at some point, had loved my mother.

“As hard as it may be to believe, she is the finest woman I’ve ever known. Fearless, yes, but also a little stupid for her bravery. Hopefully, she’ll be right as rain when her rehabilitation ends.”

Something was off about this man, but I also knew this was the best option if I wanted my mother to get help. I could be placed with a family in the system that didn’t harbor his secrets, telling the authorities his claims to our family were false. This man was clearly an asshole with a stone heart, but he gave me the one option that included my mother. She’d also be able to recover fully this time.

“Okay,” I breathed out. “I’ll pretend you are my stepdad if you promise to

give my mother back to me.” He just smirked while holding out his hand to shake on it. A firing chill ran up the skin when it touched his. That had not been a normal reaction, making me wonder what I got myself into. This should have been a good thing. So why did I feel like I had made a deal with the devil? And whatever I just bartered would be worth more than the cost of my soul?

~

New York...

Next time it might be wise to question where this mystery man lived. Holy guacamole, that had been a crappy flight from California. Let's not fail to mention, I had to do it alone from my mom being transferred by helicopter to a local hospital. A helicopter they wouldn't let me take to keep her company.

Moving into a new house with a new 'stepdad' just seemed a little weird without her. Thank heavens I had this woman named Rita with me. She seemed sweet and tender like a grandmother would be. Though, she looked my mom's age. I think she felt sorry for my situation more than anything else.

Rita's vanilla smell came up from behind me as we walked down the jet's stairs and onto the tarmac. A limo pulled up, and the driver got out to let us in the back. Not forgetting my manners, I quietly thanked him. None of this felt like it could be real. The driver chuckled a little at my inaudibly squeaked thanks. Then, he bowed his body just a little to show I was some kind of royalty. Weird, but I wasn't about to ask him why.

Around new people, I had always been shy and a little timid. In my mind, I stayed the badass my mom wanted me to be. After so many incidents of me

‘seeing things’, I started keeping to myself. When I felt too much, I shut down for no one to see the overstimulation of my nervous system. Too weird to explain, but I wasn’t in my right mind sometimes. I got angry for no reason, horny for no reason, jealous for no reasons. It was easy to get.

I blamed those dreams with the violence for making my emotional meter break. I saw the kills happen as though I had been the victim’s assassin. The smell of their coppery blood, the warmth of it, it had all been real.

Yet, it wasn’t.

Sighing, I let myself sink against the backseat of the limo while coming to terms that I might just be a freak. A freak who needed to keep this hidden in my new life.

“Honey, we’re here. Are you ready?” Rita patted my hand with knowing eyes.

No, I wasn’t. Part of me still struggled with the suicide of the girl. The one I felt emotion for afterward. Part of me felt like the life lost needed to be grieved, and I would be the only one who ever would. A figment of my own imagination, that girl had no one but me. I hated I had the nightmares. I hated that even though the stories were different, the point didn’t change. The ending never did.

Someone always died.

“Yeah,” I croaked, following her out of the car. This would be it. The giant mansion made of charcoal-colored stone and white columns would be my home. Balconies sat on the higher levels above the columns. The black roof felt like the last omen I needed about this place, but I promised to do this for my mom.

Rita took my elbow and led me into the house I’d be living in for the next year. Holding my breath, I found it to be surprising. Beautifully modern with

mostly whites and silvers adorned it. Not what I expected with the exterior looking dark and foreboding—almost like a medieval castle.

Guiding me upstairs, Rita showed me my room. Utterly ready with everything I despised as a female...

Pink.

Everything stained fucking pink, and the white furniture to make it worse. The canopy bed looked inviting, but it was also draped in pink shades of tulle. Heaven help me, it looked like a fairy godmother puked her magic all over my things. Settling in, I fell back on the bed, knowing tomorrow would be the hard part. I could handle the princess room. I could handle being around a stranger I couldn't trust. It was starting a new prep school in upstate New York that really had me terrified. One place I couldn't even google from how secretive they were.

My new *daddy* got me in with his connections. How he had connections to a secret prep school had been beyond me. Let's be real, though, it would be an elite school. It would be ten times bitchier than any school I had been to yet. Ugh, just what I needed for my last year.

Sighing, I turned on my alternative rock music. I lost myself to Breaking Benjamin's compelling lyrics that matched my life. Pity party?

Yeah, I was having one in the silence of my hellhole of a room.

## Chapter 4



**O**ctavia This might've been the first prep school I've been to without a uniform. When Daemon— my new 'stepdad'— told me I needed sizing, it was for upscale clothing. He didn't want a pauper in his castle. Even though that's precisely what I remained being. I sighed while looking over my simple clothing that I picked from the Barbie Dreamhouse closet.

It wasn't enough that the pink vomited in my room, most of my clothes got hit too. I barely found anything that identified as me in it. I did find a few things I'd be comfortable in. Though in this crowd, my dark jeans and a long-sleeved, black tee might not cut it.

I went for cute and modest for my first day, but everyone else? Let's just say I was going to be the Amish one in this slutty crowd. Girls were in the shortest bottoms possible. Tops that showed boobs, boobs, and more boobs. What kind of dress code did they have here?

Hopefully, no one would notice me from the stark difference, but I had to be real. Most of these girls didn't even have tits to be showing off. Not that I

was one to judge but use your assets properly. If you don't have boobs, flaunt your ass. If you don't have those, then your legs.

I didn't have legs for days, but I had killer curves with a D chest. Dressing my body magically seemed to be in my genes to know this stuff. Though, I had no idea why I did. Nor did I promote my body for men to stare at like a window display for my assets.

As a very sexual person, my exterior didn't show it. Sex helped ease a lot of things I suffered, so I found guys my age for casual sex. Most didn't care that easy access to me meant fucking the crazy girl, but I could never breathe a word about our trysts together. Sadly, I didn't know how to find a random hook up in a place like this. Everyone acted a little too friendly with everyone, turning me off.

The fun fact that I was crippled with bruises covering my torso, sitting on my broken bones. Not at all appealing for my first day. Makeup hid my facial blemishes, but I could feel the weight of it caking my left cheek. After a week in my sling, the doctor cleared my bruised collarbone to be okay. My ribs would heal fine after being set. It would be just the cosmetic damage that someone might notice.

"You must be new," a deep voice had my insides twisting up. I looked up to find an exceptionally handsome guy. He stood lean but muscular with thick-framed glasses around his eyes. Tousled, his messy, rich, auburn hair should have been ugly, but it sat very charmingly on him. Pale skin clear of any blemishes didn't hide his little nerdy vibe going on from his long-sleeved *Star Wars* tee, but a hot nerd with a body.

"Oh, um, yeah," I blushed from sounding stupid while clearly checking him out. "I'm Octavia, Octavia Clarke."

My hand went out for a formal introduction. He laughed while taking it.

“I’m Beau. Beau Revell.”

He ended up taking a seat right beside me, but before he could ask more about me, class started. All through the hour, I could feel his eyes on me. My comfort level had dropped rapidly because I didn’t like attention, and he gave me way too much. The underlying problem of being the new girl in any school. My anxiety hated it, festering inside me because they all thought I was pretty enough to flirt with the first day, but I’d be the social pariah soon enough.

When the bell rang, I dashed off to my next class. Childish? Yes, but I was not equipped to associate with sexy men like him. I had no idea what to say to someone like that without making an idiot of myself. When I had sex before, it stayed physical with people I knew wanted the same thing. A learned behavior my mother taught me when it came to keeping men an arm’s length away. Because of her attitude, I didn’t know how to construct that kind of relationship. Plus, I had a hot temper with a sharp tongue. If someone angered me, I lost my filter. Then, I told them exactly where to stick it.

Making friends had already been hard enough at my other school, and one didn’t know the girl who started screaming in the middle of class, happening from watching a violent kill in my mind. Maybe I could try to be an average person here. With a smile on my face, I promised myself this year would be different. I, Octavia Clarke, would not be the weird girl. Okay, so a little easier to think about than act upon. Especially with the skank glares I was getting already. Pressing down my anxiety, I had one shot not to make an idiot of myself.

“Hey there, cutie!” a peppy voice bounced next to me. Greeted by a beautiful blonde, she had legs for days and slender curves. If I had a polar



opposite, she'd be it. Where I had black and wavy hair down my back, she had straight hair that was slanted to be longer in the front, barely brushing her shoulders. My tilted, grey eyes were nothing like her bubbly, golden ones.

Her eye color was so uncommon that I couldn't help but stare into the molten honey hue. Something stirred in the far corner of my mind when I saw the shade, alarming me. Huh. I ignored it while taking the rest of her in. A button nose sat on her face while mine stood out as little and straight. Where my lips were full and pouty, hers were thin with a prominent cupid's bow. Interesting...

"Hey," I lifted my fingers a smidge from my desk. She quickly sat in front of me before turning around to chat.

"I'm Louise Gifre, but everyone just calls me Lou," she babbled, never losing her smile.

"Octavia Clarke, but you can call me Via." I smiled from hers being so contagious. How was it possible for one person to be so perky?

"Ow, pretty name!" She made me blush just from the intensity behind her kind words. Never in my life had I met someone who looked like they enjoyed rolling out of bed in the morning, but she proved they existed.

"Thanks. Lou is..." I tried coming up with the proper thing to say. She snorted.

"Yeah, my parents set me up to fail with it, but I like how tough it makes me sound. At least I'm not another Ashley!"

"Or a Brittany," I added with a chuckle. It was then I knew I made my first friend. Lou kept passing me notes and then whispered with it during the class, helping keep me grounded in this new environment.

Part of me understood she too must've been lonely for a friend. She clearly didn't fit in with the hoes here. Everything on her seemed bright and cheery.

It showed another contrast to my black apparel. She'd love my bedroom that matched her wardrobe. Her bubble-gum pink sweater fell off one shoulder, and white pants showcased those lean legs. Her sneakers were rainbow with unicorns on the toes.

"Hey wait, you said Clarke? As in Daemon Odium's new stepdaughter?" Her eyes sparkled with excitement. Apparently, he was known enough that my name already whispered on the lips of these strangers.

"Hence why I'm here now," I gestured to the room around us.

She gasped. "You're Lear's new stepsister?!"

Wait what? I know someone would've told me if I had a stepbrother. "Um, to be honest, I don't know. I barely met Daemon at their quick wedding three days ago." Lie, but also one Daemon told me to tell if people around here asked. The authorities might believe they've been married for years, but these elitists wouldn't. "There was no brother there, and I'm alone at the house. He hasn't been around if I have one."

"Oh, you do. He was probably at one of *their* houses." She rolled her eyes while harshly saying 'their'.

"Whose houses?"

Her eyes surveyed around us to make sure no one would listen in as our teacher droned on. We were in the clear as her voice went even quieter. "There are seven guys you have to be careful around in this school. They own it, and they know it. No rules apply to them. No discipline befalls on their heads. They are drool-worthy, and know it from screwing every girl in this school... Well, except me."

She made sure to point that out, and she saw my questioning eyes from it.

"I'm not their type and they aren't mine. They dominate and leave, I like romance and to... cuddle..." She shrugged. I snorted from the truth about

her.

My noise drew the attention of our teacher. We kept our heads down until the end of class after that from being watched. Lou had to be the best thing I found since the move here. Hell, the best thing in my miserable existence.

Walking to lunch, we got our food, but instead of sitting at a table, she led me to the steps in the middle of the school. It was an atrium outside, placed between the connecting four columned halls that held benches and shrubbery. Each hall had a set of steps to lead down to the center where a beautiful fountain stole the view. One with eight men dotting on a single woman as she looked to the heavens. The greenery had been placed strategically, and the fall flowers were a lovely touch to see.

Sitting on the east steps, Lou began chatting about all the fun things to do in this area. Shocker, all the girly things you could think of. The best shopping spots, best nail salons, and diet restaurants. Like she needed a diet anything with how thin she was.

That's when a commotion happened from across the quad. One giant of a man threw Beau across the outdoor square we were in. Beau got back up and charged the living Goliath. I held my breath as two other guys snickered on the side. Leaping to my feet, I ignored Lou's protests. I trudged over to the walking mountain with dark hair and near-black eyes. His square jaw had a shadow of hair from going a few days with no razor.

Standing at least six-five, I had to go around him, to the other set of stairs on his side, to meet his face a little better on a higher step. Trying to tap his shoulder, his hefty hand shoved me aside so that I fell back on my ass. Something spiked within my veins with the contact. My heart hammered in sheer hate for this man. My mind wanted nothing more than to hurt him.

Jumping up, I only saw red when I decked the side of his face. If he didn't

face me, he would feel my undying wrath. Rage bubbled over within me, igniting my once calm veins. Like a spider monkey, I took his moment of shock and leapt onto his back. He shifted so that my body flung around him. Now, I held onto his shoulders to keep us face to face.

From the sheer surprise, he tumbled backward, and I fell on top of him. We were in the bushes now with no one able to see us. Storms brewed behind his eyes as he calculated how to kill me properly. I darted suddenly. Letting out a sharp breath from the onset of pain, it spasmed in my ribs. The sheer agony seemed to ground me and make me understand I wasn't myself.

Blinking out of my stupor, I finally realized what happened. I gasped from seeing the swell on his cheek. And here I had been hoping for a regular start. "I'm so sorry!"

He growled.

He literally growled at me. My eyes bugged out of my head. Hearing more shouts and a commotion, I looked up to see everyone around us now fighting. A black fog rolled around them all. How did...

"What in blazes name is going on here?!" An older woman with wispy hair fraying out of her grey bun shouted.

Everyone then pointed to me, Beau, and the living Hulk with his two friends. Her venomous eyes darted to each one of us. Her chest heaved behind the wool cardigan she wore.

"Mr. Thana, Mr. Revell, and Ms. Clarke, that's detention for all three of you! That goes for you boys too. I have no doubt you encouraged Sevrin, again." The wiry teacher I had for English class pointed her weathered finger at all of us.

I groaned.

Detention the first day here.

The boulder of a man below, stood up with me still latched onto his front. I squeaked in surprise right before his giant hands almost fully met around the smallest part of my middle. I felt like he was going to snap me like a twig.

Then there was the shooting agony that had me blinking back tears. He gripped me right below the bottom rib that broke. His curled lip snarled at me as he yanked me off him. Beau came over to my fallen form. No, Goliath did not throw me down. I just had no strength in my quivering limbs to hold myself upright. The ground seemed nice to regroup on and breathe through the massive throbbing in my side.

“Octavia! Are you okay?” Beau knelt beside me, watching me with worried eyes as the group of guys with the Beast snickered some more.

“I’m fine. Are you?” I finally got out of my mouth when the rush dissipated. Holy hell, it was true what they said about adrenaline rushes. I felt like I could sleep for days now that it left, but the momentary high had been worth it.

“Octavia, why would you do something so reckless? Rin could have killed you with his anger problems!” Beau shouted at me, heatedly. My eyes watered a little from it. He cursed under his breath when he saw me flinch. “Jesus H.! I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you. There are just things you need to not do here. That stunt was one of them. Just please, never poke the bear named Sevrin Thana.”

“Yeah, I think I learned my lesson seeing how he’s more beast than man,” I snorted. As he helped me up, I heard him mutter ‘you have no idea’ under his breath. It seemed he didn’t want me knowing something like that, even though it had been in plain sight. How could I not from that incident? I bet the Neanderthal spoke only basic words with those growls and grunts.

Moving back to Lou, she kept biting her fingernails with a white face. “Um,

Via... Remember how I said to avoid seven guys?"

"Yes?" I asked timidly, already knowing what would come out of her mouth.

"You just pissed off half of them on your first day. Everyone is already spreading it like wildfire!"

"Thanks for not sugarcoating it and just ripping off the band-aid," I sarcastically tossed.

"No problem!" She gleamed with no sense of my teasing words. Oh geez... I'm pretty sure I just picked my very first friend to be the reincarnated Virgin Mary.

## Chapter 5

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**O**ctavia “Lou, you really didn’t have to do that.” I tried not to gape at this pixie of a woman. She waved her detention slip at me like she just slyly stole the Mona Lisa while being ecstatic about winning the lottery.

“Please, Via. You are the first female in this school not to fall for their charms. Heck, you even picked a fight with one of the assholes. You are exactly who I want to stick close to. And this,” she looked around nervously to make sure no one listened while pointing at her chest, “*bitch* has your back.”

Wow, so she didn’t like calling herself a cuss word. I smiled while watching her as she nearly skipped down the empty hall. We made our way to the detainment area, AKA, the library where we’d serve our punishment.

“Wow! I wonder if breaking the rules always gives you such a rush!” She was like a bouncing bean of Viagra. Nothing was going to get her down.

“Let’s not test it, okay? I’ll let this one slide, but seriously, Lou. Don’t get sent to detention just because I have it.” I fixed the straps of my backpack to

sit better on my shoulders as my feet dragged over the tiled corridor.

Compared to my last school, this stone palace was a fairytale castle next to the ghetto one I left. Everything had a rich texture and color that decorated these long halls. One thing people forgot about in fairytales? There was always a twist you have to be ready for.

“Look, you’re about to sit in a room with the boys who run this school. They will one day rule the world from their egos inflating that hard. I’m here as a backup when they try to sweep you into their dark side.”

I rolled my eyes. This perky thing had a candy-coated dark side if she thought any of this made sense. “We’ll just do whatever we’re supposed to, and then we’ll leave. I don’t have any desire to even spare a glance at them. Let alone join their chaos,” I hissed.

She brightly smiled while linking our arms. “You’re absolutely perfect!”

Not knowing how to respond, we just walked the rest of the way in silence. Well, Lou hummed *Firework* by Katy Perry.

Once inside the library, I noticed the librarian and all the guys missing. Nothing but silence greeted our entry. Beau came in behind us, flirting with some girl that kept pushing up her cleavage for him. I would never understand the bout of surging jealousy I felt, but one of my weird personalities tried to lay claim on him. Blinking, I turned away to make it look like I hadn’t been being privy to his business.

Who knows if I planned him to be my next mental victim, or if there might be something sparking between us? I think he would be safe from Ender. He only wanted women to screw. Punisher didn’t care who he hit, just as long as they cried out their suffering.

Shivering, Beau placed his hand on my lower back to stop the chill I gave myself. “You okay, V?” His hungry voice did this little humming growl of



smoothness in my ear. Oh, it was a heaven I never felt just from hearing that honey tone. Wait, V? You know what? I wasn't opposed to the nickname. Especially when it came from this guy. Wow. This might be a first for me. Most of the time, men never talked to me, or I avoided them before they found out my name.

"Fine!" I squeaked out.

Turning, I found Lou didn't remain by me as she chatted with our student teacher from Chemistry. By the hair twisting around her finger and jutting of her hipbone, I'm pretty sure I now knew her type. The guy was slightly leaner compared to Beau next to me but still handsome for having a few years on us. Must be the forbidden fruit aspect of him, or just her sense of what was hot. Either way, I grinned from ear to ear, knowing she had the insatiable hots for our teacher's assistant. The TA was fine as hell, and I saw a few girls drooling over him today while he wrote equations on the whiteboard.

Pretty sure his tight ass drew most of the attention.

Peeking, I found Beau's perfectly plump rear in his skinny jeans. Plump totally meant toned, but it would definitely be a firm handful.

"Um, V, are you staring at my ass?" Beau tried to hide his amusement but failed when he saw me blush.

"I-er-um-uh..." *Smooth, Octavia.* "I'm sorry?"

Did I just transform the apology into a sad question? Thank heavens Beau was easy to get along with. He shimmied his hips to tease me, but he mostly laughed before dropping the subject altogether. Pointing a finger to where we needed to go, he led the way. We checked in with a student aid who had the sign-in sheet. As I signed my name, Beau whispered in my ear. I wasn't sure

any man I had been intimate with turned me on by just breathing on my neck, but he did.

“Hey, you think you can cover for me for about thirty minutes?” Still dazed from wanting more of him, I nodded. Then, I watched him retreat to the side exit where the blonde girl from earlier waited. Oh. Now I wanted to take it back. Or at least switch her places.

Flustered, I moved to the table just shy of Lou’s conversation. Interesting enough, I think our TA might be into her as well. He just did a much better job at hiding it, but I saw it. His eyes kept falling to her long legs before quickly blinking back up. Hey, I couldn’t blame him. As they said their farewells, Lou moved back over to where I stood with a yearning in her eyes. Definitely smitten, Lou had a thing for the unavailable man named Mr. Gram.

“Now I see why you haven’t slept with the Elites,” I fired at her from her declaring them as the wrong men. I only saw three of them in the quad today, but I knew it remained only a matter of time before I stumbled into the other four. Lou blushed. Before she could say anything, we heard an exaggerated moan. A terrible mix of a cat wailing and a purr that got stuck in a throat.

Curious, we both moved to the unpleasant sound. We found something that made me want to bleach my eyes out, or maybe gut them from their sockets. If only that would take away this horrible memory. In between shelves, sitting in the alcove under the window, we witnessed the unthinkable. Mrs. Vicenti sat spread eagle while one of the Elites had his dick in her ass.

In this comprising position, you could see every open fold between her legs, right above where their bodies met. Black jeans and a leather jacket, the clothes belonged to the bad boy who she stayed impaled on. Not pausing his rhythm, he just smirked at us. He fucking smirked while pumping our middle-aged librarian on his... Oh.

Well, he packed some nice equipment. He being hung, the man wasn't super thick. I've never felt a penis that length before, and I felt my skin grow hot in response to it. My nipples stiffened at the erotic sight, being teased into an odd sense of torment.

Lou tried to cover her eyes but kept peeking just like I couldn't stop gawking. Sure to be a train wreck, you couldn't take your gaze away from it to see how it would end. That's when my dilating gaze found the angry asshole from lunch. His cold eyes found me just as his scowl deepened. Movement in his shoulder caused me to follow his thick, taut arm covered by his leather sleeve. It led to where his hand fisted his girthy cock.

Swallowing hard, I couldn't help but watch him pump himself. I couldn't stop staring at the piercing under the fat mushroom head of his shaft. A frenum one with the barbell look that had two good sized beads for the woman's pleasure. Involuntarily, my thighs clenched, and I bit my lip, knowing exactly how good that would feel in my tight channel.

A sound, between a moan and growl, came from his thin lips from watching me watch him. He didn't want to like me observing, but his inner desires loved it. Sex had always been intoxicating to me. I never understood why, but I could tell everyone in this school had the same draw to the sexual passion as I did.

My heart picked up almost in time with how hard he jerked off. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't do anything until he released me from this mesmerizing prison. Like lightning, I found myself feeling the urge to relieve the pressure building between my legs. I needed something to grind against, something hard to penetrate me and fill me because staring at his cock while knowing we hated each other did things to my labia.

Angry Eyes stopped touching himself with a smirk. He knew my flushed

chest came from him. He might hate being turned on by my eyes on him, but he loved the power it had over me. The explicit ideas this sight gave me. Stopping, he let his thick shaft bob out of his hand for me to study the heaviness. Then he whistled at his friend who remained in the ass. Oh, I had forgotten about them.

Asshole's menacing grin only grew. His friend stood with his dick stuck in the librarian's ass. Her legs were hooked over his elbows as he presented her dripping cunt to the asshole. Only seeing me, he shoved into the core of the poor woman. She shrieked from the feeling of being utterly full. Double penetration had been one thing I hadn't tried, but by her clawing the men who held her between them, I wanted to.

The blonde man behind her quickly covered her mouth with a chuckle. They didn't want anyone else seeing this, but I had a feeling they planned on me being here. They thought this would be enough to have me running in fear of them... Ha!

The guy in the ass had this untouchable bad boy look to him. Stunning violet-reddish eyes only added to his appeal. The way his shaggy waves fell over the red irises enhanced his Rockstar vibe. Looking in my direction, he flicked his tongue for me to see the piercing on it. Hot damn, I bet that would feel amazing against my clit.

Turning, Goliath growled from me giving someone else my attention. He was more of a biker dude than a playboy like his friend. Still, he influenced me in a way that I'd never tell another soul about. Something about the loathing in our eyes fueled the passion between us. Asshole never broke eye contact with me, pleased by my shock.

Snapping out of it, I couldn't let him or my dark fantasies win. Plus, I needed relief. Yanking Lou to me, she squeaked as she faced the men with

me standing behind her back. My mom was a stripper for hell's sake. I knew how to work my body and someone else's to gain attention. I just never had from not wanting my mother's life.

Whispering, I nibbled on Lou's neck while letting my nails rake over her sweater enough to pebble the skin below. "I promise I'm not a lesbian, but I need to teach this asshole he can't get to me."

Her breathing staggered from how hard her heart pounded, but she nodded for me to continue. Words couldn't form from how turned on she had gotten. Out of her element, she just let me lead while I stood up to these men again. Running my hands lightly along her trim body, her head tossed back over my shoulder. This showed her submission to the pleasure I began stimulating. She enjoyed this, and so were the gaping men.

Moving up her shirt, I fondled her breasts with both hands while finding the right nerves along her neck and collarbone with my tongue. Then I moved back up while forcing her head to turn toward me. I took her lips with mine. I commanded the audience with my dominance of her mouth, and Lou whimpered in ways that told the men I became the keeper of her pleasure.

They watched our tongues tangle while I tweaked her little nipples for them to point through her shirt. She wasn't wearing a bra from not needing one with the sweater she had on. This made my task easier. Asshole kept grunting his fury about what I did to him, so I smiled in response. He also couldn't stop himself or his raging speed from pounding the middle-aged woman.

Thrust after thrust, he might break the woman. He slapped her clit to cause another muffled shrill from her mouth being covered.

Next, one of my hands lifted Lou's shirt just enough to expose her tight tummy and her under-breasts. My other hand trickled my fingers down slowly to reach her pant hem. Both men watched that hand undo her silver

button to reveal the top of her white thong. Groaning in unison, they watched my pointer finger play with the hem before my hand moved in. What I found had my peppy little friend very excited about our illicit activities.

I moved my hand to circle her clit. Then I gave it a good pinch. Repeating, I kept my other hand on her breast. My lips demanded hers to feast on her moans. I picked up my pace, as did the men because they wanted to match my heavy rhythm.

Crumbling into me, Lou gave out from the hardness of her orgasm crashing into her. My lips were locked with hers, but my eyes stayed locked with Asshole in a challenge. That's all it took to end him. His load spilled into the librarian while his scowl deepened, glaring at me. He knew I won this round. Maybe he had been the king around here, but he would never be my king.

Helping Lou stand and fixing her pants, she blushed and retreated to the door, saying she needed to go to the bathroom. The librarian finally came out of her lustful daze and righted herself while also running away like she couldn't believe what came over her.

Long-dick put the snake back in his pants while smirking at me. He liked that I helped aid his pleasure. Walking by me with an extra pep in his step, he kissed my cheek with that same smirk. "Thanks, Love. I was growing rather bored of her arse."

Nothing else left his British mouth as he sauntered away. There was only facing the Goliath now. His leather jacket might bust at the seams from how tense he seemed. Moving to me like a feral beast, he barricaded me with his arms against the shelf behind my back. Lowering his glowering head, he blew out his hot breath over my face.

"You must be a special kind of stupid for thinking you can play games against me, Kitten." His voice hadn't come out of his lustful stage. The

gravelly tone did things to me that I'll never freely admit.

“Says the one who started it, knowing I'd be in here today to see this,” I breathlessly spoke. His darkening brown gaze studied me harder. I became a germ under a microscope he needed to learn about to survive. His giant hands landed on my hips before knotting in the belt loops under them. With a swift yank, he gave me a wedgie. It got to the point the hem rubbed my swollen clit and gave me a severe camel toe.

My intake of breath faltered from the feeling of friction against the throbbing bundle of nerves. He grinned in delight at seeing me be unsated. “You think your display made you win? You're the only one who didn't get off, Kitten. That's called losing in my book.” Oh god... His voice mixed with the pressure...

I couldn't handle it. I typically was a shy little thing, but I also enjoyed sex. I enjoyed the release. Moving my hips, I allowed myself to be unashamed while I humped the seam in between my lower lips. Asshole's nostrils flared from the sight, but he couldn't look away from my pelvis.

Seeing me shudder and squirm, he yanked harder on my pants, wanting to see how far I'd go. Liquid lava now burned his irises, seeing the hungry predator did it. In a jerky completion, I finished myself off. Asshole came back down from his high of watching to see I had just satisfied myself. I had bested him again, and the tenting in his crotch told me I wasn't the one in need anymore.

“What was that again?” I leered at the lion of a man. He snarled and pushed me harder into the bookshelf. My breath got stuck as tears stung my eyes from my ribs. His lips sank into the lobe of my ear while his breath settled along the nerves of my neck.

“You're playing a dangerous game, Kitten. You should know how lucky

you are that I'm not making you finish me off with that sassy little mouth of yours."

"I'm not just words, Asshole. I'd bite your dick off if you ever tried to use my mouth." Standing my ground got harder from this little heated argument, turning me on even more.

I never went for the bad boys, but that's what happened today. Two were using our teacher as a blowup doll, and I had gotten worked up over it. This made it clear I was all sorts of messed up in the head.

Asshole cupped my chin before pinching it hard between his fingers. Growling, he made me look at him. "You'll never beat me, Kitten. I'll suck you dry, break you down, and relish in your pain..."

"Never..." It came out as a harsh whisper with my own nostrils flaring.

"I'd own you. I'd break you into nothing more than my personal puppet." He was getting off on this. Getting off on dominating me... but part of him liked my fight.

Rubbing the bulge between his legs, I smirked right back. "I think we both know who became the puppet today..."

"Watch yourself, Kitten. You sure you can handle the mindfuck I'm about to put you through?" He sneered while bringing his face closer. "Walk away now, never speak to me again, and I'll let you survive." Righting myself, I knew he wasn't just talk. His demeanor displayed the demons of his past, the haunting that led him to be such a cruel man. What he didn't know was, you couldn't break something that'd never been whole to begin with.

Using a commanding voice, I pushed him away to break up this moment. "In chess, it isn't the queen who needs protected."

I knew I just started a war with this man. Since I was new here, I knew it would be stupid. But something about him made me want to best him.



Walking away, I could feel him searing his gaze into the back of my skull.  
Indeed, this meant game on.

## Chapter 6



**O**ctavia White. Everything stayed so pristine and white that it made my stomach roll. Maybe it came from the antiseptic smell, but something caused a bout of nausea to hit me. Feeling the churning in my gut didn't stop as I waited. Too bad the paint job had my mind using it as my memory marker. I don't know if I could ever have white walls again after visiting my unconscious mother twice this weekend.

This hospital didn't make room for any colors to help brighten the patients' futures. Shivering, I waited for a nurse to take me back to my mom. She finally woke up this morning, and I wouldn't lose the opportunity to see her. Starting school on a Friday might've been weird but having a break to cope with what was to come would be beneficial.

Especially after my detention mistake and poking the bear. The aftereffects had me using my fingers and toys in the silence of my room. The memory was too hot to not recall when I needed a quick fix. Now, I felt the tingling

begin again. Shifting, I tried to find a comfortable position to not feel the tight jeans rubbing me a little too well.

“Miss Clarke?” I leaped to my feet when the young nurse came to gather me. Partly to forget the need between my legs, and the other from needing to see my mom. Studying the hospital helped me forget about the previous dilemma just enough to breathe right. The long hall also had more white walls. I rolled my eyes, knowing white became a color for the damned.

People who came back from the grave swear they saw a bright light. Did they think about the fact that they were right under a white ceiling and bright lights? No. They all believed in a higher power that saved them.

As we walked, I noticed the red in the nurse’s cheeks when she saw Daemon. Biting her lip, he gave her a saucy look that led her on. The eye-fucking was more sickening than my anxiety. So much for wanting my mother, like he pretended back in California. Now I see why she lost contact with this man, but I brought her back to the piece of shit. Sighing, I knew he had been our only hope to stay together.

Speaking of, my mother watched the exchange and moved her gaze to look out the window. Forlorn, she looked utterly miserable. Was it the absence of being high or from seeing Daemon again? I studied each adult as Daemon slipped his number to the nurse. He lingered his hand to cup her willing ass. Neither grownup had seen me yet as I waited to be announced—to not startle my mom.

“Some things never change.” My mother sighed. Something longing and sad passed over her expression. “Only Leo-”

Her words were cut off when Daemon growled furiously at her.

“Don’t you dare bring up that traitor’s name, Liliana! You both were foolish and now look what you’ve done!”

“Sorry to interrupt,” Callie, the nurse, finally snapped out of her lust from seeing Daemon’s true nature as an asshole. “Miss Clarke is here to see her mother.” Both looked at me as I entered. I gave Daemon a hated stare. I knew I couldn’t trust him, but this just added to it all. I kept my mouth closed and tongue bit to keep from asking the simple question begging to be asked. Who was Leo?

“Hi, mom.” I waved timidly while also wanting to bolt from the room.

“Baby, you’re okay.” Her eyes watered.

“Remember what we discussed, Liliana. Tomorrow, you leave. Octavia will stay with me while you recover.” Daemon stormed out just as his words hit me like a freight train.

“You’re leaving New York?”

She patted the bed for me to sit beside her on the firm hospital bed. Doing so, she held me to her and began to sob. I could feel a fear and torment rolling off her. Was she afraid to get clean?

“Mom? What’s going on?” I nestled into her side, breathing her in.

“Sweetheart, I need you to listen closely. Things here are not-” She started having a coughing fit that had me almost running out the door to find help. A little blood came out, so I jumped up. She stopped me by gripping my wrist and tugging me back down. “I’m fine. I promise. It isn’t from the drugs or accident.”

“Mom, you’re scaring me,” I spoke honestly. I’ve never seen her like this before.

Dejected, she went back to peering out the window. Her faraway look went over my head. This position let me see the inner turmoil causing her pain. Was it the demons she now carried for neglecting me? I didn’t know, but right now, she looked utterly defeated.

“There was this place in China... a river ran through the village... with cherry blossoms floating in the breeze from the trees. He used to take me there to get away, you know. It was our time together until the others found out. I never thought this would happen. I thought I could escape with him. It makes the souvenirs worth every penny to help remember the beautiful scenery that final day, to help me remember him.”

What the fuck did she just say to me? She talked in a voice that sounded way too calm and airy. Like she had to say goodbye and gave up on something I didn't understand. Plus, there was the fact I knew she had never been to China. Her pockets were too broke for that kind of travel.

“Mom, that doesn't make a lick of sense.”

Her tortured eyes shed the tears brimming her sockets. “I tried, Octavia. I tried to save us. I'm so sorry. I failed.”

Maybe she lost her mind from the drugs and accident because this was confusing to say the least. Just as the door handle twisted, she closed her mouth. Callie came back in, seeing our teary exchange firsthand.

“Mr. Odium is requesting all visitors leave now.” My new stepdad began to best Rin in the category of being an asshole.

Hugging my mom, I pulled back, but she held me in place. “Seven is not the number, Octavia. Don't trust anyone.” I could feel her truth from her fright overwhelming all my senses. If she had lost her mind, then she got stuck in her prison while believing it. “I love you, my strong girl.”

“You too, Mom.”

“Remember what I told you when we left for pizza before the accident?” I shook my head from that whole night being fuzzy. “Keep feeling. Never go numb, Baby. Never go numb...”

“Okay.” I gripped her tighter from feeling way too much right now.

“Remember what else I’ve told you? What’s the biggest thing to remember?”

“Never let people get too close,” I recited the branding in my brain from remembering all the times we moved from ‘people getting too close’.

“Now, Miss Clarke. Mr. Odium isn’t a patient man, and I rather like my job.” Callie looked around nervously. I couldn’t blame her.

Kissing my mom’s head, I promised to remember even though none of her crazy made sense. Walking out, I let a few tears slip, knowing I just said goodbye to my mom.

“Her brain doesn’t work right anymore. She isn’t all there... I’m sure you noticed that.” Callie gave me a sympathetic smile that would have fooled anyone. But not me. I could feel her lying to me. Her deceit oozed from her body, and I tried to let go of the anger I felt towards her. Sadly, my rage won.

“Doesn’t give you an excuse to jump in her husband’s bed or flirt with him in front of her. She was lucid enough to be hurt by your actions.”

She gasped and gaped at me. I became a blunt person a long time ago. After years of being a mindless killer—even a dream one— I could threaten straightforwardly.

“There’s only one person I care about, and you helped offend her today. Let it happen again, and I’ll slice your tongue out and shove it up your ass like the fake bitch you are. Maybe I’ll gut your spine out and watch your body unable to support itself. Either way, I’ll make sure you regret ever thinking thoughts that’ll upset her.”

One of Daemon’s town cars pulled up, so I left the catty bitch standing behind me. Her feet were glued to the ground as her eyes went huge as I left no evidence of my threat. She couldn’t go to the authorities, but she knew I had been serious. Sighing, I just hoped the ride home would be peaceful.

Nope. Not my luck today. Of course, Daemon sat in here too, on his phone. Exhaling while rubbing his face, he nodded to whoever he was talking to. “Yes, I will be going with her for a week or so to make sure,” he paused to see me climbing in. “...her recovery goes well.”

Once he hung up, he texted on his phone while he began talking to me without looking at me. It made me feel small and almost insignificant.

“Your mom and I will be heading out tomorrow to transfer her to the rehab center I have lined up. There is no contact to be made while she is recovering, so I hope you said your proper farewells.”

“There are plenty of places that would work here in New York,” I gritted my teeth.

“But this one is the best. That was our agreement, after all. The best care. I’m a man of my bargains, Octavia. You will continue school. Then, you will see your mother again when she has had the time to right her wrongs.”

“Where is it?” I crossed my arms and waited.

“Classified for her healing,” he countered because he knew I would ask that. Sighing, he finally put away his phone to look at me, head on.

“Octavia, this won’t be easy for her. I’ll be going with her to get her settled. I’ll make sure the place is as good as they say it is. While I’m gone, I’ve asked my son to keep an eye on you.”

“Right, my illusive stepbrother who’s never home?”

“Lear will be there every night I’m gone. We take family very seriously, Octavia. You are now part of that. I’ll also be gone tonight to get some business wrapped up before the trip.”

“Am I allowed to have friends over while you’re away?” This was the first time in my life I could have a friend come over because I finally had one. Not

that our coke houses would be a place to bring a minor to, but still, this time I had the chance to.

“Yes. Just let Rita know so she can inform me that there will be guests.”

Part of me wanted to ask for more stuff, but I was too focused on my mother’s defeated mindset. Maybe rehab could bring her back to me, so I wouldn’t always have to see her sad eyes of lost hope.

“Lear likes to host parties as well. If you want to invite your friends for those nights, you can. I’ll make sure he understands that.” Wow, a parent who didn’t care about house parties.

“It’s just mainly my friend Louise who will be over.” I shrugged. He nodded like that would be acceptable. I just sat back and contemplated my life’s future a little longer.

This new life was weird as fuck, but I put myself here. I made this choice to save my mom. Now, I had to make the best of it.



## Chapter 7



**O**ctavia

With Lou in my room, I wondered if this could be that moment—that time every teenaged girl in movies experienced. Having that close friend that had no boundaries when it came to changing while telling me all the must-knows of the school. It was nice; even if I only listened to half of what she said. With junk food in her arms, she told me we were having a proper sleep over before school in the morning. Lou was really hard not to like from her brand of kindness.

Our conversation had been pretty light so far until it somehow came back to the library. It should've been weird to sit by a woman I touched sexually, but she picked up on me just wanting to be friends with the warning I gave her before touching her.

“Oh, and sorry for running off after detention. I just, I-” She fiddled with her hands in her lap.

“Lou, you were a fucking badass Friday! Cut yourself some slack. Very few would let me do that to them,” I toasted to her with my Coca-Cola can.

“Via?” Her cheeks burned as she whispered my name.

“Yeah?”

“Would it be bad if I enjoyed it? Like, all of it? Them, us...”

“Girl, please. Embracing your sexuality should be enjoyed. If you like both genders, or even more than one at a time, you do you. You won’t lose me as a friend over it.”

“Thanks.” She beamed like I eased her burdens. Then her smile fell a just smidge. “It’s just weird because I haven’t... I’m a-”

“You’re a virgin?” She gulped while keeping her face down to nod. Taking her hand, she looked up and saw my genuine smile. “I think it’s awesome. Truly...”

“Yeah, well, you’ve noticed how our school tends to be more sexual. I’m the odd, ugly duckling.”

“There’s nothing wrong with waiting.” I shrugged. Not wanting to reveal my past to her. “The pricks I’ve met so far at our school just prove that point. Well, I mean, Mr. Gram isn’t a terrible option.”

We both snickered, falling into each other. Feeling this now made me realize how much I missed out on it in my life over the years. Lou quickly hugged me from the side. For the first time, I felt... Welcome? Was that the word my mind tried to conjure?

“I know I keep saying it, but I really am grateful you moved here. I mean, you did give me my first orgasm.” She smirked. I put my hand to my heart.

“I’m honored,” I dramatized my words. We laughed, and then I got serious too. “I’m happy to be here too. In some ways—like meeting you—I am. Though, I wish the circumstances were different.”

“Why? What happened for you to move here?” Lou leaned back against my headboard with me as I let out a long sigh. Out of all the people in the world,

I felt like maybe Lou wouldn't judge my past. Well, the parts I would speak out loud.

"My mom's a stripper who does hard drugs. Always has since I can remember. Before moving here, we were part of a car accident in an Uber car," I paused. Lifting the hem of my shirt, I showed my black and blue stomach.

Lou gasped while her shaky fingers reached out to graze the roughest spot where my broken ribs sat below.

"A cracked collarbone—well, bruised after a second x-ray—two broken ribs, and I flatlined. That wasn't the worst part though. When I came to, I found out the bad news. The hospital tested my mom for drugs. They were about to send me into the system from how high her levels were. Hell, they were shocked she hadn't died by how high she was.

"Somehow, she held on with the damage she took. That's when Daemon showed up with a deal that was almost too good to be true. He knew my mother years ago and had their wedding done to gain custody of me while getting her the help she needs."

Silence sat between us as Lou moved my shirt to see my collarbone. It still had the faintest of the bruising. It looked yellowy and swollen. Tapping my cheek, she took the hint I had one there too. Sitting back, she just nodded to digest what I said.

"Well shit. Sounds like Daemon was your guardian angel."

"Yeah, but one almost in disguise. I feel like he tricked me somehow. Like my gut is telling me there's an ulterior motive to the niceties and him wanting me here."

"Has anything happened for you to question him?" She kept munching while thinking hard with me.

“A few. He made it seem like he was willing to move time and space to find my mother again. But made himself a hypocrite by flirting with a nurse right in front of my mom in the hospital. He won’t tell me where she’ll be to secure her healing. And, his staff stare at me almost in awe, like, constantly. They don’t think I notice, but I do. One gave me a pity look while shaking her head over the laundry basket in her hands,” I scoffed.

“Weird...” Her face scrunched in confusion just as mine expressed too. “We could always investigate him. You know, snoop while he’s gone?”

It wasn’t a bad idea. Mulling it over I found myself nodding while tapping my chin. “That makes a good amount of sense. Let’s do it this weekend. Daemon will still be gone, and we have a lighter staff from Friday to Sunday.”

“Okay. We’ll do another sleepover Friday night and snoop when everyone is sleeping but the guards.” She began setting the food on the nightstand before she turned down the covers for us to climb under. The giant bed was so comfy but so pink. I hated it still, but I didn’t want to look ungrateful. Climbing in on the left side, I sighed from the burden leaving my chest.

Having a friend had been better than I thought it would be.

“Hey, Via?” Lou spoke while we just stared at my ceiling for a minute.

“Yeah?”

“I love your room. You’ll have to give me the name of whoever did it,” she said as I turned out my light with a grin and quiet snicker. I knew she’d love my room from what I’d seen of her princess style. “I’m so jealous,” she huffed.

We both nestled down into the sheets and let the sounds coming from outside my window calm us both. A whole forest sat behind the house. One of these days, I planned on discovering them. Maybe get lost in the trees for

awhile. Find true happiness among the beauty nature would provide. Frolic and dance like maybe the world didn't have to be a dark place.

Yet, maybe it would be the darkest place of all for someone like me. My mind remembered where most of my nightmares took place. Very few times had the murderers been out of the woods. Thinking of the killers and myself, I wasn't sure if it would induce the sociopath gene. If I were to go out there, I wasn't entirely sure if my role would be Red Riding Hood or the Big Bad Wolf.

Shivering, I couldn't help but think the woods seemed to be the last place I should go. Almost instinctually, I knew something bad would happen if I let myself get lost out there. I'd lose myself.

My eyes watched the crescent moon while seeing the large tree branch right next to my window. A radiant barn owl sat on it, staring directly at me, but not watching me like an animal would. No, it studied me, calculated me. Slowly moving to the window, my exposed skin broke out in goosebumps. Yet, there was no chill in the air.

Gradually, I stepped toward the bird who still trained its sight on me. My hands rubbed my bare arms that the tank top didn't cover. My forearms felt my hard nipples pressing against them like I should be justly cold. In only my boy-cut undies, I treaded carefully just in case someone outside saw me this way. The glow of the outside light was cast directly over the bird with a heart face. Mostly white, I noticed it's golden back luminating from the light in the dark of night. The thing was stunning. Part of me felt I should be worried it watched me so closely, but the other part felt protected.

Once I made it to the window, the owl bowed its head at me with a chirp before taking off in the opposite direction. Gasping I stepped back while my heart thundered.

What just happened?

~

Waking up after my weird night, I felt like I needed to sleep at least six more hours. Having a restless night sucked, but school awaited, even if I didn't want to go. My bedroom door opened, showcasing Lou in completely ready with her cheery grin. "Good morning, Star Shine!"

I groaned. Of course, she just had to be a morning person. "Ten more minutes..."

"Via, we have to go in thirty minutes." She began slipping into her wedge heels that made her short, white, flowy skirt even shorter and her legs twice as long.

Grumbling, I made my way to my bathroom across the hall. My hair was knotted on the top of my head to not get wet under the cascading water of the shower. Mmm... At least this felt nice. The hot water nearly burned my skin, and I relished in it as I spent too much time under the showerhead.

Getting out, I still hadn't become fully awake when I half-assed wrapping myself into the towel. Most of my large cleavage pressed over the hem, and my thick left thigh hung out of the gap. Taking down my hair, the waves fell everywhere around my face.

Opening the door, I walked into something solid. Thinking it had to be the wall, I looked up from the floor and blinked. Then repeatedly blinked from not being able to think because of who stood before me.

A man.

A very, very sexy man with washboard abs on display, being only in black briefs. His straight, black hair fell perfectly disheveled from sleep and totally

hot around his sharp, Asian features. Slowly, my brain began to process who exactly stood before me as his sharper features registered in my head. Mornings were not my brightest moments.

Oh my- This had to be my new stepbrother. *Link? Leon? Something with an L...*

A towel draped over his left arm to come in and use the bathroom. I finally met his face to see him taking me in as well. Even though his green eyes matched Daemon's, that appeared to be the only feature he got from his dad besides his giant body.

Slanted, his eyes told me his mother must've been Asian. They looked mischievous and menacing all at once. Almost like he knew a secret about me, and it made my skin burn from the intensity of his observations of me. That's when I found him still staring at my bits on display, whistling in approval.

"Well now. Had daddy dearest told me you were this fine, I would've been home since you moved into the room right beside mine."

Still in utter shock, I didn't reply.

"You okay? You're not deaf, are you? That would truly suck if you were," he snorted and then eyed the exposed skin of my body with hungry eyes. "Though I could say anything I wanted about your tight little body and exactly what I'd do to those perky tits with my dick."

Well, that snapped me back to reality. Rearing back, I gasped at him with a growing scowl.

"Not deaf. Annoyed would be the proper term," I cinched my towel tighter and higher to hide from him. He smirked with his eyes crinkling in the corners. Why was he so hot? Too casual, too easy-going, something seemed amiss about how he carried himself, but I couldn't figure it out. His smirk fell

when I turned my head away from him, and he saw the abrasion on my cheek.

Reaching out, his calloused hand stroked over the damaged flesh. His dark brows creased together while he studied me. Moving down, his other hand slid the hair away from my shoulder to see my collarbone. When he tried opening my towel, I knocked his hands away. Still, he could see a little in the open gap.

“He didn’t tell me you got hurt in the accident,” he murmured. “Who has been taking care of you?”

It seemed my new brother might actually have a compassionate side. “No one. Rita settled me in and told me to call if I needed anything. I don’t, I’m fine.”

He seemed to be tense still but knew I was done talking about it. Then he smirked at my angry face and turned into a douche again.

“Keep looking at me like that, and you’ll have to correct my morning wood, *Sis*.” The way he hissed the relation seemed to give him an even bigger bulge in his crotch. He liked the dirty fantasy of stepsiblings. Well, lucky for him, Pornhub had plenty of material to sate his desires.

“Keep trying to force it on me, and you’ll wake up with it detached from your body,” I countered while shoving him away.

“I like your spirit, *Sis*. Be ready in ten, and I’ll drive you to school.”

“No thanks. I have a friend here. We’ll call a car.”

“It wasn’t a question. Dear old dad put me in charge of watching you, so I’ll be doing a thorough job. Especially after seeing how fucked up your body is.” After skimming my barely-covered body, he sauntered into the bathroom without closing the door and then turned the water on.

Stripping, he didn’t care he did it right in front of me. When his dick



bobbed out of the confines of his briefs, he hissed from the freeing feeling. Stroking it, he looked back at me with his hooded eyes and knowing smirk.

“Thanks for giving me the visual aid, *Sis*. See ya in ten.” Just like that, he stepped into the water as I ran back to my room.

## Chapter 8



**O**ctavia Lou kept giving me weird looks from my grunting and huffing after meeting my stepbrother. So, I told her what went down as I quickly dressed in skinny jeans and knee-high, leather boots. My boat-neckline top had a black lace exterior with a solid black layer under that hid my important goods. Good thing I had some strapless bras for this look. No way could I go braless like Lou’s B-cup. We made our way down the stairs only to find my evil stepbrother already there, twirling the keyring around his fingers.

He acted like he had to wait a lifetime for us to show up—that we were wasting his time. His letterman jacket and white t-shirt only flaunted what I figured he had to be.

The jock stigma seemed to fit him well from how he acted like the world owed him for existing. It also explained the fantastic, athletic body he had.

“Finally,” he huffed. “Waiting on you takes way too long.”

Instead of waiting for my reply, he just opened the door, barged out—leaving it wide open for us to follow, not being a gentleman about it—and

unlocked his black, Chevy Duramax. The truck came equipped with a lot of chrome detailing and off-roading attachments. Thank heavens it had a running board to step on. My height did not like climbing the tower that seemed to be his truck.

Lou and I both opted for the backseat to not deal with my new brother in close range. She squirmed on the leather. Like a tiger circling its prey, he noticed. Reaching for the stereo, his smirk only grew. He wanted his alternative choice in music to intimidate me, but when I started singing along, his smirk disappeared in a look of awe. I even held his gaze in the mirror.

Lou, on the other hand? She fell into his intimidation. Not to mention she seemed a little horrified that I knew this song. I bet she would be a Katy Perry fan, or maybe a Gaga person. Actually, I knew from her humming the other day that she should be a pop princess.

“Well now, aren’t you just full of surprises, *Sis*,” he hissed—I was getting used to that noise. It bordered being irritated and being turned on. My stepbrother sulked the whole ten minutes it took us to get to school. He drove like a bat out of hell, and my seatbelt caught when he slammed the break. This forced it to dig into my flesh where my brokenness sat.

“Can you drive like you know how? Via has broken ribs, asshole!” Woah! Lou growled that right behind his ear like she no longer feared the consequence. Instead of saying a word, his eyes met mine in the mirror again. He slowed his pace and took turns at a legal limit while a flash of guilt traveled over his slanted eyes.

When we got to school, I hurried out. There had been too much weirdness with him, and I couldn’t even remember his name.

“Thanks for the lift, *Bro*,” I tossed his nickname back in his face while hopping out my side. When I closed my door, I walked right into a brick

wall. Or rather Rin's, the asshole from detention, giant chest. His arms were crossed as he snarled at me with his heated glare. My new brother got out and stood next to him while clapping this man's back. Rin turned his fury onto his friend.

"Stay the fuck away from this one, Lear." Oh! That's my stepbrother's name. "She's fucking nuts."

Hey, wait a minute... He was talking very rudely about me.

"Ah, is the Big Bad Wolf still mad about losing?" I pouted my lips at him. It had Lear hissing again, liking the formation of my lips. He would be fun to tease if I needed to. Rin stalked toward me until my back pressed against the truck. Caging me in, we had another stare-off.

"I warned you, Kitten." His harsh, brown eyes darkened and for some terrible, horrible reason, my sex clenched from liking it. What could I say? I was a serial killer in my mind. Being dominated while being dominant seemed too enticing. Not that I'd ever tell him that.

"And I warned you it isn't the queen who needs protected, your highness," I mocked right back. His meaty hands firmly gripped my shoulders to hold me back against the cab. This had to be him displaying his alpha abilities, showing how small I stood compared to him.

"Who said you were a queen, Kitten?"

"Same reason you think you're the king," I argued. He didn't justly hold any title. It was only his domineering way of making people fear him that he got this far. Someone needed to be knocked a few pegs down.

His lips twitched. That's when I heard others chuckling around us. Besides Rin, Lear, Lou, and me, there were four other guys. Leaving eye contact, I watched the men who were stationed around their leader. Clearly, this had to be the unspoken authority within their ranks.

One just had to be as bulky as Rin, but with his posture slumped over, he appeared a half-foot shorter. He reeked of pot, and his icy, blue eyes were pretty glazed from the trip he took. His dark, caramel skin made his blue eyes vibrant, and his shoulder-length, black, loose curls were in a loose ponytail at the base of his neck. His stubble showed he couldn't be bothered to shave today.

Moving to the one beside him, I lost my breath from his perfection. In a preppy, pink polo and plaid shorts, this guy wanted people to admire his appearance. Even his leather satchel bag had to be the finest possible. Not a single dark hair sat astray on his head where he had the front pushed up. His eyes were an odd shade. Almost a violet tone from how the blue and brown combined.

Every feature on his long face stayed straight. He looked like he came off a movie set in India with his gorgeous coloring. At six-one, he appeared to be the same height as the high meathead. I bet if I looked at his nails, they'd be manicured.

To Rin's right, the dirty-blond guy he helped screw the librarian with, stood once again in his playboy leather, smoking a cigarette slowly. He gave me a flirty wink with his fire-brown eyes that matched his seductive behavior. He was shorter than his friends by maybe an inch or two but still well above average height for a man. Beside him stood another man in a fancy suit. His pale-blond hair seemed almost white and parted on one side. He had it gelled back, formally. The cellphone glued to his hand showed he would be a cooperate guy in his future—a CEO or something.

His height stopped above the other two taller ones, but not as tall as Rin's six-five monster frame. Mr. CEO and Lear matched more in height and build. His golden eyes held me completely captive, though. They nearly shimmered

under the sun, and I lost my breath with how his pale hair accented against them. Though, his scowl spoke enough to know he hated me before he gave me a chance. I hated people like him too.

“Right here, Kitten. I’m the one talking to you, not them.” Rin’s fingertips dug into the tops of my shoulders. This caused me to wince from where my collarbone still healed. I might not need a brace, but it didn’t mean it wasn’t tender.

“Rin, let up, man. She was just in a car accident and hurt that shoulder,” Lear had the decency to defend me a little. His hollow bravery didn’t matter because I knew how men of power worked. All Lear did? He just gave Rin more leverage over me.

“Yeah, and she has broken ribs!” Lou chimed in. I tried not to roll my eyes as I bit my tongue to not yell at them. Didn’t they understand the bully this guy wanted to be? He didn’t care if I was a female, I was a third his size, or that I was already broken. He’d keep me under his shoe no matter what.

“Is that so?” Rin chided and clucked his tongue before his devilish smirk bloomed. Lear finally seemed to grasp what I already had once his commander chuckled darkly. “Lear, why are you defending this little scrap of meat anyways? Girls like her are only good for one thing. Have you been getting your dick wet in her already? Figured she’d be easy.”

Oh, let me kill him now.

Lear sighed and cursed up at the sky, running a hand through his tussled hair. “This is my new stepsister, Octavia Clarke.”

His group of friends seemed to go immobile just for a moment before masking something I didn’t understand. It vanished before I could even attempt to decipher that look of what appeared to be almost recognition. A silence fell over their group. Poor Lou about peed her pants due to the fear

they created. Oddly, I watched her share a look with Milo that pleaded with him to stop this.

I didn't care. I just blinked and met Rin's super-pissed stare. His hand moved from my bruised collarbone, down to the bad side of my ribs, right below the first break. It wouldn't be a shot in the dark to know that's the side that got hurt, and he found exactly where the bones didn't sit right.

When his thumb nestled between the two broken ones, I already started holding my breath and bracing for the pain. Rin dug into the damage, making my nostrils flare as stars lined my blurring vision. Everyone winced, knowing how much this would hurt on a healthy body. Rin did too, but he wouldn't lift his thumb as he brought his lips down to my ear.

"I told you I'd crush you, Kitten." With another hard thrust into my side, he stepped back and left. His groupies followed, but Lear did send me a sympathetic look before catching up.

He also caught a football someone tossed, throwing it back to his team but staying in his odd group of amigos. All of them were too different to fit. So why were they all friends? What was the connection?

This seemed to plague my mind the whole walk to the nurse's office. With ice and a bandage on my side, I put myself back together, knowing this was my new hell. But this time, my wardens broke the social norms.

## Chapter 9

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**O**ctavia  
Slime, wrappers, and even half-eaten crap spilled over my entire body and onto my own tray of food. The guys behind me snickered while lifting the giant garbage bin from my head.

When I could see the light of day after the can raised, I found Rin sitting on the steps directly across from me. Six of them were there, and most were grinning from ear to ear. The sight of spoiled goods coating my hair and body amused them. Lear and the playboy were the only ones who weren't. Playboy didn't really care from his eyes roaming the slutty women around him. Lear gave an evil eye to Rin from the side. He wouldn't question his leader, but at least he was human enough to recognize it had been wrong.

Everyone in the atrium started laughing and pointing at me, snapping pictures on their phones. It seemed sad how much pull Rin had in this school. By my second period earlier today—not even two hours after our morning face-off— people were already talking about me being an easy slut.

“Trash Whore!” One of the guys, who dumped this shit on me, called out.



Everyone ate up the new nickname. But hey, at least it wasn't Ghost Whisperer.

"You okay?" Lou's eyes were wide with fear and worry. I had already filled her in on the name-calling when we got our trays in the lunch line. Shrugging, I stood with my tray that had a pile of goop on it.

"I'm going to go shower in the locker room. I have gym next anyways."

"Okay. Call me later or text me if you need me." See? How sweet was she? Most would've abandoned me to not be the target of the assholes' wrath. Not Lou. She might be terrified of them, but she still made sure everyone knew she had my back.

Walking directly toward the guys, I kept my face down to look like shame had filled me. Rin smirked, thinking I had been defeated that easily, but he had no idea this kind of torment had been my whole life. There was nothing special about this or me. A sick punk who wanted more power he could only get by bringing others down.

I forced my hands to tremble a little. It's a lot harder than it looked to make it natural, but I did it as I climbed the stairs with quaking knees. My doe-eyes found Rin's, and my lip quivered to keep him appeased. It wasn't hard. The man seriously thought he could be God. Playing the part horribly on my end had been overlooked. I had to bite my cheek to keep from smirking.

Just about to pass them, I 'slipped' on the stair right in front of Rin and his gang. My tray's crap went mostly on him, but some chunks hit the others. All of them were too speechless to move. I just stood up and took the last step up to be face to face with Rin by standing between his giant legs. Now I let my smirk out.

Licking my finger, I wiped a smear of ketchup from his cheek. "You have something right there..."

He growled and snatched my wrist. Everyone around us froze in place from being horrified at what I had just done. I relished in it; even if it meant more pain might come.

“Big mistake, Trash Whore.”

I just shrugged my shoulders and broadcasted my voice. “Being a Trash Whore is better than being Sloppy Seconds. Enjoy everyone’s leftovers, Sevrin.”

Walking past his group, I knew he would retaliate, but I got high on my newest revenge. On my way, new whispers started stirring.

“That’s the girl that stood up to Rin!”

“Is that her?”

More filtered around me, so I held my head higher. It seemed, even if it only happened for one afternoon, I knocked him down a peg.

He probably thought the same thing about me, but he didn’t realize I held my place on the lowest peg already. There wasn’t much he could do to me. I think he started seeing that by my reaction today.

“V? Are you okay?” Beau walked out of our PE teacher’s office with a tool kit for computers. He continued to be so sweet and considerate. My high tapered down to take him in.

“Yeah. I’ve been the butt of the jokes around here today. Nothing I can’t handle.”

“Is that... Is that garbage?” He sounded furious and disgusted.

“Don’t worry. The prick responsible got my payback. I’m heading to the locker room to shower it off anyway.”

“Oh, that’s smart. Your gym clothes will be better than that or nothing at all.” His words halted me. Gym clothes... Shit.

“Crap,” I groaned out loud. He noticed my distress.

“Aren’t you in gym next class anyways?”

“Yeah, but I can’t exercise yet, so I haven’t brought clothes.”

“Why can’t you exercise?”

“How did you know I have gym next?” I countered and changed the subject. He caught on and grinned his perfect smile at me. Those thick glasses made his Clark Kent side even more appealing, even better against his auburn hair. Ugh, he was so hot it was unreal.

“Touché, V.” He set his stuff down and then began unbuttoning the button up he had on over his equation shirt. Both were long-sleeved. Handing me the plaid blue and white button-up, I just gaped at him.

“I-I can’t just take the shirt from off your back, B.” Yeah, I gave him a nickname to match mine. He smiled, hearing it.

“You aren’t taking it. I’m giving it. Now, I’ll see you around... in my shirt.” His voice dripped thick with his true meaning. Chills. Heavens above, he just sent glorious chills down my spine and into my nether region. He walked off and left me by the gym’s entrance while I stared a little starry-eyed after him. Now that had been a real man, one I want to take the time to get to know.

Well, maybe. I mean, my track record with men wasn’t really that good. We’d have to see if I could make complete and logical sentences around him first. Heading into the locker room, I stayed even higher than I had from dumping food out on Rin. Beau appeared to be quite the catch.

I cleaned up and tied his shirt at my pant hem to not show too much and rolled the sleeves. From having to shower, my bruise could be seen on my cheek, but I had to let go of my pride for today.

“Oh look, it’s the Trash Whore.” A girl with a high voice cackled with her posse behind her. I caught her sitting on Rin’s lap at the beginning of lunch,

but from not caring, I didn't pay attention to her. She must've left before I dumped my tray on them.

"Oh look, it's Wanna-be-Barbie," I rolled my eyes.

"Excuse me?" She growled while coming at me. Was it seriously that easy to get to her? She'd make Rin's day being broken that easily. That made me smile. Well, until she literally slapped the smile off my face. After being stunned by her boldness, my tongue came out. I tasted the coppery tang on my lip that her nail sliced.

See, the thing was, I didn't like fights. I never started them, but I would finish them when bitches pulled this nonsense.

Rolling my chin to pop my neck, I also moved my shoulders while giving her a menacing look. "Big mistake."

I went at her. In one fell swoop, she landed on her back under my weight, and I started swinging. No one made a fool of me. *HIT*. No one would make me feel lesser. *HIT*. No one—

"What is going on in here?" *Oh shit*. I looked down to see blood pouring from the girl's nose. Her eye began swelling with a hint of black already starting to show.

"Octavia jumped Lexi! We all witnessed it!" one of her groupies shouted. I guess I played the fool this time. Even though I didn't swing first, no one here had my back to speak the truth.

"Miss Clarke, this is your second day and your second detention." The TA for gym looked completely affronted and appalled that it could happen. Yeah, she could get in line for believing this bullshit. There was no point in arguing my case when the whole student body stood against me. Rolling my eyes, I walked past her in the doorway and left all of them. Using my fingers to pull up my wet hair, I made a messy bun.

My forearms were scratched, and my lip swelled, but I'd be fine after getting some ice on it. I had this way memorized from visiting the nurse a few times already. A younger woman with red hair and freckles patched people up. Not overly freckled, but sprinkled in them over her nose.

"Octavia, what happened this time?" Her sincerity was legit because I could feel it. She had to be the only person other than Lou, who gave a damn about what happened to me.

"Hey, Fiona. Seems Rin has the school helping his master plan. Some chick named Lexi slapped me, and I took her down," I shrugged while taking a seat on the table to be examined.

"Well, I hope she got in trouble," she scoffed. Fiona continued to be an interesting one. She seriously had us call her by her first name, but she knew how to clean up my cuts.

"Nope. Seems having friends for an alibi is a solid approach." Before Fiona could touch the antiseptic to my lip, she stiffened and looked at me.

"You're kidding me."

"It's fine. I just won't fight back next time. Taking a beating might be worth seeing her get caught."

"Be careful here, Octavia. It's a dangerous game with these families. Lexi Murdock is one of the top ones you don't want on your bad side."

"I wasn't given much of a choice," I snorted. No one tried to get to know me or reach out to me. Fiona gave me a look of true pity when the same realization struck her. I squirmed under her microscope.

"No, you weren't." She swallowed hard as though she meant something completely different. "Try to keep your head down, Octavia, and don't draw too much attention. I know it's hard now, but please try."

I wanted to ask her why, but she finished doctoring me up before I could.

As she cleaned up the wrappers, I thanked her while heading for the door.

“Oh, and Octavia,” I turned to face her. “I’ll have your detention sent here to help me organize my cabinets. That way, you don’t have to see anyone else after school.”

“I appreciate it. My jeans still reek of garbage from the lunch fiasco.” I winced when her brows drew in confusion. Well, way to rat myself out on that one.

“Lunch fiasco?”

“I am now known as Trash Whore. The first literal reference was made public this afternoon.” I shrugged as she covered her mouth in shock.

Yeah, kids could genuinely be that mean. Leaving her office, I knew this would be the start of a war that I needed to strategize against. Especially now that I knew how many numbers were in Rin’s ranks.

This queen might be the only one in her kingdom, but it was still worth defending. I’d be my own knight, Lou could be my bishop, but unlike Rin, I wouldn’t have pawns. I wouldn’t use others to go down first before me. No, a true leader fought the battle for her people, even if she doesn’t have any.

## Chapter 10



**O**ctavia Two days later, nothing with my social status changed. Trash Whore echoed in the air as everyone parted like the Red Sea for me. They acted like the garbage they dumped on me could contaminate them by my touch. I rotated my eyes between them all as I made it to my art class for third hour. The only thing that made today easier had been Beau making it known he still talked to me in our first class. All the girls gave me death glares, but just like their catty words, I ignored the looks too.

I couldn't seem to wipe the smile off my face even as I finally noticed I had Mr. CEO in this class. He hadn't been here last week, and I couldn't be sure why he sat in here now. Taking the last available seat in front of him, I heard his growl. Though, come to think of it, my mind got stuck on the fact that their pothead friend seemed to be newly in my second period now, too.

Even Lou tossed me a confused look when she saw the pothead right behind me. This couldn't be normal. I half-wondered if they had their schedules rearranged to be in my classes. But why didn't one of them join my

first hour? That didn't make sense to join every class but my first one. It wasn't like there weren't enough of them for each period. There were six that I had seen, but I also remembered Lou telling me there were seven. So, where was the last?

It didn't matter. This school functioned around their circle. All I knew, I had to watch myself around the six I did recall. I didn't know their names, but I knew their faces.

"Ah, Milo, how excellent it is that you'll be joining us this semester. We look forward to having you and your skills," Mrs. Rios spoke in her native accent. Great. That just told me everything I needed to know. They were switching to mess with me more.

Ignoring him, I focused on the project and instructions the teacher demanded of us. When I did chance a glance at Milo, I was met with his greedy glare. His eyes never left the back of my head, and I could feel his hate for me pulsing off him. Standing as the bell rang, I wanted to hurry out, but Milo bumped into my back really hard. Staggering, I fell forward on the floor—landing flat on my wounded stomach.

*Ouch.*

As much as it hurt, as much as I hated the snickers, I got up and stormed out of the classroom. There wasn't much point in letting them win—even now that they were getting physical with me. Rowdier laughter shook around me as I saw the fingers pointing to my backside. Involuntarily, my hand went to my back to see if he put a 'kick me' paper there.

Absent, my back felt clean, but the hilarity of something still called attention. This lasted until lunch when I met Lou in the cafeteria. She got behind me in line. Then she got even closer to my back to whisper over my ear. "Um, Via?"



“What?” I groaned, knowing he did something to me.

“Are you on your period?”

“No?” I could feel my joints locking up in understanding. Art class. Paint. I wore white pants.... Of course, he did the most obvious prank in the book.

“Milo put red paint on my ass, didn’t he?”

“Yup... Right in the crack... I have an extra skirt in my PE locker if you want it?” She fiddled with her hands while I bit my lip. I grumbled when I reopened the cut on it.

“It’s too late now. The whole school has already seen me.”

She worried her bottom lip, and I could see the suffering she felt for me. To take her out of her misery, I added more to my statement.

“But, keep the skirt on standby for when they strike again.” I winked. This time, she firmly nodded like a good soldier. Lou had really grown on me, and I hadn’t even known her a week.

We moved through the line and got to our spot on the stairs. Directly across on the other steps, Rin’s group took up permanent residency. There would be no escaping his wrath, but I knew he wanted it to be that way.

Miraculously, through lunch, his gang didn’t strike again. I was able to head to gym without some kind of garbage being thrown at me. Small improvement from the last few days, but I’d take it. In gym, the TA glared at me as I sat on the sidelines to watch the kids run their opening laps to warm up. She moved to me the second Coach O’Neil left the gym to go to the office.

“I just want it to be clear. I don’t like girls like you.” Wow. When could a teacher ever be so forward? I knew she only said it now and so directly because our actual teacher left.

“Girls like me?” I smirked. “What kind of girl would that be? Poor on the

wealthy scale? Intelligent because I need good grades? Or are you talking about letting you believe the bitch of the school didn't strike me first the other day because a girl like you couldn't see the truth if it were to hit you in the face like a freight train?"

Her sour look deepened, and her blonde hair had been pulled into a tight bun that made her eyes turn to slits a lot easier. Pointing at my face, she started to say something when Rin and Lear appeared behind her.

"Miss Fowers, looking extra good today," Lear winked, and she blushed. Batting her hand in their direction, I wanted to vomit, knowing she would spread her legs just like the librarian.

"Oh, you boys. Always sweet-talking me." She eyed their gym clothes, and I knew before she even asked the question. "Why are you two in here?"

"We switched our schedules to have PE right after lunch instead of before. It helps me burn the calories before football," Lear winked at her again. Rin never stopped watching me watch them. I wanted to call out his lie. To point out the benefits would be better for him to work out, then eat between, but I already knew he was testing his power over this bumbling broad.

For someone who should know nutrition, she nodded and giggled like he spoke the ultimate truth. Rolling my eyes, Rin smirked, knowing I caught on to their games with the teachers. I wondered what else they said that the teachers didn't catch from fawning over these asshats.

"Oh, Miss Fowers, you didn't tell me you knew my new stepsister!" Lear made a big display of moving to me. His arms circled wide as he scooped me from my chair in a tight hug. I hissed from the pain in my side, but I knew that's why he did it. He wanted to hurt me and punish me in the easiest of ways.

"New stepsister?" She fumbled the words out while watching Lear kiss my

head a million times. Well, this was a new level of overkill.

“Yup. Has been for about a week now. I want to make sure she’s being treated well. You know, her history is tragic. I’d hate for anyone to treat her wrong.”

Oh no. Heat spread over my cheeks and down my chest. I could take the bullying—physical and emotional. I could keep my head held high, but if he went to this level, I didn’t know if I would come back from it. Sevrin gave me his shit-eating-grin the moment I figured out their new approach, and then he took over the hug. My hands became clammy as I went to hush Lear. Too bad Rin locked me against his chest with his hand covering my mouth and chin.

“H-her history?”

Right before he could answer—or maybe he did—I felt my eyes roll to the back of my head. The telling sign that my week of innocence was over. A dream summoned me, and I couldn’t control the personality that took over to provide our needs.

The woods... Why did I always come to the woods?

The man I got to be today, watched from a distance. A young couple fought with their voices. They were both early twenties and easy on the eye.

The man I was, leaned his elbow upon the tree so we could watch in a relaxed position. It seemed to be his signature move. The cufflinks on his sleeves were also a giveaway to who I would be. Who wore a nice suit to kill someone? Did he want to be a wanna-be-Bond?

“I told you, Maria! I think we need to stop while we’re ahead!” The man paced back and forth, being scared shitless. “We almost got caught!”

“Don’t even think about bailing on me now, Fredrick! We’re in too deep to stop! I want more!” The pretty Hispanic woman shoved his chest back. He

gathered himself like he didn't recognize the woman she was anymore. I could tell by how he wanted to see her, that they were once madly in love.

"I can't... When will enough be enough?" His voice sounded so distraught and broken that even she paused for a split second.

"I don't think it will ever be enough, Fredrick. I don't think I can stop..." This time, she began to cry because her addiction ran high. That's when I saw the black duffel bags next to their feet. They were hiding their loot out here.

Spilled open for us to see, their cash and jewels were exposed. They must've been robbing and stealing to have this much put away.

"Baby, let's stop. We'll move to an island and be content the rest of our lives." Fred moved towards her as she shook her head vehemently.

"No! I don't want to stop!"

"For me, Baby, for us..." he pleaded.

Unhurriedly, I watched from her backside as she lifted the revolver from the back of her pants. My heart dropped. In Disney movies, I learned true love conquers all. In real life, I discovered everyone was greedy for something else.

"I love you, Fredrick, but you're becoming a liability. I want more money, more than I want you. I want to feel the rush of getting away as many times as I can." She pointed the gun at him. His own eyes knew she spoke the truth. She became addicted to the high and persisted on being greedier for more.

With one last look of longing, she pulled the trigger as Fred fell to his knees. A crimson circle began to widen over the bullet wound on his chest. His life ended. With a scream as she heard his body hit the ground, Maria finally saw what she had done, but it was too late. Her rash decision just cost her the most significant thing anyone could ever find on this earth.

A man who would willingly die from his love for her. Feeling the tug of my

conscious stirring, I watched her collapse over the man she'd never get back.

"Don't shoot... Don't shoot..." I heard myself repeating as I jolted on the floor. Opening my eyes, I found Lear holding me as Rin looked down at me in horror.

"Ms. Clarke?" Miss Fowers kneeled slowly. "I'm going to have your brother and Rin take you to the nurse."

I stood on my own and shook my head. "I'm fine. I was just dizzy. I'll take myself to the nurse's station."

She shook her head as I made my way to the exit. I knew they would be following me to find out what caused a freak like me to go under, but I couldn't tell them the truth. Wracking my brain, I tried to come up with something as Rin's hand gripped my bicep. Dang, they were too fast.

I get Lear with him being the quarterback, but Rin stood as a muscular giant. How did he move so fast? He traveled like lightning. I wasn't slow by any means from how much I went jogging.

"You gonna tell me the truth, Trash Whore?"

"It's none of your business, Sloppy Seconds," I seethed, trying to free my arm.

"I think you better tell me why you really fainted before I go around asking questions to the people who knew you before you came here."

I had no doubt he would. I just hoped this would work on him.

"It's PTSD, okay?" I shouted at him. He reared back and looked affronted. It wasn't a total lie. Something dark and personal did happen to me. This reminded me of the sick things my mind did to not remember it.

"Why do you have it?" he growled.

“I’ve moved from one dump to the next where pretty girls like me don’t go unnoticed. Now, let me go, Sevrin.”

He calculated how much of that had been accurate. Even though I used it for a lie right now, it didn’t mean it hadn’t been true from other things that happened. Once his shock wore off, he flipped to being an asshole again while giving me a stern, yet humorous look. “It’s cute you think you’re pretty.”

*Ouch.*

That was a low blow. Just shrugging, I met his eyes. “It’s always the first thing they said to me when they caught me.”

A growl passed through his thin lips. I took the moment to yank free and run to Fiona’s office. Running hurt my side, but I didn’t want to let Rin see my brokenness. I knew he had an idea of my damage, but I just leaked too much information. Opening her door, I slammed it behind me to see my next problem of the day.

Geez... When was this going to stop?

## Chapter 11



**O**ctavia Her moaning coos and closed eyes were my first warning, but it wasn't until I looked forward that I saw Mr. Gram. He rammed into her seated position on the bed for patients. Fiona and Mr. Gram were having secret sex during school hours.

Was there something in the water here? Seriously. The students and the teachers here couldn't seem to keep it in their pants. Clearing my throat, both adults jerked apart with their flushed skin on display. Mr. Gram tucked his rather nice manhood away, but not before I saw the quality in size. He zipped himself back into his pants as Fiona fixed her top's buttons and her skirt that bunched up around her waist.

"Octavia! We were-"

"Don't worry about it, Mr. Gram. Sadly, this is the most innocent scene I've seen since moving here." I shrugged and moved past them to grab an icepack.

"What happened this time?" Fiona looked over me as she straightened her

appearance.

“Lear hugged me too tight. I fainted. It caused a flashback, and now everyone is giving me the crazy girl look. I told Miss Fowers I’d come here to be looked at, but I promise I’m fine.”

“Why was Lear hugging you?” she asked, knowing the problems I faced firsthand.

“A new way to torture me as his new ‘stepsister’. It’s annoying as fuck, but at least he’s nicer than Rin and Milo.” Placing the icepack to my head, I sighed from the mild relief.

“How would that title be torture?” Mr. Gram chimed in.

“I’m of lower stature... Married into money after living in absolute poverty. I’ve seen things not even gang movies can make true. They’re using my back story to get everyone to pity me. Also, you know how ‘New Money’ is frowned upon?”

He nodded.

“I’m ‘Married into Money’. Even lower than the status low.” Growling, I sat in the chair on the side of the room—away from the examining table they were using— and let my eyes close in mild relief. I knew both of them wanted to ask about my flashback, but I wouldn’t let the conversation sit on me.

“Sooo, you two like a thing or just fuck buddies?” I didn’t look at either but hearing Mr. Gram curse up a storm was pretty awesome. Lou might not take this too well, so I’d enjoy it until I had to break the bad news to her.

“We’re two young adults who don’t have much of a life outside this school. Zeke has a break this hour, and we use it to enjoy ourselves. Usually, we lock the door, but it looks like we were both a little too distracted to remember.” I could hear the nervousness in her voice, thinking I might turn her in.



“No biggie. You guys should have fun like everyone else seems to do in this school. I’m gonna head to my last period, and then I’ll see you after, Fiona.” I got up. This left it to them to finish up while I went to my locker for headache medicine. Popping a few, I knew I had around twenty minutes before I’d feel the pills help. My head rested against the cool of the metal, and I sighed.

The halls were quiet and empty for me to feel like a normal person for a solid five minutes. Well, it only lasted two when I felt a giant hand clamp on my shoulder to spin me around too fast with my aching head.

Groaning, I leaned the back of my head against the cool metal instead of my forehead. I kept my eyes closed to deal with Rin. I didn’t want to be bothered until this migraine subsided, but it wasn’t like he’d allow that.

“What did you see?” The venom in his tone should have made me quiver in my boots. It’s the ‘should have’ part that failed me every time.

“None of your business. Now, I have exactly three minutes before my last hour. Can you leave me in peace for three minutes today?” My tone had a bite and a whine to it, but I was serious. Rin was just my bully.

“Tell me,” he shouted in my face. My eyes snapped open to glare at him when I felt a few moist dots of his jeering spit hit my face.

“Why? So you can use it to torture me more?! Fuck off!” I shoved his giant chest. He stumbled a few paces back from not expecting it. Now, that pissed him off. Coming to me, he looked me over. His hardened eyes fell on the cut my bottom lip sported. Using his thumb, he applied the right amount of pressure to it for it to bleed again. The pain caused an involuntary reaction.

I moaned.

The sting stayed there, I could feel the pain with each pulse, but part of me liked the subtle ache it offered. “Normal girls would be crying over the little

shit I put you through. Yet, here you stand, letting me hurt you like you like it.” His minty breath blew over my nostrils as his face sat a mere inch away.

My eyes dilated, and my breaths came out a little rougher from getting turned on by his mean side. I was sick in the head, but I knew Rin could offer me the pain I needed to feel in order to get the pleasure.

“There’s a fine line between pleasure and pain... No one’s crossed mine yet,” I whispered for him to hear. Those simple words flared his nostrils as he moved to pin me harder against the lockers.

My tongue darted out to lap up the blood pooling on my lip, and he watched it like it hypnotized him. He leaned in and let his teeth clamp the cut to suck it himself. I moaned, again, as my thighs clenched with urgency to not jump his bones. With him sucking and nibbling it, I hissed in pain as my back arched off the lockers and into his stony chest. I felt him then. His hard length that I knew was pierced to torment my inner walls.

Neither of us could stop. Like moths to the light, we were drawn to each other. I hated him, but I loved what he could offer my body. His knee moved forcefully against the apex between my legs, and like the sick chick I was, I ground my pelvis slowly against the hardness he offered. This seemed to be the reaction he wanted most. He growled and shoved me harder into the lockers, but before we could continue whatever this was, the bell rang.

He leapt away from me in shock. I hurried to grab my writing stuff for the Creative Writing class I had next. I clutched my bag too, without thinking about it. When I turned around, Rin had already disappeared.

Going to class in a daze, I couldn’t work out what came over me. A sucker for pain, I knew that all too well about myself. But letting Rin do it? Shaking my head, I entered the classroom to see the pretty boy with golden skin

behind the only available seat. I guess word got around that I needed to sit directly in front of them, and their pawns obeyed.

He winked at me, but I just sat without replying in any form. Of course, as soon as I placed my butt down, he tapped my shoulder. I ignored that too until he just kept tapping. I turned around, clenching my teeth. He grinned a devilish smile with white teeth that stood out against his Indian tan.

“What?” I gritted out in annoyance.

“I’m Lucius. Figured you should know my name if you’re going to be around me.” He shrugged like the pompous ass on his backside he wanted to flaunt. He was so full of himself, and his appearance had been the first indicator.

“I don’t know, Pretty Boy has a better ring to it.” I lifted my shoulders in response.

His smile faltered.

“Excuse me?” Yup, I made him mad.

“Sorry, you’re right. Too juvenile. How about I call you Narcissist instead?” I blew a bubble in my gum while I waited for his reply.

“You’re one to be judging me, Gutter Whore.” He eyed me in disgust.

“But that’s just it. You want to be judged by your appearance. You want everyone in this school to see you, to be you. You are too proud to realize you go too far, and I bet you even have a compact mirror on you to touch up your impeccable hair.” His hand moved to his pocket, proving I was right. This man was so vain. After our little chitchat, we focused on the teacher as she handed everyone a composition notebook.

“Class, today, we’re going to start writing in a journal every day. For the last few weeks, we’ve been expressing events verbally, but now I want

everyone to write their own. I'll give you an emotion, and I want you to express it through personal stories. I'll read your entries over the weekend."

After she explained the rules and length of each entry, we had twenty minutes to describe *hope*. Not really one I was feeling today, but I put my pencil on the paper and let the words create themselves.

*Okay Diary,*

*I don't know how this works from it being my first time, but I do know every therapist I've spoken to has suggested writing my feelings. In this entry, I have to express the word hope from my own history.*

*Hope... Yeah, I haven't had much of that over the years. I guess Daemon is giving me a small dose of the word.*

*He is helping my mom, after all. Hope is trickery and deceit. We as humans crave it for a better tomorrow, but logic takes away from that.*

*I always hoped my mom's drug problem would get better. I hoped one day I'd be enough for her to choose me instead. I hoped to not have the bikers in our house using her body. I hoped they'd stay away from me.*

*I hoped for an actual bed instead of the couch or the floor when she sold the couch for more drugs. I hoped for a family who sat down together for dinner and loved each other. I hoped for my sperm donor to find us and make it better...*

*So yeah, I can sit here and write down all the times I let hope sink in and stir something inside of me. But it never came true. Just like wishing on a star doesn't mean the universe is going to change the cosmos for you to get your wish.*

*Hope failed me in the aspect of a better tomorrow. I guess it taught me to grow up and stick to the logistics of everything instead. Maybe tomorrow will*

*be better. Maybe my mom will choose me after rehab. But I'm smart enough now not to hope for it after a lifetime of disappointment. -V*

Just as I finished, Ms. Jones left the room. Pretty impressed with my interpretation, I smiled at the passage.

Just then, a fast hand moved over my shoulder and snatched my book. When I flipped around to grab it back from the teasing Pretty Boy, he tossed it to a guy across the room.

“Marcus! Read it out loud!” Lucius snickered. I bolted to my feet to run and grab it, but he thought about that too.

Holding me to him so I couldn't break free, Lucius sat back. He pressed me into his lap on top of his desk.

“NO!” I shouted as everyone stopped what they were doing to hear the words I scribbled down. They were already laughing at me before he even read the words that would ruin me. Everyone tittered at the first part from how I started. I could feel Lucius's chest vibrate behind me. Part of me just wanted the floor to open up and eat me alive. I stopped fighting his hold. As I said, hope always failed me, and I knew this was going to continue.

After reading my failed hopes, Lucius didn't laugh anymore either. His grip changed on me instead, like he wanted to offer comfort. I wouldn't dwell on that. Not that it mattered anyway... I was already ruined to the rest of the class. Looked like I didn't need Lear to make my sob story bad. I just needed to write it down for everyone to read.

As Marcus finished, Ms. Jones stood in the doorway with tears in her eyes while watching the spectacle. Lucius let go of me as everyone began whispering about how pathetic I was. I had been right about one thing today.

Their pity hit harder than their cruelty. Though, pity wasn't the right word. They were using my past to be extra cruel to me.

“Well now. It seems we have a breach of confidentiality. Lucius and Marcus, aside from the detention you'll be having, neither one of you are allowed to sit near Ms. Clarke. Josie, switch Mr. Baysan spots.”

A girl got up to move. I fumbled back into my desk before he could touch me again. The clock kept ticking, but I wasn't paying attention to anything. Lucius's eyes were on me from the other side of the room. I didn't turn towards him. He already knew he won. Heck, today, they all had.

Knowing tomorrow would be Friday was the only thing that helped motivate me to get out of my seat at the bell. Lucius stayed hot on my heels. Leaving my locker alone, I already had my backpack on to head out. Fiona saw my hurting eyes. She signaled me to go as I passed her office instead of doing my detention.

Thank heavens, she stayed on my side. Getting out to the parking lot, I found Lear's truck with him beside it. I basically sprinted at this point from Lucius still being hot on my heels. Lear stood on his side, flirting with a cheerleader, and I saw his duffle bag over his shoulder.

Shit. He had practice. Just as I nearly turned around, he saw me and smiled—until he saw my distress. That's when he took in his friend following me.

“Octavia, wait!” Lucius shouted.

I just gave him the single finger salute over my shoulder and kept moving. Before Lear could ask anything, I held out my hand.

“Just give me your keys, and I'll wait until you're done with practice,” I watched a lot of people pointing and laughing at me. Lear scrutinized the spectacle too. His jaw ticked from all the mocking eyes on me.

“I'm trying to apologize, woman!” Lucius shrieked with his furious glare.

Lear didn't hesitate to hand his keys over. Of course, that's when his cheerleader piped up.

"So, you're the gutter girl who slept on a floor?!" Yup, a wildfire of gossiping bitches as she held her phone, reading the viral text. Thanks to mobile phones, I had been condemned doomed before I left class.

"That's me," I stated, climbing in and locking the doors. Thank heavens the windows were tinted for them not to see my mask falling away. I'd be fine. I just needed a new game plan to survive the aftermath. Sighing, I called Lou and told her everything. I lost the battle today, but Lou reminded me of the war.

Afterward, I found myself feeling better and texting Beau. He sent funny memes to change my mood. I had to say, it worked quite well. Chewing my smile, I knew he was seriously the best catch here.

## Chapter 12



**O**ctavia All last night, Lou and I talked on the phone for our game plan tonight. With a pep in my step, it offered me something to think about other than my status at school. Though, something odd had to be up. Every night, that owl watched me from his favorite perch. When I was on the phone last night, I opened my window without him flying off, but the second I reached to touch him, he left. Still weird, I also kind of liked knowing he watched over me. Especially with how hard things at school had been.

As I skipped into the kitchen to grab a bite of food, I sputtered to a stop when I found Daemon. He sat at the head of the table with a newspaper in his hands. Shit! This would change our plans. He looked up and smiled when he saw me.

“Ah, Octavia! How has your first week been going?” It almost seemed genuine. He practiced faking actual emotion so much that he would’ve fooled anyone else. Not me though. He didn’t know I could read lies like a fly



always swarmed shit. That's when I noticed Lear beside him. He lifted a spoon to his mouth but stopped halfway, unsure what I might say.

I snorted. As if I wanted Daemon in my business.

"Fine. You know how school is." I shrugged and took my seat across from Lear as a maid brought me my plate. Daemon chuckled from my description being accurate in his eyes. "You're back sooner than I expected."

This had been my nice way of asking 'what the hell are you doing here already?'

"Your mother is settled and doing well. I told her I'd be back in two weeks to check on her. She sends her love." He turned his attention back to his paper and dismissed me.

Lie.

I wasn't sure if it had been the first part or the second, but Daemon just lied about something. Whatever he hid, I'd figure it out without them even knowing I detected their lie. Lear asked if I was ready to go, and I nodded to follow him out. Once we were on our way, Lear kept sparing quick glances at me. It got more annoying by the second.

"Yes?" I asked when he did it for the hundredth time just as we pulled into the parking lot.

"Why did you lie to my dad? He could've stepped in-" I cut him off there.

"I don't need anyone to fight my battles, Lear. That's what you and your asinine friends don't seem to understand. The bullshit you put me through? It isn't any different than the bullshit I had before."

Thank heavens we were at school, and I spotted Lou. Running to her, I gave her a crash course on our change of plans. Lear hadn't left his truck, but I didn't give him two thoughts. Lou and I had a recon mission to perform.

"Won't he be asleep tonight too?" she asked. I comprehended what she

meant.

“Yeah, but what if he wakes up? What if he’s in there all night? I think our luck will be better when he’s gone.” She nodded as we made our way to class. She got called out and down to the office over the intercom for something before we separated for first period. Sighing, I tried to focus on class, but the entertaining boy in front of me, kept my attention. Beau sensed my mood, so he did a lot to lighten it up.

Giggling under my breath, his next words took my breath away.

“You’re the most beautiful when you laugh.” His finger traced my smile, following the curve of my jawline. He was so sweet and so hot that I melted just a little. Maybe, maybe it was time to test the waters of this attraction.

“Hey, do you have plans tonight?” I asked with a nervousness that showed. Hopefully, I wasn’t too stupid to pull off asking him out.

“Well, I’ll be at your house for the party.” He winked, and I blushed. “I’d ask if you want to go with me, but you’ll already be there.”

“Well, what if I wanted to be with you at the party tonight?” I shrugged and chewed the end of my pencil. He couldn’t feel my pulse jackhammering away as I waited on bated breath.

“I’d say, how about I show up a little early to make sure everyone sees us together?” Hot damn. This man was smooth.

“Then I’d say, see you at eight.”

~

Lou ended up having a family emergency and wasn’t picking up her phone when I called. It went straight to voicemail, so I felt troubled by that. I

worried about her and whatever happened, but I also needed her advice for tonight. She knew this kind of stuff and what to wear to get attention.

Me on the other hand? I stood in my lace undergarments staring blankly at my closet. I wasn't a dress kind of girl, but I wanted to look hot.

Chewing on the tip of my thumb while having my arms crossed, someone knocked on my door. Before I could answer them, the person walked in. I found Beau entering my Barbie room.

His eyes went wide with his brows almost to his hairline. Taking in every inch of exposed flesh, I loved feeling his heated stare on my skin. It seared my insides with an intensity I never felt with anyone else. He wasn't being creepy or gross, but he couldn't seem to look away either. One after the other, his feet treaded carefully to me.

“Shit V, you gotta tell me to get out now. You gotta tell me no because I don't think I can walk out of here after seeing you like this.” He ended his approach right in front of me with his hand now cupping my cheek.

Clearly aroused, I knew it had been from the sight of my body. I also knew he liked me as a person. I liked both things about him as well. In a husky whisper that panted out of me, I couldn't contain my arousal. “What if I don't want you to stop?”

Those were the only words he needed before he backed me up until I fell back on the bed. Using my elbows, I propped up to watch him remove his pants.

We didn't have a lot of time, and I knew he needed to keep most of his clothes on just in case someone else barged in. Once his pants hit his ankles, I took in his above average dick. It wasn't long like the one guy who fucked the librarian with Rin, and it wasn't as thick as Rin's, but it was still bigger than the ones I've had before.

I found myself licking my lips and turning myself over be on all fours in front of him. My hand reached out and took his length in my fist. His lips susurrated from the feel and the view. I kept working him, fascinated by his sounds.

“I want to taste you,” I found myself breathless as he moved closer to me. I got wet and needy, but seeing a man lose control... That would always be the ultimate destroyer for my libido.

Parting my mouth, I moaned while taking him fully in on the first suck. His hips bucked, his hands fisting into my hair. “Fucking Hell, V. You have no idea how often I thought about your pretty, plump lips doing exactly this to me.” See? Total turn on. I picked up my pace, loving his hisses and grunts.

Letting him deep throat me, his musky scent engulfed me every time my face rubbed his pelvis. Unsure how long we kept doing it, Beau jerked back and tried to steady himself.

“Fuck! Shit!” He kept cursing while trying to breath. I relished in his undoing. Finally, his molten eyes turned to me like a volcano about to explode. “I want to lick that tight little cunt like it’s my last feast on earth... While finding out if you’re as sweet as I’ve imagined.”

Oh God. His dirty talk had me needy for more of his filthy words. Knowing he had been fantasizing about me became another weakness of mine. I wanted what he said too, but... “We don’t have time tonight.”

People would be arriving any minute now. We needed to be ready. Instead, I stood in front of him. I shimmied out of my panties while keeping our eyes locked.

Unlatching my bra, I let my breasts fall free, and Beau failed at keeping eye contact. He was a man with a woman baring herself in front of him. How could he not look? When my large and perky breasts spilled out, Beau bit his

lip from loving them just as every other guy had. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen a more perfect set of tits.”

Instead of responding to the one statement I got repeatedly, I lied myself back on the bed. I spread the lips to my soaked and swollen pussy for him to see how I needed him. He watched my intimate display while jerking his cock a few times and biting that same corner of his mouth. God, it was so hot to see him like this. Now, if he had the time to get fully naked, it would be even better. I could just picture his toned middle that would clench with his grunts.

Mmm...

My other hand moved to dip two fingers into my tight center, and he watched me pump myself a few times for him to hear how wet I got. Precum glistened from his rock-hard, mushroom tip.

“You don’t have time to feast on me, but I can spare you a taste.” Moving my middle finger to my mouth, I sucked my own juices off and watched him come undone.

Sliding my other slick finger down, I circled my nipple with my arousal, and he watched the tip harden even more from it. He dived for me. His hungry mouth and hands came down licking, nipping, and groping my breasts. His growls were almost delirious, or maybe that was me from finally having glorious sex again. Wasting no time keeping his mouth firmly on my boob, he produced a condom and nearly tore it by shoving it on so fast.

With no warning, he slammed his stiff shaft right into me. I cried out from the rip of pleasure. He knew what he was doing as he moved his dick in and out, swiveling his hips just right. When he fully entered, he rammed my G-spot every time. I screamed and whimpered, loving it so much.

“God dammit, V! You’re the hottest fuck I’ve ever had. Teasing me,

pleasing me, then seducing me like the little vixen you are...” he snarled while biting my neck. Our mouths found each other, and we clashed teeth in the urgency of our need.

My orgasm came. Once he knew I was there, he pulled his dick from me and watched my lips quiver from the spasms. His molten eyes were glued to my gaping sex. Before I was done riding my orgasm, he slammed back in and caused a second one to crash into me.

From this, he couldn't hold on. I felt his member grow even stiffer before his hot release shot into the rubber, moving slower until his climax finished. Once he caught his breath, he stood up from me and picked up his pants.

“Thanks for that, V. I haven't had sex since this morning, and sometimes a long day makes a man need to bury his cock in a tight little hole.” He began whistling as I laid there in shock.

This morning?!

Then his words from during our time together rang in. He called me his hottest fuck... as in I was just a quick fix for a release. My heart, it beat slower as my mind wrapped around what he said. Before I could even come up with something to say, my door flew open.

## Chapter 13



**O**ctavia Gripping the throw blanket at the base of my bed, I tried to hide my nudity, but it was already too late. They had seen me at my most vulnerable.

From my shock at seeing Rin and his posse, they all got a good look before I remembered to hide myself. Milo and the British one muttered ‘porn tits’ to each other and how they’d be good peaks around their cocks. Tears burned in my sockets, but I wouldn’t let them fall.

Beau moved to the guys in my door and high-fived a few of them as they all laughed. Lear and Lucius showed mild guilt, but they didn’t broadcast it when their friends were relishing in my humiliation. I thought the few things I had been through were a lot from them. I thought the bullying would be the worst...

But being played and used cut the cake.

“All right, mates, who said a week?” The Brit asked his friends. Lucius shamefully raised his hand as the Brit handed him rolled up Benjamins. A wad of cash that was pooled to guess when I’d let Beau into my pants. Beau

who I now knew was the seventh member of the group that Lou had warned me about.

“Oh, look. The little princess is about to cry,” Milo laughed through his fake, remorseful face.

Standing, I fixed the blanket like a towel. I grabbed my phone off my bed where I had it before Beau came in. Moving toward the barricade of men, I slammed my shoulder into Rin’s to get by. When I got past him, he snatched my hand to turn me around so I’d face him. He gloated and loved every minute of this. I couldn’t even open my yap from the force of tears that would come.

“And here you thought you were a queen when you’re only a pawn.” His sneer did me in. His happiness in my pain ripped my insides to shreds, but I couldn’t let him see me crumble. He fisted a hand in my hair and yanked it for my cheek to be against his.

Hissing, his hot breath blew in my in my ear. “Checkmate, Kitten. This is my game. No one beats me.”

I jerked back from his hold and took off down the stairs. I made it out of sight before the tears fell, but I could still hear them laughing their asses off at my expense.

Not knowing where I was going, I ran out the back door and right into the thick of the dying woods. The same little forest I promised myself I wouldn’t enter. Right now, though, it was the only place where I knew I could have some privacy. Where no one would look for me or find me. I could hide and never worry about my tears being seen.

My bare feet just kept running even with the jabs my soles took from the twigs and rocks. The little pain helped me feel something other than the utter humiliation I just suffered. My grip on the blanket stayed tight to my chest



where the undeniable ache throbbed in my heart. My other hand freely moved with my sprinting legs. It also held my phone.

Soon, my lungs began to burn, and my limbs were becoming tired. All sensations I could physically execute right now that would help mask my emotional pain. The pulse of my heart radiated in my ears, promising nothing would compare. When I finally stopped running, the inside noise calmed down for me to hear water nearby. Moving sluggishly now, I wandered past the trees while touching their autumn bark and found a pond.

Cascading, a waterfall ran down the hill above like a runoff. It trickled into a shower. I felt mesmerized by the beauty. It looked familiar, but I couldn't place it with the survival mode my body got stuck in. Large boulders were around the water, and the grass ended at the lip of the pond. Dropping my blanket from my skin, I waded into the water. I found the center of it floated just above my breasts.

Sighing in relief, I never learned how to swim, so having no deep spots helped me feel more comfortable. Though wandering into the water had been stupid, the rush of being careless did something to me that I couldn't explain. Now that I tested the limits of my safety, I went and stood directly under the waterfall. I let the icy water help my tense muscles. It gave me a brain freeze, but it was something else that muted my tormented mind.

Knowing I couldn't stay in here long from the hypothermia risk, I sighed and waded back to the shore. Well, I went at a turtle's walking pace to stay in longer because the scenery captured me. The sounds of the natural environment were even better. This... This would be my new spot. It didn't take long in this new town to find it, but I would be using it a lot more to get away. Once I airdried enough to swaddle back into my blanket, my phone lit up.

I had several texts. Four from Lear telling me how sorry he was and three from Lou. Holding my phone, I typed a reply right when she called instead. I answered, of course.

“Hey, Lou,” I sounded as dejected as the bread on the end of a sub that had no meat or cheese, so people tossed it.

“Girl! Beau is one of them! Hightail it now! Run for the hills!” she shrilled to protect me.

“An hour too late, I’m afraid,” I gave a hollow laugh.

“What happened?”

I knew she could sum up the bad spots on her own, but I told her about it all. How hot it was, how humiliating it was, and how I hid in the woods with only a fleece blanket on.

“Let it be known that I am your bestest friend ever. My family is all in town, and my sexy as fuck cousin is here. We’ll be over in like two hours. I want you to head back, put on the sexiest fucking thing in your closet, and when we get there, he is going to be all over you.” Lou could be a tyrant at times in her bubble-gum pink.

“I’m not sure-” She cut me off.

“The cavalry is coming!” Then she hung up.

I chuckled to myself and took a seat on a rock. Lou really was the best. Maybe she would be right. I needed to pull myself together to show them that even though they made my crown crooked by making me fall, it still sat on my head. I just needed to pick myself up and straighten it.

Sighing, I still wanted a few more minutes of peace. I was in my trance when a weird squeak pulled me out. Some rustling in the bushes made me jump. I pulled my feet up higher to make sure a snake wasn’t going to nip my toes. I hated snakes. The movement was too small to be a person or large

animal, but it scared me, nonetheless. Holding my breath, I watched in the moonlight as a black, little thing moved toward me.

Squeaking my surprise, the thing hopped right up in my lap and nestled down. The thing in question? A lizard of some kind, with wings like a bat, about the size of a cat. I would have to google whatever she was, but she curled up in the cutest way, being tame. Why on earth did she feel comfortable climbing onto my lap?

Most wild animals were scared of humans. Petting her, I heard her chest rumble a gravelly purr. It made me smile because I at least made her day. Looking up from feeling eyes on me, I found the same owl as every night and...more owls? They were all clearly different species of owls as I glanced at them all. Growing up, I always found owls to be fascinating. That's why I knew these ones easily.

The barn owl that I knew sat the closest to me. A horned owl. Snowy owl. Elf owl. Boreal owl. Screech owl. The last one wasn't an owl. By the red feathers, with an array of colors on the tail, I found a parrot. What the hell? Why on earth were these birds here? Some of them couldn't be indigenous to New York. Looking around, I began to think that this might be a sanctuary for them. It made sense, but I wondered why there were no fences or signs.

"What on earth are you sweet things doing here?" I asked the lizardy-thing in my lap. She sat up and rubbed her head against my heart. If it wasn't for the fact her sitting put her at that height, I would've thought she purposely tried to rub the ache in it away.

The parrot caught my attention. "*Squawk!* Bitch is sad. *Squawk!* Bitch is sad."

I died. Literally. The laugh that bubbled out of me also had my eyes wide. Who taught him to talk like that? He also understood more than I thought he

could. Just then, another rustling drew my attention. A small little kitty came out. Well, kitty might be the wrong term seeming how it stood quite large for a baby.

As it moved closer, I held my breath. It was a black and white bobcat-looking-thing with glowing yellow eyes. Knowing this had been too much weirdness, I stood up and set the lizard down before running back to the house. Some of the animals didn't belong in New York while the others couldn't be specified.

Nothing stopped me along my path, so I ran to the side entrance of the mansion for no one to see me. I took the side staircase up and made it to my room without being seen. I didn't stop until I got in my shower and scrubbed the nuttiness off. I didn't even wait for the water to warm up.

## Chapter 14



**O**ctavia

I did it. Just what Lou told me to. In a red, bondage dress, my tits were high and showing the tops of their roundness. The short hem sat under my curvy ass while the black stilettos signaled my dominance. My hair got styled sleek and straight—that took the most time—and my makeup dark to show off my night out. The boys were going to lose their shit over it. I smirked from that idea alone, and it made wearing a dress a delight for the first time in my life.

Lou texted that they were parking, so the time came for me to make my entrance in the pit of snakes. Taking many breaths, my hand clutched the banister as I executed my impervious version of Cinderella attending her own ball. Music played. People grinded. Red solo cups were in everyone's hands, but none of that held my attention.

Nope. That went to the boys seated right across the stairs that I wouldn't take my eyes off of. They all had a girl on their lap, including Beau. A moment of bizarre jealousy surged through me again. Keeping my mask in

place, I watched how all five of them studied and raked their greedy eyes over my body. I smirked for them to see I caught their tongues hanging out. Rin deepened his glare.

The only one who didn't act as fazed was the one who seemed to be a pothead. Speaking of, he smoked a joint while two girls rubbed the bulge in his crotch. All the other guys present were gaping, making me smile even harder. This had been exactly what I needed to do. What would I do without Lou being on my side in this hellhole?

The music still played, but I had everyone's attention. No one moved unless they were clearing my direct path to the biggest prick of them all. Not caring about the tramp in his lap—AKA, Lexi, the Royal Bitch with a black eye—I leaned over her bitch-fit to get to his ear. This gave him a clean sight of my amazing cleavage that I normally never showed off. He, of course, couldn't help but look down the valley of my breasts.

Licking the shell of his ear, I grinned while I whispered. "Bishop to A-6."

He heaved an angry breath as I dragged my face back just a little. He spoke in a low, husky voice. "The game is done. Checkmate."

"I still had a move on the board. Don't throw a fit, Sevrin. I just had to strategize my next step. There's a reason chess isn't a quick game. The thrill is in the wait..."

He didn't like my response. I straightened myself on cloud nine. The ticking of his jaw told me he didn't expect to see me come out alive from the sexcapade, so me coming out with a play pissed him off even more.

"And who is this bishop of yours?" he snarled while we stared irately into each other's eyes.

"She's coming with my second knight."

"You know what happens to pieces on the board that lose, right?" I watched

his near-black eyes swirled and his smirk grew. Something in my gut clenched, but I didn't have time to worry about his metaphors. I was too caught up in winning right now.

“Have a goodnight, Sevrin.” I got up and walked away with an extra shake in my hips. That was when Lou came in with a very attractive, blond relative. Yup, they were definitely related. I could tell without knowing, but I don't think the room deciphered the same thing.

The tall guy didn't give me a chance to introduce myself. He just prowled toward me with a starved hunger in his eyes. Once he reached me, his hands were on my ass. I leapt to circle his middle, and our mouths collided. We acted like famished, ravenous animals in heat.

“Did your new toy get my precious all worked up?” he rumbled. I couldn't help the smile he helped create with that line.

I pouted and dragged my finger down his toned chest. “His dick was too small, and he came too quick to give me what I need.”

Yeah, low blow using their penises against them. My new guy turned to the couches and looked directly at Beau.

“You didn't get my girl off? What's wrong with you? Do you need to watch a real man do it?” Oh, I liked this guy. He was good. Beau sputtered curses and then pointed at me while jumping to his feet. This made his bimbo hit the floor hard on her ass.

“She got plenty from me!” Everyone just watched as Beau announced that he, indeed, slept with the Gutter Whore. When he and his friends realized the mistake, it was too late. Everyone looked at me like I might be something, if they were willing to touch me. I wasn't done yet.

“Baby, he tried getting his friends to come in without asking me,” I pouted. I didn't even know his name, but he moved and shoved me against the wall to

grind into me. Shockingly enough, he got hard, and it felt good. I moaned, arching my back from the radiating pleasure.

“That right there, is why, gorgeous. Every man wants a woman who seeks her own pleasure.” Knowing we needed to make an exit, I looked over his shoulder to see Lou gaping at our show.

“I love how you always make me feel better. How about I do the same for you?” He smirked while setting me down. I walked to Lou and kissed her with gusto. All the guys in this place were drooling. Her cousin came behind me to place his hands on my hips.

“Sounds perfect. Let’s head up to your room for privacy.” Us girls giggled while he chased me and spanked my ass up the stairs. When we got to my door, I found a sight to behold. Milo and Lucius were making out against Lear’s door like two crazy lovers needing each other. The way the hard planes of their bodies moved together was something I’d never forget. Now this would be a show to enjoy as heat flushed my skin.

Lucius looked up and saw me as we opened my door. He pulled out of Milo’s hold and tried to grab me. Milo just watched his partner and then gave me a menacing glare for bothering them.

“Octavia! Please, just give me-” I closed the door in his face. The three of us laughed and jumped on my bed. Lou turned the TV on as her cousin held out his hand for me to shake.

“I’m Gareth by the way.” I took it and smiled.

“Octavia.” We fell into romantic comedies and enjoyed talking about the assholes down stairs. Gareth stayed turned on from seeing Rin’s dominating eyes on me because he happened to be gay.

“You should see his pierced junk,” Lou snorted. I gaped at her honesty. When she saw me, she shrugged like I might be the crazy one. “What? I



might still contain my v-card but I still saw the monster.”

“He has his penis pierced?” Gareth’s eyes shimmered in awe.

“He’s also thicker than a pringles can,” I added. I also gulped from remembering that girthy cock. Scared the hell out of me, but also turned me on.

“Aster’s was super long but not that thick,” Lou added. “Like a wooden sword, pun intended.” We all laughed. I finally learned the Brit’s name without even having to ask. I guess it would’ve been smart just to ask Lou. I knew Sevrin, the leader. Lear, the jock. Beau, the hot-nerd. Milo, the CEO. Lucius, the narcissist, and now the bad boy named Aster. That just left one...

“What’s the name of the pothead?” I asked and broke off our penis conversation.

“That would be Bellamy Argos.” She made a gross face, knowing the skunk smell that joined his habit. And now I knew them all. Well, their names at least.

“Don’t you find it odd that they all are so different and yet so close?” I asked out loud.

“Their father’s run Brimstone Inc.... You know, the group of companies that nearly run the world.” Gareth spoke the open information to the public.

I shook my head. “I don’t know anything about them, if I’m being honest. Not even my new stepdad.”

“They all own banks, oil rigs, and technology for weaponizing. They own harbors and ports that others buy and sell through. To be honest, there’s a lot involved, but the boys have always been close. They’re being groomed to take over because their friend circle truly are leaders of the future world, or as you like to call Rin, royalty. They are kings, Via.”

Well shit.

“They have their own armies. No one talks about it, but they have a militia willing to serve them from how powerful they are,” Gareth added.

“Yeah well, with all that money and power, they have a lot of enemies.” Lou shrugged.

This only made me more terrified of the boys I just pissed off, but there was nothing I could do now. I really did sign my mom and I over to the devil in disguise.

“They are bad men, Via. I don’t mean the child’s play with you,” Lou hinted at what they were capable of, and I could put two and two together.

“Okay, something happier. Gareth, do you have a boyfriend?” I changed the topic.

He grinned. “Sure do. And call me Gare, Via,” he quipped. We gossiped and talked like I wasn’t living in a killer’s house. I appreciated them sticking beside me. Tonight, in the haze of weird shit, I think I made another new friend. The idea made me smile. I relished in the fact my bestie had my back and gave me a new friend.

~

The next morning, I found Daemon in his usual spot at the table with his paper again. Now I got why he read up on current events.

“Anything interesting?” I asked as Rita brought me a plate of food. I thanked her as she rolled her eyes with a smirk from me being too polite. I was totally winning her over.

Daemon looked up and smiled at me. “Not too much to report.”

I nodded even though I could feel his lie prickling my skin. Lou and Gare had left around three this morning. Now I felt alone in my awkward home.

Lear stumbled in as Rita handed him a coffee with a few pills. Only in track shorts, I kept my eyes on my food. There remained one thing I needed to change, but Lear and Rin weren't going to like it. Yeah, that made me smile.

"Mr. Odium?" Daemon snapped his head up to see me. I never had to address him before, so I went for respect.

"Please, call me Daemon, Octavia. We're family now."

"I was just wondering if I could get a ride into town to look for a job. I need to save up for a car somehow. Lear's practices are tiring to wait through after a long school day, so I'd like to help myself. Would that be alright?"

For a moment, I thought I said something wrong from how they gaped at me. Like literally, they were staring in shock at my words.

"You want to go work to earn cash for a car?" Lear sneered in disgust.

"Lear! That's no way to respond to your sister. Octavia was raised to work for everything in her life and wasn't fed with a silver spoon. It's something you should try sometime."

Lear gave a dark look to his father. I saw something deadly pass over his eyes, and his father returned it. Lear's hackles were raised. "Do you forget about the dirty work I do for you? Maybe my new *sister* can earn her money that way too."

If I didn't know any better, I'd say Lear might almost be jealous of my position. Weird.

"I can do dirty work. Cleaning has never been a problem for me," I chided. Both men froze. I watched the evil look the two shared.

"You won't lift a finger, princess. I had a car bought for you already. A little mini cooper in pink." Daemon happily winked. I nearly vomited.

He must've wanted a little girl really bad.

"Thank you," I said graciously. Even if I hated the pink and the dainty car,

Lear no longer had to drive me. Seeing him pin me with a glare, he just caught on. Yeah, I was a badass bitch boss!

## Chapter 15



**O**ctavia Time. A lot of mindless seconds had passed since Lear's party. One week, six days and sixteen hours, to be exact. Why did this time frame matter?

Rin and his boys hadn't done anything. Not a word or look in my direction. Some would say this would be a good thing. That I was finally being left alone by the elites to have my own life.

I knew differently. I made the comment that night about needing time to strategize, so I knew that's what he did now. His move would come, and by building the anticipation of his strike, he knew he had me on edge. At the smallest sound, I became jumpy. When someone bumped into me, my heart raced. Even though I couldn't control the paranoia, I hated that Sevrin bested me, played me.

Waiting had to be the worst part of anything. Watching a horror film, it's what gave people the rush of panic before the serial killer pops out. There's a reason why I never watched the stupid films. I didn't like purposefully

putting myself in a suspenseful position that might make me feel scared. I could handle myself if needed, but it didn't mean I sought it out for enjoyment either. My life became a living nightmare anyway. Between my upbringing and my dreams, I had plenty of gore to last me 'til death do we part.

Spending almost every night at the pond I found, I tried to think about my own moves for future plays. It became pointless until I knew his move. At least the owls were good company, and they let me pet them now. The parrot was still out of place, but I did like his crude mouth.

When I complained about the new issues at school, he told me, "*Squawk!* Stop being a bitching harpy!"

Yeah, my only company had been a foul-mouthed parrot and owls with knowing eyes. The little, black lizard still claimed my lap on the rock and followed me back to the edge of the property every night. She wouldn't come further, but she watched me until I got inside. I still hadn't figured out her species, but she was cute.

Waiting in the cafeteria for Lou, after five minutes I got my food and moved to our spot. Something held her up, so I'd wait in our spot. I sat directly across from their stairs that they always occupied. They kept sitting behind me in class, well besides Lucius, and they still ran behind me in P.E. The only difference was, I became the invisible girl.

They had the whole school acting as though I went transparent. The other kids ran over me to be dramatic about it. Still, the Elite seven never spared me a glance. This included Lear and Lucius, who I thought might spare me a few reverent feelings. Right now diminished that for me as all of them—besides Milo and Lucius who weren't too PDA about their relationship—stuck their tongues down the hussies' mouths that sat in their laps. I

FaceTimed Gare at these moments to hear how beautiful I looked for the day. He was awesome and his boyfriend didn't mind letting him pick up a few broken pieces of my soul. Doing it in front of the guys just helped me not feel so isolated.

Lou tried her best, but her family still had some kind of emergency. Something she couldn't tell me about until it ended. So, our time together hadn't been much since the party where she saved my ass. Pulling my phone out, about to call my favorite boytoy, I felt someone sit beside me. Lou's cotton candy perfume hit me. I sighed with some mild relief from the tension building within me.

My phone dinged then. I looked down to see it came from Lou, who sat beside me.

**Lou: Pretend you read something funny.**

**Me: Okay?**

I did. I snorted like Gare sent me something.

**Lou: This was in my locker today.**

Her text contained a picture of a little elephant statue. Yet, it wasn't a full statue from how it shaped down to have a flat bottom. If it had a castle on top or a horsehead, I'd say it was a chess piece.

Elephants weren't in chess though.

**Me: What the hell is that?**

**Lou: I don't know but this came with it...**

A note she took a picture of, and my breath restricted.

*'Jumps diagonally on two squares. Why are you the one who cares? In this game you aren't well versed. With this unique piece you'd be first. Why settle for the crooked crown's third? Unless your wings are broken, screeching bird.'*

**Me: Rin. He's finally made his next move.**

**Lou: So why am I the one who got this?**

**Me: Let me find out what I can about that piece. It might elaborate more.**

We both stopped texting as she ate her food like a bird. Interesting reference as my mind toyed with his rhyme. Why would he call her a screeching bird? Saving that question for later, I googled 'elephant chess piece' and found what I was looking for immediately. Rin knew I'd take his easy bait.

Apparently, in other cultures, this had been the original bishop piece. The 'first' like Rin referenced. On my board, the bishop sat in third, so I understood that reference easily enough after reading this. I must be the one who has the crooked crown in his eyes. I gulped, knowing he called me out when I announced I had other players on my board.

Looking up, Rin was staring me down. He smirked with a wink, knowing I saw his threat. They all were now looking at me, and it appeared the suspenseful climb might be over. Now I just had to see where the climax would lead. I just hoped it wasn't them painting the town red with our blood.

Leaving, they sauntered away like the kings of the school. I stared after them until I knew they were gone. Checking around us, I also made sure we didn't have any prying ears.

"This is my fault, Lou," I whispered.

"How?" She leaned in so no one could listen.

"I made the mistake of calling you my bishop, like on my chess board. Chess is the reference Rin and I use when one of us strikes. This is his next move. He's targeting my bishop."

Instead of being freaked like she should, her eyebrows drew together in



confusion. “Next time can I pick my piece? I like the castle-looking one the most.”

Dear lord...

“I used the bishop because besides the two royalty pieces, it’s the next most important. My board doesn’t have a king so you’re more like my second on my weird layout.”

“Why would they make that ugly piece so high up?” Her nose turned up in disgust.

“In the time it was created, religion held the highest pedestal besides being royal. Our generation doesn’t put that first now. That’s why it is. It’s also why it has a gash on the top of the piece. It’s to symbolize the bishop’s hat.”

“How do you know so much about chess?” She really struggled to stay on topic.

“That doesn’t matter. All that does is that he plans to take you out next. I think you need to lay low and avoid me until we know what he’s up to.”

“No.” She firmly rejected my idea.

“What?”

“Nope. Not happening. He’s already set something in motion. Avoiding each other now wouldn’t matter. Plus, if I’m your bishop, I can’t leave my queen to defend herself.”

Resting my cheek on her shoulder, she rested hers on the top of my head. It got quiet from the bell already ringing, but the break gave us a good moment for our bond. Until a black butterfly landed on my knee. Superstition made me question the omen but feeling happy made me play it off as my overactive imagination. Right?

“Thanks Rita!” I shouted while munching on my dinner she saved for me. She waved me off with a smile. Yup, I won her over. Lear always had a smart mouth with her. I stayed polite to respect her hard work, and she liked that I thanked her for the little things no one noticed. They didn’t pay attention from never having to do them.

I rolled my eyes from how the rich assholes worked in this town. None of them knew the stress of school or work with cleaning on top of that. Diving into the delicious enchiladas, I moaned at the bar as she worked on the dishes. “Oh, Rita... I think you’ve just sent me to heaven. These are scrump-dilly-umptious!”

My night was spent in town to get some things for my room and wardrobe. Picking today with the bad feeling going on, I needed to feel a little more like me. My friends helped and supported the paint I bought. Even though I hated saying goodbye, I dropped Lou and Gare off at her place before coming here.

Shortly after ten at night, I ate the best food ever. Rita seriously had to be the best in this house. Plus, she was the only one who didn’t look at me with that pity and sadness. Clearing my plate, I moved to the sink and started helping her with the pots and pans. “Miss Clarke, you know you do not have to clean up in this house.”

“It’s Via, Rita. Plus, growing up, dishes were my go-to to calm down. I don’t know why but the sound of the water mixed with the mindless work...”

“It settled your soul,” she gently whispered in agreement.

“Exactly,” I smiled and dried as she washed. We worked in tandem and in silence. Only the tap running and porcelain clanking filled the wordless air. For the first time in a long time my mind fully went blank after everything

the last few weeks. A nice change that I needed, but that's when I noticed Rita quietly crying beside me.

“Desearia que no tuvieras que morir,” she spoke in her native, Hispanic tongue.

Chills ran down my spine. I didn't know the words or what they meant, but from the broken tone and sad face, I knew it couldn't be good. Gulping, I smiled and slowly left her there to head up to my room. I got paint to redo this Barbie bomb, and I would be excited to make it more my style this weekend. Well, I should've been excited.

Something foreboding seemed to be lurking in the air. After Rin's chess move, that black butterfly, and now Rita's resigned look, I kept on high alert. Black butterflies were rare for a reason because they were an omen for an imminent end.

My mother had a book about different omens. I picked it up a few times from being curious. Call me a cat, but when I went to grab my favorite ball from underneath her bed, I found the book. At the time I was only ten and the world still had hope. But, just like the omens I read about, the darkness came.

Gulping, I turned on my light, and my knees buckled at what I saw. A rainbow sneaker with a unicorn toe covered in mud, sat on my bed with a note right beside it.

Running to it, I ripped it off my bed. I let my eyes devour the words. With nothing but my feet moving now as I shot to the backdoor, I ran.

Shit.

It was Rin's next move. They knew they had me by one word and one word alone.

## **Fear**

A simple four-letter word. Easy to spell, but not easy to live with. How

could something that rolled so easily off my tongue cut sharper than a fillet knife?

Something so short in the English language was able to embody our deepest, darkest thoughts and all too easily to be consumed by it. Fear was a motivator, a scare tactic, and a way to hold power over someone else.

I spent my whole life facing my fears so no one could overpower me. No one would gain the upper hand because I had accustomed myself to this life.

Plus, my monsters weren't fictional, blue, furry things that said 'boo'. They were the men walking the broken streets I had memorized. They were homes I had been placed and tortured in after every move.

I might get scared, I might know what cold sweat dripping from my brow felt like, a fretful chill running down my spine meant, but I didn't let it devour me.

I faced my fears to show I wouldn't cower from them. I wouldn't live as a shadow or be consumed so much by my qualms that I forgot how to live.

Yet here I was... In the one compromising position I swore no one would get me in. From feeling encompassed by all that was evil, I knew fear held me at gunpoint. Fear had bested me because the person controlling this game finally used the one thing that I couldn't lose against me.

My legs shook as I ran through the withering forest. My muscles tensed under the foreboding pressure of my future, my heart hammering like the war drum for my upcoming battle. My thoughts were blank as my mind switched into survival mode.

They found my weakness, one I had been foolish enough to gain besides my mother.

Hurrying, I had four minutes and thirty seconds to make it in time to save the person they took. Tears tried to blur my vision, but I fought off that

weakness like the plague it was. Even though I began crumbling apart, I couldn't let them see how much their actions affected me.

My fingers clutched the riddle scribbled in ink over the torn parchment from one of their notebooks. Balling it up, I didn't need it anymore because I had the shattering words memorized.

*'She's alone, and she's afraid. Will you be the one to give her aid? At this time, wishes are made. Your favorite place is where we'll make the trade. Be on time, or she'll pay by blade. Consider this game still being played.'*

My mother taught me friendships were dangerous. I never planned to care so much for a friend that I made behind her back, but that didn't matter now. She didn't deserve their wrath and violence. She didn't deserve to be the pawn in a game I caused. I'd end this tonight. The games they played with me, the fear they spiked, no more. Tonight, they'd meet the real Octavia Clarke.

They thought they could win by that simple little word hanging over my head, but it gave me power too. I knew right from wrong unlike their devious integrities. I knew the true meaning behind fear, and I knew what that word meant to the brutes I was about to face. Fear was one of the main culprits behind sin and deceit. And now, I was about to face the seven deadliest sinners of them all.

That little butterfly couldn't be ignored because its purpose was right. The ending omen had been warranted, and I paid the price for not listening to it, ignoring the true meaning sent to me. My feet came to a halt at the edge of the pond. Before I could take in anything around me, a bag covered my head and two large hands secured mine behind my back.

The slight smell of a musky skunk hit me, so I knew I was dealing with the hands of the pothead. After binding my wrists, his fingers moved to clamp

around my neck as he stood behind me. My heart about cartooned from my chest as his other hand moved to circle my waist to pull me against him. His hot breath blew through the burlap covering my face. I would have gulped if his grip didn't sit so tight.

He spoke then, as he stroked my pounding jugular. The first time I heard his voice, and it wasn't pleasant. A heavy smoker but deep and sexy like a lover. I stopped breathing when I noticed my body becoming aroused by him. That's when he talked. His words made my eyes water.

“Tell me, are you afraid to end?”

# Deadly Omen

Ashley Amy

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## Chapter 1



**L**ear  
*(One week before Octavia's car wreck)*

My party was like any other out of the countless ones I'd thrown. Nothing different about the guys and I finding ourselves with a room full of willing girls as they took their tops off and danced on the coffee table. They did this all in the hopes of being the one to keep our beds warm tonight. A few caught my interest, but the same old routine wasn't working for me anymore. Something shifted inside my chest recently, but I couldn't put my finger on what.

I exhaled, leaning back into the couch to drink another beer. It seemed I wasn't the only one struggling tonight with the boredom that had become our lives. It sucked we had to do this to cover my father's meeting. Rin glared at a random speck on the wall, Bell flew too high to know where he sat, and Aster watched porn on his phone with a nasty grin. The live show didn't get

his rocks off enough from his darkened needs. I'd hate to be him, but I envied him more than anything for the easiness he had with girls.

Such is my life with my issues. I sighed just as Lo and Luce came down the stairs from having their time together and found their spot in our sitting area. They were lucky because they found love. The party might bore them, but they had something none of us had. They formed a companionship within each other. Partners that aided getting through this endless shit.

Everyone knew they were together and unavailable. Unless they invited a girl in for the night for them to share, they were exclusive. Probably on his third woman tonight, Beau retreated to a guest room. He didn't know how to stop himself from overindulging. I rolled my eyes with how easy he had it too. He probably had six girls in there now. The idea made me grip my solo cup harder as the urgent invidious feeling swept over me. None of them understood the hardships that I had. They all got the easier ones that didn't torment them into raging fits of jealousy over absolutely nothing.

"You have got to be kidding me," Lo growled from the couch. We all looked up to see who entered. Smirking, I nearly laughed at how overprotective he was over his sister he wouldn't publicly admit was related to him. She hated us anyways for the years of tormenting her. Now, she pretended we didn't exist. He lived with their dad, and she lived with their mom to keep away from each other.

Yet, Lo scared off any man who showed an ounce of interest in her. My joyous laugh reminded him it was funny as hell to observe. We all smiled as we watched him storm off to go beat the brute she showed up with into a bloody pulp. I found myself envying his family again, having a few good ones to latch onto. Part of me had always wondered what it would be like to have a sibling.

Sighing, I stood and handed my cup off to Bell, and he gave me a nod of thanks. Rin turned to look at me with confused eyes because he knew me too well sometimes.

“Need something to distract me,” I answered the unspoken question, and he got it. Of course, he did. Out of all seven of us, Rin and I had always been the closest besides Lo and Luce. Grabbing the hand of the girl with the biggest set of tits, she squealed to her friends while bouncing behind me. They were all the same. Different bodies, different hair... but they all wanted to be claimed by the seven. If only they knew the demons we were. Well, most of them did know our darker side from having their own.

Looking back, I noticed Lexi taking my spot to have the guys dote on her. None of us had touched her sexually yet. We couldn't until it was time. I hated her, but I would do anything for our circle, even if it meant her completing it.

Walking past my father's office, I glanced in the crack to find someone hadn't shut the door all the way. Peeking in, I found all of our fathers in there, and they sat in their circle like we would one day do as well.

It wasn't uncommon for Bell's dad to come in last and be too lazy to close the door all the way, so I backed away, knowing my punishment if I got caught. That was until something my father said caught my attention and had my feet planting to a halt. Maybe I could eavesdrop just a bit.

“We found her.” He looked to Rin's dad, but all the men perked up.

“Lear, come on...” The slut I didn't know the name of yanked on my hand. Rolling my eyes, I turned toward her with a casual smile while pointing to the guest bedroom door. I didn't take these girls to my personal room because that felt like blasphemy.

“I gotta talk to my dad real quick, and then I'll meet you in my room. Strip

for me and be ready in the middle of my bed,” I whispered for my dad to not know I listened in. Her eyes lit up as she took off to the door. Where was the challenge? Where was the fun? There wasn’t any when you were the top of the food chain. Everyone wanted in on the high life, so they flocked around us to get there.

“You sure it’s her this time?” Rin’s father, Sal, spoke as their leader.

My father pointed to the white wall where he had the projector. Everyone regarded the spot just as a picture of a woman appeared. Dressed in lingerie, she gave a lap dance to some grisly man just as her face materialized. Surreal, she had the most beautifully placed features I had seen any woman have. Her body matched, making sure no man could refuse her desires, causing all the men in the room to stiffen. Lo’s father choked on his drink when his greedy eyes devoured her image.

My father allowed the next picture to fill the screen. This one contained a smaller girl helping this woman out of the back of a taxi. The younger and shorter one had to be a mini version of the taller one. In my eyes, she was better than the stripper they had their eyes set on.

“It’s her, but who’s that?” Sal growled at seeing the girl who couldn’t be any older than me.

“It appears Lily had a daughter in her time away. No father in the picture.” He paused only for a moment now that he had their attention. “Lily has been working as a stripper and prostitute to hide from us with drug use as well. Anyone could be the father with what she’s been up to.”

“When we bring Lily back, what are we going to do with her?” Luce’s father growled with hatred. He pointed at the little vixen—who had eyes more haunted than mine.

She scanned the area around them like she knew a threat lurked in the

shadows. It didn't help that her gaze aligned with my father's spy as though she sensed him. Yet, she didn't look at the camera directly, just the general direction. With a bottle of mace at the ready, she seemed too prepared for an attack. I didn't like that. I didn't like the idea of anyone harming her. That maybe someone hurt her enough times, it required her to be ready for them again.

She called to me like a siren to the seaman. This young girl made my heart clench just from the sight of her. How that could be possible? I didn't know.

What I did know? I couldn't entertain thoughts of having her when I had to devote myself to Lexi for the group. I couldn't see that face again for the safety of our circle. Even if my world tilted into the light from just her image alone, I had a promise to uphold when it came to the six men that I called family.

"We need to find out more about her. We need to investigate her to make sure her mother hasn't told her anything," my father answered.

Sal nodded but was also thinking. "And how are you going to do that?"

"I have a plan that will force both of them into our hands quite easily. Everyone, meet my new stepdaughter, Octavia Clarke. She'll be here by next weekend, if my plan goes smoothly."

"Are you going to kidnap them?" Sal smirked with enjoyment. Sick bastard.

"No. I'm going a different route. I promise, neither will be too hurt." My father leered while studying both women.

They all dipped their chins in agreement, making my stomach plummet. There would never be an escape for an easier life in my shoes, and I would never get what the others had. Now, I became mocked on a universal level.

The one girl who made me feel something by sight alone, would be my stepsister by next weekend.

“Lear?” The slut popped her head out of the spare room. Reaching in my back pocket, I popped some pills Bell gave me and went to her. Soon, I’d be too high to care what girl I sank into because I’d be entertained enough to not face my sorrows. Then, I’d pass out for the weekend.

## Chapter 2

— • —

**O**ctavia  
(Present day)

*“Tell me, are you afraid to end?”*

Bellamy’s words haunted me all night. After he said them, the group tied me up to a tree to serve my punishment. Thank heavens they let me sit down or my legs would’ve been even worse off than my ass. The poor thing fell asleep hours ago. My wrists were still bound behind my torso, and my grip got squished between my back and the thick tree.

They got scratched whenever I shifted, telling me some of the cuts were bleeding. Though, they were probably scabbed over by now. Not that I could tell, thanks to the burlap crap. The bag still sat over my face to make me feel suffocated in the silence of the night.

Stupid assholes had been smart enough to cinch the string around my neck, so I couldn’t wiggle it off. I think they were hoping to disorientate me, to make me unaware of the time that passed or that I’d fear the constant dark.



The idea alone made me scoff. They had no idea I faced plenty worse than this. Proving it, I fell asleep for most of the night. Now, I came up with plans that would keep Lou safe but would still help me win against the seven.

On the plus side, my ribs hadn't hurt the last few days and weren't now that I was stranded in the forest. No, it was just my bindings and sleeping limbs that hurt. In hopes to distract myself, I started coming up with stories about a hot man coming and saving me from the madness that Sevrin Thana plagued me with. Maybe a living Tarzan would find me and whisk me away to his hidden jungle.

One could only hope and fantasize...

Too bad every man I thought about came from the volatile group of males messing with me. I was so sick in the head due to my upbringing, so I couldn't see them clearly. Given, they were all the hottest guys I had ever seen. I breathed, hating how messed up my brain remained. These were my thoughts when I didn't plan revenge.

I didn't know the actual time, but I could feel the heat of the sun. With the heat coming directly down, it had to be the next afternoon. So much for having a quiet weekend with my paint. It didn't matter if I hated this torture because I deserved it for bringing Lou into the chaos.

Last night I remembered screaming to let her go as they all laughed at me. They dragged me to this spot as I fought for her. Once I was on my ass, Rin whispered to me, 'not until you serve your punishment'. So, here I sat, waiting for them to tell me I finished. If they hurt her like this, I'd lose my shit on them all. Hopefully, I'd find out soon enough.

Gah, this pain flared in unpleasant areas. My neck kinked, my shoulders were sore from how my hands were secured, and I really needed to pee. Finally, some approaching footsteps neared. I listened to everything they

stepped on to tell me how close they were to my location. Once I knew they were in my bubble, I gradually lifted my head. I couldn't see anything, but I didn't want them to think I was surprised by their arrival. Raising my head slowly told them I wasn't afraid.

*Take that Bellamy!*

The rope holding me to the tree became a little too tight before it fell away all at once. Not moving, I waited for the person to free my other bindings before I'd move. When the footsteps began to leave me, my breathing halted. They untied me from the tree, but they were leaving me blind and helpless with no use of my hands. Assholes... the lot of them.

Grumbling, I stood and kicked my feet out in front of me—like a can-can dancer—to not walk into a tree. I would've used my hands as guides but nooo...that would be too helpful. Muttering many things about different castration techniques, I tried to follow the sound of the evacuating footsteps. I wasn't fast enough from how careful I had to move. Left to my own devices to get back, I lost them within five minutes. Still sensing the way that I needed to go, I moved my aching limbs in the direction I guessed was right. If I wound up in Canada, it wouldn't be my fault.

The absurd idea had me laughing out loud. Just imagining myself hitting their border with some Mounties watching me. They'd think I came from a horror movie gone wrong. A girl kidnapped, escaped her captors. Instead, I should be known as the eccentric dinglehopper going back to her destroyers. The logic in all of this never continued to be sound. I cackled harder—to the point I had to pause.

“Is she- is she laughing?” A deep, British voice sounded befuddled. I now knew that voice to be Aster's, the playboy with dirty blond hair and crimson eyes.

“Seems that way. Or maybe it’s that female cry when they laugh with it?” Ah, the perfectionist named Lucius, joined Aster.

“It’d take a lot more than this to make me cry, Narcy!” Yeah, I just shortened his narcissist nickname.

“Bloody hell, this woman is completely mad, yeah?” Aster couldn’t see my smile, but he made one grow on my dry, cracked lips. They were directly ahead of me, so I followed the scent of cigarette smoke, knowing it would be Aster’s. I knew how to survive well enough on my own, even missing two imperative senses.

“How does she know which way to go?” Good, I perplexed them. They picked that moment to start sprinting away from me. Again, after a few minutes, I lost the trail of smoke and sighed. Still walking, I heard a little chirp and knew it to be the black lizard with wings. She always found me when I came out here.

“Hey you, do you think you can lead me home, Daisy?” Yup, I talked to a lizard, whom I just finally named.

“*Squawk!* Bitch is bad! *Squawk!* Bitch is bad!” Oh joy, the parrot joined her. I’m sure the owls were asleep right now from being nocturnal.

“How am I bad?” I shouted at him. Instead of answering, he landed on my shoulder like I was his perch.

“*Squawk!* Bitch go straight!”

Oh hell... He gave me directions while calling me Bitch. Sometimes, I wondered when I’d wake up from this crazy. It was Bitch go straight, Bitch go left, or Bitch go right. When I got disoriented, he told me Bitch be stupid.

“Can you call me something other than Bitch?” I moaned. It was funny the first few times, but now I was taking offense to it.

“*Squawk!* All girls be bitches.”

“So, what are all guys?” I snorted.

“*Squawk!* All boys be studs.”

“Well, now I know your keeper is a male-chauvinist pig.”

“*Squawk!* He is hot! *Squawk!* He is hot!”

“What’s your name?” I finally asked something useful to him.

“*Squawk!* Momo!”

After learning that, I just listened to his commands. He got me to where I needed to be in a better time. Daisy helped my steps by chirping when I got close to something.

“*Squawk!* Save Bitch he said! *Squawk!* Save Bitch he said!” Momo’s phrase caught me off-guard. Someone told him to help me? Well, that just raised the creepy factor up by ten. He flew off my shoulder, and the lizard gave me three chirps to say goodbye. She did this every time she walked me here. Looked like I landed back on the property.

I knew I’d walk right into the mansion, and then I’d have to use my head to guide me along the stone wall. Ugh, this wouldn’t be pleasant, but I got moving to not waste time.

“OCTAVIA?!” Was that Daemon’s voice? I couldn’t tell from trying to focus on my current path. Two giant hands took my shoulders from behind before guiding me to the stairs. Once we were inside, the rowdy laughter of the guys quickly silenced. The two hands made quick work of my head covering and then moved onto my bindings. I faced the venomous stares from them, but I could also taste their panic. They had been caught, and with my smirk falling on Rin, he knew shit was about to hit the fan.

“One of you better tell me exactly what happened before I wring all of your necks!” Daemon threw the rope down too hard on the table. It made a slamming sound that had everyone flinching. Yeah, he was pissed.

The seven were all statues. I noticed Lear sinking into his chair and growing pale. That movement made me pause. He might be a jerk that followed his gang's rules, but he had also been the nicest to me. Damn... Why did compassion come when I should only feel fury?

"It wasn't them, Sir," my voice cracked when I addressed him.

"Oh really?" Daemon demanded, and all the guys' jaws fell open in shock while they stared at me.

"Yeah. I made some girls mad at school. They did this last night. I couldn't sleep, so I went out for a walk. That's when I got ambushed by them."

"Give me names, Octavia," Daemon growled. *Oh shit.*

"It was too dark to see faces. They wore masks too." I shrugged and took a seat. "I'll be fine, Daemon. It's just part of being the new girl."

"Nothing is fine about that! I don't care if you're the new girl or not!" Daemon turned his attention back to the boys. "What did I tell you to do, Lear?"

The growl emanated over all of them. I watched every single pair of eyes drop in submission. Not even Rin could hold his gaze when Daemon released his alpha power.

"To protect her and make sure she settled in, Sir." Lear's stiffness told me the discipline for this type of problem wouldn't be pleasant.

"How would you grade yourself on this, huh?" Daemon's gruff voice had me quivering in my boots. I needed to make an interference play.

"Lear has done a great job of helping me fit in. He can't be on my ass all the time. I told him last night that I had plans with Lou. She canceled last minute, and he didn't know that. Lear knew the original plan, but I never updated him."

"Octavia, you don't need to be involved in this. Why don't you go upstairs

and clean up? I'll get ahold of our doctor to make a house call." Daemon waved me away. I clenched my teeth from how he viewed women and dismissed me.

"High school girls are bitches. They have been even worse since I moved to this snobbish town, but I can handle myself. Lear had nothing to do with this. I'd appreciate you not blaming him for something that couldn't be prevented," I exasperated before I stood up.

"Octavia, what happened to you last night, with your history-" I cut Daemon off before he could say anything further.

"There is nothing you should know about my history. If you do, you'll forget you ever heard anything and never bring it up again!" I shouted it and pointed my determined finger into his chest. From my moment of blind rage, I forgot about the company we were keeping.

Oops.

Thank heavens that's when the front door slammed.

"Milo Gifre! I know it was you who took my unicorn shoes!" Lou barged in and found the scene. Me looking like utter shit, Daemon hovering like a lecturing parent. Then the boys who were staring at me like they wanted to know how Daemon would finish that last statement.

"Louise, you are supposed to be at Father's house this weekend." Milo worked his jaw with a scowl at her. That's when I saw it. The pale hair they both had, the golden eyes they shared...

"Ah, Louise, how good it is to see you!" Daemon smiled at her with a warmth I wasn't familiar with.

"You too, Mr. Odium. I just came here to ask my brother where my shoes are and steal Via, but it looks like we'll be staying in today." She then turned back to Milo after taking me in. "You are supposed to be at Mom's house,

and you know she needs you there right now. This is my only break, and you're ruining it."

So, they were siblings. I think today had been the strangest yet. That was saying something, considering everything I had been through.

"I'm going to go run a bath and rest for the day." Everyone seemed to catch on that Octavia Clarke was done dealing with people.

## Chapter 3



**O**ctavia I hated being touched by doctors. The way his hands rested on me made me feel uneasy, and the way his eyes lingered on my t-shirt didn't help. Sick to my stomach, the memory stayed fresh on my mind—even with the morbid event being hours after. Now, I lashed out with my paintbrush after Dr. Baysan—yes, Lucius's daddy-dearest—assured Daemon that I would be fine with rest and fluids. After the feel of his hands, I couldn't close my eyes. Every time I did, I saw flashes of my past.

Everything around me became a trigger from my fear spiking. Before I knew it, I silently cried with each stroke of my brush. Things here were too weird to explain, and I missed my mom. Even if it was just seeing her high on the couch or working at the club, I missed her presence. It had been almost a month since we said goodbye. This distance was the longest we had been separated.

Usually, I liked my alternative music, but because my nostalgic heart missed my mom, I blasted *Air Supply*. She loved them, and I needed to



remember something good about her right now. I needed her memory to wash away the others. I wasn't even sure what I painted, but I neared the end of the last wall from how lost I found myself tonight. As the clock ticked on, I didn't notice. Too lost in my feelings and pain, I didn't know what my brush wanted.

Anger lashed out. My hurt ego lashed out. My envy for a better life lashed out. My need for true companionship lashed out. My greed to best Sevrin lashed out. The glutton for their punishment also lashed out. Last, my tiredness slowed my brush...

Blinking out of my stupor, I found the image before me to be everything and nothing all at once. The harsh strokes showed my need for release. Yet, the delicate details showed my softer side.

A collage of hidden things masked in the swirls and shapes. Pink stained the background with black doodled over it. In one corner, I drew a dead tree with an apple falling.

That held a lot of meaning. The twenty-inch pink cutout of a gun stood out in the black smudge I made around it. So did the pink bullet that aimed at the black female silhouette. She looked up to the sky in sorrow from her shape. She was similar to the one in the statue at the school. Huh, all shadow, instead of intense features, the silhouette didn't mask who I painted.

There were patterns made all around the chaos of my thoughts to mask everything I tried to hide. I also added white details with the black, and I found I sincerely adored what I had done. This was me. A mess and broken, I still found the beauty to keep me going, and this graffiti art displayed it perfectly.

*"Never go numb, Octavia..."* My mother's words hit me as I studied exactly what she meant. It would be easy to do just that with the life I lived

now. It made my mind run rampant to find the good things to remember.

A slow whistle came from behind me, jostling me enough to almost fall off the ladder I sat on. Lear sat in my doorway with his letterman on and dark-wash jeans. His hair went every direction, like he sexily rolled out of bed with everything else ready for the day. He was scanning what I had done with a look of reverence, so I hurried to wipe my tears away before he noticed. Part of me knew I'd be too vulnerable for company, but the other part of me wanted companionship. I knew I'd never escape the tormenting eyes always prying into my life. I needed to always be strong, but I still wanted to be loved.

"Wow, Octavia." Lear slowly walked into my room to take it all in. Every wall held a dozen stories to tell my secrets. I made eyes hidden in the swirls from always feeling watched, and a shattered heart sat broken in the center above my bedframe. There were details everywhere, and Lear looked for them.

"You'd give Milo a run for his money with work like this." His hand reached out to touch the gun, but he stopped himself, knowing the paint was wet. His ghostly touch followed the line of the bullet. He stopped walking when he came to the wrecked silhouette of the girl with long, wavy hair. The cutout made her naked and alone. From how I painted her brokenness, you could tell she wanted to fight but had nothing left to fight for.

"What do you want, Lear?" I asked while piling up my supplies to climb down the ladder. He came over to hold the metal tower still and also took the equipment from my hands. This gave me two to work with in order to get down easier.

His eyes never left the raw rings circling my wrists or the slices covering my hands from scraping the bark of the tree. I could see his Adam's apple

bob from how hard he swallowed. “Why did you lie? Why didn’t you tell my dad the truth?”

Down now, I craned my neck to look up at his own broken features. Of course, he wanted to have the heavy conversation now that I had calmed myself. “The simple answer would come from my feminist views. That I can handle my own problems.”

My fingers moved to where his brows creased in confusion, smoothing over the pinched skin. The urge to soothe him bested my logical thoughts to stay away after I made skin contact. I tried to swallow the lump gathering in my throat, hating that he carried burdens that didn’t belong to him. “The truth is, I don’t like to be the one who brings pain to someone else because I can see how cracked you really are... I don’t want to be the reason you shatter.”

My delicate fingers traced the details of his beautifully broken features. How his slanted eyes were heavier than normal... His lips pulled the skin around them into a deeper frown that only accented his high cheekbones...

His eyes moved to the heart I made of shattered glass above my bed. It looked like a hammer hit the center, and I could feel what it meant to him. How much it symbolized his own world. Then, in surprise, his arms moved around me, holding me to him in an embrace for both our comforts. I breathed in his heavy sandalwood smell and rested my forehead against his strong chest.

This felt right in ways I could never explain. Being in his arms, feeling guarded by someone else, having the heat of his body sate mine. It was wrong to seek out my enemy in this way. Yet, in the privacy of my room, that’s what both of us were doing.

“Tell me, are you cracked or shattered?” his voice came out small, only filling the space between us.

“Neither. Both options would mean I was whole to begin with.” Somehow, I found myself on my tippy-toes with my whisper buried in the curve of his neck. His hands were moving along my spine in relief, and I became disoriented from the sensation. Pulling back just enough to see his face, we found our lips moving toward each other. This moment drew our spirits together, to find familiarity in the arms of another, letting our pain be shared without the stories behind them coming to light.

Just as we feathered our lips in a light touch—which sent a lightning sensation down my spine—Daemon’s voice boomed from the hallway. “Lear! Where are you? I need you in my office for work!”

We jumped apart with neither of us being able to look at the other. We both wanted to pretend that didn’t just happen by the way we couldn’t make eye contact.

“Coming!” He turned for my door. That was when he found my last wall he hadn’t seen yet. I painted the target with seven rings dead center, and it took up the whole wall. His stiffening shoulders and cut off breath led me to believe he knew what it was too. Turning back to me, he tried mask what he already revealed.

“What does this one mean?” He was watching me, calculating. Somehow, Lear knew something about the seven rings.

Shrugging like I didn’t care, I waved him off. “I saw it on the internet when I searched targets.” He seemed to buy it from my nonchalant behavior, but I added more to keep him from sniffing me out. “It matched the gun across from it.”

Lear nodded and left without another word. He passed Rita as she brought in some broth and Gatorade. I went to the bathroom and cleaned up before lying in my bed to watch some movies and sleep. Rita was a demon when she

wanted to be because she wouldn't let me move from the bed until I had a nap to her liking. It felt odd having someone treat me as a mother should, even though my mother never did.

~

## **Lear**

No one moved. No one said a word as we all studied the rings Octavia had painted. All seven of us stood there in utter horror. The secrets of our fathers were now painted boldly on the wall of an innocent girl, and Rin grew displeased when he saw it.

Though, anything involving Octavia made him upset, but some of the others were only mildly frustrated by her. Me? Still stuck in awe, knowing she was better than her picture I saw that night in my father's office.

"Has your father seen this yet?" Rin grunted with his arms crossed.

"Not yet. I don't think telling him would be a good idea," I voiced my opinion. I still never told them about what I heard with what our fathers planned a week before Octavia and her mother were in that accident. An accident I knew my father orchestrated. An accident that broke her ribs and her heart.

"He'll see this at some point, Lear. Telling him now will only save you a beating," Lo chimed in. His words held merit. It would be a good idea to tell my old man before he took out his anger on me, but Octavia protected me from his violence already today. Now, I felt the need to protect her. The idea felt almost instinctual and primal.

"No. She said it was just a target to match the gun on that wall. I say, if he sees it, we stick with that. There's no proof she knows anything about that

branding.”

“You’re right. For now, we’ll leave it alone until she does something more suspicious. We’ll need to watch her a little closer just in case,” Rin instructed. His commands weren’t up for argument from him being our leader.

“Where is she now?” Luce looked out across the hall and into the room where that window displayed the absence of her car. They came over to be prepped on a job we had to go do, but all of them took notice she wasn’t here. I hated they all paid so much attention to her.

“My father sent her to a spa. He didn’t give her much of a choice from seeing how drained she got.” I shrugged. The nonchalance might be my expression, but I remained pissed at Lo and Rin for coming up with that stunt.

I had to untie her from the tree this morning. Physically and emotionally too tired to be trying, she didn’t let me see it. I wanted to disobey Rin’s orders and free her hands, along with the bag over her head, but then they’d know something was off.

All I could do? Help her little by little to survive our circle. I knew most of them were studying her to be their next prey, but I couldn’t let that happen. My only excuse to save her came from my dad wanting her around.

“Good. We leave tonight for two weeks. I’ll have extra eyes on her in our absence.” Rin picked up his duffel bag to leave her room but not before he touched the center of the circle.

A reminder to all of us behind him.

The way we were designed to be.

What he was to us as our leader.

Dead and center... His spot.

## Chapter 4



**O**ctavia

The seven Elites were gone, Lou dealt with her family crap, and I handled people at school still having it out for me. Almost two weeks had gone by, and every time I came home, Daemon waited in the foyer to see my damage that day. Torn clothes, more garbage dumped on me, some bruises from being pushed around. To say he was pissed would be an understatement. Every time, I just told him I had it under control, and that their behavior wasn't any different from the other schools I attended.

He grumbled and gripped his drink tighter while looking sharp in his suit. I found it odd he hovered more, but I think he felt like he repeatedly failed my mom. Today didn't magically change. Lou had to leave at lunch, so I didn't bother eating. Gareth, her gay cousin, traveled through Europe for whatever family crap they had going on, so I couldn't FaceTime my favorite man.

Was it sad I missed my annoyers right now? That I missed being the focal point of their attention? Some might find that incongruous, but they didn't

know what being invisible to the world felt like. Even with the negative attention they offered, I just enjoyed the responsiveness.

I was so fucked up. My mind was anywhere but here as I absently dressed down for PE. A warning chill ran down my spine as I felt eyes behind me, and this sensation usually came when Lexi Murdock entered. Sure enough, she and her group of friends were taking pictures of me in my underwear. Good thing my rib bruises healed.

“Your mouth isn’t enough?” I gave her a lifted brow in question. She glared harder, and so I did what I do best since moving here. “You sure you want to take a picture of a body you’ll never have?”

Slowly, her friends lowered their phones from knowing I spoke the truth. I might be weird and hated, but I had a body. Thanks for nothing mom.

“Just because this school doesn’t like me doesn’t mean they won’t like those. Go ahead, send them. See what happens, Lexi.” With a high battle cry, she charged me and took me down. Every time her fists slammed into my face or my body, some sick part of me liked it. The attention deficiency worked against me to provoke her even more by laughing.

Rin wasn’t here to provide the cruelty I found myself craving, and I laughed maniacally about my sick needs. She sat on my middle and kept swinging, not understanding my needs. She hated seeing my laughter, and her shrills only made me bark out the empty humor more. I felt so hollow this last week, so this became the only thing stabilizing me. I needed the pain to feel real.

Muffled from my ears pounding, I heard other voices around me. I listened to them trying to get Lexi off me, and I recognized them warning her that I didn’t fight back. None of it mattered. A darkness clouded my vision as I listened to Lexi warn me away from *her* guys.



~

A fierce headache took over when I came to. Groaning, I couldn't even open my eyes from the throbbing pain. When I did try to open them, I found they were too swollen to lift. With an echoing beep, I realized I must've been back in a hospital, and the tug on my arm told me I had an IV in place.

I exhaled in resignation. Fucking Lexi put me in the hospital because I wouldn't swing back. God, I hope someone nailed her sorry ass. If not, I would be kicking it when I could move.

"It appears everything is just cosmetic damage. No broken bones or internal bleeding. Now, she does have a concussion that will need to be watched, but she'll mostly need rest for that. I don't suggest her going to school until her tired spells wear off," I heard a man say.

Was he talking about me?

"Thank you, Lucas. I'll see to her rest." That sounded like Daemon. Opening my eyes just a crack, I found him talking to Dr. Baysan. Ah, so I did end up in the hospital. When they noticed me trying to look around, they moved to me. Like overprotective bears, they were going to demand every ounce of knowledge out of me.

"Octavia, do you remember what happened?" Dr. Baysan asked gently.

"Just the same old nonsense at the school. Usually, it's only a few hits..." I hissed when I tried using my brain power.

"A few hits?" Dr. Baysan questioned Daemon.

"She's been coming home every day with something since she got here," Daemon sighed. "She refuses to tell me who is involved. If Alexis hadn't beat her to a pulp, I would have never known it was her."

By this point, I pretended to fall back asleep. They believed it pretty quick from my head problems.

“Why are the boys letting her get hurt?” Dr. Baysan asked.

“I’ve been wondering the same thing. I think today told me more than anything that they are involved.”

“If Lexi was able to do this, it’s either under Rin’s order or out of jealousy.”

“I told Lear to watch out for her. If they’re part of this...”

“Daemon, what if the directive came from Sevrin? You know he cannot refuse the chain of command.”

“If that be the case, we are going to be having a meeting with the boys, tonight.”

“I agree. If I find out Lucius was a part of this, I’ll show him a whole new side of punishment.” Even though I pretended to be asleep, I had to swallow hard. I couldn’t imagine the suffering they’d put me through after they got a licking from their parents. Why did I feel so protective over the guys? They had only hurt me so far. It would only be right for them to get caught.

No. Something within me knew the punishment for them would be tenfold the pain I went through. I couldn’t be responsible for someone else’s hurt.

Daemon nudged me awake. I found myself being carried by one of his bodyguards to the car. The whole ride home, Daemon texted with angry fingers. He kept growling at his phone when the replies came in.

“Is everything okay?” I asked with a scratchy voice.

Daemon gazed up and grinned with a falseness that I picked up on. He still had no idea I could read right through it.

“Only some business that has to be dealt with.”

I smiled in his direction to appear as a pleasant stepdaughter. He bought it and went back to his phone. Arriving at the manor, I was once again carried

to my room and placed gently into my bed to not bother my head. Rita got put in charge of my medication schedule as she forced me to rest again. Sleep did overcome me because my head throbbed, but it didn't last long from my panic setting in. Somehow, I needed to help them, but I didn't know how.

Sneaking out, I came up with a plan to say I was trying to find Rita for more meds, if I got caught. From the top of the stairs, I watched the guys arrive with their fathers.

When Milo came in, his dad dragged an unwilling Lou behind him. Crap. Now I really had to play it up. I tried seeing their father's face, but he cloaked himself with a fedora and a raincoat with the lapels up. Why did he hide his face when he was with people he knew?

Grabbing my phone, I shot off a text telling Lou not to say anything. When she got it, she spotted me at the top of the banister. Her shoulders visibly relaxed. She must've been scared to betray her brother or her friend. I couldn't blame her for that. Something didn't sit right about the guys and their dads, so I needed to figure out what it was before I got caught up in the whirlwind. Yeah, easier said than done.

As they left for the back office, I quietly followed after them. The balls of my feet padded the floor, and my heart rate skyrocketed. If I got caught, it'd be from my heavy heartbeat and not my ninja feet.

They all went into the office, so I waited for the door to secure before going over to listen in. Making sure the hall stayed empty, I placed my ear to the wood separating us.

"Daemon, what is the meaning of this meeting?" one of the dads asked.

"This is about Lily's daughter and her safety being here."

"What's implied she's unsafe?" another dad questioned.

"She's come home beaten, covered in garbage, and her clothes are usually

torn every day since she's moved here. Today, it was Alexis who put her in the hospital. I found out through the school nurse it wasn't the first fight. The last one Octavia got blamed for, so she decided not to fight back today when Alexis assaulted her."

"Why does any of this matter? We have Lily back. The girl can leave the picture with no issues from me," a dad spoke up his unwanted opinion.

"It matters because Lily is already fragile. If she sees her daughter this way, we will lose her completely!"

"Daemon, calm down. You are over thinking this to protect Lily's feelings. You were always that way. But, given the circumstances, I think the girl is more trouble than she's worth." Someone who sounded like an older version of Rin added in his two cents.

"What are you saying, Sal?" Daemon asked quietly.

"This girl has made Lexi feel threatened. The boys will need her to complete the circle, and they can't risk angering her right now. That completion has to happen by the end of their eighteenth year, which is now. We all know we need a second candidate for that final step for Lexi to bond to them."

"You can't be serious, Sal!" Daemon sounded outraged.

"It's for the good of our boys to know where that vile girl stands in our world. It'll also put Lily right back where she belongs. I won't be defied again. It's killing two birds with one stone."

"This is wrong!" Was that Lear? "Octavia has done nothing to deserve what you are requesting of her!"

"You'll hold your tongue boy! This is the system! This is how it will be ran! Unless the majority votes against it. All in favor?"

I wish I could see who voted against me from the bile seeping up my throat.

“All against this?” More silence. “Louise, you do not have a vote, my dear.” The guy exasperated.

“She’s my closest friend, Mr. Thana. She deserves better than this room is offering! She didn’t ask for any of this!” Look at Lou standing up to a room full of bullies for me.

“Then I suggest you cut your losses now. Majority rules. Octavia Clarke will be the final step in completing the circle. You boys will not speak to her from this time on. This is not an option for you to stray from. The word is law. No one can defy it now.” I heard chairs scuffing the floor from the men standing. I ran down the hall to not get caught as my heart hammered.

I came down here to protect them, but now they planned to do something to me, and I didn’t know what it was. There would be no need to try and protect the guys because none of them would help me at the end of the day. I needed to be my own knight, and I needed to remember that. No one would come in on a white horse to save me. I wouldn’t have a Prince Charming to kiss me awake from this nightmare.

I only had me and my strength. Lou became an idle piece from having no power or voice. The only thing I could hope to gain from her would be information, and I’d be asking for it when we were alone. Still, I planned to break into Daemon’s office tonight. There would be no more waiting around to figure out this complex puzzle.

It was time to handle this myself.

## Chapter 5



**O**ctavia

In the bathroom across from my room, I tried to regain my confidence. Clenching the end of the countertop with my fingers, I took several deep breaths. A knock sounded from the door and undid all the calming motions I attempted. Knowing it would be my built-in babysitter, I moved to it to tell Rita I was fine, and that I hadn't passed out in here. Even though I had only been in here for a whopping twenty minutes.

Jerking the door open with my angry face ready to glare her down, I seethed from the annoyance. "I'm fine Rita! I didn't die!"

Though, Rita's soft face didn't stand before me. Lucius mounted in his spot with wide eyes. This told me he wasn't prepared to see the unhealthy look of my beaten face. Not an inch of my skin stayed tan. No, my flesh had been stained in dark colors and stayed swollen. Broken blood vessels spread over my cheeks and made me look diseased, mixing with the bruising. My eyes

had this Quasimodo look to them, and it made me shudder from the sight of myself in the mirror. My poor face took the brunt of the beating.

That's where Lexi struck me the most, and it said a lot as to why. She didn't like that I was pretty. I might've been a social outcast who didn't know how to maintain a relationship, but with the things of my past, I knew I had a decent face. Lucius had an amazing face that almost hurt to look at. Thank heavens my vision blurred to minimize the effect he had on me.

"Octavia..." he said to my reflection in the mirror to not speak directly to me. When he reached to cup my cheek, I flinched away. He acted as though I burned him, and a small amount of guilt ate at me. Not large enough to shadow the lies they were keeping from me, but enough to give him a small smile and a pat on the arm. Yeah, I wasn't good at this whole comforting thing.

"I'm fine." He looked like he wanted to say more but with the way his eyes wandered down the hall, I knew he wouldn't out of fear. "Have you seen Lou? Or did she already leave?"

My question should move the conversation onto something productive that didn't include whatever they had planned for me. He moved back to my reflection. Man, he took that 'don't speak to her' rule to heart!

"She's in your room, I believe." I smiled gingerly with a nod of thanks while I walked around him. He gripped my arm right when my ear sat by his lips. His Indian looks were highlighted under the light we were by. "I'm sorry."

Two words he spoke to the ground between us. Two simple things that carried no weight unless action followed. Yet, by his devastated tone, I knew Lucius actually meant it. He couldn't change it, but he meant it.

Whatever power Rin and his dad had, it must've been enough for these men

to hurt innocent people. I hated that they were all stuck in whatever business they created. In so deep, they inflicted pain on everyone around them. I just squeezed his bicep in response. I didn't know how to react to that with everything I knew because I still didn't know enough. Knowledge would be key in this game. The bits I had weren't enough to go off of.

Dashing to my room, I found Lou pacing my floors with terror written all over her face. Once she saw me, her hands covered her gasping mouth and tears formed in her eyes.

“Via, I'm so sorry I left school today. Had I stayed-”

“Woah, Lou! This happened in the locker room after lunch. Lexi knew I'd be alone that period. Even if you were at school, it would've happened.” I walked to my bed and took a seat. She followed.

“Sooo... Were you listening in?” She hinted at me to start the conversation.

“Yeah, but I think it confused me more. What did Rin's dad mean when he said I'd be the final step for Lexi?”

Lou looked guilty as she thwittled her thumbs like little knives fighting. “Via, there're things I can't say. Like literally cannot talk about. You have to find out for yourself, and I can help you along, but I can't say it.”

“Why? If you're already helping me, why not just tell me?”

“I've been sworn to silence by Salvatore Thana. Rin's dad is the most ruthless of the bunch. He's their circle's ringleader, just as his son will be. His word is law in our world. But... I've only been silenced by mouth, just like the guys were tonight. I can communicate other ways without breaking the rules.”

“Are you afraid of what he'll do if you do speak?”

“Something like that.” She looked to the floor. “Look, I know I didn't tell you Milo was my brother, and I haven't been around enough to gain your



trust. But Via? I want you to survive this. I want you to beat what Sal has planned for you.”

“Why didn’t you tell me Milo was your brother?”

“It’s super complicated, but I’ll give you the abridged version. We’re twins. He was born first and was the male. My father only wanted one heir and, in this lifestyle, the moms of the boys aren’t married to our dads. They get set up to live perfectly nearby for being the broodmare to the heir of one of the seven. Magnus Gifre took the one he wanted and left me set up with my mom. He only calls if he needs to keep his image up because everyone knows I’m his daughter.”

“That sounds...” I winced, unable to come up with the proper word for it. “I’m not sure if me never knowing who my dad was is worse, or if having a father not claim me is. I guess we both got screwed over in that department.”

“Yeah well, Milo took after our dad. He doesn’t want anyone to know we’re siblings, but he likes to ruin my dates whenever he can.”

“No offense, but he’s a giant dick.”

She snorted. “Like that would offend me. I completely agree. With my mom getting sick, he has only visited her once, and I see how sad it makes her when he doesn’t show up.”

“Is she going to be okay?” I hadn’t touched the subject about her family emergency, but now that I knew her mom caught something, my heart couldn’t handle it.

“It’s one of those things I can’t tell you about, and I don’t know. Things have been thrown off balance. Until the new circle forms, it will be chaos.”

“What does the circle have to do with your mom being sick?”

“Everything. That’s why you need to figure out this puzzle.”

I nodded and then stood up from my bed. Rita would have dinner almost

ready, and we had some planning to do.

“Let’s go eat. Can you stay tonight? It’s time we go all *Nancy Drew* on Daemon’s office. Something has to be in there.”

“I already told my mom I would be here tonight.” She beamed as we headed to the dining room. Lou made all of this just a little easier to bear, even if she couldn’t tell me straight what they meant in that meeting. She gave me a hug as we walked down the stairs, and I didn’t think I’d ever get used to how sweet she kept being.

In the living room, we found most of the guys huddled over the coffee table. It seemed their fearless leader was the only one absent. They all fell quiet when they heard our footsteps descending, and then they were all staring at my face. Usually, Lear and Lucius showed the only remorse, but this time, all of them were.

Even Milo looked affronted by my beaten face. Hating their sympathy after everything, I turned to go down the hall on the other side of the stairs. Only I didn’t make it around the corner. Nope, I crashed into a giant chest. Both Rin and I grunted from the force, and I had to shake my head out of the stupor that came over me. His jaw ticked when he analyzed my face. That single twitch told me he noticed, but he dismissed me just as fast.

“Let’s go,” he growled out to his men. I comprehended their all black attire as they stood. Now why would they need that at this time of night? We watched them storm out and then went to eat. That’s when we found out Daemon would be gone for the night as well. Everything set up perfectly for what we needed to do.

Once the lights turned down, we also dressed in black to go sleuthing. Though, I highly doubted wherever the boys were going was to simply investigate an office. They looked more like secret black OP agents about to

go take down some criminals. Shivering, I already knew I didn't want to learn what they did for their crooked fathers' businesses because they wouldn't be the heroes of the story.

Lou and I moved down the hall in stealth mode with all the lights turned down, but her phone went off. We both leapt a good foot in the air from the sound of Katy Perry's voice singing *I Kissed a Girl*. When her screen became a beacon, she quickly swiped for us to see Gare rubbing his sleepy eyes awake. The glow of the screen made our faces shadowed, so he could only see our prominent features. He smiled at us, and his morning look could only be described as hot as hell for my gay friend.

"Please say I'm on time for this spelunking trip?" Gareth's voice held a raspy tone from probably snoring.

Lou gasped and applauded him a little bit. "Seriously! It's like you have a sixth sense, Gare! We just left her room to start!"

These two cousins were way closer than Lou appeared to be with her twin brother. Ever since Gare pretended to be my boyfriend, we had been closer too, so it must've been his charm that eased me into relaxing around him. It made me sad he stayed in Europe longer. Thinking about him made me remember Lou's ringtone.

"You have a gay man's ringtone set up as *I Kissed a Girl*?" I snorted.

Lou's little bubble-gum demonic side came out as she mischievously smirked. "Oh, come on! It's brilliant! '*I kissed a girl and I liked it*'? When would a gay man ever say those words? That's what makes it so funny!"

We had been walking to the stairs as we shared a laugh with her whispered excitement. Well, that was until something dawned on me.

"Heyyy...he kissed me!" I rustled and gave both a pointed look with my middle finger salute. They lost it to their hysteria even more as I grumbled

about being an amazing kisser. The laughter died off the further we moved down the dark corridor. Creepy as hell, we didn't want to be wandering it during this time of night.

Maybe, our illicit activities caused the tension to spread goosebumps over my skin because something almost evil spread down my tailbone. The reaction expanded over my flesh. Gulping, we moved on to his office, and when I eased the knob, I found the dang thing locked. Releasing a breath, I cursed for only us to hear.

“Hold my phone,” Lou tossed Gare's face at me as she worked out a bobby pin from her half-up bun.

Turning Gare and shining a light on our little Virgin Mary, we watched her pick a lock in utter shock. Had someone told me I'd be watching Lou do that today, I would've laughed in their face from knowing my goodie-two-shoed friend. I guess I didn't know her as well as I thought. Gare and I watched the door swing open with ease. She nodded, facing the door, with her hands on her hips to show she did a job well done.

“Forty-three seconds flat. Not my fastest time, but not my worst,” she praised herself. Turning to see my gaping mouth—I could only assume a similar look sat on Gare's face—her brows drew together. “What?”

I shook my head with a little giggle. “Where does Mother Teresa go to learn how to pick a lock?”

“My mom.” She shrugged and opened the door fully for me to enter first. “After you.”

Not a lick of light showed inside. Not even moonlight from there being no windows, and the idea of working in a fully closed box gave me a sense of claustrophobia. Gulping, I swallowed my steady fear, wandering into the

darkness. We better find something good as I fought my intuition. That little inkling inside my soul told me to turn around.

## Chapter 6



**O**ctavia

Okay, not as bad as I expected in this office. It looked like a giant, second living area when the light switched on. Four couches made up the left end while the actual office sat on the right side on a raised floor. An unlit fireplace sat on the furthest wall by the seating, and a rich mahogany color decorated the room. Some forest green tapestries hung around the walls like those old Scottish family crests. Actually, that's exactly what it appeared to be with golden threads writing something out in Greek and making an 'X' behind it.

Something tugged at a memory inside my head, but I had to focus on the task we were doing now. We had to hurry, so I kept repeating that to myself because I was terrified of being caught. I also hated enclosed spaces that didn't have an immediate exit like the door we relocked just in case someone came. It would give us an extra second to hide if we needed to. Trying to

control my breathing, I moved to his desk first and began rifling through the stack of papers on top. There had to be something somewhere...

Lou moved across the room toward the bookcase to see if there were any titles that might stand out. She couldn't tell me whatever was going on, but she could 'hand' something to me to help me figure it out on my own. Yeah, I could tell she had blurred that line a long time ago because she played this field many times. I put my money on her prick of a father teaching her, but it bothered me that I never got a good look at him.

Pondering that meeting, I wondered what the guy had over her head that kept her silent. It had to be good for all of them to blindly follow Sal. Studying my friend brought me a small smile from her exaggerated voice and movements. I could hear her and Gare whispering to not alert the staff we had broken in. Of course, they were arguing over how to go through the books. She just wanted to read the spines, but he told her if anything good was in it, it would have a false cover. Thank heavens there were only two rows of books for her to lift the covers off of. I exhaled when she dragged her finger deliberately just to piss off her cousin.

"Lou?" She turned to me, but before I could finish my thought, my eyes were drawn to the light between her cleavage. Only the camera sat above the hem of her shirt, but I could see the outline of Gare's face through the thin fabric of her top. "Is-Do you have Gareth between your boobs?"

She gave me an extra-large eye roll and then gave me jazz hands, and I could see Gare giving me the 'you're stupid' look on top of that. You'd think these two were the twins, not her and Milo. "I might need both of my hands. Plus, he isn't seeing anything important because my sports bra has him supported to face the other way."

"So, you're using your boob canyon to carry him around?" I couldn't keep

the humor out of my tone.

She scoffed, “Please. You have the boob canyon. I have boob speedbumps.”

Gareth was snorting at that. “Yeah, but they are the bumps to a long highway to Hell. Have you seen your legs?”

“So true!” I added. I had always been envious of those legs on her.

“Let’s just get back to work so we can get out of this creepy place.” Lou shivered and finally began removing the covers to see the actual books. I was going through the drawers, but not finding much that would lead me to figuring this all out. Moving to Lou after a wasted thirty minutes, I decided to help her out. I went to the opposite end of the shelf to start searching.

“You don’t think he’ll dust for prints, do you?” Lou’s eyes went wide while staring at the book in her hands and then her fingertips.

“This isn’t CSI, Lou. I highly doubt he’ll run anything for prints. Now, get back to work. We have two months until the new year, but who knows when they plan to actually hold that ceremony-thingy.”

She bobbed her chin with determination as we went through the books. Removing a cover about seven books in, I found something from my childhood I had almost forgotten about until that black butterfly appeared. It was an omen book like the one my mother owned a long time ago. I flipped through the pages to see it was identical to the one she once had. From the notes in the margins to the dog-eared pages... It was my mother’s book.

Some might think he grabbed it when I moved in, but they didn’t know this book went missing when we moved from Texas to New Mexico, when I was almost twelve. The move happened right after things had transpired with me, so my mom had been in a rush to get out. How in heck’s name did he end up with it when we had forgotten it? I knew my mom had tried finding it when



we reestablished in New Mexico. She had begged me to tell her I remembered to grab it, and that I was pulling her leg by hiding it. Of course, I couldn't lie to her. During that year of my life, she became the most paranoid I had ever seen her be. Watching the windows, locking all the doors, and even banning cellphones.

I was still flipping through it when the door's handle jiggled like someone wanted to come in. Clearly, they were unlocking the knob. Lou and I took off to the desk, but she tripped on the step up to the higher level. Face planting with a huff, I gripped her arm and yanked her behind the desk. She looked like a beached whale flopping around. I didn't look much better while trying to jerk her around. She finally got up, and we somehow managed to squeeze against each other underneath the wood. Heaving, our chests met with me on bottom in this intimate position. Her knees were also digging into my crotch, but we couldn't move as we listened to Daemon enter.

"Lucas," Daemon sighed. I knew him to be Lucius's dad now. Putting his phone on speaker, he tossed it onto his desk. We could hear the echo through the wood above our heads.

*Please don't sit down at the desk...* I prayed.

"The boys turn eighteen next week, Daemon. Sal is pushing to have all of this done by November."

"We need to hold off until I find a way!" Daemon roared. I peeked through the little crack near the floor and found him pouring himself a scotch at the wet bar across the room. Huh, how did I miss that in the corner?

"Have you thought that maybe this is the way it has to be? It'll be easier to just let it happen," Lucas pleaded. Daemon rested his forearms on the bar's surface and then scrubbed his face while looking vacantly across the room.

He held the eyes of someone truly tortured as the years of tiredness showed in his heavy features.

“And Lily? Will you honestly be able to live with yourself seeing her hurt every single day?”

“You’re growing soft, old man. Lily was already hurt before she left us. We made sure of that.” It sounded as though Lucas regretted whatever happened with my mom.

“What we did to her then won’t even compare to this, and you know it. How would you handle Sal using Lucius for that role out of punishment?”

“He just might if you don’t stop this nonsense!” Lucas bellowed. It caused Lou and me to flinch. He cleared his throat while bringing down his booming voice. “My son is all I have left. If the choice comes, Lily’s daughter will be thrown to the wolves, no questions asked. I will always protect my son, and you should be doing the same.”

Daemon heaved an exhale and nodded. “You’re right. Our sons need to come first. My attempt at redemption would’ve never won her back, anyway.”

“You were always the sickest fool among us. Hurting her with your whores and then trying to buy her back into your bed. No wonder she became a prostitute herself.” Lucas had the audacity to laugh.

“We both know she did the drugs and the job to block her essence. That toxic environment is what helped her evade us for so long.”

A muffled sound came over the phone. “Hey, Sal is here with the boys. Apparently, Rin wanted the rules to change when it came to avoiding your stepdaughter. Something about if he doesn’t talk to her and pick on her, she’ll know something is off.”

“What’s the new rule?” Daemon asked.

“We all actively avoid her but answer if it’s needed to ease her into a false comfort. He says you can be as charming and nice as you need to help pacify her. Sal is also encouraging their cruelty toward her. You know his rage issues... Now, I gotta go. They just brought in the traitor, and they’ll need me to play doctor when they’re breaking every finger after pulling off his nails.”

Both men chuckled deeply as I grew more disturbed. Swallowing the rising bile in my throat, even Lou tried not to cry. Gare, who was getting an eyeful of me, must’ve muted his end for no background noise to come through. Smart man.

Daemon came for his phone and then with his tumbler, he left the room. We waited for the door to click and the retreating footsteps to grow faint before we came out from under the desk. Crammed, it took us a few minutes to untangle, but we did it with stiff joints. At our movement, Gare got back on the line with his sound.

“LOUISE GIFRE! You failed to mention this was why we were trying to save her!” Gareth paced his room and cursed at the floor while stomping his foot. He opened his mouth to say something but nothing came out. Then, just like my mom in the hospital, he began having a coughing fit that had him falling to the floor in distress. It took him a minute to regain composure, but once he did, he had a solemn look that couldn’t be good news for me.

“He’s made it law, hasn’t he?” His voice went quieter, knowing something I didn’t. Lou just nodded while letting those tears fall.

I cleared my throat and waved my mother’s book. “Well, we got a small clue. This was my mother’s and she had it after having me. Someone got it about six years ago when we fled Texas.”

“A book?” Lou whimpered in confusion. Damn, she was such a gentle soul.

“It’s about omens. I read it when I was younger. I had a bad omen the night

they pretended to kidnap you. It was a black butterfly that usually means the end is near. You know, a white caterpillar means a new beginning, a silver cocoon means change, and a black butterfly means the end.”

They both ignored my knowledge of omens with their blank stares. Lou gasped and snapped her fingers to change the topic. “So, maybe Daemon hid more clues in other books? We can check his library?”

“There’s a library in this place?” I asked from truly not knowing. Neither man in this house looked like avid readers, so hearing about a library had me tripping over my feet.

“Yeah. We’ll head there now. Getting caught in there won’t be as big of a deal as in here.” Lou sprinted to the door, and we snuck back out with no issues.

Still running, we sprinted down to the very end of the hall where a set of double doors stood out. We entered and though it wasn’t the size of Belle’s in *Beauty and the Beast*, it would be perfect for me. Quaint, it had little nooks in the bay windows with window seats in a grey tone. The grey had been accented by a sage green on the walls. White shelves filled the sides and the windows sat between them on the far wall.

“Wow.” I took it in with my mouth gaping open at the serene feeling that overcame me.

“Your mother designed this room.” A feminine voice in the corner had us both jumping out of our skin. It also had Gare shrieking like a girl on the phone.

Rita came out of the shadows holding a book in the crook of her elbow. Her free fingers slid over the shelves and spines of the books as she walked to us in her night attire. Creepily, she was even holding a candle.

“Some might say the books in the library are the most important thing.”

Rita spoke vaguely, knowing I'd catch on.

"But you don't agree," I stated more than asked, hearing the smile in her voice.

"No. I believe the souvenirs decorating this place hold the most value. That's where the most important things are in a room, displaying something else, but books have two covers in this room." She moved to the door with a knowing smirk. "Night girls."

We were too speechless to reply. It wasn't until the two doors clicked shut that we snapped out of our haze.

"Oh-kay... That wasn't strange at all and like, no help," Lou spoke with a disturbed chuckle.

My eyes were already scanning the room from the biggest clue anyone could give. And here I thought Lou was a pro. Compared to what Rita just did, she's a silly little girl. Gold trinkets sat proudly on some of the smaller shelves. A beer stein that had to have come from Germany, Polish pottery, wooden shoes from Holland... and a black Chinese vase painted with a little village on it. Cherry blossoms blew all over the stout vase from how they were painted over the river. Seeing this triggered the words my mom said to me back at the hospital.

She tried to warn me but then coughed like Gareth just had. That's when she told me the story about the hidden village. She wasn't delusional. She was trying to give me a clue.

"I wouldn't say that," I whispered and moved to the beautiful piece wondering what secret it could tell me. Lifting it, I felt something shift inside of it. Lou walked to be by me as she let Gare see too. They were confused about what led me to it.

"I think my mom couldn't tell me the truth like you guys. When she tried,

she coughed like Gare did. Instead, she told me this story about a village a man took her to in China. Where a river ran through the village and cherry blossoms floated in the breeze. She also mentioned she was glad to have souvenirs to remember it. She wasn't rambling from insanity. She was giving me a clue!"

"Well, shit. What's in there?" Lou's eyes were wide. I tipped it upside down and found a small, pocket-sized, leather book. There were neat words scribbled inside of it, and I knew then it was a journal of some kind.

"Looks like I've got some reading to do."

## Chapter 7



**O**ctavia

May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1701

*The ball was most interesting tonight. The guests in attendance thought it'd be a simple night where the eligible elites would claim a lady to court. This was how every season worked with a ball held every weekend for a suitor to claim a lady who had just come of age.*

*None of them knew it was to see which bloodline would be chosen to bond with them... The top bachelors were looking for a certain woman to claim them all. Five of the ladies in waiting were picked to move on. I too found myself to be one. Even though it wasn't for the physical looks of us they truly desired, I still felt their hungry eyes on me all night.*

*If their stares alone determined the winner, it would come down between Amora and myself. She was opposite to my person with her blonde hair and slender body.*

*Even with our tailored skirts and bustled dresses, our corsets gave them an idea of what we had to offer. It intrigued me to follow their glances to the women they so rudely brushed off. Still, I have to keep a sound mind for the trials aren't over yet.*

*Mother tells me I need to do everything I can to win this title. That there would be no greater honor for our family's security and future wealth. Part of me wishes I could see it her way, yet I always wanted to marry for love. There would be none of that now. Not being this far into their inner-weavings of living.*

*Every girl who was with me tonight would never know normal again. We would be given to their generals if not chosen by the eight princes. I didn't know how to feel about that.*

*Dancing with Levi showed me there might be promise among the men. Boaz and Manfred also doted on me, knowing I might be the one courted by them all. I liked their attention. They simply made me blush with their grins alone. My tummy tightened with a desire I never knew could be possible.*

*Maybe being chosen wouldn't be so bad... Maybe I might find myself in love with them all as my mother desired.*

*-P*

“Miss Clarke?” I looked up from the diary I hid in my Chemistry textbook at school.

Daemon begged me to stay home for the rest of the week, but I needed out. I needed new air to breathe while getting new steps of this puzzle solved. Three days holed up in my room with only Rita bringing me things was miserable. Thursday now, I grew more than ready for their sneers.



Who cared about my face at this point? People were going to start naming their own bruises after me. Beau tried leaning over my shoulder to see what held my attention knowing it wouldn't be what we were studying. Quickly slamming my book shut, I heard him growl intangible things.

“Miss Clarke? Are you paying attention?” Mr. Gram our TA led the discussion on balancing equations.

I batted my swollen eyes and found myself winning the sympathy card from him before using words. Not that he would give me a hard time anyways with me knowing what he did after lunch with Fiona.

“Sorry. My medication makes me a little drowsy.”

That was all the info he needed to move on. Sighing, I wanted to keep reading to see what else this ‘P’ person could tell me. I knew this would hold a few answers, but I couldn't let the guys see it.

If they found out I was working to unravel their life, they'd destroy this book. It made it hard to get any pages read from them still watching me like a hawk. Last night, I read the first few entries where P talks about her childhood in England, and she was only fifteen at the time of this change.

There were territories over there that were ruled by certain families. After some wars and plagues, they were tired of losing their people. These rulers came together and found a plan to save their bloodlines from the sickness and bloodshed. P didn't know what that plan was yet, but hopefully, she could tell me what set these elites apart from everyone else. I needed to know more.

“Mr. Goodman?” I walked up to my actual teacher at his desk.

“Yes, Miss Clarke?”

“Can I go see the nurse? My head is hurting, and Fiona has my medicine. You know, school policy and all.” I smiled timidly. He waved me off to not hear anymore.

“Mr. Gram can take you down to make sure you’re okay.” He said and stood to take over from being bored just watching. Mr. Gram held the door open for me, but he was focused on something in the hallway.

Turning just a little as I moved to follow, I found Beau glaring at me. I did what I do best. I flipped him off and left the room without our teacher even seeing. Beau did though, and I loved pissing him off, knowing how much it bothered him. Sometimes I wondered if he got upset that I didn’t beg him to sleep with me again, or maybe that I wasn’t as shattered as he had hoped I’d be by his deceit. Either way, being strong drove him up the wall, and that was a win in my book.

When I met Mr. Gram in the hall, I found the blonde who had his attention. Lou helped hang a banner by the gym. She was between the ladders, standing on her tippy toes in the middle of the hall in her flowy skirt. giving orders. Mr. Gram ogled her legs. She avoided him since I told her about him and Fiona hooking up in the nurse’s station. I hated seeing her so down about the guy she liked, but it was clear he still had a thing for her too.

Remembering what she told me in my mom’s library, I remained stunned. Sunday would start October, and it was also Rin’s birthday. Lucius, Lear, Aster, Milo, Beau, and Bellamy’s fell in order the days after. The weirdness shouldn’t mean anything, but my birthday fell on October eighth, a day after Bellamy’s.

“She turns eighteen next week.” I tried not to grin too hard when he jumped and quickly looked away when I spoke.

Clearing his throat, he waved his hand for us to walk down to Fiona’s room. Lou turned just then and saw me walking with Mr. Gram. The smile that had lit her face dimmed just a little, but as Mr. Gram kept his attention away, I smirked at her. Pointing to him, I then pointed to my eyes and then at

her while displaying my legs. Hopefully, she got what I tried to say as I walked backward without him seeing me shimmy. When she blushed and bit her bottom lip, I think she got the memo.

Even though it would be wrong for a student and a teacher to have a relationship, that hadn't stopped the rest of the student body from partaking of the forbidden fruits. Though a small part of me didn't want to ruin things with him and Fiona, Lou needed to be happy too. Unsure where this put me on the dick-move scale, I'd let them figure it out.

As we got to Fiona's office, she busied herself with Rin. He lied back on the examining table. Trying to not be seen, I moved to my pills and took two of them. She saw me and smiled, knowing I didn't want to deal with the ass that she tended to. Of course, Mr. Gram had to ruin my quick escape plan.

"Fiona, can we talk out in the hall for a minute?" Oh, come on! He should know by now leaving me alone with Rin signed one of our death warrants. Speaking of the dick, his eyes immediately popped open and found me in the room with him. He smirked, seeing me trying to sneak out.

Fiona gave me a guilty look to stay in here for them to have a private moment, and I rolled my eyes at the absurd request. One of us would be dead within the next two minutes. Or we'd be fucking... We couldn't rule out that one from the sexual tension that stayed thick between us. Fight or fuck. We both would do either option in spite of each other.

"Stay flat, Sevrin. Your head needs to be examined more," Fiona ordered and then left me alone with the hungry shark. Yeah, this was safe for me right now.

"Has the Kitten been too scared to come out and play?" he taunted. I bit the inside of my cheek to keep my mouth at bay. "Figured you'd be that easy to break."

I snorted—which, of course, made him glare deeper at me—and rolled my eyes. “You haven’t even been here. If I was scared of you, I’d be pissing my pants and hightailing it out of here. Just because I don’t want to be annoyed by you doesn’t mean I’m weak. It means I have a headache. You know, that your girlfriend inflicted.”

“Are you jealous of Lexi?” Rin sat now with a devilish grin.

“It’s hard to be jealous of someone who gets passed around seven guys while they all fuck other people.” I lifted a shoulder to show my indifference. He didn’t need to know I might have thought about all of them a few times when I got myself off.

Well, and the fact I’d seen an even deeper side to Lear that had me wanting to be closer to him. Yeah, I was fucked up for wanting some cuddle-time with my stepbrother. It wasn’t like I could control my va-jay-jay and her zinging me to have sex with the wrong people. Rin grew quiet, and it wasn’t because he was letting me have the last words. No, this was deadly silence. I hurried and decided to push him farther before he spoke again.

I loved pissing him off; even if it might kill me.

“It’s okay to want me, Sevrin. All of you guys can’t stop checking me out, staring at me all day long... I mean, I get it. I have a fantastic body and all.”

“I’m not attracted to you,” he growled. I smirked harder.

“Liar.” He didn’t know I could sense his dishonesty, but he grew pissed I called him out over it.

Ignoring Fiona’s orders, Rin got up and walked to me. This gave me a view of the other side of his head that now had a harsh gash following his jaw. It had been stitched, so I wondered if Fiona did that for him instead of calling an ambulance.

Rin caged me against the door and forced our eyes to stay locked. Neither

of us were willing to back down from the stare-off. “Okay Kitten. You caught me. I want to fuck you until your mind is completely lost on everything else around you. I want to make you come while you scream my name because it’ll be the only word left in your vocabulary. I’ll take you harder than anyone ever has... Want to know why?”

Dear God, what was wrong with me? I wanted him to show me now. I wanted to be banged into the oblivion he offered me.

“Because when I’m done with you, you’ll be begging me for more, but I won’t give it. I hate you so much that it turns me on to think of me turning you away after ruining you for anyone else. I’m hard right now just seeing those bruises ruining your pretty face. If I would have been the one hitting you, I would’ve come in my pants from the excitement.”

He thrust himself against me while I felt the honesty in his words. Rin truly did hate me for things I’d never understand, but I still couldn’t let him win this. Going down, his eyes feasted on the pebbling of my nipples through my bra. His mouth buried in my neck as he released a deadly growl. My back arched off the door as his hands clamped my hips to work our gyrating pelvises together.

I hated him just as much as he hated me, but I felt something with Rin that wasn’t like the others. It remained toxic and deadly, but I couldn’t stop when it came to him. Our lips feathered with our shortened breath. My fist gripped his dark hair to yank his head to the side for my words to meet his ear. He stood too tall to do it normally. Well, that’s what I told myself while pulling his hair and loving his quiet cursing.

“The feeling is mutual, Sevrin. You might turn me on, but there’s no substance to you for me to want more than a quick fuck.” I bit his earlobe while my nails dragged temptingly down his chest. He hissed exactly like I

wanted him to, but before I could push him away and win, the door opened behind me.

With it, we went tumbling backward as Rin landed on top of me. I groaned from taking his weight.

“Sevrin Thana! I told you to stay in that bed, so you had better go lay down!” Fiona huffed as she and Mr. Gram stared down at our position. With one last thrust right into the apex of my thighs, Rin got up with a horrible smirk that melted my insides. I hated the effect he had on me, but I hated the fact that he hated me more. Yeah, I was a masochist for his brand of pain. I stayed so sick in the head that I practically begged him to finish his threat.

## Chapter 8



**O**ctavia

Almost back to class, someone pushed into me from the side. With a huff, I found myself flying into the women’s bathroom and yelping when my ass crashed to the tiled floor. Above me, I found Beau walking back and forth in front of me, becoming a man going mad right before my eyes. He even muttered to himself while yanking on the ends of his auburn hair. He removed his glasses and set them on the counter before rubbing his eyes like he could change his vision. After, he jabbed his finger in my direction accusingly.

“What have you done to me?” A mere cry but one that had a bite to it.

“What?” I sat in a daze as he stood above me.

What was up with him? He humiliated me over a month ago, and now he shoved me into a bathroom? Forcing me to listen to his ramblings about him becoming a man on the verge of needing a white room.

“You know perfectly well what, V!” he shouted and then punched the wall. I didn’t like that he felt he could use that nickname still. That nickname came from the man he pretended to be. A man that was as fictional as my other personalities just to get into my pants as fast as possible.

“No, I really don’t, B!” I tossed back with all the venom I could muster. I got to my feet to square off with the sexy-nerd that still turned me on more than I cared to admit. Damn him and his Clark Kent vibe.

Something had to be really wrong with me. I still wanted the man who made me into an easy bet with his friends. I craved his attention just as much as Rin’s, but I hated myself even more for acknowledging those feelings in this weakened moment. I blamed Rin messing with my head in Fiona’s office. Usually, after I faced off with one of them, I had time to collect myself afterward. I had time to lick my wounds.

This, this just added to the cruel torture from Rin arousing me with our hateship because being with Beau in an enclosed room escalated it. Why the fuck did they have to look like Greek Gods reincarnated?

“You broke my dick!” At his outburst, I yanked out of my waning thoughts just as three girls walked in and came to an abrupt stop. Yeah, I highly doubt anyone planned on hearing the manwhore named Beau Revell admit Octavia Clarke broke his dick.

I scoffed at the absurdity. “And how did I break your dick? Was I so good no girl can compare?” I arched my brow at him as he stammered to come up with a reply.

He sputtered with some spit and punched the wall again. Flipping around, he grabbed one of the girls who gawked at this weirdness. Shoving her to her knees, the girl already had her hands working his pants down with no argument on her end.



Wow. They really were the elites, and every girl played a sex puppet at their disposal. I shivered from the repulse of it all, and yet, I still wanted them to want me too. Not that I would drop to my knees as she did. No, I wouldn't go public with any of my feelings of psychotic arousal.

Beau ordered the other two girls to kiss and touch each other as he watched for a minute. Most guys loved the sight of a woman loving on another, but when Beau pulled out his dick with his glare on me, I winced. He was as limp as an overcooked noodle. He shoved the soft shaft in the girl's mouth, trying to enjoy the pleasure the other two were giving each other. He pumped his hips and slammed into her mouth, but even I could see his member bunched up instead of getting longer.

Beau literally couldn't get hard while face-fucking a hot little teen and watching two girls go at it. Unable to help myself from the pull I felt towards him, my feet lifted in timid steps. Moving to where they connected, I let my trembling fingers grip him where he met her mouth.

Groaning with new excitement, Beau moved faster, looking at where my hand guided him into her mouth. Stiffening, the second I joined in and aided his lust, he could get it up again. I was like his personal Viagra.

"Finally," he breathed while moving faster to reach that ecstasy he had been craving. "Who did you use to curse me?"

I figured he got too lost in his lust and just threw the blame by that line because he enjoyed being thoroughly pleased. Though I liked the sight of him losing control, I also hated it. Flashbacks of our night together came back with how all the guys stood and laughed at me... I couldn't forget the torment he inflicted. Too bad for him, I had been known to hold a grudge.

Smiling when I felt his balls tighten, I let go of his dick and watched how almost immediately he softened like butter in a microwave. In utter

frustration, Beau turned his angry eyes back to me.

“Why the fuck would you do that? Finish me, V! I haven’t come in a month because of you!”

Shrugging I moved to the door and then looked back at him. “Karma’s a bitch, huh? Maybe next time you’ll think twice before fucking with me.”

“Hey! Wait!” He was tugging up his pants, but his hands were shaking too hard to do them up fast enough to catch me.

“Enjoy your blue balls!” I called back and left. Damn, that moment felt too good to be true. Being too high to care, I found Lou in the hall again. Done with today, it was still only first period.

Something frustrated her too. The student body members weren’t listening to her ideas, and I figured out why quickly. Shocker, her brother just had to be the student body president. Lear stood as his VP. Mr. CEO and Mr. QB charming the school.

“What would you say to a morning of lunch and skipping school?” I asked while holding out my hand for her to grab. It had been too long since we had time to bond. She instantly took mine with relief washing over her face. “I’d say you’re just what my doctor ordered.”

We hurried to my car that Daemon bought me. The pink Mini Cooper still made me turn up my nose. But hey, at least I didn’t have to buy it. When we arrived at the mall, the early hour made it nearly dead. Yeah, this would be better than dealing with the guys and skanks that glared at me.

With only a few people wandering around and the employees working, there were fewer eyes staring at my battered face. Still, the eyes on me did make me agitated. After hours of shopping for Lou’s retail therapy, I carried most of her bags. Not that I minded because I could tell she needed the distraction just as much as I did.

We were relaxing in the food court when I noticed one of the many televisions playing the news. Something called me to pay attention to whatever broadcasted. I raised my chicken strip to my mouth, but I couldn't chew the piece I bit.

'BREAKING NEWS: THE MODERN BONNIE HAS BEEN CAUGHT. OFFICIALS ARE STILL LOOKING FOR HER PARTNER WE'VE BEEN CALLING CLYDE.'

When her picture came up, I lost all the air within my lungs, but I couldn't refill them as I choked on the chicken. Lou still chatted, but her words mixed with the background noise. As soon as the Hispanic beauty appeared, a cold chill ran down my spine. All the color left my face as Lou snapped her hand in my face to get my attention.

"It's her," I whispered from the shock.

"Who? Via, you aren't making any sense." Lou looked at me in confusion, but all I could do was point at the TV.

She followed my finger and rolled her eyes.

"Yeah, the bank robber they've been hunting for months. They finally caught her. So, why do you look like you've seen a ghost?"

"Because I am, or I think I am..." I sighed and then began talking my own form of crazy. "Have you ever seen something you were sure was only a dream and then it was real?"

"Not even a little bit. Via, what's going on? You can tell me anything. You know that." It was true. Lou had been devoted to helping me, but this secret didn't form from fearing her help. It came from her abandoning me when she found out how sick in the head I became.

"Things happened to me right before I turned twelve. Things that messed me up, and I never got help for. A year after, I started having these sick

dreams about being different men killing people... All of my dream men have a target tattoo on their forearms with different colors filled in to mark which one I am. The woman on the TV killed Fredrick in the woods because he wanted to stop stealing. She was too greedy and killed him to keep going, and this was about a month ago.”

Lou’s eyes were saucers but not from fear of me. No, this resembled shock... Like she knew something...

I gasped when it dawned on me. “Do these dreams have to do with whatever it is you can’t tell me?” To my question, she nodded and looked like she was ready to vomit.

“Via, I need you to tell me anything else that might be strange about you to the human world.” The way she said human world made it sound like we were from a different planet.

I shrugged, telling her my last secret that seemed to be odd about me. “I can tell when people are lying.”

She sipped her drink, but it sputtered out everywhere when her eyes went large. If she kept up her wide-eyed look, I feared her face might get stuck that way. She trembled but regained herself while shaking her head. She kept repeating ‘this can’t be true... this can’t be real’.

“What, Lou? What are you not telling me?” She tapped her finger to her lower lip. Instead of answering me, she asked something else.

“What has that journal told you?”

“Some girl named P was picked by a group of guys to compete for them. She and five others are seeing if their bloodline can bond with theirs?” I shrugged. “I have no idea what she means by that, but I’m only a few entries in. The guys are always near me so I can’t read it at school.”

Lou exhaled a breath and lost a little tension in her shoulders. “You need to

read as much as you can and fast. If what you're telling me is true, we need to make plans, and we can't until you know."

"Why can't you tell me?" I sighed and rubbed my temples. I hated this confusion.

"Ask me if what's in that book is fiction or real. I can't answer direct things..."

That's when it came to me. Whatever those rich families in the journal were talking about, they completed something.

"Is what P talks about real?"

"Yes... Every last detail, no matter how unreal it sounds, know it is."

I sat back, feeling only the truth in her words. That burdened me more than if she had lied to me. I gulped and sat back.

"Are you helping the guys play me?" I knew she wasn't, but I wanted to know the truth. She smirked with a gleam in her eye.

"No. I'm your friend. I only want the best for you."

I nodded and took a sip of my drink, knowing I would have a long night of reading ahead of me. The confusion only grew, but part of me knew I was onto something heavier than just their bullying. I would sniff out whatever corrupted them from seeing the good in anything, including themselves.

## Chapter 9



**O**ctavia

“Stop!” I begged with breathless words that were laced by my fervent fear. Listless, they echoed emptily against the wardens sending me to the slaughter. My limbs fought their holds in a useless endeavor as Lexi and her friends carried me to the Olympic pool. Not knowing how to swim plagued my thrumming heart and my shallow breaths.

Lou and I came back to school after our lunch. As I dressed down for PE, I got ambushed by the Wanna-be-Barbies. Anyone could guess why they waited because I was only in my scantily clad skivvies. My plum-purple, lacy lingerie sat at the bottom of my worries as we neared the deep end of the pool. Lexi wasn’t holding me, but she led her platinum-blond minions to do her dirty work.

There was a swim meet today, so the whole team already sat in here prepping for it. Shocker, I found Lear, Rin, and Aster on the team with the other guys on the bleachers ready to cheer them on. I couldn’t get a good

look at them while trying to break away from Barbie minions. My captors only had to battle one of my single limbs against me. I looked at all the bitches aiding Lexi and swore my revenge on her whole group. Well, if I survived this.

I didn't even know we had a pool in this school, but it wasn't like I went looking for it. This pool wasn't for just racing competitions because I could see the platforms above me for diving. That meant this pool would be insanely deep with a bottom I knew I wouldn't be able to touch. I frantically looked around for anyone to come rescue me. Sadly, Lou and the staff weren't anywhere near here.

"I can't swim," I pleaded to my abductors. My words only made Lexi smile harder. Her malicious leer turned into an evil cackle.

"Even better." She turned her nose up at me in disgust, studying my body. "You got me suspended for two days, and now you'll learn your place in this school. You. Are. Nothing."

At the snap of her fingers, they tossed me carelessly into the water. Far enough away from the edge that I couldn't reach it to save myself.

My wail was silenced once the water infiltrated my mouth. I fought the gravity of the water and tried clawing my way up with no avail. Breaking the surface for a few seconds, I was able to get a single breath while screaming for help. Then, I floated to the bottom of the chlorinated abyss. The deeper I went, the more the light vanished.

Fighting harder, my struggles didn't stop while help never came. Crying with my eyes open and burning, they were lost in the water flooding my lifeforce. I couldn't close them in fear they'd never open again. I wanted to hyperventilate, but I knew I had to hold my breath as long as I could. The drowning felt like forever as I felt my heart pound harder inside my chest.

An ache grew there because my lungs were begging for a new breath. Realistically, I knew it hadn't even been a minute, but when fighting for your life, a lifetime passes in seconds. The last seconds of my life would be at this school I hated, in front of everyone who bullied me endlessly. Where was a knight when I needed one?

Dark dots lined my vision. I knew I came close to inhaling water. I would pass out and die peacefully once I gave in, but sometimes living through the pain was worth more than finding that peace. A loud sound rippled through the water, and I felt the water crash into my body as I struggled. Two hands wrapped around me just as I breathed in the water.

~

Sandalwood and some kind of cinnamon smell hit me as I began to sputter up some of the water clogging my lungs. A mouth came down on mine, so I found where I got the cinnamon smell from. Something with a great force slammed between my breasts that made my scorched throat groan. Everything within me became extra painful and unable to move.

“She’s breathing,” a male voice sighed in relief.

Cracking one eye open, I found Lucius providing the mouth to mouth as Bellamy worked the compressions over my chest. That had to be the last person I expected to be offering his expertise to save me.

Lear paced behind them in his soaked tracksuit. This told me he had been the one who came in after me. When he looked down and saw my moment of consciousness, I saw some of the tension leave his shoulders. Neither of us had talked about what happened in my room that one day, and now with that rule, he couldn't. Lucius talked to me in the bathroom, but I remember the



way his eyes looked to the mirror when he spoke to me. Then to the ground when he apologized. Beau and Rin's conversations with me came after Rin negotiated a new law that I didn't fully know. I just knew I was not safe to keep their company.

So why did three of them save me? Wouldn't it be easier to let me die? I sighed, not able to keep up with the slumber my body already surrendered to. Drowning took a lot out of me beside the fact I already had a concussion.

Fiona and Mr. Gram came barreling in with half the teachers behind them. I gave her a faint smile as my head tipped to the side. I saw Rin with his arms crossed and his back against the locker room door. His eyes never left mine when the void found me again.

~

*May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1701*

*I fancied them. After a few weeks of keeping their company, I was smitten. Gobsmailed might be a better word for how strong my feelings were for all of them.*

*Boaz couldn't get enough of my company, and I did something last night I'm not sure I'll ever regret. In the eyes of our society, I'd be ruined. In the eyes of my lover, I remained everything.*

*An unstoppable force wound around the two of us as we joined to become one. Yes, I gave Boaz my innocence. Outside of the circle, no other man of honor would claim me if they knew what I had done.*

*We were taking a simple stroll through the gardens as the full moon lit our way along the cobblestone path. He had been the sweetest to me thus far and for that, when his hands circled my waist, I didn't tell him no.*

*I wanted to be picked. I wanted to be ravished by the men who were trying to save all of our people by doing the impossible. Their actions deserved to be rewarded for no one else had stepped up with a plan to protect us from the Northern colonies.*

*When I united with Boaz, I felt the lightning run down my spine. A branding that seared an invisible connection between us.*

*By his shocked stupor, I knew he wasn't expecting it, but he smiled after realizing what it meant. I was and would forever be their conduit to help them reign the powers to come.*

*Today, he would be telling his circle about the discovery, and the other women would be escorted away for me to have my men. Plans were now underway for our joining ceremony that would come in a week's time.*

*I'll long remember this night and the honor I know I bestowed to the Clarke name. Our future heirs would know they were strong enough to face anything because of my sacrifice.*

*I am nervous and scared, but I know my men will not lead me astray. They love me just as much as I love the eight of them...*

*-P*

“Octavia?” Daemon knocked on my door. I quickly hid the book between my mattresses and told him to come in.

For the rest of the week, Daemon forbid me from leaving the house. Dr. Baysan came over to patch me up but other than Rita and them, no one could visit. It had been a long few days that mostly consisted of me sleeping. I hated being locked up in here, but I knew Daemon feared what might happen if I went back to school.

The kids had told an elaborate lie to cover Lexi's cruelty. I apparently had slipped on the side of the pool. The teachers knew they lied because I 'slipped' in my underwear with bruising handprints along my limbs, but I didn't deny their claims. Karma would come for them, and I'd help move it along to make sure justice was served.

Daemon came into my room and took a seat on the little space of bed beside me. I spent most of my time reading about P. The last few entries had been about the courtship she'd had with eight men. Now, tonight, I made the discovery that whoever this P person was, she seemed to be an ancestor of mine. The Clarke name couldn't be a coincidence with all the secrets surrounding my mother and these seven dads.

Still, it wasn't like I could come out and ask Daemon for the truth. He couldn't give it and he'd report I was onto them. He might be being nicer to me after knowing about the bullying, but I still couldn't trust him with the powerplay happening. He remained a pawn and nothing more under Sal's control.

"How are you feeling tonight?" He asked, and I blinked in confusion. Night? Looking out my window, I found the barn owl watching me intently with the full moon behind him. Saturday night came, marking tomorrow as Rin's eighteenth birthday. Tonight, Lear wanted to host a party for him, but no sound came from downstairs. Daemon watched me a little too closely for my liking.

"I'm fine. I told you that after it happened." I exhaled from them not believing me. They had no reason to believe me after seeing the physical damage done, but I was. Numbness took over long ago. Now, I just wanted answers. Aggravated, I tried to rein in my inner bitch that wanted to lash out at Daemon.

“I know. I just... I feel responsible, Octavia. Your mother would skin me alive for what’s happened to you these last few months.”

I snorted and shook my head. “Worse happened under her care. Don’t worry about me, Daemon. I’m a pretty tough shell to crack.”

My hand trembled behind my back. Despite my words and my brave face, I had nightmares every night since Lexi tried to drown me. Panic attacks flared my lungs and throat so I couldn’t breathe. No one knew, though. I’d never tell a soul how haunted I was from feeling suffocated by the water filling my lungs.

“I’m transferring you to a local public school. This will be your last week at the prep school.” Daemon just stood up and patted my knee to end our conversation.

“Wait! You can’t do that without asking me! I’m fine at prep school! I’m a survivor!” I yelled while standing. The bruising on my face finally yellowed, and the swelling had gone down.

“You are more like your mother than you know.” He thought fondly of something. “She could never back down from a challenge, even if it meant her life. I loved that about her, but she also never knew when to call it quits. I’m doing that for you now. You can hate me, Octavia, but I am your guardian.”

And just like that, I just got told I would take the easy way out. Well, if I only had one more week with my tormentors, I wasn’t going to bow out with grace. I became a little too psychotic for that. Snickering, I texted Lou for the new whereabouts of the party. She told me they were in the woods behind my house.

Of course, the place where I felt at home while also fearing the darkness had to be where they decided to drink themselves into a stupor. Oh well, I

needed a release to get this edge out of my system. Twisted, I willingly walked into the viper's nest, and yet, I loved the excitement of it all. Yeah, I was broken, but I owned it.

## Chapter 10



**O**ctavia

In my skinny jeans and an off the shoulder sweater, I made my way into the woodlands without Daemon knowing. Something—much like the last time I got the butterfly omen—told me to be wary. Something dark and foreboding seemed to take place in my emotions with the Déjà vu feeling setting in. My skin felt tight and restless as I walked into the forest toward the bonfire in the distance.

Along my path, I got so stuck in my mind, I almost didn't notice the raven to my right. Only when it chirped at me did I see it sitting on the branch in the tree. Shortly, it flew down to land in front of my feet. I recently reviewed that omen book again, so I came to an abrupt stop, remembering the poem-riddle-thing that went with ravens.

*Zero starts the new diurnal... Tick tock for the next eternal...*

*One Raven, one violent death... Wrath will gain his forever breath.*

Another raven landed on my path and had me gulping.

*Two Ravens, two egos fall... Pride is then persistently called.*

I only made it five more feet when the third arrived.

*Three Ravens, three covetously end... Envy now begins to ascend.*

My fear definitely skyrocketed as the fourth appeared right in front of me.

*Four Ravens, four lovers shall decay... Lust's curse finally rests at bay.*

The fifth landed on my new trail I tried to change up by veering off the worn path.

*Five Ravens, five impatiently crash... Greed now wears his eternal mask.*

Number six found me next.

*Six Ravens, six insatiably quell... Glutton feeds his immortal spell.*

Yeah, I might be freaking out just about now as the seventh bird blocked my way.

*Seven Ravens, seven lazily die... Sloth is fulfilled as they lie.*

The poem wasn't done, but it seemed like the ravens stopped finding me. Though, they were sure following me into the thick of the party. My mind kept wondering when the eighth would appear.

*Eight Ravens, eight treasons shall kill... Deceit now will never fall ill.*

*If a Raven marks your path, know it is for Wrath. As the others follow, every death is marked by the Swallow. Thirty-six have to end, or the forever suffering suspends. Eight Kings set this course, only it made their lives even worse. Their vessel will seal the souls, and that is her helping toll.*

Closing my eyes briefly, I heard chattering up ahead, so I fought my inner warnings and spotted Lou with Gare. I ran to them. Once I was in the mass of people, the birds finally quit following.

“Via!” They both greeted me with eclectic grins. I tried to smile back, but I looked completely bonkers with my fearful eyes and hollow laughter. Both cautiously stepped toward me like I might attack them. I still waited for the

next bird to seal this fatal omen. If this one happened, my week just became deadly for thirty-six people.

“Follow me,” I rushed the words while looking around. There was so much we needed to discuss without prying ears. Damn Daemon and his people ban on me. All seven guys were watching me with interest, but I didn’t have time to deal with them. Gare and Lou fell in step behind me as I walked until the blaring music softened.

No one was in our area as we huddled by a small cliffside. We found it led down to a steep ravine with a river at the bottom. How had I missed this part of the forest? Oh well. I didn’t have time to worry about that now.

As our faces sat in our tight circle, I kept checking to make sure none of the guys followed. Sighing, the poem didn’t make sense with the eighth raven missing, but something had me wary from it.

In the journal, P deals with eight guys so that makes more sense. But, there’s only seven dads and seven sons here. They didn’t add up to the information I found.

“I just had seven ravens mark my path,” I whispered. Neither knew what the hell I ranted about, so I pinched the bridge of my nose. “Remember that omen book?”

They nodded.

“This is one. Well, the riddle says eight ravens, but maybe I missed one along my way here. Anyways, I have a bad feeling about this week. When the first raven arrives, the killing has twenty-four hours before the strike of zero on a clock the next day. That begins tonight at midnight, and it’s also the eighteenth birthday of Sevrin.”

Lou nodded eagerly like I caught onto something I still didn’t have the pieces for. Gare cursed and looked up at the bright moon.



“What I don’t get is P talks about eight guys. You told me it would help me understand but there’s only seven.”

“You’re getting hotter!” Lou cheered me on like this was fun for her. Thirty-six lives were not humorous in my eyes.

“Was there an ei-” Before I could finish my question, the seven guys strolled out of the thick of the forest to make a semi-circle around us.

I cut off my own question once I saw them arrive. There’s no way I’d let them be privy to this kind of information. Somehow, it had to do with them, and I knew they didn’t want me to discover any of it.

“Boys.” I nodded like their presence didn’t bother me in the slightest. Of course, if they felt my hammering heart, they’d know I was full of shit on this one. If I thought I needed to be diagnosed as insane before with just the personalities in my head. Well, let’s just say if I were smart, I’d be checking myself into an asylum.

Sadly, I’ve never been that intelligent. Daemon was right about one thing, I couldn’t back down. Something within me told me to keep fighting...to stand my ground. That something remained my own voice. Not Punisher, not Ender, not Reaper. My own strength rooted deep within me to remind me I could be more than the evil I saw. My mom told me to keep feeling. Maybe with all of this, she actually did understand more than she let on. It was hard to know from all the drugs she used. Maybe she meant to never get high and numb myself.

“Kitten.”

“Love.”

“V.”

“Sis.”

The ones who had given me nicknames, greeted me. The others just stayed

silent.

“How can I be of service, my Kings?” I mocked. They were after something, or they wouldn’t be near me.

“Still think you’re a queen after Thursday, Kitten?” Rin mocked.

“It wouldn’t be the first time someone tried to take my crown. Won’t be the last.” I shrugged.

Rin snickered with a darkness. “You only survived because I allowed my knight to help you.” My eyes moved to Lear as he glared at Rin. Ah, so he was the knight piece in Rin’s lineup. Good to know he sat third.

Lear hated he had to have permission to help me. Knowing this made me like him a little more. Any normal person in that room would’ve jumped in to save me. This wasn’t a normal place or a normal school, and these boys were hiding something that I began to suspect everyone in this town knew about.

I had my hand I could play, but there were things I still needed to keep quiet until I knew more. My smirk rose while observing at Rin. “We both know your daddy wouldn’t be happy if I had died. How would he use me for his game if I croaked too soon?”

All the guys’ leers faltered as they studied me with shock. I just lifted one shoulder with a calmness I totally faked.

“I’m on my own team in this game. Always have been, so I play it well.”

“Kitten, none of us would give a damn if you were gone tomorrow.” Rin released the tightness in his shoulders and placed his hands in his pockets to appear a little too casual.

“Yeah?” I grinned, stepping back to the very edge of the ravine. A few of the guys were already flinching or twitching their eyes, but Rin was too involved in himself to even comprehend I readied to play him again. This had to be the stupidest thing I could do. Yet, the thrill of proving him wrong

seemed to win over logic. That's what he did to me. Nothing made sense when I kept near all of them, and it drove me nuts. I needed to prove to myself I still had my power, and that I could win.

Lou gasped, but Gare held her in place to not intervene. With his nod, I knew he'd save me if I needed him to, but the guys didn't see our exchange for my safety.

"Yeah, Kitten. You could jump off that cliff right now and we wouldn't give a shit." Oh, now he set all this up himself. I smiled and met his gaze. In that moment, he finally picked up on what I had planned.

"Okay then." I spread my arms out at my sides and let myself tip right off the ledge. I felt the nothingness behind my heels and the adrenaline course within my veins. Knowing no one should never fall into water with their body horizontal, I flipped for my toes to point down.

Once I hit the water, my skin prickled angrily from the slam of the river's current automatically yanking me downstream. Bugging out, my eyes were wide with terror, not expecting the rapids. I became a tumbleweed from how my body kept twisting into a boney pretzel. With every push and shove the water did, I found it harder to hold my breath.

With it being night, I didn't see that this river had rapids that were deadly for a normal swimmer. Just my luck. The night I want to push Rin over his edge, I tipped us both over. Part of me wanted to laugh at the irony, but the other kept trying to survive. I guess that's who I was. No matter my environment, I wanted to survive, and I'd find a way to stay alive now too.

Two giant arms pulled me into a massive chest and even under water, the Beast growled when near me. We broke the surface, and I found his near-black eyes narrowing on me. We still didn't have time to fight with the next

set of rapids coming up, and Rin rolled his eyes understanding that. “Get on my back!”

I did as he barked and snuggled my face into his neck while catching my breath. My lungs were furious with me once again. They had every right to be, and I knew I’d be sore tomorrow from the punches of the water. Note: Yes, water can hit back.

Rin moved like a shark in his element. He made a great predator and swimmer as he maneuvered us to the safest trajectory. Though, even with him being a fish, we were still pulled under a few times. It took us some time, but we finally got to a point where the water stilled. Relief flooded us both. My chest caged in my heart, but I’m pretty sure it was about to escape from the terror and thrill of that whole experience.

“Hey, Rin?” I asked as he twisted me to his front.

“Yeah?” he grunted.

“Checkmate.” I grinned, and then he did the unthinkable.

Sevrin Thana laughed. He fucking tossed back his head and let it out like a wolf. Seeing his happy hoot did something to me that almost felt like butterflies stirring in my stomach.

## Chapter 11



**S**evrin

Once the words left my mouth, it was too late to unsay them. At some point, I knew I would have to stop challenging Octavia. The woman appeared to be insane enough to follow through with my threats. Shucking off my jacket and shoes, I shoved them into Lear's chest as he just gaped at where his stepsister willingly fell off a cliff. My feet sprinted, and I dove right off the side, knowing the current would get to her first.

The only thing that would help me catch up was my weight. She'd be lucky to live, but I would kill her for this one. Well, first, I had to save her, and then I'd be wringing her long, slender neck—that would look even better with my hand wrapping around it—for doing this to me. Just thinking about choking her stirred my dick but saving her had to come first.

She couldn't swim in calm waters, let alone in this river that took lives every year from the undertows and rapids. My focus stayed sharp as I landed with my body angled just right. Once I went under, I moved like I was born

in the water. Swimming became the one thing that made me feel peace with all the anger I held. My skill level would favor me in getting to Octavia in time. Between my speed and the current carrying me, I finally saw her flailing body.

Good God, she looked like a clusterfuck of twisting body parts. I almost flinched just watching her be spun in the web of rapids. She was like the ball in a pinball machine as she bounced from one rock formation to the next. Once I finally caught her, I could tell how disoriented she grew and how close she truly had come to drowning...again. My anger surged forward, but I ignored it while getting her onto my back.

Thank fuck she seemed coherent enough to hold on as I worked our way down the river. She should feel lucky the guys and I knew this spot well enough for me to know we were about to come to some standing water. The only thing we had to be careful about were the cats but they shouldn't be here right now from the night falling.

Panting, we both took a minute to catch our breath as I trod the water. I helped move her to my front for my own eyes to see she survived, but she didn't need to see how badly she affected me. She trembled under my touch, but part of me knew it wasn't just from the fear. Octavia had to be the one woman who seemed to like the darker side of things. That's why I felt her attraction to me and returned it too easily.

"Hey, Rin?" Her voice was too angelic for my ears. I hated how attracted to her I was.

"Yeah?"

"Checkmate." Her single word was too much for this moment.

I laughed. I couldn't help it from how crazy this bitch really got. Octavia Clarke just jumped off a cliff to prove her point that I couldn't let her die just

yet. Fucking hell... She knew she couldn't swim, and she still tested me. Her smile in response did me in, and I couldn't see anyone else. Then, on impulse alone, my mouth crashed into hers. I didn't know what she did to me, but I couldn't stop kissing her.

She drove me batshit crazy. She pushed me past my limits all the time, but she had the fullest lips I'd ever sunk my teeth into. Her taste permanently engraved into my memory. Sweet strawberries and honey. Moving in time with my lips, she knew how to use hers too.

Her gasp made my cock ramrod straight, and her nimble fingers had me nearly shivering from where she followed the hard lines of my body. My hands were tightening on her ass from still holding her to me.

Her perky tits pressed against me, and I could feel her hard nipples. Whether it was from being turned on or the cold water, it didn't matter. She was hot as hell dry humping against me like she wasn't afraid of the monster I was. Fight or Fuck. Those were the two words I lived by, but with this siren, I did both at once. Using one hand to still hold her, my other went up to palm her full breast.

She really liked that as her hips rubbed against my cock even harder. She drove me insane with how she chased her pleasure. Tracing me, her fingers found my hem and then worked up my abs below my shirt. The feeling grew electric, and I hated how much I enjoyed her touch.

That was until she found one of my rougher scars. Once she found it, she couldn't stop following it up and down, trying to figure out how bad the scar would be. My fist closed around those exploring digits before I jerked her hand from me. I growled while doing so. "Don't touch me."

When I went to move my lips back to her, she jolted away from me with a scowl. We were both still panting with arousal present in our dilated pupils.

She shoved my chest and got her legs down from me. “Fuck you, Sevrin!”

“You were about to, Kitten,” I chuckled darkly as she left me in the waist-deep water.

Of course, she flipped me off while working her way to the safety of the land instead of saying something else I’d contend. I finally followed after fixing my erection. We moved to the shore, and she got out with her tight body shivering. That’s when Momo, Lear’s pet, appeared in the trees. The little fucker had to be the most annoying and most entertaining thing with the shit Lear taught him to say.

“*SQUAWK!* Bitch be bad! *SQUAWK!* Bitch be bad!” See? Every human female became a bitch to him. What shocked me? When Octavia put her hands on her hips.

“Seriously, Momo?! Not right now!”

I rolled my eyes. Even though I told all the guys to stay away, it seemed they all didn’t listen as I saw all the owls in the trees. It’s not like I could get too mad because Zeus was here too. My horned owl saw me and tipped his head in acknowledgment. That’s when I saw something my eyes had to be making up. A black dragonette chirped at her feet.

“Daisy!” She leaned down to pet the most dangerous creature God ever made. The thing purred at Octavia’s touch, and I was at a loss for words. One dirty look to Zeus told him leaving this information out would cost him.

“Momo,” I called to the parrot. He looked at me and knew to listen. “Tell Lear we lived. We’ll make camp tonight.”

“*SQUAWK!* Yes, stud!” He flew off as Octavia just gawked at me.

“LEAR?” Octavia asked with quite the shock.

“Yeah, he’s had Momo for five years. Got him on his thirteenth birthday.” Why did I bother answering her? Shaking my head, I couldn’t believe how



easy it felt with this Harley Quinn. I could only prepare myself for the next argument. “We need to make camp here for the night.”

Looking for our campsite we had in this area, I had to wander a little deeper in. Finding some of our markings, I didn’t wait for Octavia to voice her opinion. Her feet stormed behind me, and I grinned, knowing she was pissed at me. God, I had to figure out how to stay away from her because I really didn’t want to.

“No! I’m going to hike back to the house. You do whatever you want.”

I sighed.

“Kitten, it’s seven miles back to the house. You don’t know what way to go, and it’s too dark to see much. We’ll wait ‘til dawn.” I wouldn’t mention the cats being out this time of night to do their work. It would only scare her, and she wouldn’t believe me if I told her what they really were.

“I’m going to get hypothermia, Sevrin!” Was it bad I loved when she used my name? No one did but her, and it was making me feel possessive. I wanted only her to say my name like that as I fucked the living shit out of her.

“Our campsite has supplies, Kitten.” That’s where I ended our conversation, and I heard her feet patter behind me.

~

## **Octavia**

What an ass, but even worse, me staring at his actual ass. The dampness made his jeans glue to his thick thighs and his round ass. If I were to look at his crotch, I bet I could see his dick too. Good thing he couldn’t-

“Like the view?” he asked. I looked up to see him smirking over his shoulder at me. Damn him and damn me for getting caught.

“I do. It’s just really sad that such a fine ass is wasted on such a prick.” I crossed my arms to look strong but also for warmth. I was freezing and beginning to go numb in my toes and fingers. That’s when I saw Rin had no shoes. He walked in his soggy socks to wherever we were going, and we hiked about ten minutes from the spot on the river to find a camping area. There seemed to be a fake log that they staged because Rin opened it up and pulled out a single sleeping bag with some supplies to make a fire. How did he know about this?

“Aster used the clothes the last time he was here and forgot to replace them,” Rin shook his head while laying the sleeping bag down.

“Okay, is there another sleeping bag?” I walked over to the secret compartment to see it empty. Shit.

“No. It’s usually only one of us out here at a time.” Rin actually answered me, and I was a little shocked.

Well, that didn’t shock me as much as him now striping right in front of my eyes. I nearly gasped but reined it in when I saw his torso. Long scars marred his back and his stomach. Some looked like claw marks with four parallel lines. The others had to be from a whip. I gulped, remembering him telling me to not touch. I wanted to do that very thing now because I wanted to comfort him. I detested him, but I hated seeing what had been done to his body.

“I don’t need your sympathy, Kitten,” he growled. “Now strip so you don’t get our only blanket soaked. I’ll get a fire going.”

He worked the fire as I watched his dick swinging between his legs. Goddamn, that thing couldn’t be real, and yet, it was. His piercings even

shimmered in the moonlight.

“Keep looking at him and he’ll get hard, Kitten.”

Damn, why did he always have to catch me beholding his giant body? I breathed deeper and got myself into my skivvies. I wasn’t as bold as Rin when it came to my nudity.

“I’ve seen you naked before, Kitten. I’m not letting you get our only bed wet because you finally decided to be a little shy with your tits and ass.”

“You could respect me a little, you know,” I nearly shouted back. He carelessly shrugged and worked the flint and steel he had.

“I’ve seen too many of both body parts that I won’t remember yours by tomorrow.” He was so infuriating that it trapezed inside my soul, building into a festering annoyance. Shucking off my panties and bra, I immediately climbed into the sleeping bag and waited for him to be done with the fire. That’s when he joined me in the bag that had not been made for two people.

Well, maybe two normal-sized people, but he didn’t sit in that category. Rin was not small on any scale, so we were basically glued together. Though, our body heat seemed to bring some feeling back into my numb limbs. Trying to get comfortable, we were both avoiding actually touching each other. Anyone could tell how well that went if they were to walk by and see us. He kept grunting when I shimmied and rolled, and then he tried rolling the opposite way.

Nope. We were in this bag together. Heaven help me, I had Rin right under me now, and it became the only position that gave us a little room to breathe as I sprawled over his chest.

Completely bulk muscle that was cut better than a linebacker, Rin was surprisingly comfy to rest on. His hard plains should not have been, but they were with how he breathed and how warm he was.

I made some throaty sounds of approval from finally feeling good. My hands couldn't help themselves as they touched his torso where some of his heavier mutilating sat. It hadn't been lost to me that around his manhood and thighs held some scarring too. I grew too tired to care after surviving my jump, so I figured he did too. He was still frozen beneath me, but he let me touch him without growling or batting my hands away.

"You should be proud of these, you know," I yawned.

"Hm?" He dozed off too.

"Your scars. You should be proud to show them off."

"Why's that?"

"They mean you survived whatever happened to you." I nestled deeper into his chest with my nose snuggling into his neck to breathe in his wet scent. It wasn't just from tonight. I noticed Rin smelled of fresh rain a lot and, now that I knew he swam, it made more sense.

"Yeah? And what if I'm not done surviving?" he questioned while drifting off. My heart lurched and ached at the same time. I might hate Rin, but I hated anyone being abused more.

"Then maybe surviving isn't enough anymore. Maybe it's time you fight back." I shrugged even though I had a lump forming in my throat.

"Don't worry about me, Kitten. After this week, everything will be fine." I nodded, hoping he would be right. I knew there was more to that statement he wasn't willing to share.

Moving my leg to straddle his trunk better, I felt his thick cock nudging me, causing me to purr again because my pussy wanted to feel him inside of me, and I didn't have the brain capacity to tell me the reasons not to. Letting myself move against the tip, Rin hissed.

Then, I felt a swat on my ass that had me yipping. He chuckled, shaking

below me. His hand moved between us and then I felt him parting my folds for his dick to rub over my clit just a little more while dipping into my entrance. He only entered me until his piercing tapped my lips. I tried rocking more to get him deeper and he just tittered at my antics while cupping my ass with one hand. This prevented me from going down on him like I wanted to.

Oh fuck, I wanted Rin right now, and my body set ablaze to have him. Yeah, the world didn't make much sense, but if anyone else got teased like this, they'd give into their primal urges too. Plus, I was too tired to care who gave me a release.

"I won't fuck you, Kitten, but I'll give you what you need." Rin took his manhood into his fist and began pumping himself while rubbing along my slit.

Um, not what I expected, but it felt incredible. The silkiness of his skin that remained a hard muscle surrounded by soft skin on the outside felt incredible spreading my swollen folds. The way it pleased my clit at this moment almost felt unreal. I'd never had a guy jackoff against my clit while grinding it along my pussy. Part of me wanted to take offense that he wouldn't fuck me, but the other part was too elated to care.

We moved faster as we gyrated ourselves harder into ecstasy. Rin bit down on my shoulder, and I jolted from the surprise. The new movement made it so he accidentally slipped in all the way. I screamed his name as I came hard. The stretching did me in as he worked me up. Neither of us planned on it happening, and from the sheer shock, I came. Rin yanked his dick out right when I felt it pulse. The sudden emptiness made my orgasm almost aggressive from the loss of his cock but feeling his release against my clit had me ramped up in arousal.

Panting, we both waited until we could talk. Rin reached for his shirt and

then wiped us both, so we were damp from the water instead of his giant load. His release matched his dick because I felt the pool of it on my belly.

“This never happened, Kitten,” Rin growled, and it vibrated in his chest.

“It’s not like I’m proud to admit it was you who just got me off, Asshole.” His words cut me deep because of how much he hated me. Heck, he’d fuck the librarian bareback, but the idea of me repulsed him worse than a middle-aged woman. I rolled so my back laid against his chest before he shifted us to our sides where he now spooned me.

Fireworks lit the sky, and I knew it was from his birthday party. I just let Rin give me an O while he jacked off during his birthday party. Heaven help me, my insane brain needed some mental help.

“Sevrin?”

“Hm?” He grunted while fading out like me.

“I don’t think I’ve ever hated anyone more than I hate you,” I stated, and he chuckled. “But, happy birthday.”

He froze and then it dawned on him where the fireworks were coming from. He grumbled while pulling me tighter against him. He was definitely almost asleep to pull that move. Sleep came quick and when morning came, the brightness of the sun nearly blinded me. What woke me was Rin shifting out of the bag. Dressed, he left his shirt hanging over his arm from how we used it last night.

“Follow the green ticks in the trees, and you’ll get back to your house,” he said while walking in almost the opposite direction.

He used his shirt to clean up the blood along his jaw. I nearly forgot about his stitches because I couldn’t see them last night. The river water couldn’t be sanitary for that.

“Hey, wait! Where are you going?” I got out of the sleeping bag with all my

nudity on display.

He pointed to the black tag by the tree he stood by. “My house is in that direction.”

With no further ado, he left me to find my own way back.

“Asshole!”

“Wasn’t what you called me last night!” He called back before darting off his direction.

My whole walk home, I devoted to figuring out a way to make Sevrin Thana’s life miserable. Yeah, that took some of the steam out of my sails. I trudged the ground until I saw something that looked all too familiar, and it told my mind to pay attention. Taking in the scenery, my mind began to match to what I saw in my dream when Fredrick died at Maria’s hand.

Moving toward the forbidden area, I gasped when I found her money hole still sitting there with four duffel bags filled with cash. A smart and good civilian would’ve turned them over to the police...

But, a girl who recognized her future looked dark and gloomy, knew to not tell anyone just in case she needed the cash. Plus, who knew if they’d think I had been an accomplice by pointing it out. Leaving it where it had been placed, it stayed on my mind the whole way back to the mansion. Guilt sank in, but my life expectancy wasn’t exactly promising. Yeah, an internal battle fought inside me the rest of the way.

That was until I got back to find Daemon waiting for me. Great, my first time being grounded for sneaking out. This Sunday just seemed to be getting better and better.

## Chapter 12

— • —

**O**ctavia

“She isn’t even mine!” The man yelled while pointing his beer bottle at the frail woman in sleep shorts and a tank top. At ten o’clock somewhere in the city, I tipped over in my bed and watched through my tormenter’s eyes. Another dream called me. By the drunk’s rising anger, I knew Punisher ran this delusion. Someone would to be beaten to death.

The fragile woman cowered from the large man. He had one too many drinks and couldn’t walk straight. This seemed to be a normal and typical night for the couple. What wasn’t normal? The fearful little girl in the corner of the room. She kept trying to appear smaller to go unnoticed, but this whole argument became about her existence.

“Tony! Not here, not where she can see,” the mom pleaded, but he past his point of mercy. He grabbed the mom by the scruff of her hair and used it to volley her into the wall. Going at her again, he picked her up by her hair and made her look at the sobbing little girl. My gut churned from beginning to get



sick. She would watch her mom die only to be stuck with this monster after. I even noticed Punisher's fist tighten where he leaned us on the open window to peep in.

“Addi? Did you know your mother is nothing but a good for nothing whore? That she's been spreading her legs for my whole crew?” The maniac talked to the little girl while displaying his dominance over her mother. “You aren't even my daughter! I found out tonight when Jimmy got too drunk to keep his mouth shut!”

“Please,” the mom begged while trying to get her hair out of his hold. She was still on her knees but cried hard while cupping the side of her face that hit the wall.

“Twelve damn years of supporting the two of you only to find out you aren't even mine to be footing!” He turned the woman's head and then brought his free hand down to smack her cheek. The force had her head trying to turn, but it couldn't from his hold on her hair.

“Mommy?” Addi hugged her knees to her chest just as Tony let go of her mom to move to her.

“Are you gonna be a little whore too? Should we break you in just like your easy mama? You do owe me a debt for letting you live under my roof.” His words made my stomach roll in revolt. There were too many similarities that I recognized from my own past. Tony stalked toward her and picked her up by her armpits. Moving his hand, he skimmed her underdeveloped body with a sickening look... That look I knew all too well.

She locked up from fear, unable to understand how the man who had been her dad the last decade could put his hands so easily on her sexually. Her breasts were barely turning into peaks, but his hands latched on anyways. He fondled the girl right before her mother who cowered behind them. She

wasn't moving even though she could. I wanted to look away, but it wasn't my eyes I saw through. As the backseat in this, I had to endure the trauma of another little girl getting ruined by a pigheaded man, and her mom wouldn't get up to stop it.

*Get up! Save her!* I willed the mother to move. I willed her to do what hadn't been done for me. *Don't let her live with this... Don't let her have this nightmare.*

Punisher doubled over with a grunt. Maybe I was finally gaining control over the hell I put myself through.

*Please...* I begged my mean personality to not let this happen. Punisher made our eyes scan the area as though he searched for me. *Please don't make me see this... To relive it through her.*

He was panting now and braced us against the window. When he moved our eyes back up, Tony had his hand up Addi's nightgown and her panties were ripped on the floor.

**SAVE HER!!!** I screamed in our mind. Punisher toppled over and fell to his knees from the force of my will. He steadied himself and looked back at the scene to find Tony had his member out, forcing Addi's hand to touch it. Telling her to pet it like an animal, and my inner wails banged in our mind for dominance. She would already be scarred, but there was still one thing I could save her from. The one thing I couldn't do for myself...

With a new determination, I looked at the wretched mother and forced my will onto her. This was my dream, so I would be in control over it. Even if it meant her death, she'd save her daughter from becoming a shadow of her former self. No child deserved this baggage... To figure out how to live in a skin they didn't feel comfortable in anymore. To wear baggy shirts and pants while pleading to go unnoticed. I couldn't let Addi become what I had been.

*Get up!* I demanded her mother.

Surprisingly, the mother darted to the kitchen and grabbed a butcher knife from the block on the counter. She charged into the room and didn't hesitate to stab Tony right through the back of his heart.

Tony turned around, completely baffled, but the mother wasn't done, though. After years of abuse, she used that knife to stab his front repeatedly. It wasn't until Tony fell over in a heap of death that she slowed down. Dropping the knife, she fell to her knees while scrambling to her daughter.

"I'm sorry... I'm so sorry..." Those words echoed in my ringing ears because my own mother had whispered the same thing to me over and over again. Waking up, I found my pillow already damp from crying in my sleep. The broken sobs weren't done yet as I heaved more out of my tightening throat. Weighted, my chest felt so heavy from the memories that I couldn't even roll over. I remained motionless in place as the lead filled my limbs. My mind let it happen to me all over again because I remembered.

A trickle of light spilled in from my door before I heard it silently close. The next thing I knew, my covers were shifting, and a body slid in to spoon mine from behind.

Heavy and hurting, I felt the labored breathing come from behind me. His sandalwood smell hit me first and helped ground me out of the nightmare.

"Lear?" my voice stayed small. It cracked from the grief spiraling with my inner turmoil. He only nodded in my neck, unable to compute words. His hands circled my middle as he pulled me tighter to him like he felt my soul calling out for love. I was amazed at how well we fit together from our size differences.

"Please don't tell anyone." I cinched my eyes shut and rubbed them into my pillow. I wanted to banish the tears while my weak voice croaked.

He kissed the top of my head in response, and I hoped that was confirmation he wouldn't, and that was when I remembered he couldn't talk to me.

Rolling over to face him, I noticed his own eyes looked stricken with sorrow. My hand traveled down to grip the hem of my shirt before I took it completely off. Lear's nostrils flared as he tried to keep eye contact with me. He tried to be respectful from how much I suffered to not take advantage of me.

"I know you can't talk to me. I know that this whole thing is fucked up, but I need to forget. I need you to help me forget." My pleading eyes found his tormented ones. I knew I asked a lot from him, and I knew his circle was supposed to hate me. I knew this would go against what was right for him, but I needed it.

"I need to feel something else. I need you to ground me back to what's real. I need you to take away the memories..." I cried while gripping his shirt for dear life. My leg looped over his hip to pin him to me as he sighed from the struggle to give in. "Just tonight. I won't tell anyone. Please, Lear. Make them go away..."

He exhaled, rolling onto his back to break our contact, not caring I stretched his shirt out. He rubbed his face with his hands to debate this ordeal and battled with himself over what was right and what was wrong. It made me want him more for being the sweetest of his dark group.

Shortly after, he rotated back over to be on top of me with a look I couldn't quite decipher. A mix of dread and hope, lust and loss, weakness and power... all combined. His soft lips came down and kissed the single tear sitting on my cheekbone before he licked it away. The rough touch of his tongue on my cheek made me shiver below him.

Loving the power he had over me, he followed the trail up my eye, where he kissed my sealed lashes. Lear didn't want to see me sad, and his look made me release more droplets. The whole time he just kept kissing them away as I clutched his shirt. Though, when he lifted it over his head, it forced me to grip his bare, athletic shoulders.

When our torsos pressed together, when his heat mixed with mine, he felt like home. His hairless chest laid smooth against mine, but where I was soft, he was hard. The hollow I had in my chest this last month, subsided from his touch alone. I didn't understand it. Not in the logical sense, at least, but I knew I needed this haven, even for only a few minutes.

Part of me knew I needed to keep clear of him and his clique, but the other part craved what only they offered. Messed up in the head, I made eye contact with Lear. In the connection between us, I knew we were two kindred souls. Too dark to make out much in the pale moonlight, I lost my bottoms, and he lost his. We both feasted on the details of each other's bodies, understanding this was forbidden. If this only happened once, I wanted to relish in everything Lear offered.

With his massive body surrounding mine, I felt secure. The way he caged me in wasn't to trap me but to make me feel protected. Like maybe he could stop the bad from reaching me just from guarding his body over mine. His lips fell to mine while his right hand wandered and caressed my body. The salty tears tangled our leisure tongues that were savoring this moment, and there was nothing rushed about what we were doing.

Where Beau fucked me, Lear made love to me. The difference remained stark, and though I loved both forms of sex, this was what I needed now. His fingers worked my slit gently and thoroughly as though he tried to memorize

every fold. My hands were running over his back and taut stomach to feel just how real he was above me.

The movements stayed slow, but the passion between us had been forming for a while now. I might not survive what his group had planned for me, but I wanted to enjoy what I could. On the cusp of my release, Lear removed his hand and replaced it with his shaft. Sliding in, he groaned, feeling how wet and tight my pussy was. I came with a force as he ate my cries of pleasure. Somehow, just like with the other two, it didn't take much to get me off. Magically, their dicks made foreplay a thing I didn't need, making me understand how broken I had become.

Meeting him thrust for thrust, we were still moving slowly to feel the absolute desire this one moment would offer us. My skin became dewy from the buildup, and my stiff nipples grated his chest, causing me to clench down again on him. Lear swore silently under his breath to hide how much he fought to give in. When our eyes met, I let him see everything there was to know about me reflected within my eyes.

My darkness, my pain, my sorrow...

He took it all in and kissed me again to provide the false comfort I needed. His hands tangled in my hair to cradle my head just as his rhythm picked up. Hardening, his cock hit even deeper. I had to bite his shoulder from the ecstasy I reached. Our eyes stayed locked, saying more than our mouths ever could. Grunting, he drove deeper with more force just as he lost it.

Stars and darkness lined my vision as electricity moved down my spine, right to where we met together. As he spilled his seed, I found myself having my third orgasm. This wasn't normal for me to be able to cum so easily. Especially when all he was doing was making love to me.

These orgasms weren't driven from the physical pleasure alone. No, they

came from the emotional aspect. I bore myself to him, and he accepted me with all my damage. Nothing could bring me a greater pleasure than someone accepting all of me. Every dark little crevice I tried to hide, Lear basked in it. Almost as though he needed to know I wasn't perfect or shiny because something darkened his life too.

We might not be in love to be making love, but this was deeper than fucking. We were two similar souls who needed someone else to share the hardships we had faced. Someone who understood the darkness. I could see his unspoken pain, and I knew I had been his outlet to forget as well. He might've taken my mind away from my nightmare, but I could see I did the same for him.

Some might say having sex right after something traumatic is sickening and immoral. If only they knew that the dark and twisted side also remembered the pleasure of my takers. Even when my stomach whirled in tying knots, I felt that they loved what they were doing. It was terrible and it was awful, but arousal came from what I saw tonight. I hated myself for it more.

Lear caught his breath while still buried inside me. I began moving just a little to remove the devastating thoughts from my head once again. I didn't want to be so messed up that I took pleasure in what I saw, but I also needed to get rid of the arousal. Lear seemed to understand exactly what I needed because he gave me a little nod.

This time, we touched more, we kissed more, and our limbs tangled more. We couldn't get close enough, and I loved that he understood me. It might've been for him too, but we both needed to forget our pain for the night. After three rounds, we were sated enough into exhaustion that we fell asleep wrapped around each other.

When the morning came with my alarm ringing, I found my bed empty and

the sheet cool where Lear once lied. Still, his sandalwood scent lingered as I sniffed to remember the peace he gave me. It seemed the men of his group were cut from the same cloth. Hump 'em and leave 'em.

Our time together ended, so there wasn't much for me to keep dwelling on. Even though that's exactly what I did. The one and only time I'd share a bed with Lear had happened, and now I was alone. Left with the solitude, I became trapped in my memories once again.



## Chapter 13



**L**ucius

I watched her. None of the guys knew it because of the implications that would happen if they did. Out of all the hardships we've faced being in the circle, none of them understood what it was like to have an addict for a mother. That day in our writing class, when I had Marcus read out Octavia's journal entry, I didn't expect her words to be so impacting.

Most of the girls in this place would write about shopping or maybe how their dad fucked his secretary instead of being home. They were all superficial and had daddy problems. But Octavia? Her words were real. Sincere. Soul crushing...

I should know. My own mother had been a crack whore. Though, her drugs weren't of the human variety, but the drug of choice didn't matter. The trials we faced as children to get our parent to change, overshadowed the type of drug. We had to pretend and act daily as though nothing was wrong while in truth, nothing was ever right.

Not that I wrote this in my own journal, but I too understood what that loss of hope felt like. Mine died right along with my mother. Buried six feet under, I liked to pretend both things never existed because of the succumbing pain they brought on. Octavia still held out for that single shred of hope. I could see it in her eyes. I could hear it when she stood her ground against Rin.

Today, she acted differently. Her eyes had heavy bags and her focus was only on the ground ahead of her feet. Something had happened to make her cold and empty. My heart squeezed, and my thoughts vacantly prayed it wasn't a permanent change. I didn't want her to lose that last little spark, that determination I longed to see. Milo moved right behind me and growled when he found me watching her again. He noticed a few times, but he wouldn't rat me out.

"Luce," he groaned, knowing I didn't hide it today.

"Something's changed," I murmured over my shoulder, right next to his exquisite lips. Milo studied her with his intense stare, and then he nodded with a quirk in his lips. He was happy to see her miserable. I hated that.

"She seems utterly miserable. Sal will be happy to hear it." His voiced echoed his own enjoyment. I couldn't tell him that I fell lower from seeing her vanish into nothing. I put on a brave face and gave him a quick peck to his perfect lips, but I felt empty.

Milo smiled, taking my hand as he led me into the janitor's closet. Once the door clicked shut, his lips were on mine to devour me. I might hate how he disliked Octavia, but I loved his greed to only have me.

"Happy birthday, babe," he panted before our lips drove together again. October second marked my birthday after Rin's, and Milo had everything planned for me. I'd return the favor in a few days for his day. Not caring if he

messed up my hair, Milo would be the only person who could ever undo me. God, he was so hot, it took my breath away every time I looked at his pale hair and knowing eyes.

Pressing him against a shelving unit, I weaved our legs for our hardening lengths to rub in a way to show exactly what we did to each other. Grinding, his hands gripped the belt loops on my hips to slam harder against me. Breathless, he loved listening to me pant from how covetous he became to please me and himself. My hand moved between our groins to grip his cock through the fabric of his slacks.

Always looking sharp in his suits, I loved the commanding aspect he held. In the circle, I outranked him as Rin's second. In the bedroom, I would forever be his to command.

"Fuck," he spurted the curse when I squeezed his head. Biting my lip, I pumped him faster and watched him use the wall for support. His eyes rolled back and then his jaw went slack. Only Milo knew my darkest fantasies. His mirrored mine, and it made our time together even better.

"Luce, take me out. Only through the zipper." God, he was so raunchy, I loved it.

My hand slowly slid the metal down before it worked in the small crack to free him from the confines of his boxers. When his member popped out and bobbed, my knees buckled. This man had to be sexiest one alive, and I prided myself with knowing he was mine. My hand took his length again, but this time, he cupped my hand with his.

Watching us both work him intoxicated me, and he knew it. When a dribble of precum beaded out, I found myself licking my lips. I was nearly salivating for him to fuck my mouth.

"On your knees," he demanded. Smiling and loving his dominance, I gave

him a quick kiss before I followed his order.

“Open your lips and leave your hands behind your back. I’m going to fuck your mouth so hard, you won’t be able to talk the rest of the day.” My cock twitched from his words. I got off on getting him off. As his Sub, he knew that. “If you’re good, I’ll let you touch yourself.”

Ugh, this man knew he held all the power, and I wanted him to use it against me. I wanted him to love me harder with it. My mouth fell open, and his dick immediately slammed into me. His right hand gripped my hair and forced my mouth to take the fucking he dominated me with.

Drool pooled at the corners of my mouth, but the slurping sounds it created drove Milo mad. I spent a long time on perfecting how to take a big cock in the back of my throat and Milo loved how good my practice went.

“Shit, Luce,” he heaved, watching me with his yellow eyes showing his arousal. “I imagine this all the time, you know. When we graduate and take over. I imagine you coming into my office and sucking me off whenever I’m tense.”

I moaned around his dick, and he hissed from the vibrations.

“You’re mine, Lucius Baysan. No one will ever have you the way I do. No one will ever satisfy your submissive needs like I can.” I gave another moan in response. He was right. The way I submitted to him came from how much I trusted him. No one could give me this like Milo because we knew everything about each other.

When I lost my mother a year ago, he was the one holding me in the dark hours of the night. The only one I had ever let in enough to see me cry. That was when we knew it was more than friendship that we saw in each other. He let me see the love he had for me in his eyes, thinking about everything that made our love so deeply rooted too.

“Touch yourself, Luce. Let me see you beat your dick off like you want me to fuck your ass.” By this point, I nearly died for release. My hands were trembling as I undid my pants, and my breathing staggered around his cock. “Point your dick straight up so I can watch you explode. I want to see you come as I coat your throat with mine.”

I did as he told me and felt his knees buckle when he saw how hard I worked my shaft. A minute later, I felt his seed spilling down the back of my throat, and the sensation alone finished me. Like Old Faithful, my cock spurted my load straight up. It came back down on my hand as we watched the globs form. Swallowing his load, I did it with Milo still in my throat because he loved the sensation and tightness, and it also always got a little extra out of him.

Standing, Milo took my hand and licked it clean while keeping eye contact with me. As anyone could imagine, that got me almost fully erect again. He smiled, seeing the rise in my penis. We were always in our own little bubble.

“If you two are done, I need Luce for a minute.” The voice had us jumping apart to see Lear leaning on the door from the inside. Neither of us heard him come in, but it wasn’t the first time he’s watched us pleasure each other. Milo fixed himself and zipped his pecker back into his pants.

Once he finished, he yanked me by my shirt to solidify our time together with a passionate kiss. His tongue stroked mine with a need I didn’t know he had. Something was up with him, but he remained too manly to tell me. I’d just give him what he needed until whatever was wrong smoothed over. When he pulled back, he smiled. After, he reached down to give my member a few tugs.

Bastard knew I’d be stiff for at least an hour now. He sauntered out as Lear

moved for him to do so. I fixed myself and listened to the door close. “What do you want, Lear? I highly doubt this is a social visit.”

When I looked up at him, I almost felt bad about my causal words to him. His eyes were circled in darker shades to show off how little of sleep he got. Then there was his rigid posture that told me something had him on edge.

“If I tell you, I need you to keep it a secret.” He cracked the door to make sure no one listened in.

“Why me?” I asked, leaning myself into the shelf behind me and crossing my arms. Lear and I had never seen eye to eye. He and Rin might’ve been close, but I was Rin’s second. It always ate at the envious fucker.

“Because, you were the only one out of our circle who voted with me to save Octavia.” Lear’s jaw ticked from something bothering him.

I resigned immediately. This might be betraying my circle, but if he knew a way to save her, I already knew I’d help. “I’ll keep it a secret unless Rin demands it from me.”

Lear nodded and began pacing. “In the middle of the night, I woke up feeling completely dead and broken. Before you pop off that I am, I already know that. This was different.”

“Different, how?”

“My emotions have been in control for years. This was... Overwhelming. I cried, Luce. Actual tears fell from my eyes!”

“You aren’t making any sense,” I said with the confusion clear in my tone.

“It was her, Luce. Octavia bled her emotions. She forced me to feel everything she did. I went into her room and found her sobbing into her pillow. I don’t know what about, but my body moved to comfort her without me thinking twice.”

“So, she’s an empath.” I shrugged. They weren’t uncommon when one

parent was a demon.

“Empaths can feel what you do, but they cannot expel their own emotions onto you. This morning, I found our whole staff depressed and some were wiping tears. I asked a few what had them sad, and they had no idea why they were.”

“So why do we need to keep this quiet?” My own heart picked up its pace because I didn’t have a clue what could bleed that much power outside of our circle.

Lear’s eyes met mine, and I saw a different kind of pain. “She pleaded to me to take it away.”

“What away?”

“The pain. She pleaded for me to make her forget. I couldn’t say no. My body refused to deny her that escape. It was literally out of my control. The harder I fought to not give in, the more I suffered.”

“What the hell did you do to ‘help’ her forget?!” I demanded, already knowing the answer.

“I slept with her, Luce. I just had sex with my stepsister, and now I can’t think of anything else.”

I hurried to him. To put it mildly, it pissed me off, but if what he said rang true, we all needed to be careful. It seemed our little new toy might stand as more than she appeared.

“Stay away from her, Lear. I can help you hide it this once, but until I figure out what she is, we don’t know how it will affect you long term.”

“I know. That’s why I came to you with this. If the others found out-”

“They’d kill her now,” I finished his statement, already drawing the same conclusion.

“We’re the most powerful force made. The seven! If she has that much

power...” Lear didn’t finish. Nothing should be more powerful than us, and if she could control him, something was in her that made her different. Something our fathers would want gone.

Before we could continue, the door swung open, and all the guys came in. Beau was last because for the last month, he had looked rather ill. Pale and clammy skin radiated with his tired expression.

Rin moved to be next to me to make it easier to take point. We all shifted to make our circle properly. To his right, it went me, Lear, Aster, Milo, Beau, and then Bell.

“We have a problem,” Rin growled. We all looked to him to continue on, but Lear and I shared a worried stare before giving him the floor. “You know how we’ve all had that feeling of being watched when we’re *out*?”

We all nodded from feeling the stare of nothing but a ghost on us. We always had.

“Last night, I felt it again, but this time, there was a voice demanding me to save her,” he growled.

“What?!” Milo shrieked.

“That wasn’t the worst part. Whoever she is, overpowered me and changed what was supposed to happen.” Rin sighed and rubbed his face.

“What was happening?” I asked. Beau began calculating too.

“A drunk idiot was supposed to rape his daughter and beat his wife to death.” None of us flinched from his words. They were awful, but we couldn’t intervene with the divine. He just had to help the scene play out.

“And what happened instead?” Lear questioned.

“The mother grew a pair and stabbed her husband to death while his fingers were in her daughter.”

*Good.* I thought to myself. I hated we had to sit by and let these deaths



happen. I'd rather help the people in them that were the good ones.

“So, the person overpowered you? Bent your mind to her will?” Lear asked him, but he kept looking at me.

“Yes. We need to move our focus and find this witch before she really fucks things up. When we find her, she's as good as gone.” He moved to the door then as everyone followed him out. Lear and I shared a private conversation with our eyes to keep our knowledge silent. If it was Octavia, Rin would kill her with no questions asked. So, I defied my leader, betrayed my circle... all to help a girl I knew nothing about. Only that her addicted mother was just like mine.

## Chapter 14



**O**ctavia We—me and whichever man I was in this dream—stood in the shadowed hall to a law firm building. Inside an office, we found a man gathering anything and everything as he looked like he got ready to bolt. Frightened beyond belief, he kept checking the door like he knew someone would be coming for him. Sadly, because I was one of my dream men, I knew someone would be here any minute to make his nightmare true.

Yup, a solid shadow of a man moved in with his expensive petticoat tailored to him and his fedora hat to shade his face. A thick scarf hid his lower face while staying tucked in the top of his coat.

“Earl,” he drawled while lighting up a cigar. It had a weird fifties hitman vibe going with this, but I could tell by the technology we were in the present. The skittish man leapt and flipped around to act like he hadn’t just been packing up his office. He stood in front of the briefcase that he had been filling with everything he deemed important.

“Oh, hey there, Jimmy!” He tried to appear calm and collected, but even I

could see the sweat on his brow and the nervous twitch in his eye. “What can I help you with?”

Jimmy puffed out a smooth cloud of smoke while just standing there, watching Earl unravel. His knowing eyes looked to the case on the desk and then back to the sweating man. “You gonna stand there and try to make pleasantries with me, Earl?” Earl gulped as his hands fiddled together in the front of his crotch.

“I had to, Jimmy! It was you or me. I couldn’t let my family be hurt over your lies.” Earl tried to pretend he grew a pair, but I could smell his potent fear of the man before him.

Jimmy clucked his tongue and shook his head slowly. “You sold me out. You just ruined my name, Mr. DeNiro. A name I spent the last twenty years building up into what it is now. You dragged it through the mud all over one measly threat I could’ve taken care of had you told me. I take care of my guys, Earl... I make sure they stay safe from the law.”

Earl’s Adam’s apple bobbed. “Are you gonna kill me now?”

To that, Jimmy cackled and moved from his leaning position on the door frame to the desk where Earl planted himself. He used the papers on his desk to put out the cigar while making a burning ring in the center.

“I ain’t gonna kill you.” Earl visibly calmed, not picking up on the cues I did. “You wounded my pride by taking the one thing I loved the most away from me. Seems only fair I should do the same to you.”

Catching on, Earl reached for his phone and began dialing someone. After the third time calling, it kept going to voicemail. Earl turned around to Jimmy with no spark in his dead eyes.

“Where’s my wife and kids?” His question had me feeling the depth of his agony.

Jimmy pulled his phone out to show the live feed where a woman sat tied to a chair with two daughters around the age of twelve in the ones next to her. I couldn't stomach this. Remembering last night with the other dream, I wondered if I could take over this one as well. I didn't see how with the mom and girls somewhere else, but I had to try.

"See? An eye for an eye and all. You took what I prided myself most in. Now, I'm gonna take the thing you pride yourself most in. First, you're gonna watch my men have their way. You're gonna see firsthand how hard it is to watch everything you live for fall apart. By the time they're done, your girls will be begging to die."

"Please," Earl spoke, and his wife heard his accent even though she was blindfolded.

"Earl?" Her voice broke with the fear of the situation. She and her daughters heard exactly what would be in store for them.

"Baby, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." He sobbed over the phone.

"Don't you dare blame yourself for this man's wrongs! You did the right thing when the FBI came over. No matter what happens, I'm proud of you for doing the right thing." She existed as a strong woman, and I admired her strength. Too bad her girls didn't deserve this brutal treatment. They were on each side of their mother with no blindfold. They could see their father over the chat. Even in their fear, they nodded with their mother's words. They were scared but were still trying to be strong for their dad.

This was my dream. I chose how this was going to end! Focusing on Earl, I drew my inner strength.

*Save them! Use Jimmy as a hostage!* I screamed. The guy I was, doubled over just as last night's guy had. Earl, with a new determination, waited for Jimmy to cackle again. That's when his guard came down.

Moving to his boss, Earl clubbed him over the head with a lamp on his desk. Jimmy hit the ground, and Earl pulled the gun from Jimmy's back. Cocking it, he showed the other men the position he had their boss in. His new determination made his eyes harden and a stone-cold killer took over.

"Release my family, or I'll put a bullet in Jimmy's head." Earl looked to his beautiful daughters. "Megan, Molly, close your eyes. I don't want you to see this."

They both nodded as they hung their heads to let their long, black hair hide their faces. The men in their room had already manhandled his wife. Her torn shirt gaped open to show her naked torso. Jimmy's goons quickly untied the family just as Jimmy started waking up. His groan alerted the crew just as Earl's wife had been released from her bonds.

"You idiots! Kill them! I'm finished in this town already!" Jimmy grunted, rolling over. His men moved to grab the wife, but she was quicker and dove for a knife across the room.

She charged one guard and stabbed him in the back as he watched the phone. When she went after the other, he shot off his gun and nailed the mother in the stomach. Her hand clasped the wound right in the middle of her gut.

Crimson fluid pooled from her belly, but she ignored her imminent death. Running and screaming, she still managed to kill the other. When she stabbed his neck, we watched the fountain of blood pulse out from his jugular.

He fired again and the shot managed to get one daughter in the arm. She cried out, but as her mother turned to go to her, she had lost too much blood. Falling to her knees, both girls witnessed something no one should. Unable to aid her, they watched their mother bleed out. She had saved her daughters and herself from being molested and raped, but in doing so, she died.

The phone of the goon was messed up so we could only see part of the safe daughter who was still tied up. “Daddy, we’re in our basement.” She cried hard and kept her focus on the door ahead of her. Knowing she couldn’t help her mother or her sister, she tried to pretend none of it happened. Earl told her he’d be there soon and then put three bullets in Jimmy’s head. Three for the women he loved.

~

Two nights in a row? How was that even possible?

This stayed on my mind as I hid out in the library. Fiona called my teacher and said I would be with her, knowing I actually needed some time to myself. She could see the tiredness in my damaged eyes. I just pulled out the journal from P and tried reading it. The words were lost to me as I tried to stop thinking about last night.

Wishing hard to know how it ended, my mind didn’t let me see if the sister was okay or if the father got to them. They always cut off at the kill, and I let out a breath of frustration.

A window sat behind me in the alcove I hid in. I looked to the dreary sky from it being the beginning of October. Though, the weather sure matched my mood more than the season.

That’s when I heard the little strum of a guitar. No one seemed to be near me, but whoever played, did me a favor. Leaning my head back against the window, I listened to the haunting melody of *Lost Boy* by Ruth B.

“Run, run, lost boy, they say to me. Away from all of reality...” My voice trailed off without me thinking, and I sang every word, feeling every emotion.

Sometimes music could be the only way to express the pain in someone's heart. It's how people bore their souls to their audience. For me, it was to forget about the real world for a short time. It's why I liked this song so much. Just as the last chord played on a guitar, I realized I had been singing out loud. Whoever played the instrument had most likely heard me. Blushing and clearing my throat, I stood to leave before they saw my face.

"Don't go," a broken voice whispered from the other side of the shelf. We couldn't see each other, but I knew it had to be a male. Instead, I heard him let out a painful sigh. "I thought I was alone in here."

"I thought I was too." I shared this private moment with him.

"How do you know that song?" He cleared his throat, and I scrubbed the gooseflesh on my arms to go down.

I got too lost in the pain of last night and in the lyrics of that song to realize the man spoke with a British accent. A dead giveaway to who had been playing the guitar, but I sat, too overwhelmed from my running emotions to see how amazing he played.

My forehead leaned against the shelf between us as I closed my eyes to let the words flow out. "All of us who are lost want somewhere to belong... Why were you playing it?" I asked with a heaviness in my tone. I was desperate to feel a connection.

"I longed for Peter to whisk me away as a young boy. I never wanted to grow up because I knew what it meant for me."

"And what does it mean?" My voice dropped even more, afraid I might release my pent-up emotions on the mystery man. He could probably hear the tremble in my tone.

"That to live means I must take." He didn't add anymore to that until after his exhale of breath. "Sing me another?" he asked instead.

“Yeah, but can I play it though?” He agreed, and I moved to go the other side in his alcove. When we saw each other, we both froze. Aster gulped with big eyes. I should have just left and walked out. Now that he knew it was me, no words left his lips. I nodded solemnly from knowing why.

Walking to him, instead of doing the smart thing, I took his guitar and sat down in the window seat. One leg came up for me to rest my elbow on my knee. I learned to play at my previous schools during music, but I never got to practice much from not having one.

“I know you can’t talk to me, and I’m kind of grateful for that right now. I’ve had a terrible few days to the point I’m willing to sit here next to you and use your guitar. If you don’t want to be near me, I’ll be done at the end of the hour.” Yes, I held his guitar hostage, and no, I didn’t care.

Aster smirked while leaning his shoulder into the shelf with his arms crossed. He waved me on with one hand. I closed my eyes to let the music flow.

I played my rendition of Breaking Benjamin’s *Anthem of the Angels* for me and my mom. It was mostly from the last memory I had of her in the hospital before Daemon took her from me. Not stopping with that song, I did *Brokenby* Seether and then a few more to follow. When the first bell rang for our next class, I cleared my throat and stood. Aster was still in his spot, but his head tilted back to show his long neck that had a few curls swirling at the base of his skull. He really was handsome even with his bad boy persona.

“Don’t be getting any ideas, Trash Whore. Just because I like your voice and talent, doesn’t mean I want to fuck you,” he blatantly said when he turned his head down to look at me.

“If I ever fucked you, it would be a pity fuck, you self-righteous bastard,” I growled back. All the raging emotions ceased when anger rippled through



me. “My vagina has standards you don’t meet to enter!”

Yeah, that sounded as weird out loud as it had in my head. Too late to take it back now. He smirked. “Love, you let Beau between your legs, and he’s fucked every girl in this school at least a dozen times. Besides, I wouldn’t fuck anything but your arse.”

“You’re sick!” I poked his chest with my finger. Someday far, far, away, I’d learn to stop poking the bears. Today was not that day.

“Not sick, Love. I just don’t want to get a girl pregnant.” Lie. I could feel the lie roll from his tongue.

“Lying doesn’t suit you. What’s the real reason you won’t fuck a pussy?”

He moved to me and tucked a stray hair behind my ear. “Besides most arses are tighter in this hellish place of easy whores? No one is prepared for what happens when I have my way with them, Love.” He kissed my temple and walked away. I stood there in shock, knowing one thing and one thing only. His words weren’t a lie. Everything he just whispered to me was the truth.

## Chapter 15



**O**ctavia

It was unusual for me to get emotionally invested in the things I saw. Though, now that I knew Maria had been a real person, my mind became lost on the girls. The three of them the last two days had been nearly too much, and knowing they might be true? Well, that's how I found myself knocking on Daemon's office door.

"Come in," he called from the other side.

Preparing myself, I entered while exhaling a breath as I saw him scribbling something into his planner. Huh, I didn't think I'd ever seen someone use one of those in this generation.

"Octavia? What brings you into my office?" He looked shocked I seemed willing to confront him after he had grounded me. "I hope this isn't about reducing your punishment."

"No, Sir. Well, not in the sense you're thinking," I tried to ease the tension with a tight smile, but my hand trembled as I reached for the chair in front of

his desk. The quaking limb did not go unnoticed.

“What’s wrong? I hope it isn’t you being afraid of me?” He was an odd man. I watched him hurt my mother and then dote on me while also allowing Sal to use me soon.

“NO! Nothing like that. I just, uh, I have PTSD and some other things that have been on my mind lately. I looked up some support groups and found one is tonight in the city. I just hoped it would be okay to go... I’ve never been able to get help for it, but it’s been getting worse. I don’t know what to do besides see someone for it. Groups are cheaper, so I was hoping to do that.”

“This isn’t a ploy just to get out, is it?” I could tell he already knew, knowing I suffered from my past. This moment marked the first time I could get outside help.

“No, if you want to drive me and meet the counselor, I’m fine with that. I just- I’d rather talk to a stranger than people I know.”

“Will you ever be able to tell me exactly what you suffered?” When he asked, I couldn’t even open my mouth from how dry it got. I shook my head, and he nodded in understanding because he had found out about what happened. Well, the aftermath of it. No one but me and my cracked-out mom did. “I’ll have one of the boys take you and wait for you. That way I know you’re safe.”

Yeah, safe wasn’t exactly what I’d mark myself in their care. I nearly snorted but reeled it in. He didn’t know they were a problem for me.

“As long as they don’t come in,” I warned. The guys would use this to their advantage against me in this sick game.

“No, dear. This is private, and they will be ordered to leave you alone. Just let me know what days after tonight, and we’ll arrange it.”

I nodded and stood to go get my jacket. The drive would be about an hour,

so I needed to brace myself to keep that kind of company. Coming back down to the foyer, I found Aster standing there with Bellamy. When he said one of the boys, I had just assumed it would be Lear, but since we, ah, did it, he avoided me completely. He was also visiting his mom for his birthday today. Apparently, holidays and birthdays were the only time she flew in from Tokyo.

Neither of the guys asked if I was ready. They just went to the door and left it open for me to follow. *Still ever the gentlemen...* My mind remembered Lear doing the same thing, and I rolled my eyes. Someone needed to teach these boys a little more common courtesy. Though, it might be too late for them as they turned eighteen this week.

I climbed into the back of Aster's Aston Martin and tried not to squeal at how amazing this silver car was. Trying not to laugh, Bellamy began lighting up a joint, but Aster knocked it out of his hand before he could light it.

"Not in my car, yeah? I just had it detailed, you bloody bastard." Aster's accent still sounded unfair against the female population.

Bellamy just rolled his eyes and opened the glove box to show several thongs stashed in there. Raising a brow at Aster, he questioned his priorities. "I think these might contaminate it more than my joint."

Bellamy slammed it closed. I found myself gulping from how mellow and articulate his speech was. Holy hell, I needed to get a grip with these guys. "You try having those things shot at you every time you're on stage, mate."

"You chose to sign that record deal. We just go and support you, fucker. You like having those panties shot at you."

Aster was in a band? As though he could pick up on my confusion, he smirked at me in the rearview mirror. "Aye, Love. You are in the presence of

a rockstar. Aster Avila, lead singer of *Fourth Ring*. That would be me..." He wiggled his eyebrows as Bellamy revolved his eyes.

"Ignore him. He just loves the attention," Bellamy actually addressed me. My eyes widened in surprise. Shifting forward to lean between the seats, I cleared my throat and looked at Bellamy. "I never thanked you for-"

He cut me off. "Don't mention it, Cupcake. Ever."

Well then. Falling back against my seat, I sat in silence as they bitched at each other. My mouth might have stayed closed, but my eyes rolled over a dozen times. Yet, I liked seeing these two banter back and forth. They dropped me off and drove off without saying a word. I knew Daemon told them to stay, but I had a feeling waiting for me was the last thing either of them wanted to do.

Turning toward the rundown building, a man in his thirties greeted people. When he saw me, his smile grew. Walking right over to me, he held out his lanky hand. This guy hadn't seen much sun and could use a good thirty pounds from how thin he stood. I could tell he wasn't a people person from how devoted to his work he got. He fixed his glasses and stumbled a little.

"You must be Octavia Clarke. Your father just called me to let me know you'd be joining. I'm Dr. Evan Bird, but everyone just calls me Evan." I shook his hand and became impressed by how comfortable he made people feel after just judging him wrong. He must be really good at this kind of thing.

"I am, but most call me Via." He seemed to appreciate me trying and led me into a room to fill out a paper while beginning to open up the group. Some were still entering as I watched feet move to different seats.

"Hey everyone! We have a few new faces today, so why don't we introduce ourselves?" Evan began.

The introductions circled as I finished up my medical history sheet, but it wasn't until a certain name spoke that I looked up. Directly across from me were the twins from last night. Molly introduced her and her sister Megan—who sported a sling from being shot.

A few seats down from them? The daughter of the whore two nights ago. Addi shifted with nerves while wearing a giant hoodie. I knew that attire well and understood she tried to hide her body.

When I Googled this group, I felt drawn to it. Now, I think I knew why. Somehow, these young girls were here for a reason, and I was too. Call it further punishment, but I could barely handle listening to their pain. All three of them had been placed in this group by the state after what had happened. Addi wasn't quite comfortable sharing, and neither was Megan. Molly seemed to be the only one who needed to get the words out.

She bled her voice in a desperate search to feel something other than her grief and torture. I hadn't seen what had happened before they were in the basement, but she painted a picture of the older men being handsy. My throat grew parched because I felt like I failed them. It also drew attention to the fact that I had had these dreams for almost five years. They came more frequently the more that time had passed.

Gulping, I couldn't even live with the things I thought my mind made up. Now, that I knew they were real? That these men were actually killing? I felt sick to my stomach.

“I just... I can't get over my dad trying to do the right thing. He was the good guy and now he's in jail waiting for his trial. How is that fair? He let the FBI know about his boss, he watched them hurt my mom, and because he killed his boss, he's being punished. What happened to the good guys winning by doing what's right?”

Molly sobbed into her hands as a moment of silence passed. She needed someone to tell her things got easier and so did the other two. Clearing my throat, I got Evan's attention. He nodded for me to take the floor. I never shared what happened to me with anyone, but now I felt like I had to for them to know one thing. They weren't alone.

“Hey, everyone. I'm Octavia, but everyone calls me Via.”

Some said hi back while some just waved or nodded.

“I think the hardest part of any trauma that people don't understand is that it never goes away completely. I mean, yes, I can have people touch me now, but I can still recall every detail. How I felt, where I was, what I wore, where their hands were. All of that knowledge has never left even though I'm getting older.”

The girls were starting to pay attention.

“I was almost twelve when it happened the first time. I was still considered a little girl when a man came into my room and forced himself on me. The officers used the term nonconsensual sex with a minor, but I was eleven years old when I was raped. I was a child.”

The first tear fell, but I knew I had to continue. I had to for these girls to atone for a sin I didn't even know I had committed.

“You're right, Molly. I did everything by the book in the poverty I lived in. But one day, a man decided my nightgown was too short. That I tempted him and his friend who were visiting the city. I cried every night not understanding how come I got picked to be the victim. That I was defenseless when it kept happening to me afterward.

“By different gangs and friends of my mom, I had lost myself under their touch. But I realized I was letting myself be the victim. I had the power to choose who I wanted to be after what they did. I finally threw away the large

clothes to hide my body and started doing my hair again. No girl asks for it by wanting to feel pretty. It just takes a sick bastard to use it as an excuse.

“Don’t let them win. You might not ever forget what they did, but you choose how to use what happened. Sympathy or strength. I chose the latter, but I’m here because my own strength has weakened from recent events. That’s why these groups are needed for us to call upon. To remind us we are not alone...”

Everyone in the circle, all nine people, looked at me like I had said exactly what they needed to hear. I had said it for the three girls I tried to save from the pain, but we were not the only victims to sexual assault and trauma.

I cleaned my face with the tissue Evan handed me. He closed up our night after I spoke with his thoughts that agreed with what I said. He asked me for my number for him to send me the session schedule, and I gave it. A part of me had been freed by finally letting the sorrow and anger go tonight.

Looking up to the door, I found Aster staring at me like I had grown two heads. Son of a... He wasn’t supposed to be here. His phone sat idly in his hands, but he didn’t type. No, his focus stayed on me and me alone.

The girls all followed their social workers out, and I moved with a brisk pace to Aster’s car. Once in, he didn’t say anything at first. He just let the silence fall as we watched the inner city vanish behind us. Turning down the music, he kept his focus out the windshield to not address me personally.

“If you ever want to talk, I know my fair share, Love.”

I scoffed. “The only thing I want from you is for you to not tell anyone. I don’t need it shoved down my throat by Lexi or Rin.”

Aster shook his head. “I’d betray my own mother if I used that against you.”

“What do you mean?”



He tapped his fingers against the wheel. Nodding, I guess he thought it was okay to answer.

“I was born from her rape.” Truth. I swallowed hard and felt my heart soften towards the playboy rockstar. “It’s a hard life to grow up as the child she didn’t want, but it was even worse from the conception being forced on her.”

“I’m sorry.” I didn’t know what else to say to that. I saw Aster in a different light when he let his cocky persona fall.

“I am too, for you, Love. I watched my mother end her life because she could never learn to cope. That’s why I was so impressed by your words in there to those young girls. I wish someone had said that to my mother.”

Wow. Aster let himself be completely real with me, and my mind went back to the library where he played *Lost Boy*.

“*Lost Boy...*”

“I’ve never truly belonged anywhere besides with the band of misfits you see me with. We might have a hierarchy to how we operate business, but we are brothers first.” I think I had a little more respect and also a little more jealousy that they had each other. I had no one. “We gotta swing by and grab Bell from his father’s office. You okay with that? I promise, no one will ever know what you shared tonight.” Truth.

Aster Avila actually had a heart under that leather jacket. I nodded as he hopped out to go get his friend. That’s when I felt my eyes rolling to the back of my head in the backseat of Aster’s car.

*Shit!*

## Chapter 16



**O**ctavia

We were walking down a sidewalk where the lamps weren't fully lit. My killer tonight watched everything around him almost as though he knew my presence. Maybe it happened because I knew this was real, that I no longer stayed the silent party within his head. Though, how the hell was I seeing through someone else's eyes?

Maybe aliens abducted me when I was younger, and they implanted something within my head. Yeah, aliens seemed to be the least crazy theory right now.

In a black hoodie, the man I was remained hidden in the shadows the night created for him. He moved until he got to a rundown apartment complex, and then he hurriedly climbed the stairs to the fourth floor. Going to room number D7, he opened the door enough to see three people. From the looks of it, a girl just found her boyfriend cheating on her with a model.

Holy Hannah! The woman was runway ready. The actual girlfriend seemed pretty but not a knockout like the other woman. Poor girl... Trying to compete with the impossible because her man couldn't keep it in his pants. Oh, how the world's standards led us all to fail because we couldn't measure up.

"How-how could you?" The actual girlfriend clearly just got off work somewhere from her waitressing uniform.

"Gale! It's not what it looks like!" Oh, wow. Did he really just use that line on her?

Torch his ass, Sista! Okay, so maybe I shouldn't be so swift to condemn him to death, but I'd suffice for his dick to be whacked off. Now that should be a law. Put your pecker in the wrong hole and BAM! It's gone.

Sadly, half our population would lose their members. Then, on the female end, they'd lose the ability to orgasm if they cheated too. Yeah. That might save the rising increase of infidelity dealing with the world's patrons. Now, how to legalize castration on a dick and clit?

"Teagan, you don't need to be nice to the girl you took pity on..." The Victoria's Secret model moved to the man named Teagan. My amputated clit idea sounded better and better.

I felt bad when girls don't know they'd been played by a taken man, but I became murderous when the woman became the willing other woman. We were supposed to have each other's feminist backs!

"Pity?" Gale looked bewildered at her man. "I've been supporting your sorry ass for three years, Teagan! I've been working myself bone-dry so you can pursue your modeling career that still hasn't gone anywhere!"

"Excuse me! I'm somewhere!" The model wanted to clarify.

"You are in my home that I pay for with my name on the lease. Teagan

failed to tell you that part of this living situation. He's bumming off of me. One call to the police, and I'll show you exactly where your *somewhere* is!"

"Come on, Teagan. We'll just go back to my place." The model jerked her robe into place.

Gale snorted. "I hope you don't have roommates, or he'll find *somewhere* else to wet his dick too."

That's when the model lashed out and began fighting Gale. It lasted a while, but I felt a shift in my vision.

No longer looking through his eyes, I found myself in my own body, right behind his. Peering over his shoulder, I found Gale shooting both the partners and then herself. I didn't see the end of this one because I stared at the back of one of the murderers that I had come to know a little too well. My feet were quietly trekking backward just as the hooded man began to turn.

My survival should have kicked in and led me to run away, but this was me. The slightly insane one who sees real kills and has a high sex drive. Yup, I stopped and waited to see who might end me next. What I wasn't ready for was the pair of green, slanted eyes widening at the sight of me.

"LEAR?" I shouted and gasped. My stepbrother was one of my personality disorders?

"Octavia, what are you doing here?"

Ignoring his question, I went directly to his arm and yanked up his sleeve. Right there, in person. The first time I had seen his color in the tattoo they all had, but I knew his style.

Jealousy, the third ring filled in with green. "You're the Green Monster..."

Yeah, with Punisher and Ender, I named this one after his envious trysts. Lear didn't move as my fingers followed the circle of green in the tattoo. My mind finally pieced together a lot more.

“The seven of you... You’re the monsters who have been torturing me all these years,” I whispered. “You are my alter egos inside my head...”

Lear jerked away from my fingers and gripped my biceps for me to look him in the eye. “Octavia, what are you talking about?”

“Tit for tat, *Bro.*” Was I scared? Fuck, I was about to shit myself! Yet, I needed to keep my cards close in order to gain my own information. “I’ll tell you if you’ll tell me.”

That’s when Aster and Bellamy came dashing down the hallway in search of Lear. They hadn’t seen me behind him yet.

“Lear! We lost Octavia!” Aster sounded frantic, and I smiled bigger. Lear sidestepped to showcase me as I winked at Aster, understanding a lot more now.

Walking past them all, I kissed Aster’s cheek and cackled maniacally. “Now I understand why you have to fuck an ass... Does seeing blood pooling from their sex get you off or is it the moment their pulse disappears?”

“What have you told her?” Aster accused Lear.

“He told me nothing that I didn’t already know. I just now have faces to put with the monsters of my subconscious.” Shaking my head, I couldn’t believe this, but I knew I couldn’t go home and demand answers. Daemon would be too close. “Take me to Lou’s and call the Punisher. Sevrin and I have a lot to discuss.”

Bellamy and Aster were trying to figure it out, and I knew Lear filled them in by the shock on their faces. They did as I instructed, and now I had one hour to come up with a plan and questions I needed answered. Smiling at Lear’s befuddled face, it told me all I needed to know. Looked like this queen just removed the king’s knight, and my next moves were pretty strong too.

# Silent Omen

Ashley Amy

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## Chapter 1



**S**evrin

Cursed. Some didn't know the true definition of that word. They used the term flippantly when they missed their bus or ripped their pants. None of them knew what it meant to wear the mark of the circle. To literally be born into a curse without being able to change the Universe's shitty decision, telling us our birthright came from it because of what our forefathers had done three centuries ago. It wasn't like I chose to be born into this legacy of darkness.

Not that it mattered anymore because my fate sealed its journey after Sunday. Soon enough, I wouldn't have to live so carelessly to sate my primal needs. I was not a beast and yet I was not a man. Somewhere stuck in a personal purgatory of being on the fence to both sides of my soul.

Pressing the clutch and shifting gears in my Bugatti Veyron, I left my windows down to feel the increase of cool air around me. Behind me, I had a few racers that were trying their damndest to keep up, but none of them

could drive like me. If I didn't want to fuck my anger out, I raced and released the endorphins another way.

Plus, a lot of drivers were pissed after, and they wanted to brawl when I swiped their pink slips. Of course, I never turned down a fight. That thought made me smile, and I punched the gas harder while keeping everything in control. Lo and Luce came out with me tonight just in case I needed extra fighters when I would get ambushed after my win.

Not that my beast needed them, but the meaning behind their help strengthened our brotherhood. We were brothers... Not by blood but by curse. Beau came too, but he spent his time in the office of the warehouse dipping his pecker into God knows how many women. I felt bad for his curse too. To never feel sated had to be hard for him, but I thirsted for blood. Luce had an upscale version of being an OCD perfectionist, and Lear never got what he wanted to keep him in a constant, jealous state. Aster couldn't fuck a girl's pussy without killing her. Lo couldn't stop himself from working to the bone for more money. Beau would never feel sated, and Bell could never sleep.

We were plagued, we were cursed, but we all had each other during the harder years. We all began this journey knowing what we were, but at thirteen, we felt the hunger for the first time. As Reapers for the damned, we fed on the souls who sinned in our names. We had to collect them to banish our hunger until the next wave hit. It sucked to be us, but we were literally made for the job. Talk about horrible genetics, and I shivered while nearing the end.

Passing the finish line, I pulled up to Ralph who ran the underground tracks. He handed me the pink slips that were bet. People wagered against me all the time, but they never beat me. I could drive the hardest terrains with my

eyes closed from how often I went on a trip to calm my beast. Sure, the others had their fair share of hardships, but having a beast within me was completely different.

Lo and Luce came up to me just as the next racers crossed. They were already jumping out of their cars with their anger humming from their bodies. If only they knew that fed the beast caged within me from feeling their blood boil. I breathed the heady scent in and basked in what was mine to claim.

*Wrath*, they called me. I needed blood to satiate my monster.

“You cheated!” one guy shouted, and five of them were already moving to fight the great Sevrin Thana. If only they knew who I truly was. They’d be running back to their mom’s basement in a heartbeat. As always, they swung first. I became intoxicated by the feel of the pain against my jaw. A copper taste filled my mouth, and I groaned from needing it.

The boys and I didn’t hold back. We were the seven, the strongest among our kind. The princes to the fiery kingdoms below. Beau moved to us, and I was shocked to see him out without a whore. He came to join the fight which wasn’t like my gluttonous friend. Though, lately, he had been acting completely off.

Punch after punch, I kept going until I knew my knuckles were bleeding. Fuck, I needed to feel this. It had been too long since I hurt someone or had used myself enough to slake my beast. The boys also liked a good fight but not like me. I needed to feel their anger while craving the taste of their blood. I took on way more men, but the guys knew that’s how I liked it. More men meant more pain.

The brawl went on until I heard the light sound of my phone vibrating. Fighting these twigs called men, I answered with my free hand.

“Lear,” I grunted while ducking between two guys.

“Get to Milo’s mom’s suite now. We have a colossal problem.” Lear’s voice came out hard and a little scared if I read him right. What on earth had one of my knights scared? We were fed to the wolves at a young age to never know the word.

“How close are you?” I asked while kicking a guy across the graveled circle. He grunted as the air got knocked out of his lungs. I was already becoming bored, and we had just started.

“Twenty minutes.”

“We’ll leave soon. Why are we going there?” My closest friend had never been this bossy.

“You’ll get the surprise yourself just as Bell, Aster, and I got it. Hurry, though. This is important to know.” He hung up. I spent the next five minutes feeding my inner beast.

He needed this after our failed night on Sunday. I still got a collection, but it wasn’t what the Universe wanted. Now I had to wait and see what that godawful bitch named Karma would do. She loved showing up and sleeping with one of us when it suited her, but she did not hesitate to show her own form of wrath. Hot as fuck when she faced off with me, but I could tell she still feared me.

What I’d give for a female to love my beast. Only one had shown promise, but Octavia Clarke became off-limits to all of us because something didn’t sit right about her.

Loading up, Beau climbed in with me and the other two took Lo’s yellow Ferrari. It contrasted my black Bugatti with red on the side. Lo and I had our own race through the hills to our hidden town, but not even he would be a match for me. I chuckled when we pulled up and got out. If only he knew I didn’t go my hardest speed.

Right behind us, Aster's Aston Martin pulled in, and then Lear's truck rode his backend. Lear might've been my best friend, but he was a fucking terrible driver. Aster and Bell climbed out of the car, but they didn't hold my focus. Lear's passenger side door popped open and out came the devil herself.

Whatever had Lear spooked just had to involve his stepsister. She strutted by us all but stopped right before me.

"Punisher. We're going to have some words if you ever let another girl suffer rape again. You're usually the one beating the biggest bastard's face in. Beat up the bad one next time!" That was all she said as she made her way to the door. My eyes shot back to Lear.

"What. The. Fuck?" I growled.

"It appears I caught our ghost...or rather, she caught me tonight." Lear rubbed his crestfallen face. Our group positioned to stand in our ranks as we watched the little vixen give us a Cheshire grin. She thought she won something... Now we just had to see if she'd tell us what she won.

## Chapter 2



**O**ctavia

And so it began... Well, not really.

The guys were still staring and whispering in the parking lot when I made my way to the elevator. Man, my life took a drastic turn by moving here, and I didn't think it would ever go back to being on-course again. I had tried calling Lou to make sure she would be home, but she hadn't answered. Begging to any higher power, I just hoped she jumped in the shower and would be here. Using my phone, I dialed Gare, and he answered with a glare from it being a little early over in Europe.

Even the lights were out, so the glow of the phone only lit up his face. He was seriously too cute, and now in a mild funk from Tom breaking up with him. Apparently, Gare had been gone too long and wasn't devoted to their relationship.

Please, Gare had been too devoted to Tom. On social media—thanks to some mild stalking—Tom already got spotted with someone new. They broke

up yesterday night! Oh, and it wasn't just Tom and his new guy together. No, they were kissing in the photo. My gay friend really needed a boost, but by his crumpled look, he wasn't getting it in Europe.

"Via, this better be life or death," he huffed while I used the code for the private elevator to get to Lou's penthouse.

"I can't call because I miss you?" I teased to bring him back to his normal bubbly self. He and Lou were a lot alike.

"Not this early. I only accept calls if you are bleeding out and needing to say our final farewells," he fired back. Good. He needed the normalcy, and so did I.

"I have to be bleeding?" I pouted.

"Yes. Extreme blood loss that makes you delirious."

"Oh dang... So I guess my problems with the seven don't count?"

"Depends," he perked right up. "Are you ready to share the trysts you've been having?"

I gasped at his dancing eyebrows. "How do you know about Lear and Rin?"

The phone dropped from his hand, and I watched the screen go dark on the floor. Gare immediately picked it up with a gaping mouth.

"WHAT?!" he shrieked.

"Oh, uh, nothing!" I squeaked, but he gave me the knowing eyes. "Fine, later I will tell you. Not even Lou knows so keep it down. Anyways, I have other problems other than me being classified as a mild whore."

"Sweetie, you are no whore. You are not tied down or committed and can enjoy sex like any healthy young person. Now, please say this is going to be good. I need some excitement in my life again."

"More than you know." I breathed while stepping in and closing the elevator doors behind me. Who knew how long the guys were going to be

downstairs, or if they were going to bolt?

My words perked him right up to know something serious had happened.  
“Via?”

I knew he wanted to ask more, but how did I answer that when I wasn't completely sure? This night better give me some results, or I would lose my ever-loving mind.

“Did Lou tell you about my dreams?” I knew she had. Lou kept Gare in the loop with our little circle and updated him about everything.

“Yes...”

“Tonight, I went to a support group and met three victims from this week's dreams.” I didn't get to add more from him jumping in, thinking I needed soothing. I probably did, but I turned into too much of a hot mess from this.

“Are you okay? What happened?”

“I'm fine, but that's not the present issue. No, that came when I blacked out from another dream coming tonight, right after my meeting. This time, I sleepwalked to the murderer. I found out the killer is Lear.”

Gare visibly gulped while he nodded. “So, you figured it out then?”

“Not really. I'm at Lou's now with the guys behind me for us to have a sit-down. They all bear the mark I see when I am the murderer, so I know they are tied in somehow.”

“Just remember they are sworn to silence, Via. They can't answer directly. You need to come up with questions that are round-a-bout to get what you're looking for.”

“See? This is why I have you to be my brain.” I smiled, and he laughed a little. The lighter mood settled my soul just a smidge. He deserved to find someone amazing. “Thanks Gare.”

“No problem, Via. Now, call me after and let me know what you get



figured out. There's still so much to this mess that you're going to have to learn. I wish I could just tell you everything to make it easier and to protect you from what's coming."

Just as I got inside Lou's arrival room, that connected to her living room, we hung up. The sinking feeling of darkness swept through me again as I studied the pristine white of the walls. Black and white colors made it controversial and beautiful.

I sighed while leaving the elevator area. That's when Lou popped only her head up from the couch. I stood behind it as I watched the color drain from her face. She quickly looked down at the end of the couch I couldn't see, and her false joy and embarrassment reddened her cheeks, but I could also see her chest flushing with perspiration.

"Via?! What are you doing here?" I watched her pretend to cough and grab a throw blanket to cover the bra she remained in. "I haven't been feeling well."

I sighed and shook my head.

"Fucking hell, Lou. Out of all days you pick to lose your v-card." I pinched the bridge of my nose just as Mr. Gram sat up and sheepishly smiled at me.

"Via? What's going on." Lou's voice trailed off when the elevator dinged.

"That would be your-" Lou already knew where my words strayed, so she shoved Mr. Gram back down to hide before the seven stepped right up behind me. Thank heavens the blanket hid her to cover what I got an eyeful of. Though, my bestie did look amazeballs in that red lace. Her blonde hair slanted over her shoulders and got a little damp from her promiscuous activities. We could work that into her sickness story.

"Lou's sick. Whose house should we move this little get-together to?" I hurried and turned around to stop them from getting too far. The strong smell

of what they were doing filled the air.

Milo stepped forward to be beside me. I think I saw a flash of concern flicker over his glacial gaze even though he pretended they weren't related. "How come you didn't call me? I would have sent someone to check on you while Mother is gone."

Wow... He couldn't be the checker?

"I'm fine, Lo. Now can you just leave me to rest?" She used the corner of her blanket to wipe her nose. I tried not to laugh at her antics as Aster stepped beside me. The twins were arguing about her being alone as the British Rockstar leaned into my ear with a smirk. "I smell it, ye know."

"Smell what?" I played dumb as he slid his arm around my shoulder to keep this private.

"Their arousal. It's part of my curse, Love. You just better pray Lo leaves before finding out who the poor rat bastard is that's boinkin' his sister, yeah."

That just had to be the moment a naked Fiona came out of the bathroom with a rabbit vibrator in her hand. She was drying it off and hadn't seen us yet.

"Okay, I think I'm good for another round if you two-" Yeah, that sentence stopped when she saw us.

Being outed, Mr. Gram sat up and gave the boys a timid smile. My eyes were on the naked nurse. Yeah, Mr. Gram had a thing for legs by how their bodies mirrored each other's lady bits. Some of the guys were giving her an appreciative look, but Milo only saw red with our TA under his sister. Oh, this would be a good story for later.

Her first time was a threesome? If there weren't the other issues of the night on my mind, and the seven behind me, she'd be spilling every sordid detail. Mr. Gram stood up and let Lou fall back on the couch with her crotch up for

all of us to see when his girthy dick bobbed out. Should I mention the proof of her virginity lined his penis?

Milo saw red and leapt at our teacher, but Lou started screaming at him to stop. Fiona ran to the bathroom for a robe, and the other guys were trying to figure out what to do. As for Aster? He still held me to him, laughing his ass off. He loved this moment a little too much.

“I’m going to kill you!” Milo shrieked and threw more punches. “She was a virgin!”

No need to broadcast that. We could see that aspect just fine on our own. Lou jumped onto her brother’s back, smacking him on the crown of his blond head. “Let him go! You. Ass. Hole! It was my choice, and I wanted it to be him!”

Okay, if I wasn’t worried about someone dying, I’d be laughing right along with Aster. Maybe a little snort and chuckle left my lips. Aster looked down at me with mischief in his eyes. “Now that you know who I am, want to see something else?”

My look had to be intrigued because when he snapped his fingers, everyone in the room groaned. Lou panted like she was in heat, and even the guys had to adjust their crotches. As Milo fought Mr. Gram, his bare dick rubbed against Milo’s front. That’s when it happened. Mr. Gram exploded semen all over Milo’s crotch from how they were positioned. Lou screamed, watching it over her brother’s shoulder. She fell off his back as she began convulsing on the floor. Oh. My. God... Viewing the naughty show gave her an orgasm!

“ASTER!” Everyone shouted in the room as I watched the men squirm to keep from coming in their pants. That’s when I let it out. My humor and insane mind couldn’t believe this had become my night.

The playboy sighed beside me and snapped his fingers again. “Always want

to ruin my fun, yeah.”

Okay, this wasn't something I expected from the rocker. He had a funny bone that he never showed me before, but I couldn't help thinking about all the evil things he could help me with.

“Well, now that my first time has been ruined by my brother, his friends, and my best friend, can someone please tell me why you're here!” Lou shouted, tugging on a robe that stayed within her reach.

“I caught Lear,” I spoke without giving too much away. Lou froze and turned around while squealing.

“Finally! It's been so hard keeping you in the dark when you've been pissing off the seven sinners!” All the men froze with their stares turning venomous on Lou. She read their expressions and bit her lip. “She didn't know that part, did she?”

“No, but you're lucky your mind let you think she had or your tongue would be burned from your mouth,” Rin growled.

They all moved to sit in the living area—sans on the sex couch—and I took them all in. It all made sense now. The colors in the rings, their killing signatures, and even their personalities. The only part I seemed to struggle with was the fact none of this could be real. How on earth could there be such a thing as magic and the seven deadly sins?

I snorted and rolled my eyes. The guys just watched me like a hawk as I paced along the bay window. If it wasn't for my mother's addictions, I might even ask for a drink right now. Though, I didn't think that would help calm the part of me that wanted to hyperventilate.

Not proud of what happened next, and I probably lost some cool points for it. But as I took in the men with knowing what they were, I laughed and

passed out. Right there on Lou's floor, I slipped out of the reality I couldn't come to terms with.

## Chapter 3



**A**ster

“Well, who feels like carrying Sleeping Beauty?” I jested after the long silence of us all watching Octavia fall. It was quite comical with her laughing like a hyena on steroids and then just falling where she stood. Lear and Beau nearly dove at her while we all watched them in shock.

Why were they tripping over each other to get to her? I shared a private look with Rin as he studied his closest friend too. Lou had been texting on her phone, but when she saw the two, her face lost its natural coloring. She bit the corner of her mouth while now looking at Rin with confusion.

“Louise, care to share with the class?” I asked, watching her squirm. She knew something from whatever she just read on her phone.

“How many of you assholes have slept with her?” Now her cheeks flushed from rage instead of arousal.

Beau scoffed because we all knew when he did, but when I saw Lear freeze up and Rin... Well, I am the man of Lust after all. Unable to help it from

feeling their sexual tension to the unconscious girl, I cackled. “Oh, bloody hell! You three have dipped your wankers in her?”

Milo looked murderous, Luce shared a look with Lear like he already knew the fucker had, and Bell just didn’t care.

“I didn’t fully have sex with her.” Rin moaned and rubbed his face. “But, from how far I went, I can’t be mad at Lear for hiding what he did.”

“It was more complicated than that.” Lear went into explaining her control over him and how she bled her emotions.

“So, when I told you about our ghost hijacking my kill, you said nothing?” Rin’s steady composure was scary as fuck. I feared for my envious friend.

“Oh, shove a dick in it! I was afraid to say anything because I knew you’d kill her! I get it, she’s a threat to Lexi. But, she’s also someone who doesn’t deserve what’s going to happen to her. You really want to watch the one girl with enough gumption to stand up to you, die?” Lear didn’t wait for a reply. He gathered her in his arms and walked out. I whistled while stepping forward.

“You blokes know how to cause some problems, yeah.” I walked over to the window to watch Lear with her as he gently laid her in his backseat. “I think we need to be constantly with her. We as in the men who haven’t had sex with her. Something is very off about our little vixen, and it could compromise things if we don’t learn what she is.”

“I agree, but I’ll decide who takes her. Let me talk to Daemon, and we’ll have it figured out.” Rin stood and grunted.

“And Lexi?” Luce asked. All of us stiffened. Yeah, she really hated our lovely Miss Octavia.

“No one makes contact with Octavia when Lexi might know. At school, we just watch. That’s an order. I’ll let you know who has Kitten duty first after I

talk to Daemon.” And that was the end of it. None of us could argue his law as the first and most powerful of our circle.

~

## **Octavia**

Waking up to a horrible migraine wasn't the worst thing. No, that went to being in my bed at Daemon's mansion. With no recollection on how I got here, I noticed the sun rose outside my window, and the clock read eight in the morning. Rushing, I ran to throw clothes on for school while simultaneously brushing my teeth and peeing. Then running back to my room for pants.

Sniffing my pits, I flopped over my bed with my jeans halfway up my legs to get back to the bathroom and ran into Rita in the hall. She stifled a laugh at my tardiness and erratic behavior.

“Heaven help you, child.” She walked off with an actual giggle. Too bad my focus stayed on deodorant and body spray. Slipping into flip flops and grabbing a ponytail holder for my hair, I booked it to my car. Reeling in from last night, I knew today would be weird for me. Would the guys still be open with me? Would Rin let me ask questions?

I hoped so because I needed answers like yesterday. Finding P's journal, I patted the back pocket I kept it in. She and I needed to get closer than we were, and I needed to make time to do just that.

Now that I knew they were... well, I still wasn't sure exactly what they were. They just weren't human. When Lou made that comment about the human world at the mall, I didn't think she really meant we were from another world. Or of this world? Damn, this was so confusing.



I parked my car in the parking lot and ran into the building to make Chemistry on time because I had two minutes. Oh fuck! How would I face Mr. Gram? Well, I was about to find out. My feet pounded against the pavement, and I breathed heavily from the adrenaline spiking my veins. I turned into the open door just as the bell rang, and everyone watched me.

“Made it.” I grinned. Mr. Gram just smiled and shook his head while pointing to my desk. That’s when my eyes drew to the empty seat behind mine. Beau wasn’t here, and my shoulders dropped from the ease of tension.

Mr. Gram started class, but I slipped the diary into its spot in my textbook, knowing this would be my only break today. I did listen to the new things he taught before I read because I couldn’t flunk out of school now. After, I got lost in the cursive of P’s handwriting. Her swirling old penmanship was hypnotic to me, and I found my fingers following the delicate letters.

*July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1701*

*Forgive me, for I have not had the desire to write as of late. The ceremony was completed but not in the way we thought. Almost sixty sun-cycles ago, we united... The nine of us.*

*I had thought it would be enchanting to be adored by eight men who I thought loved me. Maybe, before the ritual, some did.*

*Though, I learned after I shared my blood with them that most had been bedding Amora as well. I must not let myself dwell on it for the darkness already eats at me. Their infidelity will only cause me to drown in the bitterness my heart now beats in. I am nothing more than a shell of my former self. The one who was too naïve and let herself believe eight men could love her and only her.*

*I'm getting sidetracked while writing this, and I need to write down what happened that night for I feel I am already fading. Fading in a place that will never be my home or my sanctuary. I am sorry for my distracted thoughts. For, they are always on the cusp of the forefront of my mind. Now, I will focus on what is needed to be written.*

*The night of the ritual, I remember our fathers chanting words in a tongue I had never heard before. Fire danced in unison on every torch under the high moon. The wind swirled around the circle created for this night.*

*I stood in the very center with all the men around me to create the points of that circle. All of it had given me a fright, but I would lay down my life for the men who had declared their love for me. Even as the flames met the circling wind, I remained and embraced it for them... for our people. That was when the monsters appeared.*

*They had not come from the land or strolled up to the mountain top we were on. No, they magically popped into the circle. Nine different hands landed on my body as they arrived. They were cloaked in black and reeked of blood. Looking down, I found their hands had been bathed in gore, and now it coated me, marking me.*

*The urge to vomit grew, but the arousal from the power also fed my needy veins. A woman with ruby lips and snowy skin unveiled her face while dropping her hood.*

*Her inky hair cascaded down her back as she smiled down at me. Her men revealed themselves, all strong and dominating in their true stature. Their void eyes were completely black, and I knew they were not human at all. Whatever magic our fathers had procured was dark and evil.*

*"My newest daughter," she spoke to me as though she became proud of my strength to do this. "I accept you." Her men moved before mine, so they were*

*facing one another. The first man who faced Silas, offered up his bleeding wrist.*

*My stomach soured, noting it was not a new cut, and it told me my stained gown didn't come from a hunt. Their actual blood marked my body.*

*“Those who have called for help shall receive it this night. You will be welcomed into our fold with the powers of the originals. My son, Silas Thana, drink from my offering and gain the highest power within this coven. No longer will you be born of man.”*

*Silas didn't hesitate as we watched him latch his mouth on and gulp his new master's lifeforce. Once he finished, a random man appeared in his simple clothes at the snap of the Alpha's fingers.*

*“Feed, my son. Feast upon the mortals you will now rule.” This man commanded, and Silas's mouth sprouted fangs that pierced the man's neck. Many tears streaked my cheeks as I listened to the helpless man lose his life. His screams will forever be heard as they still echo in my dreams with the others.*

The bell rang.

It made me jump out of my seat from not expecting it. P's story went from zero to sixty, but I couldn't keep reading. Stupid real life. Sighing, I got up and walked to be the last one out. Mr. Gram erased his work on the board for the next class. I weaseled right up behind him and whispered for only us to hear.

“I knew you had a thing for her.” I snickered when he jumped out of his skin. He had the decency to blush, and I waved when I left the room.

Ugh. Just my luck. I had to walk right into the Wanna-be-Barbie band. They were at the lockers across from this classroom with that being Lexi's assigned one. What I didn't prepare for? Rin pinning her against her locker

with her legs wrapped around his middle. Grinding into her, their mouths ravaged the other. My personal little green monster rose within my soul. My fists clenched in rage as I watched Bell and Milo aid him by kissing her neck.

*Mine...* My mind tossed that word out. I immediately snapped out of whatever trance I fell under, but I felt it. This weird pull to kill Lexi for touching Rin. As if I had any ownership over the Beast. Plus, I knew he did this on purpose. He wanted me to remember my place in his world. I remained a pawn, and I had let him use me for a few minutes of pleasure.

Lucius walked up beside Milo as he glared at his boyfriend because he didn't know this was part of their plan too. I felt bad... Rin used Milo to draw a drastic line. When my gaze caught Lucius's, I could see some hurt hidden under his mask.

He had been the one to have Marcus read my diary but also the sincerest when he apologized. In taste, I could lick the flavor of his cracked heart that floated around. His morning class sat a few doors down, so he walked out to find this scene too. I could feel he had no idea Milo would be a part of this powerplay.

My hand covered my heart where I gripped into the flesh through the thin fabric of my black tee. I mouthed 'I'm so sorry'. He seemed shocked I would care. Maybe it was discovering P went through a lot of infidelities or Milo taking what he had for granted, but Lucius deserved better.

Whatever Rin tried to prove just backfired when Milo sensed his partner. Milo hurried and tried to grab his man, but Lucius already shook his head in retreat. His Pride tarnished by his lover. The hall now filled with the gossip about Milo stepping out on Lucius. I should feel joy Rin's move worked out in my favor, but I didn't. My eyes stayed glued to Lucius's back as he bled his pain with every step.

Milo turned his furious golden eyes onto me. Greed. I sensed his power now that I knew, but I didn't know what ring he was in the target. He stormed over to me and got right in my face. He lost control, and I could sense his thinning composure.

“Stay away from Lucius! He's mine!” he angrily declared.

I got right in his face and shoved him back for everyone to see this moment. “Then treat him like he's yours. You just publicly humiliated him by sucking that whore's neck. If you want to keep him, you better make sure he's the only one you're macking on.”

With that, I looked to Rin with a laugh. “Did you really think I'd be jealous of that? Look around you, Sevrin. No one gives two fucks if you want to sleep with Lexi! Now, you better go apologize to Lucius for what you just did because that's now the circulating news, not me.”

That's when Lou arrived by my side. She faced off with Milo, even though he still had at least five inches on her. She slapped him. Holy crap! Lou just smacked her brother! “You might think it's your choice we don't publicly announce our relationship as siblings, but you're wrong. I can't believe you just threw Luce away for the real Trash Whore of this school. My brother is the problem in this scenario, not my best friend.”

With that, she took my elbow and yanked me along. She was in a bright blue dress with white flowers patterned on it. Yeah, my Bubble-gum friend showed she had the spitfire of Hell in her, and I loved it. I needed her perky side, but I loved when I saw her claws come out.

## Chapter 4



**O**ctavia

“Where the hell is my car?!” I shouted when I came to my spot in the parking lot only to find it empty. Lou looked just as puzzled when she noticed her driver didn’t arrive to pick her up.

“Um, let me call Javier.” Just before she could press the speed dial, a voice halted her efforts.

“No need.” A growly voice behind us already had me rolling my eyes. Of course, Sevrin Thana was the problem in this setting. We both turned with our arms crossed, annoyed he’d already found a new game to torment me with. “Daemon and I worked out an agreement to where the boys and I will be your bodyguards, Kitten. Today, you’re going with me. Louise, Milo will give you a ride home. We needed to make sure she wouldn’t go off with you, so he canceled Javier.”

Beside him were Bellamy and Milo not looking so happy about any of this, and I was right there with them. Huh, that might’ve been the first thing Milo

and I saw eye to eye on. Though, the pleasure of pissing me off couldn't be missed on his angelic face. Bellamy stood as uncaring as ever, but I could tell he'd rather be doing anything else than this.

A truck pulled up behind Lou and me, honking the horn for us to turn around. It was Lear with Beau and Lucius. When Milo went to talk to his boyfriend at the back window, Lucius looked forward and rolled up the window.

Ouch.

I felt like I sat in the middle of some kind of turf war. Which was odd from them being best friends. What had happened since yesterday that made them segregate?

"Sis, hop in. I'll give you a ride home. You too, Lou," Lear spoke to me but glared at Rin. Oh yeah, something definitely went down between them. I mean, I got Lucius's reasons and maybe Lear's twisted guilt, but what the fuck was Beau doing on their team? They were making me feel like that whole issue with the Twilight Saga.

Team Edward or Team Jacob...

Though, this was definitely Team Rin or Team Lear.

"Uhhh..." What the hell was I supposed to say to any of them? All waited while expecting me to choose. What would I choose? Lear's group stayed the lesser evil but still part of the seven DEADLY sins. That title didn't come from just anywhere. Why did the bell have to ring when I read P's entry?

"Well now, what do we have here?" Aster walked over to us from his car. Apparently, he was the only one not playing this game, or he had his own agenda to it.

"I'm ordering Kitten to come with me." Rin's eyes locked with Lear's.

"And I'm getting her the hell away from him," Lear snarled right back.

Damn, I really wanted to know what went down! Lou pinched my back to let me know she was about to whisper as the children fought. Aster stood by the two of us. Lou rolled her eyes but didn't care. He knew what went on too but wanted a scene. Thank heavens Lou filled me in on this fuckfest.

“Lear's pissed with the harm Rin lets Lexi keep dishing out to you. He's sick of it, and Rin's pissed Lear kept your bleeding emotions a secret. Apparently, Rin felt you in his mind on his night out, and Lear knew something about it. Luce did too...”

Her words had me forgetting to breathe. They felt my presence?

“Aye, Love.” Aster winked, and I realized I asked that out loud. That was also the moment Lexi came out with her Barbie Squad. All the guys froze as she squealed in fury by seeing me between them. She had some serious issues...

Aster went to the guys while dragging me with him in the crook of his shoulder. This must be his favorite position to have me in. “Well now, boys. You're making quite the scene in front of your favorite lady. I'm going to take Octavia with me for the evening. Seeing how it is my birthday, I should be gifted with her joining my party, yeah. Seems I'm always the middle man, pun intended.”

He didn't even wait for an answer. He just sauntered us over to his Aston Martin. It was odd doing this with him because he knew my deepest secret. Though, he never looked at me differently after his initial reaction to finding out.

“Come now, Louise. We're wasting precious daylight for what I have planned tonight.” At Aster's words, Lou snapped out of her daze and chased after us while climbing into the back on my side. We got in, and he immediately drove us to his house that didn't sit too far from Daemon's



mansion. I highly doubted any of them lived too far apart from their circle needing to be so close. The house looked different with a tan exterior and white detailing. Not ugly but not what I had expected.

“Sooo... You’re Lust,” I started, and Aster snorted with a nod. I gave a few bobs while thinking about it. “Rin has to be Wrath. He’s too violent. Lear is Envy because I know his kills now. I’m assuming Milo to be Greed from how he feels about Lucius, but I don’t know the others.”

“Ah, you want me to fill in the holes, aye.” He smiled as we walked into his house. “You are right about the ones you do know. Bell is Sloth, Beau is Glutton, and Luce is clearly Pride. Have you seen the man’s appearance?”

“Sooo, none of you are human?” I tried to word it nicely, and he smiled.

“We are born of the human world, Love. Until we harness our true powers, we are not immortal. I will become one tonight when I fulfill the Universe’s need for balance. On our eighteenth birthday, we become what is needed.”

I wanted to ask more, but when we entered a giant music room—set up to be a recording studio—I found three other people in there. Dang, looked like my twenty questions would be put on hold.

“Guys, this is Octavia, the one I told you of. This is Lou, and she’ll be here to just hang. Octavia, this is Jason, Marina, and Todd, my bandmates.”

“Call me Via.” I waved, letting them study me. What did he mean he had told them about me?

Aster leaned in. “People think our name comes from the four of us being in this band, but they have no idea I named our band after my mark in the fourth ring.” Suddenly, that made sense when he told me that in his car last night. He literally named his band after his place, and I rolled my eyes at his secret joke. And his pun about being the middle man while actually being the middle man made more sense.

“Heard you have balls of steel facing off with the terrible Sevrin Thana,” Jason—who looked like a surfer dude with chocolate hair—said as a way to make me feel comfortable. I could sense his ease and relaxed vibe. Now Marina on the other hand... That bitch fumed by the sight of me alone. I had to give it to her, she pulled off the goth vibe well.

“Well, the balls you’re referring to aren’t made of steel.” I winked, and everyone laughed.

“Yeah, but they make you man-up when you need to.” Todd shrugged. He seemed pretty nice too with no wary emotions. I took my seat on the couch with Lou following me. She was never much for introducing herself, but I found that odd from the first day I met her. She came right up to me but around outsiders...

“I’d prefer to be called a pussy,” Lou’s soft voice barely broadcasted for everyone to hear.

“Yeah? Why’s that, Miss Gifre?” Aster teased her last name for the others to know she was Milo’s sister. I could sense how much she hated that acknowledgment.

“Well, one hit to the nuts, you go down. Vaginas birth bowling balls and they stretch and tear. If I wanted to be called something that meant strong, I’d rather it be a pussy. I’ve never understood how the words balls and pussy are exact opposites to their true power.”

After Lou spoke, we all forgot to breathe. Lou looked at each of us in confusion.

“Did I say something wrong?” She asked, and we all finally laughed.

“Nah, poppet. You’re just full of useful information sometimes.” Aster winked and then moved to the sound room. “Come on, Love. I want you to

show Jason how to play that rendition of *Anthem of the Angels*. I have an idea...”

“You brought me here to use my talents? And here I thought you actually liked me,” I teased.

“You weren’t kidding about her fire, Ass,” Todd grunted and moved to the drums that he must’ve played.

“Ass?” I smirked. I planned on keeping that nickname. Aster groaned while his bandmates laughed.

“This man loves to play pranks, so referring to him as a donkey’s rear was a must. The fact that it fits his name is fate. Plus, there was the time he was extremely wasted and got a cupid’s bow tattooed on his ass...” Jason added, and everyone died while Aster pretended to hide his face away from me with a glint. They were my kind of people. Well, not all of them. I was pretty sure Marina imagined ways to commit my murder and get away with it.

“That bitch wants to cut you,” Lou just had to hiss into my ear. Great, apparently, I didn’t need to feel emotions to know she hated me.

“Yeah, she hates any girl Ass brings around,” Jason whispered while picking up his guitar and then handed me a spare. “Okay then. Show me, Miss Badass.”

I smiled and started strumming the melody I created. It sounded nothing like the original. I had just used the amazing lyrics to harmonize it. Lou slowly moved her head to the tragic tone it echoed as Jason copied what I did to get it. Once he finally had it, Aster moved to Todd and had him add in a rhythm that stimulated slower than my guitar.

He then moved to Marina as he took over her keyboard and started a bit of a faster pace with the keys. The combination harmonized to come out beautifully haunting, and I saw Aster in a new light. Music was his passion.

From how easily the music came to him, I knew his past must've been just as ominous as this melody. When we were all working together and gaining a good rhythm, he went to the mic and began to sing his own lyrics. I was gone.

As his band played my melody to Aster's lyrics, I knew this was meant for his song. Maybe it came from being in his mind for five years or maybe just a coincidence. It didn't matter. He sang about surviving the worst but not knowing why. We both lived in that frame of mind where we live, but we're not actually living. Lou and I both had to secretly wipe our eyes and when they were done, a slow clap came from the door. Turning, I found a man who looked like an older version of Aster. Unlike Lear, Aster came out as a carbon-copy of his dad. It appeared Aster got his accent from his mom, though. The band wasn't expecting company, so they quickly jerked their gaze to his dad.

His dad turned his attention directly to me. A sinister smile spoke volumes to the monster he had to be. A wolf in sheep's clothing and all.

"Octavia Clarke." He refocused on me. "We finally meet."

Aster was already moving to my side. I could tell he feared what his dad might do or say to me. I could handle my own, and he should know that by now. I held out my hand and took his into mine. "Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Avila."

"Please, call me Arron." His devious grin didn't fool me as I felt his attraction flood into me from our physical touch. "You look just like your mother when she was your age."

Ah. That's why. He wanted my mom just like the others did.

"Though, you are a bit shorter."

"I get that a lot." I tried ending our conversation. "Well, Lou and I were

about to get going. Thank you for letting us into your home.”

“You, my dear, can come any time.” His words riddled me with the hidden lust he had for me. That’s when Aster stepped forward, feeling it with his own magic. His dad’s no-so-subtle inuendo didn’t go unnoticed. “Son, I think it’s best you get ready for tonight. I don’t need you to fail me now.”

Aster’s jaw locked down, and I started to believe none of their fathers were good men. “I’ve never failed before, Father.”

Arron nodded as Lou and I moved around the tense air they created. We made our way outside when Aster stormed out and unlocked his car. A barn owl screeched and flew down to land on Aster’s shoulder. After learning about Momo being Lear’s...

“He’s yours?” I asked, and Aster smiled. It didn’t reach his eyes.

“Ah, yes. Romeo told me about your nights.”

“You named him Romeo and you’re Lust?” I wheezed. I still didn’t know why Lear named his Momo.

“Aye. Puns are my life, Love.”

Before I could question more about the owls, Aster’s dad came out. “Aster, make sure you get this done on time. You have five hours.”

His son gave a tight nod and then pointed to his car. We got in when he basically told us to do so. Once he started the car, he exhaled. I could feel so many emotions pouring out of him. My hand reached over and patted his bicep awkwardly from not knowing what to do.

The only time I comforted anyone had been my mom in the shower, and she was too high to care how I held her. Though, it seemed my weirdness made Aster smile.

He got us going but headed for the city instead. “What say you to a night of some mischief?” His eyes sparkled, and mine gleamed too. I shrugged to play

off all the fun ideas running through my head.

“It’s your birthday, you can paint the town red if you want to.” At my words, he laughed hard and sped us off into the early evening.

## Chapter 5



**O**ctavia

“Oh, stop here!” I pointed to a toy store. Aster gave me a funny look, but only because he had no idea what I was capable of. “Just trust me, Ass.”

He snorted while pulling over. He left me to run in with Lou hot on my heels. She wasn’t as comfortable with this type of thing, and it showed in her hesitating eyes. “Via, I don’t think this is such a good idea.”

“Lou, I promise, this will be fun. Revenge is awesome when done just right.” I smirked and headed for the baby dolls. She followed but gave me some weird looks. Probably from seeing my other supplies from the grocery store. Heck, even Aster had some confused expressions when he saw my stockpile of instant potatoes, frozen shrimp, and plastic forks.

Just wait...

At least I wasn’t getting quick-dry cement to clog their toilets and plumbing with. I called that being nice in my book. When Aster said we could hit

anyone, I became a giddy little girl getting her most-wanted present from Santa Claus. Apparently, Aster loved pranking more than he cared about giving out the secret location to the clubhouse they had.

Milo basically lived there and so did Rin. Lucius would be a casualty in the war, but I didn't think he'd stop by anytime soon after today. We got back in the car, and Aster drove us the hour it was to get back to our town. Once we hit a dirt road that led into the woods, I sensed a great deal of death in the area.

It made more sense now, knowing when I saw the woods in most of my dreams, the killings happened here. Aster could feel the shift in my emotions, so he patted my arm in a teasing matter from how I tried to comfort him earlier.

“You saw everything, yeah?”

“More than I cared to...”

“So, when you go all ghostly, do you watch from afar or how does it work, Love?”

“More like I'm you. I see through your eyes. I feel what's turning you on. I thought I had a personality disorder the doctors kept misdiagnosing,” I shook my head from the absurdity of all of this.

“Sooo, when I-”

“Banged a girl to death? Yes, I was you. When Rin threw punches, I threw his punches too.”

“Jay-sus! When did they start?” Aster asked, and I shared a look with Lou. We seemed to be getting along but not enough to spill all the details. He knew the one part to my story that not even Lou knew. She didn't need to know that sordid detail. I didn't want her learning it either.

“Right before I turned thirteen. It had been just over a year since the big



incident happened, so I figured my mind warped some stories to make me feel like what I had been through wasn't as bad as what could've happened to me."

"Love, that's terrible... And your mom?"

"Was too high to know what happened to me. It's fine, Aster. Back then, the dreams only happened a few times a year. When I moved here, I had one a week. Clearly, this week, they happen every night."

"And you never knew about your mother's past or that any of this was real?" Lou chimed in and leaned over the middle console to join the conversation.

"None of it. As I said, I thought my mind twisted what happened to me. With how we lived, it wasn't much of a stretch to think about."

"Just so you know, when I have to fulfill my sin, I take women who find death is a gift. They usually can't get clean from drugs or live a terrible life of enslavement. Some can't rejoin society from how far they are gone. They are who I pick to show a grain of mercy to, Love." Aster's words made my throat choke up.

"That does help to know, but it doesn't change what else I've seen from the others."

We were pulling up to the cabin, but he stopped us at the end of the drive. We had to walk up a little hill. I saw the lodge—where we found all six cars belonging to the rest of the seven—with a small lawn in the front that would be perfect.

"Wait, do they pay people to mow their lawn?"

Both of them gave me comical looks like I asked the most ridiculous question. Right... Like any of them had to lift a finger when it came to

cleaning. I tossed the forks back into the car with a sad sigh. “That would only be cruel to the landscapers.”

“What do you do with plastic forks anyway?” Lou asked as we made our way to the lawn.

“You stick them in the ground and twist off the handle. Some leave the handle, but I like to see my victims crawl around trying to guess where the next one is.”

“Why?” Lou asked.

“If you step on the tip, it hurts like stepping on a Lego piece. Then, you see the person crawling around on all fours trying to find the other ones. It’s so fun to watch and take pictures of.” I remembered the skank I had done it to a year ago. A fond memory that made me happy.

“What if we do the forks only between the present and the sprinklers? That way when they come out for our gift in the center of the lawn, we can do your potato idea by turning on the water. They won’t know about the forks. We won’t do the forks on their path to the present, just between the gift and metal box,” Aster suggested, and I began to like how his mind worked.

“Wait, how do the potatoes fit again?” Lou asked while holding four containers in her arms.

“You sprinkle them all over the lawn. When it gets wet, it makes a giant, mushy mess. They’ll want to turn off the sprinklers manually; which makes Ass’s idea perfect with the forks. They’ll have to cross them to get to the box to turn off the water.”

We got to work while being extra quiet by shaking heaping amounts of instant flakes everywhere. Aster worked on the forks after I showed him how to snap the handles off the black silverware. Thanks to the dark and cover of the night, we couldn’t see if we were going overboard. I silently laughed just

imagining what would come. Money made a huge difference with how far this could go.

We ran around for the next thirty minutes perfecting our mess. After we ran to the car to get the red present ready with a white bow that glowed. As they did that, I went to the cars that were parked and found not one of the guys had locked them.

Grabbing my bag of shrimp that had mostly defrosted, I slipped the little buggers right into the vents that would blow the air out. It might be mean and cruel, but in a few days, no one would want to touch these cars. I only did Rin's and Milo's. Beau served his punishment with me 'breaking' his dick. That still made me smile a little too wide.

Taking the two baby dolls, I opened their backs and removed the sound box that were pressed for sound. Putting one each in the crack of their driver's seats, every time they sat or moved just right, they'd hear a laugh, cry, or coo. When I tested it, I found even my light weight worked on it. It would be perfect to make them go mad.

Aster leaned over the door I had open as he tried to silence his own chuckle watching me. "You really are perfect, yea know that."

"What you mean to say is, I'm just as sick in the head as you?" I quirked my lips as I stood to face him.

"Bloody hell, Love! You tryin' ta turn me on?" We both laughed while meeting Lou by the window to see what went on inside the cabin. Lear and Rin fought with their supporters behind them. Lear had more muscle than a normal man, but he had nothing on Rin.

"I'm sick of this, Rin! You're my closest friend, but you still don't care!" Lear screamed at him. How did we miss the yelling match while working our magic?

“I don’t have a say, Lear! Do you forget who my dad is? I don’t get to say no to what he wants! I’m sorry you’re being a pussy and taking it personally!”

When Rin said pussy, the three of us shared an amusing look. I knew, without a doubt, that we would be calling each other that for a while now. Having balls made you weak.

“Let’s break up their lovefest before they both regret what they’re about to do. You two lovely ladies hide behind the bushes in the driveway. I’ll ring the doorbell and take off for the sprinkler system to turn it on, yeah.” Aster’s idea would have him seen before he made it.

“No. I’ll ring the bell. You be ready at the box to turn the water on. Lou, go to the bush, and I’ll work my way there while they move to the present.”

“Fearless, Love.” Aster nodded and then cupped my face to yank it to his. When his lips crashed into mine, he kissed me with the passion of a dying man. Oh, and that tongue piercing I was fascinated with? Even better because he knew how to use it against my own tongue.

I couldn’t breathe from drowning in his spicy scent. So manly, I wondered how I never smelled him before.

When we broke apart, he just smirked and wiped the saliva off the corner of my mouth. “Of course, you’d be a good kisser too.”

He bolted for his spot while Lou and I both had to shake off the confusion he left us in. Had Aster Avila really kissed me? Next, Lou kissed my cheek and ran for cover at the end of the drive. I shook out my nerves and made my way to the large door.

This was it. After a calming breath, I raised my fist and pounded on the door. I took off and ducked below the window to not be seen as I sprinted on my toes to the driveway.

When the door opened, I stooped behind Lear's truck and pulled out my phone. Shooting off a text to Lear, I told him to stay on the porch.

They were all standing under the porch light now as they stared at the red present on the lawn. Keeping my phone out, I already started recording around the back of the truck.

"Who the hell knows where this place is?" Rin growled as everyone else observed the grounds around them. Lear pulled out his phone and smiled at the message. He showed it to Lucius from them being in the back of the party on the step.

When Rin went to move, Bellamy tried to stop him. "We don't know what's in that present, Rin."

"Then I guess I'll be the one with the big enough balls to find out." At Rin's words, Milo felt he had something to prove and went with him. This could not be more perfect! As Rin bent down to pick it up, the sprinklers came on full-blast. He got shot right in the face as Milo got shot in the ass.

"What the hell?!" Milo shouted while clutching his back cheeks. That's when they both saw movement by the mechanical box. Rin chucked the present to the guys on the porch. Once he started walking, the potatoes began changing from dried flakes to expanding mush. At first, he kept sliding from the mashed potatoes making it slippery to walk, but then he stepped on his first fork...

He leapt back and fell on his ass.

"Fucking hell! What was that?" Yeah, they were barefoot too. All the guys were. A stab in the dark told me they took them off when they arrived to respect the house. Milo went to move next and made it farther before he stepped on one. When he tried going back, he hit three more.

"It's fucking boobytrapped!" Milo screamed, holding a foot and hopping on

the other. I died of entertainment and so did Lou. Lear must have heard me because he looked straight at me. Instead of outing me, he gave me a wink and also let his humor show. They all were trying to not laugh at the toughest one of their group losing to a lawn of mashed potatoes and forks.

“What is this shit on the ground?” Milo roared.

“I don’t know, but we’ve got to get the water off to stop it.” Rin got back up and then became a ballerina to move through the minefield of forks. Milo followed, and I loved the fact that I had this all filmed for future giggles and revenge. Hey, if someone was going to take on a bull like Sevrin Thana, grab his horns and give him a run for his money. Even a bull can be worn down and tamed.

Aster got back to Lou as they watched from their squats in the shrubbery. I finally started my way to them while everyone remained entertained with the show we helped provide.

Still filming, I slinked my way over to my heathen companions. This would be the ultimate revenge to get on anyone.

Rin hit a fork and bounced back from instinct and hit another. Like a game of hot potato with his feet, he looked like he tried to square dance. His giant body was not made for the movements, and he went down on his ass again. He howled in pain from the fork tops getting him in the ass. I doubled over so much, Aster had to hold me up from lack of oxygen.

Once the two made it to the sprinklers, they turned them off. The muteness made our laughs heard. All eyes fell on our spot, and that’s when the bull saw red. Rin began his charge at us around the edge of the lawn. I guess it would’ve been smart to put some forks there too.

“Oh, shit!” Aster shouted, grabbing both of us girls to him. He easily picked us up and ran down the hill to his car. How he was capable of picking

both of us up and running like a sprinter? I'd never know, but I couldn't care when I saw Rin at the top of the hill. I knew they had read the note inside the present I left them. Aster wanted to do an empty box, but I wanted to serve my revenge.

It said: *'Not knowing your next step sucks, doesn't it?'*

Hey, they left me tied up in a forest and blind first. They deserved this.

"Payback's a bitch, Sevrin Thana!" I called over Aster's shoulder right as he set me down to get in his car.

We got in and drove off in complete happiness. I leaned over after we composed ourselves from the fit of giggles. "Happy birthday, Ass."

He smiled at me. For the first time, it was completely real. No smirks or sarcasm. Just him with a happy smile that didn't hide anything. I liked it more than I should've.

## Chapter 6



**A**ster

After Lou fell asleep in the back of the car, I found myself alone with Octavia, and I finally got it. I understood what had some of the guys all worked up over this girl who came out of left field. She wandered in, being so different from any girl we had ever known. Yet, she had no idea how much she affected us from her personalities alone.

The way she painted like Milo, fought with Rin, understood Lear's need to be picked, and even today with the music and jokes with me... Somehow, she had a piece of all of us in her. It had to be from whatever connected her to us when we killed. That would be something I needed to research because it should be impossible. Not even those before us had something like this.

I wanted her, just as all the others did. None would openly admit it, but I could feel their attraction. It only fueled mine for her by tenfold. After we escaped, she took me out for ice cream to celebrate our prank and also my



birthday. Lively and beautiful, she made all of the things down the road harder to bear.

If I wasn't silenced, I would have told her everything after she belted the Happy Birthday song to me at the ice cream parlor. She sang off-key on purpose to embarrass me, but it only made me like her more. Since I lost my mum, this had been the best birthday I've had yet. Not that Via would ever know.

Now, pulling into her driveway, she threw me another curveball that had me gulping.

"I have an idea, if you're comfortable trying it." She hesitated just enough in her speech for me to know this might not be something most considered normal. Plus, I felt her own arousal heighten.

"And what's this idea, Love?" Did I fail to mention I might already be hard? Yeah, I had to adjust myself a few times without her noticing.

"Look, it must really suck to not enjoy sex without killing someone, but have you ever let your partner be in charge?"

"In charge how?" Dear God, I don't think this woman knew the pull we all felt toward her. All of us—even the ones unwilling to act from their egos—wanted her.

We were all supposed to want Lexi, but I didn't think anyone really liked the bitch. Her family had always been a part of the inner circle's dealings and now she would be our center. We all hated that besides our fathers because they were gracious about her offering her help.

"What if... You know what, never mind. I don't want to sound stupid." Octavia blushed. The apple color shaded her perfect skin.

"Tell me," I nearly groaned when she bit the corner of her bottom lip.

"What if I tied you down and was in control? I could have Lou be a part of

it too, just in case I needed her to pull me off of you.”

“You would be willing to put yourself at risk?” Those who knew what I was ran in fear but not Octavia Clarke. She liked to toe on the dangerous path with the beasts she ensnared into her web.

“Yeah. Like I said, I’ll have Lou to help. But the offer is yours, Aster. I’m not exactly... what you’re probably attracted-” I cut off her words with another searing kiss, feeling my long cock strain against my trousers.

“You are more perfect than you know. I’d like to try this idea, but I want it to be you, Octavia. I want to surrender to you, Love.” I whispered in the small space between our lips.

Her slender fingers gripped the edges of my leather jacket as though she couldn’t keep herself sitting up. I wasn’t using my powers on her, so that excited me even more. She wanted me for me. Later, I’d have to kill four people to complete my journey into becoming an immortal. For now, I wanted my last minutes as a human to be spent with this vixen of sin.

When she got out, I told her and Lou I’d be up in a second. I needed time to come to terms with falling for her just as a few of my brothers already had. Yet, there didn’t seem to be a bad side when it came to the thoughts of Octavia claiming me. After ten minutes, I knew they’d be ready for me, so I made my way up to her room to see both women in robes. Octavia had thick ropes harnessed to her fourposter bed and the monster within me became excited by this illicit idea.

“Strip, and we’ll tie you down.” Octavia playfully smiled at me. I could see the hunger in her eyes. Though, first, I looked to my mate’s sister.

“Are you okay with this, Louise?” Instead of answering me, Lou walked over to her friend and cupped her face. Octavia let Lou nip her lips and toy with her while I watched the two beautiful women find pleasure in each

other. Losing my clothes, I lied back on the bed and enjoyed their passion. Women willing to embrace their full sexuality were the most beautiful to me. Bodies and parts didn't really matter. It was the woman letting herself go to dive into the pleasure.

Though, when Lou unfastened Octavia's robe, I found the perfect specimen of a woman. Her heavy breasts heaved with encouragement, and her legs parted for her friend to move closer. Lou's robe began falling from her lithe shoulders as Octavia's fingers put on a show for me. I had never looked at my friend's sister in a seductive light, but now? Holy hell, Lou became a woman, and I had missed it. My hand slowly worked my dick from not wanting to ruin this experience.

I had done a lot of sexual things, but nothing compared to the atmosphere Octavia created for me. She cared, and this was her way of showing it. I didn't think I'd ever had sex mean something before this moment. All the empty floozies were lost as I studied the most beautiful woman created.

"Love," I croaked. I needed, something. Unsure of what, she seemed to gather what I lacked in words. Coming to me, she found the rope and gave me a smile while binding me to the thick wood. I tested it and found myself unable to fight the firmness. The same with Lou's bindings on my other side. They secured my legs so they could barely lift as well.

Their work finished, and Octavia didn't wait. She straddled over my member while letting her hand move along its length. She bit the corner of her mouth again, and I groaned at the sight. She was stunning with her inky hair falling over her bare chest.

The girls shared a nod as Lou moved and took my face in her hands to join our lips together. She worked mine just as evenly as she had her friend's. I

moaned in bliss. Fingernails dragged down my chest and my hiss grew lost in Lou's mouth. Then, the most brilliant thing happened.

My tip became centered and ready to slip right into Octavia's channel. My mind emptied of anything else. Stars lined my vision. Heat traveled down my spine. It was her. Ravenous, my magic surged with the heady air around us. Usually, I would be in better control over my talent, but I didn't care. Let them find their releases faster.

*Faster...* My hips bucked up as the sensations flooded over my shaft.

"You're so tight, Love," I panted, unable to catch my breath.

"You have the longest dick I've ever taken." Her own words were broken from the pleasure as her head tossed back. My magic spiked us all like a punch at prom.

Lou felt it and within the next few seconds, I found her pussy hovering over my mouth. I obliged her request and devoured her juices while working my tongue to set her off. Girls loved the metal in my mouth swirling their clits.

Down below, I heard Octavia losing it at the sight of her friend sitting on my face, gripping the headboard to ride my mouth quicker.

*Faster... More...*

Those were the only words on my mind. They were every time I took a girl in between the valley of her thighs. This time, I couldn't brace against the girl and fuck her into nothing. My hips were trying to, but Octavia controlled the torture she put me through. More magic heated my veins into pure fire. I had no idea where it came from because I couldn't feel it leaving me.

It didn't matter. Lou came hard on my face, and her body tipped over from being completely drunk off the magic. She wouldn't be up until it wore off.

My gaze found the woman bouncing on my dick like a pro. Her eyes were shut while her back arched, rounding her chest for me to see her truest form

of beauty. Her tits bobbed, and her nipples looked like they ached for my touch. I wanted to stimulate her. I wanted to press her into a wall to show her how good I could make her feel, but most of all, I wanted to see her bleed for me...

Roaring, my hands fisted and then yanked against the rope. Nothing happened at first, but my need to please Octavia overrode my protocol to remember why I needed restraining. *She'd want to bleed for me. She'd like it. She'd watch with me this time...*

The excitement rose and built within me. I had to please her. I had to... Another roar ripped through me as I freed all of my limbs. The sound of wood breaking didn't make me pause because I had to fuck Octavia. In a blink, I had her against the wall as my mouth found her begging nipple. She cried out in a mix of pain and pleasure, rocking against me to egg me on.

The line between the two blurred just like it did every time. Something nudged at the back of my mind, but I was no longer in control. My release needed to be met. I pounded her pussy as it sheathed my cock so well. In. Out. In. Out. The rhythm hummed the slaps of skin. The sound was intoxicating mixed with her wails as her nails raked my back, her teeth sank into my neck. Both acts made me bleed.

I loved it. My hands gathered her wrists while her legs lifted around my middle. I held them above her head as her back arched off the wall. Her tears coating her cheeks only made her more beautiful to me. Even though she cried, her fierce eyes met mine.

*"I need more... Please... More!"* she begged. My magic was everywhere. A frenzy fueled it to find a place to belong. I got lost in my own fever to please her and myself. My teeth worked the flesh of her neck she exposed to me in her own surrender. She knew I needed blood.

Once I broke the flesh, she wept and moaned at the same time. Her channel walls began to clamp around my dick as she came with a force. Octavia came from my bite. Pride surged through me, and I groaned in satisfaction. My free hand moved to her backside as one of my fingers played with her little, puckered hole.

“YES!” Octavia shouted while losing a little bit of consciousness. “MORE! I NEED MORE!” Her delirious battle cry of pain and suffering called to me, and I loved it.

My finger worked in there until I hit the knuckle. This act made her come again. Fucking hell this girl was magical!

“YES! Play with my virgin ass, Aster!” Her words jolted my dick even deeper. I lost my ever-loving mind, knowing this hole had remained untouched. I would be the first one to use it. My mouth moved to the blood I got from her neck, and I drank her in to get her coppery taste on my lapping tongue. She pulled me closer to taste her friend on my tongue and also to taste her blood. Her breathy noises were ruining me.

Breaking off, I rammed her harder. I wanted her to beg me to stop now, but then I wanted her to accept my darker side like I wanted from every girl before her. *Faster... More... In. Out. In. Out.*

My movements shallowed and quickened as I found myself spilling my seed inside of her. I roared as I tasted my magic all around us. Once the sex haze wore off, I remembered. Just like every time before this. I lost myself to the passion and...

Immobilized, my breath got stuck in my lungs as I prepared myself for what I would see. My eyes shot up to see hers closed with her head drooping to the side.

No...

I began hyperventilating. Her arms hung like nothing, and she grew paler than usual.

“Mmm...” Was that? Did she? Her head moved to the other side. For the first time since my mom abandoned me, I cried.

Elated, I laughed with it. She opened her eyes and followed my tears with her finger catching them.

“What’s wrong?” she asked. Her swollen lips stained in her blood, her neck trickling a trail of blood over her collarbone... And she asked me what’s wrong.

My eyes moved down to where I could see my release leaking out of her, where we were still joined. “You should be dead. I thought I killed you.” She caught on and then looked over at her bed to see the ropes broken and two diagonal wooden posts splintered. Lou was lucky it hadn’t caved down on her yet.

“Oh.” The only sound she made. I set her down with a chaste kiss.

“Thank you,” I replied. She smiled with a tiredness in her eyes from being fully sated. The problem I faced in this moment didn’t seem real. I had been too horny to see what I could see clearly now. The magic hadn’t come from me. It came from Octavia. With me viewing my red essence, I could still see it excreting from her pores. She had used my ability against me, and I couldn’t stop what had just happened. She should be dead, not absorbing my magic like it was nothing.

I needed to go. I had to hurry to complete my kills, but I also had to do some digging on who Octavia Clarke was and what brought her here besides Daemon. This wasn’t normal and neither was the only girl who lived to tell the tale after sleeping with Aster Avila.

## Chapter 7



**O**ctavia

What. The. Hell.

Between Aster treating me like a fuck and run booty call, my room got destroyed. My thighs were bruised with handprints, my neck still bled, and my mind remained hazy. Then there was my room...

It looked like Dorothy's tornado got sent here instead of Oz. I hadn't realized how much we hit on our way to the wall he had me against, but my dresser tipped over at some point. The things on it were either scattered or shattered. My bed barely stood on two poles while the canopy crashed down. The ropes were frayed, and I remembered Aster leaving with the remains on his wrists and ankles. He hadn't even stopped to take those off before getting the hell out of Dodge.

Sighing, I found my robe and moved to Lou. Her sleazy smile made me laugh as I patted her cheeks to wake up. When I asked her to do this, she had messaged her two other trio members for permission. Fiona was a sly little



slut who answered saying as long as Lou told her every detail while Zeke (Mr. Gram) fucked her.

A little taken back, I loved Lou took the time to be such an honest person. Now, I had to get this little princess to wake up after that earth-shattering orgasm she had. Thanks to it, she passed out before I could ask her for help. Though, everything after her orgasm became a giant blur of lust. All I remember was my body being wired for more.

“Five more minutes.” She swatted my hand away.

“Lou, I need you to at least get off my destroyed bed before a stake impales you like a vampire.” She flipped her eyelids open and rolled her body immediately from the comfy mattress. When her eyes took in the damage, she had to blink many times just to make sure she saw it right.

“Woah...”

“Yeah,” I added. Finding some jeans and a sweatshirt, Lou took the hint and covered her goods. “Can I ask you something?”

“Of course!” She grabbed one of the putrid sweaters Daemon bought for me to be the daughter he never had. She could keep the bright yellow thing that matched her more than it ever would me.

“Besides me feeling like a total slut with them since moving here, do you think I’ve given the guys enough payback?”

“Not even close,” she snorted. I just nodded and slipped my flip flops on.

“Good, because I have some ideas, and I need your help to do them.” It was true. Since scheming earlier with Aster, it had brought back some petty pranks I wanted to do before I left on Monday. Still set on me transferring schools, Daemon hadn’t let up on that.

“Well, you know with any amount of pettiness you show my brother and his friends, I’ll always be your Sugar Sista to fund it.” Yes, she shook her

hips while we headed for my door.

Heaven help me, I ruined my best friend.

“Sooo, why do you keep jumping into bed with them again?” I knew this question would come. I could see it within her golden irises since Gare told her about Rin and Lear.

“Uh, can I plead the fifth?”

“No.”

“Can I plead temporary insanity?”

“No.”

“Fine,” I stuck my tongue out at her while we climbed into my car.

The truth? I didn’t even know the answer. I was attracted to them, sure, but to keep sleeping with them.

“I don’t know. All I do know is when I get in that position, something inside of me can’t deny them... Like I need them to survive. Then, when it’s done, I regret it because they treat me worse. Just like tonight with Aster running out.”

“Just be careful. I don’t care if you have a sex drive the size of the Empire State Building. The seven are dangerous for a reason. Making them jealous of each other might not be so smart.” Logically, I knew what she said to me was true. Hormonally, I knew I couldn’t deny them. If it happened with every guy on the street, I’d call myself a nymphomaniac. It didn’t. This only happened with the group of guys that were out to destroy me.

It worked too. Each time I dropped my guard around one of them, I grew somewhat attached to them. Part of me even tried to claim all the ones I slept with. Heaven help me, I was doomed since the moment Rin growled. How sad was that?

~

After dropping Lou off, I made my way to Daemon's workplace for my own answers on this whole babysitting gig. How dare he let Rin and his merry band of dicks 'guard' me?

Keeping my supplies of goodies Lou and I bought in my bookbag—I took one thing inside to deal with Lear—I stormed to Daemon's office. He would tell them to back off, and he'd also tell me why he agreed to it. Still keeping some of my manners, I knocked and waited for him to call me in. My feet were bare from me kicking off my flip flops by the entryway. I liked going without shoes.

"Octavia, what can I do for you, my dear?" He smiled before looking back down to sign some paperwork. With how nonchalant he sat, I didn't think Rin told him. Either that or his poker face was on point.

"Why would you give Rin and his posse permission to stalk me everywhere?" At my question, he paused and sat his pen down. I saw the little crack in his demeanor.

"He told me, Octavia. About your dreams." I scoffed at his words, but he didn't stop. "You are in more danger than you know from this revelation. Sevrin is keeping it from his father because of how dangerous it is."

"Why? Why is it so dangerous that I've seen all of their kills?"

"Because no one in our world has ever had that power, Octavia." He got up to pace on his side of his desk. That's when I saw it. The fear he had for me but also from me. "It just cements my choice in moving you to a new school. When you are safely transferred, this protection with the seven will end. Until then, I'd like for you to keep quiet. People have been permanently silenced for a lot less, my dear."

“Do you know what I am?”

Daemon let out a heavy breath strong enough to slouch his shoulders in defeat. “I do not, and that scares me the most. This whole town is part of my world. A world we are silenced from sharing with those of the human one. If anyone catches on to you being different, they have to report it to Salvatore Thana.”

“So, you can’t tell me anything about my mom and your circle?” I said the wrong thing. His penetrating eyes turned cold and calculated.

“What do you know?”

“Not much. Clearly, my mom knew all of you dads before, but I don’t know how or why.” That seemed to ease him. My half-truth taking root to hide my knowledge of P.

P...

I needed to read!

“I can’t tell you what you want to know, but I can tell you that your name alone carries a heavy burden. Others look to you in awe, but most now frown upon your name from your mother’s choice.”

“Thanks for at least being honest with me.” It was true. I could feel his honesty, but it did nothing to further my knowledge. Leaving his room, I ran up to mine to start reading. I wasn’t proud of the next moment.

When I turned my handle open and flipped on my light, I shrilled like a girl. Sitting on my window seat was Bellamy Argos. Yes, I used Facebook to stalk his last name. I went through Lear’s friends and found them all.

Sevrin Thana

Lucius Baysan

Lear Odium

Aster Avila

Milo Gifre

Beau Revell

Bellamy Argos

My scream brought in Lear who just had to be topless to show off his quarterback looks. He had his district championship game on Friday, so I knew he got ready for bed to get the best sleep the next two days.

“What’s wrong?” He scoured my room with panic until he found Bellamy. That’s when his expression darkened. “Didn’t realize he was doing a night watch too. I am in the other room. She doesn’t need you here.”

“The rule Rin put out is for all of us who haven’t shagged her to babysit her.” Bellamy shrugged his shoulders and began smoking a joint. It should be lethal with how much he gets high, but now I knew he wasn’t human.

“Fuck that shit! I’m her brother!” Lear tried to defend. A terrible one because of what we had done together.

“Have a problem, you know who to call. I’m just doing my job.” Bellamy leaned back into the window.

“No smoking in my room. If you’re in here, I want it clean,” I clipped. “Now, I’m going to have a soak in my tub.” *And read about my ancestor who knows the secrets I need.* Not that I said that last part out loud. The tub just gave me an excuse for them to not follow me in. Well, one could hope they’d give me privacy.

I stripped and turned the water on while fumbling my book out of the back pocket of my pants. I couldn’t let them catch me. I set it by the back on the floor because I also needed to ‘fix’ the showerhead for Lear in the morning with the item I brought inside.

He-he-he... This was going to be good.

After planting my little surprise that will kick off my last two days of other

surprises, I sat back and enjoyed feeling the water rise above my body. If there's one thing money could buy, it's a giant bathtub. Once it sat at the perfect level of bubbles and water, I turned off the tub. I slithered down to become one with P once again. This girl better give me something today...

*Now, where was I... Oh yes, right here.*

*Silas didn't hesitate as we watched him latch his mouth on and gulp his new master's life force. Once he finished, a random man appeared in his simple clothes at the snap of the Alpha's fingers.*

*"Feed, my son. Feast upon the mortals you will now rule." This man commanded, and Silas's mouth sprouted fangs that pierced the man's neck. Many tears streaked my cheeks as I listened to the helpless man lose his life. His screams will forever be heard as they still echo in my dreams with the others.*

*I was unable to move from whatever magic bound us. The Alpha moved to his new kin created by the blood bond and kissed his cheeks.*

*"Silas Thana, you are now the chosen. You, my new son, shall carry my name and my power. Let it be known tonight, Satan's power now runs through his veins! The first to lead this new circle!" I could not believe what I heard. Coming from a family who knew the Bible, I felt dizzy with guilt. What had we done?*

*The monsters claimed the others with the same line and ritual. In order to become more, they had to take the life of God's greatest creation by feeding from it.*

*I watched each of my beloveds denounce our creator and become things with no soul. This part I had learned later as their cruelty to the world and to me reached new heights.*

*“Lucian Baysan, you are now the chosen. You, my new son, shall carry my name and my power. Let it be known tonight, Lucifer’s power now runs through his veins! Second in command to his Alpha, Silas.”*

*“Levi Odium, you are now the chosen. You, my new son, shall carry my name and my power. Let it be known tonight, Leviathan’s power now runs through his veins! Third in this coven.”*

*“Asher Avila, you are now the chosen. You, my new son, shall carry my name and my power. Let it be known tonight, Asmodeus’s power now runs through his veins! Fourth ring to the kingdoms they’ll lead.”*

*“Manfred Gifre, you are now the chosen. You, my new son, shall carry my name and my power. Let it be known tonight, Mammon’s power now runs through his veins! He will be the fifth heir.”*

*“Boaz Revell, you are now the chosen. You, my new son, shall carry my name and my power. Let it be known tonight, Beelzebub’s power now runs through his veins! The sixth member has risen.”*

*“Bennett Argos, you are now the chosen. You, my new son, shall carry my name and my power. Let it be known tonight, Belphegor’s power now runs through his veins! Seventh to descend with great power.”*

*“Leonardo Loki, you are now the chosen. You, my new son, shall carry my name and my power. Let it be known tonight, Legion’s power now runs through his veins! The eighth that will complete this circle.”*

*It was of no coincidence my men had similar names already. These devils whispered in the ears of their fathers when they were conceived and tainted. I, on the other hand, had to be handpicked by them. A woman who was pure and only shared her bed with the eight could gain what I did.*

*The woman with ruby lips moved forward and kissed me full on the mouth. Then she cradled my head as though I was her young. “My dearest girl... I*

*know how frightening this all is, but I want to tell you of our God you think to pray to in claims of salvation. I was his first son's first wife until Adam decided he wanted a different woman because I could not conceive a child. My father cast me out of my home because he made me wrong."*

*I felt her guilt for not being able to be with child and how she still felt like she had failed. There was also revenge driving her to me. I was her way to have a child through the blood magic.*

*"I will never leave you just as my new men have not left me. All of your circle will treat you like the queen you are because only you can give them my next heir. By coupling with each of them, one day, your womb will round with a child to carry on my power I am giving to you. It is the only way to conceive for my line unless it is out of pure love with another."*

*She moved me for all the of the men to see. They prized me with their bloody faces after they had killed their sacrifices. Now, it was I who would be offered Lilith's blood. I drank from the fear of being with the original devils, and what they might do if I didn't.*

*"You, Pandora Clarke will be the first and only heir to me, Lilith. With my powers, your men shall all be bound to you to give you the most precious gift. A catalyst to keep them grounded as the center of their circle."*

*Yes, it was now my turn to feed from an open vein and nothing but nightmares came from me taking the young life of the girl. My men had to drink from me next for me to bond fully with them as well.*

*It was horrific. They enjoyed my screams of pain and almost drained me then. I thought all would be complete, but the devils also announced that Amora would be one of many consorts to my men from her loyalty to them.*

*They named her as a woman who remained in our inner circle. Of course, the men claimed many others, but Amora would always be their most prized*



*whore. The one who they fought over every evening as I suffered alone in my bed.*

*I am to remain their broodmare they needed to sleep with often enough to sate my needs. My curse kept me from bedding any man outside of my circle unless it happened by true love. They've locked me away to keep me as theirs even though none of them truly want me.*

*To my future heirs, I hope you can forgive my mistake. I hope you choose to feel when it's easier to go numb. Always feel, my child. Never go numb for our power is to accept all of theirs. We are now the Keeper to the original eight sins. If we fail to rein them in, the world will end.*

*I bless you to know how strong you are, and I will write more as I learn it.*

*-P*

## Chapter 8



**O**ctavia

Holy...

What did I just read? My eyes kept rereading it to make sure the words were correct. Yup, no mistaking this shit. My ancestor wasn't just someone involved with the circle. She was fucking PANDORA!

I mean, I only knew one from history, and it's where I know the seven sinning devils too... Anyone could put two and two together. Now things started making sense. Well, kind of because one of them went missing. There were eight demons who made the first circle with the original devils' blood. The lost one my mother warned me about when she was in the hospital. She said the number was eight, not seven...

So where did the last dude go? What did this mean for me in this chaos?

My mom must've failed to finish her mating shit because they all assumed me to be human. But Pandora said it had to be true love. Who did my mom

love? She flat out told me she didn't know who my dad had been from being a whore.

For fuck's sake...

She could only be a whore after finding her true love. That meant she did know who my dad was because she conceived me from love and not the circle. It seemed like when I got one thing figured out, more questions needed answered. Sighing, my fingers traced Pandora's handwriting where I saw her fingers quiver on some letters.

She grieved. She hurt. She felt alone... I understood that family trait more than she could've comprehended back then.

*Bang! Bang! Bang!*

The intruding knocks on the bathroom door made my body jerk and drop the diary in the tub. Shit!

Digging around, I pulled it out to see that the old parchment couldn't be saved. Some of it dissolved in the water already. Oh no. This was the last piece I had of her.

"Hey Sis, it's time to get out!" Lear shouted at me.

Cursing under my breath, the damage couldn't be undone. The secret journal that my family passed down, I just destroyed. Well, if I didn't feel like a failure already...

"Stop calling me Sis, Lear! It's disturbing on all levels now that we've done the deed!" I yelled back.

"But it's your nickname!" he whined. Before I could call out anything else, he stopped me. "Oh, Aster is twenty minutes out from his targets. He asked me to warn you, so you could be in bed when it happens."

If the asshole hadn't left me naked and against a wall, I would feel twitterpated from him caring. Also, I was about to walk into my destroyed

room that he left me to clean up. Sighing, it would still be nice to get a warning for once. I got out and dried myself off. His butting in made me even more grateful for the surprise I left for him in the morning.

*Take that Bro.*

When I made it to my room, I found it completely clean... Like Aster and I hadn't ruined everything. The only way I could tell things changed came from the new furniture Bellamy installed, but I had only been in the bath for an hour. He got all of this done?

Whistling, I nodded my appreciation. "You did all of this?"

My free hand not holding the towel gestured to the room. He looked up from the vanity he screwed together.

"Your housekeepers cleaned up the old stuff and brought in the new stuff. I'm just putting it together." Watching him work fascinated me. He became so involved, he forgot about me. I loved the new black pieces with white accented in the details. My new duvet was lavender and so much better than the pink.

From the black, I remembered Lou's mom's house. "Lou picked them out, didn't she?"

"Yeah. Aster sent her his card information to get everything fixed," he spoke, and I forgot how sexy his gruff voice was.

"Thanks for putting it together," I hedged, wondering why he did.

"No problem. I like staying busy and working with my hands has always been the best way to do that."

Interesting...

He went back to work, and I went to my closet to dress with some privacy. Slipping into my sleep shorts and tank top, I wandered back out and climbed

into my bed. Bellamy wanted to appear nonchalant, but I could feel his pain within him. Something made him angry about it as well.

Yawning, I crawled into my bed and watched him finish working. Once he finished, he pulled a handkerchief out of his back pocket and cleaned his hands. Then he moved to the other side of my room and sat by the window where he was earlier. His tresses were in a ponytail at the nape of his neck, and his darker skin glowed under the moonlight.

Handsome, he had this exotic look. Mostly from how all of his features were surrounding those beautiful blue eyes of his. It should've been a lethal combination to have loose ringlets that were prettier than most hair and then those eyes.

"I know you hate when I say this but thank you anyways." I smiled at him as he observed me with a strange look. After a long pause of him just studying me, he nodded and watched out the window to where a boreal owl perched.

This must've been his familiar.

"What's his name?" I asked while beginning to doze off. My mind remembered Aster's barn owl being named Romeo. That made me smile as I closed my eyes.

"Sid," Bellamy answered, and I snorted.

"Like Sid the sloth from *Ice Age*?" I questioned, and he chuckled.

"Yeah, seemed funny at the time with me being just that."

"It is. I like it. So, does being the slothful sin mean you sleep all the time?"

"I take it you know about our curses if you know about Aster's sex life," he grunted.

"Yeah..."

"My curse is to never sleep. Not a day in my life have I gotten a wink of

sleep.”

“Even as a baby?” Woah, that had to suck.

“Even as a baby. My mother had helpers from knowing what I would be. She still worries about what I’m doing all night but knows I need to keep busy.”

“So, when you get high all the time…” I trailed off, and he knew what I actually asked.

“It’s the closest to sleep I will ever get. All of the guys’ curses started at thirteen. Mine since birth.”

“Damn. That sucks. Well, maybe not. I mean, I only have nightmares so maybe not sleeping wouldn’t be so bad,” I laughed.

As I dozed off a little more, I was sure I heard him mutter, ‘it is’.

~

## **Bellamy**

She was something else. Always full of light in the darkest of conversations. Making a joke about her nightmares to help me feel better about never sleeping? Yeah, that had to be a new one.

I knew the guys felt bad about my curse, but they also used it to their advantage. Just like right now with me babysitting Octavia. No one had to lose sleep for Rin’s crazy plan because I could do it. Not that I minded, but sometimes it would be nice to be asked to give up my evenings.

“I feel it, you know,” Octavia whispered with her eyes closed. Hands down, she had to be the prettiest girl I knew, and I felt ashamed for feeling that.

“What?” I asked her curtly.

“Your pain.” Her eyes opened just enough for her to give me a little grin. “You pretend to have no care in the world, but I feel how everything hurts you...”

Fuck. We all knew now she had to be some kind of empath. It must be from her mother’s blood mixing with her human side.

“Then take one from my book and pretend to not feel it.” I hated how much I felt, but if anyone knew my mother, they’d see why. Still unsure, I had no idea how my father got her to fall in love with him. She did and even though he shares his bed with others, she stays.

Pretty sure that’s for me so I wouldn’t be raised to be like him. I didn’t mind from knowing all the guys envied what I had with her. If only they knew how often I had to protect her as well. My father became a ruthless and lazy piece of shit who abused her.

After every beating I couldn’t save her from, she said it was worth it to show me the man she never wanted me to be. Now, I put my dad in his place if he came near her. He knew I could best him now that I had grown.

Clearing her throat, she reminded me of our current conversation. “I don’t think I can... and I don’t think you should. We feel for a reason. It makes you more real in my eyes.”

Nearly asleep, I highly doubted she’d remember this tomorrow. Her pouty lips parted just enough to breathe deeply, and I found myself a little sad to lose her company.

Going to my duffel bag on her new vanity, I pulled out my wood whittling stuff and began using my hands to distract me. Between writing and woodworking, I kept my nights busy. Some nights I worked in a garage to fix cars for the owner to have the next day be easier. He never minded when I

went in and did my thing on the cars. Mostly because I never let him pay me. The distraction he offered me became his payment to me.

My hands moved the wood as I sliced the edges into what my mind envisioned. With this kind of focus, it helped the burden on my mind. Octavia didn't want me smoking in her room, so this would be my next best distraction. I kept at it for a while. Well, until I saw her body stand up from her bed.

It scared me to hell and back because her eyes were pure white and glowed. Her footfalls went to her door, so I got up to block her. How the fuck Liliana made Octavia, it screwed with the natural magic. She wasn't anything any of us had ever seen before. Right before me, she started going transparent, and I knew she was about to transport to Aster's location. Holding her to me, I called Rin to confirm what he and Lucius had been thinking. With one arm securing her to our spot, I dialed his number.

"Yeah?" Rin barked on the other end.

"It seems it's true. She's trying to transport from her room right now. Her eyes are glowing white, and she has no idea I'm fighting her."

"So, if she sleeps with one of us, she now has the ability to sense where the kills are?" He questioned more to himself.

"Yeah, man. We'll know more tomorrow when Milo goes out, but from her sleeping with Aster tonight and now this."

"It's made her mental ties to us stronger. I think she can go where they go from the connection. Lucius is researching everything and anything to figure out what she is, but I think we're going to have to break in and ask her mother."

"I agree but I'm stumped on something, man," I brought up what had been plaguing me since we were at Milo's mom's house.



“What?”

“Why didn’t she follow you if you slept with her?”

“Because I only slipped in on accident once. It wasn’t actual sex, Bell.” He sounded frustrated, and I knew he hated talking about his lapse in judgment with Octavia.

“Okay, chill. I was just asking,” I sighed while knowing I couldn’t deal with his rage issues tonight. “I’m gonna deal with her. I’ll see you in the morning.”

I clicked the phone off. Almost instantly, a message from him appeared.

**Rin: Never hang up on me again.**

Ignoring it for the night, I didn’t care if he’d be mad. Heck, I was still pissed about him ordering Milo and me to help him hurt Octavia with Lexi. The bastard knew I didn’t want to and neither did Milo. Well, Lo was attracted to Lexi, but he wouldn’t do that without Luce being with him.

I almost got Octavia back to her bed when she came to. She had no idea this became why I watched her now. That we were afraid of people discovering this secret. Someone had to make sure she didn’t chase us when we were committing murder. Too bad that someone was the unlucky bastard who couldn’t sleep and hadn’t slept with her.

“Bellamy?” she asked in the darkness, trying to figure out how she rolled out of bed.

“Yeah. It’s me. You tried to follow Aster tonight. I stopped you.”

“Oh, thank you,” she said. I rolled my eyes. She thanked people for everything. I’d seen how she was with Rita. Never a question as to why she remained the woman’s favorite already.

“Let’s just-” My words were cut off when she screamed and leapt into my arms. Hugging my neck with one arm, she pointed to the corner of the room.

I sighed. You have got to be kidding me. Now this?

## Chapter 9

— • —

**B**ellamy

Ghosts.

Ghosts were in the corner of the room. Not just any, no, the three Lear killed last night. Their transparent forms were how they died, so the two lovers were in their underwear.

I never envied Lear's Envy.

Octavia's hold never loosened, but my grip moved to her rear to keep her up properly. I rolled my eyes.

"LEAR!" I shouted.

The man came barreling in while half-asleep.

"What?" He rubbed his eyes. I just pointed between the girl holding onto me and his collection. "Oh, hey. I was wondering why they hadn't found me yet. Looks like Octavia is linked more to us than we thought."

"Just get them gone," I growled. I didn't usually act like Rin, but the more Octavia shook in my hold, the more I felt this burning need to shield her.

“What do you mean linked?” she asked against my neck. I nearly shivered from the sensation of her breath on my skin.

“We collect souls of sin, Honey,” I tried to calm her. Honey was a term my mother used to soothe me. I realized I used it a few times on Octavia already.

“Souls?” The ghost in a waitressing uniform asked. From what Lear told us, she killed them all out of jealousy. This was always the fun part. Telling the dead that they were dead.

“Sweetie, do you remember what you did to these two?” Lear eased over to her. We had done this show too many times. Octavia and I watched him lead the ghosts to the door as he called a Reaper to book them.

We needed to keep him away from Octavia until we knew what magic she possessed. Reapers loved anything odd, and this complex girl set a new bar. I tried lying her back down, but her grip on me stayed. Pulling her back just a bit, I studied her terrified, doe eyes. She might’ve been strong but nothing prepared anyone when it came to our world.

“It’s a lot to take in when you don’t grow up in it,” I tried to mollify her. Usually, we made Luce or Aster do it, but it was just me tonight. Poor girl. I didn’t socialize very much.

“Bellamy?” As she whispered my name, I knew I’d regret what she would ask next, but my mother raised me right.

“Yeah?”

“Can you sit next to me on the bed until I fall back asleep? I know it’s weird but, fuck! I’m seriously struggling with this new reality shit.” Her little sailor’s mouth had me smirking while I set her down.

This time, she let go and watched me. Taking off my jeans, I climbed in on the other side and sat there with a thumb up my ass. Yes, I knew I looked

attractive, but I never talked to girls like the other guys. I did it on purpose, but now that was coming back to bite me in the ass.

“How about a movie? I can’t really sleep now,” she shyly spoke. I noticed a faint blush appear on her high cheekbones. Embarrassment for being scared...

“Sure.” I shrugged, knowing I signed up for some dumb girly shit. As she scrolled through her list of movies on her tv across from us, I barely saw any chick-flicks. Mostly action and comedies of every kind. I didn’t know TV well from my mother not wanting me to watch too much growing up, but the cover of the one she stopped on had me wrinkling my nose. She saw my face and laughed.

“Oh, come on! *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* is a classic!” She argued to deaf ears. The cover alone had me cringing. She exhaled slowly and shook her head at me. “I’m going to go pee, but we’re educating you, Bellamy.”

“Bell,” I informed her.

“What?” She got to the door before she turned around.

“I’d prefer you to call me, Bell. My full name...” I didn’t finish, but she seemed to get it.

“Call me, Via.” She walked out to the hall and let the light stream in. The movie started, and I immediately grew interested. Not because I liked it, but because it played out to be so stupid, I needed to see how it would end.

When Octavia came back in, she watched me from the door. I thought she had just arrived, but by how she had her arms folded and how her shoulder rested on the frame, I knew she had been watching me. Observing others had always been what Rin made me do. I was the night owl who could spy easily enough, learning people became second nature if I didn’t get high.

Turning around to give me her back, her hands took the globes of her

plump ass as she moved them together to make her butt talk. “Excuse me, I’d like to *ass* you a few questions.” She made her voice gruff and manly, but it sounded cute from her. She turned around and jumped onto the bed to lay beside me.

“What was that about?” I asked.

“You’ll see,” she said through a smile while opening her nightstand the maids had messed with.

Apparently, they were restoring her candy stock because she pulled out bags of every flavor imaginable. Without me asking her, she just started handing me things while absently chewing and zoning into the show. I listened to her quote the nonsense under her breath, and it made me grin.

“Jim Carey is my spirit animal. I’d say it was Rebel Wilson, but she’s too mild for me. No, Jimmy has my insane side down.”

“This movie dates before your birth. How did you find it?” My curiosity piqued. This shit stayed weird still but oddly entertaining.

“We lived in Florida when I was younger. The neighborhood sucked balls, so I wandered around the town trying to find somewhere to go when my mom was... predisposed. I came across this old movie store going out of business because the new era of streaming made the physical competition vanish.

“The owner didn’t have much left. When he saw me standing under the comedy section, I think he knew why I picked it. Life was rough and shitty, so that old man handed me a portable DVD player with the classics he kept for himself. Fuck, if it wasn’t like Christmas to a girl like me. Well, better because Christmas always sucked a fat one. Anyways, back to the story, there were a lot of Jim Carey movies and some others. They became my escape that year.”

“I’m sorry,” I said without thinking. Fuck, my mom’s sensitivity rubbed off on me.

“For what? You didn’t know me and you barely do now.” She just lifted her shoulder a little, but I could tell how deep her pain embedded.

I blamed this on my mom and not the guilty feeling eating away at my insides. Using my arm, I pulled the broken girl to me and let her get comfortable against my large frame. She was so small, people would barely see her between my arm and body.

“Um, what are you doing?” she questioned but didn’t fight me.

“You bleed emotions, and I can’t fucking take it anymore,” I resigned. Part of me was just as drawn as the other guys to be close to her, but I wouldn’t say that out loud.

“I do?” Man, I forgot how green she compared to the rest of us.

“Yeah. Lear felt it the night Rin had to kill. None of us know what you are because we don’t know anything that can do that.”

“Oh, I just thought no one would tell me what I am. I didn’t realize you guys actually didn’t know.”

Fuck. Rin might kill me or rip off my loose lips.

“Thanks for telling me. I know it was probably by accident, but I appreciate it. Between my mom’s ancestry, figuring out why your circle doesn’t have an eighth...”

Whatever she said after that got lost in the white noise because Octavia knew something about our missing link.

“What do you know about our eighth?”

She seemed confused that I had cut her off but then nodded. We were sizing each other up for answers, and we both knew it.

“Truth game. Each time I ask and you answer, you get to ask me

something.” She laid out the rules, and I agreed. “To answer yours, I know there were eight original men. I don’t know why you and your dads only have seven.”

Thank fuck she didn’t know more than that.

“Now, my question. I know all of you are, cursed but I’m not sure with what. Are there any curses I need to be wary of?”

“You’re good at avoiding the things I can’t answer,” I nodded. She smiled up at me while letting her nose sniff the shit out of my neck. It should be disturbing, but I kind of liked it. It made her even cuter.

“Yes. Beau never feels satisfied, so you’ll see him screw six girls in a night. Or you would have, but he’s been acting different lately.”

Octavia froze and lost her breath.

“You know why, don’t you?”

“Hey! Finish my answer first and then ask your question.” She glared. For most, it would’ve shown her fierceness, but fuck did it make her sweeter to me.

“Fine. Lear has bad luck. Whatever he wants, the Universe takes. It flares his jealousy. Luce has a severe OCD for perfection. Comes with his pride. You know Aster’s already. Lo can’t get over his need for success to maintain relationships. I’m sure you’ve seen it with his sister, and I can’t sleep...bBut the one you need to be fearful of is Rin. Until our circle is complete, he can’t control his beast, and his curse to crave blood.”

“His beast?” she shrieked. Damn, I fucked up again. I knew I should feel guilty, but I felt more guilt not helping her in this dangerous world.

“Save it for your turn, Honey. Now, Beau. Answer why he hasn’t been himself.”

“Fine, Boo-Bear. Apparently, I broke his dick.” She shrugged but chewed



the corner of her mouth.

I snorted. “What?”

“His words, not mine. Since he slept with me, he can’t get hard by anyone else. He asked me if I cursed him, and now I understand he was really asking that. If I did, I don’t know how.”

Rin would need to know that one.

“Rin’s beast. Spill, Boo.”

“You’re really sticking with Boo?” I sneered, and she winked.

“Hey, it could be Bae...” She wiggled her eyebrows, and I sighed, knowing I lost.

“Rin is the Alpha. With that comes his true form to rule the beasts of Hell. As the heir to the center kingdom, he has domain over the damned and the beasts. Well, he will when the circle is completed. Until then, his beast sits right under the surface at all times, waiting to attack because of his thirst for blood. Humans would know him as a dragon, but we know him as a Draeman. The one who can go from dragon to man.”

“Holy... So, when I pissed him off or when he tasted my bleeding lip...”

“You were stirring his animal side, yes.” I bobbed my head as she sank into me from understanding the dire situation that she put herself in. “Now, my next question. What happened to make you such a force to be reckoned with?”

Her eyes darted everywhere as she shifted uncomfortably at my side. “Promise what I’m about to tell you stays between us?”

“You have my word,” I made sure she understood what that meant. As a prince to a kingdom, my word held a lot worth.

“I was raped when I was younger. Then the dreams came just over a year later. I was so sure I made up the scenarios in my head to make myself not

feel so guilty for what happened. I also thought I had a personality disorder, but it was just you guys doing what I saw. After you see so much, it takes a lot to scare a person. Especially a person who had already suffered the hardest thing a girl can go through.”

I had no words. Instead, I pulled her between my legs to recline against my stomach. She let me manipulate her, and we just stayed like that as I rubbed her arms. A man shouldn't make a woman cry without reason, and he sure as hell put needed to put her back together after he was done. My mother would smack the back of my head for this one.

“So... Kingdoms.”

I groaned, creating a happy grin on her sober face. Thank heavens she changed the topic because I didn't know what to say to that. I wanted to protect her even more as my mother's broken body came into mind, and now the truth game sounded like a great distraction.

“I need to learn to close my big mouth. I don't talk to people much, and it's showing through,” I said. Octavia turned to give me a hug, and I grew too shocked to budge.

“I like that it makes you so honest. It's a rare trait very few have. If it makes you feel any better, I like talking to you.” Damn, this hug felt good. Having her in my arms felt good... sooo, I talked some more.

“Our order is Sevrin, Luce, Lear, Aster, Lo, Beau, then me. It's from the kingdoms we'll rule in Hell after we serve our penance on Earth for one hundred and fifty years. They make rings around each other to protect our core.”

“Wow, so you really are going to be kings.”

“Yeah,” I chuckled before moving on. “Your dad?”

“I have no idea. My mom said it was a random dude she can't remember

from how many there were.” She looked at her hands. I could tell she hated not knowing. “So, what about the eighth kingdom?”

“No one knows. The last eighth member vanished and hid his territory from everyone. He broke the circle from not agreeing with the others above him.” She took time to comprehend my words, and I could tell it as hard for her to hear. So much rested on her shoulders for her mind to process and come to terms with.

“Hey, Bell?”

“Yeah?”

“I’m falling asleep, but I wanted to ask you one more thing, and you can have a free pass to ask me anything in the future.”

“You’re making a deal with a devil... Your word will be bound. I’ll have a question whenever...”

“That’s fine. I like being honest with you too.” Her tender smile melted my exterior. “How come you’re being so nice to me?”

And so I sat, holding this girl to me, while I told her about my mom. There might have been an admission to liking this cuddling stuff, but I think she fell asleep before she heard it.

## Chapter 10



**O**ctavia

Mmm... My body rolled in my silky sheets while I stretched on my tummy from the great night of sleep I had. Seriously, it had been a long time since I slept that good. Snuggling back down in my sheets, I smiled while hearing the shower running. My grin turned wicked knowing what I had in store for Lear. He wasn't the biggest problem with the guys, but Lou was right. They each still deserved a little of my fury.

The surprise for him in the shower would be epic! For my last two days at prep school, I had a few things planned to go out with a bang. Once I switched to the other school, I really wouldn't see the guys very often, if at all. Well, until Sal decided I needed to service Lexi. The dumb bitch would relish that idea if I couldn't find a way out of it.

Some whistling came in as my door opened. Rolling over, I saw Lear standing there in just his boxers. While the sight of his athletic body

remained delicious, I froze from the sound of the water in the bathroom. If he wasn't in there...

"Oh, I was hoping you were in the shower and not Bell." Lear looked back to the bathroom.

On my feet already, I sprinted to get around him in a mad dash to stop what I had just done. Not caring about his privacy, I ran in screaming, "NOOO!"

When my hand moved the curtain back, it was too late. Bell had his eyes closed while rinsing the shampoo from his long locks.

"Sad I didn't invite you?" He smirked, not understanding the water rinsing him came out blue. Yes, I jerry-rigged the shower head with some Kool-Aid to color Lear's body. Hey, it's our main school color, and he had his championship game tomorrow. I was just going to help him show some school spirit... Lear stood behind me now, and he failed to snifle his laugh at the sight. A giant Bellamy lost his caramel skin to the hue of the blue. Thank heavens he had black hair or that would be blue too.

"Dude, you're blue!" Lear leaned into the wall to belt out his laugh. Bellamy immobilized. Clearing his eyes of soap, he looked down to see that, yes, he did, in fact, get dyed a shade of bright blue that went darker on his skin. That's when his actual blue eyes turned on me.

"It was meant for Lear!" I pleaded when I saw the silent man just staring at me with those calculating eyes.

"ME?" Lear shouted from behind me. "What did I do- Oh, yeah, I can't really argue that one. Well, it would've been a good prank, but now it's even better from Rin's babysitting plan backfiring."

He left us as he wiped his eyes from the happy tears that leaked with his chuckle. Bell still hadn't looked away. Like a viper, his hand shot out and grabbed my upper arm. Yanking me to him, he placed me right under the

showerhead to take on the rest of the color. He also reached around me to make it cold. I shrieked and listened to his quiet chuckle after the initial shock wore off. Yes, he held me in place to suffer.

The dye bomb I had placed already faded, but I would still be a baby blue next to his cobalt coloring. Bellamy wouldn't let go of me until he saw the water run clear over my head. Shivering, I nestled against his chest to steal his warmth while he turned off the water. Holy fucking moly! His third leg sat at nearly that!

How had I missed his giant manhood? Where Aster was long and Rin was thick, Bell had both. Gulping, I had to look somewhere else. I guess his African genes blessed him real good. We stood in silence while his hands rubbed my soaked tank top along my spine. It felt really good—even if I became blue.

“If it makes you feel any better, I plan to fill his jockstrap with itching powder tomorrow.” I let my words breathe against his giant chest. For some reason, knowing this lazy rock of a man was a snuggle-bug, made me like him even more. He snorted, resting his chin on the top of my head. This big ole softy had to be too much sometimes.

How people feared him was beyond my recollection. Though, I might not have been the best judge because let's face it, I should fear all of them. Mostly Rin, but pissing off the Alpha... Yeah, I enjoyed it too much.

“Come on, Via. Time to get out,” Bell reminded me that we were standing in a shower with no water going in my soaked clothes. In his birthday suit, he fared worse than me.

I whined and shook my head. He just laughed and picked me up to take us both out. Sitting me on the counter, his large hands worked the towel into my hair, and then he helped me undress. See, most guys would have expected

sex. I could see his anaconda saying his hellos to me, but Bell just ignored his raging hard-on to dry and take care of me.

I got used to fierce guys. Guys who were sarcastic. Guys who did make-up sex because there was a lot to make up for. But a guy who just wanted to take care of me? Yeah, this was new. And I really liked it. Don't get me wrong, I was as messed up in the head as a girl could get, but we liked to be pampered. Because this was my first time, I had no idea it could feel like this.

When I slept with Lear that night, he did take care of me sexually, and I knew he would've just spooned me if I hadn't begged for sex. Now, I kind of wished I had let him because this felt amazing. Once he finished drying me, he wrapped me in my towel and carried me back to my room. He still had not dried himself.

Only when he set me on my bed did he use the extra towel on himself. He somehow carried that with me in his giant arms.

After he dried those loose curls of his, I watched him rub his third appendage that could be a weapon. When he caught me staring—and maybe licking my lips—he snorted again.

“You are beautiful, Via, but I will not sleep with you.” Okay, ouch. And here I thought our first night together had been almost romantic. He must've seen the verbal slap get me because he quickly added more. “I've never slept with anyone, Honey.”

“WHAT?” I stood off the bed, looking him over. It definitely couldn't be from his bad looks.

“Remember what I told you about my mother?” he inquired, and I did. She raised him better than what only his father would've done. “Women and children are precious. I should respect the woman I'm with by making sure she is the only one who will have me.”

Oh, dear God, I think I started crying.

“I know, within our ranks, most will seek our Alpha first. I know I am the last they will, but I am a man of honor. She wouldn’t approve of me fulfilling personal needs with someone I won’t have long-term.”

“Your mother is wise, Bell.” Yes, I remained in awe by his sweetness. I would never be used to men like him. I had no idea he or anyone could be like this. Once his lazy mask fell away, he revealed a real man... “Whoever completes your circle is a lucky girl.”

I knew it was Lexi, but I couldn’t formulate the words to say it. Nope, that bitch should just die and let these men find something better.

He dressed quickly and walked to me. Giving me a hug, I felt my heartstrings pull from knowing he and the other guys would never be mine. I wanted to claim them... all of them. Well, not Milo and maybe still Beau. Whatever magic had me seeing what they did made my little heart want them for myself. I couldn’t, though. I wasn’t their Pandora. My mom ran away for me to not be hurt like she and the others before her had been.

I couldn’t tell anyone of my growing feelings. Heck, I didn’t know what to do with these kinds of emotions. Yup, we were going to bottle it up as another personality problem I had. Fall for the wrong guys? Check.

“It would’ve been you, you know,” Bell sounded a little broken by us both knowing it wouldn’t be.

“Yeah, but you’ll always be my Boo-Bear who snuggles,” I rubbed my face into his chest to take in his fresh scent. He smelled of citrus. “Mmm, you should quit the weed. Smelling your actual scent is amazing, Boo-Bear.”

He chuckled and pulled us apart. “I’ll see you tonight, Honey. Pick out our movie, and we’ll watch it after Lo completes his kills.”

Milo... SHIT! It was Lou’s birthday too!



Running from my room and down the stairs, I found it would be Rin driving me today. Of course, it just had to be the Big Bad Alpha Dragon. Now, that I knew about his dragon, I could've sworn I saw his eyes shift when they took me in.

Oh, right... still in my towel, I also had blue skin. Bell came out laughing like he waited for me to notice. "You forgot it was Lou's birthday. Didn't you?"

Before I could answer, Rin climbed the stairs and clamped my wrist. He stared at my skin and then Bell's.

"What. The. Fuck. Happened?"

"Someone wanted to stain my balls blue for a literal blue balls reference. I wanted to see if there was such a thing as blue tits," Bell spouted.

Okay, kind of an awesome comeback, but Rin didn't think so. Always ruining my fun.

"We're blue. We're da-ba-dee-da-ba-daa's...." I smiled, but Rin still frowned. I groaned and tried the truth route instead of a joke. "It was meant for Lear!"

Bell just kept snickering as he left me to fend for myself. Great, now I had to play distract the beast before he thought I plagued another of his men with my magical vagina. I came down the stairs after changing, and he waited in the same spot. He went out the door and dug around in my car to get my bag as I went to his. Let him show some chivalry for once. He needed the practice. Maybe he could ask Bell for some tips...

When he got to his car, I already climbed in when he seated himself. He tossed me my bag right when it happened.

A little coo came from under his ass. I had to hide my smile as he searched around him. The shrimp hadn't flared yet, but in the next few days, they

would.

“Did you hear that?” he inquired.

Oh, heaven help me... I had to keep a straight face. You know when you get a fit of giggles stuck in your throat, and you can't help but let them out? That's what I fought right now. Coughing to cover it, he got too distracted trying to find whatever made that little sound. Oh, fuck this was great!

“Hear what?” I asked and kept my face in my bag he grabbed from my car.

He sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “Nothing.”

Nothing my ass... Bahahaha!

## Chapter 11



**O**ctavia

“FASTER!” I squealed while Rin drove us into the city in record time. We’d miss first period, but it would be worth it to make Lou’s day.

Really good at driving top speeds, I watched Rin give me a full smile from losing it to his passion. Seriously, the man needed to come with a warning label for how hot he could be.

People feared him, but if they saw the hottie I did, they wouldn’t stray far. We’d just keep my thoughts a secret.

Seeming how he actually liked Lexi, it would be best to try and force myself to not want him. I mean, I only liked him because he fought me back. Yeah, I’ll just keep telling myself that one.

He sped into the mall’s parking lot and drifted us perfectly to park. He only watched me like I’d imagine Paul Walker doing if he were alive and in a *Fast and Furious* movie.

“Someone’s had some practice.” I smirked.

“How the fuck did that not scare you? Even when I went along the edges of the hills, you enjoyed it.”

“Was I supposed to be scared?” I asked as we got out. Confused, I scrunched my face up as his hands rubbed his. When he uncovered his face, I was met with a nasty glare.

“Yes, Octavia! You’re supposed to fear me!” he snarled.

“Geez! Okay! I’ll fake it from now on!” I fired back while heading to the doors of the mall. His hand gripped my arm as he flung me around to face him head-on. Well, chest to head because, let’s face it, I stood over a foot shorter than him.

“That first day I met you, I couldn’t figure out if you were that strong or that stupid,” he whispered like he tried to figure it out still.

“A little bit of both. Just like when I jumped off that cliff, Sevrin. It was stupid to bet my life, but I’m also strong enough to risk it. Now, can you stop with all of this? I don’t care if you’re a Draeman or not... I’m just tired of the games. I’ll be gone Monday, and you can move on.”

“Who told you what I was?” He didn’t follow me or look at me. No, his eyes were up at the sky. Not wanting to get my source in trouble, I said the one thing he’d never find because I accidentally destroyed it.

“My mom left me clues to find Pandora’s journal. It talked about the original Alpha, Satan, siring Silas Thana.” It still really freaked me out to know they were demons. Well, not just demons... From what Bell said, one day, they’d rule as the devils themselves. A shiver wanted to ripple through me, but I held it together.

“You know you are not the next Pandora, right?” Rin said in a mocking tone. If only he knew how this game and information tore me down even more. I missed my mom so much, but I was so mad at her for all of this. Even

with their evil parents, at least they knew. They knew this whole world existed while I tried to play catch-up.

“Yeah! I got it! My mom ran off and fell in love with a human she told me was just another Joe from work—but didn’t know which one—and had me! I’m all sorts of messed up with empath powers because she messed up their circle! I also now know she most certainly does know who my father is, and I can’t ask her because she’s gone! And who knows if she’s really in rehab, thanks to learning all of these horrors! So, thanks for clearing that up, Sevrin!”

“Octavia...” He used my real name, but I could see the pity in his eyes when he finally heard and witnessed how wrecked I grew over that. Not the part about being their Pandora but about my dad and messed up magic.

“Don’t you dare, Sevrin Thana! You do not get to pity me! I might be playing a game I didn’t know the rules to from missing information, but you haven’t seen me quit, right? I haven’t backed down or out! So, don’t you dare look at me like I am broken!”

At some point during my rant, I began to cry angry tears. It should also be documented that I, Octavia Clarke, was not a pretty crier.

“I already know I am, dammit! I already know I’m nothing in this world and to the normal world! Even knowing that, I can still pretend every day that maybe I matter to someone. Maybe I have a purpose. I know I don’t, but it helps me cope with being nothing. But if you start looking at me like that. Then I’ll know everyone else sees it too.”

I left him there and marched into the store. I knew what I would get as I pulled out the credit card Daemon gave me. Heading to the flower shop, I purchased eighteen pink roses, a box of chocolates, and a giant balloon. The card would make it known who sent them.

This store would deliver them in an hour, so I'd see her face in second period when she got them. Going to the shoe store across from the floral shop, I found the most sparkly pair of heels and knew she'd love them. Adding that to my order for delivery, I cringed at the price tag. Only Lou would get me to drop three grand on shoes and rush delivery. Her friendship was worth it. Plus, it was my fault for forgetting thanks to my other shit this week.

Heading out to Rin's car, I found him talking to someone a few cars from us. A woman with red hair, but I couldn't see her face from here. He was such a dick. Whoever he could hump his into, he would. I watched as a fat envelope got handed to her through the window.

Geez, now he was paying for prostitutes. My eyes went to his crotch, and my mind wondered if they could get transmitted diseases. Yeah, that single thought became enough to get me to move back to his car.

Ignoring whatever girl he picked up this time, I climbed into the car and let my rage take control. Rage for what? I didn't really know, but I had a cure.

Lou and I had purchased things for me to go out with a bang the next two days. And Sevrin just happened to leave his coffee cup unattended in my care. Snickering, I pulled out some blue pills in a baggie I had crushed up. I knew exactly what they would do to an angry man like Rin. Hello Woody, too bad you won't have a Buzz to help you.

Damn, Aster rubbed off on me with his puns. Was it sad I kind of missed him? Or that it made me sad by how he left me last night. Had it really been one night? Time felt different with them. Instead of several weeks, it felt like I had known them forever. Brushing off the weirdness, I got back to stirring his cup.

They hated me, and I had to remember that. Hiding all evidence before he

came back, I saw the Dodge Viper pull away as he came back to his car. At least she appeared to be a high-end hooker. What were they called? Escorts? Yeah, I that's what they were in a rich community.

With a sigh for not getting caught, I leaned back and enjoyed the silent car ride back to the school. Well, a baby giggle had him getting pissed. When he looked at me to see if I noticed, I just pretended to be on my phone. My inner woman enjoyed the car ride, but I kept quiet. I mean, Rin drove like his foot got glued to the gas, but this time I didn't encourage it.

Deep down, I loved the speed. Without me saying it, he knew it because I wasn't flinching or grabbing the 'oh-shit-handle'. We didn't say anything as we parked at the school. He chugged the rest of his coffee, and I left to him to it. He didn't deserve a thank you because he had been holding me hostage anyways. I snorted from how bitchy I sounded in my own head.

"Thanks!" I tossed over my shoulder.

First period just ended, so I went right into second period to see a blue Bell giving me a silent acknowledgment. Ha! Bluebell...

Something really shifted between us last night, and I loved it. In their group, he was the awkwardly silent one with no filter. The one who didn't like being around people, but I liked that maybe he liked being around me. Lou came in with a sparkle in her eyes, and I knew it came from her being a princess today. She ran to her seat to tell me all about her morning.

Her mom arrived home and felt a little better. Heck, even her asshole father gave her a call this morning. A call... They lived in the same fucking town, and he called her. I'd let her enjoy it, but I wanted to *call* him something else.

Class started, and that's when my order came with another order it looked like. Mine were the pink roses and the others were red. Lou blushed as everyone watched her open the cards. Mine made her eyes water, and she

opened the shoes with a squeal. One thing to know when you have a peppy friend like Lou, anything sparkly, shiny, or girly will be accepted by their bubbly personality.

“I LOVE THEM!” Truth. She did, and I felt it.

“Who is the other from?” I asked. Okay, so curiosity bit me in the ass to see who would be sending her something during school hours.

When she opened the card, her blush turned her cheeks into apples. She handed it to me to see Z and F signed it. Ah, Zeke and Fiona... I wondered how all of that was going. We had to catch up now that I knew more too.

Bell poked me in the back, and I turned with a sly smile. “Hey, Lear just informed me they’re having a party at your place tonight to hype everyone up about the game. You gonna be okay?”

Did he just ask me my feelings? His mama really did raise him right.

“Yeah. I’ll stay in my room when everything goes down. Lou can be with me if you want to party.”

“Nah, I’ll come up and chill with you if that’s okay.”

“Of course, Boo-Bear,” I said, and he smiled. Lou just ping-ponged her eyes between us in confusion. Before I could say anything, a roar ripped through the air as the door to the classroom busted open.

“OCTAVIA!” Rin stood there panting like a feral beast. My eyes wandered down to his... Holy fuckeroni! I forgot how big his bulge would be with how thick his member got.

Lou caught on and snorted. “You already got him?”

Bell behind me chuckled. “I’d rather be blue for days than deal with blue balls for days.”

“Here goes my death. Attend my funeral? By his eyes, I think I’m gonna need a closed casket.” My joke made them laugh as I got up. My teacher



waved me out from fearing Rin too.

## Chapter 12



**O**ctavia

Still early into the party, Lou, Bell, and I sat on the stairs eating her birthday cake I asked Rita to make. Okay, so we were waiting to for the other pills to kick into Lucius's, Milo's, and Beau's drinks, but the cake made the wait easier. The couple who barely looked at each other needed to get their shit out. So, Lou and I were helping them do just that... literally.

They didn't know this, but we slipped the laxatives in at lunch, knowing they'd take a bit to kick in. Milo just left to head out to complete his kills, and I clenched my fist. Damn... I hoped we'd get to see the show begin before he left. With Beau, he got some sleeping pills, so we could screw with his face. Yup, I took one from *10 Things I Hate About You* and would be drawing a dick on his face to remind him who broke his. Permanent marker would be his enemy the second he dozed off. He had already finished the beer we put it in an hour ago. The clock ticked down, and we could see him nodding off here and there.

Bell had been by my side all night, and everyone stared at us because of our out of this world blue skin. A little shocked that he stayed close, it didn't seem Rin minded. Probably fearing I might have another breakdown if he approached me. Even I cringed from my last meltdown with him. When too much overloaded people, others were unfortunate to receive their word vomit. Rin got mine this morning.

When I asked Bell where Aster went, he said he had a gig and wouldn't be here. That hurt a little too. I thought Aster and I had bonded. I thought us having sex meant something, but I remained the fool with him just as much as I had been with Beau and Lear. All of them regretted touching me, and I could see it with how they avoided me. I had never been one to be attracted to multiple people, but with them, it was hard not to feel something. I just blamed the connection I shared with them.

*Thanks for fucking up my magic, Mom!* I toasted to the air with my fork full of birthday cake. Right after, Lucius made a mad dash past us and ran for the bathroom. 5...4...3...2...

BOOM! Everyone in the hall up the stairs stared at the door after hearing Lucius's thunder from down under. His farts made him sound like a rocket taking off. I could only imagine his embarrassment right now. Part of me knew he could be a nice guy, but he still let me suffer too. I'd call it even after this, if he didn't strike again.

Heck, Rin dragged me into the bathroom to watch him jack off earlier. He knew it would turn me on, and he wasn't wrong. But after forty minutes of not being able to rub it out, he cursed and went to find Aster for an instant release. Guess his magic could be good for something. When they need to come in their pants from too much Viagra. Yeah, that just happened to be one

of those things. As we listened to Lucius's trumpeting ass, Bell leaned over my shoulder with a laugh. "Being blue is also better than that."

Knowing he should be done soon, I went to the bathroom door and waited across from it. No way would I let that stench get near me. He came out looking clammy and tired from what just expelled from his bowels. He cleared his hoarse throat that came from all the grunting he did.

"Revenge for the journal?" he asked, and I nodded. Then, he did the most unexpected thing. He cupped my cheeks and kissed my forehead.

What. The. Fuck?

"About time you kicked my ass for that."

"You know I just blew up your intestines, right?" I had to clarify this weirdness.

"Yes, Octavia. I've had nothing but guilt on my conscience since the day I found out you suffered as I had. You doing this gives me hope we can make amends."

"Suffered like you?" Why was he confusing me when he was supposed to be mad at me?

"My mom... She was a crack whore. So, when those words of yours were read out loud, they were mine too."

"And your mom?" I had to swallow the lump forming in my throat. Damn this group for ruining me, and damn me for feeling guilty now. Why did I feel sorry for him? This's what happened when someone went insane. Nothing made sense.

"She died shooting up too much."

"I'm sorry..." Fuck. His mother lost the battle to drugs, and mine survived so far. "To be honest, I waited for the day to find my mom like that. All of it sucks."

“It does, but I hope you can accept my apology for what I did in class that day.”

“It’s forgiven... unless you do something else.” I narrowed my eyes. He laughed and kissed my head again. Heading down the stairs, he paused to look back to give me a warm grin. Then it faltered, and he went running back to the toilet. I’d say this victory went to me. He finally smiled in my presence without the guilt that had been weighing him down.

Moving to the stairs and sitting between Bell’s legs, we all studied Beau’s drooping body. A girl had been trying to get his attention, and now she huffed while storming away. That made this even better. We all moved down the stairs, and Bell did the honors of dicking up Beau’s face.

That’s when my door burst open with a Cheshire Gare. “Honey! I’m home!”

Yeah, we had a great time tonight.

~

Waking up this morning wasn’t so bad with Bell beside me and Lou on my other. Gare spooned his cousin, so us girls were sandwiched between the guys.

From how late we stayed up watching ridiculous movies, not even she could muster up the energy to rouse. They all were with me when I went under for Milo’s five kills and were there with popcorn when I woke up. After that, I had dashed to Lear’s room while he sat on the couch last night. I sprinkled the itching powder over his football pads and in his jockstrap. It would be a great game tonight for him, and it’d be the first one I’d attend.

Lou groaned and swatted at me for moving. Gare smacked her, butt and she ferociously shrilled from the shock.

“Shut up, Banshee,” Bell huffed. I knew he wasn’t asleep and that he had stayed to snuggle me all night. Yeah, that made me grin. Wait.

“YOU’RE A BANSHEE!” I shouted. Now everyone groaned, sitting up.

“Good going, Bell!” Lou made her version of an angry face.

“I am too, if you’re wondering, Via.” Gare showed no remorse.

“She doesn’t know about demons yet,” Lou looked around nervously like someone might appear.

“I do, Lou. I read it, and Bell filled in the blanks.” Bell began rubbing between my shoulder blades. “So when Rin wrote that note about the chess piece, he referred to you as the shrieking bird?”

“I actually wrote the rhyme,” Bell said from behind me. “Yes, she is. Her mother is one and Lou took on her powers at birth.”

He still laid beside me, and the other two watched us with really confused expressions. They were wondering why he kept being so honest with me. I rolled my eyes from both of them jumping to the wrong conclusion as to why he’d share with me.

“No, we have not slept together.”

“Just a shower,” Bell teased them with a smirk. I had to laugh from that one catching me off-guard.

“Nothing happened. We’re…” What were we?

“Friends. Via is my friend.” Bellamy just had to go and make my eyes water even more.

We spent the morning catching up on what I knew—which concluded being what I needed to know in Lou’s eyes. That made me ease up just a little to know there wouldn’t be any more surprises. Fiona and Zeke were officially

her partners, and she'd be spending the weekend with them. Gare had to go home to deal with unpacking, and his mother that got mad at him for sneaking out on their vacation.

I would just go and enjoy the football game while Lear suffered through it.

~

“GO, FIGHT... GO FIGHT WIN!” The crowd chanted with the cheerleaders. I sat in a spot near the middle wondering why I had never done this before. Sporting events were actually...fun. Crazy, even for my level of insane. Seriously, this was my first one and it got intense! It didn't help they were playing for the district title.

So much went on from the plays to the calls. It enhanced it to be so exciting and thrilling from the crowd joining in! And let me tell ya, I voiced my opinion on some of those calls from the men around me shouting them. Yeah, I jumped on their bandwagon... Sue me.

It was fun, and they kept telling me how the game worked. Rin and his band of guys sat at the top of the bleachers on the end, but he watched me instead of the game. They were not happy outsiders were giving me attention. Even with my blue skin, they just thought I was a die-hard football fan.

I played the card and let them explain everything to me. When they asked who I cheered for, I told them my stepbrother was on the team. Not wanting to lose my new friends, I neglected to tell them the part about which player specifically. Halftime counted down when it happened. Lear's throw jerked wrong, and once the ball released, his hands were in his drawers like a mad man. Everyone watched in horror as my *Bro* lost control of himself and ran

for the school that was a good ways away. Luckily, his running back caught the ball from the weird throw, and he made it to the endzone.

It put us in the lead, so now, Lear owed me a thank you. I laughed so hard, and the new guys were looking between Lear's back and me.

"That your stepbrother?" one asked.

"Yup." I nodded.

"You do something to him?"

"I plead the fifth." They all patted me on the back and howled with laughter. After halftime, Lear came back out to the field and pointed right at me. He gave me a glare with a grin to promise revenge. I could tell he loved that I didn't fear his group of friends. There was something between Lear and me, but since things went down his night of murdering, I didn't know how to approach it.

And now with Bell in my room at night, how did I?

Wait, who was going to stay with me tomorrow night when Bell had to go out? Gulping, I looked to the Alpha himself. He just smirked at me like he knew where my thoughts just went. Of course, he did. He wanted me quivering in my boots, and him being in my room would do a fine job of that. Stupid, sexy, dragon-shifting fucker!

Ugh, why did I like him so much? I really should go for a mild guy, but I wasn't a mild girl. No, I went full on cray-cray and someone would need the patience of a saint to be with me. I waved over at their group just as Beau stood to go. Even though I enjoyed seeing the dick on his cheek, I sighed. Time to deal with the shit of his coming coronation. Well, damn. I had fun tonight, but now he brought me back to my reality. I didn't get to have fun like a normal teen, but I wanted to.

Bell waved me to follow him, knowing I slept with Beau too. He'd need to



ground me again, and I felt bad he had to do it again. I loved his company, though, and these last few days were blissful with him. Sleep came easier, and I woke up with no lingering effects from their kills.

## Chapter 13



**O**ctavia

These nightmares were rough. I splashed some water on my face with a heavy sigh. Bellamy just finished his seven kills, marking the final night for this week. Thank heavens for that.

I used to think the ones I had once a week were a raise in my torture but having them back to back each night took the cake. One punishment I didn't know I'd be cursed with. I just watched seven drunks swim out into the middle of a lake and drown because they were too lazy and intoxicated to swim back...

Seven. Not one, like the usual standards I grew used to. The raven rhyme seemed to be a lot more than the simple words. Each one had to kill according to how they fell in the command. I was just the unlucky bystander who had to watch it all.

My hair spilled over my face, still wet from me splashing it. My eyes were shut, but I was thankful for this moment of solitude to put myself back

together again. After a few minutes of feeling the warm droplets turn cold on my cheeks, I knew I needed to go back to my room. Any of the housekeepers could see me, and we all knew how Rita got when I didn't feel good. She'd mother-hen my ass until Christmas.

Gripping my towel, I rubbed my face while straightening my back. Turning, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up as though I no longer stood alone. Slowly lowering the towel, I looked in the mirror and found Rin right behind me. His eyes were liquid fire when we locked gazes in the mirror.

He was only here tonight because Bellamy had to complete his kills instead of playing babysitter. I could tell it pissed him off he had to be close to me, but when I saw his eyes drop to the handprints on my thighs, I knew he also grew excited. After all, he did tell me my bruises and beatings turned him on. I got it now. What I didn't know then, showed clear as day. Sevrin Thana—only half a man and his other half, a beast of untold power. Torturing him, I moved the hair from my neck to showcase where Aster had bitten me. Yup, his eyes locked on the damaged flesh.

“Wanted to say a proper goodbye?” I teased. The poor chap grew pissed I would be starting public school on Monday with the humans. Until I knew Jason and Todd—from Aster's band—went there, I hated it too.

Instead of answering, he flipped me around and shoved me forward to lean my middle over the counter. My hands shot out to brace for impact as the mirror they hit, shattered and rippled. The breaking sound muffled my cry as he held me by the back of the neck. His rainy scent came over my shoulder as his body engulfed mine from behind. He was so big and this made him dwarf me as his thumb stroked the bitemark.

“I don't do goodbyes,” he barked.

My heart hammered and stumbled to work right as I caught my breath. “Then what are you doing?”

Not getting an answer, I finally chanced a look over my shoulder to see him staring at a small streak of blood my palm had left against the remaining mirror. His tongue darted out in deprivation, and I could practically see him salivate.

*Wrath...* Blood was his curse.

Daring to be bold, I turned around and hopped up on the counter with my rear in my boy-cut panties. The bruises from Aster nearly sparkled under the light. Rin loved the marks. Though, his gaze followed my injured hand as I held it between us, and my other hand found a pointed shard from the mirror. I could see what his monster begged for, and something within me felt responsible to feed him.

I sliced my palm to dare his beast. The animal within him—that made him thirst for blood—should have me running away in terror. What he didn’t know? Part of me craved him to take it from me. I thirsted in a different way because I needed to see my blood stain his thin lips. Only *mine* because my possessiveness rose once again. Sevrin would feed from me and only me...

The hot liquid pooled down my unbroken skin, leaving its crimson trail along my forearm. Rin’s eyes couldn’t look away.

“Every time you saw me bleed,” I whispered while using a finger from my other hand to gather some blood on it. I took it to his mouth to watch his nostrils flare, and his dark eyes went completely black. “You didn’t pity me... You hungered for me...”

My finger swiped against his swirling tongue in his mouth as he sucked my blood from it. The sensation of that alone had me arching my back from the counter I sat on. Heat blossomed within my core, and a moan escaped my

parted lips. Rin's predatory eyes drank me in with a slight quirk in his lips. Leaning in, he kissed the powerful pulse along my neck. I exposed it more to him in submission. My artery thrummed hard enough that I knew he could see it pulse under my flesh. His sharp teeth scraped along the sensitive skin just for him to hear me lose my breath. He chuckled and kissed where I anticipated his bite.

"You should fear I might drain you, Kitten." His hands shifted to hold my thighs achingly tight where the other bruises already sat in their rich coloring.

"No," I heaved out with my chest from his skin to skin contact driving me mad. I used my open palm to smear blood along my throat. "I fear I'll crave it until you do..."

Rin lost his composure. The second my hand painted the tops of my breasts, the beast came out. His growls vibrated into me, and I let his alpha-ness control me for a second. Just to taste what he could offer my submissive moment. My eyes were cast low, but I needed to also fill my need for dominance.

As my sight traveled up, I was challenged with the face of a man but with the fangs of his dragon. They fit into his human mouth like they belonged, but there was nothing normal about them. He also had horns on his head, and fuck me, if I didn't think about riding him while using them for handlebars. When he saw me looking, he snarled and yanked me off the counter to flip me around again. I got it. This established his dominance in this position animals used to mate.

But Rin wasn't mating me. His horse dick did make more sense though. He bit right below my ear as he growled again. "I never said you could look at me."

I pressed my ass into his crotch and let myself grind against it until I grew

afraid of lighting his jeans on fire. Turning my head over my shoulder, I took his bottom lip into my mouth. Sinking my teeth into his flesh, his blood played against my own lips. I moaned with my eyes open for him to see it pleased me too.

“This isn’t just about your pleasure, Sevrin.” My words were a lot firmer in my mind than they were coming out.

“And what if your pain is what pleases me?” His massive hand fisted around my slender neck. The grip tightened just enough to show his power and his restraint. I loved it all. Only he gave me this kind of fight.

“I already told you, no one has crossed that line...”

Rin shoved me against the door with his control over my neck, and then his mouth crashed into mine. It wasn’t loving, it wasn’t romantic. It was aggressive and a powerplay for both of us. Our tongues fought each other in a duel for who would win and claim the top.

His hands made quick work of my clothes. I did of his as well in between our vengeful kisses. Bared before each other, we only looked for a second before we were back at our battle. My nails pressed into his shoulders, and by his light quiver, I knew his beast liked it.

Gripping my thighs with a force that was inhuman enough to make me squeak, he grinned against my mouth. “I still hate you,” he rumbled in a husky voice that undid me.

“Isn’t that what this is? A hate fuck? One last hoorah before we never have to see each other again?” I could barely get the words out when he started playing between my legs.

He rubbed his pierced cockhead along my slit. Much like we did that one night in the woods. The sensation of his hardness against my wound-up clit was exactly the feeling I needed to push me over the edge. My nails dug

deeper into the clear flesh on his shoulders. There were no scars where I now marked him, and I liked the idea of that. In my haze for more pleasure, I didn't notice the black ink near my fingers on his body.

My hands were too busy moving up to play with his horns. He moaned from it, and I knew they must be sensitive to touch. I got hot and bothered, knowing they aided his pleasure, so I stroked them some more.

“That’s exactly what this is.” Rin yanked me again, fisting his hand into my hair. His new direction had me bent over the sink again for him to dominate me. “I am the king, and you are only my pawn.”

He teased my opening while fueling my rage. I slammed back against him, not caring about the pain on my scalp to do what I needed. My center took him in completely. His grip on my hair and it loosened by the surprise. God, he felt so good filling me up and stretching me.

“Pawn? Don’t be silly, Sevrin.” I fucked myself on his shaft while watching him through the shards of mirror left. He couldn’t take his gaze away from where I connected us. “We both know the biggest pawn here is you. Playing your daddy’s game for him...”

I kept up my movements, but Sevrin made eye contact with me in the reflection. I smirked as his hand came from behind and clamped my throat. His teeth sank into my neck to cover Aster’s bite, and my noise of surprise kept hidden in the chokehold he had me in. Moving his other hand to my hip, he began meeting my thrusts with a force I never knew to be possible.

“I’ll play his game until he doesn’t see my moves coming, Kitten. I’ve already started winning...”

He lapped up the blood along my neck while keeping me below him. I wish I wasn’t so attracted to him, but I was. Just like the rest of them, I had formed a bond through my dreams.

“And me? I’m just a piece you’re using to get there?”

“Don’t act like you want me to have feelings now, Kitten. We both know I’m incapable of loving,” he growled while sucking my neck even harder.

I became dizzy from how much blood he took, but I still wanted him to take more. It only fueled our connection with the passion nearly exploding between us.

“I never asked for love, Sevrin.”

He chuckled darkly. “No, no you didn’t. You asked to be fucked.” Our words stopped as we went at each other. His hand moved from my throat to my other hip for him to work us together even more.

I turned my head enough for him to merge our lips together. My blood had mixed with his and we both groaned from how good it made us feel. “I told you, I’d ruin you for anyone else...”

One of my hands came off the edge of the countertop to reach his. I dragged it down to where the bruises lined my inner thighs with a smirk. “I don’t know, Aster fucked me just as good a few days ago. He even gave you your favorite kind of foreplay to see on my body.”

Sevrin didn’t like that, and I soon found my feet off the ground while he drilled into me. Holy fuck! This was exactly what I needed from his beast. I became his counterpart to take what he needed to release. His seed began spilling into me, and my next climax milked his shaft to mix our releases while our last searing kiss mixed our blood even more.

Rin pulled out of me enough for me to turn around and face him. Now that I had come down from my moment of bliss and could actually look at his body, I found the whole left side tattooed.

He had covered most of his scars with tribal ink, and I felt a little sad by that idea. My hands went to the worst scars and could still feel the ruined skin



on his lower abdomen.

“You hid them?” This time, Rin didn’t push my hand away. He let me feel his battle scars.

“No one wants a disfigured king.” He countered, and I felt it. The truth in his words. This beautiful and deadly man had no idea how handsome he was. He might’ve been the leader, but he didn’t see himself like Lucius.

“Your tattoos are beautiful,” I followed the patterns. “But I liked seeing your strength more.”

“Why?” His menacing whisper tried to mask his pain.

I didn’t answer right away. Instead, I kissed along the harshest one where I could feel the raised skin still.

“You are a masterpiece that represents my soul. All of these? They are what I look like on the inside. You bear them on your flesh for me to see you are just as strong as I am. Stitched and marred but still living... I love seeing them, knowing you can rival mine.”

“How can you say you are the same? You’d be marred just as much as me if you had rivaling scars.”

“I’ll tell you my tales if you’ll tell me yours...” He went silent, and I nodded. “Every story is too personal because of the pain. I know that because I carry them in my mind.”

I kissed his cheek, leaving him to process my words and went back to my room. When I heard the bathroom door slam shut, Rin’s retreating footsteps followed. So much for him babysitting me tonight.

## Chapter 14



**O**ctavia

Nothing was special about today.

Nope. Not a damn thing...

Just me turning eighteen by myself.

*Hurray for making it to adulthood, Via! You weren't killed by gangs, and you didn't starve to death. In seven months, you'll even graduate high school!* Pretty sad I had to give myself a pep talk for a day that should be happy and hopeful. Too bad I found out early on that birthdays sucked.

Sighing, I sat back on my stool and continued my painting while listening to fucking *Air Supply* in the background. If I couldn't have my real mom here, I'd paint her to be with me. Silly, I knew it. Still, it felt like what I needed right now to make myself feel better. My talent didn't compare to Milo when it came to painting, but I learned a lot from my art class. The perks of money and a secret demon school and living in a quiet mansion.

No one was around today. After Bell completed his kills, the guys had to do something today to bond them or some shit. Lou went with her lovers and Gare helped his mother visit Lou's mom. She became a mess from her sister not getting better still. Me? I was alone and painting on a day that should mean the world.

A knock hit my door, and Rita came in carrying a cupcake with extra frosting because that's how I ate any treat. I was a 'more sugar the better' kind of person.

An eighteen candle sat on top, and the numbers were lit. "Happy Birthday, Via." Her kind smile melted me, and I felt the warmth dribble from my eyes. I wiped the tears fast.

"How did you know?" I asked with a look of complete gratitude. Sure, I didn't tell anyone about my birthday, but no one wanted to truly be alone.

"I had an inkling..." She winked while holding the cupcake in front of my face. "Now, make a wish, mi nieta."

And so I did. I wished to see my mom again. To be able to talk to her about all of this. Rita kissed the top of my head before leaving me to cherish her simple but thoughtful gift. I ate the chocolate cupcake with cream cheese frosting and a ganache center. That woman could out cook anyone. Just starting to clean up, I got a text from Lou on my phone.

**Lou: Rough day. Come over?**

That was odd. I quickly replied 'sure' just in case something happened between her and the other two. Relationships were the worst. As I drove, my phone dinged with an incoming call just as a raven landed in the middle of the road, fifty feet before me. Slowing down and stopping when I got to it, I knew I could call whoever back.

When I neared the raven, it flew off and left me with another omen I knew

all too well. A snake laid completely split in half. Two perfectly placed parallel lines of a black serpent. Only magic could be this precise. Looking around, I found the tongue I knew would be detached from the severed body.

*When secrets begin to be sung, we'll cut out the serpent's tongue. When a serpent is split in two, know that Death follows you.*

Fucking fantastic. Another omen from my mom's damn book. I sighed while watching the streets around me. Something felt off, very off. I found out a lot of things lately and to most, it should've been a bad thing. Going back to my car, I grabbed my phone and saw I had a voicemail from Aster. Clicking play, I listened to his panicked, British voice.

"Octavia. I can't say these words over a phone call, and I don't have time from our shite tonight. I know what you are... We need to talk before you do anything else with anyone else. Find me tomorrow after your first day of public school. Jason and Todd already know to have your back, Love. Oh, and after my research, Happy Birthday."

What I am? Could he really have solved such an elaborate puzzle? Hope bubbled into me but it was short lived. My eyes tracked movement in the rearview mirror of my car. Seeing a black SUV behind me, I punched my gas and took off. Nothing good ever came from an empty road with the sun going down and a black SUV.

From my eyes being in the rearview mirror, I didn't see the new SUV pull out in front of me. Screaming, I swerved off the road and found myself crashing into a tree. Ouch. I sat in a daze for just a second to hear the continuous horn blaring from my car. The airbag had forced the steering wheel to take out my chest. Damn, that put me in some serious pain.

Getting out, I started bleeding on my head. A little disoriented, but I had no time to cope. Running, I took off for the tree line, hoping to lose them in the

dark forest. Large men in black clothes weren't too far behind. My breaths were forced from the pain in my ribs, and my head hurt the more my feet slammed the ground.

I kept going though. Pain was temporary. Death was permanent. I knew what that snake meant, and I learned too much about this world to believe otherwise. Message received. Someone wanted to silence me.

Figure-eight-ing through the thick trees, I kept going until I knew I ran in too many circles to be caught. Resting my back against a tree, I tried to even out my sporadic breathing. That was when I saw it. Well, more so a large shadow moving across from me. It lurked in the bushes, and I watched it while hearing other snapping sounds coming from my sides.

They moved in like a pack of wolves, but these were large cats. Just like the baby one I saw that first night the guys ran me off, they were black with white spots and glowing eyes. These ones had giant fangs like a sabretooth and muscular backs that arched in defense. They were the size of bears, and there were six of them creating a semicircle around my point at the tree.

A man walked out of the shadows with a slow clap. It was too dark to see him until he got right in front of me. With the same glaring features as his son, I knew this was Salvatore Thana.

“Octavia Clarke. You seem to be making quite the mess of things.” I watched as the cats bowed to him as he stood in the middle with me. He petted one that walked up with him. “The perks of being the Alpha of Hell. I can call my Hellcats to do my hunting when my prey decides to run.”

“Hellcats?” I gulped now seeing the demonic side to them. Heat radiated from their spines and shadows misted under their paws.

“Awe, yes. So much better than my hounds. They are smarter and hunt better when I need souls collected that don't want to go freely. Now, follow

me... unless you want to be their next prey. My son only disobeyed me a handful of times before he learned what they can do.” he smirked. The rat bastard smirked from the pain he gave his son, and I knew exactly how Rin got those scars.

We walked after he tied my hands behind my back, dragging me deeper into the forest. He stopped at a landmark where two trees bowed and created an arch of some kind. Before anything else, a bag was placed over my head. Instantly, I wondered how often this happened to the guys from them doing it to me. It seemed their cruelty was taught. Maybe there remained some hope for them after all... Could they be taught to love too?

We moved through something that made my skin tighten and tingle. I felt a little sick when the sensation wore off and then I heard the sound of metal grinding. Instantly, two hands worked off my ties and hood before I got shoved into a jail cell. Like a medieval castle, stone walls surrounded me but with a metal door people would see in a prison today.

I wanted to shout after Salvatore, but what I saw across from me stopped all brain function. I thought I kept hallucinating, but when I blinked, what I saw stayed there. Right across from me...there she was. This whole time Daemon had me believing she went to a rehab center, but they've had her locked in a prison cell this whole time.

“Mom?” my voice grew small. All of the hauntings of my past purged my present, and I felt suffocated.

Everything had changed since I agreed to Daemon's offer for help. I had been picked on and shoved around while never understanding why. She was the reason. This whole town knew I was the daughter of Liliana Clarke before I even arrived. I got played the fool because of the things she neglected to tell me. Part of me wanted to hate my mother, but the bigger part

had missed her too much to care at the moment. Looked like my birthday wish came true.

I became that little girl in need of maternal comfort only a mother or guardian could give. She failed me but not in the way she thought. It wasn't from them finding us. No, it came after hiding all of this from me in hopes it would never happen. It left me unprotected and blind to this world.

"Via..." She tried to stand, but her body grew too weak from her malnutrition. Dirt stained her body, and blood dried around her fingernail beds. Her clothes were also covered in blood, making her look like an extra in a horror movie.

I probably did too from the car wreck I climbed out of just a few hours ago. My poor body hurt from all the damage the last several weeks inflicted. I'd heal only to go through it all again.

"Daughter, why did you agree to Daemon's offer? You should never have made a deal with a devil."

I snorted. "Oh, I don't know. Maybe because CPS got involved and threatened to take me away. Then there's the fact that I didn't know the man with the nicest offer was a devil! I didn't know I was a descendant of Pan-fucking-dora who was meant to keep the deadly sins contained! But wait, I'm not, because you never completed the circle's essence fertilizer in your womb and fell in love with a mortal!"

"Via..."

"No! I'm not done! I'm now going to be a step in their ceremony as your punishment! All because you thought hiding me from this world would save me. Look where I am and where I've been these last several weeks. I raised myself without you because you were too busy getting high and being a

whore to hide who you were, but it didn't matter in the end. I'm going to lose because I didn't know the rules to this game."

My body slumped against the wall, and I closed my eyes to finally let myself cry. Who cared if my mom saw me giving up? It wasn't like she fought anyways. Nope, she fled. Flight or fight, and my mom spread her wings.

"I told you to take her to a separate stall! She needs to be isolated and contained!" a man yelled down the hall.

When the footsteps came, my mom found the strength to get up and look at me with determination. "Daughter, listen to me now. Remember these numbers and find the spot. 25.0000° North, 71.0000° West."

"I'm clearly not going anywhere, Mother!" I scoffed. Why she thought I needed longitude and latitude was beyond my comprehension.

Two guards unlocked my door and shoved me down a hall to an elevator. Getting to a new corridor with one door at the end, that's where they took me. The light had been turned off as they shut me in and locked the door from the outside. My hand wandered the wall for a light, but I didn't need to. The guards turned it on from the outside.

Before me in this closet of a room was a man. Not just any... It was him. I knew from how the hair rose on the back of my neck from how he inhaled me. My blood pumped harder when my heart went into shock. My knees wobbled just enough for me to take a step back. I cornered myself against a door with no exit... Just like last time.

He, the man who ruined me at the young age of eleven. His calculating eyes took me in with appreciation. Those knowing eyes I should've recognized a long time ago. Their yellow hue... The glint of Greed...

Minus Gifre.



No wonder I felt captivated by Milo's and Lou's eyes. They were their father's, and he was my original captor. I hadn't remembered that horrible part until this moment. He hadn't aged a day, so it made the torture worse. The one who took my innocence was the one who had me now. For the first time, I felt true fear as the memories flooded my concentration. All the things I had blocked out reared to an ugly head inside my mind.

"Octavia Clarke, we meet again."

At the sound of his voice, I turned and immediately tried to get the door to open. When it wouldn't, I banged on it while crying out for help. I didn't care how crazy I looked. I was feeling actual fear again. A fear he imposed on me over six years ago. Nothing answered my pleas. In the silence, I only heard my heart breaking while he chuckled right behind me.

## Chapter 15



**S**evrin

My eyes kept shifting to the window during my first period. Everything within me felt wrong with Octavia being at her new school today.

My dragon also stirred from being restless. That fucker made us twitchy to begin with. Fucking Octavia just had to bleed for him, and he took over to screw her brains out. Not only that, but while he was in charge, he fucking mated her.

My father would kill me for this one, but it wasn't like I could control my beast during something like that. He went insane at the sight of her blood on the mirror. It had been the sweetest either of us had tasted. Craving blood sucked but needing her now destroyed me. I'd need to feed from her soon from my new addiction to her blood, and I blamed her for this.

Of course, she just had to slice her palm to me and let the bloodlust take over. She didn't know this, but we had been prizing her for a long time as a mate.

Not that I could pick her, but her attributes weren't unrecognized. She checked off being fierce, bold, beautiful, crazy, and strong beyond belief. If I could have picked a mate, it would have been her. I was supposed to mate Lexi for our circle. My beast didn't care for that one bit and did what I wasn't man enough to do.

He claimed her, marked her, and shared our blood with her. It sealed the deal. After our mating and blood exchange, Kitten had become mine. My chest stirred with pride, but my mind knew this would be a terrible thing. Just wait until the guys found out I fell just as weak as them when it came to the girl we all had eyes on.

I sighed, not happy she remained so far from us. I needed her near me to make sure she had protection. Now that I bonded to her, her safety became all I could think about. Talk about primal needs and all that. It itched under my skin and became annoying as fuck. My leg bounced restlessly as Aster looked over at me.

"You okay?"

"No," I grunted. Before we could talk anymore, he pulled out his phone that blew up. He cursed under his breath and then got up to leave. He signaled me to follow, and I knew something bad happened. We were in the hall as he paced and dialed whoever called.

"Jason," his voice demanded something. He halted while paling, looking at me.

In my heart, I already knew. I had been a fool all morning just accepting this was how the mate bond would feel. No, I was on edge and about to kill someone because my mate was in trouble. I felt this since last night and now this? Octavia wasn't dead, or I'd feel my own soul being ripped from me, but something went seriously wrong.

“What do you mean she never showed up to school?” Aster’s voice turned to ice. Lear came running down the hall with Momo on his shoulder. The little dragonette she named Daisy kept right on his heels.

“*Squawk!* Bitch be taken!” Momo chirped as the dragon female ran to me. She would know I had mated from my smell, and our kind were wired like that. I picked her up and leaned our foreheads together to gain what she wanted to show me. A talent only I had from my role as Alpha.

Flashes of night passed my thoughts as I saw her wrecked car while she crawled out and ran into the forest. Daisy and Momo followed her but got there too late. The Hellcats and my dad found her first.

“Take me there,” I commanded her. Lear sent a group message out, and the other guys ran to my car and Aster’s for speed. My car smelled terrible, but I didn’t have time to care. Someone could detail it after I found my mate. We drove until we found her car crashed into a tree. Her blood spilled from her; I could smell it leading into the thick of the trees.

Rage filled me as I punched the hood of her car and followed her sweet scent. All of our familiars showed up to lead the way. My horned owl. Luce’s snowy owl. Lear’s parrot. Aster’s barn owl. Milo’s screech owl. Beau’s elf owl. Bell’s boreal owl... They all wanted to protect Octavia from being around her. Even this dragonette wanted to find her. She sent me a flash of her bond to my Kitten, and I became shocked.

Holding the dragonette, I didn’t want to believe it. No creature could bind a dragon as a familiar.

Yet...

“Do you belong to her?” I asked the mini dragon, and she chirped once. That meant yes when they responded to me. All the guys heard and were taken back. Octavia had to be powerful if she was able to seek out a

dragonette as her shadow. All of our owls were the highest because of their wisdom but a dragon...

We ran until her scent died at the one spot I expected. The mouth to Hell. From the heat around it, I could tell it had been activated recently.

“What do we do now?” Lear looked sick to his stomach. I knew he cared a great deal for my mate. Almost all of my brothers did.

“My father will have her too hidden from us. He’ll expect us to fail this test and go after her now.” I spoke the truth. He was a sick man who wanted to test us. “He’ll kill her if we try to find her.”

“So, what do we do?” Luce reiterated Lear’s question.

“We plan. You guys will just have to trust me that I know she’s alive,” I answered.

“How do you know?” Aster looked at me with his own wisdom. The fucker knew I had feelings for her from his Lust magic telling him. Hell, he could probably scent I mated her too.

“I know you can smell it,” I grunted, and he smirked. The bastard.

“Oh, I do. I just want you to tell our brothers what a hypocritic arse you are.”

“Rin, what’s he talking about?” Lear moved up to stand before me. I sighed, knowing this would raise even more contention.

“My beast mated hers.” Only a short silence fell as they all stared at me. Then all hell broke loose within our group.

# Mysterious Omen

Ashley Amy

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## Chapter 1



**L**ucius

Heaven help us all. Aster and I waited by the tree nearest to the gateway and watched our closest friends come apart. Lear shoved Rin around with the help of Bell. Milo kept screaming profanities, but I didn't think his anger stemmed from Rin sleeping with Octavia.

I hadn't talked to him since I found him helping Rin hurt Octavia by kissing Lexi because I didn't desire to discuss it; even with finding out it Rin ordered them to. Bellamy told me it was under our Alpha's command, but Lo still could have told me. A warning would have been nice.

Nope. I had to have my heart shatter while getting an apology from a girl who shouldn't be showing any of us mercy. Given, she had claimed revenge in the most fascinating ways. Aster filled me in on all the evil things she did at the clubhouse. I'd admit it, Octavia Clarke found ways to seek revenge on a budget, and she utilized it against us. Her creativity and passion were endless when it came to her strength.

“I had no goddamn control! She fucking slit her palm to feed him!” Rin roared. I looked over to see him rolling around with Lear as they threw punches. I snorted. It sounded like something Octavia would do. Dare Rin’s beast to feed from her as a power play. She had no end to her craziness, and I really enjoyed it.

I promised Lo I’d keep my distance because he didn’t like her, but after Lexi? That went out the window. Not that I would seek her out to be more than my friend, but Lo wasn’t one to share me in most aspects, and this extended to my friendships with certain people.

The fight kept going as the three guys finally ganged up on Rin. It was interesting to see our Sloth be full of so much rage. Beau stood across from me, but I could see his eyes locked on the portal. He looked completely lost and broken, knowing Octavia remained on the other side. Most likely in one of the prisons, if I had to place my bet.

Rin had the right idea, though. We couldn’t go after her, and we couldn’t give away any of our affections for her from how Sal already responded to our initial interest. It would be safer for her there than it was for us to go after her. Living in a cell would suck, but it had to be better than immediate death.

Once the guys were finally done being...well, guys, they got to their feet.

“Now that you are done, feel better?” Aster pushed off the tree he leaned against. “And while we’re getting things off our chest, I found some things out that will interest us all.”

“Like what?” Lo scoffed, fixing his suit, patting the dirt off of it.

Lear huffed some breaths, but he nodded to Aster about things needing revealed. “There’s something I haven’t said too. Something that I knew before Octavia arrived from the accident. Our dads planned it a week before she came. I overheard them at one of our parties.”

We all groaned. With this new information, we really had to protect her. Our dads were already using us, and now they had plans for her. Knowing we were too exposed, I gave Rin a perceptive look. All of the others caught on and watched the forest around us. The Hell Mouth was always guarded by a Hellcat.

“There’s nothing we can do right now. We need to go, and we need to plan,” Rin declared.

Aster made a show of zipping his lips, and we walked away from the one person who deserved a knight. The one person who had more skeletons in her closet than us... Now, she had to suffer because none of us could see her dead.

## Chapter 2



**O**ctavia  
*(Two weeks later...)*

It stayed dark.

I didn't mean just at this moment. It had been pitch-black since that first day their hands forcefully shoved me into this room. They were trying to keep me in a constant, heightened state of fear. In the beginning, it worked from not knowing what might come—especially with Minus as my captor—but now I didn't care. Time became irrelevant, and I didn't know if it had been days or weeks. I just knew it had been more than hours from how my body responded to movement, and their neglect to the sleep I wished to have.

They didn't let me sleep...

The noises came when I drifted off. Loud horns or buzzers that made it so I could only rest when I passed out from being up too long. Being passed out had been the only time I found peace from it all. Little food would be given through the slot at the bottom of my door for me to not get any light. A

shallow tray of water would be filled for me to drink, and it barely kept me living from how sparsely it came.

My body was too weak to move, making my arrangement hard. My accommodations were lacking with only a toilet in the back corner I found the first day in here. I was grateful for indoor plumbing in my personal Hell, but from it being there, I couldn't extend my legs out straight. Being too weak, I couldn't stand on my own, and so my knees remained bent on the floor. It didn't matter if I rolled over because of the little room I had. They ached deeply, but my knees were beginning to grow too numb to care.

There were no shadows because there was no light to create them in this isolated room, and I felt that in my soul as well. Sighing, I thought about the last words to my mother... until a screeching microphone broke my thoughts, and my body locked up, knowing what it meant. That's when it came. The voices Minus liked to break me with. They played over the intercom he had hooked up in here. The same intercom that didn't let me sleep, but this signaled a different sound for a different punishment.

In the darkness I had been left in, he found out the secret to true torture. I had expected him to rape me again, on that first day, but he didn't. He had placed his hands on my generous hips and chuckled over my shoulder while holding my back against his front. Talking about the joy I would bring him with my newer body, but he wouldn't be touching me.

He left down the hall while the guards trained their weapons on me to keep me caged. A gilded cage for them only to toy with me through. Once the door shut behind his back that first encounter, it never opened again. I had been in here since, waiting for them to drop food off for a glimmer of light when the panel on the bottom lifted. Their shoes mostly blocked out the light, but every few times I could get a twinkle...

Minus had crafted this well. He figured out how to do the impossible. How do you torture someone who wasn't whole already? Someone who knew how to overcome rape already?

He made me listen to it happening to someone else. I didn't give Minus enough credit because he was a mad genius who knew how to bring anyone to their knees.

For the first time in my life, I was truly bowing on mine. If he were to come in here, I'd cower and plead for him to stop what he was about to do. Right on time, I heard it begin. If my ears could bleed my pain, I would have drowned in this room from all their pitiful sobs.

Her cries for them to stop came over the intercom, and her screams punched my heart personally. I had to listen, knowing there would be nothing I could do for her or the others. This punishment was doing exactly what it had been designed to do to me.

Warmth pooled beneath my cheek, lying on the cold concrete floor, and I knew my tears would never turn off after this. Their anguish branded into my memory, and this fresh burn oozed out all the light that remained within me.

Faceless girls devastating me in ways I never knew to be possible. To make it worse, Minus made them tell me their names. He told them to do so. His voice grunting, being their rapist, in search of a higher pleasure, demanding to tell the speaker who caused their pain. Telling them to voice who brought this upon them...

Me.

I did. Minus Gifre was greedy for my last strain of sanity, and he was taking it.

"Tell her your name," his voice came through, and I felt my empty stomach curl into itself. They usually feed me on the days they did this, knowing I'd

throw it up. In disgust, my body would purge my revolt. Sadly, today, I had nothing. I'd expel what little amount of acid I had from being so dehydrated.

"M-Melanie D-Davis." Her voice was young, and if I had to guess, I'd say sixteen or so. Distressed already, I was forced to hear it all.

"Do you know why you were picked, Melanie?" Minus asked her to fulfill his disgusting wants.

Melanie Davis.

Amber Maine.

Gabby Johnson.

Whitney Hughes.

All of them went through this same show while I had to listen to it. I had to listen to them being used because I was too broken to use that way again.

"No, Sir. Please, stop." Her sobs wrecked me, and I couldn't breathe anymore. I didn't want to breathe another breath, living through this.

Minus tsked his tongue at her. "I'm so sorry, Melanie, but Octavia needs to learn a lesson. I need you to teach it. Now, tell her this is her fault. Tell her she forced me to do this to you."

A few of the girls had been strong enough to deny him and say this was him. But they all broke after being hit and used. Melanie wasn't strong enough on her first go.

"T-this is y-your fault, Octavia. Y-you made him d-do t-this to m-m-me." She wept the loss of her normal life. Nothing was ever the same when surviving through this. Though, she wouldn't live because he added salt to my lemoned wound by killing them. My own voice was raspy and gruff, but I pleaded anyways. I pleaded every time I heard this. He didn't care, and he answered by telling me I hadn't learned my lesson.

"Please, you win." It came out with little power because I couldn't draw

any from within. Minus had truthfully won. It had been my first admission to him truly besting me, and his end went quiet. I wanted to die. I wanted to close my eyes, never waking up again.

Remembering the girl who cut herself that night in the club, I would be doing the same thing now if I could. I no longer wanted to live, and I no longer wanted to fight.

“Can you repeat that, Octavia?”

“You win,” I sobbed. The old me would have growled with it to show I still had some venom left in me, but he really succeeded this time. I was too far gone now. Malnourished, tortured, and checked out.

“T-thank y-you,” Melanie sounded hopeful. She didn’t know I was saving her the trouble of being brutally raped before her death. I could take mild comfort in her end being swift. The sound of her neck snapping came through, so I pinched my eyes, willing myself to die too. Cruel and pure evil, I never wanted to see another Devil again.

“*Do not give up, my darling,*” a voice echoed inside the corner of my imprisoning room. I scoffed at it like it might’ve been my conscience. I didn’t need Jiminy Cricket to tell me to live. “*I’ve already chosen you. Do not give up. For, if you do, this will be their future. All of them...*”

That was when my door opened. The light blinded my sockets terribly from not having any exposure for so long. My natural tan lost its healthy glow, and my bones protruded to show I had lost too much weight. Around me, I took in the gross piles of dried vomit from when I didn’t make it to the toilet to expel my disgust.

“*Know that you are not alone. Trust the shadows...*” The voice left me with that, and then my mind stilled.

Still hissing from the light, a tall figure moved before me for me to take in



his face. Salvatore Thana stood before me. Not Minus, like I was expecting. He squatted down to cup my cheek I had raised just a little off the floor. His thumb caressed my cracked and dry lips to hurt the wounds on them.

“Did you really think we didn’t know where you were this whole time?” he whispered with a dark chuckle. “Well, I should rephrase that, only some of us did.”

“Why? Why are you punishing me?” As he took me in, he could see it. I was truly too far gone to come back from this.

“Well, we were hoping your mother could lead to us to someone rather important. We were still waiting when Daemon finally discovered your mother.”

“Daemon didn’t know?” I knew that to be true without his verification. Whenever I listened to Daemon, his words rang true when it came to protecting me.

“No. Only those I could fully trust to do what needed to be done, just in case you were the next Pandora heir.” Minus moved into the tiny room behind Salvatore and having both men in here suffocated me.

“I don’t know what you mean,” I said. My mind wasn’t strong enough to compute this.

“The next Pandora heir has to keep virginal to just her elites. Minus took care of that detail before you came of age. You, Octavia Clarke, were tainted to be impure.”

“But why? What’s so wrong with me that I deserved to be raped and tortured?” I lashed out and clawed Salvatore’s cheek from him squatting near me.

He growled while keeping eye contact. Whipping out a handkerchief, he wiped the little dribble of blood my nails drew. They had gotten longer in my

time here.

“You are your mother’s daughter, and she hated being ours. She was the daughter of Pandora; who also hated her role when it came to containing and pleasing their circles. You’d be no different. Your Clarke blood is not wanted within our ranks any longer!” He raised his voice, smiting my cheek. The force made me smack my head into the concrete.

“Sal, we need her alive for tonight,” Minus looked rather bored behind us. Salvatore stood up and snapped his fingers for two guards to basically drag me out of the room. They took me to a washroom where four women waited for me. Stripping me, washing me, doing my hair, I couldn’t say much with the guards pointing their guns at me.

Salvatore and Minus just waited on the side and watched my bare form be manipulated by the women. When one reached for some foundation for my face, Sal stopped her.

“No! Leave it there. Bruises only add to her beauty.”

I felt sick. I felt used. I felt lost... Minus moved over to where they were picking out a dress. Their eyes had been set on a crimson one, but he wanted the white. “No, I want to see her blood stain this dress while she loses her life.”

It all clicked. From what I read about Pandora, she had to kill an innocent after drinking Lilith’s blood. I overheard them that night about me being the final step for Lexi to complete the circle. I was the innocent Lexi had to drink from. Then the guys would have to drink from her to complete the bond.

Something else struck me as though my brain was slowly turning back on again. Bell mentioned a hundred and fifty years they’d be Reapers for their sin, and then they’d rule Hell.

Pandora was from the 1700s... One hundred and fifty years after that, she

must've conceived my mom, and hundred and fifty years after that, I was born. Holy fuck! My mom was way older than I realized, and this was just all too much.

My wavy hair fell in down my back, and they painted my face to show the hollows forming on my sullen features. The olive shade to my skin was almost nonexistent. Then they led me into a room where there were higher sections around a small middle. At the altar, they had chains hanging down and some on the floor. Anyone could guess where they put me. My arms were locked above my head, and my feet were rooted in place on the ground.

Torches lit the small arena, and as I looked up to the higher seating above the wall, I saw them. The boys I was foolish enough to start trusting, to start falling for. The Clarke genes were true in that sense because I remembered Pandora being falsely wooed as well. My gaze dropped as I felt the familiar burn in my eyes and flare in my nose. I didn't want to cry when I was about to die.

## Chapter 3



**S**evrin

My fists flew at my opponent as we stood in the ring. I roared and kept beating him into a bloody pulp even as the officials declared our fight over. It wasn't like I was in control anymore. No, with my mate hurting so much, it bled into me. Every pain and hopeless thought she had, struck my heart. Because I wouldn't be my father who kept concubines after mating, I hadn't fucked anything but my fist since Octavia. Driving wasn't working, so the only thing that could sate both my beast and me remained to be our bloodlust.

The bell kept ringing to stop, but I couldn't because I could feel her heart shattering. My mate was fucking breaking, and there was nothing I could do about it! I was supposed to protect her! I was supposed to make sure nothing happened to her! But I had failed...

Just as my body wanted to give out, Lear and Beau grabbed my arms to protect the man who lied before me, unconscious. I fell to my knees in

hopelessness. Not that I would cry, but this was as close as I ever would get to it. The audience cleared out from the basement of the club we were in, and the workers removed my victim.

I stayed right where I was, in the middle of the cage, staring at a random speck while I lost myself to the sense of loss. I had begun grieving my mate because I could feel her giving up. My mind didn't want to know the horrors that finally broke the strongest girl I knew, but I could only imagine what she had faced after two weeks there.

"I failed..."

"Rin, what's going on?" Lear leaned down and cupped my face. Normally, I would've growled and shoved his hands away but right now... I only felt her light dimming.

"She's giving up. I can feel her begging for death," my voice was hoarse because I felt my soul cracking for her. Where she was supposed to complete me, I felt the shadow growing. Coldness where her warmth should be. Beau fell to his knees beside me. Now that we all knew how much he had been affected, everything about his odd behavior the last few months made sense. Lear found himself in the same boat too. After sleeping with Octavia, none of us desired anyone else.

"What are we going to do?" Beau finally asked after we stayed silent. The other guys were collecting my winnings while these two were supposed to talk me down. Before Lear or I could answer, Luce came into the arena where the tunnel led to the locker room in the back. He was walking too fast for his interruption to be casual.

"We've been summoned," Luce said in a panicked state, but he paused to look at the three of us kneeling in our turmoil. I stood and straightened my back. If there was one thing I was sure of, it would be my mate surviving.

“Have Lou ready. They know what to do when the time is right. Our only priority is getting Kitten out of Hell.” Grabbing my bags, we loaded up into Lear’s truck and Bell’s Range Rover. No one said a word. Enough had been spoken about this. Milo was the only one not fully onboard, but he wouldn’t betray his brothers. It wasn’t too long after that we drove up to the portal by the campsite Kitten and I had been at together. My mind couldn’t help but wonder if I’d get that strong woman back.

Fuck. I had hated this girl, and now she was all I worried about. Part of me wanted to hate her more, but the other knew she remained innocent in the dealings of sins brought against her. Daemon and Lucas waited for us to go through, and even Bell’s mom stood with them. I’d bet he poured his heart out to her about Octavia because it hadn’t been lost to my eye that he had basically turned in her lap dog. Not that I could really blame him.

“You boys have a plan?” Daemon asked. He endured Sal’s wrath, being left out of my dad’s plan. Sal and Minus knew some of the others would not approve of what they were doing to my mate. Out of their circle, these two were the only ones who knew I had mated her, and three were tied to her, but I knew they wanted to free Lily too. That was their choice. My only concern was my Kitten.

“One that’s better if you don’t know,” I spoke, stepping forward to the portal of darkness. We all knew if Daemon or Lucas knew the plan, my dad could demand it from them. We moved into the gateway and headed down the black corridor to the sacrificial room. This was where my dad and a few others heightened their black magic.

We came in through the top tier in the rounded room and could see all the way down to the center where a pair of grey eyes found mine. My heart stopped. Where there was usually fire and quirkiness, I only saw defeat. She

had been blatantly starved, and from the nasty bruise on the side of her face, she had been beaten as well.

Laurel Embers, Bell's mom, gasped. Her hands covered her mouth while seeing the rough shape my mate was in. I felt like someone had gutted me. Lear paled, and Beau looked a little green. We all couldn't believe how poorly they treated her. Even if I spent eternity making it up to her, I knew as long as she lived, I would. It was at that very moment she could no longer hold my gaze. I vowed she'd never know pain again. My mate would be treated like the queen she was.

~

## **Octavia**

"Ah, good. You got my message." Salvatore nodded to the guys. I kept my gaze to the black stone under my feet. He snapped his fingers, and that's when I found two guards dragging my mom's unconscious form in. They had bound a rope around her wrists and were literally dragging her in like that because she wasn't awake enough to walk. Anger flared within me, and a small spark of myself came back from just that sight alone.

"MOM!" I screamed at her to wake up, flailing my body. Not that I could really go anywhere or had the strength to. "Leave her alone!"

The guards just chuckled, plopping her ten feet away from me. She looked even worse for wear than the last time I saw her. More blood coated her, more bones showed through her skin, and her face had been beaten.

"Mom," I cried out, knowing I couldn't get to her. My struggle remained futile. Daemon tried moving forward as well as Dr. Baysan, but there seemed

to be an invisible barrier trapping them on their level. Every time their fingers grazed it, electric lines appeared from the touch.

Rin and the other guys were now also banging on it. Panicked, Rin shared a look with me I couldn't quite understand. It was like he felt my death burdened his shoulders. I didn't like to see the Great Sevrin Thana so meek and wretched. Dammit! Why did I care for them so much? They were the reason I was here!

Salvatore cackled and clapped at them trying to undo whatever he had done to trap them. "You thought I'd be stupid enough to trust any of you? Please. Each of you up there wants to save someone down here, and I can't let that happen. You're all being taught a lesson for disobeying me."

Talk about a power-hungry ass.

The giant doors before me opened with my mom in their way. It was Lexi and I'd guessed her mother. She wore a black dress with a wicked grin. They sidestepped my mother like an unconscious woman wasn't below their heeled feet. Lexi came up to me with an eagerness that filled my soul with pure hatred toward her. I understood now.

The inner circle. Pandora with Amora. Alexis Murdock was Amora's newest generation.

"I've been waiting for this day for a long time," she hissed, so I laughed. What else were you going to do when the villain of your high school beats you?

"Yeah? Because your family line took second to mine?" I shot back, and I could see the flare of hatred that could only be bred.

Her mother stopped her from saying anything while seeing my mother helpless and almost lifeless on the floor. "The Clarke women are finally getting what they deserve."



We couldn't fight with words anymore. Salvatore and Minus were beginning their demonic chanting. The wind picked up, and my stomach dropped from remembering the journal. A golden goblet sat on the altar next to me with a red fluid in it. It had to be blood, but I was too nervous to find out.

The wind whipped my face harder, but my watery eyes stayed focused on my mother who was finally stirring. If I was going to die right now, I wanted to see her awake and alive one last time. It might be selfish of me, but it's what I needed. When our eyes locked, and she came to, I mouthed 'I love you' to her.

Her brittle body tried to get up, but the guard yanked her down by the rope on her wrists. She didn't stop fighting, though. No, my mother kept jerking away from her holders to try and stop Salvatore because she finally saw my fate. It got to the point that they had three men on her. She was fighting, with no energy, for me to live. I could see the licking flame of true life for the first time in her eyes.

At one point, I knew she had been mighty and radiant with her being like this while weak. I just wish I got to see that side to her instead of the druggie through the years. The guys above were trying to find any way out from their invisible box, but with no avail, they all watched the shadows grow around me. There was no escaping this.

*"Trust in me..."* That feminine voice from the black room filled my head again. I twisted my head to see who it could be, but no one around me was feminine. *"Trust the shadows..."*

A large hunting knife was handed to Lexi, and I watched her lithe fingers caress the cool metal. Her sneer grew as she flipped it in her hand. Clearly, she had handled a blade before.

My eyes looked up at Sevrin above me. I could see his beast raging, but whatever trapped them, blocked their sound. He was mouthing my name as panic flared his aggressive movements almost as though he cared for me.

Taking in the near-black shade of his eyes, I knew a part of me would miss the moments we had. The fights we'd engage in as I wanted him more with our bodies. My heart warmed for a small second before my darkness snuffed it out.

'You win,' I mouthed to him, but he shook his head vehemently. Wasn't this what he wanted all along? Me to die before him? Lear placed his palm against the forcefield and made some waves against the invisible wall. I could see everything he wished to tell me then. He cared for me, and not just as his stepsister.

Luce stood similar, regret shadowing his features. Milo held his hand while giving me a nod of his head to tell me to be strong. It wasn't malicious. It was more like I wasn't dying alone, and that gave me a little peace, so I nodded back.

Aster was yelling at everyone to keep trying, but the rest knew it was too late. He kicked everything in their seating zone while tugging on his curly shag. My fierce Brit didn't want to give up. Beau couldn't look at me because he already knew he lost me. There was no coming back from a knife to the heart.

Finally, I found my giant teddy bear crying. It wasn't excessive as he stood proud with his gaze on me. I gave him an affirmation with my own head to tell him it was okay. Those silent tears of his caused my own to leak out of my eyes, so I kept trying to blink them back. There was so much I hadn't done, so many goodbyes I hadn't given.

Looking back to Milo, he bowed as though he already knew what I secretly

asked. I guess my death was bringing out the decent side in him. Before I could share looks with anyone else, I felt it. The cool piercing of metal through my sternum. I gasped while turning back to Lexi who had already drunk the blood in the cup. Now, she needed to drink mine as I died.

## Chapter 4



**O**ctavia

*“AAAAHHHHH!!!!”*

Yup, I was screaming. Where my heart should have been slowing, it increased in speed from my panic. When the knife sank into my chest cavity, all the guys I slept with went down too. All were holding their chest in the same exact location I had been stabbed. Not that I could focus on their pain. I had a fucking dagger in between my boobs, my blood spilling around it with each beat of my heart. I was staring down and seeing it heave with my breaths.

Oh man, did it hurt. The bone it went through ground against it, and my hysterics were reaching new peaks. Why was I not dying?! No one but my mom had been paying attention to me, and I begged with my eyes for an explanation. She shook her head from not understanding as well. Her own confusion raised some warning bells in my mind.

“You’ve slept with her?” Salvatore yelled at his son. I could hear them fighting in the background, but I couldn’t concentrate on their words. As the older guys and younger guys fought, my mom got my attention again.

“Daughter, do you remember where I told you to go?” she whispered from now being a few feet from me. When did she get so close? Where were the guards that were holding her? Oh, fuck! I was losing my mind.

“25 North. 71 West.” Oh, hey! I remembered!

“Get there as fast as you can! Do not stop for anything! Find a man named Leo and tell him Lilia sent you.”

“Mom?” I cried, staring at the dagger still sitting in my body. The white dress that showed way too much cleavage was now red all down the front. Her hands steadied on the hilt of the blade while her eyes remained locked with mine. With her precision removing it, I knew my mom had yielded weapons like this before.

“Steady, Daughter. My magic is a bit rusty,” she smiled as her hand covered the wound. Soon, I felt the bone snapping back into place and gasped from the wind being knocked out of me. The only thing left was the wound that had been trying to scab. “I can’t heal it all, but you can move with no detrimental damage.”

She fell against the altar from being utterly exhausted. Barely keeping her eyes open, she gave me a watery grin.

“I love you, Octavia. Just know your name has meaning. Trust the shadows...”

*Trust the shadows...* I had heard that in my head a few times. My eyes looked around me where the flames danced along the walls, and I saw it. The shadows should’ve mirrored the fire as their dance partner, but they were completely still. They were waiting...

That's it. I'd lost my mind. When have shadows not moved when their owner did?

"It's impossible!" Minus roared. "I made sure she would be impure to be their conduit!"

Every single pair of eyes that didn't know the real truth, did now. Minus just confessed to raping me. Aster stood from his knees while fighting the pain in his chest. "It was you. You were the one who raped her!" The guys that didn't know I had that in my past, looked physically sick. They were still down from whatever they were feeling, but that caught their attention.

"What do you mean rape?" Rin growled as he directed his question to his father.

"Do not question me, boy! I am the leader! I make the calls!" Salvatore yelled.

"When Octavia was eleven, she was raped, and the man who did it was Minus," Bell answered, putting it together.

It also explained why mom reacted the way she did when she saw him. She didn't know it was him who hurt me, but now our running made more sense. That year, she had been the most scared I'd ever seen her be. The shadows began moving to the middle of the room, and I watched them swirl up into a little twister. No one was paying them consideration, and my mom had lost consciousness once again.

"We're done with the Clarke line! You'll be finished with your pet when you realize how needy she is! She won't want you to take on consorts or be satisfied! You'll hate it! The Murdock line knows how this works, and they will fit us better!"

When the shadows turned to mist, I found a cloaked female before me. Her crimson lips quirked in the corners while her eyes remained shielded. Her

hands worked the locks as the men fought. Daemon and Dr. Baysan defended me to the monsters while she helped me.

“You need to run, my dear. They have found a way to imprison the immortal ones. I barely had enough magic to get here this once.”

“Who are you?” Damn, this was so confusing.

She dropped her hood when she stood up from letting my feet out. Her inky hair fell over her shoulders, and her black eyes told me what I already knew.

“I am Lilith. The one who blessed you and only you to receive my gift.”

“Your gift failed when my mom fell in love with a human. I am not born of them,” I said, my hand gestured to the arguing men.

“My dearest girl, your mother slept with all of them before leaving. That’s all my gift takes to activate. When it was time for the new generation to be made, her partner impregnated her with you while your circle was conceived. You are still my heir and were created by the original magic.”

“But I am tainted.” My eyes shed the tears, remembering too much.

“But not by choice. Being pure does not mean virginal worth, and they’ve never understood that. It means there is hope in your heart. You might not see it, Octavia, but your circle does. You’ve become their hope to stop their curse. Now run while the remaining magic I have gives you time. I’ll still be locked away when my magic expires but know we hold dominion in the Shadowlands.”

I wanted to laugh in her face at how crazy this was. But, I couldn’t when I saw how the shadows moved her. It all made sense when Pandora said they just appeared in her journal. Also, the voice inside my head these last few days now had a name to put with it.

Lilith was some kind of Shadowwalker. I read about them in my mom’s omen book, and after seeing how she came, I understood what it meant.

There were Dreamweavers too. Well, in the book. I didn't know what one actually did.

The mother of my demon lineage turned around to end the fathers' feud. "Salvatore, that isn't how this works. Only I can bless a family line to take on my power. The Murdock line is unworthy of the purpose I created."

"How the hell are you out of your prison?" he roared.

"I am a Shadowwalker, Beast. You cannot contain me when I can always make darkness of my own." Lilith's hand went up, and the far door opened to show Fiona. Her magic just simply opened the door. Nothing weird about that. Also...

What the fuck was my school nurse doing here? She should be with Lou and Mr. Gram! Her red hair had been braided, and her outfit painted her body like a buttery-leather. With weapons galore on the belt and thighs, she looked like an assassin from a movie!

That just had to be when the demons began to appear. They popped up out of nowhere, and Fiona roared while moving at inhuman speeds. Everything she was doing became a blur, but I saw demons falling at her feet in heaps of death. All the guys were up now, fighting the men who were popping in like flies on shit.

Fiona got to my mom while giving me a small smile. She sliced her wrist and offered it to my mom. What. The. Hell. My mom's lips attached, and she hummed like an addict shooting up. Fiona bowed her head to my mother. "Let's go, Milady."

"I am too weak, Fiona. Save my daughter. Get her out of here." My mother looked at me, knowing that she was signing her death certificate.

"I am your Guardian, and I don't take that lightly! Last time you asked me to let you walk away... Well, look where we are now!"



“And as my Guardian, you will do as I ask! Save her! Save the one thing I couldn’t!” My mother shrieked. It seemed that little bit of blood gave her power.

Guardian? Why was it when I learned one thing more questions came?

“I will help Lilith give you time. She’s already losing her corporeal form.” My mother stood and rolled her shoulders. She drew me in and kissed my forehead. Nuzzling her face against the side of mine, I felt how hard this goodbye was for her. “Find Leo.”

She shoved me into Fiona’s arms, and the assassin pretending to be a school nurse began dragging me with her. Her blade smote the demons in our path, and her war cry just was scary as hell. She was always so sweet to me, and now I saw she too had a dark side.

My gaze looked up one last time to see Rin tilting his head at me. I saw him mid-shift again with his horns and fangs. His hand held firmly, gripping the throat of his opponent. I saw his black claws drawing blood, and black scales were partially covering his exposed skin as more of his beast took over. I hated to admit it, but he was absolutely beautiful.

Fiona kept her hold on my weakened form, and she opened the door for us to run down the dark hallway. Monsters of all kinds charged behind us. Fiona got us near the blackhole on the wall but stopped us when we reached it.

“Octavia-” I knew what she was already trying to say. Her eyes were locked back on the fight.

“Go. I can make it from here. Save my mom.”

“If I don’t make it, tell Lou-”

“You’ll make it, and you’ll tell her yourself.” She smiled at my words, and then hugged me right as the monsters got to us. Letting go, she shoved my chest to send me backward, falling into the doorway of nothingness.

I screamed and braced myself. On my back, I grunted while taking in the woods around me. It had to be the campsite where Rin and I slept at on the night of his birthday. Trembling like a new baby deer, my legs weren't much help in moving me fast. I kept sprinting as best I could from being malnourished.

Completely dark out here, I still knew to look for the green ticks. It all made sense now why their camp sat there. It was the gateway to Hell. As my feet moved, I noticed black shadows running along my sides. That's when the demonic bobcats popped out and surrounded me. Fuck! I forgot about the Hellcats.

When they neared, I noticed them shaking their heads in confusion and meowling in pain. Not wasting time as to why, I ran. I neared the spot Maria had hidden her money and without thinking, I grabbed a duffel bag to escape. Knowing the cats would come for me, I quickened my pace like my life depended on it... because it did.

~

## **Sevrin**

My beast fought with me to fully form his body, feeling out of control. We had just watched our mate die—or should've died—and now we had to fight to get her out. My claws ripped the hearts and throats out of anyone who neared me. The blood wasn't enough to sate my beast from what we just witnessed.

Octavia, my mate, my Kitten, had been raped being a part of father's scheme to make a greater power. I didn't know he had locked up the last

immortals, but that was an issue for another day. My only concern now stayed on making sure Kitten made it to Lou.

I had Fiona handle arranging a passport the day I took Octavia to the mall. Not that she knew we had been planning to get her out of the country, but that's what would need to happen now. Glancing over to my father, I found him concentrating with his eyes closed. He only did that when he was calling his cats.

Fuck! She didn't have enough protection on the other side of the portal! Leaping down—Lilith dropped the barrier holding us—I ran toward him.

My own eyes closed, honing in on where they were. Ever since I had mated, I found I could call on the beasts because they knew their new Alpha was about to come into power. Feeling my presence, my father roared and looked at me with the utter hatred he had for me. He wanted to rule forever on Earth, but by having me, he damned his fate to rule in Hell. I was the reason he would be losing the only passion he had. Not that I cared.

“Let her die, son!” he shouted at me. We had both collapsed in our fight for dominance in the creatures' minds. They were lost and confused as I watched my Kitten run the second she saw their weakness.

Good girl.

My fingers clutched the stone beneath them as I focused all of my energy on becoming their new master. He would never let her be free, but I would never let her be caged. “She's my mate, Father. You can try to beat me, but we can both feel your power slipping.”

He roared and leapt for me as we began to fight with our dragons coming out completely. Fire blew, and our claws clashed. Usually, he had his cats hurt me, but not anymore. It was time I made my father bleed for his own transgressions.

## Chapter 5



**O**ctavia

My feet were numb, but my chest? It was on fire. Where I had been stabbed seemed to radiate a heat that I didn't understand. Gasping, I made it to the back porch to Daemon's house, and Lou opened the door right on time. Seeing me fall to the ground, she helped me to my feet, looking behind me.

Fiona...

"She stayed to help my mom," I rasped. How many miles did Rin say that hike was?

Lou just nodded. While I stayed grateful for her assistance with helping me walk, she wasn't the peppy bestie I knew. I thought she'd throw her arms around me and maybe even cry?

Nope, this Lou remained true to her mission. With determination in her eyes, she didn't let me stop to get cleaned up. We went right out to the front door where Mr. Gram was waiting by a Hummer. Rita was fitting things in

the back and had just closed the hatch when we arrived. She glanced at me, re-opened the back, and pulled out a full suitcase.

“Me debes, hijo,” she muttered, talking to someone who wasn’t in our group. Lou moved me into the car, and then Rita began her fussing. When her fingers grazed the sealed but not healed chest wound, her eyes welled with tears. Lou sat on my other side to hold me up as Mr. Gram drove us. How the hell had this become my life?

And so quickly...

A few months go by, and I go from broke bum to the next Pandora heir. My eyes cried and cried even though my mouth never released a sound. I didn’t want them to see me for what I was now. After Rita dressed my wounds, feed me broth, and changed my bloody attire, she cleaned my eyes. I saw myself in the reflection of her perceptive irises.

“We all suffer, mi nieta. Some of us, who are destined for more, have to suffer the most.” Her palm rested on the stabbed flesh. It was as though she knew this would happen to me by the guilt reflected in her eyes. I ignored it because I couldn’t think about it. Everyone knew I was going to be the sacrifice for Lexi but me. My mind hadn’t pieced it together until it had been too late.

“Where are we going?” I asked with a voice that still sounded scratchy. It didn’t go unnoticed by my fellow passengers.

“Europe,” Lou used a clipped tone. It was so unlike her, but I didn’t think she knew I needed her bubbly side right now.

I shook my head. “No, I need to go somewhere else. My mom gave me a place to go, and I have to get there.”

Mr. Gram’s eyes met mine in the review mirror. “Don’t speak another word. I’ll be flying us, and you can tell me when we get to the tarmac.” His

eyes were fierce and hard.

“Lou?” She looked down at me about to fall asleep on her shoulder. “How long was I gone?”

“Two weeks.” Her answer was short and to the point. I dipped my chin and looked ahead as Mr. Gram drove us into the city. “I saw the message on my phone. My father forgot to delete it.” She cleared her throat, and I bobbed my head, remembering she was who I was going to see that night. “I also found out after you were taken that it was your birthday. A birthday you didn’t want to tell me about. Instead, I had to find your car smashed, and your blood trail leading to one of the portals to Hell.”

“I didn’t want anyone to know it was my birthday. It’s just the day I was born. Nothing else.”

“It would have been something else to me!” she shouted. When I flinched, she froze. Relenting, she knew I couldn’t handle fighting. “I’m not mad at you for that. I’m sorry. I’m lashing out, and you don’t need that right now. I just wish I had known to make it better, is all... I’m mad at my dad for using me to get you.”

“I’m fine...” I spoke the words, staring outside the window. My insides were in complete chaos, but for now, I’d wear a mask.

“No... No, you’re not. We don’t have to talk about it now because you’re literally being hunted. But one day, I hope you’ll tell me.” It was the first crack to her badass exterior she showed, so I reached out to hug her. It was like our roles were reversed. How was I ever going to tell her what her father had done to me?

“We’ve got a tail.” Mr. Gram fixed his mirror to see the pursuer better.

“Open the sunroof.” Lou moved me to lean into Rita. “Via, plug your ears, or they will bleed.”

Doing as told, I watched my best friend's jaw unhinge into a gaping hole on her face. As she screamed, all the glass on our car and theirs shattered. The air turned violent around us, and the men behind our car were swerving into each other. We watched the crash happen as Lou just took her seat like she didn't just do what she clearly just did. Mr. Gram removed his headphones I just noticed, so did Rita. Well, I was the odd duck who wasn't ready to see the demonic side to my bestie.

"Looks like the fight in Hell is done. There'll be more demons waiting for us at the airstrip," Mr. Gram sighed.

"I'll handle it. You just get her out of here." Rita patted my hand. I hadn't even clued in that she could be a demon too. See? This was my life. I couldn't tell who was human anymore.

"We'll get her out," Lou verified. No one talked after that. Not one word while we felt the foreboding mood take over. If Salvatore was sending men, did that mean the seven lost? What about my mother and Fiona?

"Best not to think about the unknowns, dear." It was like Rita could read me. Given, most could right now from not having any composure. I thought my mask was up, but I guess not.

Pulling up to the private sector, I found a small jet getting geared to go. Coming from the field on the other side seemed to be a horde of demons.

Gulping and pointing, Rita spoke under her breath in her native tongue. "Looks like I'm up. You two get her to safety. No one goes after my family and gets away with it."

Just as Lou began tugging on my sleeve, I turned back to Rita. "Family?"

"Si, mi nieta." She leaned in and kissed my head. "I see much in your future that is unknown. I see Death, and that does not please me. Be careful with what's to come. It won't be an easy path for you or for them." She left

me with her words and got out to make a stand by herself against dozens of demons. When I tried to go after her, Lou jerked me the other way. I was too weak to put up much of a fight, but I tried.

“But she’ll die!” I shouted over the roar of the engines sounding. Mr. Gram was getting ready to pilot us.

“There’s a larger picture, Via! I know it isn’t right, and I know you don’t understand, but we have a mission to get you out of here! Don’t taint her last moments of heroism by getting caught!”

That was when a familiar chirp came from the air above me. Daisy just blew fire on some demons to help Rita, and then she landed inside the plane. She could breathe fire? My best friend forced me onto the plane. Part of her words were right, but how could my life mean more than hers?

“Octavia, I need those coordinates now!” Mr. Gram barked. My tongue rattled them off as I heard him curse under his breath. The assistants helped Lou with me as they got me in a seat. It was like a flash of speed as they buckled me in. Lou sat across from me and exhaled like we got through the bad part. The attendants got off the plane, and Mr. Gram closed the door. What the hell? Was this seriously so dire we couldn’t have other people on board?

My heart was like a bongo-a-going, and my breaths faltered watching Rita. As though she knew I was watching her, she looked at me with a nod and ran towards the demons. The high cry of the engines told me Mr. Gram was gearing up to take off. This was still only the second flight I had been on, and the last one brought me to this hellish town.

Daisy rubbed her muzzle into my leg on the floor, but not even that helped. Nope, the jerk of the plane had my body seizing up. I white-knuckled the armrests, keeping my focus on Rita out the window. Her magic was different



from what I had seen of the shadow magic Lilith used. Just like she saw something about my future, she knew their next moves. The whole time her eyes remained closed. It had been amazing to see firsthand.

“Wow,” I breathed. Lou propped herself to my side to see what I was looking at. Both our faces pressed against the pane of glass to see Rita move like a tiger.

“She’s a Soothsayer,” Lou whispered in awe. Clearly, she hadn’t known either. “They are very rare because the Universe doesn’t like anyone but their chosen Fates to see the future.”

“Wait... The Fates are people?” I might’ve shrieked a little.

“You are Pandora’s granddaughter, and you’re shocked about the Fates,” she snorted. Her face lightened just a little, but not enough to hide her emotions from me. Now that we took off and were in the air, I had calmed down just enough to feel her grief and loss. My hand trembled for many reasons, but I took hers in mine.

“Your mother?” I inquired.

“She died,” Lou croaked. I was undoing my seatbelt to hold her too me.

“You don’t have to tell me, but I would like to know what happened.” I kissed her head and cried with her. I shared her grief with the loss of all those girls these last two weeks. I couldn’t believe it had been so long.

“Most demons rely on the power of the circle to keep going. My dad knew my mom’s magic was imbalanced from having two of his kids. He knew she needed the circle to be complete months ago. He held off on purpose, and now she’s gone...”

“Your father is a terrible man,” I let it slip, and she caught the venom in my tone.

“What did he do to you, Via?” How could I tell a mourning girl the same

man that killed her mom, also destroyed her best friend? By looking out the window and not making eye contact, was how. She got I couldn't tell her the details that rattled my ears still, but I told her about not putting it together when I first met her and Milo. It wasn't until I was in a room with him that I realized the error in my mistake, and my mind had locked away what should've been obvious.

I put her at ease that he didn't rape me again, but that he made me listen to what he did to the other girls. My waterworks slipped out, but I let my soul fall into the void of numbness inside of me. It was easier this way. Just survive for now... Turning it off was the only way I could breathe an almost full breath. To let myself feel would be catastrophic right now.

"We're going to find a way to kill him," Lou vowed.

"An immortal?" I questioned, and she flipped her fiery gaze onto me.

"I don't give a damn if he's God! That motherfucker will die and pay for what he's done, and anyone else who was involved with this scheme will fall with him!" That dark side to Lou was raging its head to be known she would not be messed with. I was proud of her, but I also worried she was turning into a similar version of me. I didn't want her losing that bubbly side I was drawn to when I first met her. She was a light in my dark life.

"Don't lose yourself to revenge, Lou."

"I know you think less of me for being so angry, but I can't help it." She sighed and looked to the front where we could see Mr. Gram's shoulder hanging to the side of his chair.

"No, I don't want you to lose your light by becoming something dark and ruined like me."

"Via, when are you going to realize that there is beauty in darkness? Look at how the seven are drawn to you. You'll never find someone truly beautiful

until you see and accept their darkness.” Her words had me sitting back and thinking. Were the guys attracted to me because they knew I was a kindred soul?

## Chapter 6



**M**ilo

*That rat bastard of a man!* My thoughts raced in fury.

My fingers yanked the knot of my tie to come undone, and then they worked the top button of my shirt. I might as well shred it completely off from all the blood and holes diminishing it. Kicking the nearest item, I bellowed my frustration. The office chair sailed across my room where I found Luce observing me. This had been the first time he came near me since Rin commanded me to help him with Lexi.

Turning away from him, I reined in my tantrum and out came my business persona. My insides were churning in agony and anger, but I didn't want the guys to know. Luce did, but I still didn't want to look weak in front of him right now. Not after the rollercoaster of emotions I had been on. I was living in a nightmare.

After many deep breaths, I could finally face him with my stoic expression. My hands worked the rest of the buttons open, so my abdomen was

completely exposed to my once lover.

“Can I help you?” My tone stayed short and to the point. I needed time to gather my thoughts.

“Sal and your dad got away. Rin lost their trail.” Luce had his arms crossed over his broad chest while he scrutinized me.

“Very well. I’ll clean up and meet wherever we’re going next to discuss our options,” I replied. Luce sighed behind me. I noticed his gold skin had been a bit pale lately. He cared for Octavia, and I knew this from how he watched over her like a hawk.

“Can you be a real human for one minute?” he asked. I could hear the pain of my careless rejection in his tone. Welcome to my world.

“I’m not human, Luce.”

“Is this seriously how you’re going to act around me?” He raised his voice while pushing off my door’s frame.

Whipping the tie from my neck and wadding it up, I chucked it on my grey duvet. “And how the fuck am I supposed to act, Lucius?! Huh?! You’re the one who wanted distance, and now you’re in here acting like I should be okay letting you in again!” My temper won this round.

“I just know you’re not okay after what we just found out.” Luce moved into my room to stand next to me at my window after I turned away from him. The other guys were at Lear’s from Daemon moving Lily into a room to rest. Lear was somewhere here with us because he drove us last night. Lily had passed out and hadn’t come to yet. We couldn’t do anything until she roused from her sending Octavia somewhere else other than where we planned.

My elbow rested against the glass as I studied the sun rising. It should’ve been a beautiful thing, but I only felt emptiness.

“I thought I was doing good, you know. Protecting Lou from him, but he got Octavia because I hadn’t paid attention,” I choked up a bit but cleared the heaviness from my throat.

“You did, Lo. No one knew Octavia existed until she moved here, or what they had in mind for her. He’s a monster you can’t rein in on your own.”

“How do I face her, Luce? How do I stand before her, knowing I failed to save her?” My heart was beating heavily, drowning in grief. I knew what he did to her because she wasn’t the only child Minus had touched. Luce cupped my face. We were nearly the same height, and I found his violet eyes watering for me. He was so stunning, he almost felt unreal.

“This is why I could never stop loving you.” He kissed me lightly, and my heart raced for a whole new reason. Outside of my curse, Luce was my world. He knew how hard it was for me to stop working at my father’s firm, and he never made me feel guilty when I failed. This man would have everyone believe we fell in love when his mother died. He had no idea I’d loved him since he found me after one of my punishments.

No one knew what a sick man my father had been, but that day, I had confided in Luce. He held me as a friend back then, but I knew what my feelings were. Not a single person caught my eye outside of him, and he knew it. When Octavia came, I panicked. Not only from my fear of Luce choosing her over me, but of my own reaction. For the first time since Lucius Baysan, I found someone else attractive.

As demons, we didn’t fall in the world’s standards for staying straight. We saw beauty in any form. Just like earlier in the fight when Octavia escaped the sacrificial room. She saw Rin’s beast and worried for his life instead of fearing what he was. I had watched the exchange and knew she had to be

similar to us. The normal girl who had been raised human should have screamed in terror, but she didn't.

Aside from her being wrecked by my father, she still had an understrength when it came to us. I was a greedy bastard for wanting Luce to myself, but now it might be time for me to man up and admit the truth. There remained a reason we were all attracted to her when we weren't to Lexi. Hell, Lilith herself spared enough energy to move through the shadows to put my father in his place. No family but the Clarke line would contain her blood. The magic needed the blessing of the devil, and Lilith wouldn't give it. That didn't mean my father wouldn't stop trying to find a way.

I turned my focus back to the man who knew my soul like no one else. "I need you more than I've ever needed anything in my life, Luce."

Only this man could talk me down from my ledge. He smirked just a little while running his hand through my hair. I loved seeing his tan body next to my lighter one. The contrast would always be a turn-on for me.

"You'll always have me, but if Rin ever needs you like that again, I expect a warning." We kissed each other hard and roamed each other's bodies like the other was an oasis in the desert. It had been too long since I had my lover under me.

A voice broke us apart by my entryway. Lear groaned, "I swear, this is how I always find you two."

"Like you don't like to watch," Luce spoke, rubbing the bulge in my pants. Lear licked his lips from enjoying it. As I said, we were demons. We found beauty in all species, no matter the gender.

"Rin needs us at my place, or I totally would watch your little Dom show." Lear left us, and we shared a quick kiss to seal what we just talked about. I

needed to find a shirt that wasn't covered in blood before we left. Luce moved to leave, letting me change, but I gripped his hand to halt him.

"I love you, too." The admission I gave him compared to winning the Noble Prize, and I saw the joy on his face. I wasn't usually so open with my feelings, but with Luce, I knew he needed to hear them. He'd also never mock me for my honesty. We weren't perfect with our relationship, but we were on track to make it better. That's all I needed right now.

~

## **Beau**

Nothing was right these days. The longer I was away from V, the harder it became to wake up every day. Lear now suffered and started to feel the toll of her distance, and I could see it in the bags under his eyes. Rin was struggling too, but I was pretty sure that might be more his beast than anything. His fucking dragon nearly got us killed when V left the room today.

He lit everything up in flames, and we were all trying to take cover. Both Alphas attacked, and the room crumbled around us from their shift taking up too much room. From the destruction, his dad got away, and so did Minus. My father was included in their charade, and so was Bell's. The Murdock women also followed them, knowing they were dead to us.

Fucking Lexi.

How our lives came to this, we'd never know. The majority of our questions could be answered with the simple name, Octavia Clarke. Now, we knew for certain she was our Pandora from Lilith spouting on about it earlier.

The problem we faced now? When you bond to your conduit, you should be fine bedding others. Recently, I had become fixated on V, but when I had



been trying to be an ass, I couldn't get it up. That shouldn't be possible. My curse made me need more and more of most things. I'd focused on academics and fucking to sate my issue.

Since V, my need to screw anything slipped away and became a sole fix on needing more of her. God, it was a terrible curse. I still owed her an apology, but I didn't know if she'd accept it. There were always points for trying, I guess.

Easing onto the couch, I watched Daemon pace the room. He had been livid after discovering what his circle had done to V at such a young age. It also jabbed at me for using her that first time. She didn't need to worry because I knew I was an epic idiot for that. I watched her bloom into this fearless woman who could stand against Rin, and I lost that chance from being a dick. I already told her this, but I had now become a dick with a broken dick.

"The second Lily wakes up, we're leaving. Make sure you have your things packed and ready to go," Daemon commanded. Huh. I guess he really did care about our girl.

"Anyone else still stumped on how she survived a knife to the chest?" I asked the next important thing and found my words greeted with silence.

"I don't know, Beau. There are too many variables in this." Daemon let out a breath and leaned against his desk from us being in his office.

"For fuck's sake! Even we died momentarily before we became immortal!" I shouted, not understanding how she was the way she was.

"I think I have an answer," Aster stood up to fish his phone from his pocket. "This news is what I tried sharing a while back, but we've been being watched."

Everyone gathered around to look at the news report of Octavia's car accident. Daemon flinched, knowing he paid that truck driver to hit their car.

When he scrolled through the bottom of the report, we all went wide-eyed. There was no way. Taking his phone, I studied over this new evidence.

“I also had a private investigator open up her file that night at the hospital. She died for less than two minutes and just woke up... with no medical help, after they declared her time of death.”

“There’s no way.” Luce shook his head at the facts laid out before us.

“We can’t deny what’s in front of us. Not when it comes to her.” Rin scrubbed his face. His scruff had thickened around his jawline from him not giving a damn lately.

“No, her birthday was two months later. It doesn’t work like that,” Milo chimed in.

“Then tell me how eight people died in that car wreck, and why she came back to life after dying,” Aster quipped, rolling his eyes. “Look, we all know she’s different. We all feel it. We don’t know how or why, but this is the truth. When Lily wakes up, we’ll know for certain.”

“Until then, we just assume she sent her daughter to him.” Daemon was almost green in the gills from fear of what this meant.

“If she did, we can’t let anyone follow us. My father has been dying to find him,” Rin spoke, nodding while standing. “Let’s get packed and be ready. It might be wise to move to Europe first for a few days to throw him off.”

It would be wise. They all agreed while I still clutched Aster’s phone. None of this could be right from the math and magic. And yet, there laid eight bodies in their white bags from her accident.

## Chapter 7



**O**ctavia

“ARE YOU INSANE?” I yelled over the sound of the burning engine to my left, and the blaring alarms on the plane. Lou and I watched Mr. Gram gather supplies like this might be considered a normal day out for him. I had been asleep until there was a loud bang. The turbulent jolt startled both Lou and me to wake up, and engine failure just took out the one on the left wing.

Now, Mr. Gram focused on grabbing parachutes like he might be the one on fire. This could not be happening. My second time on an airplane, and I wouldn't be alive to tell the tale. Well, I wasn't sure I could die. Though, I also knew I couldn't swim, and drowning repeatedly did not seem like a good way to live forever, if I actually turned into an immortal like the rest of these people.

“Look, we just crossed a forcefield people believe has to deal with the polarity surrounding the Bermuda Triangle, but it's not!” Mr. Gram shouted

for me to hear.

“Zeke, what do you mean?” Lou asked as I took in the knowledge that we were flying into the Bermuda Triangle. Of all the places my mother could send me.

“It’s a barrier. I saw it. Someone very powerful has been shielding themselves from the world. There’s a high-level demon here.” That’s right. Lou told me his gift was to see the currents of magic. He could decipher gifts from it.

“I can’t swim!” I began hyperventilating. Hey, I was due for a breakdown at some point. My voice carried on about every woe life was throwing at me. “And to top it off-”

*SMACK!* I didn’t get to finish that thought when I realized Lou had slapped me. My hand moved to my cheek in shock.

“You do not fall apart on me now, Octavia Clarke!” Her shoulders heaved with heavy breaths, and her finger jabbed the center of my left boob to avoid my stabbed flesh. “I know you want to breakdown— and I promise we both will when we’re out of this mess! Until we’re safe, Pull. Yourself. Together!”

She slapped me again.

Rubbing my cheek, I nodded my head slowly. “Thanks, I needed that.”

“I know. You’re an absolute train wreck these days.” She winked.

Mr. Gram came to me then with a life preserver vest. He helped me into it and secured me with a parachute as well.

“Count to five, then pull your chute!” With no further ado, his hand pressed the button that made the door fly off, and he shoved me out into the open sky. I guess there was no time for hesitation. Doing as I had been told, I pulled the string-thing on five and felt the jerk in my shoulders. Ow. Warning, parachuting kind of hurts.

Around me, I saw our bags falling to the water from Mr. Gram tossing them out. Wasn't he scared to hit me? That's when I noticed my little lizard enjoying herself by stretching her wings. None of this seemed odd to her as she chirped to the sky. I shook my head at her easy nature. Next, I watched as Mr. Gram held Lou to him, and they were passionately kissing in their descent. Not gonna lie, it was kind of hot to see. Like an action movie with an international spy sharing that moment with his love interest. "You're being cheesy and totally cliché!"

They pulled apart, and my bestie blushed. Mr. Gram just stared at her like she was one of the only two girls he fancied.

"Yeah, but it was worth it to know I had a romantic life or death moment," Lou swooned. Within seconds of their moment, Mr. Gram went back to being our survival guide.

"Right before you hit the water, pull these to make your chute fall off. You don't want to get tangled with them in the water. It'll weight you down." He showed me what to do, and I released mine just in time. My body hit the water without too much stress. But my cut? Holy guacamole! The salt water had me burning alive in the spot that had already been on fire. Making the weirdest squeals known to man, both my companions just studied me flailing. I couldn't breathe, so words couldn't form. My hands waved at my chest like I was having a hot flash.

"Cut... Burns!" That's all I could say, but it ended up being enough. Mr. Gram pulled me onto his back and began swimming us to the... Oh hey, he tossed out a raft! Well, tickle me pink! That was a pleasant surprise. He lifted me in before helping Lou up. Instead of joining us, he gathered all the things he threw out. Zeke Gram should be awarded the title survivalist.

"He's a keeper," I whispered to Lou, and she bobbed her head in

agreement. Seems she was a little in awe too. She helped me open my vest, but I wouldn't let her remove it fully. Nope, I was going to make sure I did not drown in the fucking ocean.

With a first aid kit that had been salvaged, she worked some ointment over the nasty gash. My mother healed the important parts, but this was still going to scar. A permanent reminder of what I went through. I didn't have a bra on, obviously, and this water did not help to hide that fact. Once the worst of the burn went down, I did up my vest before Mr. Gram climbed in with us.

"The current should get us to the island ahead. It'll probably take most of the day, so brace yourselves to sit here under the sun," Mr. Gram informed us. My eyes scoured the horizon, and sure enough, there was a small island ahead. I'd need binoculars to get a better view, but... LAND HO!

"You have quite the survival training, Mr. Gram," I let my appreciation voice as I stared at the land ahead.

"Call me Zeke, Octavia. You are not my student right now." He worked open a bag and pulled out some waters. "Drink. The salt water will dehydrate you."

I took it with a simple thanks as my thoughts went to the guys. I hoped they were okay. I really shouldn't care, but I did.

"You can call me Via." The words were a little delayed, but he smirked, knowing I had lost my thought before replying to him. Lou shook her head at me with her own grin. I coughed a little while sipping. My throat was still not used to chugging water. "Sooo, what mysteries do you think lie ahead?"

We all looked at the island and noticed a constant storm around it. Mr.—Zeke, was right. There was absolutely nothing science could explain about that. I closed my eyes and leaned back. It became clear none of us knew what

might come from of all this. Better get a nap in now, just in case I couldn't get one later.

~

## **Lear**

It had been two days. Two days of everyone being at my house as we waited for Lily to wake up.

The tension was high between us, and the one person who might ease us just enough, still continued to be unconscious. Rin's left leg bounced as he sat in the corner of the living room, Aster kept checking his phone like maybe Octavia would call, and Beau tried to stay awake from the toll her absence had on him.

He had been the first to be exposed to her sexually, and I could see the damage. I could also feel my chest filling with a void from her absenteeism. Mine had been only three weeks, not over two months. I couldn't imagine his turmoil from hurting our companion.

It was true. Octavia was our Pandora. She was made to handle us and our powers. What should've been obvious, we found unknown because we were too busy avoiding the truth. No running from the truth now. Half of us had already begun the bonding process. Bell ran down the stairs and looked for my dad, who had been making calls to cover his business while we were away.

"She's awake." His two words had everyone bolting up the stairs. Fiona was at her side like she should've been the last eighteen years. What Guardian leaves her keep unprotected? My father sat right beside her and

took her boney hand in his. Her blood connection to her Guardian would help strengthen her faster, but she was still gravely ill.

“Tell me she made it.” Lily’s eyes were still tired, but the concern was there.

“We don’t know,” I said out of frustration. “We were left out of the loop with you giving her somewhere else to go!” my voice raised from the anger swelling in my chest.

“I sent her to the one place she’ll stay safe!” She sat up on the bed to yell at me. “None of you protected her, so I sent her to the one person who can! The one person none of you could find in the last fifty years!”

“Well, to be fair, you did help him hide.” Dad let go of her hand to stare out the window. His hurt undeniable.

“Of course, I did! I knew what all of you would do to him if you found him!” A woman scorned and all... That was Liliana Clarke right now. Our fathers had hurt her and made her fear being in the circle. She ran and lived a life as a drug addict because that seemed better than being with them. It had to be a terrible thing to come to terms with, and my father hadn’t yet. He hated knowing she didn’t want him. It was his own fault for sleeping around. Not even my mother wanted to live on the same continent as him.

“Look, I get your circle failed you, but you’re causing us to fail ours.” Rin stood at the foot of her bed.

“You don’t understand,” she was trying to fight the tears. It was true. We didn’t. There were too many unknowns when it came to Octavia.

“Then why don’t you enlighten us.” My father appeared defeated, but he still kept his stare on her. “What is so bad that hiding her was the best option?”

“She’s his,” she cried.



“We know. We found the car wreck report that killed eight people,” Aster popped off.

“No, you don’t understand!” She treated us like toddlers.

“Then tell us!” Rin roared. Finally done with this game, he left no room for her objection. We were done, and the secrets needed to be bled out.

“Daemon, she took on both curses with both powers,” Lily answered, and my father locked up.

“Bloody hell! No wonder she’s been off one’s trolley!” Aster bounced around while piecing together what we all were. So much made sense but still not enough.

Rin and I shared a look of sympathy for our girl.

*Our girl...*

Yeah, it fit, and we all agreed now. Milo still needed to come around, but after learning what his dad had done, it made him want to protect her at least.

“Bollocks! No wonder she’s completely bonkers, yeah?” Aster said. Bell punched him in the shoulder. “Oh, come on. Everyone is thinking it! Who else would be insane enough to jump off a cliff and into a river she couldn’t swim in just to prove Rin wrong?”

“She what?” Lily shrieked.

Everyone shot him a warning look to shut the hell up. He held up his hands in defeat. “Right. My apologies, Lily. Your daughter just fits the bill is all.”

“Will you stop, Aster?” Luce growled with his eyes rolling.

“What? I didn’t say we didn’t like it...” Good God, this man was going to get us skinned by the girl’s mother we all had a thing for. Leave it to the Brit to piss off her mother.

“If what you say is true, we need to find her, Lily. She’ll only grow more unstable as time goes on,” Dad tried to persuade her.

“A life with a curse is better than the life you want for her! I won’t let you break her.” Lily tried to fight her seeping eyes. My dad took the verbal slap with anguish in his features. I knew he loved Lily, but I think it was caring for Octavia that really showed him the error of his past. It had been odd to see him changing, but it was needed.

“She’s already started bonding to us,” Rin added.

“Like I care about that! It will sever, and she’ll be better off than being locked up for her men to use when their whores aren’t satisfying them! If she remains with you, she’ll cry every lonely night because she can’t have what you do! She won’t get to be happy from only being able to have you!”

“But you broke yours,” my father whispered.

“Because the only good man out of my circle showed he loved me enough to not hurt me. He got me out of there and gave me a life with happiness. Because Octavia is half his, she isn’t sealed to your circle like I was to mine.” That stopped us. Not bound like the previous women in her family, Octavia didn’t need solely us. She could take on other lovers if we hurt her. The thought had been a terrible one that had us all shifting. None of us wanted to share her with others outside our brotherhood.

“I love her,” Bell whispered. We took a moment to face the one man who never talked to a girl. I should have seen it sooner. He really did by the conviction in his tone. Lily paused while studying him. She could see the truth too. Bellamy had already fallen in love with our girl.

## Chapter 8



**O**ctavia

“Land!” I whined and crawled out of the raft—that would kill me if I stayed in it a second longer—and flopped onto the sand. Lou did the same thing. Zeke just tutted at us both for being dramatic. Daisy chirped from beside me when she landed and made a show of making sure I was okay.

Aw, how sweet. Though, when we were surviving a burning plane, she didn’t care this much. I smiled and patted her as she came to stand face to face with me on the shore. She pressed her head against mine, and I immediately regretted it. Instantly, my eyes shifted like they did with the guys on the nights of their kills. Wait a second, I was one of them again, and I found the rest of them surrounding my mom. They were okay!

Should that excite me or no? To be continued on that dilemma.

“I love her,” Bell whispered. The man I saw through, flipped his gaze to my mom who had been lying in a bed at Daemon’s house. Fiona stayed by her side, just watching the exchange.

My mom took in Bell's words and shook her. "I don't care. She's safer without you."

My thick arm clenched, and I realized I had to be in Rin's body from seeing his new tattoos swirling around his mark. How was I doing this? Was it Daisy connecting us?

Nudging his mind with my own to hopefully alert him of my presence, he tensed in understanding. "She's here."

Everyone looked to the door after Rin's words. He shook his head.

"She's here the other way."

All the guys nodded, and so did Daemon. They had the knowledge I had to be in his head. Knowing I wasn't dreaming did not help the weird factor.

'*Are you okay?*' Rin's voice rung in his mind. Oh cool! He could communicate with me!

Focusing on trying to make words back, I found a black tether between us. My thoughts linked onto it, and I found myself really feeling him. Rin was scared. Not that he would ever share that emotion, but he couldn't rid himself of the fright I gave him. It wasn't for him either. If I was deciphering this right, the Big Bad Alpha had been scared for me.

'*Besides just surviving a plane crash and floating to an island all day? Peachy,*' I responded.

"Is she okay?" Lear moved closer to his leader. I could see the doubt and worry in his slanted eyes. Why were they caring so much about me now?

"She said they just survived a plane crash and floated to an island," Rin growled, seeking out my mother. "Where the fuck did you send her?"

"I won't tell you a damn thing!" My mother was still ill, but she put up a fight.

"Kitten, where are you?" he asked out loud for my mother to know we were

linked.

*'Can we not piss off my mom?'*

*'Either you tell me where you are, or we're gonna tell your mom exactly what we've done with you.'*

*'Go ahead. She can't do anything to me from not actually being a good role model.'*

That made him think of a new plan, knowing I was right. "I mated her, Liliana. Your daughter is officially mine. You can hate it, but you also know my dragon will burn the world down to find her."

*'Dick,'* I muttered. Then it hit me... Did he just say what I think he said? *'How the fuck did you mate me without me knowing about it?'*

*'I didn't do anything. You dared my beast, and he liked it. He mated you.'*

Ouch. Okay... So, he didn't want to be mated to me.

*'I can hear your little inner-dialogue, Kitten.'*

*'Then hear this,'* I gave him a mental image of me flipping him off with two birds.

*'Look, we'll talk when I find you. This isn't something to discuss like this. Plus, what you are is making this mess a little worse.'*

*'I don't know if I'm ready to see you guys right now,'* I answered honestly. *'I don't think it's a good idea.'*

*'I wasn't joking when I said my dragon will burn the world down to find you. We haven't been well since you were taken to Hell.'*

*'We?'*

*'Yes, I'm included in that. So are some of the others. After sleeping with you, they've become a little co-dependent on being near you. Just look at Beau. He's sick because he hurt you and hasn't been near you.'*

He shifted me to see that Beau had lost some weight. I remembered

noticing before I left, but it had gotten worse. His eyes were sunken in, purple lining under them. Guilt set in. Whether or not he was a jerk when we had sex, he had suffered for months like this. I mentally sighed.

*'The Bermuda Triangle.'*

*'I'll be on my way, Kitten. Just know this game has changed.'*

Daisy released her mental hold on me, and I found Lou hovering me. Her big eyes peered into me like she was waiting for me to finally kick the bucket.

“Apparently, Daisy can link me to Rin,” I groaned and rolled onto my back.

“Well, duh! She’s a dragonette, and he’s the Alpha dragon! From the looks of it, she’s also your familiar, which means you have some badass powers.”

“Why does it mean that?” This world should not be plummeted into all at once. My brain had started to hurt.

“The guys have owls, and they are the highest level of familiar. Well, except Lear. He got Momo because of his curse to always envy. Poor guy... Anyways, dragons are not included from them being made from the oldest magic. They are too powerful to control through a bond. The fact that you have Daisy is unreal.” Lou shook her head, and I snorted.

“Unreal would be this life.” She hummed her agreement as we gathered up what we could haul. Zeke took most of the load. When I tried to take a second bag, he ripped it from my hands.

“You were nearly killed and have been malnourished for weeks,” he stated before I could get a word in. Lou just swooned at his manly side.

Heaven help me...

“Where should we go?” I asked.

“What did your mom tell you to find here?” Zeke asked, and my brain remembered.

“Oh, right. Someone named Leo.”

“This is where he’s been?” Lou shrieked.

“Makes more sense now with the barrier around this island.” Zeke nodded while looking around for the best path.

“What am I missing?” I inquired. Fuck if I didn’t need a *How to be a Demon for Dummies* right now.

“Leo was the eighth transgressor. He’s the one who abandoned your mother’s circle,” Lou whispered like the words might get her killed.

“Well then, shall we begin this manhunt?” They both looked at me like I was insane. In their defense, I totally was. I might also be trying to hide my emotions, and if I stopped now, it would all hit me. Not wanting that, I just started trekking without their permission.

“I say we head to the center and go from there.” I looked up at the setting sun and prayed this would go according to plan. Well, if we had a plan. There hadn’t been much time to make one.

Soon, two pairs of footfalls fell behind me, and I held my breath, breaking into the thick of the trees. It was a stark change from just sand to instant trees, but I knew most islands were like this. The tropical climate didn’t fall over this little area, and I had a guess it was the Devil’s magic messing with that. Whatever forcefield was up, made this place just a little chilly and looming.

Getting deeper in, we could no longer see the coast behind us. Another thing that made me feel a little closed in, we had to shimmy sideways from how tight the trees were in their grouping.

“Is it quiet to anyone else?” Lou latched onto Zeke’s arm, and we all stopped to comprehend she was right. On a normal island, birds would be chirping, a breeze might be blowing. Here, there was nothing but absolute silence.

“Unnaturally so.” Zeke searched for any forms of life around us. There remained nothing to be seen, but... I started to feel something watching us. My skin prickled with distress that now felt heavier at the base of my spine.

“Keep moving,” I whispered, pulling out a knife just in case. They saw and followed with their own weapons. Zeke just had to be packing a machete, and Lou had a pair of Sai blades. My poor mind couldn’t help but think of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* just from the sight of them. I think it was red one that had them in the show.

Before I could make a joke, a sensation crippled my movements. Gooseflesh puckered my arms, and a chill ran down every vertebra in my back. “Something isn’t right.”

My words had the other two staring at me in disbelief. As my skin tightened with every step, I recognized the sensation.

“It feels like walking through the portal to Hell. My skin... It’s tight and bothered.” Zeke grabbed my arm and chanted something over the pebbled area.

Cursing up a storm, my jaw dropped from hearing his little potty mouth, again. “This isn’t real.”

“What do you mean it isn’t real?” Lou questioned, trying to figure out what he saw.

“I’m not sure how Via felt it, but Leo cast an illusion over the real island. We’re walking around in his personal Labyrinth. Who knows what can see us on the other side, so keep your eyes open while I try to drop the fake image we’re stuck in.”

Lou and I shielded Zeke as he bent down to say some other demonic shit. We really lucked out that someone who could see magic came with us. Not



that I really knew what that meant, but we would've been walking in this zone of nothingness forever.

"I think I found the structure's base. Be ready," Zeke grunted. This time, I felt the ripples of magic below my feet, and like something out of a horror movie, the image blinked in and out before us. Screaming at what had been actually surrounding us, both Lou and I nearly clawed Zeke to protect us. There was one animal I hated most.

Snakes.

The worst thing God created. These weren't like the small one split in two I found as the omen. Nope, these nasties gave the movie *Anaconda* a run for its money. Giant snakes that were pure black and had no eyes in their sockets used their large, forked tongues to smell us. Looking at my dainty dagger, I knew this wouldn't be long enough to penetrate their thick hides.

"Guys," I cried.

"This has to be an illusion. The Alimari were taken from this world." Lou shook her head at the demonic, giant snakes.

"They were, but guess where they were sent to keep them trapped?" Zeke sighed, and Lou caught on.

"Purgatory. This is where he moved it!"

"Can someone fill in the one who failed Demonic History?" I whined some more. It was the snakes! I'd fully admit to the shameless tantrum of disgust I was having.

"When Leo vanished, he took his entire kingdom with him," Lou whispered to me. "He ruled the eighth kingdom. It's also more commonly known as Purgatory."

Fucking hell. Of all the places for my mother to send me, she sent me to the demonic prison for creatures that were too dangerous to walk the earth.

“The Bermuda Triangle must’ve been theorized when he did it. He found the perfect coordinates that would keep the humans and demons at bay when it came to his magic destroying planes and boats.” Zeke was fanboying over this Leo guy.

“I’m so glad you want to hump the man that rules this place, but we’re about to die, Zeke! Pull yourself together!” I said while also falling apart.

Just then, a snake moved for its giant head to be level with mine. Dear God, the thing’s head width was wider than my shoulders. His tongue kept sliding from his mouth, and I knew it was gaining my scent. Clearly, he didn’t need eyeballs to hunt his prey.

Backed up against an actual tree of this land, I finally noticed the change in them as well. Where we were seeing a tropic setting, the trees were the color of white ash now. No leaves on any of the dead plants, and the ground had a soot feel with no vegetation under my Converse.

This was truly a place that contained evil.

## Chapter 9



**B**ellamy

No one talked.

Not even Aster—who would usually be cracking some kind of joke—could ease this heavy of tension between us. The thick of it wrapped around the one simple person that had all of us out of sorts. It was Via on the line, and nothing that had to do with this could ever be a joke. In our hunting clothes, we all assembled our gear for whatever circumstance we'd be in. My gun holster held my handguns, but I also had my shotgun strapped to the side of my leg for quick access. Nothing would think about hurting Via with me by her side.

“Bell, you don't need to gear up yet, mate. We've got a full day of traveling first.” Aster stood by me, and Beau joined us at the trunk of my car. They were picking which items to take as well. Rin, Luce, and Lear were working with some Zodiac witches to cloak our jet for the safety of everyone involved. We couldn't let Sal and our fathers know where we were going.

They had been hunting Leo for fifty years.

“I’m not taking any chances. With the threat of Sal, and what might happen to our plane, I’m just gonna stay ready,” I clipped.

We walked to the tarmac where Daemon was helping Lily climb the stairs. He had been doting on her since we got her out of Hell. I bet part of him felt guilty for being the reason she had been a prisoner there in the first place. Lucas stayed on their heels with the medical needs that would keep Lily comfortable. She did look terrible after months of neglect and torture, and it had been partially their fault.

Fiona just studied the inside of the plane like a good Guardian would do. It should’ve caught our attention back at the school when she started right before Via got there that she knew something about Lily. Beau’s hands were trembling while he tried to set a long blade back down. Whatever magic bound him to Via had really messed with him.

Usually, with any weapon, he was our best. Having Glutton as his sin made him learn everything to perfection, and when he reached it, it still wasn’t enough. Me? I had always been too lazy to deal with knives and shit. Give me a gun any day, and I’ll hit my mark.

“We’re ready to take off.” Luce had somehow gotten behind us. All of us grabbed our weapons, and I closed the trunk to my Range Rover. Whether or not Via was ready, we were coming. This Bear was about to find his Honey and protect it.

~

**Octavia**

Holding my breath and trying to pretend I could be invisible was not working. Peeking through the little slit in my one eye, nope. The giant snake was still there. Daisy flew up to land on my shoulder, and then she chirped at the snake like they were friends. Her little talons nearly danced on my shoulder as she grew more playful to the snake. What on earth?

“Old magic. Both species were created from it,” Zeke replied, and I grasped I had spoken out loud.

Getting excited, Daisy wagged her little tail and began running in between all the snakes that were on the ground like this whole thing turned into a fucking game. My life was not going to be the reward for the victor. Checking on my bestie and her man, I found two snakes had worked together to trap them in their coils. Zeke just started grunting, and Lou was breathing out slowly to keep them from constricting her airway.

How the hell had I missed them getting trapped? Facing off with my attacker again, I readied myself to die and have my head bitten off. Wait, it was a snake. I’d be slowly swallowed whole. Well, fuck me sideways. That would be a terrible way to go.

“Zeke? Any spells?” I squeaked when the snake moved closer to me.

“We aren’t Witches. The power we have is it,” he grunted again. “Unless it’s blood magic.”

Right. The same magic that did this to the circle in the first place. Hard pass. No, thank you.

Trying to catch my breath, I just couldn’t seem to breathe evenly. A warmth—not a sexual one—pooled into my belly. It was trying to rouse my soul into recognition. Gasping, I lifted my eyes up to the snake. He nodded his damn head with missing eyes at me, and then pressed his head right into the spot that just began burning inside of me.

Laughing hysterically, I began to cry. This was too much. A snake gave me cues to communicate, and I watched like I knew what he might be trying to tell me. He kept repeating the movement of touching my navel with his snout, but I still wasn't cluing in. Nope, this was too weird.

"He recognizes you as kin," Zeke's voice let me know he had begun being squeezed by a snake.

"Kin?" Yeah, it might be a stupid question. Like I pointed out, I needed a book for dummies.

"Do you feel a heat within your core?"

"Yeah..."

"You're his kin," Zeke stated.

"But how?" I lamely asked.

"Does it matter? Try getting us released!" Time was of the essence when it came to them not being constricted to death. Oh-kay. My time to shine and talk down some snakes.

"Sooo, are you like from my aunt three times removed or something?" Yeah, even I heard the lameness in my joke. He just stared at me with no eyes. *Creepy...*

"Well, dear cousin, those two are with me. They're keeping me alive and also from falling apart. If you were in my mind right now, you'd see how much work they are putting in to keep me stable. Can you release them, please? Oh, and not eat them?"

Nothing happened for a full minute. Getting frustrated, I kicked the ash below my feet.

"Let them go!" The shrill in my tone seemed to get through to them. The two snakes that were coiled, slowly retracted and moved away. Moving my

head side to side, slowly, I just took it as a win. “If we’re kin, can you show me where Leo is?”

The intelligent snake with no eyes bowed and actually began moving to the left of me. Zeke and Lou were catching their breath but knew we needed to follow the snake. Nearly two hours later, we were taken to a castle-like structure made of...sand? What on earth? An actual two-story sandcastle had been structured to stand like a building made of beams and steel. Even Zeke had a hard time believing the building could exist. When we touched it, none of the pieces blew away or left the structure. It held as solid as stone, but it was clearly sand.

As I basically crawled up the porch that had been made from wood, the front door kicked out, and a tan man held a shotgun aimed directly between my stare. My saucer eyes and gaping mouth had him pausing. That was when he moved just right for me to see the grey glint in his eyes. Sleet grey, like mine. Most—myself included—thought I had a different shade of blue from my mom’s almost grey eyes. Nope... these were identical to mine.

“Who sent you?” he demanded.

“Liliana Clarke,” I became the spokesperson for our trio. The man paused, and I noticed the gun slightly drooped just a little. “My mother.”

His eyes scanned me head to toe from my comprising position of lying on the steps below him. He could see her in me, but I felt a whole six inches shorter than my mom. This man stood very tall and looked very lean from living in Purgatory by himself for so long.

“I don’t know a Liliana,” he growled and moved the gun back to shoot me.

“Lie,” I called him out with my glare. His own eyes widened at my admission to my gift. Just like the color of my skin, the unnatural grey hue of my eyes, and what the raven poem told me, I knew who this man was.

“Of all the places to send me, Mother, you send me to the man who didn’t even want me,” I mutter.

“Want you? I didn’t even know about you!” he roared. Oh, well... That might change things.

“Please, dear God, do not tell me what I’m putting together is true,” Zeke pinched the bridge of his nose.

“It is. She told me a while back she could tell when people lie. I knew then, but I couldn’t tell her from Sal’s laws.”

Lou gave me a sad shrug before pointing to the missing link. Well, this day turned inside-out real quick. Inhaling hard, I could tell she was about to burst with new information that would make me sick.

“Leo Loki is your biological father, and he’s the eighth sin, Deceit.” Lou talked like the secret had been killing her. “It’s why I told you not to tell anyone else about your power. They would’ve used you to bring him out of hiding.”

“That wouldn’t work because I didn’t know I had a daughter.” Leo couldn’t take his eyes from me. Me? I did the same thing I did when I found out the seven sinners were real. I passed out with a maddening chuckle.

~

Sage. The smell stayed strong, and I felt some kind of smoke in the air. Sitting up, I found myself in a little hut of a room. It reminded me of *Kung Fu Panda* where Po kicks through the wall on accident because they were thin and paper-like.

Same Asian setting, and I got a Zen vibe from it. Maybe a monk vibe too. Low, wooden beams supported the ceiling, and I even laid on a bed that was



more cot-like. The burning sage I found sitting in a little stone bowl wasn't helping the guru-vibe.

“Ah, you're awake.” Following the sound of the voice, I found Leo across from me. He stood from his chair that had the seat of a yoga ball and held out his palm to me. Aside from him being my dad, I could see why my mom was attracted to him. My fingers took his, and he helped me to my feet. “I figured a walk on my private beach would benefit us both while we fill in each other's blanks.”

At his words, I just nodded and let him lead me outside. This was so weird. My *dad* wanting to talk to me, on a beach in Purgatory. On the backside of his castle, there was a private beach where the sky remained clear, and no murderous winds raked your body. It was breathtaking.

“Is this another illusion?” My curiosity got the best of me.

“Yes and no. I can manipulate this realm however I please because I am bonded to the magic that created it originally.”

“Legion?” I inquired as our footsteps began treading the sand.

He dipped his chin in answer. “He is my-our line of magic. Old magic that is toxic sometimes.”

“I'm starting to think all magic is a curse,” I mumbled, but he heard.

“Why would you say that?”

“My mom hid all of this from me. It wasn't until we were in a car accident, and Daemon Odium showed up a few months ago that I learned a partial truth to my history.”

He digested my words.

“Your mother?”

“Daemon promised she'd get the care she needed when I made the deal with him. I didn't know her care would be on his terms with her serving a

punishment in Hell. Nope. I made a deal with a Devil without knowing it because she hid it all from me.”

“But she sent you here?”

Bobbing my chin, I couldn’t look directly at him. “Salvatore decided I was becoming a problem and wanted me to know my place. We all had assumed my mother fell in love with a human and had me. They didn’t know it was you she fell in love with.” I cleared my throat and smiled limply. “I didn’t know either. At the ceremony, where they wanted the Murdock line to take over, I was the sacrifice...”

Leo stopped moving, and his eyes rested between my breasts. Oh, look at that. I had a real bandage placed over the wound.

“Yeah... Let’s just say it didn’t go according to plan. My mom told me the coordinates to find you and said to mention her to you. She and the others are on their way now. I’m not sure if you can drop the shield that destroys planes, but it might be wise.”

“I cannot drop my shield,” he replied while studying his hidden bubble. “So, you are the Pandora heir and the Loki line?”

I shrugged. “I guess.”

“How does that even work with my curse and your mother’s?”

That caught my attention.

“Curse?”

“Your mother’s curse was to always be burdened with feeling. Everyone’s emotions nearly destroyed her. She was in charge of us monstrous men and had to feel what we did.”

I whistled. “That explains a lot as to why I’m all over the place. What’s your curse?”

“Do you know what the Bible says about Legion?” He asked, and I shook

my head. “He is many. Very few souls know what that means. As the king to an immortal prison, every soul that comes here bonds to me. I am many because I control them, I feel them. Before my circle completed, my curse was despair. The voices in my mind would always overrun my own, and I had to compete to be myself without going numb to the void that’s inside of me.”

Dear God... Everything he was saying...

“Is it possible I got a combination of the two curses?”

“Without a doubt, Octavia. Your little friend told me of the dreams you share with your men. My ability to tether souls seems to have gone to you, but you tethered to your circle before knowing them instead.”

Wordlessly, I sighed and sat down to take in the rising sun. I must’ve been asleep for a while from the day to have passed by already. Leo just sat beside me and let me digest it all.

“I didn’t know about you, you know. Your mother and I had lived in a hidden village together for nearly thirty years before Sal caught wind of my scent. We both agreed it was safer for us to split up. She went to the States, and I came back here. Of course, she always knew where I hid my kingdom if she ever did need to find me.”

“She told me my dad was a random Joe from the strip club she worked at. It makes more sense now, so they couldn’t get information out of me, but growing up knowing I had a dad that didn’t know I existed was hard.”

“I am sorry I wasn’t there to protect you. I failed as your father. Had I known-”

“It’s fine. I get it. I get what my mom was trying to accomplish even though I don’t agree with it, and I get why you left your corrupt circle. It just sucked to be me during it all.”

“Why’s that?”

“I’ve never fit in. After Minus raped me, I only got worse with my imbalance of emotions. I’d go from high to low all the time, and then the dreams came. Now, learning about the curses, I see how both of them took me. My mom said to always feel and never go numb. I’ve felt that empty pit inside of me, but I never knew it was an actual void for the souls in Purgatory.” Snorting, I turned to look at him, but his expression of shock had me confused. Backtracking, I comprehended what I let slip. It seemed Lou didn’t tell him about her dad.

“He did what to my daughter?”

Well, looks like bonding time was over.

## Chapter 10



**O**ctavia

*BOOM!*

Flipping my head in the camp chair I sat in, I tried to figure out what just made that explosion. “What was that?”

Lou—who was sitting in Zeke’s lap on their side of the fire—perked up and tried to see as well. Leo stayed seated like this was nothing out of the ordinary.

“Another plane crashing.” He shrugged and poked the flames. It had been almost two days since I heard from Rin and the others. Knowing my calculations, that had to be their plane. Leaping to my feet, I started running that direction.

“It’s them!” I called over my shoulder.

As if just remembering I told them the others were coming, I soon had all of them hot on my heels. With Leo keeping pace beside me, I knew he was nervous for the seven to arrive and for me to fall from how weak I was.

Lou filled him in on EVERYTHING that had happened with them when I fell asleep the second time. My father didn't take too kindly to finding out I had been raped by a member of his circle and bullied by my own. *My circle*. I hadn't even come to terms with the fact that I am their Pandora, and now I was one of them. Fucking hell, I just had to be an original sin. It took us a few minutes to make it to the crash, but when we found the plane, no one appeared to be on it. I sighed from seeing the plane engulfed in flames.

"They must've jumped like you guys did. I'll rotate my private beach to be in line with their trajectory and let my creatures know to bring them to me, nicely," Leo added as an afterthought. Probably more for my mom. Still cool, I found his magic fascinating that he could manipulate his island to face a certain way. The illusions he made would keep us protected if danger ever did come.

Walking back, I found my body still wasn't quite ready for such exertion, so my father picked me up in his arms. This was just a little weird to me because the only man who had tried to dote on me was Bell, and I only got to enjoy his kindness for a few days. My heart clenched in remembrance of him, and how I just wanted one of his amazing hugs.

"I am sorry if this makes you uncomfortable, but I will not stand by and see my daughter suffer." Well, at least my dad was a gentleman.

"Just, uh... The whole physical touch from people is kind of new to me," I tried to cough over my initial reaction.

"You should've been treated like the queen you will be. I cannot believe the way your mother had you living."

"Well, the drugs and environment hid us from Salvatore...mostly. I don't agree with what she did, but I do know she thought she was doing what would be best."

He slowed his pace and smiled down at me. “So mature for being so young.”

“I’ve seen the hard side of life most of my existence. It makes you see a lot more than most adults do in their whole lifetime.”

His smile fell, and then he kissed the top of my head. “I might not have known about you, but I am truly humbled by how strong you are.”

Heaven help me, his words made me blush.

“He’s right. That first day I met you, I knew you weren’t like the other demons at our school.” Lou walked up to keep pace right beside my face. “Not because you didn’t know our world and were a total newbie, but because I could feel your soul. It called to me.”

“How so?” Leo probed.

“It was odd, but it was like she lit up when I first saw her. Like a bright light that was warm and homey.”

Leo took in what she said and looked down at me. “Did you see a light on her?”

“Um, I just chalked it up as her bubbly personality. She’s always been peppy and bright. I guess now that you mention it, yeah,” I hedged.

“It makes sense that the twin of one of the sinners would be your Guardian. She’s already linked into the circle from her birth, but now the Universe is giving her a purpose to truly belong.” Leo’s studious observation had my breath catching.

“I don’t know how Guardians work. I only found out a few days before the ceremony that Fiona was your moms, or I would’ve asked her.” Lou blushed.

I snorted. “If that was the only thing that I didn’t know...”

“Touché! Well, hopefully, Fiona comes with your mom.” Lou wanted that for other reasons, and by Zeke’s smirk, he did too.

“She was there when Daisy showed me their group,” I reassured her again. From me sleeping so much to rejuvenate, we hadn’t had time to be there for each other. I could still see the sadness in her eyes from her mom passing. I never met the woman, but I knew she had been Lou’s only parent to give a damn.

My heart understood the loneliness that came from having no one. I still remember my mother’s cold showers I’d force her into. The one moment every day I hadn’t felt alone. Being trapped with Minus had only heightened my seclusion. My hand reached out to hers and gave it a squeeze. With our eyes, we shared a moment of full unveiling. She had me, and I had her. That seemed to be all we both needed right then. It would have to do until we could breakdown properly.

Leo got me inside and sat me down on the couch in the main area. “Rest, Octavia. I’ll wake you when they arrive.”

“Via,” I yawned. “I prefer to be called Via.”

He had been tucking me in with a throw blanket on the back as I snuggled down. I found it funny he didn’t have housekeepers in his mini castle, but I was grateful I had him doing it. My eyes fluttered shut, unable to keep open. Man, that light run drained all my energy.

“I’ll call you Via, but one day I hope you let me call you Daughter.”

~

The door closed with a reverberating thud that had me sitting up. I grunted from feeling a weight on top of me, and when I glanced down, I found Lou passed out over most of me. A grin took over my lips from seeing her reverent face. She really was too good for this life. Her gentle soul tethered



me, and now that it had been brought up, I kept seeing a white light glow more around her.

The sound of wood creaking from a step drew my attention to stare out the window. I couldn't see much from the position I was in, but I heard Leo cock his shotgun. Good grief the man loved using that thing.

"No one comes in until I hear their intentions toward my daughter," Leo growled.

"So, she knows she's yours?" I knew that had to be my mother's voice but couldn't see good enough out the window. Maneuvering Lou, I worked her to lay flat as I got up to go to the window. Peeking out of the pane of glass in the sandy wall, I found all of them. The seven had arrived with the others.

"Yeah, Lily. I just had the shock of my life when my daughter crawled up my porch with a knife wound in her chest."

"Is she okay?" That was Bell, my giant teddy bear.

"She's resting. Now, I wasn't kidding. No one goes through my door without telling me their intentions. You all know who I am, so let's just move on."

It was Rin who stepped up first. His scowling eyes settled over Leo, but his chin dipped to my dad in respect. "I'm here to protect my mate."

Damn that word. We still needed to have words about what that even meant. Lucius came up next. "Octavia doesn't deserve anything else happening to her."

Be still my heart, I had to blink away the tears that wanted to leak. Lear made sure to keep their order. "Aside from her now being family, I can't be away from her."

Aster, ever the Ass, smirked at my dad. "We can't shag anyone else now that we've shared her bed. Someone needs to keep my power balanced,

yeah.”

My dad swung the butt of his gun into Aster’s gut. The *wanker* deserved it.

“Right. I care about her too.” He rubbed his abs and tried to see something other than stars. My dad still gave him the evil-eye but accepted his second response.

“I want to see my father pay for what he did to her,” Milo’s words had me catching my breath. One, they were genuine. Two, his voice sounded too much like his dad’s. The combination was confusing.

“I’m getting sicker the longer I’m away from her. I can’t let anything happen to her because it’ll ruin me too.” Studying Beau, I could see it. He was green and clammy from getting worse.

“I love your daughter, Sir.” Leave it to Bell to capture me wholly. Hearing their words made me process things that had happened. I still blamed them for me being taken, but I could also tell they were speaking the truth with their intentions. While lost in my head, the others must’ve sated Leo’s protective needs because the door was opening. Shit!

Flopping back down, I was now sprawled over my bestie. She gave me a little wink and smile from eavesdropping too. Yeah, we both had to hide our snickers. We pretended to be asleep as they all found seats in the feng shui living room we were in. Bell obviously was the one to come to me first. He picked me up and moved me with him to sit in his lap on the floor. I kept up my façade, not ready to deal with the outcome.

“You were really going to shoot us?” Daemon asked Leo.

My dad laughed. “This thing floated onto my island decades ago. It doesn’t even work, but it is fun to use.” The three men from the previous circle all shared a hearty laugh, and I watched my mom move closer to them. Her eyes were only on her long-lost lover.

“Leo, I’m sorry for sending her here. I didn’t know where else to send her.”

“I’m not mad she or anyone else came. I’m angry because my daughter is eighteen, and I’m just learning about her.”

“How is she yours anyways? She should be a combination of all of us to be the next Pandora,” Dr. Baysan added logic.

“When our breeding time came around to signal our earthly rein wrapping up, Lily was the only woman I had been sleeping with. Plus, it hadn’t been a secret then or now that I love her.” Love not loved. That had to be good news.

“It doesn’t matter how it happened at this point. We just know the one person to save our sons is also a circle member.” Daemon was pouring them drinks like he was right at home in Leo’s castle.

“The first female to have powers outside of balancing theirs,” Leo stated while sipping the scotch Daemon poured.

My guys were listening to this, but I think they already knew the things they discussed. Aster’s voicemail sat on the tip of my tongue to talk about from their mellow reaction. He must’ve found something because I remember him saying he knew what I was.

Pretending to stretch and wake up, Bell buried his face into my neck. “I’ve missed you, Honey.”

“You too, Boo-Bear. Nothing sounds more comfortable than sleeping next to you.” Honest with that, Bell made me feel wanted and loved...

“Are you okay?” Lear came over.

Once everyone had been alerted that I was awake, I had everyone shouting questions at me. Panicked, I ran from the room and sprinted down the hallway and into the bathroom. It seemed I still had some healing to do

because, for the next few days, I couldn't be in the same room with all of them at once. Milo's eyes, their worry, my scar...

All of it triggered my days with Minus in that room. I hated it. I hated knowing I couldn't be strong enough to face off with them. But, how could I? Each one of them had played a part in breaking me. At night, I'd let Bell in. During the day, I secluded myself while hearing their plans to bring down Salvatore and his merry men.

One on one, I could handle light touches, and I dished them out after finding out they needed it from me. Something had locked them to only me, and I wasn't the least bit apologetic for it. I just hoped I could conquer my fears sooner rather than later. Sighing, it had been three days of ignoring them, so I finally decided to test the waters. Moving into the kitchen where they stood around the bamboo bar, they quit talking.

Rin was the first to move to me. He could see the fight in my eyes to run or stay. He placed his hand on my lower back and then turned to lead the discussion. Not making a scene, everyone else caught on that I couldn't talk about it. Milo kept watching me from where he and Lucius stood, and I hoped they had made up. That would be another thing I'd get blamed for.

"We've tracked them to Cuba. Lexi and her mother are with them," Lear began where I interrupted.

"So, what's the plan?" I finally let myself speak in front of them. My arms were folded over my middle to act as a barrier, and my shoulders slumped forward to keep me small.

"They clearly know we're close but can't figure out where we are. For now, we need to rest and prepare. The owls will keep up their job to watch them as Momo flies back and forth," Rin commanded.

"And what if they come here?" Lucius swallowed while taking me in. He

seemed fearful I wouldn't be ready, and he had every right to think that because I wasn't.

“We prepare. That's all we can do,” Rin said, and I sighed. They were doing this for me, and I felt guilty for it all. All of this was my fault. Moving out of Rin's hold, I carried myself outside to the ocean. The waves crashing against the shore helped bring me peace, and that's what my mind needed right now.

I had a bad feeling. One I couldn't shake off. It remained a mystery as to what my conscience was trying to tell me. One thing I knew for certain, it involved the guys, and my need to protect them. Thank you, Universe, for challenging me while I'm down.

## Chapter 11



**S**evrin

Moving to the shore I knew she'd be on, what I found took my breath away. I nearly forgot what I came down here for from just the sight of her alone. The wind blew her tresses and her white, summer dress with the breeze as she watched the waves lap over her feet. The sun was setting just right to take her in with its orange glow, and I did the only thing I could think of to savor this moment.

I took a picture on my phone. No one would know I did, but I couldn't waste the serenity that surrounded her. She wasn't whole right now, but as she would tell me, she never had been to begin with.

Pining after the woman, I moved to her. She could barely be in the same room with all of us without needing an escape, but I wanted my Kitten who could go toe-to-toe with me. The one who rivaled me as an Alpha. Her hands caressed her bare shoulders from the dress being sleeveless. Her eyes were as

vacant as the void we now knew existed in her. I hated seeing her so shut down.

“They need you to be stronger,” I stated while watching the water from her side. My role as Alpha had me always being the one to fix our circle. She absently nodded without using any words. She had put herself in a living coma just to go on. There was no joy or pain wherever her mindset was right now. My anger rose by how she just turned herself off. Tightening my knuckles, I cracked my neck to rein it in. The more the silence thickened between us, the more my fury took over. I had been trying to be patient, but I wasn’t a patient man.

Didn’t she know how hard this had to be for me? I was a man, for hell’s sake! We didn’t do this touchy-feely shit. Kicking the sand and knotting my fists into my hair, I screamed out my irritation toward the setting sun. Then I twisted to speak to her side because she wouldn’t let herself look at me. I guess that’s what ate at me the most. She acted like she feared me now, but I had her attention.

“You said we were the same,” I panted. “You said my scars were your soul, but we’re not. The woman I picked to be my mate would come back fighting from this!”

I puffed and noticed she still hadn’t turned to face me. No, instead, it was like she purposely tuned me out!

“I thought you were fierce! I thought out of every girl, Octavia Clarke could handle my world! But instead, you’re broken!” Maybe my rise in anger could get her to fight me back. I was nearly pleading to the Universe to let her fight me back...

When my Kitten turned her head to finally look at me, I saw it. There was no venom left for her to bite me with. Nothing else remained of her except

her shell. Those grey eyes lost their fire and were dull to my words.

“You’re right, I am. I’m done, Sevrin. With the circle, this game... *You win.*” She flinched while saying that last part. I put together who she said that last part to, and my beast bellowed.

“Don’t you dare let him win!” I roared and grew closer to her. My dragon had a need to touch her to make sure she really was by us. I wasn’t touching her, but my fingers twitched to hold her hand. If that didn’t make me a sentimental schmuck, I don’t know what did.

“I don’t know what you want from me! You wanted to break me, Sevrin! Why aren’t you jumping for joy that it finally happened?”

At her lash out, my hands quickly cupped her cheeks and held her, so her gaze had to lock on mine. I’d kill Minus Gifre and my father before this war was over for doing this to her.

“You, Kitten... You caught my beast’s attention the second you jumped on my back your first day of school to save Beau from a beating he deserved.” Her watery eyes sought out the truth in my words. We both knew she could feel it. “And if I were being an honest man, it’s when you captured my attention too.”

I gently kissed her forehead, never letting go of her face. Instead, my fingers moved to massage the sides of her head, through her thick hair. My beast had his protective needs too, and this sated them to keep him from taking control. She stayed close for me to continue holding her, and I was intoxicated by her sweet scent. A smell my beast had memorized for future tracking. I’d never lose her again. I couldn’t.

“I don’t know how to get her back,” she whispered between us, and a single tear glistened against her cheek. The sunset reflected in the moisture. My stomach rolled and tightened. I could not let my mate lose herself.



“You keep feeling. Even if it’s painful, you feel, Octavia.” I heard her mother’s words last night when Lily had snuck into her room. I knew they were directed to her being a little ball of chaos.

Being an empath and also despair could not be an easy combination, feeling lost while feeling everything else. I shivered. She remained a lot stronger than she ever knew just living like that on her own her whole life.

“Using my mother’s words against me?” She tried to smile, but it fell instantly.

“No.” Taking her hand and placing it over my heart, I let her feel how it thrummed from just her touch. I had one hand cupping her cheek, and the other keeping hers trapped over my heart. “I need you to feel, so I don’t lose you too.”

I was not a man for feelings, and this made me slightly uncomfortable. But my mate needed to know her worth in my eyes. I’ll spend eternity making up for my wrongs, but I’ll gladly do it, knowing she’s mine.

“And what is it you want me to feel, Sevrin?” her voice went a little breathy, and her scent shifted into arousal. Dear God, she was going to kill me, and she wanted to push my buttons to make me admit my feelings out loud. Pulling her close, I pressed my erection against her stomach and listened to the hiccup in her breath. Now, both her hands planted against my chest to cling to my shirt. I wouldn’t push her past this. She needed time to heal, and I’d give it to her.

“You make me want to rip my hair out. You anger me so much, I have to punch walls to relieve myself. You push me harder than anyone...”

She shifted against me, and I smiled. My Kitten was still there, just buried. All of us would help her find her strength again. We wouldn’t leave here until she was ready.

“I feel out of control, but I also feel alive.” I kissed the tip of her nose. She was crumbling from my touches. “You called yourself a queen playing against me, the king. That I had to be protected, and you’re right. It was only you who could capture me...”

This time, my lips barely brushed hers, and her little gasps had my cock straining to take her. She felt so good in my arms. It’s where she belonged.

“The king has fallen, Kitten. I am yours to command.” I kissed her with the passion of the morning sun warming the ground on a summer day. She was my light. She was my strength. And now, I was truly hers.

“Sevrin...” My name on her lips would forever be my biggest weakness. We moved closer as her fingers ran up my shirt to feel my hot skin beneath it.

“I am only yours, Kitten,” I groaned, my lips kneading hers.

I hadn’t planned on taking it farther, but the second her nimble fingers worked the button of my pants, I knew I was gone. My hands moved the little straps of her dress down her slender shoulders to expose her gorgeous breasts to me. There had never been a mortal or immortal alive who would ever be this perfect to me. I kneeled before her and took her erect nipple into my mouth as my hands steadied her hips.

She moaned and let her fingers twist the hair on my scalp. When her legs trembled, I moved on. I kissed all along her throat and chest to lay claim to her skin.

*Mine...*

“So beautiful,” I whispered, causing her to shiver against my lips.

I needed to do something with myself, or I was going to cum in my pants. But I also knew she needed me to be gentle to her body. Her comfort had to be my only priority as her Alpha and her mate.

Her dress slipped the rest of the way down, and I found the little devil had

gone commando under her dress. I groaned while pressing my face into her belly. I had to take several breaths from that little knowledge alone.

“I am trying to be a patient man, Kitten,” I fought for control over my beast as her scent heightened from lack of clothes. Octavia leaned down and kissed me passionately until I was standing again. My hands roamed every inch of her to show her I wanted all of her.

“Love me the way you know how to, Sevrin.” Her words pushed my beast but stunned my man. She’s right, I did love her.

In my daze, Kitten took a little control. I just let her move me to get my body bared with hers. Knowing it would be good for her to have control, I let her take it. My pants were gone along with my shirt. Within seconds, I had her against a nearby tree, her legs wrapped around my middle.

I sank into her the second her back hit the tree. Slowly, I moved to make sure she was truly okay with this. Our eyes remained locked as she let me build my tempo. The tranquil sound of the lapping waves hid our moans, but they were there.

Here, on a beach in Purgatory, I made love to my mate the only way I knew how. She was too perfect to be real to love the monster I could never be rid of, how she let me handle her the only way animalistic instincts taught me. I kissed her gently while working her into her orgasm. Once she reached it and took me over the edge with her, I still held her to me. I wasn’t ready for our first true mating to be over.

“You are my queen,” I whispered while massaging her arms.

“And you are my king,” she kissed me again. There would be no coming back from this. My mate would stay mine, and I’d need her through the storms ahead. Only her light could keep me from being a raging beast. I

needed her more than she would ever know. If these last few weeks without her taught me anything, it was that I'd never lose her again.

"Rin?" she whispered into my neck. My grip on her had tightened subconsciously.

"Hmm?" My nose kept trailing her neck to keep her scent fresh on my mind.

"Can you take me to bed and... just stay with me?"

I froze. To be honest, I had never cuddled after sex. Though, my dragon was more than happy to keep his hold on her.

"Of course. I have something to do later, but I'll stay as long as I can." I kissed her head while slipping her dress over her head. Instead of rushing back, she let me set her down on the sand, between my legs, after I put only my pants back on. The sunset diminished over the water's horizon, but this moment would be permanent. I staked my claim on Octavia, and she accepted me.

Her little fingers worked out her phone Lear brought, and she snapped a picture of us with the light glowing against her tan skin. Blushing, she bit the corner of the mouth. "Sorry, it's just the perfect setting for a picture."

I grinned, knowing exactly how she felt because of the one I had of her on mine now. I'm not a perfect man, but I wasn't my father either. I only belonged to my Kitten... my Queen.

## Chapter 12



**M**ilo

Sevrin came out of her room and nodded that it would be time for me to do the night watch over her. With Bell on sentry duty, one of us needed to guard Octavia. Her nightmares were causing her serious suffering, and we all felt the bleed in her emotions. She couldn't contain them from not being whole anymore, so one of us needed to be with her when a night terror happened.

I had been more than willing after everything I learned. My father remained a bastard of a man for doing what he did to her, and I knew firsthand what he had done. Most thought my control issues stemmed from my Greed, but it didn't. No, it came from being in the position Octavia had been put in many, many times.

Going in, I found her still up, flipping through her mother's omen book my sister packed for her. When her eyes darted up to me at my entry, she froze. Internally, it wounded me. I knew that body language all too well. I

resembled my father too much, and she could see it. The flinch from my sight alone said everything I needed to know.

This woman saw him in me, and it brought back the roughest parts of her memories. I wished I could be man enough to tell her I suffered too. That I knew what it was like to see him every day after what he had done to me. Or that my own reflection became my torture to the point I had all the mirrors removed from my home for over a year. No one but Luce knew, but I wasn't ready to tell anyone else what the pig had done to me.

I thought that if I let him keep hurting me, he would leave my sister alone. He had, but now I knew he had done it to other children that were strangers to me. Nodding at her, I sat myself beside the door. She tried to relax, but it became nearly impossible for her to do so with me as her company. Once she was settled, I turned off the light that sat behind my shoulders. Her little body sat up instantly, and I could feel her panic flare from her.

“Leave the light on!” her panting had me frozen in my spot.

“I thought you were going to bed?” I asked, dimwittedly.

“P-please don't talk until the light is on. You sound too much...” She didn't need to finish. I understood. My father had used the dark against her. He corrupted her mind by using his voice. I knew this strategy because I had been his test subject to see if it would work.

Flipping it back on, I found horror in her eyes as they rested on the gold hue of mine. Standing up and moving to her, I gave her my hand to take. “You need to gain control, Princess.”

She flinched again from the dominance in my natural tone, one I had practiced time and time again from being her in my past. I didn't like to feel weak and refused to be now that I overcame what he did to me. It was my time to show this girl how to save herself from her own mind.

“I-I don’t know how to,” her words were truly innocent, and I felt my heart sink even more. That monster would not win because I wouldn’t allow it.

Not with her.

“Then let me help you learn,” I kept my voice softer for her to see I was trying to sincerely help. She had every reason to not believe me, but I hoped she would.

“How?” her little voice was meek and lowly as her hesitant hand took mine.

“By using my voice to gain back your power,” I answered. Knowing she was an empath, I knew she could feel my nerves and pain. Still, she’d also feel the honesty in my words.

“What’s going on in here?” Luce asked from the door, and I could hear the skepticism in his tone.

“Perfect timing,” I began to unbutton my shirt.

Octavia backed away in fear of what it meant. Taking several steps back from her, I gave her a wide berth to show I would not touch her.

“We are going to help the Princess gain back what my father took from her,” I answered Luce’s unspoken question.

My shirt fell to the floor, and then I began unbuckling my belt. Mortified, Octavia wouldn’t move from her spot. I hadn’t thought what this would look like, but she’d see in a moment that I meant her no harm. Stripping my belt, I went to the one person who I trusted most in this world. My hands were trembling, and he noticed.

“I’ll need you,” my quiet voice broke just a little. Luce knew more than anyone else how hard this would be for me. His hands covered mine around the leather of the belt. I met his eyes in search of comfort, and I found his love staring back at me.

“I’m not going anywhere.” With a chaste kiss, we moved to the lower beam

in her room.

Manipulating the belt as a tie, we secured my wrists until I couldn't bring them down. My breath blew out shakily as I readied myself for what I would let Octavia do to me. She didn't know it yet, but this would let her lash the pent-up anger out.

"Are you sure about this?" Luce let his loving hands follow my wrists to my shoulders. "I can let her use me."

"No. my eyes, my voice... she'll need it to be me."

He simply bowed. The other guys never understood our Dom and sub relationship, and how I craved control while Luce craved to be tamed. They thought it was a kink, but it stemmed from us both needing to heal, using pain as a therapeutic step. Luce wanted someone to guide him growing up. His dad remained a workaholic, and his mom- well, her drugs were always the priority. With me being his Dom, I fully focused on him and giving him what he truly desired. He did the same for me, just opposite.

~

## **Lucius**

I held my breath, stepping back from him as my eyes shimmered with unshed tears. To anyone else, they wouldn't know how big this moment was for Milo. The step he was taking to help Octavia? It was admirable. As promised, I stayed in the room while he braced himself. My love for him couldn't be deeper than it flowed now.

I could see the sweat already building along his body from his nerves trying to best him. He just gripped the belt, locking his wrists and nodded. Only I knew he had been brutally raped by his father. That not even I could go near



his backdoor without him freezing up. Every time we tested the waters, he couldn't do it.

His father wanted to make him stronger, and Minus even said every man in his family did it to push the next generation. Milo was strong alright, but him giving trust was nearly impossible. I wasn't even sure how I gained his. Not willing to look a gift horse in the mouth, I moved to Octavia. She had fallen back on the bed when Lo removed his clothes.

With my hand stretched out to her, she accepted mine easily. We were two kindred spirits from our childhoods bonding us already, so I gave her a smile to reassure her this would be completely fine. Looking between them, I watched two of the strongest people I knew, squirm in their skin.

Minus would pay for this. I would gut him like a fish the moment we found him. Though, now was not the time to dwell on how I'd dismember his genitalia. No, it was time for both of them to fix what Minus had done to them individually by coming together.

~

## **Octavia**

What on earth were these two up to?

Milo and Lucius were having a private conversation with their eyes, and Lucius nodded. He stepped behind me, guiding me forward to where they hung Milo up. Opening his closed eyes, Milo looked at me with those golden irises that had me flinching again. I could feel his sadness seeping from his pores, and it was directed toward my reaction.

“Tell me what happened when he had you locked up,” his voice stayed direct, and I knew he was trying to rush this for himself. He was

uncomfortable in the position he put himself in, and I had been uncomfortable from this whole show.

What would I gain from this?

“Tell him, Princess. Trust me.” Lucius rubbed my shoulders. There had been an instant change in my body language from the way I visibly relaxed with just having him here. “Close your eyes, so you don’t have to look at us.”

I did as I had been told, and I instantly transported with my mind to that little room I could barely move in. The sound of the intercom was distinct, and I knew I could never hear the one at the school again from it.

“He-I... I was locked in a little room I couldn’t lay down in, and he left it dark. From the first day he put me in there, I never saw light until the night of the ceremony.”

“That’s why you can’t have the light off,” Milo deducted.

“Yes. I thought he was going to touch me like he did when I was younger, but he didn’t. He used my dark room as a cloak for his evil. There was an intercom he spoke to me through. He-he,” I gasped and tried to right myself again. I was vulnerable. I was back to that stage of my life where I couldn’t wear my own skin.

“He what? Tell us,” Milo also sounded a little broken.

“He raped them and made me listen to it. I’d begged him to stop, but he’d tell me I wasn’t broken enough yet. He’d make them tell me their name and have them tell me it was my fault that it was happening to them. It was because of me that they got hurt, I got them killed.” Only silence filled the room as I shook in Lucius’s arms. My sobs opened the flood gates, and then Milo said the words I wasn’t ready for.

“Turn off the light, Luce.”

Lucius moved me and placed my hand on Milo’s heart. He then left me to

do as Milo instructed. The rapid pace building in Milo's pulse beneath my hand told me he too feared the dark, just like me. The nail of my thumb grazed his smooth flesh, and I found he was tattooed all down his arms and stomach. He hid his beautiful ink under his suits but now... they were too gorgeous to not see again.

The light went out, and I froze. Milo rasped as well when my other hand shot out to feel for him. I stayed terrified and felt alone.

"Tell me how it started." He shook under my touch. Scared, he was still trying to help me through his own suffering.

"I-I'd hear the girls. They'd be crying. Some fought when Minus told them what to say..."

"Was it your fault, Octavia?" he asked. His voice raised the hairs on my arms from the undertones being too similar to his father's. "Be honest."

"Yes," I cried.

"When he forced himself on them and made you listen, you believed it was your fault?" he shouted at me, and my nails dug into his meaty flesh.

"Stop," I pleaded.

"You are not broken enough yet." The cruelty in his tone heightened my panic. I was there. It was Minus. He was before me, egging me on to fight back. My fist pulled back, and I swung forward.

"You broke me!" I shrieked.

"No! You're not gone enough. I want all of you, Octavia!" he yelled back. Pain surged through my stomach as it rolled to vomit like it had in the room. Fighting against his body, I wanted to hurt Minus the way he hurt me.

"How dare you say I'm not broken enough! How dare you strip me down to nothing!" I blubbered. Tears and snot covered my face, but my frenzy on revenge called to me more.

“Did I? Are you going to let me win?” he bellowed back. I could feel the heat of his breath at my forehead.

My hand swung, and I slapped his cheek. The resounding noise echoed through the quiet air. Blinded from Minus’s evil, I forgot where I was. I now saw my old bedroom with pink décor. The room where my life changed, and he was there too, but it was me who he was raping all over again. The floodgate of my raping had opened fully for me to remember. I remembered why I hated the color pink so much. Why I hated nightgowns and not shorts... All of it came back.

Clawing him and punching him, I screamed my rage out at him.

It was his fault.

He did this to me.

“I HATE YOU!” I shrilled again. “I was eleven! I was a little girl trying to cope with my mom! You took the last thing I had left to keep for myself!”

My fists flew as I beat against the hard planes of his body.

“You hurt them! You were the monster! I didn’t deserve what you did to me! You can’t blame me for your sickening needs!”

I kept clawing and hitting to show him I could win! He couldn’t have me!

“It wasn’t my fault! I didn’t ask to be taken and abused! I didn’t do anything to you to have that happen! It was you!”

My sobs wrenched through my body and slowly, my mind came back to me. Raspy breathing reminded me I wasn’t back in that room... That my lash out had not been done to Minus... It was on...

“Luce, you can turn on the light now,” Milo tried to regain himself.

When the room lit up, I stumbled back. His whole chest was scratched, and bruises were beginning to shade his skin where I threw my fist. Blood

trickled down his abdomen from a few deeper marks I left on his skin. Covering my mouth, I cried for a whole new reason. I had been the monster.

Milo met my gaze and held it. This was the first time I had looked him in the eye without flinching. He smiled just a little at me. “I’m okay, Princess.”

Luce moved to him and helped him out of the belt. Milo rubbed his raw wrists as Luce doctored his flesh. Swallowing hard, I couldn’t let him think this was okay. “I... I’m so sorry, Milo.”

“Never be sorry for taking back what he took. Me doing that helped you gain back what is rightfully yours. You beat him, and that’s what your mind needed to move on.” I studied him in awe. This man, one who rivaled Rin in hating me, was trying to put me back together again.

Without thinking, I ran to him and embraced his middle. Weeping into his chest, I shook my head. “How can I ever thank you?”

“There’s no thanks to give, Princess. I’m just hoping for your forgiveness.” That’s when his own arms enveloped me in return. Luce moved in from behind me. He grinned at our hug, and then whispered over my ear.

“Milo never lets anyone control him, Princess. Him doing that was the greatest gift he could ever give anyone.” I moved my hand up and followed his tense jawline. I could see it then. The truth that had been before me this whole time.

Minus had hurt his son the way he had me.

“Then let me return it, Milo. I’ve never submitted to anyone before, but I’d like it to be you.” I watched the exchange between the two lovers and hurried to correct myself. “Both of you. I never want to come between you two. I don’t want one of you individually. I want your partnership to share my bed.”

It must’ve been the right thing to say because, well? Mmm...

## Chapter 13



**M**ilo

Luce and I both ravaged her neck. My hands worked the tank top from her body, and Luce's hands slipped her sleep shorts off.

My God, she was a beautiful girl.

Many struggled with understanding how a person could be attracted to both genders. Even if we weren't demons, the idea of beauty didn't exist within the lines. It's the same for sexual attraction. Some of us embraced the beauty, even if it meant not conforming to the social norm, while others hid it from the world. Lucius had not been the first person I slept with, but he would be my forever partner. The fact that Octavia was willing to keep us as one unit meant more to me than anything else.

It seemed the sentiment had been received in the same manner for him. He knew I struggled with the idea that our Pandora could come between us. Had it been Lexi, she would have driven the wedge between him and I on purpose. Princess took away my anxiety by wanting us at the same time,

never separate. I swallowed the lump forming within my throat. For months I had refused to see her for what she might be worth out of fear.

But now...

She would be mine, or rather, *ours*. I wouldn't take her without Luce being with me. One day, I would grow to love her, but Luce already had my heart.

"Luce, be a dear and go get our bag," I commanded, and he left me to stand alone before this perfection of a female. "Are you sure you're ready for this? I've heard I'm not a gentleman."

"I seem to like pain, Milo." She nestled into my chest even more. "Show me the pleasure with it, so I only remember your voice instead of his..."

Kissing her forehead, Luce came back in and smirked at my gentle gesture. Letting her go, I went to the bag. Unzipping the sack, I pointed at the chair while looking at my lover. "Sit."

Luce moved and took his place in the chair. He knew the drill and readied himself for the hell I was about to unleash. We both loved the show I put on, and I couldn't wait to see his cock straining against his jeans.

Just the idea had mine twitching. If I were an honest man, I had been hard while Octavia used me. I had also taken note of my lover's bulge after we were done. He smirked at me now from my eyes still resting on his crotch. Just to tease me, his fingers grazed over his manhood with a simple, light stroke.

Damn, this man had me. All it took was a simple lick of his lips, and I was ready for him to bend over for me. With him touching himself—even just that little graze—I would be rendered helpless until I had him under me.

I went over and tied him to the chair with our silk cloths as he tried to steady his breathing. That's right... He knew I was about to drive him mad, but he wanted it. It came to be my turn to tease. With a cruel smile, I worked

his cock out of his pants and deep-throated him a few times to sheath him in my saliva. In payment, his grunts rewarded me.

Standing and wiping my mouth, I kissed him passionately. The twinge being created by my arousal tingled in my balls. It had been a while from our little tiff. “I hope you enjoy the cool air against your aching cock you can’t touch to soothe...”

Luce groaned as I worked the gag into his mouth. Turning around, I found Octavia rubbing her thighs at the sight of two men not afraid of their sexuality. Flushed, her chest heaved with excitement, and my cruel smile was back out.

“Lay back on the bed. You will not move as I work. My name is Sir, no exceptions. Understood Miss Clarke?” I spoke with my ruthless voice as she crawled onto the bed. Her full ass was up in the air, and it had both mine and Luce’s attention.

Fucking hell. She was a wet dream of a woman.

“Yes,” she panted.

My hand cracked against her ass, and she fell forward in surprise. Righting herself, she shot me a shocked look over her shoulder.

“Yes, Sir,” I purred. She smiled and bit the corner of her lip. My dick bobbed in my pants from the sight. Luce always licked his bottom lip when he was hungry for me, and she bit hers.

“Yes, Sirrr,” she slurred, already becoming drunk on the atmosphere we were creating. In reward, I rubbed her tender ass cheek and let Luce have a delicious view of the red handprint. He moaned around his gag, and I chuckled.

“Good girl,” I cooed. She preened from my praise, and I knew Octavia was made for us, for the kind of men we were in this environment. The fantasy we



needed to fuel our passion... “Keep this beautiful ass in the air.”

I moved to Luce and lowered his gag. “Luce, be a dear and tell our new friend what her safe word is.”

“Elmo,” he groaned, knowing I was about to really get started. She laughed a little and fell from hearing the silly name. Good. I was hoping she’d fall from her position. Strutting back to her, I placed her back into place.

“Elmo? Where did you come up with-AH!” I smacked her ass again before she could finish her words.

“That’s for not staying down, and this is for forgetting how to address me, Miss Clarke.” Hitting the plump globe of her other cheek, we men watched it bounce.

Shit... That was hot.

Rubbing the stings I left, I gave her six more spankings that had her moaning and dripping now. Using one finger to run along the edges of her lips, I showed the glistening evidence to Luce. He was losing it, but we had just barely started. Octavia tried to press her pussy back to get my finger fully inside of her. I just laughed from nothing being there to sate her craving. Tasting her while locking eyes with Luce, I watched the lust fill his vision. He really was too perfect for me.

“Roll onto your back and hold your legs out for me to see this tight little snatch I’ll be working with.”

“Yes, Sir...” Holy hell, her gasps were killing me. My goal had been to set off Luce, but I would be coming in my pants too. She did as instructed, and for her reward, I let my fingers caress her slick folds a little deeper. In this position, I got a view of how perfect she was. Her perky tits with her hard nipples pointing up just a little were definitely a plus.

Once I knew my fingers were teasing her into an orgasm, I pulled back and

let her suffer. “There is no coming without permission.”

She whimpered but kept her legs up and to the side. Going to my bag, I pulled out my little, leather whip.

“Close your eyes,” I tried to breathe through my words. Fuck, the room was filled with her arousing scent. She did, and I snapped the whip right down on her clit. She cried out in surprise but didn’t use the safe word.

“Luce, keep your eye on her cunt. Princess, watch his dick.”

I hit her again, and this time she aggressively moaned from seeing how his dick twitched with need. He was becoming a bull, angry with passion.

Pulling my own shaft out, I held it right before her opening. “Are you ready to see how he responds to seeing me fuck this tight pussy?”

“Yes, Sir!” she gasped with urgency. My little Princess wanted to get her release.

I barely got my thick head in when she tried to not let herself go. Gripping my dick and tugging it back, I let her calm down just enough to not give into her body’s need. Luce was going bloody ballistic in his chair. Precum oozed from his little slit, and it made me feel the need to hurry.

“When you hear my voice, are you going to fear me?” I asked, begging for the right answer.

“No, Sir,” she squirmed beneath me as I kneeled on the edge of the bed.

“Why?”

“You aren’t him, Sir. Y-you take control but only with what I’m willing to give.”

Smirking, I shoved into her tight pussy. For a second, I thought I was seeing stars. I rasped and tried to steady myself. Luce noticed and really became excited. He was flexing his own dick to try and get a release on his own.

“Good answer.” I fucked her hard and saw her fight to not give into her own pleasure. “You can come on my cock now, Princess. Show me how much you need to surrender to someone deserving of your trust.”

Her channel tightened even more than it had, and she screamed my name on her lips. I wasn’t done though. I kept fucking her through it all. When I spilled my seed, my eyes locked with Luce. He was right where I wanted him from how much his shaft leaked already.

“Princess, stand up and go over to Luce. Spread your pussy lips for him to see how I ruined your cunt.” She gasped at my raunchy words, but I could tell she liked it.

Doing as told, Luce nearly had tears from being too turned on. I walked up behind Octavia and let my fingers move to the front of her to play with the wetness. He heard it and gave me his pleading eyes to finish him off. Seeing my cream around her entrance had him bucking his hips forward.

“Princess, straddle him and take his dick in as slow as possible. He’ll cum once you reach the base of his shaft.”

Doing as I told her, she steadied herself over his thighs and looked to him to make sure he was okay with it. He bobbed and watched her lower lips spread to take him in. I couldn’t deny what the sight did to me. I felt my dick stirring again. Just as I planned, Luce was too worked up and came with a roar over his gag. From seeing him like that, Octavia found her second orgasm. She barely reached his pelvis when it happened.

Both were beautiful, and I got to be the lucky bastard to witness it all. They had trusted me enough to not hurt them, and that in itself surged pride into my heart. I might have been against Octavia when I first met her, but now I knew she completed us. She shared a passion with every single one us, individually.

Well, Luce and I were a pair. The fact that she respected that swelled my heart. As they caught their breath and came down from their high, I untied Luce. They were both smiling at each other—still connected—just as Bell walked into the room.

## Chapter 14

— • —

**O**ctavia

Poor Bell...

He was still a virgin and had just walked into something straight out of *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Lucius had been trying to catch his breath with me straddling his dick that finally softened inside of me. Bell's eyes were glued to where Lucius and I stayed connected. I gulped and began to climb off. Milo already had himself put back together, and the revelation of what I did hit me. I slept with Milo Gifre and Lucius Baysan...

Call me fucked up, but seeing how relaxed they were now, I wouldn't undo it. Milo's healing session with me hadn't banished all of my demons, but it was a good start. He made it so I could look him in the eye and not flinch back... The trust we both just built between us would be unbreakable now. Unless they were going to betray me.

Not seeing that happening tonight, I helped untie Lucius and got to my feet. "I'm, uh, going to go clean up." Darting into the bathroom attached to my

room, I ran the shower while breathing slowly over the sink. This was not a bad thing, and I only had to sleep with Bell to finish the circle... Tears fell from my eyes because I couldn't control them.

*Only sleep with Bell...* I thought to myself. My giant bear deserved so much more than I could give him. He deserved to be happy with someone who also deserved his virginity. He would always be absolutely perfect to me, and I had to ruin him if we were going to complete the circle.

Two big hands pulled me into a masculine chest. They turned me so I could bury my face into his hard torso.

Citrus.

Bell hadn't been smoking pot.

Not waiting for me to speak, he gathered me into his loving arms and set us both in the shower. My eyes went wide when I felt the warm washcloth between my thighs. Jumping back, I found only adoration in his stare.

"Bell, I-I..." I'm sorry? I couldn't say the words because they weren't adequate enough.

"Via, you have nothing to be ashamed of. They are your men just as I am."

"But you deserve the world... The girl who would lose her virginity with you... I'm not her... I-I'm the furthest thing from what you need."

"Silly girl. You are exactly what I need. You being with my brothers doesn't bother me in the slightest. Other men outside of our circle would get to me, but not my brothers."

"Stop being so sweet and so perfect," I wept into his shoulder from him trying to clean me still. He pulled my face back and tucked my wet hair behind my ears. His gaze stayed on me, memorizing every detail.

"My first prayer was answered," he whispered.

"What prayer?" I got a little breathless. Lost in his blue eyes, he could've

told me the sky was green, and I would've believed him.

“That it would be you who I gave myself to.” Fucking hell. Gut me and make me feel special with one line. “I do want our first time to be perfect. Whatever happened in here tonight, everyone felt. Your pain leeches onto all of us and not just your connections. I want you to be happy and joyful when I get you all to myself for the first time.”

I hugged him and refused to let go. Not knowing why I had been blessed with such a perfect man, I just sent my own thanks out to the Universe. Wiping my eyes, I gave him a watery grin. I nearly forgot how beautiful he was...

“If I had a choice. If Minus hadn't...” Clearing my throat, I couldn't say the words right now. Not after how raw I was tonight. “It would've been someone like you. Preferably you.”

Bellamy's mouth crashed down on mine. Under the shower head in the water, I felt the passion rupturing between us.

We might not have sex tonight, but by how I let him control me told him I was his. My tears were lost to the pouring water, but there were moments when we could taste the salty droplets. He'd groan when they'd slip between our lips. Somewhere, in the heat of our embrace, they had changed from grieving droplets to tears of joy. Bellamy did that. By choosing me after knowing I wasn't good enough? Well, it set him apart.

Breaking away and panting heavily, we were getting too close to doing the deed. I shouldn't be ready for another round, but I would be willing with this man. With any of my men, I would be. Swallowing the lump in my throat, I wanted to fully embrace what was happening between us. I wanted him to know he'd be permanently mine.

Meeting his heavily-lidded gaze, I held it. “I love you.”

It was the first time I had spoken those three words to anyone...ever. My mom was too high to care, and I never knew anyone else to love. I had been falling for the seven—some faster than others—but I was trying to not mix lust and love too soon. With Bell, I knew it in my heart that he would always be mine. Now, he knew I would be his too.

“I love you too, Honey.”

We kissed again. It was tender and slow.

He moved us while keeping our lips together. Bell laid us down and even though he didn't sleep, I knew this was where he wanted to be. He had always made sure I knew that too.

~

## **Bellamy**

*She loves me...* Her words swelled my heart, and I pulled her unconscious form closer. Still naked, I greatly enjoyed feeling her pressed against me. To be confident enough to sleep naked with me was a treasure I would be keeping. My fingers couldn't help but follow the lines of her face to feel how soft her skin was. A soft rap came from her door, and all the guys meandered in. I covered Octavia up, and they all chuckled.

“Mate, we've all seen her naked,” Aster piped up.

“It's respectful to cover her.” I shrugged.

“Did you sleep with her?” Rin asked and something about his demeanor told me this came from whatever business he was bringing to my attention.

“No,” I stated and watched his shoulders relax.

“Good. We need one of us to go with Zeke and do some recon where technology actually works. The owls can only do so much. Leo has a boat



linked with his magic to come and go. Are you good to be ready at dawn?"

"Yeah, I can do that." I nodded.

Octavia's head shot up and glared at everyone.

"No one is leaving this island right now. We're too weak," she spouted.

"You are weak, and we are weak from nearly completing our bond to you. Bell is not. He's the only one who can go to Cuba without being affected," Rin volleyed back.

"Sevrin, I don't have a good feeling. I haven't since you guys arrived, okay? Will you just please listen to me on this? I think we should complete our circle first." Every person in the room observed our Alpha and our Queen duke it out.

"Kitten, this isn't something that can be compromised on. If we want to take down my dad, we can't do that without learning where he is, what his movements are. Right now, the owls have let us know he's slaughtering villages to draw us out."

"Then we all go. We all need to stay together."

"V, you're just shaken up with what-"

"I am not! Why aren't you listening to me? I don't know why I have a bad feeling, but I do! It's a mystery, but we need to stay here, or we all need to go!" She was off the bed and pacing with the sheet. None of us could look away. Something was scaring her.

"You don't know what your feeling means?" Luce asked by the door.

She shook her head. "I just have this sense of knowing something will go wrong. Like a Déjà vu moment."

"Could it be your subconscious trying to protect us, Love?"

"Maybe, but it doesn't feel like that." She sat and depleted.

"Kitten, I am still the Alpha, and we need someone to go with Zeke that is

trained. Bell is our best bet.”

Scooting toward her, my arm wrapped around her middle and moved her back to sit against my chest. Kissing her cheek, I didn’t care about the death glares from the others.

“I’ll be gone for three days, Honey.”

“I don’t want you to go...” She turned her waterworks on from not being in control lately. Her fear struck us all. We needed to complete the circle sooner rather than later with her emotions being everywhere.

“Let me protect you. I couldn’t live with myself otherwise,” I blew my words into her ear.

“Sevrin, can we wait just one more day?” she nearly begged him. Usually, Rin never changed his orders or plans but with his mate asking...

“Fine. Dawn in two days, Bell. Get your snuggles in now so you can get the job done.” He and the others moved out of the room for our girl to sleep.

She kissed my cheek and squeezed my hand. “Come back to me?”

“Always.” It was true. Immortal now, I couldn’t die, and she had become my world, my center. When it came to Octavia Clarke, I would always find my way home.

## Chapter 15



**O**ctavia

Sandwiched between two warm bodies, I found myself nestling deeper. It felt like heaven and just what I needed.

“Mmm...” I purred when the body behind gently caressed my hip. Somewhere in my sleep, the blanket must’ve up and walked away from how exposed I felt. Not that I minded because my warmth drew from the two furnaces surrounding me. A deep chuckle had me peeking over my shoulder to see it had been Lear who snuck in. I gave him a playful smile as he moved my ass closer to his front.

Feeling his length, I bit the inside of my cheek and was grateful he didn’t try anything sexual. From the familiarity on my front, I knew Bell had been my victim to be used as a body pillow all night. My leg was still sitting over his hip to prove that had been his use.

“Finally awake?” Bell asked when I peered up at him.

“Yeah. What time is it?” I countered while stretching between them. They both groaned, and I tried to bite back my grin from how they watched my tits lift.

“Dinner time. Why don’t you pick out something to wear, and we’ll all go to the kitchen?” Lear buried his face in my hair while slapping my ass. He was acting odd. I knew he wanted to be close, but it had been hard for him with all the rules in place. Now? He might as well be trying to smother me. Not that I could deny the pleasure of this change, but something was not quite...

“What’s going on?” Sitting up, I scowled at both of them. The two shared a look that I couldn’t decipher and then they leapt off my bed. “Hey!”

“We’ll meet you out here when you’re dressed!” Lear called back.

Sighing, I quickly found some sleep shorts and an off-the-shoulder sweater. Thank heavens Lou had packed my things, knowing my taste. Drying everything had been fun from my dad’s lack of modern appliances, and the swim our luggage took after the plane exploded.

Hey, at least I had my things. Leo kept a drawer of my mother’s stuff from twenty years ago, so my mom had been in long, sleep dresses that had revealing areas and told me too much history about when they were worn. It was a change to her lingerie but still over the top for my taste. Going out, I found all the guys quickly buttoning up nicer shirts and clean jeans. Glancing down at my jammies, I scrunched up my face.

“Do I need to change?” I fumbled my fingers on the bottom hem of my shirt. Rin looked me over with a wicked grin and shook his head.

“No, Via. We want you to come in what makes you comfortable.” Lear kissed my cheek and took my hand. Bell got behind me to guide my shoulders. Oh-kay... So something was up.

Aster stopped their progression and full-on kissed me to the point I thought I'd suffocate. I guess my healing period and light touches were over.

“Being a hairy sack of balls sucks,” he winked. “Do me a favor and be the biggest pussy you can be from now on.” No one around us understood the meaning of that reference. When I looked into his eyes, I could see how much he needed me to be stronger. He didn't know how to help me like this.

I kissed his cheek. “You know exactly what to say sometimes.”

“Aster?” Milo called up from the back.

“How does talking about pussy win him points?” Lucius tried to whisper to his lover.

“Beats me,” Bell tossed back, and I just laughed. I truly laughed from this new dynamic making feel like I belonged.

Part of me thought I had never been whole, but what if I just needed to find my seven missing pieces? Watching them interact down the hall, I noticed just how strong their brotherly love was...

Milo and Lucius were holding hands and in deep thought together. Beau and Lear fought over superheroes. Rin held my one hand while listening to Aster speak his gibberish on why he would make a great president. Bell just kept squeezing my shoulders to tell me he was there because he had never been much of a talker. I was starting to see the good side of this dynamic. Mostly from how they tried to help me overcome my trauma while also giving me my space.

They weren't as fierce as they painted themselves to be, but I didn't mind the real versions though. Walking right past the kitchen, I gave them some funny looks. I thought we were grabbing dinner. Leading me outside on the terrace, what I found took my breath away. Strings of lights canopied over a

giant, round table. The table had a grey cloth covering and was set up fancier than a rich party.

I knew all the guys were wearing polos or button downs with their jeans already. Lou just had to wear a pink cocktail dress with her lovers in fancy clothes too. I smiled at that because it meant she might be feeling a little better to be herself again.

“What’s all this about?” I asked, gesturing to the candles.

“Well, none of us knew it was your birthday when it was. Plus, what happened on your big day, so, here we are! Happy-three-weeks-after-party!” Lou cheered.

My mom and her circle members were at their own table with Fiona, Zeke, and Lou joining them. My table held the seven and myself.

“Rita knew...” I admitted over the lump in my throat. I still didn’t know what happened to her or if she was okay.

“Rita?” Leo set down his water and studied me.

“Yeah. She’s one of Daemon’s housekeepers. She got me a cupcake and said she had a feeling it was my birthday.” I answered, taking my seat between Bell and Rin. I now knew her magic told the future somehow, but not much else. Finishing the circle to sit down, I was the eighth and the Pandora. This was where I belonged... If they wanted me after all of this.

Leo flipped his anger onto Daemon. “You’ve had my mother working as a maid?”

Wait, what?

“Yes. We both agreed it would be wise considering the others wanted to kill her for your absence. Working for me put her under the protection of my house. Your house was abandoned, and therefore the rules no longer applied.”

Leo fell back and scrubbed his face.

“Next time you decide to abandon your brothers, make sure to take important family members with you,” Dr. Baysan added.

Ouch.

Fiddling with my napkin, I just thought over what they had told me. Rita was my grandmother, and she put her life on the line to get me to safety.

“V, you okay?” Beau drew me from my thoughts.

“Yeah-no... Not really. I didn’t know Rita was my grandma, but I think she knew who I was.” Shrugging, I placed the napkin over my lap like I might be a lady. *Insert snort here...*

“Rita is a Soothsayer. She can see the future. It’s an extremely rare gift from the Universe picking their true Fates, but every now and then, a demon can be blessed with it too,” Beau responded, and I knew he knew all of this from his yearning to learn more. Lou already told me this, but it didn’t help with what I didn’t know.

Nodding, I met everyone’s eyes at my table. “Well, thank you. I’ve actually never celebrated a birthday before.” Knowing my mom was at the next table over, I didn’t want to hurt her feelings. Not that I could really change how she raised me. It was her choice to do what she did.

“Not one?” Lear acknowledged the one thing everyone wanted to ask.

“No.” I timidly smiled while clearing my throat. “Well, one year, I was still too young to be at home alone, so the strip club gave me some free food. Cocoa gave me her favorite glitter bra, Double D gave me my first lipstick, and they sang to me... If you want to count that one.”

“No, I don’t want to bloody count that!” Aster roared. “Your mother should’ve had you living like a queen! You are fecking royalty, Octavia! Diamonds, dinners, dresses! You should’ve had it all, Love.”

“Let’s not forget how we treated her. She deserved more from us as well,” Lucius sighed. It was a somber moment for all of them to take in what I went through.

Not to mention the ringer Salvatore and Minus had done. One day, I’d be okay, but I wasn’t there yet. The nightmares still lived in my memory. Sometimes, they took over my conscious thoughts. No, I wasn’t there yet, but as I looked around me, I had people who were trying to help me now.

Reaching under the table, I took both Rin and Bell’s hands in mine while addressing everyone. Would I be me again? I didn’t know, but I’d try with them by my side.

“Don’t sell yourselves too short. You’re helping me now, and that’s more than I could ask for,” I tried to not get choked up, but I did on the end.

“We’ll spend forever making it up to you, Princess.” Milo raised his wine glass to me. The rest of the men followed, and Rin squeezed my hand back as Greed prepared a toast. “You are now ours, and we are now yours. None of us want to be our fathers with their mistresses.”

“My father can say it was their Pandora line being too weak, but it was them being assholes. You have my word as your mate, that I am only yours, Kitten.” Rin just had to go and make my heart pitter-patter harder.

I wanted to believe them, I did. But... Actions spoke louder than words.

We ate quietly. The roast duck and vegetables my dad prepared were divine, but I could also hear Leo ripping into my mother about my upbringing over my chewing. As I said, it was her choice. This outcome was from that choice.

“Present time!” Bell hollered and set a gift in front of me like a giddy boy. The other men groaned.

“How the fuck did you get a gift when there’s nothing here?” Lucius



demanded.

“I made it, fucker.” Bell quipped and wiggled his fingers.

Opening it, I found something truly remarkable...

It was a bear totem carved from wood and had a string to make it a necklace. When my eyes darted up to meet his, he pulled out a necklace around his neck. It was a honey pot like on *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Covering my mouth, I tried to blink back the tears. When I couldn't rein them in, I sprung toward him and hugged the life out of him.

“It's absolutely perfect.”

“Way to set the bar too high, Bell,” Lear groaned.

“Some of us didn't have the talent or time to make something before we came, but we still thought of you,” Lou winked.

“This dinner was plenty. Plus, with Bell leaving in the morning, I needed this token,” I cleared my throat.

“We wanted to ask you formally, Kitten. As the circle, will you be our Pandora?” Rin stumbled a lot asking that. His manly side didn't like it, but his mated side knew I needed it.

“Thank you,” I kissed his cheek. “Yes, as of now, I accept.”

All the men visibly relaxed, and I finally let my laugh come out. It was contagious and needed as everyone joined in. Content, tonight was just what I needed.

“So, Princess,” Lucius started. “We need to start testing your abilities.”

“Abilities? Like my lie-detector?”

“No, Kitten. Like the fact you can use your tethers with us to literally transport.”

“Yeah, Sis. And your emotional abilities. You're a bit of an anomaly.”

“I can transport?” How come I didn't know this?

“Yeah, when you followed Lear, it was after securing your bond to him, sexually,” Beau added. *Oh...*

“When I stayed with you each night, it was mostly to watch you when Aster and Beau went out. Your eyes went white, and you began to move. I had to hold onto you to keep you grounded.” Bell winked. My father’s words about the tethers to his prisoners came back. He told me I had tethered to my circle without knowing it, and that’s how I saw their kills. It was his talent but used differently.

“We don’t know how it works, but we need to start testing it.” Rin kissed my head. All of this attention was a little overwhelming. Zero to sixty and all.

“How do we test it?” I got a little breathless from his ocean scent filling my nostrils. The heat of his body didn’t help either. He knew and smirked down at me.

Damn him.

“I figured for the first few tries I can have Daisy help guide you to your link. Dragons and dragonettes have a mental ability to always connect with their Alpha. With you as my mate and her master, she can help as she did before.”

“Okay.” I leaned my head into his chest. Something had shifted between us. Whatever it was, my soul needed it more than the air I breathed.

“I’m going to go down to the beach. Daisy will help guide you to my link, but I want you to try pushing past just seeing through my eyes. Come to me.” Rin kissed my head as everyone stayed in shock from their Alpha being sweet to someone. I could only laugh. It was all strange, and yet, very real.

All of these men were once my tormentors. And now, they were the only ones fighting for me to keep living. I could feel their guilt and emotions of regret. Maybe, that’s why I could forgive them now. Their intentions were

there. Milo's remorse stemmed from the need to make up for his father's cruelty, but he wanted it as well—now that he knew I didn't want to come between him and his lover.

My heart warmed. On an island in the Bermuda Triangle, where I found my father and his kingdom of Purgatory, in the arms of the seven, I found my home...My castle's keep.

Daisy hopped up on the table, and we placed our heads together just like last time. Though, this time I wasn't shocked when I found myself seeing through Rin's eyes. His hands were writing in the sand, and I watched for a minute before trying the next step.

*'Come to me, Mate.'*

That's what he wrote, and that's what I would do. Tickling his mind, I moved on to find the tether. After seeing the one from last time, I kind of knew what to look for. A black string stood out, so my hand reached out to touch it. The electric shock told me I had the right idea. Letting it guide me, I held on and kept forward. I wasn't in his mind anymore.

No, this place remained of only shadows and death. I could feel it in the marrow of my bones and smell the decay. Shivering from the air getting colder with every step, I finally saw a glow to lead me out. Not letting go of my bond, once I was in the light, I stood right before Rin. He smiled down at me and kissed me with abandon. I let him. This was my make-up birthday after all. I could kiss an Alpha if I wanted to.

## Chapter 16



**O**ctavia

The waves were crashing harder from the cycle of the moon. Over the horizon, we watched the sun begin to rise just enough to know dawn had come. Organizing the boat, all the guys were too focused on that to see me falling apart. Well, Lou was with me. I had told her of my mysterious feeling, and she was in agreement with me on it. They shouldn't be going.

Yet, I also knew the deaths Salvatore had been creating were only the beginning if we didn't do something. That became the only reason I agreed to this. Setting his duffle bag down, Bell put that arm around me and sighed when my face buried into his chest. "I've done this my whole life, Honey."

"I don't doubt you, Boo-Bear. I question the feeling I have that you shouldn't go."

"Look at me." He cupped my chin and forced my gaze to rise. "I will come back. Three days, Octavia, and I'll come back to you."

"And if you don't?" I pleaded for him to give me the right answer.

Instead of words, his mouth consumed mine. My hands fisted into his shirt, and his giant hands held me by my waist. Tasting my salty tears, I couldn't hold back. Part of me felt like this was a goodbye kiss. I didn't like that idea. Giving him all of me in just a kiss, it was a promise for what would come when he returned to me. Jerking back, he groaned and then smiled down at me.

“That’s one way to keep me here.” His hand cleaned my cheek before he kissed where I spilled the tears.

“I will come after you,” I warned in a loving way. “If you don’t come back, I will come for you.”

He grinned, but it didn't reach his eyes. “I know, Honey.”

Letting go of my face, he began to retreat to Leo's speedboat. My heart beat in my throat as it tightened with sorrow. Why was this feeling like a goodbye?

“Bell,” I called after him. He turned to me with his duffel bag over his shoulder. The way the morning glow shadowed his dark skin had me holding my breath to take him in. “I love you.”

We had shared our confessions before—Bell being more open about it than me—but I knew I needed to say it now. If something were to happen, I wanted to leave him with those words.

“Always, Honey. I’ll always love you.” And just like that, Bell set off with Zeke to spy on Salvatore in Cuba.

~

The first night, I slept with Rin. He still wasn't used to sharing his bed, or his body as my pillow, but he tried for me...

Still, no Bell.

~

The second night, I was the meat to a Milo and Lucius sandwich. They held me and caressed my body to forget my worries...

Still, no Bell.

~

The third night, Lear made sure I understood how much he deeply cared for me. How he always had. He told me what he saw before I came, and how he felt about me then. It only confirmed what I knew about him. That night, I heard him whisper his love for me into my ear. I knew not to bring it up again, but it warmed my soul to feel the truth in his words. Waking up on the third day...

Still, no Bell.

~

The fourth night, Beau asked me if I need anything a hundred times. It was sweet the first few times, but too much after I had been trying to fall asleep. I finally took his hand and guided him back to bed with a laugh. Letting myself give Bell a pass, I promised myself he was just running late...

Still, no Bell.

~

Five days. It had been five days, and my Boo-Bear had not come home. Last night, I spent it with Lou in hopes our friendship could bring me peace.

From her missing and worrying for Zeke, we decided it was best for me to leave halfway through the night. When I wandered the halls, I found my mom and dad talking. My feet padded to them from the childish instinct to have my parents hold me. Though, their body language halted that idea. When they hushed their discussion, I knew they weren't my option for comfort. I went

back to Rin's room to repeat my sleeping cycle. He felt me before I came in and had the blanket lifted up for me to climb in.

Now, I was sitting on the beach, where they left. Waiting, watching... No one could move me from my spot. The same spot I sat in every day to see them come back. Lear—each day I did this—came and sat by me to keep me company. My head would fall onto his shoulder, and then he'd wrap me in his arms. I had six of my men, but I wasn't whole without them all.

“The others feel your worry,” Lear whispered.

“So what are we going to do about it? He's too far past his return date for it to be him just running late.”

“We make a plan. That's all we can do.”

“You guys have been doing a lot of planning. Let me know when you're actually going to do something about it,” I huffed. Standing, I left Lear there to think about my words. When I got back to the terrace, I observed Lear walking to the water. That's when something glinted under the sunlight. That bad feeling came over me again. As mysterious as it was, something was trying to warn me.

“Lear!” I called out. My voice drew the attention of the others, but Lear acted as though he hadn't heard me. Running, my legs carried me as fast as they could to stop him. It was like he couldn't hear me at all when I kept repeating his name. My feet were hurdling the minor waves, but it was still no use.

Once his hand reached down to pick up the shiny glass bottle, it was like time froze. A surge of power emanated from the bottle and sent everyone flying backward. It was like a bomb with no flame. Complaining, I rolled over to see Lear lying frozen in the shallow water, and I was too from how I floated in the water just a little.

Crawling over to him, the other guys got to their feet and sprinted to our location. Every single body part on me was shaking with worry and pain. Cupping his face, I patted his cheeks and tried to snap him out of it.

“Lear? Lear!” I screamed and cried.

A groan escaped his lips just as Aster was gathering me in his arms. He paused for me to be with him when he came to.

“Lear?” I worried.

“Well, hello there, beautiful.” He smirked before his brows drew in confusion. “Who are you?”

When he tried to sit up, the bottle was still in his hands for all of us to see. There was a rolled-up paper inside. Salvatore had sent us a message in a bottle with a curse on it.



# Envious Omen

Ashley Amy

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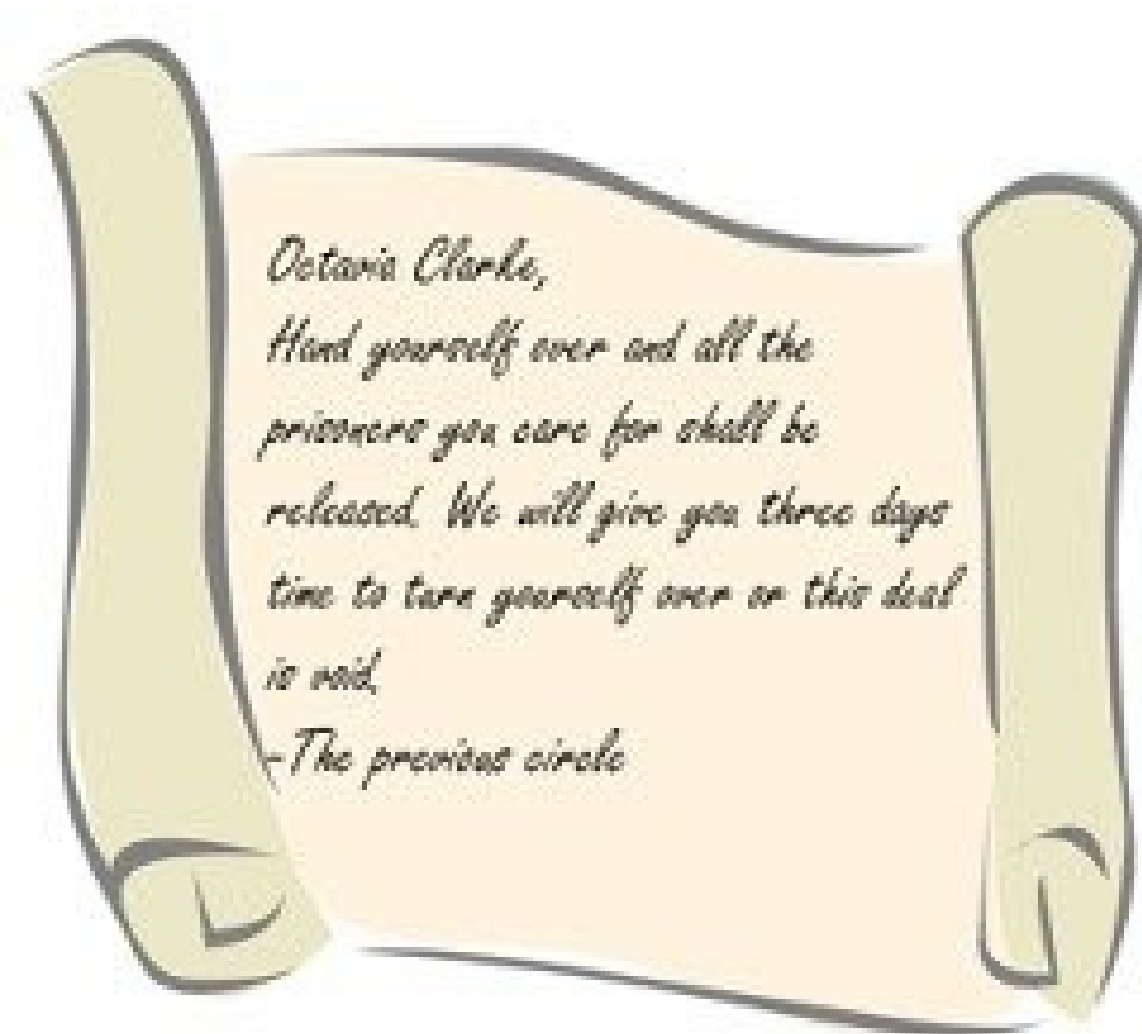
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## Chapter 1



***T***he message in the bottle...



**Leo**

I clutched the note my daughter showed me with a slight chuckle.

Fools. No one would pull the wool over her eyes with me by her side. I gave my daughter a smile, showing my delight. She seemed a bit confused by my joyous act, but she'd soon learn why. I'd teach *my* daughter everything she needed to know about this world and my former circle.

“Two can play this game,” I murmured. “Are you ready to learn the rules of the Devils?”

She sighed with a nod of relief. Knowing her, she started formulating a plan already. That's my girl, and with my guidance, this battle had already been won. Salvatore remained as stupid as when I tricked him last time with my leaving. This note just sealed his fate, and my daughter would best my Alpha.

## Chapter 2



**O**ctavia

Scrub... Rinse... Repeat.

Not even doing the dishes helped ease my mind tonight.

They should've been back hours ago. The guys all went to Cuba while I slept and left me with a note that they'd be back after their overnight excursion. There were only two of my guys here, and Lear couldn't even remember my fucking name right now. Only I had been stripped from his memory. We had to work that into our plans to figure out how to bring him back.

Beau stayed behind because he still couldn't separate from my side. We had been working on our relationship, but there had been serious damage done. It also made me feel guilty because he had to face my wrath when the others abandoned him to be stuck with the pissed off Pandora. The same Pandora who told them about my bad feeling? The one who told them we should all go in the first place?

Yup, I stood right here, like a housewife waiting for her chauvinistic husbands to return. My parents and their group were out enjoying an evening somewhere on the island as we waited for their return. Fiona took Lou out to start training her to be my badass Guardian, but I wouldn't be surprised if they were frolicking in the woods together. I didn't mind their need to bond because both sat with me earlier to plan ways to retrieve our guys. Thank heavens for not being the only female. Dealing with so much testosterone might've been the death of me.

We all agreed. When the guys got back, they were just going to hear my plan and suck it up. My Boo-Bear needed rescuing, and they were delaying me from doing just that. I understood them fearing my mental state, but they just didn't understand not having Bell or them would always be worse than my own suffering. My mind wouldn't rest, and my heart literally ached in their absence.

This whole bonding thing kicked up a notch. Hence why I moved onto this plan. Beau sat in his room reading as I planned to get my knowledge. After our sleepovers and abundant time together, things were working back into our new normal. Though, I did miss the old one with him. The guy who knew what to say to make my day better, sent me funny memes and GIFs just to see me smile. That had been the B I fell for.

Part of me almost felt bad with what I was about to do to get answers, but the other part pleaded it might also fix some of the damage between us. Turning the water off, I sighed while running my hands over the apron I stood in. Yes, I stood only in the apron and heels for the sex appeal.

I would be using my feminine willies to get the truth out of Beau on what the guys were truly doing. Seduce him into telling me their secrets... It had become my last resort, but as I stated, I wanted to be with him too. Not hiding



from him, I planned to tell him the second he came in to enjoy the dinner I'd be making. Adjusting the neckline to show off my boob canyon, I heard a startling noise behind me. Bracing myself for this new level of intimacy, I turned around with a smile.

"Hey, dinner is about twenty minutes out," I gestured outside where I used tinfoil to make potatoes and carrots on the fire.

Beau looked between me and the door that led out to the fire pit. The skepticism spoke loudly. "You've been going outside in just that?"

"May-bee," I hedged.

"Why?" He couldn't keep the humor hidden from his tone.

"Just in case my not-so-awesome cooking didn't make you melt." I bit the corner of my mouth.

He grinned and moved into the kitchen to be closer. "Oh? And why do you want to melt me?"

"Hmm..." I pretended to think it over, pulling out the strawberries I had cut the tops to. My mouth formed a perfect O-shape, and I bit it slowly to ponder. Beau gulped—probably remembering when I sucked on his cock with my lips like this—and tried to shift his building erection.

"V, this is playing dirty. I promised not to tell," his voice croaked just a little.

Giving him a saucy grin, I walked toward him. With another large bite for him to see the juices around my mouth, I let my tongue come out to lap it up.

"Do you think it's wrong of me to use you for sex like you did me?" I flashed him a wicked grin. Yes, I played dirty, but anyone would when one of their men had gone missing. "I still want you, you know."

"I do," Beau groaned. "I can feel your excitement. It's what drew me out of my room."

“Good. Now that you know I don’t plan to use you and leave you, how about we kick this up a notch?”

“Please,” he begged me to stop. I simply untied the back of my apron and the necktie as he watched it fall around Lou’s heels I stole. What? Unless they were boots or sneakers, I didn’t wear them.

“You don’t want this?” I pouted, running a careless finger over my hardening nipple. Beau had backed himself against the wall behind him and visibly gulped again.

“You’re like a goddamn siren! I’m not falling for it!” He closed his eyes to pretend even harder.

I shrugged. “Fine.”

My clipped tone drew his attention to peek, and I turned my back to him with a private smile. Hearing him sigh made me work extra hard not to chuckle. Dropping a strawberry, I did the famous bend and snap Elle Woods taught every young girl. Instead of snapping instantly, I paused in my bend to give him a view of everything between my thighs.

His gargled complaints were too perfect. Not that I used my seduction skills often, but they still paid off when I did need them. Before I could make it back up, two strong hands held me by the hips, and then I was moving forward. My surprised gasp had Beau snickering darkly.

My torso sprawled over the countertop, and my ass stayed on display for him over the edge. I moaned. I couldn’t help it when I got manhandled. Every girl needed a man to treat her like a slut sometimes. His hissing reached my ear just as he shoved two fingers into my pussy. “I wanted to apologize to you properly, make a grand gesture to win you back, but you had to go and do this...”

Heaven help me. The way he hooked his fingers while I remained bent. Oh,

Gods...

I panted and pushed back to meet his magical fingers.

“You know, I used to just want sex all the time with anyone,” he said it, but I didn’t want to hear that. “It was part of my curse to want more. Then I had you. And instead of wanting more women, I just wanted more of you!”

He roared, biting my neck as his free hand worked my nipple. Now, those words and those hands, I could get behind. Tossing head back, I cried out from the pleasure. No words formed. He demanded my attention to focus on his skillful hands.

“I can’t get enough of you, and I don’t think it’ll change when we form our circle,” he added, a little quieter.

“Do you want it to change?” I held my breath, waiting for his answer.

“No.” He released me completely, and I heard him sucking his fingers that were coated in my wetness. I waited and regrouped, leaning over the counter still. Before I could twist my body and regain control of this situation, I heard the telling sound of his zipper going down. Call me weak, but I wouldn’t be moving any time soon.

I felt him then.

This time, without the condom.

Sweeping up my leg and hooking it over his elbow, he turned me just enough to piston in with no help. I cried out from the force of his entry. My stomach knotted. Heat spread to my core. That same sizzling sensation swept down my spine, and now I knew it meant he belonged to me. Beau Revell was *mine*.

“Made for me,” he grunted.

“You... for... me...” I tried to work out, and he grinned, knowing he consumed me. His free hand palmed my ass cheek as his thumb swirled my

puckered hole. The only time I had been played with back there had been with Aster. Never in my life did I know I'd enjoy anal play. Even with Beau just circling the ring, it sent my pleasure into higher places.

“AH!” I gasped and cried out.

“I can tell you've never taken a cock back here. Tell me, V, would you let me right now?”

“Yes,” I pleaded for more. These men had filthy mouths.

“See? Perfect for me.”

Beau kept pumping into me, but his hands were no longer pinning me in place. The sound of a cap popping open had me peering over my shoulder to see he had a little thing of lube in his hands. Where he got it, or why he knew he'd need it, I didn't know.

“I told you, I felt your arousal, V,” he chuckled while working the lube around and into my ass. His dick never left my pussy as he readied my backdoor. It worked the best for me because if I hadn't felt the pleasure, the pain of his fingers entering me would have consumed me.

As he played and stretched my ass, his other hand reached over to hand me something silver. Once in my own hand, I found it was a bullet vibrator.

“Play with yourself as I go in. It'll help the little bit of pain you'll feel.”

Beau slowly pulled out of my pussy and left me aching for something to fill me. I whimpered while gearing up the bullet. Rubbing my clit between my legs, I felt Beau pause to watch me swirl around the swollen nub.

“Fucking perfect, V. FUCK!” He shouted, easing his fingers to retract just enough to spread my ass for his shaft's entrance. “Breathe, baby...”

I did. Or I tried to. My little hole started closing up automatically. Tensing from the intrusion, Beau kissed my shoulder.

“Focus on how good your clit feels. I'll make you feel good back here once

I'm in." With his head already lined up, he took the hand that wasn't helping open my rosebud and put two fingers in my cunt. I grew too close to an orgasm just from that. With every point between my legs being stimulated, I didn't know if I could wait for him to enter. All of it started to blur together when the sensations mixed.

I came.

With a loud shriek of pleasure, I let myself go. That had been the moment Beau waited for. His dick moved in during my high, and from the overstimulation, I didn't feel a terrible force of pain. This would be the only moment where I'd say his practice with others had been a blessing. It still hurt, but I heard how girls talked about anal sex. I had an excellent partner to help me ease into this amazing sex. This would definitely be happening again.

Beau moved slowly at first to keep me comfortable, but the second I told him I was okay, he took off and fucked me in the ass. His hands held my bent waist as I tried to keep the bullet on my clit. We worked like this for a while until he lifted my leg onto the counter.

*Oh! Ohh... Woah.*

This man knew how to work every angle and gave me new sensations I didn't know how to formulate. The highs he took me to, should have been unreachable. And yet...

"Gah! Beau!" I trembled and shook as one of the hardest orgasms I'd ever had raked through my whole body. Everywhere between my legs became soaked from myself squirting. He grunted and drove in harder, seeing me squirt at the angle he had me in. To be honest, I had never squirted before. This form of sex had all sorts of new things coming at me. I came down from

my high just as he pulled out and came all over my back. Not minding the wetness, he laid over me and held me at the waist.

“You can thank me for coming on your back later. In the ass is a terrible place to clean out.” He kissed my temple while we caught our breath.

“Well then, thank you.” I pecked his lips. His grin turned serious as he cupped my cheek.

“Had you just asked me where they went, I would have told you, V. You own me completely. You have since I met you. It just took you breaking my dick to know it.” We shared a laugh until a grunt had us flipping around to see Lear.

With one fist cupping his bulbous head, and the other jerking his length, he came. When his eyes opened, he had the decency to look embarrassed.

“Sorry. Live porn always does it for me.” He winked and left us.

Mind him, I would never have cared if Lear watched or joined in, but I wanted him to when he remembered me. Not when he compared me to a simple pornstar he’d forget later tonight. This guy acted like the first Lear I had been introduced to, and it broke my heart just a little. Beau sensed my hurt.

“We’ll get his memory back, and he’ll be the devoted stepbrother he was to you.”

Sweet words, but...

“Where are the others, B? I need answers, and I need them now.”

He sighed, giving me the address that I’d need when I got to Cuba.

## Chapter 3



**B**<sup>eau</sup>

Knowing I would be getting a lot of shit for this, I braced myself for what would come when we stepped foot in Cuba. I also had to protect V from our fathers owning most of the ports in the area. Leo had his boats cloaked and enhanced for faster speeds, so our journey wouldn't be long. Even with our leg of the trip being five hundred miles in length, he warped the trip to portal closer. That man had some hidden talents that I wanted to learn. Call it my Glutton, but Leo had mastered many things while hiding away.

Speaking of, he helped me load up the boat while V showered. Lou already had her party clothes on because we'd be going to an underground demon club called the *Eighth Wonder*. She and Fiona refused to let V and I go alone. Nope, I had been outvoted from the females banding together. Our girl had every right to be mad with our circle. First, they ignored her feeling. Second, they pulled this stunt and left me with the fallout. The only good thing that

came from that was reconnecting with her. It literally rejuvenated me to be at full power again.

Sadly, Bell wasn't at full power because he hadn't mated her yet, and now he was missing after her foreboding feeling. V needed Bell just as much as the rest of us, and she should be included in the decision making. I get she went through hell and back with Minus and Sal, but let the girl channel that rage in beating them. She's not a fucking flower.

Now, that I was feeling better—the only reason I had been okay with this plan had been the extra time I got with her—I could defend her if needed. Fiona would help with her skills as a trained Guardian. I'd seen the school they train at from doing some private lessons of my own. Nothing there could be earned easily, and Fiona had been regarded as one of the best. Lou would be training from her girlfriend to become V's, and I knew there would be no better teacher. I had already offered up my knowledge too from being a top marksman, and they utilized me yesterday.

Not being sick, I could enjoy life a little more. It seemed connecting with her in the kitchen gave me an extra boost in energy as well. Something that would come in handy for the trouble that we might get into. No longer being broken meant I could protect her with my weapon skills. We all climbed into the watercraft, waiting for V to come out. The two other females had been quiet, and I knew it was from them missing their third member.

Sighing, I beheld to the rapid portal that would launch our boat through the other side and sail us next to the coast of Cuba. I just hoped the guys were ready for the scolding V had planned. Speaking of my lady, she finally made her way down, and I became speechless. Tight, leather booty shorts, a red bralette, a cropped leather jacket, and thigh-high leather boots adorned her



perfect body. My girl looked like a walking wet dream with that bad girl edge. Her wet hair didn't help.

Yup, I had to adjust myself but smirked, knowing she was about to kill our circle as well. That's my girl. The badass one that looked fierce and ready to take on the world. Part of it had to be a mask, but the other part? Completely the girl I fell for. The one who took what I did to her and used it against me. The one who slipped me sleeping pills and drew a dick on my face. That was the girl before me now. Not the one who hid in her room to avoid the crowded areas of her dad's castle.

"You better bring her back to me, ya hear?" Leo jostled me from my thoughts.

"Yes, sir. I plan to keep her safe. If anything, it's her plans that should worry us both." I tipped my head in the direction she came from. Leo smirked from seeing the wild woman his daughter turned into. He hadn't perceived this side of her yet. Though, when she asked him for a boat, he just handed over a set of keys like they shared a secret.

If she had been my daughter, I'd lock her up to never be hurt again.

"Thanks... Dad," V tried out the word on her tongue. It had been no secret she wanted a father figure, and Leo loved having a daughter. His grin grew from hearing it as well, so he kissed the top of her damp head to let us leave.

V came over to me and pecked my waiting cheek. We weren't completely back to what we were, but I vowed to get us there. I just remained content that she allowed me the second chance.

"Thank you for helping me," she whispered between us.

"Just don't leave me out of your plans, V. You know I'll have your back."

She snorted. "Yeah, now that everyone can see my feeling had a consequence."

“V, to be fair, you were a bit of a wreck, and we didn’t know if it was you overreacting or real from your distress.” She pinned me with a glare that shut me up with a pop of my lips. *Right, I’m on good terms... Can’t be ruining it now.*

~

## **Lucius**

The place had been packed the second everyone heard the seven were coming. Rin about killed everyone from it, and I did the one thing we’ve always done to rein him in. Aster cursed up a storm from what I did. They all agreed to it until Aster reminded us, after the fact, as to why we’d be skinned alive. The outcome of what my call would lead to hit me like a hurricane.

Shit...

Too late now as we all watched from the upper level to see Kara approach our unstable Alpha. We could still fix this without hurting Octavia... I hoped. The fog machines made everything have a mystifying presence, and the lighting helped create the secret environment everyone wanted. No one came to a club to be Bob from the office.

Girls wore skimpy clothes, and guys pretended they were lawyers to get laid. Kara had the same idea by her revealing two-piece. Guilt gnawed at me, knowing my actions would hinder our bond with Octavia. I turned to the guys to have them help me. No matter how bad our attempt to save Bell went, my mind should never have thought to call Kara. It was purely out of habit, and I kicked myself for it now.

We made a huddle to discuss a plan. “I need to fix this before Octavia finds out.”

Before any of them could reply, a feminine voice made everything else go mute. “Find out what?” Octavia’s eyes scanned over all of us, and then her brows pulled into confusion. I could already tell what question sat on her tongue. “Where’s Sevrin?”

*Fuck me sideways...*

## Chapter 4



**O**ctavia

Time froze.

All that heavy bass in the background? Didn't register when I saw them making googly-eyes at each other. Beau yelled and tore into the guys for this heinous decision that they all agreed on to rein in Rin. They called another woman to tame my beast. The same woman who fucked them all and fucked Rin when he got like this. She apparently had been unbreakable as an immortal and could handle what he had to unleash.

My mind went to the moment Rin and I shared blood. Had he done it with her as well? Okay, that idea made my blood boil. He was my fucking mate and a member of my circle.

All those words he promised me seemed to be from the high of our moment together. None of it meant a damn thing to him, and I just stood back to observe her breakable hand rub up and down his arm. Most would think I was

overreacting. Hell, I prayed I was. Ever since I forged the bonds with the guys, their emotions mixed heavier with my already complex ones.

Lately, they had called me a little ball of chaos, and I felt that in my soul. Plus, the fact I had been stimulating Lear's sin, and Lear just so happened to be the one who couldn't remember me hurt my heart more than anything.

Funny how Karma worked. Even funnier, Karma just happened to be the ho hanging on my man because she's the only one who could calm his beast. Because a mate shouldn't be able to do that. Nope. My job description seemed to only be letting him fuck me senseless when his other bitches weren't around. Her hand moved to his thigh, and I took a step forward. That's when Milo reached out to stop me, but when I flipped my furious gaze onto him, he knew not to mess with me.

"Beau, make sure no one follows me. If anyone does, I'm not sure how out of control I'll get." That would be my only warning. He nodded, and I felt his sympathy for me from here. Wise man. At least one of them remained loyal.

"Love," Aster started, but my seething glare stopped him right in his tracks.

"Not a single one of you will talk to me. I've been left out of every decision, and then I find you hooking up with exes behind my back!"

They all tried to cut in, so I raised my hand to halt their futile attempts.

"I'm letting you know that there is no excuse for this. There never will be. If Rin needed someone to calm his beast, you should've found his MATE!"

Unable to handle all of this, I flipped them my two birds and stormed away. Lou and Fiona followed me to the stairs that led down to the bar they were sitting cozy at. Jealousy reared its ugly head, and I wasn't going to stop it now. Nope. I let it fester with my imagination.

Karma, the beautiful, leggy redhead in a tiny skirt and tube top, leaned forward and whispered with the shadow of a nibble on the shell of his ear.

Now, here came my next problem. My own insecurities when it came to comparing myself to the walking goddess. No matter how pretty anyone was, there was always something someone wished to change.

Karma had everything I did envy. Long legs, hair that naturally fell to be pretty, pale skin that shimmered under the light. It also made me compare myself to her sexually. I knew I shouldn't, and I hated that my mind did, but it remained true. Standing a few feet away from them, I felt inadequate as a woman. Not that I would ever let anyone feed on my insecurities. Mask... I had to keep my façade up to prove I had not lost my mind completely.

"My hotel is right around the corner," she whispered, and he growled. I watched his deft fingers sink into the exposed flesh on the sides of her lower abdomen.

"Kara, I can't," he panted like he had to fight the choice. Yes, my heart just broke a little. Telling me I was his queen? I scoffed from how gullible I had been.

"And why not, Sevrin?" my mouth opened without me even thinking. The snide remark nearly growled from my throat.

Karma—who didn't jump away from my man even with my announcement—lowered her eyebrows at me. "Let me guess, you've been dipping your toe in the pond here, and this one thinks she has claim?" I wanted to shave off the eyebrows that she used to heighten her expressions by arching one at me. "Go away, little girl. I'm the only girl he uses more than once."

I swear pure red blinded me. Lou reached out to take my wrist as if she knew I had planned to jump the immortal bitch. Karma's a bitch... Pun fully intended on this one.

"Louise!" Karma named Kara smiled and greeted my friend.

"Kara, it might be wise to move away from Rin," Lou tried to give a

warning. That's when Karma noticed Lou restraining me. My sweet friend trying to be nice to the slut.

"And what's this little girl going to do to me?" She sat back in her stool and cackled. "I'm immortal."

Rin hadn't moved. Nope, his usual scowl had been replaced by shock. Karma took a sip of her cocktail before setting it down for her hand to play with the edges of the napkin it sat on.

"Immortal." I nodded while moving closer to the two of them. The word slurred slowly, like I had to digest it. "Right..."

In my hidden sheath on the inside of my shorts, my hand felt for the cool metal. Those who comprehended my innocent act, knew I had something up my sleeve. Even Fiona braced herself by holding the back of Lou's shoulders.

With a flash of my own movement, I rammed the blade right through the top of her hand to pin it to the wooden surface. There hadn't been regret in my decision as I felt the silver sink into her bones. She screamed and shrilled while watching that white napkin stain beneath from her crimson liquid.

"Huh, would you look at that?" I let my pointer finger play in the pooling blood that spilled out from under her palm.

Rubbing my thumb and finger together, I studied her blood on them like it had been fascinating. My sharp gaze turned back to her, and I let her see just how psychotic my roots were with a leer of my own.

"You can still bleed." I twisted away from the two at the bar, leaving her with my not-so-subtle warning.

I wouldn't look at Rin right now. Not after how much my heart mourned from the betrayal. Instead, I took my jacket from Lou and put myself back together, speaking nonchalantly to him.

"Sevrin, I expect you to find a way to break our mating. Oh, and from this

little stunt, and the one that brought you here in the first place, consider my acceptance to be your Pandora revoked.”

“Your Pandora!” Karma now had the decency to humble herself before me. I turned around to see her better with an empty laugh of my own.

“I think I just made it clear that I wouldn’t be from this point on. Enjoy my mate. It seems he’s more like his father than he’s willing to admit.”

Was that last part a low blow? Yeah, but ask me if I cared at the moment. While he and the others came here to party, I had been worried about them, Lear, and Bell. How could they do this to me?

They all left me to stir in my misery. Worse, I let them because I believed they wanted the best for me. It appeared to be the time I let my mother’s habit to not make friends lead me again.

Don’t get close...

Now, I knew why.

Tears swam in my eyes, but I held my head up and marched for the exit.

Karma’s words were almost lost to my ears from how loud it got in here. “I think I’m in love...”

I wanted to smirk, but nothing computed into my brain. Men whistled, and a few catcalls had been given. Just like the noise, nothing registered in my mind. The crisp air of the coast greeted me in my departure. Sighing, I studied the environment and looked back to my two only companions.

“You ready?” I asked them together.

“Ready for what?” Rin growled right behind me. His voice hurt too much to hear without the music drowning it a little.

Knowing I had to face the music of the circle, I just turned with a shrug. “None of your damn business. Go back to the island and take care of Lear while we work our plan.”



Sassy and pissed, not a single one of them knew how to deal with this version of me. I hadn't been this version of me in a while. No denying I missed my spunk, but I didn't like why it had come out.

"Kitten, you need to calm down." Rin raised his hands like he approached a wild bear. Huh, I could see the connection. My emotions were spiked, and like a drug, I remained greedy to keep my high. I didn't want to feel the pain, the regret of my words, any of it.

"Fuck off, Sevrin. Go back to your little boys' night out. Enjoy your time off while I deal with what needs to be done."

Rin scrubbed his face with a sigh. "I was trying to get my dragon under control in there."

"Oh? So, both of you wanted to keep using Karma?"

He muttered curses under his breath. "Kitten, he was about to kill her from touching us. Hell, I might've too, but I know her intentions were to help, so I fought my dragon."

The position they had been in could go both ways. I lost a little of my luster, but...

"Why was she called in the first place? Why do you all keep leaving me out of everything? You sent Bell away when I warned you. You came here and left me behind after that whole thing about needing to stay close to me..."

This time, I couldn't hold back the tears. They had hurt me. Whether on purpose or not, they had.

"You know what, it doesn't matter. None of this will ever work when you keep me in the closet or locked in a room like I'm fragile!"

"But you are fragile!" Lucius roared from behind the others. "We've had to walk on eggshells around you because of it!"

The verbal slap got me. "Nothing ever works without communication, and

I'm tired of this. I am the eighth sin. I am your Pandora.”

“Love, we just-”

“You haven't even asked me! I get that I'm messed up in the head, but I need a little boost of confidence from you! All you've done recently, has made me feel like I hinder the circle!”

The doors to the club opened and out came the bitch herself. She sauntered over to my men like she belonged between them. When her arms looped over Milo's and Lucius's shoulders, I waited for them to tell her off. Instead, I got greeted with silence.

“Lou, Fiona, you ready?” I looked to them as they took in the crazy sight. When they gave me their approving gestures, I faced Beau. “I'll use my connection to you when it's time.”

“Be careful, V. I need you to return in one piece.”

“I won't be one without him too,” I answered as he came over to hug me.

“I'm giving you my trust here, V. Please don't make me regret it.”

“You won't. You know the plan. It's solid. The second I get back...”

“We'll get Lear's memories.” Beau kissed my forehead with a smile. This had been the B I knew when I first started school. I faced the rest of this group and cleared my throat.

“You guys helped me when I needed it the most, and I'm grateful. But I won't be swathed in bubble wrap and placed to the side. I've survived my whole life on the dark side. Hopefully, you remember that for when I get back.” I left them with my words and walked away. I had to prove to not only them that I could be strong still, but to myself.

## Chapter 5



**M**ilo

Her perky and plump ass sashayed away from us. Not a single eye in our group could look away from the killer body Princess had. Anger swept through me, and I immediately removed Kara's arm from my shoulders. How had I missed her moving in and doing that? Probably when Princess had me frozen in my place.

"Stay the fuck away from me, Kara." I sneered at the whore who the others called. Princess's words rung true with our level of disrespect.

"Fuck off, Lo! You guys called me!" She curled her lip at me. We had never gotten along.

"That was a mistake you all are going to pay for," Rin growled with his predatory words.

"We already are," Luce looked to Princess's back as her and the other two females got in a cab.

“Not as much as V is, I guarantee that.” Beau rolled his eyes and tutted with his mouth. “You guys have no idea what you put her through just leaving her behind like that. You fucking abandoned her!”

“We were coming back!” Rin snarled. I just stayed off to the side and let them duke it out. We had messed up. All of us chose this course, and now our girl could barely look at us.

“Yeah? Tell that to the girl who has been abandoned her whole life! How do you think she took your note?”

Aster went to answer, but Beau cut him off.

“That was a rhetorical question. For the last two days, I’ve had to feel everything bleeding from her because she feels unworthy. She blames herself for what happened to Bell, and Lear, and then you assholes leave!”

Now Beau started sounding like a female. Though from the shitshow in the club, he had every reason to be upset.

“Where is she going?” Rin finally asked what would be important.

“I can’t tell you. You’ve failed every plan so far. I won’t deny our girl her chance to finally put all of you in place.”

“What’s her plan?” I finally voiced my concern. I didn’t mind Octavia being the strong, independent woman she was, but I also wanted to keep her safe.

“My loyalty is to her right now. None of you deserve it after this last week. Maybe you should all put a little more faith in her.”

“It’s not about faith, Beau! Is she safe? How long does she plan to be? Or are you also forgetting we can’t be away from her for too long!” I shouted.

“Out of all of us, I’m the only one who’s felt that true absence, so fuck off, Milo!” Beau used my real name. “I’ve also been trying to hold her together while you were away! Or that you made her continuously worry while you

decided to go clubbing and exceeded the timetable you gave her. Be mad at her and me all you want, but you were all selfish pricks tonight.”

“I’m kind of with Beau on this one. You boys have never had much practice with relationships, but if what I’m gathering is right, your Pandora has every right to walk away.”

Fuck, even Kara agreed. She’s the bottom of the barrel who never cared. If she openly admitted we screwed up, we probably did.

“You don’t get a free pass for not knowing either,” Beau stated. “She has been tortured, and you left her behind. Now, I’m leaving to go fulfill my end of her plan. You can join me, but someone needs to go back to Lear.”

Beau walked back to his boat that sat directly by ours.

“He’s right,” I admitted. “We don’t know how to work a relationship, and we were all selfish with thinking we could be just as we were before her.”

“Yeah. After Beau painted that picture of her just worrying, I feel terrible.” Luce shook his head and observed the empty road she left on. “But what is she doing now?”

“Doesn’t matter, mates. Octavia is right. We need to trust her and include her. It might kill me to not know, but we deserve it for keeping her out of our plan.”

“And for calling me, you idiots.” Kara shook her head. “No girl wants to walk in and see another woman attached to her man. You gone and fucked up this one, boys.” And with of blink of my eye, Kara popped out of this plane. Must be nice to wield that power.

“So, what do we do?” Luce asked.

“We follow her lead. There’s a lesson she’s teaching us, and she has every right to do it. Now, who’s staying, and who’s going back to the island?” Rin asked our remaining group.

## **Bellamy**

The cathedral where my father took me had been small and quaint. The candles blew a little every time the door opened with the five former circle members coming and going.

My circle had six hours left before they'd take me and vanish. My mind knew it would be best for them to keep Via safe, and I was okay with that. Never would I wish her to be taken over me after what she had already gone through. Knowing her though, and that last promise, the guys were going to have to lock her up to keep her from coming.

That's when whispers and movement picked up around me. I shared a look with Zeke as he kneeled on the other side of the altar. We were before the pews and had a clear sight of the door. If the former circle's men were acting like this, it meant one of two things. Either the guys had come for me or my Honey had.

My father moved behind me just as Minus moved behind Zeke. This would be their stance to make sure my group didn't pull anything over their eyes. The wait seemed short when the two large doors parted across from us. In this tiny church, I could see Via plain as day with Lou and Fiona. Where were the guys? Why was she here without protection?

"Ah, Miss Clarke. I see you wanted to wait as long as possible to turn yourself over." Sal came around to study my girl. Her grey eyes only saw me, and I could tell by how she studied me, she wanted to calculate the damage I took from their beatings.

“I’m here, aren’t I?” she challenged Sal by looking directly into the Alpha’s eyes. By the quirk in her lip, she knew it too. Sal trembled from his unstable dragon wanting to come out and force her submission. Probably upset, he remained mad Via didn’t cower or fall to her knees after everything they did. That’s my girl.

“It appears so. Where are the other children?” Sal moved around the altar to place himself between us.

“Not here. I brought two Guardians to retrieve the prisoners, and myself to go with you. They didn’t agree with my plan.” Via stepped forward to show this fight wouldn’t be backed down from.

“Yes, I could see why they’d struggle handing over their conduit,” Minus tittered as his grip tightened on Zeke.

“I’ll remain right here until I know they are safe. Once they are clear, I’ll go with you.” Via stood her ground.

“Trying to call the shots?” Sal smirked. “What if we decided to take you all instead?”

“I’m sure you know by now that I’ve been with Leo.” Via walked along a pew and ran her hand over the dusty back.

“What does he have to do with this?”

“Well, being a Devil himself, he told me anything written in a bargain is bound by word, if the other party accepts. He also studied the letter and found it to be your handwriting, Salvatore.”

“The others didn’t write it, though.” He sneered.

“Nope, but you addressed the letter as ‘we’ and signed your circle. Anyone helping you now falls under that agreement. Either keep your word, or you owe me a favor. Favors from Devils are very rare for a reason, right?”

All of us watched as Sal blanched. Via learned what she needed to know to

save me and Zeke.

“In the letter, you also state the prisoners that I care for will be released, and I’m an empath. So, I hope you aren’t keeping other people a secret. The universe will know.”

Holy hell... My woman knew how to barter like I’ve never seen anyone do before.

Leo really taught her the ins and outs of this mess. Of course, he would. Being her father meant a lot to him. Via whipped the letter out from her bra—that she only wore under her jacket—as Lou handed her a pen.

She signed her name at the bottom.

“There. Now, this contract is in motion. As it states, I am here to hand myself over for the release of the prisoners I care about. You better learn to word your contracts better because, with the Universe as my witness, I care about anyone being hurt or detained against their will.”

“I’m going to make your life a living hell for this,” Sal snarled.

“Mhmm. I have no doubt you’ll try to break me.” Via shrugged. “So are you going to give me my favor now, or are you going to hold up your end?”

Sal snapped his fingers and the ropes binding Zeke and I were cut away. I moved to Via to protect her, but she placed her hand on my chest.

“I am now bound by my word, Boo-Bear.” Her words sank in. She had to go with them. “Please, trust me, and that I know what I’m doing.”

“With what happened last time...” I couldn’t finish my words.

“This time, I know you’ll be waiting for me. I don’t take that lightly.” She kissed my cheek. “I love you.”

Her whisper tickled my ear just as she began to walk to Sal. Lou took my hand and hurried us out. We were being let go, but that didn’t mean they couldn’t chase us. Our fathers’ militia remained on guard for their devious



acts. Lou ran us to a waiting taxi and rattled off the address to the harbor. None of us talked until the car stopped, and we were out. Prying ears would be everywhere. At the dock, we found Rin, Aster and Beau waiting for us. Taking a seat in the boat, I noticed my boat I brought here with Zeke.

“Where’s Kitten?” Rin’s eyes scoured the land.

“She turned herself over by binding your dad to his word. He has to let go of all his prisoners unless he wants to owe Via a favor.”

“No wonder you didn’t tell me the plan!” Rin yelled at Beau. Our Glutton only shrugged like her being taken wouldn’t be an issue.

“Trust her, Rin. This isn’t the only part of her plan. She had to hand herself over to them to fulfill the exchange.”

“She just saved a lot of lives too,” I added. Most of me wanted to go get her now, but the other part stayed stuck in awe of what she had been capable of.

“Your dad doesn’t know anything about her talents, or who her dad is. Instead of just assuming she’s going to fail, try believing in her.” Lou stood and went to the front of the boat to get off. “Okay, Rin. You’re staying here with me, and we’ll take this other boat back when it’s time. Beau, you wait here for us. We’ll see the rest of you when Via’s done.”

“I feel like I’m a little lost on all of this, yeah.” Aster scrubbed his face.

“I’ll let her explain when she’s done investigating.” Lou hopped off, and Rin joined her, knowing all of this had been out of his hands. “Next time, try to listen to her idea. She’s pretty brilliant, if you remember what she did to you guys.”

We all sat back and digested Lou’s words. I didn’t know what happened while I was gone, but by the guilt on my friends’ faces, I knew something had gone down. Great. I’d been gone a few days, and shit hits the fan. Looked like I have my own investigating to do when I get home.

## Chapter 6



**O**ctavia

Well, at least this time I had been contained in a cell for me to see the others had been cleaned out. My isolation didn't come from a separate room. Nope. It came from being the only prisoner here. That sent a jolt of pride in my heart.

A noise sounded to alert me that people approached. It hadn't been too long since I had been brought here myself. Being yanked by a rope around her wrists, I found a tall woman with darker skin being shoved into the cell across from me. She fought and jerked on her end of the rope, but the three guards moving her won.

"You'll pay for this! On my life, Benjamin Argos, you will suffer for this!" The haughty man she spoke to stepped forward, and I knew instantly this had to be Bell's dad.

"My son failed me because of you, Laurel. I don't take kindly to knowing he was too weak to do what needed to be done."

“My son proved to me that he’ll be a good man even after a life with you.” It clicked then. This African woman had been with the guys the night of the ceremony. This lady had to be Bell’s mom. The one who raised him right from having a prick as a dad, but I could see her resilience even after the years of abuse from the man before her.

“He’s one of the best I know,” I talked out loud without realizing it. Both parents looked at me like neither knew they had an audience. Laurel smiled, tipping her head to me.

“Thank you for saving him, but he won’t take it well.” I bowed my head in reply and waited for Benjamin to leave. He had been too furious with two women ganging up on him to want to stay.

Once we heard the door slam, I looked back to Laurel. “Them taking you changes my plan. If anyone comes in, tell them I’m sleeping.”

She simply nodded, but I could tell she wanted to ask more. Most did from not knowing who or what I was. Lying back on my metal slab of a bed, I closed my eyes and focused on the one tether I knew how to reach. Seeing through his eyes, I found Rin in a screaming match with Lou.

*Rin? I called for his attention.*

Feeling the tension leave his body, he sighed and meandered to the window. This left Lou screaming at his back. Their hotel would be right on the waterfront for a quick escape.

*Are you coming to me, Kitten?*

*That had been the plan...*

*How come I hear a but coming?*

*They just brought in Laurel. She came after my agreement, so I can’t bargain for her freedom.*

*Kitten, I know you want to save the world, but the guys that are bonded to*

*you will need you too.*

*I know. Just give me a few days to figure this out. We both know I can escape from my tether to you. Let me see if I can find out anything important.*

*Kitten... He paused.*

*Yeah?*

*I'm sorry. For not listening to your warning, for leaving you out of the plan, for what happened at the club... You were right. You are one of us. I guess it's just going to take some time to get used to you being a force on your own.*

*Sevrin... What did I say to that? The Great Sevrin Thana apologized to me. It wouldn't be a fix until change happened, but he at least admitted his weakness.*

*You don't need to say anything, Kitten. I told you, you were my queen, and I treated you below a pawn. None of us have ever been in a relationship besides Lo and Luce. This new dynamic is going to bring some new trials.*

*Communication. It's the only way we'll ever work.*

*Whatever it takes, Kitten, I'm all in. I'm not willing to lose you.*

*We'll talk more about that when I get out of here. Just please, trust me.*

*I do, but it doesn't mean I won't worry about you.*

*I worry about you too.*

*I know. Beau told us about our stupidity. It won't happen again, Kitten. All of us, we want you.*

*Can this wait until I get back?*

*Yes, as long as you understand one thing.*

*And what's that?*

*You're mine, Kitten.*

*Only if you remain mine. I don't share, Sevrin. I know it's odd from me*

*getting seven of the best men created, but my heart... I can't share.*

*I will never let another woman into my bed. Like I said, I had been trying to stop my dragon from shredding her apart. He sides with you too. We are yours.*

*Good, because I love you, Sevrin.* My second admission came out, so I held my breath while waiting for him to respond. Could the Alpha say the words I needed to hear?

*My heart is only yours, Kitten.*

My heart swelled with pride, and I knew he could feel it.

*I need to go. They're probably close to coming for a visit soon.*

*Be safe. My beast is struggling already with this.*

*I will. I'll check in when I can.*

Sitting up on my bed, I found Laurel studying me. Pointing to my head without words, she caught on that I had some kind of power.

"Are they safe?"

"Yes."

She sat back on her own bed, tipping her head. "Good."

"How come you're here?" I questioned.

"Word traveled fast that they had my son. No one touches my son without dealing with me." She sat taller, and I knew we would get along well.

"Bell told me what you went through to help him. I think you're a bigger force than their circle realizes. Someone who can take pain while keeping a clear head should be their biggest worry."

"Much like you, Miss Clarke. My son filled me in on all you've suffered. Those who aren't strong enough for this evil world will be eaten alive. Just like most of the mothers to your circle. Only two of us remain, and we were raised as demons."

Every word from her mouth rang true. Not wanting to learn more about them losing their moms, I let the conversation die there. She could tell something needed done on my end, so she guarded our position to warn me. Lying back and staring at the ceiling, I knew it was time to get to work. Lilith told me to trust the shadows. Now it seemed like the best time to figure out how.

“I’m having another nap,” I used my code, and she understood I would be doing something. Closing my eyes, I focused on Rin’s tether to take me to where I needed to go. Hopefully, this wouldn’t be for nothing.

~

## **Lear**

They just kept giving me odd glances. They thought I didn’t listen in when they spoke about the fact that I couldn’t remember Octavia. My friends had changed. Everything in the middle of their transition blurred in my memory. From the assholes I had known to these guys spouting about their world revolving around a girl. How we got here had been stripped from my mind. Though, every time my mind tried to place her, I felt this nudging of... something.

“What are we going to do?” Bell asked. He apparently had missed the grand moment I had my memory wiped.

“Nothing until Octavia and Rin get back.” Luce stepped up.

“I can’t even imagine what Lear’s going through.” Aster blew out a breath. “Us being gone and now her?” He whistled.

“Look, Lear lost his memory, but we had to get Bell back before we could help him. Now, we just have to wait for the other two to return.”

I sighed from the hall I stayed down to listen in.

“It’s hard hearing you’re useless.” Leo appeared beside me, studying the guys. The shadows concealed our hiding spot.

“There’s just a lot missing, and I hate that they think I’m broken. All over some girl I can’t remember.”

“Well, remember this. That *girl* is my daughter.” His barreling tone laid all the warning it needed. I flinched from sounding so callous about her.

“I’m sorry. It just isn’t like them to be this distraught over a girl.”

Leo moved to stand shoulder to shoulder with me. His smile seemed more humorous than anything.

“Aside from Bellamy admitting his love for my daughter the day you all showed up, you were the first to truly love her. You and I talked about it before this curse hit you. She needed your comfort, and you gave it from already loving her. She loves you too, and I think that’s what killing her the most. You think your friends changed? Out of all of them, you’ve been the most protective of my little girl.”

“Why are you telling me this?” I gulped. The girl who watched me like a hawk, loved me?

“I’m warning you, son. Octavia will go to the ends of this earth to find a way to help you. Something within you calls to her now. Correct?”

I nodded from feeling that something there.

“She’ll spend forever getting you back because deep down, your soul still knows you belong to her.”

“What if there isn’t a cure for what happened to me? What if I never get my memories back?” I whispered my true fear.

“Then you create new ones, so the old ones won’t matter.” Leo’s advice had me looking to the man.

“For someone who has been in isolation for so long, you give pretty good advice,” I stated.

“Well, I spent twenty years away from the one woman I loved, and I found out I had a daughter too. Hating Lily would’ve been easy for it. Forgiving her and getting to know my daughter seemed more important, though. I didn’t lose my memory like you, but I lost time.”

We stayed together until the guys noticed us. They stopped talking long enough to look guilty. My jealousy roared that they had it good, and I didn’t. I had always been the outcast to the Universe. Momo had been my constant reminder.

Speaking of my familiar, he squawked at me all the time asking ‘Where’s my bitch?’. Lucius’s snowy owl named Hedwig seemed out of sorts too. The rest of our pets had been in Cuba, spying on the enemy still. Leo pulled me out of my trailing thoughts by bumping our shoulders together. I could see a great sadness resting within his irises.

“Remember one word, Lear. Time. You can’t get that back, son.” Leo patted me on the back before sauntering away. Damn, that fucker was right. I wanted to run to my room and hide, but I needed to do my part with this. If I had fallen in love with Octavia once, maybe I could do it again.



## Chapter 7



**O**ctavia

All the shadows danced. The thing was, there had been nothing around to create them. No, they were alive all on their own. I mean, the name of the place being the Shadowlands should've been enough to know shadows were the tenants. The smell still reeked of decay like the time I moved through to get to Rin.

This time, I didn't hold the tether as I studied the deadly landscape. Nothing remained living here, and it scared me for myself. Only Lilith's words telling me to trust the shadows had me being stupid enough to be here. I had always been dubbed insane and coming here, not holding a tether, proved that.

*Trust the shadows. Ask them to lead you to what you seek...* Well, speaking of Lilith.

*What if I'm seeking you?* I kept walking forward.

*It is not our time to meet again. Focus on what needs done now, Octavia. What do you need to know?*

*Um... I guess I need to know how to help Lear? Or maybe what Salvatore's really up to?* I had to contemplate it all from not knowing where to start.

*Very good. Now, ask any shadow to show what you seek.*

*Thanks, Lilith. I owe you for your help.*

*One day, you will free me fully. There is no thanks to give when I know that.*

Opening my eyes, I looked at a dead street corner with a flickering streetlamp. Somehow, I walked into a destitute town. It had a post-apocalyptic vibe from the crumbling buildings and zero population.

This place made no sense.

Sighing, I gazed over to the lamp and let my crazy show. Yes, I'd be talking to a shadow.

"So, um, uh... Can one of you show me where Salvatore Thana is?" Within seconds of my words, a giant, black wave moved from the lamp and stood before me. Manipulating its own shape, the thing transformed into a human shadow. His silhouette beckoned me to follow, and I did with my feet trying to formulate how to walk. Now, this had to be me losing my mind. We walked out of the town and down a long dirt road. There's no way I could've done this without a guide.

"Will I one day be able to move without a shadow-guide?" I asked the man-shadow.

Shaking his head, he just waved me to keep following. Looking him over, I noticed he even gave himself a rather large eggplant between the legs. I mean, I knew shadows can elongate when the sun is right, but the rest of him stayed normal. Huh, must be nice to be a shadow. Well, if they could have sex. The female shadows would enjoy him. Plus, if he had been ugly, they'd never know. Nope, it was like someone permanently turned the lights out.

"Can others ask the shadows for guidance?" I cleared my throat and tried to

look at anything besides his swinging third leg.

He shook his head.

“Sooo, you have to be a Shadowwalker?”

This time, he finally nodded.

Huh, I guess I’m a Shadowwalker like Lilith.

“Can I guide people through the shadows?” My question had the shadow pausing before he stared at me. Well, I’m assuming he stared from how he flipped his head around. Slowly, he bobbed his head. His inky mist of a hand took mine as his other hand pointed at the connection.

Ohhh...

“I have to keep physical touch?”

He tilted his head to me.

As we kept moving, I found the shadow didn’t want to let go of my hand. To be honest, with all the other creepy things here, I wanted his hand too. Maybe he could sense my unease. His touch felt cold but also homey. I wasn’t sure how to react about feeling safe with shadows, but bigger problems held my main attention.

Speaking of, Man-shadow ran his hand down in the open air before us. By doing so, I noticed a slit form. The shadow could create rifts between worlds.

The opening let in light on our side to tell us we were viewing a different realm. Man-shadow picked a corner of the room where a chair sat over us to provide cover. Wow, they were sly and cunning without me even asking.

Still not quite being used to magic, I had to keep myself from passing out again. It seriously had to be the worst reaction I had to this kind of information. We could only see shoes but there was a blond guy tied up to a chair in front of us. He seemed to be bleeding with his head down. They were beating him for some reason. When his head lifted, I tried to hold in my gasp.

Gareth...

“I won’t tell you a damn thing, Minus!” Gare’s words got him another fist to his jaw.

I began moving without hesitation, but Man-shadow stopped me. He shook his head and reminded me I’d be giving away what I am if I went out there.

Still, for me, that’d be better than watching them beat one of my only friends. Nausea swirled in my belly, knowing I had to wait to save him. This had me needing to talk to Man-shadow more after this. If I could move people through the Shadowlands, I now had a few that needed me to save them. Awesome new ability I learned, but I hadn’t practiced enough to know what I was doing.

“I just need to find my daughter, Gareth. She has what I need. The second you tell me, I’ll let you go.” Minus cleaned his knuckles from the punch he landed on Gareth.

“I know what you seek. You’re hoping the magic in our heirloom will help whatever Frankenstein project you’re trying to do,” Gare sneered.

“Dear boy, this project will make it so I can kill an immortal.” This voice belonged to Salvatore as he entered the office. “There are quite a few who are unworthy of living for eternity.”

“You mean your circle?” Gare didn’t show an ounce of weakness as he battled them with his words. I had been rooted with pride but fearful of what it meant.

“Gareth, we will find them. It’s only a matter of time before our Seers see Leo’s location. Either you help us along, or we kill you.” Minus shrugged like it would be nothing off his back.

Even though Gare and Lou were cousins, it had been through her mother’s side. Minus clearly made it known he did not see Gare as his nephew.

“I don’t know where they are. Octavia changed their direction when they left.” Gare’s words should’ve been true, but I felt his lie.

He did know where we were. Most likely, when Lou got to Cuba, she let him know. That girl always had to keep him in the loop.

“So, you just showed up to Cuba for a vacation with no phone or company?” Salvatore stepped right in front of our view.

“I followed you,” Gare seethed. “I figured you could help me find them.”

Lie. Lie. Lie. He had come from getting directions and knew to not keep his phone for the safety of our spot. Man-shadow squeezed my hand as I digested this information.

“Then I guess there is no point in keeping you around.” Minus flipped the safety of his gun, readying it to fire.

My heart stopped, and I acted on instinct next. Leaping through the rift, I went flying right into Minus to keep him from using the gun. We hit the ground hard, and when I rolled off of him—somehow, I knocked him out in our fall—I found Man-shadow fighting Salvatore.

Only he wasn’t a shadow anymore. Nope...

He turned into a Greek god with butt cheeks chiseled and all. His bronze and shiny skin also gave him a slight statue vibe. When I finally stopped gawking, I realized...Woah... He could move through dimensions and change forms.

“Via?” Gare looked like he might be seeing a ghost.

“It’s me,” I gasped for a new breath from tumbling with Minus. “You ready to bust out?”

“W-wh-where did you come from?” Ah, I could see how me jumping out from under a chair might shock someone.

“You’ll see. Just make sure you don’t let go of me, and we’ll be all good.”

My hands made quick work of his bindings. Once I got one wrist free, he used that hand to work on his other as I got his ankles unrestricted.

Man-shadow shoved Salvatore out into the hall and turned back to see us. Also, it should be noted that his manhood moved like it was a dangling dick because now it was.

Holy mother of...

He looked to me with pale, blue eyes as I got Gare to his feet. He yanked me by the hand. Poor Gare nearly choked on his tongue when he saw the mountain before us. Man-shadow led me by my one hand while my other stayed glued to Gare. Once through the rift, Man-shadow made our slit smaller to not be seen.

His magic amazed me, and he had no idea how cool it had been to watch. That's when Salvatore came dashing back in.

Furious, he shook Minus until he roused grumpily. "Minus, they have a Shadowwalker."

"That's impossible, Sal," he groaned while rubbing his temples. "The Universe declared Shadowwalkers outlawed."

"I was just attacked by a man of the Shadowlands! The only way they can come to our world is by the assistance of a Shadowwalker!" Sal roared, knocking things off his desk.

"Do you think it could be her?" Minus whispered with a deadly undertone.

"There's only one way to find out. Have them ready my car. We're going to the holding cells."

Shit!

Man-shadow sealed the hole, and I somehow knew I would be okay to talk. "I have to get back to my cell, but we need to get Gare back to Lou. Can we do it that fast?"

“When they transported me, it took around ten minutes.” Gare just had to deflate me more.

“Man-shadow... Wait, I’m sorry. I’ve been calling you that in my head. Do you have a name?”

He shook his head.

“Well, seems how I keep calling you Man-shadow, can I call you Manny for short?”

He nodded.

“Okay then. Can we make it back to my cell in that time, and can you help me keep Gare in the shadows?”

Yeah, that was a tall order.

He dipped his head and began leading us to where I originally came from. Gare made sure to hold my hand as tight as possible from what this dimension looked like.

“Via, can you tell me how you’re here?”

“It’s a long story. Lilith told me to trust the shadows when I was being sacrificed. She then came out of a shadow to help rescue me. After, I found my magic from my dad made me tether onto my circle instead of the souls of Purgatory. Using my tethers, I found I can transport to where any of the guys are, and now I found out that I’m also a Shadowwalker. Manny has been my guide.”

“Wait, back up. Your father? I thought it was some drunk? And your circle?” Gare had bug eyes from all of this information.

“Oh... I guess a lot of shit has happened since we’ve seen each other.” I nodded. We walked on as I readied myself to catch him up. “Recap, my dad is Leo Loki, the eighth sinner. From my parent’s love, I became both the Pandora heir and the eighth sinner. I finish the circle while also completing it.

My dad hid his kingdom in the Bermuda Triangle, so Salvatore couldn't find him. I'm here from trading me for all of their prisoners. They took Bell and swiped Lear's memory. Bell is safe, but I haven't left yet from finding his mom in the cells."

"Holy..." He paled.

"I know. I've passed out a few times. Oh, and Lexi stabbed me through the heart, but apparently, when I was in my car wreck and died, I became immortal."

"Fucking Lexi," he muttered what everyone thought. That bitch would be dying by my hand soon enough. "Wait, you can't become immortal until your eighteenth birthday. And, you can't be a Shadowwalker unless you've been kissed by Death."

"Can we not fret over the small details until after we're safe from Salvatore knowing what I am?"

"Yeah. We'll go with that." After our quick conversation, we ran. Our sprint carried us quickly to where we needed. Manny made a rip again, and I saw my metal cot.



## Chapter 8



**O**ctavia

“How are we going to work this, Manny? He has to keep touching me, but I have to be on the other side?” We all stood around to strategize. That was until we heard the distinct sound of a door opening at the end of the hall. Before I could have a panic attack, Manny took Gare’s hand, latching it onto the back of my shorts, shoving me through.

Ah, catching on, he weaved the tear smaller for only Gare’s hand to be through to sit behind me. I leaned against the wall to appear bored. Manny shortened the hole a little more to only be where Gare’s single finger now held on. Laurel had wide eyes as she watched me pop back into my room. I shook my head and used a nod to gesture toward the men coming our way.

It took her a minute to right herself, but she did. She laid herself down to pretend to be asleep. When her eyes closed, I found the two men coming my way.

“You’re right, Octavia. I guess I never saw it that way.” Laurel hummed. Oh, she was making it look like we were having a discussion.

“It’s the only way I see it,” I added, lamely.

“See what?” Minus demanded.

“Miss Clarke and I were discussing her dynamic with our sons.” Man, she was good.

“Oh? And how long have you been discussing this?” Salvatore eyed me, trying to catch my lie. Too bad that hadn’t been his power.

“A while. We don’t really have a clock to judge time off of. She asked me if I plan to stay with them now that I know I’m the Pandora heir. I told her it would be their actions that kept me or lost me. Just like my mother, I don’t share.”

Both men turned furious, and Laurel sat up to tip her head my way. I really liked Bell’s mom. Besides her mocha beauty, she had gumption.

“I know she sent you to Leo, you know.” Salvatore moved closer to my bars.

“Good for you. Want a sticker?” I popped off.

If ears could steam, he’d be Thomas the Train. Good. He deserved to be lowered down a peg.

“Hey Laurel, do they make grown-ass-men sticker charts? You know, like some use to potty train toddlers?” I asked her but kept my gaze locked with his.

Laurel snorted and shook her head.

“You’re more trouble than your worth, but it looks like this cell is holding you just fine,” Salvatore sneered. He and Minus moved away then, retreating like they were victorious. Laurel waited patiently until the door closed before leaping to her feet. Manny already began making the rift bigger behind me.

“Octavia, what the hell is going on? One minute, you were napping, and the next, you popped out of existence!”

“So, um... I found out I’m a Shadowwalker. I’m going to get Gareth to Sevrin and Louise real quick, and then I’ll be right back for you.”

“You might want to wait until tonight just in case they decide to pop back in and check.” Her words held merit, but... Gare popped his head out of the hole, and she squeaked.

“I just saved him from his imminent death. Hence why they came to check if it was me or not. I promise, I will be right back for you.”

“Just hurry. If they know a Shadowwalker is among us, they’ll want extra guards staffing this place. You should not exist, Octavia. I hope you know something had to do this to you, and it’s not an easy thing to receive.”

Chills spiked my senses as goosebumps pebbled my skin. It had been made clear by everyone that a Shadowwalker’s powers shouldn’t exist anymore. Gare said being kissed by Death could do it, but I was pretty sure I’d remember that happening. I shook the morbid thoughts away, preparing for the important things now.

“I don’t know how I am the way I am. Just know this power makes it so I can save everyone I need to right now. My time to worry will come, but it will be after I do what needs to get done.”

“Words I like to hear.” She smiled like my answer had been her test. Looked like I passed. “Now, go! I’ll cover for you if I need to.”

With a swift yank, Gare jerked me through the shadow behind my back. My startled noise made Laurel chuckle. Manny sealed us in on the other side.

Once we straightened, I noticed Manny already holding Gare’s hand. Oh, and my gay bestie had a red tint to the tips of his ears, knowing exactly what he looked like as a human. I didn’t have the heart to inform him the shadow

had also held my hand. You never know, maybe Man-shadow batted that way. Though, making a butthole out of a shadow might be hard...

Nearly impossible unless the hole went all the way through. I really needed to stop thinking about shadows having sex. My mind had been corrupted enough. Shadows getting it on would not be in my history on Pornhub. That might only be because nothing would come up. Fuck, I had a smutty mind sometimes, and I had almost seven lovers.

As we walked, I noticed my shadow guide turning his head to be in our direction. I didn't know which of us he had been checking out from lack of features on his face, but I prayed it to be Gare. After Tiny-Dick-Tom, Gare needed a real man who would be devoted to him. Could a shadow devote though? Oy, my mind had been all over the place. I hadn't even noticed I held onto Rin's tether to take me to him.

Apparently, the tethers worked faster than just frolicking through the Shadowlands. I smiled when I felt Rin's mind tickle my own. He felt my presence too because the second I saw through his eyes, he leaped off the toilet and ran for his pants. Did I catch him while he was shitting? In answer, he quickly looked down at his painful erection. The truth slapped me like a Southern mama!

He had been jacking off in the hotel bathroom. Snickering and laughing, I watched him yank his pants up just as Manny opened the rift. A good girlfriend would've waited, but I couldn't help myself to see him squirm just a bit. Rin took off out of the bathroom just as the tear in between dimensions started to open. The men I traveled with didn't see it, but I did. I felt the panic set in on my mate as he realized he got caught. Also, he left the shower running with no one in it... and his phone sat on the counter where two people fucked like crazy on the screen.

## Sevrin

My mind couldn't stop thinking about her. Those tits... That ass. Fuck, I needed to give in soon, or I'd go mad. Lou slept in the bed, and I knew I couldn't take my hard-on any longer. Storming into the bathroom, I stripped and turned the shower on to hide my grunts. Sitting on the bathroom toilet, I searched my history and played my most recent porn in the background. I didn't watch the shit often, but hearing a female mewling helped me reach my end faster.

This pornstar had some practice, but even though she was extra loud, my dick reacted to it. Octavia's body popped into my head just as I cupped my balls. Twisting them just enough to give me the sensation of brief pain, I grunted and used my other hand to start working my dick. Damn did it feel good with the memory of my mate's body hot on my mind.

Sure, a lot of pornstars were hot, but nothing beat my girl. Her shapely hips and tight ass that jiggled just right when I rammed into her. How her perky and large tits pleaded for my attention. I had to bite my lip from just remembering how hot her little body was.

Beating my dick, I let the sound coming from my phone mix with the image of her. The hand holding my balls moved up and played with my piercing. Most girls thought I got it for them, but the thing also helped give me what I needed. The sensation always drove my beast mad. My fist that I had been fucking, twisted around my dick as I moved harder. It hurt a little bit from the dryness of my hand. I didn't have lotion on me, but I grabbed some

conditioner from the shower across from me. Lathering my hands in it, I worked myself into a frenzy.

“FUCK ME!!! OW! FUCK MY PUSSY!” The phone shouted at me and the stimulation had me doing just that. I jerked my dick and thought about drilling into Kitten hard enough for her to say that to me. Getting close, I felt it. My Kitten was coming, and I had my dick in my hand. Shit!

Jumping up, I ran to my pants, surveying my full erection. This would be a bitch to walk around with, but I had to. Running out of the bathroom, I hoped she'd only see me watching over her sleeping friend. Trying to keep my cool, I heard the sound of the porn on my phone.

Fuck!

Running back in, I was greeted with a sight I had not expected. Kitten had fallen into the tub with the shower on from laughing her ass off. Gareth held out my phone to me, and some new guy tried shielding his hard and naked dick from me.

Who the hell was this guy?

As if reading my thoughts, Kitten stood up and got out of the shower she fell in. “At least you made it warm water.”

Her quirking little mouth and teasing words were going to earn her a spanking. My dick twitched, and I ended up flexing my abs, trying to gain control.

“This is Manny. He's my shadow guide. Thanks to him, I can navigate that realm easier, and I can move people!” she cheered.

“How are you able to address the shadows, Kitten?” Fear licked my spine. Shadowwalking magic had been banned centuries ago. All had been killed off besides Lilith, but her children didn't get their predecessor's gift.

“We don't know. This is a new revelation.” Gareth shook his head. “One

I'm a little grateful for considering they were about to kill me."

"Do you know?" I pointed at the nude dude strutting his giant meat in front of my mate. Kitten could've cared less, but I had been bothered by it. The mute shook his head. His haunting eyes had my skin crawling. Manny had been the first shadow I met, but I knew their polar eyes were their key trait next to their shimmering, bronze skin.

"Kitten, please tell me what I'm missing here."

"Your dad is trying to make a weapon that can kill an immortal. He needs something from Lou to make it."

I froze. Not many knew Milo and Louise's mother's lineage, but she had been royalty. Created from the original banshee line, every original family had been given a scepter to contain the majority of imbalanced magic. Now that their mom had died and Milo was in line for his kingdom, Lou would lead the banshee clan. I highly doubted my mate knew any of this.

"The scepter?" I asked Gareth. He nodded and moved to the room where Lou slept.

"He'll come for her too. Only she can activate it now that Aunt Hattie is dead," Gareth went to sit next to her on the bed.

"I feel like I'm missing a lot," Kitten inquired.

"You are, but until we're safely back to the island, we can't talk about it," I kissed her forehead.

"Lou's been running from this for a long time..." Gareth spoke the words to no one in general.

"Okay. I guess I'll pop back over to Laurel and then be back for us to head out." Without thinking, Kitten hugged my middle. Her reaction to me had been completely natural, and my dragon purred from it.

"Hurry. We'll head down to the dock and get the boat ready to depart." My

arms acted on their own as I held my mate to me. This woman remained perfect, everything I'd ever need... Until she said her next words.

“Conditioner?” She sniffed me more. “Not a bad choice.”



## Chapter 9



**O**ctavia

They were waiting for me.

All of their guards circled around Laurel as she held her head high and proper. Standing, she gave them a turned-up nose of disgust. We were clearly scoping out the room before entering. From our crack, Manny and I could see all of the former circle that stood against us.

Rat bastards were planning this alright.

“How long do you think she’ll be until she returns for Laurel?” Mr. Avila asked.

“*If* she comes,” Mr. Argos pointed out that I might be as cold as them.

“No girl would save every soul possible and leave one behind. She’ll come,” Salvatore reassured them while taking a seat at the desk.

I gestured to Manny to zip up our hole, and he did. “Okay. We need a good plan because this might go to shit real quick,” I said with a hushed tone even though I didn’t need to.

Manny just bobbed his head.

“Can you speak?”

*In this plane of existence, within your mind from having no mouth. His voice held a higher tone than I expected.*

“Woah. Mind blown a little bit. You could’ve said something instead of just nodding your damn head.”

*My apologies, Octavia.*

“Well, better late than never. So, tell me, do you have any ideas on how we can infiltrate a room filled with armed guards?”

*I can open a rift below her feet and bring her down. You will just have to keep touching her to make it work.*

“And what if they come through or fight back?”

*I will use you to go through and fight off the people long enough to get her to this side... If I may be so bold, your life might not be worth risking like this, though.*

“Have you ever loved someone, Manny?”

*No. My kind rest until needed. This is the first time I have been activated as a guide. The last Shadowwalker was killed nearly four hundred years ago. When there is no walker, we are not needed.*

Now my little heart hurt for him.

“Well, if you ever get the chance to love, jump at it. Hopefully, I exist long enough for you to enjoy it.” I smiled.

*You are immortal. I shall be awake forever now.*

“Not if Salvatore makes his weapon.”

*Well then, I shall try to find this love you speak of just in case we fail to stop him. Why is it so important now?*

“Oh, right. That woman in there? She’s the mother of one of the men I love.

I can't risk her life and face him, knowing I didn't try. Even on my own conscience, I couldn't."

*Okay. Let us move to be under her. You will pull her down while keeping your touch on her skin. I will handle the men.*

He moved us to another spot not too far away.

"Can you see where every spot is on the other side?" I asked in awe.

*As long as there is a shadow, I can see everything. That is how Lilith speaks to you now. She uses her guide to transport the words to you.*

"Wow. Your powers are so awesome! You literally have the world at your fingertips!" Not being a man of many words, he just got to work on his portal stuff. Holding a lock of my hair, he leapt through the hole that went up, and I grabbed Laurel's legs. She fell right on top of me, and we both grunted when I landed on my back with her sprawled over me. Never again would I open a rift below someone. Especially someone taller and broader than me. Laurel had even more curves than I did, and it also knocked the wind out of me.

"Octavia?" she gasped, trying to get off me. My hand quickly attached to hers.

"You have to touch me at all times in this realm, or you'll get lost." Our hands cupped the other's as we watched the fight above us.

Manny fought like a gladiator. Never tiring or losing focus, he just kept pushing people back.

"Go, Manny!" I cheered. My words made him look down at me just as Mr. Avila jumped onto his back.

All of the former circle attacked at that moment and brought him down to his knees. He grunted and hit the ground from their force of strength and magic suffocating him.

No...

*The shadows... Trust the shadows...* Lilith's voice flooded my brain.

Flipping around, I looked at all the shadows before me. "Help him!" My shrill had been heard as more darkness moved forward. Each one touched me to pass from the Shadowlands and into my world because I acted as their access point.

Five shadows transformed into Greek Gods just like Manny had. Their only focus would be helping him. Almost like a mindless pawn, and I didn't like knowing I had brought that upon them. They were a people forced to slumber from not having someone to guide. There had to be a way to fix their world.

Once they freed Manny, they all moved to the tear and jumped down. Manny sealed the rift instantly as the other shadows moved back to where they rested. He then took my hand and tugged me along. My mind was stuck on these poor creatures that had no life outside of this darkness. No wonder it remained a void and empty... Their life remained absent of living without the Shadowwalkers. Hopefully, there would be a way to free them. So much about this world still was unknown by me, but that would have to change. I needed to know it all if I had any hope of helping these creatures.

~

## **Beau**

I sat at the dock, as Rin and Lou loaded Gareth onto the back bench. Poor guy had been through hell and back from the looks of it. Thanks to our dastardly daddies for his mindfuck. Well, that had been my guess from not knowing.

I fixed my glasses and closed the book I had been enjoying. A ménage tryst kept my mind focused on all the things I wanted to do to my girl with my

mates.

“Enjoying your word porn?” Louise dared to tease me.

“Don’t act like you don’t read them too. I’ve seen your shelves,” I countered.

“Yeah, but most who read romances are girls.”

“And most have had their cherry popped before reading smut.” I rolled my eyes at her. That seemed to finally shut her up as the other guys laughed at my expense from reading the book.

“I just wanted to know what I’d be getting myself into,” Lou whispered a little meekly.

“Sweetheart, you’re lucky we’re demons and have insane sex like this. Most humans read this shit because they aren’t satisfied.” I patted her leg and went to the helm.

Rin joined me once Gareth had been taken care of in the back. We watched the area to make sure no one approached us. A few yachts down had some kind of party going on. Girls dancing in bikinis for the guys to become titillated, and before V, that would have been me. Now, I couldn’t help but feel sorry for the saps. Having someone to love filled a lot more of me than some random girl warming my bed.

My curse still attacked me all the time, but with V and I patching things up, things were getting a little less strained. Only her heart could be big enough to accept me a second time after what I did. Then there had been the fact that she let me pop her ass cherry. Between the dirty book about three lovers and what we had done in the kitchen, I found myself getting hard.

Discretely, I tried to fix it by pointing the mad fellow upward. Rin just had to notice and smiled with a snort.

“That was me when she used my tether to appear. She caught me with my

pants down.” Rin let the embarrassment go already and allowed himself to laugh at whatever happened.

“I still can’t believe I slept through that,” Lou groaned.

Gareth just sat back and guffawed with some wincing. “It was quite comical. Manny had his first erection from it, and he didn’t know what to do about it.”

“Who’s Manny?” I asked and then looked between them. “And how did you guys find Gare?”

“We can’t talk much about it here, but our girl has some other talents,” Rin spoke for only me to hear while watching the partying crowd.

“I figured that much from what you guys just said,” I scoffed.

“She’ll be here soon, and when she comes, be ready to get us out of here.” Rin kept searching the area around us. Whatever had him worried couldn’t be something small. I sighed while turning the boat on. We could idle for a little to keep the engine warm and running. All of us waited and waited for whatever might come. Rin stood up and kicked over a bucket from his patience growing thin.

“Something must’ve happened.”

“It only took us ten minutes to get to you from that side. It’s been thirty.” Gareth studied Lou’s phone.

“She should be here by now,” Rin growled. Before anything else could happen, Rin froze. “They’re here. Get the boat moving, Beau.”

As my Alpha commanded, I shot us off and had everyone gripping their seats. Propelling us forward, I noticed the music on the other boat silenced. Rin picked up on it too.

“How are you feeling after securing your tether? Can you handle shooting?” he asked me.

“I’m fine. You just drive, and I’ll handle our tail,” I picked up my rifle that

stayed hidden on the lower part of the speed boat. When I stood up fully from picking it up, I noticed something odd. Almost like a tear in Rin's shadow. A mist of black seeped out as the line got bigger and then, I watched three people tumble through it right behind my Alpha.

What. The. Hell?

A very naked man quickly got to his feet and knitted the interdimensional tear back together. Behind my back, I could hear Gareth and Lou. "Oh! I see what you mean. Dang, he is hot!"

"He's a grower," Gareth added and took our attention to the horse dick the guy already had. A grower? There's no way...

"Beau!" Rin barked when the other ship approached. Oh, right. Duty called.

Steadying my rifle in the crook of my shoulder, I stabilized it on what would really matter. Some might open fire on the people, but I knew what I really needed to hit.

Take out the boat, and none of them could pass. I readied myself with just my feet from how the boat bobbed in the open water.

"Any time now. We're about to reach the portal!" Rin shouted, flipping his gaze back to the gaining boat.

*BANG!*

My shot rang through as they all looked at me like I had missed. Somethings weren't instant like in the movies. The explosion finally happened, and everyone went wide-eyed. Silly fools should never distrust a marksman who trained until he couldn't lift a gun anymore.

Righting my glasses, I just frowned at Rin. "Did you really doubt me?"

"Well, you've been in quite the funk lately." He had the decency to look a little sheepish. V jumped down the few steps to land in front of me. I found

her hugging around my middle. Our tiny girl couldn't reach her arms much higher than my ribs.

I froze under her easy touch, and my eyes locked with Rin's. He just gave me a look like he knew exactly what went through my mind. My only guess had been V doing this to him as well. Our girl trying to learn to be affectionate. I smiled broadly, knowing she truly was trying to accept me again. Rin shot us through the portal as we watched the remnants of the boat burning behind. Today would be a good day.



## Chapter 10



**O**ctavia

Woah...

That had been quite the rush. Letting myself jump through the Shadowlands and land in a moving boat that shot through a portal. My stomach knotted as we landed inside the bay near my father's private beach. Leaning over the side, I hurled what little food I had.

Shocked, I found both Rin and Beau on each side of me while I tossed my cookies. Rin held my hair and Beau rubbed my back in support. This had been an odd new development but a welcomed one. Once I finished, I sagged a little in relief and let them hold me up as Lou waded us to the dock. Manny hopped out first when we arrived, and he tied us to our parking space without being asked.

Part of me felt like his people had served almost as slaves to the Shadowwalkers, and I couldn't come to terms with that idea. I had Rin help me over the side where Manny helped the rest of the way.

“Thanks, Manny. You didn’t have to, you know,” I wanted him to know I didn’t see him as just a shadow-puppet.

“You are my vessel to the living world. I am your guide. Of course, I have to ensure your safety.” He looked utterly confused as to how I could say something like that.

“She has seven mates, Manny. Be careful getting too close to her,” Lou chuckled.

Beau got out with a fixed glare on my guide. “What she said. V is ours to protect.”

Just then, the rest of the crew came down. All had relief etched into their features. Bell didn’t know who to hug first from the shock of seeing his mother.

“Laurel!” My mom gasped and ran to help the other mother.

“Lily, it’s been a long time.” Laurel accepted her assistance.

Bell sought me, and I found my Boo-Bear completely healed. He spun me, crushing my middle while I dangled over the ground.

“Honey,” his voice went hoarse.

“Boo-Bear.” I pecked his lips. “I told you I would come for you.” All the emotions plastered to my face when he moved a stray hair from my eyes. His cool, blue irises held me captive because I feared I’d never see them again.

“I was about to return the favor.” By his feet, I noticed a duffle bag packed and ready because I took more time getting his mother than I planned.

“How about we try to stay together this time?” Tears brimmed my eyes. In response, he kissed me passionately. He tasted so good, and his hold on me had my toes curling.

Once he set me down, Aster came over to me and swept me up immediately. “I’m a right bastard, Love. Forgive me. Kick me in the balls to

show me how idiotic I am.”

I laughed and squeezed him back. As a group, we had a lot of progress to make for us to work, but I liked knowing they seemed to be honest in their apologies.

“Stop hogging her.” Lucius smiled down at me. He and Milo sandwiched me in their version of a hug. I’d never tire of seeing their love for each other or that they came as a package deal. “Princess, we are sorry. None of us have done this before, so please be patient and help guide us when we fuck up.”

“Because one of us is bound to in the millennium,” Milo added, and I snickered.

“We’ll work on it. I’ll also try to not lose my temper so quick.” I blushed a little. Being back on the island felt nearly perfect until I found Lear standing at the other end of the dock. He looked so confused and so lost, my heart broke. I wanted to run to him and for him to hold me again. My heart still remembered the night we shared when he helped me forget my grieving. My feet padded over to him as he tried to give me his carefree smile. I could see straight through it from it not meeting his eyes.

“Have you been okay?” It seemed to be the only question my mind could come up with. It’s not like I could say ‘did ya miss me’ from him not even knowing me anymore.

“Mostly. It seems that even though I can’t remember you, I still feel your absence.” Lear’s soul cried out to mine, and I could feel the sensation of the loss inside him. His suffering stood out, but he had no knowledge as to why. I hugged him without a second thought. My heart knew him, and I would make sure he knew I still cared. Hugging his middle, I leeches onto him and refused to part as he stumbled to put his arms around me.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered into his chest. “I’ll fix it, Lear. I promise. I’ll find

a way for you to remember me.”

Before he could reply, my father pulled me away. He engaged first in our hug, and I let my father hold me. I might be a new adult these days, but nothing compared to the feeling of finally being someone’s little girl. One I never had until I found him on his hidden island. Part of me would’ve loved to be raised by this man, but I also knew my past shaped me.

Just like the night I went to the meeting for others like me, those girls would learn to be strong. I was cultured to be resilient from what I had been through up until this point. Knowing those events made me treasure this moment even more, I held on tighter. Tears welled as I rubbed my face in his white button-up shirt.

“Did my plan work, sweetheart?”

“It did but we had a few snags along the way. Laurel had been captured after I made the deal. Gareth too, but I learned I’m a Shadowwalker...” I pointed to Manny who stood like a statue.

“That should be impossible.” My mom came to stand beside me. She lost focus on our reunion from the jolting news.

“It’s how Lilith’s been talking to me, Mom. She has her guide sending me the messages, and Manny over there is my guide into the Shadowlands.”

Everyone stared at the statue of a man with bronze skin and pale eyes. He truly radiated pure perfection when it came to looks. Like Lucius, he was almost too pretty to look at.

“For the love of...” Beau nearly tore out his hair when he saw everyone’s eyes on the dangling rod. “Can we please move this inside and find this fucker some clothes?”

All of the men present chimed in to agree. Seemed they all didn’t want to whip theirs out to compare. There was a first for everything.

“Come on, Manny. I’ll find you a pair of sweatpants until we can take you shopping.” I rolled my eyes from the guys trying to be too macho.

“Why are clothes necessary? Doesn’t every man in your realm have a penis?” Manny let me tug his elbow to follow me.

“They do, but it’s customary to not show your goods to anyone unless you’re sexually active with them.” Lou took his other arm, chatting like it had been a completely normal sentence. Nothing stayed normal for long in this new world.

“Ah, you mean sex!” Manny clued in.

“Good job, big guy,” Lou teased. Manny probably thought she meant his body, but her eyes were on his bazooka shooter. Gareth still struggled being this close to the man. No one could blame the dude who liked high-quality dicks. This here was a prized bull.

“And when you are interested in having someone as a partner, what is the proper way to find out if they want to be in your bed?” Manny just had to keep talking.

“You just ask-” Before I could finish by adding ‘them on a date’, Manny shifted his gaze to Gareth.

“You. I want you to be my partner.”

Lou choked on the air she breathed from the very abrupt announcement. She stumbled over her feet and fell right into the shallow end of the water. Well, at least the guys could lay their jealousy to rest...

~

**Bellamy**

“Let me get this straight.” Leo pinched his chin between fingers. “You somehow gained Lilith’s illegal ability to Shadowwalk. By doing so, you spied on Sal and found out he’s trying to create a weapon that can destroy an immortal?”

“Yes. He mentioned needing Lou’s family heirloom,” Via paused to look at her friend. “Apparently, you are Banshee royalty, and the one who will lead your clan now that your mom has passed.”

Lou paled and had the decency to bow her head to her Guard. “Yeah... We hadn’t gotten that far in the conversation when we talked on the plane and being here hasn’t been a breeze either.”

“I’m not mad at you. I just wish I had known.” They shared a private smile that showed those words meant something. I shifted Via a little on my lap, so I could look at the guys.

“Why would he need that heirloom?” I asked.

“The scepter has core power, raw magic. I think he’s found a way to manipulate it into what he needs,” Gareth sighed. I had to smile when the shadow scooted his chair closer to be of comfort to the Banshee.

“This isn’t good.” Lucas looked to Daemon. “He’ll kill anyone who tries to contest his authority.”

“He’ll kill his circle members that didn’t follow, and he’ll kill all of us,” Rin growled, popping his knuckles. Five of our fathers had aligned against us to keep their power over Earth and Hell. Three were here to stand with us along with my mom and Lily.

“We’ll need to free the original immortals, and Pandora’s circle if we hope to win against this mess,” I brought up.

“How do we do that? We don’t even know where they are?” Milo had a good point.

Via cleared her throat and raised her hand. She shifted in my lap, and I had to clutch her thighs to tell her to stop. She gave me an impish grin over her shoulder before addressing the mass. “Manny can take me to her. When I spoke to Lilith in the Shadowlands, she said it wasn’t time. Maybe this is what she meant. I needed to learn about Salvatore’s plan before we made our own using this knowledge.”

“First, I think we need to focus on Lear’s memory,” Daemon stated. Lear shifted in his chair as all eyes fell on him again. The man felt guilty he couldn’t remember, and everyone could read it plain as day on his face.

“I agree. Nothing is more important than his needs right now.” Via’s words made him blush and cough a little.

“I’m fine. I understand all this stuff is important.” He shrugged it off.

Via looked to all the parents, Lou’s triad, and Gareth with his overbearing companion who wanted to sleep with him. “Can you guys give us a moment alone? We have private things to discuss.”

They all shuffled out as our girl stood up from my lap. No one harped on me when I made her sit with me. They knew we both needed to fill that yearning burn from worrying and being apart.

“Right. About what happened at the club,” she started, and I stopped her.

“What happened?”

All of them groaned. Well, Beau smiled.

“I’m not the one up shit-creek anymore. These boys went to find you and told V they’d be back within two days. The night of the second day, our girl made her own move and went to find them before she planned to trade for you. Rin lost his temper, and the guys did what they’ve always done...”

Beau’s words had my eyebrows reaching my hairline. “YOU FUCKERS CALLED KARA!”

“Not me. Lear and I remained here with V. They also left her in the dead of night and stuck it to me to deal with her waves of emotions.” Beau gave an apologetic look to her. Via sighed and rolled her shoulders like this nonsense had to be the most ridiculous thing she’s ever heard. In my eyes, it was. They all knew Kara calmed him by fucking him like a bull. I growled at them all as Lucius lowered himself.

“I’m sorry, Princess. I am. I mostly did it out of habit, and when I realized the mistake,” Lucius flinched. Via softened from probably sensing his honesty. “She can teleport anywhere and arrived before I could tell not to.”

“Look, if this is gonna work, we need some ground rules. First, I am not a damsel in distress. I am grateful you were there for me when I needed it, but I’m not fine China. In this circle, as your eighth, I need to be seen as an equal.”

“I think she’s more than proved it with how she handled us,” I added. Everyone agreed, and she beamed.

“Second, I do not share. I get that it’s a bit hypocritical, but I can’t. If you need more than me outside of the men in our circle, I need to know now.”

No one chose to lose our Pandora, our girl.

“Third, if a female touches you, either you remove her from your body, or I’m slicing important limbs off.”

“What?” I nearly laughed. Not from what she wanted, but what she’ll do.

“Careful man, she stabbed Kara’s hand on the bar from touching Rin while thinking she was untouchable as an immortal.” Beau winked. Flabbergasted, I sought out my girl for confirmation.

“It’s true. I’ve had your kills in my head for years, so I know how to do plenty to a body.” Well, I’d be damned. My little Honey let her crazy flag wave, and I loved it.



“That goes for you as well, Love.” Aster pointed out.

“I can agree to that, Ass.” They shared a private, flirty exchange.

I didn’t mind my brother having that with her, but I’d kill any other man for it. Nope, I couldn’t share her outside of our circle.

“Next, communication. No more running off and leaving me. We are in this relationship together and this war.”

“We learned our lesson when you ran off to execute your plan. We didn’t like it, and it won’t happen again.” Milo shifted uncomfortably. I had a deeper love for my girl for thrusting them back into their place. She remained our center, and she proved she could handle us.

“Good. Now, my next one is a bit of a question. You all know I hate that you kill innocents in scenarios because the Universe demands it. When we bond fully, will that change?”

“We aren’t sure, Kitten. To be honest, our itch to kill faded when we thought we lost you. Usually, yes. We’d be Reapers for our duration on Earth, but I think the Universe knows there’s a powerplay happening.” Rin made us all realize we hadn’t thirsted for a kill. Sure, our curses still existed and would until our circle fully formed, but the hunger hadn’t been gnawing at us.

“Okay. I think I have an idea on how to get Lear’s memory back... If you’re up for hearing about it.”

“Lay it on us. You’ve done brilliant so far, Love.” Aster kissed her ass. “A fine pussy you are.”

“Can someone clue me in on why he keeps calling her a pussy?” Milo grumbled.

“Have your sister explain it. She started it.” Aster winked.

“Tell us, Honey,” I whispered to her, cutting off the bullshit.

“The Fates.”

“Bollucks!” Aster shouted. “Anything but them!”

“Hear me out. They see past, present, and future. I don’t have Rita, so they are the next best option. Manny can take us there quickly. I just need you to agree and for someone to go with me.”

“I will.” We all froze when Lear volunteered so quickly.

“Are you sure?” I asked him.

“It’s my memory that’s missing. Plus, I think—just in case I don’t get my memory back—it would be good for Octavia and me to spend time together. Leo pointed some things out, and he’s right. I am Envy, and this is hard for me, but I need to.”

We all watched Via tear up and smile at him.

“I’ll go too,” Rin sighed. “I think it’ll be wiser to keep our company small. Just the three of us and Manny. He’ll need to stay in the shadows though. The Fates are blind to them, and we don’t need them knowing what we’re doing.”

“I think it would be wise for Princess to finish her tethers first. I know I shouldn’t rush you two, but...” Milo let his words trail off. I nodded. This needed to be done for the future of our circle.

## Chapter 11



**O**ctavia

“Like this?” I asked my dad.

Leo smiled, standing behind me as I manipulated the power-source of the island. Just as he created his own castle, private beach, and labyrinth, I wanted to create something special for Bell.

In the morning, I’d be leaving with Rin and Lear to find the Fates, so tonight, I had to take my Boo-Bear’s virginity. My heart ached, knowing we needed to, and I couldn’t let it happen organically.

Talking with Laurel, she told me about all the things Bell loved. She mentioned me, of course, but her words gave me an idea. Maybe I could still make this magical and beautiful for him. Thanks to Leo’s magic being a part of me too, I got him to show me how to manipulate this hidden realm. Well, I first asked him to do it for me, but he decided it would be best to show me.

I couldn’t deny the thrill I had with him spending quality time with me. His movements were interesting, and I practiced moving my limbs like a yoga

instructor. It had been doing the calm movements that stretched me out to ease the chaos in my head. I finally saw why he had the monastery vibe working around this place. The voices and emotions of his prisoners were a lot like me feeling everyone else's emotions. Doing this slowed down my response to all the crazy and let me breathe.

On a secluded part of the island, I had found my center. Well, Leo helped me find it.

“You're doing far better than I ever did this early on. Learning this magic is very natural to you, Daughter,” he whispered, helping me shape the scenery before us. I had to bite my lip from how much I enjoyed having him for a dad.

Most of the guys didn't luck out with their fathers, but Leo had been proving he wanted to be the best father he could. After my life of neglect, I nearly cried from his praise. Like a peacock, I was sure I preened from his attention and compliments. It sucked not having him then but having him now had been worth the wait.

“Okay, now close your eyes and concentrate on what you want. Envision it in your mind. Tell me what you see,” my dad whispered while helping me.

“Bell's a romantic. I see the waterfall he loves because it was my favorite spot too when I lived with Daemon. The trees would be in bloom instead of the dead ones this time of year. For his romantic tastes, I'd want strings of lights around the pond that hang from the trees. Red rose petals marking his path from the house to here with white ones floating in the water. Lily pads too with little candles on them in the water. Ow, paper-lanterns floating around us! Oh! Oh! And maybe making the water like a hot spring instead of just a pond!”

A warmth swirled within, heating my limbs as my father assisted to work

the magic. I could tell something started to happen from how it made me feel. My fingers extended with the heat, letting it waterfall from my fingertips.

“Open your eyes,” he murmured with a stunned voice.

Doing so, I found exactly what my mind wanted to create with the over-the-top romance. It might look cheesy to some, but Boo-Bear had been my open book when it came to liking this stuff. I just hoped it would be enough to show him how much I cared. Doubt crept in on my little parade, but I quickly tried to hide it to focus on the sight before me.

“You stay here, and I’ll send him down.” Leo kissed the top of my head and then chuckled. “Part of me wants to skin them all for touching my daughter, but I also know I have no say when it comes to the next Pandora completing her circle. At least it’s Bellamy and not that Aster boy.”

He muttered that last part before walking off. I grinned and laughed as well from it. Only a dad could say something like that, and knowing Leo wanted to say it, made it even better. My hands fiddled with my robe’s tassels as I strutted my legs back and forth. My mind raced to make sure I hadn’t forgotten anything. This was my Bell, my Boo-Bear. Everything needed to be perfect.

“Music!” I snapped my fingers and ran to press play on my phone. Most of my stuff would fit this moment, so I just pressed play on all of it from hearing the door shut.

My nerves were shot, and my heart raced, not knowing if he’d like this or not. Did I go too far? Did I look too desperate, trying to make this perfect for him?

Before I knew it, two large hands settled on my hips, and a large chest sat above my shoulders. His grip held me tightly, and I loved the feeling of his possessive touch.

“What’s all of this?” Bell’s voice had a comical ring to it. I groaned.

“I went too far, right? It’s too much. I should’ve known-”

Bell covered my mouth, kissing me from behind right below the base of my ear. He also growled just a little. “Honey, look at everything around you. Now tell me, if I had done this, would you be running for the hills or grateful the person who loves you gives a damn?”

“Gives a damn?” My answer came out more of a question.

“I love that you know me well enough to know I enjoy over-the-top gestures. The fact that you did this for me means I truly did pick the perfect woman to complete me.” With my chin bobbing just a little and my lip jutting out, I tried to contain the emotions I could feel coming from him. He knew I’d gather his reaction through my magic.

“I just... I wanted you to know that even though we have to do this now, I also want to because I want you.” I turned in his arms to give him a testing kiss.

The simple touch of our lips fused our bodies together. Closer, tighter, firmer... like two magnets, the pull between us only strengthened the closer we got. From our rough touches, Bell jerked back just enough to look at my swollen lips that were damp from his. My legs wound around his waist, and one of my breasts had popped out of my robe.

Oh, he found that freely hanging nipple with his mouth as he teased me senselessly with his teeth and tongue. The sucking motion swirled and twisted my nipple to the point I had to grip his long hair to anchor me.

“GAH!” I called out. He only raised me higher to look down on him devouring my breast. “I would’ve never known you’re a virgin, Boo-Bear...”

My breathless voice had him chuckling as he nipped my diamond nub harder. “I might be a virgin to a pussy, Honey, but I’m no stranger to a

woman's body.”

“And how do you know all of this?” I teased while clenching my thighs around him. His dick spasmed from the confines of his pants.

“I watch a lot of porn, Honey.” Oh, fuck! A man who could admit what he liked and owned it... Yeah, I moaned.

“What do you watch?” I licked my lips as I felt his hand move between our bodies. He stroked me like a pro, and I tossed my head back from the sensation.

“Does my little pot of Honey like it dirty?” He shoved two fingers into my core. “Mmm, maybe I should taste my honey to see if it's as sweet as the name I'm giving it.”

He yanked his fingers from my cunt and brought them to his lips. I could see the way his tongue swirled around his deft fingers to clean them.

“Mmhmm... Finest pussy in all the land.”

“You never answered me, Boo-Bear. Porn. What kind?”

“All of it. All the kinky shit, gay shit. You name it, I've jerked my cock to it.”

“What's your favorite?” I gasped when he went back to pleasuring me.

“Watching a woman please herself. Seeing her come undone from knowing exactly how she wants it.” He grunted when I started grinding myself onto his hand. By this point, my robe flapped at the sides with the belt still tied below my breasts. My second hand traveled down slowly as he watched me tweak my breast with the one that stayed high.

Between the valley of my thighs, he felt me nudge his hand away as my own took over. I worked myself while watching him stare right at my opening. Soon, he began losing his breath as I worked myself into a frenzy. One made of a single need for relief. My fingers slid in and out as we listened

to my wetness around them. My thumb applied the right amount of pressure to the nerve in my clit to stimulate what I needed.

Seconds, minutes? Who knew how much time had passed? Who cared? In this moment, Bellamy's sexual desires and my own needed to be met. My lower stomach pulled with heat, and my sex clenched.

"I'm glad you love to watch because I love when people stare at me like this," I hissed into his ear right before I let the pleasure finish me.

I let myself shout to the sky that I came from Bellamy Argos watching my pussy being fucked by my fingers. Once I came down, I saw the molten blue of his eyes hungering for more. I bit the corner of my mouth as I smiled like the Devil I was.

"Tell me, is porn better than that?" My snarky words were met with a snarl. Bellamy set me down and quickly began removing his clothes. I did the same with what remained covered by my robe. Turning, I found the lights and cool effects I did were vanishing. "Nooo," I whispered and Bell stepped behind me. "I wanted your first time to be perfect. How can it-"

This time, he shut me up with a kiss. His hands cupped my ass, and I jumped up to let him walk us into the water. Thank heavens it had stayed hot, but the more we moved to the center, I felt it getting cooler. The waterfall now pushed cold water, but it felt good mixing with the heated pool. Bell broke us apart while we both panted for fresh air. He pressed his darker forehead against mine and let his eyes close.

"Everything about you is perfect, Honey. This moment was already branded into my mind when I felt you worrying if I'd like it. You make this moment. If all of this were to disappear, it wouldn't matter because only you being here does."

I cried. Real tears fell from my eyes. This time, I shut him up with my



mouth just as he walked us underneath the cold stream of water. The sensation remained intoxicating from the heat flushing my body. From the heavy spray of the water cascading over us, I couldn't tell where my tears mixed in, or if I had stopped weeping. All I knew, I loved this man.

My love for all of them had been different. I loved Rin for his strength and fight. I loved Aster from his jokes when I need them most. I loved Milo and Lucius when I saw their love and also how they balanced me by being together. I loved Beau for his friendship that he now offered me again. I loved Lear for being the constant rock when I needed him most. Bell? I loved this man for him being willing to openly admit his love for me. He made sure the world knew I was his woman.

My hands fisted into his hair just as he moved me to put my pussy right over his giant dick. There hadn't been a second of hesitation on my end when he began working my opening with his fingers to spread my lips. Once the head of his shaft got in, he worked us together by using my legs as handles. Looking down, it was hot as fuck to see his giant, black cock disappearing between my thighs.

Letting my eyes roll back, he stopped us when he fully entered. He started to struggle already with this being a new sensation for him. This was not a fist gripping his manhood, and I loved the power it gave me. Rolling my hips, I moved and moaned from feeling utterly full. He easily took first with the biggest dick contest. Not that size mattered between my guys. They all knew how to handle what they had, and they were well above average.

After letting me run the show for him to watch, Bell stopped me from going up on his dick. Instead, he pushed my front down to the water for my back to float with my legs staying around his waist. With an evil smirk no virgin should have, he bruised my thighs with his grip and used the water to guide

me forward and back on his cock. The movement kept my ears under the water to hear the push and pull.

I let myself enjoy being his fuck-toy, feeling fully relaxed in the warm water. Not hearing my own voice, I let myself be as loud as I needed as he moved me. I screamed his name while I palmed my bobbing breasts. Bell just looked down at me like this had to be the hottest thing ever. Truly, I had to agree. No one fucked me like this, and never on their first go.

We worked together, and I just let myself embrace what he did to me. With a roar, I looked up to see my bear of a man losing it quickly. The sight of him letting go had me coming too. My back arched out of the water, and he moved to hold me up as we met our end together. Our mouths found each other once again to seal what we had started.

Everything came into focus after the high wore off. I smiled up at him under the moonlight. His grin back had my heart swooning even more. Our bond had been completed. Studying around us, I noticed all that remained of my getaway seemed to be the pond. Even the waterfall had vanished, and we were only left with the silence of the island.

“Boo-Bear?” I turned back to see him still trying to catch his breath.

“Yeah, Honey?”

“It’s gone. Everything just vanished.”

“Except you...”

When he opened his eyes to hold my gaze, I saw everything he wanted me to know. Damn, I must be allergic to this man from how often my eyes watered. Our moment got added to as the lyrics to *Peanut Butter Jelly Time* blasted through my phone. Bell and I both had startled expressions, but we bust out hooting.

“Peanut butter? We might need to use that next time.” He winked, and I

laughed even harder. These men...

## Chapter 12



**O**ctavia

My hand steadily knocked on Gare's door, but there had been no reply. Sighing, I twisted the knob and walked right in to see just why they couldn't hear me. With the wooden headboard banging against the wall, my knocks mixed right in. Flushing, I went to cover my eyes but stopped myself. Gare was not on top. Not that I expected him to be a top kind of guy, but I also knew how big Manny's dick had been just dangling. Now, that giant thing steadily fucked my best friend's ass.

How could he take such a huge dingle-ling up the ass? I had Beau for the first time, but the first few moments were painful. Manny's would rip me in two! Gareth didn't seem to mind as he let it happen and worked his own dick in the process. My dirty, slutty mind wondered if this was how Milo and Lucius worked together. Quickly running out and closing the door, I found Lou trying to go in. Her cheery smile seemed brighter now that she had Zeke and Fiona together again.

“Hey! I just need a few things from Gare he stole out of my bathroom.” She shrugged and tried to open the handle.

“Wait! I would give them another ten minutes to finish up their *goodbye*.”

“Via, you’re so weird sometimes.” She snorted and pushed it open. On cue, she squeaked and slammed the door shut too. “Or, you know, I can just buy some new ones when we leave this island.”

She waved over her shoulder at me and then closed her own door. That did make me laugh just a little. I moved into the kitchen where my guys were making another plan. Not that it had to be a bad thing, but it got old after a while.

“What is there to plan?” I grumbled, taking a seat on the counter between Aster and Beau. “You hold onto me, I move us through with Manny, and we find the Fates. We get our answers, and then we leave.”

I shrugged while biting into an apple from the fruit bowl. Aster barked out a snigger he tried covering up, but I caught it before he could, along with his words.

“Strategy for the game of Tug-of-Whore,” his muttered words had me pausing beside him.

“Come again?” I asked, perplexed.

He gave me a saucy little smirk. “I’d love to *cum* again, but I’ll have to wait for you to get back.”

I punched his shoulder while chuckling. “Not what I meant. What did you mean by that statement?” None of the others could hear us from arguing about stupid, basic things. How had this become my life?

“Let’s just say they’ll ask Rin ‘what’s up’ without meaning it as a greeting, Love.”

“What?” He stumped me.

“His face is one they want to frame with their legs?” He questioned his response to see if I’d get it. I shook my head as he cursed. “If everyone called their groins private parts, the Fates would call them public parts... mostly for Sevrin Thana to use.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me. More exes?” I whined, and he nodded.

“And hos... Exes and hos, Love. The three most jealous women of them all. You’ll find out soon enough, but Rin is planning how to handle them without upsetting you with his past with them.”

“Ass, how do you have a joke for everything? Even when it should be the worst time for one?”

At my question, he tossed his arm over my shoulder, standing beside my seat on the counter. He then placed his other hand over my heart with a small smile. “For the most part, I’m just this way, yeah. But, with you, I feel what my jokes do for you. It ebbs away just a little of the pain that surrounds your heart when you’re sad, Love. I enjoy knowing I’m the reason you can smile just a little more.”

Well, fuck me. I nestled my head into the crook of his arm and enjoyed when he snuggled me back. As a group, we were still a work in progress, but we were still moving forward. Of course, Gare picked this moment to come out of his room walking like he was saddle-sore. Chuckling again, Aster saw Gare’s movements, and Manny’s wild grin after. He laughed too, seeing their lust radiating.

Our private moment to strengthen our bond ended because I had to go deal with more bitches who wanted my men. My little green monster wanted to roar, but I also knew both sides to a relationship took trust. All of this had been a learning curve for us. Now, I had to see if they retained what I taught and asked of them.

Damn... This trust thing sucked.

~

## **Sevrin**

After fashioning the rope around all our middles, I tugged each one to make sure they would stay. Even Manny seemed almost happy with my idea to keep us literally tethered to each other. Though, that might be from the fact he finally had sex. Poor Gareth could barely walk after being used as a blowup doll.

“Kitten, you ready?” I asked her quietly as Manny readied the portal.

“I’ll have my big, strong, Alpha with me. Of course, I am.” She winked, and I had to smile. Octavia had never been like other girls, and I loved it. Her hand took mine, giving it a squeeze. Through our bond, I could feel her slight flare of panic. “Also, I trust you.”

Ah. Aster must’ve been filling her in while I devised a plan to not deal with what the Fates normally liked.

“There’s nothing to worry about, Kitten. They’ve got nothing on you.” I kissed her head to give her a mild show of comfort some girls needed. She’d never ask me for it, but I didn’t need our bond to tell me my mate needed to be soothed.

“Then let’s just get this done. The Shadowlands are creepy as fuck.” She shivered and rolled her shoulders back.

With Lear and I holding each of her hands, we stepped through the rift. The rest of our circle watched, knowing Kitten had made time for each of them before we did this. Now, it would be my time... and Lear’s from him trying

to figure out how he fell in love with a chaotic mess of a strong woman. Hell, we all were still trying to figure that out, but she captivated us all.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” she whispered back to me. That’s when I realized my face had a constipated look to it from smiling and laughing. Fuck. If that didn’t say how I felt, I didn’t know what would.

“Nothing. The rift made me feel weird.” I shrugged it off.

“Like you need to take a shit?” she teased, and I groaned while moving forward.

“We’ll just have Manny lead us to the Fates and be done.” That’s when she spanked my ass. I nearly jumped five feet from the surprise. Something had her in too good of a mood.

Instead of making a scene—because I also liked seeing her feisty—I just followed the Shadowman deeper into the nothing. Kitten’s description of this place had been accurate. The Shadowlands fell under Death’s command, but no one knew where any of the Horsemen retreated to.

According to my father, they took a leave of absence centuries ago. No one knew where they escaped to, but I did know it had been around the time the last shadow-kissed had been hunted down and slain. I’d leave too if the Universe killed off my heirs with my gifted abilities. It hadn’t just been the shadow-kissed Death created. Pestilence lost all his poisoned-touched. War’s generals that held his keen-sight had been slaughtered as well. Famine’s people had their tongues gutted from them for holding his baiting-breath.

That’s what made Octavia’s ability a little hard to believe. The only way to hold dominion over the Shadowmen was to be kissed by Death. A powerful man who fell off the face of this earth centuries ago. One she claims to have never met, and I believed her. Something odd stayed in play with all of this.

“Sevrin? Are you okay?” Kitten kept her knowing eyes on me. I didn’t



want to panic her about the rarity that her situation had been. It would be another puzzle for us to solve, involving Octavia Clarke. She didn't need to be overwhelmed like she already had been from everything else that made her unique.

"Yeah. Just a lot on my mind from all of this." I couldn't lie to her from her being able to tell. Hopefully, my words would appease her. She just nodded, but she slid her hand into mine and gave it a squeeze. Always worried about the rest of us, my Kitten never let her own issues become greater than our shallow ones.

"Manny says we are here," Kitten repeated the shadow with no mouth. Manny had turned back into his mouthless, natural form of blackness the second we stepped through the rift. His fingers began to tear the veil between dimensions. "He will stay here and be ready for my call."

Kitten hugged him while preparing us to go through with her. Her look could kill when she pointed her digit at us.

"Don't let go of me until we're on the other side."

She tugged my hand to go through first for her to remain between Lear and me. I stepped over the wall and braced myself for the sight of their cave. Yup, these creepy triplets loved their dramatics. A long walk up a narrow path to the mouth of a cave was just the start. They were a little eccentric with their theatrics. Thunder cracked, and rain drizzled to make the path slick. I sighed, as did Lear. The Fates were like this in every aspect. Their sexual pleasure had to be all of them together too.

## Chapter 13



**O**ctavia

Well... Um...

There weren't really words to describe this terrain. My thoughts went to Dracula's castle, but instead of a castle at the top, there sat a cave. The Cave of Wonders came to mind from the mouth of it being a panther head. As long as it didn't talk, I'd be okay.

"They must be a fan of *Aladdin*," I whispered to Lear. He snorted in reply.

"The cat symbolizes their alliance with the Hellcats. The Fates have always enjoyed kissing the Alpha's ass. You'll see in just a minute how bad these girls are." Lear helped me untie the knot around my waist. The rope had been a wise idea.

"I have an idea from what Aster hinted at," I mumbled, watching more over-the-top lightning light the dreary sky.

"They only want Rin, though. So, no worries about me." He winked, winding the rope up around his elbow and palm to store in his bag as a circle.

On the trek up, Rin never let go of my hand. Though, that probably had to do with making sure I wouldn't bust my ass on this narrow strip of land rather than a romantic gesture.

Lear stayed behind me, and I felt his grip on my hips every time I did waver. He still hesitated to initiate contact, but he had been trying to keep me safe. I bit my lip and smiled over my shoulder when it happened again. Both men chuckled as we neared the top. Not many words were shared, but I felt comfortable. Even though Lear couldn't remember me, he attempted to try and strengthen our bond. Some things—like touching—stayed in that awkward zone.

“Who makes a place like this?” I shivered, looking at the crumbling rocks tumbling down the ravine by my foot.

“Women who think gruesome deaths should be their reality version of a soap opera,” Lear exasperated.

“Well, when you see everything and share everyone, entertainment can't be easy.” Rin shared a little look with Lear. I felt out of the loop as they snickered.

Oh well. I might've been in the circle, but I didn't have a penis. Sighing, I just shook my head and moved past them. We had a job to do, and I didn't have time to figure out their secret jokes. The path inside the cave widened, but the darkness replaced the fear of falling. My body locked up from the shade engulfing me. Memories of my imprisonment threatened to spill over. My breath wavered within, and my skin prickled with perspiration from the chill the blackness gave.

“Octavia?” Lear tried to move to me, but I had already curled up in a ball on the ground. “Rin! I can't find her. Use your night-vision!”

Two arms cradled me into a firm chest. The ocean scent let me know my

Alpha had me. “I’m right here, baby. Block it out. You’re not there anymore. They can’t hurt you. Only I’m touching you.” His words finally broke through, and I took my first, deep inhale since my panic attack hit. My fists held tightly to the front of his shirt, and I nestled my face into the crook of his neck. He let me sit like that until I gathered my bearings.

“What happened?” Lear asked as he finally found our location.

“My dad locked her up and used the darkness as a weak point. She’s doing better, but I didn’t even think about this part to their cave. I’m sorry, Kitten.” Rin gave my body a squeeze. This mountain of a man quickly became a lot more than just an asshole with an evil complex. He became my mate, one I’d pick again. Lear not having his memory sucked, but that’s why we were here. Quitting my pity party, I got up and brushed some dirt off.

“Sorry. I didn’t mean to.” I cleared my throat.

“You can’t plan a panic attack. That’s why they call them attacks, Kitten. Never apologize for it.”

“Take all the time you need,” Lear’s voice sounded slightly strangled, and I had forgotten that disremembering me meant forgetting everything that had happened to me. Rin’s soothing words must’ve hinted at my struggles. Taking each of their hands, we relied on Rin’s animal side to guide us out of this madness. The intent of this had been to scare people, and they got me from it. My heart still hadn’t steadied after coming down because I remained on high alert for the next scare.

These bitches really did enjoy their reality version of *Survivor*. From the sounds of it, they all wanted to be the *Bachelorette* but wanting Rin as their final rose. Not on my watch, Satanic bitches! Oops. Couldn’t really use Satan on that one because his heir held my hand right now. Man, this life just couldn’t straighten out.

Because television shows were on my brain, my mind made me a *Wipeout* contestant. You know the people that throw things at you? Foam chunks? Yeah... My obscured path didn't have foam chunks hitting me in the face. It might as well have been them heaving a shark at me with evil cackling in the background as I kept losing my balance.

Both men made sure to stick right beside me to ensure my safety and mental health. Exactly what I needed from them, and Lear's gentle touch helped me know we would be okay if he didn't get his memory back. Though, I stood my ground as a proud little shit because of the fact I wanted him to remember the times we had together. That out of their group, he had been the first to care for me, and now he'd be the last from his memory of me being swiped. Amnesia had to be the most cliché thing to do to someone. Still, it had been different actually dealing with it instead of reading about it.

Voices carried over as we saw a small glow of light coming from around the corner. The feminine tones used their throat to speak a language I didn't know. As we rounded the bend, we found the gorgeous blondes chanting over a giant, boiling cauldron. And here I thought I was getting used to this crazy world.

Nope. The greenish-yellow glow from their pot couldn't be normal, and neither could the knife they were about to stab into... was that a possum? Now I had to figure out if it was playing dead or already dead as it lay limp in the arms of the middle one. They were identical triplets to make the confusion harder. Once they were about to disembowel the little creature, he woke up and tried escaping. Well, that answered my playing dead question.

"Excuse me," I announced our arrival just as the one swung the blade down. When she jerked her head up from the woodland animal, my interruption changed the trajectory of her aim. The blade pierced her sister's

forearm. The middle one shrieked and dropped the living possum right into the boiling pot. Its death cries were terrible, and the splash he made hit the wired cage by the side of the base, killing another possum from the wave. We watched the caged one wither into nothing but bone from whatever had been in that potion.

Woah.

“Seriously? You just made us kill Navar and Navarre!” The one on the right that had stabbed her sister yelled at me while opening the cage on the floor.

“Wait, they’re both named Navarre?” Lear tried to cover up his snort.

The middle one flipped her hair with her nose turned up. The knife still sat in her arm, but she didn’t move it. Hell, she didn’t even act fazed that metal jutted out the other side. That told me all I needed to know. These chicks were truly insane. Like, more than I could dream of being. They were a different brand of crazy.

“N.A.V.A.R.R.E. is the proper spelling, but I like N.A.V.A.R. better. So, they were both named it to appease us all.”

Wow... Oh-kay then...

“Sevrin?” The one on the left purred and caught her sister’s attention. “Is that you?”

“Oh, Sevy! We’ve been waiting for you to come back and play.” The middle one still had the dagger in her arm.

Sevy?

“No one gets as rough as you,” Righty cooed. They all flocked him and touched him without a second’s warning. One even moved to start unbuttoning his pants.

My hand leeches onto her wrist, and when her eyes met mine, they widened. Yeah, bitch, I didn’t share.

“The Eight Transgressor has returned to claim her kingdom,” she whispered as I watched her eyes go white and begin to glow. Her sisters moved around her and studied where we touched. Both looked a little stunned to see me. How did they not know about me already?

Lefty reached out and touched my cheek, and her eyes did the creepy thing too. “The shadows, sisters. That is how she has been hidden from our view.”

Middle grabbed my other hand with hers dripping blood down it from the knife. Ew. “She seeks our help now from also being their Pandora. Leviathan’s heir cannot remember their bond.”

This had to be the weirdest shit I’ve seen, but it made sense. The three saw the different stages of my life.

“The bond is all that is needed to repair the damage. They need to strengthen it once again if he wishes to regain what was lost to him,” Righty whispered.

“Too much raw magic resides in her. Without completing the circle and bonds, she soon will be lost to the darkness. Living forever with the Shadowmen from her mind becoming unstable,” Middle added.

“Not much of her history can be revealed from Death marking her. Lilith chose well when she went to him for help,” Lefty chimed in.

Lilith. I should’ve known she’d have more answers.

“War sits on her horizon. A war we already know is coming. Without her bonds being formed, she shall fail. Salvatore will reign, and the new circle will be lost forever since his weapon is nearly complete. He just needs one piece that the Banshee Queen has.”

Lou’s scepter...

“What has been will be no more with either outcome. Octavia Clarke is an anomaly, not even the Universe can control. She is the loophole to end the

cycle.”

The girls let go of me and acted as though they didn't just see my future going either way. There were plenty of helpful hints to get us by, and Lear seemed to agree from my side. We could change the outcome with the small bits we learned.

The three girls smothered Rin, and I watched his dragon try to come out to eat them, knowing it upset me. Aww...

I could totally see it now that I watched for it. Laying my own claim on him, I stepped between them and my mate. They snarled and sneered at my sudden move. I just gave them my own crazy-eyes and too wide of a smile.

“You know the Disney movie *Hercules*?” I asked, and they tilted their head just a little. “If you think about touching any of my mates, I will spoon the eyeballs from your sockets and leave you with one to share.” They gasped, and Lear chuckled from my side. He seemed to like my chaotic nature, and I blushed from his attention on me.

Just then, a whiny voice that I knew all too well came from behind the bend on the other side of the cave. The one voice that had me wanting to rip her tongue out and make her choke on it.

“Ladies? Any news on their arriving time? Sal wants to-” Lexi's words halted at the sight of us.

Without even hesitating, I picked up the rat tail to the Navarre in the cage and flung it at her. The bones landed on the top of her head with a little of the potion left.

We saw the heat rising from her scalp as she shrilled and ran to the sink in the corner. I hadn't noticed that being there, but it made sense with what they did in here. When she finished washing her head off, a three-inch gap of baldness sat on the very top of her head, stopping at the crown. Her hand



skimmed the reddened skin, and she shrilled again. You'd think she was the Banshee...

"You bitch!" Lexi cried and then turned to yell deeper into the cave. "Sal! They're here!"

I wanted to kill her now, but as I stepped in that direction, Lear stopped me. "Now is not the time. We will, but right now, we need to escape."

Dammit. He was right. Sighing, I called for Manny already knowing the Fates were going to tell Salvatore everything. It seemed they were the Soothsayers he had in his back pocket.

Just as Manny split the veil, Sal watched us jump into the Shadowlands. His fear spiked from across the room, so I gave him a saucy smile to let him know I felt it. Time to finish my circle and reinstate my bond with Envy. That's how we'd win this... together.

## Chapter 14



**S**evrin

Octavia was lost in thought from the news the Fates had shared. I couldn't blame her on that one. She had been right this whole time about completing our circle, and I had to fuck it up. Though, my mate never made me feel guilty for my choice. All she asked was that we move forward together, instead of us excluding her.

Lear kept side-eyeing her, knowing what had to be done again if he wanted his memory back. His gaze shifted to me, and we communicated with one another that, yes, he did want to. We just had to see if Kitten would be on board.

"I'm so tired," she yawned between us. The rope kept us linked like sausages, so we didn't have to hold onto her all the time. She stopped walking and made eye contact with Manny who was in his shadow form. She nodded and smiled.

"What?" I asked between them.

“Manny can’t speak as a shadow, but he can talk in my mind though, like earlier. There’s some kind of palace here he wants to take us to for the night. Apparently, we’ve been gone for ten hours.” Kitten tried to cover another yawn.

“Half of that was our hike up that stupid ridge,” Lear grunted.

“Have him lead us to this palace,” I said after his hissy fit. Manny dipped his chin and moved forward to guide us. As we walked, he and my mate kept having a telepathic conversation. I tried to not let it bother me, but everyone knows I’m not a patient man on a good day. “Care to enlighten us?”

“Oh, sorry. We were just discussing how sleeping here would affect you two. Manny is eighty-five percent sure that if I command the shadows to help us, they’ll make sure you don’t get lost.”

“Gee... That makes great odds for us. A fifteen percent chance to be lost forever in the void of shadows.” Lear snorted.

“I’ll make sure before we do it. I’m just tired, okay? Being a badass takes a lot out of a girl.” Kitten always had a way of putting a smile on my face.

Knowing she needed some rest from how hollow her eyes had gotten, I just clasped her hand to lead the way. Her head leaned over to rest into my lower pectoral, and I stroked her mane. Heaven help me, this girl owned me.

Not saying much from the Shadowlands taking a lot out of us all, Manny guided us to a small palace. Almost like a country home for royalty but stationed in the shadows on the destitute ground.

“Woah, I wonder who lives here?” Kitten had her mouth hanging open.

“Death,” I clipped. Kitten just gaped at me and then studied the landscape. She simply nodded like she could see him running this place.

“He’s been missing for centuries,” Lear spoke in awe as we noticed the lights inside working.

“No one could travel here from all his heirs being slain,” I pointed out, knowing it would be the perfect hiding place.

“Why were they killed?” Octavia gulped as the clues clicked into place.

“All four horsemen have an ability they can pass onto supernatural beings. With it, people began getting hungry for power. They went mad from the influence. The Universe declared their gifts too dangerous to give, and everyone who had their power was put to death.”

“So, when everyone mentions I’m shadow-kissed?”

“That would be Death’s ability he gave his generals,” Lear answered for me.

“And what will the Universe do to me?” she whispered as we neared the double doors made of solid wood.

“We need more information from Death or Lilith first. There isn’t enough to go off of,” I tried to reassure her. It didn’t work from the fear painted into her features.

Knocking, I knew it would be best to move on from this topic, until we knew for certain she had been. Not that I’d ever let the Universe take her from me anyway. Plus, she had been made immortal. We all waited, but no answer came. The silence of this plane was already deafening but waiting for sound exaggerated it.

“Should we just go in?” Lear asked.

“Yeah, I want to see what he knows.” My mate straightened her spine and lifted her shoulders. Using my extra strength as a shifter, I got the doors to part with a few grunts. Kitten petted my bulging biceps with a quirk on her lips. Biting that damn corner like she always did, I felt my dick stir. Never in my life had I wanted someone like I wanted her all the time.

As a group, we observed the entry first and found a little note addressed to

Octavia. Her trembling hand reached for it, her brows pulling together. She took a steadying breath before reading it out loud.

*Octavia,*

*Forgive me for my leave of absence today. My brother did a stupid thing that required my assistance in his dimension. I'm sure there are many questions you have for me, but I'm afraid we'll have to meet again for it. My shadows have told me of your arrival to my realm, and for that, I say welcome. Enjoy your stay and ask my men for anything you require.*

*-D*

Stumped, we watched shadows emerge as they pointed up the stairs. Lear and I both looked to our girl to see what they wanted.

“Death readied a room for us to rest in.” She walked by each one and greeted them like normal people. I felt her sadness then because she grieved their poor life of never waking up without a shadow-kissed to follow. I could tell my mate didn't like the idea they remained imprisoned in this place until someone woke them.

Once in the room, Octavia nodded to Manny.

“Yeah. That works. Just wake me in four hours for us to head back.” He disappeared into the shadows as she turned to see us. Her smile was a little shy, and her cheeks stained a little red. “So, Manny is going to hang out with the shadows in the palace while we rest. He'll wake us when it's time to leave. Is the bed okay for all of us, or do I need to get separate rooms?”

Ah. She had been nervous for Lear not wanting to lay beside us. My devilish grin turned downright wicked the closer I got to her. It appeared to be time she learned her stepbrother's secret.

“Did you know Lear here is a voyeur?” I moved behind her as she gasped from my feathering touch along her collarbone.

“I had an idea from when he watched Beau fuck me in the ass in the kitchen.” Her breathing faltered. I choked.

“When was this?” That fucker got a lot lately all because we left him behind too.

“When you were at the club. I tried seducing the answers out of him by only wearing an apron. He seduced me right back and popped my ass cherry.”

“Strip, Kitten,” I nearly roared as the excitement of her words took over. Most might be jealous of our friend, but Beau deserved the reward from all he went through. Plus, he would always be my brother. My girl didn’t even hesitate and soon her fully bare body bent to remove her thong and pants. That peachy ass...

I groaned right along with my closest friend. Damn, this girl was beautiful. When she stood, I came behind her and fondled her heavy breasts. Their firmness always set me off even more. The perkiness of her dusky nipples helped strangle my dick in my pants. Always eager, she welcomed any of our touches when we needed it. Her scent filled my nostrils, and I knew our girl wanted this moment.

But...verbal consent for this would be needed.

“Kitten, do you want us to play with you?”

“Please,” she begged, and both of us had to take a deep breath to not blow our loads in our pants.

## **Lear**

Damn Rin. I loved the man from him being my closest comrade, but this might kill me. Out of all our brothers, he knew how sick and twisted my fantasies could get. One that I didn't openly talk about from others finding it disturbing.

Sloppy Seconds...

The name ruins it completely because that didn't do what I liked justice. I enjoyed seeing a girl being taken, and most knew that about me. Voyeurism had been what my circle identified me by because only Rin knew that I loved seeing a spent cunt gaping, with another man's release dripping from her. His release most of the time. Sometimes, you couldn't help what you liked.

Kinks could be a funny thing that way. Rin liked blood and rough, Lo and Luce had their BDSM stuff, and I liked a used pussy. Rin let go of Octavia's breasts as he moved to grab the chair in the corner of the room. He positioned it to be straight across from me for him to sit in it like a king.

Doing just that, he took his dick out and gave me a smug grin. Yes, this would partially torture me, but I also knew I'd love it. No one understood my needs more than Rin.

"Come here, Kitten." His pet name for her had me wondering where it came from, but I also knew I'd learn it once I got my memory back.

The fact she was willing to do this to help me and please us both, had my mind pressing me harder to begin. Giving me her back, she moved to our Alpha, and I studied every intricate detail on her body. Every dip and every curve... Octavia Clarke remained the best I had ever seen.

Rin took her body and turned her to face me. Well, this would be a new way he'd ruin me. I leaned into the wall and let my hand push on my bulging

crotch through the fabric of my jeans. The pressure only intensified the urging need to sate myself.

Octavia went to straddle him backward, but he had other plans as he hooked her legs to fall over the sides of the chair. He positioned her, so I could see every fold between her legs.

The bastard smirked at me, knowing full and well how hot this was with his dick jutting up in front of her exposed bits. His fingers moved down to play with her swollen nub first, and I got to see her reaction firsthand.

Her head tossed back, and her tits bounced with her breath. Fuck she had to be the most beautiful woman I had ever seen with how she let herself go to feel it all. His fingers delved into her slick folds for me to hear how wet and ready she had been for him. I watched those two fingers fuck her shamelessly until she locked up.

Rin wasn't ready to let her cum, so he yanked his fingers out and left her mewling for their return. My knees buckled just a bit from watching her buck her hips forward in search of his fingers. My balls already had a tingling sensation drawing them up tighter. I had to stop rubbing myself, or I'd be finished before I needed to be. My ass clenched along with my thighs to contain it.

Gripping his dick, he tossed me a wink just as his barbell piercing toyed with her entrance. She tried moving toward him, but her position made it impossible.

Rin stayed in control. The bastard knew it too when he shared a private look with me. Teasing our girl and leaving her helpless had been his plan. Using that metal piece, he tortured her clit to the point she wanted to cry for a release. Her moans and cries made my dick work itself against the grain of the fabric around it, so I tried to stop my climax peaking too soon.



Opening my pants, I found my boxers already spotted with precum, and I bit my lip as more followed. Rin just stayed in his spot, knowing the sloppy sounds of her pussy had me losing my damn mind.

That's when the little vixen squirted. We both watched it shoot from her cunt a few feet from how Rin had her sitting.

Fuck... That had to be the hottest thing I've ever seen.

Not even Rin could bounce back after that. Now, he turned it into a game as he rubbed his mushroom tip on her spot to get more juice out of her. My hand couldn't help but work my cock at the illicit sight. I grunted, and I tried to contain myself, but I was too far gone.

She had squirted five times now, and the more she did, the more my dick ached. I moved closer to her to see what it looked like in person.

Porn helped, but this? Holy fuck! It had been better than anything faked. The way her lips opened up as Rin's fat head rubbed that opening. Her next squirt flew and hit me where I wanted it to. Using her as a lube now, I nearly fell to my knees when her warmth splashed me. Rin knew I had to be close. He stopped working her reddening lips and shoved his dick right in.

"Yes," she panted with her arm hooking behind Rin's head. The sight of them had me excited enough, but Rin always added on.

"You seeing this, Lear? How her cunt pulls around my dick from it being so tight?" His words had me observing the up and down motion. Every time she went up, her lips pulled just as he said. It made me know she stayed tight. Her lips also curled in when they came back down. God, the sight of his fat dick abusing her pussy had me begging for him to finish.

"Want to know something, Kitten?" he asked in her ear.

"Hm?" She couldn't form words from her immense pleasure.

"Lear is all about wetness. He'll even suck my dick to taste you on it."

I would. I had no shame in enjoying exactly what Rin said. Octavia lost it then. The idea of me sucking him made her want to give. My cruel friend still wouldn't let her. He pulled out and snapped his fingers at me.

I nearly dove into them both with how bad I wanted to join. I took his dick, eager to enjoy her taste and scent. Her sweetness mixed with the manly scent of Rin's dick, and I loved it even more. My head bobbed and moved to keep enjoying the flavors.

“Look at him... Look at how much he loves sucking my dick to taste you...”

Octavia gasped when she looked down. Her little sounds turned into more. That's when I looked up to see her abused cunt right in front of my eyes. She was coming on my face while I blew my best friend. Seeing it did me in. My fingers sank into her heated core. My spine tingled from her pleasure being reached. Rin batted my hand away, popping out of my mouth to work her.

Biting her neck, he roared and growled from needing his end now too. She just bounced on his dick while he did all the work. With another roar, I studied his face to see the concentration he got lost in. As he pulled out, I watched his release spill a little out of her tight hole. The same hole that had been well used and looked it. Red and swollen with her lips tender.

This... This was how I enjoyed a girl to the fullest.

Rin let his fingers play in his mess, and he always had the biggest load. His smirk hadn't been lost. “Fuck her. Just like this.” The man knew I wouldn't last long.

I moved to the chair and had to lower myself to line up with her entrance. The sound, the feel...I got lost with need as I used the arms of the chair to help hold my position. I fucked the poor girl like I'd never fuck again. Damn, heaven had to be real after feeling this.

The shockwave in my back had me arching a bit. A sensation I had never felt before ran through me just as I met my end. Octavia's tight walls milked me for every drop from her climax hitting at the same time. She had to be the best sex partner ever.

With a flash of light, my eyes only saw darkness before it all came back. My memories filled my mind of her being my stepsister. How I longed for her when I knew I couldn't have her, and the moment I did share her bed when she shared her grief. I sighed, keeping my eyes closed.

"Lear?" she questioned with me still inside of her.

"I'm back." I breathed heavily and opened my eyes to see the relief in her face. Now knowing what I didn't, I gave her a saucy grin. "Miss me, *Sis*?"

She groaned, but us men laughed. Pulling out, I found Rin harder than a stone again. He shrugged and smiled. "We've got a few more hours. Our girl could use a few more orgasms."

"Mmm. Yes, she could." Via fanned herself. For the next couple hours, we took turns and worked together to fulfill everything she wanted. This had my future written all over it.

## Chapter 15



**O**ctavia

This time, the flames around the circle didn't scare me. Standing in a line around the middle altar with all my guys didn't bother me either. Tonight, we began anew. With the warnings and revelations, the circle had to be complete before we went after Salvatore Thana.

My nerves did sneak in when I came to terms that this would be permanent. After today, these seven guys would be my only world. My tethers connected us all like no other circle had been before. The human part of my brain told me this had to be crazy to do at eighteen, but the new paranormal side knew this was right.

I exhaled, witnessing the guys all commit to me, and their vows to take on the Devil's power chanted with the whipping wind. With our kills turning eighteen, no sacrifice would be needed for this. Lexi had to sacrifice me from not being an original like them. She had tried to do a new ritual to take on the Pandora power and needed to kill for it. Burning off the top of her hair hadn't

been enough, but I knew one day we'd meet again. One day, I'd take Alexis Murdock down permanently. The Fates saw war coming, and we'd both be involved.

Now, we had to deal with all the unknowns, but we'd be a circle first because the Fates warned against my unstable nature without it. Many questions remained from the little clues given by the Fates. The facts about my previous death and kills without being eighteen yet, and Lilith's role in all of this if she had truly been locked away. Still, nothing could take back the peace of this moment.

My men smiled at me with a welcoming warmth that contrasted our first meeting. Loving smiles that started as hateful glares. The goblet passed around with the original blood of the Devils that Leo had. Apparently, Rita—who still remained missing—told him to gather it before he went absent, and Lilith agreed. They never told him why, but I was pretty sure this moment said it all.

Times were changing.

By the end of this war, only one circle would remain in power forever. With completing our circle, we agreed to accept that responsibility. They did their part, and now it stood as my time to accept my role as Deceit and become Legion's heir. Drinking the glass, I felt a burn on my arm. Dropping my gaze, I found the branding like the others. This time, there was an eighth ring filled with grey. Knowing their eyes matched their ring, I came to the conclusion that this would be my color already.

I also found my father's family crest and knew my mother had one of them in our house when I had been little. That's why Daemon's looked so familiar to me when I saw it in his office. Grey, I now had the mark telling the world the eighth transgressor was no longer lost, and this hidden kingdom would be

mine one day. The guys all grunted and gripped their arms as the eighth empty ring circled their targets. Tears welled in my eyes.

For the first time in my life, I felt like I belonged. I had a place among my peers. My mother came behind me and moved me to my new place in the center at the altar where I sat. Now I had to bind our circle to me as the Pandora.

“Are you sure, baby?” she whispered. I nodded.

“They aren’t like your men, Mom. Plus, I’m not tied just to them if they ever try to do that shit.”

She dipped her head and kissed my cheek. As the Pandora, we didn’t know if I would need to kill, but I refused. There would be no more offerings for this circle to continue. If I was a loophole, I’d make this part of it.

My boys came to me, and with Rin’s fangs diving into my neck, they all drank from me. Lost in the sensation, I felt like I had floated away. The only thing holding me down had been Rin’s grasp on me. He had gone first to share our blood like we had already done in the bathroom. Now, the magic sealed us as one, and his circle on my arm burned. We both checked on it when I hissed and sure enough, the center filled with his black. Rin’s lips moved to that black dot, and he gently kissed it, locking eyes with me.

“Mine,” he nearly growled from the pleasure.

One by one, my guys took my blood and offered me theirs. They presented me their necks as they slit little lines for me, and they fed on Rin’s bite on my neck. This would be our changes to the old ways. I would feed from their living veins to mark them as well. With each tether completed, their mark filled on my target. Heat flared within me and pumped through my body. This was working.

After I finished the arousing feedings, I turned to our parents as they

waited. None of my guys acted like the hungry animals I had expected from Pandora's tale. They all kissed and touched me to know this would be different from my mother's ancestors. I became theirs, and they became mine. If they wanted each other, I'd accept that too. Just no one else because my green monster still lived.

With the wind heightening, and the flames growing, we all waited until it happened. It slammed into me instantly. Where my mind raced and wandered, I now felt like a lazy river ran through my thoughts. One track instead of hundreds, and emotions no longer drowned me. I didn't know it would be this big of a change, but feeling it now, I never wanted to go back to my chaos. Testing, I could still reach out and read someone's emotions, but it did when I wanted to, not all the time.

Searching out my men, I tried to see if they too had their curses broken. It took seeing Bell for me to know it worked. My giant teddy bear began tipping to the side and had to keep righting himself, rubbing his eyes. I smiled as he swore. "Fuck, I'm tired."

Everyone laughed. Everyone rejoiced in knowing our curses were finally gone. All of them stood in ease for the first time since their adolescence, and Bell since he had been born. This marked the start of a new era, one I refused to let the Universe dictate.

Moving to my room, I noticed my father changed my bed to one that went from one wall to the next and had to be ten feet long. Understanding dawned on me as the guys piled in.

Rin picked me up from behind and moved me to the center where Bell waited for me to cuddle his front. Lear took his spot by Rin. Milo and Lucius wrapped around each other on Bell's side. Aster and Beau took the foot of the bed with their heads facing each other by my feet. Their hands gripped my

ankles, and as we all settled down, I knew I made the right choice. Seven mates might've been a lot, but we all complimented each other. With all our kinks and quirks, we worked as one.



## Chapter 16



**O**ctavia

One hard dick ground against my pelvis, and another nestled between my ass crack. Opening one eye, I found Bell having his first ever sleepy look. It only made him that much more handsome. My grin stretched from ear to ear as we pecked each other's lips.

“How was your first night of sleep?” I tried to keep quiet enough to not wake anyone else. His eyes shifted to the arm around his middle from Milo spooning him. I had to bite my cheek from the cuteness of Lucius also spooning Milo.

We shared a snicker, and I loved that these guys weren't afraid to be close for my benefit. Their brotherly bond showed with how comfortable they all were sharing this giant bed my dad conjured up.

“I feel...” Bell started to explain but had to think it over. “Rested. I feel rested. For the first time in my life, my mind shut off.”

Tears brimmed my eyes. If only this man knew how much I loved him.

“I do know how much you love me.” He kissed my head and laid back against his pillow with a sigh.

Not me.

Nope. I froze. Had he...

*Can you hear me?* I tested with my mind.

“Of course, I can,” he snorted with his eyes sealed to rest some more.

*Boo-Bear, I’m not using my mouth...* That got him to look at me. *Can you still hear me?*

For a full minute, neither of us moved. I wasn’t even sure breaths were being taken. How could this be?

“Holy fuck...” Bell sat up and started swinging a pillow around to stir the others. “Guys, get up!” They all grumbled and groaned in protest to the idea of waking up so soon. If Bell’s ability to read my mind hadn’t appeared, I would be joining their cause.

“Guys, Bell just read my mind. Well, only thoughts I directed toward him.”

That perked some ears. Rin moved behind me and sat us both up so my ass perched in his lap. He kissed my shoulder, observing his friend. Even with the new revelation, he took time to greet me. My cheeks flushed just a little, and I treasured that the Alpha willingly showed me affection. Rin went completely still. This time, unlike Bell, I knew what had happened right away. My mind had focused on his kindness.

*Can you hear me?* My round eyes met his narrowing ones. He wasn’t mad, but he didn’t know how this could be.

*It isn’t uncommon for me as Alpha. You might want to try with the other guys, Kitten.* His words were right. With Daisy, we had been able to talk before. Now, I didn’t need my familiar. Following the command sequence, I

found Lucius ready for me to test it on him. With a sigh, I kept our concentration up.

*One, two, buckle my shoe...* Yeah, random, but it worked.

“Three, four, shut the door.” He nodded and rubbed his temple. *Can you hear mine, Princess?*

*Yeah... I can hear you. You don't need to touch your head to do it.* My lips quirked at that.

He blushed on his bronzy-gold skin. Oh, that's kind of hot to see.

“Heard that too, Princess,” he groaned. I just snickered and moved on.

Drifting to Lear, he sat up to face me from being next to Rin. His slanted eyes still hesitated from him being a mild jerk to me before his memory clicked.

*I don't blame you for anything. I'm just glad you're back.* My hand reached out to give his a squeeze.

*Would it be pathetic to say I missed you?* His thoughts made my eyes water.

*No, because I've missed you more.*

*I've missed you the most,* he countered.

*I've missed you to the moon and back.*

*I've missed you infinity-*

“Can you two stop, so we can move on?” Rin growled from being between us.

*To be continued.* I winked.

*Yeah, Sis. Anything for you.* I groaned, and he laughed. My head turned to the foot of the bed, and I found Aster rubbing his hands together in excitement.

*Fuck a...* I started.

*The answer is duck, but my answer is this dick because he's feeling awfully*

*neglected lately.* His smirk came out, his hand moving over the bulge in his pants. I couldn't help the splutter that came out of me. I did love this man and all his sexual humor. *I love you too, Love.*

Ah, shit. This experiment had me weepy and turning into a hormonal girl. Milo didn't even wait for me to start when I faced him next.

*Lucius has been begging me to bring you back into our bed, Princess.*

*And if I needed to use you again?* I asked, knowing things had still been eating at me.

*I'm all yours.* Yup, he had to make my throat choke up. My eyes wandered back down to Beau as he smiled at me. My gorgeous, nerdy, strong, auburn hunk of a man. Mornings were different without his thick glasses I loved so much.

*Why do you have glasses when you're immortal?* My curiosity got the best of me.

He rubbed his palm along his neck with a sigh. *We weren't immortal until eighteen. Just like Rin's scars, my eyes fell victim to one of my dad's punishments. He hated how much I read, knowing it came from the curse. They healed after his beating, but I still need them to see perfectly.*

*B...* I wanted to rupture into tears. All of us had been through so much.

*It's okay, V. I don't have to wear them, but the compulsion in me does.*

*I like them...* From the first day I met you, your glasses and tees were my favorite thing about you.

*When my eyes found you, I couldn't find a flaw. Lucius and I talked about it before from his pride needing the best like I strive for more. Mostly more perfection.*

*It's true.* Lucius's voice cut in. *We did try to find a fault in you.*

*Wait, did you just join our conversation?* I turned to him.

*Yeah, I guess I did...*

“Guys, I can have a threesome!”

They all groaned, and some rolled back over. Milo only smirked. “Princess, tell me something I haven’t done before.” Now more whines and mutters came out. Some curses followed from them picturing me in a Milo and Lucius sandwich.

“I meant the mind-talking. Beau and Lucius joined at the same time.” I rolled my eyes and bit the corner of my lip to tease them all. “Plus, I haven’t taken two at once... My ass cherry only got popped recently.”

Yup. That had all the guys adjusting.

“Let’s move on. Do you think you can try all of us?” Rin changed the subject.

Sitting back into his chest, I couldn’t help but notice all the hard dicks on my bed. My pussy begged for all of them. Did that make me a slut? Yeah, but only with my guys.

*I want to spread eagle right now and have all of you fuck me. One after the other, I want a dick in my pussy, my mouth, and my ass all at the same time.* Their labored breathing changed the air around us as Aster moved up to yank my sleep shorts off. They could all now smell the honesty in my statement.

I opened my legs further apart to fall over Rin’s thighs. Everyone stared at my wet cunt like it was the Holy Grail. Milo acted first as he slipped me a little vibrator. My guys liked a woman pleasing herself, and I loved being watched. Somehow, all of our kinks mixed perfectly.

Moving my hand down, I turned on the buzzer and let it circle my clit. My other hand followed to play with my puffy lips as seven men watched me. Fuck, this had to be one of the hottest things I had ever done. My spine tingled. Arousal made my belly ache from the need they created. Rin began

rubbing my shoulders as Bell's meaty hand slipped up my shirt to fondle my breast. I made all sorts of sounds as I began finger-fucking myself.

They did too at the sight. Some even pleased me more by touching themselves. Between us, I couldn't hold back when the wave crashed into me. It signaled what was about to happen between us all.

I came.

I lost myself completely in the arms of my lovers. When I came back down, I found Milo and Lucius already starting on each other, and Lear jerking his cock with a force. God, I loved how perfect they were for me. Just as Rin shifted me to sit on his dick, an echoing boom roared through my window, shaking the sandcastle we were in.

Nothing shook the castle from the magic...

Soon, we all watched the walls begin to droop as the sand no longer held together. The ceiling above us began to come down, and that's when Rin yanked me from the bed to the door. In the hall, we found Lou's triad and Gare with Manny already running for the exit. Panicked, we watched as the telling signs said we'd be buried alive.

"Honey, use your dad's magic like you did for me to help us out." Bell tried to keep a soothing tone, but I could feel his panic too. My moves concentrated just to hold up the ceiling in front of us. The impact hurt my body, but we had to get out of a falling castle. Around everyone's feet, sand filled up and made our trek harder. Thank heavens my Alpha-man had me in his arms.

The fact my ass was showing would be dealt with later. My full concentration took over on just holding the roof up. As we tumbled outside, I let go of the magic and watched the building turn into a giant pile of useless sand.

On the beach, we found my mom, Daemon, and Lucas standing over two bodies.

No...

Beau handed me my sleep shorts, and I kissed his cheek for grabbing them in that mad dash to get out. Next, we all took off to the shore. Laurel laid on her stomach with a hole in the back of her neck. My dad was beside her like he might be unconscious.

“Mom?” I pleaded both to be alright. She now had my dad laying in her lap as she patted his cheeks to rouse him. Daemon held Laurel, but it didn’t take a doctor to know she was gone. Bell fell beside his mom with his hands trembling to touch her. He ripped her from Daemon and rocked her corpse with his tears of disbelief.

“Salvatore placed a bug in her, one made up of whatever he’s concocting to kill us.” Lucas knelt beside Bell, placing a hand on his back. “Whatever it was, shot straight through her spinal cord. She might be gone, but take comfort knowing she felt no pain.”

“There’s nothing we can do?” I cried and held her lifeless hand. Bell couldn’t control his sobs for the one woman who raised him to be the best man possible.

“She isn’t immortal, Octavia. Salvatore and the others knew this would kill her when they placed it in her neck.” Daemon crouched beside me. “It seems he’s getting closer to his weapon because Leo is fading.”

I finally looked over at my dad and crawled to his side. My mom wept quietly, but her worry stayed present.

“Dad?” I shook his side as he groaned to rouse.

“Daughter, you need to keep the barrier up. I feel them coming.” His hand took mine, and I felt the connection of our magic. Though, his hand seemed

too cold to my touch. Death tinged the air around him.

I tried working on the shield around the island, but that's when Salvatore or someone started shooting rockets and explosives into it. Everyone looked into the distance to see the shield blocking them out. Every hit weakened me more and more. My nose began to bleed, and my limbs became too unstable to sit. Falling back, I fought the explosions the best I could.

"I can't hold it," I sobbed from the pain of their attack rendering me defenseless.

"We need to run." Rin looked to where my barrier weakened.

"If that barrier falls, all the creatures of Purgatory will be freed," my mother stated, and I gulped.

"It's going to fail! Octavia hasn't been trained to control the magic! Leo's out cold, and we're a minute shy of joining him!" Rin roared and kicked the sand. My mind remembered what my dad did when he first left the circle.

"We move the island," I murmured and tried to sit up.

"But where? They'll follow." Lear pointed out.

"To the one place only I have access to." I met Rin's scowling face, and he nodded in surprise. "I'll buy you time." Just like that, my Alpha shifted into his giant dragon and took to the sky. I didn't have time to ogle his black scales with blue undertones. Nope, I knelt beside my dad and woke him just enough to get the spell and his magic to boost mine.

"Manny, open a rift." I gulped, readying my words. The barrier had been gone by this point as everyone linked hands to not get lost on the other side. Thank heavens Lear remembered that one.

"Your men are safe to travel through on their own from now being fully connected to you, but the others will need a pair," Manny informed us of this new change.



Bell carried his mother's lifeless body. Lear took his father's hand, and so did Lucius. Beau had been the gentleman to carry my dad, and Aster helped my mom. Lou and her trio used Milo. Gareth went to Aster as well. We were ready to move.

Focusing all my magic on this, I chanted and thought about the place I wanted us to land. I felt the whole island being sucked into the rift as the other groups went flying into it as well.

"Manny! Guide them!" I shouted over the tropical storm hitting us. He nodded and walked through from this not affecting him. Trees and animals had me ducking as I waited for my Alpha.

*Sevrin, come to me...* I used my words, knowing his dragon would understand them. Still, he fought to protect his mate by blowing flames at the enemy. *Please, I need you to be with me.*

That got him to make one last wall of flames they couldn't pass. As he landed, he shifted gracefully into my Alpha-man. Naked, I took a small pleasure in his body. Those tattoos glinted in the morning light, but his fierce eyes held me. Together, we walked through the tear between dimensions just as the rest of the island came through too. In the backyard of Death's castle, I set up a smaller island to contain the beasts of Hell.

# Cruel Omen

Ashley Amy

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## Chapter 1



**D**eath

Ah. Octavia was heading down the path we'd tried to pave against the Universe's wishes. I smiled, sensing the rift in my dimension she no doubt, opened.

"Has she made it?" My favorite Soothsayer asked, pausing her task of scrubbing the dishes to look at me.

"Yes," I clipped. My brothers sat around the table as we enjoyed the best enchiladas this world would never know. Being at Barin's—my brother of War—we heard his combat horses beginning to fuss with the coming storm.

His farmlands only weathered poorly when something grave marked our path. All of our domains worked differently than the human realm. Barin's ruling covered the countryside and ranches that housed his hellish horses. Unlike my land's title dealing with my darkness, he had named his Misty Meadows. Such a stout title for a Horseman's territory. I rolled my eyes just

thinking about it. Though, his grassy plains and western feel did help settle us all when our solitude claimed our sanity.

Speaking of my brothers, we had the same thought when the neighing became rowdier. We paced across the room and over to his large window and found his skeletal horses with flaming manes running the grounds wildly as though something crawled up their missing asses. This sign had been expected for all the things we put into play. Now that it had come closer to being real, we all grew a little antsy.

“Are we sure about this?” Kepi—my brother of Famine—whispered among us for the one named Rita not to hear. She knew most of our plan, but not all of it.

“I am,” Addis—my brother of Pestilence—murmured. I stood in agreement but didn’t show it as something tugged in my chest.

“What say you, Letum?” Barin side-eyed me, so I tilted my head to comply.

“I stand with my brothers. We do this together. Our last and final task.” I called to my Shadowmen with my mind to open my portal. It was time the Horsemen rode once again.

## Chapter 2



**O**ctavia

It hurt.

My arms remained stretched out and locked to keep my hold on the island as my dad's land tried to recreate itself before us. Behind me, everyone stayed clustered together for safety reasons I couldn't control. We had to withstand the tornado that had every piece of Purgatory swirling within it. In the darkness that the Shadowlands thrived in, I tried to keep an eye on everything inside the vortex I created. The Alimari snakes spun along the end of the twister, the swirling movement showed just how big the giant squiggles were.

Containing them and the other creatures I hadn't met yet—mostly out of fear—I tried to keep control over the magic. This natural disaster wanted to take on a mind of its own and run rampant on this place. I screamed while trying to stabilize it, and blood drizzled from my ears, nose, and mouth.

Along my nailbeds, I noticed they too bled from the strain in my hands. This magic was a lot to handle for only having one practice at it.

“Guys!” Lear shouted from behind me. “Hold onto her! Let her draw our strength!” Everyone moved from needing to touch one of us who could walk this land. All of their hands reached a place along my back and arms. That’s when I felt it. Just like when I accidentally set off their magic from their touch before at the school with Rin on the steps my first day that had everyone brawling. When I slept with Aster and bled his Lust. I could feel their magic within me, and it felt just the same. This time, I wasn’t an unstable human. No, I could channel this. Direct this to where I needed it.

They groaned behind me from how much I had to take. Their magic helped me to hold onto my father’s essence as I manipulated the land. Creating a smaller version of the island, I made it almost like a pen to keep the creatures contained. Knowing I had been pulling so much from the guys, I leaned out of their grip to save them. They all fell around me in heaps of unconscious slumber. I just prayed they’d wake up from this. My father grew greyer by the second as my mother clutched him to her chest. Her foot rested on Beau’s leg to keep their contact.

I panted, trying to keep up the barrier around the new prison. So much had happened, yet so much had to be done, but all that registered now had been the pain. Even my eye sockets had a pulse behind them from the pounding of my heartbeat. My body wanted to shut down and rejuvenate, but I had to keep up the forcefield. Without practice, it took my full concentration to do. Just like with Bell in the water that day. If I got sidetracked, it would all crumble into nothing.

Crying from the strain, my body wanted to give out, but my determination knew no bounds. Red swam along my vision, and I knew I began weeping



blood. The beating within my skull picked up. Our physical forms might've been immortal, but like I told Karma, we could still bleed.

Just then, two strong hands clamped my shoulders. A smoky smell lingered and something about it called me to remember something. My mind itched at the familiarity as it kept tickling me to remember something. Something I couldn't.

"I've got you, young one. I'll protect your land and your family." His gravelly tone matched the smoky essence that wafted from him. "Rest and remember."

In the swirl of my body losing the battle to keep awake, I did. As I drifted into my dreams, I remembered where I heard this voice. In my dream of remembrance, I came in to watch the other version of me in the image, but I watched as a bystander.

*I walked through the hospital door while the medical staff stood around my dying body. They shocked my chest with the pads after calling clear. Spasming in an arch from it, the never-ending tone of the flatline remained. My eyes studied all the chaos of that moment where we knew my life had changed. Still, now, it all seemed to be background noise. I hadn't come here to relive it, but to remember it.*

*In the corner of the room, I found him. The man I was made to forget somehow. Tall like Rin, he had the athletic muscle of Lear. Messy, black hair fell just above his eyes. Tan, his skin had an olive tone, but there also seemed to be a little grey mixed in. Not much, just enough to tell someone he might not be human. His pointed jaw and straight nose rested above his curling lips. Weighted, his eyebrows fell into a natural scowl like Rin's. Though, his lips told me he wasn't angry.*

*My mind jogged to catch up. I had seen his face when I fell in and out of*

consciousness before. Standing in the corner with his arms crossed and his back against the wall, he waited while watching my bed. How had no one noticed him in his simple jeans and black tee? He didn't wear scrubs like the rest.

That's when I saw something that would make me sick for the rest of my life. My spirit lifted from my body and went right to him. He had come to collect my soul because this had been Death himself.

"Who are you?" My soul asked. I just watched the exchange in my memory.

"They call me the King of Reapers, young one."

"Reapers?" My soul questioned. Not recalling this encounter left me blind to the world that would soon be revealed.

"They collect the dead for me." His finger lifted to point at my hospital bed where the doctor had given up. They marked my time of death and raised the white sheet over my face. The same sheet I awoke below.

"I'm dead?" I could feel my soul crying from here.

"Well, yes, but not for long." His smoky voice pulled me back to gaze at him. I didn't realize how bad I looked when this happened.

"What do you mean? And if you're the King, why have you come to get some poor girl?" Well, I guess in death, I still had my sass. My soul wanted answers with her attitude.

"It means you are destined for a lot more than this, Octavia Clarke. I am here because I am the only one who can fuse a soul back into a body. My Reapers can only reap."

"Why would you do that for me?"

"Well, you are the loophole. The conduit and the queen combined. Not even the Universe can touch you." He moved closer to my soul and brushed his hand over my cheek.

*“W-what are you doing?” My soul stammered.*

*“As I said, you are the loophole. The way I can finally finish my task. By kissing your soul, you shall have dominion in my dimension. But more than that, it will be the place you’ll one day know to seek as sanctuary. Somewhere safe for you and your circle.”*

*“My circle?”*

*Three more men popped out of nowhere and stood beside Death. One had long, blond hair and a square jaw. His hand caressed my arm. Gripping my own as I watched, I remembered the tingling sensation as he marked me. Just his touch branded my soul. The phantom pain flared on the spot now.*

*“These are my brothers, young one. They have come to bestow their gifts upon the anomaly the Universe couldn’t stop from forming.”*

*The next had red hair that had been buzzed entirely off. He rested his forehead against my soul’s and then locked our eyes together. A zing happened that I couldn’t quite understand. The other brother had white hair and the prettiest face as he blew his breath into my nose. When he finished, the three left me with the man with grey eyes lighter than my own.*

*“Why did they do that?”*

*“I can’t share more than I have already. You won’t even remember this when you wake up.”*

*“I won’t?”*

*“No, young one. You have to make your path yourself. Just know, some of us have altered it slightly to help you get to where you need to be because we knew you’d come, and we’ve been waiting.”*

*His lips pressed against my forehead. A bright light followed that conquered my soul, and that’s when the monitor showed my heart beating*

again. The same sound that I woke up to... Only, when I remembered nothing after death, it had been from Death erasing my memory.

After the hospital recall, my dream flashed to individual memories. Each one showed Death watching me. In the forest behind Daemon's house, and at the school where he walked right by me.

Only I could see him, and now I knew it had been from being marked by Death. He had been all around me, but I hadn't noticed because he made me forget. All the times I had been bullied, he lurked in the shadows to watch it happen. He'd smirk every time I sought my revenge. Then, in my dreams, I'd talk to him again. It only happened a few times, and the first seemed to scare him when I found my way to him.

"Young one! What are you doing here?" He shouted from his desk he had been writing behind. Standing, he moved to me to find it had only been my soul to come.

"I-I don't know. Where am I?" my soul asked him. This moment happened after I used my tether to follow Lear's kill. When I passed out at Lou's house, my soul had come to him while I slept. No wonder I had been out for so long.

"Ah! You've discovered your first magical ability goes farther than just seeing through their eyes." He nodded in understanding. I still didn't know back then. On the sidelines watching this interaction, I did now.

"What do you mean? Who are you?"

"You won't remember, but it seems you've used the link I created between us to find me again. Your soul feels lost from your unstable magic. It seeks me to help end it."

"End what?" My soul gulped, looking around the old-fashioned room fit for a king in a previous era.

"Your suffering. But I cannot, young one. I need you to keep surviving the

*chaos for a little while longer. It will get better when you complete your circle.”*

*“I want to die?” my soul questioned him.*

*“In a sense, everyone does. But as I said, you cannot. We need you to help the rest of us against what the Universe demands. You will end it all.”*

*“Why?”*

*“I cannot tell you all of that. Plus, you will forget this just like I’ve had you forget everything else.”*

*“Well, if I’m going to forget again, can I ask you what your actual name is?” Being shy then, I fidgeted after asking.*

*“Ah, you are smart.” He moved to stand beside my soul. With his hand resting on my lower back, he pressed me out his door where a line of black mist levitated at my eye-level. “Most know me by Death, but my birth name is Letum.”*

*And with that, I woke up in my bed that following morning. I had to rush to school, not knowing I sought Death out the night before.*

~

Just like then, I bolted up in a bed. Someone placed me in the same room Rin and Lear stayed with me in last time. Lifting the covers to get out, I found someone had changed me into a white, nightgown nightmare out of the eighteenth century. The frilly lace had me gagging. Those poor women suffered too much back then. No rights, no comfortable fashion because they were only property.

Eesh. I shivered and moved to the door. It was time for Letum to answer the rest of my questions.

## Chapter 3



**O**ctavia

Man, this place remained a little too creepy for my taste. Turn of the century, English manor for royalty had to be the best way to describe it. A summer home with large windows, but instead of the sun streaming in, only darkness filtered through the panes. Still beautiful, it just gave me the willies walking down it like I had entered a horror movie. The wooden floors creaked when my feet padded on the cracks just right, and black, crown molding followed the baseboard and middle line along the walls. Under the middle slab, the color was a rich grey and above held a baby blue.

The combination should've been odd, but I rather liked it. Finding the kitchen, I saw the adults of our group. My mom, Lucas, and Daemon whispered to each other while sipping their glasses of scotch. When my mom saw me, she set her glass down and came over to mother me like a hen. Sometimes, I wanted her to be like this, but after a lifetime of nothing, it became hard to accept.

“I’m sorry I’ve made you feel alone, Via.” She kissed my temple. “But never doubt for one second that I stopped caring about you. You have always been my world and one day, I will make up for my wrongs to you.”

“I’m trying to take it in, Mom. It’s just hard. I wanted you like this my whole life. Now that I’m grown, you are, and it’s weird.” I kissed her cheek in return. Not that the damage between us could change overnight, but we both longed for it to happen. “How’s Leo?”

She stiffened. “He has not roused from whatever Sal did to him.”

My heart clenched. “Is he still cold?”

I recalled touching his glacial skin before we moved.

“It’s getting worse” Daemon nodded.

“Laurel?”

“Bellamy woke up yesterday and gave her a proper burial with our help,” Lucas mentioned the crucial parts.

“Yesterday? How long have I been out?”

“Three days. Death told us it would take you a while to recuperate from how much magic it took for you to save the island.” My mom led me into the kitchen. I filled a glass with water from the tap. Happy to see it was normal, apparently the Shadowlands had clean water. My mom might not be the addict I thought she had been, but I refused to let alcohol tempt me.

“Who all is awake now?” my voice stayed small from this situation being too new.

“Milo, Lucius, and Bellamy,” Daemon responded. “Rin channeled most of his magic to keep the others from being over-used.”

“And Letum?” I inquired.

“Who?” Lucas countered with a question.

Right, only I knew him by his true name. His universal name fell from my

lips. “Death.”

“He said he would be back in a few days and that was two days ago.” My mom moved to the sink to rinse her glass out. So now, I had to sit and wait. Restless, my insides burned from the idea of wasting any time. I didn’t want to wait. Never have I been patient. Just ask the guys when it came to their constant need to plan. Ugh, I hated it.

My agitation and itch only worsened as I traveled back up the stairs. After trying to find Bell, I knew he had been hiding to be alone. I wanted to see if he needed anything from me, but I respected his need to grieve in private. Laurel and I didn’t know each other long, but she had been a woman I looked up to immediately.

At the top of the stairs, I heard males quietly laughing and knew it would be my favorite duo. Peeking in through the crack in their door, I found both laying in their boxers facing each other.

Fucking hell, I never knew I’d like watching male-on-male action, but these two ruined me. Milo and Lucius were such a contrast that it turned me on more. Kind of like watching Bell’s black dick sinking into my pink pussy.

Aannndddd now I grew hornier. Horny and needy for something other than my hand. Though, I had lifted the ruffles of my dress to play with my folds as I watched the two lovers. Milo’s leg came over Lucius’s hip as he gyrated their covered pelvises together. He pinned Lucius’s hands above his head to make him take the dry-humping.

Fuck! I had to bite my lip to keep my moans down. My clit throbbed and ached as I watched them unabashedly rub their dicks together. Milo’s veiny cock slid out of the slit on his briefs, and I could see the precum from here. Lucius whimpered at the sight of this lover’s excitement. Without even knowing, my own hips swiveled over my hand from the pressing desire



growing to sate myself. I sat on the border already of reaching my end, but I didn't want it to be over too soon. Trying as hard as I could, I eased up on the pressure. My thighs were already getting slick from my arousal as my heart hammered in my chest.

Even with me giving myself pleasure, something had been missing. Something long and hard to work between my legs in the hole that begged for something, anything to fill it. The ache grew as I watched Milo remove Lucius's boxers, revealing two hard dicks showing their arousal. This had me dripping as I leaned myself into the doorframe for stability.

Milo straddled his lover with his cock jutting out over the one that pointed up. His hand fisted his own. That's when I saw the hottest thing of my life.

My pussy lips fluttered at the sight of Milo using his cockhead to rub the long sides to Lucius's dick. Hot damn, their excitement had them panting from loving it too. If Lucius's shaft had a peel, Milo's manhood would be peeling it off from the downward strokes he used. His precum dribbled down his lover's dick, and the sticky substance glistened from my view.

"Tell me how good it feels," Milo groaned while licking his possessive lips.

"Soo good... Can't move... Can't think." Lucius grunted.

With a jerk of my hips, I came. Their Dom and Sub relationship always did weird things to me that I enjoyed.

~

## **Lucius**

Waking up and feeling Milo's hardness against my own, I couldn't help myself. The slow and deliberate movements of my hips into his had me clenching my abs. He felt too good with our hard chests pressing against each

other. The warmth of his body, his clean scent, the way his perfect hair ruffled made mornings my favorite when I woke next to him.

Soon, he joined my slow movements to let me really feel how hard he was for me. His lips found mine, and he commanded them. I had always been his. That would never change. With Octavia in our bed, we both belonged to him. That had been my dream last night, and I wanted her to play with us again. I wanted to watch my lover take ownership of both our pleasures. The idea of her having both of us at the same time while Milo controlled us... I hissed from my head pulsing with a greater hunger.

“You want her again, don’t you? You want to feel that tight snatch gripping your dick again.” Milo moved his hands to pin mine down.

“Yes.”

“How bad, Luce? How bad do you need to watch me torment her until that pussy is drenched with need from my abuse?”

I groaned with a whine from the illicit image he painted. I humped him faster to tell him how bad. That my dick wanted to explode, thinking about her being here with us. Nothing could ever replace this man in my life but having her with us added to our lifestyle. She fit our kink like no other woman could.

We tried many times to find a girl who could give and take with what we needed, but none of them fit. Until Octavia filled that spot with more than we could have ever imagined. She’s perfect.

“I want to see it again. Her squeals. Your dick. The toys...” I could barely breathe from the tightness in my chest.

Milo chuckled darkly while he took control in our dry humping. This man would be the death of me. “You want me to clamp her nipples? Maybe her

sensitive clit after I give her a hard orgasm? You want to see her tremble from the pain while I use the largest dildo that we have on her?”

“Fuck,” I hissed. “That’s exactly what I want.”

“Me too, Luce. I want to torture her with our favorite toys. Then I want to put both our dicks into her pussy at the same time. She’ll cry out from the pain but just imagine our dicks doing what they’re doing now inside that dripping cunt.”

My eyes rolled back as I came closer to the end. We humped and moaned while Lo stayed in command. Beads of sweat glistened my forehead, and my teeth clenched from the burning rush of desire striking my crotch. From the door, we heard a breathy moan from our favorite girl, giving Lo a wicked gleam in his eye. His dick slid out, and I could see that this new arrangement had him extra hard.

With a wink she couldn’t see, he rolled on top of me after relieving me of my boxers. My darker dick pointed up to the sky, almost pleading to the gods for relief. I flexed it when Lo’s pale cock glistened and poked it. He knew this would torture me in the best of ways. One of his hands kept mine detained while his other fisted his ribbed cock.

He slowly moved the head down from my tip to my base as his precum marked my shaft. This had been about him claiming my dick more than exciting all three of us. Still, I couldn’t help the pleasurable moan that spilled watching him repeat this pattern around my dick. It was so hot to see two cocks enjoying each other. His silky skin never hid the hardness of his shaft. Being a demon, I loved that enjoying a dick had never been a bad thing because the poor humans couldn’t rejoice in their pleasure of the same sex. Well, females could more so from the males viewing it sexually. Still, same-sex partnerships had been frowned upon.

Not with us. The second I knew this man wanted me, I couldn't let him go, and he did the same. We would always be what the other needed.

“Tell me how good it feels.” Lo licked his thin lips.

“Soo good... Can't move... Can't think.” I tried to compute proper sentences, but he had me too worked up. My back arched when we heard the telling sound that our little voyeur liked the show. Lo winked at me before getting up to go to her. His beautiful shaft still hung out of the confines of his briefs, so I watched it bob with his steps just as our Princess did.

“Stay,” he commanded me. As he led her onto the bed beside me, I knew I wouldn't be going anywhere. Lo moved to grab the bag of toys we recovered from the sand—he spent yesterday cleaning them all and now it worked out in our favor because Princess wanted us just as much as we wanted her. My cock twitched again from what my lover had planned for her.

Our little fantasy was about to come to life.

## Chapter 4



**M**ilo  
Beautiful.

Both my lovers lying side-by-side, completely stripped of their clothes. I stood above them with my favorite black bag over my shoulder. Princess got a single taste of what had been in this carrier, but now she would know the true Dom I was. Taking the silk ties out, I handed them to Luce.

“Tie her up,” I ordered. My voice displayed my controlled demand. Though every nerve within me became alive and wired. Luce pounced like lightning, already excited for what would come. Using the headboard, Princess’s hands dangled above her head as she stayed on her back. Completely exposed, even vulnerable, she put her trust in me yet again to handle her pain perfectly, balancing it to the point of pleasure.

I would do just that. For her. For Luce. For myself.

With my forming smirk, her pupils dilated from the heat within my gaze. She comprehended what I had planned for her tight little body. She knew,

and she craved receiving it just as much as I yearned to dish it. The longing I had for this had me fisting my hands repeatedly. Once I knew I could govern myself, I ignored the strain in my balls to end it now. Moving to her, I displayed the clamps in my hands that had a chain between the three pinchers. Her brows drew together in confusion.

“Why is there a third, Sir?” Her sweet little voice had my cock twitching when she remembered her role in this. Only I could be the master for these moments. Luce had been lucky earlier that I let his morning brain be his excuse for forgetting who I am in the bedroom.

Instead of telling her, I placed the first one on her dusky nipple. It had to be the size of an eraser tip on a pencil. The perfect size, if you asked me. Probably from her fulfilling everything else on my wish list for my dream woman. My hand caressed the valley between her full tits before I secured the other one. I hadn't made them too tight yet but I would as we eased her into this.

Knowing I'd see her writhing in pain had me clenching my abdominal muscles and my shaft. Luce knew not to touch his dick, but I could see in his eyes how badly he wanted to as I slowly slid the third chain down her stomach. All of us watched, fascinated by the sight. Her tan skin against the glinting silver, the way her belly rose and dropped with every begging breath. The cool chain pebbled the flesh I feathered with it. As though she knew my plans, she parted her legs. Already swollen and soaked from touching herself, I clamped her clit extra hard to remind her of her error.

She cried out by arching her back off the bed. Luce and I listened to the chains clanking where they met together by her navel.

“When you're using me to come, only I can give the order for you to finish yourself, Princess.” My words made her whimper and affirmed she heard.

Twisting her nipple clamps to make them tighter, Princess bit her lip to hold back her screams. Fuck, did it turn me on more. My spine tingled as her scent had me blinking to think straight.

“You remember the safe word?” I murmured while teasing her lush lips with a brush of my own.

“Elmo,” she heaved. As a new breath filled her, I worked the clamps even more.

Going back to my bag, I pulled out two butt plugs. Luce moaned, knowing one would be for him too. He needed this perturbing act to get off harder, being like me. Their pain filled the lustful void that I always required more of. I needed them to ache and writhe from my selfish ways, my hand enforcing their hurt.

Lubing up both, I put Luce’s in first, knowing he’d love the long one that vibrated and would destroy his most sensitive part. His dick flexed for me as I played with his ass to work it in. He also drew in his six pack to show every hard line on his middle. My fingers twitched to run over those divots of perfection but we had another member today.

Princess didn’t mind watching me loving my other partner. No, she purred from her spot, examining me give my attention to our other companion. I set the vibration on the highest setting, recalling this act would work Luce into a fit. He lied on his back and accepted what I had done. The hard planes of his abs beckoned me to touch them yet again for his comfort, but I needed to see him squirm while trying to contain his pleasure. He needed to prove he could last for what I had in store.

Going back to our Princess, I made sure to go a little smaller in size, knowing she had only two experiences with anal fun, and one encounter had only been a finger. After working her plug in and giving her a light vibration,

I could tell she loved this kind of sex too. Granted, this girl loved it all. We knew her kinks and pleasures reached no end, setting our whole group off from it.

Next, I went to the bag and prepped my wax to warm up on the nightstand. As it cooked to melt, I got Luce a cock ring he needed to wear to ensure his dick got the most pleasure right now. Crawling myself up between his legs, I let my hand jerk his beautiful, brown cock. His fists knuckled into the black sheets and went white from restraining himself. Once the ring had slipped into place, he made gargled noises that had me on edge. This man unraveled me wholly.

Then, I got my crop out and gave Princess an evil glint. The handle sat around four inches thick and seven inches long. With no warning, I shoved it up her slippery channel. She cried out while biting that favored corner of her lip. She had us all fixated on that one little move of hers, and it gave her this innocent vibe that had us all watching those batting, doe eyes.

I fucked her hard with the little whip as she bucked and humped it right back. Luce and I couldn't look away. Princess always wanted to be pleased by doing more work herself. Never in my life had I seen a woman chase her pleasure the way Octavia did. I wanted to spurt my hot seed all over her in admiration, but I knew I needed to keep her reined in. Knowing she was close, I pulled out, and her pussy lips quivered for more. She wanted to be filled, but I denied her, knowing how close she got. My breathing got more substantial from our shared arousal thickening because she did this to me.

Whipping her sweet little cunt, she cried. I watched those lips flutter again. Soaked, she practically begged for more. I kept swinging repeatedly until I lost the violent urge, releasing the temptation within me to take my anger out on her. The same drive I felt to hurt others the way I had been. My eyes



drifted to the bruising pussy below me that still looked like it ached for more. There would be no holding back as I removed all the toys from both my lovers. Lucius sighed when I let him settle down. He gathered himself after the torture I induced against his prostate.

Not wasting time, I looked to him. “Lay below her and stick your fat dick in that suppliant snatch.”

He hurried and worked his face to sit between her bound arms. Once he was sheathed in her fully, Princess nearly cried. She finally got something to soothe the throbbing necessity within her pussy. Luce couldn't help but start moving once enclosed inside her tight channel. Not that I could fault him for that behavior because she was addicting to us all.

On so many levels, we desired her. Not just being around us but also the physical intimacy. Whatever bond we formed, however we had made it different, it changed the dynamics. We only belonged to her. Though Luce and I had each other, there could be no denying the pull that gravitated us to our Pandora. Not that we'd fight the feeling.

After everything, she only proved how right she would be for all of us. We'd never lose her from her own strength refusing to lie back and take it. I loved that about her. Smirking, I sauntered over to the bed with the string I used for this next part. “No moving, Luce. Stay still.”

His eyes shifted to the string I now dunked into the hot wax. He knew exactly what he was about to feel.

“Oh, fuck!” He tried to see through the stars that were, no doubt, blurring his vision. My hand kept dipping it for them to watch in awe. Our girl's nipples were swollen and red from the clamping, and I smiled harder.

“Luce, be a dear and rub her nipples better.” My order carried through as he palmed her breasts from behind. The sight of her full tits squeezing between

his fingers made me pause to delight in it for a few extra seconds. Knowing I had wax hardening on my little rope, I got back to work. I took the soaked string and quickly moved it to her navel. Drawing a line up from her pussy to her sternum, she writhed in his arms.

My other lover's hands clamped her tits to anchor him as her pussy clenched around him. Hot wax always worked miracles with driving him mad, and Princess enjoyed the new thrill too. I kept going back for more wax and letting it drip on her exposed flesh. She loved the slight burn of the wax, and we enjoyed studying the string drip leisurely.

Luce couldn't handle it. I eased up, knowing I wanted to relish in this moment with them. Putting the string away, I stripped myself and climbed between their legs. Knowing both were primed, I positioned my cock to her entrance as well. My fingers worked inside to feel Luce trying to hold himself together. Working her open, I finally nudged my tip in. From there, it took more coaxing, but we seated our cocks inside of her perfect core. She had taken us both like no one had before her. Moving my hips, we all groaned from it affecting our whole triad.

Heaven.

That had been the word that came to mind as her slick sounds mixing with Luce's uncontrolled breaths had me panting myself. My heart turned into a vise while I observed both their scrunched faces of pleasure. These two... They had turned into my world.

We worked like this as I passionately kissed Luce over her shoulder. Princess mewled from the sight, and we felt her tip over the edge. Knowing I had done it with just our kiss killed me. My tongue toyed harder with Luce's as we felt her buck between us. Luce whimpered in my mouth and I ate his

cries. I knew he was asking for me to let him finish, but I needed him to end with me. I'd always need him to finish with me from fearing I'd lose him.

Once Princess finished, she ripped me into her own embrace for Luce to bear witness to. Her lips turned swollen from how I devoured them. They matched the shade of her bruising nipples, and I loved that.

Just as I did with our other lover, I made sure she knew who she belonged to. Her perky tits pressed against my chest from the shallow breaths we took. Her eyes were blown from full arousal. That did me in. Looking to Luce, I gave a slight nod, knowing words wouldn't be able to leave my mouth. His eyes rolled back, and I felt it. His hot semen splashing onto my dick inside this gorgeous woman. The feeling zinged me, and I exploded just the same.

Luce felt it all as we kept eye contact above our girl. With our eyes, we confessed it all. Our love, our need... It had changed from the woman between us.

"Milo?" her innocent tone shot straight to my dick inside of her.

"Yeah, Princess?"

Before she could answer, we heard heavy breathing behind us. Aster stood tall with Lear kneeling before him. Our man of Lust fucked our man of Envy right in the mouth while watching us double penetrate her pussy. I smiled, knowing they'd want more too.

## Chapter 5



**L** ear

“Long nap, yeah?” Aster asked, walking out of a room as I ambled by. I paused to wait for his sluggish body to catch up.

“I guess so.” My voice still sounded groggy from the nap I had.

“Want to find our girl and see if she’s alright?” Seeing the man made for Lust only want one girl had been a day for the history books. I smiled, knowing only one woman could tame the seven sinners we were.

“Yeah, I do. If using that much magic wiped us out, I want to make sure she’s okay too,” I cleared my throat. He bobbed his shaggy waves in agreement. As we neared the stairs, we heard it. The telling sound of our girl being thoroughly ravaged.

Aster sucked in a hard breath—no doubt his gift hitting him like a freight train—as he leaned into the nearest wall. He probably would’ve felt it earlier had he not been so exhausted. I helped the poor bastard move to the doorway that sat wide open for anyone to see. We walked in just as we watched Lo

dribble hot wax all over our girl's body. Wax had never been a fancy of mine, but on Via? I'd be a true convert.

Luce sat under her with his dick already pulsing inside of her hot pussy. My own cock lifted in response at seeing her be fucked. Nothing compared to seeing her warm cunt swollen and red from another man using her. My kink was one not many liked, but fuck if I hadn't already started leaking precum.

I could see the puddle underneath her beautiful body from where she had already given her release. Damn, the sight of her already leaking core had me rubbing my boxers. Aster smirked and winked at me while trying to keep quiet in our corner. Moving in, he shut the door soundlessly. We needed to make sure not to interrupt them.

"I know your kink, mate. I can feel your arousal perking up at the sight of her pussy being pounded. The second these two fuckers are done, I'm gonna tear up her pussy for you too, yeah?" Of course, Aster would be the one to sense my illicit thoughts with his gift. There wouldn't be any denying it now as Via screamed out her pleasure. Oh shit, Lo and Luce were both inside her. Unable to stop myself, I had my dick out and in my hand.

Prickles spread up and down my spine as I watched them pump into her together. Two dicks were stretching that pussy wide open for me to enjoy after. I bucked harder as the feeling took control of my pleasure. Three men were going to use her wholly before my own cock buried itself into her. Fuck! The thoughts in my head, and the image before me would ruin me forever.

And I thought Rin's shaft was big... Two working in tandem had me watching their movements. One went up, one came down. My finger brushed along my underside as though I wanted to be Lo right now. Moving in time with their thrusts, I nearly exploded. Hearing her sloppy cunt had me biting

the inside of my cheek to keep quiet. Aster hadn't fared any better from his magic mixing in with his arousal.

“On your knees, mate. I need to fuck something until they're done.” Aster didn't wait for my compliance as he pushed my shoulders down. Not that I minded. I opened up and let him shove his long-ass dick into my mouth. His dick had always been more natural to accept compared to Rin's fat one, but his length could never go all the way in. The beanpole of a penis still tried. Neither of us looked at each other when we had such a sexy sight before us on the bed. Though, from their sloppy sounds, I made sure to make my own around Aster's shaft with my saliva.

This had me all worked up with nothing to satisfy me from making sure Aster stayed happy. My eyes studied the two men kissing as Via watched with hooded eyes. I knew firsthand she liked her male-on-male action. When I had Rin in my mouth, and her cunt right there... Shit!

The memory alone had me leeching onto Aster's ass cheeks to force him harder into my mouth. Maybe being face-fucked could calm me down. Nope. It only excited me more, knowing this dick would be another one to bruise her sweet little pussy. Fuck, three cocks in one hole and then mine would follow.

Heavy grunts sounded from the bed. We looked to find the two men spilling their hot seed into that heavenly spot I wanted to eat out just the way it was. I wanted to lick their creamy substance from her swollen lips and make her feel good. But first, Aster and I needed to fuck her even harder.

“Nice to see you join us.” Lo stood up, being his usual bristly self. Luce couldn't move after his mind-blowing orgasm. Octavia didn't budge from her spot on top of him.

“Love? Mind if we join?” Aster sauntered over to her. She purred and

opened her legs to let him in. The asshole just smiled back at me. “You’re pretty dirty down here. Why don’t we have Lear clean you up, yeah?”

My heart stopped when her breath did. She knew I loved a spent cunt with another man’s spunk, but would she accept that I liked to eat it? In answer, her slender fingers moved down to play in the stickiness of two men. She then licked it from her fingers. Her heavenly moan had all of us observing her actions. “Come taste me, Lear.”

That had been all the invitation I needed. Not caring I would soon be making a fool of myself, I moved to my girl. Well, I more so pounced at her from the excitement filling my veins. My hands took her thighs in my grip as I yanked her down a little more. Latching right onto her clit, I made sure she knew exactly how much I wanted this. Via bucked against my mouth. Between how sensitive she was and how good I relieved her ache, she didn’t know what to focus on.

Moving my fingers in, I pumped her pussy with two and felt how loose the two dicks had made her. She’d bounce back soon enough and tighten up, but right now? She was my wet dream.

The more I finger-fucked her, the more their releases spilled from her sloppy cunt. My own cock leaked and jolted from watching her let me do this. Porn like this had been my favorite sight. In person, it was a thousand times hotter. I could taste their salty tang mixing with her sweetness, and I could feel the wetness.

Moans at my side had me pausing to see Lo and Luce already humping each other again with their manhood geared to go another round. Aster stood over Via’s face and cupped her chin to take his dick into her mouth. She sucked and slurped him while I watched that unlawful scene and my own. Perfect for us all, we worked our girl until Aster got too close.

“Move, Envy. I need to feel the one pussy that won’t die wrapping around me.” Aster shoved me out of the way, and I allowed him to take my place. Our girl stayed red from whatever toys the duo used on her, but their cream pie had been cleaned up from her glorious slit. I had to hold myself together from my dick flexing in need. Wanting to give in already, I had to fight myself away from it. I wanted to enjoy her looseness later. To not blow my load, I lied back on the bed and covered my eyes with my arm.

Yes, my dick sat out in the open fresh air, but I had hoped it would talk the fucker down. Nope, nothing helped as I remained on my back and listened to Aster use her. “Damn, Love... You really let them use you.”

Sonofa-

“It felt too good.” Our girl panted just as Aster really started fucking her. We were all sorts of fucked up, but none of it mattered when Via willingly let us. Aster had been toying with my desires. He knew it from his mouth being extra dirty. The man had a death wish from wanting to send me over the edge so bad.

“Listen to it...” He spoke to me. “Do you hear how wet she is?” I did... How could anyone miss the torturing sounds as Aster rolled his hips harder into her?

Not even Lo and Luce could hold back their groans as Lo took his lover in the ass. I should know because I opened my damn eyes to watch the two. On this queen bed, we had two couples coupling as I stayed on my corner to watch and listen. Some would be jealous that they hadn’t been involved, but I just got more turned on,

Via hissed.

Aster chuckled. “Do I need to take it easier on you, Love?”

“No, I like how much it hurts.” She prompted all of us to die with those



words. Aster couldn't handle it as he jackhammered into her. Knowing she liked the pain? Ugh, my hand squeezed my dick because I couldn't put off my pleasure any longer.

In time with their sloppy sounds, I worked my fist to their movements. Just like one would do with porn if they jerked their cocks to it. I did, and I knew Bell did. Rin didn't really watch porn, but he used the sounds to rev up his release.

Looking over, I found Aster's arms locked around her thighs as he suspended them in the air for him to piston down into her pussy. We could see her squirt around his shaft, and I had to slap my dick to keep from exploding. Lo worked harder by holding his lover's hips in their doggy position as Luce jacked off beside her. He used one hand to support his front, so we all got a clear view of his epic strength. One could definitely tell he had done this show and pony many times. Well, I also knew that from watching them quite a few times.

I wasn't sure what it had been about being a voyeur, but I got worked up watching. Seeing a girl ultimately used afterward would be my finish. I loved it. I loved that their releases still left an aftertaste in my mouth, and that her honied cunt mixed in with their salty goodness. Aster roared and had us all looking over at him on our girl. His dick pulled out for the head to smother her slit in his climax.

I watched. Wholly fixated on the fact that he started painting her with his ropes of seed. His grunts and groans were nearly another end for me. How I held off this long? I had no idea, but I wouldn't last much longer.

"Clean her first and then shove your deprived cock into her." Aster moved for me to take his place. I did just as he commanded from wanting it. I let myself enjoy her ruined womanhood just as Luce roared his release. Luce's

spurts splashed over Via's stomach, finishing his partner off. Lo held onto Luce and didn't let go while trying to give everything he could. Once he stopped, he slid out and went for Via's stomach.

Licking his lover's come, Lo let out sounds of delight. Our girl had to close her eyes from how much we overstimulated her. It made my morning in this new hell. Sitting up and shoving in, I let myself feel how loose she wrapped around me. All the juices inside of her rubbed around my shaft. I couldn't last and I wouldn't. Fucking her faster, I looked at the red skin and tender folds.

This would always be my favorite sight. I groaned when I felt my balls draw tight. Our girl just took four of us with no shame. She let us each use her the way we needed. Nothing could ever be as perfect as our girl.

## Chapter 6



**A**ster

We all congregated around the table. This time I made sure to claim a seat next to our lovely girl. After our sex-a-thon, she had been a little worn down, but we took pride in what happened just an hour ago. Now, we were all cleaned up because we needed to make a plan. Via sighed beside me and rubbed her temples that had her dark waves falling over them.

“If Letum wastes more days, I think we need to consider getting other things done first,” she started our meeting.

“Who is Letum?” Beau inquired.

“Oh, right. We need to discuss my memories he hid.” She fell back against her chair. I could see the bags still under her eyes.

“Who hid?” Rin growled. Probably more from what we just went through with Lear than anything.

“Death. His true name is Letum.” She met our Alpha’s gaze. He simply showed he listened.

“And what did he hide?” Lear asked, swallowing hard. We all were. None of us wanted to be erased from her mind.

“Only my memories of meeting him. He was there that night when I died in the hospital... He was there.”

“Doing what?” Even Lo got on the defense. Who was the bloody wanker who visited our girl?

“It’s still a little fuzzy from all of them coming back at once, but I’m pretty sure he’s the reason I became immortal sooner.”

“All of them? You mean you met him more than once?” Beau leaned in closer.

“Yeah, but he made me forget seeing him. He was at the school, in the woods, just around.”

“Why?” I asked from the creep-factor building.

“He just watched me. He watched you guys too.”

“Back to the hospital for now. You said he made you immortal first?” Rin took the lead back.

“Yeah. Well, I think. I’m not sure. When I watched the memory, I wasn’t me in it. I stood on the sides to see myself and him. But I watched my soul leave my body. I asked why the King would want to come to collect me when he had Reapers. Letum told me it was because only he could fuse a soul back into a body.”

“So, you had actually died?” Luce tried to hide the pain in his look. None of us could bear the idea of our Pandora being gone for good.

If this was true, we owed a lot to the man who ruled over life and death. He gave us our only purpose. My work was fun, and I had something outside of our power. When this all finished up, I would go back to my singing career.

Though, none of it would mean a thing without the girl right beside me. How I grew to love the jokester who could rival my own pranks.

She shrugged, not wanting to think about it either. My love's face had a faraway look as she stared outside and into the shadows. "That night, Beau had killed a girl in a club. She cut herself to death." Emotions were no longer masked on her hurting face. "I remember waking up with her resounding depression. I wanted to die too. When I hung upside down with the driver already gone—still unsure if my mom was—I passed out hoping I wouldn't wake up."

All of us took a moment to hear what our girl had just told us. All of our gazes dropped to the table from being unable to look her in the eye.

"When I woke up, I chalked it up to just feeling her emotions, but I think I had been too scared to admit that I did want to die. A small part of me hated my life that much..."

"Why are you telling us now?" Lear blinked back tears. As her lovers and her circle, we didn't want to hear she had been that desperate for an escape.

"Because I had been given a second chance to live again. Within my heart, I know some who attempt suicide have a moment where they wish they could take it back, but it's too late. They don't get the opportunity Letum gave me. I owe him."

"Why do you owe him, Love?" I whispered into her ear. Hell, I owed the bastard too for giving me my girl and keeping her safe.

"I didn't want to wake up when I died. That regretful moment didn't happen. I didn't find something to live for until I started falling for all of you. Knowing what he did for me and what I do now, it only took a few months after my slump to know I'd find happiness. I wish others could have that same revelation."

“What about now?” Lo drew our attention to him. “Do you still have thoughts of not wanting to exist?” My heart stopped right along with my breath. Not knowing if I could hear this, I sought out her hand for my own comfort. She squeezed it below the table.

“You have to understand how many people crowded my own emotions. I mostly felt grief and sorrow where we lived. I felt isolated from my mom doing drugs and keeping us on the run. Things are different now. I have a home with all of you. I’m not saying those feelings won’t come back, but it helps to have someone to love me through the rough patch.”

“Just promise to tell us, Love. If you ever feel like that again, tell someone. We’ll never judge you or leave your side.” I kissed her temple and then pulled her into my lap. I needed her near after those words hit too close to what I went through with my mum. Memories suffocated me once again, and Via understood my inner torment.

“Of course, Ass. I couldn’t imagine my life without any of you.” Her pouty lips took mine. I smiled when my brothers groaned.

“Did Death tell you anything else?” Rin tried to steer the conversation away from her recent revelation.

“Just that they helped set my course for this. Somehow, he knew I’d end up here.”

“We’ll need to ask him whenever he returns,” Beau huffed. Now that we knew this information, I wouldn’t be surprised if the asshole didn’t come back. Something had him wanting to stay away.

“Until then, maybe we could ask the other person who seems to know something about all of this?” Our girl looked to Rin, and our Alpha caught on.

“That’s right. The Fates told us Death and Lilith had been involved,” he

growled.

“How are you going to get to Lilith?” Lo inclined.

“The shadows. They’ll take me to her.” Via held up her head a little taller.

“Who should go with you this time? Aren’t all the immortals locked up together?” Beau used his big brain to draw up that conclusion.

“I think we all need to. Now that you guys can walk safely in this dimension, moving won’t be an issue. Plus, what if Salvatore expects us? I’ll need more than one or two of you to help.” Her head fell back onto my shoulder.

“We need to also be wary of the fact that something has made it so Lilith can’t escape with her men. She came out that one time to help you at the ceremony. Why not move your circle out of there unless she can’t?” Luce’s words had us all pausing.

He was right.

“So, I guess, when we find them, I’ll have Manny open a rift just enough to ask her.” Via bit her damn lip. We all watched as her perfect teeth sank into the meaty flesh.

“I think that would be the wisest course. How about we all get some rest tonight and go when everyone is ready?” Rin asked us instead of demanding. It hadn’t escaped my attention the quick glance he shared with our girl. Her smile at him had me knowing she was changing our system. We all had our ranks below our Alpha, but he would appease our girl by putting things to a vote. With this, he didn’t need to. Our lives and her life were on the line against the former circle.

“What about Bell?” Lear asked as we all stared off to the stairs where he sat in his room. Nothing had made our big guy leave it after he buried his mum. He had the closest relationship with his compared to us. I grieved my mother,

but I also knew where the line sat between us. I had been a product of her rape. Nothing about me eased her to love me right with me looking like the rat bastard who hurt her. Still, I knew I had the most compassion.

“I’ll go talk to him.” Moving my love off my lap, I handed her to Beau.

~

## **Bellamy**

It all had gone numb. I could finally sleep with my curse being broken, but now my nightmares kept me up. My mother’s lifeless face filled my mind, and I had to wipe another tear away. No one deserved to see me so weak. The grief I had been burdened with, suffocated me in every way. My heart barely beat from the gravity of the pain sitting on top of it. How did people handle this? Honey knew loss, but she didn’t hole up in a room to mourn like a lost puppy.

I did.

Laurel Embers... My mom. My strength. She was gone now. A light knock came from my door. Aster walked his happy ass in without me signaling he would be welcome. Not saying anything, he just sat beside me as I stared out the window.

“It hurts, yeah?” He spoke just for the two of us. “Mostly for you because you had a mother who loved you back.”

His voice cracked on that. My gaze finally met his to see the tears welling within his stare. I remembered when his mom died. He joked and pretended nothing had happened. Now, I could see that had been the front he fooled everyone with because Aster ached in a way I now understood.



“Downstairs, our girl just admitted to having suicidal thoughts... The moment she said the words, my dear old mum popped into my head. Not that I can openly talk about this with anyone, but I know you’re soft enough to handle it.”

I still said nothing. Seeing my friend in a new light.

“My grief is vastly different than yours. I had been angry at my mum for not choosing me. She felt killing herself and ending her life was better than being my mother. Even with knowing that, I still carry a void in my chest whenever I think of her. When Octavia said she had similar thoughts, my mind traveled to her leaving me too.”

“She wouldn’t,” I cut in. Honey would never leave any of us. Aster tried to smile.

“It doesn’t stop the idea from forming, yeah. I’ve been abandoned once that way. The hole my mother left within me has never healed properly. Not until I had a taste of our girl’s love for us. I know it isn’t easy, and you need to mourn the loss, but just know we are all here for you, mate. You’re my brother, yeah?”

This had been the most real Aster had ever been with any of us. No doubt our girl brought on this change. His words were a jumbled mess, and some thoughts had cut off before they finished, but I could tell he tried.

“Yeah. Brothers first.” I gave a limp grin as the agony raging in my chest pulsed harder. I clutched my heart, and Aster seemed to get it.

“I still have random spasms of pain when something reminds me of her. It gets easier, but that moment of pain you just felt tells you we’re different than the other circles.”

“Why’s that? How does it make us different?”

“It tells us we knew how to love even when we thought we were incapable

of it. That pain... Never lose it, mate. Let it help heal you but always know your mother was important enough to hurt for." Aster stood up to pat my shoulder. We turned around to see the rest of our brothers.

"What he said." Luce patted his heart. He probably remembered his mother's addiction and overdose.

Milo could only look at the wood floor. "I still haven't grieved my mother, Bell. I keep putting everything ahead of it, so I won't have to admit to myself that I was a shit son to have."

"You weren't, Lo. You protected your mother and Lou from your father. She'll know that now." Luce took his hand.

Fuck...

Here they were comforting me like a baby. Never had I helped them through their own losses. Even our Alpha held my eyes to reveal to me his personal loss. Rin had never talked to anyone about when his mom died. We all knew she had been torn to shreds by the Hellcats, but not what actually happened. Sensing my thoughts, he cleared his throat.

We all wanted to know but had been too fearful to ask. "My mom told me that I needed to be strong enough to stand up to my dad my whole life. When I turned eight, I did stand up to him. It had been my first time, and he knew it had been my mother's guidance."

No one even attempted to breathe. How could we when we all knew what happened when one disobeyed them?

"He called the cats and had them attack her. Told me only a real man would be strong enough to save her. Of course, I ran into their mauling and tried my damned hardest to save her. My first fight with the cats left most of the scars I have now. They're a permanent reminder that I couldn't save my mom. That I couldn't stand up to my dad..."

“But you did,” a meek voice called from the doorway. We all found our girl trying to contain her emotions. It seemed to be a mix of adoration and her own sorrow. “You did, for me.”

Honey moved to Rin and circled her arms around his middle. “You were strong enough to save me. All of you were.”

Clearing my throat from seeing all the grief and loss in this one room, I stood up. “And now we need to save each other.”

Honey pulled back from Rin to smile at me. Her sadness for my mother resonated in her soft expressions. She reserved those looks for me, and she sent me her grief with her power. With it, she sent me her love too.

“One day, we’ll all be able to move on, but right now, we need to stay vigilant on our task. Tomorrow, we need to find Lilith.” My sweet girl’s words had us standing taller.

Everyone left to get their sleep. Honey simply crawled into the middle of my bed. Patting the spot beside her, I moved in, knowing she wanted me to know I still had her. That I’d always have her.

“I love you,” my voice was hoarse from my mourning.

“Always, Boo-Bear.”

## Chapter 7



**O**ctavia

“So, this is how you’ve been getting around, Love? I like backdoors too,” Aster teased as we walked through the shadows. I coughed up a chuckle that he appreciated.

Only our circle and Manny went on this trip because no one else could move safely through the shadows outside of Letum’s manor. Sadly with my new powers here, the creepy vibe hadn’t left with the deadness of this land. “Yeah. All the shadows stay asleep until they’re called to guide. Manny told me Letum has his castle staffed but nothing else. Until I called Manny, he had never woken before.”

“I sense you want to change that?” Lear winked at me. Apparently, I had been getting easier to understand. Life—of any kind—mattered to me.

“Whenever the King of Reapers makes time to pencil me in, I plan on bringing it up,” I huffed in irritation.

“Always concerned about everyone else,” Bell murmured. He took my hand in his. “How about you focus on you surviving this for now?”

“Nah. I’m a woman. I can multitask.” I smirked. All the guys chuckled as we crossed into the town beside the castle. This one had an abandoned academy of some kind, so we paused to view it. Still in pristine condition, the place looked like it had been closed recently and not centuries ago.

“So I guess the legend remains true?” Milo asked the guys.

“What’s true?” My brows creased.

“Death schooled his generals here. They’d do trials to learn his trade and the top ones got his gift.” My bookworm named Beau answered with his intelligence.

“Wait, you’re telling me there’s a school for all things death-related?” My mind sat a little idle from hearing that.

“Yup.” Lucius popped the word.

“So, he trained and taught them, but only the top got his gift? What happened to the rest of the school?”

“They usually died. Each colony or clan of demons sent their best to compete. The Culling Trials were a way to thin out the weak in ranks. The ones who lived without being given the Horsemen’s gifts held respected roles in our demonic community. Many worked for Brimstone Inc. You know, that we’ll be the heads of one day to rule in Hell?” Beau cleaned his glasses to look at the building better.

Lou mentioned the human cooperation basically controlled most of the world. I had met part of their militia saving Bell from Salvatore.

“The Horsemen? *Their* gifts? Who else gave things?” This world had me lost in the sauce.

“All the Horsemen held their own set of trials in their domain. Their gifts

are all different. Death kisses his generals to control his army of shadows and to live in his land.” Beau pointed at me to remind me I had been.

Now, I knew it happened in the hospital when he kissed my forehead. Thinking of that reminded me of the one who burned my arm.

“Does one simply touch to transfer his gift?” I asked.

They all stopped walking to stare at me.

“Yes?” Bell hedged for me to continue.

“And one breathes on you?”

“Fuck, Princess! Are you telling us...” Lucius started.

“That all the Horsemen visited me that day in the hospital? Yes, yes, I am. Did they all do something weird to my soul when it wasn’t connected to my body? Yes, yes, they did.” No one moved but they sure as hell stared at my body.

“Why? What do their gifts do? What did they do to me?” A mild panic swept in and had me hyperventilating.

“If she had been given their talents, how has she not accidentally used them?” Aster had a good point.

“They erased her memory. To use the gift, you have to do it consciously. She didn’t know.” Beau used his book smarts again.

“That’s not our concern if this is true.” Rin looked between our group. “If the Universe finds out they did it, even just one of them, it might help my dad succeed in building his weapon. We weren’t worried about her being kissed by Death because of her immortality, but now we should be.”

“I won’t lose my mind,” I whispered, remembering the Fates’ warning. Bell gripped my hand harder as though he had been trying to anchor me.

“Not with us by your side. We know that our tethers can feed you magic. If your burden grows, we’ll be there to help carry it.” Awe, my Boo-Bear and

his romantic side.

“Maybe that’s why?” Beau had a contemplating look about him.

“Why what?” I asked.

“Why they picked you. I mean, you’re different from how your magic formed. Maybe they knew you were the loophole to their gift.” We all had to pause and think on that one. It had been true.

“Letum said something about me being the anomaly to change things. A loophole the Universe can’t touch.” I tapped my chin.

“We’ll deal with Death when he shows back up. For now, let’s find Lilith.” Rin moved to lead by walking next to Manny.

Our shadow guide just marched on. He had never been much for words, but I still enjoyed his company.

The lands changed again as an eerie feeling swept over me. “Something’s wrong here...”

Manny’s black silhouette turned to me and nodded.

*Salvatore used evil magic to hold the immortals and the once-last Shadowwalker. The blood magic requires constant sacrifice. It is now bleeding into all the realms it touches.*

All my men locked up like they heard Manny. Well, with them being able to move freely and talk to me within my mind, this wouldn’t be a leap too.

“You heard him, didn’t you?” I swallowed hard as they all nodded.

Well, things just kept getting added onto our crazy little circle.

“We need to find Lilith to figure out this jumbled mess.” Lear rubbed his temples. We just walked on with our own headaches forming. Our gravel path turned into a mucky marsh that we had to hurdle through. Against my mid-shin, the goop around us had me shivering.

Ew.

From me watching my feet, I didn't see Manny stop right in front of me. I ricocheted off his back and landed ass-first in the filth below us. Bell came over with Lear as each took a hand to hoist me up. The mud made a curdling fart when it settled in the spot I vacated.

Heaven help me, this was the spot Manny worked his weavings on. In the swamplands, we would find Lilith.

Through a small crack, I could immediately tell someone sat right in front of us. By the broad shoulders, it had clearly been a man blocking our view.

Huffing, I rolled my eyes and reached into the slit, but found myself being zapped at the hole. What the hell? Shaking my arm out, I tried to get feeling back in my hand.

*Salvatore has secured the breach Lilith created. You cannot enter or leave with the help of the shadows.* Manny's voice had me grumbling. Even though we couldn't see, we could hear a particular voice clear as day. Speaking of the bad guy.

"I'll find her, Lilith. I'll find your last heir!" Salvatore roared.

Hearing him be here told us a few things. One, they had to be in a dimension he had access to. Two, they could be reached from whatever way he came from.

*Manny, can you take me to Salvatore's side?*

My shadow guide nodded and sealed this hole for us to come up behind Salvatore for his next rift. Manny knew precisely how to manipulate the tear between dimensions. Seeing where they were, I knew the black castle prison well. In the first kingdom of Hell meant they were somewhere I had already been. My mother too. This meant they were technically prisoners Salvatore hadn't released...

*Manny, open the rift for me to go through.*



Aster's eyes widened. *Have you gone mad?*

*No, my deal with him stated every prisoner, but he never released them.*

Rin smirked down at me and nodded to our shadow companion to do as I asked. Not that he had any pull. Manny listened to only me from being his Shadowwalker. Together, Rin took my hand, and we stepped behind his dastard daddy. Salvatore kept yelling at Lilith.

She had been annoyed until she saw me step out of the Shadowlands. A small smile played on her lips.

“Salvatore.” I greeted the man from behind as he whirled around to catch me. Rin moved me safely behind him. The new Alpha had been set when we completed our circle. They squared off as both scowled harder. Knowing what this man did to Rin's mom had me wanting my Alpha to tear him to shreds.

“Our deal was all the prisoners...” My head inclined to the immortals. Lilith and Pandora both were in there with their men, but only Lilith remained awake. The others were in some kind of coma. Probably from all the years of being trapped in here. They might've been immortal, but we required sustenance to be healthy. All of them, besides Lilith, had this ashen skin that began to shrivel like they were mummified. Seventeen breathing corpses laid around the dungeon, but Lilith tried to lift the corner of her mouth my way.

Salvatore sputtered, trying to come up with an out for his lie. “The only way they can go freely is by me dying! I connected their prison to my lifeforce!” he shouted, but I remained unmoved.

“All the prisoners... The rules don't change from how you fortified them. You broke our binding agreement.” I shrugged.

“I cannot let them go just like I will not let you-” Rin didn't let him finish

before he punched his father's unhinging jaw. Hot damn, I loved my dragon-man! Was it bad that him taking down his dad turned me on?

"Death holds the answers you will need, my child." Lilith drew my attention as the two Alphas started fighting.

"But how did he hide me? I don't understand how he knew any of this." I asked while gripping the bars to get closer to her.

"Rita. She told us who needed to know about what she saw coming. Your grandmother worked side-by-side with the cruelest of monsters to ensure you'd be here today."

"The Horsemen?" I asked, needing to know if she meant I needed to be wary of them. I had come to terms with majority of the immortals being cruel. Most lost their humanity in the centuries they lived.

"Yes, things are in play. Rita did what she had to do to make sure you'd survive or the previous circle would have killed you."

"You mean, without the help of Letum's shadows?"

"One of the many things they did to secure your life."

"But why? Why did they do it?" That had been the difficult part to comprehend.

"Because you would be immortal, and an anomaly that the Universe couldn't stop." Lilith gave me a sad smile.

"I don't understand what that has to do with anything. I keep hearing it, but I don't get it." I sighed and closed my eyes as Rin kept beating the shit out of his dad. Who was I to stop him?

"Being what you are as the combination of Legion and Pandora, made it so you can stow other powers. You, my child, are a void for dark souls, but your magic changed how it works. Instead of Purgatory, you link onto physical

people. The Horsemen haven't been able to create a general to hold their gifts without them going mad."

"But I am crazy. Having both curses had me feeling everything all the time..." My brows drew together.

"No, it prepped you to handle what the Horsemen need you to do."

"And why do they need me?" I whispered.

"GUARDS!" Salvatore finally roared after his son had bested him. Rin began pulling me back to the rift, but I kept eye contact with Lilith.

"To do what they were created to do, my child." Lilith smiled harder with her dry lips now cracking. "Now, go do what needs to be done, and I shall meet you again. Remember your favor, Octavia Clarke. Salvatore is bound by the Universe to give it to you."

I swallowed hard. In every text known to mankind, the Horsemen only did one job. They brought the apocalypse.

## Chapter 8



**B**<sup>eau</sup>

Rin shoved our girl so hard through the rift, she took out Manny. They fell in a pile at our feet just as a horde of guards tackled Rin. They all tumbled through the tear and into the mud, and V let out a war cry when one tried to hit her. She rolled to sit on top of the guy to begin her punches. With her fists of fury, her swings had the caked mud flying off her.

It'd be hot as hell watching her mud wrestle if it hadn't been her capture on the line. That had the rest of us working together to beat off the brutes trying to get our girl. Sal stood on the other side with an evil gleam in his eye. The bastard didn't know I knew how to make good on his promise. He owed V a favor, one he couldn't deny her. We all heard it through the hole.

Not that I could worry about that right now with twenty men fighting our group of nine. The bastard just sat back and watched his lackeys do his job. Ignoring his sneer, I pulled a blade off my back. I kept slicing through the horde just as my brothers did. V handled herself in a way that made me

proud. Though, I hated that at some point in her life she had to learn to fight off men. Regret still ate at me from the life she had been burdened with. How could someone so sweet be troubled with such an oppressive past?

None of us seven were saints. We showed how cruel we could be, but Octavia made us all want to be better. She wanted us to choose to be better. For her, I'd try my damned hardest. She deserved to have a break. I wanted her smiles and drive to push us past the hardships, but here we were.

More questions rose about what her abilities were right along with why everyone wanted her so much. Lilith answered generically for Death to answer the rest. The tricky old ones knew how to play this game.

Rita.

No one had seen the Soothsayer since she got V onto that airplane. Now, her son had been handicapped and still hadn't woken up from whatever Sal implanted into Laurel Embers. Nothing about our lives had ever been easy, so the simple fact that only one of us had a mom that still breathed spoke a lot. Lear's mom only lived because she abandoned him when she moved away.

I sliced into the next man just as Manny's black form got up to seal the portal. My heart stopped as he worked the stitching.

"What are you doing?" I shouted. "They're on our side of the rift!"

*When they no longer touch you, they shall be swallowed by my brothers.* Manny gestured to everything around us. Everything made out of shadows. Giving him a curt nod, I used our new connection.

*We need to run.*

*Someone will need to carry Princess. Her little legs are being swallowed by the marshlands.* Milo's once white shirt had been ruined by the filthy land.

Bell snorted. When we looked over at him, we found our girl seated on his shoulders swinging... Was that an ax?

“Die, Jedi, die!” she yelled. We watched in horror as she severed someone’s head off.

It still amazed me she could go from innocent to crazy with no warning.

*Where the hell did she get an ax?* Lear’s voice asked what we all wanted to know.

*It was on the first guy I took down. Now, are you going to focus on me, or are you going to follow through with your new plan?* V talked, but kept her eyes trained on the battle.

After we snapped out of her spell, we booked it. Until we were on the edges of the swamp, none of us stopped. When we turned back, we saw some seriously disturbing shit.

An upsurge of black came from the side like a wave and engulfed the men working with our fathers. Arms of shadows gripped onto the trespassers. The men screamed and cried while being sucked into the darkness. Not even I could stomach the ripping of the limbs we saw and heard.

“Sooo... That’s what happens when you don’t have a guide here, huh?” Lear squeaked.

He probably remembered when they went to the Fates. Good thing our girl refused to lose any of us because that had to be one of the most gruesome things I had ever seen.

*BANG!*

We all heard the gun go off.

A womanly shrill sounded from our right. We found Bell’s knees buckling as V flipped forward from his shoulders. She landed on her back in the swamp. Then, she had to quickly roll over because Bell fell face first in the spot she abandoned.

V trundled him over in a panic, not caring about her muddy state. A little

bullet hole sat on his chest. Looking back to the rift, I found the barrel of a gun peeking through. Manny moved rapidly to finish sealing it. The poor guy would hold this over his own head forever. Sal got a gun in before the hole had been closed.

“Boo-Bear?” V cried over my fallen brother as Rin went to carry him. With his Alpha strength, he could handle Bell’s weight the easiest.

I crouched beside our girl and pulled her into my chest. “He’s still breathing. You know Sal can’t complete his weapon without Lou’s specter.”

“The second we get back, we find a way to wake Bell and my dad. I’m tired of Salvatore taking my family away from me.” She got up to lead our group. I couldn’t help but notice how strong she had truly become. As a queen, her title fit even better now. Our queen was taking on the world to save us.

~

## **Octavia**

I didn’t even wait to shower.

Nope.

Instead, I went straight to where I knew Letum worked. Thanks to the recent recovery of my memory, I knew where his office sat in this place. With every stomp of my rapid pace, I squished the mud from my feet. The yucky noises didn’t halt me. Not even when my mother tried to call after me. No thanks to Death himself, I had to defend us from the little things I did remember. He could clean the mess I had made because I was too pissed off to deal with it.

“Via?” Lou rapped on the unguarded door as I dug through Letum’s private papers. He had spells for everything. I knew something would be here for my

dad and Bell. From the violent anger within me, my hands trembled as I tried to examine the words better. This reaction came from how tired I had gotten from losing this battle.

So focused on my task at hand, I didn't hear Lou move in behind me. She gently removed the paper from my grip and set it aside while cupping my face. It was when I looked into her eyes that I suddenly burst into tears. Hers were glossy in understanding, not pity. Falling into her chest, Lou sat us on the floor in the middle of Letum's office. Rubbing my back, she rocked us as I lost it to my fit.

My whole body raked from the violent shudders and fell apart with the one person I knew wouldn't judge me for it. Lou had been the light in my life since the first day I met her.

"I can't..." I heaved the words out between my breaking breaths.

"Can't what?" Her voice got a little tight too.

"This game. This life... I can't keep playing this chess match when I don't have the knowledge to beat Salvatore." She let me sob into her chest some more just as another warm body positioned behind mine. I blinked just a little to see Gare had joined us.

"That doesn't sound like the fierce little spitfire I first met." He winked while running his fingers through my mucky hair that started drying. Thanks to flipping off Bell when he went down, I got covered head-to-toe. God, I had to be gross in their eyes. I knew they had some mud on them from me flicking bits of it.

"Back then, it was just me." I sighed. "I could handle myself getting hurt because I didn't care. I care about my dad, I love Bell, and they just keep hurting them. I can't keep watching my family fall."

"Loving people takes more than heart, Via." Gare kissed the only semi-



clean spot on my head. “It takes courage.”

“Even humans never know when their clocks will stop ticking. Most try to live for happiness while they can. You are truly immortal. Things might be happening now that has Sal knocking out our group, but he can’t kill them.” Lou nestled into me even more.

“Now, as much as I love our snuggle time, can we go put you in the shower while we conjure a plan?” Gare didn’t wait for my response. My two best friends just moved me to the bathroom.

All three of us got down to our skivvies and hopped in. They both lathered me and soothed me, and I knew what they said was true.

*Courage...* I had to have the courage to win this fight. Sighing, we all moved to dog pile in the tub after they made me squeaky clean.

“You guys are the best, you know that?” I spoke while we listened to the falling water around us. Showers had always been my peace in my messed-up life. Even before meeting my new family. Showers were that one moment a day I got a glimpse of my mom below the addiction.

“Duh! I’m going to be your Guardian. Could you imagine if we hated each other?” Lou snorted and shook her head.

“When are you guys going to complete your bond?” Gare asked. I actually had to look to Lou for that answer. We had been overrun by everything lately, so I didn’t know.

“Fiona says I need to be able to pass every trial, so that means I’m not ready still.” She shrugged and blushed like it was something to be embarrassed about.

“What if your Guard is ready? What if—with what’s coming—I want us to link sooner?” I wanted my bestie to know I thought she was worthy in my eyes. That I wanted her to fulfill her right as my Guardian.

“Well, you also have that little fact about being the leader of the Banshees,” Gareth reminded us.

“Oh, can you not be my Guardian and lead them?” I pushed some wet hair from my face to see her better.

“Yeah. I can do both. Plus, the alliance I’d create with the reigning rulers of Hell would benefit my clan. We’re outcasts, the slum of the demons. Having an alliance with you would only help my people.” Lou sucked on her bottom lip while giving me a guilty look. “I just don’t want you to think that’s the only reason I’m doing it. I want to be your Guardian because you are my best friend. Protecting you is something I plan to do anyway.”

I could only smile. Lou had the biggest heart of gold. Her people were lucky, but I also knew she’d need me to not get walked on. Though, when her feisty side came out, I had no doubt she could rule the world.

“Lou, look at what you’ve already saved me from. Remember jumping out of a plane? Being ready to kick my bullies’ asses? I never once doubted your intentions. Plus, we didn’t know you were my Guardian until after all of that. You’ll always have a place by my side. Even though I don’t know how Hell is ran, your people will always be welcome.”

“You two saps.” Gare fanned his eyes. “You make me feel like shit for missing all of it.”

“Please, you’ve had your own new adventures.” Lou wiggled her brows at him.

“Oh!” I shouted. My mood being lifted from these two taking the time to help me. “Have you had sex with Manny in his shadow form?”

“Seriously, Via? There’s no way shadows can have sex!” Lou scoffed.

Gare remained silent and sank lower into the tub. We both squealed, knowing he looked like a boy being caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

“How does it work?”

“How does it feel?” We asked him at the same time with our firing questions.

“Fine. I’ll tell you.” He groaned. “Via, you know how he can hold a hand in his shadow form?”

“Yes...” I remembered the cooling sensation I always tingled with.

“Well, his dick can touch too. It’s just like putting a coolant on him before he enters.” Gareth flushed. We squealed again.

A second later, our bathroom door flew off the hinges as Rin and Aster stormed in. They looked ready to kill, until they saw the three of us in the bathtub with the shower running.

Aster smirked. “Love, we have an arrangement that says just us.”

“I’m not being sexual with a gay man!” I teased as everyone chuckled a little. “Plus, he kissed a girl and didn’t like it.”

Gare and Lou caught my reference from the night we snuck into Daemon’s office.

“What the hell does that mean?” Rin growled, and we chortled harder.

## Chapter 9



**O**ctavia

From my little venting time in the tub, I knew I needed the rest of my friends and family to help me. Part of me had stayed in the mindset that I had to do this alone. Purely out of habit, but one that seemed harder to break than I thought it would be. Leaning on other people would be one of the hardest things I'd have to will myself to do.

Moving into a room with flowing conversation, I found our parents awake. They gathered together on a sofa in the corner of the drawing room. It hadn't escaped my attention about how friendly Daemon and Lucas were with my mother. Not that she seemed to mind. Hopefully, they could mend their fences, but everything they had put her through would take time to get over. Though, those willing to change deserved a second chance. Just like I forgave my bullies now surrounding me as I sat down. If I hadn't allowed myself to see their good, we never would have become the next circle of original sins. I would never have fallen in love with seven men, and my heart ached, beating

harder by the very thought of not having them. No. Second chances needed to be given. My story showed why.

“Daughter, what is it you needed all of us for?” My mom sat between her two men. If Leo were awake, he’d be with them as well. My eyes traveled to my companions that had one of us missing. Heartache had broken each of us at one point or another. Not having Bell again hit my group harder than the last time.

“I have a few things to square away before we even attempt to stop Salvatore. First, I want to hear your ideas on how we can wake up Leo and Bell.” I fidgeted with my hands. Biting the corner of my mouth, my head instantly filled with groans from my guys.

*Princess, you can’t do that in a room with people we don’t want to strip you in front of.* Lucius whined.

*I’ll sink my own teeth into that pouty lip if you do it again.* Rin grumbled. I snorted out loud. Changing the conversation to veer away from questions, I cleared my throat.

“Anyways, as I was saying, we need my dad and Bell before anything else can happen.” I tried to redirect the filthy, hot guys I loved. They were sending me some porno images in the group chat our minds made. Each one added something new to the other.

“I think it’s wise to let them wake up on their own. We don’t know what supplied that spell, or what other magic might do to them.” Daemon had a good point, but... we needed them awake now.

“What if we didn’t use magic?” Milo murmured with his hands clamped in front of his face, his elbows resting on his knees. Lucius sat beside him on the couch.

“I’ve tried everything I know medically already,” Lucas sighed. The good

doctor had been the one to work double time for my dad.

“No. Not spells or medical assistance,” Milo scoffed and then pointed to me. “Princess has tethers to each of us. Bellamy’s is secure, but I bet she’s formed one to her dad now that she knows who he is.”

“You want her to use her links to guide them out of their comas?” Lear double checked.

“It could work.” Daemon stood up to begin pacing the room. He then turned to look at me. “Have you ever moved through a mind?”

“Uhhh...” My brain froze. Had I? “Is that what I do when I see the kills happen?”

My question went to Rin to answer. He too had to think about the proper response. “Yes and no. I’m always conscious when you come to me. Though, you did overtake my body and power that one time.”

“So, how would I do this?” I bit the corner of my mouth to gnaw on it. This time, everyone remained so deep in thought, they hadn’t noticed to make porn references.

“We’ll need to practice your control. When you enter a slumbering body, the mind is still active, but you can draw the person to you. Call on them to see why they can’t wake up.” Beau showed off that beautiful brain of his yet again.

“Bell will be easier from the secured link. You should try him first.” Lou gave me a half smile.

“Okay, I will. Though, I do have one more order of business. Whenever I finish this, I want to do the ceremony for Lou to become my Guardian. I want us linked before we deal with Salvatore.” I directed my statement to Fiona from her being Lou’s trainer.

She dipped her head. “Lou’s training can continue after she has connected

to you. Just know that she'll need to be fed from your vein to keep the connection stable. You can call on her to help give you strength as you saw when I fed your mother."

"Yeah, we'll have to cover the dos and don'ts as we do it." Lou blushed. We hugged each other before I needed to do the next step. My guys got up to let me lie on the couch they occupied. Once I nestled into the pillow on it, Beau knelt beside me.

"Remember, you aren't moving to their physical bodies. You need to keep your body rooted here."

"How do I do that?" I whispered for only my guys to hear. Part of me feared failing.

Being the Pandora should've come with a manual or at least a mom willing to teach her daughter. Though, the tethers came from my father's magic mixing with the Pandora magic.

"You'll feel your body try to move. There will be a moment to guide you through the tether or to stay in a mind. I know you've mentioned you go to the shadows this way. Same thing but go to the mind."

Well, if this wasn't a clusterfuck of confusion.

Nodding, I fell back and closed my eyes until the blue tether appeared because my Sloth needed me. With a shaking hand, I gripped the rope of magic to hunt him down. The smell of decay struck, but it didn't bother me from my physical body already being in the Shadowlands. Hopefully, that wouldn't fuck this up too. With a curt nod no one could see, I began my journey. From Bell already being nearby, my path to him didn't take long.

Stopping, I came to the tricky part. How to stay within his mind? Gathering my wits, I paused to listen to my intuition. I knew not to let go of the tether, but I also knew not to follow it further than this. I sighed while trying to

understand what to do next. Squeezing the glowing rope from frustration, I felt something zap me.

Yipping, I looked down to see the tether open a little. Moving my hand to the slit, I felt Bell's mind blending with my own. He had been frustrated as well. A little creepy, I realized their tethers were their thoughts in my head. By opening Bell's, I had fused myself with his feelings he was having now.

Knowing he was in the rope and not that the rope would lead me to him, I had to figure out how to get into the damn thing. Cursing under my breath from being stupid, I comprehended I was a spirit right now. I didn't have restrictions from my body not getting in the way.

Grumbling, I pictured myself being sucked into his mind. Surprisingly, it worked. I found Bell in a white room, banging on the wall. Why the wall? Because there had been no door or window. He had been trapped in a white room within his mind.

~

## **Bellamy**

Something within me roared. I woke up in this white room not very long ago, but my frustration proliferated. No escape appeared to be possible. Whatever found me and put me here had done an excellent job of locking me away. Usually, I stayed calm by nature, but my last memory of consciousness had me remembering Honey being with me. This made me unleash my animal.

Octavia was sitting on my shoulders when we watched the shadows engulf Sal's men. Their fervent cries of utter agony had me almost smiling. The Shadowmen weren't to be messed with. Still, I couldn't help but wonder if



my girl had been placed in a room like this too. Were her lithe fingers tearing at the stone of the wall? Would she remain whole from what the silence did to her last time?

My avid and betraying thoughts had me losing myself to get out. I screamed while beating against the wall. Hours had come and gone, but I hadn't stopped trying. No, I couldn't stop. With my nailbeds bleeding, I started to cry as my body wavered to stand beside the wall. These were the tears that hiccupped out of me from failing again to protect the woman I love. Hell, I couldn't even protect my mom. Octavia was probably better off without me because I couldn't keep anyone safe.

"Boo-Bear?" a little voice called out from behind me. I turned around to see my girl transparent in the little room I had been locked into.

Running to her, I could somehow touch her soul. I held her against me immediately. "Honey..."

My voice stayed raspy from the screaming I did against the wall to get to her. I held my little ball of chaos against my chest. Stroking her back, her nimble fingers worked over me to make sure I was real.

"Are you okay? Are you in a room like this one? I've been trying to get out to find you."

Her slender hand moved up to hold my cheek. "You don't remember?"

"I remember passing out and waking up here."

"Salvatore shot you with the same thing that killed your mom, and the weapon that destroyed my dad. You're like Leo right now. We're in your mind, Bell."

"How are you here, then?" I asked my sweetest gift.

"My tethers... They do a lot!" She snorted.

"Why am I trapped in my mind?"

“I don’t know. I’m hoping I can guide you out like Manny does for me in the Shadowlands.” She took my hand and then gave me a chaste kiss.

“Only Dreamweavers can move in minds, you know.”

“That’s a problem for a different day. I don’t think I am a weaver from the complexity of Leo’s and my mom’s magic. I must have similar things, though. I can only move to those I have attachments to.”

“We’ll study this another time. What’s your plan?” I asked as she tightened her hold on my hand.

“Just... Don’t let go. I’m not really sure how to do this.”

Without another word, my girl beamed us from the prison in my mind to a blue tether. We both looked at it, and she gave me a small smile.

“When I’m going between you guys, I go to the end of the tether. I’m hoping you’ll wake up by going to the finish line of your own.”

“What if I can’t?” I swallowed. From wherever the hell we were, Via seemed too comfortable with this darkness.

“I’ll be with you every step of the way. I’m not losing you or anyone else in this madness.” She didn’t give me a chance to speak as we neared the end. Nope, my girl had her mind set on finishing this task. When my hand flexed around the last little bit of glowing blue rope, her little hands shoved into the middle of my back. I flew forward.

There hadn’t been a moment to make noise when I went from wherever the hell we were to the room my body had been placed in. Jolting up from the bed, I found Via smiling at me from the foot of it. My grin reached from ear-to-ear, knowing she had saved me.

Grabbing her and hauling her to me, I snuggled her into the covers. She squealed and laughed. All I did was drink her in. Octavia Clarke would

always be why I tried harder to be better. Just like my mom, she had been a woman to bring change to the hardened hearts of those around her.

## Chapter 10



**O**ctavia

My magic had depleted just a bit, but I knew my father awaited. Somethings I could sacrifice my sleep for. Having my dad back would be one of them. Everyone crowded around Bell and me after we made our way back down the stairs. Hand in hand, I hadn't been willing to let him go. A collective sigh echoed in the room from everyone being worried about our return. Well, we did it, so there was that.

Now, I had to use a tether I had, but I wasn't linked to like the guys. Shaking out my hands from the nerves coming around, I readied myself again by lying on the couch. My mom came over to me and gave my shoulder a gentle squeeze. "Do not fear what you cannot change. You'll do just fine, no matter the outcome."

Her sentiment was sweet, but I still worried about my father. Bell and I had a connection that had been solidified. I no doubt made one to my dad, but I didn't know how I did. That's the problem with thinking you're human your

whole life. My mental illness just ended up being my powers. *Winning big, I guess.*

Falling back, I let out a heavy breath. Just as I did, my mind went to Letum. When I got my memory back, I deduced coming here to him. Somehow, my spirit sought him out by the tether I had created. The concept of how was what lost me.

Still, I remembered him saying I had been trying to find him.

Maybe that's all it would take.

Closing my eyes, I tried to simply focus on finding my dad. In my heart, I knew that longing ache to have him still remained. Even after meeting him. That same ache for wanting a dad turned into a sharp pain for losing him, and I couldn't have that. With the drive in my mind, I used that feeling to find him. I watched the dark scenery around me change into a little village of huts. Swirling in the air, the cherry blossoms left me speechless. The soothing sound of a river echoed behind me.

I knew...

Logic came in after my mom told me that story of China. Clearly, I knew the tale to be true after finding my dad, but seeing their paradise was different. Where Bell's prison detained him, my father's jail enamored him into staying. Little Asian children ran around in their linen robes people could only see in a place like this.

Moving down the path between huts, I noticed all of the people pausing to stare at me. There was no emotion behind their faces because they weren't real. Still, their creepy vibe had my Spidey-senses tingling. Shivering, I moved away from them to the last hut that pulled me to it. Just like Letum had mentioned, when I focused on Leo, I could feel him. Something within me knew my father would be in this last house.

Entering, I looked around. The breeze and water around the village supplied the only sound, and I found the home quiet until I heard a low laugh that sounded too familiar. Under my feet, boards of bamboo painted the floors. The similar Zen-theme that had been in his sandcastle. Now, I knew where he got the idea from.

This little, cozy hut had a lot of appeal.

“Dad?” I asked as I neared the slightly cracked door at the end of the hall. When he didn’t reply, I paused by the entry. Maybe my mind had me hearing things. Maybe the laugh had been in my head? Still, I needed to make sure.

“Leo?” I pushed the door open and then shrieked at the sight of the naked back of a woman sitting over my dad’s junk. Covering my eyes and gagging, I also turned around. I could hear the two of them quickly slipping into clothes, trying to mask the bodies I had already seen.

“Via?” Leo’s voice sounded weird. It was like he didn’t know where he knew me from.

“WHO?” His mistress sounded distressed. Her voice... It held the same undertones as mine. Spinning on my heels, I stood face to face with my mother. Or someone who would pass as her doppelganger. By this version’s fleeting glances between my dad and me, she couldn’t be my real mom, but she also hadn’t been a mindless drone like the village people.

“Who are you?” I stepped forward. If she didn’t know my lineage, she wouldn’t know I could sense her lie from a mile away.

“This is ridiculous. Leo? Please tell your guest to go. We need to get back to bed.” This imposter flipped her hair in my face.

Leo’s brows drew together, knowing the same thing I did. If this had been my mom, she would’ve recognized her own flesh and blood.

“I asked you once. I’ll only ask you one more time.” I let my voice drop to

show I wasn't playing games. "Who. Are. You?"

"I am Leo's lover." Her eyes sought my father's stare for his aid. She knew he had a lie detector with his sin. She knew how to word that without it being a lie.

"Your name?" I batted my eyes accusingly at her.

"I didn't barge into someone else's home! Who are you to demand who I am? Who are you?" She nearly screamed at me.

I shook my head and walked to the side of the room before I gathered myself enough to answer. Two could play her game.

"Well, technically, you and I both know this place doesn't truly exist... This is just the prison Salvatore helped create. So, by definition, this is not your home." I shrugged while turning to face the woman who couldn't be my mother.

No, mine had told me my best would be enough before I came here. Not that Liliana Clarke would win mother of the year, but at least she knew I existed. Still, there just seemed to be something not right about this imposter.

"Via, what are you going on about?" Leo only had his pants on from the rush to find clothes.

"I just want to know her name," I pouted to him. Even though he was confused, he softened like the amazing dad I had come to know.

"Daughter, you should not insult your mother like this..."

"Dad, Mom sent me here to get you out. I'm using my mind gifts right now to be inside your head. You've been comatose since Salvatore planted a bomb in Laurel's neck. She died, and you haven't woken up."

"Handsome, why don't we go back to bed and forget about this?" It didn't escape my attention when I heard some kind of low hiss under her breath.

Enchanted, my father also softened from whatever magic she had been using on him.

“Use your own power, Dad! Tell me I’m lying or ask this imposter what her true name is because we all know it isn’t my mother’s!”

The doppelganger gasped.

“That’s right, you evil witch... I’m the daughter of Liliana Clarke and Leo Loki. I can also tell if you lie! You’ve done good so far by avoiding true facts about yourself, but I won’t fall for it.”

Finally, my dad seemed to startle out of his stupor enough to come to terms with my logic. He slowly moved to look out the window as the haze wore off. Knowing she had lost, the imposter dropped her glamor. I was faced with a ghost in rags. She wailed at me and dove down from above before she careened toward me.

I barely flipped out of the way with enough time to get back on my feet before she tried again. Leo still hadn’t come entirely out of whatever she had done, but I didn’t have time.

The woman finally snagged me and tossed me into the wall. Note, I might be needing to take some lessons from Fiona as well.

My breath caught in my lungs. The scare left me vulnerable long enough for this woman to throw a spear at me. Where the fuck did she get a spear from? By the pale glow, I knew she could summon it. I grunted, trying to remove it from my shoulder. Nearly laughing, I couldn’t believe my life of torture had prepared me for this shit.

The ghost woman with hollow eyes got in my face before she started punching me. Man, this had to be a new low for me. Leo came to me then as he shoved the witchy thing away. He pulled the spear from my shoulder and jostled it to lob at her instead.



When it hit her center and pinned her to the far wall, I'd never seen my father want to kill anything more. "Be gone, Wraith!"

She screamed while white flames ate her completely. Turning back to me, my dad looked mortified and very guilty. He patted me down to make sure I would be okay. Me? I was pretty sure a brick prepped in my ass to be shitted. Or is it shat? Anyway, I was about to shit a brick. He doctored me and helped me stand. As we walked out of his house, I broke the silence.

"Sooo, a Wraith? That's a new one."

He let out a dry laugh and held me closer to him. Managing to keep away from the hole in my shoulder, we both knew Dr. Baysan would need to examine me.

"Wraiths are tricky. They hunt and prey by feeding on a lifeforce. If you hadn't shown up, I'm not sure I ever would've had the strength to rouse." He kissed my temple.

"Is that why your actual body has been cold?" Tears brimmed my eyes and then leaked out. Leo just wiped them away and kept me closer.

"Yes. I was cold from being fed on..."

"And if she kept feeding?" I gulped.

"I'm immortal, but not immune. I would've turned into her personal, eternal buffet while trapped in my mind."

"Sorry for not coming sooner. I didn't know I could do this until I had to." My own guilt now bundled into a knotting ball in my gut.

"That's when most of our magic happens. When we're faced with death."

"Speaking of death... We're at Death's place now from Salvatore finding your island. I got everything moved in and safe, but Letum did help."

"Letum?" He asked.

"Yeah, Death's true name."

“He told you his true name?” My father gaped. I just nodded. “Well, I’ve missed a lot.”

“Not as much as you’d think. Apparently, I’ve met him and his brothers before, but he took my memory of it. I have it back. Before I could ask him to fill in the blanks, he disappeared. We’re all waiting for him to get back.”

“Well, you have me back.” Leo kissed the top of my head. My heart swelled from knowing that I did, indeed, have my dad. One I loved already.

More shrills replaced the sounds of the streams. Of course, there couldn’t be just one Wraith to deal with. Preparing myself, I promised to find Fiona right after I healed to teach me how to fight these hags.

## Chapter 11



**M**ilo

Nothing but obnoxiously pacing the room helped me calm down. Princess had been in her father's mind for two full days.

Neither body had stirred. Still breathing, that had been my only hope for whatever prison she had been getting him out of. The rise and fall of her chest had me becoming codependent on that single action. It told me she still lived. That's all I needed to know right now. I yearned within to make sure my Pandora would come back to me.

Would our girl ever understand how seven selfish pricks needed her? I'd make sure the second she was back in my arms that she would appreciate this concept. Footfalls scuffled the hall outside of the sitting room, but I didn't check who it could be this time of night. My focus would stay on the only woman who could tame the seven.

Luce appeared with his sleepy eyes and tight smile. I had sent him to our bed hours ago. Everyone else went too because they knew I wouldn't rest.

Not until I knew she would be safe again. Just like when I closed deals for our fathers' company. I sat on pins and needles until the paperwork finalized. Still, nothing took the length of time this had. Unless I counted that time she traded herself for Bell.

It seemed where our Sloth was concerned, our girl spent a lot of time. Though, Leo's bested him on this. Bell's excursion only took her a few hours. Why was her father's trip taking so much longer?

"Lo? You're still up?" Luce's groggy voice always had me taking extra breaths from how sexy it remained.

"She's not back yet," I tilted my head to the Sleeping Beauty on the couch. Fitting name because she would always be my Princess. If only I could kiss her awake.

"Handsome, you need some rest. There's nothing we can do until she comes back on her own." My lover came up behind me and embraced me around my middle. His warmth spread over my back from both of us being without our shirts. I stayed in my slacks with my belt undone, but Luce stood behind me in only his boxers. It would be ultimately, the wrong time to get aroused, but loving the man that smelled of cinnamon behind me had me pausing. I turned in his arms and pecked his full lips with my thinner ones.

The same small lips my sister had as well. Still, out of all of us, Luce held the fullest lips with his Indian heritage. What had been meant for a short and sweet kiss turned into neither of us wanting to pull away. My hands ran through the thick tuft of hair on the top of his head that he kept longer to style in the Pompadour fashion. Mine had a similar cut, but I parted it with gel to make sure I always looked professional. Luce and Princess would be the only people I allowed to ruin my hair in a heated moment.

Luce and I knew each other's mouths like we knew the sun would rise

every morning. Our familiarity had always made him my home. My safe haven, my keep. Now, our Queen sought sanctuary within us all, and we'd always give it to her. Still, her name would remain as our Princess no matter how high her real title got.

Panting, our bruised mouths parted as more voices traveled down to us. Still holding onto each other's faces for dear life, we just kept our foreheads pressed against each other until we recuperated. The rest of our circle emerged from the hall and into our space. Apparently, none of us could sleep with her being missing.

"You still in here?" Rin nodded toward me. I dipped my head in return. Nothing could remove me short of a bulldozer.

"So, it appears none of us could sleep, yeah." Aster strutted over to the desk in here and sighed. "Right bastards we are for letting her do this so quick after Bell."

Bell looked guilty from his spot, so I shook my head at him. "None of us saw it coming, Bell. No one could predict Sal would shoot you with whatever magical nonsense he concocted."

"He's right. Don't even think about blaming yourself," Rin growled at the mere idea. "If anything, we agreed to let her do this, not you."

"She'll be fine." Lear more so told himself than us. "She's strong."

"The strongest." Beau concluded with all of us agreeing.

"What if we try to go after her?" Rin let the one thing come out that we all wanted an answer to.

Could we use her tethers in reverse to go to her?

"Well, has anyone tried their connection to her to just talk?" Bell's question had us all wanting to facepalm. No, we had not done the most basic thing our

bond had given us. We all sat on the couch and allowed Rin to do it. From being the Alpha, he already had a connection to her with their animal links.

Damn dragonette.

Speaking of all our familiars, they holed up where the field of Purgatory had been placed behind the house. None of us had seen much of them from not needing their assistance in this dimension.

They all had been playing and enjoying their break from being helpful. My Screech Owl Bill—Yes, after Bill Gates and yes, I was part Banshee with a Screech Owl—still chased the mini dragon. All of our birds loved teasing her. Though, they best be careful because that little thing could blow fire on their fluffy wings. Momo squawked outside to let us all know they were on the hunt for Princess's pet at this moment. That poor thing had her own harem chasing her scaly tail.

Impatiently, I paced the room again as we all watched Rin concentrate. Luckily, it didn't take long for him to include us in the conversation.

*Kitten? Can you hear us?*

*Yeah...* Her voice sounded almost strained. We all straightened our spines from the notion.

*What's going on?* I demanded.

*Wraiths... Salvatore set up my dad's prison with the draining bitches. One had Leo believing he was in a village he and my mom lived in. Oh, and one made herself the spitting image of my mother.*

*One?* Lear inquired. From the sounds of it, they faced many.

*We thought there was only one, but when we tried leaving the village, more came out. We're running and fighting the best we can, but I'm injured, and my dad is drained from the bitch.*

*Do you need us to come to you?* Bell asked while standing from the chair he

made warm.

*No. We're almost there. Can someone be ready to help my dad, though? He's seen better days...*

*What about you?* Luce asked. She knew our voices well enough to know it had been him asking.

*I'll need your dad. I took a harpooning spear through the shoulder. The thing hurts, even in my spirit form.* I quickly moved to where she rested and revealed her shoulders. Kicking myself, I noticed the blood pooling below her body from the wound being a through and through.

Her black tank top had shielded it from our view, but now we could see it. Rin cursed under his breath from not scenting her blood sooner.

"Luce, go get your dad," our Alpha commanded. Luce ran up the stairs to the suite they were staying in. It only took a few moments for Lucas to come down with his medical bag. He sat and started working by recording her vitals.

"Her blood pressure is low, and her heartbeat is dropping. She can't die, but I think they can trap her if she's weak enough. No doubt, Sal knew this too." The good doctor's hands fastened a gauze pad on the backside just as Lily came down.

"What happened?" Brimming with tears, I saw her genuine love for her daughter.

"Sal. He knew she'd go for Leo and is using Wraiths to keep both of them too weak to get back to their bodies," I answered to sum it up.

"Boys," Daemon called everyone to look over at him. "Just like when she moved the island, give her your strength again."

For the men about to rule Hell and collect sins, we sure were being stupid tonight. We moved and gripped her exposed flesh. Opening our flows, we

copiously controlled now, we let her have it all. None of us spared a drop of energy for anything other than her.

“It’s working. Her pulse is getting stronger with more beats,” Lucas whispered. He still worked on repairing her body so she wouldn’t wake up in the searing pain of her stabbed flesh.

Now, he wanted to cauterize the wound by grabbing the stoke from the fireplace and heating it. Without even explaining, he looked to his son.

“Lift her body so I can close the exit wound.”

Knowing this might hurt, I gave a brief warning to our girl.

*Princess, be ready to feel some pain. Lucas is going to sear your wound to keep you from bleeding out.*

*Shit! Tell him to wait just a sec!* She sounded like something substantial needed to be pushed off her.

“Wait! She’s not in a place to have it yet!” Everyone froze. No one moved and barely breathed while we waited for confirmation. It took about five minutes, but her sweet voice finally came back.

*I’m ready.*

At her command, our circle nodded to Lucas to finish his medical procedure. When the hot metal branded her skin, we heard her cry out within our minds. Using every curse in the book and some delightful new phrases, she gritted to bear the agony, and my favorites had to be her phrases:

Shit on a stick.

Pee on a Leaf.

Fart on a whale.

There were many more, but it had us guys smirking through her pain. That smart little mouth won us all over, but these were funny sayings. When the branding finished, Rin picked up her body. He didn’t want her to lie in the



stain of crimson below her. No one wanted to let her get worse by putting her in her own blood.

Lucas cleaned off her back with his gauze. It had been coated in the antiseptic. Before any of us could do much more, her physical body just popped out of Rin's arms, no longer being in the same room as the group. We knew what that meant, so we dashed and raced up the stairs to the room we left Leo in.

Sure enough, our girl stood at the foot of his bed as he groaned to sit up. Princess tipped over and face-planted in the middle of the bed.

Moaning, she lightly waved at us. "Fucking Wraiths..."

Her words were slurred as she fell immediately to sleep. Good news remained, knowing her soul had reconnected to her body. Moving her, I took her back to her room. We all crowded the king-sized thing to be close to her. None of us could be away from her, but we could finally rest, knowing she had returned.

## Chapter 12



**O**ctavia

“Left. Right. Left. Right,” Fiona repeated, directing my fists. They were punching her open palms for my aiming practice. After the whole Wraith issue, I asked for her help when it came to self-defense. I had the street smarts, I could also swing a heavy object, but being a ninja was never offered to me before. Now, I had to master a few tricks quickly before the real war. Salvatore’s men were trained like Fiona and the guys. If I had any hope of beating him, legitimate fighting skills were needed.

That Wraith kicked my ass and losing sucked. I didn’t like it. Now that I had healed, I knew I had to learn to brawl without an ax. My knuckles did well when my opponent couldn’t fly. Anger still rolled through me from being too helpless but being stabbed hadn’t helped either. Thanks to my immortal side picking up, it only throbbed with a cut after a few days of healing. Better than the hole through the bone that made breathing hard.

Though, being doted on by seven men had not been an adverse side effect to that, and even Rin tried to help me dress and bathe. He didn't know shit on how to, but Bell guided him to learn because I quote, for future injuries we know she'll have. That's when I reminded them that if I had a child, they had one hundred and fifty years to figure out how to hold my hand through labor. Yeah, that thought shut them up.

"Concentrate, Via." Fiona sighed, seeing my eyes unfocused.

"Sorry. I guess I'm just used to my mind being everywhere. Now that I don't have to, I'm not sure how to think of just one thing."

"It's fine. I get it. I just need you here if I'm teaching you not to die. Imagine if I just swung a sword and severed your head."

Eesh...

"How would I heal from something so... Frankenstein?" I couldn't help my curiosity.

"Your body would move to it and pick it up for it to reattach. You would hold it there until it stitched back together. From when it happened to Lucas, I know his arms were exhausted."

"Wait. Lucas had his head severed?"

Fiona chuckled. She looked young like the rest of her generation, but now I knew she was my mom's age. "Lily walked in on him, sleeping with a few strippers. She had come to tell him she had mastered another move with her katana. Instead, she came in behind him sitting on a couch with the girls around him. With no hesitation, she sliced his head right off."

She laughed at the memory. Part of me wanted to be a little jealous. Fiona got to see a side to my mom I had only dreamed of. Still, I never got a glimpse of her the way they talked about her.

"The strippers ran quicker than flies swarm shit." Fiona ended the story I

missed the middle to. With a fake laugh of my own, I tried to keep her mood light. She stopped dead in her tracks. “Via, I’m sorry. I didn’t even think before I spoke.”

How did she know? Oh. I bled a little of my emotions. “It’s not your fault. I’m happy to hear the stories. I’m just sad I don’t have any of my own.”

Fiona wrapped her arm around me and hugged me to her. We walked into the house like that.

“How about we do your Guardian ceremony?” she asked.

“I’d like that.” I smiled.

Staying in the living room, Fiona went to get everyone we needed to involve. One by one, people slowly trickled in. Each of my guys gave me a kiss as I watched Lou’s triad do the same for her. The love in this room magnetized. After seeing Daemon try to protect me, I knew part of him grew to love me like Leo.

“To start, Via, you must offer her your bleeding wrist. Lou will then accept the act by drinking from it,” my mother stated while bringing me a gorgeous dagger with rubies in the handle. She saw me gawking at it. “All Guardians use a knife gifted from the Night Court. This was mine and Fiona’s. Now, I’m giving it to you.”

My palm opened with a tremble as she handed it over. This let me feel the coldness of the steel.

“Mom?” I whispered between us.

“Yes, sweetheart?”

“Can you help me?” If I needed too, I could slice my own wrist, but...

“Of course. I had my mother help me too.” She smiled with unshed tears. I imagined this exact image growing up. Though, it was me leaving for prom. You know, that cliché scene? She’d say, ‘my little girl’s all grown up.’ Same

emotion, but with blood sharing and a knife. Being a demon that lived forever made special moments very different.

“Once you do this, Louise will become eternal too. Nothing can kill her from her linking onto your immortality.” Fiona spoke from our side. She stood by Lou and helped slice her wrist.

The pain from the blade didn’t come right away. I examined the slice and then the pulsing discomfort set in with it.

“Stay by me?” I asked my mom when she tried to step away. Gratitude flashed in her gaze from me trying to let her back in. Another stepping stone we were hurdling together.

“Always, Daughter.” Her tears freely fell with pride.

Leo came to my other side and kissed the top of my head. His excitement for me presented itself on his features. “Guardians are rare, Daughter. Never lose faith in yours or why she has been given to you.”

His words had me turning to my first and best friend. Lou beamed her kindness. That bubble-gum attitude I loved most about her. The way her cotton candy perfume made me think of happy things. Recalling everything about our time together, I knew she was made to be my light. I’m not really sure why they gave her to me, but I wouldn’t look a gift horse in the mouth.

“Ready?” She asked.

“If you are” I smiled weakly. Lou took took the led because she knew I had issues understanding demon ceremonies, so she sampled my blood offering and fed from me. By letting her go first, I also showed I respected her title to me trusting her to take the lead. Intimate, her lips sucking my blood was different from when Rin and I shared it. His had been seductive, but Lou’s became calming.

When it was my turn, my mom and Fiona chanted something. Not hearing

anything but the hum in my ears, I felt it. Another piece of my soul fitting into one of the last black spaces I had. Everyone in this room had been a piece to my broken puzzle, and they were putting me back together again. Call me Humpty Dumpty, but they were. All the Kings that is because no horses were involved.

Fireworks exploded in my vision, and by Lou's gasp, I knew she saw them too. This had been the final thing. Lou was my Guardian, and I was her Keep.

## Chapter 13



**S**evrin

I had to teach her to swim while she wore *that*?

Gulping, I tried to rein in my dragon because the animal in me wanted to throw our mate over my shoulder. Take her back to our room to fuck her senselessly. I'd continuously mate her for days for her to know she belonged to me. I had to snap out of it. Thoughts of breeding already were odd, but I blamed it on the fact that she brought it up. To scare us, she used what that time would be like, but Kitten didn't know my dragon wanted to do it now. Her words excited him.

In this moment, I fought him for control because he wanted to mate her in front of the circle. He wanted my brothers to see, and the illicit idea wouldn't be hard from them being outside with us. All the guys sat on the side of the Olympic pool in their own suits. Though, the rules Kitten established made it so none of them could join to help because she wanted to learn to swim. If

they joined our session, nothing would get done. No, they'd only be a distraction and nothing more.

Still, their presence seemed to soothe Kitten's jitters. She didn't know we stayed on edge from the sight of her in the barely-there fabric. Her gold bikini had us foaming at the mouth. Full tits under little triangles. Bottoms that had the delicate straps sitting high on her shapely hips...

Fuck, she wanted to set us all off. Even worse, the backside had been a thong. At least I stood in the water and could hide my erection. The other guys tried to discretely move their trunks to hide their pitching tents. Our girl gave a shy wave as her foot connected just right with a patch of water on the edge of the pool. Catching it, she fell and busted her ass for all of us to see.

Her little squeaks of surprise were pretty cute. Bell and Lear got up to run to her. Though, we all could see she would be fine. Laughter raked the air around us, and even she joined in to chuckle at herself.

"Careful, Love. Slippery when wet." Aster winked. "Just like my favorite place on you."

A groan escaped most our lips from his sexual reference. Kitten just laughed. She delighted in his attention. They had an odd relationship, but one that worked well for them. Hell, her relationships with all of us were far from ordinary.

Aster's lips pressed against the open skin of her ass that landed on the cement. He smirked again. "Now that I've kissed your fine arse, does it count as arse kissing?"

Our girl loved it and laughed, and we enjoyed it too, but we wouldn't admit it to Aster.

"You ready?" I asked while moving to her. The hesitation didn't stop her from walking to me. Albeit, it was a prolonged little strut.



“Yeah?” Her little fingers met mine as I pulled her to me. That had been a mistake. Her intake of breath came after feeling my hardness against her stomach, and it set me on edge. Clearing my head when she stepped back and blushed, I could only smile. Damn, this woman owned me, body and soul.

“First, lay on your back and learn to float.” I guided her with my hands to help her lie over my forearms in the water. “Good. Now, let yourself find your natural buoyancy. Breathe in and keep some of it within your lungs.”

She did as I asked.

“Perfect, now slowly exhale.” As she did, I moved my arms down for her body to sink naturally. When her body stayed up and found the right groove, she squealed with excitement.

“I’m doing it!” Even though my mate had just turned eighteen, she looked more excited than a toddler getting a new toy. The guys clapped and cheered her on as I taught her how to use her arms and legs in this position. I had never taught someone to swim, but I really enjoyed teaching my mate. My dragon purred, seeing her this happy. Out of all the shit happening, this moment brought me back to what had been important.

There would be no escaping what was to come with my father, but there were still happy moments to be had during it all.

Happiness. She gave that to us. She made all of the burdens in this life easier to bear.

“I’m giving her a bloody ten!” Aster shouted as they all judged her technique like the bunch of idiots they were.

“What? I love our girl just as much as you do, but I’ll also be honest that her form isn’t perfect. I’d give her an eight point five.” Beau studied her gliding body.

“You bloody idiot! I’m not judging her swimming! I’m judging how her tits

move with every stroke,” Aster huffed. Now the guys looked at her chest to watch her breasts move up and down. Kitten tried not to laugh as she backstroked around me.

“Ohh... Yeah, I’d have to give those a ten too,” Beau murmured. All of them grew quiet, but our girl couldn’t hold back her laughter anymore.

She fell under the water and broke the surface coughing up the fluid her giggle drew in. Now, we groaned, seeing her dripping wet in a little bikini. Way better than Pamela Anderson in *Baywatch*.

“I think that covers our first lesson, Kitten. Now you know how to get yourself to the surface.” I tried talking over the lump in my throat as I watched her shimmy to the stairs.

That damn bikini! I’d never let her wear one again from the aroused state I stayed in. I was pretty sure the others agreed as they tried to stand up while adjusting their crotches.

“A granny in that bikini... A walrus in that bikini...” Lear kept listing things off to try not to think about her in it.

Kitten blushed and tried to fold her arms over her middle. “Sorry, it’s what Lou found for me to wear. I’ll find some shorts and a tee for the next lesson.”

“No way in hell. You’re too fucking gorgeous in that thing.” Milo really liked the gold color, matching his sin so well. He went to her and guided her into the manor while smacking the bare cheek of her ass. All of us behind them watched it jiggle just right. The fucking bastard knew it would destroy us.

To change the topic, Beau looked to the sky and threw out an idea that would have us all a little more relaxed. “What if we went and checked out that academy tonight? It’s been on my mind since we passed it.”

Kitten turned with her saucy grin. “You and your books.”

“What can I say? My academics do come in handy...” He winked, and we were left clueless to the joke between them.

“I wonder if it’s haunted?” Bell asked.

“In the Shadowlands?” Kitten shrugged. “I’m pretty sure everything is.”

“No, I mean from how many people died there. You’ve never heard of their famous Culling Trials, but they were gory and deadly. Not many survived.” Milo finished Beau’s tale as Bell dropped his head and closed his eyes to respect the dead.

“How does dying work here? I mean, we saw the demons Salvatore sent through, but what actually happens to them?” Kitten stopped walking to turn and face us. We didn’t learn that bit.

“None of us know, Kitten. No one has seen the Horsemen in centuries. You’re the first person to have access to the Shadowlands since Lilith got locked up,” I answered for the group.

“So, the school could be haunted?” She smiled from being the wicked little thing she was.

“How about we get ready and find out? We have time to kill waiting for Death to show up anyways.” I kissed her head and moved passed her.

Lou popped out just then. “You’re going on a date to a school?” We all froze. Probably thinking the same thing since we started our polyamorous relationship. We hadn’t gotten to fully date our girl properly.

“Yeah, it is a date,” I stated. No one fought me on it from wanting it to be too.

Lou squealed and yanked our girl away and into her room. I could only laugh, knowing she was about to get a makeover from her little friend.

## Chapter 14



**O**ctavia

The place was beautiful. White stone filled the halls and black marble guided our steps. Large, there had to be at least three levels to the place. Grinning at the emptiness, I got a rather bold idea. I mean, they were my guys, right? Who doesn't enjoy a teacher fantasy? Opening a classroom door, they all stopped behind me. My lips curled even more, knowing I was about to be bolder than normal. Hey, I had a thing for doing stupid, crazy shit. This would just be a first for me in the sex department.

“Boys, welcome to class today. If you'll find your seats, I'll start today's lesson.” As if I had grown two heads, all of them gave me funny looks. I had to bite back my knowing smirk to not laugh. “Right, I'm sorry. Your teacher called in sick, and I'm the only sub available. You may call me Ms. Clarke.”

Aster got it first—he probably felt my building arousal. His own wicked grin shined as he quickly moved past to find a seat in the front row. His Lust detector came in handy. I wasn't sure how they hadn't smelled my arousal

yet. Speaking of, Rin sniffed and finally caught on. Come to think of it, he had been sniffing me a lot lately.

Once he moved in, the rest of the group simply followed. Thanks to Lou—she must've known my excursion would lead to this—I had on a white blouse that buttoned up over a little, pencil skirt. Thank God for friends like her who think ahead. Popping a few buttons, I walked in and sat on the desk with the guys right across from me. Crossing my legs to show a little more thigh and almost ass, I leaned back with a smile. This would be fun.

“I’m not like your normal teachers. I like to play games to make sure my students enjoy their learning experience,” I said.

Aster already leaned over his desk like an eager boy because he wanted to learn and get an A in my class. The rest started to pick up on my fun and relaxed in their seats.

“What kind of game, Ms. Clarke?” Lear winked at me, skimming my body with his eyes. My cleavage lured him in perfectly.

“Well, if we’re going to be together forever, I think it’s only fair to see what you know about me...” I stood up and walked around the desk. I found a yardstick waiting for me to swing it around.

“Oh? And what’s our reward?” Milo licked his lips, studying my body. All of them grew hungry, so I opened up my connection to them to feel it. I also might've sent my horniness their way too. It only seemed fair from having to stare at seven hot guys all the time. They groaned from it.

“If you get the answer correct, I lose an article of clothing...” Yeah, my response really got them going.

“And if we get it wrong?” Beau swallowed hard. He had always been my good scholar. I knew even if he was turned on, losing wouldn't be an option.

“You all lose an article of clothing... I suggest putting those brilliant minds

together to come up with answers...”

“All right, Princess. Lay it on us.” Lucius kicked his feet out to cross them at his ankles. The guys claimed the first two rows to be closer to the fun.

“We’ll start this off easy.” I hopped off the desk as my tight, little skirt went up. Smacking Rin’s desk with the yardstick, I saw his eyes dilate from the violent act. “What’s my favorite color to wear?”

“Black,” Milo answered without even giving the guys time to coordinate their response. I had to smother my smile by biting it back. Who knew Mr. CEO watched me so much to notice my black apparel?

“Correct.” I moved to stand in front of his desk.

“Are you going to striptease me, Princess?” he asked as I leaned over his desk.

“Sorry, but if you want my shirt to come off, you have to unbutton it...” My reply had his nostrils flaring wildly. All the other males paid close attention. Milo’s hands trembled with his focus strictly on my white top that already peek-a-boomed my black, lacy bra. Having this much power over the man who loved control made a moan hum within my throat.

My eyes trained onto where his hands met together to unbutton my top. He did it slowly as I kept my leaning position over him. Lear sat on his one side and Lucius behind him, devouring everything within their stares. Their gazes remained transfixed on every inch of flesh Milo revealed. This would be fun to play even though I wanted to just say fuck it and spread my legs. Seduction would make us all hot and bothered.

Every time the padding of the tips of his fingers feathered my belly, I had to clench my thighs together from the heat beginning to pool. I also broke out in goosebumps from the ghosting caress that had me aching for more. How I

wanted his gentle touch to scratch me deeper, and his control to snap just from watching him undo my buttons.

I dropped the yardstick. My nipples strained against the confines of the lacy material sheltering them from the beast before us. Gods, I never knew a girl could need a man—or men, in my case—like this. Looking down in the gap of Milo’s desk, I could see his dick tightening the front of his crotch. I loved the sight.

Once I had been fully exposed, he stood up and lifted one of my arms from the sleeve and took it out for me. I let him play me like a doll as we kept eye contact the whole time he stripped my top. When we were done, he took his seat and gestured for me to continue on. Yup, this roleplay would be the death of me and maybe seven guys.

Moving back to the front, nothing held any humor now. The game had stopped from everyone wanting the finishing prize. Clearing my throat, the excited knot in it wouldn’t budge. “Where was I born?”

They all groaned. Without even answering, they flipped off their shirts and tossed them at me. I had to smile when Bell winked with his pitch.

“The answer, boys, is Fayetteville, North Carolina.”

Strutting my body with my skirt riding up, I paced leisurely in front of their desks. Throwing them a bone, I wanted to ask something that had my mind curious about their brotherly dynamic.

“Who has the thickest cock out of all seven of you?” I knew.

My Alpha had the girthiest one with Bell hot on his heels. Bell had the biggest in combination of length and girth, but not as thick as our front man. Lear scoffed as his head gestured to his left where Rin sat. “Ask a hard one, Sis. Rin clearly flaunts his fuck-stick.”

Rin gave his friend a leering grin. “I don’t see you complaining when you

watch my fat dick fuck a tight pussy.”

Lear groaned and had to lean back to adjust his dick in his pants. He clearly had memories about Rin fucking tight cunts, and my little green monster reared its ugly head.

“A tight pussy?” I walked between them as they both caught onto my anger within my reaction.

“Yours, Kitten. I meant yours.” Rin tried to cover up his mistake as I tsked their behavior.

Twisting my skirt for the zipper to sit above my navel, I began tugging it down extra sluggishly. Torturing them, I watched it myself as my matching black panties peeked between the metal.

“Your hands would’ve been where mine are, Lear...”

“Please,” he pleaded. I could see the desire pressing him to restrain his body into his chair. Nothing satisfied me more than having control sometimes. Just like when Rin and I fought for dominance when we slept together, having the power gave me chills. Licking my lips, I presented my body to him by lying over his desk. Rin moved his over for my legs to be displayed, and Milo did the same for my head area. On three desks, I laid out like a grand buffet and nodded for Lear to get his helping.

By the time his hands reached my zipper, the other guys had moved their desks in to circle me. Fuck, if being displayed didn’t turn me on even more. When Lear gripped the metal, he hesitated, and removed his hands. When I went to question why he abandoned my body, I didn’t have time when he shoved forward to use his teeth.

His slanted eyes locked onto mine as I used my elbows to prop me up. The way my stomach dipped with my panting added to the naughty things my mind conjured up. No one breathed as we watched our Envy leisurely smirk



with his tugs. Once my crotch came into view, he nestled his nose into the lacy fabric with his mouth still around the zipper. He inhaled my scent and groaned before finishing his task. I had to put a hand over my heart to keep it in my chest.

“She smells ripe with her arousal.” Lear wheezed as Rin patted his back in support.

“Next question, Kitten.” Rin growled for me to hurry the fuck up.

“So bossy, Alpha.” I smiled as he groaned. “Fine. What is my favorite color?”

They made noises of disapproval. “Love, we don’t know this shite about you.” Aster voiced their problem.

“I don’t have one.” I only shrugged as they stood up to take off their pants. All of them were tented over me. I loved my new little game to relish in it. Well, Aster had gone commando, so his long shaft already made his debut.

Bell looked down at his boxers and then at my underwear. “You had one extra piece compared to most of us. I think it’s only fair you lose your bra and panties when we get the next one right.”

“Deal,” I agreed. This game had already gone on longer than I wanted. I required someone to fill the ache between my legs. The primal urge to be filled and fucked took over a long time ago. Plus, I highly doubted they knew the answer to this next one...

“Where is my favorite spot to sit in a classroom?”

“Left back corner.” Beau and Bell answered in the same moment. I held my breath when both leapt up without me concurring their answer. With a nod between them, Bell moved to my chest. I raised myself a little more for him to reach the clasp behind my back. He didn’t go for it though.

With a teasing smirk, those icy blue irises disappeared behind the black of

his pupils. I knew he had something up his... OH FUCK!

His teeth clamped my nipple through the fabric, and I arched from the surprise of painful pleasure. How these boys knew me enough to know that single move would ruin me, I had no idea. One hand went up to keep his face there as the other kept me balanced below. Milo changed his position to sit behind me on the desk as Bell worked my left breast with his mouth.

The scraping of the lace mixing with his wet mouth did things to me I never knew could happen. All of it felt amazing. Then, I felt a hot breath blow on my inner thigh. Everything within me clenched and cried from Beau knowing a woman's body so well. His knowledge told him exactly where my nerves were that would be most sensitive. His fingers toyed with the one that followed the top hem of my thong as his breath kept blowing against my thigh.

Unraveling and coming undone before them all, I tried to keep my composure. I tried to remember if the sun rose in the east or the west. Overstimulated in the best way possible, I lost myself to the satisfaction only my mates could offer my begging body just as more hands moved onto me to join the other two.

Everything within me burned to life, knowing I lied under the hands of those who loved me most. I, their Pandora, had been centered between them all. The floodgates between our connection opened, and we all felt each other's need for more. It had been a delirious torture, and we clashed together for more.

Until a scream came from the hallway.

We all jerked apart as another sounded. High-pitched and terrifying, our group watched each other freeze.

"What was that?" I panted.

## Chapter 15



**O**ctavia

Without even thinking, Bell swept me into his chest. He picked me up right off the desk I had been a buffet on. He had made himself a human shield for me against whatever had made that screeching noise in the hall outside our classroom.

“Guys?” I didn’t even know what to ask. Not that they were listening as they tried to find different things to use as weapons. Aster found my yardstick I hadn’t gotten the full enjoyment from, and Beau found some pens he planned to use as throwing daggers. Milo and Lucius worked together to break apart a desk as Rin destroyed his own. It seemed we all assumed the same thing... Whatever made that noise couldn’t be friendly.

“You got her, Bell?” Rin growled, picking up the shards of wood that splintered apart to become stakes.

“You seriously asking me that?” Bell scoffed.

“I can fight on my own. Thank you very much.” I fought against Bell’s hold, and he knew better than to restrain me. Picking up a broken metal leg, I’d use it to club whatever was out there over the fucking head.

How dare this unknown thing interrupt my sexy times! “I swear, every time I’m trying to embrace all of my men at once, something has to intervene and ruin the moment *after* I’ve gotten worked up!” I spoke that to myself, but the hums of agreement around me told me the guys had similar thoughts. Lucius came and kissed my temple.

“You’ve taken four of us in the same room. You’ll have seven soon enough.”

“But I wanted to be fucked now,” I whined. I couldn’t help it from feeling completely energized in the wrong parts of my body.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake!” Rin growled while storming to me. His hand yanked away my panties as he pushed me to fall over a desk. Rutting into me from behind, I gasped from the surprise and shock. I mean, it was an excellent surprise.

“We can’t be doing this right now.” Yeah, my words held no sincerity as he fucked me like the animal already inside of him wanted to. My pussy devoured his girth, begging him to keep ramming into us just the way he was. The stretching and pulling made my G-spot throb even harder.

“Guard the damn door,” Rin ordered when all the guys got distracted by our mating. Not that I could fault them for that. This side of Rin was hot.

“Why do you get to be the one that fucks her as we fight?” Beau looked incredulous. If I had a mind right now, I’d probably defend his case.

But...

*Mmm...*

My thoughts were only on the pleasure Sevrin Thana shoved into my pussy.

That piercing of his would always be the best death possible. Aster ran to me and fused our mouths together. Now his piercing set me off a different way. When my sex spasmed from my naughty thoughts, Rin growled and shoved Aster away. Sometimes, his Alpha side made it so he couldn't share. It looked like right now would be the moment he picked for just that as his dragon glimmered beneath the surface.

My man of Lust just lazily smirked and winked at me. "I needed a kiss of luck, yeah?"

Just then, my wild eyes drew to the door where Bell and Lear ran back in cursing up a storm. When did they leave the room? I guess my sex-induced thoughts had everything blurring.

"Ghouls," Lear hissed over his shoulder to Rin. My stepbrother readied his own metal weapons from the legs of the chair.

"They're real?" I asked through the lusty fog clouding me.

"Everything your little mind can think of from movies and books are real, Love. Though, vampires do not sparkle and shifters aren't always the sexy Alphas you'd read about."

I purred while looking over my shoulder to see Rin about to bite my shoulder. "So, I just got lucky?"

My dragon-shifter growled and sank his teeth into the flesh of his mate, that mate being me. He also shifted just a little for me to see my favorite horns. I pouted from not being able to reach them in this position. Still, the pleasure of the thought had me sensitive. My head tossed back as his hand wrapped around my throat. It was a sign of my submission for now, but also me being his possession.

*His...*

Damn, did that fill me with pride. Through our connection, he felt exactly

how much I enjoyed being his.

Ramming me harder, I took his pounding and his biting fangs that marked my back. Hitting sensitive spots—I never knew existed until now—I threw my head back again, and cried out from the nerves being stimulated.

“I love when you do that.” Rin’s grumbling tone infected my ears. I let his growly voice consume me. “I don’t care what’s happening. I’ve been teased too many times lately. I had to bury my thick cock in your tiny cunt.”

“I needed your cock too. I’ve missed it,” I tried to breathe as he chuckled.

“Look at your other boys fighting those disgusting creatures. All the while you didn’t even notice them coming in from begging for my dick.”

Rin was right. Looking around, I found all of my other guys stabbing and slicing through the enemy. The enemies that were rotted corpses with sneering faces. How rotting flesh could be so moveable had been beyond my comprehension. Wait, one of them just lost a piece of flesh from her face, but she picked it up and slapped it right back into place. The gross part was, it stayed.

Being rotten and gross, her greyed skin had become sticky. Clumps of hair were missing from her scalp, and if I hadn’t known they were Ghouls, I’d say they were more of a zombie.

“I love this,” he hissed behind me while still pounding into me from behind. “Fucking you on the battlefield.”

“Your bloodlust?” I focused on how hot my men were instead of the gruesome Ghouls.

Bell fought with his fists now and used his strength as his weapon. Not that it took much for him to best the stupid things that kept nipping with their teeth.

“Yeah, I need to feel the high of the battle while sinking into my mate.” I

could tell this was totally trippy for him, but my own arousal kept dimming just a bit from the ugly things ruining my moment. Turning my head to Milo and Lucius, I found them sharing a passionate kiss before charging into a mob of ugliness. Oh, that had been hot.

Lear and Aster had this unspoken conversation as they dismembered the Ghouls together. Ah, I bet they were using our new tethers to speak in their minds.

Beau... Holy fuck!

Could I just call him a ninja? I mean, the guys told me was good with a weapon, but seeing him like this? The man moved like Fiona had at the ceremony. It seemed like he had made his movements into a form of dancing. Damn did it rev me up even more. Not to mention they were all in boxers to show off their perfect physiques. Well, Aster had his sword swinging between his legs. No, it had not deflated yet.

My men had me tipping over my first climax from watching them.

My men. One fucking me and the others defending me, so I could mess around. I mean, this moment had to be one for the weirdest shit ever, but... We were immortal. I felt like I had found my home with them. All of our weird crap pulled us closer together and that had me smiling now.

My Alpha lover had me purring from his beast wanting to claim me in the most peculiar moment. Not that I was a cat, but his nickname had me always comparing myself to one.

“Can you two get done so we can get out of here?” Aster grunted while tossing three of them back. Rin choked me harder just as I felt him swell within me. His hot release buried into me just before he ripped out with a roar.

Streams of his stickiness roped between my pussy and his mushroom tip.

He, of course, took a moment to relish in it.

I had a little chuckle too while picking up my metal bat to start swinging. Rin shifted enough that I got to see his claws come out with his horns that I still wanted to stroke. Patterned with black scales, his arms shifted too. Did finding him attractive like this make me a fan of bestiality?

As though he could read my thoughts—wait, I didn't have my block up... he could hear them—he shook his head. “I'm more human than beast, and I haven't knotted in you to breed... *yet*, Kitten.”

Oh, that had my blood boiling. Not that I was ready to have kids, but if knotting had been anything like I'd read about.

“You can go between the forms for that purpose?” I asked while swinging my metal stick to take off one of the heads of the Ghouls.

“Trust me, Kitten. The day I breed you, you'll know exactly what's happening.” After his parting words, I shivered and watched him tear through the Ghouls.

Seven guys that could all fight like fucking gladiators, and they were all mine. Yeah, I could live with this revelation. We all ran for the door before the Ghouls could put themselves back together again. Yes, just like Humpty Dumpty. Man, that damn egg had been on my mind a lot lately.

Running into the hall, we were greeted with hundreds of the buggers climbing up the walls and hanging from the ceiling to get to us. We all groaned but braced ourselves. So much for finding this place pretty. Fuck that. It had to be another version of Hell I didn't want to deal with. I had no panties on, but a lace bra still hid my tits. Not that these monsters cared, but I had to go back to the manor like this. Freshly fucked by one of my guys but looking like a whore for the seven of them. Not that our family and friends would judge... but still.



“Okay, I’m gonna ask it. Why does Letum even have these things?” I growled.

A voice behind me had me freezing in place. The smokiness called to me from my memory now being able to place it. “Because this academy is his most sacred place, and he doesn’t like trespassers.” Yup, there would be no mistaking the anger in his tone.

I turned slowly with a manic grin. Part of me wanted to look innocent. But how could someone with missing clothes and a cunt dribbling sperm? The other part of me had been pissed he took so long in returning.

“Too bad you didn’t tell us before you vanished again. Where the hell have you been?” My brash shrill had him pausing momentarily. Then, Death did the darnedest thing. He doubled over in a fit of laughter.

## Chapter 16



**O**ctavia He hadn't stopped laughing. Nope. This man known as Death leaned into the wall to hold himself up from shaking so hard. Also, he tried to point at our exposed bodies, but couldn't from his humor winning.

"What the hell were you doing?" He gestured to my missing bottoms and then to the guys running around in only their boxers. Well, Aster still strutted his bare ass to match his nickname.

"We were..." Crap. How do you explain to the man who ran the school that you used his classroom to fuck around?

"You were doing some roleplay in room 302?" He looked inside the room to see my missing clothes everywhere as the Ghouls crawled around to find their missing limbs.

Yuck.

"We were attacked by Ghouls!" I pointed out the obvious issue that he still hadn't mentioned.

"No, they protect my school. No one gets in without permission from me

first.” Letum turned to the horde. “You are dismissed.” With moans and grunts, the things dragged themselves away as the whole ones began cleaning the filthy room. I just found my next level of crazy.

“How come you have Ghouls here?” I studied the things that seemed fully relaxed now that their master heeled them.

“They are the supernaturals who died in my realm. From their blood shedding on my shadows, they forged their afterlife to obey me.”

“So that’s what happens.” Beau took note of this new information.

I felt sick with the knowledge they couldn’t move on. Letum seemed to easily read my expression. “Their souls left their forms. My command is only of what remains of their bodies.” Okay, I could live with that. Moving on, I jabbed my finger in his direction.

“Where the hell have you been?”

“I am sorry, young one. My brother’s horses got out, and we had to gather them all. It took longer than expected from them knowing change is coming.”

“What change?” I narrowed my eyes. “Also, you used that excuse last time you avoided us. Why were you really away?”

“I think this conversation is due back at my manor where you can all cover your extra bits. There, we can discuss over tea, everything you need to know.”

“Seriously? You’re going to leave me hanging again!” I shouted after him.

“Your grandmother is not a patient woman. I told her I would retrieve you and be back.” Letum swept his hand in the direction of the exit.

“You mean Rita?” My hope dazzled my expression. Still looking freshly fucked, I had more glow now. Letum didn’t respond. He just turned his ashen skin away from us, and we all followed. As much as I wanted to grill him

now, not having my va-jay-jay covered bothered me more. Not that we could use any of the clothes left behind. They were covered in slime and blood.

“You want to help me cover my balls, Love? I could hide that sweet snatch of yours as well.” Aster came up to me, and I had to laugh. His crude mouth would always be my favorite part about him.

Rin growled from behind us. He then picked me up to sit on his shoulder. I thought that would be the end of it, but nope. He opened his boxers and slid me down to be in them with him. Like a baby in a baby carrier, Rin used his boxers to cover me and hold me up.

His hands held my thighs but kept them low to not give him a wedgie. Storming off to catch up to Letum, the other guys rushed around us to argue.

“You just got to fuck her!”

“Let one of us carry her like that!”

When the Alpha growled back at them, they all knew to leave it at that. His possession of me had him hung up right now. Something wasn't right with his dragon, and I could sense it. My hand went up and over my shoulder to caress his cheek as he walked us back to the manor. In my adult-sized baby carrier, I just enjoyed the ride. It helped that Rin kept purring into my neck, but it turned me on even though we just finished. Something magical happened between my legs when the circle completed. I could never get enough of them. With my Alpha's dick stirring again, I only had one thought...

What I'd give to stroke his horns right now.

~

“I know you have questions. I’d rather get them over with. Hm?” Letum poured two cups of tea before sitting across from me. He only wanted me present for whatever news he had to share. The tea party arrangement on his balcony had been an odd request. Plus, it was in his room that we looked over the shadows that didn’t move behind his house.

His social skills lacked. If you asked a girl back to your room, it usually meant a booty call. Though, could I blame the man who had been lost to society for so long? He didn’t know the social norms. I had to take a breath and remember he was trying, and it helped humor me that the guys got so flustered when Letum did ask me to up his room.

It was pretty comical. I had to use my mind to calm them down. Like right now, I had them all listening in. I just asked them not to interject for me to focus easier. Lucky dicks were enjoying Rita’s cooking anyway. I could smell her food from up here. Letum only had biscuits between us to pair with his tea. I blamed the hangry side of me, but I blurted words to get this done faster.

“I think it would be easier for you to start at the beginning. Why is my grandmother involved? How did she and Lilith work you into this?” I took a sip from my China. He smirked and bowed his head a little.

“So intelligent for knowing nothing of this world.”

“Maybe that’s why I am. Knowing nothing makes me want to know everything.”

“Why do you want to know everything?” Letum leaned over to put his elbows on the table. His hands rubbed in front of his face.

“Because, I’m scared. Fear tends to run most of our lives,” I responded. Fear had always been that one component to drive a person to anything.

“What is there to fear?”

“Losing. I fear we’ll lose against Salvatore. I’m not sure why you’re asking me. As Death, I’m sure you know plenty about people’s fears.”

“So, I do...” Letum appeared like he had a secret to tell. “Do you know why so many fear me?”

“Because you can kill them? You can end their life at any time?”

“Because everyone craves death to some degree.”

I gulped, knowing all too well how hidden that craving for it could be. “Why are people designed that way?”

“I am the final finish line. Only peace follows my gift for most.”

“Gift? You call dying a gift?” I sat back to study him better.

“Of course, I do! How do you think we immortals feel, knowing we’ll never leave this plane of existence?” he roared.

I shrank lower from his outrage. His hands threaded through his thick hair as he tried to gain control. I could tell he wasn’t used to having discussions anymore. The man had been gone too long, and his temper snapped easier from it.

“Only those who are cursed with being eternal know what it means. Death is a wish all the stars refused us.”

Not wanting to stop him from feeling his pain, I stayed silent.

“We’ve tried to create our people. The ones who might be strong enough to handle our gifts. None of them could. Lilith and her Devils lucked out with how Pandora’s circle worked in their favor to be rid of their gifts. Still, none of them can pass on like they wished.”

“So, you want to die, but no one can take your power? Lilith and her harem did find people to take theirs, but still can’t die? Am I understanding correctly?” I quizzed his words.

“You are, young one. Now, their cycle just creates more immortals who

will feel our longing to die.”

“How old are you?”

“Eons, if I had to guess. After the first few thousand years, you lose track.”

Letum took his seat.

“Okay. What does all of that have to do with what Rita did?”

“Before your mother ran off with Leo, Rita had a vision. She saw the one who would change it all. Do you know what her vision showed?”

I shook my head even though I had a guess.

“You, Octavia Clarke. Your grandmother saw your birth, but she saw two different endings.”

“What were they?” my voice barely broke a whisper.

“The first had been the previous circle discovering you in childhood and killing you before you came into your powers.” Yeah, I could see that.

“And the second?”

“She saw the Eternal Executioner. That is what you will become known as with my help.”

“How? Why? And, what the fuck?” I shrieked. That title had my arms covered in goosebumps and not in a pleasurable way.

“In order to save you, she knew she had to make a deal with me. In order to secure your immortality, Lilith had to make a deal with me.” His wicked gleam had my mind reeling.

“No more hidden secrets. Spill the beans already, Letum.”

“Your generation feels so entitled,” he teased. I just gave him a stern look to quit yanking my chain. “Fine. Rita’s contract bound her gift to me. She would become my personal revelator. I let her work for Daemon Odium, but she returned with reports for me every night while seeing glimpses of you.

This, in exchange for me to shield you with my shadows. The former circle didn't know you were the next Pandora from me cloaking your essence."

"And Lilith's?"

"We knew that along this certain path, to this point, you were set to die in that car crash. We all distinguished your magical mixture made you unique, though. It bred you to be what my brother's and I needed."

I caught on. For Death to agree to save me, he made sure he could use me too.

"Your gifts, you all gave them to my spirit, branding my soul."

"Bingo. That was Lilith's only bargaining chip we would accept. With how your mind functions, we could put our power into you without you going mad."

"But why? Why me?"

"Same reason Lilith's circle used Pandora and her men. We want to leave this plane of existence permanently."

"But I thought you said they still can't die?" I whined a little from the ache in my head.

"Right. They couldn't, until now... The weapon Salvatore is building will work with all the raw magic he's using."

"But he can't complete it from Lou still having her scepter," I pointed out.

"That isn't the only missing piece. In order for anything of that magnitude to work, I also have to touch it, and the person wielding it."

His Cheshire grin grew as I caught on.

"Let me guess. You're willing to help me, but it comes with a price." There didn't seem to be a reason to form it as a question.

"Just remember, the Universe sits on the wrong side. They hate that you were created, and I helped you. They'll now help Sal finish his weapon with



their own magic if we don't make one first. They'll bypass my power to do it. Someone is really upset you disrupted the cosmos."

"And how do you plan to help me now?" I asked. I didn't want to touch the fact I had another enemy I couldn't see. One by one, his three brothers popped into the room. Now, I recognized them all from the hospital visit.

"Octavia, let me introduce you to my brothers. Barin, my brother of War." He gestured to the one with the buzzed, red hair.

"Kepi, my brother of Famine." The one with the silvery hair bowed to me.

"And Addis, my brother of Pestilence." The blond one I remembered first touching me.

Here I sat, across from four of the cruelest men in history. Ones set to destroy the earth one day...

"What do you want from me?" I didn't cower before them.

"Tell me, is the queen done playing with only one piece at a time?" Letum smiled. "Because I think it's time to use every piece you have, all at once."

"But that's not the rules of chess." My brows creased.

"Octavia, when playing this game with immortals, none of us have rules. If you want to win against Salvatore Thana, you'll need everything you've got to hit him all at once, and we can help you..."

There it was. My price to win.

If I wanted to save my lovers and family, I had to agree to whatever they wanted. Letum knew this too. He backed me into a corner and gave me only one option of escape. He really had been playing the long game. No doubt using Rita to corral it all in. If only Salvatore could see the other board we had been played on. Not playing, but played.

I folded my arms and made eye contact with Letum. Channeling Rin's Alpha-power, I let them feel I was a queen. Rin growled in my mind from

enjoying me using his power. Grinning from my authority, the brothers all found seats across from me at the table, on the balcony. They held no remorse for playing me so well on their own board.

Here I thought I had been a pawn on Salvatore's checker-print panel. Nope, that went to these assholes. The cruelest of mankind revealed I was the Horsemen's Queen piece, and they were gearing up to use me. And yet, I knew no matter what they asked of me, I'd give it for my family. Just like Rita and Lilith had for me, I would make sure none of them suffered.

“What do you want from me, if I accept your help?”

# Final Omen

Ashley Amy

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## Chapter 1

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**O**ctavia

No movement came from the four brothers after I asked my question. Nope. They just stared at me without blinking, enhancing their creepy factor and nailing it. They could beat a portrait in a holding still contest because absolutely nothing on their bodies moved. Were they even breathing?

“Ohhh-kay. Your eerie stares have been noted. Now, can you please answer my question. If I accept your help, what do you want me to give you?” Leaning back in my chair, I kicked my heels up on the table. Letum gave me a disgruntled look for being impolite. Hey, at least I got his expression to shift. Mr. Old-fashioned didn’t like shoes on his things.

“Let’s just say we need something only you can provide us,” Barin spoke up from his place beside Letum. Forged from bone, his armor showed his victories, and besides his buzzed red hair, War was how I pictured him to be.

“And what’s this *something*?” Tricky men were trying to pull the wool over my eyes.

“Nothing that will harm you in any way, but we cannot state what it is.” Kepi shrugged and then tipped forward to brace his elbows on the table. His silvery hair made him a little elf-like. Having a long face and narrow nose added to it, making him inhumanly handsome in a unique way.

*We can hear you, Princess.* Milo sounded resentful.

*I said he was handsome. Not that I wanted him. I have the seven of you to juggle.* Using my mind for words didn’t stop me from physically rolling my eyes. To be honest, the defiant act worked with both conversations.

*I’ll be sure to take your punishment out on you later. Maybe a good spanking will remind you who I am.* Milo’s words had all the other men groaning inside my head, and I knew they were picturing my ass being spanked with red handprints.

*Kitten, just find out what they mean by that.* Rin mentally sighed.

“Will I be chained to you like Rita?” I challenged.

“Not in the slightest.” Addis winked.

“Will it kill me?” I asked my next question. Hey, I had eighteen left to figure this out by the game’s standards.

“Quite the opposite. You will be helping to kill us.” Letum sipped his tea.

“The weapon? In payment for helping me create it, you want me to use it on you?” They all shared a look. Letum took another sip before answering me.

“Yes, but we’ll require something else from you in order to complete this task.”

“Why can’t you tell me what it is?” I put my feet back down and crossed my arms.

“Because you won’t agree.” Barin held no social skills while he blurted it

out.

I snorted. “You think I’ll agree after you said that?”

“I do.” Letum stared me down with his glacial glare. “You forget the position you are in. My brothers and I are safe in our lands away from Salvatore Thana. You and your circle are not. You, young one, need us.”

“But at what price?”

“Look, I cannot tell you what we’ll require, but I can promise a few things. You and your circle shall not be harmed. None of you will die or be injured. There will be no servitude in exchange for our services. This, and killing us is what we are asking of you.”

“My other family and friends?”

“All will be fine. No one will get hurt with what we need from you. We all give our word. You know how that binds us.” Letum reminded me about the favor Salvatore owed me now.

*No, Kitten. If they can’t tell you what it is, walk away.* Rin demanded.

All the guys were arguing from half of them thinking it would be fine. The others agreed with our first king. Me? I knew no reward came without risk.

“Deal,” I said. The sounds drowning my mind silenced when I made the final call, and they respected it. The four brothers turned to me in surprise. “If you can promise my family won’t be hurt, and we will not be your slaves, I’ll do it. This bargain only holds if you help me finish the weapon.”

When our hands clasped, I felt the same shock that I did with Daemon in the hospital. That made more sense because I had made a deal with a devil without knowing it then. Letum smirked with an evil glint in his eyes, and goosebumps flared on my arm in warning. Whatever I just promised him would probably piss me off in the days to come. I was sure Rin will give me hell for this too, but I was Hell’s queen after all.



My thoughts distracted me. Of course, that's when I felt two strong hands shove me into the room across from Letum's. I harrumphed from the surprise. Landing on all fours, I rolled onto my ass just as Rin walked into the room as he slammed the door. Already, I could see his gaze darkening with his dragon.

"What the hell, Sevrin?" I yelled while standing up.

"You're not doing it." His low growl rumbled between us.

"Doing what?" From the rush of this situation, I lost my thoughts.

"The deal. You are not agreeing to anything with the Horsemen until we know what it is. That's an order, Octavia." Oh. He was super mad if using my real name meant anything.

Squaring my shoulders, I glared at him.

"You do not get to push me around. I am not a puppet, and you are not my bully." There. I laid down my laws.

"Bully?" Oh crap. Now I've excited the wrong elements in the Alpha.

"I didn't let you push me around then, and I won't let you now." I crossed my arms.

He stalked toward me with his predator present. In a flash, I found myself shoved back and falling on the bed behind me. Did he... Oh no he didn't. Sevrin Thana just pushed me!

"Looks like I can push you around easy enough." Heaven help me, the bastard flexed his meaty bicep. Like I didn't know he was the size of a mountain.

I climbed off the bed and shoved at his chest. He didn't move a millimeter. "What the fuck is wrong with you? You can't be shoving women around for not listening to you!"

Before I could open my eyes from my blink, he closed in. Instantly, I found

my back pinned to the wall. His hand clamping my throat. "I'm not shoving women. I'm pissing off my mate for pissing me off," he growled out.

Dammit. Why did this also have to be so hot? Knowing my Alpha mate teetered between his human and animal side, I decided to tip the scales. His dragon loved me, but he also fought for dominance.

Removing his hand, I let my mouth move to his neck where I sank my teeth into the meaty flesh. This showed I would not submit right now, but something had my Wrath on edge lately. I knew one sure way to help sate the craving, one that would also pleasure me. He watched as I broke the skin with my blunt teeth. I knew this hurt, but the pain fueled something else for both of us.

Earlier today, he fucked me on the battlefield. Tonight, he'd fight me until we both got this out of our systems. Rin might not have been my bully anymore, but he yearned to hurt me in ways to please both of us. I needed this too. Just as I drew blood, I took my hand and slapped him. Right across the face, I let him know I was my own Alpha. His eyes filled with the blackness I knew so well because it was the darkness within our souls I'd always crave to combine.

Someone as dark as me, accepting me.

Rin yanked me by the hair to expose my neck. Using his sharpening canines, he sliced an extended cut. It followed from the base of my ear and curled over my jugular. I hissed. He didn't complete it quick because he wanted to savor watching me squirm from the pain.

"You sure you want to play with me, Kitten?" All the anger left him. We were back to his Alpha, wanting to claim his mate. His dragon tried to get me to submit.

"How many times do I have to tell you? No one has reached my limit of

pain.” I fused our lips and bit into his lower one.

Our hearts quickened and matched beat for beat just as his black scales ran down his arms. My fingers brushed over them to feel the rivets between each one. I loved his partially shifted form. I loved each of his forms, but this one let me know a truth about me. A piece of my heart belonged to a monster. The same monster that learned to love me.

Rin pressed me harder into the wall. I heard a cracking sound echo behind my head, and little white crumbles fell from the top of my head when I went to view the damage. My man was so worked up, he just broke through the sheetrock of this wall. Fuck, if it didn't turn me on more.

Thrusting him back, I shimmied out of my clothes that had blood leaking all over them. He loved the sight but didn't return the act. Nope, he wanted to remain in his clothes to appear superior. Ha! I enjoyed being naked. Mostly finding that affection when his scouring eyes were doing what they did right now. Feasting on me and making me feel desired. Though, he did unzip his girthy cock.

Once I finished, neither of us waited as we lashed together. First, we were on the bed with his dick slamming into me, but missionary with Rin really wasn't my thing. Yanking his hair and heaving myself, I forced us to roll over. Rin wanted to be pissed, but like a snake, I hypnotized him. Well, my bouncing breasts did that job.

My hands were back, gripping his thighs as I squatted over his pelvis. His dick spread me apart deliciously. With me leaning back, he could see his shaft stretching me to the max. That also held his sight as I kept riding my Alpha, but it didn't last long for him to snap out of my alluring, vaginal trap.

He growled and threw the two of us against another wall. Yes, we cracked this one too... with my ass-print. My legs locked around him. My fingers

moved up to use his horns as handles. He might be pinning me against a wall, but I'd show him I could work with anything. His claws scratched down my back, and I knew some of them were open wounds. Still, I loved it.

“Do you remember when I beat the shit out of Beau that first day?” Rin panted while we fucked each other.

“Yeah,” I tried to answer.

“Did you know it was about you? He caught me staring and started making jokes that you were already his,” he growled, clamping his nails into the flesh of my thighs.

“I thought you said you fell for me when I jumped you.” I gripped his horns harder.

“That’s when I fell for you, but I watched you before that. I wanted to fuck you the second I saw you,” he roared and made his thrusts harder.

I couldn't help it. His words. His movements... I was his. I cried out and came in the same moment, and my release set off my mate as he roared. Our mouths locked. Our teeth nipped at each other's lips from the intensity of our fuck. His dragon needed this. I needed this.

The ache of our delicious encounter was displayed on my throat, back, and bruised thighs. Some individuals didn't understand why people liked rough sex, but then you had people like me. I didn't understand how to live without the pain, and Rin offered it to me in a way that satisfied me. My release kept going. After a minute, I jerked back to figure out what was happening. It wasn't just me as Rin struggled to hold both of us up.

“Sevrin? What's happening?” I cried out from the pleasure becoming too much. When I lifted to pull us apart, I found we were stuck together. My panicked eyes met his, but I came face to face with his dragon eyes. Carrying me to the bed, he lied me down with a gentleness I never knew Rin to be

capable of. His dragon purred from his throat and nuzzled over me. If it hadn't been from the constant state of ecstasy, I'd be asking some questions. His head shook just as I found the horns receding with the dragon's presence as my man came back to me.

"Kitten?" Rin's voice was a little high from still coming inside me.

"What. The. Hell?" I wheezed, trying to sound harsh.

"Remember yesterday when I mentioned I'd knot in you when I wanted to breed you?"

"The fuck? You better not be mixing baby batter!" I screeched. Motherhood sat far off from my radar because I'd be a terrible mom.

"No, you aren't due for another hundred and thirty years, Kitten. I think you just worked my dragon up when you brought up pups awhile back. Then, you rechallenged him today, but he already mated you. Now, he's trying to impregnate you from accepting you."

Well, when he worded it like that, I laughed. It came out as a sob from still exploding between the legs. "Tell him I love him, but no more of this without warning. I'm not going to be able to use my legs for a week!" I groaned. We could finally separate. Rin just moved us under the sheets to keep me close. "Also, I already accepted Letum's deal,"

I flinched. Instead of Wrath, I found Rin sighing as he pulled me closer. "We'll deal with whatever it is when it happens." He nuzzled into my neck and licked the closing wound he gave me. "Right now, I want to sleep with my mate and forget about all of it for a night."

"Sounds perfect." I yawned. In the arms of my Alpha, I knew I would always be safe.

## Chapter 2



**O**ctavia

“Why is it hot?” Lou whined. “I mean, it’s sand under constant darkness, so it should not feel like a desert.”

I couldn’t help my grin as we fumbled through the remains of the sandcastle. While the men talked to the Horsemen, Lou pulled me aside. We were now on our own quest to find her scepter. Poor Gare got roped in too. Though, he snuck off when a secret shadow beckoned him. Lucky duck. Already an hour into our scavenger hunt, no such luck on our end.

“Can we take a break?” Oh, fuck. She even puckered her lower lip to persuade me. How could I say no to that? We could ask for more help later if we needed to.

“Fine. You want to go back to the manor?” I tilted my head in the opposite direction.

“No...” She had a little devious grin. “Will you let me bury you in the sand and give you a mermaid tail?”

Her peppiness held no limits.

“How long have you been dying to ask me that one?” I should’ve known her treasure hunt had ulterior motives.

“Um... Since we crashed onto your dad’s island?” She shrugged like she was all innocent and shit. “I couldn’t ask you when we had so much to deal with. Right now, majority of us are okay, and we have part of a plan to finish this nightmare. So, now seemed best.”

Heaven help me with this girl.

“Now, lay down and keep your legs together.”

Lou’s smile radiated more warmth than the sun in this singular moment. I couldn’t remember the last time I saw her this happy. Probably before I got kidnapped on my birthday. Thinking about that made me think of Rita, and how she liked to lurk in the background from what I could tell. Silent, but knowing. She saved my life. Now I knew we were family.

“Via, lay down!” Lou barked.

“Did you...” I couldn’t even say it. “Did you just order me like a damn dog?”

“*Squawk!* Bitch sit!” You had to be kidding me. Nope, Momo flew in and landed on Lou’s shoulder. She beamed with pride.

“I saw him coming. I couldn’t help myself. Lear trained him to order the owls around, but I mean, none of them listen to this sweet little thing,” she cooed at him. Daisy came running by with the other owls chasing her scaly backside. She chirped at me but didn’t stop. Momo joined the ranks to catch the dragonette.

Lou and I both chuckled. “Did you see her grinning? That little fireball ain’t fooling anybody with how much she likes her own little harem.”

My friend’s words stopped me.

“They can’t do the horizontal tango, right?” Yes, I just asked if I needed to worry about my female dragonette mating birds.

“Don’t look at me! I don’t know how they mate!”

“Owls can mate. They usually pick one female per season. Though, Horned Owls mate for life, and they are very possessive.” My weird knowledge of owls leaked that tidbit.

“Ah, like your Alpha? It would totally fit that he got the owl to be like his dragon.” Lou snorted, but her words rang true.

“Yeah, but how does a dragonette mate?”

“You might need to ask Rin that one.” I could tell it confused but intrigued her. It fascinated me too. I nodded while lying down for her to finish her silly game. I’d pictured this kind of thing before, but never tried it. I felt her working on covering my legs with the sand, and the heat of it actually felt good engulfing me.

Ever since moving to Daemon’s, I’d felt cold. Though, in the chilliest places, I’d felt the most at home. Take the forest, for instance. The portal to Hell made me feel cozy and welcome. Letum’s shadows blanketed me in their cool temperatures, but my father’s magic filled me with heat instead. The combination of the hot and cold felt incredible. As I rested my eyes and relaxed, the start of an idea formed.

A combination...

“I think I know where to start this war,” I whispered. Lou perked up to look at my face from between my feet.

“What?”

“Where to fight Salvatore.” I closed my eyes while it all came to me.

Well, not all, but the guys could fill in the gaps.

“How does something like that come to you? Like, I can carry out an



action, but coming up with an idea,” she whistled and shook her head.

“It came from War.” A voice drew us to see my father standing there, and Leo smiled down at me as Lou kept going.

“What came from War?” I asked.

“Keen-sight. It’s his gift to his generals to help strategize. I’m sure since your wreck, you’ve had plans that came to you?” he questioned.

I had always been good at retaliating, but he was right. When I got revenge on the guys, the ideas just came to me. “I thought I couldn’t use it without knowing about it?”

“Anything dealing with the brain will seep through, Daughter. Not even immortals are immune to brain damage.” He sat beside me and started helping Lou pile me with his soil. Seeing him like this melted my heart even more, and I could identify the enjoyment within his expression.

“What is this idea of yours, Daughter?” Was it bad that my heart pitter-pattered from feeling loved by my dad?

“What if we made a trap in a spot that we knew better than anyone else? After we make the weapon, we fight in the place the guys know best?”

“Where’s this spot?” Leo made scales in the sand on my shins while Lou started designing my shell bra. Basically, slopes of sand covered my tits in my tee.

“The forest behind Daemon’s house. The guys were forced to survive out there so much, they know it better than any place. Salvatore might know it too, but not as good as they do.”

“One problem.” Lou patted the sand to stick over my mounds. Not weird at all. “We still need my scepter, and the other raw magic items Sal has.”

“Have you not called her scepter to you, Daughter?” he asked, but my confused features told him. No, no, I did not. “Sometimes I forget you grew

up so human. Magic is not your first instinct.”

“Yeah, magic is hard for me to remember. Sometimes, I think this is all a dream. That maybe I’m in a coma from the car wreck.”

“Sorry, I’m real!” Lou stood up to shake out her clothes. She then snapped a picture of me as a mermaid with my dad by my side. Even though I looked ridiculous, it would be a keeper because it was my first photo with my dad. Lou flipped her phone around for me to see how ridiculous I truly looked, and she made my shell bra massive with my tail a little too small. We all laughed as my dad helped me out of my sandy grave. I needed this moment. I’ve been having a lot more of them lately, and they helped me see through the bad.

“Dad?” He looked down at me. I still wasn’t sure how I wound up so short with both my parents being tall. Maybe the corrupted magic stunted it. “Can you show me how to do whatever you just said?”

“Calling the scepter?” he asked.

“Yeah, that.” I smiled at him. A blush crept over my cheeks. Leo waved me over, and I gingerly went.

“Stand like I taught you.” He positioned me like he had when I set up the romantic night for Bell. “Perfect. Now, raise your hands above the sand. Do you feel the heat?”

I nodded with my palms facing the ground. The warmth rose to lick my hands, edging the tips in a tease. As more cocooned around the rest of my body, the more I felt for it. The magic nestled becoming homey and welcoming. I’d never tire of the sensation that overwhelmed me from finally finding my home.

“Let that feeling drive you. Use what is yours to find what you need.” His words entered my mind as I closed my eyes to focus. Tingles spread through

my body and shot down my arm. The heat embedded into my frame, and I let it in. All of it drowned out everything actually around me. Opening my eyes, I tried to feel for the scepter. The sand shifted and moved like a snake ran below it. The pressure of the magic built up, moving and searching until it found what it wanted.

The item needed was discovered, and the magic of the island pulled it to me like I was reeling it in on a fishing pole. Not that I've ever been fishing, but it seemed like it would be similar. When the mound of magic moved toward me, I fell on my ass. My shock turned to surprise from it actually being a snake that retrieved it. The baby Alimari held the scepter in his mouth and grinned at me.

Well then, I guess it was a snake moving below the surface. I looked down at the sand below my feet and shivered. How many snakes were underneath me right now?

“Well, I'll leave you girls to it while I reconstruct my castle.” Leo kissed my head. I winced from the reminder of how I got the island here, knowing how much work would be cut out for him.

Taking the scepter from the snake's mouth, I thanked it. The words felt foreign to say to this creature, but it dipped in reply. As I handed the metal stick to Lou, I shook my head. The snake nestled back underground, and I couldn't help but feel gross.

“You think this'll ever get easier?” I asked her. When she didn't reply, I turned to see her staring down at the wand laying over her open palms. Her absent look told me no one was home because her thoughts took her somewhere else. Letting her have her moment, I kept quiet.

“She handed this to me.” Lou had a single tear run down her face. “Right before she died, she gave this to me. She told me it was my turn to protect our

people, and that she knew I'd make her proud..."

My heart lurched in my chest as my throat closed. I wrapped my best friend in the tightest hug I could muster. I couldn't talk from having nothing to say.

"It's been in my bag this whole time because I couldn't bear to see it. All it does to me is remind me of losing her. Then I think about my asshole brother and how he ignored us both."

"I'm not defending your brother, but he had reasons, Lou." I wouldn't tell her those reasons from them needing to come from him instead.

"I don't know how you could love a monster that can't even love his sister." Her words stabbed me. Lou had no clue what her brother did to protect her. From not knowing, she drew up conclusions, ones that told her she couldn't be loved.

"Maybe because that monster and I are more alike than anyone else." I cupped her face for her to see me better. Basically, I forced her to look down at me. "Your brother loves you more than you will ever know. Him severing ties protected you."

She snorted and rolled her eyes. "From what? My asshole of a father?" It was meant as a joke, but I knew the second she understood. Something in my expression told her what she hadn't linked together. "Oh, God... OHMIGOD! He hurt him, didn't he? My dad hurt Lo like he did to you!" Her hands went up and knotted into her scalp.

"It isn't my story, Lou." I knew I dropped plenty of hints, but it still should be a story for her brother to tell.

"All this time... I thought he didn't love me."

"Acting the part made it easier for you not to want to be around him," I pointed out. Milo's actions could be seen a mile away, once I learned why he was the way he was.

“I have to go.” Lou didn’t wait for me as she took off back to the manor. I knew she went to find her twin, so I gave her a head start. I loved both the Gifre twins in different ways. Today, maybe they’d learn to love each other.

## Chapter 3



**M**ilo

“You think we can win this?” Luce asked. His voice quiet from his hidden fears. I couldn’t lie to him.

I sighed while bracing my forearm against the window. “I don’t know. They have a century and a half of mastering their cruelty. Just look at my father, and what he finds pleasure in.”

“But maybe that’s how we’ll win. No one but us knows their darkness as much as we do.” He got up and came to me. Lately, both of us grew restless. “I feel like we’re finally living for the first time, and it’s about to be stripped away.”

Cracking a little, his voice gave out. I turned towards my lover and let him see the determination in my eyes. My hands held his angelic face as my thumbs swiped his leaking tears. Holding him like this felt like holding my heart before me.

“It won’t be easy, but when have I ever lost? I worked my ass off from my curse and my Greed. Don’t think for one second I’m willing to lose our circle, our Princess... my you.” I kissed his full lips, chastely.

“God. How can you be so strong while everything falls apart?” He tried to laugh, but it came out dry.

“Because, it’s the only thing I know how to do. Our fathers might be older than us, but we have the Horsemen on our side. With their eons of experience and their personal armies, we can stand our ground against the kingdoms of Hell.”

Luce pressed his forehead to mine. He seemed mildly calmer than five minutes ago. “I love you, Lo.” My grip caught his chin as I tugged his face to lift. Capturing his lips, I let him feel my anxiety for what was to come—all of it. Every unforgiving piece of my fear bled into the passion I fed him. Once we broke apart, my hold kept his face near mine.

“I’ve loved you since before I knew I even could...” My words were valid with our history. This man sought the strength in me, but he remained my rock.

A knock rapped on my door. We turned to see my sister coming in with glassy eyes. She took in our closeness and squeaked. “I can come back if you’re busy.”

Luce looked between us because Lou never came to find me for anything. Usually, we kept our distance. Octavia really was changing the dynamic of our circle and families. I nodded for Luce to leave, and he kissed me before departing. My sister made a face, but nothing compared to walking in on her when she lost her virginity.

“Do you have a minute?” she asked while fidgeting.

“What do you need, Louise?” That’s when the unexplainable happened. My

sister ran to me and leeches around my middle. I even grunted from the force of her hold. Her body trembled as her sobs claimed her. Not knowing what to do, I rubbed along her spine in comfort.

“I’m so sorry for how I treated you when you shut me out.” Her quiet words had my body locking up. Somehow, Lou found out what I never wanted her to know. “Before you blame Via, she didn’t tell me. I saw something in her expression when I mentioned it.”

Even if Princess had spilled the secret, I could never hold it against her. If Lou and I were to move past what happened to me, I had to let her in.

“It’s okay, Louise.” I held her tighter to me.

“No. No, it’s not. I spent years resenting you, Lo. I think I even hated you...”

“Why?” Her words startled me. Had I really been that much of an asshole? The truth was there because I had been to keep her away. Guilt gnawed within my soul from finally seeing what I did to my twin.

“I thought you didn’t want me as a sister. That you wished I hadn’t been born too.” Just like that, my little sister broke me. We might’ve been twins, but I still came out first.

“Never in my life would I give you up as my sister. I just couldn’t let Father do to you what he did...” I couldn’t even finish the words.

“I’m going to kill him.” Her light voice transformed into something else. Something I never wanted to see on my sister. I spent my life keeping her and my mom away so she could be raised happily. I wouldn’t let her ruin that now with her thirst to avenge me.

“No. You are going to help protect Octavia, and I’m going to kill Minus Gifre, making sure my eyes are the last he sees.”

“You’re still doing it. You’re trying to protect me. Lo, when are you going



to let me do it for you? Maybe it's time to let someone else carry the burden. When it comes to killing Dad, we do it together." She nestled her nose into the button on my chest.

"Actually, I'll have to," a quiet voice came from the door. My twin and I looked toward my woman. Octavia had this wind-blown look with her hair in disarray. Flushed, her face showed she must've been working hard. Or maybe she ran here from wherever she was previously.

"You?" Lou asked.

Right. Princess's conversation with the Horsemen reminded me of what he said.

Death had to gift the wielder, and he chose her a long time ago. Decades, if I made my timeline correct according to Rita's visions. If Lilith was involved, it had to be before she got locked up.

"Yeah. Apparently, Letum gave me his gift to use the weapon. The weapon he has to help make." Princess shrugged and blushed. She would never be used to the attention her anomaly brought on.

"So, we can't kill my dad?" Lou connected the dots.

"No, but I'll need your help. I might have to be the one to kill them, but we still have to trap them." Her brilliant mind had been conjuring up something. I could see the twinkle of fire rising behind her heady gaze.

"There might be a fight," I reminded her. Princess smiled as Luce walked back in.

"If I can get the seven of you to love me, how hard can it be to destroy the ones who actually hate me?" She shrugged. The reminder of her pranks quirked my lips. Only this woman could take on the seven of us and come out with a harem.

Luce leaned over her shoulder to whisper in her ear. "Are you saying our

bullying came in handy?”

“Maybe.” She kissed his cheek with a giggle.

Lou sensed the shift of moods in the room. “Well, I’m going to go train with Fiona.”

“Train... Riiight.” Princess winked. My sister turned into a tomato. Holding in my gag, I gave my two lovers a death glare. There would be no talk of my sister not being innocent.

Before I could voice my opinion, Lou hugged me. “I love you, Lo. You’re not shutting me out again. You don’t have to be the strongest anymore.” She left me to think about her words. The strongest? I guess I tried to be. It’s how I wanted everyone to see me as. The corporate man who could take on the toughest clients. Yet, there would always be one thing that made me weak. One thing, my father took from me.

“Are you two busy?” I clenched my fists from a wave of anxiety hitting.

“No?” Our girl moved in to be closer to me.

“I-there’s something I need to do, but I think I’ll need both of you to do it.” Fear of my past swept in. Sweat already beaded along my hairline. My heart pummeled my ribs that contained it. The memories of those hated nights took over.

“Milo?” Octavia’s voice grasped me before I slipped away. I reached for her, and I held her to me as my eyes met Luce’s over her shoulder. Without words from doing this dance before, he understood.

There’s only one thing that gave me hesitation.

One spot my father stripped of future pleasure.

“Are you sure?” Luce asked as he moved around Princess to hug me from behind. I looked down to draw Princess’s attention up.

“I think we were missing a piece before, one we have now.” She still didn’t

understand our code, but her eyes glistened, knowing I meant her. She was our missing piece.

“Then take her, Lo. When it’s time, I’ll join.” Luce’s words resonated within me. His love and support were unlike any other. The two of us kissed before we began stripping our girl. This wasn’t our normal routine of whips and chains. No, this would be something more because we would be making love to our Pandora.

Softening under my touch, her muscles relaxed as my hands ran over her pebbled flesh. I licked the saltiness from her skin, tasting wherever she had been before this. The shell of her ear leaned into my mouth as I nibbled on the tougher skin. She hummed from loving it. My pants tightened in my crotch, loving it too.

“I have to warn you, I slept with Rin when I finished with the Horsemen...” Her breathy moan deepened under my feathery touch. I used a single finger slip up and down her dripping slit.

“Are you trying to make me jealous?” Luce and I both chuckled at my question. We had no qualms sharing our girl.

“No... I-I wanted to warn you- OH GOD!” She squealed when I kneeled. My face rubbed into her pelvis, my nose sniffing along her swollen clit. “Wait! He came inside of me!”

Now I really laughed with my other lover. “Princess, we suck each other’s cocks almost daily. Semen doesn’t turn us off.” Luce came behind her to watch me. I met his gaze over her shoulder with my tongue fucking her pussy. He licked his own lips in envy of my position. Not often did I do this, but when I did, he couldn’t get enough.

Princess bucked and humped against my mouth. Her legs opened wider, and her hands fisted into my slicked-back hair. I’d have to fix that later. With

a knowing purr, our girl climaxed all over my waiting tongue. Luce groaned as his hands rubbed along her sides. She probably came that fast from him relaxing her so much. Massages and women went hand in hand.

Getting up, I guided our girl back to our bed. She placed herself in the center as I kicked off my clothes and climbed between her legs. This time, I started differently. Instead of my dominant side resenting, I kissed her tenderly. The smoothness between us almost seemed recited. We worked so well together; just like I did with Luce. My dick slipped between her legs and slid right in from how ready she was, and her tightness milked me even without her orgasming now.

No one would ever know two cocks could get in here, and the memory had me wanting it again. Sheathed inside our girl, together.

“I’m ready, Luce. Use a condom for later...” I worked out the words, already feeling overwhelmed. Princess caught on by this point, knowing I was trying to overcome my greatest fear. I heard him readying the foil wrapper holding the protection. With every crinkle, my heart rate quickened. My anxiety tried to take over as I felt my lover’s hands holding my hips behind me. Sealed, it would take a crowbar to open my eyes. Flashes of terror lined my vision as I drowned in the memories of having my ass taken raw. No lube. No comfort.

Just pain.

“Milo?” My angel beckoned me back. I wasn’t sure how to relinquish myself from the prison of my mind. “Feel me. Focus on me.” She moved her hips slowly around my shaft. Using her hands, she massaged my arms to stimulate a natural response. “We love you, Milo. Focus on that. Touch me. You’re still in control.” Her sweet voice brought me back. I met her beautiful, grey eyes before I dropped my face against her chest.

Playing with my hair, she didn't stop moving or soothing me. The whole time I focused on her warmth, I hadn't noticed Luce prepping me. I locked up, and Princess felt it. Her nimble hands moved to my thighs as she raked her nails over my skin. It felt amazing. Finding her stare again, I had to keep eye contact with her to let Luce finish. She understood. Princess didn't care about my waning expressions. No, she cared about me and helping me.

"I've got you. *We've got you.*" Her quiet words set the moment for Luce to enter. I froze as Luce stroked in deeper. Octavia never stopped holding me through it all. Luce even added his own loving words and touches to comfort my mind of terrors. After the initial shock, the pleasure finally came, and I sagged in relief. My face rose from the valley of her breasts as we all began to work as one.

Between my two lovers, my two submissives, I felt home. Groaning from the surprise of how my heart felt, Princess cupped my cheek before pulling me in for a lingering kiss. We worked as one train for a while. Before Luce could end himself, I stopped our movements. I turned around to see his violet eyes.

"I want to feel you inside her, with me, now..." My words excited both of them. Just like before, we stretched and readied our girl. We kissed and touched until our fingers and lips ached. Luce joined me, but before he fully sheathed, we all exploded. Not from the kinks or fun, but from the love.

## Chapter 4



**O**ctavia

Holy fuck, I was sore again. This week showed me just how much work it would be to keep up with seven horny guys. I mean, not that I don't enjoy it, but I waddled like a duck in the afterglow. Only a few hours went by since my time with the duo but had been previously shared between four guys. Rin took me at the school and again late last night. Now, the duo finished enjoying me.

What's really terrible? I'd fuck another right now. Everything was screaming from the workout, but that pain felt so good when used again. We all slowly gathered around the dining room table as everyone trickled in. My eyes roamed over my favorite muscles, checking out my men—something within kicked into overdrive. I felt like I needed to keep fucking them until I died. Glutton, anyone?

“V? Are you okay?” Of course, my actual Glutton sat beside me. He smelled yummy too. Without my knowledge, I shifted in his direction to bury

my face in his neck. Sniffing him like a wildebeest, I didn't stop until I felt him chuckle. What the hell was wrong with me?

Moving back into my seat with a full-on blush, I couldn't look him in the eye. "Sorry, I'm not sure what's wrong with me today."

"From the looks of it, it's something I can definitely help with after this meeting." His hand rested on my bare thigh. Oh nice, my sleep shorts traveled up. Even through my padded bra, the rock points on my tits showed through. They were no longer nipples from how hard they were. Nope, just betraying bitches.

"What do you need help with?" Bell sat beside me on my other side. Seeing his strong body and beautiful, blue eyes, I got ready to jump him too.

"Is it hot in here?" I fanned my chest as a heat rash formed. My lady bits also heated. Not even clenching my thighs helped whatever spelled my nether region.

"No, Honey. What's going on? You look flushed. Are you not feeling well?" Leave it to my romantic partner to take care of me.

"I-uh-I'm...horny?" I tried to whisper. Only the two heard, but I could see their reactions. Both quickly stood, leading me into the coat closet down the hall. My back shifted to Bell's front as Beau flicked on the light. A single bulb swayed above our heads just enough to show what we were doing but lots of shadows were exposed.

"You want us to help you scratch your itch?" Beau wasn't really asking. He knew I wanted him...like yesterday.

"Please," I whined. Something had me leaking my wetness as my stomach tightened. Heat pooled into my lower belly, and I'd never needed a damn dick so much in my life. A vibrator wouldn't cut it either. Bell worked my

top off from behind as Beau slid my pants down. When he went to remove his glasses, I stopped him. “Leave them on,” I moaned.

Damn him and his Clark Kent side. My bra popped in the back, letting me know Bell unlatched it. I stood proudly between them as they kept their clothes on. Fuck, this was hot. Doing the dirty in a tiny closet, with a room full of people outside.

“We need to hurry. We have about ten minutes,” Beau calculated.

Bell took that as his cue and hooked me by the knees to fall over his elbows. This same position was what Aster had done to the librarian back at the school. That’s how he presented her dripping cunt to Rin. Looking down at my own, I saw my previous activity oozing out. Beau’s fingers played in the sticky mess.

“Would you look at that, Bell. Our girl has been needy for more than just us.” Beau licked his fingers, and it caused me to shiver in excitement.

And here I thought only Lear liked another man’s spunk.

“Who have you been fucking, Honey?” Bell whispered to me as Beau drove in. “Tell me how they used your tight, little pussy.”

I cried out, knowing Bell wanted details. He liked his porn, so my stories added to his excitement.

“I had Milo and Lucius together when Aster and Lear joined too. They watched as Milo worked his BDSM magic on me. He used clamps, butt plugs, a whip, and hot wax. The wax was my favorite. Lucius was inside my cunt when he dribbled it on me, and from the sting, I clenched around his cock, but he wasn’t allowed to move for him to feel it...”

“Oh fuck, I’m going to have to watch that myself,” Bell groaned. His dick still sat inside his pants. I felt his groin moving into my ass with how he positioned me. Yup, he was dry humping from the excitement because my



giant teddy bear wanted me. Bell's teeth nipped at my neck where the chain sat holding the necklace. The one he made me. As if I'd ever take it off.

Beau's growl made me focus on him next. "Just the four?"

I shook my head. "You were there when Rin took me at the school. He also enjoyed me after my meeting with Letum."

"He got you twice within a day?" Beau smirked. He wanted the same treatment.

"Milo and Lucius too. I just finished with them again, not too long ago. I need more, though. I-I don't feel relieved yet."

"How many orgasms have you had?" Beau asked while circling my clit with his thumb. The pressure angled just right to work me over. Not quite, but almost there. His sexpertise came in handy.

"I lost count... A lot."

"How does your pussy feel right now?" Beau worked himself into me. His position made it so we could all see his dick disappear into my swollen core. From here, I could see how red I was. We watched the motion of his shaft going in and out.

"Raw. It hurts, but it also feels too good to stop," I cried out. My orgasm ruptured—along my spine tingled again. My release set off Beau's, so we watched him roar as he shook the base of his dick to empty fully into my pussy. When he yanked out, I felt just how used the guys made me. Bell didn't waste time.

"Beau, take out my dick and line me up." He had no qualms asking his brother to touch his cock. I could hear the aching need in this voice.

"Just hurry up. I'm sure everybody is out there now." Beau's words had me remembering we were in a closet. Beau maneuvered Bell's massive dick to

my entrance. Then, he leaned back to watch. With Bell's shaft being long and thick, he could do this position effortlessly.

"Honey, you're going to be tighter from how much you've used your pussy. If I hurt you, let me know." See? The sweetest man alive. Beau was actually pretty sweet too, but they were different. Bell was a protective romantic. Beau was a close friend who tried to make my day better.

He worked in slowly for me to adjust. I hissed a bit but wouldn't let him pull out. Nope. I wanted him to stretch me. Maybe he could relieve this constant ache. Not wasting time, he fucked me as hard as possible. Between the time crunch and my recap, he desired to give me his release too, so I let him work me into another frenzy. Unsure if it was the magic behind their talent, I was just glad I had seven guys who could get me to orgasm. In my younger years, not many got me off when they tried. Not my boys. Nope. They pleased me to the point I thought I'd break.

Bell slammed me up and down on his dick as he pumped to match the tempo. Fuck, did it feel good. Beau could see me clawing to grip something, so he moved forward for me to use his shoulders as my anchor. Being so sensitive set me off again. Bell muttered curses, feeling me close up. I couldn't imagine how it felt on his size. If the others noticed my squeezes, it would be a noose around Bell's big cock. The thought didn't help as we ended together. We stayed in our odd position to catch our breath.

That's when a knock hit the door. "You bloody bastards are lucky I caught a whiff of your activities. I have Lear starting the meeting to keep people from finding you, ya wankers. And Love? Be ready for me later. All this Lust brewing off you is driving me mad."

Aster walked off as we laughed. The guys helped me dress, but there wasn't much I could do for the mess between my legs. Stepping out, we ran into Lou

and her lovers. They all looked a little hot and bothered too, and Lou even blushed. Ah, so it wasn't just us getting our freak on. Everyone but the two of us moved into the room. Lou gave me a shrug. "I think something is wrong with me and Fiona. We just fought over Zeke's dick like starved women. Usually, there's plenty of other things to do with each other. This time, we both wanted his manhood."

"Thank fuck! I thought it was just me being a slut." I sighed. Her words eased me a bit. "Maybe it's something about being here?"

"Has to be. We just made Zeke take a Viagra to fuck us both twice apiece." I looked over at her man. He did seem thoroughly exhausted.

"I've fucked ten times in the last twenty-four hours, and my crotch still thinks we need more. Something has me out of sorts."

"Must be the water?" Lou asked. Fuck if I knew.

But, when I saw Aster's wicked gleam, I knew I wanted him between my legs right now. Fuck me sideways... Figuratively, not literally... At least, not until after the meeting.

## Chapter 5



**S**evrin

Something had Kitten all worked up. I observed the Horsemen, watching her enter back into the room. Her freshly fucked and disheveled look held no secret. The Horsemen's smiles, though? They told me all I needed to know. I had an inkling of what they just did to everyone, but I couldn't prove it until I uncovered the truth.

All the women in this room seemed to have sipped the same Kool-Aid. Every single one of them scented of arousal and other men's spunk. My dragon roared from feeling possessive of our mate. He didn't like to think they messed with our girl like that. Though, he was also stuck on mating her, breeding a youngling into her womb. He wanted to protect her and shelter her, but none of which Kitten would allow. Damn dragon kept trying to take over and fight my logic. When dragons bred, they wanted to secure their mate until the deed was done, but mine didn't understand the complexity of our circle.

“So, who has ideas on how we get the raw magic items?” Lear kept leading the discussion to keep the focus off our girl.

“I do, actually,” she squeaked when she took her seat. My brothers helped her find it after their tryst wafted in the air. In jealousy, my dragon flashed forward from them touching her. Fighting for control, I had to remind him she wasn’t just ours...

“I have a favor to cash in on. I’ll use it to get the items. We just need to figure out who will go with me. I want to find Salvatore when he’s alone to do it.” Kitten held some valid points.

Everyone openly discussed the idea, but I couldn’t hear any of the noise from my dragon, demanding we take her back to our bed and nest until she conceives. *You’ll be waiting for a long time, buddy.*

“I figured Sevrin would be best from his Alpha powers. Maybe Beau for his marksman skills?” she added and blushed, nervous to input what she thought would be wise.

“No!” I ordered. Not from her, but my dragon. When she flinched, my beast finally understood he wasn’t helping right now. “Sorry, I meant my dragon isn’t stable right now. I don’t think it would be wise for me to join you with another male around.”

“What’s going on? Is he okay?” Kitten asked, and now everyone waited for an answer. Dammit.

“He wants to finish what he started,” I warned her where my next words would lead.

“Bloody hell. You fucked her last night too! That’s twice in one day!” Aster whined.

“Did you forget about yesterday afternoon?” Lo pointed out Aster had me too.

“No, but don’t play innocent. I know she joined you two after our other meeting.” Lear helped Aster.

“Can we not talk about this right now?” Kitten sank into her seat as the former circle members tried not to listen in. Leo struggled to not clench his fists. Moving my eyes, I saw a couple who were being discreet. Gare leaned against a wall next to his mate. I mean, Manny just let himself be in the wall as a human shadow.

Lou and Fiona took a seat on each side of Zeke, but soon, they fought over his lap. The poor bastard looked tired. Rightfully so, if his women were going through what I think they were.

“Let’s send Bell and Beau.” Aster winked at the two that just came out of the closet with her. “You’ll have the muscle and the marksman, yeah?”

“Well, you could get everyone off by making them come in their pants.” Kitten’s harsh words had us all looking at her. Her eyes? They bounced to each of our crotches to see who would be hard.

“Love, I promise you, I am not at fault for this episode you are in. Though, I do render my services if you need them to help sate it.” Aster winked. Kitten’s face went a little sad from lashing out at him. Until this episode—as Aster called it—wore off, her hormones were bound to be everywhere.

“I’m sorry, I don’t know why I’m so...”

“Bitchy?” Lear supplied. The glare she threw him could cut through steel. “I mean, loving and caring and thoughtful and charming and...”

“It’s okay. You’re right. I am being aggressive and defensive.” She sighed. As a change of topic, our Sloth took the cue.

“I think we need to recruit some help. We have the Horsemen, but it wouldn’t hurt to round up some others,” Bell added.

“I can get my clan,” Lou nodded.

“Bell, do you still have that in with the Hellhounds?” Beau asked.

“Come to think of it, yeah I do. Their Alpha owes me a few favors.” Bell had a thoughtful expression. He saved the shifter from my father’s clutches. Sal secretly used a human group for hunting the hounds.

More or less, my dad tricked the stupid humans into doing his dirty work. He gave them small hints, and they located Dalco’s pack. There were a few eccentric human groups standing against us, but the biggest thorn in our side had always been the Order of Amarties. A bunch of mostly wild females who thought they needed to cleanse the earth.

“You two go to gain that favor,” I agreed.

“We could look into Kara and her clan?” Luce brought up. Our girl instantly froze. “But, you are the only one welcome into their lands.” He pointed to me. Kitten tried to hide her growl of disapproval.

“We’ll be fine,” I tried to appease her.

“No.” She resigned. “Luce has a point. We’ll need anyone we can get.” Her eyes met mine with a fierce look of determination. It made me not want to fuck up whatever was about to come out of her mouth. “I trust you, Sevrin. Break it, and I’ll kill you with the weapon I’m making.” Yup. There’s my psychotic mate. I couldn’t help but enjoy her threat, knowing she would follow through with it too.

“You have my word. Strictly business,” I honored her with my promise. She bit the corner of her mouth, knowing I spoke the truth.

“Okay. Tomorrow, Beau and Bell will leave to make a treaty with the Hellhounds. Lou, Fiona, and Zeke will find her people. Sevrin will go to the Karma family. That leaves you guys. Who will go with Manny and me to find Salvatore? We might have to stake out for a bit.” Kitten planned accordingly.

“I have an in with the Sirens if a shadow can get me there faster.” Milo stepped forward. Our girl got a little possessive again, and he noticed. “I’ve made many business deals with them. They live in a secret cove off Venice and need supplies. I’ve handled that and their ships they need glass bottles for.”

“You sold them glass bottles?” Our girl asked. She had no idea about the Sirens that weren’t from books, or the mean and vicious creatures they were.

“When they sink pirate ships, they use this magical glass, only our company creates. The Zodiac witches are under blood contract to only work for us that enchant the spell. We sell it to them.” Milo took pride in his work, as he should. When it comes time for us, he’ll run the corporate world.

“Wow, there’s so much I don’t know. So many species I never thought about.” Our girl sat back to grasp the meaning of his words.

“Basically, if it’s found in mythology, it’s real. Though, quite different than they are portrayed in their stories.” Beau cleaned his glasses on his shirt. No doubt smudged from their tryst in the closet.

“Well, then. Milo and Lucius will recruit the Sirens. That leaves Aster and Lear to go with me.” Kitten shook her head from the unknown variables in our plan. Her apprehension never ceased.

“Oh, Daughter, tell them what you told me in my land,” Leo reminded her.

“Right. Well, now that we’re getting our armies rounded up, I have a plan for the place. We go back to Daemon’s mansion.”

“Why there?” Lear asked.

“Behind the house is the woods you guys know like the back of your hand. I say we use it. We set up our battle in the one place we know better than Salvatore does. With my dad’s help, we could move the sand there and use it



as a sand trap. We could also use some of my other ideas to cut off some of them.”

“It’s actually quite brilliant,” Milo agreed. “Some of the pranks you pulled on us hold merit as well. What did you have in mind?”

“I’ll get to that later. Right now, we still have a weapon to forge. Tonight, we rest. Tomorrow we ready our troops.” She stood from her spot. “Now, I need to go and swim for a bit to cool off.”

Using my nose, I scented why. Still aroused, she wanted to hide that thought from us. I could only laugh as my dragon tried to take over because he wanted to be the only one to fill her with seed. Aster and Lear quickly moved to catch up. We all knew they were next to get her. One of these days, we’d all enjoy her, together.

The idea aroused me as my dragon growled. But they call me the possessive one...

## Chapter 6

— • —

**A**ster

There she lay. The finest woman in all the lands.

Huh.

I couldn't decide if that line made me sound like a pirate or a knight in Camelot. If it were a pirate, I'd say 'there she be'. So, knight of old it was. Her skimpy, gold bikini sparkled under the lights Death had surrounding this pool. The shimmers made her tan skin stunning, and I wanted to be that damn floatation device she sprawled on.

Hmm... That gave me some naughty ideas.

"Fuck," Lear muttered beside me.

"She'd make any man arse over tit," I agreed.

"You and your British mouth." Lear shook his head. "As long as you never call Via's pussy a fanny, we'll be good."

"You think she'll let us enjoy her fanny?" I provoked the poor lad.

Instead of the groan I expected, Lear gave me a saucy leer before he dropped down to his knees. He pulled my trunks down with no warning, giving me no time to question his motives. Nope, the wanker shoved my dick in his mouth. I hadn't hardened fully, but the swirling of his tongue changed that.

"Leak your magic just enough that she'll look." Lear popped me out of his mouth. Doing as instructed, I let her sense my Lust. It tickled her just enough to harden her nipples. She looked over as Lear bobbed his head around my shaft, so I just waved with a sly grin. This would be fun tormenting her.

Of course, Via never let us men win that easily. Her fingers slipped into the side of her bottoms to play with herself. Damn this devil woman! Couldn't a man win once? I had one partner sucking me off while the other gave me a show, and the pleasure rippled through me.

Octavia moaned from enjoying our little show. I groaned from it all, unable to get my excitement to subside. After a few minutes, I had to force Lear off me. He got the memo I wouldn't last. We both stripped and dove into the water. The splash made our girl squeal.

When we came up, we found her laughing. That's just how I wanted her. This girl had to grow up too fast like the rest of us, so making her laugh took the wisdom out of her eyes. Yes, being wise would be a compliment, but when you're newly eighteen, you should be able to be a little carefree. That's what I'd always work toward for this girl.

Slicking back my hair, her finger reached out to play with one of the ringlets that didn't go. When my hair became damp, my curls were tighter. Dried, they were wavy instead. She seemed to like seeing them wet.

"You up for a round on your floaty, Love?" I asked. Lear couldn't help but roll his eyes with a smile.

“On my raft? That barely holds me?” She looked dubiously at me like I had grown two heads. No one said being pleased couldn’t be fun too.

“Hop off and let the master show you how it’s done, yeah.” My statement made her move, and I took the floatation device to the shallow end by the wall. The long lounge would be interesting to do this on. Hell, I wasn’t even sure how to execute this. Still, I could see the happiness and humor dancing across Octavia’s face. That made it all worth it.

“Get up on the side. We’ll do this with you straddling me.” I got up and rested my back with my hands placed behind my head. My dick stood proudly up for my girl to see. Yup, no shame in the equipment I had.

“Do you think I should take these off first?” Our girl leisurely untied the strings on her hips. Both Lear and I couldn’t escape her enchantment. You know, the spell called ‘hot girl stripping’ trance. No man could deny the thrill when a vixen used her body.

“Mate, push the raft to the side and hold it steady as she climbs onto me.” I looked to Lear. He had to snap out of seeing that bare snatch too as he did as I demanded. Octavia jumped and squealed a little when the floaty bounced, so I gripped her hips to steady her.

She shocked me by instantly impaling herself on to my cock like we didn’t have a spare minute to adjust. That’s when I saw her crazy eyes.

I mean, I knew my girl had them. Heck, we even did pranks together, but this look said she had been starved for dick.

Wild. Unadulterated. Primal.

Though, I knew she had plenty of action this morning. As fast as she could move, Love bounced up and down on me thoroughly. She gyrated hard enough to move the raft like each end were wings, and the middle bobbed up and down. I grew petrified for my life as the floaty bent up and down with

my ass in the center. Waves created instability, and Lear got taken out by a larger one. He came back up for air in a panic, clearly seeing the terror in my eyes as I tried to keep on top of the floatation device.

I was fucking Lust and couldn't focus on the pleasure from being literally scared shitless. Not that my cock could shrivel up from the muscle enjoying the hole that suctioned onto it. My hands gripped the sides of my safety device as we moved like a caterpillar to the deep end. Inching rather rapidly with the raft worming its way farther and farther away from safety.

"Lear!" I panicked. Not that Octavia noticed. Nope, she was entirely dedicated to her thrusts, driving herself to take me deeper.

"Hold on, man!" he called out.

I just tried to keep us upright as she kept fucking me, but this was not how I saw my fun times going. Knowing she barely knew how to swim, I didn't feel comfortable having her in the deep end. Trying to figure out a way to get us back to safety while not interrupting her was hard.

That's when a rope whacked me in the face. Lear held the other end on the steps of the shallow side. I sighed in relief while relinquishing my solid grip on one of the sides. Both of my hands moved up to hold the twine as Lear began to pull us.

Relaxing just a bit had been a mistake. I felt my balls draw up and knew there was no coming back. Hey, I'd like to see someone last as long as me while being ridden like the world might end. As a buckskin horse, she wanted to tame me at the rodeo. My legs jerked out from how hard the climax hit me, gargling noises fell from my lips, and I bucked from loving the sensation that came at the wrong time.

That's when my locked form failed us. We flipped off the raft halfway back. Under the water, Octavia didn't stop grinding on me until she felt my

dick soften. Her eyes opened wide as she shoved me away. She swam toward the shallow end like a shark on the hunt, and I had a guess who her next prey might be.

~

## **Lear**

A predator.

Via moved like she owned the water, and the hunger I just observed taking out Aster, now focused on me. Terrified, my dick still stood proud for the hot babe my girl was. She couldn't be ignored after her top had shifted and spilled her tits out. When she entered the shallow end, her fingers played in her folds to tease me. I looked out to the water for a moment of clarity.

Aster floated on his back like he didn't have the energy to swim back, or he was thanking a higher being for letting him live through that fuckfest. Two hands shoved my shoulders down from behind. I sat on the step to see my sidetracking let her sneak up on me. How did she move around me without me knowing?

Via didn't waste time. With me bending my head backwards to look at her, she seated her pussy over my mouth. Holy blueballs! Our girl had gotten some action. Her lips were bright red as creamy juices slopped out of her. I couldn't help but get into it instantly. Never in my life had I ever seen such a spent cunt that wanted more. My hand moved around her thighs to hold her to my mouth. I ate her out like my life depended on it.

Something with all the girls had been off. Every single one of them were too horny for their own good. But, if it gave me this delicious treat, I didn't care.

“It hurts so much,” she whined while grinding her swollen lips harder against my face. “It feels like I have to keep fucking to help it. I need fucked, Lear.”

In the water, my hips jerked at her words. Aster might’ve had the scare of his life, but I got my greatest fantasy. Still, I let my licks turn soft to help her tenderness.

“NO! FUCK ME!” The shark I called mine moved away and jumped over me to land over my dick.

Not wasting time, she took what she wanted from me. What she needed, what she desired because Via didn’t care about anything else right now. I met Aster’s stare as he pointed to the door. All the other guys watched our girl lose complete control over herself. I wasn’t even sure if our girl should be called human right now. She seemed more animalistic.

“RIN?” I questioned my Alpha. He knew what I asked without saying the words. With a simple nod, I knew what he knew too.

Fucking Horsemen.

Via gripped my shoulders to ride me harder. Tears streamed down her face from how much she had been used. After this, I’d rub her better and put some ointment on her bruised, lower lips. I couldn’t imagine what she and the other females were going through. Still, we’d help her as much as we could.

Once I knew I was close, I made my girl look at me. Her watery eyes weren’t her own from the haze taking over. With the tenderest kiss I could give, I let her know I was with her. Through the pain, the war to come, and everything after. We came together on the steps of the pool, and our circle members waited for the climax to end before helping her out.

The Lust was gone from her eyes as exhaustion replaced it. Knowing I needed a moment, I nodded to Bell. He took her in his arms where she fell

asleep, nuzzling his neck and humming her compliance. Gone was the predator that needed my dick.

They left, and I looked at Rin. “What are we going to do?”

“Besides kill the Horsemen?” I could see the fury within his eyes, but it wasn’t just from what they had done to Via. His dragon wanted to skin me too for touching her. I never envied the man born with a beast.

“You guys are acting like it’s a bad thing.” Milo shrugged. His eyes still focused on where our girl left. “She’s perfect the way she is. Even if they altered it, you know just as well as I do. Nothing will change how we feel about her.”

Damn Greed and his rightful words. We all knew what this would mean—it came at the worst timing of all.

“Who’s going to tell her?” Luce asked.

“No one. Not until we know for sure that’s what they did.” Rin ordered. It sounded like a wise plan. “Aster and Lear, just keep a close eye on her when you go.”



## Chapter 7



**B**ellamy

“Bellamy, my boy!” Dalco called over from his spot around their evening fire. His tribe held the most massive pack of Hellhounds found in the world. They all still fell under Rin’s ruling as Alpha supreme, but he sat right below the first-line Alphas. Plus, being on the outs with Sal made him go into hiding with his people.

Dalco stood to greet me with his black hair glinting under the sun. Even in this dim light, I could see the fiery colors mixed into the black. Beau and I hiked all day to get here at the right time to see the sun setting because I told him it would be worth the view. By Beau’s gaping jaw, my decision had been correct.

The Alpha Hellhound moved to us from the sliced tree bench he claimed. About three trees had been split apart and cleaned up to seat those who wanted to rest around the fire. Dalco’s teeth glowed against the orange hues

of the sky and his bonfire. The man carried himself to stand taller than me, but we shared the same stature in muscle.

We shook hands before patting each other's backs. "What can I do ya for?"

Dalco didn't get visitors often on his side of Canada. The mountains helped his people feel at peace with the wolves that were natural to the habitat, and the indigenous species knew to leave the hounds alone. Hellhounds were different from the conventional shifters. Instead of two, they had three skins. Their human form, their wolf form, and their wolf bodies of hellfire.

"Dalco. Always a pleasure to be welcome among your pack." I respected him and his people. I gestured to Beau. "This is my circle member, Beau Revell."

"Always, my boy! You know you've become one of us. Any brother of yours is welcome too. Please, come join us." He guided us to sit beside him, and two others cleared the spots for us, knowing we had things to discuss. "I'd like to think you came for a social call, but I can see the storm brewing in your gaze."

This man had always been perceptive. I think part of me learned a little from him last year. After I saved his life, I spent the summer up here with his clan. Part of me never wanted to return to the life I lived before Octavia.

"I wish I was here for a social call too." I smiled a little before letting it fall. "My circle has completed the links. Our Pandora is also our eighth because she's the daughter of Liliana Clarke and Leo Loki."

He whistled. "Now that's a scary mix. Legion and Lilith's magic would make for a deadly combination. She okay?"

I spent time telling Dalco our story. The trust between us cemented long ago, so our secrets would stay his. By the time I finished recanting the tale,

night set in. The fire glowed, but most of the people left a while ago. Even Beau drifted off just a bit and planned to let me handle the negotiation.

“It’s either us or them,” I finished with. “The Universe will help Sal, but the Horsemen are willing to help us.”

“But you aren’t just looking for help with them, ain’t ya, son?” Dalco patted my back and sighed. “It’s a lot to ask an old man and his pack that can die.”

Old man. I grinned at that statement. He didn’t look over twenty-five, and I knew from his stories that he was my dad’s age. Nodding to his last words, I knew how to win him over.

“It also affects your future. You know as well as I, how much Sal hates you,” I reminded him.

“Ain’t that the truth.” Dalco busted his gut to laugh. “He’s always hated that the hounds weren’t forced to listen. Hell, look where it landed me.”

He laughed, recalling the day I had to save him. Sal set up Dalco’s execution, but I got him out before the prior circle could do it. That’s why he owed me. I gave him these coordinates and some cars to get out of there with about thirty of his tribe. The Hellcats can’t shift like the hounds. Sal can control their animal side, but from Hellhounds having full intelligence, he couldn’t with them.

“I think you landed in a good spot,” I shrugged. We both took a minute to revel in the beauty nature offered. The pine trees always smelled like home to me.

“All because of you, Bellamy. If they had killed me, I hadn’t had an heir yet... My people would’ve been lost.”

“When can you breed?” Beau asked, waking up a bit more from my side. Certain creatures could mate whenever, but a lot of us only had a small

window.

Beau didn't know how much that question hurt Dalco. A grim smile filled the Alpha's expression. "Same as yours, son. You know most are tied to procreate when the circle does." Dalco's fist clenched his drink too tight. My memory jogged to the story of what happened the first time he did breed.

"Forgive his thoughtlessness, friend. It was insensitive to ask, but he doesn't know." I bowed my head.

"Know what?" Beau asked.

"Sal and Minus killed her before you were even a babe." Dalco fell a little quieter. "They killed my mate before she could give birth to my son."

Beau stilled. We both knew how cruel our fathers could be. Beau's need for corrective lenses were a testament to that.

"Don't worry, boy. Their treason doesn't sit on your shoulders." Even after eighteen years of losing his mate, Dalco revealed how empty it still made him. The hollow in his chest that no one could replace because it was reserved for mates.

To make it worse, Alia had been pregnant. The same time frame that our own mothers were due. They killed her when she neared the end of her last term. No loss could compare to losing a mate and unborn child.

Not even my mother.

"Sal killed my mom," I cleared my throat. Dalco paused his sip to listen better. "Implanted whatever toxic weapon he's making into her neck. He used her to get to Leo. Whatever they used, it locked Leo away in his mind and killed my mom."

"Bell..." There were no words to say. So, I continued.

"That moment showed us all how close he is to completing his weapon. We might have Death, but he has the Universe. I'm not ready to lose my mate,

Dal. I'm not ready to face this world with that kind of loneliness, and neither are my brothers."

"You won't, son. We're your family too." He patted my knee to draw my attention up. "Which means we stand together as a pack. When do you need us?"

A moment a relief filled my veins.

Our fathers ruled with force and fear, so that whole time, we had been making allies. Beau already called the Guardians he trained with to rally them as well. Not that we saw this coming, but we also knew our fathers' ways weren't right. Now that we were in a time of need, my kindness paid off.

"Thank you," I dipped my head in respect.

"Stay the night, son. We'll go over everything we need to in the morning." Dalco stood up to lead us to one of his spare cabins. He knew I was a little choked up from his compassion to talk any more than I had.

~

## **Lucius**

Welcome to actual Hell. If anyone thought our kingdoms were the worst, they clearly had never met a Siren. These hags killed men to mate and breed. The souls of the men they took were tied to them in servitude. Paying our token to the ferry-guide, we took our seats on the gondola. The soul steering us moaned a little from losing the ability to talk.

Lo knew how much I hated this place. Not that he really enjoyed it either, but he did business with the crabby women. Through the dark tunnel—that worked as the barrier between the human world and this cove—the cries from all those who were lost to the Sirens rang. I hated hearing their cruelty.

“Relax, Luce. There is nothing we can do about how their people survive. Plus, we need their help,” Lo hissed.

“I just hate this place,” I muttered. As we entered their cove, I remembered their bubble of darkness. Even though it remained daytime in Venice, they kept this place under constant moonlight. Porting, we got out and walked along the sandy beaches. The trail turned to stone as we traveled up the winding path.

We went straight to where we’d find their coven leader, Samantha who would be in the building in the center. In their grand library, they displayed all the ships they captured. Inside, we looked to the upper level where the ships were. All exhibited in their little bottles because their magic made the vessels shrink to fit. No one wanted to break them open because the boats would revert to actual size.

“Mr. Gifre!” A willowy woman opened the two doors to her office. Clearly, she wanted my partner as more than just a business associate. She popped a few buttons for her blue bra to show, and her skirt had been turned around for the back slit to sit over her thigh. This exposed her blue, lacy thigh-highs below.

Milo just smirked when he felt me tense. “I’ve never slept with her, Luce. Nor have I ever been interested. She does this every time we have a meeting. Though, she’s been waiting until I’m immortal to make a move, so I guess the cat’s out of the bag.”

He found this humorous. In a way, I guess I did too.

“Samantha.” He kissed her two cheeks and then guided us into her office. Lo always took charge. Aside from Princess, Milo’s people skills were extraordinary. He could talk a tyrannosaurus rex into becoming a vegan. As

head of Brimstone, he knew the ins and outs to the trade. Well, most of it had been his Greed for success driving him.

“Mr. Gifre?” Samantha purred. “Who is your friend?”

To this, Lo wouldn’t keep me a secret. He placed a warm kiss to my cheek with an affectionate smile. “This is my lover, Lucius Baysan. Part of my circle, now that we have our Pandora. That’s why I’m here, actually.”

We took our seats, and I watched the master work his magic. Somehow, he had her believing we’d lose without her aid. This ruffled her feathers enough to preen under his attention. Within five minutes, Samantha agreed to give us her elite Sirens as though it had been that easy.

When we boarded the gondola to leave, I still couldn’t wipe the disbelief from my face. Milo chuckled beside me. “I still got it.” He winked.

“How come you didn’t seduce Princess with your charm when you decided you wanted her?” I had been wondering this since we fell for her, but today reminded me.

“Because, just like with you, this isn’t the real me. Sure, I can close a deal and make people swoon, but that isn’t love. If I wanted Princess to love me, it had to be for the real me. Not my business persona, but the grumpy dick I am.”

“I wouldn’t call your dick grumpy,” I teased. “He gets pretty happy to see me.” Lo smiled, and my heart stopped. God, did he even know how breathtakingly beautiful he was?

We sat back together on our row in the gondola and enjoyed the tunnel of lost souls together. If you could get past the screams, it would make for a pretty romantic date. I nestled into the crook of his shoulder and let myself enjoy it for the moment I wanted it to be. The only thing better would be having our girl here too, but maybe we could bring her to Venice one day.

I grinned at the thought.



## Chapter 8



**S**evrin

Karma's a bitch. Well, not just her because the whole female population of past Karmas were too. Entitled, self-righteous skanks that always wanted into our inner circle. Now, I came with that very invitation. I groaned, already dreading knocking on the door in front of me. Still, I had to buck up and do it for our circle. If we could get all these allies, there was no way we could lose. Saving Kitten came before my pride. Asking a bunch of bitches for help will be the hardest thing I had to do. Guess the Universe was serving me a slice of humble pie.

I knocked. Only once.

As the highest Alpha, they'd know my entrance. It was my signature when I had to make house calls. Coming to Malibu sucked because the sandy beach and crashing waves behind me only brought back memories of Leo's island. Mostly sexual things came to mind. Being a warm-blooded male didn't help my case when it came to thoughts of Kitten. Damn sand.

The door opened, and Karman greeted me. She was Kara's mother. Her long red nails jerked the door open a little manically. The excitement of my visit had her on pins and needles.

"Sevrin!"

"Karman, might I have a word with your mother?" I tried to sound a little nice. Still, it came out bothered and annoyed. Not that Karman cared. She knew something important brought me here if I didn't summon them to me.

"Oh, of course!" She ushered me in.

Once I entered, I faced the original herself. Karma stood proudly in her lingerie and red hair. All of them were the same when it came to their high sex drives, and human men worshiped the redheaded Karma women because of their beauty. None of them compared to my Kitten, but I was biased in my opinion.

"Sevrin," Karma clipped, curtsying.

"Karma." I dipped my head to acknowledge her respect. "Kara has probably told you my Pandora was found."

"She did." Karma moved to her wet bar in the corner and poured two scotches.

"Our circle is complete now," I finished my thought.

Karma hummed and handed me one of the glasses. "Fantastic. I'm still not sure why this information needed to be hand-delivered by the future king." Wise woman.

"My father doesn't want a replacement for his earthly role or his kingdom in Hell. He's making a weapon to kill immortals. I have Death making us one too. I came to warn you of the coming war."

"I see. And this war isn't us sitting as Switzerland, is it? You want my family to choose a side." Karman and Kara joined us as we sat in the sitting

room. I took a sip of my drink and nodded.

“I’d like to make an alliance.”

“What will you give our clan?” Karma played the game well. Living for centuries did that to people.

“I have a few ideas, but I would like to ask you if there is something you’d want.”

“For Kara to be one of your mistresses.” Her answer, I expected. “I want her to carry your child when the cycle comes.”

Kara snorted. She knew already how possessive my Kitten got.

“Grandma, their circle isn’t like the others. They are actually faithful to their Pandora and can’t touch someone else.” Kara winked at me. “Is she faithful to you, or do I have a shot? Her brand of crazy still leaves me hot and bothered. Well, I mean, I’ve been hot and bothered the last few days. Like, I’ve needed a damn dick constantly. Went to a bar and had to get gangbanged by a vampire biker club.”

“Kara.” Her grandmother rolled her eyes. Then, she turned her attention back to me. “I’m not sure what you think you can offer me that will-”

“A spot in the inner circle.” My words perked her up. She sat taller to listen more. “Amora’s family will be ending with my father. You shall inherit their property in my land. The first kingdom will be open to the Karma clan.” Having a home in my territory was a huge compliment. Only three families outside of my circle did. It meant they had the backing of the first king.

“Well, then.” She placed her hand over her heart. “We’d be honored, my King.”

There it was. For the first time, my new title came into play. By doing what we were, I would be the king, so I stood. She met me in the middle of the

room for us to shake on the deal with our blood. The mages taught me this trick years ago in my training.

Slicing our palms, the Karma clan just entwined themselves into the inner circle. When I went to kiss her cheeks, I paused by her ear. As their protector, I needed to warn her.

“Do not let Kara fight in this war.” I pulled back, and she saw what I had been hiding from everyone. She caught on that it needed to stay discreet.

“Thank you for the warning, King Sevrin.” Her eyes darted to her youngest heir, knowing what I warned about from having an inkling herself. Pride glistened in her eyes. “Please contact us when it is time. We shall prepare.”

With that, we had another alliance under our belts. The numbers made this a little easier to handle.

~

## **Octavia**

“Fuck. Who knew recon work would be so boring?” Lear whined a little. Two days into this trip and Salvatore hadn’t been alone at all. Even when he slept, he had five women with him at night. The man had some more in-depth issues with his constant need for companionship. As though Aster could read my thoughts—or maybe he heard them—he gestured to me.

“Most Alpha dragons know the Pandora is their rightful mate. Even Rin’s granddad chose Pandora. He kept his concubines, but he did claim her. Sal would never mate your mother. His dragon is a little psychotic from it, Love.”

Ah. He tried keeping his bed warm to replace the hole in his soul he gave himself. Served him right for how he treated my mom. We watched on

through the little hole Manny made us. All the groups had a shadow-guide that Letum gave them to enter back into the Shadowlands, so I knew they'd have quick escapes if they needed it. So far, we were the last ones to handle our task.

“Wait, he’s on the move,” Lear whispered. We watched him get out of the bed to head over to a large picture on the wall. The picture wasn’t much, but that had to be why he chose it. To hide something of great value, mark it with something people would overlook.

Not that it seemed too poor. No, just average in his den of lavish things. A mountain range painted the canvas with a gold frame. Like I said, nothing to stare at too long, but it fit the design of the layout. Salvatore looked around his room to see the women fast asleep. When they came in, we closed our rift to keep us from bleaching our eyes.

As he worked the lock, we all sat on pins and needles. What did he hide in there? When it fell open, Lear side-eyed Aster. Whatever the two caught a glimpse of, they quickly nodded for Manny to zip up the portal. Silence saturated our ears when the rift sealed. Lear cleared his throat. “Holy fuck! You saw what he has too, right?” He asked Aster.

“What does he have?” I broke their bromance.

“King Neptune’s trident that Poseidon gave him before the Gods went away. A snakeskin from Medusa’s hair, but how he managed that one with them gone is beyond me.”

“The first dragon’s skull was in there too.” Lear looked astounded. Me? I was hearing Greek Gods and Goddesses were real.

“Back up. How can there be all those Gods with you guys being immortal? Wouldn’t that make Hades the ruler of Hell?” Fuck me sideways, this life got the best of me.

“The Gods were the original creations the Universe gave. It isn’t just the Greek ones that exist, Love. When they grew bored and tired of here, the Universe gave them a way out. Do you know the place mentioned for the Gods?”

“Mount Olympus?”

“Correct.” Lear kissed the side of my head. “On behalf of them, each of their ultimate power split. Hades went to his eight generals, and our magical lines are through them. You know them as the original devils and sins. Lou’s Banshee clan came from an Irish line of Gods because like I said, everything exists. Just not in the way the stories are told. Look at the tale of Pandora.”

“Wow. So, it took eight men to take on Hades’s power?”

“And it had to be sealed together with an anchor. That’s where Lilith’s role came in. That’s why the circle is so important to maintain. The power becomes unstable without a conduit. Remember all our curses? It’s all part of the imbalance and the wrongness the Universe didn’t like.” Aster added.

“Okay. So, we need everything in that vault to make our weapon?”

“Precisely, Love.”

“Then let’s do this. There’re too many items in there for one person to carry. Do you two want to fight or help me pack the goods?”

“Sis, we’ve always been fighters.” Lear had to use the nickname I hated with a passion. I groaned as they chuckled.

“Okay, I’ll call a few Shadowmen.” Nodding to Manny, I let him know I was ready. Using my mind, I called for the help of the shadows. Having that ability remained a perk that I never wanted to give up. It came under weird circumstances, but helpful ones.

All at once, the six of us jumped through. The bronze men followed my lead as Aster and Lear went to hold back Salvatore.

My hand reached for the trident, but Manny swatted me away. I glared at him.

“What was that for?”

“Your powers are too much for these items. You will set them off. My brothers and I will carry them.” Huffing, I turned around to help the guys as they had Salvatore pinned against the wall. When he opened his lips, I press my finger against them. How could such an ugly man create one of the men I loved so much?

“I’m cashing in my favor, Sally. You will not call for help or fight us because you want to gift us the raw magic items,” I whispered between us.

It took me stepping away to see he had not put on his pants. I remembered seeing his butt cheeks when he rolled out of bed, but now I got the view of the front side.

Holy micro-penis! The snort came out on its own. I couldn’t help it! Salvatore Thana, first king and Alpha, had the smallest dick I had ever seen.

“No wonder you have so many issues overcompensating.” I shook my head. “But dude, ruling the world won’t help your little-man-syndrome.”

Aster lost it beside me. Oh, how I loved that we could share our humor.

“How did Rin get such a nice penis if you are his dad?” I asked.

“Maternal grandpappy, Love. It comes from the mother’s side.” See? My perfect dose of humor to make this even better.

“Okay, but how did he knock up Rin’s mom? A turkey baster? There’s no way this can pop a cherry.” Fuck me, I just couldn’t help the jokes popping in. “Do you think it explodes like a little pimple? It gets fuller at the head and then finally bursts?”

Lear had a hard time keeping his hold from shaking. Aster couldn’t stop grinning like a fool.

“Sal?” a meowling voice screeched from the bed. My hackles raised, knowing it too well. Turning to see who I didn’t want to, sure enough she rested with the whores. Lexi was in the group of harem women, and her wig she wore had twisted to let everyone know she was still bald below.

“Well lick my nipples and call me Sally! So that’s how you stayed a virgin.” I put two and two together. Little dick here couldn’t break a hymen. “No wonder you were his top pick. You let him fuck you and get off without taking your innocence.”

“Too bad she couldn’t get off too. Unless the other females helped,” Lear jabbed. Oh damn! He’s got the jokes too.

Lexi shrieked. Before she could do anything, I found a dagger on the nightstand at my side. I took it and marched over to the biggest brat I knew. Without a care in the world, I shoved the blade into her heart. The crunching of her sternum told me I went deep enough. Her eyes went wide because she wasn’t immortal. There would never be regrets for ending this stupid bitch that tried to drown me. Killing her quickly was a courtesy she didn’t deserve.

The knife plunging into her chest cavity brought back my memories, and the pain I felt when she did the same thing to me at the ceremony. The pride she felt for ending the Pandora line. Now? My leering grin dominated over her.

“Your lungs are going to fill with blood soon. It hurts to breathe around the knife because it moves it. Your heart wants to pump, but the valves have nothing going to them... I know this exact feeling from when you did it to me.” A gargled cry fell from her lips when some blood spewed up. “The difference is, I’m immortal. You, Alexis Murdock, are nothing but a blip on my timeline. The bitch who thought she could be above everyone. Guess what?”



Her wide eyes were terrified, but I felt no remorse.

“I beat you.” My hand pulled the blade out as a flash of blood squirted with it because hearts were a little gory to gouge. Lexi fell back on Salvatore’s bed, and the whole thing got splatters of her blood on it. As I looked into her hollow gaze, something settled within my soul.

## Chapter 9



**O**ctavia

“I told you, I’m fine!” I shouted over my shoulder when someone entered. No doubt, Lear and Aster were back to check on me once again after I killed Lexi.

“With that tone, I’m not so sure.” My mother’s voice came in. I froze while laying out the magical items Letum needed.

“Oh, it’s just you,” I sighed in momentary relief.

“You make me sound so important.” Her dry words made me return them with a dry laugh.

“I’m sorry. I meant it as a compliment. Just you. No war. No violence. Just my mom.”

“I like the ring to that.” She moved in and saw the raw magic. “Wow, I remember when all of these went missing. Never would I have guessed Sal to be behind it all.”

Something passed over her expression when she mentioned her Alpha. She tried to mask it, but I saw what she didn't want me to.

“Did you ever love them?” It was an odd question, but it always ate at me.

“No, I knew my role. My mother told me what would come from her experience. I'm growing fond of a few, but back then, only Leo.”

“Can you tell me about it? I mean, I know the key points to your story, but not the middle. Fiona told me you sliced off Lucas's head.”

She giggled with delight at the memory. Ah, so having violent tendencies seemed to be genetic. “A terrible day to set me off. They were all too busy with their concubines to realize I needed one of them. If I wanted anything in that prison Sal made for me, I had to act out because Leo left for a business trip the day before. None of them wanted to keep me company in his absence. I cut off Minus's dick one time, severing it right in half for being... Well, him.”

“You cut his dick off?” I gasped with a blissful feeling.

“Sal might be the ringleader, but Minus was his pesterer. I found him sneaking in to tie me down on more than one occasion. After I dismembered his member, Leo knew he had to get me out. After the raping I suffered too many times, my mind never regrouped. Only in that little village did I get a glimpse of it. Well, until I had you.”

Her fingers found my hands that were fiddling. My heart ached in ways only my mother could restore. She made her apologies, and I accepted them, but bringing up this might undo all the work we'd accomplished. I didn't ask for details about my birth, believing my father didn't want me. Hell, my mom told me she didn't even know who he was. Now, that I looked back, my lying-indicator had gone off.

“Leo had just left when I found out I conceived. Of course, I knew you

were his. The magic of the circle remained, but our love created something not even the Gods could undo.” Her eyes lined with the love she had for me. I could feel it where our hands laced.

“How did you find out you were pregnant?”

“Rita. That wise, old bird knew already. She called me when I arrived back to the US. A nifty trick to see the future, and where I would be staying.”

“What did she tell you?” Now, my curiosity skyrocketed.

“That I conceived you with Leo. She said to run and stay hidden. That she took care of the hard things already.”

“That’s it?”

“Well, she told me I’d have a little lie-detector on my hands. One that would see through me if she ever asked the right questions.”

“That’s why you drank and did drugs. It made my readings weird with you from never knowing if you were seeing things.” I slumped.

“Yes, Daughter. I contacted Fiona immediately. She was the only person who knew about my pregnancy. Sal thought he severed our Guardian bond when he locked me away, but he didn’t know I always had secret contact with her.”

“How?”

“Your grandmother again. Rita knew what needed to be said. Told me to go down the hallway, and she’d be in the room at the end. Fiona waited for me when I opened the door. Not that our reuniting could be savored. I told her the news, and she got me the money I needed to stay low. I had to keep us in the poverty areas to help mask your power.”

“I figured that out, but it’s nice to know my conclusions were right. Too bad they found me anyway.” Memories of the things Minus did still stung. Had my mom not been getting high at the neighbors, I would’ve been safe.

I stopped that train of thought because I hated what I went through, detesting the flashbacks. But, without it all, Milo and I would never have linked our souls the way we did. Only he knew my true suffering because I knew his. We both went through it with the same man.

“I thought I had us hidden. I thought I had you safe. Rita promised me on your eighteenth birthday, everything would be okay.” My mom let her tears fall. “Now I know she meant when you would be kidnapped.”

My mom kept talking, but I didn’t hear any of it. I became who I am from all I went through. Every little hardship I faced made me grow up a lot faster than I should’ve. It made me see real suffering on the inside and the outside. I could relate to those who needed my victory to get to their own. That’s how this part of trauma worked. We had to step up and help the next victim, and it didn’t matter ethnicity or background.

Surviving anything brought those who also had, together. If I were like Lexi, I could never love my men the way I did. I would never cherish the moment Milo asked me to help him through his trauma with Luce being the Dominant.

“I hated you while loving you for so long that it blurred the big picture,” I thought out loud.

“What?”

“It’s okay, Mom. All of it. It’s okay. No, I’m okay.” A little laugh escaped my mouth. “I’m okay...”

“Via?” she asked.

“Don’t worry, Mom. You helped me see what I needed to. I think part of me recognized what I needed to understand, but you helped me see it all. I hate the nightmares, but I love my family.”

Three brisk knocks stopped my mom from questioning me more. Luce

poked his head in.

“Is it safe?” Lear inquired behind him.

“She hasn’t killed the peaceful one,” Milo hissed.

“We’d need Bell for that,” Aster snorted.

“Need me for what?” My Boo-Bear asked.

“Via killed Lexi. We’re-”

“I’M FINE!” I called out. The door opened the rest of the way to expose them all. My seven men who loved the little ball of chaos I’ve become.

“I told you her mother would be a good choice to send in first.” Aster puffed his chest.

“Killing Lexi did not ruin my humanity.” I rolled my eyes. “After all her attempts on my life, I wasn’t willing to let her walk away.”

They moved in, but before we could dive in more, a shrieking chirp hit us all. More horrific sounds followed, and I knew it meant Daisy wasn’t all right. Everyone ran outside into Purgatory’s pasture. The sight? Well, it wasn’t one anyone could really believe.

My dragonette had been pinned down by the owls as others assaulted her. Oh. My. God. They were gangbangng my dragon!

“Daisy!” I called after her to make it there in time. Two owls not holding her down or using her flew at me to scare me off. The guys jerked me back to keep me away from their claws and beaks. Ah, all the males looked a little territorial, and Momo flew around above them in a perfect circle.

“*Squawk!* Fuck my bitch! *Squawk!* Fuck my bitch!”

After he spoke, we watched him dive down to take over the mating position. Daisy tried clawing out of it, but it was too late. They each took a turn on her back. At least it wasn’t an interminable fucking. Nope, owls were two-pump-chumps from the look of it. Still, six owls and one parrot just

violated my dragonette. The two holding her down, kept her muzzle to the ground to keep her flames off them. They claimed her as theirs, and I could tell instantly what was going on.

The seven birds just mated my mini-dragon.

## Chapter 10



**O**ctavia

Soothing a mini dragon was something I never wanted to do again. For the last few days, Daisy slept around my head, and when she woke up from the slightest sound, she pounced on my face. Talk about PTSD. Daisy remained curled around my neck during the day. She hissed at the guys and their familiars if any of them came near us.

My dragonette turned us into the She-man Man Hater's Club. Sighing, she wouldn't let me set her down in Letum's office as we waited. Letum just got back from Addis's lands, so he was supposed to meet me to put together this weapon.

"You ready?" Letum walked in like the King of Death he was. Well, talk about thoughts becoming real.

"I think so. Lou is bringing in her wand. Once we have that, we'll be good to go!" I clapped. Not sure why I did it, but my anxiety stemmed. Clapping gave me a momentary relief with an outlet of movement.



“We can get started on the other things.” He moved to the table without any side conversation. I’ve come to realize that’s how he worked.

A straight shooter ruled over death. It made morbid sense if I thought about it too long. Letum didn’t even wait to explain things, and he just took the first item, shaving some of it into the bowl he had before him. Every time he finished with one of the powerful holders, he called a Shadowman. Discreetly, he talked to them and sent them away with the item we needed.

“Um, Letum? What are you doing with the raw magic?” Breaking his silent concentration, he jumped a little bit.

“I am returning them to their proper places to restore the balance Salvatore disrupted. The Merfolk will have their trident back and so on. We have what we need. It is time to right one of his wrongs.” His words were ones I could get behind.

Being an imbalanced magical being myself, I figured we could help get the Universe mildly happy this way. Well, I hoped it would please the most prominent entity enough not to help destroy me.

“I’m here!” Lou sang with her entrance. Letum didn’t turn around to greet her. Instead, his hand came behind him and waited for her to hand over the scepter. She gave me a weird look, so I just shrugged. The man hadn’t been a man of society for a long time, so part of me felt like I needed to help him find his place. Maybe after this, we could open his school again. That seemed to be the only thing he loved from his former life.

But then I remembered he wanted to die. Was there anything that could sway the man born for death to keep living? But I knew that answer when I saw the emptiness in his gaze—the longing to end his solitude. People feared him, but I think he feared people. He didn’t want to be around them because of how they treated him.

Death. We all craved it to some degree. Because of that, we feared it even more. My mind understood how he must've been treated. I could see how this plagued the man who spent centuries alone or with his estranged brothers. Maybe leaving this existence would be best for him, but something pulled to tell me no. He had a higher purpose than dying. Hopefully, my gut feeling wouldn't lead us all into the final apocalypse.

"You know how you told me that whatever you needed from me wouldn't hurt my family or circle?" I asked. My mind now siphoned the knowledge, and the clues he left me with.

"Of course, I gave my word." Letum kept his focus on Lou's scepter. He was shaving a little piece off one of the gems decorating it.

"Does it have anything to do with the end of the world? I mean, we can't die as immortals." Holy shit! Did I just sign off to live on this planet alone?

"I see the wheels turning in that head of yours, young one." He chuckled. Well, at least he looked at me for two seconds. Lou caught onto what I had. Was it too late to undo what I had done?

"Oh, shit," she cursed. We both sat on pins and needles, waiting for him to say something else.

"I do not know the outcome of this war. I just took the opportunity to place my pieces to align on your board." Letum handed back Lou's artifact.

"Rita didn't tell you the end result? I thought she said I'd become the Eternal Executioner?"

"But you can hold that title without humans running around." Lou pulled her bottom lip into her mouth.

Crap. She was right.

"Rita did not share with me the end of this war, Octavia. She just knew you'd need me to destroy Salvatore. As a keeper of the future, she cannot

overshare what she sees. We have to play it out on our own.”

“That didn’t answer me. Did I sign up to bring the apocalypse?” I screamed at him.

“In a sense, yes. Not the one you are thinking of. Though, that might come about as well. With this much magic, many things will come.” Fuck this Horseman and his riddling words.

“Just finish the damn weapon.” My teeth ground together. Lou and I shared a conversation with our eyes. We both knew we’d do anything to save as many people as possible, even if it meant our end.

“I am going to produce a flame. Hold the blade over the smoke for it to absorb the magic.” Letum moved to the fireplace he had in his study. Lighting the wood, he stoked the fire to get it hot. He took the pot over to hook it right above the heat. Words chanted from his mouth as he whispered his demonic language over the boiling pot. Soon, smoke expanded from the brim, so Letum beckoned me over with the blade. He helped me angle it for all the metal to be infused with the magic. The sword glowed in vibrant hues, telling us it was working. My handle got hot, but I knew I couldn’t stop holding it now.

“Keep it steady. I am going to finish the binding on this with my own magic.” Letum moved to stand closer to the fireplace. With a small dagger, he sliced his hand deep enough to have a good trickle of blood. From the hilt to the tip, he drenched the thing in his crimson life force. Once the heat burned the blood into the new metal, he had me turn it to the other side. Repeating the task, he pointed to the needle and thread for Lou to bring over. He doctored himself while also keeping an eye on the sword.

The weapon made me feel like a knight from Camelot, but it was too big for me.

“The magic set in. Are there any other requests for the blade I’ve secured for you?” Letum spoke, but Lou and I just gawked at the reddish-black metal.

“Can we make it a little shorter? I’m not tall enough for something this size.” The thing sat from the floor to the top of my hipbone in length. My guys could totally wield this thing but not me.

“I wished you told me this request before I handled all this metal. What am I going to do with the extra pieces?”

The idea came to me, and I grinned with pleasure, knowing this would work out even better than before. “I know just what to do.”

~

Cold. Freezing. So glacial, my nipples were about to get frostbite through my shirt. Welcome back to the human realm where winter was still a season. Snow covered everywhere, and I couldn’t help the shivers taking over. Coming back to New York made me feel like a whole new person aside from the temperature being arctic. This time, I wasn’t the lonely girl lost in the world. I was an original sin trying to save the world.

“What do you mean I’m not fighting!” Kara yelled. It appeared the Karma family arrived safely. I watched her slam the door before their driver could handle it. The only reason I waited out here was for Rin and me to go to the store. I needed supplies and ammo for my ‘craft’ projects.

Kara saw me. Her anger switched to desire at a single glance. “Octavia. We meet again.”

“Kara,” I tried to bite my tongue to keep from saying anything else. I wanted to be mad about her sleeping with my guys, but by her new reaction? It wasn’t them I had to worry about anymore. Nope, I needed to worry about

myself. Her hand started caressing mine like a long, lost lover. Her smile turned from friendly to seductive. Shit.

“I’ve never met a woman as bold as you.” She licked the shell of my ear after invading my personal bubble.

The front door opened. Kara jumped away, but not before getting a handful of my ass. She slinked in past Rin as he watched the show. When she disappeared, he couldn’t help but snort.

“I can wait if you need...”

“Fuck off, Sevrin.” When he got beside me, I punched his arm. He grabbed my fist before it connected and gave me a deep kiss, holding it between us. His merge left me breathless and thoughtless.

“You ready to go to the store?” Rin clicked his key fob to unlock his sports car. I bet he missed the rushing speed of his baby. We both shared a heated look over the roof of his car from our tongues wrestling moments ago. I leaned my elbows up on top and folded my arms. So much really had changed since everything went down on my birthday.

“Do you think this is going to work?” My hesitation came out in the question. We were using my idea. What if I was the reason the world came to an end? Could I live with all those deaths on my conscience?

“Kitten,” Rin growled. I looked deep within his dark eyes. His dragon danced right behind them to protect me. “Focus, baby.”

Oh, shit. Hearing this giant call me baby just made my ovaries somersault.

“You’ve got everything strategically ready. We’ll start setting up when we get back with supplies. Your plan is solid, or I would not let it happen.”

“I’m just scared. Letum beat around the bush about it being the apocalypse. What if I end the world?”

“Then the world changes. We know what kind of problems will arise from

the magic that will be used. All we can do is save what we can, Kitten. We strive to help the humans, but casualties will come. I think death will feel better than the enslavement my father wants to plague them with.”

“Promise me something?” I felt the fierceness of his undivided attention. “Promise when we lead, we’ll do it right. No more Universe dictating the sins. No more cruelty to those who don’t deserve it. If we win, I want to make this place better.”

“You have my word, Kitten. We’ll rewrite it all.” I did have his word. I felt it in the marrow of my bones. The first king had my back, so we had to fight to bring that change.

We both slipped into the car at the same time. Instantly, we started gagging from the disgusting smell. I rolled out from the car after the fumes consumed me. Choking on the clean air did nothing from the rotten smell that fermented in his vehicle.

“What the fuck!” Rin tried to breathe. I could see him lying on the ground on the other side from underneath the car. Aster ran out of the house with Lou. Both looked like they had a fire to put out somewhere.

“Via! Don’t forget about the shrimp!” my bestie shouted.

“A little late!” I coughed out. As they neared, they stopped fifteen feet away. Yup, the smell caught them already. The shrimp I secretly hid in his vents just bit me in the ass.

“What shrimp?” Rin now stood over me. Shit. I guess it’s too late to undo what I did. Time to confess my sin.

## Chapter 11



**O**ctavia

Construction in the woods had everyone a little antsy from how long it took to set up. Not to mention, we came back to New York after the snow arrived. My dad and I took our assigned space and got to work. Manny held open the portal to the Shadowlands as we worked Purgatory into this side for the sands to stream around us. Thank heavens Purgatory's sand stayed hot. It bit off the chill I'd had since being back in this climate. California, and most of the other places I lived, didn't have snow.

I worked on pulling the sand through as Leo guided it. He knew the design I wanted from us discussing it last night. My mom kept herself out of the swirling sands as she watched on the sidelines. Quite the family time, but a moment I knew I'd treasure. The magic remained a little hard for me to control, but my dad promised me he would handle this part of it. Ever since I called Lou's scepter to me, this idea formed. The Alimari would come in handy as they wormed below the ground, being free from their land for a

short time. A free for all for the snakes to have some fun while we took on the previous circle. Plus, we had our army of all the other demons and supernaturals that hated their ruling. Convincing some didn't take more than letting them know we'd end their reign.

"Focus, Daughter," Leo called out. Bringing myself back, I let the magic flow through me as my body heated with it.

Lou and Gare stayed back at the manor to find places for all the armies coming in. Milo helped them too, and he bought out some local hotels to put them all in that wouldn't fit in the mansions. Instead of staying at Daemon's place, the guys and I were bunking at their secret clubhouse. Yes, the one I bombed with fake potatoes and forks. A laugh bubbled in my throat from doing more pranks now. I couldn't help myself as Aster and I sat down to draw up some plans.

There would be plenty of fist fighting, but I made sure we did this with my signature. My little flare on all of this. There were no more separate chess boards. All our games came to this epic conclusion, and I just hoped we played this right. With the Horsemen and my circle, I knew my pieces were the best. As the Queen piece, I'd move the most. Part of me knew it would come to this. Before everything happened, I felt the change coming. I knew I needed to be strong enough. Hell, I wasn't strong enough half the time, but I kept trying. That's what mattered. You could have bad days or great days but keep moving forward.

I also really needed to go back to those group meetings to see how the girls were. Maybe Aster would go with me to check after all this. After this...if there was something after. Around my neck, my fingers clenched the wooden bear Bell made me because worried pitted in my stomach. I couldn't lose any of my guys. I finished with my dad and stood back to see the sand we brought



through. He worked some extra magic to make a little hut for him and my mom. Knowing they wanted alone time before tomorrow, I wanted the same with my own men.

“You guys good?” I asked my mom and dad. Manny already popped himself back into the Shadowlands. He could move quicker that way, back to Gare. My parents came to me after I asked. Their whispers of encouragement settled me a little more. We were finally comfortable to be ourselves around each other.

“Never could I have dreamed of a better daughter.” Leo left me with that. We embraced one another before they excused themselves to meet Daemon and Lucas. I walked a little aimlessly back to the mansion. Daisy chirped at my feet to let me know she took on her role as my guide. When some of the owls and Momo tried to follow, she hissed. Yeah, she still hadn’t forgiven their little gangbang. With a swish and flick of her tail, she strutted herself in front of me—a little more attitude than I wanted to see on her.

“*Squawk!* My bitch!” Momo still chanted after her. His phrasing had me pausing to enjoy that someone else took on that nickname. Even if it was my dragonette suffering at the parrot’s tongue. Sorry, Daisy, sacrificing one for my sanity. Not even for the many. Nope, just me.

“Kitten,” Rin purred behind me. His meaty hands came around my middle to draw me into his chest. “You’ve been working really hard. I think it’s time you take a break.”

Without warning, Rin lifted me into his arms, and my hands responded by looping around his neck. He moved us toward Daemon’s house as my parents waved us off. They went into the mini-sandcastle Leo made for their night. Their two other lovers passed us on our path back.

I’m not quite sure how I felt about knowing what erotic things my parents

were about to do. I've seen my mother having sex with grisly men without caring. Something about knowing it was my parents screwing around made me queasy.

Oh well, they needed it before tomorrow. This was their last night if anything went wrong.

Our night before battle. One that would destroy the history books or the world. The idea of an apocalypse happening hadn't left my mind. The Horsemen were hiding something from me...something that I willingly agreed to for their help.

"I think you need a night off forgetting about this war, Kitten. You need to relax." My Alpha nuzzled my neck.

"Oh? That's rich coming from you. We both know neither of us can go a full minute without calculating little things in our plan."

"I think I know a way to keep you preoccupied." When he spoke, I realized we were not heading toward the house.

"Where are we going?"

"We decided you've been working too hard the last week setting this up, and we've been busy securing allies. It just seemed like the right time to step back and be us for a bit."

"We?" My lip quirked in the corner, already knowing who he referred to.

"Your men await, milady," he teased as we entered the grove where the waterfall rested. This place became my sanctuary the night Beau used me. It was where I found all the familiars for the first time.

Zeus, Rin's Horned Owl. Hedwig, Lucius's Snowy Owl. Momo, Lear's Parrot. Romeo, Aster's Barn Owl. Einstein, Milo's Screech Owl. Hunter, Beau's Elf Owl. Sid, Bell's Boreal Owl.

So much had changed since then. That night, I saw a baby Hellcat without

knowing it was one, making my bad feeling back then have more sense now. Before me, the guys took my breath away. Never in one hundred years would anyone believe my bullies from then were now the people I held most dear.

~

## **Beau**

The things you do for love...

Somehow, I found myself being the man on the trapeze in this circle. Swinging from tree to tree, I tried to hurry with the thick band of lights I was stringing up. People should note that the bark froze earlier in the season. Gloves were too slippery, so I embraced the cold branches. Yup, a modern-day Tarzan to please my girl.

“Beau, you’re going to break the wires if you keep swinging with them,” Bell shouted up at me, but the rope of lights stayed warm, though.

After our little adventure into the Canadian Rockies, I held a lot more respect for our Sloth. The man’s mother did a fine job making him sympathetic to others. It worked out in our favor, and it also bloomed something between us, but not a bond like Lo and Luce. No, more that he became my favorite brother. This week had us building and securing our relationship even more. Tomorrow, he’d have my back, and I would have his.

We paired off for the fight. Well, except Rin because he would lead the sky attack with his dragon. Aster and Lear had a section to handle together while Lo and Luce would never choose a different fighting companion. That left the big man with me, and I rather liked knowing the caring one would be with me.

“Fuck off, Argos. You just keep unfolding your damn waterproof blanket,” I hollered back. He laughed while laying the picnic blanket to sit perfectly straight on top of the snow.

Our asses were going to ruin it the second we sat, so I wasn't sure why he wanted it to be so perfect. I grumbled my thoughts without realizing they came out.

Bell just smiled. “When she took my virginity, she made sure everything was perfect. The lighting, music... the water being warm. I want to make sure I do the same in return. No, she won't really care that it isn't perfect, but she will love that we did this for her.”

“Yeah, but she used Leo's magic to conjure up your romantic dip.” Aster winked from behind us. “Bell, why am I doing peanut butter and jelly sandwiches? Rita would've made something. You know, something warm, mate.”

Bell had this peaceful expression that told me the cheap sandwich meant something. I honed in on that look. “Care to share the secret?”

By this point, I was done stringing the lights. Looking over, I found Rin had finished with the twelve-man tent. Absent now, I knew he went to get our girl. Lear's shadow moved inside the tent from the light of his flashlight. He was on bed-setup-duty for our night out here.

“When we finished having sex, the *Peanut Butter Jelly Time* song came on. I'm doing it to see if she'll catch it.” Bell seemed slightly amused by his joke. I liked it too.

“Hey! I'm the funny one!” Aster shouted our way.

“Your last joke nearly got you drowned!” I yelled back. Everyone found that one hilarious.

“Yeah, but can you think of a better way to go?” Damn the Brit. He had a

point. Before any of us could say anything else, Rin came back into our area with our girl. It looked like we finished just in time. Her face said it all. We outdid ourselves, and she loved the over-the-top gesture of our love.

## Chapter 12



**O**ctavia

Aster towered over a folding table, spreading jam on a slice of bread. Next to him, there sat a plate with at least twenty sandwiches on it. In the middle of winter, they made a picnic for me. My eyes traveled over to Bell who was setting up the other food on the blanket. His eyes twinkled with that little joke between us when the song ruined our first time.

Damn him for being so perfect. Actually, damn them all. My heart fluttered from their sweetness. The men cruelest to me were now the sweetest. All of them won me over in their own ways and at their own pace. Hell, Rin just stormed off when he found out his car was permanently unsalvageable. Yup, the smell saturated everything to the point it couldn't come out, but he didn't skin me alive for it. That night, he did fuck my brains out to release his anger. That kind of response I could totally take on.

Speaking of, I took these guys on. Now, they were returning the favor with another date night as a whole circle. I loved it. They did this for me to have

an incredible night before war came to our doorstep. The burning in my nose traveled to my eyes as I fought off the tears.

“You guys are amazing.” I walked as Rin guided me to the blanket. I spent the next twenty minutes being feed grapes and cheese, and they wouldn’t even let me hold my sandwich as Bell ripped bites off for me. The sensual feeling of having them surround me started zinging my forbidden region. Normally, I wouldn’t let them do this for me. I liked that I had always been independent, but I could tell they needed this.

Tomorrow, I would be with Lou’s triad. They wouldn’t be by me. It caused them to be anxious, and I felt it. They needed this moment to feel like they were taking care of me. Even with our telepathy, anything could happen while we were apart tomorrow.

“Tonight, there will be no talk of strategies.” Bell warned. Rin pulled me onto his lap across from my Boo-bear. He needed his time after Bell fed me some yummy grapes. This whole spread just became my favorite meal. Well, second next to Rita’s amazing enchiladas.

“Okay.” I blushed. A purr hummed behind my ear. That told me Rin’s dragon also needed soothing.

“Shall we go into the tent?” Lear extended a hand. Surprisingly, Rin let me take it, so we congregated inside. By the way they moved, I became highly suspicious that they scripted this moment out too.

Bell got in front of me and stripped himself completely bare as three queen-sized cots lined the ground behind him. Lanterns sat in the corners of the giant tent for romantic lighting. Fur blankets draped over the cots for warmth and comfort if someone rolled between cots. They looked so soft and probably would feel even better buttering against my body. Yup, they definitely thought this night through.

When I took my eyes off the love nest, I got an eyeful of all my guys getting naked. Sneaky little bastards totally planned this.

“What is all of this about?” I asked them with a slight giggle of giddiness.

“You told us that every time we’re about to get naked all at once, something stops us. We made sure we could pencil you in.” Beau kissed the top of my head. Seven pairs of hands found a part of my body. Someone stripped my coat first, removing one article of clothing after the other. They massaged and caressed my body. Their touches grew harder when more skin got revealed. I moaned from their calloused hands roughing up my skin. Overwhelmed, I just closed my eyes and let them handle me. Teeth sank into each nipple, different fingers toyed between my legs, and someone played with my ass too.

A mouth nibbled against mine just as my knees weakened, butterflies stirring in my belly. My cunt became soaked and ready for something. I needed someone or something to take the ache away between my thighs.

“Please,” I begged. They loved making me come undone. “I need more.”

Bell quickly took my hand as he lied back on the bed. He and Lear worked me to straddle my Boo-bear as Lear’s fingers never left my backdoor. Bell entered me then, my wetness making his entry easy. Being turned on would never be hard when seven sexy as fuck men got naked in front of me.

Milo and Lucius were in their own world of kissing as Aster dropped down to all fours before a kneeling Rin. Were they? Lord have mercy! Aster’s mouth took in Rin’s fat dick. With his ass poised in the air, Beau moved behind him. Three men. I watched three men touch and fuck each other. Hell, Lust was being spit-roasted!

“Oh, God,” I cried out from the excitement ruining me.

“No Gods here, Princess. Only Devils to be found in this orgy.” Milo came



over. His mighty hand gripped my chin to pull open my mouth. Submitting, I let him. His cock soon used my throat for pleasure. Lear's tongue danced along where Bell and I joined. He slowly moved up to my ass crack with his trailing spit.

Someone popped a bottle open, and my only guess could be lube for what they planned. One finger plunged into my ass as everyone watched. I looked over my shoulder to see Lucius and Lear both enjoying my pleasurable torment. The atmosphere grew heady with our desire and body sweat. Groans and wet slaps echoed around us.

The chill in the air had my nipples hard, and the body heat around me flushed my skin. The contradiction made this even better as I blew out the cold air.

Boo-bear could sense how close I was already. He brought his mouth up to my chin and feasted on my jawline. His citrus fragrance called to me while Milo's clean scent invaded my mouth. They smelled amazing together.

Lear massaged the oil around my tight ring. Seconds later, I felt his intrusion.

Bell sensed my overstimulation, so he cupped my chin—with Milo's dick in my mouth—and forced me to look into his baby blue eyes. Against his dark skin, Bellamy had the prettiest eyes. They were soul-crushing while being all knowing. My watcher. My Sloth.

Milo sat at a close second. His light skin and hair with gold eyes making him my Greed. The two above me, unraveled me just by looking at their perfection. I cried out as an orgasm destroyed my thoughts.

## **Beau**

Aster worked Rin's dick like a cock tease. I watched him slurp and suck our Alpha's shaft like a Playboy Bunny. As demons, anyone watching wouldn't care about two men getting it on. No, the taboo sight worked to turn us on. I moved to take my place behind my brother of Lust. His reddish eyes caught my movement, so the bastard only smirked and perked his ass up at me.

Rin couldn't help his chuckle too. He and I never let anyone into our asses, but the times we've seen our brothers do it, we knew it had to be pleasurable. The stimulation of a prostate delighted any man willing to try it. I wasn't ready to be another man's bitch, but maybe one day, I would trust one of them to do it.

My eyes drifted over to Bell. If I had a pick, it would be him. Though, I knew my ass wouldn't take him on the first go. Getting on my knees, I lined up behind Aster. I had no qualms using his ass to get myself off.

The lube coated my shaft, and I jerked my cock a few times just to excite it even more. The tug and pull had me biting my bottom lip. My eyes drifted over to Bell as our girl lied on him, chest to chest. His dick being buried between her gorgeous legs had my focus as I drove into Aster. V watched me slip into the off-limits area. Her own excitement maddened her desires and mine, so my hands pushed Aster's cheeks out to give myself a better view. Inside him, my dick already twitched from enjoying his tightness.

Traveling my horny gaze up, I found Rin watching Aster's ass too. We made eye contact and smirked. Taking full pleasure in spit-roasting our man of Lust, we knew we'd do it again.

## Chapter 13



**M**ilo

With every slow thrust of my hips, I didn't want to lose myself yet. Lear sheathed himself in Princess's ass with my other lover delighting in the view. I had to blink and look away from seeing Luce stroke his own dick. Knowing we were doing this tonight, I told him he didn't have to be my Sub. In a group setting, with our circle, he could be free to enjoy the thrills he wanted to try.

My mind already okayed him fucking our brothers because we shared that already. Now that I let him have me, I wouldn't struggle seeing him fuck somebody else in the ass.

"Take him, Luce," I hissed from already picturing the five of us moving as one. The side show made my balls tighten too.

"What?" My partner looked to me. Even with me giving him permission beforehand, my lover remained faithful.

“Take Lear. Let me see you drive him mad,” I panted. Princess looked up at me, but my words made her eyes roll to the back of her head. Her moan vibrated around my dick that fucked her face. She suctioned me in to take me deeper. One of her hands came up and wrapped around the base of my dick as the other lifted to tickle the underside of my balls. I couldn’t see straight as her hand twisted around my cock. Her saliva made the motion smooth with no burning tug.

Bell’s face sat right below the action I gave our girl. In a tent, the night before battle, we were having an orgy. That’s one way to kick off this war. It secured our bond and trust in each other, though. Looking around, my brothers used and enjoyed each other with no hesitation.

Before Octavia, very few of our members embraced this side of us. Something about her put us all at ease to be ourselves wholly. Luce kept his violet gaze on me as he positioned himself by our man with green eyes. Lear’s grip on Princess’s hips tightened as he readied himself to be fucked. Our girl had all of her holes filled, but we had more dicks to devour.

My lover slid into Lear and our man of Envy froze to take him in. His poor eyes slammed shut from never being entered before. Lear was having his ass cherry popped with a large audience. My balls drew up from his level of trust with us all. My hand knotted in Princess’s hair to shove her face harder around my shaft. I needed to move. I couldn’t hold out much longer. Not with knowing Lear’s secret, not watching my lover fuck someone else, and not with our girl letting us be filthy savages with her body.

I tried to watch our train, Luce seated in Lear, Lear in Princess, and Princess straddling Bell... with me above to study it all. Now, both my hands cupped her face to hold her still as I choked her with my cock. I face-fucked

my girl like there was no tomorrow. My eyes could barely register the other party beside us on the other bed.

I roared when I came. There seemed to be no way I could hold it back. My spine zinged and my dick pulsed with its explosion. Princess swallowed it all as I watched. My eruption set off everyone in my group. Grunts and tremors held us prisoner until we finished. Once we did, Rin whistled at our girl.

“Kitten, come,” he ordered. Our girl took a few breaths before crawling on all fours over to their cot. The sway of her breasts below took most of my attention.

~

## **Sevrin**

Watching my girl get fucked was painful. Even with Aster working his Lust on me, I needed her. Their sex party climaxed, so now it was our turn to delight in her warmth. “Kitten, come.”

My girl did as commanded with a sway in her ass as her tits jiggled below. The little tease was about to get fucked hard for that attitude. Some of the other guys positioned themselves to rest. Lo and Luce decided they both needed more, so their bodies ground together as they tangled beside us. Those two could get it up just by the sight of the other.

I understood that now as Kitten glided over to our side. My dick always stirred when she took a deep breath that pushed her tits up, or when she bit her damn pouty lip. I popped my dick out of Aster’s mouth and scooted back. I gave her a wicked grin just as my cock jerked itself from my dirty thoughts about her.

“Turn around and fuck Aster’s dick with your mouth as I take you from behind,” I growled.

“Won’t that be a little hard from me taking him from behind?” Beau grunted with the force of his shaft slamming into Aster’s ass. I made Kitten do as I demanded. She tried to go below Aster, but he could barely support himself from the pleasure Beau stimulated. I didn’t know much about being fucked from never letting anyone near my backdoor. As an Alpha, that made me feel like an Omega, and my dick softened at the mere idea.

Thank fuck for the delicious pussy before me that stiffened me quickly again. I slammed in with no warning because our girl was always drenched for us, and she also had Bell’s spunk to help this round.

“Aster, rise up and use her shoulders to brace on.” My new order had the man of Lust trying to get up. Beau had to pause his drives to let him. Like this, I fucked Kitten on my knees while she remained on all fours. Aster’s dick sat at the perfect height for her mouth with him kneeling in front of her, beau’s dick still sheathing in his ass.

“Fuck, Rin,” Beau panted. “I won’t question your methods again. Aster’s ass is suffocating my dick!” The man who knew everything, just learned something new. I chuckled while fucking my vixen like the animal within me wanted to. My dragon finally eased back and left her alone with his mating shit. Tonight, in this tent, Kitten got me as just a man.

None of us could last long, and my eyes were glued to the way her ass bounced around my dick. Her little hole spilled Lear’s cum, and my finger couldn’t help touching it. She moaned below me as I played with the forbidden area. My view of it was perfect.

Aster had one hand using her shoulder as a crutch while the other found her tit below. Beau reached his hand around Aster’s crotch and fondled his balls

below Kitten's mouth. We were all slaves to the erotic things we were doing. Everything felt too good. Kitten's pussy locked around me in warning of her end being reached.

I let her climax stimulate and milk me for mine. With my roar, Aster couldn't hold back. He ripped his dick from Octavia's mouth and came with ropes of come all over her face and tits. Beau watched each strand of semen spray her and lost it then. We all came from the one between us taking us all. She inspired this. She inspired us.

Grabbing a towel, I pulled her to me and cleaned her face off. No one wanted to move after that. Bell slid over as we put her between us. Everyone found their places in the room as we turned off the lanterns.

Luce broke the silence first. "You think Sal will come tomorrow?"

Kitten snickered below me. Aster joined her. The two were in cahoots again with their terrible humor. I still couldn't believe she ruined my baby with shrimp! Oh, and she also showed me the fucking voice box from the doll that drove me insane.

"I sent him a strap-on without the hollow dick attached, through the portal. I told him I had the rest of the equipment if he wanted to make his dick bigger and let him know where we'd be. He's probably reading it right now." Kitten yawned and snuggled into my shoulder. "Goodnight, guys. I love you."

She drifted off to sleep. All of us men fell speechless from her public affirmation. She just told everyone in this room she actually loved us. We loved her too but didn't break the silence.

## Chapter 14



**B**ellamy

Our perch in the tree gave us the right cover. Any enemies coming in our direction wouldn't make it far. Beau set up his tree stand for us and readied his arrows. The same ones dosed in gas and lighter fluid on the tips.

*Honey, you be safe.* I used the link we shared to encourage her tactics because she was the mastermind behind what we were about to do here as well. Her worry for our safety shouldn't be plaguing her mind right before she entered her own fight. She had the keen-sight, gifted for this very thing.

*You too, Boo-bear. I love you.* I'd never tire of hearing her love for me.

*Always, Honey.*

"You ready?" Beau asked as he sharpened one of his blades.

"Not much to be ready for when we don't know how many are coming." I shrugged.

Beau pointed to the owls that were set to help us. Hunter, his Elf Owl, stayed little and hidden. My Boreal Owl didn't sit much bigger in size. We



both had the smaller of the owls, but it made them perfect for their tasks.

“I see movement.” Beau fixed his glasses to squint at something in the distance. I could only imagine how bad he wanted to spoon out his father’s eyes for what he did to his. Following his line of sight, I saw what had him looking that way. Demons of all kinds appeared in the little opening of land between the trees. They were in the campgrounds by the portal.

We poised ourselves up high to watch for their entry, and Beau needed this level to shoot his arrows off for the highest outcome of hits. Not that the master could miss his shot standing backward.

“Guess this means it’s time.” I climbed down the ladder just enough to fall the rest of the way if I needed. This let me see the action but left me ready to defend our position. Beau needed his focus on his aim, so I would be the one to fight on the ground with the hounds of Hell and Barin’s skeletal horses. Our partnership would work well for this.

*Guys, we’ve got a breach by the campgrounds. Demons are pouring out of the portal. We’re in position but be ready for the attack to begin.* I spoke to our group chat in our heads.

Beau sounded off the elkhorn to secure the owls. They knew what was being asked of them and the risks, but our familiars didn’t cower. Sid hooted at me to let me know he was ready. Beau taught Hunter to whistle like a breeze to signal his readiness. Momo swooped in before our enemies could see, showing perfect timing once again by that annoying bird. Still, we needed his talking skills and wings. Honey sure did know how to plan thoroughly which made sense because War gifted her with his keen-sight. Speaking of the Horseman, he held his own arrows to shoot in a tree on the other side. Daisy would light them for him.

Pestilence plagued the woods with his gas. Death and Famine were in

cahoots somewhere else, but they had the Shadowmen in their sector. Already, the earth rumbled from how much magic resided in one area. Not that we could change or cancel the war Sal began.

Beau blew the elk call again to tell them to start moving, and our familiars pulled the strings to our dummy bags. This made them brush just right against the dying trees. With little light, the human outlines we sewed appeared real. They weren't prettily made. If you paid close enough attention to them, you could see they were not actual people, but these idiots were thirsting for blood. This left them a little too determined to pay proper attention to their surroundings.

Once Sid jostled his dummy, the horde of demons ran right to it. Hunter did his on Barin's side to lure more away. Both demon parties yanked the fake legs down that we put jeans and shoes on. When the top part of the dummies showed, their leering grins fell in confusion because we used bedsheets to sew the things. Only in pants, the torso showed it wasn't a real person. We left that part on purpose.

Honey wrote on the white cloth with black ink. 'Say hello from the other side, Motherfuckers!'

That was Barin and Beau's cue to gear up. With their arrows poised, they launched the dosed sticks. The parrot got the signal from Beau before he shot. Barin and Daisy had their own signals. Using Momo's talon, he struck a match, and the arrow sailed right through the flame. They practiced the positioning countless times to get it down. We learned Momo was a bit of a pyro and needs babysitting with matches. Once we taught him how to use a match, the little shit kept lighting our firecrackers off—even the ones in the house.

Anyway, the flaming arrows landed in the bullseyes Honey painted on the

chests. The firecrackers inside lit up brighter than the Fourth of July. We also trailed a fuse to follow along the whole trap and watched them go off, one right after the other. That whole open area had been tagged with lighter fluid, so the sparks of the fireworks blew up everything. Most of the demons got stuck in the explosion, but some were out of reach or retreated in time. We planned for this.

Momo moved to his next placeholder to help corral the rest of the demons. Lear had to practice a great deal to get his parrot not to squawk first when speaking.

“Over here!” Momo’s high voice made some of them turn around, and it took a lot to train him not to squawk first. Beau’s owl shuffled his second dummy to wave a fake hand. “Come get me!”

The rest of the idiots fell for this. Add in an actual voice and they thought we were cocky enough to expose ourselves. Still, a few with actual brains slipped my direction. I readied myself for the fight to keep them away from Beau.

Just as before, they grabbed our dummy. Beau and Momo worked together to blow them up just as hard. The three birds took off into the night to go help the others while Daisy let them go ahead of her. Poor thing still got upset over what the fuckers did to her.

Beau climbed down to stand beside me to take in the chaos of controlled fire. Our first round had been won, but now the hard part began. More would come through the portal, standing against us.

*We’re done.* Beau sent out our message. Hopefully, things went this well for the others. Dal sat in the woods with his hounds around us. The horses stammered with their excitement to chase. We knew more would come out of the portal, so we set up the environment with our flames and their death.

What came out of the portal next had the three of us stiff in the joints. A savage Hellhound leashed by new guards. One with the blue flames of an Alpha body, but only one family could create the hottest color that almost went white.

Dal moved out to stand next to me, unbelieving of what stood before us. In his human form, I saw the tears brewing in his eyes. “It can’t be...”

“When they killed your mate, did you ever see the body afterward?” I had to ask because we were both coming to the same conclusion.

“No. They killed her before me and took her body away. I didn’t even get to bury her.”

“So, that...” Beau’s words stilled as we came to terms with who prowled under Hell’s control.

“Is my son,” Dal finished. He looked to me after we watched the feral hound. “My friend, I know I’m repaying a debt, but-”

“This isn’t a new obligation, Dal. Our mission hasn’t changed. We kill the demons that come out of this portal, but we save your son.”

“Only I or Sevrin can reach him. He still falls under me as my son, so make a distraction, and I’ll get him to heel.” Dal clapped my back. His face lifted to the sky as he howled to the moon during his shift. This called his pack forward with their own. Hellcats came out of the portal next, but Rin worked with his mind to help hold them back. Speaking of, we could see his dragon overhead every few minutes as he circled.

Our fight was down here with the animals of Hell right now because the era of cats was over. Hounds would come out on top today.

## **Lear**

“Shut up!” Aster snickered.

To pass by time, we shared a fond memory between us. One that happened a year ago when we snuck into a bar. There was this gorgeous cougar we both had our eyes set on. As a bet, we tried to outdo the other to pick her up. Let’s just say, Ali had been our first sharing experience with each other. Of course, Aster had to take her ass to keep from killing her, so we were a fumbling threesome of drunkenness. Ali didn’t care. Having two men bring her to the brink of earth-shattering pleasure made her miss our amateur moves and our fake IDs.

Aster had fallen off the bed when his sozzled mind made the room spin. This was how she got impaled on his long dick. Of course, in the excitement, Ali thought Aster did it on purpose. That was why we were sharing a laugh now because both knew he fell off the bed, and she happened to roll just right with the oil slathered on his dick.

“It’s still a good memory to recall,” I said as the humor died off.

“That’s when I picked up on your kink, you know.” Aster sat back with our bag of toys to rest his head on. “Your eyes kept staring at my dick. A few times after, I caught you staring at Rin’s crotch. Either, you really liked cocks, or you like picturing us use them.”

“I didn’t ask for my weird kink, but I also enjoy the high it gives me.” I shrugged. What else could I say to that? What turned people on or who they were attracted to couldn’t be helped. No number of priests or prayers could change someone’s true desires.

“I get it. I spent my whole sexual life in an ass or killing a girl, finding it rather arousing when they died. I hate that, yeah. I hate knowing I’m that

dark and twisted that I got off on someone dying.”

“Via did too, you know. She told me about it one night as she dozed off.”

“Yeah?” he asked.

I nodded. “She hates that about herself too, but she also understands how dark our lives have been. We might be changing into better men, but there’re still things that won’t ever change. Rin will never stop being the biggest asshole we know, Milo won’t change his stripes much at work, and you’re going to be touring with your band after this. There are some things that can’t change, and our girl is okay with that.”

“I love that most about her. She isn’t asking us to change completely. Just to be better in what we’re doing.” Aster gave a thoughtful look. Sitting back, we looked out over the canopy of night. Right now, everything was quiet. Everything seemed to be at peace. A peace we were about to disturb.

Explosions lit the sky in the distance. Bell had given us his first warning already, so their plan of action was underway. Aster sat up to take the bag from behind his back. Beau’s plan involved his marksmanship. Our policy?

Fuck that. We’d be lighting the homemade bombs Via made. Rin didn’t like that she knew how to be a suicide bomber, but he took it in stride when we told him what would be on our agenda tonight. We made sure our Alpha understood she would not be touching them, and we would not be making them. Her smarts mixing with our throws.

A second explosion happened over yonder. Evidently, the boys were working pretty quick to get their job finished.

*We’re done.* Beau used our group chat to verbalize what we could clearly see.

“Our turn?” Aster held up a bomb with a wicked grin. Boys loved playing with fire. We were no exception, and neither was my parrot that flew above

us now. Momo found his itching for the fun it could be to be a pyro. With his pack of matches in one claw, he landed with the other.

“*Squawk!* Light me, fuckers!” Yup, he was definitely my familiar. His claw readied the first match to strike just as another swarm of demons infiltrated our neck of the woods. All of us involved, grew excited for our turn.

Momo lit the match as Aster readied the first bomb. Our giddiness should’ve dimmed with our odds of maybe dying today. Not today, Satan! Or, should I say ‘not today, Sevrin!’

*I heard that.* Rin growled in our minds. *Focus just a little harder on your task, Lear. Time to put that quarterback skill to good use. Don’t fumble a fucking bomb, man.*

Aster and I laughed. He lit the first one and sent it flying toward the mass of enemies. We watched people flying everywhere. Some had limbs not attached anymore, and their screams had my damn parrot cackling like an evil warlord. Momo might like this shit a little too much. By Aster’s wide eyes on my bird, he felt the same way. Yup, my parrot liked killing and blowing shit up. Good thing I knew today would feed his new addiction.

Daisy flew above us when I noticed Sal’s Harpies flying in. The half-bird women always creeped me out. They didn’t have boobs from having a feathery bust. Their wings attached to the bottom of their arms, and their feet were talons. I angled my throws up at the coming bitches just as Daisy blew her flames in their direction. The Harpies flew right through our fire hazard. Their shrieks filled the night sky as their bodies burned. The first group fell from the air and crashed into the ground.

Aster used Momo to work the ground as Daisy helped me light the atmosphere.

*We got this.* I radioed out.

## Chapter 15



**L**ucius

Being in the sandpit never made for a dull moment. We set up on the cliff above the river Princess jumped into. That very river we infected with Sirens to sink their drowning prey.

They did their job by luring the demons into their trap with their song. Still, more enemies arrived. Sal's numbers were higher than we anticipated. The Horsemen used their gifts, but every time they did, we felt the earth rumble. Their magic affected the lands to respond in destruction because their purpose was to rip apart the earth.

Earthquakes quaked. Tornadoes twisted. Cyclones collided.

I knew this from checking the internet. All over the world, natural disasters struck today. After our own demonic town perished, we asked them to tame it back. My work stayed here on Leo's territory. Even spending half the day fighting in this spot didn't take my delight away. It was a live and giant-sized



game of Whack-a-Mole. Though, the weapons acting as hammers weren't big enough to take on these moles.

Every time the snakes popped out, Sal's army screamed in terror. Nothing like a Purgatory twist to liven the show up a bit, and none of them had ever seen these creatures before. Dying by them couldn't be easy. Speaking of, Bartholomew Revell, Beau's dad, got himself coiled in a hold by one of the younger snakes. The Alimari couldn't be killed, and he learned that. Hence why they lived forever in Purgatory. Bart's attempt at stabbing the poor creature only enraged it. The idiot hadn't stopped his tireless swings to see the snake staring at him from above. My memory recalled the scene in *Aladdin* where Jaffar was the giant snake. His tail coiled around his prey with his head above? Well, this was like that, but the snake wasn't that big.

Princess didn't waste any time.

When Bart noticed the snake staring down at him, he laughed. The stupid man didn't see my woman coming from behind. Milo paused his fighting across the field to watch as well. Nothing like your woman taking out the trash to turn a man on.

Her sword dove into the middle of his back, and we watched him wither away. The process took more time than most would think. The blade literally sucked the life off his bones, and his skin turned to mist as it entered the red metal. The screams were also something I could live without hearing again. Sadly, we had more circle members to slay today.

Milo's penetrating gaze called me to look at him. His dominance still held above everything else. We smirked at each other, pleased with Princess's work. Our lingering gaze came to a halt when I noticed Minus move out of the thicket behind Milo. Thanks to the sand, the snow had melted from the heat where we put it, but Minus's steps didn't crunch on the ground.

“MILO!” I bellowed out as my legs carried me to his side. Minus hadn’t seen me yet, but I wouldn’t reach him in time. All in the quick seconds of time, I knew my life would be over. My heart hammered and broke in the same complex second. The muscle beating in my chest knew this would be the end. It came down to letting Milo being speared, or myself. Clearly, I knew what needed to be done.

Princess saw what would inevitably happen, but she saw too late. My determined look pinned her down. Sadness swept over her delicate features. “LUCIUS!”

Her high-pitched cry gained Lo’s attention. He turned to me just as his father was about to drive the blade into his back. My sweaty palms shoved with all my might against his chest to get my greatest love out of the way. The moment I projected him forward was the same one that I felt the blade pierce into my side.

A blade made from Sal’s science project, and I felt my magic draining. My muscles weakened as it sucked the life out of me. Just as Bart had been lost, I too would be soon.

Milo froze on the grass when he took in the whole picture of the situation. He got up and hit his father over the head with a rock.

Minus jostled backward from the impact, and that’s when Via arrived at my side. Her nimble fingers yanked the blade out. I stopped deteriorating, but the damage had been done.

Falling to my knees, she also knelt to steady me in her arms. Over her lap, she laid me to rest as her hands cupped my face.

“Luce?” She called my name, but I could not reply. “Lucius! Please, please don’t die.” Tears streaked her pretty face. I didn’t like seeing her weep. Our girl rarely did from how strong she was.

That's when I felt it. Princess opened her connection between us and started forcing her energy into me. The bolt of energy was unlike any I knew before, and my heart steadied to a heavier rhythm. Still not sufficiently stable, I couldn't let her use her strength on me.

"Princess, stop." My hand lifted to the one she had placed over my heart.

"I-I can't lose you, Lucius. I can't." I caught her face in my hand. She nestled into the touch.

"You won't. I can survive until the end of this." I pulled her face down to mine. We shared a gentle, caressing kiss. Her sweetness filled my flaring nostrils.

"Hold on for me. Do you hear me, Lucius Baysan? If you die, I will make another deal with Death to bring you back."

~

## **Milo**

I was going to kill my father. For one, he was about to stab me in the back. For two, he just took out one of the loves of my life! Octavia held onto our lover as I gathered my father's sword. The evilness oozed from it. From touch alone, I could tell the depths of the blood magic that it took to create such a weapon.

With how hard my heart just broke, my emptiness immediately sought to bond with this weapon. It wanted me to use this sword against my father, to slice him open and allow it to devour him. I lifted the blade to see my reflection in the slate-colored steel. Behind me, I watched Octavia kiss our lover while trying to get him to hold on.

Luce...

He hadn't even been lost yet, but I found myself grieving him. My heart felt like a million needles embedded into it. Every rise of my chest brought me closer to my knees.

He hurt him. The man I love.

My father did this. He would now pay. A hand latched onto my arm. I jerked out of the grip to find Princess. She stood before me with her watery gaze. Sorrow filled her expression, but something else too. It took her worrying her bottom lip for me to understand. She remained concerned for me.

“Not like this, Milo. I won't let you take that step. I will not let you become closer to being like him.” Her grasp covered mine on the tainted blade. “I love you too much to lose you too.”

With the placement of our hands, she sent me her own bitter agony. Her thirst for revenge against the bastard who took so much from both of us. Both our virtues had been destroyed by the same man. Our first time had been one of torture. Now, that man lied at my feet, groaning from the rock I hit him with.

“I need to be the one, Octavia. I need to be the one who is in control of the life leaving his eyes.” My hands shook with the rage consuming me.

“No.” Her clipped tone had me pausing to look at her. In our relationship, she never used that hard voice with me.

Using her blade, she knocked my own from my hand. She poorly executed it, but she also didn't have the years of training we did. The surprise and not expecting it had me losing my weapon. I was about to lash out at her, blame her for taking away my right to end the man who destroyed me. Before I could, she took hold of my hand and placed it on her hilt. She made room for me on her weapon not forged in Wrath, Greed, and innocent blood.

Letum offering his blood acted differently than taking someone's unwillingly. The vengeance I felt in the other steel did not hit me with this one.

No, Octavia's love did instead.

"We do this together, Milo." The hours of fighting already had her looking a little ragged. Still, she wouldn't give up unless she died in this war. "Everything. We do it together."

Her soulful eyes pleaded for me to understand, to agree. My free hand moved to embrace her face, my thumb hooking a stray tear on her cheek. I kissed this magnificent woman before me. With my lips on hers, I told her everything she needed to know.

I loved her.

"Hey! No kissing without me!" Luce called out. He sounded mildly better, but not enough to ease my soul.

"Oh, shut up. You got your kiss from her just a few moments ago." I shouted to the tree he crawled over to for protection.

My father began sitting up on his hunches just as Lou came bouncing over, seeing what was about to happen. She placed her hand over ours.

"I'm in this too." Never in my life would I forget the cold and calloused look she gave our father. "He's hurt me in other ways outside the physical capacity. I want to see him die, knowing I helped your justice, and mom's."

My father had the decency not to beg. He knew his wrongs could never be righted. The three of us moved as one. The steel sliced through his sternum. The crunch of his diaphragm made my twin wince.

We watched the blade call his soul forward. Unadulterated terror took over his expression. His cries could be heard across the sands. Before he

completely died, he looked at me. With the sincerity in my heart, I held his gaze.

“I hope you find peace on the other side.” After my words, he was gone.

~

## **Sevrin**

Spending most of my time in the sky, I looked below to keep checking on Kitten. Lou and Fiona worked together to protect her as Leo’s snakes picked people off. Lily used her own magic to destroy the coming attackers, and Kitten kept fighting now that she returned from Lo’s side of the clearing.

Luce had been maneuvered against a tree to rest his weary body. Minus did a number on him to get back at his son. Too bad he didn’t know we all could communicate. Luce didn’t know this, but Kitten asked us all to feed our power through her to help heal him. In the bond, I felt us all channel through her, our Pandora acting as her role...a conduit for our powers.

Ahead, I saw a group of at least three hundred women. Even my dragon recognized the damn cult approaching. It was the same one we run into any time we leave our town to go into the city. The Order of Amarties veered their path when they found my girl killing more demons. I dove immediately as their leader stepped forward. I recognized her immediately. Danielle Bromwich moved from the back of her pack to the front. She was always one for a dramatic entrance. Lifting the hood of her white cloak, it stood in contrast to the black her hair was dyed.

Piercings sparkled on the corner of her mouth and one above her lip. She also had a septum piercing to make a ring between her nostrils. Her makeup always matched the badass vibe she wanted people to see her as. I found it

quite comical that the leader of a group devoted to killing demons looked like her. Most would picture an uptight church-goer. Not in this case. The only thing that screamed innocent about Danielle was her white cloak. I landed and transformed back into my human form. Kitten startled from my quick appearance.

“Good timing, Sevrin. I need you to make some kind of distraction. Lou has the north side covered with her Banshees while she’s there, but Beau just told me they’re running into some issues by the portal. Your father is still over there, but I can’t reach him.” She sounded so exhausted. Just looking at her told me how much this took of her.

“What kind of distraction do you need?” a Scottish accent reached our ears. Danielle slithered her way into our conversation.

“Who are you?” Kitten asked the human.

“They are a human cult who try and kill demons. Nothing but a thorn in our side,” I growled.

“Put your feelings aside, Devil!” Danielle roared. “My people and I have come to help you rid this earth of the greatest nuisance known to man.”

“Well, thank you.” Kitten smiled and extended her hand. “I’m Octavia Clark. Daughter of Leo Loki and Liliana Clarke. Pandora and Devil. Queen of the eighth kingdom.” This had been the first time she spoke of her lengthy title. Pride surged through me, knowing she fully accepted our future together.

Danielle took her hand. “I am Danielle Bromwich, leader of the Order of Amartías.” Talk about a woman who loved the limelight. Two other females took their places at her wings. This established their hierarchy in our presence. I could see the sneers on their faces. Helping us couldn’t be delightful, but we were the better option.

“These are my VP’s Rachel Tyson and Sasha Means.” She gestured to the two blondes beside her.

Rachel looked like a woman on a mission. Under her cloak, I noticed her security guard uniform—definitely a woman who could handle herself, and one not to piss off. Sasha had this sweet and innocent look to her. If I were to see a woman like her, it would be in a boutique or hair salon, not a battlefield.

“Well, I know you probably don’t like us, but your help is appreciated.” Kitten welcomed them instantly. Her damn human side didn’t know any better.

“You’re fucking humans! You understand that you’re going to die out there, right?” I couldn’t wrap my head around their idiocy.

“Then we die, knowing we helped rid the earth of your father! We die to help take him down!” Danielle righted her shoulders to stand taller.

“So, you’re a suicide cult now?” I jabbed.

“Sevrin, stop.” Kitten glared at me. “They are here to help, and I’m going to need it. Your father has a forcefield up around him. I can’t get through it on my own. If they distract him, I can get on his side of the field.”

Dammit. Kitten’s words were right. My father sat in the middle of his meadow with nothing but the other Devils around him. All of them just watched the show instead of helping their men.

“Now, I need you to go help the Banshees and Karma’s clan secure the north.” Kitten hugged me. Her weak hold told me after this, she’d need to sleep for a week. She was feeble and groggy from how long we had been fighting already.

“You aren’t okay. I’m not leaving your side, Kitten.” I refused when I felt her weariness.

“Rin? I need you to believe in me right now. I need you to have more faith



in me.” She called me by my shortened name. I looked into the depths of her stunning, grey eyes. All the while, I knew what I had been truly afraid about. Kitten didn’t know what we knew. The Horsemen had used her, and now I was too petrified to leave her. Even with knowing what I did, I couldn’t let her see my hesitation. My dragon protested against my mind, but my man knew this needed to be done this way.

Kissing her head, I allowed my nose to fill with her scent. “I believe in you, baby.”

## Chapter 16



**O**ctavia

Well, damn.

Rin's new little nickname had my panties getting damp.

I watched his dragon form emerge once again, before he took off to help the others. What a sight to behold. He didn't know I could feel his struggle to leave. That his dragon called out to me in rage. Whatever secret he harbored, I hoped he'd share it soon.

"What do you need from us?" Danielle had me turning to see her cult.

"I'm going to try and open the forcefield with my own magic. I need you to cover me as I do it."

"We can handle that." Danielle snapped her fingers. Her coven moved in a unified V-formation that kept her and me in the center. I noticed the outer layers of people started dispersing into the fight. Their method of movement worked. Where we got to right now had been the farthest, I made it yet.

Almost to the invisible bubble, I had about ten women left. They guarded my back as I placed my hands onto the energy force. The conversations with my dad kept coming back to me. I was an anomaly, one with a cavernous void within me. A void that could take on infinite amounts of magic without hurting me because I came from Legion.

Sighing, I focused on the feel. The electric shock went from hurting me to connecting with me. It moved like a current into my soul. I had to work hard to repress the urge to let it all out from it trying to take control over me. Once I got it reined in, the top of the dome opened, and it all started coming down.

Salvatore's reaction savored on my tongue. My thirst to kill him only encouraged my magic to wipe out his. He never knew my capabilities because they were blocked away by Letum for the Fates to never know. He, and the remaining asshats of the former circle, got up. Their fists punched the ground, and we watched the buzz travel my direction.

Literally, the ground rolled with a wave of magic ripping it up. Seeing it come my way, I leapt back. All the shades of their sins popped up as smoke from the hole that ruptured on our side. The women helping me all inhaled the infection of their sinful smog. Slowly, their pores started smoking whatever sin took control of them. Not surprisingly, most had the lustful red.

Danielle stood next to me with wide eyes. In a panic, she started praying with Rachel and Sasha. "Lord, please forgive us... They were too tempting..." she cried.

Rachel took over the next line to their hysteric prayer. "I can't find a good man right now. Reading about many gave me hope!"

"I'll never read another Reverse Harem again!" Sasha shook her arms as more red oozed out. "The book club was all Danielle's fault! We had too much free time while we hunted demons!"

“Hey! You’re the one who organized the weekly meetings!” Danielle snarked.

“I just wanted to feel loved,” Rachel wailed as the other two fought some more. My heart went out to her, but I didn’t know how to undo what the evil men did. Soon, their bodies convulsed. The plague of sin consumed them. Much like the kills the guys committed, they were dying by their greatest sin.

I watched them fall. The army made from a cult that got me to the bubble, and they all just got slaughtered by the former circle and their greatest sins. On Danielle’s last breath, she pointed to her heart. Her finger turned to me as she smiled one last time. I patted my chest to let her know I would avenge her and her sisters. They might’ve been secret sinners—mostly of Lust—but they didn’t deserve to die like this.

My foot lifted to move to her—to properly close her eyes...

That’s when I heard the little click below my foot. Only then did I realize they placed their own bombs around the dome they hid under. Bombs that were controlled by weight distribution. With the shift of my foot, I went flying through the air with all the dead humans that tried to help me. The building fire scorched my skin, severing the nerves inside the meat of my flesh instantaneously.

Sheer agony ripped down my side, and the breath left in my lungs didn’t last long. Searing pain rippled through every ounce of my flesh. Yes, my whole body ached in ways I never knew were possible, proving worse than the training Fiona put me through for hours on end. On my stomach, I tried to blink through the haze of what just happened. I stepped near a mine, and it went off.

As though I set off a domino effect, more explosions blasted the exposed field. Humming, my ears couldn’t hear anything. A bomb nearby had gone

off and thrown me, and dirt coated me as it sprayed from the next wave of fire. My heart throbbed against the confines of my chest, the pulse of my heart echoing with the ringing of my ears.

Looking around, I took in the chaos. So many people laid vacant around me. Eyes that were open but not alive. Death shadowed this land, but not from fighting beside me. War always came with a price. Beholding around me, I saw just how high the price was.

A deep chuckle penetrated my mind enough to rouse me from my slow-motion view. Flipping my gaze, I found Salvatore slow clapping above me. “Are you ready to give up, Octavia? If you surrender now, I’ll let you live.” His greedy eyes flicked over my body as his eyes flexed black.

I clenched my teeth. This bastard would never own me the way he had my mother. Even with the pain, I couldn’t just lay here and take it. If I were about to die, I’d do it with all the dignity that I had left, so I heaved myself up to stand before him. If it took my life, I’d still do this to save everything. My guys were all in their required spots, so none of them would see.

Not that I planned on dying, but by the blade wielded by his hands, it became a likely possibility. With my decision made, I gave him a leering grin. My hand fumbled into the back of my pants to feel for the handle of my revolver. The cool metal called to me as I kept the chauvinist pig distracted. Not that it took much from him pointing to my missing sword with his own. I lost it during the surprise of the explosion.

“Looks like you’re all out of tricks, Miss Clarke.”

Whipping my gun out, I trained it on him. He laughed when I cocked the hammer.

“I’m immortal. What do you think that gun is going to do to me?” Salvatore hooted his joy.

I couldn't help but think of my words to Karma that night in the club, and my eyes took on my inner crazy to show him how mad I was. The cut on my lip stung as I stretched it into a smile. Licking the blood with my tongue, I kept my wild gaze on him—to show him I hadn't given up.

“You can still bleed.”

Swinging the gun, I trained it on Arron Avila first. It seemed fitting for his sin contorting all of these fallen women. I fired, and the shot hit where I wanted it to...right where a heart should belong. In another quick concession, I hit Benjamin Argos over Salvatore's shoulder.

Salvatore watched his loyal brothers' bodies begin to quake. The earth began to convulse at the same time. A storm took over the sky with lightning striking everywhere. The pace of the storm was unnatural, but so was killing four immortals today.

Fires spread over the snowy field Salvatore took safety in. Raising my bleeding hand, I flipped off the sky to give the Universe a universal 'fuck you'.

“But that's impossible.” Salvatore watched his brothers corrupt from the inside out.

“Not when you use the tip of your sword's blade to make bullets out of.” I blew air over the smoking of my gun. The unnaturalness of my bullets had the metal melting in the barrel. “Still think I'm out of tricks?”

Salvatore snarled. He hated my snide comeback. He drove his blade toward me, but I fired just as the metal sliced into my side. I cried out and threw my hand from the impact. This movement caused me to throw my shot. The damn bullet grazed his shoulder, and it caused him enough harm to pull back from slicing me in half.

There would be no denying my retreat. My gun couldn't give me more after

using it like I had. No, I needed to get to my sword. Salvatore caught me by the ankle. Dragging me back, I let my nails grip into the soot and snow to escape. He cackled above me.

“You! You have proven to be more trouble than I thought. I should’ve killed you when you were just a babe.”

*Guys...* I used my mind. The words hung in the connection between us. I couldn’t come back from this. My eyes closed as I sent my love into the connection. *I love you all.*

I sent them each a little image of how I treasured them. Rin and my fights. Lucius’s upbringing bonding us. Lear’s sweetness when he fought for me first. Aster’s poorly timed sexual jokes. Beau’s friendship. Bell’s romantic nature. All of it. How I needed them all to feel whole.

*We love you too, Honey, but you’re not dying on us today.* I looked up to see all my guys. Milo steadied Lucius to be there too.

His golden eyes smoldered into mine. *Together, Princess.*

“Together.” I choked up with him using my previous words. They all nodded to agree.

Before anything else could be said, they moved as a united front. Their hands shot out along with their magic. Black, violet, green, red, yellow, orange, and blue...

In a combination, their tethers of light braided into a stronger strand. Something stirred within me at the sight, an instinct finding me. I outstretched my hand, and the grey sparked. My magic joined theirs as I rolled to my back. The blast took out Salvatore square in the chest.

He flew backward and landed on his side, and with a grunt, he got the wind knocked out of him. His baffled daze left him vulnerable for a short window of time.

My chance opened up. Standing, my right hand covered the slitted wound on my right side. He got me right below the ribs. With my dominant hand, I gathered my sword. Rin moved immediately to help steady me. His eyes focused on the spot I bled out, apprehension lining his crinkling brow. “We need to heal you.”

“We’re not done, tough guy. Let’s finish this first. Then, you can worry about my wounds.” Rin still froze from the sight. Yup, something was definitely going on inside that shifter head of his. “Help kill your father, and I’ll let you lick them better.”

To that, I watched his pupils dilate. That’s right. My man of Wrath still enjoyed his bloodlust. As Salvatore heaved, we readied the steel above him. I could see the fear of death in his panicked gaze. He murmured what sounded like an incantation, but we didn’t stop. Rin didn’t wait for me to give an epic closing speech. He shoved our hands forward, killing his father. Well, that was anticlimactic.



## Chapter 17



**O**ctavia

“I want it to be one,” I said.

The guys were doting on me and helping me clean up. Though, we still hadn’t left the battlefield. Those who worked with Salvatore got rounded up by the hounds and evil cats. Now, that Salvatore died, they listened to Rin. I could see in my guys’ eyes that they thought I hit my head a little too hard. The laugh that escaped my mouth didn’t help.

“Our kingdoms. I want us to merge them. No more rings. I want us to rule together.” Now my words made a little more sense.

“But you can’t have seven kings of the same castle, Love.” Aster held my shirt up for Dr. Baysan to clean me.

“Why not? Your kingdoms will still be there. Just as one. We could put things to a vote between our circle.”

“It could work.” Beau’s beautiful mind got to work. “Like a parliament of kings... and queen.”

“I kind of like the idea.” Lear shrugged.

“Whatever Kitten wants, we’ll do.” Rin had my mom patching him up. “We just need to work out the logistics.”

“It shouldn’t be too hard. The castles will be the tricky part. Our magic can work the buildings to merge or change. Well, if Leo and V are willing to show us.” Beau winked.

“It really is easy.” My dad walked over with the Hellhound named Dalco. Dalco had some skittish boy beside him. He looked around our age, but his beard and hair were wild. Also, there held no trust in his eyes.

“We can do it after we all rest, but I must ask to keep Purgatory, Daughter. I want to move it back to be my island.”

“Of course, Dad. As long as you put a portal inside for me to visit easier.” I grinned.

“Sevrin,” Dalco called over. I stood in shock that he was still here because the Sirens left already. They seemed pretty upset my guys weren’t interested in having mistresses. Part of me wanted to gut their spines, but I also got it. They killed normal men they slept with. An immortal wouldn’t die.

Lou relocated to my side. Her movement pulled me from my thoughts. She looked terrible. After the mine went off, I lost sight of her. Zeke held her up as she limped. She had so many abrasions that I knew one of the explosions got her.

Still exhausted myself, I couldn’t let my Guardian suffer. My hand moved down to stop Dr. Baysan’s hand dressing my cut. Rin caught on, so he helped Zeke bring her to me. Lou couldn’t even see straight from being that roughed up.

Fiona was in the same boat, but she already started feeding from my mother. As Rin moved my bestie to me, I remembered Dalco’s question

never got asked.

“Dalco, did you need something?” I didn’t see a point in beating around the bush. Zeke helped Lou feed from my side.

Yes, it was just as awkward as it sounded, but I didn’t see a reason in making a new slash somewhere else. Aster kept my shirt in position just below my breasts, so nothing showed that the guys would get possessive about.

“I did. I need to ask a favor of my Alpha.” Dalco turned toward Rin. He finally caught on that he needed to focus on something that wasn’t his mate.

“Forgive me. My dragon cannot rest inside while Octavia bleeds.” Rin moved to the Hellhound Alpha. “What do you need of me, friend?”

Good boy. He would keep our allies being nice to them.

“Your father raised my son to be a weapon.” We looked at the young guy our age. He went rigid from the attention and struggled not to go into a defensive pose. “I just learned he didn’t die with his mother, but he does not have the human skills to become Alpha yet. I cannot let him near my people until he is trained.”

Ah. Even though his wording sounded a little jumbled, I got the gist.

“Salvatore raised him in captivity.” Everyone looked at me. “Sorry. I forget my filter sometimes. What do you need from us, Dalco?”

“I need the best to train him. The best Alpha, and the best leadership.” He glanced over my men.

“We’ll do what we can. We’ll start with the basics and integrate him into our business when he’s ready to take on more.” Rin walked over to the wild boy. My mind kept comparing him to Tarzan. That’s when I realized I didn’t know his name.

When Lou finished feeding from me, she snuggled into Zeke’s neck as he

picked her up. Milo moved to her too because he would always care for his twin, but I was glad he showed it more now. My feet treaded to the animalistic man. I watched his nostrils flare at my intrusion of his space. Like I would with a wild dog, I lifted my hand to his nose. He sniffed me with his hackles raised, and his fiery eyes never lost sight of mine as he scanned me in his space.

“Can you tell me your name?” I whispered to him.

He shook his head. Clearly, he understood me.

“Can you speak?”

“N-no-not w-well.” His voice had a similar smoky tone that Letum’s had. My heart broke at his stutter. This boy had been kept as a pet, one that Salvatore and Minus neglected and abused.

“Are you named?” I asked next.

He nodded. Rin moved over and used his alphaness to keep the boy still. He then put their heads together like Daisy did with me. It was how he connected with his shifters. After a few moments, Rin pulled back. “His name is Tyr.”

“Well,” I smiled at the fearful boy. I kept thinking of him as a child even though he was my age. Tyr also stood as tall as my men with rippling muscles like Bell’s. “Welcome to the family, Tyr.”

“Thank you, my Queen.” Dalco bowed beside his long, lost son. I could see the tidal wave of emotions taking over him, and the blame he put on his shoulders.

“Dalco, with our new kingdom, I’m going to need new guards. Would the hounds of Hell like their sacred job back?” Rin moved to stand beside Bell’s ally. “Not just as guard dogs, but as a family of the inner circle.”

Dalco fell to one knee. “We’d be honored, my King.”

Before we could get any farther, wisps of smoke had Lilith and another

female popping up. The other had a similar facial structure to mine. This must've been Pandora.

“Octavia!” Lilith cried out with joy. “You did it! You’ve freed us!”

“Granddaughter.” Pandora moved to me with a kind smile. “I know you wish to learn more of us, but we do not want it.”

“What?” I stood confused.

“Your mother can tell you anything you’ll need to know. My circle and I just want to move on.” Pandora looked over to her daughter—who happened to be my mother. “You look well, Lily.”

They chatted as Lilith moved to me. “We are tired. Both our circles wish to be done, but there is one thing I need before we retire.”

“What’s that?” My exhaustion made keeping up hard.

“A promise you’ll do right. That by us leaving Hell in your hands, you’ll rule it justly.” Lilith covered my wound with her bleeding hand. Oh, my shirt was still up.

By her mixing our blood, I’d be bound by word. In agreement, I handled myself carefully. “I promise to run things as I see fit. That I’ll make the laws unbiased for people to follow.”

“Good, I’ll accept that.” She moved to my blade. Picking it up, she handed it to me. “A wise secret, Eternal Executioner. If a Pandora dies, so does her circle.”

Oh. By killing Lilith and Pandora, their men would die too. I remembered how my guys fell when Sal tried to sacrifice me. “No one knew that because we were immortal. Now that weapons were made to kill us, you must be extremely careful.”

“Thank you.” I took the blade from her.

“No, thank you. We will retire to Mount Olympus as those did before us.”

Lilith kissed my head. My mother gave her mom a final hug and relief still present on Pandora's face. I remembered her journal. The entries of her depression.

Letum's words rang true. People feared death from wanting it. Pandora embraced it knowing she'd be finally free. After centuries of sorrow, she'd be rid of it all.

Only holding the blade out, I let each one of them walk into the blade. Neither hesitated. Lilith was as old as time. After Adam, she wanted her peace as well. No longer damned to Hell after being tossed aside, she'd find true peace on the other side.

After both women vanished, no one had words. We looked around the field to see the fires dwindling down. There were new cracks in the earth from the quakes. The sky finally let us see the morning sun.

"Where's the Horsemen?" Lear asked.

I sighed. "I'm sure they'll appear when they need us again. You know how they like their disappearing acts."

**O**ctavia  
(Three weeks later...)

School sucked.

Yup, back to the old ways before war sat on our doorstep.

Not that we needed to finish school, but I told the guys a diploma would be imperative to me. Living in the neighborhoods I did, completing high school marked a huge milestone, and I just caught back up in all the months I missed.

We lived in Daemon's mansion. He and Lucas joined my parents on the island of Purgatory. The same peninsula everyone called the Bermuda Triangle would now forever be their oasis. They all decided to live a little longer. Not that I could blame them because they finally found something to live for.

Leo helped us shift Hell around. Instead of rings, we were now a giant city down there with a giant castle. The world lost a lot of its landmarks from the power of our war. Many people were lost that day, but it wasn't the complete

end of the world. Just the start of a new era for all. As the final bell rang to excuse us, Lou was hot on my heels.

“Is it weird being back just doesn’t feel the same?” She exhaled. We walked down the hall as everyone parted for me. Oh yeah. That change still weirded me out. People were bowing and calling me milady or my Queen. Many also apologized profusely for their bullying.

Odd how the tables turned. Still, I didn’t hold it against them—no point in beating a dead horse. Fiona waved from her nursing station. We returned the gesture before heading out to the parking lot. My Mini Cooper sat in the front row with the spaces around it empty.

Some perks of being royalty were nice. Our drive home didn’t take long, and we found Rita in the kitchen frying something. My nose twitched in disgust. That had to be a first because Rita’s cooking was always delicious.

“Um, Grandma?” I asked. Yes, we were now that close. Pandora didn’t give me time to call her that from her excitement to be done with this existence. Rita stayed around to make up the difference. “Is that meat good?”

My mom and Leo came around the corner to see me. Both sniffed and frowned at my words. Rolling violently, my stomach curled. I ran to the sink and barfed my guts up from the sensitivity to the smell. No one moved as I cleaned myself up. My mother stared at me in a panic.

“Fish did the same to me,” she whispered to my dad. I didn’t know if it was my puke or what, but Lou lost her cookies right after me. Zeke came down the stairs then. He left school early to help my father this weekend. I didn’t know why my parents were visiting. Only that Rita invited them to dinner.

Zeke doted on Lou and held her hair back. That’s when my guys walked in. They all froze at the sight of puke and pale faces. Then, they all nodded like they knew something.



Rin stepped forward. He then proceeded to sniff me like an animal. Whatever conclusion he came to had him sighing. “We assumed correct. Her scent has changed.

His words went to the other six men I slept with. Their eyes fell to my stomach.

“Can someone please tell me what’s going on?” I growled. Clearly, whatever they were hiding, involved me being sick.

“You’re pregnant.” Rita paused briefly to tell me. “Why do you think I invited everyone over? I knew you’d be finding out today.”

Her words hit me like a freight train. If I’m pregnant, that means...

“Oh my god! I’m pregnant too, aren’t I?” Lou cried. Her hands began patting down her still-flat tummy.

Rita hummed. “Anyone affected by the circle’s mating will be with child if they gave into their heat cycles.”

My brain finally pieced together what I had been missing. My open-ended arrangement with the Horsemen...

“LETUM!!!” I screamed. Oh, they were all dead men walking. I should know. I had the weapon to do just that...

*To be continued...*

# Forever and Ever Omen

Ashley Amy

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## Chapter 1

— • —

**M**ilo  
*(Two years and eight months later...)*

The carpool didn't fair too bad on our way home. Sevrin's tasks held us up at the office the longest, but that probably came from him going to help Dalco in Hell this morning. The others in the group handled most of the hardships down there while I ran Brimstone Inc. Trades and sales were my main focus. On top of being in my board meetings to support our business, Rin handled combat training for new recruits to our militia.

Lear and Bell worked together to be the front-men our people came to with problems in our kingdom. Beau oversaw the prisons and handled punishments. They kept busy with their tasks in this circle. As for Aster? Well, he wanted to live some glory days with his band. He'd be back tonight about the same time as us from his last tour. Gone for six months, I knew Princess would be all over him, but I could let her slip into his bed from having someone else warm mine.

Speaking of my devoted sub, Lucius helped me here with his meticulous filing abilities. Being my secretary of sorts helped us role play quite a few times in the office. Gods, forcing him between my legs, under my desk, while I hosted meetings...nothing got me off more than my sub sucking my cock during a private meeting. He executed his task remarkably while I had to rein in my control. The sheer torture of the whole thing took our love to new heights.

It helped a lot from Princess always being too tired for fun times lately. Part of me understood the strain on her from her choosing to be a stay-at-home mom. Still, it made us men use our fists more often than not. We tried to woo her, but the second she hit the pillow, all hope became lost. She didn't mind we had to jack off, but we still felt guilty. Some of the guys didn't understand the complexity of motherhood and why it tired her. One day, they would know. I just had that inkling something would make them see the work that she put in was harder than our own.

"You okay, Lo?" Bell asked from his seat in our town car. We had the two benches that faced each other.

"Yeah, just thinking about the party tonight." I smiled. The birthday party Princess worked tirelessly to pull off.

"Can you believe it's been two years since we became dads?" Lear shook his head in awe. Time moved too fast sometimes.

"What I remember was Kitten's reaction." Rin made us all laugh. There'd be no forgetting that day...

~

**Octavia**

*(Back to the day she found out...)*

“Hand me your phone.” My hand extended to Lear.

Not knowing what to do under these strange circumstances, he did as I ordered. Rita hummed behind me as though she didn't just drop the biggest bomb of my life. I scrolled through my Google search, that led me to YouTube. The page loaded and buffered while I watched the video I needed. The screams of torture echoed through the cellular device.

“Uh, Honey? Whatcha watching?” Bell asked from behind everyone.

I didn't reply. Once I saw what I needed to, I had the technique down. If I didn't do it right, the extra pain inflicted would be solid gold. Tossing back his phone, I climbed the stairs two at a time as they chased after me. Manny moved in with us to get to know Gareth a little more, so finding my guide got a lot easier. The only man I would have trouble tracking down? That slimy sonofabitch named Letum. Rage fueled my sudden temper. I was fucking eighteen and still in high school!

“Guys,” Lear whispered behind me. “She just *Googled* how to castrate a bull.”

“The fuck?” Rin sounded disbelieving.

I barged into Manny's room as they contemplated ways to protect themselves. Manny sat at his computer desk with his hand fisting his cock. Of course, gay porn played on the screen. A train of six guys welcomed me into the room with their grunts.

“Octavia.” Manny greeted me as he turned his computer chair to smile at me. No, his hand did not fly off his dick in horror from our intrusion. Poor guy saw nothing wrong with rubbing one out in front of an audience.

“JESUS H. CHRIST!” Beau cursed while turning his back. All the guys winced at the sight of our hung friend, and I still couldn’t believe Gareth took that thing up his ass. Pooping must’ve come easy for him—such a disturbing thought. I shuddered.

“Dude, you don’t keep jerking your dick when people come in.” Lear pinched the bridge of his nose. My stepbrother also had a tenting crotch.

“Ugh,” I stormed over to the computer and pushed pause. I wasn’t a complete bitch. He could finish after my tantrum. “Manny, where is Letum?”

“Visiting Addis, I believe. Why?”

“Can you go get him?”

“Is that an order to make me do it right now, or can I finish?”

“I’ll let you finish, but please hurry.” As soon as the words left my mouth, Manny started jackhammering his cock with his fist. Well shit, I didn’t mean that quick! I barely leaped back in time as he erupted. His grunts were quiet as he finished. Manny sighed in contentment.

“Gareth told me where to find these delightful videos.” Manny grabbed some baby wipes from the shelf on the side. Huh, someone must’ve walked him through how to clean up after his volcano. Just then, Gareth came in to see his Pornhub recommendation up. At least he had the decency to blush.

“What’s going on in here? Lou just sent me an emergency text to come over.” Gare ebbed away from the guys. He could sense the unease. He just didn’t know it came from me.

“The Horsemen knocked me up,” I lashed out.

Gareth startled. “You cheated on your circle?”

“No, I mean the deal I made with them. They worked some mojo to set off my ovulation. Manny is going to go fetch the bastard so I can cut off his balls with joy.”



“Ah, so that’s why she watched that video.” Lucius chimed in.

“I’ll be leaving now.” Manny stood up and kissed Gareth before creating a rift to move through. Once the tear sealed, Gareth collapsed in the vacated chair.

“Thank fuck! Shadows have an endless ability to get hard within five minutes. With nothing to do, Manny has fucked me so much, my ass is raw. I gave him porn and taught him how to wank himself.”

A laugh escaped me. Then, it turned into a cry. Unsure why, I couldn’t stop the tears.

“Princess, what’s wrong?” Milo moved to me.

“I don’t know. I just need to cry,” I sobbed into his chest.

“Hormones. The book I’ve been reading said this is completely normal behavior,” Beau added in his two cents. He was about to be a whole two cents poorer.

“A book?” I asked.

“Yes. I’ve read about three now to understand the changes your body is about to go through.” He cleaned his glasses off with the hem of his graphic tee.

“How long did it take for you to read three books about pregnancy?” My hand snuck a pen off the desk. None of them saw it.

“Since we returned? I had to make time for them between my reading lists for AP English.” He shrugged.

My hand swung with no remorse. Right before I could nail the turkey, Milo caught my arm. The tip of the pen sat only an inch away from Beau’s shoulder.

Everyone went still.

Rage still festered within me. “You’ve known this whole time?” I roared.

“Kitten, we didn’t want to upset or worry you during the war.” Rin took a delicate step toward me.

“Don’t you Kitten me, Sevrin! If it weren’t for your delicious dicks, I wouldn’t be in this mess!” I fumed. A snort left Aster’s nose from my word choice, but I couldn’t be mad at the equipment, just the operator.

“You were the one who made an open-ended deal with the Horsemen! Blame yourself!” Rin snapped at me. His hand waved toward my pen. “You almost stabbed Beau because your hormones are making you psychotic!”

Remorse filled my veins with cement. I blinked back tears again from almost hurting Beau. Fuck. My emotions were everywhere. Rin’s words hit me too. He called me crazy...

I moved between my guys. Manny would pop out wherever I was, so him following wouldn’t be an issue. Fresh air would be the only thing on my agenda until Letum came.

“Dammit,” Rin muttered. “Kitten, I-”

I waved him off. No use in apologizing about the truth. My feet marched outside, so I went to the one spot that always calmed me down. The waterfall didn’t do the job I needed from my last memory here. Trees were dead and scorched from the intensity of the war.

Plus, I had sex with the Devils that did this to me the last time I stood here.

“You called?” The gravelly tone let me know my victim had arrived.

“I’m pregnant.”

“I know.”

“I know you know, you slimy ass. I’m just wondering why you did this to me,” I whimpered. After my fight left me from earlier, the truth finally sank in. My fear of motherhood. Anxiety rippled through me at the mere idea of

me tending to a child. “I didn’t want kids, Letum. I don’t want to be a mom. I don’t know how to be one the baby can look up to.”

“You’re overthinking your abilities. Most of it is instinctual. The other? You learn from your past. Give your child the things you wished you had. Trial and error work too.”

“Why? Why offset my magic to speed up my heat cycle?”

“Remember how I told you Lilith’s circle finally found people to pass their magic on to?”

“Yeah, I also learned Hades divvied up his between his generals.”

“Same thing. I needed someone to take on my power. Someone born to retain how much I have. Death isn’t a thing I can separate into many. That kind of power corrupts. I knew a daughter from you would not. She will have a void much like yours to retain my gifts.”

“So, you used my womb to make your replacement?”

“Yes. After I train her, I shall be ready to die.” Letum took a seat on a rock nearby.

“Train her? Why can’t I kill you now?” I paused, noticing his gender remark. “Wait, why do you keep saying her? I’m too early to know.”

“Pandoras cannot be boys, young one. You will have a girl to replace me as a Horseman. I will open up my academy when she comes of age. By doing this, she’ll learn while securing her generals.”

My hands moved to my belly even though nothing stood out. Maybe a little bloating, but not a bump.

“It’ll be painful,” I said.

“What?” Letum asked.

“Giving birth. It’ll be painful. You promised me nothing that would bring me pain. I’m pretty sure getting gutted with contractions as my vagina opens

up to roll out a bowling ball will be painful.”

“Your father taught you well,” he mused. “Very well, what favor is it you want to ask of me?”

“Let me think about it.” I exhaled. Exhaustion played a massive part in my life lately. Now, I understood why.

“All right.” He tapped his chin, moving onto my personal dilemma. “I feel I must tell you my brothers and I no longer sense the Universe. It feels as though the endless energy has been cut off.”

“What does that mean?”

“We’re not sure. Between all walks of magical creatures, we have our own steady supply of energy. I just figured you should know you will not have to fear your daughter’s birth.”

“Oh, thank you, I guess.”

“Well, I must be off.” He got up to leave. “And, Octavia?”

I turned to set my gaze on him.

“You’ll be a wonderful mother. You might not think it with your past, but look how far you’ve already come. You are a survivor. I know you thought you couldn’t love your men but look at you now with them. You’ll do just fine.”

He blinked out of existence, and I plopped down on my rock with a sigh. Time for me to plan a different future.

## Chapter 2



**A**ster  
(*Present day*)

“Love, I’m home!” I called out as I entered the penthouse we bought in the city. My mood grew ten times lighter just from knowing who I would see now that I had arrived home. Oh, how I missed my little loves too. My little women meant the world to me.

“Love!” I shouted again.

Huh, where could she be? The house had been covered in pink, lavender, and white streamers. Balloons covered the floor for the kids to run through because there would be a rather enormous horde tonight.

“Love?” I questioned while moving down the hallway. She wanted to host the birthday party here instead of at the mansion Daemon gave us because there would be fewer hiding spots here for that many rugrats. Our girl spent all day preparing this, and her work came together stunningly. Well, if a unicorn shit rainbows and barfed glitter on the walls.

The smell of soft cinnamon tinged the air, mixing with Octavia's natural sweetness. Rita must've been cooking snickerdoodles again, stationing herself in the large kitchen here since we bought the place. Octavia stayed mostly here in the penthouse to keep closer to the guys that worked at our main office in the city. Rin put a portal in one of the spare offices to commute easier to the Underworld. Our girl just wanted them closer in this plane of existence.

Not that they didn't spend a few weekends a month in the castle because we planned to move the girls there when things were more settled in the new kingdom. As the permanent rulers of Hell, she didn't like us to be there all the time without her. Not that we needed to be there with Dalco as our Chief and General. The hounds kept everything running rather smoothly under our rule, but there were still some uprisings we had to deal with that made it safer for the girls here. Soon, they'd be the princesses of their castle.

"Octavia?" I hollered when her pet name received no reply. Checking every room, she seemed nowhere to be found. I turned myself around and re-entered the living room. That's when I found where I missed her the first time. In the play area, we made in the corner for the girls, she sat at the children's table with her face resting in a bowl of glitter. Paint and marker added to her demure clothing to bring out the black fabric.

I rested my head against the wall and watched her lightly snore. Each breath blew more glittery fun over the surface. The front door opened as the guys walked in laughing, but they silenced when I pointed to our sleeping girl and shushed them.

"Why did you leave her like that?" Lo stepped forward.

"I just got here and found her." I shrugged and moved to our lovely lady. "I can carry her to bed. Does someone want to fill me in on the little joke that

had you doubling over?”

My lips quirked up. How could they not when my brothers knew how much I loved a good chuckle. I didn't wait for their reply from them rousing our lovely little lady.

“Mm, Ass?” Octavia stirred as I set her in her spot on the bed. Lear turned down the sheets to make it easier.

“It's me, Love. I'll finish decorating with the guys. You get some rest.” My words were futile. She already hit the hay again before I finished my sentence. I looked back at Lear. “Are you going to fill me in or not?”

“We were reminiscing about the day Via found out she was pregnant.” He walked with me down the hall.

“Ah, she had quite the breakdown that day,” I snickered.

“Not as bad as the day she first got that ultrasound,” Lear shivered.

“Mate, can we please not bring up that day?”

“Why?” He snorted, then stilled. “Oh shit! I completely forgot about that poor nurse. What was her name again?”

“Yosette,” I grimaced. That poor, poor woman would never be the same. I wished I could say Octavia only waved her crazy flag at her once... Sadly, Yosette took on the brunt of our girl's cruelty at the doctor's office because the poor nurse couldn't help her attraction to me. Lear stumbled into the living room and tipped over the back of the couch, laughing harder than he came in. All of our other brothers froze and gave us weird looks.

“Aster just reminded me of that poor nurse, Yosette.” Lear wiped his leaking eye.

“Dear Gods,” Milo groaned. “That poor girl. She finally had to check into a psychiatric ward after the things Princess did.”

“I still send support baskets from our company.” Luce winced.

“Can we not bring it up?” I blushed. This story would be the only one that could strangle my balls. They could call me a testicle on this one.

“No way, man! It’s too good not to remember,” Bell just had to pipe in. So, we sat as I recalled the story of how a nurse named Yosette had to be put into a straightjacket.

~

## **Octavia**

*(Beginning of her second trimester)*

“When did you say your conception date was?” The pretty nurse asked me. I could see the insult in her brown eyes. I usually never used eye color against someone, but hers I wanted to say were filled with shit. It didn’t help her tan stayed flawless unlike mine from the sickness of this Devil-child, literally. Her hair bounced around her shoulders to be too flirty in a room with my guys. Using my Lamaze’s breathing technique, I tried to will my anger away. Fuck, being pregnant made me feel worse than I did when my emotions were imbalanced.

“I should be around three to four months.” I smiled. Even though my lips turned up, my brows slanted down because I could see the insinuation. I could see the fullness to my stomach too. The bitch didn’t even hide her distasteful look when my bump already looked like a balloon sat up my shirt. Clearly, she thought I shoved junk food down my pie-hole all day every day. Not that she took note of my morning sickness issue.

Morning? Bah! Mine came around any time I neared a kitchen! Whoever came up with that needed to be punched in the tit or kneed in the balls. There



my anger went again, flaring from feeling like a bloated whale. I just hated how everyone looked at me.

From eight weeks on, I couldn't fit into my jeans. My eyes couldn't help but glance at Rin because this fat monster had to be his from him being the giant, and I'd skin him tonight for impregnating me with a shifter!

"Okay." Yosette looked doubtfully at her clipboard she took notes on. They probably were rude comments and judgmental thoughts about my weight issues. I could barely eat a sandwich every day, but I still packed it onto the tummy. Pregnancy was a sure way to make a woman doubt her beauty. Thanks to Lou's height, she barely had any bloat. Fiona's baby too. They were both lucky bitches with their long legs. At least Kara's tummy bulged like mine. Not quite as big as mine, but closer than the other two in our inner circle.

"Undress from the waist down and put the sheet over you when you finish. The doctor will be right in." Yosette stood, but only had eyes for my man of Lust. Envy reared its giant head in my soul when Aster caught her stare and gave her a flirty wink. Not that he did it to get into her pants, but he still noticed. Hello, bloated cow over here not being noticed.

I began to cry. Seriously, I cried more in the last few months than I ever have in my entire lifespan. If a person could die of dehydration from crying so much, it would be me. Thank fuck, I'm immortal.

"Princess, what's wrong?" Lucius took me into his arms. Bell knew the doctor would come soon, so he helped me step out of my jeans as my Pride cradled me.

"Sh-she's pretty. Ah-Aster w-winked at her, and I'm a cowww!" I sobbed into Lucius's shoulder. God. Someone could take these hormones and shove them up their ass. Who wanted to feel like a train wreck all the time?

“Love, you know I only love you. I’m just trying to be nice.” Aster stepped into my bubble. I only had my empire-waisted shirt on with my lower areas being breezed. I nodded and took my place on the death bed like I didn’t want to skin her alive in this compromised position. Lou warned me about the stirrups and the speculum. What had my men done to me?

A knock came at the door as the deep voice asked if I was ready. I replied yes, just to get out of here faster. A lanky and brittle, older man entered. He had to be around fifty, but his head had no hair to analyze. Just his wrinkles and scrubs that sat high on his waist. These things told me the little details.

“Ms. Clarke?” At his question, I nodded. “Good to meet you. I’m Dr. Fredrick.” We shook hands, and I gave him a timid smile because this whole thing didn’t sit up my alley.

“You too,” I replied. Dr. Baysan told me this man would give me the best prenatal care. That he trusted this man with his life. It helped that he also knew about our way of life, and why my seven men weirded his nurses out, but he knew.

“This must be your circle.” He looked between my guys. When his eyes found Lucius, his smile broadened. “And you must be Lucas’s son.”

“Lucius Baysan.” Lucius extended his hand. “Pleasure to meet you, and we appreciate your discreetness.”

“No problem. After working with your dad for twenty years, I’ve seen your side of living. I rather like knowing that I have a lifespan and will die.”

Odd words.

“Okay, Ms. Clarke. Are you ready for this ultrasound?” As ready as a pretzel wanting to burn to death in hot cheese.

“Yes, and please call me Via.” I tried to ease myself to be more comfortable.

Dr. Fredrick fixed my covering, so it folded right at my pubic bone. He then squeezed a pile of goop onto my lower belly. Thank heavens they warmed it first.

He got this stick out that connected to a screen, and then he started spreading the goop around. Instantly, we heard this overwhelming sound of what had to be a heartbeat. Though, it thumped way too fast.

“I know a baby’s heart beats around 140 to 160 beats a minute, but isn’t that a little too fast?” Beau asked. At least one of my guys brushed up on this baby thing.

“Correct.” Dr. Fredrick leaned into the screen while moving the stick around. “That would be because we are hearing more than one beat blending together.”

That information sent me spiraling. “More than one?”

All the guys sat up a little taller too. Dr. Fredrick turned the screen toward us and then pointed at the black holes with white in them. My pregnancy was far enough along that we could see the babies.

“This is one.” He took a picture and typed some stuff.

*Bitch-ass penis cocker! You best be moving on to tell me how many babies I’m having.* The guys laughed from hearing my thoughts. The doc didn’t notice.

“Here is the second sac.” Again, he took a picture.

“So, twins?” Lo smiled proudly. Of course, the man who is a twin would find a way to make this terrible thing about him.

“Not just yet. Look back here. She has another one.” His finger guided our view to see the little bean. “She is having triplets.”

You could hear a pin drop from the silence.

“THREE!” I finally shrieked. “I can’t even do one! How am I supposed to

mother three?”

“Kitten, you’ll do just fine.” Rin took my hand. Pure joy shined in his eyes. Actually, all the guys had this blissful aura from the news. Things moved like they weren’t really happening after that. Not when the guys helped me dress or when we got up to go. Beau would remember the important things while I cried under a rock. I should be excited, but I stayed scared. Frightened that I might be like my mom. Well, not hiding from my circle, but screwing up.

My mom and I were good now, and I had graduated high school with my three beans growing inside me. That was one thing I wouldn’t negotiate on when the guys wanted me to rest instead. Graduating high school became a milestone I needed to pass for myself—something they didn’t understand from their higher upbringing. I remembered how valuable a diploma was to the poverty towns I grew up in.

I sighed while we walked out of the room. My nerves were frazzled. What didn’t help? That nurse named Yosette blowing a kiss to Aster. Oh, hell no... Before I could think twice, I supermanned at her. I flattened her like a pancake before I started swinging my fists at her. My anger swelled mostly from her hitting on my man, but that wasn’t what came out of my mouth. Nothing about Aster even left my lips. Instead, something that I will never be proud of, did.

“I’m not a fat cow, you bitch! I’m carrying three Devils!” Yup, my vanity won that round as Bell pulled me off of her. Dr. Fredrick moved out to see the ending of the show. Yosette didn’t know our way of life, but it still didn’t give her an excuse to flirt with a pregnant woman’s man.

“Yosette.” He could clearly see why I fumed. “The seven men with Ms. Clarke are her husbands. I suggest you keep that in mind next time they book an appointment.”

The young nurse with a tan similar to mine, rolled her eyes. Bell wouldn't let me go to kick her ass again, but I knew it wouldn't be the last time I saw her.

## Chapter 3



**B**<sup>eau</sup>  
(*Present day*)

The doorbell sounded to signal the arrival of our first guest. Going to it, I found Lou's triad with their two kids in tow. One boy from Fiona and one girl from Lou, and both were fathered by Zeke. Oliva Gale—Gale after Lou's late mother—and Wren—just Wren—from Fiona not wanting him to have that many names. The two did not share a womb or mother, but they were called twins in the loving nature of their birth.

The two little ones darted past me and headed straight for the table where we had our girls frosting cupcakes. This place was turning into a madhouse, and we only had one family show up so far. Just as my hand moved to shut the door, two little boys ran around me. I had to shimmy just right to not get my balls taken out. Who knew my Guardian skills would pay off in saving me from the pain children accidentally inflicted all the time?

“Boys!” Kara huffed down the hall outside our penthouse. The magic of the war changed many things, and that included Karma’s line now breeding male offspring. That’s right, the bitch of the west had twin boys.

She didn’t know the exact fathers from fucking a whole vampiric biker club during her heat cycle. Though, the rebellious men proudly accepted both boys as their kin from their group. The highest ranks were who screwed with her, so they knew the boys’ placement would be within the presidency. The MC group was named Teeth Sinkers... Yes, you read that right. Kara fucked a nest of vampires and produced two of her own bloodsuckers.

As if the Karma women weren't thirsty enough for dick, their own Karma worked against them. They now had boys with dicks that drank blood to sate their thirst. Kara’s tune changed when she saw Lou and V chatting on the couch. “Via!”

Our girl came to accept Kara as a member of the inner circle, and they did playdates often, and somehow, our girl befriended the slut most of us slept with. Hey, we weren’t all making great choices before our girl showed up. We were different men now from her and our daughters. I couldn’t even remember what majority the women looked like that I had been with previously because I didn’t care to.

“Can you believe they’re two?” Lou looked at the table, hosting every kid as they made a giant mess. I already lined up a cleaning crew to come in afterward to save Via and Rita the hassle.

“No,” V’s gaze drifted over our darling girls as she reminisced how fast time went by. “I still remember having them.”

“Don’t we all.” Lucius snorted. “I think my hand still tingles from you stopping the circulation.” His hand flexed on the handle of the wooden staff he now had.

We took in the cane Luce had to use now. Not all the time, but after the war, he didn't bounce back all the way. His soul being sucked caused him some grief with his hip. If he overworked himself, he needed his cane to help him. Our girl never looked at him with pity. When he got discouraged and needed use of his cane, she kissed him, remembering why he needed it. She'd whisper how having him as a hero would never be masked by a stick. Lo did the same thing because it was he who Luce saved.

"Shut up. I wasn't that awful." V folded her arms and sank deeper into the couch, jutting her pouting lip out. I rolled my eyes from that same maneuver our younglings were picking up on. All of us men snorted or scoffed. The day she gave birth made it known that none of us wanted her to have another heat cycle.

~

## **Octavia**

*(Delivery day)*

"You have got to be kidding me," I grumbled. Out of all the things pregnancy caused, full-on peeing myself shouldn't have been on the list. I couldn't even see the damage from the walrus size my stomach took on. I didn't even feel it. No fullness of my bladder—which I felt all night when I peed ten times—no muscle spasms to hold it in. I just soaked myself.

"Um, V?" Beau asked at the same time the worst contraction took over. I'd had Braxton Hicks before, but this was a whole new level.

"Oh fuck!" I doubled over. Beau paled and then nodded. I think he answered whatever question ran through his mind.



*Guys, ready the bags. V's water just broke.* He relayed the message in our group chat of the minds. Oh, my water. That made a lot more sense.

Not wasting time—you'd think another apocalypse came since the brink of the last one—they had Manny open up a portal to the Shadowlands. My men watched too many videos about women not making it to the hospital in time. Car deliveries, in the home, or unsanitary bathrooms had them being overbearing worrywarts. But their persistence would be welcomed now as another wave of disembowelment hit my gut. Why, for hell's sake, were contractions this terrible? Why did people have multiple kids?

Finally arriving at the hospital, it only took twenty minutes but after these contractions? Eternity set in to take me to Hell, but not the Hell we'd be stuck ruling for eternity.

"I'm not gonna make it," I blubbered in Bell's arms. The fucker tried to cover his little grin, but I saw it. "Leave me to die."

"Will you stop being dramatic?" Rin sighed. Oh, hell no!

"Do you remember what it felt like to be clawed viciously by the Hellcats?"

"You know I remember everything about those days." He gave me quite the look. I just returned it with my own.

"Imagine that ripping pain inside your stomach every few minutes!" I screeched at him. None of my guys could take their bewildered eyes off my face from my tone. That's when I cried the first time. "This isn't a good way to end my birthday."

I sobbed, more accurately. Yes, my birthday had just been celebrated, and now I'd be having triplets to end it on a bang.

"We get to meet our three girls today." Milo's hand rubbed the top of my stomach. It sat perfectly round in the bridal carry Bell had me in.

"You forget what comes with babies. Parenthood, Milo! I'm not ready to be

a fucking mom! Make them stitch my hole up or something!” My demands weren’t being heard. None of them were willing to negotiate with me.

“Ah, Via!” The good doc found us before we entered the Labor and Delivery wing. “I have a special room over here I use for demons.” Another contraction hit as we moved. No words or questions could form as the tidal waves of sheer agony ripped through my ribs and down my va-jay-jay. How the fuck was a woman supposed to breathe through this shit?!

And I wanted natural labor?

“Please, just knock me out and cut me open,” I panted after the last battle eased. Killing Salvatore had been easier. “I can’t do this.”

“Oh, dear. I’m terribly sorry I forgot to mention this, Via. Demons can’t be cut open to give birth. There’s too much magic that heals you almost instantly. You will be having a vaginal delivery.” Dr. Fredrick was lucky I got laid-up on the hospital bed with another contraction.

“Then give me drugs!” I shouted.

“Sweetheart, you didn’t want drugs with everything you’ve been through.” Lucius tried to counter. The responsible me did want that from my life knowing hard drugs, but this version of me didn’t care what they did to get the babies out...as long as I didn’t feel this.

“I will kill you,” I jabbed my finger at him. Another wave collided within me, and I kidnapped Lucius’s hand to take it out on. I had him nearly screaming too.

“Let’s just check your progress to see if you can have one.” Dr. Fredrick washed his hands and put on his gloves.

The guys helped move me in the maxi dress I wore for the doc to have better access. Yosette picked that moment to come in with my gown. I glared at the bitch who now knew I’d kill her if she so much as looked at my men.

In this majorly uncomfortable position, I still gave her an icy glare. It said, 'Try me, bitch.'

From the pain, I barely felt the doc shove his fingers up my who-hah. He gave a displeased sound. Fuck, that meant bad news.

"Being a demon, your labor kicks in and goes a lot faster than humans. I'm sorry, Via. You're almost ready to start pushing. You can't have anything for pain relief now."

"What?" I bawled. "And how will I know when it's time to- OH FUCK!" I crossed my legs. A sensation to bear down struck every nerve within me.

"That's how!" Dr. Fredrick took up residency between my legs as Rin and Lear helped my legs into the stirrups. "Okay, young lady, with everything you have, I want you to push on your next contraction. Do not push between them."

Everything lost color around me as the world spun. Labor would be burned off my bucket list. Not scratched but burned to feel the agony it made me suffer through. After a million pushes—okay, like seven realistically—I flung my head back into Bell's chest. Oh, when did he get there?

Looking around me, I found Lucius still letting me death-grip his hand with Aster's in my other now. Rin stood by the doctor as he went paler by the second. I couldn't imagine what a vagina looked like having a bowling ball come out of it. By my Alpha's face, I didn't think his imagination readied him either. Lear, the ever-faithful best friend to Rin, stood at the ready to catch our Alpha. The man who could pummel faces in, couldn't handle childbirth.

Milo had his phone and called the chain of people we talked about. He turned to me with a smile. "Lou and Fiona just went into labor too."

"I have to share my birthday with more babies?" It was truly a selfish thing

to say, but my body remained stuck in the process of being as selfless as possible.

“Um, Honey? It’s just after midnight. You don’t have to share your birthday.” Bell soothed me from behind. Ah, he made me feel an ounce better.

“We have a head!” Dr. Fredrick caught all our attention. Another contraction set in tempo with what I needed to do. Who knew birthing could be so instinctual?

“GAH!” I cried while my ass cheeks clenched to help. Not that it did from the wrong end pushing, but whatever right now.

“PUSH!” His order came, acting like Shaun T in his workout videos to motivate people. “ONE MORE!”

I felt this fire set off inside my lady bits. Ah, so that’s why they called it the ring of fire. I was gonna kill everyone for making me feel it.

“I’m not ready to be a mom!” I cried. “I’m going to fuck them up!”

“PUSH!” I did. Just as I finished, we heard the telling sound of a little cry. Our first baby was here with pale skin and black hair that sat under the birthing crud. As they cleaned her up, Rin sniffed and stiffened. He awkwardly stalked to the table they put her on. Pure joy replaced his inquiring expression, and his dark eyes found mine as they handed her over to him. “She is mine. I smell my Alpha line in her.”

Oh fuck. My mate just had a tear slip down his cheek. Lear patted his back with affection. We didn’t care who each belonged to because they would be loved by all of us. Before I could celebrate, the doctor caught my attention. “The next is lined up! Do the same thing.”

Why...? Still a sobbing mess of perspiration and exhaustion, I bore down again. At least pushing took the focus off all the pain. Three more and the

next one came out—a little blondie with Indian skin. I mean, the skin was a dead giveaway, but the near-white hair? What the fuck? Neither Lucius or myself had blonde hair. Rin moved over to investigate as he started sniffing our circle. Well, his sense of smell would help. “She smells of Lo and Luce.”

Just as he said it, our little girl opened her eyes for us to see their golden hue. It caught me off-guard. Most had brown or blue eyes.

Then her eyelids closed as the nurses rushed her to the table as her little body trembled. Maybe she was cold? She didn’t express her misery about coming out, like her sister.

“They are demons. We are born with our eyes matching our colors,” Bell whispered to me. He probably heard my mind.

His words didn’t detract what my keen eyes noticed as my Alpha froze up near our newest arrival. I noticed Rin’s brow crinkle with worry, and I finally understood the nurses were rushing around her still. My anxiety flared as they rushed my little one out of the room. Milo followed with Lucius hot on his heels.

“Sevrin, what-” I got cut off by another contraction. I cried out and gripped the hand rails from my baby being whisked away. I couldn’t go with her, so I had to force myself to stay.

“She isn’t responding or crying,” Rin answered while handing his daughter to Lear. “I need to go.”

“I got her, man. Go help them.” All of us watched the door. I couldn’t go after my baby because I had another one coming.

“Is she okay?” I sobbed between the cramping.

“We won’t know right now. With how she appeared unresponsive with her eyes open, they’ll need to do a brain scan. That isn’t my area, Via. I’m sorry,” Dr. Fredrick sounded dejected with that news, hating to deliver it.

“You need to push. The faster we get this last one out, the faster we can find out what’s going on.”

I did. I used my whole body like an exorcist to get the last one out. Not really, but I felt like it.

“PUSH!” he shouted at me. God, I wanted to kill him right before a little cry took over my serial tendencies. As his hands helped catch the next one, and my eyes were wild and surprised. With skin a few shades lighter than Bell’s, this baby had African roots, but it was the auburn hair that caught us all off-guard.

“Safe to say without Rin’s sniffer, this one’s ours.” Beau smiled to Bell. Their bond had deepened a lot lately. Aster and Lear looked a little put out. I just carried three babies with the others, but they didn’t contribute. Just as I was about to reach out for them, a massive contraction rippled down my ribs, right to my crotch. The doc moved back between my legs after my squeal and chuckled.

“You had one hiding behind her sisters. Well, let’s welcome her to the world too, shall we?”

FOUR? I would have four daughters?

Aster took the place Rin had. He watched me scream and cry all over again just as the next one slid out. With dirty-blond hair and slanted eyes, we had a winner for the last two daddies. Magic worked itself again with how they came to be. Before I could give it too much thought, I passed out. Yup, apparently, I found my pain limit. Giving natural birth to four daughters did me in. Rin would be upset he didn’t reach it first.

## Chapter 4



**L**ucius  
(*After the delivery*)

My greatest fear came true. One I didn't know I needed to fear, and one I never knew could be real as we watched the new set of doctors take over. Our little girl stopped breathing. They wouldn't let us into the room to comfort her as they resuscitated her. With slight tremors, we watched her body quake. One nurse recognized who we were and allowed Rin into the room. As our Alpha and extended father, he could help call her back.

Rin shoved the doctor out of the way just as he touched his forehead to hers. Gooseflesh took over my skin, and my body felt as though it couldn't hold itself up any longer. Two hands secured my waist from behind.

"I've got you." Lo's voice held the smallest sound of worry. Not even he could mask the fear of losing our daughter. "She'll be okay." He tried to convince both of us.

I couldn't speak. My tongue sat heavily in my mouth as it expanded under the roof to touch my teeth. That's when my throat started closing up. Rin shifted a little to show how much magic he had to use to find her. Next to us, the four Horsemen popped up out of nowhere.

"Well, that wasn't in the plans." Letum eyed our baby that had gone blue.

"I told you it was too much magic," Barin added. "One of them was bound to get hurt."

Kepi scoffed. "That's my heir dying, you ass!"

His what? When Letum saw my bewildered expression, he shrugged. "All of your daughters will replace us, just like you did the previous circle. We can finally die when they take on our powers." Death had one sure way of asking to die.

"What did you do?" Lo took over.

"Your daughters will train with us in their youth, but they will become the Four Horsemen."

"The agreement Octavia made, she said you did something. I guess the fourth baby makes sense. You used her as your broodmare to create your legacies with our sperm."

"Indeed. Your daughter will inherit my lands," Kepi added. I wanted to be mad. I wanted to revolt against what they had done, but one thing mattered right now, and my eyes found her lying too still on the table.

"She has to live first." I looked through the pane to see Rin still working on her. A flare in her chest finally showed it rising and falling. Silent tears finally fell from her eyes, but no sound left her parted mouth. Still, my baby survived whatever just happened. They brought in some machine to scan her just as Rin came out.

"Brain aneurysm. She'll be okay, but they have to check how much damage



her brain suffered.” Our Alpha led us back helplessly to the room because the medical team didn’t want us in the room for what might come. I just had to keep telling myself she would be okay. Whatever we needed to do, we would, for her. I knew Rin healed her the best he could, but brains were tricky things.

As we entered, we found our girl half-asleep with the guys holding three babies. Ah, the Horsemen’s words made more sense. Four daughters of the eight sins.

“What’s your mom’s name?” Bell asked Beau. Yup, that little one definitely had their coloring.

“Jane.” Beau smiled. They must’ve been talking about what to name theirs. “Let’s do Ember Jane. After your mother’s last name and my mother.”

I could tell the naming had been going on for a while. Princess sighed. “I love it. No offense, Bell, but I’m not naming my daughter after a fruit.”

“Hey, in *Ice Age*, they name theirs Peaches.” The big man shrugged, having an owl named Sid.

“And you already have an owl named Sid.” She jabbed with a yawn right after I thought it. She looked like death warmed over, but I would never say that out loud. She also looked like she just woke up. I smiled while gazing at my lover.

“Gale?” I asked Lo.

“No. Lou plans to use our mother’s name. Plus, I’d hear my failure every time we said it. How about Faye after your mother?”

“For a middle name, but it would be hard to hear it every day after remembering how I lost her.” My heart ached.

“What about Fallon?” Princess drew our attention. “I found it online, and I liked it. It would honor both of your moms without being directly linked.

They fell from this plane, but their superior legacy remains, and that's what the name means."

"Fallon," I tested it out.

"Fallon Faye." Lo grinned. Tears highlighted the yellow hues in his eyes.

"We're going to follow the same pattern!" Aster shouted for our attention.

"Meet Jayla Joy!"

Lear's living mother would love to meet her grandbaby named after her. Aster met my gaze because I remembered when his mother took her life. He was using her middle name to ease the pain—a second chance for them in our hodge-podge family.

"Is Fallon okay?" Princess asked, worrying over what she didn't get to see. We moved to her, knowing she saw we weren't a heaping pile of blubbering shit.

"Rin saved her. We'll know more down the road." I kissed her head. This woman gave us everything we never knew we were missing.

Speaking of our Alpha, he had his little girl in his arms. "My mother's name was Raven. I like it."

"Raven Lilith, after my line too." Princess's cheeks heated. Not one of us idiots even thought about her. "I want them to carry the same last name as my line too, to have that bond."

"Clarke. They'll all be Clarke. Daughters of the Eighth," I announced. For us men, it wasn't even a competition. We all agreed as our girl looked at us with those beautiful eyes of hers.

Raven, Fallon, Ember, and Jayla Clarke were ours.

~

## **Milo**

*(Present day)*

A weird sound caught our attention away from the couch. What on earth?

A rustling stirred. Followed by a cracking, it called us to look at the bay window. Oh, I forgot about Daisy's eggs. She laid them the night Princess gave birth, but the four eggs hadn't hatched in two years. We thought they were duds.

Rin did tell me dragon eggs incubate for eighteen months, but these took an extra six. In the pet bed Princess bought for Daisy's nest, we watched the dragonette fly to her babies as eggshells popped. This moment had us all anxious since the owls and parrot tag-teamed her. Speaking of, they made up, and she even allowed them to flock around the circular pillow right now.

All the little kids ran over to see the show. In a silent moment, no one spoke. We all waited with bated breath for these babies to show themselves. There may or may not have been a bet on what they'd look like.

"I see a beak!" Lear shouted. Clearly, he had his money on that. I had mine on scales.

The first one showed itself. We all cringed a little in excitement and horror. Looked like our children weren't the only things affected by magic when it came to multiple daddies. With gold parrot beaks, black dragon bodies, white owl wings, and a colorful parrot tail, the mutant babies were here. They were so ugly, they were cute, with large owl eyes.

Our four little ones immediately went straight for them. As though bonded, we now knew these creatures, born under the same magic, were their familiars. Speaking of, their eyes matched our daughters' irises. Well, we'd know whose was who's.

“What the fuck do we call those things?” Rin’s eyes were saucers. A delightful depiction of our Alpha.

“Well, they are part dragon, owl, and parrot.” Princess tapped her chin. “Pargowl? Owdar? Drarrowl?”

“Too many tongue ties in those.” I shook my head. “We could do Pod or Dop as the acronym?”

“Owww! Doppies! Like Dobby from *Harry Potter*!” Princess bounced around in excitement. Even though it was absurd, not one of us men could ever tell that woman no.

“Doppy it is.” I kissed the crown of her head. Mutant birds, that our daughters loved already, named after a *Harry Potter* house elf. When did this become our lives?

## Chapter 5



**S**evrin  
(*Present day*)

As a group, we helped Rita get all the food ready. With most of the people busy enjoying the company that arrived, I stayed behind the scenes. People and conversations weren't my fondest memories. Beau seemed to agree as he measured the alcohol meticulously for the spiked punch. Kitten still didn't drink, but she promised to try one fruity cocktail as long as we made sure she didn't have more.

Her mother's addictions still haunted her even though they weren't real. Lou and Kara were the ones to convince her into trying it tonight. After the birthday party, of course. Us guys didn't care if she wanted the house to remain alcohol free. We supported her. A bottle of scotch did sit on the top shelf in the kitchen, but we only enjoyed that when everyone was home.

Tonight, the remaining former circle—AKA the grandparents—decided they wanted the kids to stay with them. With most of us no longer having any parents, Lily's men never played favorites.

Even to Lou's and Kara's kids, they had them calling the former circle Nana and Papa. All of the parents loved it. The girls' birth showed a softer side to Daemon and Lucas I never knew existed. With how Leo treated Kitten, I knew he'd adore his grandchildren all the same. The weekends they took them were the only times Kitten had enough energy for bedroom play. My dragon understood her tiredness, but my dick didn't go off logic. Especially when my girl breastfed the munchkins. Fucking hell, her lactating did things to me. My dragon came out more just from the sight of her dripping breasts, knowing it helped our pups grow.

Going into my room, I closed myself into the bathroom and took my dick in my hand. There might've been a party going on, but that left me with more reason to relieve myself now. I didn't want my hard-on to display too much.

If my Kitten wanted sex tonight, I'd have no problem giving her another round, but I made myself achingly hard from the image of her lactating breasts that fed our young. It wasn't about the leaking milk. No, it was all about her being the best nurturer to the girls, so I needed to relieve my cock before the visitors got here in twenty minutes.

~

## **Octavia**

*(Three months post-pregnancy)*

Three babies fed, one more to go. Being a breastfeeding mommy made me feel like a milk cow. Besides changing their diapers and putting them to sleep, I fed them. Four little girls required me for their feedings. Three months into it and I saw no end. No light at the end of my tunnel. About a

week ago, I finally had to start supplementing them with formula because I couldn't handle how depressed it made me since I fed them constantly.

I'd freely admit I hadn't been okay. With my mom and Rita's help, I got out of my funk just a little bit. They both told me bottle feeding wouldn't be the end of the world, but it didn't change the stigma. Part of me felt like I failed my little ones. That I was being selfish in not wanting to feed them all the time.

God, the world's views on breastfeeding versus bottle-feeding were awful. With the support of my men, I finally grew strong enough to say I needed more of a break. Maybe if I only had one baby, I could've stuck it out. Still, it's fucking hard. I mainly focused on their morning feedings and nighttime ones.

So this nightly round had one more baby to go. Rin just took Raven to her crib in his room. Lear took Jayla and Bell gathered Emmy in his large arms. Seeing their daddies love them always did me in. Fallon sucked from me now with no sound. My heart broke every day when no noise left her little mouth.

My mute daughter.

Her brain aneurysm damaged her frontal lobe that controlled her vocal cords. It also messed a lot of people up physically, but Rin healed most of that. Thanks to magic, she'd almost be completely normal—just not her vocal cords.

Tears stung my eyes. Her beauty still held me under her spell, but how I wished I could give her what she was missing. I also prayed she wouldn't be teased for her missing voice. Real things like this were not the same as fairytales. No prince to kiss it away, but she had her mommy. I'd always be in her corner.

"Is she almost done?" Startled, I lifted my eyes to see Milo leaning into the

wall. He stood in his white tee and black boxers. His smile touched his golden eyes as he watched me. The same yellow eyes were displayed on our daughter. Her near-white hair came from him too. Just her Indian tan came from Lucius.

“Yeah,” I grinned at him. My voice choked a bit, and he heard my mild distress immediately.

“She’ll be okay, Princess. With us by her side, no one will hurt her.” His words were strong and true... but.

“I’m so scared. Learning ASL has been hard enough. We’ve been teaching all of our friends and family with her sisters, but I just wish the rest of the world could understand to learn it too.” My views on sign language drastically changed after having a child who would never speak.

“The world won’t revolve around her, but I thought about letting her carry around a dry erase board to communicate. I know it sounds silly, but-”

“I love it. It’s a great idea.” Now my eyes strung from the thought Milo put into this situation. If Fallon had one thing the others didn’t, it was a father whose drive never emptied. His Greed forced him to work endlessly before. Now, he redirected it to our daughter’s future needs. “The therapist I’ve been talking to said we could start teaching her sounds with her tongue when she gets old enough.”

“It’s a brilliant strategy.” He smiled down at me while caressing Fallon’s cheek with a single finger. God, he was ruining me.

“I love you, Milo.”

He beamed as I removed a sleeping Fallon from my boob. His hands were ready to retrieve her from hovering already. “We love you too, Princess. You’re the most devoted mother I’ve seen.”

He kissed my head and whisked Fallon away to her crib in their room. I



rotated nights with my men and babies. Tonight, it would be Rin's turn.

I walked in without my top or bra on because it felt like a cage and restrictive. When you feed four babies in a row, there didn't seem to be a point in keeping covered. Besides, no one would see me other than my men. By the door, I paused from hearing something. Peeking in, I found a sight that would forever be engraved into my memory.

And here I thought I couldn't love my Beast any more than I did. Above her crib, Rin rocked Raven in his arms to get her to fall back asleep. She always stirred in the transition from arms to bed.

It wasn't his sweetness that called to me. No, that came from hearing his deep voice carry a quiet tune. Sevrin Thana, first Alpha, and king, sang a lullaby to his daughter. My ovaries just exploded. Had I not just given birth, to four little girls, I would be spreading my legs right now. Well, I still would spread eagle right now. There'd just be no baby-making.

A warmth drizzled down my arms that were crossed below my boobs. I took my gaze off my attractive mate to see the boob juice. *Dammit*. I silently cursed just as Rin laid Raven down. When he came back up and saw the milky stream, I saw a quick flash of his dragon.

A feral growl rumbled within his chest. "You have no idea what seeing that does to me..."

I scoffed and squeezed my boobs for more to leak. I felt like a broken spigot. "This is not attractive."

"You feeding our young is not unattractive. It does a lot to my animal side. Nothing pleases my dragon more than seeing you nurture our children." With another growl, he swept me off my feet and into the shower. Covering my mouth, I didn't want to wake Raven as my excitement bubbled.

"You sing?" I had to ask the important things before I forgot. He turned on

the water with a grunt and nod. This clipped reply told me yes. Looked like Rin wasn't here anymore. With his back to me, I hurried and shimmied out of my sleep shorts.

My body—thanks to being a demon—bounced back a few weeks after the girls were born. Thank fuck. Four coming out of my birth canal would ruin me forever without magic.

Rin turned around just as I straightened back up. With no warning, I found myself seated on the counter in front of him. Huh. I thought we'd be having hot shower sex. Usually, this man liked to rut into me from behind.

Right now, his gaze locked with my nipple that seeped a little more milk. If it hadn't been for his starved appearance, I would've covered them. But something about the way his nostrils flared with his pupils dilating, told me to let him stare. I bit the corner of my mouth from my nerves getting to me just a little.

Soon, his deft finger came up and slowly slid over the puckered nipple. The sensation floored me as his calloused finger mixed with the cool air around us. The feather touch was a promise. One I needed him to keep right now. He caught the little droplet that emerged from my boob. That single-digit moved to his mouth as he swirled his tongue around the nectar of my body.

A moan escaped me as I watched his searing eyes demanding me. Rin didn't give me a minute to take in what he planned. Nope. His thick dick just shoved right in. Not that his dragon could contemplate the fact this would be my first time after having our girls. Worries tried compelling me into my anxious nature, but Rin's dragon didn't let me have time to waver.

Through our mind-connection, I felt his love for me—filling every visible pore on my body. Emotions swam to the surface as I let him have his way with me, but his intrusion left me in a drooling stupor. All worries if I'd enjoy

this were washed away as he fucked the shit out of me. Not literally, thank heavens.

My hands dug into his shoulders. The tips of my nails piercing his weathered skin. This man... This tortured soul, who faced Hellcats for his mother, loved me. The scars that marred his flesh might've been hidden by his tribal tattoos, but I could sense every ounce of ribbed flesh. In our connection, I let him feel how much I appreciated the fact he allowed me to touch his damage. My damage wasn't visible, but I let him in on the sensation—his mixed right in.

Two people that were wronged in several ways could do better, be better. We were not like the circle before ours. With our love, we'd rule righteously. The thoughts about how far we came sent me over the edge. Just as I was about to reach my-

## Chapter 6



**L**ear  
(*Present day*)

Where the hell did Rin go? Just as I was about to go find out, the damn doorbell sounded. With everyone busy in the living room, I moved to the door. Lo and behold, it was the cruelest assholes known to man. The ones who damned our daughters to a future none of us could predict.

“You rang the doorbell.” My dry tone escaped their knowledge to know I used sarcasm.

“It is a party. We didn’t want to be rude to the birthday girls.” Letum treated my statement as though I asked a question.

“We haven’t seen you since...” I had to do the math.

“Since I helped make the bracelets Octavia requested.” Without my allowance, the four Horsemen entered our city home. Needing a break, I figured I better let Rin know who just showed up. As I entered his suite, I

heard his grunts and groans from the door. You had got to be kidding me. We had a fucking birthday party going on, and he's rubbing one out!

Leaving no room for him to be warned, I burst through the door. I wanted to give him a piece of my mind, demand he come out and deal with the shit all of us other brothers had to deal with. Instead, I noticed how angry and swollen the head of his cock was. Instantly, arousal stirred in my own loins. The skin around the piercing in his shaft got a little raw from how he tugged on it.

Rin groaned in defeat. "I was just about to finish, but you ruined my fantasy."

"What were you thinking about this time?" All logical thoughts vanished as my hormonal ones came in. Aster and I fucked around in our room more times than not from Via being too tired. We'd treat her to orgasms, but actual sex had been off the table most nights. I still wasn't quite sure why staying home with the kids tired her so much.

She'd watch Aster fuck me before passing out. The others and I had fun moments too, but all of us missed our girl. She stayed home all day. What could be so tiring about that?

"When Kitten used to breastfeed," he grumbled as his hand started squeezing and slowly jerking his cock.

"Ah. Your dragon always did love a good mother," I pestered. Rin had me suck him more than once after walking in and seeing our girl nurturing our young.

I licked my lips at the memory of his shaft fucking my mouth. After almost three full years as a devoted circle, we found our groove. None of the guys mocked that I salivated while seeing their dicks. They weren't bothered by

the fact that when we did have an orgy with our girl, I always went last to savor it. Gods, did her sloppy cunt get me off.

Without realizing it, I stroked over the seam of my jeans to apply pressure right where I needed it. Damn did it feel amazing. How long had it been since I rubbed one out? Too long according to my cockhead twitching with precum.

“If you’re going to rub your dick, get on your knees so I can fuck your face,” Rin growled and stood up with his pants around his ankles. His hand released his cock as I watched it bob and bounce from gravity. My hand trembled from the utter excitement of getting off.

With my cock in hand, I fell to my knees with the back of my thighs resting on my calves. I barely opened in time as Rin forced his wide dick into my mouth.

“Take it all, Lear,” he groaned. Someone needed this today. Working my dick, I swiveled my hips back and forth to add to the movement of my hand. Rin just kept going as he rammed the back of my throat. If there’s one thing I got good at in our time together, it would be being fucked in the mouth.

“That’s right. You touch yourself from liking my cock in your fucking mouth.” Rin always loved his dirty words, so did I. “I can’t stop thinking about how much Kitten loved to be fucked when she was pregnant.”

The memory tortured me too. Via had at least three rounds a day in her second trimester. There was no slowing her down when she jumped us. Even when her stomach swelled, she wanted us. Not that we minded her round tummy. Demons loved knowing their offspring grew in the womb.

“You’re remembering it, aren’t you?” Rin demanded. I moaned around his shaft in reply. “Do you remember how raw she’d be? That you’d fuck her at the end of every day because her cunt got fucked so much?”

The memory of that finished me. I jerked my dick as my load shot up between Rin's legs. My release hit him, and the shock sent him over. Our Alpha never had another man's seed explode on him. Not like the load of his I swallowed now. Knowing my climax worked him over, I felt a little proud about it. He just laughed as we cleaned up. Well, we both were less stressed now.

## Chapter 7



**O**ctavia  
(*Present day*)

Those two. Both of them wore a playful smirk strutting out of the end of the hall. Only Rin and Lear could come out looking unabashed about their illicit activities. They didn't know I listened in at the door. That Rin openly talked about enjoying me as Lear choked on his cock.

I giggled. Straight up lost it to a fit of silliness that—no doubt—the alcohol I just sipped helped bring out. My first-time drinking came the day after my legal twenty-first birthday. I didn't start until my mom took my girls for the night. Anyway, the little bit I had took the hard edge off. The chip on my shoulder I'd had since the girls arrived. Their safety and dangers around them took over most of the time. I forgot how stressed I was until all of it lifted at once.

Part of me wanted to jump all of my circle's bones, but I also knew I had guests to entertain—the joys of hosting. Not that I could complain with



having Lou here tonight. Hell, even Kara's subtle advances were welcome.

"You warned your mom about the bracelets, right?" Lou giggled with me. She just didn't know I sniggered about my guys using each other so openly. I loved that they were comfortable, but I knew they missed me. I really needed to find the time to not be so tired. Four little girls took a lot out of this mama. All-day every day, mess after mess, I just owned the title of one hot mess mama. Though, I could tell the toll of being a stay-at-home-mom didn't just affect me.

"Yeah. She knows that unless she wants total chaos on her hands, she needs to leave the restrictive magical bands on them at all times." I looked over to the butthead who helped me cure the metal. Much like he did when building my slaying sword. "Thanks for the help with the bracelets by the way."

I raised my stemmed glass to him with my pink cocktail swishing around. Letum tried to hide his subtle smirk. His brothers outright laughed. It was no secret I just hit happy and tingly.

"Oh! By the way, when are you going to start training them?" I asked the four donkey rears. They let me know Raven would be Letum's prodigy. Ember would learn how to be War from Barin. Addis paired off with Jayla, and Kepi would handle my most vulnerable, Fallon.

I still wasn't over her brain injury that happened during her birth, but I had to stay grateful that it only ruined her vocal cord response and no physical movement. Thanks to magic, Rin was able to pull her through enough to heal her physically. We saw that miracle as she ran with her sisters now.

Fallon would never be able to talk, but from her being able to eat, I hoped to challenge her with sounds using her tongue. Her therapist started on the tongue exercises we discussed since her birth. Once we found out Fallon would never be as whole as her sisters, we all decided to learn how to sign.

We made sure that as a family unit, she'd never feel like an outcast. This mama knew how to play with the boys. If my girls were destined to take over for the cruelest of them all, I'd teach 'em how to take it head-on.

"When they are of learning age. Right now, they have too many tantrums and nonsense." Barin waved his hand dismissively in the direction the girls left in.

"Ah, I remember making their bands as my Shadowmen had a field day keeping up with the girls. Give my men an army, and they can annihilate their enemy. Give them four toddler girls? Not even they could contain the damage." Letum chuckled into his tumbler.

Speaking of the Shadowmen, Manny and Gare were on their honeymoon after getting hitched a week ago. Wrong week to add another important date to my calendar, but I was happy for them.

"How are your men?" I asked Death.

He shrugged. "They are shadows, young one. They don't do anything until called."

That nasty roll in my gut reminded me of that idea I had forever ago. Now, I had a chip I could play on the table.

"Will you ever free them? I mean to live as they want?" The tightness in my throat constricted even more.

"Not if I have a choice." He snorted.

"That's what I want," I jumped in immediately.

"What?" His incredulous expression would forever be imprinted into my memory.

"You owe me a favor. I want the Shadowmen to live all the time. They can stay in your dimension or whatever, but they need to be free." I nodded.

"That's what I want."

“You’re tipsy,” he countered.

“Be that as it may, I also thought about this a lot when we lived in your dimension. I want those shadows to enjoy life like my guide does. Please, Letum. Besides being bound by word, do it because it’s the right thing to do.”

Everyone ping-ponged their expressions between us. Even his brothers locked up and watched what the one named Death would choose.

After a long pause, he sighed. “Fine.”

I squealed. He raised his hand to stop my excitement.

“But, I’m going to need your help. Pack a bag to last a few days, and you will come with me to arrange whatever it is you see for them.” His words had me stopping.

Before I could give my response, Addis piped up. “It will be good now before getting the schools back up anyways. We might still have sixteen years until we use them, but your shadows can help.” The schools. I forgot about Letum mentioning that.

Slippery snake hid behind partial truths the day I found out I was pregnant. He mentioned his heir to deceive me into thinking I only had one. No, I had an heir for each of them.

“The schools?” Beau asked from his spot.

“If these little ones are taking over as the Horsemen, they’ll need generals. We’ve worked out that they’ll need the trials as well to prove they are the best,” Barin grunted. “Plus, we’re hoping their Pandora powers will help balance their generals from going mad.”

As the next argument began, I went back to Letum’s request. How could I give up three days?

“Wait!” I stopped the incensed conversation to rewind. “Letum, I have the girls every day. I can’t leave them.”

Anxiety already came from my mom taking them tonight. A few days?

“V, we can handle the girls for a few days.” Beau drew my attention.

Lear snorted. “There’s seven of us and four of them. We’ll be completely fine. You go and be a badass while we manage the kids.”

“I’ll keep Milo at the office while the rest of us stay home.” Rin winked. “You need a break, Kitten. I think this is the best plan of action for you to get that as well as your favor.”

“But...” I tried holding back the tears.

My girls had become my life. Everything I did involved something for them. I didn’t like leaving my little ones, but at the same time, I knew my fire burned out a long time ago. “Okay. Let me go pack and make a list for the guys with things-”

“Via, we got this. We’ve watched you a million times.” Lear walked over to help me stand up.

Bell came to get behind me. His hands sat on my shoulders as he guided me back to my closet. “Honey, we are more than capable of caring for our young in your absence. Give us some credit.”

Dammit. He was right. “Well, I guess I’ll see you in three days. Just remember my mom is bringing them back tomorrow night.”

“We will. Now, go have your trip and maybe get some extra sleep while you’re there.” Bell kissed my head and left me to pack. I had to trust that the fathers to my daughters could manage things for a few days.

## Chapter 8



**A**ster  
*(Present day for the rest of the book)*

Early mornings.

Ugh.

My least favorite part about returning home. On the road, I could sleep until noon or later with no issue. Here, my daughter just had to be a morning person. With me being home and Octavia away, it was my job to give Lear a tiny break today. Hence why I stumbled down the hallway like a drunk to Jayla's room. I could hear just how much of a morning person she seemed to be.

I checked my phone to see Lily texted our group saying she forgot their bracelets and would be away for a few days to get them back. I snorted. I think we'd survive without their dress-up pieces. Another ear-shattering squeal sounded as I neared her room. We moved them into their own rooms at one to not see things in our bed.

“La-la-la-la,” Jayla cooed. With my vocal abilities, it sounded like our daughter might follow in my footsteps. Her high notes were top notch, just a little wild. Our daughter... One with Asian eyes, with Lear’s jade shade, but with wavy, blond locks like mine. Her cheekbones were her mother’s, but she also got my dimples. Adorable, in simple terms. No mistaking who parented her in the magical womb of her gorgeous mother.

God, I missed Octavia. I only got to see her for a day before she needed to leave, and she slept a good chunk of it. Hopefully, she’d be excited to know I planned on doing shorter tours.

I had missed so much already. When I left, Jayla Joy could barely walk. Now, the little Devil ran like an Olympic champion. I didn’t want to miss anything else from how fast she grew. Now, she looked up to me with those doe-eyes I loved so much. “Daddy Asser!”

She couldn’t pronounce things properly yet, but I didn’t expect her to. I loved hearing the adolescent phrases on her tongue. Lifting my daughter from her crib, I loved on her with a dozen kisses. Even now, she had that delicious baby smell from her bath and lotion last night. I didn’t have to bathe her this morning because of her nightly one. We did have to do the A.M. routine of the diaper drill. I found myself so tired, that the diaper tabs were missing to secure it. My fingers tried to pull the flaps up but found a smooth surface instead.

What the hell?

Jayla just laughed at me while I tried to figure out why they left a defective diaper in the box. Surely, someone must’ve known their machine pooped out deformed diapers. Apparently, they were a sandwich short of a picnic. I’d have to call and have a word with them. Diapers were not a cheap option, and they needed to do their job better.

Huffing, I set Jayla down while dialing the customer service line I read off the box. I got the robot telling me my call might be recorded for quality assurance before being directed to a representative. “Dampers Plus! This is Karen at customer service. How may I help you?” Her voice remained too sweet for my liking.

I was mad at her. “Hello, this is Aster Avila.”

The woman gasped on the other end.

“So, you’ve heard of me. Good. I have a complaint about these diapers of yours. I just got back from touring and am giving the mother of my child a break. You must understand my shock when I find the next diaper missing the Velcro tabs to secure it.”

“I’m very sorry to hear that, sir. Do you have the diaper nearby?” Her voice stuck to some kind of script.

“I have it in my hand right now,” I clutched it in my palm.

“Okay, I’m going to have you do something for me.” She let me know, and I agreed. “Hold the diaper up. Let me know when you do.”

I did as she instructed. “Okay, what next?”

“Turn it around,” her voice deadpanned.

Using my ear and shoulder to lock around my phone, I did just that. Immediately, I could tell the rep had just played me the simple fool. I had the damn thing backward the whole fucking time. Being so exhausted, I hadn’t noticed my basic error.

“Did that help, Mr. Avila?”

From my embracement, I hung up. Well, shite. How do I tell the other’s this one? My plan would be to bury this little story and pretend it never happened. No one would ever know.

Whistling, I looked around the room to find Jayla. We still had a diaper to

secure. Only, she wasn't anywhere within my sight. Checking every nook and cranny her room offered, I found zero evidence of her naked, little bum.

"Jayla!" I hollered as I left the room. A high-pitched giggle gave away her little game of hide-and-go-seek. "JJ?"

Her nickname slipped from my lips. Lear and I both got in the habit of calling her Jay or JJ. Her mommy didn't like either. Probably from Rin calling Raven, Rae as well. Too boyish, but I liked the idea of that. Making my daughter seem more robust just by the ruggedness of her nickname. Maybe we could get the boys to stay away if we kept up the nickname.

A slight laugh sidetracked me. Moving my way down the hallway, I saw clouds of white puffing out of the kitchen. I wasn't sure I wanted to see this, but alas, I had to. Another fucking laugh ended the riddle that had me hunting down my daughter. Turning the corner, my eyes about burst from their sockets! Jayla had a twenty-five-pound bag of flour open with over half of it around her feet.

Cupped in her hands, she blew another cloud off them that signaled her naughty behavior. Her feet kicked and danced in the damn stuff. Elated, her happiness couldn't stop my gut from souring. Octavia would kill me if she came home and found the bang-up job this dear ole da was doing. Air going to my lungs halted movement. My whole body went numb. That's a sign of a stroke, right? Or is it a heart attack? Either way, I needed a medic.

"Man down," I whispered as my body slumped to my knees. My hands fisted into my hair. A long whistle came from behind me as Beau patted my shoulder.

"This is definitely not your finest moment as a dad." The wanker chuckled. I wanted to give him a piece of my mind as I climbed to my feet and raised a finger.



Before words could leave my mouth, the sound of running water caught my attention. We both turned to my two-year-old just in time to see her standing like a sumo wrestler to watch herself pee on the fucking floor. Her large eyes lifted to my horrified ones. “Uh-oh...” She let her mouth make an adorable, tiny circle. Uh-oh was right. My hand lifted the damn diaper that started this all. If only I had put it on the right way the first time.

## Chapter 9



**S**evrin

“I said no, Raven.” I put my foot down on this. The little sneak climbed out of her crib and then crept into the kitchen. She climbed up onto the counter by using the drawers as steps. Her intelligence never ceased to amaze me. Now, I stood holding a bag of chocolate chip cookies over my head for my spawn to stop eating. Rae’s hair was a gnarly mess. It looked like she stuck her finger in an outlet from how it nested around her petite face.

Out of all the girls, she had the longest hair already. Emmy’s might rival it if her curls were straight. A growl bubbled from her throat. God, did I have a feral daughter? Her dragon just had to be as stubborn as mine. A flash of dominance zinged over her grey eyes just as I spoke about her beast.

My girl was an Alpha. No doubt about it. I loved it. I just struggled to raise it. Two laughs came from behind me. One came from Aster as he cleaned up

a giant load of flour. He had Jayla dumping handfuls into the garbage bag as they sang about cleaning it.

Like he had any right to laugh at me as he sang about messes not mixing with dresses. Or his other line about mom might kill him and remove his priceless limb. The lyrics excited Jay without her knowing their true meaning, but her mother would be none too pleased if she ever repeated them. We had been warned on more than one occasion to not speak profane thoughts in front of virgin ears—Kitten’s words, not mine.

The other chuckle came from Beau as he made his coffee. Two mugs sat before him. It didn’t take a scientist to know how close he and Bell had grown. Sharing a daughter made them bond into more than just brothers. Well, I guess we all did to some degree.

I was just the poor sap who got a daughter to myself from my dragon picking up the slack. We also figured out the pattern of their arrival, and their paternity stemmed from the moment, the Horsemen triggered her heat cycle.

My dragon and I mated her first. Then Lo and Luce in their room. She fucked Bell and Beau in the closet. Then there was the whole swimming ordeal with Aster and Lear.

“Mine!” Raven leapt from the counter and snagged the bag of cookies. She landed on the floor in a crouch as I just gaped. My hand stayed frozen midair. What the fuck kind of ninja did I help create? Was this what Kitten dealt with every day? After today, I would never let her do this alone again. Just from our daredevil, she needed five pairs of eyes.

I quickly jerked the bag out of her hands and decided hiding the cookies in my room would be the best course of action. As I entered the hall, another wild snarl came from my daughter. I checked for her location over my shoulder just as my eyes caught her shift for the first time.

Kitten had told me Rae's dragon was like nothing she had ever seen, but it was something not even I could believe. Flames licked around her body as she morphed from man to beast. Once she shifted, I gawked at the dragon made of fire five feet away. They weren't the orange hues, either. No, from her Alpha role, she held the blue flames like the Alpha hounds. Her diminutive wings spread with the colors of her flames flaring beneath her black scales.

Finally picking my jaw up from the floor, Raven bellowed so hard, her dragon's legs trembled. That's when I comprehended what she was doing. Leaping just a second too late, her breath of fire licked my feet. Blisters came instantly as I hopped around. Just like the time I stepped on Kitten's forks, I tried to hopscotch my way through the maze.

"Oh shit! Oh shit!" I kept shouting as I stomped around like the giant I never stopped being. Fucking Beau stood behind my daughter. Two mugs were poised before him. Not even he could take in the sight in front of him.

When her fire stopped spewing from her mouth, she seethed as she panted. Her grey eyes crossed over to her animal and reflected my terrified face. Beau ran past us and left me behind before Rae could take him out with me.

"Coward!" I yelled.

"Just give her the cookie!" he replied.

Damn his logic. My hand worked out one. As I fished the broken one out, my daughter growled. In fear of her fire, I dropped the damn thing on the floor.

The broken pieces turned to charcoal as she did as I feared. Yup, more flames. "Oh shit! Raven Lilith, if you want a fucking cookie, you better stop right now!"

Yes, I just yelled at my daughter. This time, the tiny dragon no bigger than

Daisy, sat on her hindquarters like a fucking dog. Even her heavy tail twitched behind her. I sighed with a nod. This time, I made sure I got a full cookie to not get her fire again. I'd also need to ice my feet until the magic healed them.

And people said terrible twos were bad. Fuck you all. I had a demonic dragon for a two-year-old. Tantrums and meltdowns? Nothing unless your child flamed up too. I tossed her the cookie and hid the bag in my boxers. Not like I had anything else on.

“Good girl,” I cooed. Positive reinforcement. I remembered Kitten telling us to use it. Damn, I was pretty good at this parenting shit. My gloating stopped when I noticed Raven looking for the bag missing from my hand. “All gone.”

I took a step back from her in hopes she'd let me evacuate. The fucking bag of cookies crinkled in my drawers, and the predator honed in. Her feet took position as her snout lifted, sniffing them out. Shit.

“Raven!” It was too late. My hands moved to cover the blow, but the fire burned them with everything inside my pants. The bag caught fire in my underwear right on my penis.

## Chapter 10



**B**ellamy

“Oh no!” Ember grabbed her little horse trailer to pull the toy horse, laying it on her. I just watched from the doorway with a warm grin. “I save you!”

Her little, toddler voice always warmed my heart. Gods, how I wished my mother could meet this little firecracker. A pang pulsed in my chest. I held my breath through the ache, but I let my mother infiltrate my thoughts while enduring the sorrow.

It never got easier without my mom. I missed her every day. Every time I saw a York Mint Patty, my hand lightly grazed the silver wrapper. They were my mother’s favorite little treat, and I wanted that reminder. The little bit of pain remained welcome because it made me know what I felt for her was genuine.

That same candy? Now, I kept a pack of them on-hand because Emmy loved them too. Turning back, I watched her be the veterinarian in her little

game. Her auburn curls were a mess of coconut oil because neither Beau nor I paid attention to Honey when she did it. We put way too much of it on to tame her corkscrew curls that she got from me. Well, mine weren't quite that tight, but the afro she sported, stunned everyone on the streets. Everywhere we went, Ember turned heads.

Her skin tone sat between mine and Honey's shade. A tawny darkness with Beau's dark, red hair. The knockout part of her beauty remained within the baby blue hue of her irises. My eyes, just on her now. A complex blend of perfection rarely seen. All of our daughters held unique attributes—both physically and intellectually.

“Hey.” Beau wandered over to me with two coffee cups. I smiled at his offering before turning back to our daughter. Our daughter. Man, that was weird to think about—three people creating something together. There would never be a question to who Emmy belonged to with her hair and eyes. I smiled while watching her play.

“Jay made a mess in the kitchen. There's flour everywhere. Aster is having a great time being back from his tour.” Beau snickered quietly. We didn't want to disrupt our daughter from her playing. “Rae just lit Rin's dick up in flames over a bag of cookies.”

That last story had me cocking my brow. Come to think of it, I could hear his painful grunting now. “I think today has shown all of us that Via is a miracle worker when it comes to motherhood.” I sighed, missing her.

We turned our attention back to Emmy. I smiled at how cute and perfect she was playing with her horses. “More!” She took a toy hammer to the pony's chest. “Oh no! You gonna die!”

Wow. She was banging on that thing pretty hard. My brows went to the center of my forehead. Even my smile fell a tiny bit as I watched closer.

BANG!

BANG!

BANG!

With each new slam of the pink hammer, my nuts shriveled up. I winced, as did Beau. A laugh of excitement bubbled from her lips as she drove another hit onto the poor horse. We heard the plastic break before seeing it. Emmy lifted her hand to reveal the horse being cracked above a leg, right below the neck.

She studied the damage and then shrugged. “You dead.”

She tossed the pony over her shoulder. It sailed our way. In its crash, it plunked to the ground by our feet. What the fuck? Did I say cute and perfect? My daughter could model a video for animal cruelty! How did we make a spawn this evil?

This was what happened when Devils bred. Emmy moved onto her next victim. I could no longer stay patient with what she was doing to them. This time, the hammer swung harder at the toy. Beau and I grimaced from it.

“Ahhh! I can’t save you!” Ember took more swings with the pink, plastic hammer. Her cackle told us she didn’t want the thing to live. The irony of that old saying came into my mind. You can’t beat a dead horse. Well, my daughter decided to prove that theory wrong. In a literal sense, she beat her dead ponies.

When she tossed this next one over her shoulder, it hit me in the thigh. My little grunt caught her attention. She turned those big, round eyes on us with a megawatt smile. Ah, fuck. Now my heart went back to melting.

“Daddies!” She squealed while getting up to come over to us. Her tulle dress sashayed with her padding feet. Her poor hair looked a little limp from how much coconut oil we put in. When she clutched my leg and rubbed her



face into my knee, I saw the oil. Now on my jeans, the stuff streaked my pants. Beau and I both got a little disgusted over it, adding that to the list of things Honey would have to show us how to do properly. We still had one more day to go without her presence.

Next time, the group of us would pay closer attention to what she does all day. We all owed her an apology for assuming she just stayed home and did nothing. Talk about putting us in our place.

“You play?” Emmy asked from Beau’s leg she now hugged.

“Of course, Firecracker.” Beau’s hand went to stir her hair. The second it touched the sloppy oil, he recoiled. Emmy squealed while running back into her room. We entered while she pulled everything out of her closet. A little girl’s closet was a monstrous sight to behold for a man—a lot of pink and frou-frou to wade through. Lace and glitter caught my eye as well.

“Wear dis!” Emmy threw gaudy hats at us. The ones you saw those women wear to horse races. Beau gave his headpiece a distasteful sneer but did as our daughter asked. I just bucked up and put the damn thing on. Emmy took Beau’s hand while tugging him down to the floor. He handed me his coffee to do it, but some spilled on his crotch in the exchange.

“Oh no, Daddy! You broken!” Emmy gasped.

She moved like lightning. There was nothing either of us could do. Ember Jane took her pink hammer and nailed Beau right in the nuts. He grunted while losing all the color in his face. He rolled over into the fetal position and cupped his nuts. His groans didn’t detract Emmy from ‘fixing’ him. She kept nailing him with more blunt swings along his side.

Me? I dropped the two mugs in horror. At the sound of the cups shattering, Emmy looked to me. She blinked and gazed up to me under those long black lashes.

“Daddy? You mess!” She pointed to the mess at my feet.

I couldn't say anything. Nope, not a word. My daughter just took out her other daddy with one solid swing to the nuts. All my mind could think about was Octavia. Like mother, like daughter... Looked like we're going to have another beautiful psycho on our hands.

## Chapter 11



**L**ear

Energy. So much energy.

Why did a two-year-old have that amount of energy? She's teeny! No wonder Via didn't want to do anything when we came home at night. Fuck, the clock didn't even read noon yet, and I crapped out.

I moved into the kitchen to pour myself something stiff to make it through the day. Aster groaned from his place on the couch. His face remained down and between the cushions. His limbs looked paralyzed as half his body hung off the couch.

"And I thought afterparties were bad," he whined. I moved over to sit beside him, so he lifted his head for my legs to go under.

Yup, I cradled Aster's head in my lap to soothe us both. Just as I was about to sip the only thing strong enough to ebb my headache away, Aster stopped me. "Mate, you can't day-drink while watching kids."

I peered down at my tumbler and cursed profusely. Not much for crying, I might actually give into the tears right now.

“I can’t do this. How does Via do this every day with FOUR of them?” I set my drink down on the coffee table. Still, I couldn’t take my gaze off to the amber liquid calling to me. My eyes stung with tears.

“Only one more day, mate. You have me until she gets back, yeah.” Aster sounded a little miffed too. The idea of one more day sounded traumatizing to us both. JJ would suck our souls out by then. Maybe her powers drained us to steal our energy. That made more sense from how much she had.

My hand aimlessly played in Aster’s waves. The motion helped us both out.

“One more day,” I whispered my prayer to survive.

“We should get her some help, yeah?” Aster’s voice drifted off from him dozing. I sat in the same boat as him. My head fell to rest on the back of the couch. “A nanny or some shite.”

I mumbled my agreement just as sleep took over. Naptime. Now, this was some shit I could get behind.

~

Squeals had both of us sitting up in a panic. I clutched my heart with wide eyes. Aster turned to me as we listened to our daughter sound again. The noises coming from her were not mean or whiny, but she had a set of lungs on her. Jayla’s excitement had us both moving down the hall. What on earth could be making her giggle and squeal like a Banshee?

Parting her door open enough to peer in, we both started cringing from the sight. Above our daughter, we noticed the swarm of flies circling. Her little hands clapped while watching them. More squeals left her mouth like we

took her to a circus. At the same time, Aster and I took a whiff. I mean, when you see a group of flies hovering, it usually was garbage or shit.

“When did you change her last?” Aster whisper-hissed.

“I thought you did,” I sputtered. Both of us sighed while moving into the room. Well, more like we inched in just in case whatever she bred in here was contagious.

“JJ?” I leaned over her railing with a timid grin. Seeing her two daddies always made her excited. Those green eyes she got from me still softened my soul when she beheld me with them. They slanted like mine, but sat larger and more innocent.

“Dada! Dada!” JJ’s excitement honed in on her daddy that just got back from touring. Aster’s eyes welled up. The poor bastard missed a lot from being on the road recently. Working at Brimstone had me missing out on small things. He missed her becoming a toddler instead of a stumbling baby trying to walk. Now, we had to chase her down from running so much. Though, his episode this morning might send him running back out to the bus.

“She’s so beautiful.” Aster lost sight of the damn flies as his hand caressed her cheek. She giggled and rolled over to attack his hand. Turning into the little demon I grew accustomed to, she bit his arm. “What the fuck?”

He reared back in absolute shock. The horror of our teething toddler’s actions showed within his rounded eyes.

“Ut da duck?” she repeated.

“Fucckkk...” I ran my hands through my hair. “Via will kill us if she says that!”

“Ducckkk!” JJ just had to use my word against me.

“It sounds like duck. We’ll be totally fine, mate.” Aster waved me off.

“Now, hand me your flipflop so I can swat these vermin away from our daughter.”

“You’re right. Via won’t ever know she’s saying fuck.” I nodded while stripping my shoe off.

“Duck!” JJ just had to metaphorically knee me in the balls. Aster took my shoe and swung it at one of the nasty things. He smushed it into the wall above the crib.

When he lifted the sandal to reveal the dead fly, JJ started sobbing. I wasn’t talking about a little weeping. She full-on threw her little body around and let her limbs whack everything around them.

“The hell?” I asked.

“Just lift her up. The sound probably scared her.” Aster made a good point.

I hooked her up by the armpits and held her to my chest. Her blonde waves got into my mouth from the static of her roll. Using my shoe as a bat, Aster clubbed more flies. Every time one went down, JJ threw herself in my arms. Her little hand reached out toward Aster as her bottom lip quivered. He stopped to study her.

Pointing her finger at the dead flies, she cried harder. What I wouldn’t give for her to have Ember’s mind right now. That little one could talk your ear off with her gifts. JJ remained a typical toddler, but we couldn’t figure out what she needed from us.

On her finger, she had extended, one of the living flies landed on it. She giggled again and kissed its head. The fly never moved. I mean, if you’ve ever tried capturing a fly, they usually escape right before you can touch them. This one appeared to be nuzzling into her hand as she petted it. JJ delighted again as more flies landed up her arm.

I gulped while looking at her other father. There would be no questioning it

now. Our daughter was Pestilence's heir. We tried denying it long enough. There'd be no going back after today. We just had to help her grow into her strange magic.

## Chapter 12



**L**ucius

“I’ll give you a cookie.” I waved my damn arm—with said cookie—up at the ceiling. Fallon’s little hiccup—that we’ve come to know as her laugh—echoed through the whole hallway. Moving down, I tried to make sure I could catch her when she reappeared. I loved Milo Gifre to the moon and back, but his heritage, not so much.

Our daughter took his Banshee abilities to a whole new level. Mixed in with her Famine magic, Fallon could literally lose her corporeal body. The little cutie could turn into a spirit and go entirely invisible. An impossible combination created a rare species. We called her a Phantom just as the few who still lived. Very rare, but very powerful Banshee lines could have them mixed with the right magic. See what happens when you fall head over heels for a damn anomaly? You create four more.

“Fallon, sweetheart, daddy really needs you to come back. We’ll snuggle on the couch and watch your Barbie shows. Preferably before Daddy Lo



comes home.” I was on my last leg with this. My trekking had gone on for over an hour. Just following her gimpy noises from her not being able to speak.

Maybe we needed to buy her a bell. I knew how ridiculous that sounded, but what else was I to do? Fallon’s a mute child who went invisible and unsolidified. It wasn’t like I’d collar her. Maybe a cute little bracelet for my little one. I loved that her tan skin and lips came from me, but even more that her white hair and yellow eyes were all Lo’s. Princess contributed to her other looks, but Fallon took on our colorings.

“Darling, please come to daddy?” My grip on the dessert made it break. I groaned, unable to hide my disappointment. “And that’s how the cookie crumbles.”

I quoted *Bruce Almighty*.

“What has your cookie crumbling?” Lo came in through the front door to the penthouse. His jacket unbuttoned with a hand pulling his tie loose. A briefcase sat in his other grip. Fallon’s hiccup echoed above us. I gave a half-laugh, half-cry from being overly frustrated. How did Princess do this day in and day out? I couldn’t even last til now.

“I can’t do this. How does our girl do it?” I lost my mind. Throwing the rest of the cookie into the wall across the room, we watched it break apart the rest of the way.

“Luce-” I cut him off.

“For hell’s sake! Fallon is floating around God knows where! She can’t talk to me! She can’t let me know she’s safe besides that adorable hiccup we know to be her laugh! I’m failing her, Milo. I’m failing our daughter because I don’t know how to work with her.”

The man I fell for moved to me. He left no room between us as he backed

me up against the wall.

“Why are you really afraid, Luce? Tell me.” My Dom commanded. His tone left me needing to speak.

“What if—like right now—I can’t protect her? What if she’s bullied like her mom? Gods, I can’t bear the thought of her fighting this world without us—let alone as a fucking Horseman! I want to kill those brothers for what they’ve done! I want my little girl to be happy forever while I keep her safe, but I can’t even keep her safe at my side with her abilities.”

There. I said the words that haunted me since we found out her brain got damaged. My daughter would never be normal. Her hands were her communication, but only when she let you see her. Lo moved to me. He took me in his hold as I cried on his shoulder. One of us needed to keep on top of the company while our girl worked her magic with Letum. My lover could run that place with his eyes closed while we stayed back to watch the kids, but this was what he came home to.

Aster still hadn’t cleaned up all the flour. Cookie crumbs were everywhere from me chasing my daughter. Scorch marks lined the hallway from Raven’s anger issues. Yeah, Milo could see how we failed on epic proportions.

The front door opened with a knock. Tyr moved in to see my lover. The Hellhound had proven himself quite useful within our business. He still needed to learn personal skills, but in almost three years, he came a long way from the rogue pup.

“King Lucius.” Tyr dipped his head in honor. Still weirded me out to hear my title but was growing used to it the more it’s used.

“Tyr, you are family. Stop the king nonsense.” I winked. The corner of his mouth flickered with a barely-there movement. The boy struggled to allow

himself to feel anything. Sal and Minus were sick bastards. Dead ones, but evil nonetheless.

Just as we were about to move farther into the home, Fallon's hiccup sounded. Like lightning, Tyr noticed the movement and caught our daughter as she fell from the ceiling above him. He held her like Simba in *The Lion King*. The poor lad didn't know what to do with her as they blinked at each other.

Fallon's full lips parted as she studied him with her curious expression. Her hands cupped his jawline that held his trimmed beard. Tyr stiffened from her naïve intrusion. My daughter didn't know she was messing with a wild Alpha, but I don't think she'd care if she did. All our brothers came down the hall with the girls in tow. They stopped to see Fallon feeling Tyr for her sensory memorization. Her doctor told me about this. She'd rely heavily on her other senses to compensate the one she was missing.

"Tyr, are you in control?" Rin moved to his second. Between Rin and Lo, Tyr became another brother. Just one we didn't share our Pandora with.

The Hellhound gulped and closed his fiery eyes. He nodded to his supreme Alpha for us all to know my daughter sat safely in his hold. I released a breath I didn't realize I held in until now. Fallon hiccupped her laugh before hugging Tyr around his neck. He just remained frozen while letting my daughter maul him.

"You guys have had a long day. Why don't I make dinner?" Lo kissed my cheek before moving into the kitchen. "Tyr, are you staying?"

We looked over to see the boy sniffing our daughter's hair. Knowing what he was, helped us understand he needed to grow accustomed to her scent. It would help him around her next time, and he wouldn't lock up quite as much.

Setting her down, we watched her wobble over to her sisters. All four of them sat down in their area and played together.

“No. I must be going. I just came to drop off paperwork from my father.” Tyr set down the manila folder before rushing out the door. On his last glance, he spared it for my daughter. A little odd for my taste, but the guy got a pass on awkward shit. He didn’t kill my little girl, so he remained fine in my book.

## Chapter 13



**B**<sup>eau</sup>

I helped her finger skim one of my favorite classics. *Robin Hood* came to life on the pages. The little pictures helped guide her reading, and I loved when Emmy read with me.

Her keen mind showed Barin's influence when it came to her learning. Emmy started talking way too young. Her sentences were spoken shortly after that. Now, I had her reading basic words. This was what happened when magic breeds advanced children. Fallon came out as a rare Phantom. Jay became *Lord of the Flies* today—more appropriately, Lady of the Flies. Rae just had to have a dragon body of Hellfire around her scales.

My daughter had the intelligence of a third-grader already.

“Daddy Beau?” she asked. Her voice was still high to help me feel like she was still little.

“Yes, Baby?” I loved these moments with just the two of us. My innocent little girl let me share my favorite past time with her.

“What’s a cock?”

I choked on air. “Um, where did you hear that word?”

“In da books under da bed.” She shrugged.

Oh fuck. She found my hidden romance novels. The ones Lou josted me about for reading. Sometimes, V let me read them with her to arouse both of us before we fooled around.

“Nothing you need to know about, Emmy.” I kissed the top of her head. Regret formed immediately as her oily hair coated my lips.

“Ya, huh! It said cocks were da best. They made her feel good. I want one, Daddy Beau. I want a cock!” Dear God, please just strike me down with lightning. Kill me before V finds out our daughter has been reading our ladyporn collection.

“Sweetheart, cock is another word for rooster.” My brilliant mind found a way out of this pickle!

“Why would a rooster feel good in da butthole?”

My world tipped. Everything I saw about life changed. Emmy would be wearing a chastity belt for eternity from her curiosity. Not even when I popped her mother’s ass cherry could persuade me to be okay with my daughter talking like this. I couldn’t let her be inquisitive already. She needed to play Barbies or fuck, let her kill more ponies!

How could I fix this issue I put myself in?

“Mama will be home tonight and not tomorrow.” Emmy closed the book. Did I fail to mention she had a touch of Soothsayer in her too? Answer to my first question? V would kill me before I could.

## Chapter 14



**O**ctavia

“Thanks for opening the rift!” I waved goodbye to the Shadowman who held no qualms about his hanging manhood. Maybe when the girls got older, I could teach them about modesty. The shadow stood proudly as a man on his side. Now the shadows had the ability to change between their black figures to their bronze ones whenever they wanted.

Letum promised me he’d use his school for the next decade to educate the guys on how to fit in. He felt a little bad after seeing their level of excitement about being free. He never once thought to ask his people if they wanted to live. Total dick move, in my book.

When the rift sealed behind me, I moved down the hallway to the elevator. I needed to go up it still from that shadow not knowing where I needed to go fully. Manny just had to be gone on his honeymoon when I went back into the Shadowlands. Oh well. The job finished early, and my conscience didn’t nag at me anymore. Plus, I had the best sleep of my life last night.

I planned on using my good mood to get my rocks off tonight. Maybe I could enjoy all my men again... At the same time. We haven't in months from my exhaustion. Tonight, it would be different though. I opened the front door to our house with my key just as Beau ran into the living room. "Guys! She'll be here tonight!"

They all tried to hurry, but I cleared my throat to halt their movements. Panic could be read on every expression before me. Emmy skipped down the hallway and joined her sisters in their corner. They were all there, but I did notice Emmy's poor hair.

I didn't think Rin attempted to comb Raven's wad of knots either. Jayla had white powder polka-dotted her bare legs, but at least she had a diaper on. Only Raven and Emmy were potty trained so far. They also had the magic that helped them learn quicker with that. Raven's dragon knew what to do, and Emmy's intelligence showed her.

Fallon clicked her tongue at me to gain my attention. My heart warmed as I signed my love to her. God, I missed them. Two days away had been better than three, but I couldn't check up on them at Letum's manor.

Taking in the penthouse, I found the tornado that hit it. Crumbs everywhere, flour, and... were those scorch marks?

Just then, my phone dinged with a text from having service again. My mom texted to let us know she forgot the bracelets they took off to show Nana and Papas their powers.

Ah. The mess made more sense.

I turned to find the guys looking rather worse for wear. Rin had icepacks smothering his crotch. Aster laid over the coffee table in a heap of exhaustion. Beau moved to borrow some ice from Rin to put on his own junk.



Lucius's eyes were rimmed with red. Milo stood in the kitchen to prepare dinner. Bell gave me a very limp grin. Lear... Where?

A flash and a dive later, Lear hugged around my ankles. "Thank heavens you're home! I'm sorry I never understood your exhaustion! I'm sorry I thought you had it easy! Never let my mouth take a foot into it again!"

Well then...

"Uh, I take it things didn't go well?" I asked.

Milo pointed to a woman I had missed since coming back in. She sat near the girls and helped them color at their little table.

"Meet Liz Jamriska. Your new nanny." Milo's words had my eyes widening. Today went that bad, huh?

"Nice to meet you." She fangirled for a minute. I shook her hand. Taking in her moss-green eyes and light brown hair, I liked her instantly. She seemed a bit wild but down to earth at the same time.

"You too. I'm Via."

"Oh, I know. You met my sisters when they helped you with the war." Liz's eager aura felt familiar.

"Your sisters?"

"The Order of Amarties. I'm one of the few survivors left, but don't worry! We changed our hunting to only naughty demons. We've got your back Queen Octavia!"

My title. I hated being called a queen. It never sat right with my upbringing. Still, that's exactly what I was. Everyone in our community knew it, and some of the human leaders did too.

"A few of you survived?" I asked, feeling guilty when they all were mass murdered.

"Yeah, my friend Yosette and I were in Mexico when shit went down.

Though, Yosette is kind of...”

I tuned out the rest, knowing exactly where Yosette was. Hello, Conscience, we meet again. All the guys flinched as she spoke. The odds were never in our favor for this type of thing.

I gave Lucius a look, and he immediately pulled out his phone to make some calls. I’d forgive the nurse for what she did, but I couldn’t guarantee her safety if she tried getting to my men again. Liz went back to the girls. Raven dropped her crayon and stared at it as it rolled away. When it finally stopped, her mouth opened. “Oh, tit!”

My sharp gaze landed on her father. Rin’s eyes turned into full moons. “Oh shit!”

Figured as much.

“Ut da duck?” Jayla said to Raven in response. Now I turned my steeling gaze onto her daddies.

“Fucckkk...” Lear cursed. “Babe, you’ve got to understand the hell they put us through first. JJ got into flour, and she peed in it. Oh, and had flies swarming her. Rae shifted and burned Rin’s penis and balls. Emmy kills her toys violently. Fallon phantomed for hours on end. It’s been a hard day.”

I nodded while trying to bite back my grin. “Do you guys remember when I had that emergency meeting with Letum?”

“Like a year ago.” Lear snorted.

“Do you remember why I left with the girls?” I hinted. They should know what the bracelets were. They’ve had them for a year for hell’s sake. I also told them!

“Not really.” Bell had the decency to blush.

I took a seat across from all of them. “They got their powers at one, so I went to the man who can do weird things to metal... I told you all why I

left!”

Yeah, I raised my voice.

Silence greeted me.

“The bracelets my mom texted about? They block their magic, you idiots! I had them made because I couldn’t handle days like you just went through. Had you been paying any attention to me or my issues with your daughters, you’d remember!”

My hurt came out with some tears. Men got a little forgetful when it came to what hardships happened while they were in the office. It could go the other way too, but my experience dealt with the seven men I mated myself to.

“You’re right. We see that now.” Rin caught my attention. “Kitten, there are no words for how sorry I am but listen to my promise. You will have help now. We will be more understanding. I dealt with one today. I have no idea how you did four so long by yourself.”

“If you ever need a break, we will give it. I can’t believe you haven’t taken one yet, Love.” Aster sat up with guilty eyes. “I’m so sorry I’ve been gone while you deal with that. I plan on doing shorter tours. I decided that before today, but I’ve missed you and the girls growing too much.”

Dammit. Now they had me choking up.

“We love you, Princess.” Milo bent over my chair to hug me from behind.

“I love you guys too.” My eyes moved to our daughters. Even though I was exhausted every day, I knew I’d never give it up.

My fears of being a mom were overruled by the love I had for each of them. They would always have a home with their mom and their dads. Seeing them play, I also knew they’d have each other too. My life... Well, it’s been a doozy of suffering and loss, but if I had to do it all over again to have my men and little girls, I would.

The guys changed so much since the beginning of our story. I gazed at each of them as they watched our daughters playing. I knew nothing would change their paths either.

We ruled Hell, and we would do it for eternity now. Our little girls already wouldn't take over for us. No, they had the Horsemen's kingdoms they'd claim in their future too. Now, we just had to see where their paths would lead to next.

Daughters of the Eighth, as Lucius called them. Seemed fitting because this mama bear would make sure her daughters were ready. Ready for the apocalypse they might accidentally bring on.

# Our Omen

Ashley Amy

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## Author Note

NOTE: Please know this addition takes place after the daughter duets. It's roughly twenty years after you first met the 8T crew. You don't have to read *Daughter of the Eighth* to read this, but you should plan to pick it up soon.



# Chapter 1

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## Chapter 1

**O**ctavia

Coming back home, the silence filling the stone halls felt daunting. My hands rubbed the outside of my arms as I let my men trickle in before me because my eyes refused to leave the portal that we walked through to leave JJ's wedding. The seven of them allowed their delighted voices to fill the empty air in our castle, but it didn't feel adequate for me. Once the portal sealed, I felt the first tear fall. My babies were officially gone, and their childhood home became a blimp on their timelines for their own futures.

Slowly, the laughter and joy dissipated between my guys because they heard my snuffle, feeling the sorrow in my soul. Lucius made his way to me first, knowing I needed the kindness we shared since that moment in class he had my journal entry read for everyone to hear. After that, he stopped being my bully and showed me compassion. Tonight, he didn't take his cane because he knew it wouldn't be too taxing on him. Though, I saw a slight gimp in his step as he approached me. "Princess, what's wrong?"

“Love, did something happen at the wedding?” Aster followed close behind. He had gelled his curls to sit in spirals on the top of his head.

How could I ruin their moment? They were over the moon that the girls won their battles and found decent, strong men as their mates. I was the one not strong enough to let go, but I held out until we got home so the girls would never know. Shrugging, I lifted one shoulder. “It’s too quiet.”

“The wars were won, Kitten.” Rin tried to understand what I meant in his own way. They had lives outside of this castle, and I had a small one, but I prided myself in being home with the girls. Making peace treaties on the side only happened when a conflict arose for the Queen of Hell to handle, and it wasn’t often enough to placate my mind in their absence.

Turning to let my gaze see the empty hall, I saw the silhouettes of our girls when they used to run down them, playing too roughly with each other. Smiling just a little, the memories were too cute not to grin about. “Remember when they tried to ride their Doppies and race down this hall?”

Gradually, one by one, they understood. Through our connection, they let me know they’d miss being their dads, but it still didn’t compare to my role. I was the prominent nurturer of our babies, but I didn’t have them home anymore. Bell cleared his throat with a small laugh. “I remember Emmy using her keen-sight to see Raven would win because she planned to use her dragon, so she grabbed the vase off the decorative table and chucked it at the spot Raven would be.”

“Dear lord, Rae needed five stitches after that mess,” Lucius groaned, recalling having to get his father here to fix her up.

“Yeah,” I whimpered. “They needed us.”

The guys weren’t sure what to do. I could see how my heavy emotions hadn’t been something they saw coming, but I was happy through the

wedding. The amount of pride I had for my daughters was the only reason I could keep my sadness at bay until now. Standing taller, I tried to pretend I'd be fine, but I knew they'd feel it.

“I think I just need a moment alone.” Lifting the hem of my dress to not trip on the fabric, my guys saw the sneakers I snuck on without anyone ever noticing all night. Old habits died hard, and heels were still a devil worse than us.

Heading into my room with the bed that went from one wall to another, I reminisced on all the nights our family of twelve squished together to fit. The girls always wanted to snuggle their daddies, and I was fine with it because I got the nap time ones. Touching the fabric of my bed, I wept again. Those memories were the only keepsakes I had.

A small knock came from my door, and my mom entered in her olive dress with her hair curled around her face. She neared two hundred years in age, but she looked like my sister. Sometimes, I forgot I looked twenty-five even though my age neared forty. Gods, that felt uncomfortable to think about.

“Via?” She saw me gripping the silky duvet like it could bring back my little girls, and I realized I was hugging the fabric to me for security. Seeing my lip wobble, she knew. I saw the same sheen sitting over her own eyes because she became an empty nester without getting to be my mom. “Everything alright?”

We both knew the answer to that, but I shook my head. In doing so, the emotions of grief exploded. My mother was quick to catch me as she sat me on the bed beside me. She held me into her side, letting me lose myself like I truly needed to. There was no forcing the tears to stay at bay now that I sat here with my mom. We grew closer over the years, and the girls spent at least

two weekends a month with her in the Bermuda Triangle during their younger years.

“Oh, sweetie.” She kissed the side of my head.

“What do I do now? How do I stop missing them? Who am I without them?” It came out in a rushed slur, but she understood me.

“You get to do the things you enjoy that make you Octavia Clarke, honey. No, you’ll never stop missing your little girls, but you get to transition into having an adult relationship with them.”

“Adult relationship?” I questioned her.

“You get to do shopping dates and lunch dates. They’ll invite you over for dinner to show you their own places that they put together, seeking your approval. Do you remember when you merged the castles into one with the merging of the kingdoms?”

“I asked you and dad to come see it,” I answered, seeing where this was going. Now that the worst of my sobs were done, I settled down and let my head rest over her lap, curling up on the end of the bed.

“You did.” Her hand played in my hair to comfort me. Her voice shook just enough for me to know this conversation wasn’t easy on her.

“Mom?” I turned my head to peer up at her. She used her hand that wasn’t toying with my hair to cover her mouth with the back of it.

“You’re just the most remarkable daughter anyone could ever ask for. I missed so much while you were growing up that those old emotions are raising their ugly head.” Fixing herself, she allowed the tears to fall like mine had. I reached my hand to hold hers in our odd position. Once she could speak again, her love cast over me. “Some think you were made to save the world, but I know you were made to save me.”

“Mom,” I choked up.

“Getting to see you become everything you were meant to, took the burden of losing you as an adult away. Though, you called me two days after I went to Leo’s island, and you moved into Daemon’s mansion to finish school. You called me.”

I remembered that conversation. As odd as it was, I wanted my mom’s input because the guys didn’t want to finish high school, but I did. The only person who could understand why, was the woman holding me because of the places we lived. “I wanted to finish high school, but they didn’t get why. I needed someone on my side.”

“And I always will be. I was so proud of your choice to complete your diploma, and your choice to call me to defend you. You came to me, just like your girls will always have you to come home to. And I promise, they’ll come. There’s no amount of adulting that someone can go through that’ll take away the need to have their mother.”

“I love you,” I whispered for her to hear. Her words of comfort were working, but I didn’t know when my girls would need me.

“This life is forever, my sweet girl. My promise will always remain to be right by your side when you need me.” For the rest of our time together, she hummed a tune, stroking through my straight hair that I did for the wedding. With my hair having so much wave, I felt this look wouldn’t overshadow my little girl on her big day, but everyone would know I put effort into myself.

I rolled to hug my mom, loving this moment only she could coddle me through. Then I remembered she magically appeared. “Mom, how did you know to come?”

“Oh, we actually came to see if you needed any help with the cleanup, but we entered to find your men staring down the hall. Lear caught me up, and I knew you needed me, just like you’ll know when your girls need you.”

Smiling to myself, I loved that the guys comprehended my needs and let her come. It gave me hope that maybe I'd have this moment with my own girls in the future. Though, I knew that might take years with their honeymoon phase setting in.

## Chapter 2

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## Chapter 2

**L**ear

“What do we do?” I asked the others as Lily settled Octavia. We could feel through the bond that whatever she was saying to her daughter worked because she eased just enough that we could breathe again.

“We plan something for her.” Bell stepped beside me. “Maybe we do something like the night of the battle? A group date all about her?”

“We’ve made sure to do several dates with her through the years,” Milo joined the conversation. “How would we make this one extra special?”

Knowing the group had to think it over, we moved to the living area when we realized this would take more thought than a random idea. Sitting next to Aster, I found our group had shifted a little for us to favor our partner in fatherhood. Rin would forever be my best friend, but Aster became something else in our years with JJ. Lo and Luce were always this way, but Beau and Bell sat beside each other too. Rin paced the floor between the couches because his dragon didn’t like that their mate became upset.

“Ice cream?” Luce brought up. “She loves ice cream and junk food for a movie night.”

“But this needs to be more than a movie night.” I exhaled heavily. “She needs to be reminded why she’s valued as her and not her as a mother.”

Rin stopped walking, turning back to me with wide eyes. “What did you just say?”

“She needs reminded?” I shrugged.

He snapped his fingers with a smile. “That’s it! What if we did a date night with us bringing a reminder as to why we fell in love with her. Her, the one before she became a mother.”

“That’s actually brilliant.” Bell sat back and relaxed.

“And I know the perfect place, yeah?” Aster had a wicked gleam in his eye.

“Where?” I asked him from my side.

“The old clubhouse. You know, the one she played all the pranks on you boys at? That’ll be my reminder to her, and I’ll blindfold her to be surprised.”

“We haven’t been there in years,” Milo recapped for us. “How do we know we can even safely stay there?”

“I’ve had maids cleaning it every so often,” Rin admitted. The rest of us knew that place felt like more of a home to us than our mansions. We could escape our fathers there. “We’ll need to go and remove the furniture coverings that kept the dust at bay, but it won’t take us long. Does everyone have something to bring that would make her feel important for when we fell in love with her before motherhood?”

Everyone nodded quickly, but I needed more time. They all had something physical to share, but my moment of love happened in her bedroom. When she painted it, and when she bled her emotions into me. Rin eyed me like he could see I was struggling. An idea started to form, but I wasn’t sure if it was

the right direction. “Mine will take a bit more time to procure, but I can meet you there in about two hours.”

“You do you. I’ll see if Manny can get some extra shadows to help make it go faster on our end.”

Now that we had a plan, they took the portal to our old place of fun. I got a lift through the swirling vortex to my old family home. My father gifted this mansion to us when we finished high school, and we had the girls here on the weekends when they weren’t with our remaining parents. This house never felt like a home until Via moved into it. After she arrived, everyone working here changed their depressive tune because her light caused a chain reaction. Well, if she wasn’t bleeding her sorrow into them. My lip twitched at all the old memories this place held. Touching the wall, I let it guide me up the stairs to where our rooms used to sit across from each other.

The memories pushed me to pause my steps, thinking about the day we first physically met with the towel incident. For the last two decades, we were devoted parents, loving our girls, but now I was seeing what had been forgotten in parenthood. Our beginning needed rekindled and thought of often. Not because we were having problems but because she deserved to hear every moment that we saw only her. That happened long before us professing our love.

Giving my door a few light raps, I meandered toward the room where I learned I loved her in during our quiet moments as step-siblings. Holding my heart, I opened the room that hadn’t changed over the years. After we fixed the castle and made it safe for the girls, we left our flat in the city and this place.

The emotions swept over me like a barrel going against Donkey Kong. Crying, I couldn’t comprehend why this trip held so much inside my soul

until I remembered my previous thought. This became my home when Via arrived, and it was the place I first loved her in. My lack of appearance here made my soul jolt in more sorrow. In my haste to be the best dad, I let go of my roots within our relationship.

Holding the doorframe, I patted it with my hand being tender against the grain. “I’ll come back, Home. I’ll come see you more often.”

That promise was official because I knew I would. This place bred the beginning of my journey with Via, and I’d never lose it.

~

## **Lucius**

Being the perfectionist out of our group, I made sure to spruce up the place accordingly. My item was the very thing that broke her heart right along with mine that first time I bullied her. In all honesty, it had been the only time I targeted her specifically because her heart bled the same heartache mine did all those years ago.

Via made us prove our worth for her after displaying her strength, standing against the Elites. The school still existed because Fiona still worked there as the nurse, and Zeke still taught. They loved going to the school together to work while Lou hung back to raise the littles. Her and Via had many playdates that Kara joined too. Well, once she felt less threatening to our girl.

“Thinking about old times?” Bell looked around the place we once made as boys. This building wasn’t much because it hadn’t been made with our father’s money. We made this, so it felt like the homiest of homes when we suffered so much in our youth.

“We’re almost forty,” I whispered to him in a way that told him I couldn’t concentrate on a certain timeline. My mind bounced between us with our girl and her raising the girls so perfectly. Thinking of Fallon, my heart tugged at what she just survived to become her birthright. My mute daughter showed everyone how powerful she was, but it came at the cost of my worry. Having a bum hip didn’t help, but I never stopped when her life was on the line. I never would. She was my baby, my little princess.

“And we’ve fought how many battles?” he teased, seeing where my mind took me.

“Too many,” I laughed back. “Though, the fighting was fun. I just hope it comes a little more balanced and not in another twenty years with four thrown at us.”

“But if it does happen again, our daughters can join the battle with us. They’ve gained their immortality.” Bell let me see his pride for Emmy conquering her school like the badass her mother raised her to be. My sin seemed to be rooting in all of us when our daughters came to mind, and I loved that.

“They’ve proven they’re Via’s daughters, and the world will forever know they are Clarke women.” Sipping some water, not many of us drank to keep it light for Via. Even though she learned her mother’s ways were a falsity, she saw what it had done to others. Aster was the same way. Occasionally, we dabbled in liquor, and I had a feeling Beau experimented in the kitchen with something new for her to try because we’d be staying here for the night.

Our home still hosted guests in the towns of Hell, but we had other leaderships to handle the madness for a night. Well, a few nights because JJ got married today. Aster and Lear’s little diva gave us her own scares with

illegal substances, but she found how to be healthy, and she had a powerful team behind her Pestilence.

Raven and Ember decided to go on a cruise together with their men, but Fallon was around because it was her new people that we had to find homes for. More so build them, but we were working on it close to this very spot. All the work of the last couple months had been daunting, so tonight wasn't just for Via. We needed a moment for the group to feel whole and complete again. Restored would be the proper word for what we needed.

Being placed in charge of perfecting the date's setup, I studied the area below me as I placed myself on the black banister above. Walking up the steps to it, I took in all the Halloween photos we printed with our girl dressed up as her nicknames from us. With Rin, she dressed up as a sexy, black cat. Lear and her wore Sis and Bro shirts while kissing. In a honey pot costume, she had Bell dress as Winnie the Pooh, but his shirt said boo.

Aster somehow managed to buy an ass costume that only covered his junk as suspenders held them up, and she was a giant heart telegram for him. With Beau, they were the letter of the alphabet they called the other, so he was V and she was B. Lo and I were her princes and she was our princess. The perfection of the photos had me looking at the black wood of the railing as I neared the top.

People thought the blackened wood had been done on purpose, but they didn't know Aster and Beau pissed off Rin one night, and he torched it. Luckily, I knew some home reno stuff and burned the rest to match his tantrum. The clubhouse felt more like an odd cabin with smaller rooms and living spaces, but it felt like being home. No castle or mansion could compare to this place of brotherhood.

"Reminiscing, are we?" Lo made his way up to me, seeing the shadows

ready the place for our date.

“What gave me away?” I grinned when he leaned on the railing too, overlooking the process.

“That faraway look in your eyes. You always get it when I fuck you with a memory being shared between us.”

“You always knew me better than I knew myself.” I rested my head against his shoulder.

“Where did your thoughts take you?” he asked.

“When Rin lost his temper and burned my railing.” Patting it, we shared a laugh, but mine fell short. “I forgot how much I missed this place. This was our home during our teens to get away, and we just left it.”

“We outgrew it, Luce.” Milo went quiet, feeling something I hadn’t seen too often from his mask being steel. Lifting my head, I wanted to see him better as he spoke. “This place was our haven before Princess, but we had four kids and kingdoms to run. It couldn’t be done in a place like this.”

“But we could’ve come back,” I murmured.

“Then maybe we should start. Maybe we’ll have those guy nights like we used to,” he jested to be funny, but I kind of wanted it.

“Maybe we should. Maybe us guys need to have some time together again.”

Lo saw how badly I wanted our friend group and circle to become a brotherhood again and not just fatherhood. Dipping his chin to me, he kissed my temple. “You know I’ve never been able to say no to you. I’ll arrange it with the guys after tonight.”

“I love you,” I said softly, looking up at him for him to see my submission in my body language and eyes.

“You better never stop because I’m a loose cannon being in love with you too.” Embracing me, my Dom never stopped putting me first like a good one

should always do. Our lifestyle remained unmoved even when we added children into the picture because no one should have to hide who they were or that different power dynamics existed within relationships. Princess liked all the flavors, being another sub for Lo but an equal with the guys. Sometimes, she even dominated Rin's dragon, and he let her out of love.

My phone vibrated just then, and I had a sinking feeling I knew who it was. Separating from my lover, we stared at the screen to see our woman asking where we went. A mix of worry and pain from exclusion filled our connection. I forced a large amount of love through it for her to know she'd never be alone because of it. Though, she knew we saw her breaking down. "What do we do?"

Lo whipped out his own phone, speedily sending off a text. "We send in reinforcements."

"Who?" I blinked to angle my head in order to see who he sent to help.

"My sister."

Ah, Lou would be the perfect fix for Via right now. Their best friend bond, and their Guardian bond would settle her unease. With a ping back, we knew our backup was on her way. Lou would turn her frown upside down. d=



## Chapter 3

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## Chapter 3

**O**ctavia

“What do we do?” Violently sobbing, I let Lou fall into me. She came for a quick visit, and I grew to understand why the moment she sat down and started talking. Bringing coffee, I got it ready for us to have a moment while the guys were gone. Her coming had me wondering if she was a cover for whatever they were doing, but then she burst into tears like I had earlier. Being in my breakfast nook, we were off the kitchen at the smaller table where I used to feed the girls breakfast. Dinner had been held in the large dining room, but we started our days in this one, stumbling in half asleep.

Crying into my shirt, I felt her tears as one slipped from my eye due to the memory. Liv and Wren left with my kids, so she felt just like me right now. Holding her, I had to fight my emotions to stand down because this topic sat too fresh on my mind. “I have no idea.”

“What has gotten into you two?” Turning to glance over my shoulder, Kara stood in a pair of sweats and a baggy sweatshirt. With a few pints of ice cream in her hold, I knew this wasn’t her normal, sexual look.

“By your appearance, I’m going to go out on a limb and say whatever got into you too,” I answered. Kara favored lingerie and skimpy clothes even though she was our age, and her sons were adults. Those same sons mated my daughter, making us in-laws. Biting back a shiver, it wasn’t from hating her like I used to, but Kara was the friend who could be a lot. In small doses, I could handle her. We called those small meetings playdates.

Rushing to take a seat, she let her bitchiness fade into sadness too. Shoving the tubs in our direction, she kept hers by her. Thanks to how many times we hung out in twenty years, she knew our flavors. Opening hers she dug right in. “Guys? We were mom friends. What are we now that we don’t have kids?”

One of us said it out loud, but it didn’t spill from my lips. Taking her peace offering, I didn’t say much as I shoved some mint chocolate chip into my piehole. “Who are we without being a mom?”

“See?” Lou wept harder. “Our partners have careers, but we’ve been part-time for a long time. What are we supposed to do? Who are we without cleaning up after them or holding them through heart breaks?”

“I don’t know, but we’ll figure it out,” I said around another full bite. Both looked at me like I grew two heads. “What?”

“You’re acting like you’re at peace with our babies gone,” Lou whimpered.

“No, but I cried when my mom stopped by earlier. All the girls left the wedding to do their stuff, and I lost it. I realized what you two are right now.”

“And here I thought we’d be emotional together.” Kara cried and ate more ice cream. “When Lou texted she was heading here, I couldn’t sit at home in

the silence. It's been killing me.”

“Same,” I choked. Clearing my throat, I pointed at the table. “Every room has a memory of them being little, and I can't stop playing them in my head. They used to eat here every morning with their messy hair and sleepy eyes.”

Yeah, round two came, and I fell back into tears. The three of us whined more, falling apart that our jobs were done because we raised our children. Lou set her spoon down for a moment. “We did what we were supposed to. We helped them become independent adults, so why does it feel like we lost?”

“I'm starting to understand why so many men had mommy issues,” Kara added. “I want my boys to call me when on a date to tell me about whatever women they're seeing.”

“Woman. You mean woman,” I corrected her, raising my hackles on behalf of Emmy.

Flipping her hand dismissively at me, she tutted from her lips. “You know what I meant just like you know I'm not going to get those calls. My boys grew up in a biker bar for hell's sake.”

Worry filled me to the brim, but I had to remember I helped influence her boys too. They'd also know what would happen to them if they ever harmed my daughter or broke her heart because they saw what I did to those boys who put their hands on Raven. Daisy still used that dick as a chew toy. Speaking of my dragonette, she rested over my feet below the table, sensing in our bond that something wasn't right. I loved her, and her babies that were gone too, so she belonged with our group tonight.

Dropping some ice cream, she needed a treat to help her cope as well. I had no doubt the owls were out with the guys doing gods know what. It irked me

that Lucius didn't text back with anything other than 'be back soon', but I had company keeping me sane in my breakdown.

"What are things we used to do?" I changed the topic. "Before being moms. What did we enjoy? My mom brought it up, but I'm struggling to remember."

"I was out on the town and partying it up." Kara's eyes glossed over as she thought back to her glory days.

Rolling mine, Lou held back a snicker. Setting her coffee down, she had spooned some of her ice cream into it. We learned that delicious treat by accident when we were too tired to pay attention, and she dipped her spoon in both. The combination ended up being delicious, so we started doing coffee floats. Tonight called for a tub of spooning the ice cream for me.

"You used to prank people," Lou chimed in.

Snorting, I taught my daughters that one well. "Okay, but things for me to do for myself. I can't prank the guys every day. It wouldn't be fun."

"You always wanted to watch a movie instead of going out," Kara moaned in annoyance at my ways. "Maybe start going to a theater more often to get out of the house."

"That's not a terrible idea." I tapped my chin.

"Depending on which one, I'll go. Though, I prefer books. Wow, I might be able to finish one again," she laughed. Lou had dried enough of her tears to look a little less depressed. Her hair had been styled into a pretty bun, and Kara's was curled down her back. I nearly laughed that we were wedding ready with our hair, but our makeup and clothes were opposite.

"And I'll stick to my wine." Pulling a bottle out of her bag, Kara favored a buzz to survive her days. Sharing a laugh between us, I studied the elements that made us different as friends. Three things that more women would relate to.

“What if we did something crazy?” I asked them.

“Um, did you forget our past? I feel like crazy is in our titles at this point.”

Lou shook her head.

“What if we opened our own business?” I waited for them to think it over. They had a quiet conversation with their eyes.

“What kind?” Kara hinted at wanting to know more.

“Think about a place like a recreation center but based on women. We could have a screening room, a bookstore and-”

“Wine!” Kara shouted before I could finish. “OMG! How perfect! I could bring in the best for tasting tours, and we could sell tickets and books!”

“We could add other things too!” Lou joined in the excitement. “Maybe a daycare for moms who want to have their time but can’t because they’re the primary caregiver.”

“In that case, I feel like a gym or exercise classes might be good. Think yoga for stress relief, and kick boxing for that built up annoyance from men and kids.”

“We can work out more plans later, but I think we might’ve found what we can do next.” Raising my coffee mug, they clinked theirs against it. We’d become businesswomen with a life of our own, proving age didn’t matter when we started chasing dreams. Feeling better, hopefully our place of fun would help women make friends. Everyone needed a Lou in their life.

## Chapter 4

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## Chapter 4

**B**ellamy

It took me a minute to figure out how to do it in the best way because I wasn't sure how Via did it back then. Standing before my mirror, I noticed it worked enough that she would know what I was trying to do. My reflection showcased the now blue tint to my skin as I soaked myself in blue, kool-aid water. The poor tub I used might not recover, but that was a concern for a different day.

We were supposed to find something that would show Via when we fell in love with her before she had kids, and my mind instantly went back to the night I had with her before she turned me blue the next morning. I remembered making her match by pulling her in, but I never wanted to let her go. I never wanted to leave that shower or that moment that I had with her.

She was the light of a perfect summer morning, cascading over me in a way that made me reawaken, bathing me in her warmth. Never wanting to lose that sensation, I made sure my Honey knew how important she was. Octavia



Clarke would forever be the only woman I had slept with, and I took great pride in knowing she took my virginity.

Heading out to find the guys, they were waiting for me by the portal. Their side conversations all silenced when they saw me, and Aster was the first to begin laughing. He thought his choice in using the clubhouse would win him affection from our girl, and it would in her eyes. It was a joke between the two of them, but this would mean the world to her from me.

“Mate, I've got to say, you went above and beyond for this.” Patting my back, Aster guided us through the portal as everyone joined in his laughter. Good. If it made them laugh, hopefully it could bring a smile to her own face.

Back in the castle, we heard the feminine variety of laughter, telling us Honey wasn't alone. Heading into the kitchen area, we found our girl in the breakfast nook with Lou and Kara. They had a notebook out, scribbling things down like none of them were sad anymore.

Clearing my throat, I announced our presence. “Honey?”

“Yeah, Boo-bear?” she said without looking up for a minute. When she finally did, the smile she had only lit up even more. Her eyes began to sparkle with our beginning flame, remembering exactly what I wanted her to with this. “Why are you blue?”

“It's a surprise, Love,” Aster told her. “And if you're ready to see it, we'll take you there now.”

Lou had been called in as a decoy, so she knew now was the time for us to take over. Closing the notebook between them and chugging the rest of her wine, Kara took the hint as well. “Go have fun with your guys, and we'll keep planning this when you return.”

“Return from where?” Via was always too smart and read between the lines.

Lou made an annoying sound from her lips because she hated that her best friend could read her so well all the time. “How about you go enjoy the surprise instead of trying to figure it out? Your power is cheating.”

Via took the hint that she wasn't going to get information out of her best friend, so she said her goodbyes and followed us to back to the portal. Aster stepped up and placed a blindfold on because he wanted the location to be his surprise. Allowing him, it took a lot out of her to let us surprise her, but she knew the result would be worth it.

As a group, we made our way through and stood in the driveway of the clubhouse. Tucked away in the mountain, no one knew how to get here besides us and the people we hired to clean it. After taking a moment to place Octavia for her to stand perfectly in front of the entrance on the grass, knowing she would remember all the forks they put in it for Milo and Rin to step on.

Without wasting a beat, he removed the blindfold for her to see the clubhouse, and she began laughing from all the memories flooding her mind. “Why did you guys pick here? Did you want me to play more pranks on you?”

A chuckle could be heard in each of us as we stood around her. Aster took the lead and pointed to the building ahead of us. “It was this night that I learned I was head over heels for you, Love. It was before you had kids, and it showed me who you were.”

She began connecting the dots, her gaze swinging between each of us. When she landed on me, the blue began to make sense. That was when we had that intimate shower between the two of us. Tipping my chin to her, I was impressed with her skills of deduction. “Back then, I thought I wouldn't be able to have you, but I couldn't begin to describe how badly I did.”

Her eyes began welling up with tears as she took in each of us. Now that two were out of the way, she knew there were five others to go. Facing Rin, she didn't say anything as he readied himself. Our Alpha hated showing emotions, but he always would for her.

“We used to pretend to hate you, and in the beginning I did. Then you had this insane way of challenging me, and you don't know this, but you drove my dragon mad. He wanted you after the first day you jumped on my back, and you only made it worse by proving how strong you were. The first real glimpse of that for me and not my dragon was when you ran into danger without knowing what you were going to face because you thought we had Lou.”

With no other words, Rin handed over the elephant chest piece he had kept this whole time. Via's eyes went wide at the sight of it, remembering how we tied her up and left her in the forest for a night. We really weren't good to her, but she knew we would spend forever making up for it.

Milo was the next step forward, knowing she couldn't speak well. Handing over a ruined shirt, there was also a crop tucked in it. “This was the shirt I wore that night I let you use me to get over what my father had done to you, and the crop was when you let me use it on you that first time. It took a lot of trust for both of us to commit to this, so I couldn't pick just one when I feel like they belonged together.”

Only the three of them knew about what happened that night, and we learned to respect whatever it was to not ask about it. Milo and Octavia finally completed their connection needed to help our circle complete, so whatever happened between them was worth it. None of us planned to do this out on the grass before heading into the clubhouse, but things changed when Aster began telling her about why he picked the building. It made sense to do

it right here after she connected the dots, so Lucius followed behind his partner. Lucius opened his satchel and pulled out what happened to be a composition notebook. Octavia's eyes watered at the sight, knowing what was within those pages.

“Why would you keep this?” Standing baffled, she couldn't comprehend why he'd pick an item he bullied her with. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Rin bend over to tie his shoe while Via's back was to him, and it made me wonder why he waited until he had her back to do it.

“Because it was my first taste of the real you. You weren't being the strong girl everyone saw, and the one you had written about mirrored what I was trying to hide too. I'd be a fool if I didn't admit that I began liking you from that moment. Your words were mine in a different context, and I began respecting you after that.”

Via didn't wait another minute as she hugged the two guys to her right and told them she loved how thoughtful they were. Her tears were ones of reminiscent memories. She still had a few more men to go, and I noticed Beau eagerly marched up beside me to give her something,

She stepped back from Lo and Luce to see his hands behind his back. Cleaning her eyes, she waited for him to deliver whatever he planned to. His mischievous gaze promised something we weren't expecting. Finally revealing it, he handed over a twelve-inch dildo that was broken in half. We all knew the story of what happened in that bathroom after he had slept with her and couldn't get it up for anyone else but hearing her laugh over it right now? It was everything my worried heart needed.

Octavia burst into a fit of laughter, doubling over as she took hold of the giant dildo. She played with it and moved it back-and-forth to reshape it here and there. Beau fixed his glasses, bashfully excited to see how happy he had

made her. “I don’t think I need words to describe why I picked this, but just in case, I’ll never forget this moment. I’ll also never forget the regret I had after using you the way I did, so here is my broken penis that you broke to teach me a lesson.”

It was unreal to witness the transformation in our girl as we doted on her with our affection. Trying to keep it all together, everyone turned toward Lear as he stood still on the side. His eyes shifted between us because the spotlight found him so fast after everyone else finished. Hooking his thumb toward the building, he tried to hide a humorous tone. “Mine’s inside because I didn’t realize we were doing this on the grass.”

Everyone laughed and made their way to the clubhouse. As we stepped a few feet forward, Via made a sound of pain and lifted her foot up. Bending down to find out what stopped her, she was pleasantly surprised to find what remanence there was of a fork. By the calculations of all the years, that plastic had been there for over twenty.

She observed the fork that was tarnished by the ground, and some of the prongs were missing for the teeth. She had snapped the tops off, so the broken handle made sense. Of all the days for her to step on something so impactful, she had to pick right now. Our gardeners had spent a few days cleaning up the mess she made, and we had thought they got everything out. We also paid them a bonus for doing the hard work, and they were more than willing when we added those zeros to their paychecks.

As Via headed inside with the rest of the gang, I saw Rin hanging back to watch her walk forward with the fork. They were all talking about how unreal it was that she found it, but I had a suspicion. That thought led me to believe it was unreal after all. Standing by Sevrin, I waited for everyone to head

inside before asking him, but my mind was already piecing together. “Did you spend a little bit of time putting some forks in the grass?”

“I don’t know if you saw me bend over to tie my shoe, but I hurried and stabbed one in. It looks old and wary because I kept a fork from back then to. It felt right to let her find it like this rather than hand it over, and it worked.”

Hearing the ringing laughter coming from inside the building, I knew he was right. It had worked, and we were making our girl feel a little more like her old self once again.

## Chapter 5

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## Chapter 5

**A**ster

More excitement only began to bubble as we headed into the living room. Everyone waited for Lear to show what he got for her because he was the one who hadn't been here when we prepped the clubhouse. We found our seats and waited patiently as he began dragging over what could only be giant canvases, and there were four of them. The guys and I shared a look because we had no idea how he managed to do this in a few hours, but we had connections all over the city.

He looked a little embarrassed as he stood front and center. Being my partner in fatherhood, I stood up to go help him with whatever he needed because I could tell he needed someone in his corner right now. Our bond strengthened so much after having JJ, and I could tell he needed me.

Appearing sheepish, he rubbed the back of his neck before beginning to speak. "So, like Astor, my thing was a place, but I didn't want to take you there and leave the clubhouse because the clubhouse brings back all the



happy memories you needed right now, but I also remembered that this clubhouse doesn't have much about you here. Besides the pictures we added here and there through the years, there's not much."

Pausing to point at a large canvas of her standing on the beach, it was a photo Rin took of her when we were hiding in the Bermuda Triangle. Her white dress flowed with her pretty waves. Ah, how that brought back even more of our early days.

Clearing his throat to begin again, Lear reminded us to focus. "I decided the best gift I could give you would be to take the piece of you that I love most and place it in the clubhouse our brotherhood called home before we found it in you."

Helping my mate, I assisted him turning the first frame for her to see that it was a picture of one of the walls in her old bedroom. Hosting the complete artwork of it, Lear let us all see what he had been doing in the last hour. The total of his efforts exceeded ours because he had moved all the furniture away from the walls in order to get the photos perfectly and precise. The black and white mixed with the pink hosting all the little, hidden images she made in her bedroom back in high school. The canvases of them were beautiful and well done in a way that would make them look great singly or as a group.

After showing her all of them, he tried not to blush. "I came into your room that one day you were still painting everything, and I could see how broken you were. I don't know what it was about that moment, but it made me want you even more. Plus, I slept with you shortly after in your room because your emotions bled into me. I thought they were my own for a long time because that's how I felt, but when I understood they were coming from you, I couldn't bear the thought of you suffering like that. That told me everything I needed to know about loving you because I already did."

And just like that, my Asian partner swept our girl off her feet. She ran and threw her arms around him for more than one reason. We had stayed in the clubhouse after the war for a little bit just for us to feel a little more grounded in a place we were comfortable in, but she had never felt that comfort here for missing out on our teen years within it. Placing her artwork in here would make it feel like she belonged because she did.

When they finished up their romantic moment, Beau headed into the kitchen and brought forth a couple pitchers of drinks that he had been making and experimenting with. It was a rare occasion to have our girl drink, but she would when we didn't have the kids or anywhere to be the next day. Alcohol was one of those rarities in our lives because of everything some of us went through with our parents. Every now and then, we did partake and enjoy the fun it could offer, and tonight would be one of those.

"I've made a new mojito, and I stuck to the family favorite of margarita." Beau set the pitchers down and lifted the cups he brought in. Making this night an extra special occasion of our youth, he managed to grab red solo cups. Ah, how those brought back some memories of when we were younger and partying it up underage.

At first, Via was thrilled and excited to see where this would lead, but a sadness took over her expression again. "I don't have to make sure a sitter is available or that the girls are okay for the night."

None of us planned on her mothering memories to come forward during this, but I knew the perfect diversion. Quickly grabbing a Jenga box, everyone recognized it as the one we used to play with the girls, but they had no idea I altered it. "How about we play a quick game?"

"Jenga? You can't be serious," Milo added his salty input.

"Oh, but I am! You see, this isn't normal Jenga. There's something on the

bottom of each piece of wood to make this an elevated game for our group.” My mischievous grin told them all how epic this was about to be.

“What kind of elevated?” Via knew to ask the right thing. “Is it a drinking game, or is it a sexual game?”

“Love, you’re breaking my heart in believing I could pick between the two. Clearly, it’s both.” Some of the guys began to snicker around me, but I held her eye contact as she showed she loved how my humorous side could subside her sadness.

Opening the box, I readied the tower, knowing none of these people would comprehend what I put or that I knew the right placement and had a certain power to make them feel drawn to the right block. Painting them our target colors, they whistled at the sight. Even though I couldn’t plan this night, I had wanted to utilize this game for some time, creating it when JJ went to her academy. Things were about to get interesting, and I knew they were more than willing to do this by adding their colors alone. Well, there were certain pieces that a few of our guys wouldn’t quite enjoy, but I would enjoy watching them do it.

“Kitten, why don’t you go first?” Rin didn’t even wait for me to begin the rules. Everyone was in an understanding that whatever their piece said, they had to do.

Octavia sat a little forward on the couch and reached for the coffee table between everyone. Some of us shuffled our seats closer to being a circle around the game. Lucius got up for a minute and went to turn on the Bluetooth speaker with his phone connected to it to set the mood of the music. For now, he chose an EDM playlist to keep the happy vibes uplifted. I appreciated the thought process he put into it.

Via’s dainty hand reached forward and plucked a center one out in her gray

hue. Pulling together, her eyebrows showed her confusion before she turned the piece around for me to see. “You literally put on this one that I have to take off my bra.”

Shrugging, I tried to bite back a smile that wanted to escape. “Love, you just know how to pick the best ones. But I'll give you a little clue that there isn't just you pieces in there. Some will go against us as well.”

Being my cheeky self, she knew my style. Seemingly satisfied for now, Via reached her hands up her shirt and undid her bra, pulling it through her arm hole. We all got to watch how her boobs jiggled just a little extra now that they were free under her T-shirt, and the seven men sitting around her couldn't look away. This was exactly what we needed tonight.

Beau was up next because he sat to her left, so he followed suit and picked his poison in his color of orange. Smirking, he showed it to her first in a way that said ‘ha-ha’. “I only have to take a shot.”

Our girl stuck her tongue out at him in defiance because she was bitter about getting the first sexual one. Beau went to the kitchen and grabbed a couple bottles of liquor and little cups. He came back with some Tequila Rose and Jaeger for us to do shots of, if another one called for it. There were plenty in this game that called for shots, so he was wise to bring the supplies. Taking one of the shot glasses off the top of his stack, he got himself the darker drink and swallowed as fast as he could. Shivering, he hadn't been prepared for the way it would go down. A big sigh of relief hit him when he sipped his mojito and sat down. Oh, how the fun was just beginning. kjh

## Chapter 6



## Chapter 6

**O**ctavia

It always felt odd to me to have my bra off below a shirt because I always grew up believing I needed to hide them. Things had changed over the years, and I went braless here and there on a night out with the guys, but they weren't often enough to feel natural right now. Even though the game kept continuing and more drinks had been had by a few, I kept noticing how their glances couldn't detract from my chest. Always wanting to be the center of attention, my nipples pebbled just to display for her guys. I wanted to roll my eyes at myself over it.

Now that the play was back to me, I prayed I got a drinking one like the others had or losing the shoe one that Lear got. How nice it must've been just to lose shoes instead of the one thing containing a private spot. Gently easing my finger into the next slot, eight pieces had been moved, so it was getting just a little trickier to keep playing. Luckily, I hadn't had as much as the guys because they had to do a piece of wood that said all guys drink, and some had

shot picks as well. Between that shot and the drinks they got on their own, they were starting to get a little fuzzy.

When mine lifted easily, I read the bottom and snickered just a little bit. Clearing my throat, I readied to read it out loud because it didn't pertain to me. Finally, my color did me justice, and I noticed everyone tried to pick their own as well. "All men must dress down to their boxers."

Some groans echoed around the room as they stood up to strip their shirts and pants. Lear muttered some curses about having bad luck on his side because he thought he won with the shoe. After they lost their shirts and pants, I studied how extremely sexy my guys were. They ranged in different body types from lean muscle to bulk muscle, but they were in great shape. Their coloring went from pale to dark, and I loved how different they were. The one thing they all had? Abs. Their abs always wanted me to lick them, but I never knew why that was such an instinct in women. Lickable abs? It made no sense, but I still wanted to.

"I hope yer ready, Love, because we both know what I never wear." Aster seductively swiveled his hips for me to see him leisurely removing his leather pants. In his typical fashion, his long dick hung between his legs. Taking his naked seat, I heard the guys mutter about him planning to steal the show. Even after all these years, I felt my cheeks turn up a few shades by how daring he was. Clearly, I grew flushed after seeing seven sexy as hell men strip for me.

Beau quickly grabbed a piece because his skills were too masterful for a simple game like Jenga. My only hope would be that the three shots he had would soon start affecting him like the other guys were feeling. His eyes quickly lifted to look toward Aster in annoyance. "Why the hell does this say suck a toe?"

“Nice one, mate!” Aster jeered. “You get to pick anyone’s toe to suck in a sexual way.”

My nose turned up at that because I was not a foot person. I would never turn down a foot massage, but I had never let someone lick my foot. It didn't sound too intriguing. Like I expected, Beau turned my way and offered his hand for me to lift my foot. My stomach soured, but I knew he'd struggle to do anyone other than Bellamy in the room. And while I'd rather pass off this task, he also was asking me first. The things I'd do for my men during a sexual drinking game.

Lifting it, Beau ended up falling to his knees off the couch to have better access, holding my foot up. He made a face of disgust, but I couldn't fault him for it. My feet were clean, but were feet ever really clean?

Manning up to do it, he hurried and popped my big toe into his mouth. Pulling up immediately, I felt an odd tingle travel up my leg. Keeping that thought to myself, Beau went to stand and be done, but Astor refused. “Mate, you literally can’t just pop a toe in your mouth and call it done. There's absolutely nothing sexy about that.”

“Then put a time limit on your blocks next time,” Beau argued with him. “I sucked her toe.”

Aster grumbled and got up from his side across from us to come over. Kneeling next to Beau because he never fully got up, Astor took my foot from him and put his mouth over my toe. Swirling his tongue with the piercing, I hurried and reached out to grab the cushion of the couch I sat on. Unprepared for his attack, I didn't know there was some type of nerve in my toe. This very sensation traveled to my center and made me gasp like I did when the men gyrated their hard shafts against my core. After a minute, Aster handed my toe back to Beau in a challenging fashion to dare him to best him.



The other guys were just staring at me because I was coming undone from someone sucking on my damn toe.

Beau noticed how excited it made me, getting antsy for more than Aster's wicked game. Sighing, he decided to add to it. Licking the side of my toe, he swirled his tongue around it without popping me into his mouth. These men always knew what would excite me, but then they always took it to the next level. I never knew how to take it when they toyed with me the way they did, but I wouldn't question how amazing it felt.

On the next turn, Milo went and pulled something that I had a suspicion Aster rigged with his magic. "It says I need to stimulate her arousal."

"I say, you find another pressure point to delight her with." Of course, Aster would say something like that with another mischievous grin. We were playing right into his hand, and he knew it.

Milo being himself, he knew exactly what to do in order to enhance my pleasure. As Beau sucked my toe, he picked up my arm from the back of the couch and began sucking right below my elbow on the outer side of my inner arm. Gasping uncontrollably, I couldn't fathom what they were doing to me. My eyes rolled into the back of my head, and I wasn't sure how they kept playing with me. The more we did this, the more whimpering came out of my mouth because I needed stimulation in other places.

Now that Lucius was going, it took him several minutes before he picked up his next rectangular block. The guys wanted to watch the show before them as I came undone by two men sucking on two very different parts of my body. Sevrin sat beside me, so I kept smelling his ocean scent as it continued on.

Clearing his throat, I noticed how Lucius had to readjust himself across from me. The excitement of my whimpers made my men sit on the edge of

their seats. "It says I need to be fucked in the ass."

Milo released my arm instantly to look at his lover. Knowing it was his time to leave me, we understood he would be the only one in Lucius's ass. It gave me just a moment to calm down, and Beau let go of my toe at the same time. Moving back to where they belonged, I watched as Milo whipped out his ready and waiting dick and sat back on his couch. Lucius was quick to pull down his boxers for us to see him completely naked. He joined Aster in that aspect because Aster never wore underwear.

"This game feels like an odd version of truth or dare, but there aren't any truths involved," I announced to the group after trying to catch my breath.

"But you haven't been sad." Aster challenged me with his words to deny them.

Wanting to say a comeback, it got caught in my throat the second I looked over at the sound of Lucius moaning. From having so much sex, his ass was always ready for Milo to take. Lo sat forward on the couch and hooked his arms below Lucius's knees for me to have a perfect view of his cock going into his ass. Luce's dick sat proud and mighty, jolting forward every time Lo forced him down. The two of them had always been so beautiful to me, and they were right now as Milo took Lucius savagely in the ass, lifting his sub only to slam him back down again.

A few more people went, and then it became Rin's turn. From the corner of my eye, I watched how Aster's eyes lit up with joy at whatever was to come. I could tell he was purposely shaking things up, but I wasn't sure how when I knew he had to pre-write all these beforehand. The building of colorful blocks was getting to a point where I didn't know if it could take much more. We had maybe one more round left before it would tumble to the ground, but it took us quite some time to get to this point.

Rin grunted from his spot at our man of Lust, knowing he was pushing buttons by this point. “It says someone has to suck my cock that isn't a Pandora heir.”

“Sounds a bit tough there, mate. Who are you going to pick to suck your fat dick?” Aster raised his eyebrows.

“And what if I don't do the challenge?” he asked the question none of us had this whole time.

“Then we get the honor of calling you a little bitch for the next five years.” Aster crossed his arms, tempting the beast within to come out. Rin was on edge already, and I could see how close his dragon was coming to the surface because he wanted to bite off Aster's head.

Rin would let the guys touch him when we were being active as a group, but I knew it wasn't his flavor to do on his own. Leaning into my big, strong dragon, I blew a little of my breath in his ear. “If it helps to know, I'll be watching.”

With his hackles now raised, I knew there would be no undoing what I had done. His finger quickly pointed toward Lear as he snapped them to beckon him forward. Lear loved this type of play, so my stepbrother quickly went across the room and fell on his knees to adjust himself between Rin's legs. Before he fell to his knees, I took notice of his own tented shorts because the loose fabric of his boxers couldn't contain what they held within.

Lear bobbed his head up and down on Rin's shaft without starting easy. Their level of debauchery was one I couldn't describe. Our group fun didn't happen too often, so when it did, we were all starved savages for it. Licking my lips, I let my gaze fall to where he was being sucked and back to Rin's eyes for him to know I enjoyed it. My men being affectionate with each other was nice, but when they got down and dirty with each other, it gave me a

whole new level of appreciation for a man's anatomy. My whole body was like a live wire as I watched them, and I noticed Aster snapping his finger in my peripheral vision. I had no doubt he was adding another level of Lust to this whole ordeal.

Being my turn again, I pulled one out as carefully as I could just as the structure began to tremble a little. I knew it would hold up for mine, but it was about to get interesting. Holding the rectangular piece of wood in front of me, I noticed this one was blue, but the tone of the color didn't match the description. "This one says every man has to start jerking off right now."

Even though they couldn't see my chest, it grew flushed with excitement because they knew that seeing them do this would ruin me. Trying to contain my composure, it got even harder the more I noticed things. Milo refused to pull out of Lucius, but Lucius began to jerk himself. When everyone went to question why Lo wouldn't pull out, he made a snide comment about using his personal pocket pussy in the shape of an ass. Plus, he was doing all the work to lift Luce.

Rin refused Lear to lift his face and forced our Envy to suck him off as Lear touched himself between the legs from below. I could see the top of his shaft within his grip from here, and it excited me to new levels.

Aster whipped his out by uncrossing his legs and let me see the slow and calculated pumps he planned. One day, I would find out how he manipulated the deck for us to pull out what he wanted, but for today, I'd enjoy the fun it brought. Bellamy sat in a chair on the side as he fisted his own long and thick member that was blue, giving me Smurf fantasies. Licking my lips from across the room, I bit the corner of my mouth and made him groan from watching me stare at him. His beautiful cock was out in the open just like the others because none of them cared about being naked around each other from

our years of being together and their brotherhood making them trustworthy mates.

I felt out of place now that I was only missing a bra, but I didn't mind either. Beau grabbed his next piece from the pile, and it ended up being another shot. None of the guys wanted to stop touching themselves as they watched so I gingerly took it upon myself to pour each of them a shot glass and handed them out. Lear was the funniest because he had to lift his head up from the ground in order to receive it. He took it fast to put his mouth back around Rin's shaft, so when everyone else cheered in the middle, he just gave us a thumbs up.

The excitement of this was nearly undoing me, but I found myself wanting more.

## Chapter 7

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## Chapter 7

**B**<sup>eau</sup>

Damn the Brit. Sometimes, I really wanted to hate him, but in moments like this I knew I couldn't. This sweet torture was one I couldn't possibly describe to anyone else, but he understood it. After having the satisfying burn of my shot, I went back to touching myself for Octavia to watch, sipping my cocktail. Her eyes kept shifting between each of us, taking in how differently we stroked ourselves. She had the same patterns memorized because she had educated herself for the last twenty years.

Feeling my buzz go up, I knew the others would just believe we were getting drunk faster from not doing it often. The drinks were deceitful, but I figured no one would understand that I added a little Pixie powder to them in order to enhance our drunken states as demons. Though, I could feel it kicking into myself with the added elixir. The prize of today was only to get Octavia happy, but this outcome made it so we all reconnected again. There

weren't words to describe how it worked with the group, but this was like a recharge for us.

Somehow, Aster had planned this too well because the next three in a row were all shots. The group downed theirs, and we chased it with the drinks I had made because doing so much alcohol at once turned our stomachs a little. Trying not to think too much about it, I kept trying to stay on top of it with the others. Aster must have known what I did to the drinks because his smile kept widening every time we took another one. Telling me he knew my secret, he complicated it with his own. Being the conniving man he was, he enjoyed making us suffer.

Though, I couldn't really decide if this was suffering or not because it felt so good. Everything within me wanted to explode already, but I kept it in because I knew we weren't done having fun yet. I didn't want to be the first one to shoot my load and have to watch everyone else keep going. I still was a glutton for punishment after all these years. Being next to V, I made it a point to scooch myself right against her as she sneakily placed her hand where mine was. Gloriously moving her hand up and down, the others hadn't noticed because they kept trying to hold her eye contact. I sat back with ease as the game continued with more drinks. She'd hand me a drink when I had to with her free hand, but I let my head rest against the back of the couch. Closing my eyes, I reveled in the feeling she provided. The soft skin of my shaft tugged here and there with the looseness in her grip. Without having saliva down there to help it, she didn't want to grip too tightly.

It didn't feel like a rug burn when it happened, but I was a man who preferred that slick feeling. We got too used to the magnificence of her drenched pussy, and if I was having a knock off, it needed to feel similar. Spitting into my hand, I coated my tip in it for her to stroke over the other



places. I couldn't remember my left from my right as the game continued, but I began to feel warm all over. There was a scent in the air that turned into more of a heady musk because we were scenting Octavia's arousal.

"You're so perfect, V." The words slipped out like a dream, and I was more than willing to let it happen. When I sat forward again, I noticed Aster had moved across the room and was now fucking Lear's ass. Our Envy still had his face buried between Rin's legs, creating a train for Via to watch beside me. Her eyes couldn't look away from the sight as she tugged faster on my shaft.

The forbidden attributes of this kept formulating into an intoxicating environment. Being who I was, I was greedy for more, so I leaned to my side and placed my mouth where her neck was. Tonight, she straightened her hair for the wedding, so it was easier to move and not get lost in her waves. Though, I loved her messy sex look when it came to her hair being tossed everywhere. Sucking along the nerves, I made sure we men weren't the only ones struggling to hold out.

Somehow, the game managed to get back to Rin's turn. He drew one and had a smirk on his lips, shoving Lear's face off his cock. Aster held his daddy partner, and set him up to lean over the side of the couch as he continued railing in from behind. Lear had his hand on his own member, stroking it endlessly in his bent position. Leaning over a little farther, he tried to make out the words on the little block of black. "What does it say?"

"That I get seven minutes of heaven with Kitten." Rin was ever too pleased by that finding. The rest of us groaned in disbelief because we were either using our hands or were in someone's ass. Grabbing her hand, Rin didn't wait because he needed his release right now.

"Well, that's just not fair." Bellamy felt a little put out. At the snap of

Aster's fingers, Bellamy was shooting his load wildly and had no words left in him to speak. Rope after rope, we watched his giant load spray into the air. Him doing that triggered Lo and Luce to follow suit, and Lear wasn't too far behind from what my eyes could see. Before I could say anything to stop Aster, he snapped his fingers again, so V's fingers worked me into rupturing as well. My load landed on her hand and forearm with how it shot toward her. When I finished jerking in my seat, she picked up her hand and leisurely licked all my cum from it.

Giving me a saucy wink, she stood to follow Sevrin out of the room. I hated that he got her, but I knew she needed attention as well. He'd give her exactly what she needed, so I couldn't complain too much. For a night to make her feel better, I was noticing just how much we all needed it. No more wars to fight or daughters to save, we were getting back to where we needed to be.

As the two snuck off, I reached forward to do my turn on the Jenga set. As my hand reached for it, Lear ended up falling sideways into the coffee table. My hand was on one of the blocks as he knocked everything loose. The stack came tumbling down as all the guys pointed at me. In disbelief, I couldn't speak the words, but my finger pointed at Lear. Anyone who hadn't cum yet, began to lose control in this very moment. Aster pointed between the two of us and clapped while pointing out the two pictures on the table. "Losers have to finish drinking those pitchers."

"You have got to be kidding me," I deadpanned back at him.

"Nope." Standing up completely with his cock out of Lear's rosebud, he just let it dangle there like nothing was wrong with how it had been just inside an ass and dripping cum from the tip.

Luckily, there was half a pitcher of each because people had been drinking. Finding it within my willpower, I grabbed the mojito and left the margarita

for him. We sat side-by-side where the two just vacated and began chugging as the other ones cheered us on. It felt like drowning, being waterlogged. Trying to bear through it, I was a Devil after all. Sitting as Glutton in this group, my need for more do not carry into chugging alcohol anymore. We had gotten older and out of practice, so every gulp I took didn't come easy.

Once we finished, Lear sat for two seconds before bolting for the front door. With this being a cabin, we only put in one bathroom, and we knew Sevrin would take her in there for his own memory lane. On cue, Lear began puking his guts up, and the sound unsettled my stomach. Bolting to join him, we were hurling our guts up off the porch together. Bell came over with a towel for each of us to wipe our mouths with, and he even managed to snag some mouthwash. He was the best partner, and he was mine when it came to fatherhood.

Once we came back inside, the others had claimed all the couches but one. They were drifting off because they had been drinking just enough that it mixed with their climax, so it sent them into a sleepy state. Not being too far behind, I went to the corner and grabbed a few sleeping bags. There were rooms here, but tonight felt like we needed to have a camp out together. One of the couches got left open, but I knew that would be for our girl, so I claimed the floor with Lear next to me. Bellamy joined us because the chair wasn't all too comfortable to sleep in. We needed to invest in some recliners next time, but that was a future problem for a different day.

For today, we did it. We made our girl happy again. I could rest easy with that on my mind.

## Chapter 8

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## Chapter 8

**O**ctavia

Heading into the bathroom with him, I knew what he wanted before we even entered. With the guys falling asleep, he wanted some alone time for us to reconnect as well. By the bobbing of his dick, I knew he had been waiting a long time. My eyes kept drifting down to where his third appendage kept defying gravity, knowing what he planned to do with it right now.

In all the years we had been together, I never tired of feeling his piercings while inside me. My core began to tingle just thinking about it because I knew it would rub me just right. Rin always knew how to please me without having to do much. Even if it came from our connection, I would never complain. Orgasms were the dream I heard too many human girls whine about because their partners failed to give them what they needed. In a few cases, I had even heard of men being jealous of their toys, but they didn't realize women were jealous that they got to cum when they didn't.

The second the door slammed, his lips were against mine, and my mind turned off. It felt intrusive in the most sexiest of ways because Rin let his animal take over. His dragon didn't understand consent, but he knew he had it with me as his mate already. His hands fisted into my hips, gripping the fabric hard enough to pull into my skin, letting me know he was teetering too close to his edge. My body became a live wire, and he was my conduit.

His hands were needy, urgent, to touch my body like he hadn't been able to in years. Without the girls being around, we could do it this way, and that thrill excited me just a little more. There would be a few bonuses to not having the kids in the house anymore, but that didn't make my heart hurt any less in their absence. His fingers worked swiftly to climb up my shirt, leaving the hem of my pants. Fondling my naked breast, I felt how large his palm fell over my fullness.

My legs swiftly lifted to lock around his middle in a way that forced us into a dry humping. The sensual move of my body grinding against his hard length only added to our excitement, but Rin was impatient. Our fun of doing that only lasted a few minutes because he wanted to move onto the next part. Being part dragon made it so his animal just wanted to fuck. His animalistic tendencies always drove him to bending me over and shoving it in with his piercings playing with my inner G-spot. My core was already hot and bothered, but the idea of feeling that metal grate against my slippery spots almost became too much. When I pulled back to gasp, he knew I was getting too close, so he set me down.

I knew what he wanted so I hurried and removed my clothes for him to see my naked body and feast upon it with his eyes. Being naked already, he stalked across from me, his lingering gaze couldn't stop from taking me in before locking with my eyes. That single stare reminded me of what we used

to be the very first time I saw it. And just like that, I knew how to rage this beast on and provoke him a little more.

Walking to the counter, he barely let me pass by him, and I saw the urge to grab me twitch within his fingers. Sometimes it was hard for him to have an Alpha of a mate, but he let me take the reins sometimes. Sliding all the way back, I lifted my legs for him to see my core front and center. My breathing deepened as I tried to take in enough breaths to make it possible to talk. With a leering grin of excitement, I let my hand slip between my legs for him to watch me play with myself. It wasn't fair that I had to watch them do it without touching myself too, so he had to suffer. I started out slow, only circling my clit.

“Do you remember when you first that gave me those demanding eyes?” I asked him, nearly begging for him to remember.

His smile was ruthless as he stepped up and stroked himself between my legs. Catching onto my game, I saw him lift one shoulder in response. “You're gonna have to be more direct with that question, Kitten. I hate to tell you this, but I looked at you like this all the time when you weren't looking, so why don't you be a good girl and tell me when you first noticed?”

And just like that, my breath hitched because I could feel the honesty in his words. For the most part, we avoided talking about those days because they were my bullies, but they forgot about all the excitement that happened between us. Biting the corner of my lip, Rin's nostrils flared at the sight. All these years later, and that was still my men's favorite move I did.

“I think it had something to do with me putting a certain amount of pills in your water one morning before school. I believe you came and got me from class because I pissed you off too much.”

With another hearty growl in my direction, he stepped forward with a

playfulness in his eyes. “Oh, I remember. I remember how you couldn't look away just like right now.” Shoving into me, I knew we were about to the fuck to the memory of him jerking off in front of me when we were just kids.

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## **Sevrin**

*(Back to the day Via put Viagra in his water)*

Damn her. She managed to uproot everything I planned to do today, and I fell for it. Helping her with Lou's present wasn't enough. No, she thought she could claim revenge on me, and she did. All thoughts of having a normal day went out the window the second my cock started stirring in my pants during class.

At first, I thought it was because I couldn't get her out of my head, but then I started to realize it wasn't just a twitch. Growing harder by the second, that damn woman did something to me. Storming down the hallway, I left my class without even bothering to ask. I made sure to go directly to Mr. Gram's class where I knew she would be. My anger was ever present, and she deserved my wrath for what she had done.

Making a left, I beelined for the door that I knew she would be behind. My fury pulsed in every vein of my body, but it mainly pulsed between my legs. Opening the door, I didn't even give Mr. Gram time to start his class properly.

“Octavia!” I roared her name as she tried shrinking into her chair at the sound of it. Mr. Gram knew better than to say anything as I beckoned her out in the hall. He had nothing to use against me after I caught him screwing Milo's sister.



Moving ever so carefully to me, she tried to give me a deceitful smile as though she knew she bested me. No one dared intervening because they could see how angry I was over what had been done to me. Grabbing her by the back of the shirt, I forced her to follow me and nearly dragged her to do so. She tried fighting my hold here and there, but she was no opponent for my strength. Once we made it to the bathroom, I shoved her directly inside. She turned around to give me some lip, pointing her finger at me in her own anger. “How dare you!”

“How dare I?” My hackles raised, and I knew there would be no coming back down for me. “Me? The one you drugged?”

Her eyes went wide because I pieced it together. Crossing her arms, she tried to mask what she had already revealed to me. Lifting one shoulder, she tried to appear nonchalant. “You have no proof.”

She loved challenging my beast, and he loved the game she created. It was getting a little unhealthy, but I couldn't back down from this one. Unzipping my pants, I let my fat cock pop out for her to see the piercings bobbing. Her eyes narrowed on what I wanted her to as she tried to hide her growing arousal. She could hate me all she wanted, but I knew I had a perfect dick.

“Oh, I have the proof.” Stroking myself, I let her see that this challenge had been accepted. I let her eyes take in the fact that I was about to jerk off with her standing right there, and I blocked the exit, so she couldn't escape it. She chose this course of action, and I would get off on the fact that she was trapped with me.

“Just because you're hard doesn't mean I drugged you.” Taking a few more breaths, she had to hide how turned on this made her. “I'm sorry when you think about me it stimulates you to get hard though.”

Oh, her little mouth was about to make her regret every word she ever said

to me. Walking closer, I made sure to slowly pump my shaft for her to watch it. I visibly forced her to not see anything else as I closed her in. She backed herself against the wall of the first stall, and I obstructed her view to the other side. I got so close to her, I had to point my tip up or else it would touch her stomach. Her eyes kept glancing down, seeing what I planned to do in torment for her.

From here, I could smell her delicious, cinnamon scent as it riled my beast up. She didn't need to know this, but he kept wanting her. He became an annoyance, an itch below my skin every time she stood her ground. In all honesty, he saw Octavia as the only woman who could be an Alpha mate to stand at my side.

With my right hand jerking myself, my left fell and began to play with my piercings. I circled in them and tugged on them as she watched the pull of my skin against them. Licking her lips, she couldn't hide that she enjoyed what I had to offer. My pulse quickened in excitement because this had been a first for me with a woman who denied access to me. We had our moments where there was no denying how attracted I was to her, but right now, I made her see it for the first time.

“Look at me,” I ordered her. Dropping my own mask, I let her see the lust feeling my eyes as my lids grew heavy. My breathing grew shallow as I pumped myself right against her, nearly feeling the heat of her body.

“Why?” She challenged me before she looked up. When she did, I felt her breath get caught in her throat. Unable to look away, Octavia's eyes met mine. She saw everything that I was unwilling to say, but she thought it was just in the name of lust and desire. This woman would never know it had to do with my dragon wanting to claim her.

My left hand let go and braced myself against the stall that I had her pinned

against. Someone tried coming inside, but they got the idea it would be better to leave. I didn't turn around to see who it was, but I knew they would know better than to bother me in a moment like this. This was a moment my dominance took priority over my human side.

Through her bra, Octavia's nipples hardened just enough that I could see it through the padding. She had gorgeous tits that I wanted to see again after seeing them when she was screwing Beau. Everything inside of me wanted to rip her clothes from her and bend her over to fuck her from behind like my animal wanted, but a tiny sliver of logic stayed with me to not to.

"You did this to me, so you're going to watch me take care of it." I still kept our eyes locked because nothing could break the spell that I had over her right now. The same could be said for my own position when it came to her, but I wouldn't willingly admit that to anyone.

"Is this your form of a punishment?" She toyed with me even more. Being her bold self, Octavia let her hands unbutton her pants for one of her hands to slip in underneath the fabric. Just like in the library, this woman met my vigor with her own, demanding to be seen as an equal next to me. "Because I gotta tell you, you look like a scene from a porn film."

"Is that why you're touching yourself? You like watching porn?" I wanted it to be an insult, but I knew it couldn't be with my own desires liking the sounds that came from a screen. Instead, I found myself fucking my hand even harder as I let some spit dribble down in order to coat my tip better. That single second, she looked away from my eyes to watch my saliva fall for my hand to catch and soak my dick in.

"Don't we all?" After her words, my hand took notice of how her fingers worked underneath her jeans. I could see the swiveling motion that made my balls tighten up a little. This challenging game between us was something I

didn't want to lose quite yet, but I couldn't admit it to anyone. In order for our circle to work, we had to have Lexie.

My dragon roared against that idea inside of me, hating what we had to commit to in order to save our future. I let my mind focus on the woman in front of us again to calm him down because he was watching her as well. He never stopped watching her, and it was becoming a problem.

She bit the corner of her mouth like she always did without knowing it, and it drove me mad because I wanted my teeth to sink into her lip. I wanted my teeth to break her skin and taste her blood. This woman would never know that, so I kept it to myself.

“Oh, shit!” Just like that, she began to orgasm and spasm, standing right before me. Her falling apart was what triggered my own, so I reached forward and lifted her shirt up for my load to coat her stomach. I watched as my hot spurts of cum glazed her in ropes of white. Grunting, I couldn't stop as I kept going in my orgasm. Whether it was the pill or the woman, I didn't know.

Once everything subsided, she gasped in disbelief. Shoving me back, she still hadn't done up her pants as her hands took hold of her shirt. “You bastard! You could have shot your load easy enough in the sink next to us!”

“But where's the fun in that?” I drawled for her to learn her lesson to never stand against me. My dragon kept purring inside because he liked seeing us mark her with my semen. Grabbing paper towels, I watched as she hurried to clean herself, wetting a couple to scrub off the remains. I just watched her annoyance build against me, delighting in it even more.

## Chapter 9

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## Chapter 9

**M**ilo

In the early morning of the next day, I could hear the birds chirping outside to welcome us back into our old neck of the woods. Hell had been fine, but this sound had been one I missed. Everyone was still asleep or beginning to toss and turn enough to stir, so I took them in from my spot. Lying on the couch, I had Lucius on top of me as I held him to my chest. My hand kept lightly stroking his back because I loved the feel of his skin below my fingers.

Across from me, Princess was positioned perfectly on Sevrin for him to do the same. Everyone in the room didn't put clothes on because we were so comfortable being naked around each other. Though it had been a long time since we were able to dress down this way so openly in an area without someone seeing us. I quite enjoyed having this again, but I knew my fatherly side would never stop worrying about Fallon. Even though they were perfectly capable and proved it, my daddy heart struggled to come to terms

with the fact that my daughter wouldn't live with me anymore. I wouldn't be her caretaker now that she had mates.

The others were quite excited for our daughters, and we should be, but I understood where the Princess's sadness rooted from. Being a parent made up a lot of our lives, and my daughter was mute. I had the constant worry of how the world would treat her, but I knew she had the best men possible and capable of defending her outside of us.

For some reason, I grew a hard on, but I knew it wasn't because I was thinking about my daughter. Sniffing in the air, something felt strange, and I noticed Rin lock up a little as he opened his eyes. For a moment, he just stared at Octavia. She rested so peacefully on him, but then she began to push her hips a little lower to find his dick in her sleep. A mewling sound left her lips like a whimper, and he finally looked at me after she kept trying to claim his cock.

Within our stare, he told me everything I needed to know, and he shook his head to tell me not to give in. He had to fight with restraint to not let Octavia claim his dick, and she wasn't even awake to know she was doing it. Laughing to myself, we knew what would happen if we all fucked her while feeling this new breeze of lust in the air. With Aster still sacked out, we understood it didn't come from him.

Rolling over to drop Lucius on the couch, I headed toward the kitchen. Lucius, being the perfectionist he was, made sure to put supplies in the fridge for the morning after. Placing an apron on, I didn't want the heat of the kitchen to hit my body. I began pulling out the eggs and bacon while whipping up some pancake batter. I didn't cook often, but breakfast was one of the first things most people learned how to cook from how easy the ingredients were. Our griddle was about the size of two put together because

we bought a bigger one for the crowd we had to feed. Warming everything up, I watched my circle from across the way as they slept peacefully in the other room. Sevrin kept trying to fight Octavia because she kept trying to claim his member in her sleep still. He finally had to roll her off and place her on the couch and join me in the kitchen.

She griped in his absence, but she was too tired to care. Between the recent events and the alcohol she had last night, our girl would probably sleep for three days straight before feeling rested again. I was just glad we could give her this and let her sleep soundly in our care.

Taking over whisking the eggs, Rin decided he would do the scrambling as I did the pancakes. The bacon sat in the sizzling pan, but it didn't need flipped yet. Working together quietly, we knew how to do this with our eyes closed because each of us were leaders. I fell under him in our order, but I ran our company. Brimstone Incorporated still stood today, and we were bringing a change to the world that was needed.

“Do you think we'll ever get bored?” he asked me.

Via snapped straight up like something jolted her awake. Sniffing the air, she turned her sleepy eyes towards us. “I smell bacon.”

Trying to refrain from laughing, I shook my head at him. Pointing my spatula in her direction, I knew that woman was one we could never be bored with. “With her as our mate?”

Rin joined my laughter because she popped right up for bacon. Everyone else began to rise as well from their places around the room, but we never got dressed. For our last day here, we were going to be nudists, and I knew it would just lead to more sexual fun. Sevrin had already let me know this wave of lust hitting us will be one we had to avoid, so I knew he wouldn't take part in fucking her.



We lived today like it was just us regrouping, but we had been starved of the sexual interactions it would bring on. Smiling to myself, this would be our life. For the next millennium, I had the best people by my side. We had the best woman who I dished an extra helping of bacon to when she came over for food. The way she ate was just a tease in itself, and we watched her for a minute as we readjusted our hard dicks that were standing front and center. Her eyes had been too focused on the meat, so she didn't notice how ours were standing tall in honor of her. Yeah, we'd never get bored.

# Chapter 10



## Chapter 10

**O**ctavia  
*(Five weeks later)*

Walking into the building, Lou and Kara were by my side. It was an old strip mall that had gone out of business, but the building itself was structurally sound. We were looking into it for our place that we wanted to use and having a building already up would make our lives a lot easier. In Hell, we opened a small bar, and Kara decided she wanted this one to have that effect as well. We weren't sure how to pull it off with wanting the quietness of the other facilities, but we knew if we used a little magic, we could soundproof the upper level for what would be a dance club.

My feet carried me forward as we studied every surface in the building. The inspector was meeting us here to tell me if there had been any damage inside the walls or electrical problems that we would need to investigate. He did his thing and said to meet him here to go over it. So much could go wrong when buying such a big place that hadn't been run in years, but he didn't know who

we were. Just inside the city, we wouldn't be too far from where the guys worked, and we'd be closer to their childhood homes in the neighboring town.

This building had extra spaces that we weren't sure what to use for, but the ideas were endless. Kara kept studying all the mannequins still in the window of one store. Snapping her fingers, it triggered some type of idea. "I could sell my lingerie line here!"

"Lingerie?" I couldn't help but ask.

"Think about it," she started. "We're going to do a library setting, a coffee setting, a bar setting so why not give them a space where they could feel pretty too? I have this one friend who works with plus size lingerie, and she is so good! We can make it a goal to make every woman feel beautiful."

"We do have the space," Lou added with a shrug.

"So you literally want us to open all the stores in this place with something we bring to the table? We wouldn't rent out any buildings?"

"Why would we need to?" Kara asked. "We're literally going to be the three owners of this whole building, so I think we could manage running this place. We have a great area to do those classes we talked about, so women can come do some workouts."

"There's already a play area built into the center of this whole complex, so we could use that as the daycare if moms need to bring a child." Lou got really giddy and clapped while bouncing on her heels. She struggled the most out of us because her partners worked day jobs, and she was raising two kids in their house.

"You guys know we have to staff these places, right? We have to sit and do interviews and background checks."

Both waved that away like it wouldn't be a big deal, but I knew job

interviewing was not going to be the funnest part of this new gig we were trying to do. Walking down to the far end as they went the other way to keep hyping each other up on ideas, I noticed an old martial arts place that had been put in. There was another building not too far that had an adjoining door to it, and it made my mind turn on the possibilities.

If Kara could have her lingerie store, I felt I could have my self-defense class. I could call the local group meetings that I knew so well, and I could offer them the neighboring room. This one would be more of a charity project, but I loved the idea that was forming in my head. Victims of sexual assault and rape could come to a meeting, and they could sign up for a self-defense classes for free. Sometimes, we made ourselves physically stronger to help us if it ever happened again. It could also be healing and cathartic for a lot of them.

With a new vigor in my own step, I ambled back to the other two who were talking about doing some type of bakery inside. I completely agreed because women did get hungry, and pastry dishes were always delicious. We would just have to make sure we set one up for regular pastries, and one for food allergies.

We began making a list of everything we saw a possibility with and where it would go in the building. When I told them what I wanted to do, neither turned my idea down because they knew how much it meant to me. I would be contacting the state and letting them know that once we got this place up and running, that room would be free of charge for them to use. We would also discreetly make it something else for others not to know.

When the inspector got back with his list, I knew we weren't going to luck out with it being easy fixes by how he flipped through some papers. Just the thought of the papers being plural told me this was going to take a little bit of

work. Bellamy promised me he would be running the construction crew with his woodworking skills, and he would have this place in tip top shape in no time. He also hinted at using some magic to enhance everything, and I wasn't opposed to the idea to get this going a little bit easier. With the list now in my possession, I headed back to the castle. The other two went home because they didn't know jack shit about construction.

Going through the portal, I found my castle quiet because the guys went back to work. Between running Hell and their worldly company, they didn't come home too often. They promised me that Friday nights would be blocked off for us, and I would hold them to it. Taking the list to the dining room, Bell promised to be here later to go over it. He knew men to handle the tasks, but I sat idle now.

Plunking down, I felt a little useless again. As the Queen of Hell and ambassador for keeping the peace, I didn't have much work lately. Just as my mind wanted to cave in on itself, I heard something I hadn't in several weeks.

"Mom!" Raven's voice had me getting a little too excited. Trying to rein in how badly I needed my girls, I had to remind myself that they needed to live their lives. Their wings were spreading, and they left my nest. I did what I was supposed to do and raised them into adulthood.

"In the dining room!" I hollered for her to find me before taking all the twists and turns to the bedrooms. When she came rushing in, her look of worry did have me standing. "Baby, what's wrong?"

Looking her over, it took her a minute to speak. Her lower lip quivered as she burst into tears. My fear of the situation had me wondering if I'd need to call my men home. "I'm pregnant!"

A little laugh escaped my lips, and Raven reared back like I was mocking her hysterics. Shaking my head, I had to bite back another wave. "Sorry,

sweetie. I thought you were coming to me for something life or death.”

“But I am! Mom, how am I supposed to be Death when I have to be a mother? How the fuck am I supposed to be a mother? Me? I didn’t plan of having kids so soon!”

“You know who you sound like?” My smile widened.

“Who?” She wiped a tear from her eye.

“Me.” I began to cry with her. Oh, how my emotions riddled me senselessly. Hugging her to me, she didn’t understand what I meant. “I wasn’t ready to be a mother either, Rae.”

“You didn’t want us?” I knew her hormones were talking instead of her senses.

Shaking my head, she wasn’t understanding. “I thought I’d be the worst mom from how I was raised. Plus, we had just defeated Salvatore and the former circle, and I decided to finish high school. Slap on a pregnancy, I had just turned eighteen.”

“But you were the best mom,” she whimpered back into my arms.

“I fought my trauma every day to make sure you had the best version of me I could offer because I never wanted you girls to feel like me.” Kissing the top of her head, she had to lean down to be in my hold because she got her father’s height. “I wanted you to have the mom I yearned for, but I wasn’t perfect.”

“You were, Mom.” She nestled in, reassuring me in my role as her mother. A key trait she’d use with her baby.

“Rae, you’re going to be a great mother, and if it ever does get too hard, I’ll be right here. I’ll help when you need it.”

“I love you, Mom.” she wept more into my chest. This wasn’t common for my headstrong daughter, so I soaked it in as long as I could.

A few minutes later, I heard two more voices echo from down the hall, calling my name only they got to use. When they rushed in, Fallon was with them, and I held all four of my girls as they told me they were pregnant. The elation and fear hit them, and I was the person they wanted to tell first.

“Mom?” JJ sat up and cleaned her eyes.

“Hm?”

“How are we going to tell our dads without them skinning our mates alive?”

“Huh, good question. I hadn’t thought about that.” And I hadn’t. I was just caught up in my girls still needing me. My mom had been right when she said a little girl would always need her mom, and they would still come home when they needed me. A warmth blossomed in my chest when I realized I was graduating from motherhood to grandparenthood. Even though I looked twenty-five, I’d have grandchildren to look forward to. Yeah, I loved the normal bits of my life mixed in with the magical aspects of our world. Nothing would ever compare because this was our omen.

The End.





## About the Author

### **A**bout the Author

Ashley Amy is the mom of a horde of wild ones in a small town located in Idaho. Painting worlds through words has always been her favorite thing to do. From the chaos of her mind, writing became her relief. If you want to learn more about Ashley Amy's other books, follow her on Facebook!

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## Acknowledgements

### **A**cknowledgements

For this series, I'm thanking myself (and Cheyenne) because I wrote this when I was experiencing the darkest moments of my life. Bleeding my sorrow into these characters saved me. I felt unloved, unheard, and I lived as a side character in my own life. Shadowed by the insecurities that had built from a toxic marriage, it was writing Via that gave me strength to leave. That bleeding emotion returned back into me with her strength, helping me find my power and taking it back. There's more in this story than these characters being on their journey, so I hope, as you read them, you can feel that. I hope you feel every ounce of fight I had for their love to conquer anything. Writing this last installment recently, I did it while fully seeing my growth in who I am as a writer, mother and partner. Happily living with a man who loves me more than the air he breathes and enjoying watching our children grow every inch.

Thank you for sticking with me for this adventure, and here's to all the others coming.

-Ashley Amy



Writer of ominous tales.

Ashley Ang

So sinful.  
you'll crave more.