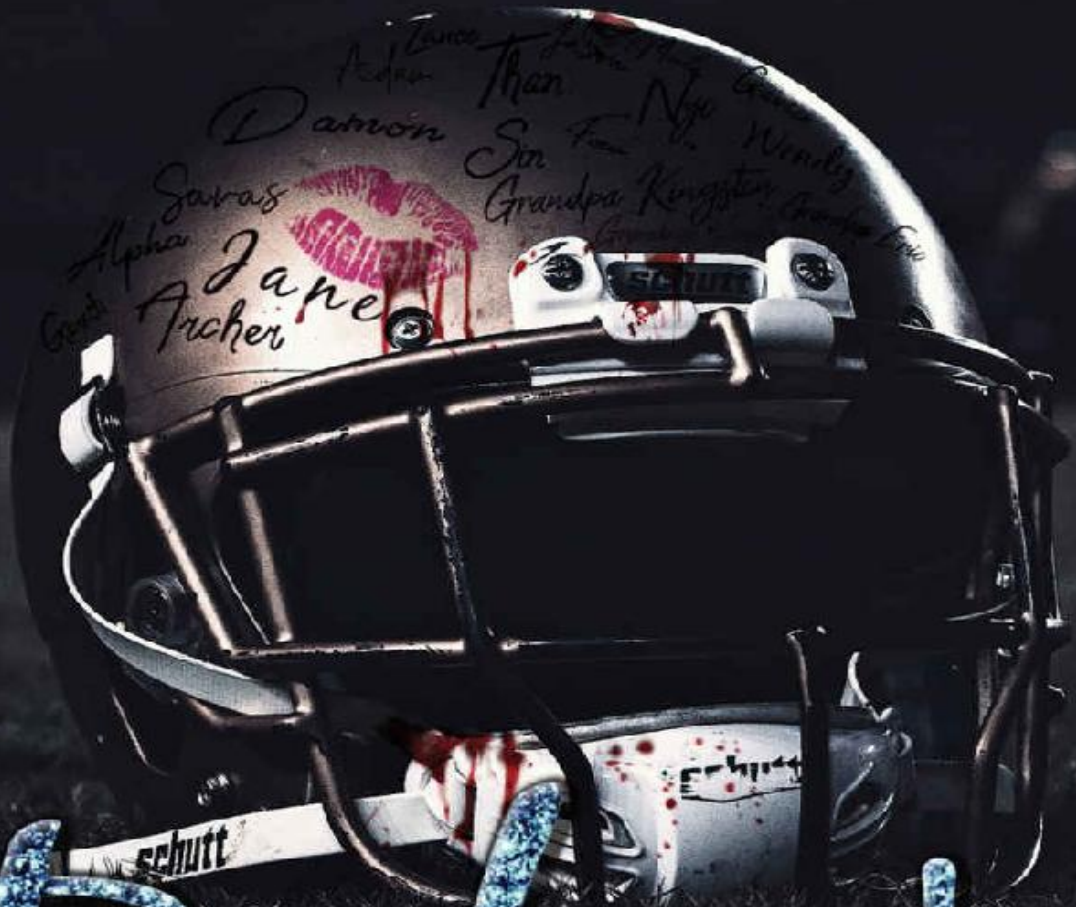


BIZARRO UNIVERSE BOOKS

JANIE MARIE



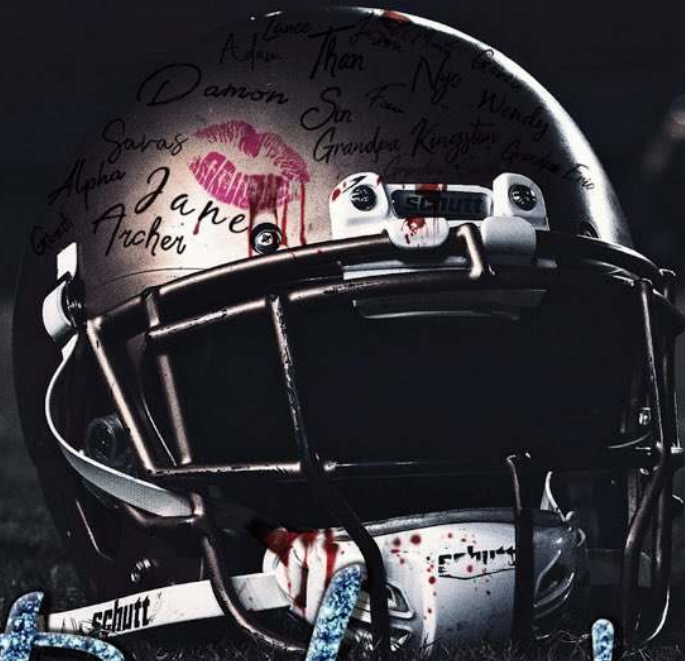
Baby's



JANE'S TEAM - BOOK TWO

BIZARRO UNIVERSE BOOKS

JANIE MARIE



Baby's



JANE'S TEAM - BOOK TWO

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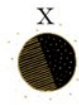
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You know what you did.

I'll never forget it.

I adore you.



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CHAPTER ONE

10 weeks

“Jane’s knocked up.” Ryder’s life-altering words ceased all dinner conversation at the Mortaime-Leodegrance household.

With a shaky smile, Jane met her mother’s and stepfather’s shocked stares. She didn’t blame them for looking like they’d just witnessed a car crash. After all, Ryder, one of her four boyfriends and her baby daddy, wasn’t supposed to blurt out the news yet. The plan had been to have dinner with her parents, get them in a happy mood, then tell them she was pregnant.

Not that she expected either of them to be thrilled. Hell, Jane was still on shaky ground with her mother. It wasn’t easy to move on from learning your mother deliberately tried to ruin your chances at love. She forgave her, yes, for her sanity. But she would never forget that her mother resented her because her father loved her. She would never forget that her mother had tried to sabotage her love life.

Jane remained civil, though, despite her mother’s previous actions, as she’d finally accepted her daughter had four boyfriends, three of whom—Ryder, Tercero, and Luc—were brothers. The other, David, was Jane’s stepbrother.

Kingston finally blinked. “I’m sorry. For a moment, I thought you said you were having a baby with my daughter.”

Ryder grinned like the damned Cheshire cat. “See, you thought your hearing was going with your old age.”

If Jane could facepalm, she would have knocked herself out. But Tercero, who called himself boyfriend number three, was seated beside her, dropped his hand onto hers. Her quiet boy gave her a supportive little squeeze, no doubt aware his brother was about to verbally spar with her stepfather. It was a game for Ryder. He liked to fight and saw her stepdad as a formidable opponent.

Kingston stood, knocking his chair over, crystal blue eyes ablaze as he roared, “You got my little girl pregnant!”

“She’s my girl,” Ryder said, unfazed. “Now she’s gonna be my hot baby mama. I’m King Daddy.”

“Oh Jesus,” Sarah whispered, holding her head between her hands.

Ryder made a face at her. “Sarah, the name is Ryder Godson. You better remember that when you gush to your friends about your daughter being pregnant with my adorable ass baby.”

“Jane,” Kingston snapped, the vein in his forehead pulsing as his face grew redder, “is this true? Or is this some joke you two are playing?” He glanced at Tercero before darting his gaze to her again, sitting when his legs seemed to give out. “Oh Lord, I can tell it’s true.”

“Damn right it is.” Ryder leaned forward, resting his forearms on the table. “I told you I was making babies with her, Pops. Happened sooner than we hoped for, but that’s

expected of me. I'm so fucking impressive that my little mini me destroyed her birth control.”

Jane let out a nervous giggle. Ryder might talk like a fool around Kingston, but he was completely serious about being a dad and prepared for this baby. He only acted like a silly idiot because he liked to make her laugh. Right then, she wasn't sure if he was trying to see her laugh or cry.

Perhaps she should've seen his silliness coming. He'd already done the serious and romantic stuff when she realized he'd known about the pregnancy.

He hadn't taken her anywhere. He'd merely kicked David and Tercero out of the apartment because it was something he needed to do with her alone. She loved that the others understood Ryder. He might be the strongest and most fierce of their group, but he was delicate about her, and they respected him. They wanted her to experience the preciousness of the sweet side only she saw with her bad boy, and stepping aside for him to do so was one of the best forms of love they could give her.

So that night, after Luc dropped her off at the apartment she shared with Ryder, David, and Tercero, she was greeted with one of Ryder's most romantic and sweetest gestures.

He had the whole place set up with a mixture of calla lilies and blood-red roses. Every space that could hold a vase held fragrant and beautiful flowers. Then he had a classic teddy bear and a stack of pregnancy and parenting books that the local bookstore recommended.

She'd almost fainted when he smiled and got down on one knee. He'd surprised her earlier by embracing the others, texting that they would all be fathers to the baby he most

likely seeded. But if he proposed, that would change everything.

Again, he was perfect in his own way. He held up a pacifier and said, “I love you more than words can express, Sweet Jane. But I’ll spend every day trying to show you everything I feel for you.

“I can’t wait to start this journey with you. Things are going to change; we can’t help that. Just remember you’ll always be my sexy vixen. My goddess. Always will I see my moon when I look in your direction.” He grinned wickedly. “Now you’ll be my hot baby mama.” As she laughed, he grabbed her hand and slid the pacifier onto her finger. “Will you accept me as your sexiest baby daddy—King Daddy—who is fucking lucky enough to have three other fuckers to share the title with me?”

“It’s true,” Jane finally told Kingston as the sweet memory circled her mind. “I just found out a couple of weeks ago.”

“How far along are you?” her mother asked. Her face was pale as she darted her eyes between Ryder and Tercero.

“Ten weeks now.” She smiled. “I’m happy, Mom.”

Her mother didn’t respond, but Kingston did.

“Is this why David isn’t here?” He glared at Ryder. “You stole my son’s girlfriend?”

Ryder had been lifting a roll to his mouth, but he halted to respond. “Old man, she’s still Papi’s girlfriend. Just like she’s still Tercero’s and Luc’s girlfriend.” He took a big bite, chewing in an oddly sexual way. The way his jaw muscles flexed had her squeezing her legs together.

Damn, my hormones already got me with cravings.

Seated on Jane's other side, Tercero chuckled and slid his hand to her thigh. She'd worn a sundress, and he slipped it up to touch her skin. Tingles, fire, ice, and treasured chaos.

She shyly peeked at him, always awed that he made sure she was content in stressful situations.

He didn't look at her, but his faint smile came and went.

Kingston looked absolutely baffled. "You're not marrying her?"

For the first time that night, Ryder's incredible presence wavered. Still, he quickly recovered with a convincing indifference and casually shrugged a shoulder. "Kinda our business, isn't it?"

"My daughter getting married is my business," Kingston said, huffing.

"You're nineteen, Jane," Sarah whispered, her face still pale. "You're saying you want to be an unwed teen mother?"

Jane rolled her eyes. "I'll be a young mother with a full-time job and a stable relationship with her baby's father and other boyfriends." She held up her hand before her mother could open her mouth. "We have a stable relationship. We work for us, and we'll keep working."

Kingston shook his head. "This makes things different, Jane. You have to settle down and marry. You can't have a baby while being with four men."

"Why can't I?" She was ready for this argument. She hadn't planned to get pregnant, but she was all in when those two pink lines appeared on that stick. Her baby had become her priority, and she was thankful the men in her life could accept that.

He sighed and clasped his hands together. “Because a child can’t and shouldn’t have to explain why its mother has four boyfriends. Because a child shouldn’t be bullied for their parents’ lifestyle. As a parent, you must think about these things. What do you expect to tell everyone when they ask who’s the father?”

“That my baby is so damn special he or she gets four,” Jane retorted as he opened his mouth to list off more of the criticism they no doubt had ahead of them.

A heated kiss was pressed to her temple as a scorching caress slid down her back. “Sorry, I’m late.” David pressed another kiss to her head, then moved to the chair next to Ryder. Her blue-eyed boy released angry waves of energy that almost had her sweating, but he was respectful to his father and everyone in the house.

As soon as he was seated, a chilled kiss soothed the burn from David’s.

Luc knew how to keep her calm and level-headed. “It seems we missed the announcement.”

“Yeah.” She turned enough to kiss the corner of his mouth. “Thanks for coming.”

As usual, Luc kept his expression blank. Only the faintest of softness in his cold eyes and the light squeeze on the back of her neck told her more than words and romantic gestures from him ever would.

Kingston exhaled loudly as Luc sat beside Tercero, but his gaze shifted to David. “Son, you know I’ve supported your relationship together for a while now, but I beg you to think things through. She and Ryder are starting a family. I don’t like it, but it’s time to grow up. That means you and the

others”—he glanced at Luc and Tercero—“move on and let them figure things out.”

Jane wanted to argue immediately, and the rage and conflict radiating from her guys told her they wanted to do the same, but no one spoke. Kingston had singled out David, and they all knew David needed to address this with his dad.

He breathed deeply as he served himself a heaping of mashed potatoes. He was steadying himself, thinking over his words, and she was glad that no one was rushing him.

Ryder handed David a roll and the salt. He took them but smacked Ryder’s hand away when her bad boy reached for a particularly tasty-looking serving of meat on David’s plate. They were so freaking cute.

Finally, after David had his plate the way he wanted, he met his father’s stare. “I’m not abandoning Jane or my child, so don’t ask me to move on again.”

Sarah looked ready to faint, and Kingston stared at David in shock.

His father’s hand trembled on the table. “It’s yours?”

Ryder rested a hand on her lap but shifted to cover her tummy.

David smiled at her. “We’re all daddy to this baby, Dad. But, if it helps you sleep tonight, Ryder supplied the DNA. Maybe I’ll get lucky next time.”

Kingston cradled his head as her mother sighed with relief.

Fury bubbled beneath Jane’s skin as she watched them in their different states of relief. It wasn’t like David was related to her, and she’d have loved for this baby to belong to any of her men. If it had been David’s, she’d be just as happy. “You

can say congratulations,” she finally said, unable to hide her anger and hurt.

Kingston looked up, his gaze softening as he searched her face. “Oh, my darling girl, I’m not trying to upset you. I’m worried.”

“You don’t have to be,” Ryder said, his clipped tone fierce. Jane took his hand to calm him. He always picked up on her emotions and reacted badly if she was upset.

Kingston held up a hand. “I know you’ll take care of her, but you need to realize your ‘group’ relationship isn’t going to work. Not with all of you. I’m being logical.” He darted his gaze between her four men. “She’s my daughter—I want the best for her. You have no idea the stress that will come with this pregnancy and then a baby. Her time with all of you will be cut drastically, and you’ll resent each other and the baby. I don’t want that to happen. The last thing Jane needs to go through is you four fighting with each other or breaking her heart because you realize dating a girl with a child, and the father in her life, is too hard to handle.”

His eyes landed on Tercero. “You barely see her already. You do whatever you do at night and sleep nearly all day. What will you do when she’s too tired during the time you’re able to see her?” He didn’t let Tercero answer, and she couldn’t even say a word as the truth of his statement hit her hard. Tercero had always been the one with limited time.

Kingston focused on Luc. “And you, do you plan on her working full days with you? Have you asked her if she wants to stay home to care for the baby instead of putting it in childcare? Do you want to be fourth in line while your younger brother gets to proudly show off his child with her?”

Or will you be as wrathful as you are with your rivals when you realize she's not yours anymore?"

He threw all his attention on David. "And you, son, will be traveling more and more with the team. When you come home, you'll see the family Jane and Ryder have built without you. You're going to be an intruder. Is that what you want? Do you want Jane to lose you before you both get even more invested, or when you've watched this baby come into the world believing you're its father too, only to watch its real father do everything you don't and more?"

He waited for David to speak, but her blue-eyed boy sat silent.

Then Kingston leveled Ryder with a stern look. "You're good for her. You act like a damned fool around me, but I know you'll make a fine father. I'm disappointed you quit the team and school, but I don't blame you if this is why. You're not a man who will let not one but two precious souls out of your sight. You are not going to hold that baby in your arms, then watch Jane go to my son or your brothers because she's trying to give each of you attention."

Kingston shook his head. "I admire how much you love her and want her to see that they love her, but you will break. You will snap when that baby calls David Daddy. You will rage when your brothers are there for the first steps, and you will destroy everything when Jane chooses to sleep with one of the others because you've offered to be on baby duty."

Sighing loudly, he continued. "I wish what I say was not true because I know you all love her, and she loves you. But you'll destroy each other when you all realize Ryder is the father of this child, and he will realize it too, and he'll loathe

you for interfering. And it will break her heart when you finally fight.”

“Jane,” her mother said, putting a hand over Kingston’s, “you know he’s right.” Her eyes watered, and she swallowed hard. “I’m still trying to make things better between us—I never should’ve become jealous of your father’s love for you. I should’ve been proud that I was responsible for bringing him more love. But I fell into a toxic cycle. I fear that if you push this, you will do the same. You’ll watch them resent the baby and each other. They’ll resent you.”

Her mom smiled at Ryder for the first time ever. “I believe Ryder’s love for you is great enough that you never feel less loved by him, but don’t pressure yourselves to spread a love already stretched between the five of you. So please, listen to us. Think things through. Think about the chance to be fathers and husbands the others would be giving up if you decide to stay in this relationship.”

An unbearably heavy feeling crushed Jane’s chest, and she lifted her gaze to Ryder. His eyes were already on her. She’d never get over how each of her guys looked at her, and Ryder’s utter devotion to her was something that never wavered.

“Babe,” he said, lifting his hand from covering her stomach to hold her chin, “there’s a reason I—we—accept each other with you. I will never love another as much as I love you. I don’t think I’ll love our baby as much as I love you. I know that seems wrong, but it’s just how I am. I’ll protect and cherish the child we made together, but I need the others to help me.”

He looked at his brothers. “I won’t always be able to be home with how I’m fighting now. I don’t want you coming to

every fight, and you won't want to when the baby is here. I want them home with you. I want you to feel loved all the time because your mom is right—you're going to struggle with so many different emotions. I want Tercero with you when you feel that way, and I can't be there. I want Luc to push you to be the person you want to be, and I want David to love you the way he does. And he can love and care for you and everyone you love, so I can fucking smother you with my love when I'm around."

He grinned, leaning down to kiss her. It was magic, like always. Like she was alive when she had not been. "Breathe," he murmured, chuckling when she gasped. "I love you, angel. I want to give you more than the world, so if you want them to be daddies with me, I'm happy to let them take their places beside me. I want them to stay if they're willing to face everything your parents are saying. You're going to be a great mom, and I know you love more than other people think is possible. I guarantee none of us have felt less loved because our schedules don't equal the same amount of time with you. You'll always find a way to glow for us, and our baby will light up like a little firecracker beside you."

She smiled even though a tear slipped free.

"Aw, my hormonal girl is already leaking tears." He wiped them away with his thumb, chuckling as she made more. "It's okay. We'll make it work."

"Okay." She nodded, kissing him.

"There's my girl." He gave her one of those quick kisses and nudged her with his nose. "Eat up. You puked a lot this morning."

Jane laughed, wiping the rest of her tears as she turned forward. With a big smile, she focused on her parents. "Thank

you for the advice. I love you both. But I love myself and my guys. We'll be okay."

Her mom didn't say anything. Instead, she gave her a tight smile and returned to her meal.

Kingston, however, smiled at Ryder, then at her. "I'm going to support you. Don't hesitate to come to me or your mother. Promise me you'll think of yourself, too—don't put yourself last like you do too often. You won't be able to love any of them as greatly as you do if you allow yourself to break down. You come to me if you need to—I'll straighten these boys out."

Before she could reply, Ryder did. "Old man, if you wanna box, say so. Don't use Jane as an excuse."

Kingston's blue eyes twinkled. "I've been practicing."

David laughed; he'd been training with his father and Ryder. Kingston only sparred with David, though. Ryder never joined them.

"He rocked me the other day," David said with a smile, and the atmosphere lightened.

Jane grinned as Ryder joined in, but he rubbed her tummy again. She wasn't even sure if he knew he was doing it. It sent a giddy feeling through her, and she felt ready to put the drama behind her.

Only her smile slipped when she turned to Tercero.

He and Luc weren't saying anything, but their eyes said enough. They were preparing to say goodbye.

Jane's heart sped, and she darted her gaze toward David. He was talking to his dad, a playful grin on his lips as he recounted his father cheating during their spar, but the half-

second glance of complete and utter loss he sent her had her standing and rushing to the bathroom to puke her guts out.

She heaved and heaved, and only tingles picked up her soul as she clung to the toilet bowl. The sickness did not mask her fresh tears.

“I know, my love,” Ryder whispered, holding her as she cried. He pulled her onto his lap, wiped her mouth with a washcloth, and then pressed his lips to hers. “Don’t burn out, Jane.”

“They’re gonna leave,” she whined, too broken to open her eyes. She saw it as clearly as she’d seen that her future had changed with those two pink lines.

“Then stand and fight for them.” He kissed her again, tilting her face back so she had no choice but to look at him. Fierce beauty awaited her, and even fiercer words were spoken. “You are a fucking goddess, Jane. No other girl can hold us together, and you won’t fall apart now. You’ve been through too much shit, and we’ve all held you in some way, but it’s you who makes your light again.”

Carefully, he wiped her tears, his green eyes darkening as they took in her sadness. “They’re going to try to leave because they love you, and they will if you cry and run away. You gotta roar, baby girl. I’ll give you strength, but it’s you they need to believe when you ask them to stay. They are yours to keep.”

She held a hand over her heart. It was too fast. Not dangerously so, but it felt just a beat shy of a panic attack. She’d had more over the past year after her abduction, and she couldn’t stop them. They knocked her down even when she was soaring with happiness.

Ryder put his hand over hers. “Breathe ... it’ll pass.”

She nodded, still weeping as she saw images of how things had been with David before they got together in her mind—how distant he was and how he looked with other girls. She saw Luc’s office staff and business associates. So many were gorgeous, successful women. None of them would fall and cry like this. Would he finally decide it was not worth the trouble to deal with her and a child?

And Tercero ... oh, she loved him so much. So many whispered behind her back that she was only stringing him along—out of either pity or simply because he looked similar to Ryder, but they didn’t know anything. Sometimes love was quiet and powerful.

He didn’t like to pull her from Ryder. He wanted his brother to love her and considered it a gift to watch. He was special, and she knew he was working through the fact that he was moving on from the dead girl who had rejected him, whom he had considered his soul mate.

Still, he’d already been slipping away—just a tiny step out of reach for reasons he wouldn’t tell her.

“You’re going to be emotional as fuck, babe.” Ryder caressed her fingers as he gently rocked her—he was going to be such a good daddy. “But you can’t let these emotions knock you down so hard that you don’t even look up when they need you to tell them to stay.”

“Do you think they’ll want to leave, though?” She searched his face for a sign. “Am I going to keep them from having everything they deserve because I’m selfish?”

“Hon, I’ve told you this already. You’re our goddess—our queen.” He smiled, and it was a gift from Heaven. “We are

two kings, a prince, and a quiet warrior who wish for nothing more than to guard our greatest treasure as she glows for us all. Selfishness has nothing to do with asking them to stay.”

“Because they love me,” she whispered.

“Fuck yeah, they do.” He grinned, kissing her everywhere on her face.

“Stop,” she laughed, not pushing him away. “I’m all gross and smell like puke.”

“Maybe,” he said, moving back to kiss her lips. “But I’m keeping you anyway.”

CHAPTER TWO

Ryder carefully shifted his hold on Jane to turn the doorknob to their apartment and smiled when her head lolled to the side. His girl had put on a brave face after falling apart earlier. She'd smiled and kissed David and his brothers as they got into their cars to leave. Luc had told her to take the day off tomorrow, explaining that he had an unplanned business trip and would be gone for two days.

Ryder didn't know whether it was true, but he appreciated Luc providing Jane time to recover. Maybe it would be good if he asked Luc to take Jane along for the trip. There seemed to be a look in his brother's eyes when he said business, and Ryder knew that meant something Jane wasn't aware of.

He kicked the front door shut and flipped the lock before carrying his two babies to the room. His eyes fell to her stomach, and he smiled even though he felt like a dick for getting her pregnant when that had not been something she was expecting.

She didn't see it that way, but he did.

He'd been possessive with Jane from the start, and he still didn't know how to fully welcome her other loves into his relationship with her. Because he *was* the first one she considered herself with. Yes, she'd been in love with David

since she was little, but she'd chosen him first because David had crushed her heart.

Thankfully, David came around after Ryder had taken the step to be with her. His old rival had been jealous initially, but they joined together to figure out how to make things work. So then it was David who'd given Tercero an opening with Jane.

Ryder had guessed Tercero had a thing for her, but his acceptance of David made him see Jane had been peeking at his brother. It made him strong enough to accept that Luc and Jane were great together. It sucked at times, they were all dominant and wanted her, but they made efforts for their girl.

Still, even if Ryder accepted them, they knew he couldn't be equal about anything with her, and they pushed down their possessive urges. He needed to love her like he needed air in his lungs, and they let him do whatever he needed so that his mind, heart, and soul could make room for them. That meant he was an asshole who didn't wear a condom like the others. He didn't nut in her ass like David and Luc or stick with coming down her throat like Tercero often did.

No, he filled up her fucking womb with his cum every chance he got because he wasn't as strong as she thought.

He was weak. And he might've ruined shit for her, for all of them.

Ryder sighed, pushing the door to the bedroom open, only to stop short.

David sat there at the edge of the bed. He was shirtless, just wearing a pair of gray sweatpants—Jane's fucking wet dream about all of them—but it was the packed bag at David's feet that had Ryder jerking his head up.

“Where the fuck are you going?” he hissed, checking to see if he’d woken Jane. His baby only hummed and rolled against him more.

David eyed Jane, his shoulders hunched, defeated. “You know they’re right.”

Ryder barely controlled himself as he walked to the other end of the bed and laid her down. His heart pounded hard and fast as she reached behind her to where David slept. Sometimes Tercero joined them, and even Luc on rare occasions, but David’s spot was permanent.

He flicked his gaze toward David and shook his head. “You’re not walking out on her, especially without saying goodbye.”

“It’s your baby,” David whispered. No hate. No disappointment. Just the simple truth that because Ryder couldn’t be a stronger man for Jane, he marked her in every way to be her number one.

Ryder glanced at Jane’s stomach. It was still flat, but he knew what was happening. He’d read the books that told him the little thing growing there was constantly getting closer to becoming a tiny person. “It could’ve been yours if you were as much of a dick as I am.”

David smiled, shrugging. “We know it’s hard for you. I always hoped it would ease up and let us in more, but I wasn’t going to push you. She was still learning, and our schedules made shit difficult. You needed more of her, and she needed more of you—that might always be true.”

Ryder leaned over, grabbing David’s pillow to wedge behind Jane. It settled her enough to fall deeper into a sleep,

and he hoped it was more peaceful than what was happening around her. “She needs you too.”

“I know.” David turned enough to see Jane.

Ryder pointed at the bag. “You’re not leaving tonight. Put that away and get in bed.” Tugging off his shirt, he walked toward the door. “I’m serious. Cuddle the fuck out of our girlfriend. I’ll be back in a sec.”

David flipped him off, but he also stood and took his bag to the drawer, hiding it. Only after David slipped in bed with Jane did Ryder walk out. He went across the apartment, not knocking when he reached Tercero’s room.

“Motherfucker,” Ryder growled, scanning the empty room. It wasn’t just empty—it was cleaned out. A black envelope was in plain view, sitting on the bed. Ryder snatched it, fuming at the elegantly written term of endearment in silver ink: *Tesoro*.

He almost crumpled it but tossed it onto the bed and returned to his room.

David was spooning Jane, his fingers lightly caressing her stomach. He frowned when Ryder came in alone. “Where is he?”

Ryder shook his head. He felt like he might kill someone because he didn’t want Jane to wake up and discover Tercero had slipped out in the middle of the night.

David sighed and pulled open the blanket. “We’ll find him.”

He had the urge to hunt down his brother and even locate Luc to ensure the bastard wasn’t gone. But he listened to David and got in bed after removing his boots and jeans, smiling because Jane reached for him immediately. “I’m

here,” he whispered, sliding his arm under her neck, at peace when one of her legs entwined with his so that she was perfectly sandwiched between him and David.

“You’re going to be a good dad,” David said quietly. “An even better husband.”

“Bitch, I didn’t ask you to marry me.” Ryder snickered, guiding Jane’s head to his chest. “Stop talking like you’re not in this with me. You’ll be my husband-in-law.”

David chuckled. “She’ll love that term for us. You know, I feel like we’ve had this conversation before.”

“Must’ve been you dreaming about me getting down on one knee. I knew you fantasized about me.” Ryder chuckled, smacking David’s fist away from hitting him. He and David weren’t like that about each other. It was all Jane for them, but he did enjoy annoying David and making Jane laugh at their friendship. “Stop. I’m holding my baby mama.”

“I think it’s a girl,” David said, lying down again and touching her stomach.

“Nah, it’s a boy.” He nuzzled Jane as best he could. “Strong little fucker.”

“A girl can be strong,” David said, sounding tired.

Ryder agreed—Jane was the strongest person he knew—but he was sure it was a boy. “Well, a boy first would be best. He can take care of a baby sister later on.”

“As if she wouldn’t have the entire army of wolves and devils her mama leads right behind her.” David kissed Jane’s head before closing his eyes. “Thanks, Ryder.”

Jane did have an army at her beck and call, and he smiled at the thought of it. “It’s never for you.”

Again, David flipped him off, but he only smiled and slipped his hand on his spot to search for sleep.

Even with David there to hold her with him, fear crept in. He worried Tercero was only the first to leave. Because he realized David could decide he wanted to father his own children and have a wife he didn't have to share. Then he realized if they did stay, he'd never get to make Jane his wife.

"Don't leave," Jane suddenly whispered in her sleep.

Ryder lifted his head, checking to see if she'd woken herself. She was frowning, clutching at him, and David was already asleep but so attuned to her that he hushed her, caressing her until she relaxed.

Leaning closer, Ryder kissed her pouting lips. "I'm not leaving. He's not leaving. You have us both, angel." He hesitated but added, "I'll find Tercero ... and I'll beat the fuck out of Luc if he tries to skip out. You get all of us. Our baby gets all of us, too."

"I'll buy a bigger bed," said a voice from the doorway.

"Fucking hell." Ryder scowled at his older brother. "You actually startled my ass."

"Learn to pay attention to more than Jane." He motioned for Ryder to move. "Get in the middle with her. I know Tercero left. She will at least wake up with us before I leave for my trip. Or perhaps I should take her?"

Ryder nodded because he'd been right. Of course, they'd have to talk privately before he took her, but it was good Luc was suggesting it.

He shifted Jane on top of him and quickly became annoyed since it resulted in David draping his leg over his. Not just that, but being in the middle meant Luc's cold-ass skin

touched Jane and made her shiver like a little bunny. Now he needed David to be on him to keep her warm. “You could put some damn gloves on when you get in bed,” he whispered harshly to his brother.

Luc didn't reply. He stayed on his back, brushing shoulders with Ryder, but kept a hold on Jane's hand as she cooed like a baby on his chest.

“Are you staying for good?” Ryder asked him.

“Go to sleep, little brother,” Luc said.

But it was fine. Ryder would get stronger because that's what he did. He made himself the strongest—all for her, always for her. He'd do the same for his baby.

CHAPTER THREE

Tercero sighed, not opening his eyes when he heard the door to his new room open and shut. “I don’t want visitors.”

The bed dipped ... twice.

He opened his eyes and narrowed his gaze at the intruders, noting their scowls and different states of undress.

Archer’s white hair stuck up in every direction, and since he wore no shirt, Tercero could tell he’d been with at least one woman or perhaps a whole harem—you could never tell with Archer. Savaş wore only a red pair of briefs and sported fresh scratch marks on his shoulders and arms.

“Why the fuck are you here?” Archer asked, his harsh tone hinting that he knew very well why Tercero had let himself into their apartment. They lived twenty minutes from the apartment he’d shared with the others, closer to the university.

Savaş dragged a hand down his face before mussing up his neon red mohawk. “He left Jane. He’s hiding from Ryder.”

“I’m not hiding.” Tercero rolled away, not in the mood to have a gab session with his wilder brothers. They weren’t in relationships to offer any advice anyway.

A pillow smacked his head, and Archer snapped at him, “She’s pregnant, you fucking twat. Roll over so I can hit your

face for her.”

It was almost cute how his brothers were protective of her, but Tercero could demolish Archer, and if pushed, he'd likely slip and hurt him.

“She’s pregnant with our brother’s child.” Tercero smacked Archer’s hand from his shoulder. “I’m doing this for her and for him. I won’t interfere.”

“I thought you were all going to be daddy,” Savaş said with a yawn. “Ryder wouldn’t have let you in the way he did if he didn’t want you there. And she’d run off with him if he was all she wanted.”

“Yeah, asshole.” Archer gripped his shoulder and pulled him onto his back. “Go home to them before she wakes up.”

“Luc already called,” Savaş supplied, clueing Tercero in on how they found out in the first place. “He’s gone over.”

“He’ll leave eventually,” Tercero said. Luc wanted his queen, not his brother’s queen. Certainly not when she was having Ryder’s baby and not his. While Tercero loved that she carried Ryder’s child, he knew his brother wouldn’t last with sharing her. He could barely tolerate it as it was.

Yes, they got along and loved her together and separately, but Ryder was still very much set on being her husband and father to her children. Tercero wouldn’t take that from him. Especially not when Ryder had refused Elise’s advances before she died.

“Go home,” Archer repeated, “or I’m calling her and telling her you’re fucking some bitch you’ve been keeping on the side.”

That was the final straw.

Tercero grabbed Archer by the throat and slammed him onto the bed. The urge to take all his rage out on his brother filled his muscles, but he steadied and released him. “If you hurt her with lies, I will destroy you.” He stood, pointing at the door. “Leave. Don’t make me hurt you.”

Archer rose, fury lighting up his pale eyes. He was holding back too, and just as enraged. Perhaps Tercero had misjudged his brother’s abilities. “I’m not the one hurting her with lies, ass-fuck. You’re the one inventing shit to leave her.”

Savaş sighed and went to Archer, gripping him by the arm and dragging him out. But he added his two cents. “Jane isn’t Elise. Unlike her, Jane has Ryder, and she still wants you—craves you.”

“I’ll make her crave me,” Archer spat.

“Shut up.” Savaş shoved him down the hall, pointing. “You’re not helping.”

“Not trying to,” Archer retorted, his voice fading. “Jane’s sweet and sexy. Not the manipulative bitch he’s hung up over.”

Tercero’s blood pumped painfully fast through his veins. They had no idea what it was like to love someone who didn’t love them back. They didn’t know what it was like to watch that person wither and die right before their eyes. They didn’t know what it felt like to have their big brother mean the world to the girl they loved. Twice.

“When did you last spend time alone with Jane?” Savaş asked him, leaning a shoulder against the doorframe, a sign Tercero would have to move him if he wanted to avoid answering. “Not the mornings when you’re just getting home,” he added. “I mean, when you’re not off doing the shit she

doesn't know about. 'Cause I know she's hung out with Archer and her crew more than you over the past two months."

"There's nothing to say about this." Tercero returned to the bed, sitting as his gaze drifted toward his phone. He'd fallen asleep staring at a photo of himself with Jane. He'd taken so many pictures of her, but his favorite was a selfie of her licking his cheek as she laughed. He didn't even like taking selfies, but she'd asked him to, and then she'd snuck in the lick.

"She's not your soul mate like you believed Elise was." Savaş let the words hang before adding, "But that doesn't mean she's not the one."

"I know that." He hated sounding so weak and childish for believing in soul mates. They weren't fairy tales to his family; they were real. He knew it had everything to do with losing both parents—they needed magic. And that's what Jane and Ryder were to each other. It was beautiful to Tercero. His brother loved nothing. Only her. He didn't want to destroy it, and Kingston had pointed out many truths he couldn't ignore.

"She's not a regular woman," Savaş continued. "She's able to keep you all together. You're the one who's kept her from doing that."

"Because Ryder still wants her to himself." He hadn't meant to say it, but it was true. Ryder would always be her priority because he *needed* to be her priority to be stable. David would always be on her other side and strong enough not to let Ryder's relationship with Jane bother him. And Luc would always be there, even if he didn't touch, which he did anyway. He loved Jane, and she loved him back in a way that entirely captured his big brother's dark heart and soul. She was and always would be Luc's queen.

Savaş exhaled loudly. “I don’t think he’ll ever not want her all for himself. He’s greedy about her like that. So is David. Hell, even with her crew—Damon, Than, Sin, the whole group—they worship her, and she makes them feel special. She pulls all of us in like the moon does the tides. And Ryder loves to watch her glow. What you’re doing—it’s going to cause her to dim, and he’s going to destroy you for it.” Savaş stared at him hard, letting that sink in. Ryder was the ultimate monster if he stopped being perfect for Jane, and he would be a demon if Jane ever got hurt again. “He’ll do more damage than even you can do to yourself. So if this is about not wanting to hurt him, you’re doing it wrong. If she hurts, he loses it. If he loses it, she breaks even more.” He pushed himself off the doorframe. “This is about you, brother. Jane already chose you. You’re the one who didn’t fully choose her.” With those final words, Savaş strolled into the hall.

“The truth,” Tercero muttered to himself. He’d not chosen Jane. Even if he loved her and knew she was the love of his life, he hadn’t chosen her the way the others had. They made her their soul mate regardless of Ryder, while he clung to a soul who was gone and had never even loved him back. And, because of that, he’d distanced himself. Now he was leaving.

He opened his phone, taking in their picture again. She made him feel alive. She picked up his damaged heart and kissed it even though it left her lips bloody and bruised.

Loving him came at a price—she had to love him while knowing he considered another his soul mate. Sure, she thought Ryder was hers, but she didn’t lessen her love for him or the others because of it. He saw it all the time. She was trying to defy the gods and make her own magic. She was trying to make all of them her soul mates.

She tried to heal him and live up to Elise—how she thought Elise should've loved him. Then she drowned him in her essence, and he accepted because she gave him hope that he could live a perfect life with her, his brothers, and David.

But he didn't deserve to live. He didn't want to allow himself happiness. Jane made him happy, even when she didn't know it. Just her attention made him want to smile, and he fought it because he'd never give her what she deserved. How could he? His soul mate had told him he wasn't enough, and Jane had what his soul mate had craved. Ryder.

Tercero opened a file of photos of Elise he had kept hidden. She'd been nothing like Jane. She was tall and had a toned body with far larger breasts than Jane. Her skin looked like delicious cocoa, her eyes were like honey, and her dark hair didn't allow any light to escape.

Even her smile was dark, the opposite of how Jane's reminded him of moonlight so you wouldn't feel alone in the dark.

No, Elise was an abyss of darkness and cruelty, and Jane was the light that gave all who saw her hope. It was foolish to hold onto Elise, but he knew she was the one his soul had been meant for. It ruined him that he'd failed his soul, and he couldn't bear to submerge Jane in the darkness he kept inside himself. She had no clue what he kept hidden from her.

A text pulled him from his downward spiral but didn't help him escape his doom.

RYDER

Don't let me find you if you have no intention of returning.

Then he hit him in the gut with a selfie of Jane asleep on his chest, David on one side, his arm draped around her waist, and Luc on the other, holding her hand. Tercero hadn't expected Luc to show up. He rarely joined their group, but Jane was giddy when he did.

She'd try something new to show 'her king' she was great. To show David she was brave. To show Ryder she was always Sweet Jane. Then she'd look at Tercero with a soft smile on her pretty face.

It held a hint of wickedness that made his stomach clench because she wanted him, even worn out and sated. So she'd lean over the others and kiss him like she was dying of thirst. He'd give her all of himself until she purred like a fed kitten, then Ryder would pull her close since Tercero usually had to leave for the night, and he and David would help her sleep—she still had nightmares about her abduction and father's death.

"Your brother left," came a soft voice at the door.

Tercero looked over to find a woman who wore a shirt that likely belonged to Archer and nothing else. Her olive skin, dark tumbling locks, and eyes that matched the darkness of his heart peered at him. His skin prickled. *Elise?*

Tercero shook his head, pushing thoughts of Elise aside. Now that he could see the woman clearly, he knew it was just his fatigue and emotions playing tricks on him. She wasn't Elise, and she certainly wasn't Jane. "I'm sure he'll be back," he said, even though he wasn't sure about Archer.

"No. He said something about your girlfriend. Or maybe your ex?" Her chin wobbled. "The way he talked sounded like he was in love with her."

“What he has with her is not your business,” Tercero said harsher than he intended because he now wondered what Archer was up to. And because the girl gave him that same cruel look Elise used to. Only there was a different hunger in her eyes as she took him in.

Her lips trembled for a moment, but she took a step closer. “Then what you and I do isn’t their business either.”

CHAPTER FOUR

“What the actual fuck?”

Jane stirred at the deep timbre of Ryder’s voice, but she was too sleepy to be bothered.

He obviously didn’t care about her hearing him because he spoke again, his tone rougher. “Motherfucker, you better get off my fucking leg.”

She peeked an eye open, giggling when the palest blue eyes twinkled at her. “Hi, Archer.”

His boyish grin sent a delightful shiver through her body. “Hi, gorgeous.” He ignored Ryder’s threatening rumble and crawled beside her, pushing David aside.

Her blue-eyed boy scowled, sitting up fast. “Are you sleepwalking?”

“Yes,” Archer responded, reaching an arm around her waist. “I’m dreaming Jane’s my woman. Go away so I can have my way with her.”

David flicked his ear but laughed, leaning over the silly boy to kiss her. “Morning, baby.”

Her lips sizzled. “Morning.”

His lazy smile stayed in place as he searched her face. “Want me to toss him?”

Archer replied, “No, she wants a sexy blond. Go away, Mr. Sexy Blue Eyes.”

David gave Ryder a look that had her checking on her bad boy. He was furious, his eyes glued to where Archer held her. “He’s playing,” David said, getting up.

“I am not,” Archer mumbled, his smile contagious. “Love me up, hot mama.”

Jane cackled but lifted her head to kiss Ryder. That’s when she spotted Luc beside them. He was shirtless and sinfully sexy with his inked body. “You came to see me?”

Luc’s icy gaze was also on his younger brother’s hold on her. “Yes, *you*, my queen. Not to watch my immature brother fondle you before I leave for a few days.”

She opened her mouth, but Ryder talked over her.

“You have two seconds to get out of my fucking bed.” He glared at Archer. “The only reason you’re not knocked out is that she’s on me, and you’re making her laugh.”

“I wanted to see her.” Archer tightened his arm around her. “I’ll behave. I need to be here with her.”

Jane frowned, her eyes moving around the room when a chill slid up her spine. *Tercero* . . . “He left me.” She focused on Archer instead of Ryder. Her bad boy couldn’t see her pain—he lost it whenever she got hurt.

Archer lifted a hand to her cheek, and she remembered how he’d talked with her a few months ago about how she’d feel if things didn’t work out with everyone. She had thought

he was merely joking, but it was like he knew something—like he was trying to prepare her.

“Babe,” Ryder said, pressing his lips to the crown of her head. “I’ll find him.”

Her eyes stayed on Archer’s, watering at the sadness in his. “Archer?”

“Sorry, doll face.” He caressed her cheek. “I tried to talk to him, but he’s being a dumbass.”

David sighed, sitting on the bed again. He reached out, rubbing her leg as she felt Luc’s cold touch against her back. “Baby, he’ll come back.”

She shook her head. Archer had tried to warn her; she knew it.

“I’ll stay.” Archer’s head came closer, his lips brushing her forehead as he hugged her. It was a miracle Ryder wasn’t throwing him off the bed, but her dangerous boy merely wrapped his arms around all of them. Luc sighed, annoyed at his brother’s touch, but accepted the embrace. They were trying to show her what she still had, but it didn’t help the shredding feelings across her heart.

“He doesn’t love me,” she whimpered, wrapping an arm around Archer. For some reason, she knew he was hurting as much as she was.

“He does.” His lips pressed against her forehead. “I swear he does.”

“But I didn’t love him enough.” She gasped when her heart squeezed painfully and hugged him tighter.

“You did.” Archer tilted her face toward his, his pale eyes glowing in the dark. “He’s broken. He has to want to heal. He

knows you can help him, but he doesn't want to leave the pain. He wants to punish himself." A slice of anguish swiftly cut across her heart, and she whined when it began to burn, and Archer kissed her eyelids. "It'll be okay," he said, nuzzling her. Then, just as she felt a soft brush of his lips on hers, he moved away.

Her breath hitched, and she opened her eyes to see him leave the room. The emptiness that had already spread to her soul started swallowing her heart.

A cold hand gripping the back of her neck stalled it. "Don't fall apart because my brother is foolish." Luc gently squeezed where he held her. "Look at me."

She felt sick. Her heart had just cracked in half. Her lungs weren't working.

"Look at him, babe." Ryder shifted so Luc could reach her easier.

Her king's face looked as if it had been carved from stone. His tender kiss, however, lifted her broken soul into his arms, and ice crawled across her skin.

"I don't want to forget." She gasped against his lips as Ryder sucked on her neck, and David squeezed her ass as he kissed down her spine. They were consuming her, pushing the pain away, but she didn't want to forget. She wanted to cry, to find Tercero, but at the same time, she couldn't bring herself to force him to stay. He'd left by himself. That told her too many horrible things, and she wanted to weep. She wanted to scream and destroy everything. She wanted to disappear.

"Show her some magic, Luc," Ryder murmured against her neck. "Let us help, angel."

Luc kissed her tears, sending something she'd never felt through her body. It was more than ice, fire, and magic. It was delicate yet powerful—an inferno he captured and held together as he called the others to her.

He tugged her off Ryder, pulling her leg over his waist but pressing her against Ryder as his kiss switched from sweet to fierce. She struggled to keep up with him as Ryder laid back with a hand behind his head.

She whined when David nipped her hip and pulled her panties down.

“Be gentle,” he warned Luc.

“He won't hurt her,” Ryder promised.

David squeezed her ass cheek again before moving to let her king comfort her.

She felt their gazes on her as Luc pushed her dress up. A chill skated across her skin, and she sighed as Ryder's hand slid across her prickled flesh.

“You won't break from this,” Luc said, holding her face. It probably looked cruel because of his firm hold, but she saw the silver flame in his eyes urging her to see his meaning.

“But I want him,” she whispered, clinging to her love for Tercero. She'd hurt him because those who whispered behind her back were right. She didn't give him enough of her time. She could have fought her fatigue when he was around—begged him to stay with her instead of leaving to do whatever he did in secret.

Luc touched her temple and murmured, “Close your eyes. Just for now, I'll let you hold him tight.”

“I don’t want to forget,” she said, following his order even though she didn’t understand.

“I know you don’t.” Luc slid his finger down her jaw, and his touch shifted from icy to burning, to tingles—to magic.

She gasped, clutching Luc’s arm but not opening her eyes.

“*Shh* ...” He moved his finger over her lips. “Imagine his face. Imagine the smile he gives you. That secret smile you two share when you think no one is looking.”

Her quiet boy staring at her from far away flickered in her mind. His dark eyes appraised her in that precise way of his—like he saw so much more than she wanted anyone to see, and he rewarded her with the faintest and briefest of smiles before walking toward her.

Chilled lips skimmed hers. Again, like his fingers, the ice transitioned to heat and tingles, then treasured, beautiful chaos. *Tercero*.

“There,” Luc whispered, tilting her head so his mouth could slant over hers. He kissed her the way *Tercero* did—like he was dying but willing to give her everything of himself.

She completely lost herself in him. Her eyes shut tightly as the image of *Tercero* became clearer. He was gone, she knew, but Luc was giving her a glimpse to hold onto—reminding her that there was still intense love between her and *Tercero* that even stupid judgment from others couldn’t ignore.

“That is yours,” Luc murmured against her lips. “Keep it and decide later what you will do about this.”

Jane pried her eyes open, her heart crying as *Tercero* slipped away.

Luc held her face, his heated gaze not one of love. She flinched, but he grabbed her tighter.

Despite the blast of violent emotions from Ryder and David that engulfed her back, they stayed still and quiet.

“He left,” Luc told her, letting the words sink in no matter how painful. “We did not.”

Her heart ... it didn't know if it was relieved or further broken.

Ryder shifted, a hand dropping to her chest as if he knew she'd just taken a blow there and was searching for a wound he could mend. “Do you hear him, babe?”

As much as it hurt that Tercero had indeed left her, she nodded.

Her bad boy leaned closer, kissing her neck. “We want to comfort you through this. But if you want to deal with it alone—we'll step back.”

“Unless you close yourself off from us,” David cut in. His hand dropped down onto her thigh as he scooted closer. “Baby, I love you, and I respect your wishes. But I won't watch you become a shell of the girl we love. It broke all of us before. I won't let that happen again.”

Ryder nodded in agreement behind him, and she wanted to cry. David had watched her—they all had when she had to love him from afar after he became her stepbrother. She'd shut herself away from the world all because she didn't think she'd ever love anyone but the boy she couldn't have.

Luc kissed the corner of her mouth, his chilled lips so wonderfully addictive. “Let us worship you now, my queen. Later you may decide how you will rise from his departure.”

He licked her lip, and she felt Ryder's arousal against her ass as he let out a low groan and ground against her.

It always did something to her that he was so possessive, yet he got so incredibly turned on at the sight of her being loved by the others.

Even Luc, as greedy as he was about her, wanting her all to himself more than he admitted aloud, became more excited when Ryder or the others got lost in their lust for her.

Luc's lips quirked up as Ryder pressed his length against her again. His strong hand palmed her fuller breast, and his smile turned wicked when David jerked her hip to give Ryder a better angle.

"My little brother must be feeding off your hormones," Luc murmured, breathing in her whimper as David's finger sank deep inside her. Gray eyes flashed with silver. "As well as your stepbrother, it seems."

David grunted. "I'm her boyfriend first." He nipped her leg and held her ass cheeks apart for Ryder to get more access.

There was darkness in Luc's quiet laugh as he tilted her face toward his. He always made her feel so different from the others. His presence alone always pushed her to be stronger. The strong that most people praised. Not the quiet strength Ryder and David helped her realize she already had—the strength others called weak simply because she didn't hide her tears.

"Do you feel sick?" Ryder asked, sliding a hand down to her stomach. She mewled, torn between arching her ass out for him, pushing against David's hand, and tilting her pelvis so Luc could bury his cock in her. Ryder nudged her with his

nose before dragging his tongue across the fluttering pulse in her neck. “Tell us, babe. You able to take all three?”

Reaching behind her until she could grab his ass, she nodded. “Same time,” she said, gasping as David flicked her clit. “Ah! Not sick. Please.”

She felt their smiles if such a thing was possible, and her body hummed when their lips touched her skin.

Her bad boy didn’t waste time with his underwear, which barely contained his erection, and pushed down the waistband to free his dick. He knew how much it turned her on to feel it on her—sometimes more than him entering her. Well, until he pushed in as deep as she could take him.

David laughed a deep, sexy sound and did the thing that made her toes curl—she didn’t even know what he did with his hand, but it was magic.

“Yeah, get her fucking soaked,” Ryder encouraged David as he continued grinding his dick against her ass.

Luc untangled himself from her, watching her writhe in beautiful torture as they played with her.

Ryder cupped her tummy and groaned into her hair. “Fuck, babe,” he rasped, faintly digging his fingers into her flesh. “I did this. We did this.”

“Don’t ever be upset that it was just him,” David said, pushing her leg wider and forcing her to roll her back to Ryder’s front. Then, he pushed up, hovering over her tummy, and pressed a searing kiss right below Ryder’s hand.

“Get her right on the edge for me.” Ryder moved his hand to her breast and squeezed. “Look at Luc, babe.”

Her eyes went to her king, and she moaned at the sight of him as David lowered his mouth between her legs.

Luc licked his lips and ran a hand through his hair, slicking it back.

“You in?” Ryder asked him, his breath hitching as she panted and whimpered from David’s talented mouth. Oh, she hoped she didn’t look ridiculous because they could make her damn soul leave her body when they went down on her.

Her legs trembled, and her stomach tightened. And Luc watched it all.

He eventually sent Ryder a challenging stare but nodded as he dragged a hand down his inked torso. “You start first, then both of us.” He flicked his gaze to David. “He’ll finish her alone. He needs to learn how to be more careful with his strength.”

“Fuck, don’t stop.” Jane reached for David when he lifted his head. His turbulent gaze flew toward Luc, and she forgave him for stopping just before she could fall. “Baby, you’re gentle,” she said, caressing his cheek as he positioned himself in front of her.

He shook his head and held her cheek. “You know I’m not.”

“Not always,” she blurted, crying out as Ryder pushed inside her without warning. “Fuck.”

David chuckled, dipping his face closer as she gasped from Ryder’s slow, deep thrusts. “You had him too worked up.”

Ryder flipped him off but grabbed David’s head to make him kiss her.

Damn, it turned her on so much when he did this. Even more so when David eagerly accepted the order but made it his own.

When Ryder slowed down, David eased back and kissed her chin. “Ah, he’s calming down for you.”

Ryder grunted, pressing in deep. “Move.”

David chuckled, kissing her once more and then moving aside.

“Oh, fuck,” she whispered, reaching for Luc. He’d taken his pants off, leaving him naked. Her mouth watered. Every intricate tattoo danced with each breath he took. He was already a masterpiece, but he’d turned his body into the most beautiful canvas with words few could read.

From the neck down, his body was inked with hidden messages written in classical Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Maya, Egyptian, and Babylonian. There were several astrological and Zodiac symbols too.

His cold expression turned wicked as he stroked himself a few times, watching Ryder slide in and out of her. “Brother?”

Ryder kissed her head and pulled out. “Babe, can you take me in the ass?”

She nodded. He had the biggest dick out of her guys. Because of that, he usually insisted the others take her in the ass so he wouldn’t hurt her. David loved ass. He had the Cinderella dick of her group; he fit her perfectly.

Well no, he didn’t. David was almost as big as Ryder, but she considered him a perfect fit. He was a stud and gave the good kind of hurt.

Luc sighed, earning a grin from her. He could always tell when she was distracted.

“Apologies, my king,” she said, dropping her eyes to his dick. He was gorgeous—thick, veiny, and the perfect length for her not to feel overwhelmed.

“She can take you,” David promised Ryder as Luc pulled her closer.

Jane slid her hand down his cock as he nuzzled her neck, and Ryder massaged her back hole after lubing it with the juices they’d created together.

“You two have never taken me together,” she said, gasping when Ryder pushed a finger inside her ass. Usually David and Ryder teamed up to take her together. Tercero would join but didn’t enter her if Ryder was already there. But Luc never participated in double penetration with any of them.

“As I have said before, Jane,”—Luc kissed the corner of her mouth— “you were not ready for two kings. Prove I am correct in that I should stop coddling you.”

“Ah, fuck,” she said, clutching him tightly as Ryder worked in a second finger. “Don’t baby me.”

“You’re our baby. Relax,” David coached as he walked to the bedside table and tossed Ryder lube. “You’re extra tight lately.”

Damn, she loved when David watched. He always kept himself out of reach, even when she begged him to come closer.

His blue eyes darkened when they connected with hers. “I say when, sweetheart.”

Luc smirked against her cheek. “Manners, Jane. I am your focus right now.”

“I know,” she said, pumping her hand around his length. “Please.”

“Spoiled girl,” he said affectionately before rolling onto his back and pulling her on top. “Get yourself off now.”

She glared at him as Ryder chuckled and leaned back. In her peripheral vision, she saw her bad boy put an arm behind his head as he stroked himself. She didn’t know why she liked seeing them do it.

“This is why, Jane,” Luc said, gripping her chin. “Stop trying to figure out how to get us inside you while you are meant to be with me, and perhaps we will grant your wish.”

Shivering, she leaned down to press her lips to the corner of his mouth. “I’m emotional and horny—you’re meant to be sweet.”

“You know better than to expect that from me,” he said, grabbing her chin again and pressing a brutal kiss to her lips. It was short and angry. But the slight caress along her jaw as he released her assured her he wasn’t mad—that he loved her. “I’m waiting.”

Ryder laughed, as did David, who crossed his arms and watched.

“You better fuck him now, babe,” Ryder said. “I’m getting needy as fuck over here staring at your gorgeous face.” He motioned to Luc’s dick, poking her belly. “Get him in you like you want so you can get warmed up. All you have to do is take our dicks—Papi and I will do the rest.”

Luc’s challenging stare bored into her. She’d kissed him plenty in front of the others. She’d had sex with him in front of

them too, even if he preferred to keep them private. Yet the smirk teasing his lips told her he welcomed the others watching her sitting on top of him.

His dick brushed against her tummy, and she moaned when she saw Ryder still giving himself teasing strokes. It had her body buzzing with need.

Luc wasn't making much effort, a thing he did. He liked her to show him what she had in her. "Love me back," she whispered, kissing the corner of his mouth again.

He didn't reply, but he turned his head and claimed her kiss. Stunned that he'd given in, she almost sobbed when she tangled her fingers in his hair. He touched her too. One hand went to the small of her back while the other held her head.

Ryder chuckled, and she felt his lips touch her back. "Emotional girl. Take care of her, Luc."

Luc didn't respond. He kissed her deeper, sitting up in a fluid motion while keeping his grip on her.

She felt Ryder get off the bed and panicked at the thought of him leaving. But Luc hushed her with a soft kiss and lifted her so she could slide down his length.

The noise from her mouth as every inch disappeared inside her was a mixture of torture and ecstasy. Like always, the shock of something so much colder touching where she was so warm had her trembling in his arms. The angle, all his strength when he lifted her up and down to get her started ... "Oh, fuck," she moaned, tugging his hair and tightening her legs around him. This position always surprised her when any of her men did it. The need to ride their cocks was frantic, almost violent.

“Good girl,” Luc murmured against her neck as she fought to reach her release. She felt possessed, only faintly aware of David and Ryder moving around the room.

“Oh, yes,” she shouted as her orgasm ripped through her.

He didn’t give her time to recover or savor it. He stood and kept himself inside her. All she could do was hold on and ride out the last shocks of her orgasm.

Tingles danced along her waist as Ryder kissed her temple. “So pretty.”

She sighed, her muscles relaxing as Luc moved her.

“She’s being lazy now,” Luc said, smacking her ass before lifting her off his dick. She cried at the sudden loss and glared at him as he carried her to the ‘fucking couch,’ dubbed so after Ryder yelled one night, ‘Put her on the fucking couch.’ It made group sex so much easier.

Ryder ran his knuckles along her spine as he whispered in her ear. “Still good?”

Her breath hitched as Luc sucked on her neck. “Good,” she managed to say.

Her bad boy nuzzled her but nudged her and Luc toward the couch.

She shivered with anticipation as Luc guided his dick back inside her once he was settled on the couch, one of his legs still on the floor to give him a more effortless thrust. “Yes,” she breathed, pressing on his chest as she rode him. It hurt so good.

Luc reached up, holding the side of her face. These little touches from him made her feel like his queen. He didn’t get wild with her like the others. He was controlled and always

took his time. His only goal was that she was satisfied—he just made her work to get him there.

Sweat dotted his forehead, and she grinned at his relaxed expression before yelping when his palm stung her ass.

A tingling caress covered her abused flesh, and she felt Ryder glare at his brother, but she leaned down, moaning as she kissed Luc's lips.

“You know better,” he murmured, shifting on the couch as she felt Ryder come closer.

“Be nice,” Ryder said roughly, rubbing the sting as she promised she was okay. He grunted, putting a knee between Luc's legs as he pushed on her back. “Down, baby, and hold still.”

She shivered, feeling both his and David's hands on her ass cheeks. David was holding her throbbing ass while Ryder was lubing her hole. “It's gonna hurt,” she whispered to Luc as he kissed her neck.

He chuckled, giving her a faint thrust. “You can take it.”

Her thoughts became muddled as Ryder pressed the head of his cock to her ass. There was something so deliciously filthy about them being brothers—of them fucking her together—and she moaned, relaxing for him.

“Horny as fuck,” Ryder said, pushing the tip in. She cried, clutching Luc as her king held her close. It felt like her ass was on fire, and they were ripping her in half, but she didn't want them to stop. She wanted them inside her together, and they knew that. “Breathe, angel.” Ryder pushed in deeper.

“Oh, that's better,” she whimpered. The head going in was the hardest fucking part.

David knelt beside her, kissing her cheek and licking her tears. “Stay relaxed.”

She gasped as Ryder pushed in deep before pulling out. “Fuck!”

David kissed her this time, swallowing her cries as Ryder pushed in again. He made smaller movements, making her slide back and forth on Luc’s dick. Even Luc grunted, and David smiled in their kiss. “That got him.”

Luc sighed, turning her face toward his and claiming her lips as Ryder picked up his pace.

“Fuck,” Ryder groaned, squeezing her ass with one hand while the other stayed on her lower back. “You okay, babe?”

Her response was to moan. She didn’t know how to describe how it felt. It hurt. So bad. But the pleasure and frenzy of them working on getting her and themselves off made up for all the pain. It made her want more pain because they loved it.

“Oh, fuck.” Jane ripped her mouth from Luc’s as he and Ryder began offsetting each other. She could only lean her head on Luc’s shoulder and hang on, but David’s lips skimming hers made her fight to do more than get fucked good.

She opened her eyes, reaching for him. Ryder helped angle her so she could reach David, but neither Luc nor Ryder slowed.

“David,” she whimpered, wanting him to join in.

His lips tipped up, and he guided her hand holding onto his neck to his dick that he generously exposed from his gray sweats.

She gasped, wrapping her hand around him, pumping her hand as he smoothed her hair out of her face.

“Good girl,” Ryder praised, fucking her harder. He had her surging forward so hard that Luc had to hold her in place. “Put your mouth on him, Jane.”

David’s touch usually turned rough, but he kept smoothing her hair back, sighing each time she squeezed him.

Ryder eased up, groaning loudly as he massaged her back. “If you want him, you better take him because you almost got me ready to nut.”

She pulled at David, turned on by the sound of flesh smacking and their strong hands maneuvering her body.

David chuckled, getting into a good position while Luc and Ryder helped. “Been a while since every hole’s been filled, my love.” He fisted his hand in her hair but kept his touch gentle as she kissed the tip of his cock.

“There she goes,” Ryder praised, picking up his pace again as soon as her lips closed around David’s dick.

Almost immediately, though, she gagged and popped him out of her mouth. Her eyes watered as her stomach turned.

Ryder stilled, so did Luc.

“Jane?” David caressed her cheek.

“Let me try again,” she rushed, determined to take them at the same time. She knew he’d protest, but she tried anyway. Gagging was usually half the fun, but this time felt wrong.

David pulled away as she coughed and fought not to throw up. “No more, Jane.”

“I want all,” she cried, reaching for him.

Ryder pulled out, and she cried louder when Luc hugged her. “Babe?”

She was so embarrassed. They tried to love her, and she almost puked her guts out on David’s dick. What would happen when she got further along? Maybe this was also why Tercero left—she wouldn’t satisfy them anymore.

“David, take her ass,” Ryder muttered, his eyes locked on her face. He didn’t look away as he ordered David again. “She can take it. Her gag reflex is just bad now.”

“I’m not going to keep going,” David said, rubbing her when Ryder crouched to where she was.

“Please,” she begged, feeling empty without Ryder inside her.

“Baby, no.” David kissed her back, but she reached behind her, grabbing his dick.

Ryder smirked at her as he nodded at David. “Fuck her ass. She wants all of us.” She slid her hand down David’s dick, whining while Luc murmured words against her neck that she couldn’t understand.

She nodded, feeling David get behind her, and gasped loudly as he slid in. “Yes, thank you.”

Ryder leaned forward, kissing her cheek as she rested her head on Luc’s shoulder again. He moved her hand to his dick but nuzzled her before kissing her mouth. It was like he didn’t care that she’d almost puked or that her mouth had been around David’s dick.

It was almost too much. She knew her guys weren’t into each other at all, and she would hate it if they were into anyone but her, but she fucking loved that they did things like

this. She felt like it was their way of saying nothing with her was wrong—she'd always need the reminder.

“You still want three?” Ryder’s breath hitched as she worked him with her hand. “Tell me, Jane. Do you want three?”

She didn’t know what he meant. She would spew if his big dick went in her mouth, and she would freak out even more because her ass had been on him. She wasn’t that fucking freaky. “I do, but I can’t take you in my mouth right now.” She cried out when David pulled out and slid back in, and his fingers dug into her ass.

Ryder grinned. “Do you want three?”

“Yes,” she said, unable to think when Luc thrust up and built a rhythm.

Her bad boy’s chest rumbled, and giving her another kiss, he took her hand off him and stood. “Be still,” he told David.

“You sure?” David asked as she panted, hanging onto Luc as she tried to figure out what was happening.

“Yeah, she wants it,” Ryder said, then she felt him. “Don’t you, Sweet Jane?”

Her eyes widened, and she peeked at Luc.

“Your call, Jane,” Luc said, reaching up to her cheek.

She peered over her shoulder. David had maneuvered himself to be higher, and Ryder was about to push into her pussy with Luc. “Oh, fuck.”

Her bad boy’s smile turned deadly. “Don’t forget to breathe.” Then he carefully worked his dick in with Luc’s.

She screamed, digging her nails into Luc's shoulders as Ryder began to move. He wasn't sheathing himself, but he was in. She had three dicks inside her.

They were killing her. She wanted them to. She wanted them to destroy her. "More."

"There's my queen," Luc murmured against her ear as David and Ryder proceeded to fuck her. Luc's and Ryder's dicks were in her dripping wet pussy, and David was destroying her ass.

She came hard, and Luc groaned—then they were all moving.

Her throat burned as much as her ass and vagina when she screamed. She was stretched so much; it was amazing. The sounds each of her men made were just as stimulating as their movements.

They used her to get themselves off, and she fucking loved it. They knew she needed it to be this way.

"Fuck, I'm almost there already," Ryder told the others. "She feels too good."

Luc sped up, muttering something to them, but she was lost in her screams and the orgasm that crashed through her again. Her legs gave out, trembling uncontrollably as all her weight fell on Luc.

David took charge, then Ryder, then Luc. Then together, out of sync, they fucked her hard. They pulled her hair, squeezed her ass, and tugged her arms behind her back. They fucked her like they were mindless to everything but getting their release.

Ryder growled the way he did whenever he was close, and she came just as she felt his release. He didn't stop, though,

which seemed to spur her sexy stepbrother on because he whispered her name and came in her ass.

Luc grunted, outlasting them all but not by much. Only moments passed, then he filled her insides with his cum.

“Fuck,” she breathed, hugging him as David and Ryder eased out.

Luc’s arms came around her, caressing her sweaty hair as Ryder walked to the bathroom.

David moved until he was beside her and lifted her hand to his lips. “Are you okay?”

She weakly nodded, content to let Luc soothe her. His dick was still semi-hard inside her, enough to continue the pleasure and not overwhelm her. It was the perfect distraction from the pain.

David kissed her hand again, then helped her sit up on Luc. She felt like jello, but he moved behind her, resting a knee between Luc’s legs. He held her against him with an arm around her chest, then pressed his pelvis into hers, mimicking the forward thrust she might perform if she could ride Luc alone. “One more,” he cooed in her ear as Luc’s cock stirred to life. “You need one more. Maybe an easy one.” His free hand dropped between her legs, massaging her clit as Luc gripped her hips and moved her on him.

She felt it building. They knew exactly what to do, and she surrendered to them, letting them fully control her body as Ryder watched from the doorway, still utterly naked and beautiful.

David grasped her breasts, pinching her nipples but not in the painful way he usually did. He was playing her body perfectly after exhaustion, and when Ryder strolled over,

stroking his cock as David started doing the same behind her, she lost her mind.

“You like this, huh?” Ryder stopped beside them, jerking harder and faster as he watched her pant and whimper. “Our beautiful girl likes when we use her, doesn’t she?” He gripped her hair when she nodded. He ignored David kissing her neck and forced her to look at him. “Our girl loves when we fuck her like a whore.”

“Yes,” she cried at both his words and the sting of his hold. She didn’t know why she wanted to be used, but she did. And because Ryder had helped her not fear being labeled a whore, a slut, a hoe—she felt beautiful at the thought of being their whore.

“Silly girl.” He chuckled, kissing her softly as he and David continued to jack off.

Then Luc sat up, turning her onto the sofa. He kept fucking her, but Ryder and David were kneeling over her, jacking themselves off right over her as Luc turned into a mad king. So much for easy.

She didn’t care. She ran her hands over Ryder’s and David’s muscular thighs, moaning as she watched them frantically trying to find their release.

Luc got his first, growling as he pumped his pulsing dick into her until he pulled out to allow David to take his place. Her perfect boy didn’t even stop as Luc’s cum dripped out of her. He pushed in, fucking her like he hated her, but the smile he sent her way said everything.

He’d never stop loving her. He’d always be her home. He’d always be her David.

When she showed him how she felt about him with her eyes, he lost control. His rhythm became jerky, then, with a feral growl, he came. She felt every rope of hot cum painting her insides.

Her orgasm hit her out of nowhere, crashing through her body like an avalanche, and she was still coming when Ryder took his turn.

“Oh, fuck.” She tried to hold her leg, but she didn’t have to. David and Luc held thighs as her bad boy did that thing that was too much. He’d fuck her hard and fast, then pull almost all the way out, leaving just the head of his cock in so he hit her g-spot over and over again. She knew it felt good to him by the noises he made. He was working to make her ...

“Fuck,” she yelled, squirting as he pulled out. Her whole body was locked up, but she needed more. David knew. He reached down, hooking his fingers in and fucking her with his hand until he achieved the same results as Ryder. She could only scream. Luc used his body to keep her leg up and pinned her arms to keep her from doing what David was. Whenever Ryder did this, she had to keep coming, or she’d die. It was torture and chaotic ecstasy.

And her bad boy did it again. He fucked so deep that he hit her cervix hard and then teased her until she screamed and cried for more.

“Ah,” Ryder said, praising her when he pulled out and let Luc fuck her with his hand, “fuck, that’s our girl.”

Her body wasn’t hers anymore. She was possessed. They possessed her completely.

Luc’s cold fingers set her off, and he got rewarded as he freed his hand. It sprayed all over Ryder, and her future baby

daddy reveled in it. Then he fucked her until she couldn't breathe.

He fucked her until he roared and filled her with his cum like he wanted to get her pregnant all over again.

“Beautiful angel.” He leaned down, kissing her as the final pulses of his dick sent shivers through both of them. “Never doubt what we are.” He grabbed Luc's and David's hands and pressed them over her tummy. “David, Luc, and I are daddies to this baby. You're our goddess, our queen, the mother of our child. Our girl who lets us fuck her right.”

“I love you,” she said breathlessly.

“And I love you,” he said, grinning when Luc and David kissed her wrists. “We'll do this again whenever you want.”

Her smile was lazy and exhausted. “I love that you knew.”

His sexy laugh made her tingle. “We know you like the dirty, rough stuff. We did that because you needed it.” He stared at her, and she knew he wouldn't say why she needed it—who they'd distracted her from losing and continued. “We loved getting you off. We know you're afraid we won't think you're sexy when our baby grows here.” He caressed her stomach. “We know you're afraid we won't be satisfied when we love you. You satisfy us, babe. No other woman can do what you do to us. It's more than fucking, okay?”

She pulled him down and fell in love with him again when he kissed her the way a god would kiss his goddess.

Then David. He kissed her the way a warrior prince would kiss the princess he's waited a lifetime to find—like she was everything to him.

Then Luc, her king. He kissed her with darkness. He kissed her with absolute light. He kissed her like she was the

queen in a world that had so many times felt like Hell.

CHAPTER FIVE

Luc lowered Jane's purse to a table and gestured for the bellboy to unload their luggage in the suite. He didn't bother reacting to how the foolish boy's eyes lingered on Jane's breasts, which had become much fuller with her pregnancy—he'd see that he never looked her way again later.

"Fancy," Jane said, coming to a wobbly stop beside him. She never went with him on his business trips and rarely spent time at his apartment in the city. He liked minimalistic elegance, but she was content with her boys in their homey apartment. However, after their last morning together, he knew she was ready for this side of his business. He also wanted her close while Ryder searched for Tercero. Their little brother didn't get to break their girlfriend's heart and not suffer the consequences.

He'd delayed his departure until the following day to make arrangements for what he had planned. It had given his brother time to think before doing anything drastic.

Luc moved some hair behind her ear. "You would be accustomed to these surroundings if you'd part from my brother more often."

She poked her tongue out, something he adored she did only with him. "You could come around us more, too—you

know how Ryder is. Plus you get me all day.”

“*Hm.*” He took her hand and led her into the suite as the bellboy exited.

“Can I do anything else for you, Mr. Godson?” the boy asked, keeping his eyes on Luc this time.

He hid his smirk and shook his head as he held out a tip. “Privacy with my girlfriend will be appreciated.”

The boy nodded, snatching the tip, and bowed his head. “Of course, Mr. Godson. I’ll inform the staff you’re not to be disturbed.”

Luc sent Jane a smile. “On second thought, I’d like some items prepared for her after she has a bath to wash away the flight.” He walked to the desk and scribbled down his requests. “Darling, you prefer the gummy prenatal vitamins, yes?”

Her cheeks flushed. “Yes.” She sheepishly smiled at the boy, but there was that wickedness that Luc craved to see in her as she added, “My other boyfriends forgot to pack my bottle.”

The boy’s eyes widened, clearly aware she was saying she was taken—and not just by him. His little queen wasn’t as silly as she behaved; she knew when she was being lusted after. Most of the time, at least.

Strolling toward the little shit, he held out the list. “Stare at my pregnant girlfriend’s breasts again, and I’ll burn out your eyes and shove your dick into your ass.”

“Sorry, sir,” he sputtered.

“You should be apologizing to me,” Jane snapped, passing them and making it clear she’d not forgiven anything.

When Jane shut herself in the bath, Luc slid his gaze back to the boy. “I expect you to use your tip and wages this hour to deliver her a bouquet of calla lilies and chocolate-dipped strawberries. I also expect you to inform the rest of the staff that she is not only cherished by myself but also by the father of her child—my deadly like-you-cannot-fathom brother—and several other gentlemen you would soil yourself meeting.” He shoved him out of his way but muttered over his shoulder, “And find her a bag of gummy bears. Pick out only the reds. I want a full bowl for her.”

The boy scrambled away, apologizing until the door slammed shut behind him.

Tugging his tie loose, Luc opened the bathroom door. The sight that greeted him was a welcome one. Jane had removed her clothes, leaving only her gray bra and panties in place as she looked in the mirror. She was admiring her hickeys and bruises, distracting herself from the sadness ready to drown her.

“Must you always make it clear you are not just mine?” he asked, stopping behind her. He had no problem with helping distract her. She called him a drug, often. He’d dull the pain for her while she needed him to.

Her eyes locked on his reflection as he cupped her throat. “You’re cute when you’re jealous.”

He chuckled, lowering his lips to her head. “You’re breathtaking when you’re vicious.”

She laughed, tilting her head back to rest on his chest. “This seems very domestic for us. Wanna brush your teeth with me?”

“*Hm.*” He slid his gaze down her figure. She wasn’t showing yet, but he knew that’s what else she’d been inspecting. “Looking to tie me down for eternity, Miss Mortaime?”

“Is that what it feels like?” She turned her face up, searching his eyes. “For all of you?”

“Do not ask such silly questions.” He caressed her cheek as his other hand came to rest above the spot that would soon become round with his brother’s child. When she pouted, he glared. “You know I don’t baby you.”

She sighed, turning in his arms. “I’m pregnant. I’m ... sad. You can baby me a little bit.”

He dropped his hold to her waist, watching her stare in awe at his ink. She had no idea what was written about her—what had been there even before they started their relationship. “You are so easily distracted,” he murmured. “Perhaps you are still a silly girl.”

She dropped her hand to his dick. “A silly girl who likes your cock.”

“Manners, Jane.” He lowered his lips to hers, not allowing his time with her to go to waste. When she slid her hands up to his chest, he deepened their kiss and pushed her against the sink. She was far too sore from being fucked the previous morning, but it didn’t stop his desire for her. Unfortunately, he didn’t have time to do more than kiss.

“I can take more,” she whispered when he pulled back.

Luc tipped her chin up. “I know you can. But I have work, and I want you to relax before you join me.”

“You still haven’t said what you’re working on.” She leaned her head on his chest and closed her eyes. “I know your

schedule, and there was nothing. I'm surprised Ryder didn't tie me up when you told him it's a secret."

He held the nape of her neck as he stared down at her. "That is because my brother knows my secrets."

She gasped and looked up again. "You let him know but not me?"

He lifted a shoulder in a shrug. "He's my brother. It's hard to keep secrets from any of them. It was luck that allowed me to keep my interest in you hidden."

She pouted. "But he didn't let it slip."

"Ryder rarely reveals truths he discovers." His thumb slid over her pink lips. "Perhaps he worried you would not handle this side of my business and didn't want to frighten you from me."

Her eyebrows drew together as she searched his face. He knew she had high expectations for all of them. But he also knew he was the lowest on her list of doing noble deeds while David sat at the top.

"I don't fear you, Luc," she said softly before grinning. "Not anymore."

He smirked as he leaned down and pressed his lips to the corner of her mouth. "Silly little queen. Always having faith that I'm a good man when I am not."

She nuzzled his cheek, breathing in deeply. "I'll always have faith in you, Luc. Even if you show me you're involved in stuff that scares me."

His fingers flexed in her hair, massaging her head. "We shall see if that remains true very soon." He lowered his gaze to her nearly naked figure. "Seduce me later, Jane."

Her beautiful eyes glittered with mischief, just like her smile. “You didn’t join me in the shower yesterday.”

“No, I did not.” He slid his fingers through her hair. “I believe I bumped enough dicks for the day.”

Her laugh made him smile. “I loved you were there.”

“That is why I was there.”

“Did it bother you?” She blinked, worried. “I didn’t even have time to think clearly when it happened, and I didn’t ask if you were okay with it.”

He’d known she had been thinking of a way to bring it up. “I was okay with it, Jane. My brother wouldn’t do something any of us are uncomfortable with.”

“You mean, you guys have talked about it before?”

He chuckled at her wide eyes. “We are brothers who fuck the same woman. Yes, we’ve discussed what is allowed and what is not. And I know incest has popped up into your mind. I will put your mind at ease—we only view it as brothers and a friend fucking our girlfriend. We know you fantasize about us taking you together—that is what we did. It was all for you. We only held off on indulging you because you were not ready to be stimulated to that degree.”

A pretty smile formed on her lips, and he captured the kiss she’d been offering.

She was the only person who could take away his stress. All she had to do was smile his way, and he felt peace. Her kiss did far more.

“Have a warm bath to ease the pain you are trying to hide from me.” He kissed her once more, then straightened. “I’ll lay

out appropriate attire for you before I leave for the conference room. It's close, so you need only call if something is wrong."

"You don't want me to go with you?" She popped her bra off and shimmied out of her panties but covered herself.

He moved her hands down with one hand, then grabbed her chin. "I want you to be well rested for tonight. The other assistants will be at my disposal for this."

Pink bloomed across her face as her eyes lit with golden fire. "So they know about your secrets?"

Her anger satisfied him immensely, and he gripped her chin tighter as his own ignited, eager to mix with hers. "These are secret assistants, Jane. None from our office are above you. As I said, this is a side I have deliberately kept you, and most others, separate from. Now I want you included, or at least knowledgeable." He watched her fury rise as those gold flames in her hazel eyes lashed out. "Are you upset that I hid this to preserve our relationship so it could strengthen, or are you jealous of the assistants you do not even know yet?"

Her hands balled at her sides. "They're women, I'm sure."

"Yes," he admitted. "And yes, Jane, they are attractive in the obvious ways." He smirked as she cut her eyes away and waited for her to look back at him. When she did, he admitted more. "Yes, they are interested in me. Yes, I have fucked most of them ... before we began our relationship, of course."

She breathed out her nose, trying to hold back her emotions. "Of course you did." She jerked her chin from his hold and went to the tub. She turned it on and got in before it could warm, her gaze fixed on the cascading water with eyes as cold as the water. "I'd like to be alone," she snapped, still not looking at him. "Enjoy your meeting."

Luc said nothing and left, shutting her inside so she could sulk in private. They could battle with each other later.

His phone vibrated, and he sighed, answering without looking—he knew who it was. “Little brother, you held off longer than I expected.”

“Have you already fucked up?” Ryder asked, obviously not interested in their usual taunting.

“Of course.” He walked to Jane’s things, selecting the dress, shoes, and undergarments he wanted her to wear. “Did you think I would continue hiding? That I am not about to meet with many of my discarded submissives?”

“I thought you’d wait until you got what you wanted from her.”

Luc laid out the items for her on the bed. “I told you I’d be honest with her.”

Ryder grunted. “I figured you’d let her be happy for a while. Now she’s going to be sad about Tercero and everything you’ve hidden from her.”

Luc answered the door when there was a knock, gesturing to the same bellboy to set up everything he’d ordered before addressing Ryder, “You figured wrong, little brother. I much prefer to break her heart sooner than later. It will hurt less this way. This was why we agreed she should come with me instead of staying with you, yes?”

“Whatever.” Ryder sighed, and Luc could imagine his younger brother pacing a room and running a hand through his hair. “Did you get her vitamins?”

“You sound like a worried mother.”

“I’m a worried boyfriend and soon-to-be father,” Ryder replied coldly. “This better work.”

“If it doesn’t, you’ll be one step closer to calling her your wife.” Luc’s snarl barely stayed silent. “Now go do what you planned. I have a meeting to attend.”

Instead of replying, Ryder ended the call.

Luc placed his phone on the table as the boy finished arranging the flowers and gummy bears. “No one is to disturb her while I am gone.”

“Yes, Mr. Godson.” The boy fumbled with the cart. “Should we call you if someone arrives?”

“One of my staff will be arriving shortly.” He gave the boy a dismissive wave. “Leave.”

“Yes, sir.” He left quickly.

Luc would see that he had learned how unwise it was to stare at his girlfriend. But, for now, he needed to prepare. So after changing and placing his gift to Jane on her dress, he exited the room.

“You look annoyed,” Damon said, pushing off the hallway wall. “Are you regretting this?”

“Perhaps,” he said, opening the door wider. “She’s bathing—announce your arrival.”

Damon’s amber eyes gleamed as he passed Luc. “And if she still enters the room undressed?”

Luc lifted his eyes to meet Damon’s. “I’ve already decided to discipline one foolish male for looking at her, King. I advise that you do not become the second.”

“But if she allows it ...”

“She won’t,” Luc said calmly. “Nor will Justine appreciate your wandering eyes.”

A low laugh escaped Damon. “Her vengeance would be quite a sight.”

“As would Jane’s.” Luc tugged his sleeve down. “Make sure she wears my gift.”

Damon nodded, shutting himself inside the room with Jane.

In just a few hours, she would know the truth about him. Luc had little faith in anyone except his brothers, but he would take the risk tonight. He would not be a father to her child without allowing her to know everything he was.

“Mr. Godson,” Gianna murmured as she held open the conference door. If Jane knew they were staying on the same floor as his meeting, he might be burned alive. Some secrets were necessary, though—he was uncomfortable leaving her for extended periods.

“Gianna,” he greeted with his usual indifference. It mattered little to his ex-sub—she and the others like her craved his coldness. When she reached for his arm, he cut her a dark look. “I have no interest in you beyond business. Have the others arrived?”

“Yes.” She brushed past him, her nose in the air.

Luc followed her into the adjoining room, where the remaining discarded subs waited. Like he’d told Jane, they were attractive. All had ideal figures. They were tall, with elegant features that time and money enhanced. Gianna had sleek black hair, Juliana had soft waves of red, Isabella was a platinum blonde, and Gabriella had ocean—a mixture of various blues and greens. He never chose brunettes or ones of

short stature because he'd already claimed one before she knew he had.

He chuckled as he opened the portfolio laid out.

"Is something funny?" Juliana asked.

He finished reading the data they'd accumulated before looking at her. "Only that my youth and hesitation of pursuing the girl I desired led me to make such ridiculous choices with you four."

Their painted lips parted in shock, but none uttered a word.

He removed his pen to sign the contract he'd requested as he continued, "You were all discarded over a year ago. Each of you will leave the collars you are wearing. My queen will be at my side tonight, and I will not have any of you insinuating there is still more to our involvement than our expiring business dealings." He scanned their faces. They knew he'd entered a relationship with his younger neighbor last year, and as their contracts stated, they were nothing to him other than pleasure. He was their Dom, and they were his submissives. It was a slightly unusual arrangement, as most Doms cared for their subs, but he didn't care about the technicalities. He'd hoped to pursue Jane when she became of age, and he chose to relieve his stress by having control over others.

He'd met these women through his side ventures, which Jane would learn about tonight, and he'd easily obtained their total servitude before realizing he'd done so. He couldn't recall which he'd fucked, but he knew at least one had not reached that level. And while he had no feelings for them, he was at least a proper Dom who gave them appropriate care—all but his emotions.

“Queen?” Gabriella finally asked as she unlatched her collar.

He studied her angelic face. She had flawless, creamy skin and gray eyes that reflected her colorful hair. She was heavily desired amongst other Doms and yet entirely unremarkable to him. He’d merely acquired her because she was desired. “Yes,” he said, eyeing the morning star on the center of the collar she had worn. “She is ready to see what I have hidden from her, and I’m ready to reveal everything to her. After all, I’ll soon be one of the fathers to the child she carries.”

“Congratulations, Mr. Godson,” Isabella said, placing her collar on the table. “I look forward to meeting her and wish her a healthy pregnancy and baby.”

Luc nodded, though he saw the hurt they were attempting to conceal. It was those things that made Jane stand out to him. She thought it was weak to show her emotions, but revealing such things about herself took strength. While concealing feelings required strength as well, he did not admire it. No amount of bravery was needed to hide emotions, after all. “I will inform Jane of my past with you four. Then I will ask her to be my equal.”

Gianna let her collar clatter to the table and stood, leaving without a backward glance.

Luc didn’t acknowledge her departure. He focused on Juliana. “Remove it.”

“What will you do if she’s repulsed by you?” she asked, tossing the collar down. “What will you do when she sees how inferior she is to us? I’ve seen her, you know? We all have. She’s as plain as her name in both looks and personality. I don’t see why any of you even like her.”

“I’m aware you’ve sought her out,” he said calmly. “I’m also aware she doesn’t go to the incredible lengths each of you do to achieve her beauty. And don’t pretend to know her personality.” He opened the next portfolio and began to read.

Gabriella cleared her throat, the sound just as delicate as the whimpers she gave when he would tie her down and do as he wished. “She’s one woman, sir.”

“A prude,” Julianna inserted. She and Gianna always pushed his buttons, the total brats.

“A prude?” He met her envious green stare. “Though you do not have the privilege of knowing about my sexual relationship with her, I’ll take pity on you. A prude does not get fucked by the father of her unborn child—my brother—her stepbrother, and myself while pregnant and unable to control her gag reflex.”

Julianna cut him off. “Lots of women can handle three men. But she won’t let you do what gets *you* off.”

He met her venomous stare with his own. They didn’t deserve to know more about Jane, but he would share because it would hurt them to understand how deeply he loved her. “I don’t desire to harm her. Seeing her receive every pleasure she wishes for while leaving loving marks of my affection across her skin for a short time gets me off. And that is only because she knows I was involved in heavier, darker play before her, and she likes to glimpse it. She knows I’m holding back.” He smiled at the thought of his little queen. “It thrills her to see the violence I hold inside myself. And while it may seem impossible to you, I desire her lips on mine over any encounter I’ve shared with any of you.”

Juliana stood, leaving the room too.

He didn't care where they went. He was removing them from their business contracts anyway. Still, he knew they would show tonight, and he wouldn't stand for any of their nonsense.

"The child is your brother's, then?" Gabriella asked.

"Most likely," he said, signing again. "Perhaps one day I will see that she carries my child, but it's not something I'm currently interested in."

"You smile at her," Isabella murmured. "Even thinking about her."

He knew what she meant. He didn't smile at them or anyone else—not the type he reserved for Jane. "I do." He checked the time. "I'll meet her in a few hours. Bring in your replacements for their interviews if you still desire my recommendation to the organizations you each requested."

Gabriella stood, trying to ward off the tears in her eyes. It was one of the reasons she was so sought after; they loved how vulnerable and innocent she looked. He, however, preferred Jane's more genuine innocence. Gabriella's was an act of manipulation. "What about the others?"

He glanced at the open door and shrugged. "I'll ask Jane to help secure the positions they've left unfilled."

"Very well," she said, turning and leaving.

Isabella stayed.

"Speak, Isabella," he said, closing the folder and giving her his attention.

She smoothed her platinum hair behind her ear and lifted her eyes to his. She had been his most obedient sub—always

eager to please and obey. “We hoped it was simply a fantasy you needed to get out of your system.”

“It was foolish of you to hope at all,” he said. “We were no more than Dom and submissive. Not in the traditional sense, either. I made this clear in each of your contracts.”

Her meek demeanor wilted further. “Because you desired to be the submissive one?”

He laughed, leaning back in the chair. “You think I’ve submitted to her because she has more than one male?”

“What other understanding can there be?”

“None that you are to be concerned with.” He regarded her quietly, still surprised that she would be the one to confront him further. So again, he chose to share because it would hurt and extinguish any hope that he would reenter a relationship with her or the others. “What matters is how she and I feel toward each other and that I accept the other males she has chosen. We are devoted to her and don’t mind that she often leans on the one she first involved herself with.”

“Your brother, you mean?”

He nodded. “My brother was quite capable of keeping her to himself. He had every opportunity to win her entirely, yet he loved her more than most men can love a woman, and he saw she wanted to also give her heart to her stepbrother and his two brothers.

“Naturally, she cannot equally divide her time and affection between us, and she favors him often. But we know he requires that favoritism. He encourages her to embrace herself and what most consider unnatural. It doesn’t lessen her love for me or the others. They, however, are magic—something you might never experience because you willingly

enter agreements that reduce you to a simple tool for someone else's pleasure."

Her chin wobbled, and her form appeared to shrink. "Do you not see how you've reduced yourself?"

"Your opinion, and the opinions from anyone outside my relationship with her, is irrelevant." He opened the next file. "I care not what you think of me, Isabella. I'm not dense. I know many have expectations about how such a relationship should work. For us, we are happy. We are in love with our dream girl and loved by her in return. We work together to make her happy, which is heaven for us.

"I suggest, if you are so affected by my choice, you find *your* idea of a perfect relationship. Then, when you also receive negative opinions from others, care as much as I do about yours at this very moment—not at all." He waved a hand toward the door. "Bring your replacement if you found one. Otherwise, you are dismissed."

She opened her mouth to say more, but he cut her off.

"I do not care about you, Isabella. I love only her. I embrace the others she has chosen. Find another to serve if that is your only desire. I have no more interest in submissives. She is my queen—my only desire."

"But she's not interesting at all," Isabella whined, balling her dainty hands on the table. "There's no reason for any of you to be so in love with her. From what we've seen and heard, she's weak and annoying, and her favoritism for your brother is unfair and disrespectful. On top of it all, she has no aspirations except accepting the job you gave her with your company."

He placed the pen down and met her teary gaze. “You realize I have heard you four whispering about her before. I know you find her weak because she was abducted. Because she struggles with sadness from the loss of her parents, one through death and the other through something possibly worse—envy and neglect.” When she opened her mouth to respond, he continued, “I find her strong because she fights every day to overcome the horror and losses she has endured. I find her strong for openly sharing her fears and insecurities. I find her strong for holding onto us when women like you strike like jealous snakes the moment you see an opening.”

“But—”

“But nothing, Isabella. I have ignored your whispering behind my back—how you mock her behavior and looks. It should already be clear—I adore everything about her. She’s flawed, fragile, and fierce. She is my perfection. Perhaps you are the idea of perfection for another—but she is mine. Now I have given you more time than you deserved to whine—I am done with all of you. Either bring your replacement or go sulk elsewhere.”

She left, a final whimper lingering behind.

Luc breathed out, eyeing the tattoo on his wrist. The little moon hidden there soothed his dark heart, and he smiled despite his disbelief that they dared to insult Jane to his face.

Why women felt Jane had to live up to unrealistic expectations of perfection, he didn’t know. Why they thought negatively of Ryder being the most dominant in his time with her was absurd. Without Ryder, Jane might’ve always reserved herself to loneliness. She might’ve never seen how greatly loved she was.

He appreciated what his brother did and wanted him to receive the love only Jane could give. After all, as fierce and violent as Ryder was, he was sensitive about Jane. If his brother needed to smother her and take her more than he did, so be it.

Luc looked up when Gianna, Juliana, Gabriela, and Isabella returned with their replacements. He scrutinized each one and chuckled. They were all close to five feet, brunette, light-complected, brown-eyed, and were dressed plainly. “Even through your spite, you cannot replicate her.” He stood, collecting the folders and their collars. “Jane has hazel eyes and a smile that no other has.”

As he rounded the table, he told the applicants, “I’ve decided to ask my girlfriend to assist me in hiring. You may make an appointment if you feel you are qualified.” He placed four business cards on the table and shook his head in disapproval at the others. “If you four have any intelligence, I suggest you stop this pathetic quest to make Jane look inferior. You have just proven how threatened you are by her. Move on with your lives because my thoughts will not linger on any of you beyond this moment, and I will spend my life happy with the woman you are attempting to mock.”

With that, he left to ensure his plans were in place for the night. He’d had enough of their attempts to create a wedge between Jane and him. Perhaps he was becoming soft like Ryder.

No, that wasn’t right. They were soft about her. Every other woman could choke on their opinions. He loved his queen. A jealous, narrow-minded woman with no experience of their situation meant nothing to him or the others. And he rather liked that.

It meant he had a true queen—something they would likely never be.

CHAPTER SIX

Jane couldn't hide her frown as she studied her reflection in the mirror.

“What’s wrong?” Damon asked from where he sat off to the side of the room. “Sin would call you Ugly just now.”

She laughed as she slid a hand over the gray vinyl dress Luc had left for her, then eyed the matching heels she wore. “Um, well, it’s not Halloween. Where could he be taking me?”

His dark chuckle eased her nerves, and she stayed still as he stood and crossed the room to take her in more carefully. “No, it’s not Halloween, but you’re dressed appropriately for tonight.” He stopped behind her, his eyes full of mischief as he dragged his gaze down her figure. “Your ass and the curve of your waist are breathtaking, little queen. Shall I send the others the pictures I discreetly took of you?”

She laughed, stepping closer to the mirror to inspect the choker necklace. It was a gray ribbon with a silver moon and morning star pendant.

“A submissive collar,” Damon commented, smiling when she gasped. “Only, you are represented as an equal. So not a submissive collar at all.”

Her eyes locked onto the design, and she touched the two celestial figures as she tried to figure out what it all meant. “Luc’s a Dom?”

Damon shrugged, snapping a photo of her from behind. “Was, I suppose.” He grinned, shaking his phone. “Ryder’s going to flip.”

“Damon,” she whined, not upset about the picture but panicking about Luc. “He’s really a Dom? But I’m not his sub.”

“I don’t think he’s making you one.” He slid his hands into his pockets. “I did say was.”

“Who were his subs?” She felt lightheaded as she shuffled through the women he worked with and the competing businesses. “That asshole brought me to meet his old fuck pals?”

“I believe he’s going to show you, Jane. And they are old, meaning no more.” He moved over to the table, picked out some of the gummies Luc had left, and popped them into his mouth. “Don’t be afraid or angry.”

“Is that what he wants? For me to be his sub?”

The door shut loudly, and looking into the mirror, she spotted Luc strolling toward her.

His eyes almost glowed silver as he came closer, but his expression was blank. “Not at all, my queen,” he said, stopping behind her as he gestured for Damon to move. He sighed, pushing her hair behind her shoulder. “However, if that is something you wish to explore after tonight, we will discuss it with the others.”

“They know?” She was beyond hurt. She knew Luc was experienced, that he likely had done more intense things

during sex than the more playful games he had with her at work—spanking her when she talked back and vibrating panties. Still, he was never brutal or anything like she imagined a Dom would be.

He held her stare through the mirror as he caressed her arms. “Yes, Jane. I wouldn’t have put it past Ryder to discover all of my past to ensure your safety anyway. I shared it with all of them out of respect. They agreed not to tell you when I committed to you. They understood I wanted to build our relationship up before frightening you. They have been good on their word, and now I am ready to share.”

“Because you want me to be your sub?” She didn’t know what to think. She didn’t even know how any of that stuff actually worked. Was she even using the correct terms? Was he going to put her on a leash like a dog? Stick her in a cage and feed her by hand like a fucking pet? Was he going to make her bleed, tell her to shove her hand up his ass, or punch his balls?

“You can see her mind racing,” Damon said with a low laugh. “She’s imagining every dirty book she’s ever read. You should know, little queen, that many books don’t properly portray BDSM lifestyles.”

Luc gestured for him to leave and waited for the door to shut before he spoke to her. “I want you to know everything you wish to know about me. I won’t ask you to do anything you don’t want to—I don’t desire to treat you as I have others.”

That stung, and it must’ve shown on her face because he gripped her chin and brushed a featherlight kiss to the corner of her mouth.

“Because you are my queen, Jane. Not my slave.”

“Kings have mistresses,” she fired back.

He smirked. “True. However, I am not interested in lowering myself to simple satisfaction. I have no mistresses.”

“Well, I doubt you were simple.” She was angry and didn’t want to be close to him, but he still pulled her close, and she let him.

Settling a hand on her waist and the other on her neck, he gave her a rare, full smile. It was stunning, and she gasped when he pressed his mouth to hers for the most fleeting of kisses. “I struggled to find release or sexual satisfaction during my time with any of them. I will not return to this lifestyle unless it is with you. Even then, I’m sure my brother and David will push their way in—to observe, at least.”

Her breath skittered out as his thumb caressed her jaw. She could only imagine Luc leading the others in a Dom session, or whatever the hell it would be. Her heart raced as she thought of each of her guys taking turns leading, and if Luc taught them BDSM stuff, and she liked it ...

“You’re flushed, my queen.” His eyes flashed, and he fisted his hand in her hair.

She whimpered and was somehow entirely turned on by his slight display of violence. They’d only ever been overly wild the previous morning. His spanks were usually careful, but this was different. His grip tightened, and he tugged her head back, sending a thrilling tingle down her spine.

She didn’t think he even wanted to hurt her. Honestly, she didn’t want to be in pain, but she found it hard to believe he’d just walked away from his Dom lifestyle and wondered what he’d held back with her and if she’d like it.

“Interesting,” he murmured, his eyes drawn to her fluttering pulse. “Do you trust me, Jane? Do you trust that I will protect you and never harm you? That this”—he jerked her head—“is for your pleasure? For our pleasure?”

Her mouth went dry, but she nodded and hesitantly touched his chest.

The corner of his mouth twitched. “Don’t be skittish. I have already clarified that you are my queen, not a sub. If you want me to be more dominant or to play, it can be done. But I will not treat you like a sub. I will not degrade you or inflict pain that is not pleasurable. Understand?”

“Yes, and thank you. I don’t think I want to be a sub,” she said, sliding her palms over his firm chest. “But I want to know what you like.”

“You. Only you.” He kept her in place with his hold but let his free hand glide over her chest, stomach, and around her ass. “I am taking you to my dungeon.”

“Huh?” She had gone from thinking sexy things about him to people hanging from walls and getting tortured until they died.

He exhaled, squeezing her ass hard before releasing it. Then he massaged her head where it stung. It felt surprisingly good, like counter-pressure that relieved an invisible discomfort. “It’s a playroom, of sorts. I own this one and want you to see what this business involves. I also want you to assist me with transitioning new staff into place. And, of course, you will observe the event hosted tonight.”

Her mind spun with images of leather, chains, and whips, then Luc overseeing it all. “You need me to help hire people to

run a dungeon? And you want me to watch people get off on freaky torture?”

“Are you judging others’ kinks, Jane?” He chuckled and kissed her forehead, a rare sign of affection from him.

She melted, mumbling and closing her eyes, “Sorry. I’m horrible.”

“No, you simply don’t understand, and you’re threatened by my involvement.” Another kiss was pressed to her forehead. “And no, the staff I wish to replace are admin and hosting staff. The chief Dungeon Monitor and their team are already in place. Now, are you ready? I planned to meet you for dinner but decided I’d rather take you myself.”

She didn’t respond as her mind raced. Luc was a Dom. He had subs, ex ones. He had some shady side business where he hosted parties she was about to attend in her vinyl mini dress. She touched the choker.

“It marks you as mine and me as yours,” he said, grabbing her clutch.

She ignored the warm gooey feeling in her chest. She was still upset and warring with herself on trusting that he’d been faithful and nervous that she would lose him when she couldn’t compete with his subs.

“Don’t you want to change?” she asked as he returned to her. He wore one of his nice white suits, but she wondered if he should wear leather or walk around with a whip. God, she hoped not. She loved him, but she’d never let him live it down if he walked around like one of the Village People.

He took her hand and threaded their fingers together as he led her to the door. “I’m dressed appropriately, as are you. You are lovely.”

“It’s tight,” she said, self-conscious as she skimmed her hand over her tummy.

“You are not showing,” he commented. “I would show you off more if you were.”

“You would not,” she said.

“I would,” he argued. “Though we can wear masks if you’d like.”

“Ooh,” she said, beaming up at him, “I kinda want a mask.”

He smiled faintly. “I had a feeling you would. I have one waiting with our driver. It’s very fitting for the king’s queen.”

She grinned, then focused on Damon when he fell into step with them. “Does Justine know you’re attending a dungeon party? Or whatever this is?”

He rolled his eyes and pressed the elevator button. “She frequents them more than I do. There’s a local one near home—that’s how we initially hooked up.”

Jane’s jaw dropped. “You’re a Dom?”

He shook his head. “She’s a Domme. Not mine. I mostly ignore her activities. I’m too dominant for her, but she has needs—I will not take them from her.”

“She’s a dominatrix?” Jane asked, leaning against Luc. Her legs were still weak.

Luc supported her without complaint and responded. “Yes, like a dominatrix. Leather, latex, and whips. You will see several, I think. Don’t feel bad for him. Not all Dominants carry out sexual acts.”

She swallowed, remembering when she saw a show about a dominatrix. The woman was gorgeous but intimidating. She had no idea why a woman would want to be that way, but whatever floated their boat. After all, she loved the rough, dirty stuff as much as she liked sweet and romantic.

“And here, my discarded subs think I became your submissive,” Luc commented.

Her head jerked up. “You told them about me? And they thought you were my sub?”

“I discarded them when I decided to pursue you. They think I have the desire to be a sub because you have more than one boyfriend. To them, you appear to be a pathetic excuse of a Domme, and I, more pathetic for allowing myself to be ruled by one they have deemed inferior.” He shrugged as though he didn’t give a damn about what they thought. “I desire a queen, which I have. You simply have more than one king. You don’t need to dominate anyone. You are impressive to us just as you are.” He smiled. “Sweet yet vicious. Brave yet uncertain at times. Innocent but also delightfully filthy in your desires. Confident, but not distastefully so. You accept your limits, and I admire that in you.”

Damon bobbed his head in agreement. “Some women think strong females are restricted to smart-mouthed badasses.” He shrugged. “I have yet to meet a man who finds snarky personalities appealing. Fuckworthy, for certain, but often nothing more—but that is just my group. I’m sure some crave a woman like that.”

She watched Luc send Damon an odd look the exact moment her guard ... friend shook his head and continued.

“And Luc is being modest in his description of you.” He winked at her, giving her a filthy smile that removed her

curiosity about Luc's strange reaction to Damon's words. "Though, as good men of the queen do, I'll offer this. Don't let your mind become an enemy because society has groomed you to believe feisty women are strong and complex ones like yourself are not. Yes, a woman can be feisty—fierce. But they are not the only version of strength. Justine is a good example—as I have noticed that you compare yourself to her when I bring her around."

Jane's face flamed with embarrassment. Justine was Damon's girlfriend and Than's older sister. She was everything she imagined when she read books about badass heroines—stunning, always confident—utterly perfect. Side-by-side, Justine was everything a person could desire in a partner, while Jane looked like a goof—a child.

"You shouldn't compare yourself to her," Damon said, "but I will offer you some insight because I hate that you tear yourself down. Justine, though I enjoy our relationship, tests my patience. She's the embodiment of a powerful woman, but I can easily knock her off her high horse should I wish to. She loathes this and insults me because I do not bend to her. I will not lower myself so she can feel superior and treat me in a way I do not wish to be treated. And that is the difference between you two.

"You are powerful, yet you embrace the power your men possess and welcome their support. You don't tear them down. You don't become violent or angry when you see their power next to yours. Instead, you embrace every part of them and help them rein in the destruction they could cause. Justine, however, desires to be better than me, better than everyone. To dominate as supreme. And to dominate those who are uncomfortable or opposed to it is wrong."

“Not a queen,” Luc murmured.

Damon nodded and added, “She’s more a tyrant. And foolish tyrants or overconfident ones fall. They have enemies and disloyal followers who will not hesitate to bleed them if another should come to take their place.” He gestured to Luc. “He, for example, was an untraditional Dom. He didn’t bond with his subs emotionally, but he recognized a queen when he viewed you as more than the girl next door. Not because you are the strongest, smartest, or most beautiful—which you are in his eyes anyway—but because you are the one he wanted to share his rule with. He became greater because he embraced you, his brothers, and David as his equals. He opened every bit of himself to you and allowed bonds to cement between all of you.”

Jane couldn’t hide her smile if she tried. It had taken her a while to feel worthy of her guys, but she truly felt like a queen after the morning she’d shared with them.

Still, she was a queen who’d lost her sexy ninja.

As soon as she thought of Tercero, her smile slipped.

“Don’t,” Luc said, his tone low but full of fury. His steel eyes cut to her, and he shook his head. “Don’t ruin our time together.”

Damon moved to stand at the elevator door, providing as much privacy as possible. She didn’t want to cry, but she was sad. She’d been trying to be brave, but it was still there, that hole of nothingness Tercero had left in his place.

Luc sighed, placing a hand at the nape of her neck and pulling her close. His stare was cruel, all ice and violence, but she managed a sad smile because she knew he loved her—he wasn’t trying to be mean.

“I should forbid smiles while you are with me,” he murmured, kissing her forehead. “I simply want to spend time with you, Jane. Give my brother time to come to terms with his choice. Perhaps he will realize the mistake he has made and return. But don’t sulk about him while you are with me.” A flash of silver lit up his eyes, and he smirked. “You may do that with David.”

She chuckled and wrapped her arms around his waist. “I don’t want him to come back if he wants to be gone, but it sucks. I feel like I let him down.”

He didn’t comment. He applied comforting pressure to her neck and breathed in deeply.

It was nothing, yet it was everything he could give her. So she smiled and kissed his chest before straightening her shoulders. He watched her with no outward sign of approval, but that was Luc. He didn’t sing praises for doing shit she should already do.

“He left,” she said with a nod. “You didn’t.” Then, she realized he was holding a black coat. “That for me?”

“Yes,” he said. “I’d prefer not to destroy the remaining hotel staff for staring at you.”

Giggling, she let him put it on. “It’s just my boobs. I gotta buy some new tops.”

Damon snorted, shifting to face them again. “You dismiss your appeal far too easily, Jane. Your fuller breasts are only a bonus for onlookers.”

Luc’s stare was calm, but she felt the heat rolling off him. “You have complimented her quite enough, King.”

Damon’s smile would have almost been sweet if it wasn’t so terrifying. “Apologies, my king.”

Jane rolled her eyes—they were both so dominant. “Don’t apologize to him for complimenting me. My boobies are the best they’ve ever been. Y’all better talk them up before I get sad about them being all gross after the baby comes.”

Luc sighed, but Damon laughed and asked, “Why would you be sad about being able to feed your child?”

“Because I’ve already looked up what they don’t tell you about pregnancies and babies, and it’s awful. My boobs are going to get even bigger after the baby comes!”

“I’m sure your men will not object to such a change,” he said, laughing as he walked ahead of them.

She peeked up at Luc. “I read they get ugly and painful. I might even get stretch marks.”

“Perhaps,” he said, casting his gaze down on her, then to her cleavage. “Don’t stress over such things, Jane. A woman’s body changes with childbirth. I have no doubt my brother and David will enjoy every change as much as I will.”

“You will not enjoy stretch marks.”

A faint twitch of his mouth barely caught her eye. “I will not baby you and make up uncertain promises. I have no idea what my reaction will be to a mark on your skin. But I will still only want you.”

“Even scarred and fat?”

He squeezed her hip. “I care only to have your smile and love, Jane.” His eyes darted to hers. “Whatever package that comes in ... the mouthwatering package I am graced with right now, or one that will no doubt alter later, is what I will always desire.”

“Are you trying to defeat David’s and Ryder’s dreamy lines?”

“I don’t have to try,” he said with a faint smile. “You’re cute when you think I’m being sweet. Sometimes I like the reminder that a sweet soul resides inside my queen.”

Her face warmed as she stared at him. She couldn’t think of anything to say. Did that mean she wasn’t sweet most of the time? “Sorry?”

He didn’t take his eyes from hers as he cupped her cheek with one hand and leaned down. “Sweet little queen,” he murmured, brushing his lips against hers, “never forget I fell in love with you for who you are and that I crave how you make me feel.”

Then he kissed her. His lips were cold, but they burned when she kissed him back. Ice and an inferno transferred back and forth between them, and she couldn’t help but fall a bit more in love with him when he smiled against her mouth. He brought his other hand to hold her face so that those who waited for them to leave the elevator could wait longer.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Ryder adjusted the chub he'd gotten after staring at the pictures of Jane Damon had texted him. His brother was a lucky bastard. But he was happy his baby would finally get a full view of Luc. She might not know what the hell she'd gotten into with his brother, and she might fear it all, but it was something he'd been waiting for Luc to bring her in on. He hated keeping her in the dark about anything.

Honestly, he didn't want Jane to be totally into whatever Luc fantasized about. He knew Luc didn't view Jane as a sub, but he had no idea what she'd do if she saw other women in that role. He wanted her to continue embracing herself and not try to be what she thought Luc wanted. Because Luc didn't even like the shit he did before her, but he would do it if Jane asked. She'd make herself uncomfortable or endure pain if she believed that was a way to get Luc off.

The one thing he was thankful for was Luc's maturity. He'd know if Jane was trying to please him and have no problem setting her straight.

"You've adjusted that *semi* five times since you opened whatever text you got."

He looked up, locking eyes with Sin, who'd spoken—then Than, who tried to act like he wasn't curious. They'd come

with him on this trip to ensure he didn't do something he'd end up regretting. "Then stop eying my dick."

Sin chuckled and pushed his hair back as they walked through the abandoned building. "Let me see her."

"No." He pocketed his phone as he considered punching the fucker. "I'm still debating if I should fight Damon for taking pictures of her or take on Luc for buying her the damn dress. Who knows how many assholes are gonna stare."

"They do anyway," Than said. "She's hot, and she has a fucking harem."

"She's just mind-boggling," Sin cut in, "I have to stare. She's pretty, for sure, but it's something else." He gestured toward Than. "What am I trying to say?"

Than chuckled. "How the fuck should I know? You don't have to tell him you think his girlfriend is pretty or *mind-boggling*."

Sin rolled his eyes. "He knows I think she's pretty. I'm just saying—it's not that that makes men notice her."

Ryder knew what Sin was trying to get at. Jane was gorgeous to him and the only woman he wanted to stare at, but society's beauty standards would consider her plain—a Plain Jane. She didn't try to look like every other woman or follow beauty trends. If she saw something she thought was pretty or cute, she'd try it, but she mainly stuck to tinted sunblock, eyeliner, and mascara even though she already had full, dark eyelashes.

The one thing he loved that she put on was her fruity lip balms and glosses because he could kiss, suck, and lick until her lips were pink and swollen, then she'd put on more. She

was so cute because she would complain the gloss never lasted, not even considering he'd sucked it off.

“Look, he’s thinking it over,” Sin said, pointing at him. “You know what I’m saying about her—what is it?”

“That you think my girlfriend is a *Plain Jane*, and that calls to you?”

“You think she’s plain?” Sin frowned and then smiled. “Oh, yeah, she is a Plain Jane, isn’t she? Something about it ... I dunno—it’s attractive and lures you in. Lots of women start looking the same after a while because they all try the same looks—she doesn’t, and it’s ... nice? And I like the ones who wear makeup too, but it does something to me when they don’t try to change shit.”

“Women wear makeup for themselves,” Than said, shaking his head. “They don’t all wake up and think they need to impress Alexander Sin today. Get over yourself.”

Ryder chuckled at Sin’s open mouth.

“You’re just jealous because some do think that.” Sin turned back to Ryder. “Jane’s got stunning eyes and a pretty smile. And her cackle when she laughs. Yeah, she’s a cackling Plain Jane with pretty eyes, and I stare.”

Ryder laughed then. “What the fuck? Are you crushing on my girlfriend? Her cackle?”

“She giggles and cackles.” Sin grinned at him. “I’m just saying that’s why I stare, and maybe others do. So leave the poor assholes alone if they look at her. You don’t have to fight me for admiring her pretty eyes and hearing her cackle.”

Than shook his head, chuckling, but Ryder knew what Sin meant. Jane always had fun with her Wolves, Demons, and Knights. It was one of the reasons he welcomed her mainly

having male friends where he knew other boyfriends would forbid it. She'd chime in on their dirty talk, make jokes, goof around, and hold nothing back when she laughed.

"You're looking less pissed, by the way," Sin said.

Ryder shut away his thoughts about Jane's looks and Sin's stupid comments about Jane's laugh because he fucking missed hearing it. "I'm trying to give my baby—both of them—the world." He pushed open a broken door. "I'm not fucking up with Jane anymore."

Sin rolled his eyes. "Jane loves being fucked up on."

He laughed at the bastard. "Idiot."

"You sure he's in here?" Than asked, scanning the graffiti and the broken glass that filled the concrete room. He shook his head when they had to walk around a pile of old shit and piss. "What will Jane do if he comes back? You think she'll accept all this? 'Cause she deserves to know, and we won't keep it a secret if he returns."

Ryder pressed his lips together. He didn't like keeping anything from Jane, but he had trusted his brothers when they asked for time before opening up to her. He knew how they felt. It had sucked to fear her reaction to finding out who he was and how he felt about her when she was so fucking in love with David. So he let them keep their secrets.

Luc's made sense to him most. He was older and had done things he regretted all because he'd felt Jane was too young for him. But Luc had been loyal to her from the very second he decided to start a relationship with her. So Ryder was fine with giving him time to figure out how he would tell her. Tercero was a different story.

“He’s here,” Ryder finally told Than. “And I have no idea what she’ll do. I have no problem with her knowing the truth, but he needs to be the one to tell her. All I care about is finding him and telling him he doesn’t have to fucking worry about me.”

“And you’ve done so,” came a voice in the darkness.

Ryder squinted, barely catching a flicker of shine in a pair of eyes before Tercero stepped forward and lifted the black mask that covered his face. “And?” Ryder asked.

“And what?” Tercero moved into the light, revealing his all-black bike gear and weapons. “Do you expect me to return simply because you can be strong now?”

Than nudged Ryder, who had balled his fists and growled.

It did the trick, allowing Ryder time to breathe and calm himself. “Are you seriously taunting me? After your weakness—over a dead bitch, mind you—led you to walking away from our girlfriend? Our pregnant girlfriend who’d just puked her guts out at the thought of losing you hours before you decided to slip out without saying goodbye to her?”

Sin crossed his arms and moved in front of Ryder to address Tercero, “You need to see her in person regardless of if you choose to return to the group. Leaving like you did affected all of them.”

“More than us,” Ryder snapped. “You should’ve seen how close Archer was to slipping up with her.”

Tercero gritted his teeth, and it pissed Ryder off.

“Uh-uh. You don’t get to act mad about that.” He breathed out because he felt himself losing control. “I’ll pick my fight with him, but you don’t get to act pissed about him.”

“So you’ll let him get closer to her?” Tercero laughed lightly. “Really, brother, the last thing you need is to put more pressure on yourself. Focus on Jane and your child. She’ll forget me.”

Than scoffed, but it was Ryder who replied.

“You, of all people, know she won’t forget you.” The muscles in his arms jumped, but he steadied himself as he took in his brother’s appearance. Though Tercero was armed to kill and fully able to, his eyes were tired, his posture tense and unsteady. “You’re starving yourself, aren’t you? After two fucking nights? Or have you already been doing this?”

“Not your concern,” Tercero muttered, flicking his gaze out the broken window.

“Nah, you look at me, bitch.” Ryder moved past Sin to come face-to-face with his brother. He towered over him, but Tercero never cowered, even weak like he was at that moment. “Savaş said you had one of Archer’s cunts with you the night you left. Tell me you fucked her so I can end you.”

Tercero smiled faintly. “Is it that simple?”

Ryder stepped back when Than touched his shoulder, and he realized Tercero was seriously fucked up in the head about Jane. About whatever was eating at his soul to make him walk away from their girl. “You wish for that, don’t you?”

Tercero didn’t answer, but he didn’t have to—his brother wanted to die.

“You can suffer then.” Ryder laughed, but he felt rage he wasn’t used to feeling toward one of his brothers. “I’ll tell you now—I can handle you with us. But I won’t let you in if you’re this fucking sick in the head. Sort yourself out, and don’t show your face until you’re stable. She’ll break or

destroy everything if she sees you like this.” He knew Jane. She was beautiful, strong, and vulnerable—and she would destroy herself if she saw any of them this way. It would kill all of them.

“I know,” Tercero murmured. “She can’t see me, and she won’t. I promise.”

Sin shook his head as a rare serious expression spread over his face. “You’re a disgrace to her. So do as you’re saying and stay away—and if you’re going to kill yourself, see that your body is never found.”

Ryder motioned for Than and Sin to leave. “Wait for me—I’m fine.” They left them alone, and Ryder refocused on Tercero. “Luc’s taken Jane to Dungeon. He’s going to show her off and tell her about his subs—and the shit he’s talked to us about.”

“Why are you bothering with this?” Tercero pulled his mask back into place. “He’ll still walk away, or she’ll leave when she considers raising a child around him.”

“He won’t.” Ryder moved to keep himself from punching his brother. “Luc and David took her with me. All three of us.” He smirked at the way Tercero’s eyes narrowed. “Yeah. Her gag reflex kinda made things difficult, but baby took all three of us. She got so fucking wet about Luc and me being in her together, and David learned some tenderness. That was until we fucked her like she wanted us to. She wanted us to use her.”

“Now I know part of it was that I helped her get over being called mean things, but that’s not the only reason—I doubt she even realized it.” His jaw clenched as all his anger returned. “Because not only was she sad as fuck about you, feeling like she didn’t give you enough—she worried the others would

leave. That she'd not be enough—because she wasn't enough for you.”

Ryder turned his back on Tercero but added, “Congratulations, brother. You convinced your treasure she's worthless.”

“You could've told him she doesn't feel worthless to the rest of you,” Than said, falling in step with Ryder once he rounded the corner.

“He knows,” Ryder muttered, checking his phone. There was a text from David. He couldn't help but laugh at the contact name Jane had snuck on his phone.

PAPI

Find him?

Ryder knew what he was really asking and replied:

I didn't kill him.

PAPI

Is he alright?

“Mr. Perfect is always caring about everyone,” he said aloud before replying:

He's lost.

PAPI

Do we tell Jane where he is?

Sighing, Ryder glanced at Than. “He wants to know if we should tell Jane where he is.”

Than glanced up at the building. “I think she needs to fight for him if she wants him.” He faced him again. “But you can be a big brother.”

“We’re quads,” Ryder drawled.

Sin laughed, lifting his helmet off his Harley and pulling it on. “You’re first born and have always been considered the oldest. We might provide Jane with the muscle to fuck up anyone who wrongs her, which we will do if any of you fuck up, but you can step in for Tercero.”

Ryder straddled his custom Night Rod and glared at Sin. “He skipped out on my girlfriend. She’s acting tough, but it’s gonna hit her once she accepts it. She’s going to break down, and that’s his fault.”

“No, it’s not.” Than lifted his helmet. “You’ve already admitted you did wrong by knocking her up. I might want to fuck Tercero up for leaving her like he did, but he might’ve been able to deal with his mental shit and cope if you had eased up about Jane.”

His hand tightened around the phone as he replied to David:

You fuckin decide.

PAPI

Stop whatever you’re thinking. We decide together.

He hated that David was so perceptive.

I hate you.

PAPI

Do you need me to tell you I love you since our girlfriend is gone?

I'm not going to.

Don't forget the cat food.

Ryder chuckled, pocketing his phone as he stared down at his bike. He knew Than was right, but he didn't like hearing it. He honestly didn't care if he let Tercero down. For him, only Jane mattered, but his girl was hurt because he wasn't strong enough to step back for the others. And he did care about her being happy with Tercero. They were beautiful together. Not everyone saw it, but he and the others did. They were two broken souls constantly trying to mend the lingering wounds others had long stopped seeing. It was sad, but so fucking worth it when he saw them smile at each other after they were both sated and at peace.

"I shouldn't have said anything," Than said, scattering Ryder's thoughts.

"Yeah, you shouldn't have, but you're right." He looked up at the building. "But he still needs to want to save himself. You can pull someone out of the water when they can't swim, but you can't always be there to stop them from jumping back in. That shouldn't be Jane's job either."

"Deep." Sin chuckled. "Let's go beat the shit out of some assholes before we start writing love letters to each other."

Than shook his head but smiled. "You gossip more than Jane. And you try to get philosophical with her about the most random shit. So shut up."

Sin laughed, throwing up his hands. “I’m her sex counselor.”

Ryder ignored them and pulled his phone back out. He sent a quick text to Tercero.

I don’t want you to hurt yourself. Call me if you want help.

I’ll come.

He sighed, then sent another:

I’m sorry, little brother. We can learn how to be good for her together. You don’t have to do this.

Than didn’t hide that he was reading the text. “He won’t respond, but that’s good. Let’s go and give him time.”

Usually, he’d argue about Than giving any orders, but he nodded and pulled on his helmet.

Sin started his bike and yelled over the noise. “Did I ever tell you about the time Jane dreamed about Jason Momoa, and then she couldn’t stop thinking about how much I look like him? She said he’s hot.”

Than laughed. “He put his helmet on quick for a reason.”

Ryder shook his head. He knew about Jane’s silly thoughts that Sin looked like the actor. But he grinned and raised his voice so Sin could hear him too. “Did she tell you she thinks I’m a god compared to all of you, even Jason Momoa?”

Sin laughed loudly. “I’m just saying—I stood a chance with her for a day.”

“You stand a better chance of my fist smashing your face.”
Ryder ignored their laughter and took the lead. He needed to blow off some steam, and a fight would help. It sucked that he

wouldn't be coming home to Jane after he was done, but maybe he needed to get used to it. If he were going to be a better boyfriend, he'd have to get comfortable letting Jane be without him. He sighed, realizing the others had already been feeling and dealing with this very thing. "Fuck."

CHAPTER EIGHT

“There’s no need to tremble,” Luc said, giving her hand a comforting squeeze.

She peeked up at him, her heart sprinting because he looked too freaking sexy in the gray silk mask he wore. It was simple, just a sleek strip that fit perfectly without messing up his hair, while hers was a delicate silver-gray masquerade-style mask.

His eyes shifted to hers. “Head high, Jane. You are not inferior to any here, and I do not expect you to behave like many of those you will see inside. Remember, you are not my sub.”

Jane glanced ahead. The place was massive and not at all what she’d imagined. She had expected a sleek, fancy building at the center of downtown. A gothic cathedral in the middle of nowhere was not where she thought he’d take her.

It was hauntingly gorgeous, something she might see as a European tourist. But it was here, on the outskirts of Aspen, Colorado, with expensive cars pulling to the front where several masked valets and bell boys waited to serve.

Damon’s rumbly chuckle eased her nerves as he looked over his shoulder at her. He wore a mask, too. The dark red and black scales reminded her of a dragon, which fit Damon’s

presence. “You look perfect, little queen,” he said. “You’ll blend in until you’re ready to glow.”

She spotted a faint smile on Luc’s mouth. He wanted her to stand out, and she was cowering in the shadows. It was silly, but she loved that he always pushed her out of her comfort zone and into one she was proud of.

“Thank you,” she murmured, lifting her chin to take in the exterior. The pea gravel drive was long, lined with wood-burning torches that lit up the pale stone walls of the cathedral. What surprised her most was the mixture of demon and archangel sculptures incorporated into the structure. “This is a church. A church that has demons on the outside.”

Luc smiled. “It was never used as a church. The previous owner merely found the architecture appealing. I do as well.”

“You own this whole place?” She knew Luc was loaded—he bought her things all the time, and his penthouse screamed money—but this was insane.

“For now,” he said, glancing at her again, “if you like it.”

“What?” She darted her eyes to Damon, who shrugged before she focused on Luc again.

“I’m going to be a father, Jane.” His smirk made her thighs sweat and clench. “If my queen disapproves of the deeds carried out within this business, I will sell. I have many generous offers.”

“It’s so pretty though.” She gasped and stumbled to a stop. A towering statue of an armored angel stood at the base of the stairs, his massive wings outstretched over the stairs on each side of him. He alone was breathtaking, but Jane’s eyes fell on the limp, wounded woman in his arms.

She wasn't just wounded—she was dead. Yet the angel cradled her as if she were still alive. His fierce gaze was on the woman alone, but he wasn't the only one watching her.

Off to one side of the stairs, another statue of a knight kneeled, his agonized stare fixed on the woman. He was beautiful, so fierce but broken. Jane's eyes stung because she could almost feel his heartbreak.

A chilled finger followed a tear that had slipped from under her mask. "Do you see the resemblance?"

Her lips wobbled, and she nodded. "It's David." She sucked in a shaky breath and tore her eyes from the statue of David to look up at the angel holding the woman. Only then did she see the sculptures she'd passed without realizing it.

Beautiful and deadly. The Angel of Death stood flanked by three other male angels.

None displayed emotion as they watched the angel holding the woman.

She nearly sobbed as she took in the obvious leader of the four, the Angel of Death. "It's Ryder." Her breathing quickened as sorrow washed through her. He was empty. Not a single emotion was present in her deadly boy. Not even his brothers behind him. "Archer, Savaş, and Tercero." She finally looked away, unable to stand the sight of them like this. They were only sculptures, but they were too realistic not to be affected by the lack of expression on their handsome faces, and she didn't think she could handle seeing Tercero's because it felt like he was right there.

So she lifted her gaze to the first angel she'd seen. "My king," she breathed, clutching Luc's hand.

“And my queen,” he added. “I commissioned a sculptor to create scenes from a dream I had. It reminded me of a book about a fallen angel and his fallen queen, a warrior prince, and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.”

He gestured to the woman ... her. “The night of your attack, I feared I’d lost you—that I’d destroyed my brothers and the prince who loved you more than you realized. Because you would not have been there to be attacked had I been patient and more understanding. Of course you needed time to learn how to be in a relationship with all of us, let alone one at all.

“But I was frustrated by how easily my little brother won you over. I knew you’d admired him more than you wanted to admit to yourself, and he was the one who protected you. He saved you again and again. He did everything, even supporting David and Tercero’s feelings for you, and I was jealous.”

Luc tilted her chin up so she could see his masked face. “I had the sculptor depict us in the places of the angels, warrior, and the fallen queen—to remind me of what I would cause by failing you again.”

“You didn’t fail me, Luc.”

“Sweet little queen.” He held the back of her neck as his eyes shone with the same silvery gleam as their masks. “I did fail you. But I will do all I can never to do so again.” He inclined his head to the side. “Allow me to show off my queen.” He gestured to the statues and Damon. “Correction: our queen.”

A sad laugh slipped out, and she smiled up at him. It still surprised her that Luc had such strong feelings for her.

“Beautiful,” he murmured, placing her arm in the crook of his. “Remember, everything with you is far more satisfying than anything I’ve experienced here.”

“Yeah, right.” She turned, kissing his shoulder as he led her up the stairs. She couldn’t stop herself from reaching out and touching *Death’s* hand.

“I wouldn’t lie, Jane,” he said as they reached the intimidating doors. They were black, carved with more angels and demons.

She wanted to believe him, but as soon as the doors opened to reveal a long hall with naked women suspended from the wooden beams across the corridor, she doubted him.

The women were spaced maybe ten feet apart, bound in the most intricate ways with an attendant nearby, monitoring or cooing words to them.

Jane’s breath hitched as they walked through. “What is this?”

“Suspension bondage. This is Shibari,” Damon said with a chuckle. “Don’t worry—they like it. Everything they do is done safely, sanely, and with consent. Their riggers are very good.”

“Those are the men?” She eyed the attractive, masked men circling the women.

“Yes,” Luc answered, not even looking.

Jane nodded, trying not to stare, but it was hard.

“This is more art,” Damon commented. “Most sessions don’t conclude with sex.”

“Oh.” She hugged Luc’s arm as they drew closer to the opening. The hall opened to a larger mess hall with vaulted

ceilings and elaborate stained glass depicting angels and demons having sex with human women. It was beautiful, with white marble walls and carvings. More dark wood beams and gothic wooden chandeliers accented the whole place, but it was unreal. More so when she finally looked at the hundred or so men and women meandering around. “Oh, gosh,” she breathed when a man crossed their path. He had a naked woman on a delicate gold chain crawling behind him. “Does she like that?”

“That’s most likely punishment,” Luc murmured. “Perhaps she likes the punishment, or she requires training.”

“Did you do this?”

He patted her hand. “My subs wore collars, but I never paraded them around in such a way.”

“Even if they wanted punishment?” Jane nearly gaped when the man lightly yanked on the crawling woman so she’d come to heel at his side while he spoke to another man.

“I doled out punishment in other ways.”

A sour feeling swirled in her stomach. As much as she didn’t like the idea of a woman being punished, she tasted the nasty tang of jealousy in her mouth at the thought of Luc’s former subs getting off on whatever he viewed as punishment.

A chilled kiss brushed her temple, and she stiffened when he spoke. “I enjoy the tame discipline I deliver to you far more than the nonsense I’ve done in the past.”

She sent him a smile and pulled her shoulders back to stand taller. It was more than his words. She could feel the stares of many in the room, and she knew it wasn’t that she was on Luc’s arm that drew attention. It was that he was being affectionate. Somehow, she knew something as simple as a

tender kiss wasn't usual behavior for him, even here. Hell, it was unusual for her to have him be so openly affectionate.

His eyes flicked down to her lips. "You succumb to my warmth as much as you do my coldness."

"Don't worry," she said, turning her head to kiss the corner of his mouth. "I'm aware this is because I'm emotional."

He gripped her chin, keeping her from moving away. His eyes were cold but not his words. "I cherish every emotion you share with me, Jane. Never stop." He pressed a lingering kiss to her lips, then added, "And you are right—my outward affection will be sparse. I must compete with your men and keep you on your toes on what to expect from me."

She laughed, kissing him back. "I never know what to expect from you. Now show me your 'discarded' subs. What a mean way to refer to them, by the way."

"You like it," he said, guiding her away from the entrance and out of view of whatever was about to go down with the dog chain girl.

She responded with a smile—he was right.

"Vicious, and yet no one realizes it," Damon commented as he and Luc walked like kings amongst peasants, even though Jane was sure every man in the building was worth millions.

"I didn't say anything," she said. "I just want to get it over with—like a bandaid."

"Well, allow your king to rip." Damon nodded at a group of women just ahead. They were gorgeous, all different, but somehow all had the same perfectness. And Jane realized nothing about her was similar to Luc's old subs. Well, their

dresses were almost identical to hers, save for the color. They wore white.

Jane swallowed, taking in their bare necks that seemed to be a focus with their high ponytails in place. She had a feeling they intended to irk Luc with this display. It didn't matter. What mattered was that three wore disgusted sneers as they took her in. The fourth seemed to realize she was not mimicking the others, but she quickly fixed a snobby curl onto her mouth. Everyone in the hall appeared to notice something was amiss, and their gazes began to shift between Luc's old harem and her.

When the black-haired one eyed Jane's dress and scoffed, she knew she'd have to toughen up—be a queen.

“Jane,” Luc said as they approached the four, “these are the four submissives I told you about.” He pointed at each one as he spoke. “Gianna, Juliana, Isabella, and Gabriella. Ladies, meet Jane, my girlfriend.”

Jane smiled in greeting, and her grin grew as glares formed on their lovely faces. She could understand the sting of losing Luc; she'd felt it before herself. But she didn't think Luc had been their boyfriend. It wasn't her fault if they put themselves in the positions they had with him, and she didn't pity them for it.

“I would say it's a pleasure to meet you four,” she said, meeting more violent stares from the foursome, “but we all know that'd be a lie. So I'll say y'all look lovely this evening, and I wish you all the best on your search for a new Dom. While I'm positive Luc is king amongst all here, he's permanently claimed.

“Now I suggest you take care of the possessive gleams in your eyes in the next five seconds. I'll add that the same can

be said about your little scoffs and any other insults you've prepared for the night."

The black-haired one ignored her. "You will never compare to us."

Jane felt Luc's body temperature skyrocket, but she smiled as she smoothed a hand over her stomach. "Honey, it took four of you to distract him enough from coming and fucking me when I was underage."

Damon coughed a laugh, but Jane stayed locked in a staring match with their little leader.

"Oh, silly me," Jane continued, "I suppose y'all failed at that." She knew her grin had turned wicked. "By the way, if you knew him at all, you'd know gray is his true color. So do yourselves a favor and realize he's showing you I am his choice and that you don't know him the way you think you do. Because you look like a bunch of jackasses trying to fit in with him."

Pride radiated out of Luc as he took her hand and nodded at his former subs. "Enjoy the evening, ladies."

Jane waved at them and made her tone as chipper as she felt. "Bye, girls!"

"Your adorable sass is more arousing than should be possible," Luc said, tugging her away.

"Was I too mean?" She beamed up at him as the corner of his mouth lifted.

"They were going to humiliate you." He raised her hand to his mouth and kissed it. "You knew they wanted to attack you, and you struck first."

“Kill shots,” Damon said. “Adorable ones. Your boys will be proud.”

She giggled but covered her mouth when she realized they’d walked into an area where a woman was spanking a man. He was naked and kneeling on a bench with his ass on full display for the room—his hands and feet secured with leather cuffs.

Several people shot dirty looks her way, but their sneers vanished when they saw Luc. They even bowed their heads at him and returned to watching the man as he begged the Dominatrix for more when she stopped with the crop she’d been using to paint his pale ass red.

Luc lowered his mouth to speak softly in her ear. “This repulses me. Unless you want to watch, I’d like to continue. I am meant to oversee the auction shortly.”

“I’d worry if this excited you,” she said, taking the lead as she tugged him toward a dark hall. “Am I going the right way?”

A full Luc Godson smile blessed her. “No, my queen. You’re about to enter the sex party room.”

Stumbling to a stop, she waited for him to take her the right way, but she caught sight of the bound man behind them getting the biggest dildo ever worked into his ass. “Luc, get me out of here.”

He chuckled, tugging her, then sliding a hand down her spine to rest on her ass.

Damon strolled up close and whispered to her, “That man’s life might be in danger if David learns you suddenly don’t want a dick in your ass .”

Jane covered her ears when she heard the familiar buzz and moans. “Oh my gosh. Stop, Damon.”

“It’s not like your men will ever do that.” He gave her a wicked grin. “Unless you want to test out how they feel about it.”

“Absolutely not,” she hissed, batting him away. She didn’t have a problem with anyone liking or doing it—it was simply not something she wanted to see or do.

“Stop teasing her,” Luc said calmly. “There’s nothing wrong with being uncomfortable with viewing certain acts. And she already knows her ass is the only one we have interest in.” He squeezed her butt cheek and continued leading her down the candlelit hall. There were several doors, each with a sign signaling if it was occupied.

“Are these restrooms?” she asked, then squeaked when a naked man on a leash exited with a woman holding his lead. He wore something that looked like a gas mask with a zipper over the mouth area. She knew there was a term for everything she saw but didn’t know any of them.

“Playrooms,” Luc said, squeezing her ass again. This time, she tensed because he hiked part of her dress up and let his fingers graze her entrance from behind. “Good girl.” He tugged it back down. “I’d have had an issue if you were turned on by anything you’ve seen so far.”

“Shaming your patrons?” She fixed her dress, shooting him a glare. “Don’t do that again because now I am turned on.”

“I know you are, little queen.” He lightly patted her bottom. “Because it was my touch, I’ll allow it.”

Damon winked at her. “The Dom is not quite ready to be equal, it seems.”

Jane bit her lip as Luc stayed quiet. It wasn't like she wanted to be Luc's sub. She didn't feel that way about herself. Or at least, she didn't think she did. “Does me liking it when you're rough and stern with me mean I'm a sub?”

“No.” Luc applied pressure to her back, his touch warming. “You simply know I am usually careful with you and enjoy it when I don't hold back.”

“I can take it,” she said, nodding. She wanted all her men fully satisfied. “I can take all of you.”

“I know you can,” he said. “Just like we are proud of our abilities to satisfy you without hurting you.”

“It's a pleasure for them, Jane,” Damon said. “Don't worry when they are soft with you.”

Jane peered up at Luc. “Even you?”

“Especially me.” He tugged the hem of her dress before resting his hand on her bottom again.

She nodded, trying to understand him. He had a problem seeing a man as a submissive, but she couldn't figure out what he must've liked when he had his subs. How could he be done with it and like being soft with her?

“Remember,” he said as they neared the end of the hall, “everyone here has consented to what is done to them. This is what they fantasize about. They find it pleasurable and exciting.”

“Okay,” she said, holding her breath as she took in the grand hall. There was a stage with women lined up. Some wore masks and sheer shifts; others were fully naked—all

were shackled at the wrists, and their submissive collars were tethered to the floor. “I guess I understand why you’d be so worried about my reaction.”

“You’re open-minded but very opinionated, Jane.” He kissed her temple, ushering her toward a table in front of the stage. It looked more like a judging table than the other round ones scattered throughout the room.

Her eyes shifted to the dozens of men in suits there. Some wore masks like Luc’s but black. “It’s just hard to fathom that someone would want to be treated like this,” she said, her eyes widening because a naked woman was being shown off like a dog to a group of men. She was leashed, lying partially on a table and spreading her legs while the man holding her lead spread them even more so the other men could inspect her.

When one appeared to ask for permission, and the Dom nodded, Jane stumbled. The man whipped out his dick and rubbed it on the woman’s pussy.

“Holy shit.” She tore her eyes away when the man entered in a brutal single thrust.

Damon chuckled, pulling out a chair for her. “Some women like to be passed around like an old-fashioned porno magazine.”

“King, stay with her.” Luc helped her into her seat. “I’ll be just a moment.”

Damon pulled out the seat she assumed was Luc’s and peeked over at the woman getting fucked, then grinned at Jane. “Your face is red. Are you appalled or turned on?”

Jane peeked too. The man who held the leash kissed the woman as the other man plowed into her like a madman. “I find it kinda degrading.”

Damon plucked a strawberry from a plate in front of her. “Why? You like rough sex and to be watched. Anyway, she consented to be his and to do whatever he wishes. That’s her fantasy. It doesn’t seem much different than Ryder allowing the others to fuck you.”

Jane whipped her head around to glare at him. “What?”

“I meant in the beginning.” He bit into the strawberry and shrugged. “You can’t deny that Ryder was the dominant of the group before you got pregnant. He was your first, the one who took charge of the relationship when it started to fall apart before it could even start. He positioned himself at the top with you because you needed him to. But he set the rules, for the most part.”

She frowned, though her cheeks still heated at the sounds coming from the woman and man. Even more so when she spotted men from around the room spectating the whole thing. One even pushed his sub down on her knees to give him a blowjob as he watched the other woman getting fucked.

Damon chuckled again as he held up a strawberry for her. “Forgive me, little queen. I respect Ryder and your reliance on him. But I know you love the others too. I want you to have all that you desire. If that means your kink is letting Ryder be dominant, embrace it. Especially now that he’s your baby daddy.”

“They’re all daddies, and they’re all dominant,” she said, cursing her good peripheral vision because she saw Luc speaking to a group of men with subs on leads. The women didn’t even glimpse at Luc. They were all obedient, keeping their downcast gazes on the floor. One of the men gestured between Luc and the sub he had, but Luc gave a dismissive shake of his head, then looked toward her. It sent a warm

sensation through her belly because she could make out ‘queen’ on his lips. “You think I have a kink for Ryder’s dominance?” she asked, focusing on Damon.

“Don’t you?” He held the strawberry up again, but she waved it off. He ate it himself but did so slowly and with a moan. She glared at him, and he laughed. “I love teasing you when you’re high-strung like this. Mm. You know, now that I think about it, you like David’s dominance a bit more than Ryder’s.”

He nodded like he was confirming this with himself. “You get a little spark in your eyes when he challenges Ryder, and you love that he loses control of that perfect exterior you always envisioned of him. You get those dreamy eyes when Ryder is silly with you and an asshole to everyone around him. But I’m sure he does more in the bedroom than I’m aware of—I’ve seen you with bruises many times and know you’ve only been with him while David, Luc, and Tercero are away. He’s more private with you than he lets on with the others, but we all know he’s wild with you—he’ll just never let anyone see because he’s that possessive.”

He was right—Ryder was intense when they were alone. Her breath hitched with the most recent memory of just them. She could almost feel his hands squeezing her hips—how it felt when he’d fucked her on the countertop because she’d pointed out it was the perfect height. Then he’d carried her to the couch and got to his knees. He flipped her onto her belly and pressed her face onto the sofa cushion.

It was rougher than he ever let anyone see him get with her. The only sweetness was when he slid his forearm beneath her throat and kissed the side of her neck. Then, he nuzzled her, rubbing his face along hers and breathing her in as he

whispered that she was his everything. But after that, he put her in a rear chokehold to hold her in place and rutted into her so hard that the sofa's frame bruised her hips. It hurt so good that she cried. Then he turned her and tossed her partially on the couch but left her ass hanging off the edge and fucked her with his hand mercilessly.

Even after he made her squirt, he didn't let up. He knew squirting almost hurt with how intense it was. But he loved to make her do it with his dick. So he teased her again and again, praising her every time he succeeded in his mission.

He fucked her like a monster, and she loved it. Every brutal thrust. Every painful suck and bite. Every violent sound that tore out of his mouth. They reveled in it together.

He just didn't want anyone to know. He knew she wanted him that way and she'd beg him to do it if he stopped, but he still checked with her randomly. He could be sleeping with her, and he'd wake her to ask, "*Sweet Jane, are you sure?*" She didn't even have to wonder what he wanted reassurance about—she knew. And she told him the truth, "*If you stop fucking me like that, I'll cry.*" He only liked when she cried from the good hurt.

Damon chuckled and caressed her hot cheek with the back of his fingers. "There it is. I wondered how you would react—if it would be fear or pleasure. I'm relieved it's pleasure and want I see. I'd have a hard time killing him if it were the former."

"He'd never hurt me," she said quickly. "It was the good hurt, and he knows I like it. I want it that way sometimes. Need it."

"I still have to check. You were bruised and could barely walk for the next few days. And that is saying something,

considering you're regularly fucked by several men." He smiled wickedly again. "So while I would not say you're exactly a sub in the sense you see here, you certainly have kinks that your boys are feeling out with you."

"But I'm pregnant now."

"All the more reason to let your freak flag fly."

She chuckled, snatching a strawberry. "Well, if you guys insist. Just don't tell the others about Ryder."

He smiled tenderly. "I can tell you like it, so I won't. He's possessive, but it's more than hard fucking, yes?"

Nodding, she was glad Damon wasn't running to Luc. "He keeps me."

"It's beautiful," Damon said, still watching her in a way that made her tummy squeeze. "I don't think he'll ever share what is his with anyone else. Except perhaps David?"

"I think David is aware Ryder keeps things between us private." She felt her face heat at the thought of the looks David would give her whenever he returned home, and she'd been fucked then loved by Ryder. His jaw would tighten, and those blue eyes would burn, but then he'd kiss her and give her the faintest caress over the spot Ryder called his. It was like he could somehow tell by touching her that she was happy, and he'd relax.

Damon smiled as if he knew exactly what she was thinking. "It's okay, little queen. I can see Ryder needs to be this way. I know David would intervene if it was wrong. As would Luc. Don't feel upset—some love is not meant to be witnessed by others." A devilish smirk teased his lips. "So I say again, let your freak flag fly."

"Maybe I will."

Cold fingers caressed her jaw as Luc motioned for Damon to get up. "Leave us."

"You're no fun, Luc," Damon said, snagging another strawberry before he left.

Luc watched Damon before unbuttoning his suit jacket and taking a seat. "Would you like something more, Jane?"

She realized he meant food when a topless waitress arrived, and she shook her head.

"Some champagne, perhaps," the waitress suggested.

Luc turned to the woman. "She's pregnant. No alcohol for her at all tonight, please. Bring her a chilled glass of water."

"Of course," the woman said, smiling. "And congratulations, Mr. Godson ... and Mistress."

"She's my girlfriend, Selene," Luc said. "And thank you, Jane and I are very happy."

Selene bowed her head to Jane. "I'll inform the waiting staff of the wonderful news."

Luc nodded. "I'll also have water."

"Yes, of course." Selene bowed her head again, then left.

Jane, however, stared in shock at the woman's scarred back.

"She was rescued from trafficking," Luc murmured. "Most of the women who work the rooms are. Many choose to leave and live normal lives, but some, like Selene, don't know how to adjust to normalcy. I allow them to do what they must to feel comfortable and make a living. At all times, they are in control, though."

"So they want to be serving staff? And naked?"

“It empowers them.” He leaned into his seat but shifted to give her his attention. “Here, they control who sees their bodies, if at all. They are not touched by a single person here. Should any uninvited touch unfold, I deliver harsh punishment to the offender. I’ve only been required to do so twice.”

“You protect them,” she said in awe.

“I’m not a savior, Jane.” He moved her hair to expose her shoulder and leaned down, kissing it. “I’m a king.”

She sighed as he kissed her again. He was usually private about certain things between them. Anything but a chaste kiss or her on his arm was reserved for behind closed doors, even if the people outside those doors knew he was ravaging her inside. This was a different Luc. Kind of like Ryder when he had her to himself and was at his fight club. He relaxed more, and besides fighting, he was almost not as mean to everyone.

“Interesting,” Luc murmured when her lips and her knees parted. He smiled against her skin before he leaned away. But he wasn’t done with her. His hand dropped to her thigh, pushing up her dress until he could slide a hand between her legs.

She clamped them together. “Luc!”

Even with her legs squeezing his hand, his finger grazed her slit. “Relax. You already know you want this. Let it happen. No one will look at what I do with you.”

“Really?” She scanned the dimming room. Some people still mingled. The girl getting fucked was being tended to by her Dom, and some men were near the stage, gazing at the chained women and a few men.

“Really,” Luc said, shifting her panties aside. “I’ll be as discreet as you think Ryder is when he fucks you while

everyone is in the room.”

A tingle bloomed throughout her core. Ryder loved hiking up her dress and sitting her on his lap when they hung out with friends. He'd position her just right so he could slide in without others seeing. He liked to tease her to stay quiet as he fucked her slowly and carried on conversations. It wasn't easy, but he'd taught her to breathe out instead of screaming. It was only doable with the slow sex. She couldn't stay quiet if he did more than the slow grind.

Her mouth popped open, and she widened her legs, sighing when Luc cupped her. “Luc, I don't know if I can stay quiet.”

“You can,” he said, nodding at Selene when she placed their glasses of water on the table. She also laid out a tray of vibrators and lube. “This is her first time,” he told Selene. “Perhaps she'll be interested in playing during our next visit.”

Jane covered his hand and tensed when he pushed a finger in and curled it up as if holding her in place or telling her to stay quiet.

“Of course.” Selene picked up the tray of vibrators and lube before bowing her head and leaving.

“Luc,” Jane gasped as soon as he pulled his finger out. She watched him casually lick his fingers before taking a drink.

“Jane,” he replied with a smirk that looked even more devilish with his mask.

“Someone will see,” she whispered.

He placed his glass down and leaned closer. “I know you're worried about everything that will change after the baby comes. I want you to have an option for your wild side.”

“Huh?” She darted her eyes around when the lights went out, except for on the stage and a very dim one over their table.

His hand returned to rest between her legs. “You’re brave to stand up for us, but I know you will still worry when our child grows older. I’m giving you a place where you can embrace everything you want to shield our baby from.” He inclined his head, indicating the whole room. “Do you realize how many here have children at home right now? How many have wives or husbands that they love but can’t be who they are anymore? This is a place where dark and filthy dreams can exist. However much you want to take home with us is fine. And then you can always have this to move things to when you feel it shouldn’t be in the home.”

Her eyes watered, and she leaned over to kiss him. “You’re giving me my dirty dreams?”

Chilled lips suddenly burned against hers, but he pulled back soon. “Such an emotional little queen you are. And yes, as dirty as you’d like.”

“I love you,” she croaked. “Fuck, I’m such a crybaby.”

He pressed a kiss to her forehead. “You’re hormonal on top of being an already emotional being. I adore you.”

Her face hurt from her smile because Luc didn’t spout an *I love you*. “I’ll try to keep my emotions in now.”

His eyes flashed silver as he studied her face. “Never hide to please me, Jane. But we must be quiet now.” He pushed his hand between her legs and gave her a little smack on her pussy. “Be whatever you want here. Just try not to scream yet.”

“Kinda hard to be quiet when you’ve got me throbbing.”

He smiled but didn't look at her. He did, however, slip a fucking ice cube into her vagina.

“Luc!” Hissing, she squeezed her thighs together.

“Quiet, Jane.” He pushed his fingers in, playing with the ice. “I know you fantasize about being touched in public. Among your many fantasies, this is one I crave as well. Now hush, I must work. Then we'll play.”

She felt like such a silly girl for falling more in love with him. Only Luc could be crude and cold as ice, and still make her feel like she was everything.

Holding in her moan, she spread her legs as much as possible, peeking at him through her lashes as he used his free hand to open the portfolio in front of him.

The chair beside her was pulled out, and she struggled not to whimper when Damon sat in it.

His wicked eyes gleamed as he winked at her and got comfortable. “Shall I share this with your men?”

She realized he'd pulled out his phone—that he was offering to record what Luc was doing to her. Her breath hitched as Luc did a slow, deep caress while writing, not looking her way. That didn't mean he wasn't aware of what Damon was proposing.

“Won't your girlfriend mind?” she asked, her legs trembling.

“Maybe,” Damon answered. “But I live with her spanking men, sometimes women, and them licking her cunt when she wants. Some even fuck her. She'll deal with me serving my king and queen.”

“I insist you do all that you wish, Jane,” Luc said, barely glancing at her with those gorgeous gray eyes of his. “Ryder and David will likely have words with me ... and King, but that is not your concern. Now embrace your kinks.” He gestured toward the stage and spoke louder to whoever was there. “Begin.”

The first woman was unchained and brought forward as another man dressed in a black suit began speaking to the crowd.

“Many thanks to our king for presiding over tonight’s auction,” the man said. “And I am honored to announce that our king’s queen has joined us this evening.” The crowd looked her way, curious and awed. “Welcome, lovely queen, and congratulations to you and our king on the news I was given permission to share: The King and his queen are expecting.”

Every person in the room stood, clapping.

Luc didn’t remove the hand between her legs, but he smiled, nodding to the man on the stage and the others before leaning over and kissing her, which resulted in more cheers. Yet he only had his attention on her. “Smile for me, Jane.”

She did. She gave him the smile she kept only for him, her heart shining as brightly as he claimed she did. He was publicly accepting their child as his.

“Beautiful,” he murmured before kissing her once more. Then he turned to the man on the podium. “Proceed.”

The man bowed, gesturing to the chained woman as he spoke. Jane couldn’t hear a word, though. All she could do was sigh as Luc began writing on the papers in front of him as

bids started. She fought a moan as he pushed his fingers inside her.

Gasping, she nodded to Damon. "Record us."

"Live?" After recording her face, he attached his phone to a selfie stick and slid it over her thigh to film between her legs.

Luc pushed in deep, then pulled almost out, spreading her. "Live," he murmured to Damon, continuing to write about the auctions.

"Good. They've been watching since you kissed her." Damon chuckled, peeking at the screen and adjusting it without touching her. She trusted Damon like he was one of her men, yet knowing he could see turned her on more. Even more so when she spied Ryder and David on the live stream, grinning their sexy asses off.

"Luc," she breathed, clutching his wrist.

Damon popped an AirPods in her ear, and she could hear David and Ryder talking.

"I'm beating Damon's ass for this," Ryder was saying to him.

"No, you're not," David replied. "We already talked to him, and she's letting him do it."

Ryder grunted and ran a hand through his sweaty hair. "His hand better not be on her."

"She can hear you," came Damon's amused voice. He had the other AirPods in his ear.

Ryder locked eyes with her. "Is Damon touching, babe?"

She couldn't speak, but she whimpered and shook her head.

“Let her enjoy it,” David said calmly, watching in that way of his that made her moan and wish he’d touch her. “Hi, baby.”

Releasing a soft moan, she nodded back. “Hi.”

“You look beautiful.”

Ryder scowled, tugging his hair as he watched what Luc was doing to her. Then he darted his attention to her face. “Babe, when you get home, we’re buying this same dress in my color.” He licked his lips, the wild inferno in his gaze simmering as he seemed to calm down about Damon. “Mm. I could watch you all night, but I’m gonna disconnect, angel. Have fun with Luc. Don’t let Damon touch you.”

“Unless you want him to,” David said, smirking at Ryder’s growl. Her stepbrother knew her well. He winked. “Don’t worry—your King Daddy will get over himself after a few fights.”

“Fuck you,” Ryder drawled, releasing his hair but staring intently at his phone. “Fuck. Hurry home, Jane. But have fun.” He smiled at last. “I’d jack off for you, but Sin’ll pass out if he sees my dick.”

She gasped when she tried to laugh. They were taking up Luc’s time with her, but he enjoyed showing them how he cared for her.

David and Ryder both chuckled, those sexy laughs that made her core tingle and ache, and she moaned quietly as they watched her near her release.

There was so much happening, from Luc touching her in public, to being aware that anyone could see—to Damon’s thigh brushing hers as he live-streamed her to her other loves, who cooed in her ear to let go—to take what she desired. To look at Luc.

Oh, he was so sexy. His mask threw in that bit of mystery, but she saw her king's faint smirk. Then he looked into her eyes and smiled.

"Fuck, there you go," Ryder praised as she came apart.

"Good girl," Luc praised softly, returning his gaze forward. "Tell them goodnight, Jane. They have things to attend to, as do we."

Still trembling and breathless, she smiled. Luc removed his hand and raised it to her mouth, and she didn't wait for his order. She sucked his fingers.

"Damn," said Ryder, chuckling. "Goodnight, my moon." He disconnected without waiting for her response.

Then David took her in and said, "Don't hold back with Luc. Live out whatever fantasies you want with him tonight."

Nodding, she told him with her eyes how she felt about him.

"I love you too," he said, smiling before disconnecting.

Damon removed the selfie stick and pocketed his phone as though he hadn't just live-streamed her getting fingered.

A cold caress slid over her cheek, and Luc murmured, "Relax now."

More tired than she expected, she nodded but kissed his fingers. Then Damon's AirPods played the music she liked to dance to—she loved film scores.

Luc chuckled lightly when he glanced at her dreamy smile. "Imagine the adoring look you'd give me if I'd simply fucked you online for anyone to see."

“Keep my face shielded, and you’ll likely get your dick sucked for breakfast every morning.”

Damon chuckled while Luc’s lips lifted only slightly.

“Manners, my queen,” he said, holding her hand.

Blissed out, she relaxed into her chair, watching him work for a bit. He was observing bids, and once the final bid was called, he’d wait while the winning bidder handed over a card to the auctioneer, who then presented it to the woman or guy being bid on. After a quick read-through, they’d nod or shake their heads at Luc. He’d then sign the contract and motion for the bidder to take his prize, or if they declined, they’d be permitted an escort off stage. The people weren’t objects he was selling. Those who were bid on were in control—Luc merely offered a place for them to keep that control.

“Sorry,” she said, watching him place their joined hands on the table as he continued to conduct business. He thought she’d fear him or be disgusted. When, really, he was ruling a different side of humanity in his underground kingdom. “I always foolishly forget that I’m in the presence of a king.”

CHAPTER NINE

Luc tossed the cloth he'd used to wipe Jane's thighs into the garbage as he led her away from the live auction. It hadn't been his intention to take her to one when he first considered showing her his other lifestyle, but he had no choice after Tercero's departure. He would not make the mistake he had the year before and step aside for a foolish belief that Jane didn't want and need him as much as she did Ryder and David.

"You look all broody," she said softly. She peered up at him, eyes glazed over from her earlier orgasm.

Such a sensitive creature.

Placing a hand on her lower back and giving her an annoyed glare, he said, "Ryder broods, Jane. I plot."

She laughed and leaned against him. "I see. Am I allowed to know what you're plotting?"

"No," he said, knowing it would piss her off.

As he'd desired, her eyes lit with twin infernos of gold and emerald flames, yet she schooled her features quickly and turned her head forward. "Fine. Be like that." She reached for Damon's arm. His protégé smirked, folding her arm in the crook of his as Jane continued, her nose in the air, "I'll stick

with Damon, then. Maybe we'll plot some kinky shit I can try with Ryder and David and leave you to your private plotting."

"A wonderful idea," Damon encouraged her, grinning wickedly the entire time he led her a bit farther from him.

"Thank you," she said, her nose still in the air, but she peeked at Luc, hurt.

He exhaled and strode after them. She wanted him to chase her and assure her he cared for her. "Really, Jane?" He took her hand, halting her. "I do have a reputation to uphold."

Damon chuckled, taking her other hand and raising it to his lips. "Your king desires to make amends. Excuse me."

She glowered at the dangerous man before darting those fierce eyes up at him. Then she huffed, the stiffness in her posture relaxing. "I'm being a baby again."

"Yes," he said, chuckling at her disappointment. "You are a mess, little queen. Let me plot, if I must, and don't take it personally." He caressed her cheek with the back of his fingers and debated removing her mask, but he left it in place and leaned down to kiss her. *Perfect.*

She sighed, pressing herself closer to him as she sought a deeper kiss.

He obliged, pushing her mouth open to worship her the way she deserved. In front of all who respected him. In front of all who desired him.

Leaning away, he took in her faint smile as the audience watched in awe. Many times he'd called himself a king, but as he watched her smile widen, he realized it was the first time he felt like one. "This way. I want to show you something."

Her eyes sparkled. "Did I dazzle you?"

He led her to where he would offer her a chance to play. “There’s yet to be a moment when I am not dazzled by you, Jane.”

Again, that smile came and lingered on the corner of her mouth. It said more than words could—she felt the same about him. She just had not realized how much he felt for her. *Silly little queen.*

Damon came into view, opening the private door for them to pass through and shutting them inside alone.

Luc released her, watching as she took in the room. She glanced at the cage bed at the center of the room. He had replaced everything he’d used on his subs nearly a year ago, but he knew she must be wondering how many women he’d fucked there—how many had been caged.

Her eyes trailed over the bondage hooks and cages below, then drifted toward the toys and restraints. He watched her fingers twitch as she passed the bondage tape and smiled; he’d been right.

“Some of those look painful,” she murmured, continuing past his toys to inspect the custom sawhorse, the bondage star, the stock, and the punishment chair. Finally, the gun machine. “And new.”

“I knew you would desire to see my space as I had had it before. Though you are correct, these are new.”

“Why?” She turned and faced him.

He tilted his head, observing her. She did not wilt in a place where he’d taken women. Her shoulders were drawn back, her eyes bright, just as he’d hoped. “I am showing you my truths. That means you will know what I have done to

others. Out of respect for you, I had everything made in time for your visit.”

“Do you want to cage me? Or whip me?”

“Not at all.”

A mean smile that made his spine tingle danced over her lips. “I’m not good enough for your cages and whips?”

He crossed the room until he stood before her, then gripped her chin. “There are women and men who enjoy being controlled, being punished. They enjoy surrendering their will—to let another make their choices. And some crave pain. While I feel you would occasionally like me to take the burden from you, I would never see you caged—certainly never whipped.” He smiled and trailed his finger down her neck. “Bound, however ...”

Her pupils dilated, and her pulse raced under his finger. “How?”

“How do I know? Or how should I bind you?”

“How do you know?”

Smiling, he leaned forward and kissed the corner of her mouth. “I see it in your eyes, Jane. I’ve always seen it.” When her mouth sought his, he leaned away and took her by the wrist to lead her to the glass wall that overlooked the dungeon below.

He barely glanced at the fucking and torturing happening amongst the savage. Instead, he watched her, how her lips parted in surprise as she took in everything. There was a mindless orgy in one corner, another filled with masochists and sadists as they bled and drank in their twisted fantasies. The forced whores and the men ready to gangbang them were visible too, and Jane watched it all. She even gasped in delight

when she spotted the demonic costumes his monitors and DJ wore.

“I love the demons,” she whispered, touching the glass.

“Dungeon monitors.” He moved some of her hair aside and kissed the nape of her neck. “We have themes, and they adjust their attire to match.”

He wrapped an arm around her waist and twirled a lock of her hair with his free hand.

“They like to be forced?”

He knew she was talking about the scene at the center of the room. Each night a group had a chance for center stage. Consensual non-consent had all the attention tonight. “Yes,” he said, holding her tighter as her breathing quickened. “It’s their fantasy. Similar to the fantasy you once imagined when you watched us from your bedroom window.”

She sucked in a breath and tried to shake her head, but he hushed and held her still.

“Yes, Jane.” Trailing his nose along her neck, he grinned and nipped her ear. “Don’t you remember? You told me so.”

“I’ve never said that!” She tried to jerk away from him, but he gripped her wrists and fastened them with bondage tape he’d snatched while she wasn’t looking. The rip of tape echoed through the room, and she reacted as she had since her abduction, cringing and shaking.

“Don’t,” he warned when she raised her foot to slam on his shoe. “Trust me, my flame.” Of course, she didn’t at that moment—he knew she was too panicked even though she stilled for just a moment at the unfamiliar term of endearment. But she soon thrashed and hollered out for help. “Shh ... I

promise you will enjoy this. I will free you of their torment. I swear.”

Her whimpering and struggling were worthy of escape, but he was too strong for her, just as any man of equal strength would be if she faced them. “Why are you doing this?” she cried loudly. “Damon! Damon, help me!”

“This room is soundproofed. And I told you why.” He yanked her arms back, adding the final touch of tape before shoving her against the glass and kicking her legs apart. He pressed his body against hers. “There, there. It’ll be over soon.”

“Get off me,” she roared, giving all she had against him.

He reached around, gripping her throat as he inhaled her scent to keep himself calm. This didn’t arouse him—not yet, at least, but it was necessary to free her. “Don’t you remember standing at your old bedroom window, staring down at my brothers, David, and their team as they initiated the cheerleaders?”

She froze then, and he gripped her harder around the throat to keep her still when she finally moved. She was full of fire and terrified as she spat out, “When I was seventeen, and you snuck into my home? Like a pervert?”

He smiled. “The night I went to check on you because I knew what you’d see from your window.” That had been the one time since they were children that he had reached out to be closer to her—the only time he’d considered revealing his feelings for her.

The initiation of the cheer team into their fold was horrific, but an event they were all aware would come to pass once they became Seniors. If the girls wanted access to team parties,

they had to pass initiation and establish a hierarchy amongst themselves and the players. The tradition was that they were abducted from their homes by the varsity football team, bound and gagged, then forced to participate in a pool fight against the previous year's cheerleaders.

It led to girls getting down to their bras, panties, and wet t-shirts, as they used floaties to attack their abductors and the graduated cheer squad.

There were kisses, blowjobs, and even fucking as the winning girls got to claim a player as their prize. Luc knew Ryder and David would be the ultimate prizes that year. She'd known it too.

Nuzzling Jane, he squeezed her wrist and said, "Don't you remember how you trembled when you watched David and Ryder get chosen by the winners? How you wished aloud that it was your mouth they were taping shut ... your arms being yanked behind your back?"

She shook her head vigorously, but her eyes fell to the Forced scene below.

"Don't lie, Jane." He pulled her away from the window enough for her to peer up at him. It allowed him to take in her flushed cheeks and glassy, uncertain eyes. "You wanted David to snatch you from your bed the same way the players took the others—you'd heard the rumors for years and craved to be the one David stole. Even if being forced disgusted you, and you knew it was wrong, you wanted to be thrown over his shoulder and taken from your home. You wanted to be restrained by Ryder—wanted his hands on your body so you could finally see how his darker skin contrasted with your lovely pale complexion.

“And you wanted Archer to help David strip you down to your bra and panties, all while the team watched you become their plaything. While they forced you to do what you’d seen done to the girls at our parties. You wanted the horror of having no control over what happened, as long as it was them.”

“I’d never want to be forced,” she seethed with almost convincing venom.

Luc smirked, lifting a finger to caress her jaw. “Liar.”

Her breath hitched as the rising of her chest hastened. “But it’s wrong. What happened to me ... I can’t. Ryder and David ... they’ll be disgusted. Everyone who said I wanted him to ... to rape me ... they’ll be proven right.”

There it is, he thought with a smile. “What happened with Dylan Berith was wrong, Jane.” She flinched at the name of her tormentor. She had no idea the bastard had a price on his head—one Luc had put there. “Never again will you be taken by a man you do not desire to be taken by. As for Ryder and David ... well, they are not here.”

She blinked. “But ...”

He interrupted her. “What have I spent so much time trying to get you to understand?”

“That I’m your queen?”

“Our queen, Jane.” Turning and shoving her back against the glass, he grinned at how she held back her moan. “A queen knows she is loved unconditionally by her men, and her men understand that one of the best reasons for our queen to have more than one love is that we each sate her different needs and desires.”

He held her by her throat firmly but not choking her—though he was curious, there would be no breath play while she was with child—and went on, staying mindful of his hold. “They know you. They know what you wanted then and that you’re afraid to ask for it now.”

Her voice trembled as she said, “But I feel disgusting for wanting it now. Something’s wrong with me.”

He knew she thought this way. She’d fantasized about being chosen in a foolish, dangerous game when she had no hopes of ever being with the boy she loved. She’d likely dreamed of it often, interchanging each of them in David’s place because even then, she’d looked his way—looked at all of them—with longing. She just had society’s expectations weighing her down to even look up and see the rest of them. But her soul knew, and he was sure they’d always appeared in her fantasies alongside David.

So he told her the truth. “Ryder knows you so well, Jane. He’ll give you anything, just as the rest of us will. But he cannot bring himself to scare you so. He must cope with what he knows you suffered before exploring his darker fantasies with you.” Then, smiling and tightening his hold on her, he added, “David wanted to take you from your home that night. He fantasized you were among the girls competing for the winning title and that he would be your prize. Well, his prize since the winner merely got to choose her final captor.”

“How do you know?” Her pupils dilated as she trembled with a mixture of fear and intrigue. “You were in my room that night. You kept me from watching what happened.”

“Of course I did.” He slid his thumb along the vein visible beneath her skin and smiled. “You would not have been able to handle watching. Though I did not know Ryder would tell the

cheerleaders to fuck off before tossing them into the pool and leaving. I did not know that David had stared up at your window. That had he seen you, he would've slipped and revealed his feelings because he would have gone and taken you the exact way you envisioned."

Her eyes widened, and she shook her head. "I heard all about the guys having fun with the girls in the locker rooms for days. You're lying."

Oh, she was such a silly girl at times. "Do you forget that some girls are liars, Jane?" He chuckled when she swallowed and her eyes watered. "Archer had to remind David that he was staring at his *sister's* window and that Diane was waiting. And no one would dare admit that Ryder Godson threw them into the pool instead of letting them suck his dick, which is what she'd begged for before he taped her mouth shut and told her he couldn't stand her voice and would never let her lips touch his skin. How embarrassing it must've been for the girl to have Ryder Godson turn down a blowjob."

She gasped but was forced to quit when he squeezed her neck. Still, she managed to whisper, "That can't be true. I know I was his first kiss, and we gave our virginity to each other, but surely he'd done something."

"He didn't—that is the truth. Now tell me, do you remember your desires that afternoon? How you'd been so ready to be their victim?" He pressed her back against the glass, knowing it was painful and that his hold on her must've startled her when she flinched. Yet she tried to stay calm. The others would have to convince her of their thoughts that night. So he changed his question. "Do you remember my Senior year's initiation—when you watched from your window?"

She gave the subtlest of nods as her breath hitched. She was nervous, but he saw her mind racing, recalling the night he spoke of. Her fear seemed to shift to curiosity as she bit her lip and tried to peek at him.

“I wanted to steal the sweet girl David Leodegrance was giving up,” he said tenderly. He needed her to see the difference between what they would do and her fantasies and how her abduction had tainted her curiosities. It was easy for people to confuse forced play with rape. He’d not make that mistake with the woman who owned his heart. He could show her how to indulge in her fantasies and separate them from the awful things that had happened to her. “I wanted to take what my foolish little brother was letting slip through his fingers because he’d become a villain to her. But you were so lost that night. When I looked up, when your eyes met mine under the fading moon, I knew I could steal you from all of them.”

She held her breath though every muscle in her body locked up.

“I saw how easy it would be to win your heart if I gave you all my attention. To make you the girl finally chosen as she should have been years before.”

“Why didn’t you?”

At last, he smiled and held his wrist in front of her. Even if she thought the writing had nothing to do with her, she often touched the star and crescent-shaped scar he’d inked with the moon and morning star. “Because of this.”

Her beautiful hazel eyes focused on the scar, the tattooed symbols of them, and the words written in Hebrew. “I’ve guessed the moon and star are us, but I don’t know what it says.”

“Do you remember the morning I caught you on your porch with the red jar with a lit candle inside? You were around seven, I think. I was just ten. You must’ve used the candle to sneak around in the dark, but then I saw you smile at the flame. When you reached inside, I—”

She cut him off. “—shoved your hand inside to stop it from burning me. You were burned in my place.”

He cradled her cheeks. “We were burned together, Jane. I merely blocked some of the fire from destroying your soft skin.” When her eyes watered, he leaned down and pressed his lips to hers. He let her feel his heat, the fire she’d ignited inside him when he saw her with that flame that wanted to destroy hers.

Moving his mouth to her ear, he murmured, “It’s written in Hebrew and Babylonian so that few will know its meaning: *We will burn together*. The moon and her morning star that you had come out to see that early hour.”

Her breath skittered out, and she sagged against him, nodding. “I remember. I cried that you burned me, and you said, ‘Yes, silly girl, we got burned together.’”

“Then you know why I let you watch me with those girls. I stared at your window as the glow from a candle danced over your face. You hid in the dark, but I saw you—how you knew this would happen in three years and that David would never take you now that he was your stepbrother-to-be.

“I could not become the Sun or the Earth for you. So I watched you light yourself on fire with grief and decided to burn with you. I stayed in the dark, burning alongside my silly little moon as she prepared to mourn the loss of her universe. But tonight, my flame—my beautiful queen—tonight I will

swallow the darkened flames that cling to your soul until your flame returns.”

She peered up at him, crying. It was how he'd longed to see her—with every emotion free as the dull shades of green and golden brown suddenly roared to life in her eyes.

Kissing her tears and licking them from his lips, he gave her the information she would need. “Your safe word is *Death*. That is a full stop. I will immediately end the scene and comfort you to bring you back to Earth and the present. If you need me to slow down, *Breath* is your warning word. *Hell* is your ‘keep going’ word should you require more of something I have given.”

“Why Death?” she asked, relaxed as she uttered the word.

“Death is peace and the end. And you know who was depicted as the angel outside. You have grown to trust that he will always come and stop everything—end the world—all for you. So Death is your safe place.” He watched a serene smile tug at her lips. She knew he'd chosen to make his brother her safe place, though none but her would ever find such comfort in his arms.

“And what we do,” she said softly, “it's okay? I won't be wrong to want the things you might do?”

“It's a scene, yes. Everything we do there is consented to, which I will get from you shortly. If you disagree, you may say so, and we will return to the hotel. If you consent and decide it's not what you want, scream for Death, and I will end the scene. Damon will step in and get you to Ryder if you continue to scream it. Should that happen, you may decide later to try again. I'll add that while this will be rough, I will be careful with your cunt and ass. You took a lot yesterday.”

He grinned at her flushed cheeks. “I promise to destroy them some other night, if you like.”

“Definitely, my king,” she breathed, though she was tensing again, the fight or flight urges building because she felt the atmosphere shifting around them as he slowly pulled forward the devil she needed to face.

“Be mindful of your safe words now. I suspect you have many kinks, and I will test some I am curious about during this session.”

“Do I really have kinks?”

“Several, Jane. You tend to let Ryder and David play with you most. After all, Ryder succeeded in breeding you, and you never told him you shared that kink.” He smiled at her shocked expression. “David is very primal with you. He’s animalistic, hunting you like a deadly predator, and you enjoy it like good little prey. I would also say he’s a Pleasure Dom in the making, as he likes to bring you to climax as many times as possible. Breeding is also something you desire with him, and he you.

“But we are here to focus on your desire to be forced. Do I have your consent? I will also add that I plan to involve others in our scene.”

Her head jerked to the side. “No. No others. I’m not cheating, even if you think it’s okay.”

“Not to fuck you, Jane. I promise they will not penetrate you with any part of their bodies. You should also know while Ryder would kill any who do what I plan for them to, he knows you’re here—knows that anything goes within Dungeon, and he and David are entirely fine with you indulging yourself under my supervision.”

She bit her lip, curiosity lighting up her eyes. “You’d be there to stop them from going too far? I don’t want to have sex with anyone but you.”

“They will follow my instructions. They are my most trusted caregivers. I promise, no penetration with their bodies. Now do you consent?” Perhaps she’d like to know they were not aroused easily—it would help her feel less afraid, but he would wait to see their reaction to her. His men had only seen photos of Jane and none had commented on if they found her attractive, only that they agreed to participate as caregivers and players in the scene.

Her eyes darted around the room as her flight instincts rose, but determination took over, and she nodded. “Yes, Luc, I consent. Just no penetration from anyone else. And only if you swear Ryder and David are okay.”

“Good girl.” He wrapped a hand around her throat, then nodded to the camera. The locks of the secret passages sounded in the darkness, and she tensed. “And they are. Now, remember your safe words. Screaming *no* and *stop* will only result in more of the scene. This will not be like the Senior Ceremony. No prince will call you his at the night’s end. This is Hell, my darling.”

Fear raced over her face when the Fallen, as they were called, flanked him. They were dressed for tonight’s theme, wearing horns, and had black, red, and gray paint splatters across their bodies.

“My king?” one of them rumbled behind him. He recognized the gravelly tone belonging to Four, the spokesman of this trio of Fallen. Jane, under normal circumstances, would likely be intrigued by each of them. Mute would fascinate her with his fangs, jagged scar, and ghostly pale eye that had

miraculously been saved. She'd blush at Alpha's absolute power and black eyes against his dark brown skin. There was no mistaking his Indigenous features, and Jane being mixed herself—would adore the chance to bond with him. She would gasp at Four's beauty—his hazel eyes that burned as chaotically as the fires she sometimes struggled to contain in hers. So while his queen would not have his brothers and David this night, she would have the best he could offer.

Luc caressed her throat, his fingertips gliding over the satin necklace, and let the mask of coldness he lived and breathed without her slip into place. It was time for Jane to have her fantasy of being taken by force—and to regain control over the poison Dylan Berith and his sick friends had bled into her sweet soul.

He leaned down to her, kissing the corner of her mouth. Then, breathing in her sweet scent, he whispered, "Take her."

CHAPTER TEN

Jane only had a second to savor his chilled lips on her skin. Then he spoke, his tone as cold as the ice dread encasing her soul. *Take her.*

It felt like Luc was no longer there. He was in her line of sight, just inches away and still holding her, yes, but the silver eyes narrowed at her as if a new person had taken over him. A man who needed to see her suffer. Not the king who'd shown her off all night and had behaved more tenderly with her than she was used to. Not the dark ruler of this underground kingdom who had laid claim to her and their child.

Her eyes shifted between the three men who'd entered. They looked like the dungeon monitors with their demon getup, but instead of the controlled smiles she'd seen on those men observing the sex party, the trio wore sadistic grins that had her heart screaming with terror.

"No," she shouted at the top of her lungs as the other two yanked her partially bound form from Luc. She forgot it wasn't real—that Luc had set it up to fulfill her fantasy and free her, and she resisted, digging her feet into the floor until she felt the heels snap and both shoes slip from her feet.

The first man with beautiful hazel eyes gripped her jaw tightly and spoke in a gravelly voice that sent goosebumps

along her skin. “Scream all you want, little girl. Get that pretty throat of yours nice and hoarse.” Then he yanked her choker off and tossed it behind him.

Her stomach dropped, and she screamed until it hurt. She screamed so loud she didn't hear the timid voice in her mind as it told her to remember something.

Luc came into view, but he didn't look at her. He bent to pick up the necklace he'd given her.

“Luc, help,” she croaked, watching as he put the necklace in a pocket and removed his suit jacket before rolling his sleeves.

Again, that coldness stared back at her. He even had the audacity to smirk when the man with fangs and a jagged scar over his pale eye fisted her hair and yanked her toward a table.

Lightning pain shot through her scalp, and she kicked her legs. It was the only way she could defend herself since her arms were bound behind her back. Her foot connected with the third man, the largest of them.

His high cheekbones, taut, darker skin, and long black hair that he had shaved on one side would have had her blushing. But she didn't blush—didn't marvel at his gorgeousness.

He growled and gripped her calf to keep her from kicking him again. “Fight all you want. We like it when our prey thinks she can get away.” He glanced over at Luc. When he nodded, the man and the first one ripped at her dress.

“Luc,” she screamed, tears streaming as she fought harder. She didn't have a bra on and only wore the skimpiest thong.

But he was no longer her savior. He watched them cut the thong and shredded dress off with knives before they carried

her to the metal table where the toys were without an ounce of love in his eyes.

The scarred one made a low, whining noise that she barely heard through her gasps and thundering heartbeat in her ears. He swiped at the table that held all the toys, knocking them to the floor, then held up more tape.

Once again, the instinct to fight overcame her. She would not be taken again.

“Bastards,” she raged as her mask slipped off. The harsh lights above her head burned her already tear-stung eyes, but she knew there was no escape.

And so, with a suddenness that left her sobbing, her fight was stolen. They were too strong, and Luc was not the same.

Death, she thought. Death would save her from all of this. It wasn't real. She could scream Death's name, and it would all end.

She would never know if her fantasy would bring her to life or if it made her a disgusting person for wanting such a thing. But to end the fear... the way her heart beat so fast it hurt to breathe, hurt to think. It would all end.

“Don't,” the big one said, covering her mouth just when she opened it to scream. His long, rough fingers dug into her cheeks and jaw as he loomed over her. He narrowed those dark, bottomless eyes on her face as the scarred one stroked her hair. “You need this.”

The icy air in her lungs tried to rush out, but his hand pressed tightly against her mouth wouldn't let it escape.

He growled, leaning closer. “Scream if you want, but don't you fucking dare say his name. Not yet.”

The first one with hazel eyes slid a hand over her abdomen. “Alpha,” —he nodded at the man holding his hand over her mouth— “Mute,”—he glanced at the quiet, scarred one who yanked her legs apart and began wrapping her ankles in the weird tape Luc must’ve used— “and I, *Four*, own you right now. He can’t save you. So keep his name off your tongue.”

Tears slipped into her hair as she breathed quickly in and out of her nose. They terrified her, yet she realized this was a reminder. They knew she’d scream for Death and end it all. Her bad boy was a monster, but he could not be this.

Luc approached, his mask still in place as he tilted his head. “Have something to say, *Sweet Jane*?”

Her eyes burned at the precise enunciation of her pet name — Ryder’s pet name for her—daring her to give up.

Alpha moved his hand enough that, should she wish to, she could scream for Death. She could bury her desires and keep thinking badly of herself for wanting something so crude and horrible. Or she could stay quiet ... let them force her into whatever darkness they had planned.

“That’s a good girl,” Luc murmured when she shook her head. “Secure her and cover her eyes.”

Her pulse roared in her ears, and despite reminding herself that it wasn’t real—that it was a scene—she tried to fight again, kicking out when Mute reached for her other leg. She felt so embarrassed and angry for being exposed. Her body hadn’t started changing much, but she only felt beautiful to her guys.

Still, a twist formed in her gut at the way they kept looking at her. She didn’t want to admit it, but some wicked part of her

liked that they could see her.

Four grinned at her, his hazel eyes swirling with fire as he stroked her cheek. “No, she’s got such pretty eyes. I want to stare into them when she screams.”

“When she comes,” Alpha growled, forcefully pushing her face to the side. He leaned down, running his nose along her skin, then spoke against the column of her neck, “Do we have permission to taste her? She smells delicious.”

Oh. My. God.

Luc didn’t react the way she expected. He was relaxed, always wearing that calculating look, as he moved around the table, testing Mute’s ties. Slowly, so slowly, his gaze drifted up to her face and stayed there as he neared Alpha. She hated herself for suddenly not being disgusted or terrified by their comments. These were not her men, and she had already told him she didn’t want to cheat, but her stupid body still reacted to Alpha’s, Four’s, and Mute’s closeness, almost a sizzling, electric sensation that lazily slid across her skin.

A fifth person, unseen, but she would know his sex voice anywhere, spoke up. “Put your tongues or mouths on or penetrate her, and it’ll be the last thing you do.” Damon strolled closer, out of a dark corner like a ghost, his dragon mask still in place as a dangerous smile appeared on his face.

Four smiled as Alpha growled and moved aside, but the hazel-eyed demon threw in, “She looks worth being the last thing we taste ... definitely the last thing we penetrate.”

Mute nodded, pulling her hair, and it felt so good. She immediately remembered Damon Facetiming her guys and felt so conflicted about being turned on.

Luc motioned at Damon. “You have your orders. Interfere again, and it’ll be the last thing *you* do.”

She needed the reminder that Luc had given her ultimate control. All she had to do was ask for it back.

A throaty laugh left Damon’s mouth, but he still reached out and caressed her jaw with his fingers. “I’ll interfere if she asks me to.”

Shit. That sounded like more than coming to her rescue.

“Leave her eyes uncovered,” Luc said, gaze narrowing on Damon as he smacked his friend’s hand away from her. “Four, Alpha, Mute, pick a toy—it’s time to play with my little queen. And yes, you may do whatever you wish to her with those toys.”

They grinned excitedly, but the darkness of their smiles had her shaking. They were not her men. Damon was not her boyfriend. Yet they were all staring at her bound naked body. Their hunger for a bite, for a lick, for a hard fuck—it was there in the way they drew their lips into their mouths and growled.

Damon dragged his gaze down her body, and she moaned—not allowing herself to wonder why.

“Maybe next time if the King Reaper and Prince say so.” He winked and turned his back on her, slipping back into the shadows.

Oh, fuck, why was she so turned on? Why was she terrified and so completely ready to be tortured and fucked?

The distinct hum of a vibrator sounded. Then another. And another.

They surrounded her with different types and sizes of sex toys in hand. Her breathing quickened, and she tried to pull her

legs together when their gazes settled between her thighs. She didn't know what to think or do. Fear still shot down her spine, keeping her muscles locked and her heart racing just a beat shy of a panic attack. But there was an unmistakable swirl of anticipation in her tummy.

It was wrong. She shouldn't want it. Only Luc, Ryder, David, and Ter ...

Agonizing loss shot through her heart, and tears welled in her eyes.

Mute noticed first and snapped his teeth in what seemed like disapproval, then roughly squeezed her thigh and pressed the head of the vibrator in his hands to her clit. She screamed, making Four groan. Alpha practically purred while Luc merely watched.

"Oh God," she cried, terrified, humiliated. And so fucking aroused as each male zeroed in on her bucking hips.

"More," Luc murmured, gripping her chin and swiping his thumb over her trembling lips.

Alpha nodded at him and rubbed the vibrator over his crotch as he rested a hand on her other thigh, holding it down painfully as he growled again. Then he smirked at her and pressed it next to her pussy, shoving the other vibrator aside and turning up the speed on his. Mute didn't argue. He switched the one he had for a bullet style and rested it at her entrance, her clenching entrance that suddenly throbbed for more. She wanted him to push it in and hated herself for it.

"It's all right," Luc murmured, still caressing her lips.

Four lowered the vibrator he had to her left breast, circling her nipple but gestured to Mute. "Let him, my king," he rasped, pressing his other hand to her stomach before moving

up to brutally squeeze her breast and pinch her nipple. She cried out, and it only earned moans from them. “Fuck, this little slut wants it.”

Luc pushed Four’s hand away from touching her skin but didn’t touch the vibrator on her breast. He did, however, reach between her legs and move the bullet vibrator in and out—up and down.

It was all wrong. It was awful and sick. It was pushing her to the edge.

“Fuck,” Four said, almost breathless, as he watched her cry and buck. “Scream again. Oh, you sound so fucking perfect.”

Luc smiled, a mesmerizing, devilish smile, and pulled the bullet free, holding it up to Mute. “Take this. Do what you like with it, and bring me a dildo for her. It’s been over a day since she’s had a dick inside her.”

Mute didn’t hesitate to lick the bullet vibrator. Again, those low noises sounded from him, making her tense in delight. And he wasn’t stingy with his taste. He held it up for Four, who dragged his tongue along it with a deep groan. Then Alpha snatched it, licking it clean as his chest rumbled. He nodded like he approved of a good meal and returned his focus to her clit.

“You better come, you little whore,” he snarled, pushing it on her harder as both he and Luc spread her legs at awkward angles, pinning them down, forcing the orgasm to destroy her.

And she came. Hard.

“Fuck,” she moaned, clenching and whining for more. She was still so sore, but she needed to be filled up.

Luc chuckled and raised his coated fingers to her mouth. “Such a sensitive creature she is.”

Jane panted, sucking his fingers as Mute held out a huge dildo. Her eyes widened as Luc nodded to him.

“Get on the table with her,” Luc added, shoving his fingers in her mouth, gagging her as he glanced at his three men. “Seeing that she’s managed to affect each of you, do as you wish but remember my rules.”

She shook, humiliation coating her skin as they excitedly grinned and palmed their erections through what she realized were merely boxer briefs. And she absolutely loved it.

Luc pulled his fingers free, smiling as she coughed and gasped. “It’s quite hard to arouse the Fallen.”

“No,” she whispered as Mute crawled on top of her, freeing his throbbing erection as he held out the dildo to Alpha to lube up. “Luc, no.”

He shoved his fingers back in her mouth. “My rules will stand. And you know what to do if you want it to stop.” He watched her gag around his fingers, then slowly removed them. She felt calloused fingers slide down her slit before the fat head of a cock pushed at her entrance.

“Luc!” She shook her head, then froze when she realized Mute was fisting his dick but preparing to stick the dildo inside her. It wasn’t real.

Alpha fisted her hair and leaned down, murmuring in rough tones that had her rolling her eyes back and arching into the dildo Mute teased her with. “We don’t fuck our charges, little whore.”

Luc’s cold hand was unmistakable at her pussy. He was massaging, muttering things to Mute as they played with her.

Four smiled down at her. While he was beautiful, she felt he was the most threatening. “I want to paint you with my

cum. I bet you'd look so pretty. Wouldn't she, Alpha?"

Jane could hardly keep her eyes open. There were too many sensations. Too many feelings of shame and desire.

"She'd look pretty with our cocks stretching out her pink pussy," Alpha amended.

Four nodded, his manic smile stretching wider as he palmed himself again, then put the vibrator back on her breasts.

She couldn't fight it anymore. She moaned and tried to lift her pelvis for the dildo. "Please."

Alpha groaned at her begging and nuzzled her neck. His heavy breaths were rhythmic, and she realized he was masturbating while he breathed on her.

Luc hummed, then she felt the head being worked in. It was as big as Ryder's, and she almost thought it was so similar to her bad boy's dick that he had been used as its model. Mute's thighs brushed against hers, and he leaned over with Luc's instruction, fisting his dick as he and Luc worked the dildo in as deep as she could take it.

"Fuck," she groaned, closing her eyes as Alpha breathed faster in her ear, tugging her hair, then she felt Mute thrusting. He was causing the dildo to move and fucking his hand over her cunt, using his knuckles to hit her clit. And Luc was right there, monitoring and holding the position as his Fallen imitated fucking her.

Her thoughts became a thunderstorm of sensations. All she could do was cry out in ecstasy as Alpha whispered disgusting words in her ear.

"Little fucking tasty whore," he growled. "I'm going to devour you. I don't care."

Four laughed and moved around to Alpha's side, maneuvering himself between Alpha and her and leaning over the table partially. Then Alpha growled and thrust into his ass, fucking him roughly. Four grinned and hovered his face over hers, breathing in her cries as his groans fell into her mouth.

Her eyes were surely going to pop out of her damn head. This was not happening. Yet with the table jerking as Mute rutted against her and Alpha slammed into Four, she knew it was.

Luc's cold hands slid up her stomach, over her breasts where they squeezed. "What have you done to them?"

Four groaned as Alpha growled and slammed into him faster. She couldn't believe any of it. He was matching Mute's frantic pace between her stretched legs. She screamed, earning more moans from the group.

"The dark," Four grated, gripping her jaw and staring into her eyes as he struggled not to fall on her. "She makes the dark glow."

"Ah," Luc said, moving Four's head from hovering over her. It only led to Four turning to where Mute was.

And holy fuck, Four opened his mouth for Mute's dick to dart in.

Alpha roared, fucking Four harder. "Keep watching, little whore. Fuck, keep watching."

Luc chuckled and leaned down, brushing a featherlight kiss over her mouth. "I'm never letting you go, Jane. This is no longer his."

Tears spilled into her hair, and she sobbed. But she couldn't bathe in the meaning behind his words.

Four cried out, and she gasped when he came on the table and her leg. But Alpha was done with him. He pulled out and shoved Mute into Four's arms, who immediately dropped to his knees to continue sucking Mute off.

A section of the table under her ass folded downward without warning. Her legs were cut free before she was turned onto her belly. It hurt, but it was better than lying on her arms. Luc said nothing of her cries of pain. In fact, he seemed to relish in it, pressing her face down onto the table harder as Alpha lined himself up behind her.

"No." She knew to scream for Death, but she held onto the whisper that it wasn't what it seemed. Luc was taking care of her, letting her reclaim her desires because she'd never be able to ask Ryder or David to treat her this way. Not until she embraced her demons.

"It's fine," Luc promised. His hold didn't ease, but she felt his hand alongside Alpha's on her ass, then a fat cock pressing against her ass. "Beg for it."

Shame washed through her because she immediately wanted to. But she stayed quiet, shaking her head.

Alpha laughed, his muscular thighs brushing against the backs of her legs. "Too bad."

A scream tore out her throat as he entered her. It hurt so much that she almost didn't register the feel of his cock rubbing between her pussy and his hand.

He wasn't in her—it was the dildo—but his dick was dangerously close to sliding in to take her by force. He was keeping his thumb over her entrance.

She couldn't help herself and cried, "More."

Luc chuckled, and she felt her hands cut free. She tried to move them, to do the right thing and get away, but she had no strength. Her arms had gone numb. All she could do was lay there, her body jolting with every slam of Alpha's body against her.

She was dripping wet and cried when Alpha mixed her lubrication with his because she liked it.

Unable to fight, she was helpless as Luc yanked her head to the edge of the table and shoved his dick into her mouth.

“Fuck,” Four groaned, resting his head on the small of her back. But, no, he wasn't just resting. His body jolted like hers. Mute was fucking him, and he was using her to brace himself.

Jane choked. She cried. She hated herself.

She fucking loved every thrust and groan.

Because the impossible was happening. Dylan Berith wasn't in her thoughts. She didn't see the scary woods as the moon teased her with its glow that horrible night. She didn't see the others who had watched and held her down—the horror on her cousin's face when he watched her in a similar position and the monster about to rape her.

She saw the possibilities of what she could embrace with her men. With herself. With these men who could scare her until she was ready for them.

“Oh, you're such a good little whore,” Alpha rasped, his hard dick roughly dragging between her pussy and his hand. “I'm going to come all over this pretty ass.”

Sparkles blinded her, and she moaned around Luc's thick cock as spit and precum spilled from the sides of her mouth and onto the table.

Her body was broken, yet she couldn't stop coming. She wanted to die from it.

She pried her eyes open, locking them on Damon. He stood in the dark, but she saw his shape, saw the glow of a phone screen as he recorded what was happening to her.

Panic. Shame. Fear.

She suddenly saw Ryder's fury. David's anguish. Tercero's disappointment and disgust. And Archer ...

She ripped her mouth away with all her strength, crying, "Death!"

Luc pulled away. So did Alpha with a roar, though she felt the splatter of his cum. It was hot and heavy as it spurted onto her ass, but he stopped. Every one of them stopped touching her as she cried. "I'm sorry. Death. Please."

Luc fixed his pants in place as he rolled her onto her back and lifted her into his arms. "Shh ... It's over."

She reached up weakly, wrapping her arms around him as Four draped a blanket over her. "What have I done?"

Damon approached, handing Luc a wet cloth and motioning for the others to give them space.

"She's strong. Give her a moment," Luc said, nuzzling her as he carried her to the bed. "It's all right, my flame. I'm here."

She buried her face in the sheets, so ashamed of herself. She didn't know which part she was mad at most. But she'd just betrayed her men.

"Babe," Ryder's voice was clear as day. "Look at me." He sounded furious, but all his love was there as he growled. "Jane, fucking look at me!"

She peeked, whining at the phone Damon held. She knew Luc was pissed, but she couldn't look away from Ryder. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Oh God, don't leave me. What have I done?" She sobbed harder. "What did I do?"

He shook his head, running his hand through sweaty hair. "We told you to embrace whatever fantasies you had. Luc promised to take care of you. I know he took care of you. It's your mind, baby. You didn't betray me. I know what Luc was considering and why he did it. I'm not mad. I know he used Fallen. I know it probably went wilder than any of you planned."

She blubbered, clutching Luc. "I'm sorry."

Luc's body relaxed beside hers. "She'll be fine," he told Ryder.

Ryder glared at his brother but smiled when he focused on her. "I'm not mad, angel. I knew what was possible. I knew you'd think of me and why you need this. So does David. We can't do what Luc can. I can't do what his Fallen did for you yet. It's okay. I'll always be here. I'll always love you."

He was the absolute best. "I love you."

He gave her that divine smile. "And I love you. Longer than always, okay?"

"Okay," she said, accepting Luc's efforts to soothe her. He wiped under her eyes and around her mouth. She could see the awfulness of how she looked and knew Ryder was taking it all in. But she felt peace. He'd come. She'd called for him, and he'd come.

"He took it back," she blurted out as everything clicked in her mind.

Ryder frowned, glancing at his brother and then at her. “Who, baby?”

“Luc took it from the monster.”

Ryder’s eyes almost looked glassy, but she knew it must be her tears tricking her. “That’s good. He’ll hold him. I promise.”

She felt Luc’s stare but couldn’t look at him yet because she immediately wondered if her monster could hurt him too.

“I’ll see you soon,” Ryder murmured. “Damon will bring you home if it gets too bad because Luc has some work to do. But let my brother be there. I promise all of it is okay.” He glanced at Luc. “Call me if she doesn’t recover... . And thank you, brother.”

Luc didn’t say anything, but she felt him nod as he continued cleaning her, caressing her in a way that mirrored David’s and Ryder’s massages.

“There you go,” Ryder cooed. “You’re okay. We’re okay. I’ll fucking kill them if they crossed the line, but I know Luc wouldn’t allow that.”

“But,” she started to say—to tell him she liked it—but he cut her off.

“You liked it,” he said calmly, though his eyes burned with bright green flames. “You liked it, and I get it. You liked the fantasy, baby girl. They’re helping you take your fantasy back. It was the only way Luc could catch your monster, my love.”

Silence stretched between them, and she could only stare at him.

“I’m going to let Luc finish with you. I’ll see you soon.”

She nodded, clinging to Luc again.

“There’s my girl.” Ryder smiled, and she could breathe again. “Good night, my moon.”

“Good night, Death,” she whispered back.

“The one and only, babe.” With those words leaving his mouth, he winked and ended the call.

The low noise she realized must be the only sound Mute made came from behind her. She felt bad. She hadn’t betrayed Ryder. Her bad boy knew her. He knew and trusted his brother. He knew she had a fantasy that he couldn’t explore with her yet. He trusted these men.

“Does he know you?” she asked Mute.

He tilted his head to the side, then gestured to Four.

“We met the King Reaper weeks ago,” Four answered, his voice still deep, but something had immediately changed. He wasn’t a man set on forcing her. “He threatened us with gruesome deaths—we liked him immediately.”

“Your prince was better,” Alpha added. “He threatened to break every bone in our bodies and keep us death for as long as possible.”

She laughed and hugged Luc as he kept massaging her. He was so careful. So strong as he held her still-shaking frame in his arms. He held her monster inside, and she was afraid to ask him about it.

“You don’t talk?” she asked Mute.

He grinned that time and made another gesture, nodding at Luc.

There was no sign of distress when Luc responded, “He is nonspeaking, yes. He doesn’t want to be examined for it, so I

do not know if it is from his injury, which you can see from the scar on his throat, or if it is his choice not to speak.”

She closed her eyes, realizing they were likely survivors like the women at the auction. Her heart cried, and she felt awful for ruining their moment. “I’m sorry.”

Mute, scary as fuck with his looks but no less handsome, nudged her with his finger. He made another hand gesture, and Luc sighed.

“They would like to stay for a while.” He tilted her face toward his, and she smiled because she saw her king again. “Beautiful.” His kiss was careful but still so incredible that she cried. “So emotional,” he mumbled, tugging her closer as he nodded for the others. “And you don’t have to wonder—I am fine. He won’t touch you again.”

She sniffed, nodding and forcing herself not to fall apart. She wanted to be strong for him if he was going to carry her darkness.

“There’s my queen.” He kissed her again, breathing her in.

They got on the bed, which was huge, and each of them laid a hand on her, massaging her the way Luc was, all while Luc kissed her in a way that reminded her he was her king.

“You should still fuck,” Alpha said, smiling. It transformed his face so much. He was so handsome. “Fill her with your cum and give your blood like you wanted to.”

Luc didn’t argue. He just continued kissing her, murmuring soft words in a language she didn’t understand against her skin as each man took turns wiping the sex off her body.

When Luc cleaned between her legs, she was ready.

“Help me,” she told the Fallen. “I feel weak, but I want to love my king.”

Four was the first to move, lifting her tired body as Alpha removed the rest of her strap while Mute helped Luc undress. It was shocking to see him allowing someone to touch him so intimately.

“Don’t worry,” Four cooed in her ear as he held her against his body. He was still naked. “Your boyfriend helps us satisfy our urges however we like because we struggle around women. We’re usually there to assist him only. We fuck each other because we have a bond, and it feels safe. But we don’t touch him.”

She didn’t know why he shared it with her, but she was glad to hear Luc wasn’t perhaps in love with these men. She understood it was possible, but she would have felt so betrayed if he’d been in love or infatuated or fucking anyone else.

Luc smirked at her as he lay, propped up in the center of the bed like the king as he lazily stroked himself. “You didn’t tell her how much of what you did with her is significant.” He looked Jane in the eyes, that wicked grin still in place. “Alpha was stolen from his tribe as a child, and Four and Mute were sold by their parents. They met when they were still very young. They were abused by women and men until Alpha killed their captors when he was eighteen. I found them shortly after. They were all in need of medical care.

“It took a lot for me to get them to agree to let me help. But, once I showed them what I did for others, they allowed me to get them the best care so they could do whatever they desired.”

Alpha cut in. “I went home for a short time. I was happy, but I knew my new brothers needed me. My name is Charles

—you may call me either. Alpha was the identifier my captors gave me. I keep it to show that I am not afraid. Four and Mute do the same.”

“Charles,” she whispered as her heart broke for the little boys who’d been stolen and wronged so horribly. But her admiration increased for all of them, especially Charles’ protection over his *brothers*. She also understood his choice to continue using the identifier he’d been given. While it was vastly different, it reminded her of how Ryder would call her an adorable hoe—to remind her she was braver and better than those who called her and any other woman who wasn’t liked for having male attention, such things to bring her down. It made her feel powerful, just as she knew Charles must feel when others called him Alpha, and he proudly remained standing.

“They only trust each other and me,” Luc said. “They usually don’t become aroused, understandably so. But something about you stirred up their desire.”

“Lots of things about her did,” Four said, putting one of her arms in Mute’s hold, the other he held to Charles, then he straddled Luc with her.

“To see him,” Alpha said, gesturing to Luc, “with you. To see someone as dangerous as he is loved and able to love. To see how you both light up the dark together. I have never seen anything like it before. It gives me hope.”

Four nodded behind her. “Exactly. I’ve never seen love in the middle of all this darkness. I didn’t know it could exist.”

“You gave up the idea that you could still be loved?” Jane asked.

Charles smiled. “It is hard to hope for such things. But witnessing how his darkness mixes with yours and how you both created light ... incredible. And you were so afraid—but you trusted him. You trusted him, and he doesn’t know how it feels to be one of us. It was hard to believe someone could trust and be loved by someone who didn’t know the same horror.”

Jane smiled, understanding more clearly now. “I’m lucky. But I have faith you’ll each find that someone.”

He nodded, caressing her cheek. “You see the difference? You understand that was not who we are?”

“Yes.” She stared into his dark eyes and smiled. “It kept slipping away that it wasn’t real, but I feel the difference.”

“Good,” he said, still caressing her cheek. “It’s okay to forget. You are working through something horrible. Your men didn’t expect you to be perfect at it. You fought. You slipped between so many rooms in your mind. And when it was too much, you did exactly as you should.”

“Death,” she whispered.

“He’ll always come,” Luc promised. “And we will be with him.”

The best promise ever.

Four squeezed her from behind. “Again, don’t worry. He’s not into me, nor am I with him. Maybe your other boys will come to play. We can show them how to scare you in the best ways.”

Charles grunted, tugging her leg wide as Four lowered her onto Luc’s shaft. It reminded her of how David had done something similar, and she smiled, leaning back against Four as he held her, allowing her to make love to her king.

Luc held her hips, moving gently but so fucking deep with the way he was sitting. “That’s a good girl,” he praised, closing his eyes to shut out every feeling but her.

And she, after looking at Charles and Mute and pulling their hands closer, asked, “Would it help to use me so you can see what it’s like with someone else? Would you trust me for this?”

Charles smiled and nodded. “You consent to our touch?”

“Yes, as long as you don’t penetrate me. But let me help you the way you’ve helped me.” She put both their hands over her sex, and Charles immediately took charge, his calloused fingers expertly working over her clit.

“Want a toy?” he grumbled, gripping the base of his hardening dick. “You’re right—I need this.”

She smiled, happy she could support them as they’d done for her. It was something she knew only some others like them might understand.

Mute closed his eyes and stroked away, almost growling as he did just as much work as Charles.

“Yes,” she whispered, closing her eyes. “If you like it.” They didn’t need her to help them, to save them. They’d survived horror and saved themselves. Luc gave them additional tools and support to continue their healing journey—just as he had chosen to do for her. It wasn’t wrong to need and accept help. It wasn’t weak. It was brave. “Use me.”

Four chuckled behind her, helping her ride Luc as he massaged her breasts and nuzzled her neck. “Such a pretty soul in the night—it’s no wonder he adores you.”

The vibrator turned on, and she lost herself to everything. Everything but Luc and his Fallen, and she only stopped when

every single male had spent their loads.

Charles and Mute stood over Luc, coming on her breasts. Four had worked his dick between her ass cheeks and came all over her ass and back, and Luc filled her up. He came inside her so hard, then he cut his wrist, just over his scar, and held it to her mouth.

“Drink,” he said, still pulsing within her throbbing vagina.

She didn't know why drinking his blood mattered or why she even wanted to once she saw it rolling down his arm, over his veins. But she drank it, moaning as Charles, Mute, and Four smeared more across her body, each whispering ‘eternity.’

“Mine for eternity,” Luc said, pulling her down on top of him to sleep with her nestled on his chest, his softening dick still inside her. His Fallen cuddled around them, hugging each other and touching her wherever they could reach until ... oblivion.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Jane leaned against Luc, sighing as they returned to her apartment. He'd offered to keep her with him—that they could go to his office until Ryder or David came to claim her—but she wanted some time alone.

A smile tugged at her lips as she thought over her last two nights at Dungeon. The Fallen had curled up with them to sleep, but they'd woken alone, though Charles had left a note with their numbers and instructions to call if she wanted to play again. He had even suggested she invite the others, and she nearly died of embarrassment when Luc read over her shoulder and laughed when she asked if that meant they were into Ryder. She didn't want anyone to have any part of her men. They shared her, yes, but she didn't share. And they didn't want her to. But it never failed that she sometimes thought someone could take them from her.

Luc had explained that they respected Ryder and David and were interested in helping with her fantasies and healing. They were also curious to see others who didn't know trauma with someone still trying to escape their nightmares.

He also revealed that Four and Mute had been castrated, and he'd paid for the best for them to heal. She didn't know

men could have sex if that had happened, but she'd learned something new.

He said he'd not anticipated Charles sharing his name and would talk to Ryder and David about their reaction to her. She hadn't comprehended at the time that his Fallen didn't grow aroused during scenes or around women. It hurt her heart to imagine what horror they'd survived. They were strong men who looked like they could kill someone with their bare hands, yet they had not escaped their nightmares. She felt awful for forgetting monsters didn't discriminate when choosing to ruin someone—that survivors came in all shapes and sizes.

Luc told her not to be so hard on herself. What mattered was that she'd recognized the connection between their tortured souls and hers and had chosen to help them in the only way she could think. He encouraged her to call them if she wanted. He'd smiled, searching her eyes, and she knew he nearly mentioned her fear of being close to women too. Her fear differed from the Fallen, but they both wanted to overcome that fear to find the right women in their lives.

After that insight into the Fallen, her king pampered her in the best way. He gave her an actual massage with oil and everything. It led to slow, slippery sex.

So they flew back home after a relaxing day and one more night. Ryder and David had already told them they'd be home about an hour or two after her. It was perfect for what she needed to do. Alone.

“Try to rest, Jane,” Luc said, unlocking the door. He checked the apartment, which made her smile. He even checked that Keanu, the cat he and Ryder adopted for her, had a full water bowl and clean litter. Because Ryder and David were perfect boyfriends, her kitty was fine and too lazy to

even greet her from where he slept on the windowsill. Her king made his way back to her with a frown on his gorgeous face. “If this is some attempt to sneak off to find Tercero, I will warn you that now is not the time. And I do not want you searching for him by yourself.”

“I promise not to leave.” She wanted to grab her chest and weep but held herself together. “I just want to take a nap. The flight wore me out.”

His appraisal of her lasted for a few moments before he sighed. “Fine, I’ll allow the lie because I trust you will not leave.” He walked toward her, gripping her chin and tilting her face up as he searched her eyes. “Don’t fall into the dark alone, my flame. I’m here. You know I have already promised to burn with you. And I swear to you—I am fine. I’ve spent a whole year preparing to catch your nightmare.”

The stinging in her nose and tightening of her throat made breathing hard. So much was on her mind, and she’d pushed everything into a dark corner. One corner was empty now, thanks to Luc. But another was empty because Tercero was gone, and she’d not allowed herself the chance to accept it.

“Oh, Jane.” He folded his arms around her, and she hugged him back. “You can overcome this—I promise.”

She nodded, hugging him tighter.

“You will have nearly an hour alone. I’ll leave you to do what you must.” He stepped out of her hold but leaned down, kissing the corner of her mouth. “I’ll call you tomorrow.”

“Thank you, Luc.” She smiled because, for some reason, it meant everything to him to see it directed at him. She wanted him to know she loved everything about him and them. “I love you.”

He didn't say it back, but he didn't have to. He cradled her face between his cold hands and kissed her, sending her all that magic he could create. Her cruel king wanted to numb her pain, even if he was leaving her to wallow in grief. It nearly broke her resolve, almost made her beg him to be with her for what was coming.

The chill from his kiss spread to her aching heart and surrounded it. But then he broke away and strolled out without another word, locking the door behind himself.

She stared at it and waited for the anesthetic he'd created to fade. Then she faced the dark corner in her mind that she'd refused to look at.

A pathetic sound erupted from her mouth, and she turned, clutching her heart as she wandered toward Tercero's room. Utter sorrow broke free she realized why her bad boy hadn't let her in there sooner. Empty.

She knew she must look dramatic, but she didn't care. She fell to her stomach on his bed and screamed. He was really gone. He knew what it felt like, yet he'd left her to suffer it anyway.

She sobbed, clinging to his bedding. All he'd left was his sheets, which didn't even smell like him. He'd erased himself. "Why?" She cried harder, lifting the fancy envelope addressed to her. She couldn't open it. Her heart wouldn't survive whatever he'd written to her. So she crumpled it, praying it would vanish—that she'd open her eyes and find her quiet boy staring at her in that amused way of his as he asked her what she was being silly about. Then he'd tell her there was no way he'd completely erase his presence in her life—that he'd never be able to leave her.

But, of course, the room was still empty when she opened her eyes. He'd managed to vanish, leaving only the trace of his existence that he'd wanted.

Perhaps it was a brutal truth she'd refused to see. Everyone talked so much shit about her relationship with him. Maybe seeing how he could disappear was the slap in the face she needed.

Snot dripped from her nose, and she again let out a broken cry and wiped it away with her hand.

"Oh, sweet girl, I tried to prepare you for this."

She turned her head toward the man, already recognizing his voice, and smiled pitifully when his pale blue eyes connected with hers.

Archer pushed away from the doorway and crossed the room, scooping and carrying her to the room she shared with Ryder and David.

"What are you doing here?" she finally managed to say as she bawled against his neck. He smelled clean, not like he'd been at football practice, where he should've been.

"Not letting you slip too far into the darkness he left behind," he said, sitting with his back against the headboard. He kept her in his arms, rocking her as she cried. She needed to cry. She needed to get it out at least once before Ryder and David returned. So, with Archer's lips resting against her eyelids, she grieved her quiet boy.

Somehow it was easier to break down with Archer than with Luc. She didn't want to cry with her king when he'd given her so much. But Archer was different.

"I should've known," she blubbered. "I should've let him go sooner."

Archer chuckled, kissing her other eyelid. It was such a soothing caress. Not at all the feeling she wasn't used to receiving from him. He was always so playful with her, such a tease. This was absolute relief, like medicine for an illness that wasn't meant to heal. "Don't. Don't play this blame game shit. You're the fucking love of his life; that will never change. You know why he left."

"Because I didn't love him enough," she fired back, angry but trying so hard to drown in the solace his presence gave.

"There's a difference between loving someone enough and not having the physical time to devote to one another. You loved him. He knew it. All of us saw it when you'd smile at each other." He breathed out and began running his fingers through her hair, then added, "He's just fucked up in the head."

A tightness formed around her heart, and she whined. "I know. And I didn't help him."

Archer tangled his fingers in her hair and hugged her tighter. "It's never been your job to fix him. You constantly held out your hand, and he's always been too afraid to take it because he fears pulling you down with him."

She jerked and curled up further like a punch had been delivered to her stomach. She'd known. She'd always seen how Tercero kept her at arm's length. She'd lied to herself by thinking it was just his way, that he still needed time to grieve the girl he'd lost before her. But that wasn't the whole truth. Tercero was unwell. He needed more than grieving and time. And she'd turned a blind eye to it because she didn't know what to do for him and didn't want to accept that a mean girl who treated him like shit would always be the one he wanted to love him. Jane's love would never be enough.

“Shh ... You need to calm down now before you get sick.” Archer kissed her eyelids again, soothing the sting from her tears. “Do you want me to help?”

His words were like a tether, and he was slipping it around her to keep her from falling into the dark—offering to pull her up so she could find her way out. She peered up at him, taking in the teasing, sexy smirk he usually wore, and something warmed inside her upon seeing it.

“We won’t tell the others,” he said, wiping under her eyes with his thumb.

“What kind of help?” she whispered, hiccuping as she held his wrist to keep his touch a little longer.

The twinkle in his pale eyes held her steady while he glided his fingers over her face. “I know what he does at night.”

All the air rushed out of her lungs, and she shook her head; Tercero didn’t tell anyone about the secret shit he did. She thought he was embarrassed by something, or it was illegal—and had promised him repeatedly that she would be supportive of either. But still, he’d never told her. “No. There’s no way he told you.”

Archer’s eyes dropped to a trail of goosebumps she hadn’t noticed on her arms, and he grinned. “I didn’t say he told me. I said I know what he does. There’s a difference.”

Sniffing and loving his hold, she tried to concentrate on his words. The information felt like hope—she just had to take it. “What does he do?”

“I told you I’ll help. The way for me to do that is to let you see.” His gaze flicked toward the door as it opened. “You had to bail early, too?”

David stopped inside the room, dropping his gym bag as he darted his eyes between her and Archer. His concerned gaze never wavered, but he eventually smiled that sexy smile of his. “Baby, whatever he’s plotting with you, you better do it later. I saw Ryder pull in when I entered.” He glanced back at Archer. “I knew my girl was coming home to me, so yeah, I bailed. Coach is pissed you missed practice.”

“Why did y’all lie?” She clung tighter to Archer. They were meant to give her time to fall into misery. She deserved to be there after failing Tercero.

Archer made a chiding noise in the back of his throat. “Don’t do that, beautiful. You may want to bleed out from your wounds, but we—they—are not about to stand by and watch you fade.”

“Maybe I deserve it,” she muttered, knowing she felt too sorry for herself. She had been shown how much she still had, but it didn’t stop the anguish of losing the man she loved.

David sighed from the doorway but stayed quiet, almost like he wanted Archer to lead the conversation. It didn’t matter, though. Archer had eased the pain, but she deserved to drown in it again. And she wanted to do it alone. Not with Ryder coming any second.

Archer tilted her chin up and searched her eyes. “So much determination to wither and die for him that you will sacrifice the men begging you to glow. Don’t you see? Tercero needs light. You’ll become a darker night if you push us away.”

His words once again slipped a rope around her. Yet this time, they made her want to grip the line in her own hands and pull.

“There you go,” Archer murmured, his eyes dropping to her mouth as she held in her pitiful cries. “You can come and cry with me any time you like. But I’m sure David and even Ryder will let you do it in their arms.”

She knew he was right. Ryder would be volatile about her and still do anything for her, and David would do the same. But Archer was such a soothing presence—not one she expected. It hit her that while Ryder could let her fall apart about Tercero, he’d probably not do well with her alone in his brother’s arms instead of his, especially after he’d had a glimpse of her panicked with the Fallen.

Archer loosened his hold on her but leaned down and whispered in her ear, “Don’t tell anyone about what I said. I’ll find you later and show you how to find him.”

She nodded, sighing when he kissed her forehead and eyelids. *Why does this feel so good?*

“Playing with fire,” David muttered, eyes narrowed on Archer. His glare worried her until he playfully shoved Archer out of the way before collapsing on the bed with her. He wrapped her in his arms but spoke to Archer, “Get out of here now. He’s in a mood.”

Jane managed a smile for the silly boy who’d come to stop her from drowning herself. “Thanks, Archer.”

“Anytime, gorgeous.” He winked and left her with David.

“He’s gonna get his ass beat for sneaking over with you before we could even see you,” David mumbled tiredly as he rubbed her tummy. “We’ve missed you so much. How are my babies?”

Covering his hand, she told the truth. “I don’t know. I’m so lost, David.”

He released a breath and tilted her face toward his. She loved how he looked at her—like she was worth sacrificing his life for. She'd never let him, but it felt like a blessing each time she saw it. "Please talk to me, Jane."

"I can't. I don't want to break down about this with you right now."

His warm hands held her cheek, erasing the evidence of her tears. "Okay. But I'm here. I'll hold you through anything. And I know Ryder told you, but I promise what happened at Dungeon is okay. I'm so happy Luc could do it for you."

"I know." She really did. David had such a good heart. Sometimes she worried he was too good for her and that he'd realize it and leave for someone who didn't have the bad inside them. Someone as perfect as him. Yet he stayed. He chose her.

"My girl is getting lost in her mind," he murmured, dragging a hand down her spine as he pulled her against his body, warming the hollow places inside her. "Stay with me, Jane."

"I'm trying," she promised, focusing on his heat to ground herself.

He sighed, caressing the dip at her waist. "Did Archer help?"

"Yes." Truthfully, she didn't want to drown in the dark. She wanted to fix everything. So it surprised her that it was Archer who'd known to come—because she would've let herself sink. "He just showed up to check on me," she told David. "I'm talking to you now. I know you're with me."

David brushed his thumb along her cheek. "Then tell me what I can do. I can feel the sorrow seeping out of you. Just

point me in the right direction on where I can help.”

All she could do was shake her head and curl into him. David made so much better just by being there with her. It wasn't that he fixed anything ... it was knowing he was there, holding her, protecting her—loving her. “You're making it better.”

“I doubt I am right now, but I'll try my best.” He cupped her cheek and tilted her face toward his, kissing her. Every time felt like a brand to claim her all over again, and she melted. His deep chuckle had her moaning and spreading her legs when he tugged her beneath him. “You know you can open up to us.”

“I'm kinda opening up to you right now,” she said, smiling. His lips and tongue on the tears still clinging to her cheeks showed how much she was trying to hide still.

He didn't judge her. He kissed her, settling his body over hers. “Promise me you'll be careful with Archer. He might mean well, but ... just be careful. Tell me when you're ready.”

“I'm ready for dick, yes.”

Not only did David laugh, but Ryder's chuckle tickled her ears after the bedroom door slammed shut.

The sound nearly had her coming undone, and she pushed her hand inside David's sweatpants to stroke him.

He groaned but shook his head and pulled her hand free. “Baby, as much as I want to, we know you need a good meal more.”

She gasped as he stood and rearranged himself. He looked so damn sexy with his tousled hair and t-shirt stretched over his chest, the short sleeves hugging his biceps. But she was annoyed now.

Ryder laughed louder as he strode over. He was leaning over her with his tall, muscular body in no time, kissing her face and nuzzling her before speaking in that mocking tone he used when he was looking to get a reaction from her. “Aw, baby girl, are your hormones making your pussy cry for dick? We know Luc dicked you down this morning when you should’ve been letting yourself recover. Don’t be dick-crazed. You have our baby to think about now.” He leaned away to look at her and groaned. “Oh, damn, please be dick-crazed anyway. I fucking missed you. Let me slip in real quick.”

She couldn’t help laughing, but he didn’t let up. He was grabby in the best way. This was how Ryder always came to her when she was slipping. Yes, they could talk, but he knew her so well that he didn’t have to offer it. He knew what to give, and his serious self was not how she needed him. She needed the side of him that came to life because of her.

“You’re getting her hornier,” David said with a laugh. He shoved Ryder enough to snatch her and haul her out of bed, then dodged Ryder’s kick at his leg easily and guided her legs around his waist as he left the room. “Baby, I promise we’ll do some thorough fucking later, but Luc told us how sick you were on the plane. Let us feed you.”

Her insides warmed. David knew how to read Ryder and quickly adjusted how to be around her.

Ryder passed them but not before smacking her ass, then muttering over his shoulder, “You need anything else?”

“Where are we going?” she asked as David kissed her neck.

Ryder watched it all without his expression changing as he snatched up her purse. “Meeting the boys for dinner.”

“Oh, good,” she said, snuggling David. He was so warm, and soon his heat would be too much for her. The other night, she’d talked to Diane, who was pregnant with Adam’s baby, and the girl had been all tears about how hot she felt all the time. So preparing to be overwhelmed by David’s intensity, she clung to him. “I’ve only seen Damon since we announced the baby. He said the boys are excited.”

Ryder grunted as he locked the door. “You’d think you’re their girlfriend with all their fucking nagging to see you. Sin’s even thinking up baby names. Don’t you dare listen to his suggestions. If you pick something he says, I’ll picture his stupid ass face whenever I call my kid’s name.”

David nipped her neck as he jogged down the stairs, carrying her easily. “He’s trying to grow up.” He’d kept his voice low, and his lips on her neck were distracting, but she knew he was telling her something important.

“Huh?”

He squeezed her ass, then whispered in her ear, “He’s letting up, so you have more time with everyone else.”

“Stop whispering romantic shit in her ear,” Ryder said as he had somehow gotten ahead of them and held the door open. He looked tense, but he still smiled at her. “Ride with Papi. I’m taking my bike ‘cause I have some shit to do later. I’ll be home in the morning.”

David didn’t linger. He took her straight to her car as Ryder headed toward his bike.

It was no surprise to her to feel a throbbing sensation in her chest, just below her heart and to the side, but she plastered a smile as David lowered her to the ground.

Of course, David saw through her. He touched the spot and leaned down, pecking her on the lips. “Go on. He doesn’t have to give you up completely. Ride with him there, and you’re mine tonight.”

She grinned before rushing after Ryder. He was already straddling his sexy motorcycle. It should be a crime for that boy to add anything sexy to his sexiness. “Babe, wait!”

He turned, looking murderous, but quickly relaxed. “The fuck, Jane? Don’t scream like that.” His gaze flicked toward David before he held out a hand for her. “Papi doesn’t want you?”

“Of course he does,” she said, taking his hand. “But I wanna ride with you wherever we’re going.”

He sighed but pulled her close and cupped her cheeks. “I’m trying to be equal about shit.”

“I know.” She held his wrists and pouted her lips, almost giggling when she heard David chuckle from across the parking lot.

“Babe,” Ryder growled before pressing a hard kiss to her lips. “Don’t pout.”

“But I get kisses when I pout.”

Finally, he smiled and handed her the helmet he’d bought her. “Get your cute ass on. Might as well ride with me before the docs say you can’t.”

“Gimme this.” He snatched the helmet from her, then carefully slid it over her head.

“Love you,” she murmured, hugging him from behind once she was situated.

“And I love you,” he said, patting her hands. “But I’m gonna be pissed if you try to hide shit from me.”

She tried to lean away, but he took off, causing her to squeeze close to him. His body tensed, even if he had grabbed one of her hands to hold and rest on his thigh. She loved when he did this. But all her giddiness vanished, and she wondered what had pissed him off. He was trying to make time equal, but was that too much for him?

“I saw Archer sneak out of the apartment, and I know he bailed on practice,” he said, his voice rough through the headset in the helmet. His fingers slid between hers as he added, “I trust you around all of your friends—I can even tolerate the Fallen—but I don’t trust Archer with you while you’re vulnerable. So whatever he snuck over to do with you, I want to know.”

Well fuck.

CHAPTER TWELVE

“So none of them care about banging the baby on the head when y’all fuck?”

Jane and her crew of wolves and devils turned their heads to stare at Sin. In fact, the whole diner was looking at him. She should’ve been embarrassed when people shot her disapproving sneers, but she could only grin at her silly friend. She was so thankful her boyfriends knew being around her buddies was exactly what she needed after all the heaviness at Dungeon.

David shook his head, but a smile teased his lips as he responded. “After all this time, you still don’t understand the female body?”

“Not the pregnant ones,” Sin said with a shiver that resulted in a smack from Hadrian.

“Dude,” he said, gesturing toward her.

Sin winked at her. “Sorry, little vixen. I’d still take you raw if you were down, and I wasn’t at risk of having Ryder rip my dick off.”

That started a whole new round of insults and smacks.

Jane peeked at the bad boy in question to make sure he wasn’t about to beat the fuck out of Sin. He seemed okay

though. He'd chosen to sit at the bar where he appeared to be in a serious conversation with Than, but she could tell it was all a ploy by the way he peeked at her every couple of minutes. He was giving her space.

It was sweet, and she loved having David glued to her side and her friends right there bumping shoulders with her, but she would never want less Ryder. It also scared the shit out of her that he'd let the Archer subject drop the moment they got to the diner's parking lot. He was going to brood, and she prayed Archer wasn't foolish enough to come around.

Piercing green eyes connected with hers, and Ryder held her gaze as the boys around her continued to raze Sin. He didn't smile or move, just watched her as tingles danced over her lips.

She still had no idea how he could spread that sensation over her mouth from a look, but she was happy to live in ignorant bliss if it never stopped.

"If I didn't love watching you glow for him," David whispered in her ear, "I'd be jealous of how he has your attention and not me."

Her body heated. "My hand is literally on your dick."

His blue eyes darkened as he looked down at her hand covering his crotch. "Baby, you wouldn't let go of my ass unless I let you grope my dick. But you have to admit you're distracted."

"He's my hot baby daddy. He always distracts me." She sighed when he moved some of her hair and kissed her neck. She didn't tell him what Ryder had said, but she would later.

"Well," David said, kissing the same spot again, "he's trying to grow up. Maybe lay off the 'fuck me, daddy' eyes so

he'll feel like he's done a good job?"

Maybe it was better to tell him what Ryder had said now. He'd help keep Ryder in check if things went bad.

"He's mad about Archer," she whispered, then bit her lip when David smiled against her skin. "And I can't tell him why he was there."

"Let him be mad." He nipped her neck as a deep chuckle rumbled in his chest.

"David." She shook her head. "I need your help. If he finds out Archer—"

David cut her off. "—if he finds out Archer was holding you, kissing your eyelids, and staring at you the way he was while you dozed off with him—yeah, Ryder's gonna beat the shit out of him. But that's not your problem. It's Archer's, and he knew what he was doing by sneaking over to see you when I let it slip you'd be home alone."

"I didn't sleep," she replied as her mind went wild, wondering what he meant about the way Archer stared at her.

"I might've been there for longer than it seemed," David admitted. "You looked relaxed with him, so I ... watched him with you."

"Oh." She dropped her eyes to the vein on David's forearm as he teased her hand covering his dick.

"Oh," he copied, letting out that deep chuckle again. "Let Ryder stew. He'll make it up to you in the best way when he's at the end of his restraint. And you know that will feel so fucking good."

That was all it took for tingles to shoot straight to her core, and she moaned. Loudly.

David kissed her neck, chuckling as the others gaped.

“Damn, David,” Sin said, situating his junk. “What are you doing to our girl?”

Her blue-eyed boy grinned at her before answering. “Only telling her not to worry about her baby daddy because he always makes it all better.”

Everyone turned toward Ryder. He’d already gotten up and was heading her way. And as people usually did in his presence, they stared at his every movement. He was just that freaking impressive. Everything about him oozed power and beauty; people wanted to get close to him even if he scared them.

The blank expression he usually wore so well slipped away, and a dangerously sexy smirk lifted his lips. “Worrying about me, Sweet Jane?” he asked once he was close. He leaned over, bracing one hand on the table while the other held the back of her chair.

Damn, this boy for leaning in like this.

She knew the restaurant watched them, wondering the same thing everyone did whenever she was out with her boyfriends. She knew it had looked like she was with David, who still sat close, whose dick she still clutched under the table. So they’d wonder why the sexiest man ever would loom over her, leaning in as if he might kiss her.

His eyes lit up, and he smiled wider. “Naughty Jane is looking to play? Even with your wolves and demons here to see you?”

“Don’t worry, sexy. I’ll get us some popcorn,” Sin shouted, getting smacked by Gawain and Gareth; Jane hadn’t even noticed they’d arrived.

Ryder didn't look away from her. He stared like he was the lucky one. "Tell me what's up, babe."

Her mouth went dry. She knew pregnancy hormones could cause horniness but didn't think it would start so soon. It was definitely a Ryder thing.

Sin's whisper still reached her ears while Ryder waited for her reply. "I've never seen someone look so fucking thirsty for dick. It's like a superpower for her."

David chuckled beside her, and she gripped his dick tighter. "She wants both," he told Ryder.

Ryder smiled like some kind of dark angel—too beautiful and perfect but that edge of the deadliest predator. "Our girl will have to wait."

"Aw, man, I like to watch them," Sin blurted, cutting through her intoxicated, dazed state so that Ryder's words could register.

"Huh?" was her brilliant response. Ryder never denied her.

He leaned closer, so close she felt his breath on her mouth. "You haven't eaten your damn food. Papi and I told you to eat, and you're grabbing his dick and eye-fucking me so hard you didn't notice when they asked you to order dessert." He brushed his lips over hers so faintly it hurt not to have more. "I ordered you some key lime pie, by the way, and you'll fucking eat it after you finish your meal." A quick, harsh kiss from him made her gasp, then he leaned away. "Hands off his dick and focus on yourself."

"Ryder." David removed her hand but held it as she struggled to breathe correctly. All his softness was gone, and everyone was watching him scold her. "What the fuck is wrong with you?"

Her bad boy didn't pay David any attention. He kept staring her down. "I can't love you if you won't even take care of yourself. I sure as fuck can't step away and let David or Luc—or anyone else who's hard up for you—love you when all you do is forget everything but having us inside you. Now control yourself, or I will kick them out and take control for you. I don't give a fuck what any of them think if it means you're getting hurt."

Jane tore her stinging eyes away from his glare. He'd gone from sexy to mean so easily. He was never like this. Worse, he did it in front of her friends—their friends. And none of them were brave enough to say anything as he continued to stand there like he was waiting for something.

"Look in front of you, Sweet Jane," he said ... ordered.

She didn't want to, but she did and felt like an idiot. Her whole plate sat there with only one bite taken from her burger. Then she saw everyone else already had half-eaten desserts in front of them.

"I watched my brother skip meals around you and even before you," Ryder said as she stared at her full plate. "I didn't say shit to him. And I've always had to put food in your mouth when you're with me because you'd rather kiss me than choose yourself. Then you're stuffing your face after we've fucked and fallen asleep. And then what? You're sick to your stomach for hours. I'm done ignoring it.

"I stepped back tonight so you can have fun—so I'm not monopolizing your time. I let go of whatever you're doing with Archer so you can have some fun and relax. And what are you doing?" He shook his head. "I'm not your only man, baby girl. Let me do what I need to do so your other men can stand by you. But I swear to fuck, Jane, if you act this damn silly in

the head about David, me, and Luc, I'm taking you away from them. Because I will not lose you because you put yourself last all the fucking time. Our baby needs you to take care of yourself, or you'll never be able to care for them."

David pulled her closer. "Enough, Ryder—she'll eat."

Ryder glared at him, but instead of saying anything, he leaned down and kissed her again. It was softer but still too brief. "Eat." Then he stood and left with Than following behind him.

David's lips warmed her cheek before he nuzzled her and murmured, "He loves you, baby. He's just trying to ease up on you, and it's hard for him. But he's right—he's always taking care of you. He doesn't mind, we both love being loved by you and loving you, but we gotta grow up and take care of things too."

She didn't look away from the door. It felt like she'd lost him. She hadn't, of course, but it hurt. Her insides felt all wrong. Everything felt wrong because he wasn't supposed to leave.

"He didn't have to be a dick about it," Gawain muttered to no one in particular.

"He said it in front of us because he knows we're here for her," Sin told him, and his words sank in deep.

Gareth shook his head, his glare thrown at the exit as if he could make Ryder receive his disapproval, then he focused on her. "Darling, you don't have to listen to him. You'll take care of yourself and your baby just fine."

Sin smiled, and for once, it wasn't full of mischief. "No, ugly, you know Ryder's right. You get all starry-eyed about him, and you forget everything. We get it—Ryder's a god, and

David's your sexy stepbrother." He winked at her. "But David's other obligations mean he gets less time with you. I'm sure he knows to make sure you eat, but he won't take your hand off his dick when you do see him. That has to change." He reached across the table and held the hand that had not been around David's dick. "That fucking gutted him to talk to you like that. He probably feels like he just ripped himself apart, but he had to do it. He's realized how dependent on him he's made you and how much he's fucking ignored shit with Tercero."

Her frown must've looked pathetic because he poked her lip.

"Get it together now, ugly. Show him you can take care of yourself. He loves to baby you, but it can be damaging. You gotta find balance."

She wanted to bawl. She wanted Ryder to march back in and baby her the way he and David always did, but everyone was right. Even now, she ignored things. She ignored her needs for her wants, all because she didn't want to fall apart about Tercero.

"I love you," David murmured in her ear as he slid her plate closer. "He loves you."

"I know." She roughly rubbed her tears away and smiled at her friends even though she wanted to cry and chase Ryder down. It wouldn't be easy, but she could at least make the effort he was to be better. Her guys deserved that. She deserved that from herself. "Throw a hot dog at my face next time I'm swooning over them."

Sin smiled more genuinely. "You got it, beautiful."

"Sorry, I'm late."

Jane lowered her burger and jumped to her feet. “Wendy! What are you doing here?” Her best friend went to school several cities away, and they rarely saw each other anymore. Texting was all they ever did, and those texts were getting fewer and farther between on both sides.

“Ryder texted me that I should come by more often.” Wendy rounded the table and hugged Jane tightly before touching her stomach. “I thought something was wrong.”

“Nothing’s wrong,” David answered, offering Wendy his seat. “We’re glad you could come.”

As always, Wendy didn’t swoon over David like she did over Ryder. Instead, she forced a smile, muttering, “Thanks,” and then took his seat. “Girl, you need to start eating healthier. Pregnancy isn’t an excuse to eat junk.”

A sigh slipped past Jane’s lips, and she sat. As much as she loved her friend and missed her since she moved an hour away, she didn’t miss the unwanted advice and reminders that she was a fuckup. It wasn’t Wendy’s fault—she simply wanted everyone to be healthy and happy. Unfortunately, while it was a great thing to want, Wendy’s opinions about health discouraged Jane from ever disclosing her eating problems. How did anyone confide in someone who already looked down on anything that wasn’t perfect about them?

David kissed the back of her head as he moved around her and dragged his hand down her back. He knew about her bad habits. He knew she sometimes wanted to slip back into purging or starving herself. He knew Wendy’s judgment hurt her but that she’d never want to hurt her friend by letting her know how much her words hit her.

“So where’s the proud daddy anyway?” Wendy asked.

Jane grabbed David's hand, tugging him before he could also slip away to give her space she didn't want. "David's right here. Ryder and Luc are out."

Wendy's gaze flickered to David, then the boys, before returning to her. "Right. I forgot about things with you."

"What?" Jane's face hurt from how much she scrunched it up and stared at her friend. It was like a kick to the stomach when she was barely putting things together to be stronger. "You know all about this."

Shrugging, Wendy spoke like she was a completely different person from the one who cheered upon hearing she was pregnant. "I thought Ryder would've put his foot down by now. I kinda thought that's what was up when he texted."

"Put his foot down?" She couldn't believe what she was hearing.

"Isn't that why Tercero left?" Wendy ignored the glares from Sin and Gareth and focused on David. "Aren't you going to let them be a family?"

Shock. Or a damn nightmare. None of this could be real. She expected it from her mom and even strangers, but not Wendy.

David's usual polite tone disappeared, and he snapped at her friend with rage she would've felt if she hadn't been so sad. "Have you lost your fucking filter? You know damn well she's sad about Tercero—we all are. And you know Luc and I plan to join Ryder as this baby's father."

"I just want what's best for Jane." Wendy finally looked apologetic, but her disapproval was plastered on her face.

"What's best for her is that she's loved and supported by everyone she cares about," David said, pulling Jane up and

holding her around the waist. “Fuck this. I’m not this fucking tolerant. We have enough to deal with without people pushing her to be with only him. I’m with Jane too, Wendy. Get the fuck over it.” He snatched a to-go box from the table and dumped Jane’s food inside, along with the slice of key lime pie a waitress was bringing over.

Jane felt paralyzed. All she could do was stare at Wendy’s surprised face. When had so much slipped away from her? She’d heard some people lost touch with their friends when they got into relationships or went off after high school, but she thought she still had Wendy.

Well, no, that was a lie. Jane was a horrible friend. She made no effort to stay in touch with Wendy. She never had, honestly. She waited for Wendy to reach out first because she felt like a burden—an annoyance. But if Wendy called, she’d spew all her problems. Wendy would listen to her drone on and on—she’d already heard it for years about David—clearly that she was done.

I’ve done this to myself.

It hurt to look at Wendy, but she did and realized she didn’t know what she was most sad about, except ... “I’m not a good friend, Wendy, and I’m sorry about that. I wish I wasn’t how I am. But I can’t deal with this right now. I have too much going on to add judgment from you.” Tears welled in her eyes, but she kept them from falling and stared at Wendy’s blurry, stunned face. “If you can’t respect my relationship with my boyfriends, stay away.”

Everyone quieted, and she knew she’d just lost the only girl friend she had. Because while she did occasionally hang out with the other guys’ girlfriends and fuck buddies, she wasn’t close to any of them. It was hard to be friends with

other women when they considered her too boy-crazy, and most of the girls talking to the guys became rude when they realized the guy they liked was her friend.

Yeah, girls were supposed to support each other, but Jane had never had that. Not even with Wendy or her own mother. So she kept all others at a distance, too much of a coward to be judged like Wendy had just done.

David tightened his arm around her and pulled her out of the restaurant. "I'm sorry, sweetheart."

"She came all this way," Jane said, watching David toss her food into the car as he held the door open for her.

"Then she had plenty of time to think about how she would talk to you."

"People won't accept us." She turned her head when she saw her guys exiting the restaurant. "And I'm sucking so bad at being your girlfriend. I couldn't even keep Tercero. And if I want him back, I have to betray Ryder."

"You don't suck at being my girlfriend," he whispered before hollering across the parking lot, "We'll catch everyone at the fight."

"Night, Little Moon," Sin yelled. "We love your silly, conflicted, emotional ass. Never forget that."

The others cheered agreement as David cupped her cheeks. "What makes you think you have to betray him?"

She held his wrists. "Archer."

He sighed, loosening his hold on her. "He's told you to keep something secret?"

Jane nodded, hoping it wasn't a mistake to tell David. If Archer backed out, she might never get a chance to find

Tercero, and she wanted to see him. No matter how unstable her emotions were, she had to try. He couldn't just disappear. If Ryder could grow up, so could she, and that meant going after Tercero.

“Then I'll help with Ryder.” David smiled, holding the back of her head. His fingers tightened in her hair, and he crowded her, pinning her against the side of the car with his body. “Anything up with you and Archer?”

That was the last question she'd anticipated. “Me and Archer?”

“So innocent,” he said, then kissed her deeply. She couldn't even think about what he'd said. He consumed her every thought no matter how hard she tried, and she melted against him.

So much for learning how to control myself around him.

He smiled against her mouth. “You don't have to change anything with me, Jane. I know my schedule is hectic. But I'm confident in our love for each other, even if I worried for a moment that you could do without me.”

“I'd never be able to go without you,” she rushed.

“I know.” He smiled that breathtaking smile of his and pressed himself closer.

“You're getting me hot,” she blurted, giggling when he gave her a wicked smirk that promised all things rough and naughty.

“I love getting you all hot and bothered,” he said, squeezing her ass hard, then stepping away to hold the door for her again. “Let's get out of here.”

“Ugh, you need to stop doing that.” She shook herself as if she could rid herself of the lust he’d just unloaded on her.

His eyes lit up. “Get in the car, Jane. You already know I play the long game with you.”

“Yeah,” she spat, “and you’ve got Ryder copying your long game. I like when he’s all over me, you know?”

“I know.” He smiled and took hold of her chin. “I promise I’ll help. But, right now, it’s just us.”

Grabbing his hand, she pulled it to her lips and kissed it. “Sorry, baby.”

“I still have no idea how I became your baby, but I won’t complain. I love making you remember I’m crazy about you.” His gaze darkened as it slid down her body. “You have one second before I fuck you against the car, Jane. Get in.”

Her eyes widened, and he growled. “Shit! I’m getting in.”

That predatory gleam filled his eyes as he watched her settle, and he breathed in deeply. “There’s my frightened kitten. I’ve missed her.”

With her cheeks flaming, she buckled and whispered, “I’m always your kitten.” She knew David had been holding back with her for a while due to his schedule and then the pregnancy, but he was clearly in need of re-establishing their relationship.

“Then prove it to me.” He shut the door and rounded the car.

Jane stared after him, her mouth open and her heart racing. Apparently, David was done with the distance and perfect boyfriend routine. It reminded her of the things Luc had said.

She had never considered that David had a kink. She had just figured it was how he liked sex—rough and making her come as many times as possible. He'd eased up over the past month, and she hated it.

They took off as soon as he was seated. She stayed quiet even though the heat radiating from him created the urge to submit or run from him. “Relax, baby,” he said, resting a scorching hand on her thigh. The veins in his arm were full, his muscles flexing with the tiniest of movements. “You’re my kitten, and I’m your David—that will never change. But I will learn how to be gentle.”

“I don’t want you to be too soft,” she rushed, unsure what he was getting at.

“I merely meant while you’re pregnant, sweetheart.” His smile was gorgeous and lethal. “Don’t worry. I promise to take good care of you.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

David smiled to himself as he arranged the logs for the campfire he was building. He'd taken Jane to a state park that allowed camping, and the nearest campers were at least a mile away. She hadn't been camping since they were younger, but he knew Jane was secretly outdoorsy. She just spooked easily.

An owl screech had scared her. She'd gotten embarrassed and had gone to observe from the car.

He glanced where she sat perched on the seat, hugging her knees to her chest. He supposed she'd left the door open to be brave, but she was skittish. Her eyes darted around the darkness until she scared herself, then she would let out a soft gasp and focus on him. She considered him a safe place, but then she would breathe faster and lower her gaze quickly.

He'd gotten her nervous in the car with his shift in mood, and she was doing as she had in the past, letting that cute prey energy run rampant in her sexy body. She was a natural for what he would ask her to do with him. He knew she wasn't into being submissive in Luc's setting, but she had always submitted to him. It made his life Heaven and Hell.

For a little longer, he'd rein in his instinct to grab her, toss her beneath him and fuck her senselessly.

She'd had those pretty eyes on him for as long as he could remember. She looked at him like he was the best damn person in the world, but she still ignited the urge to capture, devour, conquer ... claim.

It was terrifying because he thought she would be too afraid, but if Luc could be honest with Jane, David could.

When he'd chopped wood and prepared the campsite, he'd noticed her pulse fluttering. He'd heard her soft gasps. Her sweet scent had grown stronger, teasing him.

"Did you finish your meal, Jane?" He lit a match and held it to some dried kindling. The campsite he'd chosen had plenty of space to be loud, and he could do everything he wanted to without anyone hearing her screams.

Her eyes stayed locked on him as she slowly reached for her to-go box to show him it was empty.

"Good girl," he praised, hiding his smile when her cheeks reddened. "Take a picture and send it to Ryder. It'll keep him from searching for you because I want you to myself tonight."

She gulped but nodded and did as she was told. Her hands shook, but she found the bravery to look back at him. "Do you think about that a lot?"

He tilted his head as he thought over her question, as there was obviously a lot on her mind. "You mean, having you to myself?"

"Yes." She tossed the phone down and squirmed in her seat.

He stood, dusting his hands. He loved that she bit her lip as she watched his movements. *So not too afraid, then.* But perhaps her self-preservation had kicked in.

Jane always had a strange way of coping. She could hide in different areas of her mind, away from what she knew could destroy her. She likely wanted to confront everything, but he wouldn't push her. He couldn't fathom having to process everything dumped on her in such a short amount of time.

“Don't start doubting things with all of us. That's not what I meant.” He reached for the supplies he'd dumped nearby as the fire grew and unfolded the sleeping bag. When he'd still been in high school, he'd often camp with Lance and other friends, but he stopped after starting his relationship with Jane. Tonight, she'd get a glimpse at the boy she didn't let herself see. “I get my alone time with you when I can,” he eventually said to add to his answer. He didn't want this to turn into him wanting her to himself—that ship had sailed when he truly looked at Jane and Ryder together.

“But you used to talk about getting married and having kids,” she said, still protectively holding herself. “Do you remember?”

He smiled, nodding as he made his way toward her. “I remember telling you that when we were just neighbors. I was thinking about you when I said I wanted a wife and to make babies with her.” He stopped in front of her and tucked some of her windblown hair behind her ear. “Don't think I'm upset because Ryder got the honor of breeding you first.”

Her face went red again. She looked stunning in the fire's golden glow. “I didn't know that was a thing. Y'all talk about me like I'm a prized animal to produce your offspring. It's such a crude term.”

“You're going to be the mother of our children, Jane. And don't pretend that you're not into it.” He loved that she was exploring these things about herself at last. “Even now, I

remember the excited spark in your pretty eyes when I mentioned someday making babies with my wife.”

“Maybe,” she said shyly, tilting her face toward his palm. “I never told him that when he first said he wanted to get me pregnant. I wanted it badly but assumed it would be later.”

“Oh, he knew you wanted him to succeed.” He squatted in front of her and rubbed his hands on her thighs to warm her up. She was shaking. “It’s why he pushed the rest of us out so hard. We let him, and he knew we did, but he’d already been fighting that urge of his. I’m sure we would’ve fought eventually if he hadn’t succeeded because I’ve struggled not to fill up your pretty pussy with my cum.”

Her breath caught, and she squeezed her legs together.

He shoved them apart and moved so her legs would close around him. She was barely hanging onto the seat, but he helped keep her from slipping between him and the car by hooking his forearm under the edge of her ass. “What’s wrong, baby? I know you like it when I come inside you now. I know because your pretty eyes flutter closed even though you fight to stare at me, then you tremble and come again the moment I do.”

She gasped, darting her hands to his shoulders. “I love that you come in me now. I kinda always thought you didn’t because we’re ... related.”

Chuckling, he leaned down and nuzzled her neck. He wanted to mark her like he did the first time he got to kiss her, but he held back. “We’re stepsiblings who were in love before our parents got married. And Dad knows how I feel about you. I think he was honestly a little upset I wasn’t the one to get you pregnant.”

“That’s kinda weird.” She tilted her head, offering more of her neck to him.

“It’s a male thing, wanting bloodlines to pass on. Dad has always looked forward to becoming a grandfather, just like I’ve wanted to be a dad.” He scraped his teeth along the tender part of her neck and breathed out when the urge to bite down flooded him. Instead, he kissed her there, closing his eyes to stay in control. He wanted her to know about him before he took anything from her. “You know I will view this baby as mine, right?”

She hesitantly wrapped her arms around his neck, keeping hers offered to him. “Yes. I want you to.”

He smiled, kissing her neck again. “Do you want to carry my children one day?”

“Yes,” she said, breathless, as she tightened her legs around him. “Oh, David, I want that so badly.”

Blood rushed to his dick, and he grinned as he ground his hips against her. She arched into him, begging to be thrust into even though they still wore clothes. “That’s my girl,” he praised, licking her neck. “Now I want you to listen to me, Jane. I want you to understand that I know you think I’m perfect, but you have to know that’s not true.”

“You’re pretty close,” she said quickly.

His heart beat faster at that. “Would you think that if you knew I think about finding you, fucking you hard at the most unexpected times? That I want to bite your neck right now until you bleed and drink your blood? That I want to give you mine? And one day, I want to see you pregnant with my child. I don’t give a damn that you’re my stepsister—I want to tell everyone my girl is having my baby.”

She moaned, nodding as she raised her hips.

“I need you to say it.” He growled that time, feeling her heat against him as she sought friction between them. “Fuck, Jane, stop. I want an answer now.”

A startled sound left her, but she gripped his face and turned hers to look him in the eyes. “I want everything you just said.” Her gorgeous eyes swirled with gold and green, and she told him those three words with just a look.

“I love you, too,” he said, giving her a smile that always made her blush. “Stop biting.” He pushed her hand from his face and gripped her jaw, tugging her lip free with his teeth.

His kitten moaned, then heat crawled up her chest and neck until her cheeks glistened a breathtaking rosy pink. He couldn’t wait to see her perfect little cunt the same color.

“I will give you eight seconds to run and hide, Jane. Don’t go beyond the light from the fire. It’s too dark for you, and you might get hurt. This is a taste of what I’ll do with you from now on. I’m giving you the power to tease me and get me worked up whenever you want because I’m not the good boy you grew up with next door. You know that, right?”

“You’re my David,” she breathed, but a feisty smile formed on her pretty lips as her sweet scent flooded his senses, and she bared her teeth at him. “Mate. My mate.”

“Fuck, Jane,” he growled, tugging her against him more. “How do you know that term?”

“Luc gave me a little hint. I searched Primal Doms and Primal Subs on my phone while you were searching for wood. Saw the word prey and mate used a few times. Prey got me excited, but mate made me burn. I kinda always wanted to be claimed by you like I read in my paranormal romance books—

now I know why. You're a Primal Dom." More of her intoxicating scent filled his entire being—he wanted to lose himself in her.

"You're fucking perfect, baby." He let go of her jaw but pulled her by the nape of her neck so he could kiss her. Then, shoving her mouth open with his, he devoured her. All her cute noises nearly had him stripping her, but he growled and leaned away enough to get her consent to everything. "You're okay with this then? If I chase you, catch you, fuck you as hard—as instinctually—as I want? And if I want you to fight back, you'll play? Because I'm going to be rough, Jane. I will pin you, strip you, bite and suck and lick every part of you until you're screaming, and I don't want you to lie down and take it. I want you to fight back."

"I'm okay. I'll rise up against you and love when you still overpower and take me." She grinned at him. "You make consent so fucking sexy, baby."

He laughed, feeling like he was the good guy she thought he was. "Eight seconds, my love." He knew when he and Ryder called her that she turned to mush, but he wanted her to see all sides of him, so he gave her a sweet kiss to remind her that he'd be that too. "Don't hurt yourself, okay? It's my job to give you the good hurt. Now run."

She squeaked and slipped free of his hold as he counted aloud.

"One," he said, standing. He kept his back to where she'd run off and pulled his shirt over his head. "Two," he called louder, kicking off his shoes. He left his gray joggers on for Jane's pleasure. "Three, baby." He smiled, hearing her fumbling steps as she ran in several directions. Unfortunately, there were only a few places for her to hide—a felled tree

about twenty yards to his left, a boulder maybe thirty yards, a tree she could consider climbing but didn't think she would, and an area of high grass. Next time he'd have her more prepared, but it was a good start.

“Four,” he said, folding his pants and shirt. “Five.” He tossed them into the car and breathed in the smell of fire and the brisk air that only hinted at Jane's scent. “Six.” He was ready to seek her out and loved that she was trying to hide. She'd gone quiet, and he realized she'd thrown several things around to throw him off. “Seven. I won't be tricked, Jane. I can fucking smell you.” He smiled as more rocks and sticks were thrown, and his heart pounded with the anticipation of finding and conquering his prey. The fucking love of his life knew he was into Primal play, and instead of being upset, she wanted him to claim her.

“Eight,” he said with a growl, then turned, knowing she was watching him. He felt her stare and gave her a show by flexing and rubbing a hand over his chest.

His eyes fell to the rocks and sticks nearby. She'd done a good job trying to throw him off. There was no organization to her pattern, but he'd find her. Something about her always drew him in, like she was a magnet calling to him in the dark. So, smiling, he turned to where he felt her. She had chosen the grass—*smart girl*. He could barely see her, but those eyes were so vibrant in the firelight.

“I see you, baby.” He watched her sink deeper into the grass. “You gonna let me come pin you in the grass, or do you want to try to get away?” When she didn't answer, he chuckled. “Make it back to the car before I can catch you, and I'll wake you up with my face between your legs the way you keep begging me to.” He knew she had a sleep kink—both she

and Ryder did. But he'd only done it if he knew she was faking sleep, but since she was exploring this with him, he'd open himself up to satisfy every one of her fantasies.

“Really?” she called out, her voice shaking.

He licked his lips to add to the mental picture for her. “Really, baby.” This wouldn't be a race she'd win, but she didn't have to know that he'd reward her anyway.

Quicker than he expected, she dashed out of the tall grass, heading the long way around. He figured it was because it had the most obstacles for him and might serve to slow him down.

But he was fast. He caught up to her in no time, his heart pumping when she let out a scream mixed with fright and anticipation. She darted around the boulder, slipping, narrowly avoiding his grab at her.

A growl worked its way up his throat when he managed to feel her hair on his fingertips, and she yelped, stopping opposite him on the other side of the waist-high rock.

Her eyes fell to the flat top, and she bit her lip as no doubt dirty thoughts ran through her mind.

“Giving up?” he asked, watching her breathe faster.

“Never,” she spat, breaking away.

But she didn't get even halfway to the car before he snatched her around the waist. His dick swelled with her screams as she kicked and clawed at his arms, but she moaned when he pinned her face down on the car trunk.

Her damn jeans were in the way, so he kept a hand on her neck and held her in place as he yanked at them. The fabric ripping excited him more as she tried to fight him off, but she giggled and wiggled her gorgeous ass at him once he got her

pants down far enough to expose her. He'd finish stripping her in a moment.

"Not fast enough, sweetheart. You're mine now," he said, sliding his fingers along her soaked core. He'd kept her thong on, surprised she was wearing one because she was such a cotton boyshorts girl. Unable to help himself, he leaned down and licked the dimple above her ass. She only had one and called herself lopsided or unfinished, but they always fought to kiss that minor imperfection.

"I'm yours," she said, still struggling beneath him. Her pants and shoes made it impossible for her to get leverage, and being stuck seemed to turn her on more.

"Mine," he said again, moving the thin fabric and pushing his sweats down to free his dick. He groaned, gliding the head along her slick entrance as he leaned over her.

He inhaled her scent and prevented her from pushing back into him. She was his to tease, so he shoved his sweats down the rest of the way and stoked himself, only letting her feel the head of his dick against her opening. She screamed at him.

"David, please."

He didn't give in, even though he wanted to. Instead, he ripped her shirt to expose her back and licked up her spine. She cried out as he licked, sucked, and nipped. When he made it to her neck with her scent and taste on his tongue, he growled in her ear, "Let me hear you purr, kitten."

She whimpered, reaching back to touch him, and he smiled when she gripped him at the base of his cock, letting out a soft sound that might as well have been a purr.

"I didn't say you could touch." He shoved her hand away and tugged her hips, so her ass stuck out for him. But before

thrusting in, he raised his free hand and bit into his wrist hard enough that it would bleed. He knew he wanted this for more than a fantasy. He wanted a bond with Jane until he could finally give her a child himself. And to his instincts, this was a way of further connecting with her and the baby growing in her womb. “Drink.” He held it to her mouth, groaning when she licked at the few drops that landed on her lips. “Fuck, Jane. You better suck before I hurt you.”

She moaned, latching on as he pushed into her. He didn’t let up like he usually would. While she held onto his wrist and sucked greedily, he went feral, fucking her so hard the car moved with his every thrust.

He’d come if he didn’t slow down. So, he freed his wrist, withdrew from her, flipped her around, and ripped her shirt the rest of the way off. *Beautiful.*

David tugged off her shoes and jeans and leaned down, inhaling her scent as he ran his nose along her skin.

She moaned as he sucked the skin over her heart, and her hands went into his hair. He was ready to bite, but he wanted more. He wanted his scent on her and to drown in hers.

So he moved lower, licking and pressing rough kisses to her stomach until he reached his prize. Jane had the prettiest, sweetest-tasting cunt.

Her shoves at his shoulder had him grinning because she still raised her hips, offering herself for him to feast on.

It was the extra consent he needed, and he smiled before forcing her legs apart more. She fought him, trying to kick and shove, but he pinned her thighs down and leaned close. How the fuck she could smell like a mixture of flowers and berries,

he didn't know, but he inhaled deeply, letting his nose brush against her sensitive clit.

“Shit,” she said, tensing. Her hands went to his shoulders, then his hair. She tugged, forgetting her role, then shoved and tried to pull him off.

Not giving her any further warning, he dragged his tongue from her entrance to her clit. She screamed, trying to fight free. She did what he wanted, slipping perfectly into the role of prey and mate. His pulse roared through his ears, but he was lost in her scent and taste. He wasn't going to stop until she gave more.

She let out the sexiest gasps and whines, still trying to escape his hold. But he loved fucking his girl with his mouth, and he was good at it. He growled against her, smiling when a tremble rolled through her body, and she clenched up.

“Fuck,” she screamed, pulling his hair as she came.

He drank in her essence, growling his approval as his dick hardened even more.

“Good girl,” he said, ripping his mouth away, smiling at how pink, wet, and swollen her pretty pussy was. “No breaks, Jane.”

She was already tired, but he knew she could handle more.

He pulled on her thighs, making her ass hang a little off the edge of the trunk. His eyes settled on her breast but then darted to her neck. The urge to mark her there was stronger, but he didn't even bother to ask about having a noticeable mark from him. This wasn't going to be just a hickey. He was going to break her skin.

So he lowered his gaze to her breast again, palming it roughly as he lined up to enter her. He wanted to be deep

inside her when he marked her. As soon as he pushed in with a gasp leaving him, he prepared to sink his teeth into her soft flesh.

“No, my neck,” she cried, tilting her head to the side. “Please. I want on my neck.”

Grinning, he licked at her breast. “You sure?”

“Yes.” She turned her head again.

“Such a good little mate,” he said, lifting her into his arms. She had the loveliest smile on her lips, and his male pride roared within his mind. She wanted to be his, to be claimed, and she wanted the world to see his claim.

He pushed in deeper, watching her eyes flutter closed. Nuzzling her neck, he inhaled again, groaning when her scent assaulted his senses. “So fucking sweet,” he said, licking where he’d bite. A shiver rolled through him, and he bit down, groaning when her blood touched his tongue.

She cried out and pulled his hair. He knew it hurt, but she was trying her hardest to pull him deeper into her. So he sucked harder and met her request as he carried her toward the boulder.

He’d tasted her blood before, and he’d fucked her while she bled on her period. She had no idea how much he fucking loved to thrust between her bloody thighs. To fuck her and pull out with his thighs and stomach painted red and pink. But this, marking her and drinking her blood, was a new level of pleasure.

Part of him wanted to continue drinking from her, but he ripped his mouth away and smiled at the bite mark. He’d only punctured the skin in two places that still seeped blood, but his full bite was clear.

She touched it, wincing, but he pushed her hand away and leaned down, licking it clean.

She fought him again, scratching his shoulders and pulling his hair, but she was whining.

He knew why. So, after inspecting the wound, he roughly grabbed her face and pressed his lips to hers. She melted for a few seconds, then tried to push him away again.

She was such a good girl.

He laughed, kissing her harder, and he only stopped when her lips were dark pink and swollen. “Lie back,” he ordered, lowering her onto the flat top of the boulder. He’d have to thank God later for making such a perfect rock and placing it there for him.

“Make me,” she said, her voice breathy like she was afraid, but he could feel her heels digging into his ass, urging him to fuck her.

Fuck, she’s perfect.

He grabbed her jaw and pressed another hard kiss to her lips, nipping them before he shoved her onto her back. A little cry escaped her with the chill of the rock kissing her skin, but he didn’t let her up.

He pinned her, pressing his forearm above her breast to have complete control. “Scream,” he said, pulling out of her before thrusting in hard.

The sweetest screams ripped free from her, and he almost grew drunk on the rhythmic hitches in each cry as he fucked her hard.

Jane always felt amazing and, even soaked like she was, he marveled at how her pussy could hug his dick so good.

“Fuck, Jane,” he groaned as she tightened around him. Her back arched, a strangled cry leaving her lips as he pulled another orgasm from her.

“Oh, fuck,” she chanted. “Oh, fuck. Oh, fuck.”

God, he wanted to make her lose her mind. He wanted to fuck her until she passed out, then wake her and fuck her again.

If only he hadn't been staring at her face when she said those three words with her eyes.

That gorgeous fucking look got him every time.

With a growl, he fucked her hard, not pulling or slowing to make things last. The little quirk in her lips made him want to bite her again. She knew he was close.

“You want it, don't you?” He snapped his hips forward faster and faster, pulling her down every time she scooted away. “Don't you?”

“Yes, I want it,” she rasped, clinging to his arm, her fingernails decorating his skin with little crescent moons. “Come in me, David.”

“Fuck,” burst past his lips. He loved when she said his name in that breathy way. His stomach tightened, and he let his own groans mix with hers as he raced toward his climax like an animal with only one goal. Mate his female.

Heat rolled down his spine, and he roared at the night sky, his cum releasing deep inside her. She clenched around him, screaming as another orgasm destroyed her.

He jerked his hips forward until he was pressed so deep he hit resistance. “Fuck, that was perfect.” He smoothed her hair

out of her face. She was sweaty and flushed and so fucking sexy.

Her exhausted, pretty smile sent even more of a thrill through him, and he continued with slow, deep thrusts so that she had everything from him. “Fuck,” he said, leaning down and kissing the bite on her neck.

“David,” she gasped, trying to free her arms, but he kept her down.

“I’ve got you, baby,” he said, breathing heavily as he kissed her blood-stained lips. “Be still. I’m going to clean you.”

“My leg,” she said, her lips trembling as much as the muscle spasm she was experiencing.

“You’re okay,” he said, massaging her thigh, thankful that even if she was exhausted and uncomfortable from the muscles in her body twitching uncontrollably, especially around his still pulsing dick, she kept a faint smile on her lips. “I kinda wanted that to last longer.”

She let out a sleepy laugh. “I don’t think I could take longer right now.”

“I know.” He smiled, letting go of her arms. “Relax for me.”

“Just stay in,” she said, tightening her thighs around him.

He smiled again but pried her legs apart. “I want to see,” he told her, hissing as he pulled out. Then, after letting go of his dick, he spread her so he could watch his cum spill out. “Keep me in,” he said, using his fingers to push his cum inside her again. She was still clenching, moaning sleepily as he got everything inside her. Only when he finished did he lean down and kiss her swollen cunt to make it all better.

She hummed, running her hands over her stomach. Even though he knew he'd not gotten her pregnant, he grinned at how she instinctually tried to urge her body to give him a child.

David pressed his hand over hers, smiling as she rubbed over her tummy. His dick was ready for round two, but he knew he needed to take it easy with her. So he pushed down his urges, reining in the desire to mate her again. It was time to return to the man she always thought he was. Well, the man he was because of her.

He leaned over her, nuzzling her neck. "You feel okay?"

"Mhm." She didn't open her eyes. "Wanna play again?"

Chuckling, he kissed her neck. "You need to take it slow. I might need to hide you away from your other boys so you can recover."

Her head moved from side to side. "I'm a goddess. I can always give more to my boys."

He chuckled again and kissed her neck where he'd bitten. "You are our goddess."

"Can you just put it back in for a few more seconds?" She peeked an eye open at him, a lazy smile ghosting her lips. "Please."

"Really?" He glanced at his dick and almost laughed because it was like it had heard her and was ready to get to work again.

"It felt so big," she said, moaning and wiggling. "I don't think I can handle hard fucking, but—"

He knew what she meant. Sometimes really intimate fuck sessions left her overstimulated, and she needed a little more

stimulation to counteract it all.

So, standing straighter, he spread her legs and tugged her to the edge of the rock. “Relax for me, okay?” His grip tightened on her leg and the base of his dick, and he eased in. “Fuck,” he groaned. His girl was truly a goddess to take his dick so good and still have a smile on her lips when he knew it hurt. “You want me to move or just stay still?”

She breathed faster and clutched his hand but reached up to his lips, tracing them with her fingers.

“Reminding yourself who I am?” he asked, easing out just a bit before slowly pushing in deep.

Her lips parted, and she arched her back. She knew he liked to make her come again and again—just like Ryder did—but he’d not expected her to be able to do so after being hunted.

“Beautiful, baby,” he said, dragging his hand over her breasts and down to her stomach again. “One day,” he promised, pressing his hand over her womb. Her eager nod had him lifting her.

“Wait, I’m not done feeling it.” She pouted at him but lazily looped her arms around his neck.

“I know.” He stayed sheathed, pulling her tight, so she didn’t bounce, and carried her to the grass. “You need me to get you off one more time.”

She hummed and kissed his neck.

“Good girl,” he cooed, kneeling. He kept her on him and leaned down until her back met the ground. “I’ve got you.”

“Not too hard,” she said, touching his cheek and closing her eyes, then she smiled. “A little hard is okay.”

Chuckling, he caged her beneath him and gave her a slow, deep fuck where he kept his body pressed over hers and only moved his hips. She nodded, her eyes still closed as he brought her closer and closer to that last precipice her body demanded she leap from.

“Oh, yeah,” she whispered, gasping. She buried her nose against the base of his throat. He usually didn’t push in so deep with her like this because she was so petite, but he understood why Ryder did it so often with her.

“Fuck, Jane,” he groaned, unable to stop himself from going faster.

“Oh, keep going.” She nipped at his throat. “Yes, oh, just like that.”

He kept everything the same, his breath hitching as she started sucking his neck, marking him back. “Shit, Jane, that’s going to make me come.”

She sucked harder. Then she bit him.

“Fuck.” He stayed mindful that she needed him not to fuck her into the ground, but he allowed himself to get lost in her one more time. It was fast, but he knew she wanted it that way. Jane loved hard and fast.

“Come in me, David,” she said, her lips brushing his tender neck.

She didn’t have to ask. “Fuck, baby, I’m coming,” he said, groaning loudly and thrusting in with each jerk of his dick, loving that his cum was precisely what she needed to unwind.

He eased back and dropped his forehead to her shoulder, sighing. “Need any more?”

She giggled, kissing his neck as he breathed heavily against her. “No. The tummy clench eased.”

“Tummy clench?” He knew what she meant, as he usually made it his mission to make her come again and again. He just didn’t know what it felt like for her. Easing back, he stared between them because he loved seeing his dick entering or leaving her.

Jane whined, holding him but nodding for him to keep pulling out. “Yes, my tummy clenches sometimes, even after I come, and I need to come again.” She gasped when he was out. “David, it’s bigger. What the fuck?”

He laughed, staring down at himself. “Excited, I guess. You okay?”

“Perfect.” She kept staring at his dick. “Put it back in.”

He laughed, shaking his head. “You look tired.”

“I am tired.” She still had not looked away from his dick.

“Kitten, it’s gonna hurt if I do.”

She shook her head, reaching between them to touch him. “Oh, wow. Have you been holding this back?”

“My dick is the same, baby.” He smiled, watching her finger slide over the rim of his dick.

She sighed, raising her hips to tease herself. “Mm, no. I think it’s bigger. It’s mate upgrades.”

David laughed, pushing himself up, kneeling instead of leaning over her. Then he gripped himself and smacked her swollen cunt with his dick, making her gasp. “So cute, baby.”

Instead of saying anything, she grinned and rolled to her stomach. Her sweet smile as she peered over her shoulder at

him held the wickedness she'd developed around him and the others over the past year. She swished her feet since he'd been between her thighs.

"You're spoiled," he said, slipping a hand under her belly to lift her. He didn't want to smash her face into the ground. "Come here."

"But I want that mate-dick."

He smiled, loving how she could turn hard fucking and biting her into something cute. "You already know I say when."

"Ooh, Alpha David is in charge."

"I'm always in charge with you." He hoisted her up as he stood and flipped her so he could toss her over his shoulder. She giggled, but he heard the fatigue. "It's bath time."

"Bath time?" She tried to wiggle free, but he smacked her ass.

"Be still so I can watch where I'm walking." He followed the overgrown path to the sound of water. Once he reached the hot spring, he lowered her but kept her in his arms, a hand under her ass.

She squeezed her legs around his waist as she looped her arms around his neck, but he felt her strength fading. "David, it's so pretty."

"I'm glad you like it." He waded into the water, smiling as she pressed sleepy kisses to his neck.

"My David," she whispered, even sleepier.

"That's right, baby. I'm your David." He peeked at her, noting her disappointed frown. "What's wrong?"

“I wanted more.” She blinked a few times, trying to keep her eyes open.

He’d noticed this about her since she became pregnant. She could be completely alert one moment and struggling to stay awake the next. “It’s okay.”

“I’ll do better next time.” She resumed kissing his neck. They were sloppy kisses, but he loved how she wouldn’t give up on showing him she loved him.

“You were perfect. Better than I ever dreamed.”

“My teeth weren’t strong enough,” she said, touching the tender spot on his neck.

“No?” He smiled at her. She’d bitten him hard but hadn’t broken the skin. It left him in awe of her for being brave enough to handle his bite. “I have some ointment at camp that I’ll put over your bites,” he said, gently cleansing her with the warm water.

“Don’t let any fishies swim up my girly bits.” She yawned and leaned her head back. “I’m sorry I’m so sleepy. You can stick it in. I like sleeping with dick.”

“I’ll take care of your girly bits.” He let her float and held the small of her back as he used his free hand to glide over every inch of her body. Every urge to conquer and mate her got carried away with the passing stream, but he knew and was happy that Jane accepted and wanted the same things. He could share everything about himself with her and knew they’d grow closer—and eventually, he’d make a baby with her.

“Maybe we’ll have them close together,” she said.

“You reading my mind?” He grinned and continued bathing her. “And we’ll see. I can be patient.”

“I think I want them close together. I don’t have enough friends who will have babies to play with mine. I mean, there’s Diane, but—”

He kissed her when her words trailed off. She was so brave to smile every time she saw his ex, especially since Adam and Diane had hooked up and would soon have their child. “Shh, I’m only yours. Always have been.”

She nodded and let him kiss her again. “Having babies close will be best. They’ll have each other.”

His heart broke for her. “Do you want to talk about Wendy?”

Even in the dark and with her eyes closed, he saw the tears. “No,” she said with a little croak.

“Okay.” He knew intense sex brought out many emotions, and his girl had so much going on. “Try to sleep, Jane. I’ll get you dry, and we’ll sleep. We’ll spend tomorrow relaxing and one more night, all right?”

“I want to talk to you.” She pried her eyes open and reached for his face. Of course, he gave her what she wanted, pulling her close so he could lean down and kiss her. “I miss you.”

“I’m here,” he promised.

“Forever,” she whispered, losing her battle to stay awake.

Smiling even though his heart ached for her and his adrenaline was fading, he finished cleaning her and added to her pledge. “Beyond forever, baby.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

11 weeks

“Well?” Jane did a slow spin to show off her outfit for Sin. He was her chaperone for the night. After spending the previous day relaxing, exploring the park, and camping with David another night, she was ready to see Ryder for his fight. Of course, David had wanted to take her, but his coach had called and asked him to come to dinner.

She knew it had everything to do with her, even if David said it didn't. But he'd called in backup to keep her from blaming herself for any problems he faced with his team because of her. That perfect replacement and escort to the fight was the wildest of her *wolves*.

Sin lowered his phone and grinned. “Hot damn, Little Moon. He might make this his fastest fight just so he can get to you.” He stood, pocketing his phone as he circled her. “Black and gold.” He lightly touched the gold chain she wore. It held the black feather pendant Ryder had given her for her eighteenth birthday. “And a touch of silver.” He gestured to Luc's collar. “Where's David's representation?”

She moved the choker down just a smidge to reveal David's mark.

“Damn, he went savage on you. About fucking time.” He took her hand and pulled her after him. “Let me get you to the god of death you call King Daddy before he decides I’ve run off with you.”

“Oh yes, let’s call him a god to get his head even bigger.” She laughed when he shot her a dirty smile. “Stop. I meant his ego.”

“You meant his ego and his dick.” His boisterous laugh suddenly mixed with Savaş’ and Archer’s; she hadn’t known they were in her apartment.

“Jane would never complain about either growing,” Savaş said, pushing off the wall.

“Shut up.” She shoved him, but her eyes connected with Archer’s pale blue pair. She didn’t know why, but she felt nervous around him. His gaze was different as it slid up and down her body. *A tickle*. She could feel his eyes on her, giving the lightest tickle.

He smiled, and it wasn’t just that mischievous, flirty grin he usually gave her—though she couldn’t tell what emotion he was feeling either. “Lookin’ good, mama.” He shouldn’t have sounded so sexy, but that teasing tone was absent when he’d said it, replaced by a slightly husky, rough one.

Sin laughed, pulling her from whatever spell Archer had cast. “Boy, don’t call her mama in that voice.” He dramatically rubbed her arms. “You gave her goosebumps.”

His eyes lit up, dropping to where Sin touched. “We should head out.”

Savaş shot Archer a glare and reached for her hand. “You look pretty, Tex. Ryder’s gonna love it.”

Jane let herself be led out, but she swore she felt that tickle along her spine the entire time Archer followed them.



“How’s he been today?” Jane asked Than. The others had gone to get drinks, insisting she stay put in the stands rather than getting bumped around with the crowd. She didn’t even want to think about how much they would shelter her once she started showing.

Than didn’t look at her, but he smirked. “Moody. I get what he’s been trying to do, but some souls are not meant to part.”

She sighed, leaning against him as she rubbed her butt. “I didn’t ask him to stay away. But it was fun to have time with Luc and David.”

“Which is why he stayed away.”

“You’re making me feel bad.” She groaned, rubbing her bottom again.

“I don’t mean to. Just preparing you so you can talk to him.” He eyed her as she continued fidgeting. “Roughing it in the woods took its toll, I see.”

She rolled her eyes but appreciated Than’s efforts. He was the main one Ryder seemed okay with letting in, and she knew he always supported Ryder even if her bad boy didn’t want to talk things out with him. “I’ll talk to Ryder, thanks. And David is comfy to rough it with. He took me to some hidden places, and I had so much fun. It’s just—well, you try wearing a vinyl dress without panties after so many days of wild sex.”

“A bit too much info there,” he muttered, removing his jacket and gesturing for her to stand. “Try to keep your juices to yourself.”

“Than.” She gasped, smacking his arm. “I can’t believe you.”

He smiled and arranged the jacket. “You’re the one who brought up wild sex. And when you talk to Ryder, make sure he knows you appreciate everything he did so you’d focus on the others. He’s just like you sometimes—second guessing every decision when it comes to your wellbeing.” He glared at her thigh. “Jane, really? Why are you already wet?”

Her face went red as she wiped at it. “It’s water! I’m not wet like that. I had a bottle in the car.”

“And yet the moment she sees my brother, she’ll say something entirely different,” said Archer. He smirked as he stopped beside her and held out a towel. “He might’ve spied on you and knew you would need something soft.”

Than snatched the towel from him and placed it over his jacket, but Jane couldn’t look away from Archer’s profile when he came to stand beside her, his strong shoulder brushing against hers as the others piled in. *Christ, when did I start thinking about Archer’s strength?*

“Stop staring,” he muttered, looking forward, but there was no denying the flirty smile he wore. “Sit.”

She did, gaping when he smiled wider. “I was already on my way down.”

“Mhm,” was all he said as he sat too.

“Ryder said to give you these,” Sin said, reaching around Archer to hand her a bottle of Dr Pepper and a white calla lily. “Romantic asshole.”

Jane swooned, holding it to her chest as she scanned the crowd. “Aw, he does love me.” The guys laughed, but she was in her little heaven while looking for her bad boy. “Why won’t he let me see him before the fight?”

“Because if he saw you, he’d end his fight too fast and fuck you in the octagon,” Archer said softly so that perhaps only she could hear him, but he made a show of adjusting himself. He side-eyed her and smiled. “Don’t tell him, but I’m hard at just the thought of watching.”

Her mouth went dry, and she peeked at Than. He was talking to Damon, but she had a feeling he’d heard. “You’re asking me to keep lots of secrets from him,” she whispered to Archer. “I don’t like it.”

“Oh, but you do.” He chuckled, and again, it wasn’t quite the same teasing sound she was used to. It made her stomach squeeze and her skin tickle.

She sucked in a breath and forced herself to focus on the caged octagon. “Stop.”

“Why?” He brushed against her again. “You want Tercero back, right?”

“You know what I mean,” she hissed. Her eyes bugged when his quiet laugh sent that increasingly stimulating tickle to her core. “What the fuck?” She squeezed her legs together, embarrassed and upset with herself more than anything.

He glanced at her, then dropped his eyes to where she ached. “Want me to sit somewhere else?”

She couldn’t believe what had happened. She was turned on, and it was Ryder’s brother that she was getting this way for. Yes, she was with Luc and ... Tercero, and they were also

Ryder's brothers, but Archer was her buddy. This wasn't supposed to happen.

He leaned close to whisper in her ear, "I'll find you in a few days and take you to Tercero."

"Archer, what ...?" She didn't know what to say. "Why am I ...?"

"Pretend it's just the excitement of having not seen Ryder." He took a deep breath before releasing it, blowing warm air across her ear. "But I'm not going to pretend. I'm going to think about this—you—all fucking night."

She couldn't breathe. She couldn't move. But she felt him leaving and then Sin taking his place.

"What's got you flushed?" Sin asked, touching her hot cheeks with the back of his fingers.

"Nothing," she blurted, sucking in air and looking around for Archer.

Sin watched her and shook his head. "Damn, girl. You better be careful with Archer—Ryder will kill him."

Jane jerked back, bumping into Than. "Sorry."

They all gave her knowing looks. She wanted to cry. "Don't look at me like that. I didn't mean to."

Than placed a comforting hand on her shoulder and squeezed. "Relax. It's nothing he's not already aware of."

"What?" She panicked, looking for signs of Ryder. The last thing she wanted was for him to be angry with another of his brothers. She couldn't be the reason he lost them.

Damon sighed loudly. "Breathe, little queen. As soon as you see Ryder, it'll slip away. Figure out what's happening

when you're not supposed to cheer for your boy.”

She lifted her drink to her cheek and breathed in deeply. *Ryder knows? How the hell does he know something I don't?* “Is this because of my pregnancy hormones?”

Sin laughed. “You'd have dropped to your knees or shoved his hand between your legs if your hormones were out to play.”

“Sin,” Than chided. “Enough.”

Just then, the lights dimmed, and the spotlights on the octagon glowed brighter. The crowd went crazy as Ryder's fighting name, *The King Reaper*, appeared on the giant monitor above the cage.

Then Jane saw him. He'd been told by the men who organized the fights to be more dramatic with his entrances, but Ryder didn't listen to anyone.

He didn't have to do anything special. He was already dark and mysterious, and those green eyes seemed to glow under the harsh lights as he sought her out.

She took him in—sighing at the sight of his body. He was pumped, showing off his impressive form to the world.

Tingles slid over her lips, and she gasped before screaming like every other woman in the building.

“Oh, fuck,” Sin muttered.

Jane realized something was wrong when Ryder's eyes narrowed on her as she cheered before shifting to the stands, searching. “Oh my gosh. Did he see Archer with me?”

“He looks pissed, so maybe,” Sin said. “He probably noticed him and the blush on your cheeks. You get a look about you when you're hot for someone.”

Jane gulped. Was getting turned on by Archer considered cheating? She'd almost creamed her thighs from his laugh earlier, and she was going to sneak around with him to find out Tercero's secrets. "I'm so stupid."

"No, it was bound to happen." Than gripped her by the arm and hauled her up. "Come on."

"Where are you taking me?" She stumbled after him, grateful that Damon was following.

"To him before he kills the other fighter or blows his fight to find his brother." Than shoved people away and gave the guard a frightening glare. "This is his woman. He needs to see her."

The man shook his head, but someone behind him shoved him aside.

Of course, Ryder would toss security around like ragdolls. He stood there, staring down at her like a demon about to claim her soul, and she had no time to react when he reached out, gripped her chin, and pressed his lips to hers.

The roar was deafening, but she melted as he hoisted her up. He pulled her legs around his waist but kept a hand covering her ass. That didn't mean he kept anything modest because he had no trouble sliding a finger deep inside her.

She instantly came all over his taped fingers and didn't give a damn that the whole building saw. She cried out against his mouth like they were alone in bed.

Ryder growled, sounding like a monster as he ended their kiss. "You're the deadliest fucking creature alive." He kissed her once more, then lowered her to her feet. "If you get hot for him again"—he fixed her dress—"I'm fucking you in front of him, then killing him. Understand?"

“She understands,” Than said, steadying her. “They’re calling you.”

Ryder grunted, licking his fingers before heading back to the cage.

“That’ll give Luc a run for his money.” Damon laughed, helping her walk. “I think he liked the dress, by the way.”

She tried to stand, but tiny tremors still scattered through her body. “Oh, gosh. My legs. He’s gonna kill Archer.”

Than wrapped an arm around her waist, hoisting her until he carried her up the stairs. “You don’t know how to live the simple life, do you?”

“Ah, let her enjoy it,” Damon rumbled with a wicked smile. “She made him feel like a king just now. All because his brother got her horny.”

Jane peered behind her, biting her lip as the other fighter circled Ryder. The man was taller and more muscular, but a sadistic grin formed on her boyfriend’s lips. He wasn’t worried. He never was.

Sin was laughing by the time she settled next to him. “Fucking hell, Jane! You pushed him over the edge.”

“Shut up.” She snatched the towel up and wiped her thighs.

He laughed louder. “Honey, he wants everyone to know he’s King Daddy. Look, he’s cleaning his hands so that fucker doesn’t get any of you.”

Jane focused and felt her cheeks burn. Ryder was ignoring everything, his eyes on her while someone squirted hand sanitizer on his hands.

He looked pissed as he rubbed the sanitizer until a smirk pulled at her lips. Then he turned to face his opponent, his smile triumphant.

She tried to process everything that had just happened. Even when the fight started, she couldn't focus on it. Archer was going to help her with Tercero. Archer had made it clear that he was going to think about her—all fucking night.

And Ryder was onto him. He was onto her. He'd kill Archer if she got turned on again.

It was serious, not just a caveman threat. Ryder really could kill a man. She'd seen his opponents go down in the past—how easily he could end their lives—and he was beating the absolute fuck out of the huge guy he fought.

She screamed, covering her mouth when the man landed a punch to his side.

Ryder didn't even flinch. He grinned, nodding for the guy to try again.

“Oh, he's having fun now,” Than said.

Ryder let himself get hit, then countered with so much devastation that even the bloodthirsty crowd had to look away.

Never Jane. She watched it all. Every spray of blood. Every impact from Ryder's fists. Every cry from the crowd. She bathed in it, just like her bad boy did.

“Be honest with Ryder, Jane,” Than said when Ryder's back was to them. “He won't hesitate to hurt his brother.”

“Especially his brothers,” Sin agreed.

“How didn't I know anything?” She pressed her hands against her temples, torn between cheering, passing out, and running to hide from everyone.

“You’re a bit innocent about certain things.” Than shrugged. “We’ve known for months.”

“But Archer’s my friend.” She was so glad she had her guys to talk to. She didn’t know what she felt, but it was intense and coming on fast. “Is this because I lost Tercero?”

Sin let out a whistle and clapped as Than continued talking.

“Don’t let yourself get stuck doubting what you’re feeling. Maybe Tercero fucking up was the push for Archer, and one needed to help you look beyond your group. But Ryder’s going through a lot—so I mean it, be up front if you pursue things with Archer. Tell him if you decide to sneak around together. Even if you lie to Archer, never lie to Ryder.”

“Isn’t Archer afraid?” She didn’t want Ryder fighting his brothers. She’d seen them fight throughout the years, and it always hurt her heart. But Archer was such a clown around her. Well, they did have deep talks a lot, and he had been there when she felt like she couldn’t see the truth about their love for her. She just never considered he might include himself. “Was it all an act with him joking and being my friend?”

“Just talk to them,” Than said, clapping and shouting encouragement as if Ryder needed it.

She fell into a trance, watching her bad boy. He was like the perfect killing machine. His fights were always different. He changed how long fights went and how much of an absolute monster he became, but she thought he must have total control over how everything played out. Even the hits he took. She was almost positive they were twenty percent for show and eighty percent for her to baby him once he was done.

Two loud thuds sounded, and she froze as she watched the man collapse. Ryder followed, punching him until the referee was brave enough to shove Ryder off.

“That was fast.” Than took her by the arm again. “That means he wants you. Now.”

Jane didn’t argue and let him guide her through the mass of crazy fans pushing to get a closer look at Ryder. Thankfully, Damon, Than, and Sin were huge guys. They had no trouble getting her to the gate, and she knew she was on her own when her bad boy got close enough to grab her.

Steam rose from his body, making him look like a demon from Hell, but she didn’t fear him. “You didn’t put on a long show.”

His eyes never left her face. He didn’t even acknowledge the announcement that he’d won, and before she knew it, she was seated on the bench in the locker room. Thankfully this new place wasn’t as trashy as the first place she’d seen him fight. She still felt he deserved way better than underground fighting, but it wasn’t her place to tell him to find somewhere else to beat the shit out of men and win lots of money.

Ryder tossed her scissors and held out his hand. “Cut this tape off me.”

She’d done it for him several times before, but her hands shook as she cut him free.

“You’ve never been like this around me,” he said, and the gravelly way he spoke made a shiver roll through her body when he continued. “Not even when we first started up together.”

Taking a deep breath, she was able to steady her hands. “I’ve always been comfortable around you. Even when you

were a mysterious asshole.”

The corner of his mouth tugged up. *Damn sexy prick.* “So it’s him you’re worried about.”

It wasn’t a question, but she looked him in the eye when she was done and nodded. “I can watch you fight anyone but your brothers and David.”

“So you expect me to be okay with this?” He moved toward the locker with his fighting name on it and took out fresh clothes. “I give you space for shit to grow stronger with Luc and David, miss the fuck out of you, and then I have to see your flushed cheeks and glassy eyes right before my fight—yet it’s for my punk-ass brother I saw sneaking away?” He towered over her, tilting her chin up so he could stare into her eyes. “When did this start? Is that why he was over to see you the other day?”

“Ryder, I don’t even know what started!” She grabbed his wrist, afraid he’d pull away. He didn’t, but there was nothing sweet in his eyes. “Yes, he came by the other morning. He found me crying in Tercero’s room, and I realized he’d known he’d leave me. Then he took me to our bed, hugged me, and let me cry. I didn’t want to cry in front of any of you—especially you—and I think he knew that.” She breathed fast, waiting for him to interrupt, but he was patient, so she went on. “He told me he knows what Tercero does and would show me if I wanted to get him back.” She swallowed, then added, “But he said not to tell you.”

“And you weren’t going to,” he said, releasing her chin. “When did the other shit start?”

“Nothing has started!”

He laughed, a dark, piss-yourself kind of laugh. “Babe, you were soaked when I slid my hand between your legs, and it wasn’t from me.”

Just hearing him talk about his hand between her legs had her squeezing her thighs together. “You think I learned to stop being hot for you after four nights apart?” She lifted her chin. “Just because I had a good time with David doesn’t mean I’m not pissed and hurt about what you did at the restaurant, by the way.”

“Fine,” he said, still wearing that cruel smile, “you were a little hot for me—like always. But something started between you and Archer. I want to know when.”

She gripped the feather pendant she wore and shrugged. “I only really noticed something when they picked me up tonight. I guess you can tell me when something started for him. Seems you and the others know plenty I don’t.”

His eyes fell to where she held his necklace, sighing. “You really are blind, babe. Or maybe I’m a dick who can’t stand when you look away from me, so I make sure I have your attention?”

“You kinda always have my attention,” she admitted, standing and heading for the table with medical supplies. After grabbing everything she’d need to clean a wound, she returned to him. He had sat down where she’d been, but his eyes were on her. “Always, Ryder.”

He motioned for her to sit in front of him. “And it’s fucked shit up for anyone else who wants a chance with you.”

“No.” She put everything on the bench, then grinned and hiked her dress up so she could straddle it. “You just claimed me before the others. You didn’t fuck up anything.”

“Fuck, Jane.” He grabbed her hips before she could sit and made her straddle him instead.

She smirked, wrapping her arms around his neck. He was sweaty and a little bloody, but she fucking loved being held by him after he’d destroyed another man. “Hey.”

He chuckled but squeezed her ass, making her shiver as his strong fingers dug into her flesh. “Don’t hey me. We’re in an argument.”

“I don’t think we are.” She tightened her legs around him and played with his sweaty hair. “But you’re hurting my feelings—you haven’t even complimented my dress.”

He shifted an arm under her ass to free his other hand and hold the back of her neck. “You knew how I felt about this dress the moment I looked at you. Come here.” He pulled her closer and gave her what she needed—his kiss.

Oh, he was always magic. She whimpered against him, trying to mold them together. He let her. Of course he let her, deepening their kiss as she rubbed herself on him.

Her bare pussy kissed his stomach, and he hissed. “Get yourself off.” He jerked her against his body, laughing when she moaned. “That’s right. I’m the one who gives you good dick. No matter what tricks that little bastard has up his sleeve.”

“Oh, please don’t be mad at him. He didn’t mean anything. I didn’t even know.”

“He knew. Now make it up to me. Come, angel. All over me.”

The tingling ache at her core intensified, and she became frantic, grinding herself against his abs. He held her tighter

and kissed her harder, shoving his tongue in, worshiping her the way he did whenever he put his face between her legs.

“Ryder, please.” She kept moving—whimpering and gasping. She was so close she could cry.

Growling in that almost inhuman way he sometimes did, he stood, bringing her with him as he reached between them. “I’m wearing a fucking cup. Pull me out.”

“No, put me down.” She wiggled out of his hold, shoved him against a locker, and pushed his fighting shorts down his muscular thighs. He was bulging against the athletic cup, making it easier to free him. Still, he hissed, grabbing her hair when she knelt and took him in her mouth.

“Fuck.” He tightened his hold on her hair but didn’t shove her down. “Dammit, I don’t want to hurt you.”

His concern made her moan. Her bad boy would always make sure she was okay.

She looked up at him, locked her eyes on his, and went deeper. It wasn’t easy. He was too big, but she took him deeper than ever.

“Okay, you’re okay,” he said, giving her a tentative thrust. She gagged, but he praised her and kept going when she gripped his ass to keep herself steady. “That’s my girl.” He shoved back in, thrusting harder and faster until his hips were jerky and his grunts loud. Then he yanked her into his arms, turned them, and pushed inside her.

They moaned, clinging to each other. It felt so amazing to be joined with him again. The best part was his smiling face as it inched closer to hers.

Finally, he kissed her and resumed thrusting into her. It always hurt, but she loved it, and thankfully she always got so

wet that she didn't just cry from pain. Jane unsnapped the button on his jockstrap, freeing him.

He took advantage of it, hoisting her up so he would hit that spot inside her over and over again.

“Fuck, yes.” She threw her head back, utterly consumed by him.

“See what you do to me?” he growled, holding his hand over her neck. His eyes flared though—he'd seen David's bite. “You let him mark you?” His thrust became painful. “Breathe,” he ordered, easing back but not letting go of her neck. “He better have asked permission.”

Jane could only nod. Her bad boy was jealous, even though he'd been the one to mark her in a way the others had not.

“You realize now I've got to make you smell like me again.” It was a threat, and she felt all tingly that he got this way about her. She loved that he was thinking of her and encouraging more private time with the others, but she'd not want Ryder Godson to be less intense about her. “I see you fucking smiling,” he said mockingly. He pressed his body against hers and breathed into her neck, opposite David's bite. “You like when I'm an asshole, don't you? You like when I drown you in everything I am—so you remember I'm King Boyfriend.”

“King Daddy,” she rasped, hanging onto his shoulders and trying to keep enough oxygen in her lungs. Ryder had that ability to fuck the life out of her.

“That's my girl,” he groaned, easing back enough that she could breathe without his weight crushing her. “You're mine. All fucking night.”

“Oh yes, please,” she begged. Only Ryder could make jealousy so freaking sexy and yet cute and terrifying at the same time.

Just as he slammed into her hard, he froze.

“What’s wrong?” she asked, tightening her leg around him as fury burned in his eyes.

He pressed her against the locker, caging her there, then glared over his shoulder. “Who the fuck is there?”

She could barely focus on what he’d said, but the rage flaring out of him in waves had her trembling. She feared he’d do to someone else that would have devastating consequences. She wasn’t willing to lose her bad boy. “Ryder, relax.”

He didn’t respond to her and kept her hidden, growling as he kept his eyes on whoever was there. “I see you, motherfucker. You’ve got one second to get out of here.”

The sound of someone running reached her ears until the locker room door slammed.

“Fuck,” Ryder snapped, turning toward her. All the violence in his entire body vanished when he looked into her eyes, and his dangerous tone softened. “Sorry, baby. We need to stop. I need to find that piece of shit—I think he recorded us.”

She kissed him, whimpering quietly even though it hurt as he eased out. “Why’d you let him leave then?”

After fixing her dress, he carefully set her on the bench and reached for his phone, speaking as he typed out a text. “Because I didn’t want him to see more of you.”

The door banged open while Ryder tugged on some pants. He watched Than, Damon, and Sin drag in a man wearing all

black.

Ryder moved, blocking her view of the guy. “That was fast.”

Than took his phone out of his pocket and sighed. “Not fast enough.”

Damon tossed Ryder a phone. “He streamed the two of you on the big screen.”

Her stomach dropped. “The big screen over the octagon?”

Ryder went quiet, looking through the phone as sounds of their interrupted fuck session filled the room.

“People were going nuts,” Sin said solemnly. “We couldn’t figure out how to turn off the monitor—then we saw this fuck hauling ass out of here.”

Ryder looked at the guy, and she almost felt bad for him. Almost. “Did you send this anywhere else?”

Than shoved the guy to his knees. He was their age and looked like a classic, clean-cut college boy.

“Fuck you,” he spat. “You cost the fucking team over this bitch. Now everyone can see what a pussy you are. Thirsting after a whore who fucks anyone with a dick.”

Jane held Ryder by the waist. He wasn’t lunging at the guy, which was probably a bad sign. He was too calm. Calm Ryder was calculated and made people hurt.

“Brother?” It was Archer. He strolled into the room, passed the guy who was possibly a member of his and David’s team, and came to stand in front of Ryder. “I know how you want to deal with this, but it’ll get messy.”

Ryder stared at Archer in that emotionless way of his. It should terrify her, but she understood that he loved her and wanted to protect her in every way. “Then prove yourself. You know what I expect.” When Archer nodded, Ryder grunted and took her by the hand. “Come on, babe.”

Jane peeked at Archer, but he didn’t look her way. He only gestured for the guys to leave the player—or maybe just a crazy fan—where he was. She didn’t want Archer to get in trouble. Ryder had already quit the team, but Archer was just a first-year quarterback. He could lose everything.

Of course, Ryder didn’t seem to care about that. He merely gathered his clothes and led her and the others out. “How much went out?” he asked Than.

“Enough.”

Jane sighed, pulling Ryder to a stop. “Does it show my face?”

Instead of answering, he held out the phone to let her see the video. “I’m covering you most of the time, but there’s no hiding your mouth around my dick.”

Her face burned, but she watched the video, turning it down when her screams greeted her. The asshole had gotten the whole thing, even their conversation about Archer could be heard. “At least I don’t look fat,” she muttered, trying to lighten the mood. She didn’t want Ryder to go crazy on everyone. There was only so much Luc’s money could buy, and they didn’t need Luc paying off people that Ryder beat the shit out of.

“You look hot,” Ryder said.

Damon squeezed her shoulder and nodded for Than and Sin to follow him down the hall. “We’ll do what we can to

make sure anyone who recorded deletes it.”

“Thank you,” she said, watching them leave as Ryder started to pull on a shirt and shoes.

“He sent that to people, babe,” he said. Too calm. “Those people will share it.”

“Well, it doesn’t show much of my body. It’s mostly you, and who’s gonna complain about that?”

He shot her a glare. “I thought you’d be as mad as I am about someone seeing you.”

“Ryder, you used to swim naked just to get my attention—I’m sure there are lots of videos out there of you.”

“Pervert,” he said, shaking his head. He knew she was mad—she was just as possessive about him, but he was letting her pretend. “So, what? I’m supposed to be all right with this whole fucking building seeing you? Seeing us?”

“It sucks.” She knew her eyes were watering, but she couldn’t help it. She liked when people knew one of her guys was touching or fucking her, but that she’d consented to. They also, in their subtle ways, agreed to watch. It was an unspoken thing—a tilt of the head, a smile, or a wink. This was different. “But it’s not like I haven’t been made out to be a stupid hoe before.”

He growled, standing and coming to her. His hands framed her face, and he leaned down for a long kiss. “Breathe,” he said, straightening. “You’re my adorable hoe, remember?” His gorgeous eyes kept her from losing her shit. People had seen her, and she had to figure out how to get through it. “We took all the power of that fucking word. Now it’s ours. It’s cute and you own it. Right?”

She nodded, sniffing like a damn baby. He was the one to use the word she feared being labeled and made it something cute between them. It was his way of telling her that people would always judge her and call her names because she was his—because she wasn't only his.

“Babe, I've fucked you in front of the guys before.” He kept her face warm, sliding his thumbs along her cheeks. “Just because they didn't see your pussy or tits doesn't mean that they didn't know my hands were there, pampering the fuck out of you while I buried myself deep inside you. And you fucking loved it. You loved that they knew what we were doing.”

He grinned, shifting, so his thighs cradled her hips. “Other than your pretty mouth wrapped around me and your gorgeous ass in my hands, there weren't too many good shots of you. I'll kill anyone who exploits us, but let's own it here. I'm not embarrassed. That video was hot as fuck. I already AirDropped it to myself.”

She laughed, wrapping her arms around his waist. “You sexy pervert.”

“You like it.” He leaned down, kissing her forehead. “Wanna go make a bigger scene with me?”

Her cheeks hurt from smiling so hard. “I feel so freaking emotional. So exposed. Why does it matter if he broadcasted us when we do it anyway?”

“Because, babe, you control who sees and when you want to be seen. That's how it's supposed to be. Both of us are okay with it. This fucker took our choice away, but we'll get it back.” His lips captured hers so suddenly she almost collapsed, but he hooked an arm around her and hoisted her up. He didn't wrap her around him, just kept her legs dangling

as he positioned a hand on her ass to hold her eye level. “Come on, Sweet Jane. I’m ready to finish what we started.”

Damn this boy. He knew how to complete her in the best way. “Show me off, Ryder.”

His grin turned downright filthy and violent. “There’s my goddess.”

The door creaked as Than propped it open, his gaze shifting between them. “Fuck, you’re going to make a scene, aren’t you?”

“As if we don’t cause one every time we’re together,” Ryder said proudly as he approached the door. He peeked behind him when a yell sounded but didn’t appear fazed. It wasn’t Archer’s.

Than held up his phone with the camera on. “Your eyeliner is smeared.”

She took the phone, giggling as Ryder’s smile widened. He lowered her to the floor so she could stand.

“She might’ve choked a bit,” he told Than.

“You think?” Than rolled his eyes as Ryder chuckled. “I’m surprised you didn’t poke her eye out.”

“Than,” she said, swatting him but loving they were joking about it.

“I’m just saying, for a moment, I didn’t know if I should look for how to turn the monitor off or run to save you.”

Ryder moved behind her, ducking to watch her fix her horribly smeared makeup. “I’m careful with my girl. She knows how to handle me.” He kissed her cheek. “Kinda digging the dicked down look you’ve got going on, babe.”

She glared at him through the phone. “You were gonna let me go out there like this. Dickhead.”

He grinned like a damn shark. “I see beauty, Sweet Jane. My girl pushed herself to give me her pretty mouth, and I know it must be hard to take me. But I won’t apologize for showing off how you give me every part of yourself.”

Than chuckled, taking his phone back. “You left her a little dreamy with that one.”

“I make her tingle,” Ryder gloated as he rubbed his hands over her sides. “Come on.”

Jane took his hand and did her best to keep up with his long strides. Of course, he noticed and slowed, but she didn’t want to draw attention to her struggle to walk straight.

“Oh, Bambi,” he teased, releasing her hand to hold her around the waist. He somehow managed to support all her weight and still make it look like she walked on her own. “You went too long without King Daddy’s dick, huh? I gotta break you back in.”

Her cheeks burned, and her anxiety increased as they approached the exit. She could hear the crowd—the yells and insults. They sounded like they’d been holding a contest for the girls who held up signs for each round, but her and Ryder’s video was all the buzz.

“Hey,” he called down to her when they reached the opening of the arena. When she was brave enough to look up at him, he wore that mask of cold indifference that he did for the world. “Let me handle this my way, okay? Remember when you see them cower that they’re cowering from you too. I’m yours, and they will realize they fucked with the monster you have wrapped around your little finger. I’ll destroy their

whole fucking world just for you, Sweet Jane. Now embrace us.”

“I do,” she said. He was her warrior, her shield, her sword. They all were in their different ways. Luc kept her on equal ground with him and pushed her to face her fears, while David encouraged her to be brave and do things by herself. Tercero used to come to her in her darkest of hours and remind her that she could take his hand and he’d feed her support however she needed it ... but Ryder was different. He was an unbreakable, destructible force should she ever call on him. No matter if it were right or wrong, he’d stand between her and any threat.

Her bad boy gave her a long look, then nodded and pulled her behind him. They stepped into the spotlight.

The crowd’s cheers quieted, and many scrambled out of their way as he headed toward the table reserved for him. It was next to the announcer’s table because they’d wanted him available to comment on his fight before the required afterparty, but he’d not cared enough to come back out sooner.

Ryder ripped the mic from the table, then calmly addressed the crowd. “Enjoy the show?” When no one spoke, he repeated himself. “I asked if you enjoyed the show?”

Hesitantly, people began to clap. A few brave individuals even whistled, then a larger group of idiots let out degrading catcalls.

His expression remained the same as they got louder, but she felt a change roll over him. It was suffocating as his presence intensified so much that it made it hard to remember to breathe. So she didn’t startle the way every damn person in the crowd did when he yelled, “Shut the fuck up!” He waited for their frightened eyes to focus on him, then continued, “This is my girlfriend—the mother of my unborn child.” He

pulled her in front of him. “This is my goddess,” he added in a darker tone that had her smiling at their fearful faces. “Someone disrespected her, and you cheered for it.”

No one uttered a word. No one blinked. They stared wide-eyed as Ryder put a hand over her tummy.

His tone was threatening, but she was comforted by it. “If any of you share footage of me worshiping my goddess, I will know—and it will not end well for you. You look the other fucking way if you stumble upon us. And you delete her from your fucking phones. Am I understood?”

He didn’t wait for anyone to respond. He tossed the mic onto the table, sat at his reserved table, and pulled her onto his lap.

The two announcers scrambled to fix their mics as the lights changed. The DJ, set up on the octagon, laughed nervously. “Uh, I guess it’s time to party. Congratulations, King Reaper and his Goddess.” The DJ wore a LED mask with mismatched eyes and a distorted smile. “I dedicate this show to you both.”

“Ooh,” Jane said, snuggling into Ryder and loving that he used his hand to cover her ass as he pulled her closer. “He should get a raise. He called me your goddess.”

Ryder nodded at the DJ but kissed her head. “I’ll give him a nice tip.”

The music started, but she didn’t pay any attention. She was too busy peeking at the crowd. They’d transitioned from terrified to drunken and likely drugged excitement, but none came close. She had a feeling the dark energy pulsating around Ryder kept them back. She oddly found comfort in it when her bad boy created it. “Magic,” she whispered, kissing his jaw.

His fingers flexed on her ass, and he exhaled. The tingles bloomed, and she smiled as they raced within her until they reached his spot. “Mm,” he hummed. It sounded and felt like the contented purr of a beast. “What do you say, Bambi?” His hand slid around her ass cheek, and he squeezed, showing off how well she fit in his hand. “Do you have it in you to be my Sweet Jane in front of everyone, on our terms?”

Her breathing sped up. She took in the wave of bodies dancing and several people making out. She spied her wolves and demons—they had stayed close, but she’d noticed them roughing up several people and even breaking phones.

Sin caught her eye and winked. So did Damon. Than shook his head in disapproval, but a smile teased his lips as he turned away.

“Answer me, my moon.” Ryder palmed her ass harder and dropped his other hand to her thighs.

“Fuck,” she moaned, closing her eyes as he massaged her leg. “I need it soft, though.”

“You need it deep,” he corrected with a low, husky laugh. “Open for me. Let me get you ready for me the right way.”

“The right way,” she teased, prying her eyes open as she watched him part her legs enough for his hand. The table mostly hid them, but anyone who looked would know what was happening.

His smile turned deadly. “Shut up and spread your legs.”

It should’ve pissed her off, but it turned her on more. So she opened her legs, a keening cry leaving her as he caressed her slit from bottom to top. She darted her eyes around and caught a few people staring, but they looked away when Ryder glanced at them.

“You focus on me,” he said, teasing her throbbing clit with his finger. “No one will dare look at something they shouldn’t. Now look at me.”

She did. It was hard to ignore the eyes on her. Usually it turned her on, the excitement of being watched and caught, but she struggled this time.

“Talk to me. I see your mind fucking with you.”

His ability to read her so well had her relaxing. “It just feels different.”

“Only a little,” he murmured, playing with her. It felt so good, yet it was not nearly enough. “Just this time, these people saw us without our permission. This gives us back the power. And”—he pushed his middle finger deep inside her, grinning as she gasped and dug her fingers into his neck—“it weeds out the dirty fucks who recorded us and are planning to exploit the video.”

Panting but trying to keep her face relaxed, she asked, “How’s it do that?”

He moved out and in so slowly, then curled his finger. “Because they won’t be able to resist pulling out their phones again, and your wolves and demons are watching. The question is”—he continued his slow finger fucking—“how far can we go in front of everyone?”

“I don’t know.” She tilted her head back, moaning. “Oh, that feels good.”

“I wish I could lay you on this table and feast on you.” His smooth voice slid over her skin, and she smiled. “But I won’t let any assholes get a better look at you. So keep dreaming, little pervert.”

Still smiling, she met his stare. “You let your friends watch you fuck me. Doesn’t that make you one too?”

“I don’t have friends.” His smirk made her clench around his finger. “Easy ... And I guarantee those you’re referring to have never looked at you. They know I’ll kill them. Just like I’m tempted to kill the Fallen.”

She moaned like a freak because his death threats did delightful things to her body.

“My secret little psycho girl.” Ryder held her stare as he removed his hand and held it to her mouth. “Want to taste us?”

She did, but she shook her head in defiance.

“Brat,” he said, licking his fingers himself. “Mm. A little more, then you’ll be ready.”

“Get me ready then.” She’d let her bad boy have her in front of whoever wanted to watch. All because of the way he was looking at her.

His jaw muscles flexed, and his hand settled between her legs. She didn’t hide her reaction. She moaned and arched her back as he did what he always did, sticking two fingers in and pressing toward her backside. It made her soaked every time.

“There you go,” he cooed, working over her clit. “I’m gonna make you wait to orgasm. You’ll come when I do.”

“That’s mean,” she said because if Ryder wanted to, he could hold out for a long ass time.

“I am mean.” He shifted her without warning, making her face the table as he centered her on his lap. As soon as he had her settled, he spread her legs and put his hand between them again. “But not to you.”

“Shit,” she hissed, gripping the edge of the table. He maneuvered her again, positioning his hardening dick between her ass cheeks. “Damn you and your gray joggers.”

His deep chuckle had her tingling. “David and I know they get you fucking wet, especially when we don’t wear underwear.”

“Of course you sexy assholes plan it every time.” She had to force herself to lean back against his chest. He cupped her with both hands and widened his legs so hers would be too.

Instead of fucking her with his hand, he sighed and began a deep massage, pampering and torturing her. “You know Archer’s gonna fuck that guy up for you, don’t you?”

Her eyes darted over to the locker room doors. Ryder took that chance to swirl his finger around her clit, and she couldn’t answer. Which had likely been his goal because he started talking again, his eyes on the people dancing as he teased her.

“You have no idea how many men I’ve punished for you, Jane. How many each of us has ruined because they dared to harm you in some way, or some for simply trying to? And we keep you in the dark so you won’t think badly of us—so you don’t feel guilty for them suffering the consequences of their actions.” He nuzzled her neck and breathed in before exhaling. “Would you hate me, my moon? Would you leave me if my truth meant bad men have suffered because I would destroy the world for you? Because my brothers know this—David knows this—and they step in to ensure I am not too tainted for you to love.”

Turning her head enough to see him, she kissed his forehead. “I can never be mad at you, Ryder. Definitely not for doing what you think is necessary to keep me safe.” It was a little scary to realize this man would destroy everything for

her, but she couldn't imagine a limit on what she'd do to someone if they hurt him or someone else she loved. He and the others had witnessed awful things happen to her. If it were the other way around ...

He lifted his head from the crook of her neck to look at her. "You'd forgive me for being a monster?"

"You're my monster. I love many of my monsters." She smiled at him. She realized something terrible had almost happened with that guy in the locker room until Archer stepped in.

"But would you forgive me?" The vulnerability in his entire being wined her. She pressed her lips to his, sighing when he deepened the kiss.

Maybe it was the combination of things—their conversation, his hands on her, and the crowd possibly watching, but she felt her whole body tingle, and when she opened her eyes, the world glittered with stars. "Sparkles," she said, gasping as darkness tunneled her vision. All she saw were his eyes and smile and sparkles. "I'm going blind."

He chuckled, pressing his forehead to hers. "Breathe, angel. And answer me when you catch your breath. I'm dying to have your forgiveness."

Sucking in precious air, she said, "I already forgave you. Nothing you do could make me stop loving you—and I never plan to leave you. So don't worry, sweetest, deadliest boy I'll ever know."

His smile was heaven. "Good to know, sweetest, most dangerous creature I'll ever know." He shifted her forward and kissed the nape of her neck, tugging at her dress to expose her

ass to him as she felt him free his dick. “Because I’m going to torture the fuck out of you.”

One of his hands disappeared from massaging her, and he pushed her forward so that her forearms rested on the table. She turned enough to see that he’d started lazily stroking himself, and her mouth dropped open.

“Turn forward.” He smacked her pussy with the hand that still covered her.

“But I want you in m—”

He cut her off. “Nah, I need some me time. I gotta reflect on some shit.”

“Ryder,” she said, groaning when he rubbed circles with the hand still cupped her. She still felt him jacking off in that slow, lazy way that drove her insane, especially when he let her feel his length against her skin. “Fuck.”

“We’ll fuck soon enough.” He quickened the movement of his hand and leaned forward enough to slide two fingers inside her before withdrawing them and lounging back in his chair. “Now be quiet so I can think.”

Oh, he was deliberately being a jerk. She smiled to herself because she could be a tease too.

Jane forward more on her elbows so her ass would raise. It made his hand slip from the apex of her thighs, but he slid it around to hold her ass cheek, playing with her from behind. It was a distraction, but she knew how to make him crack.

She ensured she was lined up with his dick and rotated her hips to feel him between her cheeks and her opening. “Mm,” she hummed, rocking her hips to hover-fuck him.

“Such a naughty girl,” he commented, using that tone that seemed bored, but she knew he was aching to pull her down as she slid herself back and forth along the length of his dick.

“Your naughty girl,” she whispered, catching Damon’s wicked gaze as he turned after taking some guy’s phone and shoving him away.

“Then stop looking at Damon,” Ryder snapped, gripping her hip and grinding her along his erection.

She giggled, loving his jealous side.

“You think you’re funny?” He pushed her lower back, causing her to lean over the table even more. “I can be funny too. I can come all over your ass and leave you hanging all night. It’ll be hilarious.”

“You just said you’re not mean to me.” She grinned upon hearing him growl, and he skimmed his fingers over her back, down her ass to her soaked core. “And doing that would be mean.”

“Nah, it’s just a consequence.” He caressed her some more while still lazily jacking off. “I’m trying to figure out how to deal with my brother while I work on my sharing skills, but I’m struggling with the idea of sharing you with more than our group.” He slapped a hand down on her ass, then rubbed the sting. “You want to fuck Damon? Or do you just like him looking? Or is it more?”

She was still trying to process his comment about ‘his brother’ because she didn’t think he solely meant Tercero. He was thinking about Archer, and so was she.

Ryder’s hand slid up to her lower back, and he shuffled his seat to move closer. She was still hovering over the table. “Not gonna tell me? Is it that serious?”

She shook her head. “Damon’s hot. He’s loyal to me, and I trust him, but nothing is going on ... that I know of. I mean, you know he flirts, but I don’t think he means anything by it—and he’s dating Justine.”

“And the offer he extended to you to join in if we allowed it?” His tone held no emotion, but she felt his rage like a wave of electricity over her skin.

Her eyes widened, but she shouldn’t have been surprised that Damon had told her. Her guys were loyal to her bad boy too. “He offered and it turned me on, but I don’t know. I haven’t thought about it.”

The energy vibrating around them eased. “Do you know Justine’s fucking crazy? If she knew he’d watched you, she’d be a threat? One I would take care of regardless of the fact she’s Than’s sister?”

Jane bit her lip. She’d believed Damon’s dismissal about it being a problem at Dungeon because she’d realized Justine was a *domme* and stupidly figured that meant anything goes. But she should’ve known better.

“Just letting you know,” Ryder said, relaxed. “You don’t have to worry about that crazy bitch. Damon didn’t tell her anything because I ordered him to keep his trap shut. I worried you’d try to include him in more than Dungeon, and I know she’s stupid enough to do something to hurt you. I mean, she fucked a seventeen-year-old at her school. She gives zero fucks about consequences.”

“Noted,” she said, turning away from Damon. People were peeking, but Ryder was keeping her from being on full display for anyone but him.

“Good.” His hand smoothed over the swell of her ass, then his fingers splayed out on her side, and he tugged. “I want you to stay quiet. You make one fucking loud sound, and we’re leaving. I’ve shared you enough. I don’t want anyone imagining your sexy moans when they nut later. Now sit on my dick.”

Excitement flooded her, and she wasted no time easing herself onto his waiting cock. Even though she’d had lots of sex with him, his size still surprised her. She preened over his encouraging grunts and his hand guiding her down while the other helped feed his dick into her.

“You can take more,” he said when she felt too full. She didn’t argue as he lifted her off a little so she could work more in. “Good?”

Panting and trying her best to bob up and down on his dick discreetly, she whispered. “So good.”

“That’s my girl.” He affectionately slid his hand over the small of her back and exhaled. “You look so pretty taking my dick. I wish I could get you pregnant all over again.”

She whimpered as she tried to stifle the sound. The music was loud, but some people were close enough that they would make it out.

He chuckled and slowly thrust into her. “Did David teach you about breeding, babe?”

She nodded, her arms trembling as she held still for his slow, deep thrust. It was so slow she wanted to scream, and he knew it.

“I think I’ll have to fight him and Luc because it’s gonna be hard to let that go. I want to breed you every fuckin’ chance I get.”

“Oh, gosh,” she said, clenching around him.

“Uh-uh.” He groaned and pulled her back onto his chest. “That’s too soon.”

“I want to come.” She reached between her legs, but he shoved her hand away and tugged the table to hide them. “Stop being a jerk.”

He hushed her but pushed up so deep she stopped breathing. It was then that Damon came over. “This better be important,” Ryder told him.

Damon leaned across the table and said, “He might’ve hurt him too much. I’ve sent the doc over.”

Ryder sighed but still gave her a slow thrust. “Where’d he take him?”

“The warehouse.” Damon placed a towel down. “I’ll pull my car around and drive her home if you want.”

She knew something important required Ryder’s attention. Damon wouldn’t interrupt otherwise. But she was so lost in feeling herself joined with Ryder.

“Lemme finish with her, then I want you to take her to Luc.” Ryder motioned for Damon to leave and, at the same time, pushed on her back.

She would’ve smacked her face on the table, but Damon stuck his hand out in time to soften the blow.

“Fuck, Jane.” Ryder replaced Damon’s hand with his.

“Sorry.” She felt silly. She hadn’t realized she was still trying to get herself off and could not brace herself.

He moved her arms, folding them so she could rest her cheek on them, and grunted at their friend. “Touch her again,

Damon ...”

Jane wanted to defend Damon, but she closed her eyes when Ryder’s massive frame folded over hers, and he began fucking her so deeply that she couldn’t hold her cries in.

“Then be careful with her,” Damon snapped as he walked away.

“Motherfucker,” Ryder growled but nuzzled her. “See? I’ll need time if you want to do anything with anyone else, angel.” He kept pumping into her, getting rougher before growling again and slowing.

She loved him so much. He was worried he was messing things up for her and other guys, and he was at war with his dominance to allow even the possibility of someone like Damon coming into their group. “He’s just guarding me like you guys want. Now fuck me and stop worrying. I’m your girl.”

“My goddess,” he corrected. He slid his forearm beneath her neck as the other came down over the back of it.

She moaned, lost in the way he lost his battle to keep things slow and gentle.

He rutted into her, breathing and grunting against the side of her head. “So good, angel.”

It was a perfect hurt. The perfect submission to him. Her bad boy needed it, and she was happy to give herself to him.

It felt like it would never end. Sweat dripped down her body, and breathing became difficult, but she loved it. She loved catching the eyes of her wolves and demons. Of the strangers who didn’t care to be caught staring. But most of all, she loved the tingles that swam over her skin and every bit of

Ryder's presence as he worshipped her in the middle of the dark kingdom he reigned over.

"Ryder, I'm gonna come," she rushed, clutching his forearm and biting to keep from screaming. It felt like she'd gone to heaven and come back, and she moaned against his skin.

He grunted and kept going, fucking her through her orgasm. "Fuck, it's too good." She felt him swell, then every spurt of warm cum as he slowed down until he stopped. "God dammit, I wanted to play with you longer." He kissed her cheek and nuzzled her. "I'm gonna run and check on things, all right?"

She hummed, nodding as she released his arm. "Sorry for biting."

"I don't mind." His body and heavy breathing felt so good, like a massage, and her sleepy state kicked in. "I'll come by if I finish things early but get some rest with Luc so you can work tomorrow without feeling too bad."

"Mkay." She kissed the bite and closed her eyes. "Will you put your dick back in me if you come over?"

His body vibrated with a low, husky laugh. "Whatever you want, angel. Luc not letting you sleep with his dick?"

"He rarely does it—just you," she said tiredly. "Whatchu gonna do with that guy?"

"Don't worry about it." He nuzzled her again as he eased himself out. "You okay?"

She said, "Ow," but gave him a thumbs up.

He chuckled, and she felt him use the towel Damon had given him to clean her up. "We'll do it better next time. No

interruptions. Maybe someone else can play with you too.”

“This is your kingdom,” she mumbled, exhausted and satisfied. “I like having the one-on-one too.”

“Yeah?” He kept cleaning her before tugging her dress down. “So Luc has Dungeon with you, David has the fuckin’ wild with you, and our place is my dirty arena?”

When he put it that way, she felt silly. “I kinda meant just public. Wherever and whenever.”

“Ah.” He carefully shifted her so he could lift her into his arms. “Dream of some public sex for us then, and tell me tomorrow.”

“I want alone sex too. The kind you don’t let anyone see.” She touched his cheek as she noticed Damon and Sin come over.

His gaze flitted over to them, but he returned his focus to her. “Rough or sweet?”

Her mind went from how he’d shove her face down hard and raise her ass to how he’d sit on a chair or anywhere and pull her onto his lap. He’d keep one hand on the nape of her neck, the other on her ass, and he’d stare at her as he controlled how she rode him. Even if she wanted to lose her mind, he’d keep her with him and love her. It had goosebumps breaking out across her skin—the same way it did when he’d roll her onto her side and enter her from behind, keeping her in his arms as he whispered that he was hers, and she was his. Then when they’d finish, he’d sometimes lie on his back while she tried to recover on hers, both breathing heavily. Then they’d turn their heads to stare at each other, and he’d reach out to caress her cheek as he spoke in a deep voice that made her shiver. “*Sleep, my moon. I’ll keep the monsters away.*” He

knew she had nightmares, so he promised to fight them. Even if no one believed her, she knew he did exactly as he promised because every time they tried to take her, his presence would come forward, and they'd flee.

He smirked, touching her cheek. "You slipped away, Sweet Jane."

Shaking her head, she pressed his hand against her cheek harder. "Tell me."

"Sleep, my moon. I'll keep the monsters away." He kissed her lips, then nipped them as he handed her to Damon. "I love you."

"And I love you," she said, snuggling into Damon's hold as Sin put a blanket over her.

"Stop stealing my lines." Ryder smacked her ass but gave her one more kiss. "Dream of me."

"Always, Ryder."

He shook his head. "Longer."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Luc's annoyed huff brought a smile to Jane's lips. "You act as though I haven't worshiped you in front of others before," he said in that almost tired tone of his.

It was hard to keep her face relaxed. Well, impossible because she could practically see and feel the events of the night before and the early hours of the morning when Ryder had come over to Luc's to spend the night. Her bad boy had looked too cute arguing with Luc in the dark, but she'd fallen asleep once he seemed to notice he had blood on himself and went to shower because Luc forbade him from joining them in bed. Ryder did, however, wake her with his mouth between her legs while Luc dressed across the room.

Her king didn't come over, but he watched his brother bring her to climax on his bed, and he smirked before leaving the room when she begged for more.

"Oh, fuck," Jane moaned as Luc slid a hand over her thigh, ripping her from the memories and back to the present.

"My naughty little queen." He chuckled, squeezing her leg. "Do you think we can return to business? Or must you continue daydreaming about fucking my brother in my bed this morning?"

Sighing, she slid onto his lap from where she leaned against his desk. Of course he made room for her, but he acted annoyed as he moved a folder he'd been reading. "And if I daydream about us?"

His piercing gaze made her hold her breath. "We are working, Jane. And there is no need to daydream—I can bring your fantasies to life during our scheduled breaks."

Snickering, she snuggled against him. "I love your professionalism regarding our sex life." She tucked her head under his chin and closed her eyes, smiling when he absentmindedly ran his fingers through her hair. "I think I'll try putting our work sex on your schedule."

"I'm sure your favorite assistant will take issue if she realizes you scheduled for me to fuck you on my desk."

Her jealousy spiked, but she refused to let him pick at her. Naturally, he saw through her when she opened her eyes and glared at him for just a fraction of a second.

His eyes gleamed with silver, and he smirked. "Something to say, Miss Mortaine?"

"Yeah," she spat. "I'd like you to shove me off your lap and whip out your dick so I can choke on it."

"Hm."

"Really? Hm?"

His chest rumbled with a low, rare laugh. "Perhaps later, darling."

She sighed because hearing him laugh was enough to remove any jealousy. Luc Godson usually did not laugh unless it was cruel and delivered to inflict pain and humiliation.

He got quiet and proceeded to read the files on the applicants they'd been reviewing for Dungeon.

“Why do all of these women look kinda like me?”

He smiled faintly. “Because my former subs think they are mocking you.”

“Why's that funny?” She frowned. It didn't make sense.

“Because they didn't even realize these women are more qualified than they were at their administrative positions. I think I'll see they are hired as superiors at the companies where they each took new employment.”

“You can do that?” She checked over the applicants' profiles and agreed with him—these women made her look like a silly child. They were badasses in the business industry.

“I can do many things,” he said, taking the file from her and guiding her head back to his chest.

She smiled, loving how he stayed mature and serious, yet let her curl up on him like it wasn't a big deal for his girlfriend to rest against his chest while he worked. A part of her hated that she was so sleepy lately, but she adored how Luc lightened her workload without her even asking. Hopefully, she'd regain some of her energy soon.

She almost dozed off, but he spoke again. “Do you intend to explore your feelings for Archer while he sneaks you onto Tercero's job?”

“What?” She opened her eyes but didn't move. “His job?”

“That's what you focus on?” He placed the file down and wrapped his arms around her. She melted. “Archer has feelings for you, Jane. He is making them clear for the rest of us to see.”

“He hasn’t said anything directly to me,” she said, frustrated with herself for not putting it together that he was into her. She’d totally friend-zoned him. “Why can’t I confront any of this?”

“Because you are afraid to feel all the pain from Tercero leaving, and you are afraid to open yourself up to anyone else.”

“You say it all so easily.”

“It is easy.” He pressed his lips to her forehead and exhaled. “Shall I be honest?” She nodded and he continued. “I think you deserve to know about Tercero. Whether you choose to mend things is up to you, but you must confront him about leaving the way he did, to get closure at the very least. Archer plans to sneak you close to Tercero while he works. It’s risky, but he can get you close if you want to know. I can as well, should you decide to pass on things with Archer. As far as he is concerned, I’m not surprised he finally slipped up.”

“You knew he liked me?”

He gave her an annoyed glance. “All one has to do is look, Jane. It’s something you prevent yourself from doing. Although, you seem to be changing that to some degree. I heard about Wendy.”

Jane leaned her head on his shoulder, her nose burning as she tried not to let the pain slicing through her heart destroy her. “She’s my best friend—my only friend besides the guys—but I can’t be judged by her. She wants me to pick Ryder and leave you, leave David, and she’d lose her shit if she heard something was up with Archer—which I don’t even know what I’m feeling with him. It’s confusing, but I can’t deny things are different. But gosh, if she found out, she’d never approve.”

“You don’t need her approval,” he said gently. “While I know you’re hurting, I’m glad you paused your friendship. There’s nothing wrong with ending any sort of relationship once it becomes unhealthy for one or both parties. You acknowledged you don’t want her judging and criticizing us, and you’ve accepted you’re not the greatest friend for her either.”

“Ouch.”

“You admitted it yourself.” He twirled a lock of her hair. “Friendships take effort. If you’re unable or unwilling to devote yourself to being an active friend because you want to focus on being an active girlfriend, you are simply being honest. It’s hard to admit. But I do think you have put off quite a bit in your desire to please all of us and your friends.”

“It’s easier to be friends with the guys.”

He chuckled. “Of course it’s easier. You get to goof around, and they don’t come with as much drama as females do.”

“Women have to deal with more than men,” she said defensively.

“In some ways, yes.” He covered her stomach, sliding his thumb back and forth. “Now tell me if you want to let Archer help you find Tercero or if you want me to arrange something.”

Jane peered up at him. “You know everything, don’t you?”

A faint smile appeared on his perfect face. “Of course, my queen.”

“It’s a miracle I don’t walk around like I rule the world with how you talk to me.” She tilted her face up to kiss the corner of his mouth. “Since I’m annoyed with you for

knowing everything and not telling me, I'll let Archer show me. Then maybe I'll get over this feeling he's stirring up in me."

"You want to stop what you're feeling for him?"

No, she thought instantly, but that didn't matter. "I couldn't keep Tercero happy, and Archer obviously didn't tell me shit for a reason. And I don't even know if I'll be able to win Tercero back—if I should even try. So why add in someone else when I'm not enough?"

"Perhaps I don't nurture your ego as much as you think." He kissed her temple and reached for the file again. "You are a queen, Jane. You are bright and captivating—worth receiving every happiness you wish. Stop forgetting that."

A knock sounded on the door, and Luc called for them to enter. Hela, his secretary, bustled in carrying Luc's afternoon coffee. Like she always did, she gave Jane a displeased once-over before plastering a smile on her face. "Mr. Godson, your four o'clock is here early. I've prepared conference room one."

Luc placed the file down and picked up his mug. "I was already aware they would arrive early. Damon will lead the presentation. Offer him your assistance."

Hela looked taken aback. "But they are expecting you, Mr. Godson."

After sipping his coffee, he placed the cup down and returned to twirling Jane's hair. "That is all, Hela."

Jane snickered as Hela slammed the door behind her. "Aw, she must not like sucking up to Damon the way she sucks up to you."

"Damon always reminds her that he prefers to work with you." Luc motioned for her to stand. "I simply allow her to fall

over her feet to please me.”

Standing, she sent him a glare. “Like it when she does that, hm?”

He stood and buttoned his suit jacket, his expression emotionless. “You know I don’t. Though I do like when you get that possessive gleam in your eyes because someone is interested in me.” He smiled and took her hand. “Come. I already knew what your decision would be—we’re meeting Archer.”



It wasn’t long before they pulled into a shopping center parking lot and stopped beside Archer’s white mustang.

Luc placed a hand on her lap when she moved to get out. “He’ll be joining us.”

Sure enough, Archer slipped out and rounded Luc’s company car until he was on the side that would put her between him and his brother. She couldn’t explain the heat that washed over her as she watched him. All the Godsons had athletic forms, but they carried themselves in ways. She’d never noticed how elegant Archer’s movements were, and it sent a tickle across her skin to take in Archer’s grace and strength.

He ran a hand through his pale hair, scanning the parking lot as he did so. There was something very sensual yet powerful about his hands. Like Luc, he was a quarterback; their hands were their weapons. Luc knew how to touch a girl; she bet Archer did too.

She sucked in a breath, holding it as he opened the door and got in.

The air thickened within the car but lightened as soon as he saw her.

“Hey, mama.” A boyish smile lit up his handsome face. Looking smokin’ as usual.”

Her cheeks were probably red, but she still looked him in the eyes and smiled. “You know he won’t like you talking like this to me.”

His eyes danced between her and where Luc rested a hand on her thigh. “Oh, I know. Your boyfriends have all made me suffer for how I talk to you.” He touched a bruise under his eye. Her heart raced, not liking the sight of him hurt, but she kept calm. She’d seen him with plenty of bruises—it was part of the game, and Archer was a wild quarterback.

Luc motioned to his driver. “Take us to Location C. Utilize stealth.”

“Yes, Mr. Godson.” The driver took off, and while she wanted to ask what the hell Location C was and why stealth would need to be used, Jane quickly forgot it all—too absorbed in Archer’s profile. His playfulness with her always dominated her attraction to him, but damn, the man was fine.

“Staring again,” he said with a grin. “I’m not sure Tercero will appreciate that.”

“Tercero doesn’t get to care about anything I do right now,” she said, leaning against Luc to put some space between them. As exciting as it was to realize she was attracted to him, she knew she shouldn’t indulge herself. She was there to find Tercero. But she was still frustrated. “And I’m looking because I still can’t see it.”

“See what?” He angled his body toward hers. “That I look at you the same way my brothers do? That I’ve always looked at you that way?”

Luc held up a hand, silencing him. “Careful, little brother. You’ve shown patience this long—give her time. For now, focus on showing her what you set out to.”

Archer chuckled and pulled a hood over his head. His whole outfit was gray and white and tactical in its design. She wondered if he had weapons hidden on him due to the numerous pockets she could see. “Of course, big brother,” he said. “Change her clothes. We need to be quick if we’re going to sneak up on him.”

“Sneak up on him?” she asked, almost laughing because they made it seem like she was going on a stakeout. “And I have to change?”

“I thought you liked how ninja-like he was.” Archer reached into the bag Luc held and pulled out black leggings, a black long-sleeved top that almost looked like a corset, and a black knitted beanie. “Dress. I promise I won’t peek.”

A part of her wanted to tease him the way he’d been teasing her and tell him to look if he wanted, but she kept her mouth shut and turned to Luc. The amused gleam in her king’s eyes had her embarrassed. It was like being caught crushing on the star quarterback when she was just the quiet girl nobody cared about.

Except Luc had been the star quarterback too. He’d been crushing on her, along with his brothers. With Archer.

Damn, I’m a lucky bitch.

“Sweet, little queen,” Luc murmured, helping her change. “Who knew it was possible you could become more boy-

crazy?”

Archer chuckled, a rough sort of laugh. “And I worried she’d become too serious with a bun in the oven.”

“Our brother feared it,” Luc said, untying her shoes. “I knew her frustrating adorableness wouldn’t fade. That it could grow, however, was a pleasant surprise.”

The coolness from the vents and Luc’s cold hands had her shivering so much that she couldn’t quite shimmy out of her pants. At least, not without leaning her back against Archer’s side.

He was warm ... and strong. She leaned harder.

Luc shot her a coy smile and finished helping her. “Lean forward and listen.” After she complied, he began fastening the corset. “Archer will be taking you into dangerous territory. I, as well as Ryder and David, fully trust he will keep you safe and hidden. Nevertheless, you are to follow his instructions. Do you understand?”

“Ryder and David know?”

“I told them,” Archer said, not looking at her. “It was wrong of me to ask you to keep it from them.” He shifted and held his phone out for her to see.

RYDER

Don’t be reckless with her.

Or I’ll end you.

She couldn’t help herself—she laughed. “He’s so sweet.”

Archer snorted but swiped at the screen so she could see David’s text.

DAVID

Be good to her Archer.

“You must’ve done something to impress them,” she said, turning to see him pocket the phone in the gray tactical vest he wore. “Would that have something to do with the guy who recorded Ryder and me?”

“Obviously.” He grinned and pulled out a bit of black fabric, holding it up. “A guy has to get his hands bloody to be close to you, you know?”

She blinked, shivering as a blast of cold hit her from Luc’s side. But he was right. Every one of her guys had fought in some way to protect her. They’d kept her in the dark a lot. Maybe because they feared she would be afraid or leave, but she knew they did violent things. For her.

“Will you get into trouble for whatever you did?”

“If he opens his mouth,” he said. “You’re worth it.” His eyes danced toward the window, and he pulled a white fabric mask over his nose and mouth. “We’re here.”

The car stopped beside a dark alley. The area looked sketchy, and she knew Ryder and David would protest her being there.

Luc caressed her cheek and turned her face toward his. “Be careful. And don’t become emotional.” He pressed a kiss to the corner of her mouth. “I promise you may let out your emotions on us tonight.”

“You’re staying the night?”

He secured some fabric around her mouth, then wrapped it around her head so only the area around her eyes would be visible. “Yes. Now go, and do not leave Archer’s side.”

She touched his cheek, seeing through his cold exterior. He was worried about her, and not just that she might be hurt by whatever she was walking into. “Thank you, Luc.” She raised his hand to her mouth, nuzzling the inside of his wrist where he’d marked himself for all eternity. “I love you.”

“You’ll get emotional if I say it.” His thumb found the inner part of her wrist, tracing over the faint star scar she had from the fire he’d been burned with. She’d forgotten where it had come from, but now she cherished the mark.

She laughed, feeling her eyes prick with tears. “Yeah. Tell me later.”

“As you wish.” He released his hold on her. “Hurry now.”

Archer opened the door, slipping out like a ninja himself, and held out a gloved hand for her to take.

“I guess I didn’t know much about Tercero,” she muttered, letting Archer help her.

He shut the door and pulled her into the darkness. “You know him. You know how you love each other. But things have been kept from you.” His hand tightened around hers. “I’m going to show you the truth. It’s time.”

A sickening pit formed in her stomach. She stared at Archer’s back as he pulled her along, and she threaded her fingers between his.

He peeked at her over his shoulder, his pale eyes glowing against his equally pale skin. “I’ve got you. You’re strong enough for this.”

Her breath shuddered out, and she squeezed closer. “Thank you, Archer.”

The crinkle in his eyes told her he was smiling under his mask. “Keep quiet. We’re almost there.”

She nodded, and he continued through the dirty alley. It reminded her of a crime movie or a superhero one—DC style, with the type of villains closer to real-life monsters. There were broken bottles, piles of trash, and dark corners everywhere. Whatever Tercero had involved himself in was undoubtedly dangerous. She just hoped he was the hero and not the villain.

Archer ran his free hand along the brick wall. A sour scent stained the air, and she covered her mouth, thankful she had the scarf to block some of the smell.

“You okay?”

“Yes,” she whispered. She froze upon hearing male voices.

Archer held a finger to his lips but still pulled her along. The angry voices got louder, but it was impossible to understand anything the people said. She was sure they were not speaking English.

Her heart pounded. Her hands trembled. It wasn’t just men talking. Women were crying and pleading.

Then she saw them. Armed men stood at an open warehouse door, and inside, dozens of women and girls sat in various states of distress. Each one had been bound in some way—duct taped, tied with rope, or zip tied at the hands and feet.

Jane jerked her gaze toward Archer. He had released her so he could pull out a crossbow-like weapon. Where he’d had it hidden on him, she didn’t know, but it was real, and he looked like he knew how to use it. He wasn’t aiming it at anyone—he was just ready.

She focused back on the scene. Her every breath stung her lungs and caused her eyes to water. The frightened looks on the girls' faces said too much. She'd worn that look before. Her men had seen her this way—they'd seen her about to be raped. The same fate awaited these girls, and she was helpless.

What the hell did Tercero have to do with any of this?

Her mind raced, panicking at the thought of him being involved in something so horrible. How could they ...

A startled gasp ripped free from her when a dark figure quietly dropped from the ceiling behind one of the armed men. He was covered head to toe in black, but she'd recognize him anywhere. "Tercero."

Archer hushed her and aimed at someone. He didn't release the arrow, though. He didn't have to.

Before she could even suck in another breath, Tercero attacked with a sword. It was a katana, like the one displayed in his old room.

She shook, terrified as he sliced through each man so effortlessly. They didn't even see him. Only when the women screamed and tried to escape did the other guards realize something was up.

Jane nearly yelled but forced herself to stay silent. If she did anything, it would only distract him, and she would die if her stupidity cost him his life. She trusted Archer's love for his brother and that he'd step in if Tercero needed him.

Yet it was clear with every swing of Tercero's blade that he needed no help. It almost didn't look real. He was so precise, and it happened far too quickly. Not like the movies where there was lots of noise and deathly cries. Her quiet boy killed like a demon. They were dead before they hit the ground.

“Archer?” she whispered, gasping when Tercero threw a knife, embedding it in a man’s throat as the guy tried to use a girl as a shield. Well, that man made a noise, and she almost puked at the sight of him trying to pull the knife free.

“My brother didn’t take it well when you were abducted,” Archer said softly. “None of us did.”

Her eyes bugged out of her head as Luc waltzed through the door with Than and Damon—who was supposed to be hosting Luc’s meeting—in tow. They greeted Tercero with a nod while Luc talked to his brother as if standing amongst dead bodies and trafficked women and girls was normal.

“Luc took you to Dungeon, Jane,” Archer said, collapsing his crossbow when others arrived, backing in a couple of white vans. “You saw the women. Did you really think there wasn’t violence involved in saving them?”

She kept her eyes on Tercero as he cleaned his weapon and pulled the knife he’d thrown at the man free from his throat. Her stomach turned. “Luc’s employed Tercero this whole time? He’s been killing people to supply Luc with women at Dungeon?”

Archer chuckled and slid an arm around her waist when her knees gave out. “Luc has a lot of power, and he hears things. He may have some illegal imports, but women and children are never on the table. Still, many of these women are foreign. They wanted to come to this country because theirs is not safe. They just put their trust in the wrong people, or the wrong people took them. Luc has connections and can help them, so he does.”

She shook her head. She’d idolized Luc for saving the women, but this seemed more like he was stealing *product*

from competitors. And Tercero had been helping the whole fucking time.

Archer's mouth came close to her ear. "I can see you thinking everything wrong. It's dangerous and not done by the law, but they are saving these women."

She watched Luc gesture in her direction and held her breath when Tercero glanced at her. His dark eyes flared with rage, which she'd never seen directed at her. It terrified and thrilled her all at once.

"We've been spotted." Archer moved her in front of him and leaned down, whispering in her ear. "Do you think he's more upset about you seeing him kill people—or that you're leaning into me?"

Jane froze. She was leaning against him, maybe to get away or stay upright. His muscular chest at her back with the way he crouched to speak to her was all kinds of intimate, and Tercero was watching.

"Better he's jealous about me than angry that you now know he's a killer, I think." Archer was fucking bold because he got even closer, practically wrapping his body around hers as he added, "Just so you know, this isn't just for him."

"Archer, maybe don't flirt with me right after I've seen a bunch of guys killed. The smell of blood and all—not good for a pregnant gal."

He chuckled, hugging her. "I knew you could handle it."

"Not really handling it. I think I'm in shock."

"Maybe a little bit of shock. You get it, though?"

"That Luc is stealing someone else's supply of women, and Tercero is his assassin? Yeah, I get it."

He sighed, straightening but not removing his arms from around her waist. “Luc has various contacts in law enforcement. They get involved after Luc and Tercero are done because Luc’s not the only one with connections. The people trafficking them are powerful. They won’t get caught because there are dirty cops who help them.

“These fuckers here are only doing the dirty work and will continue to be replaced. They’re nobodies that will serve some time or get probation. The big guys will never pay the price unless Luc makes them pay.”

She watched her quiet boy. He really was a ninja—her freaking wet dream. He no longer looked her way. He was working, helping release the women and girls. When he lifted a crying little girl onto his lap, Jane’s heart squeezed. Would she ever see him that way with her baby? Did she want to? Hell, did she want any of them around her baby? Or her?

The little girl wouldn’t settle, but then Tercero lifted his mask to show the girl his face. There was no way to understand what he said to her, but it worked. He rocked her, smiling as he talked. It was like every memory Jane had with her dad before he died.

Luc watched as well, his expression blank, but he took a blanket from one of the people who had arrived and wrapped it around the little girl. He even caressed her head, which made her relax in Tercero’s arms enough that she leaned her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes.

“They’re surprisingly good with the little ones.” Archer’s hand gently brushed over her tummy. It somehow lessened the queasy, knotted feeling in her gut, and she realized that happened a lot around him. “Would you like to help them?”

She blinked, shutting out the images of the dead bodies, and tried to focus on the women. They needed help. They needed comfort. Luc kept the women at Dungeon safe. He gave them choices and control over their lives. The women chose to stay. “What do they do with the little girls?”

“Unfortunately, many have been sold by their own families, so they have nowhere to return to. He’s tried to return them to their families in the past, but they end up worse off, often sold again. A few of them belong to the women taken, or their mothers have already come through, and they can be reunited. Luc prefers those outcomes.”

“And the others?” She watched Tercero stand with the little girl as another ran to Luc’s legs.

“If they have nowhere to go, he turns them over to the police and prays for the best. His inside contacts work as spies to hopefully ensure they encounter no mistreatment. Come on. You wanted to confront him.”

“Archer, I don’t think I can.”

He turned, leaning against the rail to look at her. His hood was still down, leaving his face in shadow, but not so much that she didn’t notice the teasing smile return to his lips. “He left you in the middle of the night with just a note—one I know you haven’t even read and probably never will. So confront him and decide if you want him back. Tell him if this darkness is something you can live with. Ask him if he can let go of Elise and live his life with you and the others.”

She nodded, breathing in and out several times because the Elise thing was something she always ignored but now realized was still consuming Tercero’s heart. “Are you involved in this?”

“Not really,” he said with a shrug. “I’ve offered to back them up if they ever need it. So has Ryder. And David. You should ask Ryder what he’s done ...”

Her chest felt tight. “Why?”

He pushed off the railing and tugged the scarf down her face, then tilted her chin up. “Because of you. We failed you before. We promised your pops we’d keep you safe, and we didn’t. So it kinda feels like we’re making up for some of it if we help save others. Because there is no fucking chance we’re letting you get hurt again. We do what we can. Luc and Tercero more than the rest of us.”

Her breathing sped up as she recalled when Ryder told her about her father talking to them the night he died. He’d given them all a duty to her, but Archer wasn’t mentioned. “We?”

His smile slipped. “Your dad talked to me in private once—before he talked with the others. He caught me watching you dance in the backyard when you were supposed to get ready for bed. He wanted to know why I kept my feelings secret.”

“What?” She shook her head. “Archer, you’re acting like you’ve liked me since we were kids. There’s just no way.”

“I think I know my feelings.” He glanced over his shoulder. “But I love my brothers. They come first. And I already knew three of them put you first—and David, who is like a brother too. I didn’t think girls could pick more than one guy without it being like cheating.”

“So you’ve liked me all this time?”

He chuckled, facing her again. “Gorgeous, I’ve loved you all this time.”

Every sound fell away and darkness wrapped around them, allowing her to see the light he emitted. His lazy smile lit up his boyish face, and it finally made sense. It was his mask. All this time, because he knew his brothers loved her, he wore a mask so she'd never see him like she did them.

She moved closer and reached up to cup his cheeks. Archer had such a youthful face, but there was a very serious guy beneath the silly playboy act he put on. "Let me see. Show me how you want to look at me."

His pale blue eyes sparkled, and his smile became a mixture of teasing and sinful, but he stole her breath when his eyes locked onto hers like he couldn't—didn't—want to look away.

"Archer," she choked, rubbing his cheek. He'd hidden it so well.

He smiled, covering her hand and kissing it. "Don't get emotional about me. I've had fun sneaking in touches and pissing off Ryder. Seeing you pass off my flirting has been cute and frustrating, but I cherish every silly moment we've had."

"I don't know what to say. Or what to feel." She had no clue what to make of the information, but a warm tickle danced over her skin and chest.

"You don't have to say anything." He inclined his head to the side. "I promised to show you the truth, and now you've seen it. Go confront my brother before he thinks he's been replaced."

She flinched, afraid of what would happen. She wanted Tercero back. She was worried for him, she realized, not afraid of him, so his assassin's secret was something she could

accept. But this thing with Archer—she didn't want to get caught up in the exciting newness of it and forget that she had failed Tercero.

Archer pressed his lips to her hand again, then held both hands in his. "You're amazing, Jane. I hate that you doubt yourself but let me show you one more thing, and maybe you'll accept you're a goddess as far as we're concerned." He turned her and pointed at a balcony where two figures emerged from the darkness. They wore black, like Tercero, but they had larger, almost identical frames, with one slightly bigger. She gasped as Archer wrapped his arms around her and rested his chin on her head. She darted her gaze to Tercero and Luc, who also looked her way. "They will always watch over you. It doesn't matter that the one beside them is already looking—they will look. They will be in awe. And they will love you no matter how many you choose to shine your light on."

Tears burned her eyes at the sight of all her guys, knowing they'd trusted Archer to reveal the dangerous secrets they kept from her. Yet they were there, silently urging her to get her quiet boy back.

Archer pressed a fleeting kiss to her temple as he chuckled. "I love riling them up. Maybe flash me a sign if you think I can have some of your light." He moved away but held her hand, leading her around the rail. "Come on. Ryder is probably struggling to keep himself in place, and you need to get this over with."

Jane flicked her gaze to the balcony, but it was empty.

"Don't worry," Archer said, slipping out his phone to read a text. "David convinced him to give you some privacy. They couldn't risk something surprising me and the others, and you end up hurt. I'll see if Luc needs any help."

Before she could even process walking past dead bodies and the girls being tended to by Luc's men, she stood only feet from Tercero. Alone.

But Tercero, he was there, within her reach, and she didn't know what to do.

He took off his mask, revealing his long hair, which was pulled back into a half ponytail that had become messy. "You shouldn't have come."

She jerked her eyes up to meet his dark pair. Sadness and hurt swirled in her belly while her soul shook with fury at the sight of the dark circles under his sunken eyes. He was paler than usual, and his finely shaped lips looked almost blue. "And you shouldn't have walked out on me in the middle of the night."

He sighed, glancing away from her to survey the women and children being loaded into the vans. "You know it was best that way." He turned, focusing on her again. Misery. That was what she saw in his eyes. Complete misery and loss. "It was for the best, *cara*."

"You don't get to call me sweet things," she snapped as all the hurt surged forward, nearly choking her with the lump it formed in her throat.

His hand raised as if he were going to touch her, but he lowered it and nodded. "You're right. I apologize—I shouldn't call you such things."

Tears blurred her sight, but she kept going, not hiding her emotions. He'd feel them anyway. "So you can come here and risk your life for these strangers, but when it comes to me, you give up? Your brothers and David could have kept your secret, but they led me to you so I could see and decide because you

took that choice from me—and I’m standing here in the middle of it all, accepting it—and you toss in the towel the moment I say don’t call me something sweet?”

The faint, sad smile that appeared on his face looked painful. “I’m merely respecting your wishes, Jane. I had no intention of letting you see me again, let alone while doing this.” He gestured to the dead bodies being wrapped in plastic. “Your acceptance changes nothing.”

Angry, heartbroken tears broke free. “Why? You obviously feared my reaction because you kept it a secret. Why can’t this change things?”

“Why are you with Archer?”

The question felt like a slap to the face. “Don’t go there with me. This is about us.”

“Is it?” His gaze flicked toward his brothers. “From here, it looked like it was about him.”

A disbelieving, sad laugh tumbled past her lips. “He brought me here for you. He gave me a choice to see, and I took his offer.”

Tercero looked at her again. “You shouldn’t have. You should focus on Ryder and your child together, not filling a vacancy.”

She wanted to slap him. She wanted to hug him. She wanted to kiss him. “You asshole. How can you say any of this? Tercero, I fucking love you. I love you so much that I haven’t accepted that you’ve left me. I won’t even process it because it will hurt so fucking much if I do. We can’t be over. You can’t leave me over something wonderful. Because if this secret isn’t why you left, then the baby is.”

“Oh, Jane,” he said softly. “The baby is wonderful, and I’m happy for you and Ryder. But I don’t belong there. David and Luc shouldn’t be there either. So stop this. Go home to Ryder and be happy. Don’t put all of this on yourself. He’s the best one for you—you must know he’s your favorite. I do, and I accept it.”

Her lips parted in shock and horror. “Did I love you so little? Do you think I love them so little?” She shook her head, trying her hardest not to let the angry pain take hold of her. “I know every freaking person who judges me thinks this way—because I can’t multiply myself and give you all equal time, energy, and enough fucking mental strength to make sure it’s all equal—but I have never loved any of you less than I love Ryder. But was the one who made all of us possible. He was the one who showed me I didn’t have to cut out parts of my heart and leave them behind. He was the one who told me to glow for you all when I was tearing myself up inside because people think me loving more than him is not acceptable.”

“Loving more than one man will never be accepted, Jane.” He looked so broken. “I will always cherish our time together—forgive me for saying he is your favorite. I know you favor each of us for different reasons, but he’s the one you should focus on now. Forget me.”

Cramps assaulted her stomach, nearly knocking the breath from her, but she fixed a pathetic smile on her lips and reached up to cup his face. “Oh honey, I’d rather cut out my heart than forget you, but I can see how much you want to forget me. Is that what it is? You started forgetting her? You’d rather cut me out than forget her?”

His eyes widened, but he said nothing.

She struggled to keep her smile in place, and she let him see how hard it was as she touched the faint crease at the corner of his mouth. She loved that little quirk in his perfect face. People would always notice how similar he and Ryder looked, but she no longer saw the similarities. She just saw her Tercero.

Only, he wasn't hers anymore. "I'm sorry," she said, her voice trembling. "I never meant to make you forget her. So I get it. I'll get out of your life. But I want you to know I won't forget you. I'll think of you every day and night. I'll miss you and cry with my soul for you, but please don't throw your life away because you think it's the only way to honor her memory." She lifted her gaze to his, whimpering like a baby as tears wound down her cheeks. "Don't punish yourself because she couldn't see the wonderful person I fell in love with. And don't stay in the dark because I wasn't good enough for you."

"Jane," he whispered, darting his eyes between hers as she lowered her hand, "that's not why. You have always made me feel incredibly loved—that was never the issue. And you don't make me forget. I always saw that fire in your eyes you wanted to unleash because you hated how much she hurt me. I swear it's only my fault. You want me to be loved and believe I deserve it, but I don't. I should never have tried to stand beside my brother. I don't deserve any of your lovely light. I refuse to accept it because one day, my darkness will swallow you. I can't bear to even consider it swallowing you and your child. I can't allow that to pass."

A sick feeling rose within, but she calmed as a firm hand slid around her waist to hold her. "Easy," Archer murmured, pulling her to him as she started to bawl. "Is there anything else she needs to hear from you?"

Jane lifted her head enough to see the anguish on Tercero's face as he shook his head. It made her cry harder. But when he took a step away, she lunged toward him and dragged his face down to hers.

He could've pulled away, but he removed her hands from his cheeks to take hold of hers, then pressed his lips to hers.

The beautiful chaos his kiss always created surged forward, and she grabbed it as tightly as she held onto his vest. She felt something cutting her fingers, but she didn't care. Not when he deepened the kiss and hauled her further into his embrace.

So many memories passed through her mind, and she squeezed her eyes shut tighter to see them better. From the shy smiles they'd exchanged when they were kids, to the first day she talked to him and he gave her a ride to school ... the first time they kissed, right in her bedroom when she was about to fall apart. Then the hundreds of sweet kisses they'd snuck in as often as possible until finally, the day after they graduated high school when he stole her away from David and Ryder and took her to his room.

All moments before that, he'd merely watched the others love her and allowed her to put her mouth on him when she'd beg to have more. But that morning, he'd told her they'd waited long enough. He took her completely, feeding her every craving she'd ever had for him.

She would never have imagined the most sensual of her guys was the killer of the group. But he was. He killed because he couldn't forgive himself for her being hurt. He felt the need to earn redemption by saving others. Only, all his efforts led him further away from the one person he believed he failed the most.

Whoever the fuck Elise was, she didn't deserve him. Jane never wanted to take her memory away, but she always hoped he'd realize that his supposed soul mate wasn't the only person he could be loved by. Hell, the girl fancied Ryder over him when Ryder was an utter ass to her, but she, Jane, loved every inch of Tercero.

"Please don't leave me," she cried against his mouth. "I love you." She tried to hold on, to press another kiss to his lips, but he leaned away.

"I love you as well," he said, covering her hands on his chest, "but I can't stay."

She shook her head.

But he spoke again. "Don't come back." His eyes fell to her hands, and he sucked in a breath before applying pressure, yelling, "Brother!"

Jane didn't know what was happening. The tingles, fire, ice, and a faint tickle consumed her whole body, but all that mattered was that he was still leaving.

"Let her go." It was Ryder. He lifted her into his arms as David and Archer circled them, blocking her sight of Tercero as he walked away. "Baby girl, look at me."

She didn't want to. She wanted to chase Tercero down.

"Here," Archer said, taking her hands in his. Then she realized she was cut, and he and David were applying compresses to stop the bleeding.

"Jane," Ryder called her again. This time he nuzzled her cheek and kissed along her jaw until his lips were near her ear. "You're hurt, angel. And he's gone."

“No,” she croaked as Tercero slipped into the shadows. “He still loves me.”

“He’ll always love you,” Ryder murmured, still nuzzling and kissing her, pushing his powerful presence into her. “But he’s made his choice. He’s not willing to leave his prison, baby. A man must save himself to be worthy of the woman he loves. And Tercero isn’t ready to escape his misery.”

“I’ll save him,” she cried as David kissed her forehead.

“You can’t fix this, Jane,” he said, checking over Archer’s bandages.

Archer smiled sadly at her. “She needs stitches, I think.”

“Yeah.” Ryder sighed, kissing her jaw as David used a tissue to wipe her tears. “Where the fuck is Luc?”

Archer answered, “Went to talk to him, I’m sure.” He lifted her hand and kissed her wounds. “I’m sorry, gorgeous. I thought he’d see how stupid he is and how brave you are.”

Jane stared at his blurry image, her mouth opening and closing like a damn fish. She’d really lost him. She thought for a moment she’d gotten him back, that he’d realized they belonged together—fuck Elise, and hell yeah to him being a sexy ass killer who saved women from monsters. “I don’t understand.”

Archer’s expression softened. “He’s too broken, darlin’. He doesn’t want you to drown with him.” He inclined his head toward Ryder. “He really believes he’ll fuck up Ryder’s happiness with you, and he can’t be the one to do that.”

Ryder sighed, situating her better in his arms. “Let’s give him time. We have to get you to a doctor.”

“I don’t—” Jane removed her hands from Archer’s hold, sending a rush of blood to where she was cut. “I’m bleeding.” She darted her eyes to the darkness, then to the cloth wrapped around her hands that was turning red. All the pain ripping through her insides let up before rushing to her fingers and straight back to her heart. She saw spots. “The sky is blinking.”

Ryder’s “Fuck” was the last thing she heard before the world turned white like Archer’s hair, then black like Tercero’s eyes.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

11 weeks

Ryder paced the small exam room, glaring at David and Luc. They sat beside Jane, who was sound asleep on the hospital bed. Go figure, Jane could watch people be killed, but her own blood had her fainting.

To be fair, his girl had been through a lot. She'd blocked out too much, and he hadn't helped or given her time to process everything. Now she had a shitload of sutures after scaring the fuck out of all of them.

"She's fine," David repeated as he glanced at the heart monitor.

Jane had always had a fast heart rate, but he hadn't known it was an actual condition until he saw that she had tachycardia on her file. He'd seen the word before but thought it was something to do with pregnancy. Now he felt stupid. And he was pissed because they had been informed that she was anemic from the pregnancy.

"She'd be better if she wasn't pregnant," he said, hating himself again for knocking her up.

Luc lifted his eyes from his phone to stare at him. “If she hears you regretting this child, she will be heartbroken.”

“I don’t regret the baby,” he snapped. “I just didn’t realize so much shit can go wrong. Why don’t they teach us any of this? I would’ve been careful if I’d known she could fucking die from something I put there. Nothing matters more than her.”

David’s eyes hardened. “The baby is not a *something*. It will become someone, and that someone matters to her.”

Ryder rolled his eyes. “Jane is always going to matter most to me, dumbass. That’s why she has you. You care about everyone—I don’t.” David almost looked like he felt sorry for him, but Ryder ignored that and went on. “What if the cut had been worse? We didn’t know she was anemic. The baby is sucking the fucking life out of her.”

“The baby is not sucking the life out of her,” David said with a sad laugh. “You need to relax. She needs to take extra vitamins and eat better. She’s been so sick lately, but they said she’ll be coming into the second trimester soon, and they usually do better then.”

Ryder grunted and continued pacing. They had already stitched Jane up and decided to give her IV fluids for dehydration. But when she kept bawling about Tercero, they offered something to relax her while they waited for the bag to finish. Either she had been tired, or the medicine was stronger than the doctor said because she passed out hard. “I don’t want her working anymore,” he said, glaring at Luc. “You probably don’t even make sure she eats.”

Luc crossed his arms. “You’re not her owner. I’m her boyfriend as much as you are, and care just as deeply for her. Besides, she’s not a child—she takes care of herself. She

cannot help morning sickness, though. It won't change with the environment.”

“It might,” David said with a grin. “She gets sick of watching your receptionist fawning over you and any other women you have dealings with. She’s mentioned their perfume several times—that it makes her nauseous. Maybe she’d benefit from not dealing with the office drama for a while.”

Ryder smirked at Luc’s annoyed expression. “Aw, did you not pick up on that, big brother?”

“And what would she do if she had to sit at home and wonder about every interaction I have without her at my side?”

“She doesn’t worry about me with other women,” Ryder said, smiling. He made damn sure his baby never had to worry about him. But she was a girl, and girls had instincts. Luc was the one who’d been in ‘relationships’ before, and now that Jane knew the kind of stuff he’d done, she’d be worked up on the days she started feeling down. “I can keep her with me while you run your shit. I can take her to have lunch with you most days if that makes you feel better.”

Luc glanced at Jane, his expression mostly blank, but Ryder saw the worry there. They were all nervous about the pregnancy now, even if they acted calmer than he was. Jane was young and mostly healthy, but she had some health concerns for the doctors. And dealing with the emotional stress of losing Tercero wasn’t healthy, especially so early on. “I’ll talk to her,” Luc finally said before returning his attention to his phone.

David put a hand over her tummy but focused on Ryder. “He looked at her in that way he does. I thought he’d come back to her.”

“Me too,” Ryder admitted. He’d seen how badly his brother wanted to stay with them, but his head was his worst fucking enemy.

“I didn’t,” Luc said in a bored tone without looking away from his phone, “but you wanted to let Archer play with her. Now here we are.”

“She deserved to know,” David butted in. “And Archer isn’t playing with her. He’s in love with her.”

Ryder thought it over. Yes, Archer had a thing for Jane—maybe even loved her—but he didn’t trust that Archer could be loyal. Or that he would be committed for the rest of his life like he was sure David and Luc were. David might’ve considered leaving before, but he wasn’t going to now. But Archer? Ryder wasn’t sure what his brother’s end game was. But he had gone hardcore on the asshole who’d recorded them, so maybe he wasn’t giving Archer the credit he deserved. After all, Ryder had never thought to sneak Jane onto a job to show her what Tercero was involved in.

“He’s not interested in being a father,” Ryder said.

David shrugged. “Does that matter?”

“Of course it does,” Luc answered. “Do you think I plan to treat the child as a niece or nephew?”

“Technically, the baby will still be your niece or nephew,” David said. “But I know what you mean. I see Archer as more of a fun uncle than a daddy too.”

Ryder stopped pacing and stared at Jane’s face. She was so sad. He knew she had been holding off on accepting things about Tercero, but now there was no denying it. His stupid brother was lost, and Jane would wake up just as broken as his brother. “I don’t give a fuck what Archer wants to be regarding

the baby. If he wants to be with her, they'll figure it out. Fuck, I can't believe I'm saying any of this. Someone tell me I can go back to hoarding her to myself."

David chuckled before laying his head down near Jane's tummy. "He'll be good to her. You'll need to stop knocking his ass out."

Ryder smiled. "I'll still knock his dumb ass out. Just not around her."

Luc sighed loudly. "This thing with Tercero needs to be sorted. It's your fault he's so messed up. You need to step in."

"Step in?" Ryder frowned, darting his gaze between his brother and David. "I fucking apologized to him and told him I'd ease up. I didn't object to you and Archer taking her tonight. I went to make sure nothing went wrong. But he walked away. What else do you want me to do?"

Luc rubbed the bridge of his nose. "I forgot you talked to him already. What did he say?"

"Nothing. He's completely checked out. I thought it'd be different if he saw her." Ryder walked to the door. "I'll be back."

"Where you going?" David called out.

"Damn, Papi, I'm just going to take a piss. Do you need to come hold my dick?" He laughed at Luc's frustrated expression and left. He didn't have to piss. He wanted to make a call, so he made his way toward the waiting room, calling his brother.

Tercero answered on the first ring and asked, "Is she all right?"

Ryder found an empty seat, pleased as fuck that the place was dead; it had been busy when they'd first gotten to the emergency room. "She had to get some stitches—they're giving her fluids now."

"I saw her faint," Tercero murmured.

"Yeah." Ryder stretched his legs out as he glanced at the one nurse sitting at the desk. When she smiled, he looked away. "Apparently baby girl has always had a thing about her fingers or toes getting cut, but I'm sure the anemia didn't help. I guess the baby is sucking the life out of her."

"Is she still not holding food down?"

"Sometimes she can." Ryder sighed, adding, "Listen, I get you're going through shit. I can't fucking help what happened with Elise, though. She's dead, brother. She's not coming back. And if she could, she'd be the same fucking bitch who didn't give a damn that you were right there because I existed."

"You certainly know how to hurt with more than your fists." Tercero didn't sound hurt, just tired.

"I'm making a point. I'm Jane's fucking world, but she'd still crawl her cute ass over to you if you'd let her. You don't even realize she was gonna try to sneak off without telling me to find you. You have to accept she's not just mine—never has been. As much as I get possessive and want her all to myself, I can't fathom ripping any of you out of her heart—I won't do it. I'm trying to learn how to be less."

"Don't," Tercero cut in. "Don't change how you are with her. She deserves everything you want to give."

"I want to give her you." Ryder chuckled. "You're making me feel like a pussy, little brother. I'm supposed to be a

badass, and you've got me groveling for you to come back to my girlfriend.”

“I can't stand at your side,” Tercero murmured. “I want her to have you at your greatest, and I'm a burden. If I ruined her the way I know I will ...”

“Stop feeling sorry for yourself.” He dragged a hand down his face as he released a frustrated groan. “Isn't my greatest providing more than myself for her? Not cutting her up? I mean, I don't get your mindset. You fucking love her more than anything in the world, she loves you, and the rest of us accept you with her, but you want to throw it all away because you can't get over the shit with Elise?”

“It's not entirely Elise's memory that's the problem. It merely adds to the issue.”

“Which is?”

“What do you think will happen to me one day? Do you think I will always come home unharmed? That they won't figure out Luc is involved in the destruction of their crimes or that I am his hitman?” He let his words sink in. “He showed her off as his queen, even though he has enemies there. They will find out exactly who she is and come for her. The best thing for her and your child is to take her far away. Allow me to rid the world of the monsters who nearly stole her from us because, once again, I was not good enough for the girl I loved.”

“Fucking hell, Terce.” Ryder rubbed the back of his neck as a headache started building. “You made a mistake that night. You don't have to kill anyone. I mean, I'm down for it and wouldn't mind taking some assholes out, but you don't have to put yourself in danger because you feel guilty.”

“You don’t understand. I’m not like you—I can’t be cold about the ruin I cause. It will bleed out and taint her. I can’t do that. I can’t be responsible for new monsters noticing her.”

Ryder frowned, realizing there was a whole fuck load of things Tercero needed to work on. If he felt guilty for killing, especially for killing men because he thought it was a way to make things up to Jane, he might never recover. To Ryder, every fucking piece of shit who hurt women and children deserved death. “You can stop, you know? Or take breaks and get ... I don’t know ... assassin therapy.” He knew that would annoy his brother, but he got serious again. “And no one will lay their hands on her.”

“You’ve said that before.”

A fire roared through his veins, and he squeezed his phone until it creaked. “Are you trying to piss me off?”

“Merely pointing out the truth. You’re not always with her. Yes, you usually have one of the guys with her, but these men are not all fools. The risk is too great. I just realized it all at dinner with her parents. Why tag along in the family you are building when I’m putting her at risk?”

A dark smile lifted Ryder’s lips. “So the time you filled when you were with her—you want to hand it over to Archer then?”

“You’re treating her like an object. Stop offering her up to every eager dick we’re related to.”

“It hurt to see her with him, didn’t it?” Ryder chuckled, knowing he was being an asshole. But he had a plan. “She’s not an object, but I’ve seen the interest in her pretty eyes—she’s curious about him. Maybe she wouldn’t be if a certain someone occupied her thoughts.”

“Nice try.” Tercero let out a sad laugh. “Please consider what I’ve said. I’ll send word if I think you need to worry.”

Ryder ended the call with a smile. He would feel things out with Jane after she recovered to determine if she needed to rid herself of Tercero—because there was no point pushing them together if it was toxic. It wasn’t her job to fix his brother, and he wouldn’t let her go down that road. But if Tercero had a chance at recovering and genuinely felt they wouldn’t tear each other apart, he’d put a plan into action.

He stood and walked toward the receptionist, nearly rolling his eyes when her dumb ass perked up and beamed at him.

“Can I help you with anything?” She leaned forward, attempting to push her tits out even though she’d seen him come in with Jane.

He loved knocking these types of bitches and their egos down. “Do you have a permanent marker I can borrow?”

Her eyes brightened, and she fumbled with her pen jar, grabbing a sharpie. “Sure do.”

“Great. Does it write well?”

She giggled, popped the lid off, and scribbled her name and number on a sticky note. “I’d say so.”

He held his hand out, and she smiled, handing him the paper. He took it but gestured for the marker. “Thanks, Amy,” he said, reading her name before pressing the sticky side on the counter and leaning away. “Is there a gift shop open? I want to get my girlfriend one of those baby onesies.” He held up the pen. “I want to write something cute on it. Girls like that, right? What if I put Daddy Ryder and get her other boyfriends to sign it too? Or maybe I’ll put King Daddy Ryder

since I'm the lucky bastard who knocked her up? Seems like something that would make her happy. Or is it stupid?"

Her smile fell, and a constipated look swam over her face as she tried to sneak back her number. "No," she said, swallowing, "it sounds cute—I'm sure she'll love it. Um, if you head back the way you came and take a right instead of a left, you'll see the shop. I believe they sell baby items."

"Awesome." He stood back and held up the marker. "Thanks again." He pocketed the sharpie and strolled away, chuckling to himself.

"What's got you so happy?"

He looked over his shoulder and saw Archer carrying a set of Dr Peppers and a box of donuts. "That for Jane?"

"Nah, it's for me." He grinned like an idiot. "Yes, it's for your little mama and everyone else. So what're you doing?"

"Getting a onesie to fuck with Tercero." He pulled open the door to the shop and entered with Archer trailing behind him.

"How is a onesie going to fuck with him?"

Ryder went straight for the baby stuff. He picked a white onesie since they didn't know the baby's sex yet. "I'm gonna have everyone sign it, then ask him to. He'll see the daddy titles on us and get it through his damn head that I'm not the only dad." He spotted calla lilies and grabbed those too.

"She got stitches and fluids, brother." Archer laughed, following him to the checkout. "You don't have to get her flowers."

"I like to get her these when I see them," he said, nodding to the young woman. She blushed and dropped her eyes.

Archer chuckled, nudging him. “Stop glaring at people.”

He didn’t even know he was. “Shut up.”

“That’s an apology from him,” Archer told the cashier, who blushed again.

Ryder didn’t bother clarifying that he wasn’t apologizing for shit and pulled out his card to pay. He held the marker out to his brother. “Here. Sign your name somewhere. Maybe wait to see if things work out with her before you add the daddy title.”

Archer laughed, taking the onesie. “Even if I manage to make your girlfriend mine, I’m not joining in with the daddy thing. I’ll be Uncle Archer. I can’t let Savaş win Best Uncle.”

“I knew you wouldn’t see the baby as yours.” Ryder chuckled at the cashier’s wide eyes. “What? You’ve never heard of a woman having multiple boyfriends?”

“Jane’s living every girl’s filthy dream.” Archer winked at the girl. “You’ll have to forgive his attitude. He’s upset with one of her other boyfriends, and he’s grouchy.”

The cashier’s mouth opened and closed a few times, making Ryder laugh.

“I almost wish Jane would meet a chick she could relate to.” He picked up the flowers and onesie before nodding goodbye to the still-stunned cashier. “Maybe there’s a secret club for them.”

“Nah, we don’t want her in anything like that. The women will want to swap dicks out.” Archer grinned. “I honestly thought you’d tear my head off for trying with her.”

“I’m still debating it,” he admitted. “I don’t know what she sees in you.”

“I’m hot, and I make her laugh.”

“I’m hotter, and I make her laugh,” Ryder deadpanned before snagging Jane’s favorite drink. “Stop trying to steal my moves. I get her Dr Peppers. Find your own shit with her.”

Archer chuckled, handing him a straw. “Don’t worry, big brother. She’ll always look at you like you’re the reason she lives and breathes. I just want a chance with her.”

“And if she doesn’t?” Ryder turned, leaning against the door to wait for Archer’s response. “She hasn’t accepted losing him, but she will be a mess now. We don’t need her getting attached to you only for you to decide she’s not what you want. You’re coming in at a hectic fucking time.”

A dreamlike smile filled Archer’s face. “I won’t change my mind. Trust me, I’ve thought about telling her for a while now.”

“Yeah, but you still haven’t told her shit.” He pushed off the door. “Don’t forget she had no idea David and I were in love with her, and she still looks at me and thinks I might stop loving her. Be blunt.”

“I guess she did dismiss all my ass grabs as friendly touches.” Archer’s eyes sparked with mischief, reminding Ryder that he would likely be in a relationship with his dumbass brother soon. “Don’t look so worried—Jane’s magic. She’ll win our brother back, and if she accepts me, I’ll make her laugh every day.”

Ryder rubbed his eyes, sighing as he wondered if encouraging this shit was right. He didn’t want Jane’s sorrow over Tercero to push her into Archer’s arms. He wanted it to be natural if it was meant to be. “Be in this all the way if

you're in. Be able to handle that she's having my baby, and she will change."

"She'll be a good mama." Archer gestured at the door with his chin. "I'm in if she'll have me. Stop stressing."

"I still get her whenever I'm fucking needy," he said, chuckling as he turned and entered the room, only to stop short when he spotted some prick at the edge of Jane's bed with her legs spread. "What the fuck are you doing?"

Archer bumped into him as David jumped to his feet.

"He's just checking on the baby," David said, putting himself between them.

Ryder's eyes narrowed on the man and what was in his hand. "By shoving a fucking dildo up her pussy?"

Jane giggled, covering her face as Luc released a heavy sigh. The doctor, or whomever the fuck he was, cringed as Ryder's anger spiked.

David chuckled, shaking his head. "It's a transvaginal ultrasound since Jane's uterus is tilted. She'll have the regular ultrasound on her belly when she's further along."

Still not letting the man free of his glare, Ryder walked toward Jane's head, caressing her hair before giving her the flower. "You sure you don't want to wait to see your doctor?"

Luc answered as she smiled dreamily up at him. "She wants to make sure everything is fine. Sit down and stop scaring the technician. I didn't pay them for their staff to spend all their time being frightened by you."

Ryder smirked at Jane, sitting in a chair as David took the seat he'd been sitting in on Jane's other side. David and Luc had her hands between theirs, but Ryder kept his free hand in

her hair, relaxing her as he watched the tech put lube on the weird wand. “Does that hurt her?”

“No more than your dick, big brother,” Archer said, placing the stuff he’d brought down. “Is it all right if I stay?”

A shy smile touched Jane’s lips as she nodded and gestured for him to get behind David—away from Ryder, he noticed. Cute, she thought she was protecting him.

“Well, get on with it,” Ryder said, smiling at Jane’s blushing cheeks. She loved him being an asshole.

“The gel is warm,” the tech stuttered, “and it might feel a little uncomfortable. Or maybe not for you.” He nervously darted his eyes around the room as Jane frowned. Hell, they all did.

“Are you fucking serious?” Ryder stood to punch the little shit, but Archer already had the technician up and was escorting him out of the room.

“Did he just imply my candy shop is used to being probed by dicks?” she asked, peering up at him.

His anger vanished as he stared down at her. “Candy shop?”

“Y’all say it tastes like candy. I must be selling some good shit for y’all to want it so bad.”

He ignored David laughing and moved to settle a hand over his spot below her heart and to the side. “You’ve got the best shop, Jane-y Wonka.”

She cackled, covering his hand. “Imma start chargin’.”

“Nah, you’re very generous.” He smiled as David continued to laugh at her silliness but kept his focus on her. She was slipping somewhere in her mind to keep herself safe

from what had happened with Tercero. It probably wasn't good, but he couldn't stand the thought of making her cry before seeing their baby, so he said, "Want me to go fuck him up?"

Her grin stretched into a full smile. "I'd love to see him piss himself, but I'd rather get home to have some proper probing. Need to keep my customers happy."

"Sweet little freak." He chuckled, leaning down to kiss her as Archer returned with a woman and one of the doctors from earlier.

"We apologize for the technician's unprofessional and improper remark, Miss Mortaime and sirs." He nodded to Ryder and Luc, then David. "If you allow us, I'd like to have one of our other technicians perform the scan. And I assure you, the previous technician will receive proper discipline."

Jane nodded and gestured toward her spread legs. "It's getting a little drafty, and I'd like to get home to cry in private. So can we hurry this up?"

The older doctor smiled kindly way before nodding to the female tech. "I'll just stand over here to observe."

Ryder almost muttered something about the doctor wanting to perv on his woman, but all thoughts left him when the screen changed, and a rapid whooshing sound filled the room. Jane tensed, but she calmed when he caressed his spot.

"It's our baby," she whispered, her eyes watery as her lips parted in awe.

David, Luc, and Archer looked on with similar expressions of amazement as an odd-shaped image that was indeed his child made jerky movements on the screen, all while that little heartbeat fluttered away.

Ryder watched it move its little nubs as the tech explained where the head was and how even though they couldn't make everything out, the fingers were losing the webbing between them, and the heart chambers were already formed and working perfectly.

He ran his fingers through Jane's hair as she asked questions, but he could hardly listen. All he could do was stare at her happy face, then at the child they'd made together. He didn't know what to feel about the baby other than realizing it was indeed there, alive and growing and moving. But he felt absolute peace, like all the stress he'd been burying himself with vanished, at the sight of Jane's happiness.

He might've fucked up by being possessive with her, knowing the whole time he could knock her up, but there was nothing wrong about it now. Not when she looked so fucking happy and beautiful.

Looking back at the screen, he asked, "How big is it?"

"I'm measuring 1.7 inches and 1.6 ounces, head to bottom," the tech said with a smile. "I'd say about the size of a fig. So baby is right on target for your eleventh gestational week."

"We're having a fig," Jane croaked, earning a chuckle from David.

"And the heartbeat?" The tech had told them it was normal to beat so fast, but he was worried about Jane's. "It doesn't affect Jane? Like how fast it is?"

"No." The woman clicked several buttons on the machine before adding, "You can speak with her obstetrician more about Jane's tachycardia, but the baby's heart rate is perfectly

normal and has no impact on the speed of Jane's. Hang on a sec."

His heart raced as the doctor walked over, and the technician moved the wand around rather crudely. "Is something wrong?"

Jane's gasp had him looking away from the doctor. "Is that what I think it is?"

"What?" He jerked his gaze toward the monitor and froze. "Twins?"

The doctor smiled. "It appears so. Give her just a moment, and we can get a better look at Baby B. This one's been hiding. Their heartbeats are perfectly synchronized."

"Are you fucking kidding?" Jane yelled.

"No," the doctor said with a light laugh. "There are two separate sacs. Fraternal twins."

He rubbed her side, panicked. What the hell had he done to her? "Babe, I'm so fucking sorry."

Tears spilled free from her eyes, and Ryder couldn't even look at David or his brothers. He'd put her at so much risk. His mom didn't make it. What the fuck had he done? He couldn't lose her.

She cried, shaking her head. "No, Ryder, I'm not mad."

His heart lit on fire as he searched her face, and the damn whooshing sound made his breathing speed up. "No, it's not okay."

A hand came down on his shoulder, but he jerked away. Still, Archer was there, pulling him back as Ryder realized he was leaning over her as if he could reach in and take it all away.

“You need to calm down,” Archer said, firmer than he was used to.

David helped pull him to the chair. “Hey, sit. She’s not mad. It’s okay.”

Ryder glared at him. “Fuck you. You didn’t hurt her.”

“You didn’t either.” David smiled sadly. “She’s happy. She’s not angry.”

Ryder glanced at Jane. Luc was there, murmuring things in her ear that no one could make out, and she was nodding as Archer wiped her eyes.

“Relax,” David repeated, lowering his voice. “You’ve got this. You’re the strongest for a reason. Get it together. For her. Remember, you do everything for her. And you have us. We’re dads together, right?”

His chest felt tight, but as he stared at the monitor, the technician’s words became background noise. All he could do was take in the two shapes. Two little moving beings. “What if she dies?”

David shook his head. “You won’t let her.”

For some reason, he nodded, the tightness easing even though it still didn’t feel like he could breathe. But he moved David aside and went back to her. She smiled, reaching for him, and he leaned down, not hesitating to kiss her.

All the air came back to him then. His chaotic thoughts of losing her vanished as her sweet scent washed over him. But he leaned away when he felt her pulse fluttering under his hand—he’d gripped her neck. “Breathe,” he whispered, keeping his lips close.

She obeyed, smiling up at him like the goddess she was. “We’re having twins.”

“Yeah.” He kissed her gently and moved back for David to take his place. He wished it was David and not him. David could be perfect, and he probably could make perfect babies. This had him turning to the doctor. “Is there a way to tell which of us is the dad?”

“You’re the father,” Luc said calmly. “So am I. So is David.” He hesitated but caressed Jane’s cheek. “So is Tercero.”

The doctor cleared his throat. “There are non-invasive and invasive testing that can be done during the pregnancy, but I would wait until they are delivered, considering you are brothers. The more accurate testing would be too invasive, so do not recommend it.”

Glancing at the monitor, he nodded, trying to tell himself it didn’t matter that there was a slight chance he’d not fathered the baby. Babies. “All right,” he said. “Um, do we need to take different precautions? Is the second baby okay?”

The technician nodded. “Baby B looks great. It’s a little smaller than Baby A, but that’s normal. Both have implanted in great areas, so there’s no worry that she will have the placenta over her cervix. It’s a little too early to sex them, but they are both looking great.”

Archer spoke up. “Can she still have sex?”

He glared at his brother but wondered if he’d already hurt her.

“You can have sex,” the doctor said. “However, it is recommended that you refrain once the pregnancy progresses since she’s carrying multiples. For now, you can. Her

obstetrician will be able to help you have the safest pregnancy.”

“Ryder, come here.” Her soft voice slid the tension off his back, and he went to her side.

“I’m here.” He smoothed her hair back, breathing easier because she no longer looked like she was in shock. “You sure you’re okay?”

“I’m perfect.” She grinned, hooking her finger in his waistband before she turned to smile at Luc.

“And here is their first photograph.”

Ryder looked over, realizing the technician had printed more than one photo. She’d even put David’s name. “Hi, Daddies!” was written at the top, but the bottom said Mortaime-Godson/Leodegrance.

David chuckled, taking the one the tech held out to him. “I’m almost positive I didn’t supply the DNA but thank you.”

When Archer accepted one of the photos, Ryder didn’t even bat an eye. But as he stared at the labels for Baby A and Baby B, he smiled. “Fuck, Kingston is going to lose his shit.”

Jane let out a tired laugh, but he noticed she was checking each of her men as they inspected the ultrasounds they’d been given. Then her cute chin wobbled, and her eyes watered. She was one daddy short.

“Can you print one more?” Ryder asked, facing the technician. “There’s one more of us.”

“Oh.” The tech’s cheeks pinked. “Do I need to add a name?”

The woman deserved a raise. “No,” he said, looking back toward Jane. “He’s a Godson.”

Jane smiled at him like he was the best person in the world. “He’s Daddy number three no matter where he is.”

He nodded to her, knowing that was how Tercero referred to himself—as the third boyfriend. He’d been the third born. Third to catch Jane’s attention. Usually third to get her because typically Luc was not around. “Yeah, I need one for Daddy #3.”

The lady already had it printed and was handing it to him. Ryder smiled at the fact that the tech had changed the greeting on the photo to, “We missed you, Daddy #3.”

“Give this woman a bonus, Luc,” he said, putting the photos in his jacket pocket.

Luc sighed but merely nodded and took the cloth from the tech. “I have this.”

The doctor escorted the tech out while uttering that someone would be in with Jane’s paperwork and that they’d forward the news to Jane’s doctor. Then they were alone with their girl.

“Archer brought some donuts for you,” he said, wiping a tear before it slid into her hair. His girl was hurting, but he and the others who claimed her heart with him were there. “Why don’t you eat one while Luc cleans you up, and we get your stuff together?”

David stood, leaning down to kiss her as another tear slipped free. “You can cry, Jane.”

Luc gave her a sincere smile. Jane cried as Archer broke off pieces of donut to pop into her mouth as he told her how loved she was—how Tercero wasn’t there, but he would be happy about the news.

Ryder needed to see her fall apart because it reminded him that Jane, and him and the others, would always consider Tercero one of the fathers to their baby—babies. *Fuck, we're having twins.*

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

12 weeks

Tercero watched from the car window as Archer and David entered Luc's office building. As expected, his big brother had her ready, and she was heading back out with them in no time.

Even from where he sat across the street, he noticed how dull her eyes appeared. She was either ill or not taking care of herself. She looked dazed. It even seemed she didn't know David and Archer were even there. But when David cupped her cheeks and kissed her, her eyes glowed.

A weak smile formed on her pale lips, and she raised her hand to touch his mouth. The word 'sorry' was unmistakable. She was sorry for being sad.

He sighed, rubbing the space that should hold his heart. It had been one week since he'd seen her—since she'd learned that he killed men as some fucked up way of coping with failing her. She didn't view him as something monstrous or pathetic as she should.

He should've expected it. Jane befriended the most dangerous people like they were stray dogs. She couldn't help but love and want to keep them.

Yes, he should've known that she would still view him in a positive light.

Ryder had taken it upon himself to send him daily reminders of what he'd caused. There were recordings of her crying loudly, crying in her sleep, and worst of all, staring off at nothing. Lost. Empty.

She only seemed like herself when one of her wolves or demons used less than favorable vocabulary about him. If they said anything negative, she would snap and tell them they were nothing compared to him. She'd scream that he was a hero, then fold in on herself, broken from the loss and upset with herself for yelling at her friends.

The passenger door opened and shut, and Tercero sighed. "I wasn't picking you up."

Luc slid on his sunglasses before glancing at him. "You've been stalking her for a week. You look like Death's chew toy and are not helping anyone by lingering in the shadows like this."

Tercero closed his eyes as David got into his car, tossing Archer the keys so he could sit in the backseat with Jane. She was crying. Again.

"I almost think she feels the misery you have become best friends with," Luc commented, looking toward the departing vehicle. "It's as though she's not whole anymore."

"I told Ryder to take her away." Tercero started his car but waited for Luc to leave. They were meeting at a safe house, not riding together. "None of you should've brought her to see me like that. And if he took her, she'd realize he could make it all better. They make each other whole."

“What an odd declaration.” Luc rubbed the tattoos on his wrist. “I recall her yelling at him this morning that he didn’t make anything better and that he’d ruined everything.”

“I’m sure that was just her hormones.” Tercero felt sick. She should not think that way about his brother, let alone say it to him. If she cut Ryder out, she’d die inside, maybe out too.

“No, Ryder offered what you keep attempting to poison his mind with—to take her away from David and me when she refused food this morning. He told her it would just be the two of them, and he’d make her forget the rest of the world.”

Tercero sighed and rubbed his face. Ryder never did well when she was unstable.

“So, you see,” Luc said, “he doesn’t make it all better. She will hurt if any of us part from her, and he will become unrecognizable. You should’ve seen how she broke down when David tried to promise he’d never let her be taken, and our brother threatened to do whatever he had to do. No matter how strong he is, he will rage when she hurts, and she is finally grieving your absence.”

“They can go to therapy. And people get over breakups.” Tercero decided to get to business and drive. It was no longer his place to say anything about Jane and Ryder’s relationship. “What’s wrong with this shipment?”

Luc chuckled as he rested an elbow on the car door and held his face. “You killed someone important on the last recovery—perhaps a relative of someone up in rank. I need you to look through the photos of the dead. There’s a chance we could trace this back to someone up high.”

Tercero knew these groups never ended, but killing someone’s relative and not wiping out the entire evil family

was asking for trouble.

“She’s not going to be taken from me,” Luc said without looking at him. He stared out the window, lost in thought, but clearly knew what he wanted to say. “David might’ve considered letting her go before, but they’ve only gotten closer since he recommitted himself to her. And I”—he turned his head toward Tercero— “will not abandon her again. I’ve been infatuated with her since I first saw her twirling around in her yard, and I fell in love with her the morning she waltzed into my room, climbed onto my lap, and called me out for my bullshit in the sweetest way. She is mine, and I am hers.”

Tercero knew what morning he spoke of. It had been the morning he and the others had written their names on her pretty skin, committing to being her boyfriends. Luc had hurt her, but she’d faced him anyway to win him back.

“Elise will fade from your mind, little brother. Her face and voice will become harder to imagine because you are meant to live.” Luc leaned his head back and exhaled tiredly. “You did nothing wrong to warrant punishing yourself. Keep that in mind when you continue making choices on how you live. I will say, however, you would do well with therapy. I’ll cover it and, if necessary, require you to continue to do your work with me.”

“Therapy does nothing for me. I’ve tried it.”

“Then perhaps you would benefit from medication or having Jane attend with you ... perhaps even Ryder. You must know there is no competition between the two of you. To her, he does not compare to you. Even he knows that, which is why he always put her in your arms when he had to leave. He cannot feel anything but her—but you can, and you can give her everything. He knows this, and so does she.”

“She’s not safe with me,” he argued weakly, not wanting to discuss it but unable to resist listening to his older brother.

“She’s not safe with me,” Luc countered. “Nor with Ryder or David ... or with Archer. Yet she tightens her hold on us anyway and stands stronger, and the army she does not realize she holds in the palm of her hand roars behind her. You don’t have to shelter her—she’s willing to face danger. She’s still her wild, rebellious self, even though everyone assumes she’s an obedient mouse. She’ll go into danger if she feels she must—even more so now that Archer is willing to show her the truths we’ve kept from her.”

Tercero tightened his hands around the steering wheel. His childish brother would put her in the most danger.

Luc chuckled, and it was the mean sound Tercero was used to from his brother. A sound that meant pain was to come. “You despise the thought of him with her.”

“She doesn’t need to add to her stress. Having multiple lovers is stressful.”

“Do you say that because Elise paraded multiple lovers in front of you?” Luc’s cruel laugh barely touched his ears. “Did you know she pursued each of us, not just Ryder, before settling on you?” Luc didn’t wait to drive the knife deeper. “She was a monster, Tercero. You, though, are a complicated but worthy soul, and you were given a chance to kiss the moon. Realize you are spitting on the gift her father entrusted you with the next time she tries to show you a path through the darkness you’ve surrounded yourself with.”

He swallowed, exiting onto the road that led to one of Luc’s many safe houses. Everything Luc said hurt his soul, but it was the first time he felt the pathetic thing hold out a hand, begging her to extend hers again.

The loud sigh from beside him made him want to cower. He was weak. He was weakening himself every day, and he knew if he continued on the path he'd started that he would fuck up—he would finally meet his bitter soul mate in whatever damn place she and him deserved.

A cold hand on his cheek startled him, and he jerked, realizing Luc had moved his hair and was staring at a tear on his fingers. “Good. You’re not entirely lost.” He used a handkerchief to wipe his hand, then offered it to Tercero.

“I’m fine.”

“Far from fine is what you are.” Luc withdrew the handkerchief. “But I’ve seen my little queen at her brightest with tears streaming down her face, so I know there is hope for you. Make her and her father proud by working through your issues, or release her entirely. You need to stop fearing things that are out of your control.”

He wiped the remnants of his tear and turned down the road he needed to take. “Why do you think I’m taking so many jobs?”

“Because you’re crying for help. Like Ryder and the others, I have neglected your cries because we are cruel men. I’m disappointed it has taken watching her fall to do this, but I am offering you my hand now. Whether you take hers and the others’ support later is not important right now. I would much rather she hurt after learning you are healthy and living a good life than weeping over your breakup only to discover you have lost your fight.”

“Because it’ll hurt less that way,” he murmured, knowing that was what Luc had left out. It was something Luc always said regarding Jane.

“Yes.” Luc nodded as he pulled out his phone to read a text. “But you already know she would walk through Hell and jump out of Heaven for you. So get it through your head—she’s willing to face anything at your side. You just have to let her and choose her entirely this time.”

Tercero rubbed his chest again, frustrated that his heart was pounding the way it did around Jane. He didn’t want to lose her. He didn’t want to fail her or the others. He couldn’t fail Ryder. And he didn’t want to get her back, only to lose her anyway. He especially didn’t want to be the reason harm came to her. He’d rather not have her and be miserable than hurt her again.

“Gabriel has insisted I offer you a chance to move to London with him.” Luc huffed and tugged at his sleeve. Their eldest brother had not given his blessing to the relationship they’d started with Jane and had chosen to move away to show his disapproval. Jane was clueless about it because Gabriel did like her as a person—he simply wouldn’t accept their lifestyle. “He also said to tell you Elise’s sister asks about you often. And he mentioned that she resembles her sister quite a lot these days.”

Tercero sighed, shaking his head to rid her from his mind too. Delilah called him every week, leaving voicemails when he declined her calls. She always offered herself to him, and he had no idea why. He was sure Luc and Ryder were aware, and they were itching to destroy him should he ever accept.

“I’ll think about everything,” he said. “Just promise me that whatever I choose, you won’t allow Jane to come looking for me again.”

“Promise me that you will keep this—she asked me to give it to you.” Luc took something from his jacket pocket and

handed it to him. It was an ultrasound of the baby with the words ‘We missed you, Daddy #3’ above two blobs. “Then you have my word that I will never allow her to search for the man she considers the third father of that child. Correction: children.”

Tercero pulled to a stop in the clearing. His mind had gone blank. “Twins? How’s that possible?”

“You are one of four,” Luc said, annoyed. “It’s very possible. She’s fine, by the way. Ryder lost his mind for a moment, but he’s gotten better. Even if he feels guiltier than before.”

Tercero blinked, tearing his eyes away from a horrible truth. “You’re sure she’s okay? Did they say she should abort one?”

“Of course they mentioned it. To me, not our brother because the doctor was quite afraid of him. He said it was possible that the smaller of the two wouldn’t make it, but its heart was strong. Jane has already seen her obstetrician. They’ve started her on something to help with nausea and increased the number of visits and scans she will receive.”

“This is even more reason for Ryder to take her and run.” He glared at two motorcycles hidden in the bushes. “Why’s he here?”

Luc sighed. “He’s taking your warnings seriously. Any threat to her will not go home to sleep soundly at night. But I think this helps him. He feels like he can control something because he feels helpless with her. Oh, one more thing.” Luc held out a brown gift bag that Tercero hadn’t noticed. “I offered to see that you got it because he wasn’t sure what mood he’d be in.”

Frowning, Tercero put the ultrasound in his jacket pocket and exited his car. When he rounded it, he stopped to peek inside the bag. It was a small piece of clothing, and only when he removed it did he realize what it was. A newborn onesie with the words 'Baby's Team' painted in blue and pink, as well as everyone's signatures. All of her wolves, her demons, Savaş, Archer, Kingston, and Sarah, had signed it, but the titles in front of Ryder's, David's, and Luc's names crushed his heart. They'd all titled themselves 'Daddy.' Ryder had added 'King Daddy,' but it was a final declaration that any chance of Ryder taking Jane for himself would not happen.

"He plans to give her this, but he wants you to sign it first. He said it's up to you if you're Daddy Tercero or simply Uncle Tercero. I suppose 'Baby's Team' is wrong since there are two babies, or he should have bought two onesies, but I am not foolish enough to point that out to him right now." Luc turned away before slipping through the hidden metal door that served as an entrance to a long tunnel that eventually opened to an underground bunker.

He took the opportunity to study the onesie again, his heart aching at the two empty spaces. The space below the painted words had a painted kiss with a skull on the bottom lip, likely Jane's spot. But another had room for his name and the title 'Daddy' or 'Uncle.'

Tercero saw the permanent marker in the bag. He put the onesie back inside.

The flick of a lighter and glow from a flame to his right had him sighing; he'd let his guard down.

Ryder's gravelly tone mixed with his exhale of cigarette smoke. "She blamed me for ruining her life this morning." He took another drag, the cigarette's cherry looking more

menacing than it should. Ryder's electric gaze slid over to him. "So tell me, brother, how the fuck am I doing that when I'm making every effort to bring you home to her? To us? To our babies?"

Tercero couldn't respond to the questions, so he asked his own. "Did you kill the person they caught?"

Ryder chuckled and sucked on the damned cigarette again.

"It's bad for Jane if you smoke." He glared at his brother, who stood in utter darkness with only the light from his cigarette and the moon showing his outline since he wore all-black bike gear.

Ryder put the cigarette out on the helmet in his free hand. "Guess you know all about doing bad for her, huh?"

"She will be okay as long as you are by her side," Tercero assured him. "Congratulations on the news. I'm certain they will have all your strength and come out healthy and beautiful."

Ryder smiled at him. It was a violent expression. "See ya around, little brother." With that, he sauntered into the darkness, disappearing with it in a way only Ryder could. He wondered why his brother didn't just leave on his bike but didn't go after him.

The heavy metal door creaked open, and Damon poked his head out. "Good, he didn't kill you. Come give me a hand with the mess he made."

"You let him kill a prisoner?" Tercero looked in the direction Ryder had gone, but there was no trace of him.

A hellish smile lit up Damon's face when Tercero turned back to him. "That would've been kind for him."

Tercero followed Damon inside, muttering, “I guess that was a stupid question.”

Damon chuckled. “Very. We all know he’s only kind to her, and this motherfucker had pictures of her on his phone. One was her exiting the doctor’s office—they know she’s pregnant.”

His blood turned to ice. “She’s being targeted?”

“*They’re* being targeted. Let’s hope the information he got is accurate,” Damon said, not sounding too hopeful, “or we’ll have front-row seats to the apocalypse.”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Archer frowned, looking away from his phone when David emerged from the bedroom alone. “What’s wrong?”

They’d brought Jane home after her day with Luc, which had only occurred because Ryder had gone to ‘do some shit’ after an apparent fight with Jane that morning. His brothers would destroy the world if Jane didn’t overcome the breakup with Tercero. Ryder would end time itself if something happened because of the babies.

David held up his phone, then put it to his ear. “Just a moment, sir.” He covered the mic and whispered, “Go in with her. Coach said he needs to talk to me.”

“Is she awake?” Archer asked, standing. He’d kept his distance since things unfolded last week to give her time to grieve. She’d held off accepting that Tercero was gone and needed to let it all out. But he started to doubt that staying away had been a good decision.

David shook his head and continued to the balcony.

He wished she was awake, but maybe it was better that she had her dreams to escape. After quietly shutting the door, he went to the bed, where she lay curled at the edge. “Aw, sweet girl,” he murmured, getting behind her. He knew she seemed to relax when he touched her, so he put a hand over her

stomach and smiled when she uncurled from her tight fetal position and breathed easier. “There you go.”

She sighed, scooting closer to him as she attempted to pull his hand harder against her tummy. He’d likely get his ass beat for it, but she needed comfort, so he slipped his hand under her shirt, grinning when she let out a pleased exhale.

“Thank you, Archer,” she said, not opening her eyes. He loved that she knew his presence already.

“How bad has your stomach been this week?” He didn’t want to jump on the Tercero topic. She knew he’d listen, but he also knew her sadness was making things worse for her. She needed strength for what he knew she’d eventually try to do.

“It’s been awful. I know Ryder’s so mad about the babies. I’m stupid—picking fights because I ruin shit.” She still didn’t open her eyes but covered his hand with hers. “Your touch always helps.”

“You should’ve called me.” He rested his lips on her head and breathed her in. She had such a subtle sweetness that reminded him of flowers in a night’s breeze. He loved it. “And you didn’t ruin anything. Neither did Ryder. He said it himself—he’s great at everything. That includes knocking out two babies at once.”

“I don’t want to think about the babies. I want to be sad,” she whispered as a tremor rolled through her body. “Tercero’s all by himself.”

“He knows where you are.” Archer considered telling her that Tercero had taken to stalking her, but he decided not to. His brother needed to get in the right mindset first. They

hadn't even told him about the pregnancy changing. Only her parents, Sin, Damon, and Than, knew.

"I'm sorry I've ignored you all this time," she blurted, still not turning to look at him.

He smiled against her hair. "Gorgeous, you smiling and laughing with me this past year has hardly been ignoring me. I've just played a part because I didn't want to interfere."

"But now you do?"

"Now I won't play the part simply because my brothers got you first." He felt someone's stare on the back of his head and sighed. "Your baby daddy is here."

She tensed and turned in his arms. A grateful smile was on her mouth, and she peered over his shoulder to meet Ryder's stare. "Thought you were leaving."

Archer watched his brother toss his motorcycle helmet on the floor without a care in the world, then walked around the room like he wanted to see every angle of her in his arms.

"Did she tell you you could slip your hand under her shirt?" The gruffness of his brother's tone would have alarmed him if he had any sense left, but he was a stupid prick panting after this woman.

"Are you really mad I made her feel better?" Archer caressed her tummy when it clenched. "You're scaring her."

Ryder's gaze narrowed, and Archer admitted to himself that his brother in his bike gear with a scowl on his face as he took in his girlfriend was an intimidating sight. "She's not afraid of me." He smirked, and Archer knew it was everything mean in his brother that he was allowing him to see. "She's afraid for you."

“Ryder,” she said, trying to sit up, but she had no strength. Her arms shook, and she fell to her back and groaned.

His brother watched her, then crossed the room to them. He squatted beside her and caressed her cheek with his fingers. “I need you to choose yourself, Jane. I need you to choose our children.”

“I’m trying,” she croaked, leaning into his brother’s hand.

Archer watched them in awe, wishing he knew what they felt because he could see they were connected on every level. He wondered if he’d ever get close to their connection.

“I know,” Ryder said, smiling at her even though he was still angry. “Does he help?”

Archer slid his hand across her stomach, smiling when she nodded. “I think it’s the counter-pressure.”

“It’s more than that,” Ryder said, staring at the peaceful look on her face before glancing at him. “You hangin’ out for a while?”

He shrugged and kept rubbing her stomach. It looked like she was finally falling asleep. It would seem strange if he didn’t understand how much peace his brother brought Jane, even if he was a jerk. She felt safe and loved with his asshole brother, so she rested. “If she doesn’t mind.”

Ryder stood but focused on Jane again. “I know she’s needed this time to be sad, but I know she’s scheming too. Just be careful with her, Archer.” His brother looked tired when he dragged his gaze from her. “She’s my priority. Not you. Not David. Not Luc or Tercero. Not even the twins. If you scheme and she gets hurt, that’s it.”

He’d kill them all. Archer knew it was a promise, and his brother needed to issue it to get the pressure off his chest. “I

know.”

Ryder caressed her cheek again, smiling faintly at her smile. “I’m ordering some food. Encourage her to get up when she wakes.”

“You don’t want to swap places?” Archer frowned as his brother headed toward the door, snatching up the car keys.

“I’d try to make love to her or some shit, and she needs rest.” Ryder turned, putting his back against the door. “Never stay away from her because you think she needs time. Jane always wants to be chased.”

“You inviting me to push you out of bed, then?”

Ryder pushed off the door, chuckling, and damn if it didn’t scare him. “Try it. I promise I push back harder.”

He chuckled and resumed caressing her stomach. Then the door opened and shut, signaling Ryder’s departure.

“Tell me a secret, Archer,” she whispered, startling him. “I don’t want to think about everything wrong in my life.”

“We thought you were asleep.” He smiled as she turned in his hold to lie face-to-face with him. Her hair got stuck over her face, so he moved it carefully. This girl’s eyes should never be hidden. “And there’s shit wrong, but nothing we can’t handle.”

“I always feel when he leaves.”

Intense, he thought.

She reached between them, hesitantly brushing her fingers along his jaw. “Damn you boys and your jawlines.”

A smile tugged at his lips, and he couldn’t resist teasing her. “Whose is best?”

Her eyes flashed with mischief, and his heart beat faster when she grinned. “He’ll make me pay for it later, but you and David are a tie. Like you can cut butter with this.” Her dainty fingers dragged along his jaw. “So you win for the Godsons.”

He laughed, kissing her forehead. “We won’t tell him.”

Her fingers tickled his skin like a feather as they skimmed his cheek. “His is my favorite to kiss, though. I know I’m toying with a predator when I get that close.”

“That’ll inflate his ego.” It was a little weird to listen to her talk about his brother while he held her, but he could see it—she was working out in her mind if it was okay to view him on the same level as the others. He also knew she wasn’t including Tercero in her comparison because he was sure Tercero had the sharpest jawline of them. But he’d help her stay distracted if that was what she needed. “But Ryder doesn’t have dimples.”

“You don’t have dimples either.” She smoothed her hand on his cheek.

“I do—it’s a secret because you can only see them if I smile.” He had trained his face not to show them off because he hated being considered the baby of the family. They weren’t as deep as when he was a chubby baby, but they were still there.

“You smile all the time,” she argued, squinting at him as though she could somehow see better that way.

“I force a fake smile because I want people to let their guard down around me and relax. I’m not smiling genuinely.” He showed her a real one and his dimples because she was the best reason to smile.

She gasped, almost bumping him with her head when she sat up. “Archer, you shapeshifter!”

He chuckled, rolling onto his back as she leaned over him, touching him again. The girl could touch him wherever she wanted, and he’d pull the damn dimples on her if it meant she’d do it often.

“I can’t believe you hid these. I never would’ve passed up the chance to make you smile.” She kept staring, but her breath hitched when her eyes locked onto his.

He felt the tightness in her stomach because he was clenching just as hard with her leaning so close, her hair spilling around them. “Don’t panic, pretty girl.” He reached up to hold the back of her neck. He wanted to pull her down, to bring her lips to his, but he knew she wasn’t ready. This was their first time alone together since she’d cried in Tercero’s room. If she kissed him though ...

“I’m not panicking,” she whispered, leaning down. Her eyes fell to his mouth, and her pink tongue darted out to wet her lips. Then that mischief returned to her gaze, and she closed the space between them. Only she moved at the last second to his cheek. The kiss was soft and perfect, and she smiled against his skin and giggled. “I panicked.”

“I can see that.” He chuckled again, considering taking the lead for her, but he wanted her to have control of something in her life. Everyone else had things happening that she had no say in, and she needed something of her own. “But I’ve noticed you have places where you kiss your guys, too. I like dimple kisses.”

She breathed in his smell before sitting back. “I don’t have places I kiss them.”

He rolled his eyes and plucked up her hand. “You kiss David’s neck like a freak, and he does the same to you. You and Luc do that corner-of-the-mouth kiss that I always hear bitches swoon about. Ryder gets two kisses—his jaw and his lips.” He kissed the back of her hand when her eyes strained. “You lick Tercero’s cheek or neck or anywhere, so it’s not quite a kiss, but it’s something you do with him. You can do them all with me, but I won’t pretend that you kissing my dimples isn’t a win over all of them in my book.”

“You boys are always so damn observant.” She ran her fingers through his hair before touching where one of his dimples was hidden.

“Our oldest game was watching you and trying not to get caught staring. Ryder was the only one who didn’t give a damn who saw him looking.”

Her eyes flitted toward the closed door. “I hate fighting with him.”

“He hates it more.” He put a hand on her stomach again. “He’s ordering food. Why don’t you show him you can choose yourself? He’s so worried about you.”

“It was just so much.” She worried her lip, still staring at the door, and he wondered if she felt him out there. “He tells me the truth, and I do stupid stuff.”

“You said so yourself, there’s been a lot to process. But you have to eat.”

“I said something bad to him.” She pulled her gaze away and covered his hand. “Really bad.”

“There’s nothing you can say to him that will be too bad for Ryder.” He knew what she’d said, and she’d probably have moments like that with all of them. “I promise, Jane. And the

best thing you can do is go out there, kiss him, and eat the food he gives you. You can tell him you want to see someone about your eating habits if that's something you want to address. I swear he will feel better. He won't think badly of you. You must know you're all that matters to him, and fear pushed him to say anything harsh. He didn't see a solution to help you, and you fired back a warning. That's all. He understands."

The tension melted away from her petite frame, and she smiled nervously. "Is it weak of me to ask you to come with me ... to see someone about my eating issues?"

"I'll follow you wherever you need me to. And I think asking someone to come with you is very brave. If it's easiest with me, then fuck yeah, I'm going."

She stayed quiet but finally nodded to herself. "I'll tell him I've asked you to take me wherever the doctor says. Then he'll lighten up about you coming over."

He grinned because she was saying she wanted to see him. She was feeling things out with him after everything and willing to play against her big bad boyfriend to get time with him. "Don't worry about his attitude with me. My taunts over you are the highlight of many of my days."

She stroked his cheek, and the sorrow dimmed enough that some sparkle returned to her pretty eyes.

"You don't have to pretend to still like me."

His breath caught, but he recovered quickly. "Gorgeous, if you think I'm afraid of twins, you must've forgotten I'm the youngest of the craziest quads ever. Two will be a piece of cake."

“A piece of cake.” She smiled, touching his cheek again.
“One more?”

Smiling, he swore to take any teasing from his brothers as long as it meant she was happy.

“Thank you, Archer.”

He took hold of her hand and sat up. “Any time, gorgeous. Let’s go eat now.”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Ryder scrubbed his hands for the tenth time and growled, snatching the mouthwash David had brought him. He shouldn't have fucking smoked.

“You need to lighten up,” David said but threw his phone on the counter with a growl. “What am I going to do?”

“Tell the world to fuck off,” he said, not bothered by David's football drama. He knew it was a big deal—every company had pulled their endorsements on him, and they were threatening to pull donations from the school because word had gotten out about Jane being his stepsister and their relationship with her. The donors wanted a public breakup or denial of the relationship, or he would be cut from the team. So yeah, he understood David's frustration, but they had bigger problems.

“I don't want to stress her out.” David frowned. “What happened at the safe house to get you that worked up?”

His jaw ached from how hard he was clenching his teeth together. Jane was a target of the assholes who trafficked those poor women. Anyone who tried to get near her would die—he'd handle them himself, but he knew he needed to get everyone up to speed. “Motherfucker they caught had pictures of her. And the doctor's office. They know she's pregnant.”

“What?” The instant rise in heat beside him said it all. David was ready to kill too. “Is he alive?”

“For now.” Ryder dried his hands, then rubbed sanitizer over them to help with the smell. “Handle your shit however you need to but remember she comes first.”

David took a deep breath, his gaze darkening as he stared at the countertop. “Whatever’s necessary, Ryder.”

He nodded because that wasn’t even up for debate. “I’m not telling her anything until tomorrow.”

Pinching the bridge of his nose, David growled. “Fuck.”

“Quiet.” Ryder checked his phone, noting the food he had ordered was almost there. “He’s calming her down. I want her to be relaxed. Leave if you can’t keep your head together.”

“I can.” David looked at his phone too. “My dad’s coming over anyway.”

“Why?” Ryder glanced at the bedroom door, swearing he heard Jane laugh. She hadn’t laughed in a week. Maybe Archer was good for her after all.

“Because I called him for advice, and he asked how she was doing,” David said. “I forgot I hadn’t mentioned the breakup because I’d been so focused on the babies. He’s blaming himself.”

“Well, he and your damn stepmom had to say shit.” Ryder opened a drawer that had two guns and ammunition in it. They had several weapons in the apartment but needed to start carrying them. The men after Luc and Tercero didn’t fuck around. It was blood and pain they sought. They’d give it back tenfold.

“I think Sarah’s a lost cause,” David muttered, turning toward the door when a loud knock sounded. “I’ve got it.”

Ryder held out a gun, even if he was almost sure it was Kingston or the delivery person. “Not taking any chances.”

David nodded, taking the gun and checking the chamber as he walked. He peeked through the peephole and sighed. “It’s Dad.”

Ryder kept his guard up as David opened the door. He was pleased that even David didn’t flip the safety back on until he had his dad inside the apartment.

Kingston frowned, darting his eyes between them and the gun. “What’s going on?”

“Precaution,” Ryder answered, nodding his head at the bag in Kingston’s hand. “What’s that?”

“I brought her ice cream.” Kingston scanned the empty living area. “Where is she?”

“With Archer.” David led Kingston to the kitchen, taking the bag. “Don’t even start about him either, Dad.”

Confusion slid over Kingston’s face, his brows drawing together as he watched David put away the ice cream. He frowned. “She’s seeing that goof?”

Ryder snorted and relaxed a bit. Fucking with Jane’s stepdad was a form of stress relief. “She thinks he’s hot. Us Godson men are irresistible, and your stepdaughter is smokin’. We can’t fight the attraction.”

Kingston shook his head. “Karma will come for you for always doing this. Those babies will be beautiful little girls, and one day, someone will come along and take them from

you and then tell you all sorts of inappropriate things, and you won't be able to hurt them."

"Fuck that." Ryder glared at him. "No one's talking shit about my kids."

David chuckled as he poured his dad a glass of water like a fucking hostess. "He thinks they're boys. I think they're girls."

Kingston's eyes brightened. "I think someone's afraid of having a little girl."

Ryder scoffed and rechecked his phone as he said, "If one or both are girls, my job will be even easier. Ain't no little pricks coming around thinking they can fuck with them. I'll end their asses."

A soft touch on his back had him grinning as a pair of dainty arms circled his waist. "You won't end anyone who makes our babies happy."

Taking her hand, he pulled her to stand in front of him and smirked. "You saying that because they'll be too afraid of me to talk to them?"

Jane's eyes sparkled. He wanted to lift her onto the counter and fuck her all better to say he was sorry, but he settled for slipping his hand under her shirt to rest over his spot. She sighed at his touch but answered, "If they are girls, it won't matter how scary their daddy is. They'll be worth the pain."

"Good thing they're boys, then." He leaned down, kissing her forehead as he mumbled, "I'm sorry for this morning, angel."

"So am I." She pushed up on the tips of her toes, puckering those gorgeous lips.

He kissed her. He didn't give a damn that Kingston was there and was uncomfortable. He squeezed her ass and made up for his shitty attitude. He needed to do better. "You still love me?" he asked, kissing her again as he considered taking her sexy ass to bed.

She broke away, gasping. "Always, Ryder."

"Longer, babe." He pecked her and gave her one more squeeze. "Stop forgetting it."

"May I see my daughter now?" Kingston grumbled.

Jane jerked away. "I didn't even see you!"

Kingston rolled his eyes and pulled her into a hug. "Because you always have your eyes on him." He kissed the top of her head, then frowned. "How are you doing? You don't look like you've been eating enough."

"Tercero broke up with me," she blurted, then sobbed loudly, startling them all.

Kingston wasted no time pulling her into a hug. "Oh, sweet girl. I know, but it'll be okay."

David and Archer stared wide-eyed, and he probably looked just as stupid when she screeched and blubbered even louder against Kingston's chest. "But, Daddy, I love him!"

Kingston didn't seem bothered by her cries. He smiled in that fatherly way he did with Jane and stroked her hair. "I know you do. He loves you too."

Archer sidled up to Ryder, whispering, "I did not expect this."

Ryder hadn't either. Maybe it was hormones or having a dad with her after a breakup, but his girl was hysterical.

David got the ice cream out and handed it to his dad. “Baby, Dad brought you your favorite.”

“Jesus Christ,” Ryder muttered, snatching it from him. “She doesn’t want ice cream.”

“What kind is it?” Jane paused her meltdown long enough to look at what he held—cookies and cream—then her eyes filled with tears again. “It is my favorite.”

Kingston’s smug smile stretched wide, and he took it from Ryder as he led Jane to the sofa. “Here, sweetheart. We’re not going to let this go to waste. After all, Tercero’s just a human—you’re a goddess.”

Ryder chuckled, knowing that was the wrong thing to say to her.

“He’s my ninja.” She cried again but did at least start eating the ice cream.

“That was kinda cute,” Archer murmured. “They went full Ariel and King Triton.” He tore his gaze from them, and a rare seriousness transformed his face when he saw the gun David had left on the counter. “What the fuck did I miss?”

David pointed at him. “Ryder will fill you in.”

Ryder watched Jane blubber to Kingston. He heard not just Tercero’s name but also Wendy’s and that she wanted to talk to the Fallen, to which Kingston looked lost. She was saying too many things, even something about dimples, but Ryder needed to get David and Archer up to speed. He nodded toward the dining table. “Come on, asshole.” He growled at his phone as he read a text that the driver was stuck in traffic. “I thought you made her happy.”

Archer held his hands up. “I had her laughing. I don’t know what the fuck happened.”

David sat, but he kept looking over at his dad and Jane. “Is that what girls do for breakups? I’ve never seen her like that.”

“Let Kingston handle it.” Ryder opened the photo app on his phone and showed them one of the photos he’d taken from the phone of the man he’d almost beaten to death. “Where’s this place?” He didn’t recognize the photo’s surroundings and wondered if they were edited.

David studied the photo and shook his head. “No idea.”

Ryder slid it toward Archer. When he wasn’t a dumbass, he noticed things others didn’t.

Archer looked at it, then darted his eyes up to them. “It’s Dungeon.”

“Jane wore a sexy gray dress that night,” Ryder argued. He took in the surroundings and admitted they resembled the same architectural style.

“But she was wearing this the day she came home,” Archer argued.

They all turned at the sound of a knock. David was the one who got up and, like the good little fucker he was, armed himself as he went.

“She’s a target?” Archer asked, watching David too.

“Yeah.” Ryder breathed easier when David gave the okay signal and opened the door. The food was left at the door. No one was there, which was expected, but he still got up to check the bag. “Babe, you want Kingston to eat with you over there, or can you come sit down?”

“I’ll come eat,” she said, rubbing her puffy eyes.

“Damn, babe,” he said, taking her from Kingston. He nuzzled her neck and even licked the tears that had fallen

there. “What’s happening?”

“I don’t know.” She shrugged but wrapped her arms around him. Her little body jerked with tiny inhales, but she seemed calmer in his arms than in Kingston’s. Then she cried again. “I miss my daddy.”

Jesus. He wanted to punch himself. She had never experienced a breakup with her dad there to comfort her. She didn’t even have her dad around to tell him he would be a grandfather. Kingston’s presence must’ve reminded her of that.

“Your dad would say the same stuff Kingston has.” He sat at the dining table with the others but kept her on his lap. “Put hers on a plate.” He gave the bag to Archer and focused on his girl. She was a cute, sad mess. Her nose kept dripping, and her embarrassment from trying and failing to stop it made her red in the face. “Relax,” he said in the tone he used whenever he was serious. He knew it did something to her physically, and he smiled when her eyes locked on his. They flared with more green than gold, which hurt his heart, but he didn’t let it show. Instead, he took the tissue Archer passed him and cleaned her up, smiling wider when David sat beside them and started caressing her back.

Kingston put away the ice cream and joined them at the table, sitting at the head to take a dig at Ryder, even as his focus was on Jane.

Like Ryder often did around her, he felt all her conflicting emotions. He didn’t know how she could do that to him, but he welcomed the sensation. Even when they had her screaming, sobbing, or yelling in rage. It was overwhelming and made him frustrated for her. How did she walk around with this building inside her and stay sane?

“Baby,” David said, using the firm tone that made her react, “do you need to go spend the night with Dad?”

Ryder glared at him. He didn’t want her anywhere without him while a threat was present. Or ever.

“No,” she said, facing forward. She slipped Ryder’s hand under her shirt to press over his spot. “I just need this.”

“Well, the offer is always available,” Kingston told her.

“I know.” She gave her stepdad a teary smile before taking in her plate. Ryder had gotten her enchiladas and double rice because she hated beans, and even if she didn’t eat the whole plate, she wanted lots of rice. “Aw, thank you, babe.”

“My Texas girl gets her Tex-Mex,” he said, holding her fork up. Unfortunately, there was only one Tex-Mex restaurant nearby—other restaurants served more authentic Mexican, but she liked the Texas style. At least, she did before she got pregnant. Hopefully it wouldn’t make her sad, considering he’d had her dad on his mind when he’d decided to get the food.

She might’ve only lived in Texas till she was five, but thankfully, she seems to remember a lot from then. Many of her memories were going with her dad to eat—they were Mexican and French, so Tex-Mex was a frequent choice for them. She would randomly think of specific restaurants and what her dad ate, and she’d tell him. He was glad she could remember so much.

She started eating, giving him a thumbs-up. He rolled his eyes at Archer’s teasing grin. If this little fucker thought it was stupid to treat her, he’d have to set him straight.

“Mom hated Tex-Mex,” she said out of nowhere. “She always wanted him to take her to French restaurants.”

Ryder darted his gaze to Kingston, wondering what she was going on about and praying it wasn't a different meltdown.

Jane chewed and swallowed but went on with her story. "It's like she forgot Dad was only half French. His mom was mixed—Spanish and Mexican Indigenous. Her ancestors were forced not to speak their languages or even eat their foods, and it was all lost. So he liked Tex-Mex because that's all she ever learned to get close to her heritage. I wish I could've met her and my grandpa. Maybe I'll learn how to make this. I know it's not accurate to any of my actual background, but I can try to teach the baby something I remember with Daddy."

David rubbed her back. "Baby, don't you remember when your dad taught you how to make it?"

She jerked her head over at him. "He didn't teach me to make this."

Kingston answered, "He did, Jane. You were only five and had your eyes on David the whole time. So maybe it's buried in your mind a bit. Eric taught you how his mother cooked enchiladas and rice. I remember because I'd gone over to get David for dinner, and you struggled to roll the corn tortillas. Your dad did it for you."

Her cute chin wobbled, and she sniffled as she took another bite. His poor girl. He'd have to punch David for distracting her as a child.

David chuckled, cutting his food. "Yes, you can hit me for ruining the memory for her."

"When'd you start reading my mind, Papi?" He rubbed her spot once more but slipped his hand free so he could eat.

“I can always tell when you want to fight me.” David laughed again as Jane finally smiled at them.

“No hitting my David,” she said, sniffing again.

“Babe,” he said, making sure he sounded like a stupid ass with his whining, “I have to hit him. He deserves it.”

“He doesn’t deserve hits for being dreamy.” She laughed when David leaned over to kiss her cheek.

“I get to go one minute with him in the cage,” he proposed. He’d get her happy before the night was over, and they’d be ready to tell her the serious shit tomorrow.

“One minute is too long,” she said, shaking her head and smiling wider.

“Five hits,” he countered.

“One,” she fired back.

David winked at her but said, “He gets two, baby, but I get to hit back.”

Archer chuckled as he finished putting together his fajitas. “We could’ve been eating Mr. Mortaime’s family enchiladas this whole time? David, you deserve to be knocked out. Why’d you have to be so dreamy?”

Kingston laughed loudly. “It’s my fault. I shouldn’t have made such a handsome son. It’s a miracle she learned anything with him around. I remember those enchiladas—they were delicious. So, David, you’ll take five hits.”

Jane giggled, and it was the best sound for all of them.

Ryder’s phone vibrated, and he lowered it below the table to check it.

MUTE

Call 4

He closed the text when Jane tried to look and smiled at her glare. “Chill, it’s not some hoe.”

Kingston coughed on a chip and shook his head. “Boy, you are asking for it.”

Ryder ignored him and hugged his woman as he whispered in her ear, “Baby girl, give me tonight to figure things out. I’ll tell you everything tomorrow.”

“Promise?” She pouted those damn perfect lips and gave him that doe-eyed look that had him wanting to drop to his knees.

“Fuck, Bambi.” He gripped her chin, pressed a hard kiss to her smiling lips, then gently shoved her face away. “Stop pulling out the big guns and eat your food. And yes, I promise. Tomorrow. No more questions until then, or I’ll take you to the room and remind you who’s boss around here—with your stepdad in hearing range.”

“Lord, help me,” Kingston muttered, standing. “Jane, I love you, but I know you’re in good hands with these idiots. Still, I’m just a phone call away if you need anything.”

“Love you too, Dad,” she said but didn’t make a move to stand.

Kingston sent him a glare and added, “I’m going to show myself out.”

“No, I’ll walk you.” David pushed his plate aside and grabbed the gun to escort his dad out like a good little soldier, ensuring Jane didn’t see.

Ryder took the chance to love on her the way he needed to as soon as the door shut. Moving her long hair over one shoulder, he pressed his lips to the nape of her neck, then worked his way down toward her shoulder. She tensed but let out a pleased moan when he nipped her neck on his way back.

Archer cleared his throat, but Ryder flipped him off and continued kissing her. It wasn't like Archer hadn't seen them intimate before.

"Mm," she hummed but patted his hands away. "Lemme eat first."

He scowled, but that had been his plan anyway. "I just needed a little taste of my Sweet Jane to mix with my meal."

She grinned, then held out her hand toward Archer. "Help me. His dick isn't playing fair."

At that, Ryder laughed, giving her ass a smack when Archer helped her stand. "Babe, my dick wakes up whenever you're within reach. No. Let her have your seat. Don't make her sit far from me."

"Such a possessive boy," she admonished but looked happy with his order. She wanted to be close to him, and she wanted him to be possessive. His girl was a little freak.

"You like it." He slid her plate in front of her and returned to his food, his mind racing about the text from the Fallen. He was sure none had anything to do with the Dungeon photo he'd pulled from the captive's phone. They were protectors, even if he wanted to fuck them up for being intimate with his woman. They were loyal to Luc, and he trusted them entirely regardless of that discomfort. So his next thoughts were that they'd found out something. And, since Luc wasn't calling him, there was a chance they were upset with his brother.

“Archer’s gonna go with me to the doctor about my eating,” Jane said softly.

He dropped his gaze to her, then to his brother. It was easy for him to act like his mind had not been elsewhere, and he smiled at her. “That’s good, babe. I’m down to go too if you want me instead of his dumb ass.”

“He’s not dumb,” she snapped. “He’s got a nice ass, though.”

Archer smiled, like really smiled, and she blushed.

“Motherfucker,” he said, scooting her chair closer to his. “You showed her your damn dimples?”

She giggled and tried to hide her blushing face in her hands. His damn girlfriend had a boy problem.

“Babe, I’m sexier, my ass and dick are the best, and I don’t need dimples to make your panties wet, so you better settle down with those hormones. He is not allowed to make you giddier than I do.”

“I think she likes making you jealous,” said David, chuckling as he returned.

He knew she did. It was how she reminded herself that he would always love her. His silly girl would always have those moments. Ryder motioned toward Archer. “He pulled his dimples out for her.”

David’s laugh annoyed him. “Aw, you really are jealous. It’s okay. I’ll help you learn to be a man for these moments.”

He scoffed because now Jane was making heart eyes at David. She loved that asshole’s confidence, but it helped Ryder with his plans to get her in a better mood. She had way too much hanging over her head. She needed silliness.

Thankfully, David always picked up on his scheming. It was their teamwork, after all, that had kept her from bugging them about the outcome of the guy Archer had hospitalized. Luc was pissed, but the prosecutors were paid off, and no charges were coming. They'd decided it was self-defense, and lots of threats were issued. "I'll show her again who's alpha around here."

"I'm alpha," she said smugly as her eyes lit up at the chips and queso. "Ooh. I like their chips." She grabbed two chips and put them on a plate, then poured a fuck ton of queso on top.

"You mean you like chips with your queso," he said, cleaning up her mess as she stuffed her face. At least she was eating.

"I-s yummy." She made a cute, pleased sound and went back to her food.

Ryder pulled his phone out and texted:

FOUR

Is this about a photo of her?

The Fallen responded immediately.

FOUR

I told Mute I'd call you.

Yes. Is she safe?

Ryder peeked at Jane, happy that Archer had picked up on things and was chatting her up. The little shit even had a hand on her knee. He'd consider breaking that hand later.

Focusing on his phone, he let David see the conversation and replied:

Safe. Calling you in 30

David's fist balled, but he kept calm and stayed quiet. Ryder still wondered why the fuck Luc hadn't called.

"Babe," he called to Jane, "how'd you do with Luc today?"

She looked up at him and shrugged. "He mostly kept me locked in the room. I looked stupid, I guess."

He frowned, caressing her cheek to remove the tears still there. "You do not look stupid. And what room? His office?" He'd been to Luc's office before, but he didn't think she would call it a room to be locked in.

Her eyes widened, and she turned away from him.

"Uh-uh." He grabbed her chin and made her look at him. "What fucking room?"

She tried to pull away, but he gripped her chin tighter.

"Answer me, Jane." He didn't want to scare her, but he didn't like secrets, and she was keeping a fucking secret for Luc.

"His office dungeon," she whispered.

"He locked you in a secret sex room?" He didn't put it past Luc to have something like that, but she seemed to be keeping something from him. After all, he knew a small sitting area attached to Luc's main office had a bed for her. He'd put her there before, but it didn't have a way to lock anyone in, even if he was sure Jane and Luc had fucked there many times.

She sighed. “I heard Damon call it the safe room. Luc had it decorated to look like Dungeon so I’d think he was doing his Dom stuff with me, but it’s a full bunker. He acted like I was too emotional to work around anyone and locked me in. It’s not his fault. I wasn’t supposed to know that it’s a bunker.”

His blood felt like fire, and he released her chin so he wouldn’t hurt her. “So that motherfucker knew something was up and didn’t say shit?”

Her shoulders drew back, and she met his glare with one of her own. “As if you haven’t done the same. I know I’m a fucking emotional mess, but you don’t have to keep me in the dark, either. Do you really think I’m too stupid to realize y’all covered up Archer beating the fuck out of that guy? And Luc had to get involved again to keep things clear for y’all?”

“Calm your tits,” he fired back. “You know I already promised to tell you shit tomorrow. Stop getting feisty because I’m pissed at Luc. He let you out of his sight without warning these two that there’s danger.”

She opened her mouth to tell him off, but her phone rang. “I’m sure that’s him,” she snapped, going to the kitchen counter for the damn thing, but she paled as she stared at the phone. “Tercero?”

CHAPTER TWENTY

“Jane, write this address down right now.” Tercero’s clipped tone helped her steady her emotions and focus, and she felt a part of her shut off while another switched on.

She rounded the corner and grabbed the pen and notepad. “Okay, tell me.”

He rattled off an address, and she wrote it down without even taking in the details. It didn’t matter because Ryder was taking the notepad already and pulling out his phone to look it up.

“Are you okay?” she whispered, unsure what to ask him. Did he know about the twins? Was he mad? She stared at the sutures on her palm and fingers, shaking as the memories of his kiss, his arms around her, and his promise to always love her returned.

He released a breath, and that slight accent he’d acquired from his time in Italy coated his words. “I’m fine.”

She walked away from the others but returned to Archer, grabbing his hand and leading him to the sofa. Ryder and David could look up the address. They were already on the phone with someone anyway.

Archer's fingers curled around hers, and he pulled her between his legs so she could rest against his chest as she cradled the phone against her ear. He was bracing her for anything that she might get hit with.

"You don't sound fine," she said, squeezing Archer's hand and smiling sadly when he returned the little squeeze.

Her quiet boy let out a tired chuckle. "I only meant that I'm not harmed. No, I am not fine. But I can't lament my misery when I'm the one who caused it."

"At least you recognize that," she said, trembling and trying not to cry. She didn't want to say mean things to him. She could feel all his pain, and he wasn't even in the room with her.

Archer looped an arm around her waist and pressed his forehead to her shoulder as he whispered, "Keep going."

Tercero spoke, but she knew he'd not heard his brother. "Jane, you must understand, I did not leave you to break your heart. I left for you to have the best chance with my brother, but none of this matters right now. I need you to give that address to anyone who would follow you into danger."

"What?" She looked up at Ryder, his expression blank as he stared at her while listening to someone on his phone.

"Luc and I have slighted very powerful men ... organizations. You are what we both value most."

She spoke before he could say more. "Someone's after me then?"

"Yes." He sighed, and she could imagine him pacing, running a hand through his long hair. "The address is a safe house of mine, one I haven't let anyone know about. Take

your most trusted men with you and a good amount of supplies. Ryder will come for you when it's safe."

Her eyes watered, taking in the way her bad boy was shutting off. She could tell he'd known and hadn't wanted to worry her.

His fierce eyes stayed locked on her, but he was becoming something she liked to ignore. "Why does he have to come for me after?" she asked Tercero.

"Because I need his help."

She shook her head. "No. You don't get to leave me because you have this stupid idea that he's the only one for me, then say you want to take him from me. No. He's mine."

The boy had the nerve to chuckle. "I know, *cara*. I promise he will come back to you. He's too stubborn in his love for you to let anything happen to himself. The help I need is not so dangerous anyway."

"Well, then I can come along, too." She had no idea what she was saying, but she was not letting Ryder go off to become a killer.

Archer plucked the phone from her and raised it to his ear. He spoke in a rough tone that she wasn't used to hearing from him. "Brother, what are you asking to be done?" An amused quirk lifted his lips as he listened to Tercero's reply. "Well, I think I'm kinda seeing her, so it is my business where you're asking to have her sent and what you expect of our brother."

Oh, boy. Were they having a pissing contest? She wiggled off his lap as he chuckled, but he held the phone out.

"He ended the call."

“What?” She snatched it back and glowered at Archer. “Why’d you do that?”

“He’s taunting him to get him to us,” Ryder said behind her.

She whirled around, her emotions so violent she fought not to burst into tears again. “You are not going off to kill anyone, mister.”

A dangerous smile stretched over his sexy face. “Baby girl, I fucking adore you like no other, but I do what I have to regardless of what you think.”

Her eyes darted over to David, who stood in the kitchen, arms crossed as he watched them. “David, say something. He can’t go off and be a killer too.”

“You know he doesn’t listen to anyone.” He sighed, watching her battle to stay in control of herself. All she wanted was for them to hug her and promise it would all be okay. That Tercero would be fine. They’d even get her quiet boy back for her, but she could tell by the shift in the air that things were out of her control.

Tingles kissed her chin as strong fingers gripped her face, turning it up to meet her bad boy’s eyes. His downcast gaze and the way his long eyelashes nearly kissed his cheekbones had her breath stalling. “I know what I’m doing.”

“And what are you doing? I deserve to know if my baby daddy is off being a criminal. I’m tired of being kept in the dark. It doesn’t help me. It makes me feel crazy and stupid.”

“You’re not stupid,” he said, his thumb moving gently over her lips. “Definitely my kinda crazy, though.”

“Ryder,” she said, frowning but swooning at how he stared at her. It was like he wanted to kill the world but have her

wrapped around him, riding piggyback while he did so.

“You like it,” he said with a smirk. “I wanted to let you relax tonight. I was going to feast on you, let David have a turn, maybe even let Luc if the motherfucker came over. But you’d rather ... say ... taunt Tercero with Archer?”

“I didn’t want to taunt him,” she said, miffed that Archer had interfered. “He pissed on me, and you’re smirking about it.”

Archer chuckled behind her, but she realized he moved around the sofa, away from Ryder. “I was trying to help in a way I know Tercero will respond to. He was preparing to push you away again.”

David walked over, sending a dark glare Archer’s way. “Everyone needs to relax. We have time to figure things out.”

Ryder’s gaze slid down her figure, making the hairs on her body stand up. “Go finish your food, Sweet Jane.”

She didn’t hide the way his order and voice made her shiver. “No.”

His full lips twitched, which did all sorts of delightful things to her insides. “I wasn’t asking. Now go finish the food you were enjoying so you can think clearly when your ex shows up.”

“He won’t come,” she argued, though her heart beat faster at the possibility of seeing Tercero. The fact that he’d break his distance and attempt to hide her while he dealt with danger was sweet in a way only the Godson boys could manage.

“You’re not stupid, Jane.” Ryder moved closer so he could leer down at her in that intimidating way of his, but all she felt was a current between them, wanting them to touch. “My brother is very much in love with you, and he’s furious that his

little self-sacrificing plan has gone to shit because this motherfucker”—his chin jerked in Archer’s direction before his gaze settled on her again—“is trying hard as fuck to pry your thighs apart so he can bury himself inside your pretty pussy.”

“Fucking hell.” David shook his head, but his smile had her blushing, especially when that damn tickle darted across her back from Archer’s gaze.

Ryder ignored David and Archer and reached for her, his long fingers circling her throat as he gently pulled her closer and lowered his face to hers. “You have two choices. Go eat like a good girl and feel proud that you’re thinking about yourself and being rational—or refuse, and I bend you over that table, slide in you so deep that you stop breathing and gasp at the stars I make you see. And I won’t fucking move or let you get yourself off. I’ll stay there, even when he comes to *rescue* you, because he thinks I can’t keep my woman safe. I’ll let him see you begging me to fuck you, and only when you come—because that’s how good my dick feels to you—will I acknowledge he’s there. Then I’ll fuck you when he starts to speak.”

“You jerk,” she said, trying to push him away.

His mouth chased hers, and it infuriated and freaking thrilled her when he caught her. She didn’t even fight after that. She surrendered to his assault, letting him dominate her.

His tongue lashed at hers, demanding she comply. And she did.

Moaning, she clawed at his waist, trying to get closer. He let her. His lips turned against hers as a throaty rumble sounded in his chest when she slipped her hands underneath

his shirt. She slid them along his smooth skin, every glorious muscle of his jumping at her touch.

His hand gave the tiniest squeeze on her neck before he leaned out of her reach. “Are you going to be my good girl? Or do you want me to punish fuck you and leave you begging?”

Blinking and realizing she’d stopped breathing momentarily, she heard David chuckle with Archer.

“Yeah, they do shit like this all the time,” David told him.

“I kinda hope she wants punishment,” Archer mumbled. “That was hot.”

Ryder didn’t look at them or seem fazed by their comments—his focus was on her. “Well?”

“You ass,” she blurted, hating how needy he’d made her. “I’m freaking hungry, but now I’m all tingly and angry.”

The unfathomable beauty of Ryder Godson grew even more devastating as he smiled and nuzzled her. “Be my good girl.” He spoke almost too softly to hear, but she felt his words anyway. “I’ll still make you beg, but I’ll make you thank me too.”

“Smooth,” Archer said, walking away.

David stayed, arms crossed, as his fierce gaze remained on them. “Let her come eat, Ryder.”

Jane realized Ryder had dropped his free hand to curl around her back like he was considering carrying her off. She didn’t know if it was to safety or to his bed to start hearing her beg.

Ryder’s eyes flashed to hers, and he smiled again. “I’ve got everything under control, angel. Just be my good girl and

go eat with David and Archer.”

She darted her hands to his waistband and grabbed hold. “Where you going?”

“Just gotta make some phone calls.” His eyes dropped to where she held him. “I’ll still give you some dick later. Now go.”

“Maybe I won’t want yours,” she snapped, pushing away from him.

David chuckled and wrapped his arm around her. He was likely aware she would glue herself to Ryder because she absolutely wouldn’t not want his dick.

Ryder turned away with a dark laugh and headed out of the apartment.

“If I were you”—David kissed the top of her head before making her sit—“I’d eat quickly.”

She frowned, glancing at Archer as he ate with determination. “Why do I want to eat fast?”

David smirked, lifting his fajita. “It’ll give you time to doll yourself up.”

Archer swallowed and nodded. “You’re going to have some company soon, mama. If you want to dish out some of your anger on Tercero, you’ll get your chance as soon as he gets here.” He gave her the damn dimple smile. “You may use me as you wish to make him jealous.”

She gently shoved his face in the other direction. He was too fucking cute, and she was mad at him. “Tercero doesn’t get jealous.”

Archer laughed loudly. “Oh, sweetness, Tercero gets so fucking jealous. He just went and killed people instead of

letting you see.”

Her mind drifted to memories of her quiet boy, and she hated that so many moments with him involved early morning romps in bed before she left for work—he went to sleep for his ‘night job,’ which she now knew was him killing people. Their time together was usually spent acting like hermits, cuddled up together. Now she knew it was likely because of his fear that being out with her would result in danger, and maybe he didn’t want to have it rubbed in his face that the others could be out with her so easily.

David’s fiery touch soothed the cold creeping in as his hand settled on the nape of her neck. “It wasn’t that he was jealous of your relationship with any of us, Jane. He was jealous of our ability to be with you and not feel guilt that would push us to become killers.”

Archer added, “We’ve kept you in the dark, but we all carry different levels of guilt for what happened to you. He has more because you were with him when you got taken.

“Luc was a cold bastard already. He’s clever and calculated. He has similar guilt for what happened but doesn’t feel bad about what he does. Tercero saw how easily Luc could set aside his darkness and still spend his day with you. He despised how you viewed David—and that David is pretty fucking perfect.”

He winked at her. “And he was jealous that Ryder is such a solid force in your life. Yes, he wants you two to love each other, but again, Ryder does things that are not easy to swallow. But you would swallow fire for him, and we know that.”

“I’d do anything for Tercero, David, and Luc, too,” she said, hating that Tercero might’ve felt judged by her,

especially when she was here forgiving Ryder, even if she didn't want him to damage his soul.

“He knows,” Archer said calmly, “but that bitch fucked him up in the head. She always talked about how amazing Ryder was compared to him. She tried to hang on to Ryder any chance she got, even slipping in bed with him when he went to sleep. She'd take pictures and send them to Tercero. He's so haunted by the fucking hell she put him through that he relives all that jealousy. He believes Ryder can do no wrong, and that won't extend to him.”

“You loved him enough, baby,” David cut in before she could lose her shit on a dead chick. “He just hasn't figured out how to see that you don't think the way that girl did. I think it's battered his heart—like he can't imagine being loved, especially when the girl he loves is actually loved by his brother. And Tercero is a badass, but he judges himself and thinks you'll judge him, too.”

“I don't want him to kill,” she said, “but I'm not mad ...” She frowned, wondering what the hell was wrong with her and whether she was okay with any of them doing the things he was. “I mean, I can't be mad at them for saving those people. Does he like to kill?”

Archer grinned. “He's good at it, but he doesn't like it the way Ryder enjoys fighting, or David and I enjoy playing football. He does it because it's a solution to a problem. But he views it like a sentence, I think. My bro can't escape the thought that he's failed the women he's loved and that he owes his soul or whatever.”

Tears stung her eyes, but she kept them back. Tercero tore his soul apart because he got drugged and couldn't keep her

safe. He believed she would judge him, hate him. She didn't know how to fix it.

David took her fork, cutting her a piece of the enchilada. "Open."

She sniffed, opening her mouth.

"There's a good girl," he cooed, feeding her. "Just one bite at a time. One decision at a time." His eyes met hers and burned. "Only multiple boyfriends at one time."

"Multiple babies, too," Archer added, patting her knee. "And I know I'm not your boyfriend—forgive me for butting in like I did."

Her face warmed, and she struggled not to hide. Everything with Archer was still tickling the back of her mind. And Tercero was coming over because he thought Archer was with her.

David's gaze moved to his teammate, then back to her. "Do you two need to talk?"

Before she could say anything, Archer did. "Nah, she's aware I'm interested in seeing things out with her. But she should focus on Tercero."

Jane eyed him as he finished his plate. Even if he wasn't looking at her, she felt him watching. The air between them vibrated in such a different way compared to his brothers. Of course, all her guys felt different, but Archer had her nervous because the sensation was such a tease, and she struggled to believe it was real—that he wouldn't just say it was a joke like always.

He looked at her. He didn't smirk or even have that teasing gleam in his eyes. He looked older. "I know you don't want to play games with him—none of us want that. And the jealousy

thing was to provoke him. He doesn't think I can be serious about you, so I gloated to hopefully frustrate him enough to get him to sit down with you."

"So you don't want to see me?"

He flashed her his dimples, and the current between them sizzled. "I want to see you, even with the double baby special. But like I said, focus on getting either closure with Tercero or getting him back."

"Where will you be?"

He glanced at David, then at her before grabbing her chin. "Watching." He smirked when her lips parted, and her gaze fell to his mouth. His lips were thinner than his brothers but shaped so perfectly that you couldn't help but smile if he smiled your way. "But if you want to do your own provoking, put some makeup on."

"Wow, Archer, I really needed to hear I'm looking rough." She pushed his hand away as he groaned about how stupid he was.

David chuckled. "He's not saying you're ugly, baby. You don't wear much makeup, but when you do, Tercero gets this little twitch like he wants to rub it off."

"Elise wore lots of makeup," Archer said, nervously tapping his fingers on the table. "I swear I just meant that you could initiate some tension."

"Why would I want to make things stressful for him?"

His tone was angry and short. "Because he needs to get it through his fucking head that you're not Elise." He sighed, standing. "Sorry. I just want my brother to make it through this. I'm going to go so you can see him properly."

“Archer,” she called, watching him head toward the door.

He smiled at her, but she knew now that it was fake. “Talk to him, Jane. Do the cute shit you think we find childish because it’s not. It’s just you being our gorgeous, silly girl.”

She sat there, silent as tears stung her eyes.

“Stop,” David said when Archer growled and stepped toward them. “Go.”

Growling again, Archer turned and walked out of the apartment.

“Why’d you tell him to leave?” She rubbed her eyes so she wouldn’t cry.

David grunted, focusing on his plate again. “He was about to come kiss you. I don’t need him crossing that line with you right now.”

Her heart fluttered at the idea of Archer kissing her, but David was right. She didn’t want them to do anything because they were both emotional. She’d panicked in the room with him when she felt the urge to kiss him. She didn’t want him looking back and thinking he’d taken advantage. “Thank you,” she told David.

He sent her one of those sexy smiles that made her whole body heat up. “Finish your food—then you can thank me. First on your knees, then on all fours.”

Heat flooded her cheeks, and when she spoke, his name came out breathlessly instead of scolding. “David.”

His laugh was deep and had goosebumps erupting across her skin. “You know I only get harder when you say my name that way.”

She peeked at him, but he didn't look at her. He did, however, rearrange himself and use the dark tone he used on their camping trip.

“Eat, my love, because that's the only way you'll get me to eat you.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

“Will you relax?” Ryder growled, grabbing her by the hips and lifting her effortlessly to settle on his lap. “You’re seeing your ex while you sit on King Daddy’s lap. Just another night.”

Than snorted from where he sat across from them in the living room. He had a big ass knife that he was picking at his nails with, and the weird thing was that he looked more like himself than usual ... “Yes,” he drawled in a sultry tone, “just another night of waiting for a deadly assassin ex-boyfriend to show himself, and your woman learned that the bad guys are after her and that she’s dating guys even more dangerous who are ready to take their heads off. Oh, let’s not leave out that she’s seeing him for the first time since finding out there are two babies.”

Ryder’s hand slipped under her shirt, blessing her with those tingles as he pressed it to his spot. “Two babies aren’t a problem to any of us. Just stop talking Tercero up and making her think I’m not as scary.”

Than smirked at him, his dark eyes gleaming. “Careful, you almost sound vulnerable.”

She knew they were trying to calm her down. She knew David had eaten her out without mercy because he hoped it would make her too blissed out to worry about seeing Tercero.

She knew Sin rummaging through the leftovers loudly groaning that he wanted her queso, and Ryder telling him to keep his paws off her food was to make her smile. She knew all that but couldn't get her body to unclench. She couldn't get her mind to quiet.

“He is vulnerable about her,” David said, pushing Sin out of the kitchen, “and she likes that he is.”

Ryder's phone vibrated, and he kept her on his lap as he reached for it. Tercero's name was clear. “You here?”

Jane tensed, trying to listen in, and she smiled when her bad boy tilted the phone so she could hear Tercero's response.

“I'm on the balcony.”

Ryder ended the call with a chuckle and motioned to David. “Go let that sneaky bastard in out of the rain.”

“He's out there?” David smiled, shaking his head as he walked over and opened the door. “Get in here.”

The air left her lungs as a rain-drenched Tercero dressed in black from head to toe entered with the grace of a panther.

Ryder kissed her head, whispering, “Get him a towel.”

Jane nodded, climbing off his lap. She avoided Tercero's eyes and rushed to the bedroom for a clean towel. When she returned, her quiet boy had removed his soaked jacket and was running his hands through his wet strands of hair. His pale arms flexed as his deft fingers parted his hair, created a perfect braid, and secured it with a hair tie. The golden hair tie that she'd thought was lost, she realized.

Her hands shook as she approached him, holding out the towel. Then, before he could take it, she changed her mind and started drying him herself.

He stood there, letting her pat him dry without a word. She was too afraid to look him in the eye. For some reason, she worried about his feelings regarding the twins. She didn't want him to think he had two reasons to leave her. So instead of looking up, she focused on the center of his chest. Every muscle beneath the wet ribbed tank clinging to him taunted her. Unfortunately, she could make out her name tattooed on his ribs. He'd marked himself with her, yet he'd still walked away.

"I can dry myself," he said, reaching for the towel. "Thank you."

Their fingers touched, and she sucked in a breath. His skin was so cold. "Jesus how long were you out there?"

"He's fine," Ryder said, pinning her with a smirk before patting his knee. "Come here, Jane."

She lifted her eyes, her gaze locking with Tercero's. It hurt. It felt like she'd been punched in the chest. She wanted to cry, to scream and beg. Seeing the longing that roared within his gaze destroyed her even more. But even with his misery visible, he didn't make any move for her.

So, letting the sting burn her eyes, she stared at him before turning and going to Ryder.

Her bad boy vibrated with rage as he took in her face but relaxed once she was on his lap. "You're okay," he murmured in her ear, then kissed just below it.

David spoke up, his tone as violent as the look he gave Tercero. "What do you have to tell us?"

Tercero glanced at David, then slowly scanned the room, taking in Than and Sin before settling on Jane. "Archer?"

Ryder scoffed, tightening his hold on her. “Did you only come because you thought he was here?”

“I came because I knew he wouldn’t take her somewhere safe. And because you ignored my plea for assistance and stopped responding—I thought something was wrong.”

“Bullshit,” Ryder spat, still holding her tight, but Jane could only stare at the puddle forming at Tercero’s feet. He was there, but it didn’t feel like him at all. “I told you I wasn’t letting her out of my sight. You wanted to join Luc—play deadly games with the big boys—and I said nothing about it. You’ve had a fucking year to tell her, to tell us that you’re getting in way too fucking deep with this shit. You could’ve asked me to help you eliminate the threats. But instead of being open, you pushed her away, damaging your relationship with her and with us, then you made her a target because you didn’t bother to look at the damn faces of the men you killed.

“And for what? Because for a tiny fuckin’ moment”—he held two fingers close together—“that ugly bitch you called a soul mate started to fade from your mind. You couldn’t let yourself be fucking happy. Now here you are, scaling seven stories in the goddamn rain, making her worried about you catching pneumonia or some shit, and you have the nerve to bring up Archer? Which, yeah, he’s been open about wanting to see where things go. I’ve accepted and encouraged her to do what she wants, David’s accepted him, and Luc saw it coming before I did. But Archer left because he’s not as stupid as he pretends. He knew you wanted to see Jane, so he made sure it happened. Now say what you have to say to her.”

Jane’s breath skittered out. She had no idea that Ryder knew so much, but she should’ve. Just like Luc, Ryder had his ways of finding things out.

“Jane,” Tercero called softly. “Look at me, please.”

Ryder brought his mouth to her ear. “You’ve gotta glow, baby. All he sees is that I’m holding you together after he hurt you. Show him who you are.” He kissed her just below her ear, and though a feral sound rumbled in his chest, he nuzzled her sweetly. Then he stood, placing her on her feet. “She stays in this room,” he said to Tercero. He squeezed her ass and motioned for David and the others to follow him. They didn’t go far—just into the kitchen and out of their line of sight.

She couldn’t take it anymore, and looking up, she glared at Tercero. “You asshole.”

He nodded. “I know. I should never have let us be—”

Jane cut him off, her breath quickening as fuzzy darkness tried to drown her mind, but she unleashed her emotions and pushed them away. “Don’t you dare say you never should’ve been with me. Don’t you fucking dare! You pursued me, and I asked if you wanted to be with me. You could’ve walked away then, but you chose me. We were happy. But you had to keep me at arm’s length. You had to give up on yourself and us because you refused to get help. But nowhere does it mean you should never have been with me. I gave you part of my heart and took part of yours. That wasn’t a mistake.”

That little quirk in the corner of his mouth appeared, and his eyes flared with darkness. “You’re right. It seems I can no longer find the right words to say to you. And you know I treasure our time—but I’m not here to win your heart. I came because I want you to be safe. Allow David and the others to accompany you to my safe house. If Ryder doesn’t wish to assist me, fine. He can go with you. I’ll hunt down the threats against you and destroy them, but to do so, I need to know you’re safe.”

Her lips trembled, and her gaze flicked over to her bad boy. He was out of Tercero's view, leaning against the refrigerator with his arms crossed. But he didn't hide from her. He made a 'keep going' motion with his finger and winked, giving her strength because he knew she'd lost so much lately.

Focusing on Tercero again, she shook her head. "I'm not hiding while you go out there alone."

"There is no other choice, Jane." He returned to drying himself when he noticed he was leaving a puddle. "I'm the best."

Ryder coughed, and she heard David telling him to be quiet.

Tercero smiled. "Of course he's better at everything. Apparently, he even has to be the best at getting you pregnant. Congratulations, by the way."

"Don't you come in here with some little dig about his super sperm. And stop putting yourself down," she snapped, closing the distance between them. He wasn't as tall as Ryder or David, but he still made her feel small when she tilted her head back to look up at him. "I do that enough for all of us, and I'm sick of it. I sure as fuck am not going to stand here and let you put yourself down, especially saying he's better when you're practically killing yourself for the person you no longer want."

He muttered something in Italian before grabbing her face and growling, "I want you." His expression didn't change with the admission, but his touch sparked against her skin, making her gasp at the frenzy of sensations. "I want you," he repeated softer. "I love you. But I've ruined everything."

"Then fix it," she said, holding his hands in place.

“I can’t.” His thumbs lightly caressed her cheeks, but the sensation had gone from the combination of all of them to dangerous chaos that could destroy them all. “Please let me focus on what’s important—eliminating the threats against you.”

Her heart broke all over again, but she felt her bad boy’s gaze on her as tingles slid over her lips. It was as if he was reminding her to focus on herself too. She had to acknowledge that Tercero wasn’t well, and fixing him wasn’t her job. But that didn’t mean she couldn’t try to win him back and get him help.

“If I go along with whatever it is you want, I want something in return,” she said, smiling when the tingles warmed her lips.

He glanced at the kitchen, and she knew he couldn’t see Ryder because he’d stepped farther back. “I can’t renew our relationship.”

“Okay,” she said, swallowing the sharp pain in her throat as she smiled. “But I can’t accept your help if I feel you won’t be okay after this is all done. I can’t let you go out there and do something that might get you killed, or worse than that, you live your life thinking you had no choice in what you did, and it becomes the reason you force yourself to be alone.”

The faintest of smiles came and went from his face. “You don’t want me to kill for you? Because you think I would regret doing bad things to keep you safe?” He shook his head as a chuckle escaped him. “I don’t regret killing anyone. I regret that I allowed you to be with a killer and that my failures pushed me to become something unsuitable for you. And that, selfishly, I kept it from you so you wouldn’t look at me badly. I put you in danger, and that’s my regret.”

She didn't tell him that his killing bad guys didn't bother her as it should. After all, he was right. It wasn't right to be judge, jury, and executioner. But she also remembered the scars on the women at Dungeon. She remembered the looks on the women's faces, on the little girls' faces. She remembered how it felt to be at Dylan's mercy, how Adam fought to try and save her. If there had not been a chance that Ryder and the others would come searching, she would've hoped for someone to do what was necessary.

"So make it up to me. Don't just kill, then disappear. Make things better between us." She rushed when he shook his head, "Not by getting back together. I would never force you to be with me when that's not what you want."

His smile was so sad, and for a tiny moment, the disorder in his touch sent a shiver through her. "How would things be better for you then?"

A giddy feeling rose within her chest, but she kept her cool. She couldn't make this seem like some ploy to get him back. Making sure he was safe was her primary goal. "Don't let yourself become so exhausted that you put yourself in danger. Come home so that I know you're safe. You talk to me every morning like you used to. Tell me the truth about everything. You let the others help you. And you guard me yourself at least once a week."

He sighed and lowered his forehead to hers. "I know what you're doing, but I am damaged, *cara*. Don't try to fix me."

"If you're damaged, so am I," she whispered, tears spilling free before she could stop them. His eyes widened, but she hurried out, "I'm not okay, and it's not anyone's job to fix me—it's mine. But that doesn't mean I can't accept the support

others give me. I can live and never be better as long as I keep trying.”

“Oh, Jane.” He pressed his lips to her forehead. “Don’t do this. You will look back on this and realize it’s unhealthy.”

“And if I don’t, I’ll look back and wonder if I let you go too easily. I’ll wonder what you would’ve been like with our babies.”

“Jane, Ryder is their father.”

Sobbing, she pulled one of his hands from her face and pressed it to her stomach. “I know what days I likely conceived. We were together for each one.”

“I used condoms,” he said, though she saw a flash of possession in his eyes.

“And I was on birth control, yet I saw two babies on that ultrasound. I know David came in my ass one of those days and that it spilled out, and some could have got inside me. I know Luc rubbed his fingers through his cum on my stomach and pushed it inside me too.” She knew this would likely piss Ryder off, but he knew it. Ryder knew everything. He just ignored this part of their truth.

Yet her bad boy surprised her by speaking up from the kitchen. He moved into Tercero’s view. “She’s telling the truth. The babies could be yours as much as they could be David’s or Luc’s. As much as I believe they’re mine.”

Tercero released her and stepped back. “Why are you telling me this?”

“It’s not to trap you,” she said, reaching for him. He let her take his hand, but his gaze darted toward David and his brother. “But you talk about regret—this is what I’d regret. That I’d let the father of my children walk away without

knowing the truth. So let's get closure if that's what you need. Let me know you're safe like you need to know I'm safe. Let us both be happy for the other."

He swallowed hard, his gaze falling to her stomach. "And if I do this? If we find out the babies are not mine, will you stop considering them mine?"

Ryder came to her side, wrapping his arms around her and lifting her before she could fall from the blow. "If that's what you want us to do, yes," he told Tercero. "But you make things right between the two of you and with us. You accept our help, and we keep her safe—together. We keep the babies safe."

It felt like her heart had been lit on fire, and she knew Tercero felt the same agony when he covered his and nodded.

"Good. Start with getting her safety plan lined out." Ryder kissed her head and gestured toward Than. "Discuss things with him while I go put her to bed."

Jane sucked in a breath as her heartbeat sprinted too fast. She turned, hiding her face in the crook of Ryder's neck.

He got the hint and turned away from the others, walking briskly to their room. "Breathe, angel. It'll pass. You did so good."

"It hurts," she said, breathing in and holding her breath.

Ryder kicked the door shut and collapsed on the bed with her. "I know." He tugged her pants off, then stood and removed his clothes until he was left only in his boxer briefs. Then he got behind her, spooning her with his hand over his spot. "Jane?"

She held his hand, crying. "I shouldn't have said anything about the babies."

“No.” He kissed the back of her head. “He needs to hear a lot of things. He’d fuckin’ die inside if he left and realized later that they were his. And even though I’m sure they’re mine, I know there’s always a chance I thought too highly of myself.”

She laughed, wiping her tears as his lips dropped to her shoulder. “Cutest boy in the world.”

“Is it cute when I fuck you good?” He nipped the skin on her neck like a cat would and held her still as he palmed her breasts. “When I fill you up with my cum?”

His caresses, like always, felt too damn good. She sighed and, through her tears, smiled at the twisted sweetness.

“You like that, huh?” He kissed where he’d bitten.

“I do,” she said, trying to calm down. “I want you to make it all better, but I also want to beg him to come to me.”

Still massaging her breasts, he nuzzled her neck. “Begging him isn’t how you want this to go. And honestly, if there’s begging, it should be from him. But I don’t think that’s his style.” His hand skimmed down her stomach, over her hip, then down her thigh.

She loved that she could feel all his strength, yet he could make his touch so gentle for her.

His chest vibrated as he trailed his fingers back and forth on her skin. “If they are anyone else’s Jane ...” He growled, digging his fingers into her flesh. “I’m still King Daddy. And I’ll be fucking you nonstop as soon as the doctor clears you to get pregnant again.”

She smiled, wiping the last tears before pushing her ass back for him. “I thought you were worried about me being pregnant.”

“I am, but I’m not letting anything happen to you.” He hummed, then added, “If you don’t do well with having them, I’m still fucking you nonstop, and we’ll have them grown in a lab.”

Her smile hurt. “I do think they’re yours. I get butterflies in my tummy just at the thought of them being yours. But I wanted him to know that y’all loved me together when they were made. But yeah, I’m almost positive your load got me.”

“You’re just saying that.” He flattened his hand and slid it between her thighs. “I know there are small chances I’m not the dad. You know it too. That’s why you told him. So you can be ready for lots of dick when your pussy heals up. No one else gets you till I’ve succeeded.”

“Ryder,” she said, laughing. Her giggles turned into moans as he shifted her panties aside and began the beautiful torture of his fingers between her legs.

“Don’t even think about telling me I can’t. You want my baby inside you because you’re a freak who loves to give me all of you.”

“I do,” she said, her gasp filling the room when he hit the perfect motion and pace.

“Did you kiss Archer?” His tone started gentle, but there was violence underneath it all.

“Almost.” She worried about his reaction, but he played dirty, making her moan and squirm as his fingers worked their magic. “You have to tell me if it’s going to bother you. I won’t add a new boyfriend unless you’re all okay.”

He kept a flawless rhythm and fucked her with his hand until he had her falling apart and seeing sparkles.

“Shit,” she cried, her whole body locking up.

“I wouldn’t let him around you if I wasn’t okay,” he said, fixing her panties even though she was still in the middle of her orgasm. “Now ask me what you’re trying to avoid so we can be done with it.”

Her body felt like jelly, and she realized he’d gotten her off for this. “You jerk.”

His lips turned up against her neck. “Stop hiding in your mind. I know how you are—you can shut off shit to stay safe. But you know you’re safe with me. Whatever I am, this with you will never change. Now ask.”

“Like a bandaid,” she whispered before rushing out the question she’d not let herself think about. “Have you killed anyone?”

He exhaled, his breath cold as it slid down her spine. “I’ve done worse, my love.” When she gasped, he nuzzled her. “They beg for death because of what I do to them, but that would be release. Death is peaceful. Monsters who want to harm my moon ... they don’t get peace from me.” He kissed her neck. “Perhaps in a different life, I’d grant them death. Here, King Reaper is a warning of what I’m capable of, but there’s always a chance I’ll embrace it. I’d easily kill to protect—to avenge you—and I wouldn’t bat an eye at it. I can’t explain it, but it feels ... natural. What feels unnatural is inflicting suffering and leaving someone at the very edge of death. But I don’t care enough to give over to it.”

The air left her lungs as his truth slid around her. She knew Ryder got into fights about her. He kept her in the dark about it, but she knew both he and Luc had personally seen to putting her abductors and almost rapists through their version of Hell. She wasn’t stupid. She knew that he delivered consequences to anyone who would hurt her.

While she knew that Tercero had embraced killing to keep her safe, she had not honestly expected that Ryder could do something even more menacing.

“Does this upset you?” He covered his spot—below her heart and to the side. It tingled and pulsed inside her, but she never understood why he relaxed when touching her there.

“I don’t know,” she said, trying to control her breathing. “I’m not afraid of you. I just ... worry, I guess. I don’t want to lose you. I can’t. If you became something too dark or got killed or imprisoned, I’d die.”

“Me killing to protect you is too dark?”

She shook her head. “No. I believe you wouldn’t kill someone unless necessary, and I guess they had it coming. But torturing someone ...”

“I reserve that for monsters.” His fingers danced back and forth over his spot, sending little shocks that felt good, not bad. “Tercero doesn’t know ... but I have had access to some of the men he’s been unable to catch. Men who hurt little girls.” He held her tighter as her breath hitched. “I’ve done this longer than we’ve been together, Jane. Why do you think I warned you to stay away from Luc when we first started talking?”

Covering her pounding heart, she shrugged. “I thought it was because he was a Dom.”

His chuckle raised the hair on the back of her neck, but her heart and soul showed no fear. “Well, that did worry me. But I soon realized my brother would never treat you like he did other women. But it was because of this.

“I knew Luc ruled a dark kingdom. He knew he had no control over if I interfered. So one night, I followed him and

his men and saw the girls. When I saw a little girl with hazel eyes who monstrous men had destroyed, I snapped.

“I stopped thinking and nearly ended every single one of them until he stopped me. He reminded me of another girl with hazel eyes. One that did not look at me with fear even though she thought I was a mean asshole. He told me not to taint myself for her, and I woke up.”

His lips pressed against her shoulder, and he sighed. “Then it shifted inside me. I didn’t want those monsters to escape into death. Even if I believe someone’s soul could get punished for eternity, it wasn’t enough for what they’d done to that little girl—to so many little girls. Those girls would live in a nightmare for the rest of their lives. So I told those men they’d live until I decided their time was up. I still don’t feel that time has come—they live in the Hell Luc and I grant them.”

He wiped the tears spilling from her eyes. “I won’t do it if you ask me not to. But it wouldn’t faze me to take a life. I know you see it in me. You always stop me from slipping into that state of not feeling you. But I’d stop if it meant I’d lose you. Well, only if you were not in danger. If someone tries to hurt you, they will beg me to deliver their end.

“I guess you have to figure out how you feel about me doing these things, then figure out how you feel about Tercero taking lives and not regretting it. He only regrets that he’s put you in danger. And he thinks you shouldn’t be with an assassin. He thinks I can be forgiven, especially since I haven’t killed anyone yet. But even if I had, he thinks you and the others would accept me, but that you won’t him. So which is it, Sweet Jane?”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Tercero looked up when Ryder slipped out of the bedroom. His brother always fascinated him, but to see him saunter into the living area wearing only underwear and a smile mere hours after leaving a man at the edge of death was a surreal sight.

“Stop looking at me like that,” Ryder said, grabbing an empty water jug and filling it up. “She knows.”

Tercero glanced at David, who got up.

“I’ve got practice early,” he said, patting Tercero’s shoulder as he passed him. “Be careful.”

“Good night.” Tercero watched him go off toward the room, then focused on his brother making a sandwich. Sin was attempting to get him to make one for him as well. “Are you going to elaborate?”

Ryder took a bite, chewing with a smile as he dragged a stool out. Once he sat, he said, “She knows I’ve tortured men—that I’ll kill if I need to, but I won’t if it would mean losing her.” He took a drink, swallowed, then wiped his lips with the back of his hand. “She’s not that upset about your activities, by the way.”

“She should be,” he said. “It’s too dark for someone like her. And children shouldn’t be around so much darkness.”

His brother shrugged. “Kinda a good thing my girl glows so pretty around me.”

“And David and Luc,” Than added as he made himself a sandwich.

Ryder flipped his friend off but said nothing and continued to eat.

Sin sat down beside Tercero. “Why are you doing this, man? Why keep trying to take things from her?”

Tercero stared at Ryder, and his brother smirked. “I have to go.”

Sin put a hand on his shoulder when he moved to stand. “Answer the question first.”

“Yeah, dear brother of mine,” Ryder drawled. “You broke her beautiful heart. We’ve been watching her drift in and out of her pain when she should be enjoying the highs of pregnancy. She should be supported by her boyfriends as she explores the idea of someone else wanting to love her as much as we do. But you took yourself from her. You let the memory of your monster taint you, and you’ve brought danger to her—and our babies. And now you want her to leave me because I’m willing to give everything to keep her safe? Because I wasn’t kind to the man sneaking around our home, where she sleeps with our babies growing in her tummy? A man who was waiting for a chance to take her? To kill her?”

Tercero stared at his feet, sighing when Keanu, Jane’s cat, rubbed his ankles. The cat always slept with him because Ryder hated it left hair everywhere. But Tercero didn’t mind the fluffy animal. It usually ignored Jane until it was time to eat, then it would meow only at her. And even if any of them fed it, it wouldn’t eat until it saw Jane pour its food. It seemed

they were all creatures dependent upon each other, some more than the rest.

“Well?” Ryder asked when he didn’t move or respond. “Cause if you’re looking to smash the pieces of my moon you broke off, you can go. I’ll handle the threats. And David, Luc, and I ... and Archer will help our girl get over you.”

“I’m lost without her,” he admitted. “I don’t want to hurt her.”

“But you are,” Sin said, surprisingly without any malice. “And yeah, you’re fucking lost. You don’t even seem to know why you did all this.”

That wasn’t true. He knew why he had walked out that night. He’d walked out because he accepted he was a fool to think he could stand beside his brother. Not only would he never compare to Ryder’s greatness in Jane’s eyes, but he was still attached to a dead girl who desired what Ryder had fully given Jane. He left because his brother had turned down Elise, and he had no right to come between Ryder and his happiness. He had no place attempting to be a father to the child his brother had created with her, and he didn’t want to create conflict for the baby—now babies—when they would have to say they have more than one father. There were other reasons, but mostly he did not believe a damaged man like him was meant to have anyone, especially his brother’s soul mate.

Ryder chuckled, and it was a cruel, dark sound. “You know, I beat myself up over getting her pregnant. I mean, I’m a proud papa and all that, but it’s still shitty. We’re still practically kids ourselves, and we’re gonna be parents because I’ve got this weird kink to knock her up.”

“I suppose it’s romantic to some,” Sin said with a smile. “Do you know how many bitches will envy Jane because you

got her pregnant—that you wanted to get her pregnant? With twins? Your fans are gonna flip.”

“Wanting a family with the woman you love isn’t a kink,” Than muttered. “You want every connection with her, and that’s intense. And Jane wanted that connection.”

Ryder grinned. “She’s a freak like me.”

“What was your point?” Tercero asked.

“My point,” Ryder said, losing his smile, “is that I felt bad for pushing in so hard with her that it made it hard for the rest of you. But you would’ve found an excuse to disappear on her sooner or later. Tell me I’m wrong.”

He sighed, looking him in the eyes. “You’re never wrong, brother.”

“Then you’ll accept when I say leaving Jane is not for the best. For her or for you. And it’s the truth when I say I’m good with her having more than me.”

He wiped his mouth with a napkin and smiled in that threatening way of his. “Now I’m tired of this bullshit. You left without doing it properly because you wanted her to come for you. You let me find you because you wanted me to ask you to come back to our group. You brought info to Luc because you wanted us to know you’re still here as if we didn’t already know you’ve been sleeping in your car outside whatever building she’s at for the day. And now you’re here after seeing that I can, in fact, take care of everything, trying to find some way to be involved when we all know you’re capable of going after these fucks on your own. Maybe not all the threats would be eliminated, and it is a good idea to call me for backup and have the guard loaded around her, but you

know you didn't need to call her tonight and come over the way you did."

Sin chuckled. Than smiled in the same intimidating way as Ryder. And his brother wasn't done.

"So let's cut the bullshit and take care of things. Stop letting that ghost feed your doubts and tell you you don't deserve that goddess in there." He stood, grabbing his water jug. "Jane loves you. She wants you. And we all know you'd die for her as much as she'd likely sacrifice herself for you. Maybe reflect on what that means, considering your supposed soul mate told you to kill yourself, then laughed when you reached for the knife to do it."

"Fucking hell," Than muttered with a shake of his head. "A little tenderness would do wonders, you know?"

"Tender was me burying that knife in the wood so deep he couldn't pull it free." Ryder smirked and walked away, muttering over his shoulder, "I'm going to sleep with my goddess. Blankets are in the closet."

"Just one question," Sin called out, grinning ear to ear when Ryder glanced at him. "How come Archer got the clear to join the group, but I got threatened?"

"Because he got threatened and came after her anyway," Ryder said before disappearing into his room.

"Damn." Sin ran a hand through his hair. "Does that mean Archer's more badass than me?"

Than smiled. "He held his own against Ryder."

Sin rolled his eyes. "I could last a round against him."

Than laughed, muttering an insult Tercero couldn't hear.

Sin ignored him, his focus on Tercero when he spoke again. “Are you done being a dick? I mean, what I’ve heard about that other chick is fucked up, and I’m sorry. But Jane’s the one for you. She would never do anything so horrible. That little vixen would throw hands with that girl if she ever heard the shit that was said to you.”

Tercero knew that, and he smiled to himself. Jane wasn’t a great fighter, but she was feisty. One thing he loved about her when he watched her train with her wolves and demons was that she always went back in, even when she knew she was beaten. She kept fighting and used what was hers to come out on top—her men.

“Sleep on it,” Than said, gesturing toward his old bedroom. “Your brother put linens on your bed before you got here. If you decide you merely want to protect her, tell her goodbye tomorrow the proper way. Tell her why you’re leaving. Or stay and fix things and pray she welcomes you back.”

He didn’t respond, and Than didn’t linger.

Sin sighed beside him. “Just my extra two cents because I’ve not talked to you ... I have tried thinking about her with just Ryder. And it seems good, and I can see where you’re coming from. They’re like two puzzle pieces fitting together. She breathes because of him almost. Their connection is crazy. But then I look closer and realize that she’s alive and glowing, but she’s doing all the work to keep him warm. He’s colder than Hell without her, and she gladly tries to warm him. But she gets weak. That’s when he notices something is off, panics, and does stupid shit. Sometimes it’s just being an idiot to make her laugh or cuddling the fuck out of her. But the real

boost is when he pulls her between him and David—David’s a force of his own.

“He’s almost as strong as Ryder and loves her just as fiercely. He does everything while keeping her best interest in mind and ensuring everyone is cared for. She says he’s her sun, and I can see what she means. He loves her in a way that even Ryder doesn’t, and I’m in awe again. And I wonder how I could have pictured her without her David there.

“But even then, there’s something not quite right. She’s beyond content, but even she knows that something is missing. So that’s when Luc shows himself. That mean bastard doesn’t baby her the way they do. He knows she’s great—she wants to be more than just a girl with boyfriends that make her live and glow. He tells her to stop being a baby and to be a queen, and she gets that vicious little spark in her pretty eyes and roars.”

Tercero laughed sadly. “Her unholy trinity.”

Sin nodded. “They all have a role. So does Archer ... and so do you. Because even with that unstoppable trio, she looks behind her. She looks for the one who helped her dance for all her men because that man wasn’t like the others. He helped her see how beautiful it was that she loved and was loved by all of you.

“She’s told me about the different ways you guys feel to her and how you allowed her to feel them all at once. That, as different as they were, they fit together for her, and you made it what she called treasured chaos. And you know—I don’t think she’ll accept Archer without you. You are no longer there to rein in that chaos, and while she’s not running from Archer, she’s not quite the silly girl we all love.”

Tercero hadn’t thought about that. To him, Archer was a fool who would have fun with her, then screw up and hurt her.

But he didn't know Ryder had threatened their brother. That meant Archer wasn't playing games. He also didn't know his influence over her helped harness all of them into strange chaos that worked for them.

Sin patted his shoulder as he stood. "I hope you realize what your brother was saying."

"What part?"

"That a soul mate doesn't do what that girl did to you. And sometimes, goddesses are the most unsuspecting of girls—the ones whom everyone dismisses as weak. Somehow in all the shit around them, they find strength and create magic. That goddess in there"—he hitched his thumb toward Jane's room—"she's been trying to use her magic to tie more than Ryder to her soul." With those final words, Sin strolled over to the recliner and passed out.

Tercero stared at him for a moment before heading to the room he used to occupy. His brother had indeed left out bedding, but the frame on the pillow drew his attention. He sighed, covering his heart as he lifted it. It was a simple silver frame with a four-by-six photo of Jane licking his cheek. The same image he had cherished on his phone.

A piece of paper crinkled on the back, and he turned it, smiling at the message from his brother:

*Found this cute shit on her phone.
She's been staring at it for the past
few nights to go to sleep, so I
printed it for her. Made this copy to*

*put on your grave, so don't think I'm
that sappy. But I hope I don't have
to put this on your headstone.*

Good night, brother

Tercero placed the frame on the nightstand and made the bed. Once he was done, he lay down, facing the photo. He didn't know that Jane had a copy of the photo, but it sent his dying heart into a frenzy to realize she stared at it the same way he did.

Then the magnitude of everyone's words tonight hit him. His brother wanted him there. David, as always, was happy to see him safe and present, ready to welcome him back. Luc's uncharacteristic concern probably would not manifest without Jane. And Archer's consideration to do what was best for him and for Jane by staying away. He wasn't treating Jane like a joke. He had shown her what they'd all kept from her, encouraging her to see the truth and not be afraid.

Tercero rolled onto his back but turned his head to the side to see the photo. Ryder's words hit him hard. His soul mate convinced him to kill himself to prove his love. And when he tried, she still said she'd always want his brother over him. Yet Jane was there telling him not to go into danger alone, and if he did anyway, she'd go with him. She'd bring her army, and they'd fall together.

He pulled his phone out of his pocket and opened the file with Elise's photos and letters. He took in her cold, hungry eyes and knew they hungered for his brother. He had the letters she put him down in, trashing all his efforts to make her

happy. “Not a soul mate,” he whispered, hitting delete on the entire folder, then quickly deleting it from the trashcan folder: *Deleting will permanently remove the files.*

Do you want to delete?

Delete or keep?

Closing his eyes, he smiled when a gold glow flickered, and Jane’s smiling face appeared before she licked his cheek.

Delete.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

12 weeks

Jane couldn't keep the stupid smile off her face as she sat on the bench at the end of her bed, watching a sleeping David attempt to snuggle with a very much asleep Ryder.

Her occasional sobbing throughout the night had caused them both to be tired enough that she escaped without waking them.

Luc had come very late, and she'd noticed him asleep on the sofa. She wanted to cuddle with him while he was around, as he'd already mentioned how busy he'd be the day before. She'd gotten an hour of sleep with him, but now he was preparing to leave. Good thing, too. Ryder apparently verbally beat him over the phone after learning she'd been put in a safe room because Luc hadn't said a word to the others. But she knew her king had things under control. So did Ryder. He just liked to get moody at his brothers.

A chilled kiss was pressed to her neck from behind, and she sighed as Luc held out a slice of toast. "You should record this," he murmured, sipping his coffee as he observed his brother and David. The disapproval was evident in his narrowed gaze and the slight curl of disgust on his perfect lips.

“Oh, I already took several pictures,” she whispered giddily as Ryder grumbled in his sleep, shoving David’s hand off his chest. “And a video.”

Luc chuckled but gave her a pat on the butt and motioned to her toast. “Eat.”

Frowning and turning away from the adorable sight of her boys, she took a bite.

Luc moved her hair and massaged her neck. “You know it’s worse if your stomach is empty. Given that you will have some added stress today, it’s best to at least try to settle your stomach.”

“I know,” she mumbled with her mouth full.

“Manners, Jane.” His chiding only made her smile, and he released a mocking huff.

She finished the toast and, after dusting her hands off, wrapped her arms around his waist and snuggled against his chest. “I don’t want you to go.”

“Clingy little queen,” he said, running his fingers through her hair.

“You like it.” She nuzzled him, breathing in his clean smell as it mixed with his coffee. Thankfully, it was one smell she hadn’t grown sick of. “Do you know if Tercero’s still here?”

“You know he is,” he said quietly. “Do try to set boundaries, Jane. While I know my brother is unwell, you are my priority. His road to recovery may require a firmness only we brothers can give him. And you shouldn’t give in so easily. Make him grovel.”

She smiled. If Tercero chose her and wanted to return, she had half a mind to act like a brat and make him work for it.

But she didn't feel right about it. They were both wounded souls. She knew how it felt to believe she was a burden, that life would be better for those she loved without her. She knew how pathetic she'd allowed herself to think from time to time for different reasons. She had struggled to believe that she was worthy of her guys. If she had a sister who was larger than life the way Ryder was, shined brighter than the sun the way David did, and one so calm, controlled, and powerful, the way Luc was, she'd feel frustrated and unworthy too. On top of it all, Tercero carried guilt over her abduction and the haunting memories of his ex.

Luc finished his coffee calmly, but the heat coming from him sent off alarm bells. "Fine," he said, his tone clipped, "do what you wish with him."

"I will," she said defensively. She didn't want him upset with her, but she wouldn't be a bitch to Tercero. He hurt her, but he didn't want to hurt her.

Tilting her face up, Luc looked her over, then chuckled. "Forgive me, darling. I must've forgotten that you will always consider him yours no matter where he runs off to. And my queen protects her kings."

The fire stirring within her heart fizzled out. "I just think everyone has had their turn telling him he's wrong, and I've had my moment to show him what he's made me feel. He knows where y'all stand on helping him. And he stayed. He stayed, knowing he might be a dad, but more likely that his brother is having two kids now instead of one. So maybe it's not the best idea to be a bitch when he took a step."

He took her in like he always did. He seemed to see through her and know all her secrets. "This is why he calls you treasure."

“Maybe I should take a step, too. Because it’s still hard to believe that about myself.”

“Don’t be so hard on yourself. You have a lot on your plate—always have.”

“That’s not what everyone says,” she mumbled. Yes, she knew people were jerks, but their opinions hit hard when her emotions were high. People saw how amazing her guys were at their professions and sports, and she was just Luc’s assistant with no dreams of climbing higher now that she was focused on spending as much time as possible with her babies.

Again, his gaze searched her soul, and he murmured, “Most people who openly judge others have little to no comprehension of the matters they judge. So do as I have said—don’t be so hard on yourself. I feel you’ve not yet found what you’re meant to do. Or you have not realized you’d be valuable in a particular area.”

“Ugh, y’all have such a way with words.”

“Easily done when the matters we speak of involve you.” His fingers lightly trailed along her jaw. “Smile for me.”

His words almost had her purring, so she gave what seemed to make him whole, and she was granted a rare warmth he shared only with her.

“Beautiful, my queen.” He lowered his head, smiling when she pushed up on her toes to capture his lips with hers. “So impatient,” he added before drugging her with his kiss.

He gave all of himself so that she fell numb to the world—so that he became all she craved and needed. Every caress of his tongue as he tangled his fingers in her hair and tugged her head back pulled her deeper under his spell.

A desperate whine escaped her, but he swallowed it with a satisfied rumble before pulling away and growling, “Good girl,” into her ear. “Now get in bed. And allow Ryder to intervene if he feels things are improper with Tercero.”

Time. Feeling. Awareness. Tercero. It all returned as he released her and picked up his suit jacket. She sat there stunned as tingles danced up her arm.

“I’ve got things handled with him. Come here, babe,” Ryder grumbled, his arms coming around her as he reached over to where she sat and lifted her onto the mattress. “Making her all drunk and shit. Get the fuck out of here, Luc.”

Jane blinked as David’s hand slid under her ass and lifted her toward the center of the bed, between him and Ryder.

The faintest of smiles teased Luc’s lips as he tugged on his sleeve and picked up his coffee mug. “Have her packed to come home with me tonight.”

Ryder raised his middle finger while David muttered, “She’ll be ready.”

“Bye, Luc,” she called out as Ryder’s arm wrapped around her, and her king turned to leave.

“Yeah, fuck off,” Ryder growled, pulling her underneath him.

Luc waved and continued walking.

She laughed because her bad boy always got grumpy about her spending the night with Luc. “Don’t be mad,” she cooed, kissing along his jaw as he made more growling noises.

“You shouldn’t sleep without me,” he said, turning his head so he could take some of the kisses she’d aimed at his

cheek. He kept them short and annoyed, but she saw the smile he tried to suppress.

“You’re going to be out with your brother doing dangerous shit. Luc’s place is the safest for her. I don’t think she sleeps much with him anyway,” David said, laughing as he moved closer to her back and kissed her neck. “Morning, baby.”

She moaned. His neck kisses always turned her on. She arched her ass out, and he continued kissing the back and side of her neck, occasionally sucking and biting the tender skin, all while Ryder acted like a sexy grump. He gave deep kisses that left her gasping as he palmed her breasts, then leaned out of her reach.

David chuckled, turning her face toward his. His hair was messy from sleep and all the pulling she’d done on it when he’d gone down on her the night before. He looked absolutely yummy. “I think it’s King Boyfriend’s loss this morning.” He pressed his lips to hers.

“Fucker,” Ryder muttered. He shoved her cami up and closed his mouth around her nipple.

“Ah,” she cried, feeling him rid himself of his underwear. She forced her eyes open to look at them and moaned again. Ryder was stroking himself in between his licks and sucks, then he shoved her panties aside.

David spread her legs, earning a growl from Ryder as he pressed the head of his cock against her clit.

She jerked, crying out at the sensation of Ryder’s dick and David’s mouth closing around her neck.

“Fuck,” Ryder groaned, pushing just the tip in—never stopping his movements with his hand. He pulled himself back, frustrating and thrilling her. It was torture. She loved it.

David moved his mouth to her ear, breathing heavily as she felt him jack off too. He slid his dick along her core from behind.

“Oh, gosh,” she breathed, holding David by the back of his neck with one hand as her other darted between her legs.

“Fuck, babe.” Ryder’s deep voice sent tingles over her skin. Then he yanked her hand up to his mouth, sucking her fingers as he rubbed her clit with his dick again.

David tugged her cami off, and before she could even catch her breath, he sheathed himself inside her. A strangled cry of shock and ecstasy burst from her mouth.

Ryder’s eyes sparked, and he grinned around her fingers as David rutted into her like a madman. Even with David anchoring her to him with an arm over her shoulder and the other around her waist, her body jolted between them.

They felt amazing, and she loved when David lost control and gave himself over to his most basic desires.

Jane whined, hanging onto the arm around her shoulder and neck. The corded muscles flexed and tightened with every thrust, and every grunt had her edging closer to release.

Heat flushed her pale skin, and she moaned as she fell apart.

David kissed her cheek sweetly as she clenched around him, but he didn’t ease up. He kept her in his hold, reminding her he’d always be there.

His dick swelled as his rhythm became more erratic. Then the bedroom door opened without warning.

“The fuck?” Ryder said, mid-jack off as he stared at Archer.

Heat flared in Archer's eyes, and he smiled, showing those dimples off. "Please, don't mind me."

Ryder turned her face away from his brother and claimed her lips as David resumed his punishing pace. It sent her body into flames, tingles, and tension as she climbed higher. They were loving her in front of Archer.

And she liked it.

David dug his fingers into her shoulder, growling like a beast as he released his load deep inside her.

Her skin felt raw as her tummy tightened, and she moaned, staring into Archer's eyes throughout each pulse of David's dick.

"Our little cum-bunny," Ryder praised, rubbing her clit as he lifted her away from David.

"Be nice," David said, breathing heavily as he rolled onto his back. He smiled at her, his glistening chest rising and falling as he watched her. "You okay?"

"Mhm." She sighed as Ryder gave her a slower caress.

David took it all in but darted his eyes to Archer too soon. "We gotta go?"

Archer nodded, though his teasing eyes stayed on her. "It is game day. But I can see why it's getting harder and harder for you to make it on time."

"My girl's worth Coach's wrath." David sat up and leaned over to kiss her shoulder. "Thanks for the good morning, sweetheart."

She giggled as Ryder nipped her lips and shoved David away. "I can't wait to scream for you tonight."

Archer coughed to cover his laugh.

“Only if you’re feeling up for it.” David shoved Ryder so he could get a kiss. Ryder grumbled and released her so she could receive a proper goodbye. That always involved deep, heated kisses and lots of ass-grabbing for David. And a lot of her begging him never to leave.

“Let him go, babe.” Ryder slipped a hand between her and David. “He’s gonna be late.”

David pulled back and cursed as he jumped out of bed. He caught the pair of workout shorts Archer tossed him and hurried into the bathroom.

Jane stared at the empty doorway, then her eyes darted to Archer. “Have a good game, Archer.”

His boyish smile came and went, then he said, “Can I see you tomorrow?”

Ryder didn’t react like she expected him to. He chuckled and slid a hand up her thigh until he reached her ass, pulling her closer. Well, he dragged her leg over his waist so he could rub his dick on her. Jane could hardly think, but a smack on her butt from her bad boy fixed that as he grumbled, “He’s waiting for you to agree to go out with him. Tell him yes or no so I can fuck you already.”

She gaped at Ryder, but he didn’t seem fazed.

He smirked and ground himself against her until she moaned. “Don’t deny it—you want to be fucked hard before I make love to you. I’m just eager to do both.” Smacking her butt again, he dropped a quick kiss on her lips and continued to tease her. “Now answer my brother. I’m ready to hear you cry out my name only.”

It took a lot of effort to look away from him, but she did and locked eyes with Archer. Her lips parted as Ryder sucked on her neck and rolled her onto her back. The way Archer watched it all, watched his brother slide her panties down before he brought a hand between her legs and went back to work on her neck, had her tingling skin on fire. “Yes,” she choked out, her eyes widening as Ryder replaced his hand with his dick. “Yes, Archer, I’ll go out with you tomorrow.”

“Leave now, little brother,” Ryder said as her eyes closed, and he made them one. He moved over her, blocking everything out with his muscular body. “I wanna love her by myself for a while.”

“See you tomorrow, gorgeous.”

Even with Ryder slowly thrusting into her, she felt that awareness she’d started to notice with Archer—his presence and how she felt a delightful tickle at his proximity. It sent a shiver through her body as every inch of exposed skin rejoiced in the phantom caress before it vanished.

“Enough perving on everyone else.” Ryder pushed in deep and growled, “Breathe.”

She sucked in the sweet air and reached up to his face. He looked violent and beautiful. He’d not had alone time with her in a while. Now he was preparing to leave to do dangerous things to keep her safe. “I’m sorry, my love.”

He held still, his fierce stare unwavering as he lowered his lips to hers for a shockingly sweet kiss. “Don’t be, angel. I have to look mean if I want to worship my girl in peace.”

She heard the bathroom door open and David chuckling as he headed off with Archer.

“Sweetest guy in the world,” she said, feeling emotional as he nuzzled her neck when the front door slammed shut.

A dark chuckle slipped past his lips, and he pulled back before thrusting in roughly. “I’ll be sweet in a bit.”

She cried out, dropping her hands to his broad shoulders as he watched her. He wanted to be rough—needed to be. But he was still waiting for the okay. “Gimme more.”

His smile was divine. “I’ll give you all.”

And he did. Sliding an arm under her neck, he anchored her to him and ravaged her. All she could do was hold onto him, though she still made every effort to explore him. Ryder was a work of art, and she couldn’t get enough. So between gasping and squeezing her legs around him and meeting each of his powerful thrusts, she slid her fingers across his tanned skin.

Her tummy tightened when he hit that spot, making her scream with pleasure.

“There’s my girl,” he praised, leaning down to kiss her while hitting it again and again. “Let everyone hear what I’m doing to you.”

Her legs started to tremble as he brought her orgasm closer. “Ryder,” she moaned, digging her fingernails into his shoulders, “I’m gonna come.”

He fucked her like a demon. Harder. Faster. Deeper. He bent her legs up to hit her sweet spot with every thrust, then wrapped his hand around her throat, sucking every shallow breath she took into his mouth.

“Ryder,” she cried, climax ripping through her with so much force that she saw sparkles. “Oh, fuck,” she said again because he wasn’t stopping, “I’m going blind.”

He released her neck and pushed in deep, grinding his pelvis on her clit to drag out her orgasm. “No, you’re not.”

“I can’t take it,” she said, trembling in his embrace. “Oh, gosh, I can. Don’t stop. Please.”

He nuzzled her, smiling against her skin. “Lemme ease up—you’re choking my dick. Come here.” He rolled onto his back, pulling her on top of him. He smoothly sat up and situated her legs around his waist. He lifted her, helping her slide up and down his cock as he rocked his pelvis against hers. “Mm, that’s better. You good?”

“Fuck,” she moaned, tightening around him again. He made love to her like this a lot—all her guys did. But each time, her guys made it their own. Those lovely tingles danced over her skin as his strong hand held her lower back. He kept up that slow rock; she was sure she’d die from ecstasy.

“Yeah, you’re good.” He kissed her so they were the only two people in the world—so they were everything. The Beginning and the End. It was rare for him to do this now, this magic where he stopped everything but them. She realized he was showing her how much he truly loved her. They could be this incredible magic all by themselves, but he loved her and begged her to glow for everyone her heart and soul desired.

His breathing quickened with hers, and she smiled against his lips when he closed his eyes. He gave all his focus to getting them both to a final release.

The raw sounds he made sent shivers through her body, and her choppy breaths began to quicken as she felt him swell within her.

“Fuck, I don’t want to come yet,” he growled, lifting her off him. He smirked at her disappointed glare and laid her

down. “Easy, babe. I’ll finish you right. That position is too good—I want this to last.”

Staring up at him, she sighed. He was so gorgeous. The light sweat on his skin and his tousled hair made him ten times sexier. “Then make it last.”

“Bossy,” he said, spreading her legs as he leaned over her. “Want me to record us?”

She nodded, reaching for her phone. “Send it to someone, though.”

His wicked smile had her tummy flipping. “I was hoping it would be just for us, but now you’ve got me wanting to gloat.” He took the phone, thumbing through her contacts as her breaths came out frantic, eagerly anticipating the idea of being watched. “Hm. Do you want to see who I choose?”

She nodded, writhing as his hand drew lazy circles on her inner thigh. “Facetime and screen record.”

“Dirty girl,” he murmured, selecting someone. He didn’t let her see right away. He smirked at the phone then Archer’s voice filled the silence.

“Brother?” Archer laughed, but it was that sexy laugh that had her mouth popping open and made her want to squeeze her thighs together.

Ryder saw and stopped her, keeping her legs spread as he lazily smacked her pussy with his dick. “You driving?”

“No. It’s game day, remember? We have drivers ... Is Jane okay?”

“I dunno. Maybe you can tell me.”

“What?” Archer sounded worried.

Ryder didn't answer; he turned the phone to let his brother see her.

"Fuck," Archer breathed, running a hand through his hair as David's face peeked over.

"Baby," David drawled, a spark of blue fire roaring in his eyes, "are you trying to distract him from starting his first game, or are you wishing him good luck?"

"Giving him motivation," she said, darting her eyes to Ryder, who nodded. Then, she focused on Archer again after David winked, giving her his approval. "I know you're going slow to give me time, but I need you to take the lead if you want us to happen."

Archer's wide eyes searched her face, then a sexy grin formed on his lips. "You're ready for me then?" He chuckled when she nodded. "Can I see more?"

Ryder pulled the phone from her and turned it, laughing when Archer muttered a curse. "Oh, I thought you wanted to see me," Ryder said, gripping her thigh. "Now watch, and make sure you and David are the only ones who see this."

"It's just me," he said quickly.

Ryder seemed satisfied and turned the phone again. He stared at her face, reaching out with his free hand to move some of her hair off her cheek. Once done there, he leaned down, filming her seeking his kiss. He was teasing them all, smirking as his parted lips hovered over hers.

From the corner of her eye, while she panted below Ryder, she saw Archer's smile. Somehow those dimples had become so freaking sexy. She moaned.

"Uh-uh. These are my lips," Ryder said, moving back as he rubbed his thumb over her lip. His grip tightened on her

jaw, then moved over her neck. He pressed down on her pulse but didn't linger. He held the phone over the path he'd decided to show Archer, letting his brother drink her in.

She whined as Ryder teased her peaked nipple and palmed her breast.

“So gorgeous,” Archer groaned, making her chest heave as she glimpsed his heated gaze on the screen.

Again, Ryder didn't linger. He leaned down, ensuring his dick teased her as he lashed his tongue over her stiffened peaks. “So sweet,” he murmured, sucking hard before releasing her to continue showing her off. He spread her legs, humming approval as he displayed her soaked core to Archer.

“Fuck,” they groaned together as Ryder teased her clit with his thumb.

Ryder smirked as she trembled, then moved down, situating himself between her thighs and using his broad shoulders to keep her open for him.

“Shit,” she screamed as his tongue swept over her from back to front.

He hummed again, nipping her thighs when she tried to close her legs. “Keep them open. I need to show off what I'm doing to you.”

“I can't,” she whined, touching his head.

He nuzzled her hand, then snapped at her fingers. “Then I guess showtime is over.” His grin was mean and dangerous. “Tell him bye. Maybe if you think he's worthy, he can taste you tomorrow.”

Archer had a hand fisted in front of his mouth as he watched, but he scowled upon realizing they were being cut

short. She could see he was in a building—some locker rooms, she figured—and he was walking fast. He shook his head. “Take the phone, Jane. Keep it on your face.”

“Challenging me already?” Ryder’s mocking tone turned deadly. “Tell her bye.”

Jane struggled to keep her eyes open, but she yanked the phone from Ryder, panting faster when he glared at her. “Don’t be mean. I want him to see what you do to me.”

His body vibrated with rage, but she didn’t know what he was mad at. He was the one who called Archer, though she did realize he’d wanted her to himself for a bit. He was going to leave her with Luc tonight. He’d be okay—she didn’t doubt him—but Ryder was a worrier about her.

Her bad boy needed her to himself. He was losing himself at the thought of being away from her. He needed just her and him, even though he was trying to show her how much she could have besides him.

She smiled at his dark expression and touched his cheek, even as he bared his teeth. “Lie back, my love.”

The violence in his eyes wavered, and he blinked as though he was waking up. “Fuck.”

“It’s okay,” she cooed. “Let me show him one more thing, then it’ll be just us.”

He sighed, his gaze softening at last. “Sorry, baby girl.”

“It’s okay,” she repeated, pulling him up to kiss him.

He didn’t hesitate to press his lips to hers or take over the kiss, but he let her roll him onto his back. His hands gripped her ass and hauled her on top of him, but he let her stay in control and didn’t thrust into her.

Instead, he took the phone from her and let Archer watch her kiss him. He squeezed her ass cheek hard, then moved his hand to hold the back of her head as he slipped his tongue into her mouth.

There was no way to dominate Ryder, or any of her men, in a kiss, so she surrendered to him, letting him taste every bit of her. He nipped her lip, tugging it even though she whined, then suckled it sweetly and pushed his pelvis up to hit her core. He still didn't sheath himself, reminding Jane of what she set out to do.

Pressing on his chest, she leaned up and shimmied down his body to level her with his erection. His cock jutted proudly, and he tangled his fingers in her hair, still turning the phone to let Archer see.

“Show her your dick, brother,” Ryder said, angling her face toward his dick. “Keep your eyes on us, angel.”

Oh, she had not expected that. She moaned as her core ached for their touch. She wrapped her hand around the base of Ryder's dick, then licked up to the tip.

“Fuck.” Archer seemed to be in a stall or shower, and he didn't make her wait long. He took in her face, then shoved down his pants to free his impressive erection.

“Oh, yes,” she breathed, licking Ryder again as Archer jacked off.

“Eyes, Sweet Jane,” Ryder said, petting her hair as she became mesmerized by Archer's movements. “And put your pretty mouth around my dick already. Or do you want me to bruise your throat for you?”

Her entire body shivered at his words, and while tempted to let him fuck her mouth until he did indeed bruise the back

of her throat, she complied, taking him as far as she could while staring into his piercing eyes.

“Atta girl,” he praised, pushing her head down, gagging her as he and his brother groaned. After a few seconds, he lifted her so she could breathe, chuckling as she stared wide-eyed at Archer’s reaction. He was braced against a wall, working himself over with excited jerks of his wrist. “Focus, baby.” Ryder moved her hand up and down his shaft, tightening his hold on her hair. “If you can’t focus on me enough to please me, I won’t let him join us in real life. Now open your mouth.”

Archer smiled at her, still letting her see what he was doing to himself, what he was doing because of her.

Catching her breath, she brought her mouth back to Ryder’s dick. Her saliva dripped down his length, turning her stomach, which didn’t surprise her. But there was no way she was passing up the chance to blow him and Archer because she didn’t doubt that Archer imagined exactly that as he worked his fist over his dick.

“Open.” Ryder’s order made her core clench, and the queasiness subsided enough for her to obey, swallowing as much of him as she could. “Fuck, that’s good, babe. Just like that.”

Her eyes watered, but she kept them open, moaning as she looked between Ryder and Archer. Hearing their satisfied groans, a sense of power rushed through her, and she quickened her efforts to please both, bobbing her head even as her scalp stung. She pulled out every trick she knew, carefully scraping her teeth over the head of Ryder’s dick.

“You can’t outlast me, little brother.” Ryder’s taunt made her smile. Of course, he couldn’t help but show off, but she

knew how to get him to finish fast.

So, with her eyes on Archer, she released Ryder and climbed up to lower herself on his rock-hard length.

“Fuck.” Ryder gripped her hips with both hands, groaning as he raised his hips.

“Phone,” she reminded him. “Archer.”

Her bad boy growled but snatched the phone and held it up for her ... for his brother to watch her ride him. “Naughty girl,” he chided, smacking her ass with the hand that had held her hip. “Touch your tits for us.”

Again, even if she knew she would control how fast things finished, she obeyed Ryder, her lips curving up at the sight of Archer’s smile. Her white-haired boy was working himself into a frenzy, and she knew he needed to be finished quickly to stay out of trouble with his team.

“Fuck, the things I want to do to you,” Archer muttered as her hands closed around her breasts.

Oh, she hadn’t even kissed Archer, but she wanted to touch him, for it to be her hand around his dick. To have him inside her.

She moaned, digging her fingers into her breast as she did her best porn star fucking. It was shockingly easy to do when she had two hot brothers staring at her like she was a goddess as they groaned with pleasure, not caring who heard them.

When she saw Archer looking around, she sped up, moaning louder ... because, fuck, she was riding the sexiest guy on Earth while his brother watched and jacked off.

Jane dropped her palms to Ryder’s chest, digging her nails in so she could move faster. She was so close. So full. And the

noises they were making ... she darted her eyes between theirs, moaning.

“You want me to come in you, angel?” Ryder asked, moving his free hand between them so that he could further drive her crazy by rubbing her clit every time she rocked on him.

Nodding, she gasped out, “Please.”

He set the phone aside, propping it on a pillow so she could still see Archer, then reached for her neck. His touch was firm but loving as he pulled her down, so her face hovered over his. “You know how to get me there.”

She grinned, sliding her arms up to cradle his head as she ground her hips faster. There was no need to be theatrical. It was sexier for him if she just got herself off, and it pleased the fuck out of him.

“Fuck, there you go,” he praised, holding her lower back to keep her leaning over him, urging her to chase her release as he thrust from beneath her.

Her mind shut off, and she surrendered to the pleasure. Tingles erupted at every caress, sliding over her skin and sinking into her pores as both her tummy and her pussy tightened. She was so close. So was he. She could feel him swelling, hear his groans along with Archer’s. His hips jerked, hitting just the right spot, and she shattered with a keening cry as Ryder and his brother groaned.

Ryder thrust upward, filling her with his cum as the sexiest groans escaped him.

She trembled, barely holding herself up because he wouldn’t stop thrusting into her.

“It’s okay,” he said, pulling her head to his shoulder as he slowed but continued to thrust. He always gave her every drop, knowing she savored every twitch of his dick as he emptied himself into her.

“Fuck,” Archer rasped out.

Jane looked over, blinking as spurts of milky cum splattered against the tiled wall he leaned on. She wished he could rub it across her body, and her thoughts went wild at seeing his dick. It had a slight curve to it. She’d seen plenty in videos and even at Dungeon and thought them awkward, but Archer’s was enticing. It had her clenching around Ryder’s still semi-hard dick. She had a feeling Archer would hit her in just the right spot, and she couldn’t wait to spend time with him to see if their relationship continued on this path.

Ryder reached for the phone. “You best go before you get kicked off the team,” he told Archer. “She’ll see you tomorrow.”

Breathing heavily, Archer tucked himself back into his pants. “You’re not bringing her to the game?”

“I need more time with her,” he said, and Jane didn’t bother arguing. She could feel it in his touch—he needed her by himself. David and Archer would understand. “And the game is exactly where someone would expect her to be.”

She turned to Ryder, kissing his jaw as she smiled sleepily at the dimpled grin on his brother’s face. “Bye, Archer.”

His mischievous smirk stretched wide, tickling her slick skin. “Bye, gorgeous.”

Ryder tossed the phone aside and hugged her tighter. “You mad at me?”

“What?” She leaned out of his hold enough to see his face. He always looked extra sexy after they’d been together, and this was no different. She brushed his hair off his forehead, but he caught her hand and lowered it to his chest.

“I know you wanted to watch the game, but I wanna spend time with you. Plus, you know they’re on David’s case about you.”

“He wouldn’t say much to me,” she admitted, curious if Ryder would share information.

He caressed her cheek and sighed. “They’ve threatened to bench him if you come to games.” She gasped, but he went on. “Of course David doesn’t give a fuck—you’re more important—but I thought you’d like to know.”

“He should’ve told me.” She knew he’d been acting strange. And as much as she loved him putting her first for a change, she didn’t want him to if it impacted his college career.

“Yeah, he knows, but he loves having the world know you’re his woman.” He smirked. “I’m being a bit of a dick because I want the same.” He hoisted her up to press a brief, breath-stealing kiss to her lips. “So do you want to bench the golden boy so he can shout to the world he got his girl, or do you wanna spend some time with me? We could look at some baby shit and have dinner. Before I go ...”

“Aw, babe.” Her heart went all warm and fuzzy, and she knew she looked starstruck. “What about Tercero?”

He shrugged as he dragged his hand down her backside and squeezed. “I doubt he thinks he’ll hang out with you all day. He’s still in assassin mode. He’ll likely want to head off with Than and Sin.”

“They do that stuff too?”

His lips twitched. “They are for-hire security with one of Luc’s private businesses.”

She dropped her head to his shoulder and closed her eyes. “I’m sure they take every chance to rough up anyone that crosses them.”

“Of course they do,” he said, trailing his fingers along her spine. “So can it be the two of us today? After you spend some time with your boy? I’m sure he’s already awake, waiting for you. I’m betting you both need to go slow.”

The Tercero part was grumbly, but she adored that he was thinking of ways to please everyone. “Yes, I’ll spend time with him, but only for a little so he doesn’t get overwhelmed,” she said, though she was starting to forget everything with Ryder’s fingers drawing little circles on her skin as he nuzzled her neck. His dick was still inside her, and he seemed to become hard again with every breath. “So when should I go see Tercero?”

His lips curved against the base of her throat, and he rocked his hips forward. “You know when.”

She smiled as a moan tumbled out of her. Each of her men had legendary stamina that left her in pieces for days, but she always came alive when Ryder played with her sated body. “After you have your way with me again?”

“And again,” he said, sliding out, then back in. “And again.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Tercero felt her stare on his back and smiled as he washed the dishes he'd used to make breakfast. He could also feel his brother's heavy gaze right beside the sweet glow of Jane's. Her light had not wavered when she emerged from the bedroom. Everyone had heard the morning she'd had, and of course, his brother gloated, wearing a triumphant smirk and showing off Jane's love bites on his neck and chest before throwing on a shirt.

Jane had *pampered* his brother. She didn't like to mark Ryder in the way the others encouraged her to on their bodies. She thought his brother's beauty should never be tarnished, but Ryder wanted the universe to know they belonged to each other.

Her soothing voice was barely more than a whisper as she spoke. "Thanks for making breakfast and cleaning up."

"You're welcome," Tercero said, not looking over his shoulder. If he were to look at her lovely face, he'd likely do something foolish, like kissing her when he had no right to such intimacies. He'd hurt her. He'd broken her. It would have shown if she were without such supportive boyfriends and friends, but his sweet girl had embraced the love her men gave and allowed it to strengthen her while her wounds bled out.

Ryder whispered something to her. Tercero couldn't make it out but had no time to ponder as his brother addressed him directly. "I'm taking her out in a bit. Just shopping to get her some maternity things and look at baby stuff. Figured it would benefit us to appear as normal as possible."

Tercero shut off the tap and turned, drying his hands as he met his brother's stare. He knew Ryder didn't expect a reply, so he waited for him to continue.

"I know you want to keep your presence quiet, so I'm not going to bother inviting you—plus, I want her to myself for a while." He grinned down at Jane. "But we'll give you two some time to talk in private."

Tercero nodded to show his appreciation and returned to the dishes to give them their privacy.

"We'll wait for you," Than said, followed by the sound of his and Sin's retreat and the front door opening and closing.

"I'm gonna gas up and swing by the club to see the manager about me taking some time away," Ryder told her softly. "So, an hour or so, okay?"

"Okay." Her voice trembled with nervousness. It made his heart ache.

"Uh-uh, babe," Ryder chided, lowering his voice again so Tercero couldn't make out the words, but he felt that shift in the atmosphere his brother could create. It terrified others, the almost suffocating intensity of Ryder Godson when his moon was even the tiniest bit unstable. Yet, Jane reacted by making her energy. She was unafraid of the monster hidden inside his brother, and instead of running from the darkness Ryder could unleash, she glowed to lure him closer.

Tercero sighed because he'd missed the feelings they had for each other. It surely meant he desperately needed therapy if he craved his brother to love the same woman he did, but he didn't care. He absorbed their magic as it made the air sweeter to breathe.

Too soon, though, his brother spoke up, and the spell lifted. "There's my girl. I'll be back for you soon."

"Be careful," Jane said, and that time, Tercero turned to watch.

Ryder pulled on his jacket, giving her a smile that made her the envy of every person in his presence. "Always forgetting who I am."

Her eyes flashed, and she beamed at him. "Just like to be reminded."

"I'll remind you later, Sweet Jane," he said, winking, then gave Tercero his attention. "She ends up hurt, or you take her somewhere without checking with me first—you're dead."

"Ryder," she admonished, giving Tercero a soft smile. "He's just being a bully. He doesn't think you'll take me anywhere or let me get hurt."

"It's fine," Tercero said. "He's not pleased I asked for you to be sent away."

"I'm reminding you that she's all that matters to me." Ryder pinned him with a final look before opening the door. "No fucking until things are sorted with you both, either."

Jane's cheeks flushed, but she stayed quiet. So did Tercero. He would give anything to be with her again, but it was the furthest thing from his mind. All he could focus on was that she was about to be his responsibility, and everyone trusted him to keep her safe.

Ryder grabbed his helmet. “And no sucking his dick, Jane. He’s got to stay alert.”

“Seriously, Ryder?” She fanned her cheeks, walked toward her boyfriend, and gave him the cutest shoves to leave. “There’s about to be no fucking or blowjobs for you if you keep it up.”

Laughing, Ryder moved her hands, then cupped her cheeks and kissed her.

Tercero lowered his eyes, giving them privacy again, but that did not weaken the image of Jane on her knees for him.

The door slammed shut, and Tercero finally looked up once the lock clicked.

Jane stood there, dazed. The puffiness of her pink lips only added to her beauty as she blinked to refocus on her surroundings.

“Would you like anything else?” He motioned to the coffee machine. He knew she didn’t drink it, but she liked to smell it, so he would make himself something and allow her to sniff it between his sips.

“What I want, I’m not sure you’ll give,” she said, walking toward him. Gone was the timid girl whom his brother coddled. In her place was a wounded but determined warrior. Gold flared in her eyes as the emerald dimmed to a muted olive tone. Sad but fierce.

His heart, the shattered, bruised muscle, thumped painfully fast as her scent enveloped him. She smelled of moonlight and flowers that had bathed in the sun’s rays after icy winds had scattered their fragrance for the earth. “I have little to offer you, Jane. Besides my skill as a killer.”

She peered up through her dark lashes, and though her eyes misted with tears, she spoke steadily. “We’re almost two of a kind, you know? We both struggle to see our value and can’t accept that we’re impressive to the gods—and often, with all our flaws and failures, *they* envy us.”

A smile touched his lips before he could stop it. “Luc’s influence over you is quite beautiful.”

“Well, y’all were bound to rub off on me.” She hesitated but slowly reached for him, sliding her arms around his waist and resting her head on his chest. “Don’t push me away. You asked what I wanted—I want this.”

Breathing out, he wrapped his arms around her. She wanted a hug and had assumed he would not give it. He held her tighter as memories of her curled up with him assaulted him. He’d gotten the gift of having her pressed against him every morning. Even after she’d been loved by Ryder, David, or even Luc, she still craved his affection—his company. They’d talk until she had to leave or until he fell asleep from exhaustion. He knew she often stared at him while he slept—he’d seen it on their security cameras. She’d smile, move some of his hair and then snuggle herself closer ... then peek up to see if she’d woken him. Then she’d lean away to stare at him again. Sometimes he’d see her lips move. She talked to his soul because his mind wouldn’t let her closer. His soul listened, as he watched himself hug her tighter whenever she did it, and she’d smile and close her eyes to join him in his dreams.

“I’ve missed you,” she murmured, breathing him in as her body melted against his. Her breasts were even fuller than when he’d last been with her, but she pressed herself closer to touch as much of him as possible.

Of all the ways for her to react toward him, he should've known she would choose tenderness when he deserved the brutal flames he knew simmered inside her. He swallowed, unable to stop himself from asking the question that he had no right asking. "Even with them?"

"They are not you, and you are not them. So, of course, even with them. Even with *him*."

His eyes closed to stop the sting in them. It was a simple comment, but he knew she meant so many things with it. So he followed her lead, meaning more with only a few words. "I am sorry, Jane."

She pulled one of his arms around her to hold his hand. Their fingers laced together, and she raised them to her mouth, kissing his bruised knuckles. "I know."

Another kiss was pressed to his battered hand. The man Ryder had left clinging to life was a sadistic monster, even after a brush with Death. He'd laughed when Luc questioned him, demanding he reveal the individuals issuing orders. When the bastard asked how good Jane's mouth felt, he'd lost his restraint. Damon and Luc had to stop him from killing the man, and here his angel was, soothing all his wounds with simple words and kisses.

"I want you to know something." He dropped his gaze, locking eyes with her as she peeked up at him. "Elise did not mean more to me. I love you more."

"And that hurt?"

He smiled sadly. "I believed she was the person I was meant to complete and love. She was a dark void of endless cruelty and hunger compared to you. I hated that I stood beside you when she was the one God had set aside for me.

How dare I ask my brother to share his gift when mine was cruel, dark, and taken from me anyway?"

She laughed, but it was a sad sound. "Honey, not all soul mates are the person you're destined to love and be loved by, especially for the rest of your life. And, if you consider Luc's beliefs, not all souls are paired up anyway. Some are meant for those whose soul mates aren't meant to be romantic partners."

Blinking, he repeated her words in his head. He'd never heard Luc speak of soul mates. Where Ryder was very vocal about Jane being his, and Tercero had instantly believed that Elise was his, Luc had ignored those conversations. Was this why?

A delicate caress on his cheek pulled him from his musings. Jane held his cheek, staring at him in a very Luc-like way—a deep soul-searching stare that might see every secret one would hide. "I think you were the only person God trusted to love a soul as ravenous as hers. You're the only person who could be everything she desired. She didn't see it. I think a lot of people don't see what's right in front of them. For her, she saw only *death* could satisfy her hungry soul."

Closing his eyes and leaning against her palm, he relaxed. As significant as her words were, he didn't want to talk about Elise anymore. He wanted to focus on Jane's safety and ensure she healed from his mistakes. So he leaned away and smiled. "How are you feeling about the twins? Did the doctors say you need to make any changes?"

She huffed but didn't push him. Instead, she tugged him toward the sofa. "Not really. I still kinda zone out when it gets real, and I can't deny that two little things are growing here." She patted her stomach. "I'm all right this morning, but that

sometimes means I'm sick later, and sometimes it just strikes out of nowhere. Did you get the ultrasound?"

He glanced at how she petted his knuckles, trying to comfort him. "I did. Thank you for thinking of me."

Her eyes were glassy when he refocused on her face. "They said that they're about the size of figs, so I guess a little bigger now. My pants feel tighter—even my dresses don't fit because of my boobs."

"Come here." He released her hand and put his arm around her so she could cuddle against his side. Somehow, he knew she needed this from him. It wasn't that she didn't get enough from the others. It was that she had not received any from him.

Snuggling closer, she clutched his shirt. "Thank you."

He inspected the sutures on her hand and smiled sadly. "I should've been more mindful. Does this still hurt?"

"Not really." She took her hand from his and wrapped her arms around him again. "Will you tell me what you and Ryder are doing tonight?"

It didn't surprise him that she would take this chance to secure information. Jane had her ways of obtaining things she wanted, just like the rest of them. She knew Ryder would tell her if she asked, but she also knew he wouldn't want to tell her. Ryder was truthful but complicated. "I will tell you, but I want your word that you won't use what I say to endanger yourself."

Her cheeks pinked before she dipped her head down. "I told you I wanted to be a pirate and go pirating once. I'm going to be a mom now. I'll have to live my swashbuckling fantasies through the rest of you."

“Silly girl,” he said, blessed that she was comfortable enough with him to be a goof after all he’d done. “And I’m certain your men will indulge your pirate fantasies if you tell them.”

Finally, a happy smile appeared on her face. “Stop stalling.”

Exhaling, he told her, “I’ve discovered the location of who I believe is an elite member of an organization involved in trafficking women and children. If we’re lucky, he’s talkative.”

“Then you’ll kill him?”

His body tensed when she said it so casually. He didn’t want her to become heartless, even if she related to the women who’d been harmed and killed.

“If it will help keep you safe, yes.”

“It would keep more than me safe.” She smoothed a hand over his chest, humming how she used to after they were intimate. “The little girl you held that night. I can’t stop thinking about how peaceful she looked with you. You saved her from more horror, and she knew you’d keep her safe.”

There were little girls far too often, but he knew which one she spoke of. Older survivors often feared him, but the children always clung to him, unafraid, even though he’d just murdered their captors right in front of them. He didn’t want to discuss how satisfying it was for him to save those children. Even if she didn’t seem to think it was wrong, it was. But he had a feeling Jane would think very much like Ryder. Luc called her vicious for a reason. She could be horrible and the means to be a monster. He would not give darkness a chance to consume her. “Do you have any other questions?”

“Do you think someone else will come after me now that you’ve captured the other guy?”

“Yes.” He didn’t want to scare her, but she did better with the truth. “Than, Damon, Sin, and a few others do similar work. They are watching over you, and I have complete confidence that Ryder, Luc, and David can keep you safe. Of course, you have to behave.”

At that, she pushed herself up and moved to the other end of the sofa, so they no longer touched.

He saw the fire in her eyes and knew her hurt and hormones were ready to rip him apart. It was the least he deserved, so he lowered his head to show his submission. “I’m not trying to upset you.”

“Then don’t do this shit,” she snapped. When he looked up, her chest heaved, and her eyes glittered with angry tears. “You are a warrior, Tercero. You broke up with me yet still risked your life to keep me safe. You came here, knowing Ryder wanted to beat your ass, and you stayed. You stayed even though I’m not the one you want to love you.”

“Jane,” he said, shaking his head as he reached for her. She smacked his hand, sobbing, but he gripped her thighs and slid her closer.

“You left me,” she cried as he pressed his cheek against her chest where her fluttering heart pounded like a battle drum. “You don’t love me,” she shouted, hugging his head to her chest.

“I do,” he swore, closing his eyes when they stung. She needed to cry with him. She needed him to feel the deep sorrow he’d caused within her beautiful heart. The air in his lungs vanished, but he refused to breathe in and instead let

them burn with hers as she gasped. Why had he done this to her?

Jane continued to cry, but she took one of his hands and pressed it to her tummy. “You left us.”

A tear escaped his tightly shut eyes, and he shook as his soul roared. It did not weep for the girl he’d been destined to give all of himself to—it never had. But it mourned losing Jane and ... the babies she carried. It roared to fight for her—them.

“You don’t have to love me,” she whined. “You don’t have to love these babies, but please don’t get yourself killed. If you want to make it up to me but don’t want me, keep yourself alive, and don’t cut your brothers out of your life.”

He smiled and kissed her tummy. There was a slight bump now. “I will live, Jane. For you, for myself.” He kissed her stomach again. “For these little ones.”

Warmth washed over him as she finally sucked in the air she needed. She touched his cheek, crying, “Breathe.”

Hugging her tighter, he obeyed and inhaled her scent. The fire in his lungs extinguished, and he continued to breathe deeply. The poison of Elise’s memory and his many insecurities weakened in the onslaught of her emotions and love. And he realized this was their magic. They could turn misery into love.

Her fingers slid through his hair, and he felt her fast little heart slow to a more tolerable rhythm. “I forgive you, you know?” She continued before he could process what she’d so quickly given him. “But I will make you suffer for hiding that you were a sexy ninja when you knew I fantasized about you that way.”

Laughing lightly, he sat up and gripped her chin. “I will make it up to you.” Saying that was wrong, but he couldn’t stop himself.

Pink bloomed under her cheeks, and her lips parted. “You better.”

Electricity sizzled between them, heating where he touched her. He wanted to kiss her, to make up for everything with his actions, and love her. And he knew she’d let him because that’s what made her their Jane.

“For now,” he said, “because I have yet to forgive myself, allow me to fantasize with you.” He took in her smile but froze when the color drained from her face. “Jane?”

She bolted, rushing to the hall bathroom, where she barely made it to the toilet to vomit. Her retching hurt his heart, but he dropped behind her, holding her hair as she heaved up breakfast.

“It’s all right,” he cooed, rubbing her back.

“I’m sorry.” She flushed but kept her body blocking the toilet so he wouldn’t see.

“Don’t be.” He stood, grabbing a washcloth and wetting it. He held it out for her and lifted her into his arms while she covered her mouth. “I’ll help you into a bath.”

“Just a shower,” she mumbled, closing her eyes. “Oh, leave it to me to ruin a moment. Stupid freaking medicine doesn’t help at all.”

He kissed her hair. “Nothing is ruined. I’m here taking care of you, and you’re letting me.”

“I’ll let you join me in the shower, too.”

Smiling, he settled her onto the counter. “I can’t stay alert that way, but I’ll remember the offer when I sleep.”

She had no reply, but she smiled weakly as she brushed her teeth. She did, however, rake her gaze down his body.

He’d only put on the under armor, which was sleek and black. Perhaps he was indulging her fantasy without realizing it. “Do you need help getting in?”

After rinsing her mouth, she turned to face him and shook her head. But she did get him back. She yanked her cami over her head and shimmied out of the string bikini panties Ryder liked for her to wear. “You can get me one of David’s shirts, though.”

Nodding, he looked away and waited for her to pass since she was blocking the doorway. Jane loved David’s scent so much that she asked him to share his shirts with her. She’d tell him to wear them for at least a few minutes to absorb his scent. Ryder was very jealous but never said so. “I’ll leave it on the counter with fresh undies and a bra.”

“Thanks.” She shut herself in the shower, but he didn’t leave. The grin on her face as she glided her hands down her body and tilted her head back in the spray told him she was pleased he’d lingered. Her sing-song tone screamed it. “If you keep staring, I’m gonna be sad that you’re not helping.”

Time to go. “Call if you become unsteady,” he said, leaving her alone. He allowed himself two seconds to close his eyes and hold the image she’d granted him, but that was all. On the third second, he returned to his duty to her and his brothers. Ryder had paid for the best security devices, but he inspected them to ensure they worked.

His brother was vicious. Their apartment was a giant trap for anyone foolish enough to attempt a break-in.

Everything seemed in order, so he checked the room. Ryder had weapons but often counted on using an attacker's weapons against them. Still, Tercero quickly located several combat knives. To most, they weren't visible, but Tercero knew his brother and smiled as he inspected a karambit. It was one of Ryder's favorite curved blades to train with, hidden beneath a pair of Jane's panties on the bedside table.

Jane's voice nearly startled him as she murmured, "He embraces the whole Death thing, doesn't he?"

Tercero returned the blade and faced her. Her hair was dripping, and her face and arms were damp, but she wore David's shirt. It clung to her wet body. "Are you all right?"

"Just got spooked." She shrugged, but her eyes were alert as she scanned the room and said, "I've started having anxiety about bathing alone. Someone is usually with me, but with you gone too, I take them alone more than I used to."

His stomach knotted. Jane had been abducted once and nearly another time before that. But they were all outside captures. "Why do you have anxiety in there?"

"Dunno." She shrugged again. "It's the same feeling I get about Dylan Berith and those guys. Maybe in a different life, I died in a bathroom."

"Jane," he said with a shake of his head. "That's morbid. Don't think such things."

"They're just dreams." She walked toward him, holding her towel out before plopping onto her bed. "I feel all out of breath. Will you dry me?"

He knew she was tempting him on purpose, but he didn't mind. "I think Ryder and David look forward to the day you truly rely on their help for moments like this."

She closed her eyes but smiled as she draped her legs over his when he sat near her. "Yes, I can't wait to have my stomach so big that I need to ask David to shave my girly bits. Gosh, I'm gonna get so big, Tercero. It's gonna be gross."

Her sarcastic tone made him chuckle. They all knew Luc liked to shave her, but she was shy around the rest of them. "You don't know David very well if you think he's not already salivating at the thought of shaving you."

"He does keep things secret," she murmured, her cheeks flushing as a sultry smile curled at her mouth. "He took me camping and spilled a big one, so maybe you're right, and he does look forward to it."

Tercero patted her legs as he mulled over her words. Then the realization hit him. "He hunted you?"

The rosy undertone flushed crimson on her cheeks. "Claimed is more the term I would use. But being David's prey is something I don't mind in the slightest."

He knew her stepbrother had aggressive desires toward her. That David would finally open up about them, though, surprised Tercero. "He told you what he's into?"

Her eyes opened as she nodded and held out her arms for him to dry. "Showed me. Well, chased and caught me."

"Then ravaged you," he finished, feeling light in his heart for the first time in weeks. "I'm happy he was finally open with you, and you both enjoyed your time together."

When he tossed the towel aside, she grasped his forearm. "I never thought about kinks or fetishes before Luc took me to

Dungeon. I never thought about how there was something to Ryder wanting to be the only one to come in me and how we both get excited about him touching me while I sleep. How I like when he fucks me while others are watching. Or that David's roughness came from his desire to bond with me that way. So I'm stuck wondering what else you kept from me."

His gaze fell to her sutured hands, and he shook his head. "It's pointless to wonder about these things."

"Because you don't want us back together?"

He exhaled and stood again. "I dream of us getting back together, but that's not what we should discuss."

She inspected her hand. The blades on his vest had cut across her palm and three fingers. It would take another week or so for her to heal fully. Scar. Her eyes flashed to his, and she grinned. "You know, after the shock of watching you kill those men—the fear of the whole situation and what it meant about you, I realized I've never found myself more attracted to you."

"Taking lives isn't attractive."

"Saving lives is, though. And that's what I saw. I saw one man risk his life for dozens of women and children he didn't know. I realized you trained yourself to become something deadly because it's your way to honor and protect me and others. And that is sexy."

He should've guessed that she'd view it that way. "It's still wrong."

"It's wrong for these men to be protected," she said. "I'm not naive enough to think the system works. The fact that Dylan was only sentenced to four years and will go up for parole this year all because a judge 'didn't want to ruin a

young man's life' reminds me every single day that the system is fucked up."

"Luc bought the cops and the prison warden to ensure he suffers beyond that ridiculous sentence," Tercero added. He understood her mindset and knew she was aware that Luc personally carried out extra punishment on Dylan. It was hard to leave any woman's justice in the hands of the courts, and his brother was powerful enough to serve fitting justice. "What is it you're scheming, Jane?"

"Scheming?" She exaggerated her surprise by gasping and touching her chest. "Me?"

He sighed but smiled inside. She and Ryder had similar sarcasm. "I can't keep you safe if I don't know your plans. Just tell me. Or at least tell your boyfriends or other guards."

"I've already told Ryder and Luc I want to be involved. I want to help."

This infuriated him. She wasn't supposed to even know about the horror around her. "And they agreed?"

"Yep," she said it so simply, like risking her life was nothing to worry about. She sat up, getting directly in his view. "I'll be careful. I'm only saying I want to help. That can be me being watched over like a prisoner by one of you. I don't want to be a useless damsel in distress. A useful damsel with impressive guard dogs, maybe, but not useless. "

His body relaxed, and he hugged her. "You're not useless. I see your face in the faces of the women I save. You're not making any of us feel like monsters, which means everything."

She stayed in his arms for a while, kneeling on the bed as he stood beside it. It was wonderful to feel her body against his. What they were doing together was a fairytale dream. He

recognized that she wanted to mend things and return to having him as one of her boyfriends, but it wasn't that simple. Jane deserved the best version of him, not the broken man who'd only taken a single step toward her after leaving her in pieces. He didn't think he'd ever be able to be worthy, but he'd at least ensure she was safe.

"I miss dancing with you," she said softly. "I guess I get why you stopped having the time to do it, and Ryder took the chance to occupy that time, but I wish I would've been a bossier girlfriend."

His heart throbbed. Jane loved to dance, and she was still shy around others. He'd taken what they had from her well before leaving her. "Would you like to get some fresh air? You always like how the air feels the day after a good rain."

"Is it safe to walk?"

"Ryder and the others don't plan to keep you captive indoors." He helped her onto her bottom. "Let me get you some leggings."

"Are you wearing the ninja clothes out?" She giggled and flopped onto her back, kicking up her legs. "You put them on."

"Ah, you can be a bossy girl when you want." He helped her into the leggings and backed away. "Relax for a moment. I'll go dress."

She pouted her lips. "Don't lose the whole ninja look. Let a girl live her dream."

It was wrong to attempt to woo her, but perhaps he could indulge her a bit more. The clothing he'd worn wasn't his usual style for a job. It was more a tactical street style so he could blend in, but Jane would notice the weapons.

So he smiled as he geared up and sent a message to his brother:

Taking her for a stroll in the courtyard. She needs some fresh air.

RYDER

I'll alert Damon.

He was incredibly grateful that his brother didn't issue threats or insults. It gave him hope that, once he achieved his goal of eliminating the threats against her, he might be able to pursue Jane again.

A low, appreciative whistle sounded as he returned to the room. Her phone wasn't silenced, so he heard the shutter of the photos she had taken. "I'm gonna have to beat them off with a stick."

"What a sight that would be," he said, helping her up. "Do you have protection?"

She patted her thigh, where there was a slight bulge, and lifted her shirt to reveal she'd hooked on her karambit—of course Ryder would give her his favorite style. "Got my spray and my blade. Let's go, sexy ninja."



Jane thanked the street vendor and greedily licked at her vanilla ice cream cone. She and Tercero had been wandering the courtyard behind their apartment building for almost an hour, and she was starving. And not just for food.

Her eyes slid over Tercero as he paid the vendor, and she sighed. He was all business now, tense and always searching

their surroundings.

She would never lose this image of him. His black tactical pants and hooded jacket might have appeared to be a fashion choice, but she knew better.

She knew every pocket held something that, when wielded by him, would inflict devastating damage. She'd never seen him with a ballcap, and she wondered if it was for style or for him to blend in. Since there was no logo, just a completely black cap, she settled on a mixture of fashion and camouflage. He failed to blend in because he looked too sexy in the all-black getup.

"You keep staring," he said, taking her free hand to lead her back to the building.

"Just annoyed you didn't dress up like this when we were together." She licked her ice cream but kept her eyes on his, smiling when he tracked the movement of her tongue. "You're not focusing."

He grinned, and she almost died. "I'm quite capable of multitasking, Jane."

"Tercero," a woman called out.

Jane jerked her head around to see a gorgeous woman with glowing olive skin and long black hair beaming at him, waving as she rushed over. "Where's my stick?" she muttered before the woman got close.

Tercero released Jane's hand but dropped his arm around her shoulders. It seemed that was the moment the girl noticed Jane, but she fixed her strained smile and continued going over.

"I almost didn't recognize you with all these clothes," the woman said, raking her dark eyes down Tercero's body.

Jane tensed, her mind taunting her with the idea that Tercero had already moved on with someone else.

“Hello, Leah,” he said calmly. “What a surprise it is to see you.”

Leah practically glowed when he remembered her. “It is. I thought I would’ve heard from you.”

Tercero didn’t tense or seemed surprised. His expression remained neutral as he discreetly checked their surroundings, then he focused on Leah and offered a polite smile. “I apologize if you felt leaving your number when I did not ask for it gave you the impression I would call.”

Jane snorted and grinned at the girl. “Sorry, I was thinking of something funny.” She licked at her melting ice cream but added, “I’m Jane. You guys probably met when he broke up with me. I gotta warn ya—there’s loads of competition for my Godson boys. You have to compete with the dozens of phone numbers AirDropped to them throughout the day.”

“But we only keep her number,” Ryder said behind them. Tingles danced along her arm and down to the hand he eventually grabbed. “So it’s a lost cause for the rest of you.”

Tercero tightened his arm around her neck and leaned to whisper in her ear while Leah gaped at Ryder. “Go with him. He needs to spend some alone time with you.”

“Will you call me?” she asked, loud enough for his admirer to hear.

He leaned away but kept his face near as a sexy smile appeared on his lips. “I’ll call you tomorrow morning.”

Ryder grunted, plucked the cone from her hand, and licked the dripping ice cream. “Hurry up and kiss him, or whatever the fuck you plan on doing, so we can go.”

Leah gasped, darting her eyes between them, but she was smart enough not to open her mouth.

Tercero glanced at his brother but focused on her. “Go. He’s becoming needy.”

She searched his eyes, looking for a sign. He wasn’t sure enough about where they stood. He’d made it clear he wanted to prioritize her safety and his issues, but he’d accepted most of her flirting and made his own suggestive comments. So she took matters into her own hands. Being careful where she grabbed him, Jane fisted a hand in his shirt near his waist. “He’ll wait for me to get a proper goodbye.”

“*Merda*,” he growled, cupping her cheeks and pressing his lips to hers. It was everything she’d been missing. Everything that made sense in all the pain and chaos. All the sorrow between them was still there, but he created everything he wanted her to have. Tingles, fire, ice ... a tickle ... all held together as treasured chaos.

His lips curved up against hers, and he ended the moment by leaning out of her reach. Still, he cradled her face and ignored his brother and the woman he’d obviously given his attention to at some point. “Goodbye, Jane.”

Ryder tugged her to him and returned her cone, but even he grinned at his brother. “Than’s waiting. You might want to hurry up whatever you need to finish with this one and clarify there’s only room for Sweet Jane in your phone. Unless I read that goodbye wrong.”

“Are you ever wrong, brother?” Tercero asked, winking at her.

“Nope.” Ryder tugged Jane away. “Let’s go, babe. It’s time to pamper you.”

Jane swayed into Ryder and didn't bother wiping the dopey smile off her face as she waved over her shoulder at the woman. "Bye, Leah. It's been awkward. Hopefully we don't have to meet again."

Laughing, Ryder threw his arm over her shoulder and led her away. "I honestly thought I'd be annoyed with him kissing you so soon, but that was fucking hot. I better get lots of lovin' for helping put that constipated look on that bitch's face."

"Don't call people bitches." Jane beamed up at her boyfriend. He looked too freaking cute as his smile dropped, and he frowned.

"She was a bitch," he said, his brows furrowed. "Didn't you see the nasty look she gave you?"

"No." Jane shrugged and leaned against him. "You think he was with her?"

"Nah," Ryder said. "Did you see how relaxed he was with you? He didn't give a fuck that she was there. But I think he considered her a possible threat he'd have to eliminate."

That would've been unfortunate, but her babies took priority over anyone else. If some girl was a threat, she deserved to be dealt with.

Jane held up her ice cream. "Can you get me down to the cone?"

He didn't even slow his walk. He just lowered his mouth and took a big bite to level her off.

"Cutest boy in the world," she said, biting into the cone as she peeked over her shoulder. Tercero had already walked away from Leah and was heading toward two bikers she'd recognize anywhere—Than and Sin.

“I wouldn’t have been cute if you’d been stressed in that situation.” He stopped at a car she knew wasn’t his and opened the passenger door. “I’d have made her cry and doubt herself so much that she’d never be able to approach a man again.”

“That’s strangely loving, babe,” she said, taking a seat. “Whose car is this?”

Ryder tapped the window. “Bulletproof. And it belongs to the show manager. He knows he’ll lose me as a fighter if something happens to you, so he said it’s mine until I take care of things. Now buckle up and stop trying to get a glimpse of Tercero. It’s Sweet Jane and King Boyfriend time.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Ryder checked his phone and sighed. The man he'd tortured the fuck out and Tercero had tortured further—had died. Luc claimed the man had slipped his broken hand out of the shackle anchoring him to the wall, and somehow managed to grab a knife that had been left out. Then he'd bled to death while trying to cut off his other shackled wrist.

It was a believable story, but so was the idea that his older brother had decided to finish the job. It wouldn't be the first time.

He glanced over at Jane, and even though she was frowning at the maternity pants and his worry about what could happen to him and his brothers if this man's body was found, he smiled. One less monster hunted her.

“Don't smile,” she muttered, holding the pants up to her front. “My stomach is going to be out to here. The fuck? How is that even possible?”

He laughed, pocketing his phone. He tugged on the elastic panel she was glaring at and stuffed a teddy bear in it. “See? Nice and comfy for the little guys.”

She grinned, taking the teddy and hugging it. “Aw, I want it.”

He picked up the pants she'd discarded. Most of the stuff he'd pointed out consisted of dresses because he fucking loved having access to her body, but she needed jeans more than anything. "You can have the bear—that's it."

"I thought you were pampering me." She huffed, putting the bear back on the shelf and staring at it with glassy eyes.

"Jesus Christ, Jane." He snatched the bear and tucked it under his arm as he approached her. "You know you've asked for every damn plush toy we've come across today. If I say yes every time, our bed will be filled, and I'll have to kick David out."

"I know." She sniffed, taking in the bear he held.

Her mind was probably on David now—and Archer. He'd have to let her catch some of the game on his phone. He'd only held off because the drama people were trying to push with David dating her was blowing up on social media and overflowing into the live stream. For now, he wanted to shield her and let her enjoy something about them and the baby ... babies.

"I don't want to get fat," she said—well, whined.

He couldn't stop himself from chuckling and hugging her. "You're not going to get fat. Your tummy's protecting our babies until it's my turn to take care of them. They gotta grow." He knew she was extra emotional. She'd reconnected with Tercero only to have to walk away when they'd finally touched in a non-toxic way. And because she was Jane, she probably wondered why Tercero had some bitch gushing over him. But also, because she was Jane, she gave him all the attention he needed. She might not believe it, but he lived for these moments when he was the center of her universe.

She nodded, hugging him tightly. “I think I feel too much.”

Oh, his sweet girl didn’t get it. She and Tercero were healing things between them in their unique way, and his brother had given part of himself back to her. She was coming back to them and didn’t even realize it. “Let’s pay for this and go to the park.”

“You hate the park.” She peeked up at him with those pretty eyes. Fuck, he loved when the gold center glowed for the green surrounding it.

“You like it, though.” He gave her the bear and dropped a quick kiss on her head. They’d looked at nursery furniture and baby necessities. She couldn’t decide if she wanted white cribs, raw natural brown, or something dark. His girlfriend was one of those girls who could be into everything girly—pinks and rainbows, then totally into nature where everything about her felt like a fucking fairytale meadow, but then she could go full dark with everything black and deep purples and reds. She even had a nerdy style at times.

He’d probably have to get Luc to hire a decorator for her, but she’d at least had fun looking at everything.

He had helped her take lots of photos and opened a baby registry. He’d see she got everything, but there was no point filling their apartment. “Come on. I know the babies will be just like you and want to go all the time. Let’s get them familiar with one of your favorite places.”

“You really are freaking dreamy, Ryder Godson.” She hugged the bear and glowed.

“I’m incredible, babe,” he said, dumping her stuff on the counter. “Stop acting surprised.”

She darted away with a gasp, snatching a tiny leather jacket off the rack. “It’s perfect. A little Ryder. Gosh, we might have two.”

He shook his head. “They might be girls, Jane.”

“Girls can wear leather jackets.” She frowned, looking for the tags. “Well, not real leather. I can’t control you, but every baby of mine is gonna be animal friendly.”

He took the jacket and showed her that it was faux leather. “You sure? What if they’re girls and you want them to wear dresses?”

Jane waved a dismissive hand. “They would totally rock a dress with a leather jacket.” Her eyes went wide, and she held it up in front of him. “Oh my gosh, if we have boys, they’ll kill everyone.”

“You mean, they’re going to be lady killers?” He took the jacket and smiled because it did look like his, and Jane would melt with him and the babies wearing leather jackets.

“Guys crush on guys, and girls crush on girls—I’m sure our babies will be heartbreakers either way if they look anything like you.” She shrugged, looking at the other clothes. “Ooh, a football jersey.”

“Those are not the colors of the teams we’ve been on,” he said, taking it and putting it back. “I already told you that Coach Prince is gonna get you baby jerseys with all our numbers on them.”

“Oh, I miss Mr. Prince.” She took the jacket and slid the bear’s arms through the sleeves. “Awww. We’ll have to get them mini bikes when they get older. And little footballs. Do you think Tercero will want to teach them to dance or be a fighter? I guess you’re the best at fighting, but you know ... I

want everyone to be super into their daddy and uncle roles. Gosh, I wonder what Luc's going to be like."

He didn't say anything, just leaned against the rack she was shuffling through. He loved when her mind jumped from one thing to the next. Sometimes her thoughts were painful—bad memories and hurt that hit her every second—but this innocent jump in thought made her his silly girl.

"You think Luc's Fallen will want to visit?" She grinned at his glare. "What?"

He scowled. "Really? You're gonna act all naive and shit?"

She actually cackled, throwing her head back and making her ponytail come loose. "I found them sweet."

"Yeah, so fucking sweet that they lost control and fucked each other in front of you—after they helped Luc tie you up for a forced scene." He moved closer and grabbed her chin to make her look at him. "I'm still debating if I should destroy them for touching you."

"No, you're not," she said, patting his chest. "They weren't into me. They were doing their job."

"You managed to give them boners, babe," he deadpanned. "A trio of trained men who still don't know if they want to be with women or men got hard at the sight of you." He glanced at the cashier, who finally walked over and smirked at her stunned expression. "How's it goin'?"

Jane snorted and tried to sneak away to look at something else, but he snagged her around the waist and pulled her in front of him.

"Stay put," he told her as he fished out his wallet. At that moment, he noticed a figure standing in the shadows of the

store. It wasn't Tercero's sneaky ass, but the guy held himself with all the lethal grace of a trained killer.

Jane pinched his stomach lightly, and though he didn't want to take his gaze off the person, he glanced down and noticed that she'd undone the snap on the chest gun holster he wore.

He didn't need assistance, but he smiled proudly. She had spotted the threat and was telling him to protect her, or she would do it herself. "I know," he murmured, moving her so she could duck behind him or the counter. "Send an alert."

She nodded, pulling her phone from her pocket and smiling at the cashier.

Ryder waited. The guy was doing the same or shadowing them and possibly reporting to someone. Either way, he would feel pain when Ryder got a hold of him.

"They're coming," Jane whispered, beaming at the cashier, who asked if they needed anything else.

Ryder held Jane's neck to maneuver her and shook his head as he paid for everything.

"Have a great day," the cashier said, handing over the bags.

He nodded and took the bags, ensuring that Jane was not in the man's sight as he led her toward the exit.

"Where are we going?" she asked, sliding one arm around his waist. It looked clingy, but she positioned herself to use him as her shield just as he wanted her to.

"He's following us, but I can't tell yet if there are others." He scanned the other shops and the face of every person they passed. Nothing seemed out of place, but people got trafficked

in broad daylight all the time, sometimes with the help of innocent-looking people. “There’s a hidden trail to the park this way. He’ll try something there if he’s doing more than spying.”

“What do I do?”

He hated that she had to go through this. Her body was shaking, but she put on a convincing front that all was well, that she was just out shopping with her boyfriend. “Hide and stay quiet. I’ll handle this motherfucker.”

The muscles in her body tensed, but besides tightening his arm around her, he couldn’t comfort her. His relief rested in the safety precautions he, Luc, David, and Tercero, had put on Jane without her even knowing it. The pendants she wore all the time—the pair of angel wings he’d given her and the moon locket Tercero had gifted her—had both had tracking devices added after her abduction their Senior year.

But he didn’t plan on losing her to anyone ever again.

He cast a discreet glance behind them and confirmed that they were being followed, and the man had unholstered his gun. “As soon as I say, run behind the trees up ahead and get low.”

“Ryder?” Her voice shook as she dropped a hand to cover her tummy. But she was preparing herself too. She’d already gotten out her pepper spray.

“It’s all right,” he cooed. He wanted to roar because some shit wanted to take her from him. “I’ll make up our park trip. Maybe even slip in some dick if you’re a good girl.”

“Sweetest boy in the world,” she said shakily as they drew closer to the tunnel of trees on the trail.

“Only for you, angel,” he said, keeping his tone light as the darkness of the path closed in around them. The slight curve in the path gave him seconds to hide her. He removed his arm and gently nudged her toward the darkest part of the path. “Go.”

She rushed off, and he slipped into his dark crevice as he tossed the bags and armed himself.

His ears perked at the crunch of gravel. He noticed Jane had done an excellent job blending in. Thankfully, she was wearing her dark leggings and a neutral-colored shirt because even though he’d watched her slip into the dark, he struggled to see her.

“Fuck,” the man hissed, sliding to a stop as Ryder stepped out behind him.

“Yeah, you’re fucked,” he said, aiming at the back of the fucker’s head. “Lose the gun.”

The guy tossed his weapon before holding both hands up. “Just wait, okay?”

“Why should I? You ruined my fucking date.” Ryder patted the man down and found a knife, but he’d only been armed with the gun unless he had something shoved up his ass.

“I have info,” he rushed as Ryder circled him. “I was only given a photo of a girl and told to bring her in alive. I didn’t know who she was until I saw you.”

Ryder chuckled at that. “Flattery won’t save you.”

The man’s dark eyes narrowed, and his shaking hands stilled. “You’re Famine’s brother.”

“Obviously,” Ryder said, sizing the guy up. Jane would probably find his ass attractive with his closely shaved head and inked neck. He was perhaps a year or two older than them and tough, but Ryder could tell he was still fresh in the business. And he knew Tercero’s code name. “What does my brother have to do with this?”

“He freed my sister.” The guy peeked around the trees as the sound of backup came from the streets. “I swear I’m not a threat. I owe him. I only sought you out to warn you.”

“Then why’d you have your gun out?” came Jane’s voice from the tree behind Ryder.

“Dammit, woman,” he said, shaking his head as he held out a hand for her to stay put.

“Ask him,” she demanded.

“I know your boyfriend’s more dangerous than me.” The guy didn’t attempt to look for Jane and squeezed his eyes shut at the sound of Tercero, Than, and Sin approaching. “I wasn’t going to hurt her, but I didn’t want to die either. I’m all my sister has left. I’d do whatever was needed to return home to her.”

Jane scoffed. “Real fucking classy way to repay a debt.”

“Brother?” Tercero said, surprising Ryder because he had somehow put himself between him and Jane.

“He says you saved his sister,” Ryder said, lowering the gun, but only because Sin and Than had theirs out, ready to do what was needed. He didn’t want to have a cop or anyone else come along to see him about to kill someone.

Tercero didn’t move, but Ryder sensed his brother nodding. “I recognize him.”

Motioning to the discarded gun, Ryder took a step back. He needed Jane in his arms, or he'd lose control, regardless of if the man was no longer a threat. "He has orders to bring her in alive, but he's claiming he was only going to warn me after realizing we're brothers."

"She's fine," Tercero said, touching his shoulder before pulling Jane forward. His brother knew him too well—knew only Jane could keep him steady.

Sparks danced up his hand as she slid her fingers over his knuckles. Her sweet voice lit up the darkness closing him off as he struggled to look away from her would-be abductor. "Ryder, put the safety on and put it away."

Blinking and realizing how numb he'd gotten, he dropped his gaze to her and breathed in her scent. "You're everything," he said without thinking. He could only stare into her hazel eyes as the golden-brown flames danced for the emerald inferno surrounding them.

She smiled and pressed a kiss to his chest, above his heart. "I know, but I need you to stay with me."

He nodded and lifted her. She hugged him, wrapping her legs around his waist as he walked a few steps away from the others. His heart pounded, even if he'd been confident in his abilities to keep her safe, but it steadied when she tightened her arms, and he felt her heart beat against his.

"I'm okay," she whispered against his neck as she stroked his hair.

"We'll take him with us," Tercero said, holding out his key. "We're close to Luc's office. He's been notified."

Nodding again, Ryder swapped keys with Tercero. There was no way he was allowing Jane to sit near this guy. "Be

careful with him,” he said, meeting Tercero’s stare.

His brother smiled faintly, but a storm simmered within him. “I will.”

“You better be,” Jane mumbled, holding out a hand. “I need ...”

Tercero took her hand and raised it to his lips. “You have it, *tesoro*.”

The flood of warmth that erupted from Jane almost caused him to tremble, but he held her tightly and smiled as their girl sighed and her body relaxed. She was slowly getting her *ninja* back. “We’ll meet you there,” Ryder said. He turned to Than. “Help him.”

Than gave him a stiff nod and proceeded to guard Tercero as he secured the guy with zip ties. He knew Tercero could handle himself, but he wouldn’t take any chances.

Soft lips pressed against his jaw, pulling his attention to his girl as she mumbled, “I need us to go.”

“We’re going, baby,” he promised, focusing only on her so he didn’t turn around and do something that would make him lose her.

“This your stuff?” Sin asked, reaching for the bags on the ground.

“Yeah.” He hoisted Jane higher and walked away from yet another man who would’ve taken her from him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Jane snuggled against Luc's chest as she watched Ryder and Tercero interrogate the man hired to abduct her. His name was Benjamin Ares, and Tercero had rescued his sister three months ago from a human trafficking ring like the one she'd seen before.

Benjamin had been caught trying to free his sister and was about to watch her get raped—they planned on killing him only after they'd each had a turn with her.

Tercero had shown up by then, and her sexy ninja did what he did so well.

“Are you sure you wish to watch?” Luc murmured while his fingers worked through the tangles in her windblown hair.

“I'm sure.” She locked eyes with her would-be captor before Ryder slapped him.

“Don't fucking look at her,” her bad boy growled.

“Sorry.” Benjamin lowered his eyes, but Jane could feel the fire burning in him. The man was pissed and wanted to fight back, but he knew he would die if he fucked up too many times.

Luc shifted and, after placing a kiss on her head, laid her down on the sofa in his office. “Why don't you watch the

game?”

Jane poked her tongue out. She guessed he would take charge, and he wanted her distracted. “I wanna hear what he has to say.”

“It’s more important you rest, Jane.” He touched her stomach and gave her a long look. “You missed lunch. You know the doctors want you to eat better.”

It was almost four, and while she was hungry, she wasn’t sure she could handle eating if things got crazy. “I’ll eat soon.” When he gave her an annoyed look, she pulled out her phone and opened the live stream to the game.

He left the office and returned with a blueberry muffin with glaze and coarse sugar on top. “Our favorite receptionist ordered these for me today.” He smirked at her scowl and held it out with a bottle of cranberry grape juice.

“Did you have one?” she asked, inspecting it. Hela often brought homemade treats for Luc, and every time he declined, usually with some remark that he only ate items prepared by his girlfriend or those with demonstrated culinary skills. She loved when he was such a proper asshole.

“I did,” he said with that damn smirk still in place. “It came from the bakery you like. I extended thanks on your behalf.”

Jane snorted but took a bite. Damn, it was like blueberry heaven.

“Manners, Jane,” he said, leaning down and kissing the corner of her mouth. Before he stood, his gaze fell to a sugary crumb on her lip, and his tongue flicked out to take it into his mouth. “Such a messy eater.”

Her face warmed. “Sorry.”

“Don’t be.” Chilled lips pressed firmly against hers.

It left her breathless, and she felt giddy at the praise, but she still complained. “There’s only ten minutes left.”

“Ten minutes is a lifetime,” he said, straightening and tugging his sleeves. “If our interrogation becomes unpleasant for you, say so.”

Violent. Bloody. Deadly.

Jane shifted her eyes from Luc to Tercero. He was looking at her with an unreadable expression. No, not entirely unreadable. He was calculating everything, weighing options and consequences. It made him look so much like Luc. They had so much control over themselves.

Ryder, on the other hand ...

She held her breath as she watched the muscles in his arm and hand flex as he twirled a knife. The way his fingers skillfully moved had her nervous but strangely excited. Something about his hands, how the veins stood out and ran up his arm as he repeated the action again and again, was so captivating. It was hard to look away, but she did to get a read on him.

He didn’t focus on what he was doing. He was too busy holding back the violence he kept locked inside. She could see it, the vicious monster lurking beneath the masterpiece that was Ryder Godson. Terrifying.

Beautiful.

“Where would you’ve taken her?” he asked, and she shivered as the velvety but threatening tone slid over her skin.

Their captive answered, “Don’t know. I was supposed to send a photo once I had her. Only then would someone tell me

a drop point. I assume a car would have been waiting to take her to whoever wants her or somewhere they'd try to lure the rest of you. They likely would drop her into one of the harvests once business was handled with you."

Luc placed a hand on the nape of her neck, squeezing gently when her body tensed, and it stalled the terror that wanted to encase her heart.

Ryder glanced over, his jaw clenched as he scanned her, almost as if he needed to reassure himself that she was okay. Then he breathed in and out like a damn bull ready to charge as he returned his attention to Benjamin.

Poor Benjamin. She almost felt bad for him.

"So your sister gets saved," Ryder said, his tone rougher, emptier, "and you think it's best to enter the business of taking other women and girls?"

Jane struggled to keep calm. If she freaked out, Benjamin was as good as dead, and she didn't want that. Regardless of how much of an utter asshole he was to do this to someone, he had a sister relying on him.

Luc sighed, releasing her as he strolled over to Ryder. "Obviously, dear brother of mine, he is involved in something that pushed him to do this. He feels he has no other choice."

The sneer on Ryder's face caused Benjamin to wince, but he was a brave one. He met her bad boy's gaze evenly.

"You do anything for her, right? Well, I do the same for my sis. Not all of us have a big brother's bank account to fix things." He lifted his eyes to meet Luc's stare and chuckled bitterly. "I already know I'm fucked, and I know your reputation—I'm not expecting any leniency. I chose to warn you because I hope you'll help keep Alexandra, my sister,

safe. Do whatever you fucking want to me, but please make sure she's safe. They'll come after her again because someone wanted to buy her, but I have a little stashed away for her. I'll tell you where it is. I'll give you names and addresses, but they're smart. They're keeping anything that ties back to them out. But I'll give what I know for my sister's safety."

Jane didn't gasp like she wanted to. Ryder always said she didn't know everything about Luc, that he was dangerous in a way that worried even Ryder, but she had seen how much her king did for survivors. "We'll keep her safe," she blurted, meeting Ryder's glare with her own. "What?"

"Shut up, my love," he said in that empty tone that made her stomach twist. "You don't call the shots here."

Luc shook his head. "Her opinion matters."

"She's in this fucking mess because she matters to you," Ryder snapped, standing as he turned toward Luc. The knife in his hand hung loosely at his side, but he was furious. "Tell me I'm wrong."

"You're never wrong," Luc said, smirking even though Ryder looked ready to punch him. "But she still chose me and embraced her position at my side. Did it ever cross your mind that she would want to save others from the horror we nearly lost her to?"

Her eyes widened, and Tercero shot her a warning glare before he grabbed Ryder's shoulder and squeezed. "Brother, this is not the time or place to discuss this. You know she chose him as much as she chose you."

Ryder removed himself from Tercero's hold and turned back to Benjamin. "You're gonna pretend you're ready to make your drop after you give us everything."

“My sister,” Benjamin gritted, shaking his head. “I need her safe first. Prove to me she’s safe, and I’ll do whatever you want.”

Ryder twirled the knife again, and Jane saw the emptiness slip into place on his face, just like the statues at Dungeon. He was becoming something else.

“I’ll get her,” Tercero said, noticing the shift in his brother.

Luc gave the subtlest nod in Ryder’s direction, and she took that as a sign that it was time for her to make the calls. Ryder could not be unleashed in this situation. Not yet. He might’ve had control the night before, but that had changed.

“Babe,” she said, standing and stepping in his direction.

He held out a hand without looking away from Benjamin. “Come here.”

She cringed at his dark tone because while she didn’t doubt his love for her, it never meant he couldn’t get angry with her. She couldn’t handle him mad at her. But she raised her chin and approached anyway, slipping her hand into his.

He pulled her in front of him, making her face Benjamin. “You want to make these calls? You want to be responsible for his life and his sister’s? For Tercero, Luc, your demons ... me?”

The stinging sensation in her eyes made them water. She knew what he was doing, and it made her feel like shit. He was protecting her from the guilt she’d feel if something didn’t work out. If Benjamin was lying or defaulted and one of them got hurt or killed, she’d hate herself until her dying day.

His tone didn’t soften, but his touch—it felt like magic as he turned her toward him and cradled her cheeks. He hadn’t put the knife away but kept the blade away from her skin and

stared into her eyes. “Everything I do is for you. I won’t keep you in the dark, but I will protect you, even from yourself. You are not going to make decisions about this.”

“I want to protect you, though,” she said, clutching his shirt.

“Protect me by keeping your beautiful heart and mind free of these decisions. You must know by now that if you break in any way—if I lose you—I end.” His brows drew together as he watched her face scrunch up at the thought of him ending, then he added, “You don’t have to carry such burdens, Sweet Jane.”

She felt in her soul that he meant something deeper with those words, something more complex than they were already dealing with. But it was lost on her, except for her realizing ... “You don’t either.”

Instead of holding onto the seriousness of everything, he smirked, and her bad boy’s presence lightened. “Always forgetting who I am.” He leaned down, kissing her forehead. “I’ll let you help Luc with the survivors, but let your boyfriends handle this part, okay?”

It was a compromise, at least. She felt Luc’s and Tercero’s encouragement. They knew how important it was to keep Ryder grounded. “Okay,” she said, kissing his jaw before he straightened.

“Tercero, you’re not going after anyone until I find out more,” he said, turning away from her. “Jane needs to eat a full meal—you both do. Take her.”

Clever, Jane thought. He knew she would want Tercero to eat—and it was a chance to be alone with him.

“Smooth, brother,” Tercero said, coming to her side. He didn’t seem offended, and the smile he gave her as he took her hand to pull her away made her tummy flutter.

Ryder winked. “Behave, sweet girl. I’ll come to get you in a bit.”

She swallowed, watching the mask effortlessly slip back into place before he turned his back to her.



The rest of the day slipped by in a blur. She’d gone with Tercero to the cafeteria in Luc’s building. He had already arranged for one of the cooks to work the afternoon, so they ended up sharing a full meal. They’d even watched some of the game. Archer had done well as starting quarterback and received loads of praise—speculation too.

The sports community still couldn’t get over Ryder’s sudden drop out of college. So any opportunity that they got to speak with Archer, they brought up Ryder. After doing that, they took the chance to confront David, as he had been caught publicly with her as much as she’d been with Ryder.

It made no sense why what they did together mattered to anyone outside their group. They stayed away from most school-related events, but someone always spotted them and posted evidence of their ‘scandalous relationship’ online.

Jane had stopped getting on social media and closed every account because she was the one people tore apart. She tried her best to live in ignorant bliss, but she knew her men were aware. Their efforts to show pride and unity had positive and negative reactions. She knew it would always be that way,

even if it was only their business, so she didn't bat an eye when they commented to random people.

Her beautiful blue-eyed boy usually kept his composure, though. He'd let questions and criticism roll off his back and only respond to questions about his performance during games. So his response during the post-game interview surprised her.

Sweaty and still full of adrenalin, he'd met the reporter's question with frightening confidence when asked, *"Is it true you're dating your stepsister and that she's carrying the child of your former teammate, Ryder Godson?"*

"My private life shouldn't be discussed here, but I'll answer because I'm not ashamed of my relationship with her." He smiled, and it was somehow perfect and threatening. "I love my girlfriend and always have, despite our parents unexpectedly getting married when we were younger. I'm sure you've already dug up information regarding our relationship starting in high school—I won't comment on it. And yes, Jane is pregnant."

"I am, just like the Godsons are, beyond happy. No words can describe how excited we are to welcome the children we make together into the world."

The set of reporters gasped. They asked whether that meant she was having twins and if he was the biological father.

His coach tried to regain control, wanting to focus on the game, but Archer had other ideas.

He leaned over, speaking in that sexy drawl that had her gaping at him through her phone, and said, *"It's not your*

business if he's the biological father. He's happy and ready to be a dad. The rest isn't your concern."

A persistent reporter exclaimed, *"But don't you, your family, and teammates find this unnatural and distracting? It's taken away from your incredible accomplishments, after all."*

Archer had chuckled and ran a hand through his white hair. *"It's not his job or mine to make sure you feel comfortable about his personal life. You chose to focus on a private detail instead of doing your job, and you couldn't even do it well enough to realize he said Godsons, plural. Continue insinuating that our relationship with her is unnatural, and we will decline further interviews."*

The coach pushed David and Archer off the stage as Savaş spit water onto the table. The big guy had laughed, patting Archer's back as he got up, adding, *"I'm the only Godson still available, ladies. I'm snipped—no babies to worry about with me."*

"You keep smirking," Tercero said, bringing her an array of sweets.

"Ooh, where'd you find strawberry wafers?" She snatched the pack and ripped it open.

"The receptionist's desk was locked. I hoped something nefarious would be enclosed, and her employment would be terminated to reduce your stress—but I think this was a greater find."

Jane giggled, moaning as she bit into it. The crisp wafer melted the moment it hit her tongue. "I agree. The bitch has seen me craving things in the afternoon after puking all day. I've even asked for these in our vending machine. I bet she bought them so I wouldn't get any."

“That sounds very juvenile and exactly as I imagined.” He sat, pulling her against his side. “I am sorry your day was ruined.”

“Well, I had fun meeting your lady friend. But I hope I don’t meet more.”

One side of his mouth lifted into a quick smile before he said, “I was talking about your time with Ryder, but I suppose I should apologize for things with Leah.”

Jane held her breath, waiting for the bad news. It wasn’t like she was a saint, but she didn’t know how she’d feel if he went to someone else after leaving her like he had.

“Nothing happened, Jane,” he said calmly. “She had been with Archer the night I left you. As you know, Archer turned up at your place, leaving his company for the night in a hurry. She was hurt.”

“And you comforted her?” Her face screwed up at the thought of Archer with her, and she hated the jealousy that flared to life in the pit of her stomach.

“She wanted us to comfort each other and cried about how Archer obviously had feelings for my ex-girlfriend.” He twirled her hair, sighing. “I considered doing something to make things worse for myself, but I couldn’t. I merely drove her home. It meant more to her, as you could tell.”

“She was very pretty,” Jane murmured because it was true. She also knew that the girl looked an awful lot like his dead soul mate.

He was quiet before nodding. “Yes, very pretty.”

“You didn’t have to agree,” she muttered, making him chuckle.

“I know, but you know I find you far more lovely than ‘very pretty.’ It was your face I compared hers to. Your face that made her appearance inconsequential. And even when I wanted to ruin myself, I could not find her worth more time than the pity ride I gave her so she would leave me alone.”

“Pity ride, hm? Did you take her on the bike or your mustang?”

Yet another chuckle escaped him. “My car. She was upset when she found your bra and panties from the last time we were intimate wedged between the seats. She was more upset when I tucked them into my pocket.”

Jane laughed and turned to kiss his shoulder. “Oh my gosh. I’d forgotten about our car sex.”

“Ouch,” he said, smirking.

“Not in that way.” She laughed. “I just blocked out everything because I couldn’t think about you without losing my mind.”

His dark eyes drifted over her face, and he raised her hand to his lips. “Hopefully I can make things easier between us. And I’m sure Ryder will make up for today.”

She looked away and focused on the wafers. It was hard to tell if he was saying he would commit to her or if he loved her but didn’t want to stay.

For her sanity, she changed the subject. “We had fun looking at baby stuff. I knew there was a chance he’d be pulled away.”

Tercero raised a wafer to his nose, sniffing. “How did it feel to see him that way?”

Jane knew he meant to shut off, ready to kill. It bothered her, and yet it didn't. "I'm not going to think badly of him, Tercero. Or you."

His smile turned sad. "I know, but it's something that worries me. You should want to be far from these things. Not ready to watch the father of your children carve a man to pieces."

An icy tingle skittered down her spine, but she continued eating. She didn't want Ryder to become a killer, but— "I'm not stupid," she said, dusting her hands and clearing the crumbs off her chest. "I know it's wrong. It's not like I want him to be a bad guy. But I won't shield Ryder by abandoning you and Luc to it either."

"You should," he said quietly. "Luc and I chose this."

"And it eats you up," she argued. "Ryder can separate himself. I don't know how he does, but I see it eats you up. How could I sit there and allow you to destroy yourself when he's being your big brother and stepping in to ease that burden?"

"I adore your way of viewing things." He kissed her head. "What a pleasant fiction—to imagine he is doing this for his brothers."

"He cares about you," she said, heartbroken. Did they really think Ryder only cared about her?

"Only because of you." He kissed her head, then stood abruptly, moving in front of her as the office door opened.

"Easy," rumbled a voice that had Jane's eyes bugging out.

"Ch—Alpha?" She jumped up, peeking around Tercero, who already had a gun out and aimed with the safety flicked

off. It was the big guy. And he wasn't alone. "Four, Mute—what are y'all doing here?"

Four smiled, his hazel eyes sparkling. The sight of him had her tummy fluttering excitedly. "We came to help."

"We're more than Dungeon guards," Charles said, sneering at Tercero. All his beauty was displayed without the horns, and she knew she'd get in trouble with Ryder because of how she looked at him. Well, only a little—Ryder knew she was open about being attracted to anyone the same way they didn't hide if someone was pretty. "You're the one who hurt her?"

Oh, boy. Jane moved around Tercero, patting his chest as his dark eyes seared Charles with contempt. "Hey, he's just asking a question. He doesn't know what you've done since then."

The sound of a door shutting and steady footsteps on the marble floor had Jane looking behind her.

Luc was in more disarray than she'd ever seen before. His shirt was spattered with a small amount of blood and torn, exposing his chest.

"What happened?" She darted toward him, checking for injuries. "You didn't ..." She didn't know what to say. She had been sure they wouldn't hurt Benjamin.

"My little brother slipped," was all he said.

Her stomach turned, and she darted her eyes to the door. "He killed ..."

Luc cradled her cheeks and dropped a fiery kiss on her lips. "He just lost his composure. I stopped him. He didn't like being stopped."

Jane held onto Luc but knew she needed to check on Ryder.

“No,” Luc said like he could read her mind. “Benjamin is alive, and it’s not as bad as it sounds. Let him finish.” It was then he noticed his Fallen. “I did not call for you three.”

Four spoke. “We didn’t like the vague updates.”

Tercero gave her bottom a quick caress like he was showing the Fallen he was permitted the contact before walking toward the room where Ryder was.

“Did you bring supplies?” Luc asked, tucking her against his side. He was breathing heavily, and she had a feeling Ryder had punched him somewhere.

“Obviously not,” said Charles. “We assumed you’d have any equipment needed.”

Luc nodded, pushing her hand away from his ribs when she tried to feel for an injury. “I’m fine. I’ve had to restrain my brother before.”

Jane bit her lip. She knew the brothers fought a lot when they were younger, and sometimes that was just how they blew off steam. But she hated that Ryder was cracking—because of her.

“No, it’s best to keep your hands to yourselves,” Luc said, pulling her attention back to him as he addressed something one of the Fallen must’ve said, “but there’s a survivor you can help with. She’s still very traumatized.”

Four nodded, his expression much darker. “When do we leave?”

“Now.” The word was wounded and low. Benjamin had a busted lip and was limping, but he seemed okay.

It felt like she was stuck in a dream when her bad boy stood in the doorway, watching her as Benjamin limped toward Luc, Tercero at his side.

Ryder's face stayed partially hidden because the light behind him was turned off. Only his mouth was clear, and the mean smirk he gave her shook her.

She didn't let it show beyond a quick tremble, then turned, grabbing her wafers. She always had to reassure her bad boy that she wouldn't fear him. So she didn't hesitate to march over to him with her snack. He stared at her like she was an insect he wanted to squash, but she knew this display wasn't because he was angry with her. He was afraid. "Tercero found wafers," she said, lifting one to his mouth. "Want one?"

A low sound rumbled in his chest, but he opened his mouth to accept it. He chewed slowly and let his gaze slide over her frame. "You all right?"

Jane nodded and shuffled closer to him, beaming when he put his arm over her shoulder and pulled her flush against him. He breathed heavily but didn't appear injured.

"And they're here because?" He didn't look at the Fallen or anyone else—just her. If it weren't for the tingles darting across her skin, she'd fear he was too far gone. But he was there, holding her carefully.

"They got worried and came to help." She held up another wafer, smiling wider when he ate it. "Wanna take me home?"

His eyes flashed, but he shook his head as he finished the wafer. "We're spending the night at our alternate residence." His gaze softened, and he caressed her cheek with the back of his fingers. "It's not entirely ready yet. It was supposed to be a surprise from all of us."

Her mind blanked. They didn't have a second residence. Then it hit her, and she gasped. "Y'all bought a house?"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

12 weeks

The ‘alternate residence’ was a damn lie.

They hadn’t bought a house. They were building a fortress and disguising it as a family mansion where they would live together.

The behemoth had three levels, including a basement that could fit a gym, a dance studio, and a fighting octagon. As far as living quarters went, they’d designed an enormous room that would fit a custom bed for all of them. Each of her guys had private bedrooms, too. They even added a nursery that could convert into whatever she wanted. Three additional bedrooms were also factored in since they hoped to have more children with her.

She was excited about the common rooms and could already picture having her wolves and demons over to hang out. There were two oversized family rooms, a theater, and a library in an actual turret so she could live out her princess fantasy. They even had plans for an indoor pool with privacy glass that could switch from crystal clear to blocking out views and light at the touch of a button. They could swim under the stars or protect themselves from prying eyes.

If that wasn't enough, the property itself was to die for. It was ten acres enclosed with fifteen-foot-high walls and three gated entrances. Luc had plans for a guest house and stables because he knew she dreamed of owning horses. They'd also have a lovely pasture with a babbling brook.

"You look like you're going into shock," David said as he prepared her a plate of waffles and strawberries. He and Archer had gotten there right after she'd toured the place with Luc. Most of the rooms were still under construction, but one of the bedrooms and the group room were mostly ready. A bed for six and its giant mattress had been delivered but still needed to be put together.

"It's a lot," she said, glancing at the chef's style kitchen. David was a natural at cooking. He'd arrived with a few food items but quickly pulled her into a kiss after checking to make sure she was indeed unharmed.

He chuckled, glancing at their surroundings as well. It was going to be beautiful once it was done. "I'd only seen pictures," he said, "but when I saw the stream, the studio, and how they set up the nursery between three bedrooms, I knew you'd love it. Plus, it sounds like Luc wants to get you horses. I think he will buy the pasture on the north side of the property. It would be perfect for them. Remember how you always talked about having one? A Friesian, right? And a Shire horse?"

"I wanted a Pegasus." Her gaze darted to his, and she smiled even though she could see the strain around his eyes as he cooked. "Baby, you didn't have to tell them about us. Or the babies."

"I did," he said without looking away from pouring the syrup. He slid the plate to where she waited, then glanced at

her. “I’m not ashamed of you or the others. Or our babies. I’m only upset that I almost let it slip that we’re having twins. Archer said it’s okay—that they think I meant we’d make more babies eventually.”

“But the sponsors.”

“I’ll find new ones.” All the tension melted away, and his jaw relaxed. He grinned as he cut her waffle. “Archer said every social media platform is going nuts. I guess there are books with relationships like ours, and those readers are posting in support. Coach said it might help because they dug up all sorts of accusations of rape and things the school has covered up. So they’re saying the school supports rapists, but not a student in a committed relationship with his high school sweetheart.”

He laughed, feeding her a bite. “So don’t worry about either of us. I should’ve been honest with my sponsors and fans sooner, but I’m done hiding. I’m happy, baby. Really.”

Nodding as her heart warmed, she closed her mouth around the bite. “Fuck, David, it’s so good.”

“Making her horny already?” Ryder said.

She darted her eyes over as he strolled into the kitchen. She didn’t know how he could make something as simple as walking attractive.

“I learned how to cook when I was sure I’d never be with her,” David said, winking as he cut another piece. “I wanted to torture myself and hear her moan.”

Ryder didn’t respond, but David’s comment had her pressing her legs together. She’d never guessed that was why he’d learned how to cook. Her mind went wild at all the times

he'd made food when they lived with their parents. He had waited every time for her to take a bite.

Her perfect boy chuckled and continued to feed her as her cheeks grew hotter and hotter because thoughts of David jacking off after watching her moan wouldn't leave her mind.

Obviously, Ryder had guessed the direction of her thoughts, and he smiled wickedly. "Our Sweet Jane is all flustered. Perhaps you can let her finish her meal before you take advantage of your panty-soaking abilities, Mr. Perfect."

"Apologies," David said, shooting Ryder a smirk, "Mr. Imperfect."

Ryder seemed pleased at the jab. His eyes flashed and settled on her face as she continued to eat. They needed to talk. Ryder had been put in a complicated and dangerous situation with her when he'd just wanted to give her a relaxing day after so much stress.

But after his outburst with her and hurting Luc, he'd quieted. It felt like tiptoeing around a slumbering beast every time she saw him. He likely thought he'd fucked up and was keeping his distance to punish himself.

It was the last thing she wanted, especially after Luc had informed her that getting a house together had been Ryder's idea, supported by David and Tercero before they'd realized she was pregnant. And it was Ryder who'd kicked things into action by using his savings to buy the land. Yes, Luc had come in with the rest of the funding to hire a builder and start construction, but her king had admitted that if it wasn't for Ryder's maturity and determination, he might've dismissed his brother's request to contribute.

"Did you get the bed put together?" David asked.

Ryder blinked and looked away from her as he came closer. “Yeah, it’s all ready for the two of you. Or you can use your room. The mattress is there already, and I put out bedding.”

“Where are you going?” David asked, frowning.

“Just keeping an eye on things,” he said, sitting on the stool beside her. He sounded tired and angry, but he was gentle as he glided his hand up and down her spine. “Tercero should be back in a few hours with the others and that girl. Luc’s staying, but he’s holed up in the office with Damon.”

“How bad did you hurt him?” Jane asked, putting her hand over his thigh so he wouldn’t leave.

The corner of his mouth quirked up. “He’s just bruised, angel. He’ll be fine.”

“I’m sorry,” she blurted, feeling emotional. She didn’t know if hormones made her extra sensitive, but she hated the stress she was causing her guys.

“Jane, don’t do this.” He lifted her hand to his mouth, kissing it. “You don’t need to apologize for me losing control of myself.”

“But it’s my fault,” she argued.

“It’s not,” he said, shaking his head. “You know I don’t think that. None of us think that. You’re overwhelmed, hon. Just breathe.”

“Baby,” David said, sitting on her other side, “you can exist and be loved by us. That shouldn’t make you a target—or make things your fault when someone tries to hurt you to get to us.”

“Just wait until the public finds out about all this,” she said, taking the fork instead of breathing like she needed to because she realized others would learn Luc was part of their group, and his business affairs could be investigated.

Ryder leaned over, kissing her head. “Stop. You need to slow down your thoughts. No one will find out that you were almost abducted, so it’s pointless to even go down that road.

“And I’m sorry about Luc. It was fucked up to blame him and Tercero. They might have kept it secret, but I knew all along. So, really, it’s my fault. Not yours, okay?”

She was overwhelmed, and it hit her that she could’ve been taken again. All sorts of horrors could’ve happened to Ryder, her, and their babies. Her mind went to how Benjamin described his sister’s situation—it was similar to what she experienced with her abduction. David’s cousin had almost watched her raped.

Images of being stopped and thrown to the ground as the men laughed at her bombarded her mind. She wanted to be strong—to be the one monsters knew not to mess with, but she was a silly girl.

“Enough.” Ryder lifted her chin and pressed his lips to hers. Tingles. Breath. Him.

A low hum went from his mouth to hers, making her lips feel fuzzy and her thoughts a sparkly blur. She knew a dazed look was on her face when he pulled away with a husky chuckle. “There’s my girl,” he said, pressing a shorter kiss on her lips. “I’m going to make up for today—just let me do what I have to so I can.”

The flashes of her horrific abduction faded, and all she saw was his perfect face.

“There you go.” He nuzzled his face against hers, breathing her in deeply. “Don’t get lost in your mind. You’re safe. You survived horrible shit and still live every day for yourself and us. Let us carry the load for a while.” He nipped her jaw, then kissed it. “Don’t leave us.”

“I just wanna be brave,” she said, closing her eyes to shut out everything but him.

“You are.” He moved her hair and kissed her neck. “You’re brave and strong—the most dangerous creature alive.”

She opened her eyes, leaning away to look at him. “Why do you always say that?”

“Sweet Jane, you must know I’m a monster to all but you. You are the only reason I’m not empty.” He touched his spot, smiling when it tingled. “Because part of me is always with you, and I’m only whole when we’re close. That means I and everyone you’ve captured with your smile will come if you call. You’re the bringer of Death, pretty girl.”

Speechless, she could only blink at his smiling face.

“Guess you didn’t know you were dangerous.” He kissed her again, chuckling when she finally snapped out of it. “No, don’t wake up. Stay in that little dreamy place you just went.”

She laughed, kissing him but shoving him because if she didn’t, she’d never leave where he had just taken her. “You’re so impossible.”

“Hm, it’s pronounced ‘incredible,’ but I hear preggos like you get confused, so I’ll forgive you.” He laughed, kissing her neck, where he always liked to bite, as he got up. “Don’t mix me up with Archer now. I won’t take the pregnancy brain excuse for his pale annoying ass tearing your pussy up.”

“Fucking hell,” David muttered, sliding her stool closer as he held up another bite. “Never refer to any of us with her as tearing up her pussy.”

Utterly playful, Ryder grinned. “Did Papi call it ‘making love’ out in those woods with you? Or did he pound that pussy so hard you cried?”

“Go,” David said, laughing. “I swear, I might be laughing, but I’ll beat—”

“Not my ass,” Ryder quipped, walking away and laughing more. “I’m sensitive about my ass, Mr. Perfect. I won’t even let Jane stick anything up there.”

“I don’t want to,” she said, giggling but still staring at him in awe.

“I’d probably let you if you were into it,” he said, facing her as he walked backward toward the door, “but I know neither of us is.” He rested a hand over his heart and smiled. “Good night, my moon.”

“Good night, Ryder,” she said, beaming as tingles slid over her lips before spreading to the spot below her heart and to the side.

“You two really are magic,” David said, standing. “Oh, I forgot your juice.”

Jane covered Ryder’s spot as she watched him walk out. “I felt something when he said all that.”

“I know you did.” David returned, placing a personal-sized bottle of orange juice in front of her. “When he talks to you like that, I’m not sure anyone else is supposed to hear him.”

She sighed as the tingles faded but smiled at David, blurting, “Do you think Benjamin’s sister will hit on any of

y'all?"

He chuckled and cupped her face. "You don't have to hide how intense things are with you two. And, if she does, it will likely hurt her feelings because she will be turned down or ignored."

"I hate my mind sometimes," she admitted. "It just goes in every direction. And I always worry one of you will get jealous when that happens."

"I know," he murmured, smoothing her hair away from her face. "But you can at least remove the worry about another woman gaining our attention."

A tickle skittered up her spine as Archer spoke behind her. "You know, I think she just likes messing with you." His hands settled on her waist as he leaned to whisper in her ear. "Stop acting like you don't already know you're it for all of us."

She shivered at his touch, but frustration and many unresolved issues raced to the surface. "My mother's love is supposed to be unbreakable, but we all know that's not true. I was supposed to have Tercero, but I don't know what he's thinking, and I can't work on it with him because he's risking his own life trying to keep me alive.

"Then there's you. I know you kept your feelings for me secret, but there's no guarantee you won't act how I've always seen you act with hot girls when one comes along. I also know I can lose one or both babies at any time. I know that David and Ryder want to have children, but I don't know if I'll safely bring these babies into this world or if having children is a requirement for them to stay. I was on birth control, you know? I was supposed to have time to be confident, but that isn't how things have turned out. The only certain thing is that nothing is certain."

He exhaled, sending his warm breath across the nape of her neck. “Fuck, I guess I’m shit at this. I didn’t even think about how everything must feel for you.”

“Look at me,” David said, waiting for her to lift her eyes. When she finally did, he gave her that sexy David Leodegrance smile. “There you are. I know Ryder just overwhelmed you, and you’re already overthinking everything, so I will say this now—I will be with you through this pregnancy and after. And I’d love to be a dad and raise babies with you, but it’s not a requirement. You are my requirement, Jane. I’m here. I’ll always be here.”

Archer chuckled and pressed a kiss to the back of her head. “I get why you think he’s so perfect.”

“I’ll teach you my ways,” David joked. “Better me than the magical shit Ryder does with her.”

“Did he make her dreamy?” Archer winked at her.

She laughed and kissed her blue-eyed boy. “Thank you, David.”

“Always, baby.” He lifted her. She grinned as he guided her legs around his waist and dropped a hand to her ass to hold her up. “Want me to teach him my ways in bed?”

Her eyes almost popped out of her head.

He chuckled, squeezing her ass, and started walking away. “Fine. We’ll let my teammate sit out. She’ll see you tomorrow, Archer. She needs a break from her Godson men.”

“As long as it’s a small one.” The white-haired boy’s mischievous gaze locked with hers.

She hugged David but kept her eyes on Archer, her heart racing when he flashed his dimples before turning and leaving

the room. As tempting as the idea of Archer being present while she was with David was—so much had happened that she'd forgotten she'd given him a virtual blowjob—it was the right choice for him to leave. He'd publicly claimed her, but they'd yet to spend time together to begin anything.

David squeezed her ass cheek as his body heat intensified. “He’s better at holding out than I thought.”

“You were testing him?” She grinned, even though it annoyed her too.

“Of course,” he said with a laugh. “If he can’t control himself and understand that he won’t always be able to be with you, he needs to address it. He’s used to casual hookups, Jane. Post-game, he’s used to fucking at least one woman.”

She tensed but not in a bad way. David cussing made her horny. “Yeah, I know.”

“But you don’t know how often he’s used to it.” They reached a bedroom, but it wasn’t the group room. “We’ll stay here and wait for the others before we use the group room. This one is the one I picked for us.”

They were on the second floor, but this room felt like the first level since part of the house had been built into a hill. So even though the other rooms were nearby and had balconies, David’s opened to one of the yards.

Jane took in her surroundings. There wasn’t much to the room yet. It only had a mattress on the floor, but it was made and looked comfy with all the pillows she liked. Despite the lack of decor and an unfinished paint job on one wall, she knew it would be a favorite spot for her in the mansion.

Huge arched glass and wooden doors were open, revealing a patio nestled by a copse of flowering and evergreen trees. A

comfy settee was set up beside a stone water feature ... right under a tree with a hardcore sex swing. “You hoping to get lucky?”

He hugged her but lowered her so she could stand. “Always hoping.”

She scanned the room again, but her stomach knotted. “Do you think Archer’s hopes will fade when he finally gets lucky?”

“I think Archer loves you.” He plucked a blue flower from a morning glory vine and placed it in her palm. “I think he’s going to dedicate himself to being with you. It’s up to you if you accept him.”

Her eyes darted to his, and she nodded. “Accept that he’s been with dozens of women and will give it up for me—a chick who’s about to be as big as a house.”

David crossed his arms as the muscle in his jaw ticked, likely debating saying something. When he smiled, it was tight and not comforting at all. “It’s more like a hundred, Jane. And don’t ever compare yourself to a fucking house.”

Her lips parted as she stood there in disbelief. Usually his cussing got her worked up, but all she could focus on was the information about Archer.

Yes, he was a bit of a fuck boy—she knew that. She had accepted it. She was mostly okay with it, even if she had some anxiety building at the thought of him getting bored with her or comparing her to his wild lifestyle. But a hundred women? Maybe more? “He told you that?”

“He doesn’t hide it. I know he’s trying to figure out how to tell you. He knows it’s not something he should be judged on, but I think he feels embarrassed or disappointed in himself. He

crushed on you for years, and none of us knew. We thought he was just attracted to you—nothing serious. But I realize he’s a lot like me. He’s just good at hiding it with all the jokes.”

Jane felt dazed as she walked toward the bed. She stared at it before realizing her legs were numb, so she plopped down and tried to imagine a hundred women. “I can’t compete with a hundred women or the hundreds more he hasn’t experienced.”

David walked closer, squatting in front of her. “Sweetheart, he loved you from a distance and slept with that many women to try and find something with someone else. A hundred faces and personalities got up close and personal with him, and he always wanted you. It’s messed up, but it shows how much having a chance with you means to him. He literally experienced a lifetime’s worth of women and shrugged them off because they weren’t you.”

“Isn’t it possible that’s just because I’m sorta forbidden? What if he gets his taste and I don’t live up to what he’s hyped me up to be? Some guys would say I’m used up after I pop a baby out too, and I’m doing two at once.”

“Jane, no, baby.” He rubbed his hands along her thighs, pushing the chill away. “You exceed the hype for all of us. You know I was worried about showing you how I wanted to be with you, but finally doing it—even if I was careful because I didn’t want to put you in danger—I was in my ravaging-my-girl heaven, and you played so beautifully. I can’t wait to do more together—to fuck you and maybe give you my baby. You will never not live up to the hype for me. And I know Archer more than you realize—you’re going to blow his mind.”

“I like how you evaded my coochie being loose after having the babies.”

His shoulders shook as he tried not to laugh. “Your woman bits are not going to be loose. We know how amazing the vagina is, especially yours. It will return to normal. But if it helps, I knew you’d feel this way about yourself. I researched it and found that many women benefit from seeing pelvic floor therapists after having a child.”

She’d never heard of such a thing and was embarrassed to ask.

His smile softened. “You don’t know what I’m talking about, do you?”

“I’ve only heard you have to do Kegels, and some men ask for their wives to get stitched up to make them tight again.”

“That’s awful, baby.” He shook his head. “Hopefully, you won’t need an episiotomy because that sounds painful. But if you need it, none of us will ask you to get ‘tighter’ by stitching you smaller. Pelvic floor therapy is different. I think other countries are way ahead in women’s health than ours, so it’s not mentioned to many. But if you need additional support to feel comfortable again, you’ll have it.”

“You always surprise me, David.”

“I know.” He grinned, reaching for her shoes. “Always assuming the worst is your style. Mine is doing everything I can to help you through the worst in whatever way you need me to.”

“Stop making me swoon.” She yawned, frustrated that the day had been ruined. She’d missed David’s game—Archer’s first game. She’d missed out on cute moments with Ryder, and her bad boy needed her so badly. And she missed out on her evening with Luc.

“I see your mind racing,” David murmured as he stood. He peeled off his shirt and pushed down his jeans. *Not commando*. He smirked and caressed her hot cheek. “My little pervert. Tell me what’s got your mind still spinning—besides the obvious.”

Her eyes watered as she yawned again, and she growled at herself. “This. I’m always so freaking tired. I wanna make you happy. Soon it’s going to be too late to fuck.”

“Jane, there are other ways to be with each other. They just said no penetration once you get closer to delivery because you’re a higher risk for early labor.” He spoke again before her mind could conjure perverted ideas. “And I’m happy.”

He helped her shimmy out of her leggings. “Today, I woke up with the girl of my dreams. She was loved and kept safe by her other boyfriends, and now I get to spend my first night with her in our room.”

“Our room,” she repeated, closing her aching eyes. “And I’m ruining it by being so tired.”

“Nothing is ruined.” David situated himself behind her, engulfing her in his embrace. She sighed, gliding her fingers along the veins in his arm. “We have our whole life ahead of us, Jane.” He buried his face against her neck, breathing her in deeply. “This is perfect.”

Smiling, she slipped into a dreamy sleep where David conquered her on every surface of their room. The bed. The floor. The dresser and windows. The walls. Definitely on their patio amongst the trees, the sun, and the stars. Then, because dreams were where your wishes were whispered to the universe, she dreamed of him caressing her pregnant tummy and, later, proudly holding a baby. It was just like he said. Perfect.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Ryder glared at Benjamin. And Benjamin's fucking sister. And the fucking Fallen who kept staring between Jane and that girl like they couldn't decide which one to fuck.

He couldn't care less what they did with the sister. He couldn't remember her name even though she kept staring at him and Tercero like they were gods. As long as the Fallen didn't force the girl, they could do whatever they wanted. They just needed to stop staring at Jane.

Than chuckled beside him. They were in the kitchen while the others gathered in the sitting room about twenty feet away. Jane's eyes were bright, and her skin glowed. She'd definitely had a good night's sleep, which surprised him. He'd expected David to fuck her brains out after the scare they'd had, but he should've figured Mr. Perfect would put their girl's health first.

"What are you laughing at?" Ryder asked as he focused on Jane. She was on Luc's lap, coddling his brother because she'd seen the bruise on his ribs, even with all of Luc's tattoos.

"You need her," Than said low enough that the others wouldn't hear. "Apologize for hitting Luc and beg her for a blowjob or something."

“You act like I’m some kind of sexual deviant who can’t control myself.” He frowned when Jane kept kissing Luc’s jaw. Jaw kisses were his thing with her.

“You’re a Jane deviant,” Than said, chuckling again. “It’s not my business how you are with her, but it becomes a problem when you deprive yourself of her. You should’ve stolen her back during the night so you could sleep.”

“I slept fine,” he said, clenching his jaw when Jane kissed Luc’s again, and his brother’s eyes flashed at him. “Motherfucker thinks I won’t hit him again.”

Than exhaled, shaking his head. “Just go get her. She’s probably just as grumpy as you because she slept well without you. Fuck, you two are toxic.”

“Shut up.” Ryder had already stopped listening to Benjamin and the plan they were cooking up. He hated the plan.

“Their plan will work,” Than muttered.

“Maybe.” Ryder hated that Jane had to participate for their ploy to work. Benjamin was supposed to send evidence that he had Jane—that meant it needed to look like she’d been captured. Once the contact verified her identity, a drop point would be relayed to Benjamin. Ryder was almost positive that Benjamin would be taken out at that drop, but he didn’t mention it.

His mind was too stuck on having Jane fake an abduction. He knew Luc had created a forced scene, but she’d bailed on it and called for him to stop it. Now they were asking her to do it for someone who actually wanted to hurt her. She didn’t need the stress.

Tercero leaned his back against the counter beside Ryder. “You look awful.”

“You look like you got your dick sucked,” he said because Tercero looked healthier. His cheekbones were still prominent, but the overall tone of his skin didn’t look so sickly. “You didn’t hook up with this chick, did you? Or the Fallen?”

His brother didn’t react. “No, but finally allowing myself to masturbate seems to have some health benefits.”

Ryder almost laughed. He should’ve guessed Tercero’s self-inflicted punishment would involve depriving himself of good ole self-care. “You fucking weirdo. I fuck Jane, or she gives me a blowjob almost every day, and I still jack my shit daily.”

Than snorted. “Do you watch regular porn or videos of Jane?”

“Her, obviously.” Ryder darted his gaze toward Jane and smirked as her cheeks flushed and she rubbed her lips. “I’m so glad we bought the high-end security cameras—I can download that shit. The face she makes when she comes ... Her hoarse scream when I make her squirt. Fuck.”

“Jesus Christ,” Than said, shaking his head. “I didn’t ask for details.”

“You’re welcome. Don’t try downloading anything, or I’ll have to kill you.”

Tercero cleared his throat. “I didn’t know the cameras recorded when the system was deactivated.”

Ryder grinned. “I switched the settings to record every time there’s someone present. And yes, I’ve watched you fucking her. It’s like a dream that I’m a skinny pale fucker with anime hair. I had no idea you liked her tits so much.”

Tercero's cheeks flushed, and he looked away. He should. Ryder knew after watching those videos that Tercero was holding back some fantasy with Jane. His brother's hand would shake whenever it came up to caress her face or tits.

"What is it you dream of doing with her?" Ryder asked. "You know Luc indulged her forced fantasy. You know David went primal with her, and you know I'm into kinky shit too. Only thing I'm holding back on is breath play." He glanced at Than, whose brows were drawn together. He chuckled, thinking about how Jane's pulse fluttered and her breath hitched when he put his hand around her throat. "What? I have a thing about taking her last breath and giving it back."

Than peeked at Jane before focusing on him. "That's hardcore. Just be careful. Don't try it while she's pregnant either."

"Obviously," he said, bumping shoulders with Tercero. "So what is it? Do you want to choke her too?"

"Absolutely not," Tercero snarled, striding out of the room and likely out of the mansion.

"Maybe he wants to watch her bleed," Archer said from behind him.

Ryder turned on the stool to face his dumbass brother. "Blood play? Nah, I don't like that."

"It's not what you like that matters." Archer grinned, flashing those damn dimples. "What if she wants to bleed for him? She did for David."

"She's anemic, moron." Ryder trusted Tercero but didn't like the idea of Jane cut up. It was bad enough that David bit her, and Luc got her to drink his blood.

"You fuckers are wild," Than said, sipping his drink.

“Knife play doesn’t usually involve cutting,” Ryder admitted. He’d dreamed once of fucking her while he held a curved blade against her throat. It was too much with how conflicted he’d felt about claiming her soul, and he was terrified that if he told her about the dream, she’d fear him.

“That’s true,” Than said. “It takes complete trust to explore that shit, though. Imagine telling her your every fantasy, and she’s actually willing to try everything. I can see Jane being that way for all of you. She’s an exhibitionist, among other things. Never take her for granted.”

“You two are deep,” Archer said, snickering.

Ryder watched Archer’s pale eyes glow when he glanced at Jane. His brother had wanted to take her out on a date but all hell had broken loose.

“Have you ever done piss play with her?” Archer asked, darting his eyes to Ryder. “I bet she’d come so hard.”

“You sick bastard.” Ryder shook his head as he laughed. “I swear, if you piss on or in her, I’ll rip your dick off.”

“What? Don’t knock it till you try it.” Archer laughed, then winked. “I’m messing with you.”

“No, you’re not.” Ryder reached for a water bottle. “Savaş told me that you always make such a fucking mess and don’t clean up after.”

“No, I make the girl do it.” Archer shrugged. “They like it.”

“Jane is not cleaning up your piss,” he said seriously. “You better have yourself checked out before doing anything with her.”

“I already went. I’ll get the results this week.” Archer splayed his hands on the counter and scanned the space. “There’s a drain on the floor over here.”

“You really are a sick bastard,” Than said, standing and walking out of the room, possibly to go find Tercero.

“You think she wants to be degraded,” Ryder said quietly.

Archer shrugged again, but he lost the teasing gleam. “Maybe a little. She puts herself down so much. If I did it for her ...”

“That really works?” Ryder knew people had all sorts of kinks, but degradation—humiliating the woman you loved—seemed too fucked up.

“Fuck if I know,” Archer said. “The women I’ve done it with are sick like me. I’m just saying piss play feels good—so fucking painful that I love it.”

Ryder sighed, hoping Jane never heard that Archer enjoyed it because she’d try it. He didn’t want her to feel humiliated for the sake of any man’s pleasure.

“You don’t have to worry about me making her into something she’s not,” Archer said. “I’m a very vivid daydreamer. I can live things out in my mind and jack off until—if— I get lucky with her.”

“Is that what you did before? Just daydreamed about her while fucking other women?”

“No, I didn’t put her face over theirs. I was in the moment with every girl because I wanted to see if I could connect with anyone—I couldn’t. I used them.” He shook his head as if he hadn’t meant to admit that aloud. “But when you guys used to catch me jerking off in the pool or around the house, it was my daydreams of her. I think it’s like a superpower.”

“You’re an idiot.”

Archer grinned easily. “So what’s your plan after they find the drop point?”

“Why? You coming with me? Because I might kill someone.”

“Do you want me to stop you?” Archer wasn’t fazed about killing the way the others were. He acted like a fool, but he lacked the compassion most assumed.

“Not sure yet.” Ryder turned to stare at Jane again. She was trying to be hospitable to Benjamin and his sister, but she was jealous. The little squint in her eyes and how she tightly pressed her lips made him smile. She wanted to mark her territory.

“All right,” Archer said, opening a stick of gum and popping it into his mouth, “but I might need help stopping you.”

“You’ll have help.”

“Oh, shit,” Archer said, staring at his phone. “Jane’s mom is on Twitter.”

“Fuck.” Ryder snatched the phone to see that Sarah Leodegrance had commented on a tweet from one of the university’s donors, Ronald Washington. The tweet condemned David’s comments and relationship with his ‘harlot of a sister.’ Someone had screenshotted her comment and tweeted it with the caption: “*Mother of the Year!*”

@S.Leodegrance: My daughter and her relationship with my stepson and her other boyfriends are not the public’s concern. Or would you like to share why your fifth wife has filed for divorce, Ronald?

“Guess Jane’s sass was inherited.” Archer took his phone back as he thumbed through more posts. “Wendy retweeted this, as well as Kingston and Coach Prince, with a simple #TeamJane. Looks like our old teammates are jumping on, too. It’s going viral.”

“Team Jane?” Ryder smiled at that. He and the others had always had support from the teams and schools they were affiliated with. People adored them no matter what they did. Jane had always been the outcast.

“Yeah.” Archer pocketed the phone. “Think I’ll make myself a shirt—then everyone will know my dimples are for her.”

“Idiot,” he said, but he kept smiling. “Make me one too.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Of all the considerations Luc had given to binding Jane, he'd never imagined doing so after she'd been pushed into offering herself as bait. The ink embedded into his skin burned as he lifted a roll of duct tape that Benjamin had provided. This wasn't the tape he'd used on her at Dungeon. It would rip at her delicate skin when it needed to come off, but it would look real.

"Can I pretend I'm at Dungeon?" she asked, holding out her wrists.

Luc dropped his gaze to hers and shook his head. "This isn't a scene, Jane. You were pressured into this when you gave consent." He cupped her cheek and watched tears gather in her eyes. She'd known already. She was trying to shut off to allow herself to be used. "Do not confuse the two. This will never be okay."

Ryder sat behind her, fury and murder barely contained as he gently moved Jane's hair aside. "It's just photos, babe, but it's not okay."

"But it's not like any of you are hurting me. It's just photos like y'all said."

David sighed beside Jane. He was there, caressing her back and murmuring sweet things in her ear about her bravery, but

her stepbrother was ready to destroy, just like his brother. “Even photos of you tied up by one of us should be a result of bringing you satisfaction or pleasure. You can’t mix this up with what you consent to with us.”

Luc pressed his lips together. They were giving him a lot of credit—they did not know how he’d proposed the forced scene to Jane. He should not have touched her until she knew what he had planned.

Jane’s eyes fixed on him, and she swallowed hard. She knew what he was thinking about, and she was confused.

He came clean. “Jane,” he said, feeling Ryder’s and David’s stares. They knew, after all. He confessed his guilt anyway. “You gave me consent at Dungeon, but I bound and frightened you before you gave it. I knew it was improper, but I did it anyway.”

“I would’ve consented,” she said, likely trying to save him from the wrath the others were prepared to give. “You explained right away.”

He leaned down, kissing the corner of her mouth. “Don’t make excuses for me.”

She nuzzled him, whispering, “A queen protects her king.” Then, she turned to Ryder and David, kissing each of them on their unresponsive lips as she promised she was okay.

Ryder grabbed her chin and gave her a longer kiss. As soon as he pulled away, he glared at Luc. “Make it right. Now.”

Nodding, Luc held up the tape. “This is not for your pleasure, and it will hurt to remove. It may frighten you. You don’t have to agree to this. I can work out a different way to find those who wish to harm you.” He released a breath and

caressed her cheek with his fingers. “Are you sure you want to do this?”

She glanced behind him to where Archer and Tercero remained silent. He knew they were upset with him too, but they knew this was their best hope of keeping her safe. She looked over at the Fallen, Than, Damon, and Sin. They wanted to support her, and she accepted their dedication to her. She was showing them how much of herself she’d give back.

She did not need to look at Ryder or David—she felt them and gave Luc the loveliest of smiles. “I’ve already forgiven you for the first time, and I consent to this. Help me keep myself and my boys safe.”

“I will help you.” He kept his eyes on hers as he pulled out a long strip. The sound had her cringing, and he noticed in his peripheral that Benjamin’s sister had flinched so hard her brother had to hold her still. Luc kept his attention on Jane and told her what to do. “Don’t hold them too close together. It will still look real, but I want you as comfortable as possible.”

“Like this, baby,” David said, positioning her wrist as Luc intended when she kept her wrists tightly together.

“Yes, that’s good.” Luc brushed his thumb over her scar.

“Wait.” Ryder covered her hands. “Do we have something to put under the tape? Can we use fabric or different tape on the underside that won’t hurt? It just has to look real.”

Luc felt a weight lift off his shoulders. He’d been so conflicted over binding her that he was focused only on the pain he’d inflict.

“He has his moments, doesn’t he?” David said, chuckling as he nodded toward the tape. “Let’s put the adhesive sides together, and we’ll use a small fold to hold it in place.”

Ryder grinned and sat beside Jane again. Well, he pulled her onto his lap and buried his face against her neck. “Sometimes it just takes me a bit to see things.”

Jane sobbed suddenly. “Sorry. I was more scared than I let on. All I was thinking about was how raw my face and wrists felt after Dylan did it.”

“Shh.” His brother turned her to keep her distracted and calm her down while Luc and David worked on lining up tape strips. “It won’t be like that now.”

“He raises the bar when he’s not thinking with his dick,” Archer joked.

Their brother didn’t respond—his entire focus stayed on Jane as she cried.

“Don’t feel bad,” David said quietly to Luc. “You did good with the consent. That will help her more than anything.”

Luc was glad Ryder had seen a simple solution when he’d been too busy focusing on the physical and mental implications. “This might still chafe her, but it’s better than the alternative.”

“Both options are better than what might’ve happened,” David said.

“I don’t need your coddling.” He inspected the edges of the tape with a final glare at David. “Let’s get this finished, Jane.”

It surprised Luc that Ryder didn’t become hostile. He merely kissed her forehead and turned her to face Luc. “You can still back out, angel. Just say the word. I’ll kill them all for you.”

The corner of Luc's mouth twitched. "She knows the safe word will always be Death, but this isn't a scene."

"She knows," Ryder assured. "But she also knows I'm always hers to bring with that single word."

"Name," she corrected, sniffing. She held up her hands. "I'm ready."

Luc didn't drag things out any longer. He crudely bound her wrists and ankles, even though it enraged him. He felt sick to his stomach when Tercero rubbed dirt on her feet and arms, and his heart lit on fire when Tercero used his artistic talents to create an abrasion on her cheek. With the dried tears mixed in, she'd granted his brother the most beautiful, broken canvas.

"Shouldn't we mess up her hair?" Ryder asked, his tone dark as he paced. "She looks like she put up a fight."

"She would put up a fight," Tercero said, adding more detail to the fake wound. "You're doing wonderful, *tesoro*. I'm almost done."

She smiled at him as a fresh tear broke free. "Sorry."

Ryder stood beside Tercero to take in the nearly finished facade. "It looks real." His tone was low and even. It was the exact tone their enemies should fear, but his brother managed to smile at their girlfriend. "You want some water?"

"Yes." She motioned with her bound hands to her mouth. "And kisses."

Ryder reached for her water bottle, chuckling as he flipped open the straw. "Drink, then I'll give you a kiss."

"Leave it to our brother to make her work for kisses at a time like this," Archer said, winking at Jane.

“I’ll kill for his kisses,” she said after releasing the straw, then using just her dirtied fingertips, she hooked Ryder’s waistband and pulled him to where she sat. She gave him the cutest pucker of her lips. “Mmm.”

Luc glanced over at the Fallen and the intruders in their group. They had been a quiet audience, and he nearly smiled at his Fallen’s interest in watching Jane with the others. They were wary of Ryder but didn’t hide their fascination at his brother’s tenderness with her.

A soft hum from Jane and a deep rumble from Ryder called Luc’s attention, and he felt more stress leave his body upon seeing her eyes closed and the most peaceful smile on her lips. She looked like she’d lost a war yet welcomed death with a sweet kiss.

“Bro,” Archer muttered, “she’s supposed to look afraid. Not blissed out.”

“Then maybe you should ask for a kiss,” Ryder said, pressing a quick kiss on her lips before holding up her water.

“What in the world is going on here?” roared a familiar voice.

Luc sighed, turning to face Kingston and Sarah Leodegrance. “Savaş, you were supposed to explain things before you brought them.”

His oversized brother strolled into the room with a large sub sandwich halfway to his mouth. “What? You expected me to tell them their daughter’s in danger, and we’re going to trick the bad guys by tying her up?”

Kingston marched forward, pushing David and Tercero aside as he lifted Jane’s hands. “Explain. Now.”

Ryder smacked Kingston's hands away and lifted Jane into his arms. "Sit down, old man. You know I'm not letting anyone hurt her. Luc, give them the rundown. I'm taking her to piss before we head out."

Kingston glared at Ryder, but his brother ignored it and continued out of the room with Jane. So that aimed all the father's wrath at Luc.

He smiled condescendingly because he knew Kingston Leodegrance could not stand and gestured toward one of the open sitting spaces. "Welcome to our home. If you sit, I will explain. We won't have much time, so I ask that you let me tell you everything I can before asking questions."

Sarah obeyed, grabbing her husband's hand. Her face paled when she spotted Damon, Than, and Sin arming themselves.

"Jesus Christ," Kingston said, running a hand through his hair. "You boys are going to be the death of us."

David came to Luc's side, which Luc did not enjoy. He and David were not close and likely never would be. He felt that Jane's stepbrother was just as uncomfortable.

Yet, together, they explained everything, minus Jane's experience at Dungeon and her interaction with the Fallen, especially since Kingston kept glaring at them and Benjamin. There was no omitting Benjamin's role, though.

"What kind of person abducts an innocent woman?" Kingston roared at their captive. "Did you not gain any compassion for others after having your sister saved?"

"Don't yell, Daddy," Jane said as Ryder carried her into the room again. "What matters now is that he's going to help us."

“How do you know that?” Kingston snapped. “He could have a trap set for wherever he’s taking the lot of you. He could’ve guessed he wouldn’t be able to get you away from these psycho boyfriends of yours, and he’s using this sister angle to get you to comply.”

Luc had already discussed this with the others, and they had a plan in place.

“Well, Ryder or the others can kill them if they’re lying,” she said with a shrug. “Makes no difference to me.”

Vicious little queen.

“Jane,” Sarah admonished, her cheeks flushing red as she noticed the pair being spoken about.

Jane rolled her eyes and looped her bound arms around Ryder’s neck. “If someone tries to hurt or take me, they also take or hurt your grandbabies—my babies. Anyone who wants to mess with them can burn in Hell. I’ll send them myself if I have to.”

Kingston groaned, leaning back against the sofa. “Sweetheart, please don’t wish damnation on others. It’s not good for the babies.”

Archer laughed loudly before holding up a hand. “Sorry. Ignore me.”

Luc glanced at Tercero, who stood silent beside him, knowing that his brother felt guilty and terrified. He struggled to accept that there was more to Jane than sweetness. More than light. “She has always danced in the dark, little brother. Be patient and watch—she still glows.”

“I fear it will consume her,” Tercero said softly, smiling when Jane peppered kisses to Ryder’s jaw as he talked to Kingston, Than, and Sin.

“We all run that risk.” Luc ran a thumb over his wrist and sighed. “She knows what I am and still smiles at me the way she does. I have complete confidence that her light will not diminish.”

Archer spoke up on his other side. “She’s going to burn their eyes out.”

“Precisely,” Luc said, pleased with how Archer’s support of Jane lifted her from the shadows.

Damon walked over, nodding at Luc. “Everything is ready.”

“Then let’s get started.” Luc motioned at Ryder. “It’s time, brother.”

Ryder was their wildcard in every scenario. No one ruled him, and only the five-foot-two brunette in his arms held any sway over him. The fools who’d targeted her had no idea what they’d unleash if she got so much as a splinter tonight.

Jane removed her arms from Ryder and, after kissing him several times, she reached for David. Her stepbrother was part of the abduction. According to Benjamin, David’s nearly pristine reputation had deemed him no threat. So it was expected that if a successful abduction attempt occurred, she’d have been alone or in David’s care. They hadn’t even warned Benjamin about Ryder.

“Should we have put makeup on you?” Jane asked, beaming at David as she looped her arms around his neck.

David smiled before kissing her across her cheek until he met her lips. He did not waver in his affection with his parents present. He claimed her proudly.

“Does anyone else get turned on when she kisses him?” Archer asked under his breath. “Like I wish I was her

stepbrother so hard.”

“Imbecile,” Luc said, walking toward Jane with the modified strip of tape for her mouth.

The dreamy smile David had left on her face dropped when she spotted him. “Do you want me to put it on?”

His soul roared so loudly that he could only stare at her when she held out her bound hands for the tape. She saw in his eyes that he did not want to put her through this, to bind her when it was not for her pleasure and when she’d been pushed to offer such a thing. She was trying to protect him from the pain. “We burn together, Jane,” he said, leaning forward to kiss the corner of her mouth. “Stop forgetting that.”

The faint smile on her lips brightened, and she turned to kiss the corner of his mouth too. “Apologies, my king.”

He showed a subtle inclination toward Tercero, and she nodded before quickly kissing him. “Silly girl.”

“Sexy king,” she muttered but turned to Tercero. “Do I need a touch-up?”

“No,” Tercero said as Luc stepped away. “We should hurry this along, though.”

“Then hurry up and kiss me,” she said, daring him with her lovely eyes to step up again.

“You know I hate to hurry,” Tercero told her, cradling her face between his hands and kissing her in a way that made Kingston turn away and Sarah’s cheeks burn red.

Luc ignored the stares from Benjamin and his sister. Instead, he turned his attention to Archer, who watched Tercero nip Jane’s lips as he murmured promises of love to her and death to her enemies in Italian.

His wild brother had his arms crossed, and jaw clenched. So much stood in the way of him getting his shot with Jane. It intrigued Luc that Archer could show so much patience after his years of puberty consisted of indulging in sick fantasies as often as possible.

“Stop looking at me,” Archer muttered, but he smiled when Jane glanced his way.

Luc chuckled. “Time is of the essence, brother.”

Archer knocked his shoulder as he took Tercero’s spot. “I don’t want our first kiss to be like this.”

“I know.” She raised Archer’s hand to her lips, pressing a sweet kiss to the back. “But I still want my dimple kisses.”

“They belong only to you, gorgeous.” Archer gave her what she wished, flashing his dimples as he leaned down.

She looked at him in wonder, like she couldn’t fathom how much Archer liked her, then gave him a soft kiss on his cheek. “Tickles.”

“I promise you won’t laugh when my lips finally press against yours.” He flashed her another grin, then moved away so Luc could tape her mouth shut.

Her eyes flew to Ryder’s before darting to Luc’s. “It’s gonna hurt more?”

“You can take it,” he said instead of telling her she didn’t have to do this. She needed him to remind her how great she was.

She nodded and leaned forward. “Do it.”

CHAPTER THIRTY

Panicked breathing and muffled cries filled the air as Jane watched David get shoved to his knees on the rocky ground. She tried to move, wanting to help him as he looked up at the gun Benjamin aimed at his head, but she could only squirm in the trunk of Benjamin's car as sweat spilled into her eyes.

“The football star?” a gravelly voice asked from Benjamin's Facetime call.

“Yes.” Benjamin shoved the barrel of his gun against David's forehead hard as he held the phone closer. “I can bring him as well.”

Jane breathed faster out of her nose, trying to focus. This was the plan, wasn't it? Why didn't it feel like the plan? David was supposed to be ‘apprehended’ with her. But not this.

“We only want the girl,” the man told Benjamin. “Kill him. Now.”

Her scream shook her chest when David turned to look in her direction, and a shot went off. Lungs burning, she kicked as best as she could to get to him, but all she could do was lie in a heap as she watched David's body fall out of view.

This couldn't be happening.

“Death,” she screamed against her gag, sobbing as Benjamin approached with the phone screen aimed at her so the caller could see her. She tried to make out his features, but her stupid vision tunneled. She couldn’t catch her breath. “Death,” she tried to scream again to end the horror, but it wasn’t a scene. They’d told her so. Ryder couldn’t save her from this. Oh, she didn’t care anymore ... she wanted to bring Death to end everyone.

“Take the tape off so I can see her face clearly,” the man ordered.

Jane tried to get away, but Benjamin was strong. He yanked her hard before ripping the tape off in one easy swipe. “You bastards,” she roared, spitting and hitting Benjamin. “I’ll fucking kill all of you! My men’ll rip you apart. David! Baby, answer me!”

The man laughed. “That’s her. Shut her up now, and I’ll give you the drop.”

“Just a moment.” Benjamin sat the phone down and ripped off a fresh strip of duct tape. Then, gripping her face hard, he pressed it over her mouth when she went to scream. “Shut up.”

“We like the screamers,” the man said, laughing again, “especially the pregnant ones. She’ll be fun.”

Benjamin laughed, slamming the trunk shut.

Jane cried as she rolled onto her side and tried not to puke. This wasn’t supposed to happen. David was with her for the abduction to make it seem realistic. The bad guys had told Benjamin that David was an easy target. They’d spied on them during their camping trip and determined he was the weakest of her men.

The plan had been to go to the same campsite to photo her and David bound, then text it to the bad guys to then wait for a call. But the call came through Facetime, and Benjamin had picked her up quickly and dumped her in the trunk before she could figure out what was happening. Now David was dead.

Her chest quaked painfully as she sobbed and desperately tried to break free of her bindings. But even with the modified tape around her wrists and ankles, she was bound too many times to do much in the small space of the trunk.

“Jane!” The trunk was yanked open, and David loomed over her. “Fuck, baby, I’m fine.”

Ryder shoved him aside and picked her up. “Easy. We’re here.”

Her eyes and mind struggled to make sense of what was happening. Everyone was there, and Tercero was cutting David free. David was fine.

“Baby,” David called. “Let me have her.”

Ryder’s chest rumbled, but he kissed her forehead and handed her over. “Let’s get her cut out of this.”

Deliciously warm hands cupped her face as sapphire eyes holding back a thunderstorm peered into hers. “Jane, I’m fine. My ears hurt, but I’m fine.”

She nodded but didn’t stop crying. She had expected Benjamin to make it seem like he’d captured them together, but she hadn’t expected to see a gun to David’s head. She was especially not prepared for that gun to go off as she lay there helpless.

Tingles rubbed up and down her back. “He’s okay.”

Luc stood beside Tercero, and his cold stare as he took in her hysterics had her falling apart again. She'd failed.

"Enough of this, Jane." Luc rolled his sleeves and crouched at her dirty feet to remove the tape. "Pull yourself together." He cut and unraveled the tape before doing the same to her wrists. "You knew David was safe. Benjamin's gun wasn't even loaded. I made the shot."

David hugged her tighter as he inspected the fresh tape around her mouth. "She didn't expect it to go down like that. We didn't know they were going to do a Facetime call."

Ryder didn't move away. His presence—the suffocating power he held—wrapped around her like a blanket, and she only steadied when she felt a soft trail of tingles on the nape of her neck. "Breathe, my moon. It'll pass."

She shook her head, releasing more tears as David and Luc inspected the tape on her mouth. She was supposed to be his most dangerous creature, but she'd panicked.

"Yes," Ryder said, his voice so deep and gravelly that it kept her from passing out. "There you go. You agreed to help us catch these monsters. You knew Benjamin might have to improvise to keep his cover. It was all fake. David is perfectly fine, and he'll kiss you all better as soon as we get this tape off."

"I will, baby," David promised, wiping under her nose where snot and tears had gathered. "I swear I'm fine."

Luc turned her face toward his, looking every bit like the stone statue outside Dungeon as he glared at her. "I'm going to pull this off. It's going to hurt."

Jane felt awful. She'd panicked too much, and it was stressing them out.

He sighed, caressing her cheek. “I’m not angry with you. You should not have had to see David in that state, but it’s over now. Find your strength so that we can end this.”

She nodded, sniffing as she wobbled toward him for a hug.

Again, he sighed but put his arms around her and rested his lips on her hairline. He breathed her in the same way she did him. “You are allowed to be emotional,” he murmured, squeezing her gently, “but we are on a time limit. I don’t want to drag this out.”

Ryder took her hand in his as he moved to stand beside her. “I think you probably had enough sweat on your skin to protect you from the new tape. Let’s get this done, angel.”

Jane squeezed his hand, knowing what he meant. He was going to kill for her. They all were. She was bringing *Death* to their enemies.

David moved behind her, holding her around her waist and chest. “I’ve got you.”

It took all her strength, but she ripped herself away from them and rushed to the other side of the car. She couldn’t let Luc hurt her; she knew it would hurt so badly. She refused to make him do it and tore the tape from her mouth, screaming.

“Jane,” David said, getting to her first. “Fuck, let me see.” He gripped her face, inspecting her lips—and before she could continue processing the sting or the tang of blood on her tongue, he licked her lips. “Why’d you do that?”

“I didn’t want Luc to have to do it,” she snapped.

His gaze fell to her mouth, and though the fire still burned in his eyes and his muscles were full and ready to inflict pain, he kissed her tenderly. He was the perfect boy she grew up

with and the fierce man who would always claim her in front of the world.

The heat that always marked David amplified until it was almost too hot, but she kissed him back harder. It was brutal, bloody, and perfect as he hoisted her and started walking away with a hand on her ass.

He didn't slow down or look back when he ended the kiss but hollered to the others, "We'll be back. Go if you need to."

"Where are we going?" She closed her eyes when she felt the others watching them leave. "I don't want them to go yet. I can calm down."

"I know you can." David ran a hand up and down her spine. "I'm just taking you to rinse off this dirt. They have to organize positions to fake the drop. We have some time. Do you remember the creek?"

"I always want to remember the creek," she said pathetically, tightening her sore legs around him.

"I won't let you forget." He kissed her neck, then licked the same spot like she wasn't sweaty and dirty.

They walked for a short while as drowsiness settled over her. "Will you hold me against you—against your skin?"

"Of course," he said, coming to a stop. "Sit here for a second."

Jane lifted her head as he lowered her to a big boulder. Once she was settled, he tugged his torn shirt over his head, then took off his boots and jeans until he was only in his boxer briefs.

He smiled at her and came close enough to rest his hands on her thighs. "Want everything off, or do you want to stay in

your bra and panties?”

She sniffed, holding up her sore arms. “I’ll keep my panties on so the fishies don’t get me.”

His low laugh had her tummy tightening, but she focused on his face to assure herself that he was safe. “I kept the fish away last time.”

“Yeah, they were afraid of the big snake you had out last time.”

He laughed louder, tugging up her shirt. “I considered getting fully nude for you, but we need to hurry.”

“I know.”

“Do you want us to stay behind?” He slipped off her shoes and helped her shimmy out of her shorts.

“I need to be there for Ryder,” she said, wrapping her legs around his waist as his hands slipped under her thighs.

He lifted her and kept his eyes on hers as he waded into the water. It was night already, but it had gotten hot enough that some warmth still lingered. “Ryder’s going to do what he needs to. You don’t have to take care of him.”

“I do, though.” She sighed, tilting her head back as he started washing her. “If he kills someone, he needs me there. Plus, he won’t concentrate unless he can see or feel me close by.”

David washed her face, arms, and feet, but then he sighed and gripped her chin, making her focus on him. “Are you sure you can handle seeing these things? I see you flipping between trying to be what you want to be and what you fear.”

She smiled sadly as she traced her fingers over his perfect lips. “I can’t lose him. I’ll handle anything to keep him.”

“No one can take him from you.” He scanned her body, his jaw tightening when he spotted her sore lips. “We’re gonna have to teach you that it’s not okay to hurt yourself just to spare us pain.”

“You can try.” She smiled wider even though it hurt. She’d always try to spare them any suffering.

The corner of David’s mouth quirked up. “If you are hurt, we are destroyed.” He pulled her closer to press his lips to hers. He felt like the sun’s sweet kiss in the middle of the night, and he chuckled at her no doubt dazed expression as he murmured, “Keep us strong, my love.”

She melted. “Stop being so dreamy.”

“You like it when I’m dreamy.” He scanned her again before pressing a delicious kiss to her neck. “And when I’m something *else* ... You can bleed for me whenever you want.”

“Don’t tell her that.”

Jane started at Ryder’s dark tone, and she and David turned to see him standing at the water’s edge, holding a towel.

Ryder kept his eyes on her, and though his posture appeared relaxed, she knew otherwise. Her bad boy held back a monster, one that desired to ruin all who wanted to take her from him.

“Why?” David laughed, squeezing her and carrying her toward Ryder.

“Because she’ll let you bleed her dry.” His gaze fell over her, sending a rush of tingles down her body. “Then I’ll have to kill you.”

David kissed her temple before whispering in her ear, “You’re right. He needs you.”

Her heart squeezed, and as soon as they reached Ryder, she held her arms out for him even though he was only holding the towel out for her.

His eyes trailed up to hers, almost empty of emotion, until he saw her lips trembling. He sighed, wrapping the towel around her as he took her from David. “You knew better than to hurt yourself.”

She wrapped her arms around his neck and hugged him as he rubbed her back. “I know.”

“And for Luc of all people.” He grunted and sat her on the rock, but she refused to let go. “Babe, stop. Get dressed, or I’m leaving you and David behind.”

“Don’t be mean.” She released him but hooked her legs around his waist.

He snatched up her clothes and motioned for her to dry off. “I don’t baby you when you act up. Dry off—then I’ll help.”

Her eyes cut to where David was getting dressed, and he gave her a sad smile before leaving her alone with Ryder. “Please don’t be mad at me,” she said, focusing on her bad boy again.

“Never mad at you, Sweet Jane.” He glanced over his shoulder, watching David disappear. “What did he whisper to you?”

“That you need me,” she said, roughly wiping herself as he laughed. It was all kinds of dark and scary, but her heart steadied when he lowered his hands to her calves and rubbed them.

“Mr. Perfect never fails to surprise me.” He raised a hand to her lip and huffed. “You know how I feel about these lips.”

A smile stretched over them before she kissed the pad of his thumb. “You can punish me later.”

The way he flicked his gaze to her eyes was almost predatory—slow and precise. “I’m not going to punish you the way I do for our games. Don’t ever hurt yourself for one of us. Ever, Jane.” She flinched, but he gripped her throat and kept her from looking away. “Do you understand me?”

Tears stung her eyes, and she tried to nod. His hold wasn’t painful, just unyielding.

His thumb brushed against her jaw tenderly. “You have so much power over us, my moon. We will fall without you.”

“I just wanted to protect you all.” She pressed her palm over his heart, releasing a shaky breath as she realized it beat steady. Hers was racing.

Those emerald eyes brightened, and tingles bloomed across her lips before darting down to his spot. “So eager to be our warrior queen.” He leaned down, pressing his forehead to hers. “You have to let us fight this battle for you.”

“What if something happens to you?” she asked because that was what she feared most. Losing him in any way was unacceptable.

He smirked and put the tiniest amount of pressure on her neck as he pushed her back and hovered his mouth over hers. “Always forgetting who I am.”

“No,” she gasped, tightening her legs around him as he stayed just out of reach, “I just can’t lose you.”

“You won’t lose me, angel.” He nuzzled her nose with his, smiling as she tried to get a kiss. “You need to ride with me for this?”

She hadn't expected him to offer her a chance to be at his side after the call. She expected to be locked up and guarded by every person they could spare from the ambush. "You'll keep me with you?"

His smile twitched, and he dragged his thumb down the column of her neck. "You know you're mine to keep."

"Always," she whispered, begging for his lips to touch hers.

"Longer," he said in that gravelly tone he used to scold her. His hand moved under her jaw, but his hold still enclosed her neck. "I know you're worried, so you can stay with me for as long as it's safe. Then you can stand by my side as I end the threats against you."

"Kill them?" She gripped his forearm, sighing as tingles danced up her arms.

He watched her before nodding. "It's always been my duty to protect and keep you. I fail if I let them escape. They'll never stop coming for you, then eventually our children too. But I also fail if you look at me and see a monster, so I'm asking—even though I shouldn't put this on you at all—are you still my ride-or-die girl?"

She knew it took a lot for him to give her this power. He wanted to protect her from everything, even herself. Because participating in this meant she condemned all who wished her harm to death. "They ordered David to be killed and plan to do worse to our babies and me. They dug their own graves. So yes, Ryder, I'm your ride-or-die girl."

A smile stretched over his perfect face. "Then you'll ride with me. You'll look them in the eyes when we show them

they dared to fuck with the wrong woman. And I'll do my duty to you.”

“Can I have a kiss now?”

His chuckle sent those tingles into a frenzy. “Come here.”

Her breath felt sucked straight from her lungs as he tugged her, closing the distance he'd kept between them, but she didn't care. Not when he growled into her mouth and shoved his tongue in to meet hers.

He didn't let go of her neck ... didn't ease up when she saw stars behind her closed eyes. He drank her soul, keeping her for himself, then, just when it felt like time had stopped and everything was a dream, he pulled away. “Breathe.”

Gasping, she laughed and opened her eyes. “You literally took my breath away.”

“Nah, you threw it at me.” He pressed a sweeter kiss to her lips and released his hold on her neck. “Don't do that again unless I say so.”

She blinked as he slid his hands under her thighs and hoisted her up. “Did I really?”

He maneuvered her so he could pull her head to his shoulder as he headed back toward the others. “You're always trying to give me everything, Sweet Jane. But it's dangerous, and you can lose consciousness, and that's not the kinda passed out I like.”

Jane grinned and kissed his jaw. “I'll do better.”

He peeked at her, smiling. “I know you will. Now let's go end the motherfuckers who tried to kill Papi.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

“Deep breath, gorgeous,” Archer whispered, touching her waist before he armed himself with an impressive bow. She had forgotten that Archer was an actual archer.

She should’ve guessed he’d be just as impressive as his brothers. Apparently he was better with a bow than a gun, and she believed it. He looked lethal, taking one of his jagged-tipped arrows and drawing back on the bow when a man exited one of the four SUVs surrounding Benjamin’s car.

Her breaths quickened. Ryder had made her change into all-black on the way to the drop point. After that, he, David, and Luc kissed her goodbye, and she watched them slip into the darkness of the trees that led to a hidden road in the middle of a field. An abandoned barn sat nearby, its structure mere beams on one side.

Archer and Damon had stayed with her. Mute was with her parents and Benjamin’s sister. The others—Ryder, David, Luc, Savaş, Than, Sin, Alpha, and Four—were prepared to fight and die.

“Steady,” Damon said, aiming a long-range sniper-style rifle at the different vehicles. “Don’t forget Tercero is in the trunk.”

Her eyes snapped to the trunk as Benjamin talked with the man who'd exited the vehicle. "Archer," she whispered, her eyes stinging as the man laughed at something Benjamin said.

"No one will forget he's in there," he promised. "He has a way to get inside the car too. Just stay calm. This is what he's done all this time."

"He's never taken my place in the trunk of a car," she said, looking down at the communicator Ryder had given her. She couldn't tell where they were, but she felt their gazes every few moments. Tingles. Ice. Fire. They didn't want her this close to danger but didn't trust anyone else to keep her safe.

Archer didn't respond. He was focused on the scene unfolding about fifty yards away at the base of a hill they were on.

Damon flipped down a technical piece of eyewear, then touched the communicator attached to his ear, muttering, "Prime vehicle is the Buick—it has five. The other three have three men each."

Jane lifted a pair of binoculars, holding her breath as she listened to Ryder's voice on the communicator.

"The barn?"

"Two," Damon confirmed. "Looks like they're setting up for something. They're moving a table."

Ryder's order came through. "Stay focused on the prime vehicle. Keep her safe."

"We will," Damon said. "They're opening the trunk."

Jane's heart raced too fast, but she refused to look away as the trunk opened. The man's smile fell, but he didn't yell out because Tercero already held a shiny blade to the man's groin.

Benjamin kept smiling and squeezed the man's shoulder as he said something. Finally, the man nodded and called out.

At first, there was only silence. Then, as if rehearsed, all doors opened, and armed, suited men exited the vehicles one by one.

A growl rumbled in Damon's chest as a tall, muscular man in a stylish black suit stepped out of the Buick last. She didn't recognize him, but Damon did. He touched his communicator and said, "Luc, it's Uroš Blackwood. He actually came."

Luc's voice cut through. "Alive, King."

"Affirm," Damon uttered.

She didn't ask who that was. She wanted Damon to be ready as the huge man waltzed toward the car where Tercero lay.

"Call it," Archer muttered when the man spotted the knife held to the first man's dick.

An indiscernible command rang out on the communicator. Several arrows flew in a flurry of movement and noise, impaling three men who either fell to the ground dead or screamed in agony. The man Tercero held a knife to collapsed with a shout, clutching at the bloody mess between his legs. Damon's rifle discharged, hitting the rocky ground around the big man to keep him from fleeing as Ryder, Luc, David, Savaş, and Than surrounded the armed men with their guns raised.

Her breath hitched when the man closest to David turned his rifle toward him. David caught the weapon's barrel and yanked it free as it discharged. Somehow he got a hold of the man's arm and twisted it. Even in the distance, she heard it snap before the man screamed. When a second man stepped toward him, David threw a devastating punch at the man he'd

already wounded, knocking him out. Then he aimed his gun at the other man.

Her blue-eyed boy said something, a warning, she guessed; whatever it was, the man disarmed, and David kicked their guns away.

Her heart steadied at his confidence, and she realized she was mimicking him when a dangerous smile grew on his perfect face.

Tercero gracefully exited the trunk and armed himself with the katana she'd seen him slaughter with before instead of a gun like the others.

Luc moved into the big man's path and smirked. In his white suit, he looked ready to talk business as usual. "Blackwood," he greeted.

Jane realized Archer had pushed an earpiece into her ear. It allowed her to hear more than the communicator, even the dark smile in Luc's voice.

"Did you honestly think you could take her? That I would allow my queen to fall into the horrors you permit?"

The man in black wasn't fazed. He stood tall and relaxed even though Luc had a clear shot. "She's merely a tool, little king, but I can't deny that I was curious to try her out—see what all the fuss is about. Though I've never liked the pregnant ones, I'd make an exception for a queen."

Ryder shifted his aim to the man in black, and without looking, Luc moved his to cover the men Ryder had held at gunpoint.

She covered her heart, waiting. She didn't know how to feel about Archer killing yet, but it was there in her mind, just like it was that David could've easily killed the man he'd

attacked. But staring at Ryder with that empty look, she saw the fire in his eyes as he watched the man in black turn to him.

“Oh yes, little brother is the leader of this group,” the man said. She hated how smooth and powerful he sounded as he stood there, relaxed as he looked Death in the eyes. “I had wondered about the condition of the assets I recovered. You made sure they hurt, and I can respect your skill. It’s so easy to kill, but to keep them at the very precipice of death—so broken that they cannot even communicate the horror you unleashed. That, my boy, is what I expected from your older brother.”

Ryder watched him, his arm steady as he studied her enemy.

The man laughed. “Is that what this is? You want to torture me? All I wanted was to remove your brothers, who have made it their mission to put me out of business. Don’t you appreciate the idea of having her all to yourself? I can give you that. Then I’ll leave you alone.”

Ryder somehow sounded both monster and angel shaped into one person. It hardly made sense, but that was how her mind processed his voice when he said, “Selling women and children is not business. And no, I don’t appreciate the idea of holding my girl after parts of her heart have been ripped away.”

“She’s here, isn’t she?” The man laughed again and glanced around. “I miscalculated with how much you coddle her. Do you want her to see the real you?”

Ryder smiled instead of panicking. “You fucked with her, with our children, and her fucking boyfriends. Pretty certain she’d smile at the sight of your head split open.”

She should've been horrified and ashamed, but she wasn't.

Ryder chuckled, and it made butterflies flutter in her stomach. He flicked his eyes in her direction. "Come here, my moon."

A gasp ripped out of her mouth, and she darted her eyes to Archer. His jaw clenched, but he didn't look at her. He was ready to let loose another arrow if he needed to.

"Do I go?" she whispered, gazing toward Ryder again. He was staring right at her.

"Yes," Archer said, his voice strained.

"She's okay. Take this, Jane." Damon slid a gun into her hand. "It's ready. Aim and squeeze the trigger like I taught you if necessary."

Of course, all her practice in self-defense was absent from her mind, but she felt better with the gun's weight in her hand as she stood. Her eyes went back to Archer. "Are you coming with me?"

"It's better if I cover you from here." He flashed her his dimples. "Go, gorgeous. I've got your back."

She felt more relaxed than expected, so embracing Ryder's control and strength as she made her way to the clearing was as easy as breathing. Maybe Ryder was right.

Maybe I am the bringer of Death.

It took a while to navigate her way down the hill and through the tall grass, but with every step, she felt her bad boy's presence pulsing like a heartbeat. She felt her heart steady, even knowing the men who'd come to hurt her might not have theirs beating in the next few moments.

She knew that meant something was wrong with her. But Ryder was right—she was not a fragile little girl. Yes, she cried a lot—panicked when one of her loves was in danger, and no, she couldn't fight off a man—but her beautiful monster with his fierce emerald eyes—was there to complete her. He was there to grab her demons by the throat and squeeze.

She'd never felt such power until that realization. All eyes had locked onto her, yet she could make out her men in the chaos. Tercero had shown her it was possible to rein them all together, and she was ready to do just that.

Finally, she got within his reach, and tingles encircled her wrist as Ryder pulled her to his front.

“Sweet Jane,” he said, his voice raw and dark, “this is the man who tried to take you from me. He's offering to kill my brothers and David. He's saying he won't come after you again—after us.”

Jane stared at the man who'd wanted to take her from everyone she loved and knew she was staring at a darkness unlike any she had ever encountered.

A terrifying smile tugged at his lips. “You should talk some sense into him, little one. I will keep my word—you will be safe. No retaliation will befall you.”

Tingles pulsed below her heart and to the side, and she smiled. “Considering his gun is aimed at your head, I'd say he's the one who should be making offers.”

Ryder caressed her jaw with his thumb, chuckling. “Such a smart girl. Since my girl is right, I'll make the offers. Tell them to disarm—they'll live if they don't try anything—and you'll become our little captive. You're going to show us

where your bases are, who all your players are, and give us lists of the women, girls, and boys you've sold. I know you sick fucks love to keep inventory on them like cattle, and I want it. I also want info on all your buyers and suppliers."

The man's smile almost seemed fatherly. "You think your little group can destroy what I've built?"

Ryder shrugged. "Guess we'll find out."

"She'll never be safe," he told Ryder. "Others will seek vengeance—for me, for the business. There will always be someone, but you can take her and leave. I'll even call a truce so your brothers can go with you. We'll consider the losses they've caused me settled. But if you go any further with this, it will end poorly for all of you—for her."

Jane didn't shake. Not with Ryder backing her. Not with her men beside him, ready to see that his threat never passed.

Ryder released a deep breath and kept his arm steady. "You see, the problem is I know you set all this up to make this offer to me. Well, not quite this—you thought you'd have her to use against me. You wanted to bargain with me because you have some fucked up idea that I could be an asset to you.

"But you made the mistake of assuming I'd jump at the chance to keep her for myself, that I'd cut apart her heart just not to share her." He chuckled and dropped a kiss on her head. "You fucked up because while I'm her first man, I'm not her only man. She's acquired armies."

Charles and Four walked into the clearing, covered head to toe in blood. Each held dripping machetes and wore sadistic smiles. They took the chance to even the numbers up so the guys weren't all covering multiple people.

Ryder chuckled again. “I think they had a problem with whatever you had set up in that barn for Jane. So that tells me you also planned to do a bit more than offer me a bargain.”

Jane’s stomach knotted. She recalled Damon mentioning two men in the barn, moving things around. She would’ve been taken into that place and tortured until Ryder gave in to this man’s demands.

She raised her gun and aimed at the man. “You have three seconds to agree before I decide to handle you myself. Because if it were up to me, you’d already be dead. Every one of you would be dead. Now, what’s it gonna be?”

The asshole had the nerve to smile. “Always a delight to witness light turning into dark.”

Ryder’s thumb, still caressing her jaw, kept her from freaking out. She smiled right back. “One.”

He nodded and said something in a language she didn’t understand. Then, his men placed their weapons down and raised their hands.

Her guys moved quickly, securing the weapons and their captives. She didn’t like the tightness in her chest or how her arm shook as she kept her finger hovering over the trigger. His comment got to her, but she didn’t know how to process it. She knew Ryder and Tercero wanted her to stay pure. She wasn’t sure about Luc, David, and Archer, but she knew she didn’t want them to look at her badly. Was it so wrong to want to hurt someone who wanted to destroy her and those she loved?

“Easy.” Ryder pressed a kiss to her head as he pushed her arm down and took the gun from her. “You did good. Let me handle him now.”

She nodded as a shaky breath passed her lips. He was there. He didn't judge her, and that was all that mattered.

The big man laughed. "Such an interesting couple. One day she'll lose one of her men and go insane, or you will lose her. I can already see the horror of what someone will do to her. But it can be avoided if you let me leave."

Ryder tucked her gun into a holster on his side, then hugged her again. "Or I can take control of your assets, every account you have—private and public—and cut off the funds to your operations. I have a feeling no one will give a fuck about what happens to you once they realize you no longer run the bank. Of course, they'll also realize they're not immune to consequences anymore, but they'll have the chance to stand down and get paid. The only question is how I send the message to them that we're not someone to fuck with. And if you want to live with your dick still attached to your body."

Jane grinned when the confident expression on the man's face wavered. "We can still cut it off, I think. Let you work to earn the surgery to have it reattached. I've heard they can even make them a little bigger. It could be one of those sour then sweet moments."

Ryder laughed as his hand slipped down to cover her tummy. "Now I see why Luc calls you vicious, my little Death bringer. Think a pickle jar will preserve his dick?"

Her head bobbed. "Could probably even go for a smaller jar. Bet there's a reason he needs to take women like he does. You know, not all women are like me with a craving for big dicks. Some of them prefer the small ones."

"Jane," Luc said as he approached and held out a hand, "let them finish this."

“Go with him.” Ryder pressed another kiss to her head and nudged her toward Luc.

She went willingly, but she turned back to Ryder when they got to the edge of the clearing and said, “Babe?”

Ryder’s empty gaze went to her and warmed. “Yeah, baby?”

“Make him bleed a little.”

His smile stirred up those butterflies again. “Already planned to, my love.” He focused on the man in black, adding, “You really should’ve done your research. If you had, you would’ve known we are hers in every way. You would’ve understood she’s the most dangerous creature and wouldn’t have dared to fuck with her.”

Luc tugged her when Ryder holstered his gun and approached the man. In one powerful swing, Ryder knocked him out. “Come, Jane. He’s only just starting.”

“But ...”

She tried to keep watching as they climbed the hill, but he wouldn’t let her.

“You don’t need to see more,” Luc said harshly.

Archer appeared with Damon. He had switched his bow for a rifle that he held carelessly. “We’re leaving him alive? I thought he was the guy you found info on.”

“He is, and he’s only alive for now,” Luc said, passing Archer. “We’re taking her home. They will handle this.”

Jane breathed out at the sounds of yells and screams of terror and took Archer’s hand in her free one, letting them lead her away. Her bad boy hadn’t taken a life—yet—but Archer had. “Are you okay?”

He looked at her, his brows drawn together. “Me?”

“Yeah. Did you forget what happened?”

“The guys I killed?” He flashed a deadly smile. “They were planning on hurting you. They got off easy.”

“The rest will not,” Luc promised, raising their joined hands to his lips and turning her hand to kiss her scar. “They will pay for their crimes against you and the hundreds of women and children they’ve taken, raped, and tortured.”

“And killed,” Archer added. “You hungry? There’s a burger joint that stays open all night. They have the best milkshakes.”

Damon chuckled behind them. “Archer, has your head been scanned for the numerous concussions Ryder’s given you?”

The cries of agony got louder.

“Jane?” Luc called. She knew what he was asking.

“They were going to rape me.” She breathed through the burn that crawled up her throat. Luc usually pushed her to show the outward strength accepted by society. She knew he was proud of her for confronting the man who wanted to hurt her, but she felt it in his voice. He was calling her back to herself, urging her to let go of her darker side. “They were going to offer him a shell of me.”

Luc nodded, his hand flexing around hers. “You would’ve suffered—paid for the losses we’ve caused him—then he would’ve offered what was left of you to Ryder. He likely planned on using Ryder to eliminate us. My brother wouldn’t be able to stop himself from doing whatever it took to get you back.”

“And Ryder knew that?” she whispered, imagining the horror of what he’d do for her. She could deal with it if it were bad people. But not her other loves.

Archer kissed her hand. “We discussed all possibilities a while back. He made it clear that he’ll do anything for you, and everyone understands. We all made a pact to do the same.”

Her chest ached, and the spot below her heart and to the side felt cold. “Will he be okay?”

“If he has you to come home to,” Archer answered.

A shot went off, and they all stopped and turned.

Damon got his phone out, reading a text. “They’re fine.”

“But someone else isn’t?” she asked.

His eyes glowed. “It’s best you don’t hear anything further. Let’s get you home.”

Luc pulled her closer, and after searching her eyes, he smiled.

“Why are you smiling?” she asked, gasping when he lifted her and carried her bridal style through the brush.

“Because I was right—you’re still glowing.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

A few hours would bring Jane to her fourth night with only Luc, Archer, and Damon at her side.

Never had it crossed her mind that the others wouldn't be home the morning after she'd left them in the clearing. Maybe she was silly for thinking she'd wake with everyone piled around her, but her foolish heart had expected them to be there. Not just Luc, running his fingers through her hair.

Her emotions had been all over the place. Luc told her it was okay, but she hated going from feeling bad for what she'd asked Ryder to do and panicked at the realization she would have been raped and her babies killed to smiling at the truth—she'd looked darkness in the eyes as she showed him she was more powerful. The monster at her back and the others who followed stood at her side made it so.

She sighed and turned away from the stars that looked so pretty from Luc's balcony to read the only texts she'd gotten from Ryder.

RYDER

Good morning, my moon

Good night, my moon

Good morning, my moon

Good night, my moon

Good morning, my moon

A tickle slid along the nape of her neck, and she closed her eyes. Archer had kept some distance between them, not taking advantage of her free time the way she'd expected. Instead, he'd kept her parents occupied and did his best to keep up with the rumors about them on social media.

She'd almost forgotten that he'd also told the world he was involved with her. Different groups of people all over the country were rooting for the guys individually and polls on whose baby or babies she was having—they had not confirmed or denied they were having twins after David's comment.

"He still hasn't texted?" Archer scooted her forward on the chaise and sat behind her before pulling her back so she was nestled between his legs.

"Not yet." She turned to see him and smiled when he flashed his dimples. "You're supposed to make me work for them."

He released a low sexy laugh as he buried his face in her neck. "You need some spoiling, I think."

She smiled but returned her focus to her phone. "You've stayed away. Are you okay?"

His lips curved up against the sensitive skin on her neck. "Stop worrying about me. I'm not upset about killing monsters, especially ones who planned to hurt you." His hand closed around one of hers, and she smiled at their similar complexions. He had that same pale skin Tercero and Luc did,

but he had a healthy tan that almost matched the golden undertones of her pale skin. “I came and slept in bed with you and Luc for a little last night.”

“Really?” She played with his fingers. He had so much talent at his fingertips. He wasn’t just a quarterback. He was an amazing archer. He was a killer. Her killer.

“Yeah.” He breathed in her hair, then chuckled. “Luc kicked me out. He said I needed your permission, and I wasn’t your boyfriend yet.”

That lightened the sorrow swirling in the pit of her stomach. “He’s big on consent.”

Archer hummed. “He told me your morning sickness has been absent.”

“Yeah, I guess it has.” She kept staring at the phone but couldn’t help savoring Archer’s presence. He smelled like soap and something she couldn’t quite figure out. It made her think of how amazing she’d feel after feeling sick or starving and finally eating. “Did you eat cake?”

He pulled her against him tighter and lifted her, causing her to sit on his crotch. “The girl made cupcakes.”

“Girl? Benjamin’s sister?” She stopped thinking about how Archer had positioned her, even though he was spreading her legs so that his knees could come up between them.

“Yeah. I keep forgetting her name,” he said, gently pushing her forward. “Lay your head on my knees so I can rub your back.”

She did as she was told, but her mind had gotten stuck on the girl comment. “Why’d she make cupcakes in my house?”

His fingers danced around her sides, and he pushed up her shirt to expose her back. She only wore David's shirt and panties. "Stress baking, I think." She swore she could hear his smile, but she could only focus on his hands gliding along her back. "Luc told her you would *not* want one and declined one himself. But I was hungry, so I took one. They're not bad. Do you want one?"

"No." Jane breathed out, relaxing at the gentle touch, and dropped her head to her folded arms. "Isn't this uncomfortable for you?"

"Your gorgeous ass and pretty pussy are on my dick, and you have an incredibly sexy back that I'm finally getting to touch. No, I'm not uncomfortable."

"Should've known you'd be a perv." She grinned, moving a little. She almost laughed when he groaned.

"You wouldn't like me if I wasn't a pervert about you." He glided his fingers down her spine, adding more pressure. "I wish I could take you out, but I know it's not safe yet."

"I know." She glanced at her phone again. "You're running out of time to decide if I live up to your fantasy."

His hands stilled. "What?"

"I'm pregnant." She peeked over her shoulder to meet his stare. "I'm showing a little, and soon I'll be huge—then the babies will come, and you'll miss out on a pre-baby me. Not that I had a hot girl body before, but you know."

He moved her hair aside and resumed her massage. "It's not your body that I fantasize about. It's you. And you do have a sexy body. I've always stared at you. I find you even sexier now."

Her heart pounded, and she hid her smile by turning forward. She didn't feel the doubt she usually did. This man had killed for her and chose to pursue her, knowing he would always have to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with her other loves.

"I really do like the sight of you showing." He slid a hand around her to hold her stomach. "It's still only a little, but I think about you getting rounder with these babies, and I want to see if I can cause contractions when I fuck you."

She laughed even though she felt him harden beneath her as he rubbed her stomach. "Contractions will hurt. And they said I'll have to cut sex out when I get further."

"You shouldn't worry about us going without sex. We've all gone different amounts of time without you. All the suspense will be fun." He shifted her so she could feel him even more, and she bit her lip to keep from moaning. This was not how she expected her night to go, but then she remembered Archer was accustomed to one-night stands. "Is this too much?"

"I'll tell you if it is." She closed her eyes and wondered if she should stop things, but it felt too good. He was trying to help her in his way, she realized. He didn't know how to make her feel better without her men, and he was torn on how to continue making progress in their relationship.

His hands moved to her waist, and he rocked her to grind against him. "We can fool around if you want. I still want to wait to kiss you, but I kinda want to get you off."

Oh, that sent a shiver through her body, but she stayed silent as her eyes darted toward her phone. Nothing.

Archer removed one hand from her waist and held out his phone.

RYDER

Make her tremble.

Don't fuck her.

But satisfy her. Luc's too busy and this might be your last chance until I get back.

She's been crying without you. I can't.

RYDER

Show her this. Then make her forget her name.

“Fuck,” she said, wiping a tear. “He’s still the sweetest guy in the world.”

Archer tossed his phone away, put his hand back on her waist, and pushed his hips up. “No fucking. But can I do as he asked? I think this is his version of playing matchmaker. He knows I don’t know where to start, but here.”

She laughed as her sad little heart beat stronger. “Only if you want to.”

“Of course I do.” He squeezed her waist, then returned to rubbing her back. “Can I take this shirt off you?”

Her breath hitched, and goosebumps erupted across her skin, but she sat up, letting him pull it over her head and toss it aside; he’d seen her in less before.

“So pretty.” He caressed her spine with his fingers, then pushed her forward again. Only this time, he shifted her high enough that he could reach down to his sweatpants and free his dick. “That’s better.”

“Archer,” she whispered as he settled his hands on her hips and rocked her so that she could feel him.

“Yeah, gorgeous?” He kept one hand on her waist as the other slid around to cup her breast. “They’re bigger, aren’t they? Fuck, I think they are.”

She felt like her body was vibrating. He held a hand on her lower back, guiding her so that her core and ass glided along his erection, and he had her soaked.

Her mind blanked, and she closed her eyes and rocked her hips forward and back.

“Fuck, this is a dream,” he said, palming her breast as he pushed his hips up to meet her movement.

She groaned and moved again as the realization of what step they were taking settled around her. There was no going back. They were either going to work or fall apart, but she would embrace what he and Ryder were giving her.

His grip on her hip tightened as he leaned forward. His body squished hers, but it didn’t bother her once he kissed the back of her neck. His kisses were featherlight, but his grip on her was firm.

He released her breast and tugged her legs wider to slip a hand into her panties.

They moaned together when he touched her, and Jane found herself frantically reaching down to pull his dick from between them so that it would slide up her front. It would be so easy to let him take her, but feeling him against the fabric of her panties was so much fun. To feel his fingers sinking into her as his dick tried to do the same.

That curve. Fuck, she’d been right about that curve. It was going to shatter her into a million pieces. She leaned into him

but kept her hand over his dick, pressing it harder against her even though his fingers were already destroying her.

“I wanna see your face,” he rasped against her ear. “I want to see your pretty face when you come.”

Jane nodded, leaning forward when he pulled his hand from between her legs. He pushed her gently but turned her to lie on her back. Then he stood, peering down at her as he tasted her on his fingers.

Heat flushed her entire body as she lay there, topless with her panties disheveled. He still wore his gray sweats and a white tank, but her mind only focused on how he lazily stroked his dick and took her in.

She covered her breasts, embarrassed when he kept staring.

He shook his head. “Squeeze them for me if you’re going to touch yourself.” His hands went to the hem of his tank, and he tugged it off in a way that had every muscle in his body rippling.

“Oh, fuck,” she breathed, squeezing unintentionally. She’d known he was sexy, but it had always been in an admire-but-don’t-think-of way. Now he was offering himself to her, and she wanted him.

“I love when you cuss,” he said, still looming over her. He flashed those dimples and gripped the base of his dick as he kneeled on the chaise, scooting her so that her head almost hung off the edge. “I don’t think I’ve ever been with a girl I was forbidden to fuck. This’ll be fun.”

Her legs closed around his hips as he braced one hand near her head and leaned down until his mouth hovered over hers.

“You look so gorgeous like this. I never thought it would be for me.”

Jane reached up to hold his face, but when she tried to pull him down so their lips would touch, he ground himself against her.

“Not yet, pretty girl.”

“I’m ready for it, though.” She really was. She knew they were going to be together after this. At least, she hoped they would.

“I’ll kiss you when us being together isn’t initiated by my brother.” He gripped her jaw, tilting her face to the side and dragging his tongue along her neck. “We fit together, don’t we?”

She nodded as best she could, raising her hips. “Oh, please get in me.”

He nipped her neck, then moved to close his mouth around her nipple. He groaned and sucked hard. “Oh, damn.” He released her, then licked again. “I made you leak.”

“What?”

He released his rough hold on her jaw so she could look at him, but his gaze settled on her glistening breast that leaked a semi-clear fluid. “I thought it wouldn’t happen until you were closer to having the babies.” A hunger lit up his eyes, and he leaned down, keeping his gaze on her as he sucked hard again. She gasped as he swallowed before moving to the other breast. He groaned, grinding against her before moving to kiss her chin. “It tastes sweet, like some type of fruit juice.”

It dawned on her that he’d made her breast leak colostrum, or whatever the hell came before milk, and he liked it.

“Don’t be embarrassed.” He kissed the side of her breast before flicking his tongue out. “I am so fucking hard because I know I’m the first to get this.”

She laughed but cried out when he shoved her panties aside and pressed the head of his cock to her opening.

“Oh, yeah,” he said, watching as he dragged his dick up and down her soaked pussy. “Christ, you’re so pretty. I can’t get over it.”

Her eyes rolled back, and she surrendered to him. She let him play with her even though she wanted nothing more than for him to thrust inside her so she could feel exactly where he touched her.

His knuckles rubbed over her clit, and he fucked his hand against her. “God, I want to bury myself inside you.”

She had to brace herself from sliding off the chaise because he was thrusting so hard. Then he was standing, leaving her in a heap as he rid himself of his sweats. “Archer, please,” she begged as she took him in.

His boyish grin had her moaning, and he spread her legs roughly as he got back in place. Then, finally, he pushed in just enough to let her feel the head of his cock inside her. She came so hard and fast that she screamed.

“Fuck, yes,” he growled, rubbing his thumb on her clit as she tried to tighten around him. She still felt the head, but he wasn’t entering her. He just savored the way she fluttered around the tip of his dick. “Shit, Jane, I want to be in you so bad.”

She couldn’t focus. She nodded, trying to pull him in, but he wouldn’t enter her.

“Why aren’t you fucking her properly?”

That woke her up. Jane's eyes flew wide, and she turned to see Luc standing five feet away with his hands in his pockets like he was looking over documents.

“Ryder told me not to,” Archer said, rubbing her clit. “He wanted her to feel good, though.”

Jane blinked, waiting for Luc to get angry—or for any reaction—but he stared at what Archer was doing. And Jane realized she was still raising her hips, trying to get him inside.

Luc glanced at her before sighing and taking out his phone. The sound of a Facetime ring filled the air, and he glared at his phone the moment Ryder answered.

“What the fuck do you want?” her bad boy growled.

Luc fired back with just as much menace. “Our brother is not a vibrator to throw at our girlfriend.”

Ryder laughed. “Did you catch them? Were they in your bed or something?”

“Chaise,” Archer hollered, “and he's interrupting.”

Ryder hollered right back. “Are you fucking her?”

Archer laughed. “She wants me to. But, maybe not anymore—Luc kinda killed the mood.”

Luc hung up and marched over to her. Fire lit up those cool gray eyes, and she moaned. Her king was pissed. “You are in our room, Jane.”

“I'm sorry.” She reached for him, trembling because Archer had another orgasm building in her.

He glared at Archer. “I'll deal with you later.”

Archer chuckled. “I know. Do you want to help me? I don't think I can stop from thrusting in if she comes again.”

Luc exhaled, composing himself. “Finish with her, then leave. Don’t fuck around in my room again unless I invite you.” He cast her a final glare before walking away. She heard him answer his phone and Ryder laughing before the door slammed.

“Wanna stop?” Archer asked, still hard as ever.

She shook her head, smiling at his mischievous grin.

“I knew you were an angel.” He pushed the head in again, knocking the smile off her face. “I don’t consider it fucking until I’m balls deep.”

“Oh, good,” she said with a keening cry as he pushed in more. He hit the right spot immediately. “Shit!”

“You’re so sensitive,” he said, holding the base of his dick but still sliding in and out. It was the perfect tease. “Let me do better.”

“No, it’s good.”

He smiled and pulled out before standing and moving toward where her head lay. “Want a taste first?”

Jane opened her mouth. He didn’t make her wait. He braced his hands on the chaise and guided himself into her mouth. The curve had her gagging more than usual, but he didn’t care. He fucked her mouth, and she wondered, tears streaming down her cheeks, if he considered this another loophole.

“Fuck,” he groaned, pulling free. He looked too sexy with his white hair falling in his eyes. He grinned at her tears and wiped them from her face. “Turn around now. I want your ass almost hanging off this edge.”

“What are we doing?” Her arms felt like jello as she sat up and turned, doing as she was told.

“Not going balls deep,” he said, kneeling at the foot of the chaise. He hooked his hands under her knees and tugged to get her where he wanted her. “I can control it better this way and give you like two ... three inches. I don’t trust you not to lower yourself.”

“Yeah, you shouldn’t,” she said breathlessly.

“Lie back, gorgeous.” Then he was pushing in. There was no resistance. She had opened herself to him, and she smiled as he groaned and picked up the pace.

Jane held onto the chaise. He was rough, but he gripped the base of his dick to keep his word to Ryder. Still, it was plenty to send her into a frenzy.

“I’m gonna come,” she told him as the most embarrassing sounds left her mouth. He was hitting it just right every time, and he knew it.

“Yeah?” He kept going but started pumping into his hand too. “Can I come in you?”

She moaned, clutching his arm as he thrust faster. Harder. “Yes, come in me.”

“Fuck, you’re perfect.” His rhythm became erratic.

“Shit,” she screamed, feeling a gush.

“Fuck, yes,” he groaned at the sight of her squirting. “Oh fuck, baby, do it again.”

She cried because she felt like she’d die if she didn’t have another orgasm, and he seemed to know that. He stared at his swollen cock and eased out to hit her g-spot over and over.

And again, she felt a rush of liquid as her whole body locked up.

He jerked himself a few more times, making the most amazing sounds when he found his release. She reveled in his cum flooding her insides as he lowered his face and closed his mouth around her breast.

“Archer.” She laughed, cradling his head when he grinned.

“I can’t believe I made you squirt.” He gave one more long pull on her breast before releasing it. “Not that much came out that time.”

“It’s gross.” She closed her eyes even though she wanted to look at him. He was sweaty and beautiful.

“Nah, it’s kinky. I’ve fantasized about fucking you post-baby with your breastmilk mixing with my cum. I didn’t think it would taste so sweet.”

He rested his head on her chest, breathing hard. “I can do better, by the way.”

“It felt good,” she promised, running her fingers through his hair. “Luc’s gonna beat your ass.”

“Worth it,” he said, kissing her fingers. “You know I love you, right?”

Her breath caught in her throat. David had told her so, but she didn’t expect Archer to blurt it out.

He lifted his head to look at her. He was so gorgeous. “Do you think we can be together like you are with the others? Or is this my last moment?” He grinned and leaned down to lick the moisture leaking from the breast he hadn’t sucked. “It’s not bad as far as last memories go, but I want to do so much with you. Not just sex, even if I know it’ll be amazing. I want to be

welcomed with the others into your bed. I want to earn time with you, make you laugh—hear you scream in pleasure. Maybe just in the guest room for now, though. Luc's a dirty fighter. He'll break my throwing hand if we fuck in here."

Jane reached for his face. "It's time to kiss me, Archer."

Those dimples came and went, and he leaned over her. "Yeah, I think it's a good time." He lowered his face and, smirking, teased her waiting mouth before laughing and pressing his lips to hers.

Jane had been kissed a lot. Amazing kissers had kissed her, and each of her men had their own style.

Archer kissed her with a promise that even though his lips had touched a hundred others, hers were the lips he'd dreamed of every night.

It was beautiful and serious. He held her cheek with one hand and braced himself with his other. Strength, longing, victory. That was what he tasted like. The quarterback who was always outshined by his brothers and David showed her that she was his greatest win.

She tightened her legs around him, and since he was erect and getting harder the longer they kissed, she had no problem making them one again.

"Jane," he said, leaning back when she gasped.

She shook her head, her breath hitching because he felt so perfect. "You're my boyfriend now. None of them come between us."

His smile had her melting until he pushed in, fully sheathing himself.

“Oh, fuck,” she yelled, holding him in place. “Oh, fuck, yes.”

He chuckled, grinding his hips into hers. “Yeah, this boyfriend is going to take you to the guest room. Stay quiet because your parents are in the room beside it. So is that girl’s.”

His words yanked her right out of the moment. “How do you know where she’s sleeping?”

He laughed, pressing in deeply with a growl. “Oh, you’re so pretty when you’re jealous.”

She couldn’t stop herself from moaning and falling under his spell again.

“And don’t worry,” he murmured, smiling and watching her pant, “the room your parents are in is soundproof. They won’t hear us, but I’ll let you get that jealousy out of your system while you mark your territory.”

Another kiss was pressed to her lips, then he stood, keeping her around him, and made for the door.

“Archer, we’re naked. Let me get dressed.”

He shook his head and smacked her ass. “Keep quiet. I’m making a run for it.”

“A run?”

He kissed her again. “Run and fuck. I’m a professional.”

She giggled, wrapping her arms around his neck as he secured his grip and pressed her against the door, fucking her so hard she felt wood creaking. “Oh, fuck, don’t stop.”

He smiled—his dimples flashing—before he kissed her. “Sorry, darlin’, I’m just getting started.” Then he opened the

door and ran across the mansion—fucking her the entire time
—because, yes, Archer Godson was a professional.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

13 weeks

Ryder scrubbed under his fingernails, sighing as his blood mixed with another's before swirling down the drain. He hadn't expected things to unfold the way they had. Yes, he'd become a killer—that was always the plan. But it hadn't been the plan for those deaths to belong to FBI agents.

The door to the bathroom opened and closed. Ryder knew it was his brother. Tercero hadn't wanted him to kill and had been happy when he'd decided to go to the Feds to get them all out of trouble. Tercero was even prepared to go to prison if it meant more protection for Jane.

Ryder wasn't going to allow that. He'd let Luc in on his plan because there was a chance they'd go after his older brother. So Luc had plans to run with Jane, which was fine—he had a way to find them—but he needed the others to help him. He just didn't tell them until he got everything from Blackwood. It would be the only way for it to work out. He had to give the FBI a big payout. Giving them all of Uroš Blackwood's financial assets clinched the deal.

“Are you all right?” Tercero asked.

Ryder flicked his gaze up, catching Tercero's reflection watching him through the mirror. "Why wouldn't I be?"

"Because they used us to draw out their dirty agents." The sneer on Tercero's face had him chuckling.

"Good for them." He continued scrubbing. "They didn't care what it cost me—or you—but at least they're holding their buddies responsible. There are no good cops till the 'good ones' stand up to the bad."

"I suppose." Tercero folded his arms and leaned against the tiled wall.

They were being held at a field office a few hours from home. All of them were ready to leave, but things got messy when three dirty agents disabled a camera in his holding room. They'd shown him one of his confiscated knives and told him he should've stayed out of Uroš Blackwood's business.

He figured they'd planned on making it appear he'd attacked one of them with the knife so they'd have cause to shoot and kill him.

"Is Coach Prince here yet?" Ryder asked. That had been his way in with the Feds. Coach Prince, his former high school coach and principal, had a cousin who was a senior officer at the closest field office. He'd found that information out after Jane's high school abduction and almost rape. Coach was fond of her and had tried to call in favors to ensure all involved were given the worst punishment possible.

The man couldn't do much before, considering it was local and not a trafficking situation. But this trafficking organization was a career case, and Ryder would hand over everything in exchange for immunity for him and the others. He had no idea

that the very top of the organization would be at that would-be exchange for Jane.

Of course, they still wanted dirt on Luc and didn't want to extend protections to his older brother, whom they'd already been watching, but they couldn't pass up Ryder's and Luc's intel. Luc had agreed to provide information about the survivors and possible trafficking operators and child pornography distributors. Jane only knew about the trafficking rings. None of them wanted to scare her with the other child stuff, but Luc would reveal everything he had if it meant protecting all of them for her.

"They're finishing up with David," Tercero said. "They agreed to keep his involvement and Archer's out of any reports."

"Good." Ryder inspected his hands, satisfied that the only blood left was from his split knuckle. "Wonder if I need a shot or something."

His brother smiled. "I already asked for labs. They're retesting but confirmed the recent health reports were clean."

"Thank fuck," he said, drying his hands. "If I have to go another day without fucking Jane, I'll lose my mind."

"You do realize that you will have to stop having sex with her soon. Then, after she has the babies, you'll be cut off for six weeks at least."

"I can fuck her ass, right?" He laughed at Tercero's glare and pressed a paper towel to his wound.

"She'd be upset with you talking this way about her."

"Nah, you must've forgotten her little kinky ass likes when we talk about her," he said, pushing the door open to return to the room they'd been holding him in. They'd finally let his

brothers and David see each other that morning. They had only one monitored phone privilege after calling to bring in the ‘good guys’ at the barn. He hadn’t gotten full access back until that evening. They treated them like they were the ones who arranged to kidnap and rape his girlfriend. “You’re so stuck on keeping her untainted that you forgot Jane’s a freak. She wants me with all my dirty thoughts.”

“And you’re fine with Archer’s dirty thoughts coming true?”

Ryder waited for the guard to open the door. The agents were tense around them, even though they had commended him and Tercero for defending themselves. Tercero’s attacker was still breathing—though the man wished he wasn’t.

Savaş looked up from his cot and laughed. “Stop whining about Jane and Archer finally hooking up. Ryder told him to make a move or move the fuck on. He made a move.”

“I’m not whining,” Tercero said, sitting on his cot.

Ryder collapsed on his and ignored them as he opened his phone to read her only response to his good morning and good night texts. She’d sent him a selfie of her and Archer in bed. His dumbass brother was passed the fuck out with a smile on his face, curled around Jane like a fucking toddler.

MY MOON

Babe I got a new boyfriend

She had no idea how hard Archer had fought to get a chance with her. When Archer’s feelings had become apparent to the rest of them, Ryder shut down the fantasies because he knew Archer wasn’t fully committed to pursuing Jane.

But he'd watched Archer's massive crush evolve into something serious when they hung out more, then into full-on infatuation, then real love. Well, maybe he'd loved her for as long as the rest of them, but Archer had remained loyal to him and the others.

The night Tercero left, Ryder saw that Archer's decision had been made, but he'd been too enraged with Tercero to let Archer in.

After Jane left with Luc, Archer asked to have a fight. If he gave up, he'd walk away. If he didn't, he'd earn his chance.

David and Luc hadn't liked the idea, so he refused Archer's request at first. But Ryder knew Archer needed to prove that he was serious for once in his life. And his little brother surprised him after he stepped in to handle the guy who'd recorded him fucking Jane at his fight. Then, after Ryder saw the damage Archer had done to the man, his brother asked to fight again. Ryder accepted.

Yeah, Archer still got beat to shit, but he'd held his own. He'd even been able to conceal how badly he'd gotten his ass handed to him because Jane had only seen one bruise on his face. She never brought it up, though. She probably dismissed it as football-related, which said a lot about Archer's strength.

Now he'd gone and killed for Jane like it was as easy as breathing.

"Archer earned his shot, and he went for it," he finally said, breaking up whatever conversation Tercero and Savaş were having. He smiled at Jane's cute grin on the phone. "She likes him. She made him boyfriend number five."

"Guess my shot is blown," Savaş joked.

Ryder threw his water bottle at his giant ass brother. “You think of her as a sister. I’ll fuck you up for incest.”

Savaş threw his hands up. “David is actually her brother, and you fuck her together.”

“He doesn’t think of her as a sister.” He focused on Tercero. “Stop being moody because he got her, and you’re still halfway in the doghouse. Make shit right. She’s made it clear she wants you back.”

Tercero sighed. “I didn’t expect him to be with her so quickly.”

He rolled his eyes. “You act like Jane takes shit slow—I fucked her the day after she started tutoring me. So don’t be a pussy. What happened to the guy who ate her out without ever taking her on a date?”

“Pull out the big guns,” Savaş encouraged. “She’s ready to take you back, even if you deserve a bit more punishment. Jane’s a sweetheart. You guys have just had bad timing lately.”

The door opened, and Sin, Alpha, and Four entered.

Sin grinned at them. “What’s sweet about Jane? Please tell me she sent you some nudes.”

“Sin, you’re lucky I can’t kill anyone else tonight.” Ryder texted Jane:

Don’t give him my jaw kisses. In fact I want all kisses limited until I get back. Go to Luc.

He does that corner-of-the-mouth shit with you.

She responded right away.

MY MOON

I owe Luc at least ten blowjobs.

Ryder frowned and sent:

Why?

MY MOON

I did the squirt thing.

All over his patio. We didn't clean it.

Don't let anyone call me Squirtle.

He laughed out loud. She was too fucking cute.

That's what he gets for not pleasing you in between calls.

MY MOON

It's rude. I should go clean and wake him with a bj.

No get some rest. Spend some time with Archer because you're mine when I get back.

I'm knocking you up.

MY MOON

You already knocked me up.

Just in case, then.

MY MOON

Are you coming home soon?

Yeah, baby.

I'll be home soon.

MY MOON

Why won't you call me like the others?

No privacy.

If I see you or hear your voice, I'm pulling out my dick.

MY MOON

Glad I still have that effect on you.

Always, my love.

He smiled, knowing she was probably blushing. She melted when he and David called her that.

MY MOON

Longer.

That's my girl.

I gotta go. Get some sleep and don't let him do anything you're not comfortable with.

MY MOON

okay.

I love you, Ryder.

And I love you.

Good night, Sweet Jane.

And don't worry.

I'm keeping the monsters away.

MY MOON

Good night, Death.

“So she does call you Death,” Alpha rumbled behind him.

“You sneaky ass fuck.” Ryder put down his phone. “I thought you were only one with nature.”

Savaş spat out the water he was drinking, and Sin howled with a dumbass laugh.

“Are you mocking my People?” Alpha frowned at the way Sin couldn't stop laughing.

“Yes.” Ryder glared at him, even though he wasn't and fully supported the world's Indigenous peoples. He just had to pay back the Fallen for getting a taste of his woman. “My girlfriend keeps looking up Indigenous stuff, and I know she's thinking about you.”

Alpha grinned. It was a threatening grin that Ryder welcomed. “She's researching her heritage. Finally realized Turtle Island is her home?”

“Wait—she's Indigenous?” Four asked.

“She's mixed.” Ryder glared at Alpha again.

“So am I,” Alpha replied, grinning.

Ryder hadn't known that, but he didn't comment on it. All he knew was Jane's dad was French and Mexican—and they had Indigenous roots mixed with Spanish. She wanted to learn, but nothing had been passed down, and she didn't know where to start. All they knew was that her DNA tests showed she had almost half Indigenous markers, and at least one of her great-

grandmothers looked Indigenous—she just had no paperwork to go by—even a birth certificate.

Alpha's grin remained. "I can educate her. Many like her were robbed of their heritage and cannot trace their ancestors."

"Yeah, I know how you want to educate her." Ryder shook his head when the asshole smiled wider. "Fucker."

Sin laughed. "Ryder, you might have to grow out your hair. Jane clearly has a type."

Ryder flipped him off. Jane was boy-crazy, but *he* was her type.

"She does already have Tercero," Savaş chimed in. "Maybe you can do it for a year—let it grow out."

"Shave it on one side," Four said, gesturing to Alpha's hairstyle.

"She's not fantasizing about him or his stupid hair," he snapped. "I hate you fuckers."

They laughed louder.



David stared at the paused video with Coach Prince and the senior officer, another Prince.

"That was brutal," Coach Prince said, shaking his head. "You think he can handle this? Should we keep him away from Jane until he's had some therapy?"

David sat down but didn't look away from the video. It was the most graphic murder, something he'd never thought possible. Not even the goriest slasher film came close to what Ryder had done to the three agents who attacked him.

They'd caught the entire thing on video, even though the dead agents had disabled the system before entering the room. They didn't know there was a backup, so every moment and word got recorded.

The agents had entered casually and started questioning Ryder. He must've figured something was up because he kept his mouth shut. That was when they pulled out one of Ryder's knives. They joked it was a shame he snuck the knife into the holding room. That it was a shame he was unstable. That it was a shame his girlfriend was going to be raped until she lost his baby—obviously, they didn't know she was carrying twins—then raped again and again.

David had watched everything shut off in Ryder's eyes. He sat there, emotionless, watching them surround him.

One agent pulled out a gun, laughing about getting revenge for Uroš Blackwood with a 'self-defense shot.' Another, the one with Ryder's knife, forced him to stand.

Then it happened.

David still couldn't work out how Ryder had gotten the knife from the agent. Nor could he process how, in just twenty seconds, Ryder was the only man standing in the middle of a bloodbath.

The guy he now considered a brother had nearly decapitated one with the knife. The other had been cut down the torso from his neck to his groin, and the last had been punched so many times that his skull caved in. Only hair, flesh, blood, bone, and a cracked tile floor remained. That was the man who threatened Jane—who fired six 'self-defense' shots that miraculously missed David's old rival.

“He’ll undergo counseling,” said Coach Prince’s FBI cousin. “He agreed to weekly sessions with a therapist that we will monitor. We put him with the others and he seems to be relaxing. But if you think he’s a threat to the public or the girlfriend you share ...”

“Ryder would never hurt her,” David said. He couldn’t look away from the bloody massacre. “He’d never hurt someone who wasn’t a threat to her or himself or one of us. This will be marked self-defense, right?” They’d already explained that they had speculated at least one of the agents was dirty, and they put him in with two others who were questionable to guard Ryder so they could finalize some details. They claimed it was considered extra payment for giving them immunity, and they had only expected to hear threats, not an execution.

There’d been a separate attack on Tercero at the same time. That man was still alive, barely. He’d come clean about the connections to the man in black, who happened to be the head of some crime family David had never heard of. It made sense to him now why the man had been so confident—he had a network of dirty agents and who knew how many local law enforcement.

“I think he’s right,” Coach Prince told his cousin. “He’s dangerous, but not to anyone who doesn’t have it coming to them.”

The man sighed, sitting down at the desk. “I want to take your word for it—I know you liked the kid when you coached him, but I’m still worried. He’s a monster. He’s lucky he kept Blackwood breathing. I’ve seen some crazy shit, but he tortured one of the biggest organized crime leaders and looked

pleased with himself for it. I still don't know if I believe he didn't kill the other three."

David didn't react. Not counting the two men the Fallen had killed, three more had been killed after Ryder tortured them. He was showing Blackwood he was a scarier monster than him. Savaş had snapped one man's neck after he begged to be finished off, Than had slit the second's throat, and Tercero cut the third's head clean off. They were mercy killings, but none of them looked sorry, especially Ryder. He had smiled watching them finish what he'd started, and for some reason, David couldn't identify, seemed relieved to see their deaths.

"If he ever snapped," the senior field officer said.

David jerked his head up. "He defended himself against three men who should've been there to guard him. You didn't warn him at all. Your people and every other asshole ready to back them up are the danger."

Coach Prince put a hand on his shoulder. "Relax. He just wanted my insight, and I thought you should see for yourself. I don't think Ryder's one to feel remorse or have post-traumatic stress, but just in case I'm wrong about his mental state, it's important that you know. Luc will be made aware, and we'll leave it up to the two of you on how you tell Tercero, Archer, and Savaş—and Jane—how violently things unfolded."

"He'll be watched for a while," said Senior Officer Prince. "It's standard. Tercero and Archer as well, even though we're keeping them out of reports."

"I'll tell them," David said, standing up. "Are we done? Can we go home?"



“They look kinda cute.”

Ryder ignored David and continued to watch the scene unfolding in the distance. It was close to noon. Thankfully, the Feds were more concerned with information, assets, and the head of a crime family than a group of nineteen-year-old killers, and they’d been released earlier that morning. He didn’t think he’d be able to go another night without his girl, but he knew life wouldn’t go back to normal. He was on the FBI’s watchlist and needed to lay low for a while.

At least Jane looked happy. He almost didn’t want to ruin her time with Archer and Luc. Archer had decided to work on one of the water fountains in the yard. Jane was all smiles standing by him, blushing and laughing as she listened to whatever Archer said. Every few minutes, Archer would flash her a smile with his dimples or find a way to touch her. Her ankle. Her calf. Her small baby bump. Her ass. The bastard kept pulling her close and kissing her ass, even nipping it like Ryder did when he was alone with her. *Punk*.

“How long are we going to wait here?” Benjamin asked.

Tercero responded, “You took a job to abduct and hand our —their—girlfriend over to be raped and used to manipulate Ryder. You can be quiet and patient while he takes a few moments before seeing her.”

Benjamin huffed. “I just want to see my sister.”

David responded that time, “You’ll be with her soon. Just give us a moment. And Tercero, I suggest you decide things with you two.”

Ryder ignored everyone and kept his eyes on Jane. She was safe. She was smiling. And she had a new boyfriend.

Luc walked outside, his expression closed off as he approached Jane, then eyed Archer's progress with the fountain. Ryder didn't know why Archer was even messing with it. Luc had workers setting everything up.

David chuckled, lowering the binoculars he'd brought—they were at least a hundred yards away and hadn't called to say they would be returning. "He's so pissed at Archer."

"Let him be pissed," Ryder said, taking the binoculars to get a better look at his girl. He wanted to see her without him for a few more minutes.

Jane pouted her lips at Luc's frown, then moved away from Archer to get closer to their older brother. She grabbed his wrist and raised it to her mouth, kissing one of his tattoos.

Luc didn't react, so she pulled out the big guns. She smiled at the darkness waiting inside his brother the same way she smiled with complete devotion to his light.

"Such a sucker," Ryder muttered when Luc released a sigh and leaned down to kiss Jane. He felt that Luc went full kiss instead of that corner-of-the-mouth shit they liked to do to get back at Archer.

"They're hot together," Four said.

"Stop looking at her." Ryder shoved the Fallen away. He knew Jane liked these guys, and he didn't mind them—but they were not part of the group.

"He's just admiring," Alpha said, his rumbly voice farther away. "You should offer her a chance to see us more. Let her visit the local dungeons to meet other survivors."

Four butted in as Jane pulled out of the kiss with Luc and dragged him away. “It could help her heal. I know she’s strong with all of you—you do hold her together—but we could see the scars she’s hidden so well from the world.”

“And herself,” Alpha added.

Ryder knew what they were talking about. Luc had a way of allowing Jane’s wounds to become visible. She liked to shield the rest of them from her pain, but Luc encouraged her to bleed. He wouldn’t let her wallow or baby her. He’d make her rise above her sorrow and roar at her fears—and the Fallen knew her fears intimately. He knew that was the only reason he hadn’t fought them for touching and forcing her into the scene. They were fucking warriors, and he respected them like no other men he’d ever met.

“You can talk to her about it,” David told them, “but don’t make her think she should sneak off to do it. Luc’s places are still dangerous.”

The muscles in Ryder’s body flexed at David giving permission, but he breathed out and relaxed. It was hard not to call all the shots when it came to her. He just wanted her all the time, even with his responsibilities.

Tercero patted his shoulder. “I’m going to come back in a few days. Give her my love.”

Ryder sighed. “You don’t have to go off just because I’ve missed her. You’ve missed her too. She’s missed you. Stay. I need her for at least a few hours, but I’ll ease up.”

“He’s all grown up,” Sin joked, patting him on the back. “Than and I are gonna split. Kiss your sexy baby mama for me.”

“Meet here tomorrow to have dinner,” Ryder told them as they walked off, Savaş going with them. “You’re not even staying?” he hollered at his brother.

Savaş shook his head. “Need to find my own little warrior to bless with some Godson dick. Give Jane my apologies for not completing her collection.”

Ryder laughed. “Get the fuck out of here.”

“Be careful,” Tercero added, giving their overgrown brother a questioning look—one that asked if he was truly all right. None of them had even discussed their first kills; he knew they wouldn’t.

Savaş winked, nodding. “I’m fine. I’ll catch you assholes later.” He moved out of sight, and Ryder returned his focus to Jane.

She had gotten Luc to sit on one of the patio benches, and she was sitting across his lap, playing with his hair as he talked to her. She’d bob her head and peek at Archer, then focus on Luc and kiss the corner of his mouth.

David checked his phone. “We better hurry. My dad is blowing a gasket.”

“Why?” Ryder didn’t take his attention off Jane and Luc. His brother was caressing her bump but scolding her about something. Jane smiled and pressed her lips to Luc’s until his brother took control.

“He’s worried about us not being home yet, but mainly that Jane’s mom won’t get off Twitter. She’s switched the hashtag to Jane’s Team, and the trolls are saying Dad sold her to the Godsons and wonder how much each brother paid for her.”

Ryder breathed out the rage that ignited in him. “Is her mom saying shit too?”

David chuckled. “She’s defending Jane and all of us. I guess she messed up Team Jane and swapped it, but people loved it because it meant all of us. Dad says she’s all worked up. He told her silence is the best way to deal with trolls. That’s all.”

It still surprised him that Sarah wasn’t showing her ugly side. He hoped for Jane’s sake that she’d continue the positive trend. Jane needed women in her life. It sucked that years of being teased and bullied as a child and teenager impacted her ability to make friends with women, but he understood it. People dismissed what happened to kids too easily. Shit didn’t bother him, but he watched people when he was still in school and saw their spirits break.

He’d have to look into contacting Wendy for her. He knew Wendy only wanted what was best for Jane, and she didn’t understand the group relationship. Maybe if he could explain how they were all happy, especially him because Wendy was a bigger fan of him than the others, she’d let go of her discomforts and make up with Jane.

“You look like your mind is in a million places,” David told him.

Blinking, he nodded. “I need to shut everything out but her for a while. Reset.”

“Well, let’s surprise her before Luc ties her up.” David gave him a shove to get him moving, and he let him even though part of him feared facing her.

David, like always, seemed to know more than he appeared to. “You’ll always be the most beautiful everything in her life. Even if you’re a monster—you’re hers.”

“You guys are deep,” Four said as they trailed after them.

Ryder breathed out, knowing David was right. Jane had a way of looking at darkness with a smile. She was afraid a lot of the time of what it came with, but with him, she never hesitated. She was always ready to jump into whatever was against him.

Her scream had him jerking his head up, and he smiled. She'd spotted them and was running barefoot through the yard, sobbing.

He chuckled, pushing David to intercept her first because he wouldn't let her go once she was in his arms.

David probably knew that too, so he didn't pass up the chance to greet their girl first. He dropped his bag and caught her as she launched herself at him. Of course, being David, he grabbed her by her ass and pressed his lips to hers.

It usually bothered him whenever one of the others got her greeting before him, but he merely picked up the bag David had discarded and continued toward the house.

"You know she'll take this the wrong way," Tercero said, keeping stride with him. Alpha and Four frowned at him as well.

He shrugged. "She's in good hands."

"You're afraid," Tercero said, taking the bag and blocking his path. "He can't kiss her forever. Go."

Ryder looked past him and made eye contact with Luc, then Archer. They were also frowning at him.

"He's worried he won't give you back or that you'll look at him badly," David said, walking up from behind him.

Tercero smiled, but Ryder kept himself rooted to where he stood. These motherfuckers were right. He could kill men and

not feel a damn thing, but as much as this woman completed every part of his being, she also had him losing his mind.

“Hello, *tesoro*,” his brother greeted.

“Hi,” she said, sounding unsure. “Are you worried too?”

Tercero shook his head. “No, but he needs you. I’ll see you later.”

“You better kiss me before you leave, Tercero Godson,” she snapped, bringing a smile to all their faces.

Still, Ryder didn’t turn to see her, but he saw Tercero move toward her in his peripheral. Her cute fingers gripped his brother’s shirt before she yanked him down to her.

Well, damn, he thought. Maybe she was in full craving mode now.

“God damn,” Four said, but Alpha pushed his friend forward, nodding at Luc, who followed them inside.

“You gonna look at me?” she said, no bite. She found it as hard as he did to talk down to him.

“I was giving you a moment.” He turned to face her, his heart pounding as he took in the tears in her pretty eyes. “Fuck, babe. Don’t cry.”

She stepped toward him, and he probably deserved a slap across the face for making her stressed, but she let out a sob and covered his heart with her hand. “You dick.”

“I know.” He growled, mad at himself, as he cupped her pretty face. “I didn’t want to intrude on you with David and Tercero, and I—”

She cut him off. “—thought that I’d think you’re a monster and be afraid to be around you.”

“Well, not afraid.” He grinned, caressing her flushed cheeks. “But yeah, I did what we thought I’d do.”

Her lips wobbled as she searched his face and whispered, “Became Death.”

His pounding heart steadied, and he swallowed at how her eyes glowed with gold and green flames. She wasn’t afraid. “Yeah, I guess so.”

She breathed in and gripped his wrists. “Will anyone take you from me?”

“I won’t let anyone keep us apart.” He realized the others had given them privacy, moving into the house. His gaze fell to her stomach. “Not even the little guys.”

A pretty smile, the one she gave only to him, spread across her face. “Oh, Sweet Death, silly of you to think any child of yours will back down—even from you.”

“Fuck, I guess I didn’t think of that.” He wiped under her eyes. She was trying so hard not to cry. “Hopefully they take after you—and give in to me every time.”

“Prick,” she said, leaning her face into his hand. “Are you okay?”

He nodded. “I saved my girl for once—yeah, I’m okay.”

That seemed to break her, and she pushed his hands down so he could lift her. He hoisted her up, hugging her as she cried.

Her sad voice cracked as she buried her face in his neck. “You’ve saved me more times than I can count. It’s okay if I have a few scars.”

He closed his eyes and squeezed her tighter. “I never wanted you to scar, though. Even a small one.”

She turned her head, kissed his jaw, and whispered, “I guess you’ll always have to kiss them better.”

Turning to see her beautiful face, he said, “Yeah?”

She touched his cheek before moving her finger to her lip, still marked from the wound she’d given herself by ripping off the duct tape. “Start right here.”

Staring at her perfect lips, a ripple of rage rolled through him at the memory. He loved her for protecting all of them in her way, but he hated that that often meant she bled at her own hands. “I don’t give rewards for hurting yourself.”

Her eyes flashed angrily. “Ryder Godson, if you don’t kiss me right now, I’m going to—”

He smacked her ass, growling, “Spoiled girl. Come here.” Then he lowered his mouth to hers, entering his heaven.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

13 Weeks

Tercero glanced up from his phone to check on Jane again. Ryder had finally let her come out for air after hiding away with her for a full twenty-four hours. David had gone in to sleep with them, but Archer and Luc had respected Ryder's need to hoard her. They were sure it would've lasted longer, but Ryder had already gotten called to do a virtual check-in with the FBI, and David and Archer had left to meet with their coach.

That left Jane in his and Luc's care, but she'd found her way over to Luc's Fallen. The one who didn't speak, Mute, showed her how to sign something while Alpha talked her ear off about something else.

He smiled at her pink cheeks. Alpha was very touchy, and he knew Jane had a little crush on him.

Luc's cold voice made him tense. "Stop contemplating letting him take your place as well."

"He likes her, and she likes him," he said, trying his best not to sound upset by those truths.

Scoffing, Luc sat on the chair closest and read over a document. “She develops crushes daily, little brother. But even if he’s attracted to her, he wants a woman of his own—not her. She knows she’s not right for him, and it’s mere attraction and friendship between them.”

Tercero wasn’t sure about that, but Alpha wasn’t his concern, so he returned his focus to his phone. His work wasn’t done yet. Despite the FBI taking on the case, others would always be ready to take their place. He had to get ahead to ensure any retaliation against them was handled.

“What’re those assholes doing with her?” Ryder grumbled as he sat beside him.

Luc answered, “She’s bonding with people other than her boyfriends—let her be.”

Tercero could almost feel Ryder’s scowl and wasn’t surprised by the violent shift in the air.

“Did I say I was going over there to interrupt?” Ryder snapped.

“You don’t have to say it,” Luc said calmly without removing his eyes from his paperwork. “You had to force yourself to stop here, and you’re counting the seconds you’ve decided are enough until you can get her again. Did your meeting hold any surprises?”

The energy surging from Ryder didn’t weaken, but he responded with a smile in his voice. “Motherfuckers said I need to get piss and blood tests done. They want to see if I’m on anything.”

Luc glanced up. “Are you?”

“Yeah, I’m on something,” Ryder said, popping a stick of gum in his mouth, “your girlfriend’s lips, tits, and perfect

pussy. Take at least five hits a day.”

Luc rolled his eyes. “Child.”

Shaking his head, Tercero added, “Don’t speak so crudely about her.”

Ryder chuckled, relaxing. “I’m a big boy—I can talk with bad words. Jane said so.”

Tercero shook his head again but smiled as he sent Damon a text—Damon handled his traveling and equipment purchases. When Ryder’s leg started to bounce, he sighed. “I’m sure she won’t mind you stealing her. Or you can also get to know them since she likes them.”

“Could say the same to you, brother.” Ryder closed his eyes and tilted his head back. He still bounced his leg, likely becoming too overwhelmed with separation. “I left her with you, specifically,” Ryder continued. “You know, so you can fully get out of the doghouse.” When Jane laughed, he opened an eye to check on her but closed it again. “You know she likes when you’re yourself around her. You’re ready to cut them apart for being with her.”

“I am not.” He was.

“Fucking hell, Terce,” Ryder growled. “Stop torturing yourself. You kept her safe. We all kept her safe. She let me fuck her ten ways after I admitted I was a killer. She asked for details—I gave them, then she sucked my dick. She’s not some delicate flower that will wilt when you open up.”

“She’s a flame,” Luc said, putting his files aside. “She’s capable of becoming an inferno that can destroy, sure, but that over there is our flame. Delicate yet strong and fierce. She’s not going to burn out because we are dangerous.” He cut

Ryder a dark look. “You don’t have to inform us every time she sucks your dick.”

Ryder smirked. “Someone’s jealous.” When Luc rolled his eyes, Ryder’s grin turned wicked. “Oh, if you only knew what I do with her behind closed doors—what’s only mine and hers.”

Tercero sighed, knowing Ryder had a lot he kept from them all. “She should be handled delicately regarding what we’ve done.”

“Nah, I’m not worried anymore. Baby’s going to glow for all time,” Ryder said, smiling with his eyes closed as though he was seeing her in such a way. “But this shit with you—she’ll dim if you don’t get your head out of your ass. You’re sending her mixed signals, and it’s even stressing me out. I’m literally begging ... go fuck her already.”

He stared at his brother, but Luc saved him from having to respond.

“Are you afraid she won’t like what you want to do with her?”

Ryder lifted his head and focused on him. “What do you want to do with her?”

“Nothing.” He flicked his attention to Jane, his breath catching because she was already watching him.

“Think she’s giving you the green light with those pretty eyes of hers,” Ryder said, nudging his shoulder. “You better go get her, or I will.”

Luc stood and strode over to Jane, but he spoke to Four and motioned for Jane to leave.

“Aww,” Ryder cooed beside him. “Our big brother’s helping you out.”

“I don’t need help.”

“Yeah, you do.” Ryder chuckled in that mean way of his. “You know I fucked her with Luc and David, right? I would’ve preferred not to rub dicks with Luc, but we just shut those parts of our minds off and focused on her. She got so embarrassed for almost puking on David’s dick and sad about you that we just wanted her to feel beautiful, desired, and loved, and Luc and I took the plunge. It was fucking amazing.”

He frowned and turned his head to see Ryder more clearly. Of course, his brother was staring at Jane. She hugged Luc around the waist as she spoke to him but gestured toward Alpha. “I don’t want to rub dicks with you—what’s your point?”

That dark smile they all knew made Jane swoon formed on his brother’s face. “I wasn’t offering to play swords with you. Although I’m almost positive, she wants you and me to take her at the same time, but we’ll address that later. I’m just saying that she’s open to just about anything. If she’s afraid, she’ll tell you.”

“There’s really nothing I’m holding back,” he said. He knew Jane was silly about how similar he and Ryder looked. As they got older, the similarities in their features became more apparent—Luc’s and Archer’s as well. Savaş was the oddball, but everyone knew they were brothers when they smiled. Still, Tercero didn’t want to consider fucking her with Ryder, so he admitted one of his fears. “I’ve imagined holding my knives to her neck and dragging them across her skin—but that is foul.”

“That why your hands shake when you fuck?”

He sighed but nodded. “It’s almost like a daydream that happens without my consent. Not quite a hallucination; Luc knows about it. He said I’m dissociating, but instead of escaping to somewhere happy, I’m punishing myself when I am in my happy place—with her.”

Ryder’s stare was dead, but he didn’t look angry. “You gonna work on that? Punishing yourself, I mean.”

“Yes, brother. I won’t hurt her.”

“I know you won’t,” Ryder said. “What if it’s simply that you never told her the truth? Maybe your mind won’t try to take her from you now that she knows.”

“I imagine both of your theories are possible. I still don’t want her to indulge in a fantasy I never asked for. If I were to say it, and she wanted to try ...”

Ryder leaned his head back again. “Yeah, I feel that. It always pops into my head to take her last breath, then give it back. Like, fucking insane, right? I could hurt her so easily. But if I told her any of that, she’d put my hand around her throat and tell me to squeeze. Baby is kinky without even trying.”

“You grip her neck a lot,” Tercero murmured. “I’m glad you’re aware.”

“Yeah, I’m aware. I’ve slipped a few times—nothing crazy—but I think I’ll try it when she’s not knocked up. She gets all starry-eyed when I give the slightest pressure. So fucking gorgeous.”

He huffed, knowing Jane probably did want Ryder to choke her. “She’d consider your hand around her throat her favorite necklace.”

Ryder groaned. “Fuck, don’t tell me that. Now you got me thinking of getting my hand tatted, so it looks pretty on her.”

He smiled and shook his head, then decided to get to the heart of the matter. “You don’t have to worry about me cutting her—I know that’s what you want reassurance about.”

His brother released a breath. “Good. I mean, you saw how she fainted when she cut her hand. She’s tough, but her little heartbeat is too fast.”

“I know,” Tercero murmured. He still felt awful for the injury she’d gotten just from being close to him.

“Maybe still tell her,” Ryder said. “It might remove the guilt and whatever makes you feel you can’t be happy.”

“All right,” he said, glancing up when he realized Jane was coming over—with Alpha at her side, holding her hand.

“Goddammit, Jane.” Ryder sat up straight. “How much dick do I have to give you to get you over your crush?”

Her cheeks flushed, and Alpha grinned. “Will you hush? I wanted to share our idea with you both.”

“Thank the fucking Sky Daddy,” Ryder said, relaxing. “My dick is actually in need of a break.”

“Mine’s not,” Alpha chimed in. Ryder flipped him off.

Tercero admired his brother’s ability to flip a switch to make her laugh. But he saw she was nearly bursting with the urge to voice her thoughts, so he said, “What is it, Jane?”

She beamed over at Luc, then said, “I want to see if we can shift focus to missing and murdered Indigenous women—well, any missing Indigenous person.” She looked so hopeful—at him. “I don’t want to take you from the people you saved, but since the FBI is going after the big guys, I thought you might

have some free time. Maybe you could aid others who want to search and help.”

She beamed at Alpha’s neutral expression. “He’s wanted to do this, but Luc has been focused on groups near me. But Luc said we can spread out funds now.” Her happiness vanished as she looked back at him and Ryder. “Char ...” Her face reddened, but she recovered and continued. “Alpha says our government and media don’t give the people who go missing enough attention. But if we can bring even one girl home, that’s something.”

Tercero knew she’d been trying to learn about her ancestry and what had been lost to her family throughout the generations. She was intimidated about exploring her Mexican Indigenous side, and he realized that intimidation would lead to her pulling back on trying to find where she fit in the world, but she still wanted to help. So he nodded to them both. “We can put our primary focus on this.”

“You can ask Papi and Archer to help too, babe,” Ryder added. “Those assholes are swimming in popularity right now, so they can bring attention to it. Alpha, you can tell them what to say and which organizations in your community to contact. It’s not right that some white boys have to say something for people to care—but if it helps, they can boost the situation. Now let her fucking hand go.”

Jane didn’t seem to know or care that Ryder was reaching his limit. She cheered and jumped up, hugging Alpha.

Ryder sighed loudly as she hugged the other Fallen and Luc, then she gave him a breathtaking smile and hopped onto Tercero’s lap, straddling him. “Thank you,” she whispered, wrapping her arms around his neck.

His brother growled, then stood and, after gripping her hair and tugging so she looked up at him, pressed a gentle kiss to her lips. “Love you, angel.”

She blinked, dazed. “And I love you. Can I be alone with Tercero for a while?”

“Yeah.” His brother pressed one more kiss to her lips, then let her go as he turned and motioned for the others to follow him. “We’re having dinner in four hours, babe. So use your time well because you’re eating no matter what Tercero wants to do with you.”

Her body warmed as she watched everyone leave, then she focused on Tercero.

“Why do we need to be alone?” He tossed his phone aside and brought his hands to hold her waist. “You know he’s still on edge.”

“I know, but he loves me and knows I need you.” She ran her fingers through his hair, sighing. “I feel like you’ll slip away without saying goodbye again.”

The stabbing pain in his heart was well deserved, and he tried to soothe the wound he’d given her. “You were bonding with the others—it’s good for you. And you came up with a wonderful plan.”

“It was Ch ... Alpha’s plan—not mine.”

Knowing that was true, he shrugged and realized she knew Alpha’s name and was trying not to say it. “But you realized Luc was not invested in those plans, and you changed his mind.”

“I’m sure Alpha would’ve found a way.”

Nodding, he caressed her tummy. “Yes, I’m sure he could find the means to do just about anything, but he doesn’t want to leave Four and Mute yet—they are his family too.”

“I think Mute likes Benjamin’s sister,” she said, staring at him intently. “She’s afraid of him, though.”

He’d noticed that and was glad Jane hadn’t seen his interaction with the woman since she’d been with Ryder. He didn’t fault the girl for seeking attention from him. She was lonely and had been surrounded only by concern for Jane while worrying about her brother. His polite inquiry about her well-being had been enough to spark hope. “Mute will be fine,” was all he said, then he realized there was a reason she brought up the woman. “How did you learn she was interested in me?”

Her jaw set, and she took a deep breath. “Ryder warned me. He spotted you with her when he went for snacks. You should thank him for pinning me down and shoving his dick in me so I wouldn’t mess up your game.”

Of course Ryder would warn her but not him. “Nothing happened, Jane. She merely got her hopes up when I asked how she was feeling. I don’t think she realized I was taken. She knows now, and she’s already gone with her brother and the FBI to enter the witness protection program.”

She relaxed in his hold, relieving him, and resumed playing with his hair. “So you’re taken?”

This wasn’t a conversation he wanted to have, but he’d put it off for long enough. “You want me to clarify?”

She shrugged a shoulder, trying to appear unfazed, but she was trembling. “I can tell you’re ready to bolt. I feel like you’d rather dive into danger than be with me.”

“I won’t harm myself and put you through that grief.” He grabbed one of her hands and brought it to his lips for a kiss. “I swear.”

“Good,” she said, bobbing her head as she took another deep breath, “but you didn’t say anything about staying with me—being with me.”

Letting go of her hand, he returned his hold to her waist, happy she no longer felt so thin. “I don’t want to ruin things for you and the others. I’m happy for you and Archer, but it doesn’t change that you will have to divide yourself more if I return.”

Her eyes darted to his. “You think I can’t do it?”

“I didn’t say that.” A crushing feeling surrounded his heart, but he continued. “You can do it, and you do so beautifully already. None of us ever feel less loved by you. But I will continue to do my work. I will work harder now that you’ve given me something specific to dedicate myself to. This means I will hardly be home with you.”

“Then don’t do it,” she blurted. “I didn’t even think about how long it would take you. I just assumed it would be the same, but I guess the distance would change too. We can get someone else.”

“I want to do it,” he said gently. “I don’t enjoy killing, but I hate innocents being taken, murdered, and raped more than my own discomfort. And this is important to you—I want to do what I can to help.”

Her lips trembled, and those pretty eyes shimmered with tears. “So you’re breaking up with me again?”

“I didn’t think we were officially together, but I can’t ask you to wait for me to show up whenever I can. It’s not fair to

you. We can't stay together just because we love each other."

She swallowed and leaned back but didn't get off his lap. She stared at him, her frown growing deeper by the second. "You think you can decide for me again?" He opened his mouth to argue that wasn't what he was doing, but she covered his mouth and continued. "No, you got to talk. My turn now. And what I heard was you've decided for me that I can't handle spreading my love between however many guys I want. That because I will no doubt miss you when you leave, I cannot handle waiting for you to come home. You think I can't miss you and still function? I have four other boyfriends, honey. And two babies soon. All of you have always worked as a team to hold the empty parts of me while one of you is gone. I'll miss you, but I'd still be yours.

"And you better believe that I'll be telling everyone to back the freak up when you come home because I will jump into your arms to drink up that beautiful completeness only you give. I don't know how you give me all of you and them, but it's beautiful, and I crave it. I'm greedy. I want you even though I'm blissed out with them.

"So you need to think real hard, mister. Am I the woman you love, and do you want to be with me? Because I say yes to us. I don't care how long I have to wait—I'm yours as much as theirs. You just have to choose me. So do it. Choose."

He didn't know how, but when she ordered him to choose, something snapped free in his mind. The chains that had long held him in darkness shattered, and where a moonless night had been his only companion, a gold inferno roared to life, pushing away the night.

A breath escaped him as the warmth from its light surrounded him. "Luc was right," he whispered. "You are a

flame.” He smiled at how she studied every inch of his face as another truth became clear. “I should’ve known you could set fire to the dark abyss she swallowed me with.”

Her eyes brightened, and her smile glowed like a thousand moons. “Always forgetting who I am.”

It was Ryder’s line, but he adored how she used it on him. “I won’t make that mistake again,” he promised, taking the kiss she’d held out to him since she first asked him to be her boyfriend.

A surprised cry escaped her, but he swallowed it, kissing her deeper. For once, he opened himself to receive her love instead of simply giving all of himself and everything he believed she wanted.

She truly was the moon, the flame—the goddess Ryder and David whispered about when she was asleep between them. Because at that moment, with her arms encircling his neck and her fingers tangled in his hair, she offered up her heart, soul, and mind—and promised the universe to always be this for him—his treasure to keep.

He’d long ago convinced himself she should only glow for his brother—that she had no use for him as she was the woman who did hold his brother’s heart. Yet there was no denying it any longer. She still chose him. She had her soul mate, and still, she shouted to the universe that *he* was not less.

She gasped, tearing her mouth from his. Her smile returned as she leaned forward, licking his cheek. “Mine.”

He held her tighter as he took in how the green and golden brown of her eyes battled beneath the shimmer of her falling tears. Their girl was a crier, and she had no idea they found her

beautiful when she let herself become vulnerable in their arms. So, licking her tear, he made his claim too. “Mine.”

Nodding, she melted against him and moved one hand between them to cover the tattoo of her name. “Yours.” She meant it too. She was able to be his ... and theirs. She was magic.

He kissed her lips softly before turning and laying her on the sofa. Though most threats against them had been removed, he was still armed.

“You look like a god,” she whispered with a dazed expression as he began removing his weapons.

He kept his smile hidden but knew his silly girl enjoyed a show, so he gave her one, peeling his black under armor over his head. She moaned and greedily searched his body. He’d lost a significant amount of weight but had retained most of his muscle.

“Oh, I wish you could read my mind,” she said, still looking him over as he removed the last of his blades. “Tercero, you’re so beautiful. I can’t believe you’re mine.”

Twirling the last knife, he welcomed the surge of power that roared through his veins at her compliment. “You know, *tesoro*,” he said, staring down at her and running a hand through his hair as he appreciated the sensation, “we know about your praise kink. What you don’t know is that we have it as well. This is the first time I’ve let myself feel what your praise does to a man.”

“What’s it do?”

“Unlocks a strength we didn’t think possible.” He held out his arm, knowing she liked the sight of their veins, especially when their blood raced through them and filled out their

muscles. He wanted her to see the sharp edges of the knife—how much danger he could unleash at her command. And she showed no fear of him. Instead, trust and excitement glowed bright in her eyes.

“So much power you wield,” he murmured. “I’ve tried to keep this from you, but I think they were right—you can know the horrors I bring to others and still love me. And it’s not a bad thing for me to want you.”

“It’s not bad at all.” She was careful, reaching up to run her fingers over the hand that gripped the knife. “Show me,” she said, nodding to the blade. “My deadly Tercero, I want to see him.”

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he said, even though the image of holding his knife against her throat flashed in his mind. “The things I see ... I don’t want to scare or pressure you. I don’t even know why I see them.”

“I’m not afraid or pressured.” She tugged on his wrist. “You are more than a weapon of destruction. You’re the man who’s always sneaking smiles at me when you know I need one—the one who whispers pretty things in my ear to put me to sleep. The man who has lingered in the darkness because you know I will sometimes fall. But I know you’re there—ready to lift me, to give me strength before you pass me to my other loves so you can fight my monsters.

“You kill my monsters because you know what I figured out when y’all came back—that if you didn’t kill them, Ryder would, and he’d be consumed by a duty no one asked him if he wanted. You’ve protected him. You are an amazing brother and friend, and I’m yours. Now love me with all of you, Tercero. With all your darkness and sharp edges.”

Again, she opened the doors he'd shut long ago. He'd killed for her and the other women and girls like her. He'd kept Ryder shielded even though his brother didn't need to be because regardless of Ryder's strength and skill, he'd risk getting lost if fully unleashed onto the horrors Tercero encountered. Ryder needed to be connected to Jane, or he'd become what nightmares fear. And she'd lose him.

He'd never allow it to pass.

So when she tilted her head to the side, offering him her neck, he readied himself to accept everything she was giving him. "You're sure?"

Her grin was shaky and nervous, but she exposed more of her pale neck. "I don't want to bleed, but I want to feel what you've become. My sexy ninja."

"Silly girl. I'll never hide from you again." He grabbed her thighs and tugged her so that he could put a knee between her legs. Then, bracing his free hand on the arm of the sofa, he leaned over her and held the blade against the flushed skin of her throat. "Call his name if you get overwhelmed."

"Okay." Her breathing quickened, but she bit her lip and closed her legs around his thigh.

Carefully, he slid the blade's spine down and across her skin. The ripple of goosebumps that erupted in the cold steel's wake sent a shiver through her, but she was a good girl and kept still. "I've killed almost twenty men with this knife alone, *cara*."

She moaned and, ever so slowly, ground herself against his thigh.

"Naughty girl," he murmured, reaching the neckline of her oversized shirt. The tremble he usually experienced in his

hands was absent, and he marveled at how his talent for killing could allow him to be so careful with her. “How attached are you to David’s shirt?”

Her chest heaved, and her eyes flitted to meet his. “He can get me another.”

His grip tightened around the handle, and he smiled at the challenge in her pretty eyes. “Remind me never to doubt my brothers, especially their knowledge of your darkness.”

A wicked smirk quirked the corner of her mouth. “They know I only glow because of how many times I’ve drowned in the dark.”

“Luc’s rubbed off on you so much, *tesoro*. I could not be more proud.” He used the blade to lift her shirt from her skin. It was sharp enough that the fabric tore easily under the edge. His smile grew when he realized she wore a leather bra and his brother had painted her flesh with hickeys. Ryder had been worse off than he’d thought to need to mark her so. It made him appreciate how much his brother changed for her and them.

Cutting the last of the shirt, so it lay open, Tercero decided he would not stop there. “I don’t think Ryder will mind shopping for you again.”

“He loves taking me shopping,” she whispered, chest heaving, stomach trembling as she waited.

Tercero lightly dragged his blade over her sensitive skin, raising it before reaching her bump. He nudged her with his thigh and admired how she arched her back with a sigh. “Then he can thank me for this.” He didn’t have to be as careful with the bra. Her full breasts struggled against the leather, lifting the material from her ribcage.

With a flick of his wrist, the strong leather gave way, freeing her gorgeous breasts. He continued, eager to bare her to him entirely.

He sliced through the straps, then slowly dragged the cold steel over her pink nipples. The way she shivered instead of recoiling in fear aroused him until it was almost painful.

“Am I still pretty?” She blinked at him when his gaze darted to her face.

“Why would you ask that?” he asked, holding the knife spine down to her and brushing his knuckles over her stomach.

“You kinda missed the last days of me being skinny.”

“I stalked you more than you realize.” He smiled, squeezing the arm of the sofa and leaning down to kiss her sweet lips. “I’ve been in awe and misery because I missed so many changes to your body. It will never stop being true—you are more lovely with every sunrise and sunset.”

Her breath skittered out, and her legs tightened around his knee. “Oh, that was a good answer.”

“Hold your breath, *cara*.” She obeyed, and he slid the blade under her shorts and the hem of her panties and flicked his wrist again.

She gasped with the prettiest smile and waited for him to cut the other leg free. “You’re driving me crazy.”

“I adore your crazy.” Another slice, and she was bare. “Already glistening,” he murmured, staring down at her.

Struggling not to moan, she said, “I’m more turned on with this than I expected to be.”

“I should have known.” Still careful, he slid the blade from her thigh to the lowest part of her tummy. Watching her

tremble beneath his knife pleased him more than he thought possible.

“Oh, fuck,” she said as he went lower. “Maybe just the handle.”

He hid his smile, realizing she thought he'd use the blade on her most sensitive area. It had not been his intention to use it, but it was clean, and she was eager to feel more. So, letting her feel his fingers first, he slid the handle along her soaked core.

“Oh, gosh,” she said, her legs falling open as she peered down to see what he was doing.

“Lie back and close your eyes.” He wanted her to feel everything as he received everything she offered him.

“Fine, but I want someone to record next time.” It was a front—she was nervous but still smiled at him and did as she was told. Her legs instinctively wanted to close, but he pushed himself up to no longer leaning over her.

“Relax, beautiful girl.” He petted her thighs until her muscles relaxed. Only then, when her legs opened on their own again, did he slide the handle over her slit. The moan it pulled from her had him ready to hurry things along, but he liked to take his time.

“That's a good girl,” he praised, moving his free hand along her thigh while he teased her opening with the tip of the handle.

“Tercero, I can't wait,” she whispered, raising her hips to make the handle slide in.

She was extra sensitive and needy, something he noticed happened whenever she'd had a sex marathon with Ryder or David. He and Luc usually didn't have such extended periods

with her, but he'd been lucky to have her placed in his arms by her other loves afterward. While sore, she wanted more. She always wanted more until she had him.

“Can't wait for what, Jane?”

Biting her lip, she rocked her hips so the handle went in farther each time. “Fuck, I can't decide if I want the knife or your dick.”

He smiled. She was so impatient. “Take your time,” he teased, then surprising her, eased his middle and ring fingers inside. He, his brothers, and David often competed over who could make her climax fastest with their hands, mouths, and dicks. He beat them all with his hand every time. And that wasn't easy, considering Jane climaxed quickly already.

“Oh god, Tercero.” She bucked against his hand, crying with pleasure as he pressed the handle of his knife against her clit and fucked her with his hand. “Fuck, stop,” she screamed. “Stop, I can't take the Spider-Man thing right now. Oh, don't stop. Oh fuck, yes! Just like that.”

Chuckling, he didn't stop. She said it to all of them every time. She'd cried the one time David had stopped. So he adopted the finger motion many men failed to understand was the best way to please a woman and grinned as she let out the prettiest cries. “You're making me work longer than usual, *cara*.”

Her legs started to shake as she stuttered, “Ryder numbed me.”

He rolled his eyes and went faster. He'd forgotten that Ryder babied her during their fuck marathons, sometimes using desensitizing condoms flipped inside out to numb her instead.

She was close, clenching around his fingers and grinding. So he did something he never thought he'd do.

Removing his hand, he shoved his pants down, positioned himself between her legs, and entered her in one powerful thrust while holding the blade against her neck.

Her eyes flew open, but she moaned, pulling him in deeper with her legs and keeping him from moving back. "I'm coming!"

His eyes fell to her fluttering pulse beneath his knife as he pressed in deep and sighed, letting her orgasm consume her.

She felt like paradise and torment—he'd always want more. And now, admiring how she climaxed as he kept her inches from death, he felt like a god.

"Oh, you're perfect," she whispered, holding his wrist that had the knife. "Don't ever leave me."

"Never," he promised, flicking his tongue out to lick the tears still on her cheek.

She gasped, loosening her thighs around him—her signal to fuck her and love her as hard as he wanted to. He wanted her hard and fast.

"Hold the armrest," he ordered because he needed her to stay still. She was often their pillow princess anyway. She couldn't keep up enough energy with all of them, but she did enjoy how he and Luc let her lead sometimes. This was not one of those times. "Do you have it?"

Her head bobbed, her lips parting as he pressed the blade against her more. "Take everything," she whispered.

The shiver that crawled up his arm and spine reminded him of the rush he'd get before missions. Only, instead of

shutting off his emotions and all sensations, the opposite happened. He felt everything that she was. Her warmth and softness. Her smooth skin and shaky sighs that slid past his face. Her sweet scent that pushed each of her men into a frenzy to consume her.

Easing back, he dragged his tongue along the handle to taste her. “Heaven and sin,” he murmured. Then he took everything from her.

Thrusting in hard, he loved her the way he should have from the start. He took her pretty cries for himself. He took every smile, every whisper of *yes ... more*. Every squeeze of her legs around his waist as climax after climax rolled through her.

Her arms began to tremble, and she moaned without care of how loud she was, pulling an equally loud groan from him. He grinned, feeling the rush of her release. He didn't usually have this effect on her unless he used his hand, but she cried, writhing in ecstasy as she let go of all her insecurities and fears.

She was at her loveliest for him, and he'd never wanted to fill her with his cum so badly.

So he chased the high she was giving him, consumed her sweet offering, and pressed his body down on hers without letting go of the knife. He spread her legs wide with his thighs as he pushed her arms down and slipped both of his beneath her neck so he could hold her in place, then he fucked her with everything he was. A friend. A lover. A killer. A father to their children—a chosen soul mate.

“Fuck, yes,” she rasped, hanging onto his sides and digging her nails in as her eyes rolled back, she shattered.

Sweet misery and beauty. She was his, and he was hers.

His climax raced toward him, and he came hard, his cries of release dancing with hers with every chaotic thrust of his hips between her shaking thighs.

He closed his eyes, pushing in as deep as he could to give her every drop, smiling when she pressed sloppy kisses against his cheek. She was still fluttering around his dick, her body covered in goosebumps, all because she got off on them coming in her.

“I love you,” she whispered, nuzzling his face as he stayed buried inside her.

Breathing her in, the smell of them together, he pressed his face against her neck where the imprint of his blade decorated her sweaty skin. “I love you,” he repeated, his lips brushing her skin. “Under the moonlight and hidden in the darkest of shadows, I love you.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

14 weeks

College football games were high school games on steroids. Everything was louder. Bigger. More intense. Being the girlfriend of two of the home team's star players wasn't anything new, but the camera zooming in on her was. The fact that Jane sat between her other three boyfriends, and one was a former star player for the team, had practically put a neon sign over her head.

"You'd think they would've gotten tired of trying to get a view of my tummy," Jane said, her voice raised.

Ryder smirked at her. "Babe, Archer spent all week sharing photos of the two of you and the team banquet he and David took you to. You're a little famous."

"He's very much in the newlywed stage," Tercero mumbled, but he smiled, rubbing her thigh to remind her he was happy for her and her newest boyfriend.

"He's a moron," Ryder said, slipping his arm around her shoulders and leaning against his seat as he scanned the stadium. "He could've kept a little quiet. Not post a damn picture that shows your ultrasound in the background."

Jane wanted to laugh at Archer's error, but it was stressful. Now everyone knew she was having twins. At least most people thought it was wonderful news. Some were even gaining the confidence to be more open about their unconventional relationships. Still, it was a lot to deal with, and Jane mostly ignored the attention and stayed away from social media. She only let Archer tell her stuff he thought was positive. His excitement over her being his girlfriend was the cutest thing ever.

Luc's steely gaze caught hers, and she felt her face flush. He'd told her he had no plans to come to the game. He'd been busy doing interviews with the FBI, and she knew he didn't like their group outings as much. He preferred their private time, but he'd shown up anyway.

After greeting her with a discreet kiss on the corner of her mouth, he said, "I felt I should publicly mark my territory as well, but I insist you sit with Ryder. He is the biological father of your babies, and Archer's and David's fan clubs are rooting against him being the dad. Give him the respect he deserves and stay on his arm until the game is over." She melted when he gave her the tiniest smile before giving Ryder a nod and sitting beside him.

That was not what had her almost panting like a dog in heat.

Luc's hair was back to its natural white color, and he didn't wear his usual three-piece suit. Instead, he wore a white button-down with the sleeves rolled up to reveal the ink on his forearms, a gray waistcoat, a black and gray striped tie, and black slacks.

Goddamn!

Ryder's fingers caressed the side of her neck before slipping into her hair for a light tug. It snapped her out of her daydream of wrapping herself around her king and running her fingers through his hair because her baby daddy did indeed seem to need her to focus on him.

He was tense, searching their surroundings, but his touch was mostly gentle. It seemed like he needed her touch to maintain control of himself. Her deadly boy knew there could be more threats. She opened her mouth to tell him to relax, but her other deadly boy on her left drew her attention first.

Tercero squeezed her thigh, sliding his hand under her dress skirt. They'd been fucking like rabbits to make up for lost time, and while the others were giving him most of her time, she found herself stolen whenever she fell asleep with him.

If it was David, he woke her with his face between her legs like he'd promised on his hunt. If it was Ryder, he was either masturbating while straddling her thighs and squeezing her breasts or full-on giving her dick.

Archer was just as naughty as Ryder with the sleep stuff. He'd asked if he had permission, and he often jacked off right next to Ryder after she'd given it. They both touched her and even filmed as they whispered to each other, caressing her and groaning because they were that horny.

She still felt phantom tingles at her core from stirring halfway awake to their whispers.

"Fuck, she's soaked," Archer had told Ryder. She'd felt his fingers sliding along her folds as her panties were tugged to the side.

“Move a sec,” Ryder whispered, and she felt his touch, his hand spreading her wider. “Fuck, she’s pretty, right?”

“Gorgeous,” Archer mumbled as Ryder pushed a finger deep inside her. “I’m almost ready to come.” His breath hitched. She felt the bed shaking and realized they were both masturbating.

“She’ll want you to come in her,” Ryder said, his breath growing harsher. “Here. I wanna take my time, but you have to go. Straddle her. Only push in when you’re about to come. She’s still halfway out. I want her to stay that way a little longer.”

Archer chuckled but followed his brother’s instructions, his muscular thighs bracketing hers as the most delicious noises escaped him. “Oh, fuck.”

She’d been stuck in a dream of them touching her together, so the moment she felt his cock ease in, she climaxed, moaning sleepily through his gentle thrusts as he finished himself inside her.

“She’s waking.” She felt Archer’s smile and sighed as he pressed his body against hers, his cum still shooting into her. “Oh, I love you, gorgeous. Go back to sleep.”

Awareness had grown stronger, but she’d hardly gotten any sleep, so she hummed, lazily touching his hand as he eased out of her and got off the bed.

“Shh.” Ryder was there before the chill could disturb her, his dick hard and ready to join her. “Sleep, baby. Imma take care of you.” His body settled over hers, and he nuzzled her neck. She was so petite compared to him, especially when he did this. It was like he knew she was worried about her body

changing and wanted to remind her that he was the biggest and would always be for her.

Her dreamy smile formed, and she relaxed with a breathless, “I love you.”

“Oh, I fucking love you back, angel.” Then, with a groan, he slid in deep and stayed there. He didn’t let them separate, rocking forward and back so that she felt every grind of his pelvis. He knew she liked when he and David did this more rutting style of fucking. Sometimes fast and rough, other times—like that morning—slow and deep.

He took his time, encouraging her to rest and dream of them. He said they were magic, and she believed him—that was the only way she could explain how he’d put her to sleep and make her dream they were more than mere mortals. She was his moon, and he was the King Reaper—Death. Her Sweet Death.

Then he would bring her back to their life by growling against her ear, “Oh, I’m coming, baby. Sleep. Oh, fuck, dream I’m making more babies.”

She freaking loved it.

Jane sighed, breathing in the cool air. The drone of the crowd pulled her out of her daydream, away from more memories of how she woke with Ryder spooning her, fully asleep. But when he felt her move, he pushed in to fuck her again. That tingle still teased her, though, so she shifted her thoughts to Luc before she fell to her knees in front of Ryder.

Yeah, her king would keep her steady.

All week he’d been busy, but at least twice that she could recall, he’d taken her from the others. He didn’t fuck her, even though she sleepily offered herself to him.

“Rest, Jane,” was all he’d say, pulling her head to his chest, his fingers running through her hair until she did fall asleep. She adored and hated it. He was pampering her, caring for her because he wasn’t always satisfied with how the others cared for her after sex. But part of her, the irrational brat she could be, felt unloved when he didn’t want to have sex with her.

He’d scowled on the last occasion and had pushed down his joggers to free his semi-hard dick. “You want to wear yourself out? Fine. Get me ready ... give me your mouth until your jaw aches, then you can take me into your cunt.”

Jane smiled. Her jaw still ached from time to time, and she loved that he’d started sneaking kisses to it before he’d leave for the day.

Tercero teased her with his pinky finger, yanking her from her memories. His dark eyes gleamed, and his faint smile came and went, but he still teased her with his pinky. There was no doubt in her mind that her sexy ninja had fully committed to them as a couple after their week. He was still working, but the moment he was ready to give her attention, he’d scoop her up and carry her to his room in the mansion.

She would drool at the sight of him in the black street tech style of clothing he’d taken to wearing. Watching him disarm, setting aside every gun and blade, had her moaning and touching herself, but he’d hold a knife to her throat until she stopped. Then he’d use his knife, trailing it carefully over her body while he murmured sweet and dirty things in Italian.

He’d gotten more dominant, that was for sure. The way he’d grip her legs and spread her open, using his thighs to keep hers from closing, and holy hell, him using a knife handle to fuck her before flipping her onto all fours and fucking her

from behind like a maniac. She had no idea he had that in him, and she wasn't complaining.

She felt he wanted to explore different things, finally free from his inner torment, to indulge in his fantasies. Because other times he would kiss every inch of her body the way he used to, licking and nibbling her until she was crying for him to make them one.

He'd smile in that faint way, pushing back his hair. Then he'd lean down to kiss her, to hold her hostage in his beautiful chaos and push inside her.

It was almost too much, the sensations he'd create that reminded her of all her men. Yet somehow, he'd mastered control over the force they were together and would whisper, "Glow," in her ear. He'd slow-fuck her then and revel in every orgasm he could pull from her.

Tercero chuckled, his hand on her thigh sliding down to her knee. It woke her up, and she held her breath as he nodded subtly toward Ryder.

She scowled because she enjoyed her daydreams, but he sent her a wink, released her leg, and raised a phone to his ear.

"I assume this cannot wait," he said. He'd been communicating a lot with Charles, and she knew Charles preferred to speak in riddles over the phone than text how they planned to kill someone.

Ugh, sexy assassin. She'd get him back for teasing her, but for now, she'd enjoy her other deadly boy.

Jane shifted in her seat, moving her back against Ryder's side. She hugged the arm he had over her shoulders, kissing where she could reach and sighing.

She felt him staring, so she peeked to see his downcast gaze.

“You cold?”

She wasn’t, but she nodded, giving him her best doe-eyed look as she bit her bottom lip.

“Bambi, you know not to look at me like that in public.” He reached over with his free hand to caress her jaw. “You want my jacket, or are you asking to go fuck?”

Her giggle slipped out. “You’re so blunt.”

He smiled, and it was beautiful. “I gotta be blunt with your sexy, boy-crazy ass.” He leaned down, holding her neck, and kissed her. Really kissed her.

Hot damn, this man always surprised her. The fact he could make between her legs throb and tingle without even touching her ... She moaned, and he swallowed it.

He shut out the rest of the world—all the roars, whispers, and judgment—so it was just them.

His lips curved up against hers, and he pulled away enough for her to—“Breathe, my moon.”

She gasped, opening her eyes as the twinkling stars danced around his face. The roar of the crowd filled her ears again.

Chuckling in his low, sexy tone, he held her chin and moved away, but not before pressing a sweeter kiss to her sore lips. “Showing off you’re my beautiful girl, hm?”

“Yes,” she said, breathless at his gravelly tone.

“They know,” he said. Another kiss, this one a little harder, then he straightened. “You don’t have to worry about me. I know you’re my baby. They know you are. But we’re here to

watch your boys—they want to show off for you like I used to.”

“Do you miss it?”

He let her chin go and leaned back in his seat, his arm tightening around her. “A little, but I got a sweeter reward by quitting.” He slipped on his sunglasses and smiled. “How many times have we fucked watching from our bed?”

“Not enough,” she teased, giggling when he groaned.

“Not the time, Bambi. Pretty sure I’ll get us arrested because these fuckers are watching our every move.” He jerked her, yanking her onto his lap and growling at a group of college girls who’d come up behind them.

Tercero stood, but Jane focused on Ryder. He was scanning the group, itching for a reason to attack.

“Shh ...” Jane cooed, nuzzling her face against his neck as Luc spoke to the giggling girls. “We’re fine. I’m fine.” She’d never forgive the FBI for allowing dirty agents to attack him. It would be a while before he felt secure enough to let his guard down and be a regular person.

He relaxed but kept her in his arms and addressed the group of girls, his tone sharp and violent. “The fuck do you want?”

Jane hid her grin against his neck. Every time a woman approached Ryder, they were all smiles until he noticed them and showed them that he was not a nice guy.

Tercero answered, “They wanted your autograph, brother.”

The leader of the group bobbed her head, holding out an article from when Ryder had played. “You were an amazing player,” the girl stammered.

An annoyed scowl formed on his face. “You think I fucking care that you think I was amazing at some shit I don’t even do anymore? Get lost. I’m trying to spend time with my girlfriend before she starts screaming for her other boyfriends.” He didn’t even give them a farewell. He just turned and positioned Jane on his lap better.

“You don’t have to be so mean,” she told him, trailing her fingers along his forearm.

“Shut up, you like it.” He kissed the side of her neck. “I wanna push up your dress so bad and slide in. Are you wet? Can I check?”

She laughed nervously to hide her moan as he squeezed her thigh. “You’re going to get us arrested, remember?”

Growling, he nipped her neck, then leaned away. “You’re such a tease. You know I love this dress.”

“You say that about every dress.”

“And it’s true every time.” He glanced over at Luc as he sat again. “Why’re you indulging them?”

Luc sighed, an irritated set on his jaw. “You can’t scare the public. You still have a reputation to uphold.”

“Not my fault they’re annoying. I’m with my girl at a game—it’s not an invitation to get close to me.” He kissed her hair. “Right, baby?”

She kissed his jaw because she knew Ryder wouldn’t hurt an innocent person. She wouldn’t tell him to change who he was and be proper like everyone else. He wasn’t a polite person. He was dangerous and high-strung if he was worried about her. He was only calm if he was drugged out on her. “Right. Fuck ‘em.”

Luc gave her a dark look, his piercing eyes on her lips. “You two can grow up a little more.”

“Nah,” Ryder said, sliding his hand over her baby bump. “We came to cheer for Papi and my little bro. We’re not parents yet. We can be immature like the rest of the nineteen-year-olds screaming around us.” He was sneaky, but he slipped a firm caress between her legs that had her yelping. His laugh almost had her coming, but she got him back by wiggling her ass against him. “Oh, my love, you don’t want to do that to me right now.”

“You did it first.”

He listened to something Tercero said and laughed, but she couldn’t focus. Her vision blurred because he was still applying the best pressure.

Luc sighed. “Jane, really. Be a bit more discreet.”

“I don’t mean to,” she whispered, her body tightening when Ryder cupped her, hooking his fingers between her legs as he made it look like he was maneuvering her as he got more comfortable. He even chatted up Tercero like he wasn’t hiding his erection with her ass. “Ah, fuck.”

Ryder chuckled as she tried to curl up with her orgasm. He wrapped another arm around her and pulled her against him more. “I warned you, Bambi.”

Breathing heavily, she kept her eyes closed, praying that she didn’t open her eyes and get caught all cross-eyed or something on camera. “You dick.”

“King Dick for you.” He pressed a loud kiss to her neck and moved his hand back to her bump. “Okay, I’ll behave now. Your boys are about to come out.”

Jane clutched his forearms and allowed him to support her while she caught her breath. Her orgasms had become more intense and harder to come down from.

Luc placed a water bottle in her lap. “Drink.”

She shakily grabbed the bottle and struggled to open it.

Ryder took it and quickly unscrewed the cap. “You need your other king for a bit?”

Nodding, she turned to get a kiss from her bad boy.

He wasn’t mad. He smiled, holding her face and kissing her softly “Sorry. You okay?”

“Yeah, I can’t unclench. Luc can fix it.” She pecked him and scooted over to Luc’s lap, her breathing still heavy.

“Your heart is working harder than it is used to,” he said, holding the bottle up for her. “You shouldn’t exert yourself.”

Humming that she understood, she tried to focus on the field.

Luc kept her on his lap, running a hand along her thigh. His touch had purpose, massaging the tight muscles until he was satisfied—then moved up to her stomach, where he was gentler. “You spoil him.”

A sleepy grin teased her lips, and she peeked over at Ryder. He was talking to Tercero again, but he looked her way and smiled. “He spoils me too.”

“If you keep this up, you might have to stop having orgasms all together.” He slid a hand up, massaging her side, then ran his fingers through her hair. “Just be mindful.”

“Yes, sir.” She giggled at his light smack to her ass. “Sorry. Yes, Daddy.”

His annoyed smile made her smile grow. “It’s pronounced my king, Jane.”

“They’re about to come out,” Ryder said, standing. They had front-row seats at the fifty-yard line, so she figured he was standing to be an asshole to whichever poor soul was behind him.

Jane sighed and eased herself up. “I feel better.” Her eyes went to his hair, and she couldn’t resist touching it. “Why’d you take out the gray?”

Luc leaned back like a lazy king, his hand on her thigh again. “You don’t remember? You must’ve dreamed about us when we were younger. You kept mumbling that you missed my hair. I assumed you meant my natural color.”

This man changed his look because she dreamed of him? She remembered the dream, too. She just didn’t know she’d talked in her sleep, or maybe she’d been half awake when she told him.

“I can easily return to the gray,” he said when she stared at him.

“Luc Godson, I had no idea you could be so freaking adorable.” She leaned forward, kissing him on the lips. “Sexy, definitely, but this is so utterly cute of you.”

The corner of his mouth tugged up. “I am not cute.”

She laughed, kissing him again. All her guys said that. “Oh, I’m sorry. I meant sexy. If I wasn’t already pregnant, I’d hike up my dress and ask you to give me your heir because this whole look has me panting.”

“You really have no manners,” he murmured, kissing the corner of her mouth. “Stand up so we can cheer for your stepbrother and newest boyfriend.”

“Ooh, you didn’t say no to giving me a baby.” She climbed off his lap, taking Ryder’s hand as he helped her stand.

“I am not like the others who wish to breed you.” He removed a pair of sunglasses from his pocket and slid them on before standing. He slicked back his hair and straightened his tie, all while she watched him. Then he surprised her by gripping her face with one hand and pressing a swift, brutal kiss on her lips. “Stop staring.”

Stunned, she blinked and turned away, letting Ryder could pull her in front of him again.

Her bad boy hugged her from behind, bending so he could whisper in her ear. “He wants a baby with you, but he wants to leave it to fate. You’re lighting his blood on fire when you offer him these things so easily.”

Jane hugged Ryder’s arm, nervous about peeking at Luc again. “Okay.”

He pressed a rough kiss to her temple, then straightened. “Finally. Here they come.”

Her heart raced, and her face hurt with how hard she smiled. “There’s my baby!” She swooned, watching David run out first. Archer was behind him and swore she heard him laughing when he caught up with David and smacked his ass. The roar of the crowd and the band shook the air, and she shouted as loud as she could.

They reached the fifty-yard line, laughing and shoving each other. When the rest of the team arrived, they surrounded them in a circle and hopped up and down as they hyped each other up. There were lots of helmet smacks and bumps. It riled the fans up more when David and Archer bumped helmets and chanted something with the others.

“I wish I could be a guy,” she said between screams. “It looks so fun.”

“None of us swing that way, Sweet Jane.” Ryder chuckled, hugging her and dropping a hand to her tummy. “And they’re probably talking about you anyway. You’d break their hearts if you no longer had your pretty pussy, tits, and mouthwatering ass for them to look forward to.”

She heard Tercero and Luc scolding him, but she kept her attention on her football boys. They had finished their little ritual and were jogging over to the sidelines.

David took off his helmet, his smile wide as he searched the stands for her.

She waved like an idiot and screamed. “I love you!”

His eyes connected with hers, and his smile somehow got sexier when he did a little head shake to move the hair from his eyes. He waved back and tossed her a wink before nudging Archer and pointing her out.

Her sexy freak of a boyfriend was smiling as he took off his helmet, but those dimples didn’t show until his gaze collided with hers.

She screamed, waving her hands wildly. “Yes, those are my dimples!”

He laughed, waving to her before turning around to listen to the coach.

Ryder kept her from bumping her tummy on the railing, allowing the back of his hand to get scraped. “Babe, chill.”

Reining in her excitement, she stopped jumping and checked his hand. He had refused sutures and only used tape

and glue to seal the wound he'd gotten from killing a man, and she felt awful for hurting him. "I'm sorry."

"I'm fine." He kissed the top of her head, hugging her while the usual pregame ceremonies unfolded.

Jane tilted her head back, puckering her lips because he wasn't fine. The cut looked angry and swollen now.

Again, with his downcast look like she was a nuisance, he said, "You freak." Then he kissed her lips and gripped her jaw to make her look forward to the field. "I think Sin was right—your horniness is a damn superpower."

"What did she do?" Tercero asked, caressing her jaw when Ryder released it and resumed hugging her.

Her bad boy answered with a laugh. "She likes when I look at her coldly."

Tercero hummed. "She likes to remember you were once the mean boy next door."

"I don't like the coach," Jane said, ignoring his comment because the coach yelled and jabbed his finger in David's face.

"David isn't fazed." Ryder swayed her. "Drink some more water."

Jane nodded, sipping her drink as she watched the game prepare to start. Their team had won the coin toss and deferred. The away team opted to receive. David sometimes joined the kickoff team, but it didn't look like that would happen today.

Archer moved between the coach and David, muttering something before guiding her sexy blue-eyed boy away.

"Should we leave?" Jane asked, her heart aching. She'd ruined his career.

Ryder's smirk was deadly, and she realized the coach had noticed them in the stands. A flutter in her belly had her trembling. With their arms crossed and angry energy radiating out of them, Ryder, Tercero, and Luc practically sucked the oxygen from the air.

Her attention flew to David. He had put his helmet on to take to the field, but he noticed the support he was receiving from the men who'd become his brothers because of her.

He smiled their way and then turned and jogged onto the field.

"Fucker," Ryder muttered, sticking a piece of gum in his mouth as he tracked the coach's movements.

"You did ruin his perfect defense by quitting—and so early in the season," Tercero said, calmly despite the fierce glint in his stare.

"Then he should be thankful he has David." Ryder hugged her again, swaying as he caressed her stomach. "David plays harder without me, and Archer's playing better than ever. He should be thanking Jane."

"Why would he thank me?" She peered up at him. "I brought nothing but negative attention to his team."

Luc answered in that disappointed tone he used when she was down on herself. "You brought out the best in them. Archer didn't have the drive to be the best—he played for fun, and David is smart—he didn't need to play to get accepted by a prestigious college. Yet he took this university's offer to keep your group together. He plays to ensure his baby has the best, and now Archer is doing the same." He lowered his sunglasses and pinned her with his stare. "Now cheer for your prince and

my idiotic brother.” He fixed his glasses, but she knew he was still glaring. “Do not call me sir.”

Ryder chuckled, resting a hand on the front of her neck. “Baby girl, you’re giving him flashbacks to days he no longer wants to remember. Focus on Papi’s ass now, please.”

It took her a minute of tracking David’s ass as he destroyed the offensive team to realize what Ryder meant. Then it hit her. “They called him sir?”

She saw Luc in her peripheral fold his arms, watching like everyone else but looking like he was ready for a photoshoot.

Ryder kept her from turning. “Your pregnancy brain is already out of hand, huh?”

“Shut up.” She glared at the field, knowing her face was scrunched up in jealousy when David jogged back to the sidelines. He and the other defensive players stayed together, listening to the defensive coordinator or whatever he was called. She never paid attention to the names outside of knowing David was the middle linebacker, Archer was the quarterback, and Savaş was the center, the first line of protection for his brother.

Swaying with her again, Ryder flexed his hand on her neck. “Stop stewing about those hoes. Enjoy the game.”

Her stomach turned, remembering Luc’s pretty former subs. It made her eyes water.

Ryder kissed the top of her head, bending so he could speak into her ear again. “You want me to go get you something sweet? Hm? I saw they had funnel cakes. Or a chocolate shake and some fries?”

The twisting unraveled, and she laughed at her stupid hormones. “Sweetest boy in the world.”

“Not that sweet.” He kissed her jaw, his lips brushing against the shell of her ear. “I’m debating taking you to a dark corner and shoving you to your knees so you can choke on my dick.” Another dark chuckle, and he nibbled her earlobe. “Come on, Bambi. What’ll it be? I’ll even throw in a Dr Pepper.”

She smiled, clapping as Archer threw a pass. “Funnel cake and fries.”

“That all?” Another tummy rub. “My little spawn don’t want anything else?”

Her smile hurt. “A hotdog. Mustard and ketchup only.”

His laugh caught her off guard. It sounded so deep and ... happy for Ryder. “All right. I’ll be back. Try not to go hoarse—I wanna do that for you myself.”

He left, telling Tercero to come with him to help carry things.

The sunglasses did not hide Luc’s annoyance, but he pulled her close to his side, leaving a hand on her hip. “You do not need coddling over my previous submissives, Jane.”

“I know.” She leaned her head against him. “Just emotional.”

“You won’t always get to use that excuse.”

He began telling her different things about the game and the players and how Archer had improved to near pro level. His precision and grace rivaled how she’d seen Luc play before.

“He’ll surpass me if he continues improving at the rate he is,” Luc said, pleased.

“Yeah?” She smiled, so proud of Archer. He looked so relaxed yet in command, shouting orders before the snap. Sexy freaky boy. She still couldn’t believe he loved her.

Luc’s caress on her hip warmed. “Yes. He and David both have the potential to be drafted. You know that would mean they would likely be split up, don’t you?”

It was something she’d thought about with David. She had wanted to wait until it was closer to his graduation to worry, but now it wasn’t just David.

“I am merely informing you.” He reached with his free hand to grab her wrist, raising it to his mouth to kiss the scar there. “I will see that we have homes wherever they go. It’ll be stressful to go between them, but you should know Ryder had already considered this.”

Her mouth popped open, her mind barely registering David’s impressive tackle. “That’s why he quit?”

“That and money. And you know he loathed being under the authority of a coach he didn’t respect. But Ryder makes quite a living on his fights—it wasn’t a hard decision for him. He mostly played to get your attention anyway.”

“He did not.”

Luc released another annoyed sigh. “I know him more than you think. He enjoyed it because he was good and you watched, but it wasn’t a dream for him.

“Anyway, he asked me to review his finances when he first considered quitting the team and school. He makes more than David and Archer do combined on endorsements, and they are amongst the highest-grossing college athletes in the nation. I had no reason to discourage him.”

She melted at the level of respect Luc held for Ryder. They'd come a long way, and now Luc was ensuring she had David and Archer too.

The horrific crunch of a tackle sounded, and she gasped, covering her mouth at the sight of Archer collapsing. "Luc?"

"Relax." He moved, positioning her between his arms, but Jane's pulse pounded in her ears. Archer wasn't getting up.

"Luc, something's wrong." Her eyes watered, and she could barely breathe when the trainer and coaches ran onto the field. David did too, reaching her silly boy before the others.

"He's moving his hands and feet," Luc murmured, rubbing her arm. "He's talking."

Relief flooded her, but she felt tears splashing onto her chest. "Can we go down there?"

"No," Luc said, his eyes on Archer like the rest of the stadium.

"What the fuck happened?" Ryder plucked her up and pulled her to his chest. "Breathe."

"He's hurt," she cried.

Ryder cradled her head, and she vaguely understood what Luc was relaying—something about a late helmet-to-helmet hit and possibly something wrong with his arm.

She wanted to cry and run down there. Maybe Ryder would lower her. Her silly boy couldn't be hurt, especially not when he was doing so well. All she could do was let Ryder support her body while more people surrounded Archer. His arm lifted, and she breathed out but felt like she'd puke at any moment.

Ryder massaged her head, and she realized he'd given Tercero everything to hold. Her quiet boy was dividing things up so Luc could help. Both kept their eyes on their brother.

"He's getting up," Tercero said.

An unflattering sob slipped out as she watched David help him sit up. The trainers were still talking to Archer, looking over his arm and shining a light into his eyes.

"You better not ever hit him again," she said, crying and smiling when David pulled Archer to his feet.

The crowd cheered, and she clutched Ryder's arm as he wound it over her chest to hold her against him.

David kept an arm around Archer's waist, supporting his weight while Savaş walked on his opposite side, a hand extended, ready to catch his brother if he fell again.

"He's okay," Ryder said, kissing her head. "He's stronger than he lets on."

She nodded, hiccupping pathetically when her silly boy looked her way. He smiled, dimples flashing and gave her a thumbs up. The signal made the crowd cheer louder, but Jane wasn't relieved. He had blood dripping from his arm.

"I think he just got stepped on," Ryder said, still watching his brother. "Yeah, he's all right. They'll clean him up and determine if he can return to the game."

"We can't go down there?" she asked again.

"No, babe. Not unless it's really bad." Ryder used his free hand to cover her ear as he yelled something. She had no idea what he said, but it wasn't English. Only Ryder could yell over the hum of a stadium and be heard on the field.

Archer muttered something to Savaş, who nodded and yelled back. Again, not in English.

“What’s going on?” she asked, pulling Ryder’s hand from her ear to better look at Archer. He wasn’t too far away, but a large group still hovered around.

David sent her a smile, then rushed off when a coach called him. They were sending in the third-string quarterback. Archer had been the second at the start of the season, but their first string had broken an arm. So Archer had taken over and was better.

“I told him he better get his head checked if he’s really hurt,” Ryder said quietly. “I also told him he made you cry, and he’s lucky I can’t hit him anymore.”

She let out a sad laugh. “I’m bad luck.”

Tercero chuckled, taking her from Ryder, who leaned over the railing and signaled someone from the team to come over.

“You are not bad luck,” her quiet boy murmured, hugging her. “I think he’s okay. It probably just rattled him.”

She wanted to believe that but had to admit that chaos usually unfolded when she attended games.

A player ran to Ryder, and they spoke quietly so the crowd around them couldn’t hear. There was a lot of nodding, and eventually, the player ran back toward Archer.

“What’d he say?” she asked, grabbing Ryder’s hand.

“He’s good—just dazed—and his arm got scraped by someone’s cleats. He just taking a breather.” Ryder sat, motioning for Tercero to sit her down. “You need to eat.”

“I can’t.” She turned to see that a penalty had been issued to the player who tackled Archer, and they’d gained several

yards.

Ryder grabbed her jaw and made her look at him. “Uh-uh. We’re not doing this shit. He’s a big boy, and he said he’s fine. You don’t hurt yourself over any of us. Now eat.” He took the hotdog and funnel cake from Luc. Tercero had the fries. “Which one?”

She tried to turn her head, but Ryder held firm.

“Baby girl, he’s fine. I wouldn’t lie to you.” He kept hold of her face but gave her a kiss. “You need to take care of yourself so that when the game ends, you can give him some lovin’.”

“Babe,” she whined, wanting to look and jump over the railing like a psycho.

He shook his head. “Which one? If I have to, I’ll chew this shit up and spit it in your mouth. Don’t argue with me.”

Glaring at him, she nodded. He was right. He was always right.

“There’s my good girl.” He smiled, pressing a sweet kiss to her lips as he held up the funnel cake. “This one? Get some sugar in you?”

Again, she nodded, her ears picking up that the game had resumed. The fact that she didn’t hear sirens or gasps helped relax her frantic thoughts.

“So good, babe,” he said, letting her face go to break off some funnel cake. “Open.”

She fought the urge to look at the field, knowing it would earn her another scolding, and opened her mouth.

“Don’t be mad at me,” he said, feeding her a piece. “It doesn’t help him to see you hurting. He needs to know you’re

okay.”

Her body relaxed further, and she sniffed, wiping under her nose before opening her mouth for another bite. “It’s good.”

“Yeah?” He broke off a piece and ate it, nodding. “Not as sweet as your lips and pussy, but I agree—it’s good.”

“Ryder,” she said, shaking her head, but her heart felt lighter.

“You like it.” He fed her another piece but looked toward the field, a dark smile forming.

“Can I look?” She grabbed her own piece to show she was putting her health first.

He noticed and moved to her side. A replay of Savaş destroying several players before taking one down in a brutal tackle played on the monitor. “Just a little payback.”

Hearing the home crowd going nuts, Jane smiled, but then she sought out Archer. He was standing now, David at his side again. They both whistled, clapping for Savaş. “He’s okay.”

“I told you so. He’ll probably go back in. He won’t if he’s hurt, so don’t worry.” Ryder offered her the hotdog. “You want this, or is it too much?”

She grimaced at the twist in her stomach. “Too much.”

Instead of forcing her to eat it, he began eating it himself.

Tercero held up a fry. “How about this?”

Eying the golden deliciousness in his hand, she nodded eagerly. For some reason, Tercero offering her food did something a little extra. All her cravings amplified with him, so she let him feed her, peeking over every so often to check on the game. David was in now, and she realized he was

serving up revenge. As the middle linebacker, he called the shots for the defense, and he might as well have been a warrior shouting orders before battle.

The air felt electric, and she held her breath watching David sack the other team's quarterback. The ball got loose, and he stood and scrambled for it.

She screamed, standing up. Every person in the stands shouted with her as he ran it back for a touchdown.

Even Ryder celebrated, whistling and clapping. Luc clapped, although he was more composed than her and Ryder.

Jane cheered again, giddy at the team celebrating around David. They all ran to the camera, yelling and shaking the poor camera guy. The band played the familiar fight song, and she clapped along, screaming again when they got the extra point.

She turned back to Tercero, who watched her with a soft smile, her fries still in his hand. She grabbed one and held it to his mouth. "Eat with me."

"I adore how excited you get." He took the fry, and she beamed, happy that he was also trying to improve his eating habits. His cheekbones were already less prominent. Boys had such an unfair advantage when it came to changing their bodies.

"I've always loved watching them play." She took another fry, discreetly checking on Archer. He was throwing practice passes on the sidelines.

Ryder sat back down, patting her leg. "Babe, eat this, or I'm gonna finish it."

She sat too, smiling at the sugar on his lip, and pulled him close for a kiss so she could lick it off. "Gimme one more

bite.”

“I’ll give you something to eat.” He laughed, feeding her another piece. “I think Archer’s going back in when we get the ball.”

Her heart raced, but she nodded. “He’d only do that if it was safe?”

“Yeah.” He settled in the seat, eating the rest of her funnel cake. “He only acts like an idiot. He’s not going to risk a serious injury for one game.”

She knew he was right. She’d fallen for Archer’s masks but now that he let her see the real him, she knew he was incredibly smart and aware of more than he let on. She didn’t get much time with him, but she’d rested nearby when he did classwork. He wore reading glasses, and she’d about swooned the first time he put them on.

“He’s going to win this game,” she said, her heart fluttering when he glanced her way and flashed those dimples.

Ryder rested a hand on her thigh, tapping her fries. “Eat. I have a feeling you’re gonna need your strength.” He winked. “Tercero, Luc, and I have some business to handle after the game. So you’ll get to experience your first postgame as the quarterback’s and star linebacker’s girlfriend.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Jane's face hurt. Footage of her running onto the field after their team won and David catching sight of her was on constant replay. Every sports network covered their kiss, calling it the 'Kiss Seen 'Round the World.'

They continued to show how David pulled off his helmet and pushed through the crowd to reach her. Once she'd gotten within reach, she jumped at him. Of course, he caught her. With a helmet in one hand at his side, he managed to catch her by the ass with the other hand. Then, as if she weighed nothing, he lifted her to crash his lips against hers.

It was literally her dream moment with him, finally being his girl in front of everyone. She never thought it would come true after she became his stepsister. But that wasn't the only reason her lips glued to David's kept replaying.

Because after he thoroughly kissed her and promised she would get an even more thorough fucking, he carried her to the center of the crowd, where Archer was being interviewed. Because, despite the brutal hit he'd taken in the first quarter, he'd played the best game of his life so far.

Archer's face had lit up like a goddamn ball of light. He'd flashed those dimples and held out a hand for her to take as

David lowered her to stand. Her silly boy told the reporter, *“Excuse me. I need to give my girlfriend some attention.”*

Then he cradled her face between his hands, kissing her with just as much intensity as David.

Ryder sighed loudly. He’d stayed to wait with her—well, he’d scared everyone who tried to tell her she couldn’t go with the team to the locker rooms. “I kiss better, babe. Stop staring at the screen all fucking dreamy-eyed.”

She laughed, turning so she was facing him instead of the monitors. “It’s not a competition.”

The cold way he looked at her had her heart sprinting. He knew it turned her on.

“Every damn day is a competition with us,” he said, like she should know that already. “Who kisses you the most times during the day, who gives you the most orgasms, the number of times we’ve managed to make you squirt—I’m leading, by the way. So I’m just saying, I give the best kisses.”

“You are so freaking cute.” She hooked her fingers in the waistband of his jeans. His smooth skin was too tempting. She slipped a hand under his shirt to glide along his waist and sides.

His eyes narrowed at her touch, and he used that deep, lazy tone that meant he was issuing a warning. “Bambi.”

She laughed because she lived for his warnings. “You know Bambi was a boy, right?”

“Don’t care. That’s one of your official names now. Unless you stop walking like a newborn deer.” He shifted, leaning his back against the wall as he watched her. “So I’m warning you, Bambi, keep it up, and I’m hiking that dress up and fucking you until your voice gives out.”

A fiery hand slid around her neck, pulling her flush against one of the men she'd been waiting for. David looked at her, his eyes sliding to where she held Ryder before trailing back to her face. "What'd you do to him?"

It was hard not to get caught up between them. They were her original dream team. But she knew she couldn't live out any other fantasies about them with so many cameras around.

"Nothing." She smiled at him before giving Ryder a wicked smirk.

He took it in, searching her face like he was seeing her for the first time all over again. "You did everything," he said, taking hold of her chin. "I'm gonna get ya back."

"I look forward to it." She kissed his thumb.

With a sudden shift of his hand, he said, "Open," and pushed two fingers deep into her mouth and down her throat.

"Such a good girl," he cooed, easing back when she gagged. He removed his fingers and gripped her face with his other hand. "I needed a sample," he said before smashing his lips to hers. It was short and rough, but the sweet caress of his thumb along her jaw balanced it out.

David chuckled because she wasn't angry or afraid of Ryder's roughness. On the contrary, she was ready to jump his dick.

Ryder smirked, leaning away as he unbuttoned his jeans. He only let her see the top of his package—the sexy freaking start of a man's dick before it disappeared below his underwear. Then he slid those saliva-soaked fingers over as much of his dick as he could reach and groaned. "Yeah, that'll work."

Her mouth dropped open. He wanted her spit to get off.

“See ya around, Bambi.” He buttoned his jeans, adjusted his thickening cock, and winked. Then he walked away with a dark laugh echoing behind him.

“Oh, my love,” David said, turning her around to face him. “You realize now we all have to try and outdo him by surprising you, don’t you?”

Her mouth had yet to close when David wiped away the remaining spit on her face. She gasped when he sucked his thumb clean.

“Y’all are nasty,” she said, laughing.

The twinkle in his eyes made his smile ten times sexier. “You act as if I’ve not tasted your spit with every kiss we’ve shared. Like I haven’t kissed you after you’ve swallowed my cum.”

Fucking hell, it was hot. She fanned her face. “Not the same.”

“Fine. But I’m telling you, you got him in a mood, and he’s started something. We’re all going to play.” He watched her fanning herself and chuckled. “Come on. Archer’s meeting us outside.”

Jane took his hand, letting him walk her. There was still a lot of noise coming from the locker room, and she figured the boys would be in there for a while. “Are we going to the post-game party?”

“Do you want to go?” He glanced at one of the monitors as it replayed their kiss and smiled like he’d won the game all over again.

“I thought you were required to go.” She watched him, how his muscles seemed larger beneath his shirt, and how a deep breath had him releasing a wave of heat.

“We’ve been excused.” He focused on the doors before smiling at her again. “The school has agreed not to bench me, but they asked us to limit our public displays of affection for the same woman at university-related events.”

“Oh,” she said softly.

“Baby, I choose you over a team of guys I have to be around too much already.” He lifted their joined hands and pressed a kiss to the back of hers. “Archer feels the same. The team understands too. They tease Archer about not getting with you earlier so he could be daddy number five, and bets are going that I’m the bio dad for the twins.”

“And the coach?”

His hand flexed. “He’s a piece of shit who should count himself lucky that Ryder quit the team. He’d be dead.”

Her frown deepened. She’d only met the man once, and he’d shaken her hand. But that was before he realized she was dating both of his star defensive players, and one was her stepbrother.

“Hey, don’t be upset. I’ve been looking forward to celebrating with you.” He pushed open the doors and tucked her under his arm as he walked them through the roped-off path that led to the parking garage. It was roped off so the media could get arrival and departure shots of the players.

“David,” a reporter shouted, “tell us when the twins are due.”

He ignored the demand and the yells for them to pose for a photo, keeping anyone from getting a good view of her.

“Come on, David,” the first reporter yelled again. “Just share the news—you already share her with everyone else.”

David came to a halt and turned his head. “You want to repeat that?” Sweet David was gone.

Holy hell. The glare on his face reminded her he was her good boy, but he was just as deadly as the others.

Jane gripped his arm, holding him as he stepped toward the ropes. “David, no.”

He didn’t listen. He kept her hand in his and marched over to the reporter. The idiot actually looked excited.

“I’m fucking waiting,” David said, getting right in the man’s face, “because I know you didn’t just insult my girlfriend and our relationship.”

Sweat dotted the man’s forehead, but he tried to look confident. But Jane saw what was up—a cameraman stood off to the side, ready to catch David’s reaction.

“Baby,” she whispered, hugging his arm. “Let’s go.”

“No, he’s going to apologize to you.” He moved her in front of him. “Where’s that apology,”—he paused to read the man’s name tag—“Ray?”

Jane grimaced at the man. His face was sweaty, and he looked like every serial killer she’d seen on documentaries with his thick-rimmed glasses and polo shirt.

“We don’t have all day, Ray,” David said, his hand flexing over her baby bump. The rest of his body felt just as tense. Then she caught David taking in the situation and how bad it would be if he lost it on this guy.

Ray darted his eyes down to her, the microphone he held shaking.

Jane smiled and straightened her shoulders. She’d handle this. “I don’t want your apology,” she said calmly. “I want you

to back up. Go back to your mom's basement and think real hard about what can happen when I'm disrespected. Let your ole brain do what it's supposed to, eh? Keep you ...” She didn't want to get caught issuing a threat, so she amended her wording. “Keep you on track for the future you're hoping for.”

A low growl rumbled in David's chest as he looked Ray up and down before scanning the other reporters. “She didn't stutter.”

Every single reporter and their camera people scattered like rats. Poor Ray turned a little green in the face, but he must've had some survival instincts because he hauled ass out of there.

“Well, that was sexy.”

Jane spun around and grinned at Archer. He was dressed nicely. Gray slacks and a button-down—sleeves pushed up to expose his forearms. It was not what she'd anticipated seeing him wear. He even had a gray tie on. “What are you guys trying to do to me?”

He smirked, glancing down at himself. “You like me dressed up? First my glasses, now you're drooling because I had to be a grownup?”

She couldn't get over this boy. “I like you every way you are.”

David raised her hand and kissed her knuckles. “You okay?”

“I'm fine.” She smiled because she was. David wasn't ashamed of her and was willing and ready to destroy anyone who hurt her. But she didn't need him to ruin his career over words from someone who meant nothing. “Really, baby. I'm fine. He just wanted a reaction. You gave him one, and I don't

think they'll mess with you again. You had every one of them shaking."

Another kiss on her hand had her melting. "All right. I'm proud of you, by the way."

She hugged him and pushed up on the tips of her toes to kiss his chin. "You were sexy, scary, and you stayed in control."

He chuckled, returning her hug. "I stayed in control because you called me baby. I was seeing red."

That surprised her. And turned her on.

Archer laughed, slipping a hand between her and David so he could pull her against him. "Let's get out of here before you two go at it. I don't want to get arrested when I pull my dick out to watch."

David's anger lifted, and he grinned at his teammate. "Don't you remember? You get to join in now."

Archer slung an arm over her shoulder and started leading her in the same direction they'd been heading. "I remember. I just like to watch her. She makes the prettiest faces and the sexiest noises."

"Y'all think I'm gonna give it up 'cause you won?" She tried to keep a straight face when they glanced at her, an eyebrow raised on both of them. "Fine," she blurted. "Please take me somewhere where you can use me. I'm beyond horny."

Archer laughed loudly, his arm tightening around her. "You caved so fast. Make us work a little, gorgeous."

"I can't." She searched his face. "I was so worried. Are you sure you're okay? I know y'all think my baby slide is

magic, but I don't think I cover head injuries.”

David laughed that time, his hand ghosting her ass before he passed them to open the door like a gentleman.

“I can't believe you called your pussy a baby slide.” Archer laughed lightly, but the stare he gave her was serious. “Did I scare you?”

“Yes.” She rubbed her chest at the memory of him collapsing. “Luc had just told me you were going to surpass him, then we heard that awful hit, and I saw you go down. They wouldn't let me run down to you.”

He smiled, but it was sad. “I didn't think about how scary that would be for you. I'm sorry.”

“You don't have to be sorry. But I want to make sure you're okay. Did they really clear you?”

“They cleared me.” He glanced at David, who waited for them to walk through, then back to her. “Do you need me to get a scan? I don't want you to worry.”

She snuck a peek at David. He smiled and gave her a subtle nod. It helped her not feel dramatic when she grabbed Archer's bandaged arm and kissed it. “Yes, I'd like to make sure you're okay. You take more hits than I'm comfortable with. I already told Ryder no more punches.”

A cute smile tugged at his lips. “Okay, we'll go to the hospital.”

“Thank you.” She hooked her arms around his neck to pull him down for a kiss, but he grabbed her ass with one hand under her dress, his strong fingers digging into the flesh there, and hoisted her up.

His mouth connected to hers like they were always supposed to be together.

“Yummy,” she whispered. His lips were soft and sweet, like he’d just finished a lollipop.

He smiled but pulled away. “Take me to the hospital, gorgeous. Let’s play sexy nurse and patient.” He jerked his chin toward David. “He can be the male nurse who’s got a thing for you. He’ll catch your mouth around my dick and be overcome with rage and lust. He’ll want to fight me but can’t stop himself from fucking you right on top of me.”

David tugged her away. “That was way too much detail. I don’t think you’re hurt at all.”

Archer grabbed her hand but let David keep her under his arm. “Oh, I have lots of fantasies. I used to think you’d snap and tell her you loved her, and my bro would never get his chance. My David and Jane spank bank is overflowing.”

David didn’t seem surprised or disgusted. He grinned at Archer. “All right. Call the play, and I’ll let you watch the next time I hunt her.”

Jane’s eyes widened, and it took everything in her not to take off running so they could chase her down and fuck her in the parking lot.

“Kitten,” David said, dragging it out and sending shivers through her body, “save that cute prey energy for me. I promise we’ll play soon.”

“Fuck,” Archer said with a groan. “You two make me so hard. Let’s hurry up. I need to put my face between her legs before I beg you to call her your stepsister.”

David laughed, shaking his head. “You seriously fantasized about us because she’s my stepsister?”

Her breaths came out fast. How they both looked at her with hunger and anticipation had her damn panties soaked. And that sucked after how much Ryder, Luc, and Tercero had made her all hot and excited. She might as well take them off.

“Yeah,” Archer said, distracted. “That and wishing my absentee father would return and steal her mom from Kingston so all of us could be her stepbrothers.”

“You’re sick,” David said, but he winked at her. “Baby, if you ever want to play up the stepsiblings thing, say the word.”

“I thought it was gross to you.” She’d had stepbrother fantasies about David before they got together, but that was only because he’d tried to act like her stepbrother.

“Nothing with you is gross.” He shrugged a shoulder. “I never considered you my sister. I fantasized about you, but I wasn’t turned on by you being my stepsister. I loved you. But if it’s something you want to play with, I’ll try it. Or you can let this sicko roleplay since he already has all the fantasies in place.”

Archer nodded. “I fucking do. You can act like you’re asking us for a ride to a friend’s house, and we’ll say, ‘What will you do for us?’”

The look David gave Archer wasn’t friendly. “That’s way too thought out. No. And I take it back—she’s my stepsister. I’ll figure out if she’s into it and satisfy her if she is.”

“I knew alpha David would show up,” Archer teased, letting go of her hand to jog over to someone waiting to get into a car.

There was a line for rides, but David didn’t abuse his status to get ahead. He took them to the end of the line and pulled her body against his, one of his arms resting across the

top of her chest. “I don’t know how he can go through so many different personalities around you.”

Jane smiled, watching Archer talk animatedly with whoever he’d found. She realized Savaş was seated in the car he was near. “I like him.”

“I know.” David pressed his lips to her hair. “It just triggered me. I imagined you younger than you are now, and I don’t like that. I mean, I did want you every day, but it feels wrong to be how I am now and imagine a younger version of you. I think you did ask me for a ride to someone’s house before. You were in cute boxers that showed off your ass ...” He shook his head. “Yeah, no, I don’t like that.”

She rubbed his arm. He’d been forced to accept he wasn’t supposed to be attracted to her, yet he was. “I asked you to take me to Wendy’s. I hoped you’d crack.”

“I almost did.” He chuckled. “It’s not that I don’t think you were beautiful. It’s just ... you were sixteen. I’m only nineteen, but it bothers me to think I’d look at someone that young now.”

He was such a good guy. “I’m sure he just didn’t see it that way. He probably watched a stepsister porno and got all excited.”

“Yeah.” He hugged her, dropping a hand to her baby bump. “Did you eat?”

“Sorta.” She tilted her head back. “I know you’re probably starved. Let’s get something on the way. I’m sure we’ll be there for a while.”

“Do you want to have someone come pick you up?” His touch on her tummy felt so good. “It’ll probably be a long wait. I can stay with him.”

“No.” She grabbed his hand and brought it to her mouth. A little kiss to tease him was her first move, then she wrapped her lips around one of his fingers.

He breathed out heavily. “So I guess I’m the male nurse?”

“You’ll be the doctor, and I’m the nurse.” She grinned around his finger, then sucked on two. He didn’t gag her—he let her have control—but she felt the surge of blood rushing to his dick against her back.

“Am I gonna catch you with my patient then?” He hugged her tighter. “You’ll have to do something to keep me from reporting you. Maybe I get you down on your knees first, but it’s still not enough. So you offer me anything I want?”

“Fuck,” Archer said, walking closer. “You are good at this.” He took in how David’s fingers rested on her lips with a sexy smirk. “David, I’ll give you my glasses. She gets the prettiest dazed look in her eyes, and you kinda have a Clark Kent thing about you. You’re her Superman.”

Jane’s eyes widened. She’d never told anyone she thought of David that way, but he was perfect. A good guy with incredible strength that tried to help others. And he had the dark hair, blue eyes, and panty-dropping smile.

“Aw, she’s blushing.” Archer settled his hands on her hips and moved, sandwiching her between them. “We’ll save the superhero fantasy for another night. I know Ryder thinks of himself that way too—but he’s more anti-hero. But right now, I need a nurse. I feel woozy.”

She giggled, trying to hide her face because players had turned at Archer’s words. “Will you hush?”

He shook his head. “I’ve got a head injury. I can’t think clearly. Please, Nurse Jane, it really hurts. Right here.” He

pushed his pelvis into her so she could feel his growing erection.

“Because that’s the head you’re talking about?” She couldn’t with this man-boy. “Fine. I’ll take a look at it.”

“You gotta take my temperature. With your mouth. It’s scientific.”

David chuckled and shoved Archer lightly. “Get our ride.”

He released her and waved at one of the cars with dark tinting. “My ambulance is here.”

One of the players frowned. “Bro, I thought you were okay.”

Archer kept his eyes on her, a bright smile tugging at his mouth. “I’m hurt—my head. I can’t think straight. There are two Janes. Damn. Three ... No, four now. Every single one has my *head* throbbing.”

“Archer,” she screeched, hiding her face when the group laughed.

“Fuck,” Archer said, cupping his groin. “You hear that, boys? She’s an angel. It’s getting dark. I need mouth-to-mouth.”

“Archer,” David said, laughing, “get in the fucking car.”

“Dang,” Archer said, opening the door. “The freaking urge to submit hit hard. Is that why my brother calls you Papi?”

Jane covered Archer’s mouth, laughing like an idiot when he picked her up and nipped her fingers.

“See ya, boys. My nurse is here to make me all better.”



Archer knew he was in trouble but smiled at the cop anyway. “She was only trying to help, officer.”

The cop scowled at him. “Yeah, she helped you all right.”

David sighed, keeping his arm around Jane to shield her from the man’s glare. She was so embarrassed. The doctor hadn’t appreciated finding his hospital used in such a way and had called for officers to come down. They were going to arrest them for public indecency or some shit.

Archer checked on Jane, a frustrated growl stuck in his throat because it was all his fault.

She’d been such a good nurse. He still couldn’t believe she’d played along. After they’d been shown to a room and he was ordered to put on a hospital gown, they’d been left alone. His woman had offered to help undress him—due to his woozy state—and what do you know? She slipped and swallowed his dick.

Thank fuck her morning sickness was gone because she gave incredible head. He didn’t know if it was just her or if his brothers and David had trained her so nicely, but she was a sexy pro.

David had watched her with a frown. Something had happened to his teammate, and when Archer had held out his glasses, David had refused to participate.

Still, Jane gave a spectacular performance. The moment her lust took over, and she started touching herself, he lost his mind. He used her just like she wanted him to because the girl did like to be used. It did something for her, and unlike the others sometimes did, he had no hang-ups about depriving her.

He fucked her mouth hard and fast, knowing they were on the clock. The way she gagged was absolute magic;

apparently, it was too much for David.

Her stepbrother growled before lifting her off her knees. Archer was sure David would've fucked her right there, but a knock sounded. David quickly hauled her into the attached restroom, leaving him standing in the middle of the room with a massive erection.

The nurse, a pretty thing in her twenties, he guessed, stared at his obvious predicament with utter shock.

“It just happens sometimes,” had been his lame excuse.

She quickly reined in her shock and politely told him, “You can use the facilities to take care of it.”

“Perfect,” he said, walking to the restroom only to find it locked. A moan came from inside, and he coughed. “Oh, I forgot my girlfriend is in there. Morning sickness.”

The nurse nodded, holding out a blanket. “Here.”

He took it, figuring she would walk him to a different restroom. Instead, she took out her phone and held up a picture of an old woman kissing an old man.

“The fuck?” His erection died instantly. He stared in shock as the nurse smiled and put her phone away.

“This isn't my first rodeo.” She pushed him by the shoulders so he would sit. “I keep my nana and her boyfriend handy. Sit down, please.”

Archer couldn't believe what had happened. He'd never had to stop in the middle of sex, a blowjob, or masturbating. “What does this mean? Did you break it?”

The evil nurse laughed and called an orderly to wheel him to radiology.

The scan itself didn't take long, but they left him in the hall for a bit, and he couldn't stop staring at his lap, knowing his dick was limp beneath the stupid gown.

When he'd finally returned to the room, David and Jane looked guilty. Her eyeliner was smeared, her lips swollen, her dress and hair disheveled, and she hobbled over to him like a baby deer.

"Archer, we're so sorry." She crawled onto the bed beside him, running her fingers through his hair. "Did they tell you anything yet?"

"I saw old people."

Jane stared at him while David laughed.

He didn't have time to deal with David finding his trauma hilarious. He grabbed Jane's hand and placed it over his dick. "Make it better. I think she broke it."

"Fucking hell." David stood and walked to the privacy curtain. "Baby, I'll be back with a drink for you. Don't go anywhere."

Archer waved him away, then pulled Jane onto his lap to straddle him. "I thought nurses were supposed to be nice and sexy." He tugged her dress, freeing her tits, and groaned. Jane had nice tits, and he didn't know why, but he loved that he could get milk from her already.

"I don't understand," she said, but he already had his mouth latched onto her, sucking painfully hard the way he knew she liked. She moaned, clutching his head as she ground herself against him.

"Thank fuck," he said, feeling himself harden. "I thought she broke me." He tugged up the stupid hospital gown and realized David had taken Jane's panties because she was

already guiding him into her. “Heaven,” he breathed the moment she sank down.

David and Ryder were right—she was a goddess. That was the only way to explain how she could take so much dick.

She held nothing back, and neither did he. She rode him hard, her sexy whimpers matching the rhythm of the creaking bed.

He used her, just like she had asked earlier, thrusting up to throw off her rhythm. All she could do was hold on, but she took over as soon as he tried to slow down to make it last longer.

Jane was so sensitive—she reached her climax in no time.

And that was exactly how the doctor and the same nurse from earlier found them. Jane, with her head tilted back, gorgeous breasts in his face and hands, and a strangled cry caught in her throat.

His poor girl stared in shock, her orgasm locking her body up as he blew his load.

She came again.

Jane always climaxed when she felt any of them coming inside her. All she could do was try to hide her face in his neck as she moaned. He shuddered, his cum releasing deep inside her.

The door banged open, yanking him from his thoughts as Ryder’s familiar growl reached his ears.

“Get out of my fucking way.” The curtain yanked open. Ryder checked on Jane, who was in David’s arms, then his brother got in his face. “You’re lucky I can’t kill you.”

Luc and Tercero entered next, though Tercero stood by the door with a hand in his pocket. Archer knew he was holding a knife to keep himself calm.

Luc's glare might've been worse, but he moved on, considering Ryder radiated so much rage, and went straight to the officer and doctor with an offer to make a donation if things could be forgiven.

The doctor tried to argue, but one of the hospital directors who'd been called down offered to speak to Luc privately. Money got people nearly everything.

Ryder growled once they left and marched over to David. "Where the fuck were you? You know this moron doesn't know how to have a discreet fuck."

"I went to get her a drink. I didn't think he would try anything or that they would come so fast."

Jane peered at Archer, her red eyes watering. "It's not their fault," she said, like a sweetheart trying to protect them.

Clearly, King Daddy Boyfriend was not in the mood. "You, I will deal with you later," he told her before jabbing David in the chest. "You were in charge."

"It's not his fault," Archer said, reaching up to scratch his nose. They'd handcuffed him, and the sight of the cuffs sent Jane into tears. "No, gorgeous. I'm fine."

Ryder reached for her, but David remained between them.

He pushed Ryder back and got in his face. "Calm the fuck down. She was trying to make him feel good, and he wasn't thinking. They said he has a grade-one concussion. I know that's not an excuse, but you're not going to treat either of them like shit when you do the same thing with her."

Archer frowned. He wasn't that hurt. They said all he needed was some rest.

"I don't get caught," Ryder said, reaching for Jane again.

David didn't back down. "You do. You just haven't gotten caught by someone brave enough to press charges against you."

Jane dipped her head. She and Ryder had been caught lots of places, even their first time in Ryder's Camaro. But the cop had come after they'd finished and was a high school football fan. He had let them off with a warning, but there had been numerous times after that. Jane was an exhibitionist, and Ryder was right there with her. They just tended to do it around the type of crowd who wouldn't open their mouths.

"So calm down," David said with the authority-filled tone he used on the field. "You don't get to do the same shit and get mad at them."

A dangerous smile formed on Ryder's face. "Give me my girlfriend. I don't give a fuck about facts right now. I want her. Now. Or we're going to have a problem."

"It's okay." Jane got up, wobbling worse than earlier, and moved around David. They thankfully hadn't handcuffed her, but she would have gotten in as much trouble as him—if not more, considering the nurse tried to take up for him by saying he'd been very confused earlier.

She tried to keep a cute glare in place, but her lips trembled, and the tears spilled free. "I'm sorry."

That was all it took.

The only thing Ryder fell to his knees for was this woman, and when she cried, he either destroyed whoever made her cry or lost all his anger with her.

“Goddammit,” he growled, lifting her.

Ryder swayed with her, holding her head to his shoulder while she cried. “Relax. I’m not mad at you. *Shh.*” Ryder glared at Archer and David but turned away when Luc walked in and gestured for them to leave.

Ryder carried her out, Tercero following behind.

Luc watched the cop undo his cuffs, a fierce glare across his face as he likely struggled not to unleash his fury. “Let’s go.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

20 weeks

Luc Godson had not planned to see Jane pregnant so young, but he admitted that he now understood his brother's desire. At twenty weeks pregnant with twins, she looked much further along, yet more beautiful every time he saw her.

She had come with him to the office for the first time in weeks and was having fun showing everyone her tummy. Some of the girls had bought gifts and were trying to convince her to have a work baby shower.

Jane refused, and it bothered him. She didn't think she should have one because she had no girlfriends. Her female cousins were traveling and had lost touch with her, and she had yet to resolve things with Wendy.

Still, she glowed, caressing her stomach and sneaking snacks. She also seemed to be exhibiting some nesting. She kept rearranging his office and the room he had attached for her.

Luc checked a message from Four. They had moved a group of women who did not want to be taken by the FBI.

They were foreign and had nowhere to go. Four had fallen for one, and Luc had a feeling Mute had as well.

They were hiding out while Alpha and Tercero eliminated the remaining threats to their group. They'd agreed that after that was done, they'd organize how to address the matters Alpha and Jane wanted to shift attention to.

Luc noted the time before checking on Jane again. She was on the sofa binging a show she'd held off on starting. Now she was determined to finish it in a few days.

She gasped. "Luc, what would happen if I traveled back in time? You think I'd meet a sexy highlander?"

"You wouldn't fare well, my queen. You have no idea how much harder everything was."

She beamed at him. "I wanna go see some knights, though. I bet they were so hot."

"I am not surprised you'd think that. I'll be sure to relay to your other men that they should train for such combat."

Her laugh made him smile, and he resumed his work while she got further sucked into the show.

She'd been cooped up for over a month. Even if it was for the best to keep her safe, it wasn't what they desired. But she wanted to make up with Tercero anyway, which meant late nights, so she slept in most days and kept Ryder company while he trained in their home gym. She wanted to watch him fight, but Ryder wouldn't let her go to one yet.

This meant she was left with Sin, Than, and Damon to guard her. Usually Ryder had no problem leaving her with the wolves and demons, but it would take some time before he relaxed about her safety. So his brother was exhausting

himself by rushing through his required training at the arena and hurrying home.

Of course, he should have been able to relax when David and Archer returned home before him, but Ryder had risen to a new level in his possession. He hoarded her like a dragon when those two were around. It was his way of disciplining them for nearly getting her arrested at the hospital.

While Jane likely understood his anger with them, she was a wildcat about David and now Archer. Whenever Ryder gave them dirty looks, she'd give him an earful, then storm off to either David's room or the temporary room they'd set up for Archer.

Those were the nights Luc found Ryder working out in their home gym.

Luc had watched, amused, as Ryder growled, adding more weight than the rest of them would dare try, especially alone. When Ryder noticed him, he flipped him off.

"You brought this on yourself," Luc had told him.

"Fuck you." Ryder proceeded to bench press as though he didn't need a spotter.

"David merely called you out on your activities with her—mine as well. He knew Archer was hurt, even though he appeared fine, and he would not let you do something drastic—like kill your brother."

Ryder quickly knocked out a set and sat up, his breathing only slightly heavier. "I'm not that unhinged."

"You appeared that way, though." Luc held out a water bottle. "David always does what is best for everyone she loves and those he's taken under his protection. Archer doesn't need

protection, but we all knew our little brother was not at full capacity.”

Sipping the water, Ryder stayed quiet.

Luc sighed. “Talk to her. Tell her how worried you were. Let her hear you make amends with David and Archer. It is better to sleep as a group than get this upset about her storming off. You know she never wants to hurt you.”

“I’m not hurt.” Ryder got up and added more weight. “She misses you, too. You don’t have to baby me. I can deal with her wanting to go off with you more than once a week.”

He smiled because that was an absolute lie. “Tell her I’ll join the both of you tomorrow night. I’ll tell David and Archer. No words need to be spoken. We are her team. I don’t want her to think we’ve split into separate teams.”

Ryder nodded and returned to working out his stress.

The next night all of them, including Tercero, who was very late after *working*, broke in the group room. They marked her body with their signatures on her delicate skin and took turns giving her attention until Ryder and David rejoined forces, taking her together while the rest of them watched.

That led to Archer fucking her in front of them for the first time. It was interesting how she liked his filthy words and the rougher way he manipulated her body. Of course, they all had rough moments, but there was something different about Archer’s style of sex with her.

Jane loved to be teased with Archer’s dick. He’d only give her a few inches, moving in and out to drive her crazy.

She even relished how Archer would almost treat her like a one-night stand, sometimes depriving her of him coming inside her. They learned he’d often fuck her and tell her thanks

before dressing and ignoring her to play a video game online. It was all foreplay with them. His brother liked to get her angry, and she knew it. She'd never fall for it and would get him back by strutting around him naked, pleasuring herself on his bed while Archer tried to pretend she wasn't, or she'd sit between his legs while he tried to talk to other players, and she'd tease him until his brother would eventually bend her over and fuck her while still playing—letting everyone online hear them.

That night, though, he ejaculated on her stomach, ass, and face, then smeared it with his hands like he was trying to create a finger painting where her body was the canvas.

That had not been all they witnessed. Besides Luc teaching the others how to bind her and how he used different toys on her, Tercero opened up and showed them the new things he'd been doing.

Watching their brother use his knives to scrape together Archer's cum on her stomach had all of them on edge. Ryder had to be held when Tercero dragged the blade over her tongue, then against her cunt, before using the knife handle to push in their brother's cum.

They knew Jane was safe—she knew it too—but her eyes still dilated with excited fear as she offered her neck so willingly.

It affected Ryder the most. He radiated a variety of emotions at seeing Tercero violently thrust into her as he held the blade against her neck. It reminded Luc of how a tiger might pace its enclosure while worthy prey waited on the other side.

But Ryder kept it together, even getting turned on when Tercero shifted methods, tossing his blade aside to worship her

like the goddess she was.

The unmistakable hum of a vibrator sounded, yanking Luc from his thoughts. He turned to see what she was doing. Only, he frowned at the sight of Damon sitting beside her with an unusual style of vibrator.

“What are you doing?” he asked calmly because Jane wasn’t alarmed. “I did not even hear you enter.”

Damon smirked at him. “You looked like your mind was elsewhere. And I’m merely showing her the toy we learned about the other night.”

Jane bit her lip and looked away.

His right hand saw and laughed lightly. “She didn’t tell you?”

Luc stood because if he was about to learn that Jane and Damon had fucked without telling him—all of them—he was about to lose his right-hand man.

“It’s to prepare her for delivery,” Damon said, his eyes twinkling at the fury no doubt etched across Luc’s face. “The other night I babysat her, she came across perineal massage on one of the pregnancy websites. We watched videos on how to do it. Most had the partner using their hands, but she was embarrassed.” Damon shrugged. “I did more research and found this.”

Luc strode over, taking the device. It was styled like a lazy S, the bottom rounded and smooth, almost like a spoon. “How does this help delivery?”

Damon held out a vile of lube. “It prepares her for birthing. The idea is that it might reduce the need for an episiotomy or her tearing. She’s afraid.”

Jane sighed but kept her face turned. Though the hero and heroine were fucking on the show she'd been watching, and she got red in the face.

“Why didn't you tell us?” Luc asked her.

She shrugged a shoulder. “I dunno. Just embarrassed at the idea of me being cut or ripped. Scared, obviously—it sounds awful. But I don't want to have y'all knowing I'm not pretty down there.”

Damon patted her thigh but removed his hand when Luc glared at him. The bastard still grinned, knowing he was pushing his luck. “I can explain it. Or show you the information I found.”

Luc didn't like not knowing how to do something for her. He understood her shyness with the others at the idea of her birthing children, but she let him shave her. He'd thought she would have no stress about asking him to help, and it surprised him she would share it with Damon. “Which method is better?”

Damon shrugged. “Perhaps your hands, but I'm no expert. I just learned how to do it. She can use this or even her hands. Some even used spoons. I thought this would be easier.”

“All right.” He motioned for Damon to stand and took his place. “Jane, I won't have you shy around me like this. If you are afraid of something, you tell us. And you know I would gladly do anything to make the delivery more comfortable. I know you want to have a vaginal birth. If this helps, let me try.”

She darted her gaze to Damon, then back to him. “I just know if I ask Ryder or the others, they'll make it sexual. It

seemed more like a pelvic exam. Well, if the doctor had strong hands and was fucked up.”

“You know I can control myself,” he said, unbuttoning the cuffs of his sleeves and rolling them up. “I’ll have him show me how to position my hands.”

“I’ve seen you before, Jane,” Damon said, squatting. “Is this okay? I don’t want to upset you.”

She debated her options, biting her lip as she looked between them, then blushed at the sex on the television. “Okay.”

Damon gave her a kind smile and motioned for her to lie back. “You should remove your panties. I know you are leaving soon.”

Her cheeks heated again. Luc helped push up her dress and remove her panties, then she lay there, knees bent and thighs parted.

Damon switched into work mode. With the same precision he used to torture men, he touched her belly, motioning for Luc to hold out his hands. “You need a lot of lube.”

He held out his hands, receiving a good amount. Damon poured even more on her outer folds.

She yelped at the coldness but tried to laugh it off. “Sorry.”

“It’s all right,” Luc said, letting Damon maneuver his hands.

“The majority used two hands,” Damon said, “so I’ll show you that, and you can figure out how to use one hand. It’s only five minutes or so each time.”

Her thigh erupted in goosebumps at his touch—and because Damon was leaning over her. Damon affected

everyone he got close to, and Jane wasn't immune to his presence.

“Relax, my queen,” Damon said, putting Luc's thumbs at the entrance of her vagina and his other fingers to her ass cheeks. “It may take a couple of tries to see how she's most comfortable, but this is the gist of it.”

Damon pushed on Luc's thumbs downward, then rotated them out. “Yeah, you'll slide up to right here. Three o'clock and nine. Work these muscles, pressing firmly but don't do it too hard—you could cause her unnecessary pain.”

Luc followed Damon's path, watching his actions and not her face. If he looked there and saw any arousal, he'd prove he could not control himself either. “This is where they'd cut her?”

Damon nodded, pointing out the small space between her two openings. “Yes. If she were cut, it would hurt, but if she ripped, it could be worse. I saw that some even rip upward.” He shuddered but continued helping Luc's motions.

“All right, this is simple enough. The device is the same?”

“Yes. It's just angled so she can do it herself too.” Damon plucked it up and offered it to Luc before gently holding Jane's leg and adding more lube.

Then Damon was gone.

Luc sighed at the sight of Ryder preparing to destroy Damon. “Brother, it's not what it looks like.”

“The fuck it is,” Ryder said, pressing down on Damon's neck as he pinned him against the floor.

“Babe, don't hurt him!” Jane tried to sit up, already in tears.

The sound of her crying steadied Ryder, and he glanced at her. “You have five seconds to convince me he wasn’t touching you. Five.”

Luc pinned his brother with a dark look. “He was teaching me a technique that might help make the delivery easier on her. Control yourself. She was embarrassed to ask us, and she knew you would end up fucking her if she asked you to do it.”

Ryder watched Jane’s face, but he must’ve heard enough. Still, he leaned closer to Damon and growled, “You touch her, you die. I’m not fucking kidding.”

Damon understood that the threat was good, but he smiled. “I’ll do what she asks of me.”

His brother smiled right back, full of violence and promise. “If she asks, you ask me.”

“It’s her body,” Damon said easily. “You’re not her owner.”

Luc knew Damon put Jane above everyone, including him. His right hand would never harm her—but Luc should’ve thought more before asking Damon to assist him. Now he could only stand aside and let his brother establish boundaries.

Ryder leaned closer, his hand around Damon’s neck. “I’m her fucking everything. Don’t touch her again. I won’t stop when she begs for me to spare you.” He pushed down hard before releasing him and standing. Then he raised his voice so that the air vibrated around them, directing his question at all of them. “Am I fucking understood?”

Luc sighed, knowing that he had crossed a line. Ryder and David had known what he’d do at Dungeon, and they knew Damon’s involvement. But, even then, there was the unsaid warning that Damon was not to do more than help her if she

needed it. “We understand, brother. I apologize. I will speak to you and the others before including anyone else in matters this intimate.”

Ryder’s glare would break a weaker man, but Luc was not weak. He knew he could inflict his damage if Ryder ever attacked him. He probably would die, yes, but Ryder would still be hurt.

“I’m sorry, Ryder,” Jane said softly. “I didn’t think of it sexually. Neither did Damon. That’s why I was okay with it.”

Breathing like a bull, Ryder moved away from Damon and over to her, leering down at her. “His hands were in your fucking pussy, Jane. And whatever the fuck that is vibrating on the fucking floor was in his hands to go there next. Don’t tell me it wasn’t sexual. You fucking get turned on by him regularly. I let it go because you’re always my silly girl, but letting him touch and see when I am not there? No. That’s not okay. Unless we say differently, no one but us. Do you understand?”

“Yes.” She sniffed, rubbing her hands over her tummy like she was soothing their babies.

Ryder caught the motion and closed his eyes, rolling his shoulders as he breathed a harsh sigh. “Leave, Damon.”

Luc nodded at Damon, knowing that Damon followed his orders first. Ryder had the same loyalty from Than, Sin, and the rest of Jane’s demons. But Damon was Luc’s most trusted ... friend, he supposed.

Damon got up. Ryder hadn’t hurt him much, but he must’ve slipped in a punch before Luc had looked over. A small dribble of blood stained his lip, but he smiled and walked out, fixing his suit and shutting the door.

“Death,” Jane whispered, and in an instant Ryder’s eyes opened and locked onto her face. “Stay with me.”

It took a few seconds, but eventually, Ryder’s breathing steadied, and he approached her, kneeling and running his fingers through her hair. “I’m here.”

Her lips trembled, but she reached for his hand and guided it to her stomach. His brother didn’t react. He never did, besides the subconscious urge to protect his children. Still, he gave her a gentle caress, knowing his touch soothed her most.

“Show me what this is.” His voice still sounded raw, but he was calming down.

Luc smiled at his brother. He knew it took a lot for Ryder to rein in the violence inside him, but his little brother could do anything for their woman. “It’s to help her hopefully not tear or require an episiotomy. It’s a massage on the pelvic muscles, I’m guessing. I did not learn exactly what it truly accomplishes, but those were the muscles we focused on.”

Ryder caressed her thigh, looking between her legs like he needed to ensure Damon hadn’t touched her. “I can massage pussy, Jane.”

Their girl reached up to Ryder’s face, soothing him further. “You make it sexual.”

“Of course I do.” He gave her a dark look. “When I rub your back, it leads to me settling between these thighs, and you don’t complain.”

Luc shook his head. “This is important to her. She’s afraid of the pain and how we would feel about her if the outcome was tearing or needing the cut done. Listen to her.”

“I am listening.” The bite in his words reminded Luc that his brother had seen her in a horrible state before. Ryder was

not just in a possessive mood. His memories of the horrific night their Senior year had lingering triggers. He was in protect and destroy mode.

Jane hummed, caressing his cheek. “It just seemed very clinical to me. Like getting a pap smear.”

Ryder frowned, rubbing her thigh as he stared at her. “That’s a woman, though.”

She smiled sweetly. “I’ve had a male doctor before. They’re all business, and it’s uncomfortable and humiliating. I don’t want to feel like that with any of you.”

“You had a male doctor inspect your pussy?” He scowled. “I thought I was the first man to see you.”

Her giggle pulled a faint smile from his brother. “You were. This was after we got together. Kingston had me go to the doctor, but the woman I was supposed to see had to deliver a baby. A guy doctor was the only one there, and I was already undressed. I didn’t want to have to come back. And I wanted to renew my birth control.”

Luc decided they needed to hurry. They’d need to get her cleaned up and leave soon. “Let me show you. We can look it up with the others or hire a specialist. I know David was researching post-birth. I’m surprised he didn’t see this information.”

“Mr. Perfect isn’t so perfect.” Ryder smiled at last. “All right. I’ll keep my dick in my pants. I might still get hard because I’m watching your pussy get played with, but let me see. I’ll take care of you, babe. No others but us. You don’t have to be embarrassed.”

“Okay,” she whispered, leaning back and closing her eyes.

Ryder made eye contact with him, and Luc knew the fierceness that returned to his brother's face was a threat. He had mistakenly assumed that just because he trusted Damon and Damon wasn't touching her in a sexual way, it was okay.

Luc nodded that the warning was received and demonstrated what Damon had. His brother was observant. He stuck to only touching Jane gently versus a way that would lead to them ripping at each other's clothes.

"He could've just told you," Ryder muttered when Luc finished.

"I realize that now." Luc backed away so he could retrieve a towel to clean her. "Though I'm sure he merely wanted the best for her. I think he was worried about her being in pain. They watched videos about it together—I'm assuming he had further knowledge of what this hopefully prevents."

When Luc returned from the side room with a towel, he found his brother on his knees, leaning over Jane with his face buried in her neck, her arms looped around him.

It was a relieving sight. They didn't need Ryder stressing out after he'd finally come around with Archer and David.

He let them have their moment and cleaned her quietly, sliding her panties back on. "We should go."

Ryder turned his face toward Jane's, kissing her everywhere he could reach, nuzzling her in a way that reminded him of how cats marked their scent on things and their companions.

Jane smiled at every bit of it, cute humming noises escaping her as she held onto Ryder's arms and let him do whatever he seemed to need to do for himself.

Finally, Ryder pressed a long kiss to her lips before standing and pulling her up. “Let’s go find out what kind of spawn I made.”



Jane held Ryder’s hand while the ultrasound technician set up.

He needed her touch, and she needed to show him she was sorry for her mistake.

He’d let David and Archer know what he’d walked in on and clarified his boundaries to everyone. He’d even called Tercero, who couldn’t make it to town on time. His flight had been delayed, but he’d listened as her first boyfriend laid down the law. He told her he understood that she might find someone she wanted to add to their group, but he did not want her to allow another man to touch her unless they knew the reason and consented.

David’s possessiveness made a show when his pupils dilated, making his eyes look like they’d turned black. Archer kept a hand on him, nodding to her and Ryder that they understood.

Tercero simply nodded and ended the call. She didn’t think that was a good sign, especially since she had hoped he’d watch the ultrasound through the call. But, at least none of them had yelled or vowed to hunt down poor Damon or, worse, broke up with her.

“All right,” the ultrasound tech said, rolling over her stool and the machine. “Let’s see your babies.”

All her worries faded when the whooshing sounds of her heartbeat and the babies’ reached her ears. The detailed view

of a baby appeared on the monitor, the other barely visible behind it as the tech rolled the wand over her belly. “Oh my gosh,” she whispered, squeezing Ryder’s hand.

David’s fingers slid into her hair from her other side. “Baby, they look perfect.” He kissed her head, whispering, “I love you,” in her ear.

She told him with her eyes, her smile hurting when he smiled back, then she turned to Ryder. He wasn’t even watching the monitor—he was staring at her. “You see them?”

His eyes slowly dragged over, and she turned to look as well. The tech was taking measurements, rambling off things that Luc and Archer appeared to be listening to. Luc asked questions, and he seemed content with whatever he was told. Jane couldn’t listen, though. All she could do was stare in wonder at the little face. One was more visible than the other, but she couldn’t tell if the other was bigger or smaller.

“Here’s a good profile of Baby A.”

Her heart melted. It was the cutest face ever.

“And here’s a hand,” the tech said, laughing because the baby had only the middle finger sticking up. “Maybe they’re a little upset with me for pushing on them.”

“Definitely your baby, bro,” Archer told Ryder, patting his shoulder.

Her bad boy smiled faintly, his thumb rubbing her hand, but he said nothing. It made her nervous. The others appeared excited, but he was more focused on her.

“There we go,” the tech said, pausing the image. “Now we have a little wave. All five fingers.”

David seemed to notice that Ryder's lack of reaction bothered her, and he leaned down, murmuring, "He's worried. He wants to know they're okay and that you're okay."

Jane nodded and tugged Ryder's hand to her lips as soon as David leaned away. He was the best, acting like his focus was on the monitor. The tech was only taking measurements, it seemed.

Green eyes settled on her face again, and he smiled. "You okay?"

"Perfect," she said, kissing the back of his hand.

"Here's Baby B," the tech said. "Baby A is keeping their sibling guarded; they want all the attention. But let's see what I can get off this little one."

"Nah, they're being protective," Archer said, reaching to lay a hand on her thigh. "Just like their daddy."

After she awed at Baby B's profile, the tech checked the spinal column and heart. Jane peeked at Luc. He stood to the side, arms crossed, staring intently at every detail. When she looked back at the screen, her heart fluttered at the stopped image. Both could be seen. They were head to rump, it seemed. Like Yin and Yang.

"So, as is often seen with multiples, Baby B is a little smaller but still on target for twenty weeks. Baby A is just in the top tier regarding sizes."

Ryder nodded, smiling as the tech took more measurements of both babies, but she seemed a little frustrated, squinting several times.

"All right," she said. "I will take a few more measurements, then the doctor will come in. I have a good

guess on the sex for Baby A, but I will wait for him to make the call if that interests you.”

“Baby B?” Ryder asked, his gaze darting to the screen. “Was there something wrong?”

“No, I just can’t get a good view.” The lady smiled reassuringly. “I was trying to get them to uncross their legs. Maybe they’ll be ready to show off when the doctor comes. He’s usually lucky.”

“All right,” he said, breathing out. “Fuck, Archer, did you try to call Tercero back?”

“He didn’t answer.” Archer gave her a sad smile. “He might be boarding the plane. Sometimes the service goes out.”

“We’ll send you what the doctor records,” the tech told them. “You can even email it, but I don’t know if the file will open on a flight. It’ll be a nice surprise when they land, though.”

“Yeah.” Jane breathed out, getting nervous. “We want to know their sex, right?”

Ryder dropped his gaze to her. “Whatever you want, that’s what we’ll do.”

“I wanna know. I think.” She laughed, then nodded. “Yeah, I want to find out.”

“Then we’ll find out.”

It was then that the doctor peeked in. “We all ready?”

The tech stood, moving out of the way and informing him they wanted to know the sex of the babies.

The man eyed each of her men before smiling at her. “All right. Let’s meet your twins.”

Everything continued about the same as it had with the tech. He told them there was no sign of cleft or lip palates and that their spinal columns and other organs looked well formed. He showed a strange image and explained that it was the blood flow and that the placentas were operating well. Then he paused on Baby A, a light laugh leaving him.

“Can you tell?” he asked.

Jane stared at the screen, laughing. “A boy?”

The doctor nodded, clicking several buttons. “He’s a big boy. There’s no mistaking that.”

“Yes,” Archer said, “I knew it. Way to go, bro.”

“He’s healthy then?” Ryder asked.

Jane stayed still as David wiped a tear that slid into her hair. She would give her bad boy the heir he told her he’d make with her.

“He looks perfect,” the doctor said, clicking more buttons. “I have no reason to recommend additional testing, but you can check with your doctor. You will get additional scans as we draw closer to the due date. Next time we can do a 3D scan so you can really see them. Let me check the fluid and your ovaries and uterus—then we’ll look at Baby B.”

He told her that everything was great, then said, “All right. Let’s see if we can get a look at Baby B, who’s hiding behind their big brother.”

Ryder’s hand tightened around hers, but he waited patiently while the doctor moved the transducer across her stomach, pushing down harder.

“A little uncomfortable here,” the doctor said. “This one is curled up. But, ah, here we go. Look at that profile.” He

paused, clicking buttons again, then showed them the feet. “Let’s see if we can get a peek. I’m going to push just a little to see if I can get them to uncross their legs.”

Ryder huffed as they waited.

Finally, the doctor told them everything looked just as good with Baby B. They were smaller, which was fine because they were still measuring on target.

“Ah, there we are.” He clicked more buttons and smiled. “Big brother was guarding his sister.”

Jane didn’t think she was breathing. For some stupid reason, she never expected to have a boy and a girl. She had it in her head that it would be a pair, even if they were fraternal. “A girl?”

“Mhm.” The doctor continued clicking away, then moved so that he had both babies in view together—a little Yin and Yang.

David’s lips pressed against her forehead, and Luc smiled faintly. Ryder, however, was frozen in place.

“Ryder,” she whispered, tugging his hand.

Archer laughed, snapping his fingers. “Bro, you got this. You wanted a girl, remember? You got the perfect set on the first try.”

She didn’t know he’d wanted a girl. She assumed he wanted boys like most men did.

He blinked, looking at her and then back to the screen. “You’re sure it’s a girl?”

The doctor laughed. “Don’t worry, son. I felt the same fear when I learned I was having a girl, but yours gets her own bodyguard.”

“Fuck,” he said, looking at her again. “Babe, what’s wrong? Why are you crying?”

“I’m just happy,” she croaked, reaching for him with both arms.

He breathed out, relieved, and lowered himself to hug her as much as he could. “You sure?”

She laughed, hugging his head to her chest. “I swear, babe. I’m so happy.”

His lips pressed against her breast, where he mumbled something before sitting up enough to kiss her. “Love you, Bambi.” He smoothed her hair back, smiling like he was a king. “So fucking much.”

“And I love you.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

22 weeks

Jane huffed and puffed as she followed her mom. She still didn't trust Sarah's affection and support. Honestly, she didn't know if she would ever fully believe her mom loved her, but she didn't want to disappoint Kingston.

Her mom had come over early and dragged her out for breakfast and a day of shopping. It was nearing dinner time, and they were meeting Kingston for dinner at a Mexican restaurant David had found. She loved it, and her boys had taken to ordering for her a few times a week, but this was only her second time eating at the restaurant.

"Just to warn you, Jane," her mom said, peeking over her shoulder, "Kingston is going to beg you to tell him what the babies are. Don't tell him unless you plan on telling us both. He will drive me crazy if he starts gloating."

She smiled faintly. She didn't know why she hadn't called them to let them know she was having a boy and a girl, but she felt like keeping it to their close circle. People with lots of family and friends did elaborate gender reveals and baby showers, but she didn't have anyone offering to throw her one. Well, Luc's employees did, but only because they wanted to

get out of working for a day. She couldn't recall ever talking to those people outside of working with them, and even working with them, they shied away from her.

So, besides her men, only Damon, Sin, and Than knew. Ryder was still upset about Damon and had put a stop to him being her guard, but she knew *Sex Voice* was happy for her and that Ryder would ease up eventually. Her bad boy just had a lot to work through. They hadn't exactly had a relaxing pregnancy or relationship.

It didn't hurt that he apologized for yelling at all of them by taking her on a date to watch Harry Potter in concert. She knew Luc had told him about it, and Luc's way of apologizing to him was helping Ryder apologize to her. She still felt bad. Now that she'd had time to think, she'd been in the wrong because no way would she not scream and cry if she'd caught Ryder getting help from a woman on any part of his body.

"You know who I saw the other day?" Sarah asked, looking over her shoulder.

"I dunno, Mom." She paused, rubbing her back. She felt so huge. Usually, she was pretty comfortable, but a day of walking everywhere had worn her out. Sometimes she swore the little boy in her was boxing just like his daddy.

"Wendy," her mom said, smiling. "She told me you two hadn't talked in some time. You never told me."

Tercero placed a hand on her back, knowing the reminder hurt her.

"Not something I want to blab about," she muttered. "She basically wanted me to leave all my boyfriends but Ryder."

Sarah nodded. "Well, she did admire how Ryder was with you." She glanced at Tercero and smiled. "No offense,

Tercero. You're secretly my favorite.”

“I'm honored, Sarah,” he said politely. “But yes, as his brother, I agree that many women favor Ryder. Something about his bad boy reputation and sweetness with Jane, I think.”

“He is a grump, isn't he?” Sarah laughed, her cheeks pinking when Tercero smiled back. Her mom had definitely passed down her inability to keep it cool around sexy guys. “And you know what she's having? I heard you didn't make it to the appointment.”

“I was lucky to find out the news upon exiting my flight.” Tercero sent Jane a quick smile. “She and the boys were waiting to surprise me. She practically tackled me and screamed the news in my ear.”

Jane beamed at him. None of them were able to reach Tercero after her ultrasound. He'd given Luc his flight information, though, so they rushed to the airport to surprise him. He had been staring at his phone with a frown when he disembarked the plane. It gave her the perfect opportunity to launch herself at him without him having any warning.

“Oh, that is a sweet memory.” Sarah grinned as they rounded the corner. “Finally. I should've dropped you two off instead of making you walk. Let's hope Kingston got us a table already.”

Jane hoped so too. She was tired and starving. It didn't matter that she had fajitas two nights ago. She was ready for tacos. And flautas. Maybe some nachos too. And queso. Definitely queso.

Tercero chuckled, holding her hand as she trudged up the stairs. Her mom waited patiently, holding the door.

“Thanks, Mom,” she said, entering, only to gasp and back into Tercero.

“Surprise!”

People were cheering and clapping.

People she knew. They were all crowded around the restaurant entrance, smiling at her.

“What?” she whispered, recognizing all the smiling faces. Many were football players from both high schools she’d attended. Gawain and Gareth Knight were grinning like fools, waving at her. Lance was there with his arm around a pretty brunette. He looked so handsome, and she had felt sad about him and David choosing schools so far apart. Then she recognized Jason Winters. He’d gotten close with David toward the end of their school year too, and he liked to tease Ryder that he would apply for a position in her harem. She awed when she saw Mr. Prince. He still made her blush, and she was convinced he was immortal because the man didn’t age.

It looked like all her Helldonna buddies were there too. They’d scattered after graduating, and she couldn’t believe they’d all come together for her.

She laughed when she made eye contact with David’s cousin, Adam. Technically he was her cousin by marriage, but she loved him like a brother. Diane, her former rival, had snagged him up at the end of their Senior year. She was due next week, last Jane heard, but she was there, bulging belly and clapping with the rest of the guests.

Jane caught sight of Ryder, David, Archer, Luc, and Savaş, but they had stayed off to the side and behind Kingston ... and Wendy.

Tears welled in her eyes at the sight of her friend. She was beaming, taking in Jane's belly with joy. Kingston nudged Wendy ahead of him, and Jane was wrapped in her old friend's arms in no time.

"I'm so sorry," Wendy whispered in her ear.

Jane clutched her, crying and shaking her head. "No, I'm sorry. I should've been a better friend."

Wendy laughed, kissing her cheek as she leaned away. "Let's just agree not to fight again. I'm always going to love you. And I will keep my opinions to myself. I hope this shows that I want us to stay in touch even though we no longer live near each other."

Nodding and crying, Jane rubbed her tears. "No more fights. I'm always a phone call away or a long drive."

"Always," Wendy said, hugging her again before beaming at her belly. "Oh, you look so beautiful. I can't wait to meet them."

Jane was overwhelmed with so many emotions. She hadn't wanted a baby shower because they were usually thrown by female members of the family or best friends, and her best friend had worked with her parents to surprise her even though they were all unsure of each other. She realized their love for each other would always be true.

"Oh, sweet girl," Kingston cooed, wrapping his big arms around her and kissing her head. "I hope this was okay."

"It is. Thank you." She hugged him back, then turned to her mom, who stood behind her with a patient smile on her face. "Thank you, Mom."

Sarah Leodegrance's composure cracked, and she cried before taking her from Kingston and giving her a bone-

crushing hug. “You’re welcome, sweetheart. I really wish you all the best. I know you and your boyfriends will be wonderful parents.”

“Let me see my favorite cousin.” Adam squeezed between her and her mom. “Sorry, Sarah, but I’ve got a bone to pick with this girl.”

Jane laughed, hugging him tightly. “I didn’t do anything.”

Adam didn’t release her, but he whispered in her ear, “I heard about everything. I’m so proud of you, but if you ever have trouble, you better call me.”

Her heartbeat sped at the memories of the almost abduction and actual abduction she’d survived with Adam, but she kept a smile on her face and greeted Diane. “Oh, your belly is so pretty.”

Diane rolled her eyes. “You can say I look like a cow, girl.”

“You don’t.” Jane laughed, trying to hug her sideways, but their bellies kept making them bounce away from each other.

Adam grinned. “They’re going to be besties. I know it.”

Wendy came back to her side, grabbing her hand. “Let’s have you do a quick walk-through to greet everyone and get some food. Kingston asked Ryder what you liked and ordered your favorites. They should be serving everyone soon, but you’re first.” She looked over Jane’s head. “All of you too. You’ll act as buffers so she can get through everyone.”

Jane realized Wendy was talking to her boyfriends, and she giggled when Ryder and Luc frowned. They were not the meet-and-greet type.

They made it work, though. Ryder stayed by her side for the first leg of greeting people but nudged David to take his place so he could chat with some of her old Helldonna pals. He had always enjoyed their company over his teammates.

David was perfect, taking over the conversations when she didn't know people. He kissed her often and kept a possessive hold on her when they came to Lance and Jason. She found it cute that he seemed slightly jealous because David never got jealous after becoming her boyfriend. But he kept tightening his arm on her whenever they talked to a guy without a date. When Sylvia, his grandmother, pinched his cheek and told him to chat with her, he reluctantly passed her to Tercero.

Her quiet boy seemed even more possessive. He pulled her to his side the same way David had. Archer, who'd taken up her other side, kept laughing at his brother. Then he decided he wanted to show off because he grabbed her hand and pulled her to the next set of guests.

"You got them all worked up, mama." He kissed her a little too deeply in front of Mr. Prince, then laughed when he got his head smacked.

"Boy," Mr. Prince scolded, "I like you, but he will beat your ass." He pointed over her shoulder at someone. "He's been glaring at you the whole time you've had her ass in your hands."

Jane covered her mouth, laughing. "I can't believe you said ass, Mr. Prince."

He flashed her a wolfish smile, his aqua eyes sparkling. "Oh, Little Moon, you have no clue who I am."

Her eyes widened at the nickname and because he totally seemed younger than she remembered him. "I knew you were

immortal,” she whispered, leaning closer to him. “Give me the secret juice. I want in.”

His laugh was loud, and he pulled her into a tight hug. “I’ll take your compliments on my finely aged ass anytime, Jane.”

“He is like a fine wine, isn’t he?” Archer said, looking his old coach and principal over. “Let me see that ass you’re talking about.”

Luc sighed, pulling her from Mr. Prince. He said nothing but nodded to his former coach and led her on. “Did you take your vitamins this morning?”

“He was gonna make me immortal.” Jane waved goodbye to Mr. Prince and leaned against Luc’s side.

“What on earth are you talking about? You have no idea what Nick Prince is capable of.” He nodded to people, causing them to part and issue congratulations as they passed them by. “Now answer my question.”

She let go of the slip about her old principal because she didn’t want to know if he was into dangerous things and that she’d have to worry for his safety, and answered, “Yes, I took my vitamins. I had snacks, too. I’m good, but my feet are killing me—they feel swollen.”

He guided her to the biggest table and pulled out a chair. “Do you want to elevate them? Or take off your shoes? Those are not walking shoes. Please be mindful.”

The ache in her feet eased at his words, and she stopped to pull him down for a kiss.

He didn’t deny her. Instead, with that faint smile he used in public, he held her face and pressed a full kiss to her lips. Cold. Calculated. Sweet oblivion.

“Her food is here.” Ryder’s gruff remark had her grinning against Luc’s mouth. Her bad boy sighed. “Jane.”

Luc leaned away smiling—a real one—but he smirked at his brother. “Do not pout. I encourage her to stay by you most.”

Ryder pulled out the chair beside her and sat. “I’ll pout if I want to. Move so her mom or Wendy can sit on the other side.” He reached for the silverware, unfolded the embroidered napkin, and placed it on her lap.

His prickly mood didn’t faze Luc. Her king merely caressed her cheek before walking off to speak to someone.

Ryder caught her eyes and smiled. “Hey, Sweet Jane.”

“Hey.” She took him in, swooning. He must’ve driven his bike because his hair was mussed up in that sexy way it got when he’d been riding. It was getting longer too, and she wondered if he had neglected to get a haircut because of his stress about her.

Mischief lit up his face, and he gripped her neck as he leaned closer to hover his mouth an inch from hers. “I wanna fuck you so bad, Bambi. I love seeing you glowing like you are. You didn’t let my brothers get any of you today, did you?”

It was a little hard to breathe. Not because he was applying pressure but because she stupidly held her breath, waiting for him to kiss her.

“Breathe,” he murmured, blowing lightly across her lips. His smile turned wicked when she obeyed. “I take it your lack of response means David and Archer let you sleep in until your mom got there?”

“Yes,” she said softly, feeling eyes on them, but Ryder demanded attention. She always gave it to him. “Where were

you this morning?”

“Nowhere.” He touched his nose to hers before smiling and giving her a teasing kiss. “I have another surprise for you after the party.”

“What is it?”

“That would ruin it, baby girl.” He gave her another teasing kiss, one so featherlight she thought she imagined it, then leaned away to settle into his chair.

That was when Wendy came to her side, calling for the crowd to quiet. “All right. Sarah, Kingston, and I thank you all for making it this evening. I’ll let Jane and the guys speak for themselves, but I am so glad we could work together to get everyone here. Thank you to everyone who helped with rides and picking up each other from the airport.”

Jane couldn’t believe they’d all pulled something so sweet off. She hadn’t had a clue.

Wendy continued, “We have a few games and raffles with prizes, thanks to Gabriel, Coach Arthur, and Mr. Prince. No, Archer, your entries have been removed.”

“Why?” Archer yelled, earning laughs. “I’m with the sexy mama we’re here to honor, but I’m not—”

Wendy cut him off. “You will have a prize to try to earn with your brothers and David. Hush.”

That competitive gleam sparked in his eyes, and he nodded. “All right. Continue, Wendy, darling.”

Jane giggled as she searched the crowd for the eldest Godson brother. Finally, she spotted him sitting with Coach Arthur and Mr. Prince. “Babe, your brother came?”

Ryder rubbed her thigh. “Yeah. He’s not thrilled that we’re still all together, but he said he realized we were not simply having fun with you, so he’s eased up. My brothers have daddy issues, and he’s the only one we know, so they like his approval. I don’t give a fuck, but he can stay in our lives if he keeps his trap shut.”

She covered his hand. Gabriel was a nice man, and she respected him a lot for taking on guardianship of his brothers when they were younger. Yes, he’d handed it mostly over to Luc for their last year of high school, but he’d still taken on their father’s role, even though he was young.

She caught his gaze and smiled at him and the men her guys had looked up to as father figures. She’d seen Mr. Prince’s texts on Ryder’s phone several times and felt he’d helped with everything that happened. He still had that protective gleam he’d developed after her abduction in high school. If he didn’t look like he was in his late twenties or early thirties, she would probably view him like a father figure—but the man was too fine and had starred as her crush a few times when she was a little girl. Coach Arthur Knight, on the other hand, was a sweetheart. He always took up for her and looked at her like she was a daughter, even if she rarely talked to him.

Wendy was talking about the prizes, but Jane missed what they were, only catching the last of her speech, “But for now, let’s eat.”

The crowd cheered, and Jane moaned at the food served. They’d given her a variety plate.

Ryder slid the plate closer. “Is this good? David told them all your favorites, and I told them what I knew you’d been eyeballing.”

Jane nodded, feeling so emotional again.

“No leaking tears, hon.” He kissed her head and offered her a fork. “Eat.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Ryder listened to Archer's drunken ramblings as he walked through their home. He'd arrived home before the others. Jane was riding with Luc, but he knew he was getting her tonight.

"She loves me," Archer droned to Savaş, who had to drive and carry Archer home. "Did you hear me, brother?"

"I heard," Savaş said with a laugh. "I'm not sure she'll keep loving you after she watched you get shitfaced at her shower, though."

Archer groaned. "I had to show my girlfriend I was the best."

Ryder chuckled, checking on things before he went to his private room. Their overgrown brother had Archer halfway on the bed, trying to remove his shoes.

"Oh, she saw how great you were," Savaş said, tossing Archer's shoes into a corner. "You thought you could outdrink Coach Prince."

"I won, didn't I?" Archer reached up, patting Savaş on the nose. "Boop."

Ryder shook his head. "Let him think he won for a little while longer."

Savaş laughed, tugging off Archer's jeans. "I'll break the news that he suffered a legendary loss tomorrow."

Archer started humming. "Is that our brother? I love him. He lets me love his moon. Ain't she pretty? I hope she likes me. I want her to be my girlfriend forever."

His shoulders shook as he struggled not to laugh. "You want her forever, huh?"

"Mhm." Archer tried to hold onto Savaş like a clingy kitten, which their brother rolled his eyes at but allowed. "She lets me do naughty things to her. And she's so pretty. I've always thought she was the prettiest girl. Now she lets me touch her boobies." He clutched Savaş by the arm and whispered ... loudly, "Don't tell Ryder, but I drink milk."

"You drink milk?" Savaş asked slowly.

Still whispering in the loudest whisper of all time, Archer nodded. "Jane's got milk in her boobies. It tastes like juice. I like juice. Pineapples and strawberries. She makes the best boob juice."

Ryder shook his head. He'd have to make sure Archer cut it out. He'd read that doing shit with her nipples could lead to contractions, and the goal with Jane's pregnancy was to get her as far along as safely possible. "How many boobs have you gotten juice from?"

"Hello?" Archer stared at the ceiling. "Is God asking me how much boob juice I drink?"

"Jesus Christ," Savaş groaned, sitting on the bed.

Archer frowned, then smiled. "Hey, JC, I swear on my nutsack, I've only sipped my girlfriend's boobies. Don't tell her baby daddy. Let's keep it between us." He rolled over,

hugging a pillow. “She’s so soft. I’m pretty sure she loves me.”

Ryder couldn’t believe he was related to this idiot. Jane had gotten a dreamy look when Archer came over and rubbed her feet. After that, he got a bit more handsy, making her blush while the others played some game, popping balloons on each other, so Ryder had moved so she could give the little shit attention. He was like a damn puppy, and when he’d kissed along her neck and whispered in her ear, Jane had smiled like a schoolgirl and told him she loved him too.

Archer hadn’t expected it, and he’d blinked at her repeatedly. Jane realized he didn’t believe her, so she cupped his face and repeated herself. He finally snapped out of it and kissed her until she gasped for air. Ryder was just glad he’d kept his cool when Jane had first blurted out that she loved him. Archer, on the other hand, made a damn fool out of himself, shouting it to the partiers.

Kingston hadn’t been too pleased. He’d asked Ryder if he thought it was too soon. Ryder had shaken his head and admitted how soon Jane had declared she loved him back. She just listened to her heart, and Archer made her happy.

Honestly, he was surprised it had taken as long as it had. He and the others had realized she’d fallen in love with him, but Archer hadn’t. He still thought he was on early boyfriend status, even if he did more than a new boyfriend.

He attended all of Jane’s therapy sessions for her eating disorder. Tercero didn’t want to interfere and make them dependent upon each other, but Archer jumped at the chance to go just like he’d promised her he would. Sometimes he did his classwork off to the side, but he often sat with her, hugging her as she talked. The therapist also discussed Jane’s other

traumas and grief, and she felt very comfortable revealing it all around Archer. They were surprisingly a good match.

“You staying with him?” Ryder asked.

Savaş nodded, snatching up a pail. “I’ll make sure he doesn’t choke on his vomit. Jane make it home?”

“Not yet.” Ryder walked into the room, checking everything out. The floor and tables were littered with various snack wrappers, empty bottles, and ripped panties. “When did he even have these printed?” He flipped through a stack of black and white photos of Jane. Some were new, but others were older, from when they were in high school.

“He’s crushed on her for as long as you,” Savaş said. “It was puppy love for a long time, but when David started with Diane, he fell for her hard. He knew how you felt about her, though, so he planned to be content with daydreaming about her. I always caught him jacking off to pictures of her.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” He smiled at one that almost looked professionally shot. She looked so fucking beautiful wrapped around him on his bike. He wasn’t driving in this photo. In this one, he’d made her straddle him and had her by the neck, smiling while she smiled right back.

“Knew you’d kill him,” Savaş said casually. “He didn’t deserve to die for loving her.”

“I wouldn’t kill him for that.” He checked the other photos. There were lots of Archer with her, but dozens of Ryder kissing her naked body. “Sick fucker. I’m taking these.”

Savaş laughed, tugging off his boots and jeans. “I’m sure he’s got a secret backup.”

“Make sure he doesn’t disturb her tonight.”

“You mean make sure he doesn’t crash your private party?” Savaş laughed when Ryder merely smiled and left the room.

He heard voices as he drew closer to his hall and slowed to catch sight of them before they saw him.

Luc was carrying Jane bridal style, and her arm was looped around his neck as she played with his hair. Ryder had a feeling his brother would take to changing between his natural color and the gray shit to make Jane gush over him.

“Did you have fun?” she asked Luc.

His brother gave her that annoyed glance that Jane only ever smiled at. “I was forced into drinking from a baby bottle to compete against my brothers and David. I lost to my most foolish brother, which I will never live down. Then we had to have your silly friend strap torture devices to us to see who could survive labor pains.”

Ryder grinned at Jane’s laugh.

“But you looked so cute clutching Damon’s hand.”

Luc sent her a hellish glare. “I can’t believe you added birthing partners to the game. You knew I would choose him.”

Her shoulders shook as she tried to keep it together.

His brother wasn’t finished scolding her. “And you let Ryder select you. That should not have been allowed. The rest of us had to sit between a pair of muscular thighs while whatever imbecile you selected controlled how badly we were tortured. Did you really have to select Than for me? He’s Ryder’s best friend, if my brother has such a thing.”

She howled with laughter, clutching her stomach. “I let Kingston do Ryder’s.”

A loud sigh left his brother, and they disappeared into the bedroom. Ryder followed quietly, smiling at Jane's giggles and wheezes.

"I've honestly never laughed so much in one night. Mr. Prince had it out for David," she said, gasping to catch her breath between laughs. "David squeezed Lance's hand and told him he'd never forgive him. Lance promised not to knock him up again." She cried, holding her stomach as Luc laid her down. "Then Archer pulled Savaş's hair while Coach Knight kept 'accidentally' hitting higher settings."

Luc tugged off Jane's shoes and inspected her ankles, rubbing her feet as she continued talking like Luc hadn't experienced it all himself.

"Tercero's yelp!" She laughed so hard she snorted, then started to wheeze. "He yelped, and Adam's laugh was so crazy. He kept saying you deserve this—look what you did to my cousin!" She slapped the bed. "I can't breathe. He tried to say he didn't do anything." She mimicked how high Tercero's voice had gotten as he'd said, "They're Ryder's! I wore a condom!"

Ryder smiled. Tercero had been paired with Sin, and their wild friend had screamed along with him, hugging him and saying he believed him. Adam had only laughed harder and turned up the settings.

The whole restaurant was dying of laughter. Even the staff and cooks had come out to watch. A few police officers arrived as well because people nearby reported screaming. It had been Sin, of course—loud, obnoxious bastard.

He'd honestly enjoyed himself, even though Kingston tried to kill him. It hurt—more than any fight he'd ever gotten into

—but he couldn't let his girl see him react beyond squeezing her hand and egging Kingston on—that he felt nothing.

But he felt everything, especially when the man went for the kill. All Ryder realized was that Jane would soon feel worse pain. Twice. So he'd turned his face toward hers, kissing her and telling her he was sorry. And thank you for carrying and birthing his children.

He'd been declared the winner even though none of them tapped out. Tercero got runner-up for the yelp. Numerous people gasped because they'd thought he didn't speak.

When the games were done, Jane was presented with the onesie they'd signed. Well, the pair of onesies. He'd realized he needed to show that he was happy to be having twins. He didn't want either of his kids to grow up and learn they were not as important during the baby shower, so he'd gotten two and had everyone sign the new one.

They'd put the onesies on a set of teddy bears. One had been outfitted in jeans and boots and the other in a white dress. Both wore leather jackets.

She'd never smiled so much before. She read all the names. She expected his *King Daddy* title and the simple *Daddy* labels for Luc and David. He could tell by how she tensed that she was searching for one specific name. She teared up when she saw that Kingston had put her dad's name—*Eric*—before his under the title of *The Grandpas*, then she'd giggled because Archer had labeled himself *Uncle Daddy Archer*. When she finally found the name she'd been seeking, she broke. *Daddy Tercero*.

She'd still feared that Tercero would come up with a reason for not wanting to stand beside him as a Daddy. It was

beautiful to watch them meet each other's stare. His baby had her ninja back.

It had made her so happy that she'd confirmed to their friends and family they were having a boy and a girl.

The cheers were deafening, and even her mom was beyond excited. She'd screamed the loudest and pushed her way through everyone to hug Jane and each of them, then she kissed Jane's tummy, promising to be the best grandma ever.

The poor woman didn't know what to do with herself when the demons, wolves, and knights swarmed Jane and squished her into the enormous group hug. He would've helped, but he was wrapped in a bear hug with Kingston and David. He knew it meant a lot to Jane for him to accept Kingston, so he patted the asshole's back and promised they'd try to ensure the Leodegrance name carried on too.

Luc's voice pulled his attention back to Jane. His brother massaged her legs and feet again. "To answer your question, my queen," he said, "I enjoyed watching you smile and laugh—watching you realize you are incredibly loved beyond our group. And I'm pleased that you finally realized your men are here to stay—with you and the children we have with you."

Her laughter quieted, and she tugged on Luc's arm. "Can't you stay tonight?"

"You know Ryder won the prize of sleeping with you tonight." He smoothed her hair back. "I have a long day with the FBI anyway—I will see you tomorrow evening."

"Okay," she whispered, smiling the way Luc liked her to.

His cold brother took it in, his forming for a fleeting moment before he leaned down and kissed the corner of her mouth. "Sleep well, Jane."

Ryder decided to enter, his gaze locking with hers like it always did. “I’ll let her sleep a little bit.”

Luc straightened and walked toward him. “She’s had a long day.”

“I know.” He shooed him and went over to inspect his girl. “How you feeling, Bambi?”

Her eyes glowed, and she breathed a little faster. When he called her, she knew he was letting all his intrusive dirty thoughts win.

“You gonna give me the silent treatment because I didn’t scream like the others?”

She laughed, holding out her hand when Luc shut the door. “I’m not as strong as you.”

“You’re stronger than all of us,” he said, sitting beside her and taking her hand. “We’ll pull out all the tricks they have—if you want drugs, we’ll give you drugs. And I’m grounding the twins as soon as they’re born for hurting you.”

“I’m sure you’ll be a puddle of emotions when you see them.” She played with his fingers, sighing. “What time is it?”

He checked his phone. “Two.”

“Ugh, I feel so old already. I have never seen my mom shop so much.” She glared at him. “You could’ve told them to make her come later.”

“I wasn’t in charge,” he said, grabbing her by the thigh and sliding her so that he could rub her down too. “You wanna take a bath?”

She shook her head. “Morning. Can you get this dress off me?”

“Stop trying to seduce me, Miss Mortaime.” He grinned, tugging her, so she sat up. “You already snagged me.”

Holding up her arms, she scoffed. “I really wish I could seduce you. Instead, I’m over here rolling around like a beach ball at night, trying to get off the bed so I can pee twenty times. Lookin’ like a prize butterball turkey and shit.”

“Hon, you do not look like a turkey flopping around.”

“I didn’t say anything about flopping.” She smacked his thigh once he got the dress off. “Sexy jerk. I should make you get fat with me.”

“You’re not getting fat.” He gripped her jaw and pressed a hard kiss on her lips. “I’m barely containing the urge to fuck your tight ...”

She smacked his leg again, laughing. “Stop. I’m serious.”

“So am I.” He gave her another kiss. “You could pull me if we met on the street—baby bump and all. I’d fight your baby daddy to make you mine.”

She smiled, her face warming. “Whatever. I’m still gonna get fat and never be the same.”

“Babe, after you have the babies, if you want to work on your body, I’ll help.”

She nodded, her hand dropping to her tummy. “Did you see the stretch mark?”

He smiled even though it hurt him to do it. She’d gotten her first stretch mark on her waist. “I saw it last night.” He put his hand over it, rubbing like he could take it away. He didn’t like leaving marks on her skin. He’d done so numerous times, and she proudly wore them. He just hated that loving him would always cost her something.

“It’s ugly.” She shifted her gaze away from his. “I think I’m gonna get more, even with the creams Luc and David put on me.”

“You might get more,” he said. He couldn’t lie to her and make a promise that would likely not be true. Some women got them. Some didn’t. Jane apparently got them. His gaze fell to the jagged red line, and he traced it with his fingers. “It’ll fade, angel. And every time I see it, I’ll remember how you smiled today when you told everyone we’re having a baby boy and girl. They wouldn’t exist without this mark. They wouldn’t be strong without any of the others that are likely to come.” He looked at her face and smiled. “I’ve never wanted to see you scarred, but knowing these are because we created two little lives and you’re growing them—that’s fucking amazing.”

A faint smile tugged at her lips, but her eyes misted with tears. “But what if I don’t like how it looks? I know I should be proud of how my body is changing because that means I created our babies, but I only just started loving my body. I only got to be young and beautiful for a year with you.”

“Oh, baby,” he said, leaning down. He cradled her head between his forearms and nuzzled her neck. “You know I’ll always see the most beautiful woman when I look at you. But I know it’s not about me. I’m sorry that I took this from you.”

“You didn’t—I don’t mean it that way.” She hugged him, and he moved out of her hold to kiss her tummy.

He smiled against her skin when there was an answering kick. “Settle down in there,” he mumbled, kissing it again before looking at Jane. Her lips were parted, her eyes wide. He smiled wider. He never ‘talked’ to his children. He didn’t touch her tummy much anymore and certainly didn’t kiss it.

“Baby girl, you know this is hard for me. They’re mine—but not the way you’re mine.”

Her head bobbed, and she covered his hand as he caressed her stomach. Jane understood that he couldn’t bond with them like the others would be able to, and he was grateful that she understood him. But he needed to try. His children didn’t deserve to have an unloving father. Jane shouldn’t have to love their children for both of them. His brothers and David shouldn’t have to take on the roles of loving fathers because he only cared about Jane.

“I know you’re so in love with them,” he said, dropping his gaze to the red mark, “but I’m also aware that you didn’t plan to get pregnant so soon. Out of all of us, you have to lose this—the chance to be unchanged. Even if I’m becoming a father, I don’t have to sacrifice my body.”

He leaned down and kissed her tummy again. “I’ll help you as much as I can, but please know that I don’t expect you to *bounce back*. I’ll love the changes. Don’t let yourself think like the world does—that you only have to eat right and work out.” He shook his head, upset that women were expected to return to their previous appearance. “I do not doubt that you will work hard if that’s what you want, but don’t think that I or the others expect you to return to the body you had twenty-two weeks ago.”

“What are you saying?”

“I’m saying that I see more than the surface image of you, and I’ll always be in awe. But ... I’m not you. I can try to help you see what I do so that you’ll love what happens to your appearance, but it will still be up to how you feel about yourself. Just know that I’m here for it no matter what.”

“So ... if I end up hating how I look, even with working out and eating right, and I want to fix it ...”

He breathed steadily and kept his expression neutral. He'd already considered what she was getting at because he'd used her MacBook the other day, and her recent Google search had been about plastic surgery. No way did he want her to take unnecessary risks, but he couldn't tell her what to do with her body. “If you want to fix it, I'll help you find the safest methods and help you understand all the risks that might come with it.”

Her smile lit up her face. “Maybe I'll pop out a few more first.”

“Whatever you want.” He moved to kiss her pretty lips, laughing because his children kicked at his stomach when he pressed down on her. “Already picking fights with me,” he said, moving to her side so he could continue ‘bonding.’ “You think it's our son or daughter?”

“Son,” she said. “Every girl we have is gonna be sweet about you.”

“Yeah?” He smiled even though it was still only for her. Maybe he'd feel something more than protection one day because they were his and hers. “Like their mama—can't be mad at me.”

“Exactly,” she said, running her fingers through his hair.

He glanced at her face and was hit with the full force of her love for him. Jane wore every emotion across her face, but her eyes—they shouted to the heavens and roared to the pits of Hell. He hoped she saw the same, but just in case, he said, “I love you.”

“And I love you,” she said, smiling exactly like she did when he first saw her smile his way. She’d been in love with David, he knew, but one day he’d been passing through the halls at school, and he’d told some girl to leave him the fuck alone because he liked a sexy brunette she didn’t compare to. Then he’d winked Jane’s way, and his hazel-eyed girl had caught sight of it. She wanted to pretend she hated him, but in that tiny moment during their sophomore year, she’d slipped and smiled like a silly girl with a crush.

“Come here,” he said, slipping his hand beneath her neck and lifting her just enough she wouldn’t see behind her. He kissed her the way he’d wanted to all those years ago. He’d never tire of her lips against his, but he eased back so his brother could greet her.

“*Tesoro*,” his brother murmured, sitting behind her.

She smiled at Ryder before turning to see her other boyfriend. “I thought you won tomorrow night.”

Tercero caressed her cheek, giving her that faint smile he often slipped her. “We decided to share our prize.”

The tension always left his body when he saw her with the others, especially Tercero. His brother loved her in a way he couldn’t, and he loved seeing her with him again.

He leaned back to watch them. Jane loved Tercero’s long hair, and she wasted no time running her fingers through the ends of his ponytail. They’d wanted to love her together tonight—just the two of them. Her two Ryders ... Two Terceros. But they both knew she was tired, so he’d give her this—two Ryders to cuddle with after a long day.

They’d wake her with her fantasy in the morning.

“Time to sleep, Sweetest Jane,” Tercero said, leaning down to kiss her.

Ryder thought he was sometimes delicate about Jane, but Tercero had a bit more finesse in his movements. He made kissing Jane an art, and though he’d mastered his technique, he never stopped trying to perfect himself for her. They were beautiful.

“Mm,” Jane hummed, but they both heard the sleepiness in the sexy sound.

“Come here, babe,” he said, sliding her to the middle of the bed.

“I’m not that sleepy,” she protested, clutching Tercero’s leg as he kneeled and peeled off his shirt. And knives. “Daddy Tercero,” she murmured, “I almost thought you wouldn’t ...”

Ryder laughed, situating her on the pillow after prying her off Tercero. “Silly girl, you knew he was Daddy. We all did.”

Tercero’s smile was soft, but Ryder saw the longing and sadness in his eyes when he glanced at her stomach. David had that same look. Archer and Luc not so much, but he knew Luc was going to see to it that he sired a child with her someday.

“Sorry,” Jane said.

“Don’t apologize,” Tercero told her, lying beside her and touching her stomach. “I hurt you. It’s okay for you to doubt me—I deserve it. I hope you will see how much I consider them mine one day.”

“They are yours,” she whispered.

“Yes,” Tercero said, “they are mine.”

Ryder watched the little hitch in her breath as she tried to control her emotions. She needed time to process things. She

felt so much all at once, and while the night had been fun, she'd been confronted with many stressful issues that had been hanging over her head.

Tercero's gaze met his, and Ryder smiled at the shock in his dark eyes when he realized there was no need to ask for permission to hold her.

"We're equal, little brother," Ryder told him, moving his arm so Jane could curl up with Tercero. "At least for tonight."

His brother laughed, speaking in Italian so Jane wouldn't understand. "*You are a good brother. A better boyfriend to her. As it should be.*"

Ryder rolled onto his side, halfway spooning his girl without being in his brother's face and responding in their made-up language. "*And you will be the better father, my brother. As it must be.*"

"What are y'all saying?" she asked, sounding like she'd already fallen asleep.

Tercero caressed her cheek and kissed her head. "Nothing of importance."

Ryder rested a hand on her stomach beside his brother's. "Good night, Sweet Jane. Have pretty dreams of us ... I'll keep the monsters away."

Her response wasn't immediate—and it was only a whisper. "Good night, Sweet Death."

He smiled, closing his eyes as he caressed her stomach, occasionally bumping fingers with his brother. It wasn't until her breathing calmed and a light snore left her that Tercero spoke again in their secret language.

“You’re wrong, brother,” he said quietly. “You are already a wonderful father. You need help to look away from her for a few moments. I’ll show you how. And I’ll watch her when you’re ready.”

He didn’t think it could happen, but he would try. A soft nudge against his hand made him smile, and he realized he’d smiled just for it and not Jane’s sake.

“It’s the girl,” Tercero said softly, patting the spot he’d had his hand. “The boy is here. You’ll bond with the girl easier, I think. A little Jane.”

“How do you know which one it is?”

Tercero moved his hand near Ryder’s. “She presses her hand against ours. It’s a different set of pressure and size—I have also felt his little punches. He’s never gentle.” He moved to where his hand was before and received a very noticeable kick. There was a smile in his voice when he spoke again. “See? He kicks us away from his girls.”

Chuckling, Ryder slid his hand to *his spot* on Jane. “This is my woman, boy.” He didn’t claim his daughter, but he felt peace and closed his eyes as Tercero caressed both spots the babies had kicked and wished them good night from their daddies.

“It’ll be easier for you when they are here,” Tercero whispered. “Good night, brother.”

Ryder reached over and squeezed Tercero’s hand the way he used to when they were younger. He was the oldest and the smallest, but he still protected the others when they were afraid and unloved by their father. Even then, he could not love them the way they did each other. His only affection was

a squeeze of their hands before night swallowed them. “Good night, brother.”

CHAPTER FORTY

26 weeks

Archer checked the time and sighed. He needed to get Jane out of the intake warehouse soon—a *shipment* was coming. Honestly, he wasn't thrilled about her helping Luc with survivors. His brother thought she would find peace with it—helping others who shared similar horrors—but Archer knew better.

He'd watched her eyes strain when the instructor spoke to her and the others receiving training about delivering proper care to survivors. She'd been given examples of many types of abuse they would likely encounter and how differently each person might react to receiving care.

Thankfully, it was only training. Maybe he could guide her to a less involved area to help before she committed herself to anything. She had promised that she wouldn't interfere while she was pregnant anyway. He had time to come up with a different way for her to help.

David and Luc didn't understand his position on the matter. They both assumed that because Jane knew darkness herself—knew how it felt to her—she might be helpful and comforting to others.

Tercero and Ryder knew where his thoughts were. They knew that while Jane would likely feel something good had come out of all her bad, eventually, it would take a toll on her. She'd suffer flashbacks. She'd likely feel helpless and even put herself down when interacting with someone who'd suffered more than she had. She'd feel weak—not strong.

Some people didn't understand that helping others often hurt. Opening up about your suffering allowed others an opportunity to attack. They'd call her an attention seeker—people already did when Dylan Berith dragged her off the football field. There would always be someone ready to tear her apart. Jane could take a lot, but he knew someone—maybe even another survivor—would say she was making someone else's situation about her when she thought sharing her trauma would help another not feel alone. And it would shatter part of her soul.

Of course, it wouldn't always be like that, and it wasn't that he felt Jane shouldn't help or that he wanted survivors deprived of the care Luc could give. He simply knew something would eventually go wrong, and she'd suffer. He couldn't let her suffer anymore.

Jane glanced at him, her smile beautiful but tortured.

Fuck, it's already too much.

She wasn't ready for this, just as he'd feared. Archer pushed off the wall he leaned on, ready to take her away but stopped when a hangar door began to open. "Shit."

A car pulled into the warehouse, followed by two unmarked vans. The *shipment* was early.

"What's happened?" Jane came to his side, sliding an arm around his waist.

He hugged her, cringing when Luc, Tercero, and Alpha exited the primary vehicle, followed by Luc's staff, who'd been preparing for an intake. "Let's get out of here."

Jane didn't move, her body locked up tight as women and children were helped out of the vans. "I ... no one told me this was happening today."

"They're early," he said, watching her face, reading every emotion she felt. *Too much*. "Let's hurry. The others were already escorted out."

Jane pulled her eyes away from the scene below and over to the table she'd been at receiving training. It was empty. "It's bad for me to be here?"

Archer held her cheek, guiding her to look at him. "You're not ready. Come on. We'll catch a movie or something."

She frowned, pushing his hand down. "I don't think I can watch a movie right now."

He sighed. "I'm sorry—that was a horrible idea. Let's just go home."

A scream and wailing child pulled her from his hold, and she rushed to the railing to look down at the scene. Someone was having a panic attack or something, and several children had started to cry.

Tercero walked over when the lady shoved someone who tried to approach her, but his brother only seemed to terrify her more.

"Get away," she screamed, clutching her chest and falling. More women had noticed Tercero, and their fearful gazes said one thing—they'd seen him kill someone.

Jane's voice cracked when she said, "They're afraid of him. I thought they understood he was saving them."

"Some do, but many don't. He's used to it. Come on, gorgeous. I don't want you to see this right now."

She gripped the railing, her breath hitching when Luc and Tercero noticed her—so had many of the frightened women. Shock, fear, anger, worry. They were either afraid of Jane, confused, or worried for her.

Luc shook his head, striding up the stairs to where they stood. "Archer, you were supposed to be gone by now."

"They're afraid of y'all," Jane said, reaching for Luc.

"Of course they are," Luc said, his eyes fierce until he sighed and hugged Jane. "You're not meant to see this."

"You didn't tell me," she said, patting Luc across the chest, searching him.

"I'm not hurt," Luc said, pushing her hand down only to hug her once more. "Tercero is fine as well."

"I wanna see him." Jane leaned out of his hold to look over the railing again. "Maybe if they see him with me ..."

"Jane." Archer took her hand, shaking his head. "No, it's time to leave."

She didn't budge. She was already locked in a staring contest with Tercero. "But he might need me."

Luc growled, taking her hand. "I will escort you down to speak to him. But I expect you to leave without argument after you see he's okay."

Archer glared at Luc, but he knew his big brother wouldn't go back on his word to her.

She bobbed her head. “Yes, I’ll leave. I just need to touch him.”

Luc huffed, folding her arm in his. “Head high, and hold in your hysterics. If you must, release them away from these survivors.”

The fire in Archer’s veins was unbearable as he followed them. He knew Luc took this side of his business seriously—as he should—but it pissed him off that his brother was telling her to set aside her emotions. She was a human with feelings too, and she was a survivor herself. Who knew what was going through her mind? All Archer remembered was the horrible state Jane had been left in after her attack when they were still in high school.

Ryder hadn’t let him or anyone else speak to her, but she’d locked eyes with him as she was carried out of the woods that night. Archer would never forget that haunted look in her eyes. He prayed she wasn’t thinking about it at all.

“*Tesoro*, you shouldn’t be here,” his brother greeted Jane, turning and shielding her from seeing the chaos that unfolded when receiving survivors immediately after rescue.

“I was training,” she said quietly, trailing her fingers over his face as she had learned her lesson about getting too close to Tercero while he was geared up.

“I knew you were training today—we expected you to be finished.” He caressed her cheek and leaned down to kiss her. It was just as beautiful as any time his brother kissed her.

Luc crossed his arms, monitoring his staff. The one woman still wouldn’t let anyone near, but she had quieted and watched them.

Tercero ended the kiss and lowered a hand to Jane's tummy. "It's time for you to go now."

"Are you okay?" She searched him with her eyes only, stopping on a blood spatter.

"It's not mine." Tercero smiled, caressing her stomach. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you—it was an unexpected rescue."

Jane nodded but clung to Tercero's arm, her gaze growing more protective than emotional.

Archer knew what had changed. She knew how much it got to his brother and was angry that he needed to do such a thing. Luc's vicious little queen was showing herself, and their queen protected her kings.

"Archer?" someone sobbed.

He looked to his left, searching for whoever had spoken, only to frown when one of the survivors walked forward.

"*Merda*," Tercero said, turning Jane away from him.

Archer didn't know why his brother had shot him a glare before fully facing the other direction, but then it hit him—the woman approaching him with dried tears on her face and tangled hair was someone he knew. Someone he'd fucked and walked out on.

Her dark eyes flitted around the warehouse before zeroing in on Tercero's back, then Luc's. His older brother sent him a questioning look but resumed his observation of things.

Too soon, the woman was in Archer's space, a hopeful spark in her eyes. "I had prayed he'd recognized me and contacted you."

He took a step away when she rested a hand on his arm. "Uh, fuck." He searched his mind for her name and thankfully

remembered it. “Leah, hey.”

She flinched at a loud bang from a hangar door being shut, then glanced over at Jane, who was watching. “He didn’t call you for me, did he?”

Archer tried to work out why she thought Tercero would call her, and then he remembered his brother had been the one she’d tried to find comfort in. “Oh, no, Leah.” He peeked at Jane, noting her vicious side had disappeared, and nothing but confusion and fear clouded her eyes. He’d never hated himself more for his reckless past with women.

The situation should’ve made it irrelevant, but it was a dirty truth. His girlfriend would always bump into his past conquests, and either bad luck or karma had allowed it to happen at the moment the haunted stare from that horrible night returned to Jane’s eyes.

Archer sighed, facing Leah again. She looked like she’d been through something horrific, but Jane was his priority. “I was here with my girlfriend.” He gestured to Jane. “We were just leaving.”

Leah’s lip trembled, and she looked down at her dirty feet. “Oh.”

“Is there someone they can call for you?” he asked, looking over his shoulder to see Jane and Tercero whispering to each other.

“No.” Leah let out a sad laugh. “I don’t know how long I’ve been gone, but I doubt anyone would’ve noticed. Maybe my professors.”

He nodded, not sure what she expected from him. “Well, I promise you’re safe. Luc is my older brother—he oversees everything. His staff can get you anything you need.”

“Archer?” Jane touched his back, then moved to his side. Her eyes were on Leah, but she spoke to him. “Tercero’s going to take me home. You can stay and help your friend.”

He nearly cursed that he only wanted to leave with her—get her away from everything terrible—but he couldn’t spit the words out. He was too panicked as he saw how Jane’s eyes drifted over Leah’s face. Logically, he knew Jane was concerned, but his thoughts spun out of control. All he knew was that his girlfriend, whom he’d dreamed of having for years, would hate him. She would realize he was a bastard and decide she didn’t want his past flaunted in her face.

Hazel eyes dimmed when they met his stare, and Jane smiled sadly before turning and heading off with Tercero. She didn’t even say goodbye.

Archer stared after her, hating how tense she appeared. She was trying to hold her head high and show the survivors that her men would not hurt them, but she was slipping. And she was falling with Tercero, who still needed time to reflect on the lives he’d taken.

A throat cleared, pulling his attention to Leah again. She was cowering ... from Alpha.

The big guy who’d been around Jane a lot more than Ryder appreciated shifted his eyes from Leah and the direction Jane had gone. “It’s best that you go, Archer. I can see that your friend is reunited with family or friends.”

Archer checked on Leah. She wanted him; he knew she did. He remembered now that she’d been very clingy when they hooked up. Even though he’d explained he was only interested in sex, she’d tried to make plans to see him again. Then he learned about Tercero leaving Jane, and nothing else mattered to him.

No way would he stray, but he feared Jane would think so. “I ...” He hated how Leah jerked her head up, that hopeful plea in her eyes again.

“I don’t have anyone,” she whispered, her eyes watering. “Please.”

Archer noticed Luc had picked up on the situation and was discreetly watching. It was hard to tell if his brother doubted his commitment to Jane, but that was the first thought in his mind—that everyone would believe he had been playing a game with her.

Alpha shook his head. “It’s best that he leaves. I can help you through the registration process and leave you with the people who can best get you what you need and where you want to go.”

“I can stay with her,” Archer said, not wanting to but trying not to be a dick for once. At the very least, Jane might be proud of him. He just hoped he didn’t lose her because someone he’d fucked and forgotten wanted to cling to him after a horrible trauma.

Alpha put a hand on his shoulder, shaking his head. “Go to Jane.” His eyes narrowed on Archer. “You’re not suitable for providing care to anyone here.”

Offended but grateful, Archer nodded before dropping his focus to Leah, who was now crying. “He’s probably right—I don’t know how to help you, Leah. And I can’t offer you anything anyway. I need to be with my girlfriend. I swear these are the good guys.” He slapped Alpha’s shoulder, smirking when the man scowled at him. “They’re only mean to the bad guys. Alpha will help you get where you need to be.”

She breathed out, stepping away. “I thought she was his girlfriend. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry,” he said, trying to look at least a bit sympathetic. He didn’t know how anyone who went to school with him would not know he was with Jane, but he didn’t linger on it. Maybe she was grasping at something she knew.

Alpha grunted, crossing his arms. “His girlfriend has many boyfriends, but you don’t need to concern yourself with either of them—this is about you. Now please allow me to assist you.”

Luc strolled over, passing a piece of paper to Alpha before putting a hand on Archer’s shoulder and guiding him away. The growl in his brother’s chest sounded inhuman. “What are you thinking?”

Archer overheard Alpha’s response to something Leah had asked, “No, she’s my girlfriend as well. Please come this way. I’ll leave you in the care of someone who can help.”

“Did he just say Jane is his girlfriend?” Archer asked Luc.

“He tells every woman that he has a girlfriend.” Luc led Archer up the stairs. “Some survivors attach themselves to their rescuers. I forbid my staff to indulge in such attachments.”

“But his girlfriend?”

Luc’s lip twitched with a faint smirk. “Jealous, little brother? You just had your past fuck buddy try to steal you from our girlfriend.”

He rolled his eyes, knowing Luc was concerned for Leah’s welfare, but he was a mean prick too. “I’m not jealous, but our brother might kill him for making that claim.”

“Ryder is the one who suggested he use Jane as a cover—with her permission, of course.” Luc stopped at the top of the landing and turned to watch the work below.

“Why would Ryder tell him to do that?”

Luc’s steely eyes caught him and narrowed. “Even the strongest and bravest men can have demons. My Fallen struggle to interact with nearly every woman they meet. Jane is an exception because they see how I love and trust her.”

Archer scratched his head, pondering the whole thing. “And Ryder knew this?”

“You know our brother is capable of learning various truths.” Luc crossed his arms and focused on the medic tent where Alpha took Leah. “He overheard a conversation between my Fallen. Four had a panic attack after a woman hugged him, and Alpha was furious that someone wasn’t there to intercept. Ryder asked if they had to deal with women approaching them often, and they explained they did at intakes, Dungeon, and in public. He told them to say they have a girlfriend—or boyfriend. Not every woman takes the hint, unfortunately.”

“So how does that lead to Alpha calling Jane his girlfriend?”

A dark smile graced his brother’s face. “Because our brother thought about someone besides Jane for once. He suggested it to them, then spoke to Jane about it. She agreed immediately. They have a photo of her on their phones’ lock screens and wallpapers to create a convincing charade. Four considers her a security blanket or backup plan. But Alpha has taken Jane to one of the group therapy sessions—as his girlfriend.”

“You’re joking.”

“I don’t joke about the Fallen or their needs.” Luc tugged his sleeves and fixed his tie. “They’re not ready to date and do not know their sexual preferences yet. A fake girlfriend is a simple remedy to an area in their life that causes them distress. Alpha is highly desired, as are the others. While he does not suffer panic attacks, he does become stressed. He had a persistent admirer at therapy—Jane was more than happy to assist.”

“Lots of people know Jane’s face, though.”

“They know our girlfriend has multiple boyfriends.” Luc turned, glancing behind him. “Go to her now and be mindful of schedule changes next time you bring her. She’s not ready for this.”

“I only had one notification that you were expected an hour from now,” he defended as he checked on Leah one last time. He noticed Alpha did seem uncomfortable and had moved to observe from a short distance. “I don’t know Leah well—or care about her—but make sure she’s not put with anyone who would take advantage. See she’s taken care of.”

“She’ll be safe and receive everything I can offer.” Luc motioned for him to go. “It looks like Ryder sent Than and Damon—that’s not a good sign.”

“I’ll let you know what’s up.” He pushed through the glass door that led to an administrative area and jogged to catch up to Jane and Tercero.

When he reached them, Jane was taking Than’s arm, asking, “I’m assuming he wants me somewhere?”

“Yes, and yes, he’s fine,” Than said. “Come.”

Jane peeked over, noting Archer had arrived but still turned away to leave with Than.

Before Archer could reach for her, Damon stopped him and Tercero. “Ryder wants her in lockdown.”

“What’s happened?” Tercero asked.

“Someone showed up at the gym to offer him a deal,” Damon said with a smile.

“What kind of deal?” Tercero asked.

“The kind that involves lots of money and protection ... in exchange for him providing interference and elimination of a certain set of brothers.”

Tercero nodded, passing Damon to go after Jane.

“Why do they always go to him?” Archer asked.

“They know he’s the most dangerous of you,” Damon said, nudging him in the direction Jane and the others had gone. “They fear Luc’s power and ruthlessness but are terrified of Ryder. So they think offering deals where he has her all to himself will appeal to him. And they think offering to kill Dylan Berith and the others involved in Jane’s abduction will sweeten the deal.”

Archer chuckled and started walking. “They’re a year too late to think he’d keep her to himself. And Luc called dibs on Dylan.”

Damon smirked, falling in step with him. “Luc’s going to skin Dylan alive.”

“I wish I could watch.” He didn’t give a fuck if it was wrong. Archer knew some of Luc’s intel. Luc had spies in prison, and he knew Dylan was coming for Jane after his release. The man didn’t care about the fallout, even though he

knew the reach of Luc's power. He hated her. He wanted her to suffer and for them to break at the loss of her. But he'd never get a chance to glimpse her. She had David for the good guy shit, but even David had ensured something was in place before he agreed to stay clear of any information about the situation.

"That can be arranged," Damon said.

"Good." Archer turned the corner, smiling when he saw Jane peering up at Tercero while his brother cupped her face. Tercero killed someone or many only hours ago, but he finally had peace because Jane was holding his waist and smiling at him, telling him he was incredible for saving so many lives and that she was so proud of him.

"They're so cute it makes me nauseous," Damon muttered, looking down at his phone with a frown as he came to a halt.

Archer stopped with him to let his brother could have whatever moment they were having. Hopefully Tercero was covering his ass. "Whatever. I know you like watching them the same way I do."

Damon raised his eyes to him, then over to Tercero and Jane. "Shut up."

He laughed, peeking over his shoulder when Tercero leaned down and kissed Jane. Then, he turned back to Damon. "How's Justine? I haven't seen or heard about her in a while."

"I ended things." Damon pocketed his phone.

That surprised Archer, and he waited for him to elaborate.

Sighing, Damon looked him in the eyes. "At the baby shower, she demanded I stay away from Jane. She said if I loved her, I'd do it. She wanted me to go no contact with Jane, all while she had the freedom to do whatever she wanted with

the weirdos she plays with at dungeons.” He shrugged, his gaze sliding to Jane. “It was an easy decision.”

“What?” Archer knew Damon was loyal, but this shocked him. Actually, it didn’t, and he felt bad for the mean asshole. “Does Jane know?”

“No.” Damon pulled his gaze from Jane. “And you won’t say anything to her. She’ll feel guilty, and it’s not her fault. Things with Justine were always destined to fail.”

Archer nodded because he had met Justine a few times. She was incredibly sexy but wanted to control Damon, and she was very two-faced with Jane, and he didn’t doubt other women as well. He’d never forget how she smiled and laughed with Jane at the shower, then sneered at her as soon as she turned her back, only to meet Ryder’s glare. He didn’t doubt that had been the clincher for Justine to give Damon an ultimatum.

“Archer,” Jane said, “you’re not staying?”

He went to her, cradling her face. “It was very thoughtful of you to offer that I stay. But I’m not Leah’s friend, and I’m not trained to help her. You’re where I want to be anyway. I hope you’re not upset. I forgot you’ve met her before.”

She dropped her gaze, biting her lip. “You’re sure you wouldn’t prefer to go with her?”

“Gorgeous,” he said, tilting her face up, “I’m a dick for not caring about her—I was gonna try after you suggested it, but there isn’t anything I want with her or anyone else.”

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t even think about that.” A weak smile tugged at her mouth. She was shutting doors in her mind. “I wanna go home.”

Damon stepped forward, sliding an arm around her waist as he pocketed his phone. “We need to leave, Jane.”

“Okay.” She leaned against Damon and let her guard guide her out behind Than.

He waited with his brother.

“Are you armed?” Tercero asked.

“Always.” Archer rubbed his face. “I’m a dick.”

“Yes.” Tercero chuckled, following the others. “Don’t worry—she knows you love her. She also knows you’re not the caring type—even if people mistake your personality for being a compassionate person. She knows you are not.”

“Ouch.” He grinned, catching up with Tercero.

Tercero side-eyed him. “You realized you didn’t care what had happened to Leah—to any of them—didn’t you?”

It was something he’d known about himself well before witnessing Jane struggle. He didn’t know if he became that way because he wore a mask for so long, or if it was just how he was.

All he knew was the night Jane had been abducted, something shifted inside him. He knew she was in danger, but he immediately dropped to aid Tercero—to comfort him because he knew what his brother would feel if he survived.

“Don’t stress over it.” Tercero held open a door for him. “There is an incredible amount of evil and suffering in the world, and some cannot allow themselves to care. It’s not always that someone is heartless. If that were so, you wouldn’t care for Jane and us.”

“You give me a lot of credit.”

A faint smile touched his brother's mouth. "Because you deserve it. You lack empathy for reasons I don't understand, but you do understand what those survivors are feeling and what they experienced. You know their suffering, yet it doesn't affect you. I think you know you would not be able to function and carry out your duty to Jane if you did care for those people. So you do not.

"But you help fund Luc's operations so these people can be helped. You've backed me up on a rescue—risking your life for someone who means nothing to you. You have no reason to force yourself to care, little brother. Everyone has bad thoughts and levels of empathy for others—but no one should be judged for their thoughts. Actions are what matter. Jane knows that. She also knows you won't stray."

He smiled. "She's our silly girl, though."

"Yes. Our territorial yet emotional, silly girl. Sometimes I wish she didn't feel so much—that I did not either. But I think I'm destined to feel suffering. That's why I love watching our brother with Jane. She can make someone so empty—so neutral—feel every emotion inside her. And he makes magic for her." Tercero scanned the parking lot, sighing. "I saw what you did in there—how her eyes ..." He shook his head. "I'll ride with her unless you want me to drive your car."

"Nah, go ahead. I think she wants you, but I'll be there too." He patted his shoulder. "You're okay, aren't you?"

Tercero nodded. "She keeps the dark away."

Archer turned away, heading for his car with a smile. Finally, his panic faded, and he realized he was worried about another. Tercero was a badass, but he felt things he did not.

They must've done something right in another life because the universe and all the gods in all the heavens and hells had created the perfect woman for them. She understood them and didn't judge them for their thoughts or beliefs.



Ryder glanced up from the sink and locked eyes with Luc. “Don't give me shit for having to clean up after me.”

Luc stared at the blood swirling down the drain. “I didn't say anything.”

“You were thinking it.” Ryder used the brush to get under his nails. “Did you finish him?”

“I promised I would.”

“Don't even know why I asked.” Ryder finished rinsing the blood from his hands and shut off the taps. “Shoulda let him suffer for at least a day.”

“My schedule is full, and I'd much rather go home to our girlfriend than spend hours tormenting someone foolish enough to approach you about such things.”

“Getting soft, eh?” He laughed, drying his hands. “What'd the agents say about Tercero's kill last week?”

“To keep a tighter leash on him.” Luc stared at his wrist, rubbing the tattoo there with his thumb. “I created a believable self-defense story, but I might ask him to remain home with Jane for a while. She's getting closer to delivering anyway. I think he'd like a reason to *vacation*.”

Nodding, Ryder checked his phone and smiled at the numerous texts from their girl. She was such a little psycho.

Pregnancy hormones had taken her to a whole new level, however.

“Do not smile around me unless you are harming someone,” Luc said, tugging his sleeve.

“Fuck you. I can smile about Jane.” He read through her texts before responding to her.

MY MOON

Fine.

Don't call me.

Go marry whatever bitch you found.

Will you calm the fuck down?

I'm with Luc. Working.

She responded instantly.

MY MOON

Bull fucking shit, Ryder Godson!

“Jesus Christ,” Ryder muttered, ignoring Luc’s impatient huff so he could respond:

I'm texting Papi to stick a dick in your ass if you don't settle down.

MY MOON

Why? So you can stick yours in someone else's?

“Fucking hell, she’s a demon,” he said, clicking the Facetime button beside her name. “Hang on,” he told Luc as the phone rang. “She’s being ...”

Jane picked up before he could finish. “Well, well, well,” she drawled, narrowing those fiery hazel eyes on him, “look who finally decided to call his baby mama.”

He searched her face, noting her puffy lips and the hickey on her neck. “Told you a thousand times, hon. You’re wifey. And don’t give me shit when you look like you’ve been fucked by at least two of my brothers. Maybe David.”

“David’s not home,” she said, seething.

“That what your problem is?” He laughed at her angry scowl. “Tercero and Archer not fucking you right?”

“I’m fucked fine!” Her eyes darted all over the screen, and he realized she was trying to figure out where he was.

He turned, allowing her to see Luc in the background. “Well, as you can see, I’m with Luc, like I said. So unless I’m fucking his tight ass, I haven’t stuck my dick anywhere. I was busy. I didn’t want you to hear the business I was handling, so I didn’t call.” He watched her drop her gaze and sighed when she wiped under her eyes. He’d gotten a call from Archer about the incident with her being at an intake and how they all saw her shutting parts of herself away in her mind. He’d have to get home to her soon but for now, he had to keep her in the present. “Your hormones are making you paranoid.”

“I had a dream,” she croaked, looking up at him as all the colors in her eyes glowed with the tears.

“What kind of dream, angel?” He followed Luc to his office. They had a little more to handle before they were finished, but he’d take care of his girl.

“You were cheating,” she said, lowering her eyes again. “With Damon’s girlfriend.”

He didn't tell her that Damon and Justine had broken up. She'd had a few cheating dreams about him, David, and Luc. He'd found out it was common for pregnant women to have dreams like that. He didn't like that she would throw him into the mix, even if it was her subconsciousness. "I didn't cheat with Justine. I haven't cheated at all, and I won't cheat on you. Ever."

She didn't meet his stare but nodded and wiped her face again.

"You know me." He sprawled out on Luc's sofa as his brother began typing on a computer. "You're all I want, Sweet Jane. All I want to see and touch—lick and fuck too."

A smile finally formed on her lips, and she peeked at him. Those glassy eyes somehow pierced his heart and turned him on.

He smiled back. "I'm not fucking or loving or even thinking about or talking to anyone else. You know this."

"I just know," she said, her voice weak and sad, "we haven't been together in a few days. And last time you stopped."

"I stopped because you started having contractions," he reminded her. She'd had Braxton Hicks three times—each time because of sex. Once with him—the other two times had been Archer and David. "I still finished inside you." He grinned when she pressed her lips together. "I gave you just the tip after you jacked me off. You made it feel almost as good as your pretty pussy."

"No I didn't." She sniffed, looking behind her. Tercero was with her.

“You did.” He shot Luc a smirk, then focused on her again. “You know I love when you use both hands and lube. You’ve got the perfect grip. I’ve told you before. I’m a pussy man, but your handjobs come in second. Then your mouth. Then your ass.”

“Thanks for telling me I suck at blowjobs.” She smiled at him, though, and he watched her eyes flutter shut as Tercero sat behind her and kissed her shoulder.

“You do suck,” he said, chuckling. “Very nicely. But you know I don’t like to hurt you. And I’m not lying—your handjobs and cock kisses are mind-blowing. You have no reason to think I’d go anywhere else. So even if I jack off, doing it with you is better than anything anyone else could do for me.”

“You just say that because I’m the only person you’ve been with.”

He decided to use his bossy, asshole tone with her. “Jane.” He gave her a dark look. “Enough. I’m not even going there with you, so stop. None of us are cheating. Now I’m gonna let you go. Let your other boyfriends spend time with you because I’m keeping you when I come home.”

“How long will you both be?” She closed her eyes as Tercero worked his magic on her.

Ryder glanced at Luc, who held up two fingers before returning to whatever he typed. “Two hours, baby,” he said, focusing on her again. “Okay?”

Her head bobbed, and she sighed, staring at him while Tercero pampered her. “I love you.”

“And I love you.” He smiled when her pretty lips parted, and a little gasp left her. “Group bed, brother,” he told Tercero

so he wouldn't have to steal her from anyone else's room.

Tercero plucked the phone from her hand, and his face appeared. "She'll be okay. Just the nap home got to her."

He nodded and smiled when she was the only one he saw. "I'm not going to tell you good night here because I plan to whisper it against your lips."

Her face pinked. "You better."

"I will." He sat up. "Tell Tercero to pamper you so I can —"

She cut him off, laughing. "Bye, Ryder."

"Stretch for me, Bambi." He winked, then ended the call so he and Luc could finish things. "All right, so what's your plan? Are your cleaners gonna take care of things?"

"Sin's already handling it." Luc read through something before focusing on him. "I don't want you putting yourself at risk. This deal with the FBI needs to be treated delicately. They'd love nothing more than to arrest any one of us, and you scare the shit out of them. They're not arresting you because they fear you'd kill whoever tried to take you in, or if they did manage to arrest you, you'd escape and hunt each of them down. They won't kill you because they know your brothers will do the same to them. Only I'd go further and destroy every one of their loved ones."

"I'm touched, big brother." He chuckled, grabbing a picture frame from Luc's desk. It was Jane and Luc at Dungeon. Someone had taken a photo of Luc kissing her at the auction. They were wearing masks, but it was still hot. "So what are you saying? You want me to turn the other way next time I'm approached?" He put the frame down and leaned

back with a smirk. “Or do you want me to take them up on their offer? Make her wifey for real?”

“You know I’ve encouraged you to marry her.” Luc pulled out a file and started writing. “David wants to badly, but his status as her stepbrother complicates legal matters. Tercero will never attempt to push you aside. Archer is content being her boyfriend for the rest of his life. And I’m aware you’d murder me if I married her and you did not.”

He grinned, checking his hands for blood. “You’ve really thought it all out, huh?”

Luc leaned back in his chair, steepling his fingers. “You were the first boyfriend, little brother. We are equal, yes, but that title in this life belongs to you if you want to claim it.”

“You really believe in that multiple dimension shit,” he said, copying Luc’s posture to annoy him.

“Child.” Luc lowered his hands and pinned him with a glare. “I’m saying that you have the most right to make her your wife, and I’ll not have her visiting her husband in prison every weekend. We took out a major operation, but more are always ready to take up the disgusting practice.”

“We knew that,” he said, not letting his hopes of making Jane his wife grow further.

“Yes, but I assumed we’d have some time. The press around the last take down, and the details the FBI chose to reveal, should have scared others.”

Ryder shrugged. “Bad guys will take risks as long as they stand to gain money or power.” Then he admitted, “I won’t ask her to marry me. Maybe something spiritual or whatever the fuck she wants ... when she wants it to be all of us. Yes, I’ll be

King Husband, but we can celebrate your lower status as the fourth husband when we get there.”

Luc stared at him weirdly, making Ryder’s mood drop.

“Stop trying to read my mind or some shit,” he said, standing. “I decided this when Tercero came back. We’re all Daddy. Someday, we’ll all be Husband.”

“You do realize she could fall in love with someone else,” Luc said, standing and grabbing his jacket.

“Aw,” he teased, walking toward the door. “Damon’s got you nervous, huh? Don’t worry ... I scared him.”

Luc sighed, leading the way to the back room where there were several bodies to dispose of. “Damon is not afraid of you. He merely knows he won’t win in a fight against you.”

“At least he’s smart.” He put his hands in his pockets, toying with the ring box he was moving to the mansion for safekeeping. He might not go about marrying Jane in the eyes of the law, but he was going to marry her.

“He’s patient,” Luc said, typing in the code to enter the room. “And he desires to see her happy.”

“Then we’ll see what happens,” he said, thinking about how Damon had dropped Justine. He welcomed the news because Justine was nuts but wasn’t thrilled about Damon being a free man. His eyes had been on Jane since he’d caught the fucker’s hand between her legs. “Jane’s clueless,” he added, raising a hand to his nose to help with the smell of blood and cleaning supplies.

“Isn’t she always?” Luc smiled. “You don’t have to stay. I gave Tercero the info and finished the problem you brought over. Go home to our girlfriend. I should make it home just before dawn, I think.”

He glanced at Sin and the workers who were making a mess out of things. “We’ll be in the group room. I’ll start playing house earlier than I planned to.”

“She’ll like that.” Luc walked away.

Ryder scanned the stack of bodies Tercero had been responsible for before heading toward Sin. “How’d he finish him?”

Sin looked up and laughed. He looked like a deranged butcher wearing a blue plastic apron, gloves up to his elbows, and goggles. His wild hair was barely contained in a hair bonnet. “I honestly don’t know for sure. You broke his fucking face and cut him up, but I think the knife wounds to the chest and neck were Luc’s mercy blows.”

Ryder stared at the body of the man who’d offered him five million dollars to kill his brothers. Another five to take Jane and leave the country so they could continue business. “What a stupid fuck,” he said, backing away.

Sin nodded, raising a machete. “Go see your sexy mama. And call us the next time these assholes show up.”

“I’ll see ya.” He turned, nodding at Luc as he headed to the protected exit. He’d follow Luc’s suggestion unless he needed to get his hands bloody. He didn’t have a problem killing, but they were right; the FBI was itching for a reason to take him out. If he laid low, they might keep their word. If they didn’t, well, Luc had his plans, and Ryder had his own. No one was taking him away from Jane, and he’d do his best to keep their group together for her.

His phone rang, but he waited until he was out of the clean room to pull it out. “What is it, Papi?”

David sighed loudly. “Stop calling me that. If our kids call me that, I’m breaking your dick.”

“Ooh, you know I like it when you talk dirty.” He laughed, and so did David.

“I hate you,” David said, still chuckling. “I’m just checking on you. Are you good?”

“Aw, I’m on my way home, my love.”

“Fucking hell,” David muttered. “Are you really okay? I’m almost home.”

“Why’s it taking you so long? You know she called me because we dream cheated on her again.”

“Oh, I know,” David said. “She called me in tears, begging me to stay with her. Try talking through that in front of your professors.”

“Dammit, you answered her call?” He strolled out of the building, checking his surroundings. Luc had top security, but he still kept his guard up. “Stop trying to outdo me.”

David laughed again. “You know if she’s calling, she’s being crazy.”

“I like her crazy,” he said, getting in his car. “Did you get flowers for me?”

“Yes,” David said, annoyed. “You owe me.”

“Thanks, Papi.” He grinned. He and David were always going to be teammates. When he was in the doghouse, which was surprisingly often the further she got along, he’d be a wingman. So they took turns getting her flowers, candy, food—whatever they could think of.

“Dick.” David sighed. “I’ll leave them on my trunk.”

“All right. She’s in the group room. Don’t let Archer sneak off with her—he’s already fucked her today. She wants me close.”

“Yeah, all right. See you soon.”

Ryder ended the call and started the car. He’d taken to driving the car they’d gotten for Jane—her dad’s old car—while his bike and car were getting customized. He needed to look for a family vehicle, but he knew Jane liked riding in her dad’s car.

His eyes drifted to the little snow globe on the dash, and he smiled at the picture of his girl with her dad. He’d gotten in the habit of talking aloud to Mr. Mortaime every time he got in the car. It had been for Jane’s benefit, but he still did it even when alone. “Don’t worry, old man. I’m gonna be a good boy now. I’ll keep her, just like you knew I would.”

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

36 weeks

Tercero pulled his gaze from the video game Archer, Savaş, and Sin were playing to stare down at his lap, where Jane laid her head. She was on her side to help with blood flow, but it did little to make her comfortable. Both babies were active day and night, and several times he'd found her crying because she was so tired of being pregnant.

Caressing her stomach, he prayed the induction scheduled in three days would arrive soon. Adam and Diane's baby had been born, and while it was rough on Diane, she was happy to see the pregnancy behind her. He hoped Jane would have the same outcome.

He knew it would be awful and hated that she had to suffer, but she was strong and excited to meet the babies she'd created with his brother.

A weak smile tugged at her lips, and she nuzzled his thigh, keeping an outstretched hand in Archer's hair.

His brother was on the floor, leaning against the sofa in front of her.

It had been difficult for Tercero to accept Archer and Jane's relationship, but his little brother had surprised him with how serious he was about her. They were still a pair of goofs together, but when it was quiet, he witnessed how deep their relationship had grown—how dedicated Archer was to her and Jane to him. There was something incredible about watching his immature brother holding her, kissing her eyelids as he whispered truths she needed to hear. Only Jane could be so in love with all of them and turn adding a new boyfriend into something beautiful.

The group yelled at Archer's skill. They were working as a team, but Archer was showing off for Jane.

“Cocky fucker,” Sin muttered.

Archer laughed and turned to sneak Jane a kiss. But, of course, he flashed her his dimples before returning to the game.

Ryder and David entered the room, Kingston trailing behind them; they'd been assembling the cribs.

“Are y'all done?” she asked as David came to sit.

Her stepbrother lifted her legs onto his lap and nodded. “Yes, baby. We even set up the bassinets.”

Ryder stared at her, then left the room.

“Where's he goin'?” Jane asked Kingston.

“Perhaps to take one of the shits he muttered about fifty times,” Kingston said with a laugh as he checked out the game. “Boys, don't you have anything more productive you can be doing?”

Archer grinned. “I'm showing off for my girlfriend, Mr. Leodegrance. It's very productive to show her how well I can

protect her in the video game world. Imma make her a gamer girl.”

Kingston rolled his eyes as he typed on his phone. “Your girlfriend looks tired and thirsty.” He went to say more but shut his mouth when Ryder returned with a glass of ice water and grapes. All of which he took to Jane.

Archer scooted out of the way. “Guess he’s King Boyfriend for a reason.”

Tercero chuckled and lifted his hand so Ryder could sit her up. It was not an easy task for her anymore.

“You okay?” Ryder situated her and plucked a grape free.

Her head bobbed, and a dreamy glaze clouded her eyes as she ate the grape.

“You look exhausted, babe,” Ryder said, feeding her another grape. Her appetite had dropped significantly over the past three weeks, but she ate for them even though she said it felt like she would explode if she did.

“I’m always exhausted,” she said, trying to shuffle closer.

Ryder slid his hands under her thighs and pulled her as close as she could get without her stomach being squished between them. “I know, angel.” He held up the water as she pouted her lips for a kiss, and David chuckled at how Ryder made her work for kisses. She sipped the water obediently, and he lowered the cup, smiling as he said, “Good girl.”

Kingston sighed loudly. “Jane, darling, I’m going to pick up your mother. Do you need anything while I’m out?” Her parents would stay in the guest house for a month after the babies came, but they’d decided to settle in before the induction.

Jane was locked in a staring match with Ryder, waiting for her kiss, so David responded, “I think she’s fine. Drive safe, and don’t forget the code.”

Tercero looked away from her stepdad to watch her fall under his brother’s spell. It was good for her. Ryder knew how to take her to their own little world and make all her pain and worries better. Surprisingly, Luc and Archer were also good at distracting her from discomfort, but David made her uncomfortable. She tried to hide it because she loved David’s attention, but they knew her stepbrother felt too hot for her. Thankfully, David wasn’t upset about it. He simply found new ways to spend time with her.

“Come here,” Ryder said, sliding a hand behind her neck to pull her close. Then he gave her the kiss she needed.

Archer’s flash went off, and Sin smacked his head, but Ryder didn’t stop. He kissed their girlfriend, even rising and hovering over her to make her lie flat on the sofa. His brother never had problems with her stomach.

“Goddamn,” Sin said, tilting his head to get a better look.

Ryder ended the kiss but stayed close, nuzzling her as he murmured, “Breathe.”

Her dopey smile greeted his brother when he leaned away, and she laughed. “How’d I get on my back? We gonna fuck or something?”

Ryder grinned and pressed a sweeter kiss to her lips. “No fucking, silly girl,” he said, sitting her upright. “Any contractions?” He skimmed his fingers over her stomach as his eyes went to Tercero.

“None that I’ve noticed,” he answered because Jane didn’t like to stress Ryder out. She’d had lots of Braxton Hicks but

no consistent contractions.

His brother nodded and tugged her to her feet. “Let’s get you showered and ready for dinner.”

“I wanna see the cribs,” she mumbled, waddling as Ryder kept a good hold on her.

“You’ll see them,” he said, his voice trailing off as they disappeared around the corner.

“I miss shower time,” Archer said, breaking the silence.

David laughed, getting up. “If you regained some of that control you once had, you’d be allowed to join her.”

“I can’t help myself.” Archer let his head fall back on the sofa. “She’s too pretty.”

Tercero shook his head. Archer couldn’t keep his hands off Jane, and she welcomed his attention like she did with the rest of them. But Archer had lost control recently. He was addicted to her. It would be fine if she didn’t have contractions every time he went too far.

Sin and Savaş laughed, standing and heading in the direction David had gone.

Tercero dropped his gaze to Archer, who was staring at him. “What?”

“I’m worried about her,” he said seriously. “Wouldn’t it be better to do the c-section?”

“No.” Tercero glanced at the hall to make sure Jane wasn’t there. “A caesarian would mean future children would most likely have to be born that way. I can’t imagine her needing to be cut open even once.”

“I know.” Archer closed his eyes, sighing. “I feel helpless. She’s so uncomfortable. Induction seems brutal.”

“It makes it safer for the twins if she delivers early. She’s strong. She can handle this.” He didn’t want to imagine how much pain Jane would endure. There was no use in stressing each other out more than they already were.

“She does take lots of dick.” Archer chuckled, blocking Tercero’s swat. “What? It’s true.”

“Where is she?”

Tercero and Archer sat up as Luc strolled in, removing his jacket.

Archer answered, “King Daddy is making her all squeaky clean. And no, she hasn’t had any contractions today.”

Luc glanced toward Ryder’s room before tugging his tie loose. Their older brother had taken on many duties, but he never complained and always ensured he spent a few hours with Jane every day. “Is David making dinner?”

Tercero smiled and stood. “I believe so. She told him earlier she wanted the potatoes and meat thing her dad used to make.”

Jane had asked her mom about it—she’d had a random memory of helping her dad cook one day. Thankfully, Sarah remembered the simple meal of hamburger meat, sliced potatoes, and onions—all cooked, then boiled with tomato sauce. David also seemed to remember the dish and quickly replicated it for her.

“And tamales,” Archer said, laughing and getting to his feet. “At least we talked her out of jalapeno poppers and grilled peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. We promised to travel to Texas after she has the twins to have Whataburger.”

“She wanted a hamburger from Texas?” Luc asked, a rare, confused expression on his face.

Archer laughed again. “Yeah. I don’t know why she’s having so many random memories, but she started craving something called a Whataburger. And a burger and fries from a different place called Short Stop.”

“I offer to hire her the finest personal chef, yet she wants greasy fast food,” Luc said as he led the way to the kitchen, where David was indeed busy cooking. He’d made Sin cut the onions, and the big bastard was crying.

“Perhaps you could open a restaurant for her,” Tercero suggested. “She’d consider it romantic of you.”

“I kill and torture men for her. I draw the line at owning a fast food franchise.” Luc shook his head and pointed at Sin. “Don’t let your tears mix with her food.”

Sin sniffed, using his forearm to wipe his eyes. “Why do I have to do this? She’s not even my girlfriend.”

“Move.” It was Damon.

“When the fuck did you get here?” Sin asked, handing over the knife.

Damon smirked, chopping the onions with ease. “When you were begging David to let you cook the meat.”

Tercero made eye contact with Luc, knowing his big brother was displeased that Damon was there. Again. He’d been coming over more often, per Jane’s request. Damon usually spilled information if she asked for it—unless it was a danger to her—but that wasn’t why his brother and even David kept their gazes narrowed on the man.

“Here,” Damon said, sliding the chopping board over to David.

Archer laughed, bumping David’s shoulder and pushing him back to the stove as he mumbled something.

Damon smiled and pulled an envelope from his pocket to hand to Luc. Only sensitive information was relayed this way. “Just dropping this off,” he said. “I’ll go.”

Luc took the envelope and opened it, reading it before sighing. “Did you make the transfer?”

“Yes,” Damon said, moving to leave. “Everything should be taken care of. And I will handle the next few weeks so you can stay here.”

Tercero watched the exchange. Luc had asked him to stay with Jane instead of continuing their work, but that didn’t mean evil men were in the clear to roam free.

His older brother had long ago established a network of dangerous men to do his bidding. They were expensive, but Luc didn’t bat an eye at the cost.

Luc focused on Damon again, his stare downright evil.

Damon smiled. “I said I was leaving.”

“Why?”

They all turned at Jane’s voice. Her hair was in a towel, and her face was flushed. And she was glaring at Damon.

“Why?” Damon asked, not looking away from her even though Ryder stood behind her, emanating violent vibes.

Jane leaned into Ryder, comforted by the destruction he could so easily create—crazy, *beautiful girl*.

She darted her eyes around the kitchen before focusing on Damon. “Yeah, why? Why are you leaving if you just got here?”

Ryder sighed and guided Jane toward the recliner they’d moved into the kitchen. She loved watching David cook and chatting with him. So, like the good girlfriend she was, she made sure that she still gave David her attention, even if she was too overwhelmed with David’s presence to touch.

Jane waddled along beside Ryder, but she sent Damon a worried smile. “I still wanna know,” she muttered.

“Stop being nosy,” Ryder said, sitting first, then pulling her onto his lap. He reclined the chair. She opened her mouth and started to turn toward him, but he spoke again. “Damon, you’re welcome to stay for dinner.”

Savaş laughed and walked out of the kitchen with Sin following him to avoid any hostility that might unfold. Tercero merely smiled and went to Luc to read the note.

“Maybe next time,” Damon said, nodding to Ryder before bowing his head to Jane.

She placed Ryder’s hands on her stomach but spoke to Damon. “Are you coming to the induction?”

“I think the labor and delivery room will be full, but I’ll come by when you’re ready for visitors.” He said nothing more and strolled out, leaving Jane frowning.

Ryder kissed her head and rubbed her stomach, which seemed to put the twins to sleep. It was an attempt to distract her, but she wasn’t swayed this time.

“Why do y’all act so weird with him now?” Jane narrowed her eyes at Luc. “You’re not working him too hard, are you?”

The ice in Luc's eyes didn't thaw. "I've told you already—do not concern yourself with my work. My work includes Damon. He is doing his job."

Jane rolled her eyes and yanked the towel off her head. "Sorry," she muttered to Ryder when her long, wet hair spilled over his face.

"You need to chill," Ryder said, moving her hair over her shoulder so he could make her lean against his chest more.

"I'm chilled," she said, smiling at David. "Baby, you didn't have to make my potatoes and meat. I thought we were doing chicken."

David chuckled, shaking his head. "You already know I'm satisfying your cravings."

"Wait," Archer yelled, "you're allowed to satisfy her? Why can't I?"

Ryder laughed but suddenly quieted and stilled the on her stomach.

"What?" Tercero asked, gaining David's, Archer's, and Luc's attention.

"Jane?" Ryder said, moving so he could drop a hand between her legs. "Fuck."

"What?" Tercero walked over, already knowing what he'd find.

"Her water just broke," Ryder said, pushing the recliner upright. "Babe, are you okay?"

She nodded, but she was pale, staring at her lap. "I'm sorry."

Tercero reached her, helping her stand and dropping a hand to feel her stomach—it was hard as a rock. “It’s okay,” he said calmly, but he didn’t feel calm. His heart was pounding.

Ryder stood, his lap soaked, but he didn’t care. He turned Jane and pulled her pajama bottoms and panties off. “Archer, run and grab her bag.”

“Why’s there blood?” Jane asked, but Tercero tilted her face up and smoothed her hair back.

“It’s just a little—I think that’s your *show*. It’s normal,” he said, trying to remember what he was supposed to do. He’d need to time her next contraction.

“Luc,” Ryder called.

“I’m speaking to the after-hours,” Luc said calmly. “Breathe, my queen.”

She nodded, but her hazel eyes locked on Tercero’s. Fear.

He cupped her face and dropped a kiss on her lips. “You’re okay. Everything is going to be okay. We’re only a few days out from what they planned. You’re doing good.”

“David, what the fuck are you doing?” Ryder yelled as he tried to dry Jane’s legs.

“I don’t know,” he yelled back, his hands in the sink scrubbing dishes.

Ryder growled, moving around Jane as he responded to David’s panic. “Calm the fuck down and call your parents.”

“Here,” Archer said, thrusting a pair of pajamas at Ryder. “No, here, move. I brought you pants too. I’ll dress her.”

Ryder moved back, but he didn’t take his eyes off Jane. “Talk to me, baby. You’re scaring me.”

“I’m okay,” she whispered, clutching Tercero as Archer guided her feet into the pajama legs.

“David, what the fuck?” Ryder roared. “Are you taking out the trash? I told you to call Kingston.”

“I called!” David rushed out as Sin and Savaş rushed in.

“Oh, shit,” Sin said, grabbing his hair as he clutched Savaş. “Fuck, do I get water boiling? Do we need to rip up sheets?”

Tercero ignored them, holding Jane around the waist and helping her walk. “I’ve got you. We’re going.”

Ryder came to her side. “Archer, get the car.”

Jane released a whimper but kept walking. Well, until Ryder scooped her up and headed toward the door.

Tercero watched them before turning to Luc, who was still on the phone. “What are they saying?”

“To go directly to the hospital—they’re notifying her doctor.” Luc turned to Sin. “Get David. He’s lost his mind.”

“I don’t blame him,” Sin said, rushing off.

Tercero heard a toilet flush and shook his head. “He is not the one I expected to panic.”

“Do we need anything else here?” Luc retrieved his keys, scanning the area. “Savaş, lock everything down and check the cameras before you come.”

“You two better go.” Their brother laughed, patting their shoulders. “I’ll take care of everything and bring dinner for everyone.” His brother looked him in the eye. “She won’t be eating, but you have to.”

“I didn’t say I wouldn’t.” Tercero grabbed his keys, unsure if he’d ride with Luc or Jane and Ryder yet. They could already be gone.

“You were thinking it,” Luc said, nudging Tercero. “Let’s go.”



Luc looked up from where he sat on the uncomfortable hospital sofa. He’d decided it was best to stay out of Ryder’s way after his brother lost his composure with a nurse. Honestly, the woman got off easy. Ryder had a way of humiliating someone so much that they didn’t want to live. Telling Jane she was overreacting—that she was only four centimeters dilated—was foolish.

Ryder didn’t hurt the woman, of course, but he made sure she’d rethink her attitude toward laboring women and their partners in the future.

Tercero and David had chosen to ignore the hostility. After all, his anger was warranted. Jane had gone from four to eight centimeters seconds after the incident with the triage nurse.

Jane let out a long, shaky groan, her hand squeezing David’s. “I can’t do this.”

“You can.” David used his free hand to massage her back. At least David had regained his sanity. It was something Luc had come to notice about his brother and Jane’s stepbrother. They stepped up if the other ever slipped. “You’re doing so good,” David continued. “I’m so proud of you.”

She cried, shaking her head. “I’m a wimp. Please take over.”

“I wish I could, baby.” David kissed her hand, and Ryder took over, massaging her back.

“You’re not a wimp,” Ryder said, leaning down to nuzzle her neck. Whatever he said turned into mumbles and was drowned out by her cries.

Archer sighed, tapping his foot nonstop. Luc knew Archer wanted to push the others away to soothe her, but he was staying away the same way he’d chosen to. It would overwhelm her to have them all crowding her. She’d already screamed at a nurse for turning up the volume on a show, assuming Jane would like a distraction. “Talk her into drugs.”

“She won’t listen,” Luc said, staring at Jane’s monitor. Her tachycardia was in full swing. Every time she moved or a contraction hit, her pulse skyrocketed and had all of them on edge. He wished he could change her mind, but Jane was terrified of a needle going into her spine. The hospital and doctor wanted it, as it would be beneficial if she required an emergency cesarean, but she was stubborn. “She’s progressing quickly anyway.”

“There you go,” Tercero cooed as the contraction ended. “Good girl.” He’d not removed his hand from her stomach since they’d settled her onto the bed. He was stepping in for Ryder, ensuring that the babies had the closest thing to their biological father because Ryder had shut off the strained bond he’d managed to build with his unborn children. Once more, only Jane mattered, but Tercero wouldn’t allow them to enter the world without seeing their father’s face, or at least its likeness.

“You still comfortable on your side?” Ryder asked, eyes narrowing at Jane’s stomach for the tenth time. Tercero glared at him and covered her more, as did David.

Luc sighed, realizing he and the others had miscalculated. In Ryder's mind, he'd created something to harm Jane, all because he wanted to bond with her in such a way. He didn't think Ryder hated or regretted the babies, but he likely hated himself for the moment and didn't know what to do to ease Jane's pain.

"It's better than my back," she said, touching his cheek. "Please stay with me."

Ryder jerked his attention to her, his gaze softening. "I'm here."

Her smile was sad, and she knew he'd react badly to her pain. But, unfortunately, another contraction started. Her smile slipped, and though she tried to stay quiet, her whines broke free. "Don't leave us."

"Breathe, angel," Ryder cooed, smoothing her hair back. "Don't worry about me. Let it out."

"You're mad," she whined, screaming again.

Ryder shook his head. "Never mad at you, Sweet Jane. Now let it out. I'm here. I'm here for all of you. I'm not leaving."

That was what she needed.

She screamed. She cried. She cursed them all.



Archer paced behind Ryder as the doctor checked Jane's progress. He'd never witnessed a birth before, but he felt like she was in too much pain and that everything was happening too quickly. Jane's parents hadn't reached the hospital yet, and

she was almost ready to push. It didn't seem normal, but the doctor said it was fine.

"You're just about there," the doctor told Jane. "Nine centimeters and one hundred percent effaced."

Jane cried instead of rejoicing, and he couldn't stand it.

Moving closer, he wedged himself between her and Ryder and leaned over her, cradling her head between his forearms as he kissed her eyelids. "Shh. Imagine our room. Our bed. The way the sheets feel between your fingers."

She whimpered, but her hand came up to his shirt, and she gripped him. "I can't. It hurts, Archer."

"I know." He looked over his shoulder to make sure Ryder was okay. All the cruelty his brother could unleash was there at the surface, ready to rip him to shreds, but he breathed out and closed his eyes, nodding for him to continue. Archer smiled and returned his focus to Jane. "I know it hurts, gorgeous, but we're magic, right?"

She let out a cry but nodded, tightening her hand on the fabric of his shirt.

He kissed her eyelids again, smoothing her sweaty hair back. "Yeah, we're magic. Where do you want to go? You want our room? Or do you want all of us with you?"

"All," she croaked, reaching her other hand out toward Ryder.

He smiled. She'd always take care of her bad boy. "That's our girl. Now where are we?"

Her breath rushed out as a contraction hit her hard, but she pulled at him and answered in the most pained whisper, "Pool. The pool."

He kissed her eyelids again, then her nose and cheek. “Mm. I’ve seen you daydreaming out there. Can you see it? Your daydreams?”

She whined but nodded. “I’m pretty again.”

A disapproving noise sounded within Ryder’s chest, but Archer stayed focused. “You’re always the prettiest. Now tell me which swimsuit you’re wearing so we can rip it off.”

She groaned in agony, but that sweet tickle he felt between them radiated from where she held him. He had her between the pain and her dreams. If he could get her to her dreams for a while before she had to push, he’d feel he had helped.

“Is it the burgundy one you used to wear to tease us?” he asked, smoothing her hair again. “Or the silver one Luc likes? Or maybe the gold one that makes you glow?”

“The black one, my queen,” Luc said. He’d finally approached and stood shoulder to shoulder with Ryder.

Archer moved enough so she could see that she had all of them. He watched her smile through her pain at Luc, and he knew the moment Luc smiled back at her because she glowed. Her gaze swept to him next, and of course, he showed off his dimples.

A pained laugh escaped her, but she had that awed look on her face that she’d developed when she’d realized he was in love with her.

He kissed her lips, pleased that even though she was in pain, she was slipping into a more relaxed state. “Good girl. See? We’re all here.”

She made a cute but pained noise and slid her eyes to David.

“I’m here, baby,” he told her, giving her a smile that always made her melt and blush, which she did even at the peak of a contraction.

“Ow,” she said, darting her gaze toward Tercero.

Tercero caressed her stomach as he said something in Italian. It was too fast and low for Archer to pick up, but he knew it was simply his brother wishing he could ease her pain.

She cried, letting go of Archer’s shirt to cover Tercero’s hand on her stomach, but she drifted her gaze back to him. Her lips trembled, and her face pinked when she tried to hold it all in, so he gave her what she needed.

“Follow me, baby,” he said, pressing his mouth to hers. He kissed her to swallow her cries and let her fall into the magical place they’d created together, where they lived a thousand lives in a thousand worlds. Yet in every single one, there was a boy who secretly watched the hazel-eyed girl who was loved by the sun, the star, the night, and the very ground she walked on, who made it possible for any of them to exist.

He felt it when she reached their newest heaven when she touched his cheek. When she gasped, he knew she’d arrived at the moment where she would realize the men who could slaughter entire worlds saw her as their brother’s moon. She saw that, even with that truth, she was still their goddess, queen—their Sweet Jane.



David leaned back so Jane could fall deeper into whatever dream Archer had conjured for her. He should’ve encouraged his teammate to come to her side sooner. It had been months

since he'd accepted that, while Jane loved him fiercely, he could not do what the Godson brothers could.

It would have hurt to know such a truth, but his father helped him see that he was no less than them. After all, as he'd been the one to point out, few men could say they were their woman's first love, yet still stood aside so she could have the world. His dad said he'd never imagined witnessing such strength, and he was proud to know he'd raised a son who could put his love first. He let his dad know that it wasn't all him—that he was just lucky that Jane made sure he knew that, even with them, she wanted him by her side too.

Archer eased back from Jane, and while she whimpered at the loss of contact, she kept her eyes closed to stay wherever Archer had led her.

“Oh, my flame,” Luc murmured, sliding a finger down her cheek. Thankfully, it looked like Luc's distance had come to an end.

More was said, but David decided to check on his dad and Sarah. He stood, patting Tercero's back as he slipped out of the room. As soon as he turned, he halted at the sight of Damon leaning against the wall.

“How is she?” Damon asked, straightening.

“Progressing quickly,” he said, ignoring the fire in his veins.

“But she's okay?”

David sighed, knowing he, like Luc, needed to relax about Damon and Jane's relationship. “Yes. I think she'll be ready to push soon.”

Damon's amber eyes settled on the door. “You don't have to worry. I only came because Savaş called me before I made

it to my apartment. I wanted to make sure she got here safely. I'll go."

"You don't have to leave," he said, gesturing for Damon to follow him. "She'd want you here, and you're the one who likely helped prepare her the most for this."

Damon stayed quiet as he walked beside him, but he eventually cleared his throat and said, "I'll only ever let her see me as a friend."

It was the first time Damon had implied he had feelings for Jane, and it surprised David that he'd be the person Damon would tell.

He chuckled, stopping in the waiting room to sit and make his call. "Good luck with that."

The bastard, whom Jane had no idea had the highest kill count of all her men, wolves and demons included, merely smiled and settled onto the chair.

"I don't know how to feel about it." David shook his head. "But I don't blame you."

"I don't see how any of you could," Damon muttered, then pointed at the phone. "Who are you calling? Do you need me to do anything?"

"Just calling my dad." He selected his dad's number and raised the phone to his ear. "He was picking up Sarah. It's about an hour's drive, but I want to make sure they're okay."

Damon nodded, turning to his phone.

The call rolled to voicemail, and David sighed before checking to ensure he hadn't missed a call or text. There were none.

“There haven’t been any accidents reported with his vehicle,” Damon said.

David stared at him, chuckling. “I finally understand why you’re his right hand.”

“That is a simple task to complete,” Damon said with that dangerous smirk. “Managing Luc’s dungeons, carrying out his private business, and keeping Jane safe at all times when he is not at her side are why I am his right hand.”

“He thinks you won’t be able to keep her safe if she knows?”

Shrugging, Damon smiled again. “Luc will always want his queen to himself. He knows he cannot have such a thing and accepts it. Having me at his disposal allows him to have what he can with her.”

“Ah,” David said, rubbing his face. “Well, she won’t need babysitting while Tercero and Ryder are glued to her side. And you know there’s always Than.”

Damon’s gaze narrowed. “Than?”

David laughed. “Yes, Than. He doesn’t have your body count, but he’s close. And he’s Ryder’s right hand. He only stands aside because Ryder doesn’t want her to feel smothered. But he’d take up the job if needed.”

“I will always fulfill my duty to her.” Damon pointed behind David. “There’s your father.”

“David,” Kingston yelled, pulling Sarah behind him as David and Damon stood. “Where is she? Is she all right?”

“She’s fine.” He hugged them, glad they were safe. “I was just calling you.”

“His phone died,” Sarah said, rubbing David’s cheek. “Oh gosh, is this her blood?”

He wiped his cheek, noting a faint smear of blood. “I guess so.”

“It happens,” Sarah said, licking her thumb and wiping his face.

David ignored Damon’s chuckle and let her finish, even though he didn’t mind that some of Jane’s blood was on him. He’d had more before.

“Okay,” he said, pushing away from Sarah as memories of pinning Jane against a wall and fucking her on her period surfaced in his mind. “Let me take you to her. She was already nine centimeters.”

“Nine?” Sarah asked, shocked.

“I know,” David said, leading the way. Damon did not follow, but he’d let Jane’s guard work out his issues alone.

Jane’s screams touched his ears, and he rushed to the room, not caring if his dad or Sarah kept up. He opened the door and yanked the curtain back, fearing something was wrong but stumbled to a stop instantly, trying to turn in time to stop his parents.

Jane screeched at the top of her lungs, “Get the fuck out!”

“Jesus Christ,” Kingston yelled, clapping a hand over his eyes and turning away.

David sighed, putting a hand on his father’s back to guide him out of the room. “Sorry, Dad,” he said, opening the door.

His father lowered his hand, cheeks tinged with embarrassment. “I—um.”

“You didn’t mean to see,” he said, knowing without a doubt that his dad never wanted to get a glimpse between Jane’s legs. “She’ll be okay.”

Kingston nodded, running a hand through his hair. “Go, I’m fine. I’ll wait out here.”

“It’s okay,” he said, patting his shoulder. “I’ll go see if the doctor is done checking her. I know she wants to see you.”

“I doubt she wanted me to see her that much.” His dad shook his head. “Go, son. You need to be there. I can wait till it’s appropriate to go in.”

David left him and entered the room again, glad that Jane’s sobs had quieted. Her mom was cooing over her, wiping the sweat from her forehead as he peeked around the curtain.

“I’m sorry,” she blubbered as soon as she saw him. “I didn’t mean to yell at him.”

“He knows,” David said, sliding behind Tercero to reach her. “Do you want me to get him?”

“He saw my baby slide,” she wailed, covering her face.

Archer laughed but tried to cover it with a cough when Ryder punched him. Thankfully, only on his shoulder. “Fuck.”

“Don’t hit him,” Jane cried, but she reached for Ryder. “Babe, it hurts. Please make it stop. I’ll do anything.”

Ryder gently moved Sarah aside and leaned close to her. “It’ll be over soon. I promise.”

She started huffing again, letting out louder screams. David realized that while he’d been focused on her, the team of nurses and the doctor were gloving up.

“Is it time?” he asked, looking at Tercero.

Tercero's jaw was set, but he nodded. "She's fully dilated, and the baby was crowning. She wanted to push when the doctor checked."

His eyes widened, and his heart raced. "Fuck."

Jane's hand flailed toward him, her puffs turning frantic as the doctor and nurses guided her legs into the stirrups and removed a portion of the bed.

"I'm here," he said, grabbing her hand as Tercero gripped her thigh to help her. The nurses were talking. The doctor instructed Jane on what to do, but he could only stare at her pained face and wish for it to end.

Ryder stayed near her head, his arm beneath her neck to help her sit up the way the doctor wanted. He kept kissing her head, saying he was sorry. He only moved to swat Luc's hand from his shoulder when his brother told him to stop.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck," Archer chanted, holding Jane's other thigh as Sarah shouted words of encouragement.

Jane's eyes widened, and she started to shake before she screamed, "I'm gonna crap!"

That was not what he'd expected ever to hear her say. Nor did he anticipate watching her legs vibrating as more screams ripped free.

"It's not your bottom. It's the baby coming," the doctor said calmly. "It's time to push, hon."

"No, I'm gonna crap!" she screamed, sitting forward and pushing. "No, no, no, I don't want to crap."

"Jane," Ryder said, his voice raised in that threatening tone he pulled out for hurting men. "You're not shitting. Now push."

“Oh, hell,” Archer said before his eyes rolled back, and he fell out of view.

“Help him,” the doctor said, focused on Jane as Luc moved to take Archer’s place.

“Come on, Jane,” the nurse said, moving behind David and almost mimicking Ryder’s position. “And push. One, two, three ...”

Jane’s screams muffled all sound, but he held her hand and tried to match the nurse’s count.

He felt lightheaded, but he wanted to see the baby be born.

“Don’t you fucking dare,” she shouted, yanking his hand. “Don’t look. Get them out of me!”

“Okay,” he said, catching sight of Luc’s extra pale face. Maybe it was best not to look.

Jane’s head fell back, and she cried, trying to catch her breath. Ryder never moved his lips from her head. He gripped the front of her throat, murmuring, “Breathe.”

Her face contorted in agony, sending a rush of blood through his veins. That urge to protect her continued to rise, but he knew he could do nothing except talk to her. “You’re doing so good, Jane. You’re almost there. He’s almost here.”

Tears slipped free, and her face turned a shade of red he’d never seen before. Those hazel eyes burned bright. “David,” she cried.

“I’m here, baby.”

“Help me,” she whispered before screaming again and bearing down.

He locked eyes with Ryder, and they both knew everything would change. So they gave Jane all their focus and let Tercero and Luc witness the beginning of Jane and Ryder's children as they entered the world.

Her panicked scream turned into a roar, and he smiled when he saw determination settle in her eyes. She blocked everyone out, stared down, roaring like a warrior goddess, then cried and fell back. A new cry took her place.

"Baby boy is here," the doctor said, laying the baby on Jane as the nurses reached over him and Ryder to pat him.

David let go of Jane's hand as the world slowed, and Jane sobbed, caressing the baby's purplish-pink cheek.

"Hi, Erio," she whispered, crying with the happiest smile as she looked at Ryder. "Our boy, babe. I did it."

The doctor held the scissors out for Ryder, but he waved toward David, carefully putting a hand over Jane's before leaning down to kiss her.

David caught a faint smile on Ryder's face as he moved his hand to the baby's head. Then, he cut the cord and watched the nurses carry the baby away.

"Is he okay?" Ryder asked, his gaze tracking the nurse like a predator.

"They're just going to clean him up and ensure he doesn't need assistance," a different nurse answered.

"Luc," Ryder said, dropping his attention to Jane. No other instruction was required. Luc leaned over to Jane and kissed the corner of her mouth before going to the baby. *Erio*. David didn't even know that Jane had settled on a name.

“Fucking hell,” Archer mumbled, stumbling into Luc’s vacated space. “I’m sorry, gorgeous.” He darted his gaze to the crying baby. “Oh fuck, we’re daddies.”

“Mom,” Jane called, huffing again, “get Dad. It’s okay.”

Sarah sobbed but rushed out of the room.

“All right,” the doctor said, her hand between Jane’s legs. “She’s coming fast.”

Jane’s legs started trembling again, as did her lips, but she still had that determined look in her eyes. She’d gone from their silly girl to Mama in the blink of an eye.

Tercero reached over, caressing Jane’s cheek as he spoke in Italian. All David picked up was *bella* and *amore*. He smiled as Jane nodded, tilting her face toward Tercero’s.

She whined, puffing her cheeks and reaching for his and Ryder’s hands. “Shit!”

Archer clasped a hand on Ryder and held Jane’s leg as she started screaming and bearing down again. “That’s it, beautiful.”

David made sure Archer wasn’t going to pass out again. When he got a nod from his teammate, he returned his attention to Jane even though he wanted to see their baby girl enter the world.

“You’ve got this, angel,” Ryder coached, holding her so she didn’t have to hold herself up. “I’m so proud of you. You’re doing so good.”

Jane’s body shook more than before, and her face paled, but she never looked away from between her legs.

David prayed to every god and deity he could think of that she was okay.

Several alarms went off, but Jane kept screaming, pushing as hard as she could.

“Easy,” the doctor said, doing several things as she was handed various instruments.

Movement caught David’s eye, and he took in a rapid dripping of blood splattering onto the floor. A puddle had formed beneath her.

“Jane,” Ryder yelled, gripping her face and turning it toward him. “Breathe. I’m not fucking around, my love. Slow it down and fucking breathe. She’s coming. I swear, baby. But you have to listen to the doctor.”

David peeked at the doctor to see if there was any sign that something was wrong, and his heart ached when the doctor’s gaze went from Jane’s face to the monitors.

“All right, Jane,” the doctor said calmly, even though there was a flurry of activity and orders being issued.

“Code Omega,” repeated over the hospital intercom, followed by Jane’s room number.

The doctor continued, “I want you to push, but if I say stop, you need to stop.”

“Code OB stat LDR two.” The new code rattled in David’s mind, but he couldn’t look away from Jane.

Her lips still trembled, but she nodded to the doctor.

The sound of several people entering the room, wheeling carts, touched David’s ears as an oxygen mask was fixed over Jane’s nose and mouth.

“And push.”

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Ryder stared at the amount of blood all around them. Some was on the doctor, and the nurses were trying to soak up the rest with pads. He didn't feel like he was in his body as he trailed his eyes back to Jane.

His daughter had been born, but there was no sound. No cry. They'd rushed off with her, and he couldn't even see her through the gathering of medical staff around her.

Worse was the number of people hovering around Jane. He didn't understand what they were saying to each other. He heard the alarms. He heard the repeated code being issued through the hospital intercom system. But Jane was quiet.

Tercero held his shoulder, and Archer grabbed his hand as they stood by helpless.

Their girl stared upward, unseeing. Her pretty face, which had been so pink earlier and full of determination to welcome their children, was pale and lax.

Jane's mom sobbed, clinging to Kingston while David paced like a caged beast behind them, his hands in his hair.

"Jane," Ryder whispered, his heart growing cold.

Archer made a pained noise, turning away, but their girl stayed quiet.

He shook his head. “What’s happening to her?”

No one answered him. They worked on his girls. His two quiet, beautiful girls.

Tercero tightened on Ryder’s shoulder, and it was the only proof Ryder had that he hadn’t slipped into a nightmare. It was real. His daughter might not be alive, and his sole reason to exist was lying there motionless as they poked and prodded her delicate skin.

His hands started to shake. His hands never shook, but they did as emptiness spread out from his heart. The only thing keeping him from losing his mind was that he knew Jane was still breathing. Her heart still beat, though it didn’t look normal on the monitor. It would drop, then spike, then steady, then race.

He recalled her fast heartbeat when she pushed to bring their daughter into the world. He had noticed—or felt—the tension from the medical staff when Jane did her final push. He knew something was wrong—his daughter had not cried like her brother—but he could only focus on Jane.

He felt movement from the people in the room as she stared after their lifeless daughter, then her eyes rolled back, and everyone rushed in, pushing them away.

Luc came close, holding a bundle to his chest, but his gaze was on Jane. When he spoke, he didn’t sound like his all-knowing brother. He sounded broken. “This isn’t supposed to happen.”

Ryder knew he should grab his son, hold him and tell him that Mama was fine, but he couldn’t. He needed his moon. She was everything.

Tercero released his tight grip and took his son from Luc. Even his boy had quieted. It was like he knew Mama and his sister were in distress.

“She’s okay,” Tercero chanted quietly before he slipped into their secret language to pray to Heaven and Hell.

A cry erupted across the room, and he darted his eyes up to see one of the nurses move enough to give him a glimpse of his daughter. She was much smaller than he expected, but he knew she would be as pretty and perfect as her mama.

“Hold him,” Tercero said, moving in front of Ryder. “Brother, hold your son.”

He shifted his gaze to the baby, then to his daughter, then to Jane. His girl blinked, but he couldn’t see much of her face because of the oxygen mask over her nose and mouth.

Archer and Luc helped him when he continued to stand there, and he wanted to fall to his knees the moment his child was placed in his arms.

He didn’t recognize the inhuman sound that left his mouth when he locked eyes with his son. It wasn’t joy. It was rage. “Someone answer me,” he yelled, making the baby cry. Ryder ignored his discomfort and glared at the doctors and nurses, noting that Tercero had gone to their daughter. He shook his head. “What the fuck is happening to my girlfriend?”

The doctor walked over, her voice steady but low as she said, “Jane’s blood pressure was high, and then it suddenly dropped. That’s why she passed out. She hemorrhaged, Mr. Godson. We’re doing everything possible. You need to give her time and be calm.”

The words sounded like static, and he dropped his gaze to his crying son, then over to Jane. Someone was checking the

line that led to her arm. They were giving her a blood transfusion, and though the nurses appeared to be speaking to Jane, she never responded.

He walked past the doctor, ignoring her request for him to stand back. His blood roared in his ears, but he didn't stop until he was at his girl's side. She blinked, but her eyes were glazed over. "Look at me." It was a command, not gentle at all, but she only blinked again. He growled, moving to the space one of the nurses made for him and gripped her jaw, turning her face toward him, then breathed out and softened his tone. "Not yet, my love. I'm not letting you leave me."

The nurses and doctors and nurses spoke to each other, but he didn't look away from Jane.

"Come on, Bambi," he said, grabbing her hand. "You were so ready to see our babies. They're here. You did so good. And Elara is okay, I promise. Now look at me."

Hazel eyes glowed and locked onto his face, then her hand squeezed his.

"There you are," he said, smiling. "Stay with me now. We're always, Sweet Jane."

A tear slipped into her hair, and a faint whisper reached his ears through the hissing oxygen mask. "Longer."

"That's right." He nodded, sitting at her side. He ignored everyone, lifting her hand to his mouth and kissing it. "You always steal my lines."

She blinked, her eyes watery and tired, but he could tell she was confused as her eyes moved around.

"You're all right," he promised because there was no other option. He wouldn't allow anything else.

“Hi, baby.” David reached around, holding her hand even though Ryder refused to let go. “You gave us a scare.”

She blinked, squeezing their hands weakly.

Archer put a hand on Ryder’s shoulder, but he didn’t speak.

With how much his brother trembled, Ryder doubted he’d be able to, so he shifted to gain her attention. “Look what we made, babe. He’s perfect.”

Her eye movement was slow, but she eventually settled on their baby—another tear slid into her hair.

“You went with Erio, huh?” He knew Jane wanted their babies’ names to represent the two of them. She had picked a moon for their daughter, settling on Elara, one of Jupiter’s moons. She liked that because Jupiter had been visible in the sky when she’d gotten pregnant. Then she’d searched through various mythologies and folklore to find something to tie their son to Death. She’d said she wasn’t sure if Erio was accurate because she only saw it a few times, but she had kept the name at the top of her list. He’d told her anything was fine except Ryder Jr.

“Erio,” she mumbled, trying to raise her hand.

David did it for her, putting her fingers near the baby’s hand. Erio gripped one of her fingers, and her hazel eyes glowed again.

Finally, Archer reached out, caressing her hair. “Hey, gorgeous. No more dream walking without me, okay?”

A soft sob echoed under the mask, but she quieted when Luc moved beside Archer and caressed her jaw.

“Shh,” Luc said, “We’re here.”

Another slow blink; she was searching the room again.

“Tercero’s with her,” Luc told her, his gaze sliding across the room. “She just needs a little help, but she’s fine.”

Ryder turned at the doctor’s voice. She was talking to Kingston and Sarah. His someday father-in-law gave him a nod, and he knew staying with his girl was okay. He returned his attention to Jane, smiling when she was already staring at him. But her eyes were heavy, and she was struggling to stay awake. He wanted her awake to know she was okay—but he knew she wasn’t leaving him tonight. She was his to keep.

So he leaned over her without squishing their son and stared into her eyes to be the last thing she saw tonight. “Sleep, Sweet Jane. I will watch for monsters.”

Even with the mask on, he saw her sleepy smile and all the trust she had in him. She stopped fighting to stay awake.

He leaned back, dropping his eyes to where Erio still clutched her finger and carefully separated them. “Shh,” he said at his son’s low cry, and he lifted him to take him in. He looked like a regular newborn; the doctor hadn’t lied about him being a big boy.

“He looks just like you,” Luc said, caressing the baby’s head. “Just bigger.”

Ryder grinned, nodding. If anyone were to be bigger and stronger than him, he’d want it to be his son. He smiled even wider because he could already tell that his skin tone would be darker, and while they weren’t as bright as his, gray eyes with the faintest of green stared back at him just like he’d had when he was born.

He was everything Jane wanted between them. “Mama and Sissy’s protector when we’re not around,” he said, praying for

her to recover soon so she could see what they'd created together.

Archer looked at the baby but squeezed onto the bed to hold Jane's hand. He proceeded to do that eyelid kiss shit he often did with Jane. He murmured about how she was a warrior goddess, and with them standing behind her, she'd picked a fight with the Devil, who'd come for her.

He chuckled, looking back to his son. "I should ground you for hurting Mama." His son scowled at him, and he laughed. "That's my boy." He lifted him, kissing his forehead before handing him over to David. "Go to Papi now so I can check on your sister."

David shook his head but accepted their son with a smile. "It's Daddy, Erio. Not Papi."

Ryder peeked at Jane, smiling because the little color she had was returning to her face. It still hurt to stand up and walk away from her, but he did. Archer and Luc would take care of her.

"What did they say?" he asked Kingston as Sarah rushed past him. She only briefly cooed at the baby before going to Jane.

A loud sigh left Kingston before he hugged him and mumbled, "You already know, son. Jane knew you wouldn't let her go. Just like Eric told her—like you told her."

Ryder patted him on the back as his heart warmed in his chest. "I'll always keep her." He eased back and inclined his head toward Jane. "Go meet your grandson. I'm gonna meet my daughter."

Kingston smiled, nodding as he made his way over to Jane. He kissed her forehead before moving toward David and the

baby.

“Ryder,” Tercero called, waving him to the heavy-duty incubator.

Once again, his heart felt cold as he drew closer. There were so many wires attached to her tiny body. She didn’t have the length or body fat Erio did. Instead, she was wrinkled, and her cries were weak.

He stopped and stared, focusing on the tubes at her tiny nose. “Hi, baby girl.”

Her little eyes fluttered open at his voice, and he smiled. Then his smile slipped, and he glared at his brother.

“They could change,” Tercero said sadly. “She looks like Jane in every other way.”

“She has black eyes,” Ryder said as rage lit his blood on fire. “How is this even fucking possible?”

“She could still be yours,” Tercero said. “We share the same genes. And eye color is not certain at birth. Your son’s eyes could even change to hazel or ...”

Ryder cut him off, “You told me you used a condom!” A level of rage he’d not felt since killing for Jane consumed him—Elara wasn’t his. He could feel it.

“I did,” Tercero said, standing straighter even though he knew the threat in front of him, “but you know what Jane does if I come on her—she pushes it inside. She can’t help it.”

Fire sliced at his heart, and he grabbed Tercero by the throat, ready to destroy his brother for taking this from him.

“She’s still your daughter,” Tercero whispered, not fighting him as they felt all eyes on them. “Look at her—she reacted to your voice. Not mine.”

“She was supposed to be mine,” Ryder said, struggling against the voice telling him to crush his brother’s neck.

“Ryder?” David called.

Then Luc spoke. “Brother, let him go.”

His soul roared, and his vision blurred. He darted his gaze to the baby girl, and she cried. Images of a little girl with green or hazel eyes faded from his mind. Only eyes as dark as night stared at him.

“Mr. Godson,” one of the nurses said, her voice shaking, “I must ask you to stop whatever this is, or I will be forced to have you removed from the premises.”

Elara’s little cry grew louder, and his hand squeezed around Tercero’s neck. His brother never once tried to stop him. He’d give his life to let him be number one to both girls.

Though Tercero strained for breath, his pained smile and nod shouted he’d welcome whatever fate Ryder was ready to deliver.

“Goddammit,” Ryder yelled, releasing him and turning away. Luc was there, moving between them and checking on Tercero. “She was mine,” he whispered, gazing at the baby as a few nurses tried to move the special crib away. “She was supposed to be mine.”

Luc sighed, turning Ryder to face him and grabbing his face. “She’s yours. She’s half of Jane, half of us. Half of the brother you share almost every bit of your blood with.” He hugged him and said even lower, “For once, truly share this with him. With us. You didn’t make Jane choose when all she initially trusted was that you were true. It’s because of you that she was able to give him the one thing he thought he didn’t deserve. His own moon.”

Ryder's throat burned, and he pushed away from Luc. Not roughly, just enough to get out of his embrace so he wouldn't hurt him next. It hurt to breathe. The baby's cries tore at his heart. His heart ... He glanced at Jane resting peacefully with Archer, then at David and Erio. He saw the moment David fully put together what had happened, and his old rival inclined his head toward Elara. Her cries had grown stronger.

Taking a moment, he breathed in and out, knowing he was scaring the shit out of the hospital staff. He'd heard the doctor telling security to wait. He finally opened his eyes and walked toward the crib the nurses guarded. "I'm fine," he told them, breathing out again even though it made him sound like a demon. "Can I touch her? Or will that hurt her?"

One of the nurses smiled and took his hand, lifting it to the opening of the crib. "You could never hurt her. She's waiting for you."

His eyes burned, but he reached for her little hand. It was much smaller than Erio's, and he realized that Erio was likely conceived first; Elara could've begun days after him. She just needed a few more days to catch up.

He was careful, noting how warm they had the incubator, and he sighed when his finger touched the tiniest fingers he'd ever seen. A laugh caught in his throat, and he smiled as he whispered, "You got Mama's tingles."

Those dark eyes locked on his, and he smiled again when her little fingers tried to curl around his.

"My baby moon," he said softly, caressing her hand. He shook his head, groaning so he wouldn't cry. "It's okay, Elara. He's your daddy, but you're mine too. I'm still King Daddy for you."

He knew it was his imagination, but she almost looked like she smiled before she closed her eyes.

He felt a hand on his shoulder, and he breathed out carefully because he finally felt it. “You really do feel like all of us. Even Jane,” he told Tercero. “I’m sorry.”

Tercero responded in their made-up language. “*There’s no need to be sorry. I know what it feels like. I swear I never meant to take this from you.*”

In their language, he said, “*You took nothing. Congratulations, brother. You made a beautiful little girl for us.*”

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

Twins' Age: 2 weeks

Jane smiled at the tingles trailing along her arm in the middle of the night. She'd awoken to chaos two weeks ago. No one had told her why there were raised voices when she'd regained consciousness, but she knew something had happened when Ryder moved away from her and nudged Tercero to take his place.

At first, she didn't understand, but the doctor began to update them on Elara's condition. She mentioned her daughter's blood type, and Tercero nodded, stating he was the only one in the family who was also Type B. He told the doctor that Ryder and the others were Type O and that she and David were A Positive.

It felt as if she'd floated out of her body. It was rare, but she'd gotten pregnant by two men—brothers. Ryder had fathered Erio, and Tercero had fathered Elara.

Jane grieved her failure to give Ryder a daughter of his own, but she couldn't imagine a different baby girl. She saw Tercero in Elara's dark eyes and pale skin, and she was beautiful.

“You’re supposed to rest,” Ryder grumbled behind her, slipping a hand over her stomach. It had significantly reduced size but was a long way from being flat. Yet Ryder caressed her tummy often, and she fell more in love with him.

“I want to make sure they’re okay,” she whispered, catching the shine from Tercero’s eyes. Ryder was at her back, Tercero at her front. Luc had gone to his room for a full night’s sleep because he’d been with Erio while they’d been with Elara for her last night at the hospital. David and Archer had decided to sleep in the attached nursery on a pair of chaise lounges. They wanted her to rest as much as possible, and since she couldn’t breastfeed anyway, they promised they would handle everything.

Ryder lifted his head, looking toward the nursery, before dropping his head behind her again. “They’re fine.”

She smiled at Tercero’s caress along her cheek and nuzzled his hand. They were going to fret over her for months, she knew it. But it wasn’t like she could complain when they looked at her like they had been. Like she was magic all on her own, and she’d given them two miracles in one night.

“Do you need a heating pad?” Tercero asked. “Or perhaps an ice pack?”

“A kiss,” she whispered, tiredly gliding a hand over his naked chest.

“No kisses,” Ryder growled against her neck. “Sleep.”

Tercero winked and leaned forward to press a kiss on her lips. “Sleep, *cara*. More rest now means a quicker recovery.”

A cry startled her, and she tried to sit up, but Ryder held her down.

“They’ve got it covered, woman. Sleep.” He tugged her against him and even tossed his leg over hers. “And I saw that kiss. I’m jealous.”

Tercero chuckled, but he held her down too. “If you go over there, they will think they’ve failed.”

Sighing, she tried to crane her neck and felt her face flush at the sight of David carrying Elara. He had no shirt on, and he kept her tiny body against his warm chest as he walked over to a chair, where he picked something up before heading back to the nursery and out of sight.

Holy fuck, Daddy David is hot.

“Stop perving on Papi.” Ryder nipped her neck and didn’t let go as he growled what sounded like the word ‘down’ against her skin.

She couldn’t believe that even though she was still spotting blood and didn’t feel the least bit sexy, she was turned on and wanted to arch her ass out for Ryder.

“Horny ass.” He growled again before releasing her. “Go to bed.”

“Then don’t do shit that turns me on,” she said, mortified. They were probably disgusted by her. She was thankful that David and Ryder had not seen her vagina stretched to Hell and back. Poor Archer had passed out, yet he’d been scolded for trying to make out with her after they’d gotten home. He had flipped Ryder off and carried her to the bathroom for their first shower together in months. He’d jacked off while holding her against him, then cleaned them both.

Ryder sighed, moving, and a glow told her he was checking his phone. “It’s fucking four in the morning, Jane. You’re supposed to rest when help is available.”

She rolled to face him and grinned. “Hi.”

He let out a laugh. “Don’t hi me. You’re being a bad girl. You’re supposed to do what the doctor says. What I say.”

“I’m always your good girl, Ryder.” She frowned, biting her lip.

“Fuckin’ spoiled ass,” he said, grabbing her neck and kissing her until she saw stars. Then, he eased back and ordered, “Breathe.” She didn’t think she’d ever learn to do it on her own. He stared into her eyes as she caught her breath with a satisfied smile. “Wanna be my good girl?”

She bobbed her head, dazed and more turned on because she felt his dick hardening against her thighs.

He chuckled, moving her onto her back as carefully as possible, then straddled her thighs and pushed his sweats down to free his dick. “Then you stay still and watch King Daddy.”

Her mouth dropped open as he jacked off on top of her. His strokes were long and lazy, and he didn’t keep his noises down. He let her hear every gasp and groan—every “Such a good girl.”

She barely heard him tell Tercero something in that language she didn’t know the first thing about because she was trying to figure out if she was dreaming. No way was Ryder Godson turned on with her after she’d just had a baby two weeks before.

Her quiet boy chuckled and tugged her shirt up to expose her breasts, then reached down to her panties, to her aching clit. He didn’t make the pad she wore an issue, and he moaned when she did.

“Fuck,” Ryder said, dragging the word out as he squeezed her tender breasts. “I’ll ice you when I’m done, Bambi. Now

let us hear that pretty voice of yours.”

Tercero’s lips caught her first cry, and he smiled against her mouth. She moaned when he guided her hand to his dick, and Ryder grabbed her other one.

“That’s my girl,” Ryder praised, using her hand but doing all the work. Then he spat on his dick, groaning louder as he mixed it with the precum seeping from the tip. “Fuck, I can’t wait to fill you up again. You want me, Bambi? Do you dream about the moment I’ll thrust into your pretty pussy?”

Tercero let out a breathy groan as he pushed himself upright to help her jack him off, all while he made her eyes roll back with his talented fingers.

“Answer me,” Ryder said, jerking faster. Her arm was burning, but she was climbing, ready to fall apart.

“Yes,” she whispered, her breathing becoming frantic. “Fuck, yes.”

Ryder growled and sat back on her thighs, his eyes almost neon as they settled between her legs. Then he reached down and joined Tercero’s efforts. Only he didn’t stick to barely touching above the pad—he went full caress, totally ignoring that she was still spotting. “Oh, baby, I want you so bad.”

She tried to raise her hips, not caring about the state she was in. He was making the best noises—they both were. There was something so primal about him wanting to fuck her right then. It had her feral, and he smiled at her helpless position like a demon.

“You’re such a good girl.” He tilted his head back, his Adam’s apple bobbing as he swallowed.

Tercero switched hands and fisted one in her hair, moaning. His jerks became as frantic as Ryder’s, and she came

as she watched their muscles contract and felt the sting in her scalp increase.

Ryder jerked faster and tugged her panties aside to push two fingers in.

She yelped, and he growled, easing them out. “Okay, okay,” he said. “Not yet.”

“It doesn’t hurt,” she rushed, her body locked up. “It just surprised me. Please.”

“Just an inch,” he said, lining his dick up to her entrance. He gave her the slowest push forward. It hurt, but she welcomed the pain, letting out the most embarrassing sounds when he made his own. *More than an inch*, she thought, but she didn’t care. He was jacking off and still managing the best rhythm in and out of her.

It wasn’t long before he rasped, “I’m gonna come, baby. Fuck, I’m gonna come.” His dick swelled, sending her a familiar rush of excitement and chaotic want. He dropped over her, bracing himself with one hand, and pushed in, coming the moment his lips smashed against hers.

She didn’t know how he did it, but somehow he’d ripped her panties, got off her thighs, spread her legs, and slow-fucked her as he emptied himself deep inside her.

He breathed heavily against her mouth and smiled when she did. “You’re my fucking kryptonite and all my power.” He pressed a harder kiss against her lips, rocking forward. “You okay?”

“Yes,” she said, sliding an arm around his neck to hold him to her while she dragged her nails along Tercero’s thigh. She wanted him to come in here too, but he shook his head and got off the bed. He held his dick as he disappeared into the

bathroom, and she smiled at the faint sounds coming from him. He wanted Ryder to have her first. No mixing. He was taking care of his brother.

Ryder chuckled, sliding a hand along her thigh. “Uh, I have some Plan B pills still. Let me get one.”

“Not yet,” she said, tightening her legs. She was sleepy and knew this was his sexy way of putting her to sleep like he wanted.

He rested his face next to hers, his strong arms bracketing her as he gave her a careful thrust. “Good?”

“So good.”

“You weren’t bleeding too bad, but you might be now.”

“I don’t care.” She held on the best she could, kissing her bad boy as fucked her for the first time in a long time. “Don’t stop. Stay in me forever.”

He kissed her cheek, chuckling as he continued his slow, perfect pace. “My little freak in the sheets.” Another kiss. “You’re taking a pill when I’m done, yeah? I’m not ready to watch you go through that again.”

“I’ll take a pill,” she said, agreeing wholeheartedly.

“Thank fuck.” He kissed her harder and gave her the good hurt, whispering against her ear, “My beginning, my love, my moon—I am yours to keep.”

She gasped against the column of his neck. He was pain. He was beauty, strength, and unbreakable love. He was her end who would always command she begin again. “My Ryder.”

“Longer than always, Sweet Jane.”

EPILOGUE 1

Tercero

Twins' Age: 4 weeks

"Vieni qui piccola," Tercero said, lifting Elara from her bed. She pursed her lips adorably but settled in his arms as soon as he situated her. "I know you want to keep sleeping, but you need a bottle."

He smiled, caressing her black hair before sliding a pink beanie on her head. She was still fragile, and he worried she'd get cold without it.

"Do you know how freaking sexy you look right now?"

His gaze went from his daughter to his woman, and he smiled at her strewn out on the bed. Her hair was messy, and her lips were puffy from kissing him awake. "You know the doctor said no more sex, *cara*. Stop tempting me."

She scowled, falling onto her back. She liked to act like she was fine, but she was still healing. They were doing everything possible to speed her recovery.

They'd even convinced her to stop pumping breast milk since the babies couldn't latch, and she was in agonizing pain if she didn't pump every hour. She really tried, but her body was worn out.

"I don't even know why y'all had to call and check with the doctor." She sighed, sitting up and swinging her legs over the side of the bed. Once up, she dragged her feet and headed to the dresser. Jane was a hoodie, shirt, and sweater thief. This time he was losing a sweater.

"Because we love you," he said, walking over to her and taking her hand. "Two more weeks. I promise if you do well

today and are not in need of sleep this afternoon, one of us will gladly leave you in a satisfied but unpenetrated mess.”

Her cheeks pinked, and she grumbled something before trying to take their daughter from him.

“Jane,” he scolded, gripping her chin. “We are going to breakfast. If I give her to you, you will try to avoid eating.”

Her lips pursed, but she nodded. He knew what she was doing. She had started to cry about the stretch marks and the realization that she could not return to her pre-pregnancy appearance. It was easy to slip back into the old habit of skipping meals, but she was stronger than that. She just needed a little help.

The door opened slowly, and Ryder strolled in once he spotted them, holding his hands out for Jane. “Come here, babe.”

Of course, she went to him with a silly grin; her whole world was better at seeing his brother.

“There’s my girl,” Ryder said, snatching her up by her ass and kissing her as he walked toward Tercero. Once there, he ended the kiss with a laugh and looked down at Elara. “How’s my other girl?”

Elara opened her eyes and stared right up at Ryder. It warmed Tercero’s heart that his brother still considered Elara his own. He’d finally given his brother something that no one else would.

“You hear Daddy’s voice, and you gotta look.” Ryder smiled down at her, caressing her face. “Her little cheeks are filling out.”

“I can’t wait for her to get all chunky,” Jane said, sliding her arms around Ryder’s neck.

“She’ll get there,” Ryder said, turning his face toward Jane’s to sneak another kiss. Then he walked out, full-on making out with her.

Tercero took his time following them, knowing Ryder wanted to sneak off for a few minutes. “They never grow tired of each other,” he told his daughter, content with that truth.

It wasn’t long before Erio’s cries reached his ears and even less time before Elara started crying as well.

“Oh, good,” Archer said, pacing with Erio. “He’s been in a mood without her.”

Tercero carried Elara over as Archer pulled along a double bassinet behind him. “She needs to eat, Archer.”

“I’ll make their bottles,” Archer said, placing Erio down before taking Elara from him. He gave her a quick smile and kiss on the forehead, then put her next to Erio. “He needs to know she’s okay. Look.”

Tercero smiled at his brother’s mini me grabbing at Elara. Her little mewling sounds were adorable compared to Erio’s angry cries. But he could feel it—she had missed her brother.

Erio grabbed her hand and let out a little huff before quieting.

“Just like his daddy,” Archer said, checking if Erio’s grip on Elara was too tight. “All violence until he’s got his moon again. Come help me.”

Tercero sighed but followed. “You said you’d make the bottles.”

“I’m still gonna make them.” Archer rolled the bassinet to the kitchen. “Just letting you get something to snack on while I make them.”

He didn't resist. Archer had taken to discreetly monitoring his and Jane's diets. It wasn't something Tercero needed anymore—he refused to fall weak again—but he allowed his brothers to do what made them feel better.

“How'd you sleep?” Archer put a plate of fruit on the counter, then went to get a pair of bottles. “David and Ryder had hell with Erio.”

“That's unfortunate,” he said, sliding the bassinet closer, then choosing some strawberries. “I was able to let Jane sleep through one feeding. I stayed up with her for the others.”

Archer measured out the formula, frowning. “It was their first night apart since Elara's come home. He was so pissed. I think we need to keep them together. Still give Jane a break but rotate until they're sleeping through the night.”

Tercero peeked at the twins and sighed. Erio still held Elara's hand, and they were perfectly content. “Perhaps.”

Shaking one bottle, Archer grinned. “We'll make sure he learns some separation, though. Can't have him as needy as Ryder.”

David entered, rubbing his eyes. “Morning.” When he noticed Elara, he smiled and walked over. “Hi, precious. Did you sleep better than your brother?”

“She kept to her schedule,” Tercero told him, eating another strawberry.

David patted his shoulder. “Hopefully she'll rub off on him. Jane good?”

“With Ryder,” Archer answered, coming over with the bottles. He handed one to Tercero, then quickly reached for Elara. “You soothe that little grump.”

Erio started crying as soon as they were separated.

David laughed, gathering supplies to cook. “Are you afraid of your brother’s spawn?”

“He’s meaner than Ryder,” Archer said, grinning at Elara cradled in his arms as he held the bottle to her mouth. “But not my Elara.”

Tercero lifted Erio, shushing him as he offered him the bottle. He took it eagerly, but his little body stayed tense. “I took care of Mama and your sister for you,” he told him, watching his greenish-gray eyes blink. “*Cocco di mamma.*”

“What does that mean?” Kingston asked next to him. He and Sarah were staying for one more week before moving back home. They helped a lot, teaching them different burping techniques and helping them figure out what different cries meant for each baby. And they were always ready to babysit.

“Mama’s boy,” he explained, holding him out to Kingston. Sarah was cooing at Elara, trying to steal her from Archer.

Kingston happily accepted him. “There must be something in the Godson blood to make you obsess over her.”

Luc entered just then, dressed for work. He glanced around, looking for Jane, before scowling at Archer, who was trying to push Sarah away. He crossed the room and took Elara from him. “Behave,” he told their brother, and after kissing Elara on her cheek, handed her to Sarah.

Archer rolled his eyes and started to help David. “Shouldn’t you be at work?”

“I’m the boss,” Luc said, heading toward the coffee already waiting for him. His brother paid an assistant to bring him coffee so he could have a few moments with Jane and the twins every morning.

Jane's arms slid around Tercero's shoulders, and she licked his cheek. "Sorry for leaving without saying bye. Love you."

"I know you'll always come back for me." He turned, smiling at her flustered face—his brother had definitely had a bit of fun with her. Tercero wouldn't go too far with her parents present, but he returned her affection with a quick lick across her lips before kissing her.

Ryder grumbled, sitting beside him. "Jane, don't get distracted."

She pulled out of the kiss, face flushed, before giggling and rushing to Luc.

His brother held out one arm as he sipped his coffee, and Jane fit herself under it. She waited, head tilted back as she stared at him. Luc didn't look at her yet, but he did drag his fingers through her tangled tresses.

Ryder huffed, opening his phone. "You wanna train with me today? Or do you have plans?"

Tercero looked away when Luc reached down, hoisting Jane up with an arm under her ass and carrying her off. His brother liked privacy. "Here or at the gym?"

"Gym," Ryder said, his brows drawn together as he scrolled through his phone. "David and Archer are taking Jane to one of those pelvic floor therapists, then a spa. Damon and Sin are gonna go as well so they can all relax."

Tercero felt his lips twitch at the mention of Damon, but he said nothing. Ryder saw it, though.

"She still doesn't know," Ryder said, chuckling evilly.

"When does she ever?" Tercero chuckled too. Damon was in trouble regarding his feelings for Jane, and their girl wasn't

making it easy on him.

Two nights ago, he and Ryder had gone with Luc to their required check-in with the FBI. When they returned, they realized Kingston and Sarah had the twins, and Damon was in the group room with Jane.

It turned out Jane had developed a migraine and became drowsy after taking her prescription medication. But she had asked Damon to pull her hair and had fallen asleep on his lap. They all knew Damon was imagining other scenarios for pulling her hair, but the man had so far stuck to his word and kept everything from Jane.

“He’ll slip up eventually,” Ryder said, still laughing. “She’s gonna be pissed.”

Yes, Jane would hate that she’d teased him. David had done that to her for three years, and she still thought about it occasionally. To do that to a man who’d guarded her and made her his priority above all else while becoming her friend ... she’d weep.

“So you in?” Ryder looked away from his phone. His eyes were tired, but he saw that his brother needed time to release his stress. “I’m having Than and Alpha over to stay with Kingston and Sarah while they babysit. I need to unwind.”

“Because of lack of sleep or lack of sex?”

“Both.” Ryder tilted his head, groaning. “I’m jacking it like three times a day now. I don’t want to ask her to help—it frustrates her.”

Yes, Jane got horny and then angry a lot. She loved satisfying them, and they did what they could for her, but their girl wanted a hard fuck. She needed to heal, though, and she needed to get on birth control.

All of them had found ways to be with her. Tercero quite enjoyed flipping Jane onto all fours or her side. He'd avoid penetration, or mostly try to, and with his hand and a lot of lube thrust his dick between her cunt and his hand. "If you could control yourself and not penetrate ..."

Ryder snorted. "Yeah, I tried that and made her bleed and got yelled at by the doctor."

"No, you tried and did well until you were ready to come." Tercero frowned at Ryder's glare. "What?"

"I'm weak for her pussy, dumbass. Knowing it's forbidden again, I'm losing my mind. So I need to unwind."

"You realize there will be more times when she can't or won't want to have sex." Tercero glanced over, smiling faintly at Archer's frustration with having Elara stolen away.

"I know." He rubbed his face, sighing. "But I know it's harder for her. She wants it so bad, and I hate not being able to give her what she wants."

"Well, I had her all night, but you had her glowing in five minutes."

A triumphant spark lit Ryder's eyes. "The doctor didn't say I had to stop eating her out."

"She's nervous about the rest of us doing it." Tercero huffed. "She doesn't hide from you but pushes the rest of us away. She lets us use our hands if we don't look."

"Really?" Ryder darted his eyes to where Luc had disappeared with her. "I didn't know."

"Maybe the pelvic floor therapy will help, but she's crying in the dark about her stomach too."

“Fuck.” His brother let out a growl and ruffled his hair. “I’ll talk to her.”

“Just be kind,” Tercero said. “Her hormone levels have changed drastically. It’s going to be a while before she regulates.”

“Yeah.” Ryder glanced over when David called for everyone to eat, then stood. “Well, I need to get in a good mindset. So you in? I still owe you a punch for sneaking in. I’ll go easy since Elara is fucking adorable, but I still gotta hit you.”

“Of course you do.” Tercero smiled. “Yes, I’m in.”

EPILOGUE 2

Archer

Twins' Age: 6 Months

“Fuck, Jane,” Archer groaned, thrusting into her so hard he knew she'd bruise, but that was what she asked for.

Well, she had snuck into his bathroom as he was drying off, tugged her t-shirt over her head, then pushed her panties down and told him, *“Hard as you'll let me have. Now.”*

She didn't have to tell him twice.

So he had her face down, pinned on the counter with her ass out. They'd all held back, treating her delicately so she could heal physically and mentally, but that was apparently over.

“Oh, baby, you feel so fucking good.” He moved some hair from her face as she cried out. Jane liked it rough more than she would admit to any of them. She liked to be used for their pleasure. It didn't bother him. He'd be her sweet, silly boy when he was done.

He thrust into her roughly, making her hands slip as she tried to hold herself. It made her slide even with the counter edge at her thighs, but she still moaned, pushing at the wall to get back in place.

He helped by grabbing her hips and tugging. “Such a good little slut.” He slowed, grinding in deeply as she moaned. “You're my pretty slut, aren't you? It's not bad, is it?”

“Not bad,” she rasped, clenching around him.

Grinning, he fought the urge to come and thrust harder to make her stop. He didn't know why guys acted like women

got loose after having babies. Maybe they just had small dicks.

“Archer?” she whined, her arms shaking as she clenched again.

“Come, baby. You don’t have to wait. Come all over my dick. I won’t stop.”

That beautiful sound she made when she was close touched his ears, and he sighed, keeping his pace the same so she could come hard.

“Oh god,” she cried, her pretty lips trembling as it hit her.

“Good girl,” he praised, slowing so she could savor it. She always looked so beautiful when she came. Her pale skin was flushed pink, and her sweet gasps and whimpers were perfect.

His gaze slid over to the padded bench Jane had wanted in there, then he pulled out and smiled at how wet and swollen she was. “I’m not done with you.”

She pushed herself up and turned to face him. Glassy eyes and a red cheekbone where she’d slid on her face stared back at him, waiting for more.

He grabbed her face and smashed his lips to hers. His brothers and David hadn’t lied about her tasting sweet. She must have some secret to it, but he didn’t care. He wanted to devour her.

Jane’s hand slipped around his dick, and she whimpered, encouraging him to fuck her hand against her tummy.

He did, smashing her against the counter again. She smiled the whole time, squeezing as hard as she could for him.

“Fuck,” he growled, moving back enough to lift her.

She wrapped her legs around his waist and guided him inside her. “More,” she breathed, her eyes fluttering closed as he got a better grip on her.

“I’ll give you more.” He gave her a few softer thrusts, moving them away from the counter and toward the bench. It was a good height for laying her down and going deep. He kept himself sheathed and laid her down after straddling the bench. Thank fuck he hadn’t done legs with David yesterday, or else he would’ve fallen on her.

Her eyes flew open. He was impaling her.

She panted, but the prettiest smile lifted her lips.

“That’s my girl,” he said, flashing his dimples as he pushed one of her legs up and held the other down for leverage. Then he fucked her even harder, silently thanking Luc for buying the sturdiest damn bench ever.

Her mouth popped open, and she shouted before he felt a fluid splash hit his thighs and stomach.

“Goddamn, baby.” He peeked down, his climax trying to capture him as she squirted again. His noises mixed with hers were Heaven, and he felt her tremble beneath him as she tried to reach down to make herself come again. “Fuck, fuck, fuck.” He didn’t want to finish yet, but when she did that, it was hard not to blow his load.

“Move.”

He laughed, turning to look over his shoulder at Damon. “I want to keep her.”

“Oh, it’s Sex Voice,” Jane whispered, looking at her guard. Apparently, he had a nickname as well. Not surprising, considering they’d been fucking for a month already.

When Jane finally discovered Damon's secret, she'd been hurt, confused, and sad. It was hard to tell if Damon would've kept up the friend act, but it didn't matter once she overheard Luc scolding him. He'd ordered Damon to move on to someone else or ask her to fuck already.

Jane ran to Ryder in tears. They'd been in the gym, the babies with them because Ryder wanted them used to the noise. He, David, and Tercero had not expected Ryder's reaction.

When he accepted that Jane wasn't hurt—that she'd just found out something they'd all known—he instructed him and David to leave with the twins.

The last thing Archer saw was Ryder grabbing her by the throat as she nearly hyperventilated. Then he pushed her onto the mat and shoved his hand between her legs.

Almost an hour later, Tercero emerged with a disheveled, half-naked, sweaty Jane. Ryder had fucked her while repeatedly stealing her breath in between telling her she'd known it for months—that he was pissed, but he was okay with her feeling things out with Damon. Then he suggested that he could always kill her guard.

At the threat, she'd screamed and scratched at him, issuing her own threats. Tercero said it was the hottest he'd seen the two of them go at it. They all knew Ryder was secretive about how wild he got with Jane—and Tercero had gotten the only real glimpse.

They figured it was Ryder's way of letting out his frustration and reminding her that he was King Boyfriend for all time.

Two weeks later, after lots of tension and Jane giving Damon the silent treatment, her guard grabbed her face and kissed her hard. It seemed that was all she needed because she went wild, clawing at his shirt. They didn't even stop to talk things out.

Damon simply lifted her, pulled her legs around his waist, and walked to the nearest room. Ryder hadn't been there when they started fucking, but he'd learned what had gone down when he came home. His eyes got that empty look before he smiled and went toward the sound of Jane's cries.

Everyone heard the moment he got there because she screamed the loudest, "Fuck, yes!"

Ryder had joined in, marking Jane with a big hickey before he watched Damon come in her. Then his brother marked his territory right back. He came in her, then finished on her stomach too. Once he was done, he used his finger to sign his name with his cum, then the bastard kissed her hard and left her with Damon. It was a silent order: clean her and my mess—and remember I'm her first and her last.

Damon narrowed his eyes at Archer as he unbuttoned his jeans and freed his already hard dick. "I'll give her back. Take a break."

Archer returned his focus to Jane, winking as he pulled out. Before Archer could even move, Damon had her up and against the wall.

"Damn," Archer said, giving himself lazy strokes. He could've continued without help, but he loved watching Jane getting fucked. It was his first time seeing the two of them. He liked it more than he thought he would.

There was just something so hot about seeing the dangerous man pound the fuck out of her pussy. Damon was openly dark. He didn't put on a facade. The dragon wings on his back and various tattoos of hellish things along his arms and thighs were just a glimpse of the darkness he held within.

Damon King was evil, and he liked it.

Jane knew they were all monsters, and she saw good in them somewhere, even in the smallest of increments. But she knew Damon wasn't redeemable. She saw danger and evil, and she told him to fuck her. Their girl was a closeted baddie.

Damon chuckled against her mouth and asked if she was sure about something.

Her smile turned wicked, and she nodded as tears slipped down her cheeks. Archer knew it was because Damon had the thickest cock out of them, and it hurt her. She loved it.

The fucker licked her tears and quickened his pace. Now Archer knew what was up—she wanted him to come inside her.

Archer sat up straighter, his hand tightening around his dick at the sight of her getting ravaged. He fucking loved every second of it. Her gasps, her crying the good cry, her body jolting up every time Damon thrust into her. He especially loved when her pretty eyes sought his. She liked when he watched.

When her eyes cut to the doorway, he turned and found David and Luc leaning against the far wall, watching.

David was difficult to read, but he liked to watch her too. Luc put on that he was bored. It was an act, but a good one.

Archer chuckled, returning his attention to Jane. She was extra turned on now, trying to connect her gaze with each of

them as her moans and panting turned frantic. “Come for him, gorgeous. We’re watching.”

Damon didn’t react to Archer’s comment, but when Jane shattered, he went savage until he spilled his load into her.

“So pretty,” Archer praised when those eyes locked onto him with a hint of worry. She didn’t need to be ashamed. Damon hadn’t meant to want her, and it wasn’t her fault, just as everyone falling for her and pursuing her wasn’t her fault either.

“I have to run,” Damon rumbled against her neck. “I’ll text you later.”

Archer almost snorted. He was sure that the two of them preferred the fuck buddy arrangement over fully pulling Damon into boyfriend status.

“Be careful,” she whispered, pulling Damon in deeper.

“Of course.” Damon lifted his head to kiss her lips, and then he carried her to Archer. The big guy glanced at the audience without fear as he handed her over. “She’s got one more in her, I think.”

“Ryder should’ve nicknamed you bunny.” Archer smirked as she tiredly guided his dick into her while he sat up, still straddling the bench. “You just keep going, don’t you?”

Words were exchanged between Damon, Luc, and David—some threatening—but Archer ignored them so he could slow-fuck Jane to sleep.

“That’s my girl,” he murmured, holding her head to his shoulder. She was still moving on her own, but he would help her.

The door shut loudly, but he didn't care. Jane was his focus.

"Just you now, Archer." She turned her head and pressed a kiss on his cheek. "Just us."

"I can do that." He knew what was up now. She was somehow deprived and overstimulated with all her men and the twins. Maybe she didn't entirely fall into the postpartum depression category, but she still thought she was losing herself—losing who she'd been for each of them. So he stood, carrying her while still sheathed deep inside her, and took her to their bed. "Just us, gorgeous. Then I'll help you with the next one you choose."

A smile spread over her face as he dropped her on the mattress. "Luc."

He laughed, nodding. "Luc it is, baby. I'll help you remember how beautiful the two of you are and make sure he knows you need the reminder that you're his queen."

She reached for him, her fingers slipping onto his shoulders so she could pull him down.

Flashing his dimples, he leaned down and kissed her long and hard. Now it was just them.



Gagging, Archer kept a hand on Erio but turned away so he wouldn't puke on his baby. "Fucking hell."

David laughed off to the side, where he dressed Elara. "And you swore to Ryder you could handle it better."

"He didn't have to change diarrhea." Archer breathed out. "Fuck, Erio."

Like Ryder, Erio laughed at him, kicking his legs and making more of a mess.

“Fuck, stop.” He tried to hold him still. “Dammit. I’m just going to bathe his little ass.”

David came close, patting Elara’s back. “Well, I’d help, but I’m the only one besides you who hasn’t caught this stomach bug.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Archer peeked at Elara. She’d been lucky not to get it either, and none of them wanted her sick. She was still so small. “You should move her into your room. I’m sure I’m going to catch it now.”

David nodded, stepping away. “He likes the shower now. Just hold him and rinse both of you the way Ryder and Tercero do. You have shit on your stomach anyway.”

“Fine.” He smiled at Elara. “Bye, baby. Be good for Papi.”

David shook his head. “You guys need to stop. She’s really going to call me that.”

Archer laughed, returning his focus to a shit-covered Erio. “You really got it out for me, don’t you?”

Erio kicked again, giggling and sending shit everywhere.

“Yeah, you know I give Mama the dirty fucking.” He wiped off as much shit as possible before undressing and pushing his sweats down. “Don’t do that wiggling shit you do with me. I don’t want to drop you.”

Instead of scowling like he usually did whenever Archer gave him an instruction, he held out his arms.

“Sneaky.” He lifted him, gagging but keeping it together as he carried him to the shower and got in. Of course, Erio decided then to be cute and peed on him while he waited for

the water to warm. “Thanks, buddy.” Yeah, he was getting him back for his piss play with Jane—she liked it.

At least Erio seemed to like the shower, and he only played for a few moments before getting sleepy.

“You all right?” He caressed his nose, smiling when Erio yawned. “All right. I know you don’t feel good. Let’s nap, okay?”

He yawned again, clutching Archer’s finger. The little boy was strong like his daddy.

After drying and dressing him and cleaning up the mess, he curled up with Erio on the bed. He saw the discomfort returning, and he sighed. “Want tummy rubs?”

Erio whined, rolling back and forth.

“Okay, buddy.” He put a hand on his stomach, noticing how tense he was. “Shh. Daddy’s here. Just sleep. It’ll go away soon, I promise.”

After about ten minutes of watching his baby tensing and whining, sleep finally claimed him. It was then he felt the bed dip behind him, and Jane’s arm slid around his waist.

“Hey, gorgeous,” he whispered, putting a hand over hers as she scooted as close as possible.

Her tired voice was muffled against his back. “How is he?”

“Uncomfortable.” He played with her fingers, noting that she felt warm. “Have you checked your temp?”

“It’s just a low fever. I’m okay.” She kissed his back. “Did you check Erio’s?”

“It broke a few hours ago.” He sat up and, after scooting her close to Erio, settled behind her and wrapped an arm

around them. “What’s up with Ryder and Tercero?”

She chuckled, hugging Erio. “Ryder took Tercero to the doctor. He couldn’t keep anything down. He’s so mad.”

Archer wasn’t surprised. Ryder didn’t like leaving Jane when she was sick, but he was a good big brother. And he knew Jane would be taken care of with him or David. Luc had left the night before for business.

“I don’t want you to get sick,” she whispered, “but I need cuddles. I feel so worn out.”

“I’ve already been exposed.” He closed his eyes. “Rest, baby. I’ll give you your cuddles. Some dick if you want it too.”

Her body shook as she laughed. “Shut up. I know we try dirty stuff, but I’m not doing some weird shit-play.”

He lowered his voice to the husky tone that always made her flustered. “Sure about that?”

“Yes!” She scooted her ass back, unaware it would stir his dick to life. “You freak. Don’t use that voice on me.”

Of course he did it again, bringing his mouth close to her ear as he said, “What voice?”

“Stop it.” She smacked his hand when he slipped it under her shirt but didn’t pry him off.

“Just making sure your girls are all right.” He palmed her breast and pressed a kiss to her neck. “You know, making sure you’re not dehydrated.”

“Mhm.” She sighed, relaxing further. He knew his girl. She’d worked so hard to try to take care of Erio, Ryder, and Tercero before catching it herself. All she’d asked was that he take Erio instead of David when she’d felt too exhausted.

David had to study for a test, and she didn't want him to get sick.

"Let me take care of you," he said, dragging a hand down her stomach.

"Archer." She stilled his hand as his fingers teased her panties. "Erio's right here."

"He won't know." He grinned, knowing her mood had shifted from exhaustion to wanting him to relieve her. They'd all fucked her when the babies occasionally slept in the co-sleeper, but she'd gotten shy after Erio had woken up when Ryder had her head hanging off the edge of the mattress, cock shoved down her throat, while Tercero fucked her pussy. "Just my hand. It'll help you sleep."

"Isn't it wrong?" She dug her fingernails into his hand. "And I don't want to get you sick if you haven't caught it."

"Your pussy doesn't spread stomach viruses." He buried his face against her neck. "And no, it's not wrong. It's healthy to maintain our relationship."

She sighed, but she pulled his hand away and sat up. "Well, come on."

He watched her scoot off the bed. She snagged a pillow and blanket and sprawled out on the floor.

"Honey," he said, chuckling as he sat up. "I was gonna finger you and jack off. Why are you on the floor?"

"Can't do it next to him anymore." She rolled on her back and crooked her finger. "Quickie, please. No kisses, just in case you've managed not to get sick."

Archer peeked at Erio and made sure he had some blankets pressed around him before joining Jane on the floor. "It's cold

and hard, love.”

“That’s what I tell Luc all the time.”

“You call Luc love?” He leaned over her, moving the slight curl of baby hair that would appear whenever she got sweaty.

She hummed, closing her eyes. This would get her relaxed for a good sleep. “Only to piss him off because he’ll use his toys to torture me the way I like.”

“You know how to play dirty with him.” Archer tugged her panties off and tossed them to the side, then snagged a second pillow to put under her ass.

“I love you,” she whispered, eyes still closed.

“I know, gorgeous. I love you right back.” He pushed his sweatpants down and checked on Erio one more time. His little guy was finally relaxed too. “All right, let’s do the quiet quickies you like.”

Her head bobbed, and she spread her legs. “Please.”

Giving himself steady strokes as he played with her always got him hard in seconds.

She clenched around him minutes later, her soft whines muffled under his hand. But he was never good at quickies.

She didn’t complain when he spent forty minutes slow-fucking her as he lay on his side behind her. No, she smiled sleepily as he kissed and caressed every inch of her body before he settled her on the bed next to Erio, where she fell into a deep sleep.

Of course, he took the chance to take a little extra something to preserve the memory. It was probably disgusting, but they were all perverted when it came to her, and they already had her permission—she loved that they were like this

about her. So he grinned as he took photos of his cum spilling out of her, then sent it to his brothers and David.

They spent the next few hours replying to his text with their pictures.

EPILOGUE 3

LUC

Twins' Age: 9 Months

Sighing, Luc closed the file of a trafficked woman who had taken her life. It sometimes happened, no matter how much he offered them to make things easier. His money and power couldn't buy hope or stop the pain.

Death was their only peace. Perhaps they were right to some extent. After all, there were more monsters out there.

Damon entered the office, carrying two coffees and a message, "Heard from him."

Luc accepted the note from one of his contracted associates. This one was handling the area that was typically Tercero's. He read over the report and the payment request. "Did you send it?"

"Of course," Damon said, sitting and taking the file Luc had finished with. "The agents want another report on the survivors. I've worked with Alpha on how to hide that we've continued operations. It's believable."

He placed the note in an ashtray and lit it on fire. "Make sure Ryder and Tercero are clear from involvement. I'll inform them of the situations that arise, but they are to be your priority. Erase their presence entirely."

"I am, Luc." Damon set his coffee down and sighed. "You haven't been home in three nights."

"Nor have you." Luc knew Damon and Jane were still dancing around the idea of a relationship. Jane didn't want to pressure him and didn't know the extent of her feelings yet, and Damon didn't want to intrude on her established loves.

They had an enduring love for each other, but even with the occasional fucking and flirting, they had not become a couple.

It annoyed Ryder and David, but they were willing to let Jane take whatever time she needed to decide. If she wanted to bring Damon in fully, they'd accept him. If it were just temporary, they'd figure out what to do once they got there.

Shrugging, Damon chuckled. "It's not my home. But Archer sent word that she thinks she did something wrong. She tried reestablishing her relationship with you, and you pushed her toward Ryder."

Yes, all true, Luc thought. He knew Jane had started to slip mentally and emotionally after having the twins, but he had duties that the others didn't. He couldn't have her waiting for him to come home every night when other things required his attention. So many of his duties were for her, after all. Not just keeping her and his brothers safe but also fulfilling her desire to focus on missing Indigenous Peoples.

She'd wanted to be involved, but the horror they endured and Jane's lack of knowledge of her Indigenous heritage had chipped away at her spirit.

Alpha—Charles—was mixed like her, but he had a purer line that could be traced back for generations, whereas Jane's was mostly unknown. Charles had memories of some of his traditions and family within the community, and he appeared fully Indigenous to people who only looked at visible features. Jane had a few subtle facial features Luc had realized were from her Indigenous bloodline, but otherwise, she didn't seem to fit anywhere.

When Charles took her home with him once, she felt like an intruder. No one shunned her, and some talked to her about

their traditions and lives, but just like the moon was sometimes visible in the blue sky, she didn't fit in.

Even her desire to support the missing and murdered people had taken a blow. Archer had warned of it, but Luc understood now. Some things were not meant to be, or it was not time for her to help.

So she put on a brave face and lied to Charles, telling him she appreciated his support but wanted to focus on her children. His Fallen told her she could do both, but she made more excuses. Charles knew she was heartbroken, but he eased up, hoping she would return one day. To Alpha, she was a sister as much as the women and girls on his reservation. Hopefully she'd realize that when she was strong enough to reconnect.

Luc still sent donations to the organizations she had looked into. He sent his Fallen when someone reached out but, like her, he didn't insert himself.

"She just wants you, Luc," Damon said, making him realize he'd gotten lost in thought. "You don't have to do everything you feel she'd want. You can be only a boyfriend and father sometimes."

"I don't need your input," he said, checking his phone. Jane had sent him a gif with what appeared to be a video game character or perhaps an anime; he wasn't sure. Her text below read:

MY QUEEN

Found you.

He frowned, reading the word over the gif, and asked, "What is a Sephiroth?"

Damon let out a laugh. “Sephiroth? The *Final Fantasy* character?”

Luc sighed, promising to call her soon. “I suppose. It does seem like something Jane would dream up.”

Her reply was a photo of her and Erio sticking their tongues out.

“Yes, that does sound like her.” Damon chuckled before adding, “I’m almost certain Sephiroth is a fallen warrior. I can see how she’d make the connection. She’s looking for you in whatever place she can.”

“That sounds like you are accusing me of neglecting my girlfriend.”

“Because I am.” Damon finished his coffee and leveled him with a dark look. “Go home to her—to all of them. Sin is bringing recruits by. You needn’t be involved.”

Another photo came of Elara in the highchair. She somehow looked like the baby on the baby food jars. He had to admit Jane’s pairing with Tercero was perfection. Not that Ryder would’ve made a lesser beauty. But as Erio had a strong resemblance to his menacing father, a girl would also have his brother’s features and less of Jane. Elara was a beautiful blend of Jane’s softness and Tercero’s edge.

“Don’t accuse me of neglecting her again. I don’t care what you two become, but you are not to judge what I am for her.”

“Fair enough.” Damon chuckled again. “I apologize. I know she misses you, and I don’t like her feeling alone—especially when she’s not.”

Luc didn’t admit that Damon was right. He didn’t have to—Damon knew every one of his dealings, and they knew each

other well. “I’ll stay home the next three days,” he told him. “Make any changes to my schedule that are doable. Handle what cannot be rescheduled. And let me know if ...”

Damon smirked, standing. “No need to speak of it—I’ll call as soon as it’s done. Enjoy your time off, sir.”

Luc scoffed, gathering his belongings. “Don’t interfere if it’s not important. I only have so much patience for this little game you two are dragging out. If you’re not a boyfriend, you’ll keep out of my relationship with her.”

A more violent smile appeared on Damon’s face, but he nodded. “Understood. It’s good to be threatened, even if it is subtle. I think she’d like to see that from you again.” He bowed his head. “That is all I will say. Welcome back, my king.”



Luc waited in the hall, watching Jane chase after Erio as he crawled from one place to the next, all while Ryder relaxed on the sofa with Elara asleep on his chest. Only because Ryder was the best at putting the children to sleep did Luc not become annoyed.

“Erio,” Ryder called, his dark tone leaving no room for misinterpretation. “Mama said no.”

Erio had stalled at his name, his wide greenish eyes on his father as he reached for something on a bookshelf. He was constantly testing his limits.

Jane got to him before Ryder could unleash any more harshness, smiling even though she looked tired. “Come here. I can’t believe you can break open that gate.”

Of course, Erio thought she was playing a game with him, and he laughed, trying to crawl away again. His destination this time happened to be where Luc stood.

“Dadadada,” Erio babbled, spotting him and crawling faster.

Jane stopped chasing him and looked up, a pretty smile forming on her lovely face. “Hi, Luc.”

He nodded, acknowledging her, but let his attention fall to the baby at his feet. Erio tugged at his pants, his annoyance turning to grunts when he wasn’t picked up straight away. Luc watched him for a moment more before squatting and picking him up. “You’re meant to listen to your mother.”

“Dadadada.” Erio grabbed at his face, smiling. Somehow it reminded Luc of his brother’s smile when he tried to annoy him and Jane’s mischievous grin.

Jane made her way over, twisting a lock of her hair nervously as she waited for him to look at her.

He situated Erio in one arm and held out the other for Jane. She came quickly, fitting herself against him as she stayed quiet. “I apologize for not returning sooner,” he told her, directing his gaze at Ryder before settling on Jane again. “I’ve arranged to have the next three days off. Do you have plans with anyone?”

She shook her head, her cheeks pinking the longer she looked at him. “David and Archer left this morning. They’ll be gone for a week.”

“Tercero?” he asked, wondering where his brother was. He had not been permitted to return to duty yet, and didn’t need him interfering with his current project.

“He’s gone to help Kingston with a contractor who speaks Spanish.” She grinned, but that sadness was there. “Ryder took me over there yesterday, and I think the workers thought I was Mexican. I didn’t know what to do when they came up to me and just started speaking Spanish. I panicked and called Tercero. I feel so stupid.”

“You’re not stupid,” he said before smirking. “Foolish, perhaps, but not stupid for expecting to communicate in a language you’ve only just begun to learn.”

She breathed out her nose to rein in the fire he sparked, and he chuckled.

“Oh, little queen, you already know I welcome your fire.” He twirled the hair she’d been toying with. “Unleash it, even if you stand no chance against me.”

That golden glow burned, and she glared at him.

“There’s my queen,” he said, leaning down to kiss the corner of her mouth. “I’ve missed you as well, darling.”

Ryder laughed but otherwise stayed quiet. Jane did what she always did—forgave him instantly as she melted against him and turned enough to kiss the corner of his mouth.

Erio chose that moment to tug Jane’s hair. She yelped, trying to keep him from yanking out any strands.

“Stop,” he scolded, not surprised to see Erio glaring at him. He returned the glare, and sure enough, his son broke into angry tears.

“Shh.” He finished freeing Jane, then rubbed Erio’s back. “Just like your father.”

Ryder laughed again, but it didn’t bother Elara; she slept through anything if Ryder held her. “I don’t know what the

fuck you mean by that, but I do enjoy watching my face in his, glaring at you and you babying him. You fucking softy.”

Jane braided her hair and turned to Ryder, hands on her hips. “He means you both get rough with me and then flip out.”

Ryder stopped laughing. “Babe, you like when I’m rough. You come all over my dick. And I do not flip out—I just don’t like you hurting.”

“Same thing.” She growled like a kitten and marched over to Ryder before leaning down and smashing her lips to his for a short, hard kiss. “Sexy prick.”

Ryder smiled and lifted a hand to her ass, squeezing. “Wanna ride this dick, or you gonna leave to play with popsicle dick over there?”

Luc sighed, carrying Erio over. “Insults only earn you baby duty.” He placed Erio in a walker, then pulled Jane away. “She’s busy for the rest of the day.”

Jane didn’t put up any resistance. She just blew his brother a kiss.

“I still want her by me tonight, bitch,” Ryder hollered. “She already asked for sleep fucking, and that’s not your thing. So bring her back.”

“I’ll make it my thing,” he fired back, lifting Jane when she gasped and stumbled. “Don’t look so surprised,” he told her, exiting the room and heading toward his. “I tie you up and take you by force when you want me to. I’m capable of satisfying a sleep kink.”

Pink spread across her face, and she tightened her arms around his neck. “Did you get more tape?”

His lip twitched, but he didn't smile like she wanted him to. "Yes. Why? What other requests would you like me to consider?"

Her eyes sparkled, and she shook her head. "Not for me to decide."

His laugh turned cruel. "Submitting already?"

"Not quite," she whispered, sliding her fingers into his hair, which was still its natural white. She found it funny to tease him that Archer's disheveled white hair would suit him, and she teased Archer that he should try styling it more like him. His immature brother had dazed her when he walked through the room wearing a suit, reading glasses, with slicked-back hair. Luc would not lower himself to a disheveled mess unless it were from her fingers raking through his hair.

"I see." After entering their private room and locking the door, he carried her to the bed. She wanted him to call the shots, but she'd put up a little fight. It wasn't the same as a forced scene fight, nor the struggle she put up with David when her stepbrother played with her. No, it was more of a brat and Dom moment between them.

He'd had brats in the past and found them annoying, but he enjoyed Jane's sass. She didn't try to stick to any rules of the game. She just naturally rose against him, and he loved when she did. But at the same time, she wanted him to take control. It helped her unwind from the effort it took to have five boyfriends and a side fuck, all while being a new mother.

"Do you like when we're like this?"

He dropped her onto the bed, and she bounced before bracing herself with her hands. "I enjoy every way we are." He

gripped her face as he searched those hazel eyes of hers. “Remember your safe words, my flame.”

She nodded, her gaze softening.

“Silly girl,” he murmured, amused at how easily she melted when he was the tiniest bit affectionate.

“Queen,” she corrected, a delightfully sinful smirk on her lips.

Releasing his hold on her face, he stepped back and loosened his tie. “On your stomach.”

“I wanna see you,” she fired back, her eyes following his hands as he unbuttoned his shirt.

“Stomach, Jane. I won’t ask again.”

Her eyes darted up to his, flashing with excitement. “I want to see you.”

He kept his face blank, finishing with the last button, but didn’t remove his shirt. Jane was brave at seeing his emotionless face but wavered and lowered her gaze.

Only for a moment, though, then she looked him in the eyes and gave him a mean smile. “You really wanna know where your tape went? Hm? I took it. I gave it to Ryder, and he knew exactly what to do. Then he gave me the good kinda hurt. I cried for hours.”

Of course, he already knew she’d given it to Ryder. His brother gloated the first chance he got. It infuriated Luc, and Jane knew how it got under his skin when she did things that put her at the mercy of others. Yet, he knew she wasn’t disrespecting him—she’d plotted to get to this moment, and his brother had helped.

He returned her meanness with his own. “Do you think I care about such things? Do you think I care that he can make you cry from pain and pleasure? A large dick isn’t a display of talent to achieve those tears of yours, little queen.” He didn’t stop when her smile faded. “He doesn’t know how to make you cry the way I do. And you do not experience the thrill of being taken against your will with anyone but me. All because you’re too afraid to ask them—and they are too weak to give you what you need. They are nothing compared to me.”

Glassy eyes stared back at him, but she scrunched her face to keep from crying and spat out her words. “Fuck you!”

Breathing out his nose, he stepped up to the edge of the bed and watched how she pushed her feet back and forth in a stressed pattern. He’d picked up on how to read Jane’s posture years ago. There was a realness to how she gripped the sheets beneath her fingers and pushed with her feet. She was excited but unsure because of how believable he could be with his cruelty toward her. So he decided to make certain she wanted him to play with her this way. Words hurt more than blows for Jane.

“Look at me,” he said, his face and tone empty of emotion. When she met his stare, her nose scrunched, and her eyes misted with tears. So real, but she wanted him to hurt her like this. She wanted to be forced, it seemed. Such a complicated creature his queen was. “Say that again and see what happens.”

Her knuckles turned white, and her face glowed with heat. “Fuck. You. You fucking asshole!”

She didn’t anticipate his speed and screamed when he flipped her onto her stomach and yanked her until her legs fell

over the edge of the mattress, her feet smacking the stone floor.

“No,” she shouted, trying to push up, but he snatched her wrists and wrenched her arms behind her back, holding them in place. Then he used his free hand to grab the new tape he had ready in his pocket and fastened her wrists together.

“No?” He laughed, fisting a hand in her braid and jerking her head back. “Scream it louder.”

She whimpered, trying to twist away but quieted.

“Don’t have anything to say?” he taunted, reaching for her sweatpants. This was her final reminder to remember her safe words before he shoved her pants over her ass and freed his dick. He sighed, sliding along her soaked core as she fought to free herself, all while lovely tears slipped from her eyes.

“Get off me,” she screamed, fighting harder, but he was too strong. He’d always be too strong for her, and that was the truth she sought each time. They would always be too strong to fight off.

Luc laughed, dropping a hand to her ass. “No one is going to hear you. Fight all you want.” He kicked her legs open and lined up his dick to her entrance. She was wet, but he knew he’d meet some resistance. She wasn’t entirely over what had been done to her in high school, nor was she at peace with wanting to be forced in such a way. Yet, in some twisted way, they both enjoyed the resistance. It pleased him because a tiny part of her soul returned each time she felt him thrust in hard enough to make her scream from pain.

So he pressed down on her bound wrists and thrust into her, groaning from the burn they both felt. It could feel good

and be wrong—another reminder for her. She very well would've come for Dylan if the others hadn't arrived.

“Yes, you like it,” he said, pulling out and thrusting in again as she cried. “You like it every time.”

All her shame and sorrow blackened his cold heart. Dylan Berith had abducted her, and though he hadn't fully penetrated Jane, he had still raped her as far as her men were concerned. He didn't think she would completely overcome this horror, but he'd never stop giving her what she needed. Freeing her from this darkness would be his redemption. Had he not allowed his emotions to control him, Jane would never have been within Dylan Berith's reach.

Even if her screams had his soul roaring, he fucked her harder. More than likely, she was aware of Dylan skipping out on his parole and going on the run. She knew a monster was hunting her.

But Luc was her monster, too. He was her monster to hunt and torment all who prayed on the innocent. It was necessary, as Jane's dark side needed to be embraced carefully. He allowed her to do it through him to protect her from her vengeful reflection.

She sobbed into the mattress as she came. He continued until her body went slack, and she turned her head, whispering, “Death.”

Luc eased out, ripping the tape in the process, and flipped her onto her back. “There, there, it's over. I'm here.”

She nodded, crying silently as she reached for him. “My king.”

“That's right.” He removed his shirt and fully pushed his pants down to step out of them. “Shh. You did well this time.”

Her sniffles stabbed his heart, but she spread her legs, welcoming him to love her now.

It was odd, even to him sometimes, but he always made sure she saw the difference. Yes, he could fuck her hard and in the most perverted ways, but she begged to be loved slowly and deeply after every forced scene they engaged in.

“Still glowing when you expected to burn out,” he murmured, pushing into her with a sigh.

Her mouth popped open, and she gasped, clutching him to her. “Oh, fuck, thank you.”

He rested his weight on his forearms, framing her head, and pushed in deep. “Don’t thank me for such things.”

She slipped a hand from his waist to his ass and smiled.

“Beautiful,” he said softly, then pressed his mouth to hers. Her kiss captured him every time their lips touched, and he welcomed the peek into their dream world. They ruled side by side there, and she had power over every monster that could ever exist.

Chuckling, he eased out and, after moving her to the center of the bed and placing a pillow beside her, rolled her more gently onto her stomach. “A little more, yes?”

She hummed, closing her eyes—more *affection but rougher*.

He pushed in and lowered his body over hers, moving her hair so he could kiss her neck and shoulders. It gave her the feeling of being dominated, but she felt safe and loved.

Even if his movements were almost violent, she welcomed every brutal thrust if he kept himself on her this way—

touching as much as possible and pressing kisses to her sweaty skin.

Taking one of her hands in his, he held it against the mattress above her head and fucked her harder. She liked when he breathed against her ear and bit at her skin—when he let her hear how she made him feel.

Her moans grew loud, and a serene smile graced her face just before she cried out in ecstasy.

“Good girl.” He waited for her orgasm to fade to kiss down her spine and withdraw from her. Then he rolled onto her back, fixing a pillow under her ass.

“It’s too much,” she said, widening her legs as he lowered his face.

“You like it.” He tasted her until she trembled. He kissed every scar, especially the faint one below the morning star and moon tattoo she’d gotten on her wrist. He licked every tear, then took her to the bath to fuck her in between his efforts to pamper her.

Perhaps tomorrow, he’d tie her to the bed and fuck her with every toy she’d shown interest in while she gagged around his dick.

Of course, this would be after he’d spent the night waiting for her to fall asleep so he could put his face between her legs once more. When he pushed into her while she lay trapped in her dreams of them.

She would find out he nearly blacked out during his climax and that he laughed and called his brother when he realized he enjoyed it. Then, she would see how they took turns filling her with her cum.

They knew she'd consider it loving. Her two ruthless kings working together to fulfill her sordid fantasies. Well, fantasies and their efforts to help the lost part of her soul find its way out of the dark.

EPILOGUE 4

Jane

Twins' Age: 9 Months

Jane smiled at Elara as she spooned another bite of her food into her little mouth. She should've been focused on her baby, but she desperately wanted to listen in on Luc, Ryder, and Tercero's conversation in the kitchen.

Something had happened between waking on Luc's chest, him running his fingers through her hair and the phone call he'd received from Damon. Then Sin. Then Charles.

Ryder had received his call from Than, it seemed. Both he and Tercero had barged into Luc's room. Her bad boy hid the gun quickly, but she'd seen it just as she'd seen the fury in his eyes. They glowed almost neon until he spotted her, then they faded, and his body relaxed.

Tercero pretended all was well, but he couldn't hide the rage on his beautiful face in time.

Luc had emerged, holding a hand up for them to see to breakfast, that she'd be there soon.

Which brought her to the present. Tercero had whipped her up a light breakfast, and Luc's assistant had come and gone with his coffee. Ryder, well, she rarely saw him eat as he got up very early most days, and he didn't often do feeding time with the twins. He left it to the others and her, but he had fed Erio without her even asking for help. Erio was still with Ryder in the kitchen, getting to hear whatever juicy information they had.

Jane focused on Elara and sighed. "Even your brother got in with them. We'll have to stick together, baby girl. Girls

only.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

She grinned, looking up at her cousin, Adam. “I thought you weren’t coming till David got back.”

He strolled over and dropped a kiss on her head before doing the same to Elara. “Do I always have to wait on David to visit?”

“No, but I wasn’t expecting you. Did they call you?”

“Who?” He glanced around, confused.

“Never mind.” She fed Elara another bite. “How’s Diane? I can’t wait to do another playdate.”

“Pissed at me.” He sighed, sitting on a chair nearby. “That’s why I came ... I’m in the doghouse.”

“What for?” She laughed because Diane was never mad at Adam. She just vented at him because he was the only one around to vent to. Being a stay-at-home mom and wife wasn’t easy, despite what she’d been led to believe as a young girl. You couldn’t clock out and focus on yourself. Jane sometimes felt that way despite having five daddies to help her.

“I forgot our anniversary.”

Gasping, Jane whirled around to glare at him. “How could you?”

“Don’t get on me too.” He groaned, folding his arms and laying his head down. “I feel awful. I just got so caught up with work. I didn’t sleep for three nights. All the days got blurred together.”

“Oh.” Jane eased up. Adam was a serviceman for a gas company, and the cold weather had people cranking up the

heat. It led to outages in entire neighborhoods and lots of call-outs. “Well, I understand. I’m sure she’s really sad and doesn’t want to blame you. You shouldn’t be here. Go make it up to her.”

He glanced up, his forehead creasing as he stared at her. “Are you pregnant?”

“What?” She laughed, waiting for him to, but he kept scrutinizing her. “No. Why would you ask that?”

“Because he popped his head out here and gave me a death glare from Hell before disappearing.”

Jane turned, not seeing anyone, but she knew it would be Ryder checking why she was laughing and talking to someone. “Ryder?”

“Of course.” He chuckled, rubbing his face hard and groaning. “It reminded me of when you were pregnant, and he had the weird territorial thing going on. He even asked me if I was like David. I didn’t know what he meant, but then I realized he wasn’t sure if I wanted you.” Adam shuddered. “Sorry. That’s just ... no. I get David—y’all were an almost thing before—but we didn’t meet until you were my cousin. But he’s crazy like that about you.”

Jane didn’t know that Ryder had thought that about Adam, but she wasn’t all that surprised. “Well, I don’t know what is going on. They’re keeping me in the dark about something.”

“Maybe they’re gonna ask you to marry them?”

“No.” She shook her head to stop the little throb when someone mentioned marrying her guys. She’d never be able to.

“Want me to find out?”

She opened her mouth to tell him yes, but the boys exited the kitchen together. Luc held Erio as Ryder walked over to her, his eyes narrowed at Adam.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” he asked as he sat on a stool and tugged Elara’s highchair toward him. He held out a hand for Jane to give him the food.

Now she knew he was up to something. He did not feed two babies, ever. But she handed it over, her gaze narrowed. He ignored her.

“Just came to catch a breather. I fucked up with Diane.” Adam frowned, looking behind her. Then his jaw set, and he jerked his attention to Ryder. “Can I convince you to take a ride with me? The gym, maybe?”

“Yeah,” Ryder said, feeding Elara and not looking away. “We’ll take my car.”

Jane turned to see what Tercero and Luc were doing, but Luc had walked toward the sitting room they’d turned into a small play area, and Tercero was nowhere to be found.

“Great.” Adam stood, pulling out his phone. “I’m just gonna give Diane a quick call. Meet you outside.”

“Yeah.” Ryder fed Elara the last of her jar. Adam strolled out without even a goodbye.

“What’s going on?” Jane fired at Ryder as he wiped Elara’s mouth.

“What?” He had the clueless act down, but she wasn’t stupid.

“Don’t ‘what’ me. Why are you feeding the babies? Why are you agreeing to go out with Adam?”

“Can I not feed my children?” He chuckled, setting Elara’s tray aside before unbuckling her. “Mama thinks I can’t feed my baby girl.”

“No,” Jane said, crossing her arms, “but you’ve only fed them once or twice since they switched to solid foods. Why are you going with him?”

“Why not?” He stayed seated but lifted Elara, putting her head on his shoulder as he patted her back. “You told me to be nicer to him. I’m being nice.”

“You’re not nice.” She frowned, checking on Luc—he was on the phone but keeping an eye on Erio. “Can you just tell me? You know I hate being in the dark.”

“This isn’t keeping you in the dark,” Ryder said, tugging her chair to slide her closer to him. “Nothing is going on anyway. Just the usual business, and you know you’re not to be included in certain things.”

She knew that. It was vital for her not to know certain things because she could fuck up if questioned by the FBI, but she had a horrible feeling in her gut. “You’d tell me if it was bad, right?”

“Nothing bad has happened.” He leaned over and kissed her before kissing across her jaw, where he mumbled, “I promise, angel. I wouldn’t lie to you.”

Her body relaxed, and she smiled as he continued to nibble on her neck until he leaned away, laughing at Elara for whining.

“Stop,” he told their daughter. “Mama gets my lovin’ first and last. You can get grumpy with your other daddies when they give her attention.”

Her anxiety lessened, watching him smile and kiss Elara's chubby cheeks. He was a good daddy but still different from the others. David, Tercero, and Archer were very locked into their Daddy roles. They'd do what any father should and protect their children before her just as she would want them to.

Luc was different again. He'd also put the twins above her, but only because she'd want him to. Otherwise, he was clever with how he'd phrase and carry out things. He put the twin's safety first, but underneath it all, she saw it was for her.

Not Ryder. Ryder still put her at the top. He loved the twins fiercely. It was incredible because, at times, she would see him shut off when he looked at them, then he'd snap out of it and jump right into giving them attention or helping. But he didn't hide from anyone that she was his priority, and that would never change. Not even for their children.

"All right," he said, kissing Elara before standing and carrying her to where Erio played. "Be good for Mama, you two." He ruffled Erio's hair. "Hey, boy, look at me when I'm talking to you."

Erio glared up at him, but Ryder smiled.

"That's my boy." He lifted him and kissed his cheek. "Watch Sissy and Mama for me."

Her little mini Ryder almost looked like he nodded before pointing and grunting at the floor.

"Spoiled brat." Ryder put him down gently and handed him the toy he'd been playing with, then he walked back to Jane, tugging her up. "Tercero is going to watch them so you can spend time with Luc."

Jane nodded, sighing as he pulled her legs around his waist and sought her neck to kiss. “You’ll be home tonight, though?”

“Yeah.” He raised his head, kissing her chin before staring into her eyes. “You should check the security footage in Luc’s room.”

Her face heated. “Why?”

He laughed evilly and turned to glance at Luc before focusing on her. “Just watch it. Watch it and think of me when you touch yourself.”

“Ryder.” She peeked at the babies. They were too young to know what he was saying, but it still flustered her. He was so perverted. “Why would I think of you while watching Luc fuck me?”

His smile turned wicked, and he firmly kissed her lips before mumbling against her mouth, “You’ll see.”

She thought over her night with Luc and how she woke feeling extra sore between her legs. Her mouth fell open. “No way.”

He laughed, carrying her to Luc. “I’m hurt that you didn’t know right away. But I’m always gentle when you’re dreaming.”

Her whole body tingled, and she could only stare at his sexy face. He’d come to Luc’s room to fuck her while she slept. They’d fucked her together, and she’d slept through it.

His deep chuckle rumbled through her, and he pressed one more kiss below her ear, where he whispered, “I still like our solo play. I’m counting the hours until it’s my turn with you again.” Then he practically dropped her on Luc’s lap and strolled out of the room.

Luc sighed, situating her better. “Tercero will be here in an hour or so—he had an errand to run. I wasn’t sure if you wanted to go out together or if you’d like to stay home.”

“Whatever you want to do,” she said, resting her head on his shoulder. “It’s cold and rainy—not anywhere I want to go. And I know you miss them. We can just relax and spend time with them.”

“As you wish.” His gaze flitted toward the rain splattering against the windows.

“Oh, Erio.” Jane crawled off Luc’s lap and rushed to him as he gagged. Swiping her finger in his mouth, she felt something. Though her heart pounded, she managed to swipe it out. “You’re okay,” she said, clutching him as he cried. “What is this?”

Luc picked up the small piece of rubber and inspected it. “Looks like a part of one of his teething toys.”

Jane took it from him. It did look like one of the teethers, but a piece had been bitten off somehow. “What a crappy toy. Oh gosh, he puked a little on me. Do you mind holding him while I go change?”

Luc took him without complaint and gestured toward Elara. “She’s dirty as well. You shouldn’t let Ryder feed her.”

Laughing, she took in how messy Elara’s little outfit was. “Yeah, okay. We’ll be back.”



The morning and afternoon went by smoothly. Luc took a few phone calls, and once Tercero arrived, he told her to rest with Luc for a while. She loved how they were considerate of each

other whenever one had been away from her for a while. She was dying for the chance to ask Tercero to start helping her with dance lessons, and she desperately wanted to go to Dungeon. She wasn't quite ready for the others to come, but she was trying to be brave to get there and share the experience with all her men.

Luc wasn't a chill and lounge-around guy, but he didn't seem to mind her wanting to catch up on a show she'd held off on watching. Now they were five episodes in.

"You know," she started, staring at her fingers as she traced the tattoos on Luc's chest, "I was thinking that maybe it's time."

"Time?" His arm was wrapped around her back, and he trailed his fingers up to her hip.

"To get pregnant."

"Jane." He stilled his hand, his body tensing. "You know there's no rush."

"I know." She huffed, afraid to even think about it. She'd had a fluke getting pregnant with Ryder and Tercero at the same time. It would probably not happen again. "But I don't want a big age gap. I want them to grow up together."

He sighed but resumed caressing her. "Have you mentioned this to the others?"

"No." She peeked at him, nervous again. "I just wanted to tell them I'd like to get off birth control. It's making me feel sick anyway, and I can't lose all this extra weight."

"You don't have extra weight." He pinched her love handle. "This is normal."

“Well, I still don’t like this new birth control. And it hurt so bad to get it put in. Plus, I think y’all feel it sometimes when we have sex.”

He didn’t confirm or deny it. She knew strings from the IUD stuck out, but she had no idea if they could feel them with their dicks. “Whose child do you want to have? I don’t look forward to pulling out or using condoms just so one of my brothers or David can succeed.”

“I don’t want any of you to pull out. I want to let fate decide.” She grinned at his baffled expression. “Maybe it’ll be yours. Maybe even Ryder or Tercero again. Or David, or Archer, or ...”

“Damon isn’t your boyfriend, Jane.” He shook his head, looking at the screen even though she knew he wasn’t watching her show.

“Well, not all babies have parents who are together.” She shrugged, not upset about having a child with Damon, even if they decided to end things. Damon would still be a good baby daddy, and the others would accept any child she had.

“Yes,” Luc said, “but it’s best to allow one of your boyfriends the chance. At least eliminate one rival.”

“Fair enough.” She understood his line of thought and accepted that it would be upsetting to the others if Damon got her pregnant. “But you’d like to try?”

His gaze slid to hers slowly, and he nodded. “I’ll schedule for you to have the IUD removed. It’s up to you to tell the others your plans. If any want to sit it out, let them, Jane. I’m not sure Ryder wants you to have another child of his. He still fears that it was his fault that we almost lost you.”

“It wasn’t his fault.”

“I know,” he said, stilling when a notification sounded on his phone.

Jane reached to hand it to him, and she frowned when she didn't recognize the number. “Whose number is that?”

Luc took the phone, reading whatever text he'd gotten and replying to it without letting her see.

She huffed, getting off the bed. They were having an important conversation, and she wanted it to be him that she discussed it with first. Secretly, she wanted to have his child next, but she had no good reason for wanting it to be him. Well, other than he was older than the others, and it seemed like somehow that mattered. She stomped off to the bathroom to fume and pee.

By the time she got back, he was sitting up, legs over the side of the bed, staring at her.

“I'm not trying to upset you,” he said, though his gray eyes flashed almost angrily with silver.

“I'm just trying to talk with you.” She walked closer, stopping a foot or so away from him. “I know work is important, but can this be about me?”

“It is about you.”

She searched his face, not picking up any hint of what he meant. “How?”

Sighing, he held up a phone that didn't belong to him.

She took it, her hands trembling as she stared at the image on the phone. All the air in her lungs turned to ice before thawing and burning her from the inside out. Her jaw clenched, and she turned away to catch her breath.

It took only two for her to whirl around and hand him back the phone. “Make it hurt.” She nodded, shaking the phone for him to take. “Make him suffer ... More than what he’s doing to him right now.”

A dark smile lifted the corner of his mouth. “How do you know who’s there?”

She swallowed, putting a hand over her heart. They’d caught Dylan Berith. He was hardly recognizable in the photo, a bloody mess and missing a hand, but she would never forget his eyes.

They’d caught him before the police could and were torturing him. Ryder was torturing him. “Because I come first and last for him. He wanted first dibs, so he left before you. You should go take care of it. I know he’s itching to take his last breath.”

Luc stood, slipping a hand to the nape of her neck as he towered over her. “Do you want any other details? Any requests?”

Her mind raced with all sorts of violent possibilities. Dylan Berith had skipped out on his parole, and they knew he was coming for her. Yet, somehow, one of the men had found him. She wondered if he’d been caught nearby. Had he been searching for their home? Had he seen her, even a glimpse? Had he seen her children? What would he have done to her ... to them if, for just one moment, they’d let their guard down?

Images of Elara and Erio screaming bombarded her mind, and she squeezed her eyes shut. Dylan would hurt them. He had no desire to redeem himself. He couldn’t handle the consequences of his actions and blamed her because he wasn’t the biggest, baddest wolf.

“No,” she whispered, looking at him again. “No details. I don’t even want to know where he was caught. Just that I never have to fear him coming after our babies or me.”

“Consider it done, my queen.”

EPILOGUE 5

David

Twins' Age: 15 months

“Leodegrance,” David’s coach called after him as he headed toward the locker room exit.

David stopped and turned. “Yeah, Coach?”

“I got a notice to discuss something with you.” He glanced at the paper in his hand before sighing. “The donors are up in arms again. You weren’t supposed to be seen in public with your stepsister.”

“My girlfriend,” David corrected, annoyed. “Jane’s my girlfriend.”

Coach scowled at him, crossing his arms. “Yes, you make that distinction every time she’s an issue. Well, as you know, your little outing with her and her kids last week made its rounds on social media.”

“My kids,” David corrected again, adopting the same stance as his coach. “And we weren’t at a school event. We were at the fucking park with my cousin and his two children. We were having a playdate. It’s not my fault that someone spotted me with my family and decided to take photos and post them.”

“There are photos of you kissing her and grabbing her ass.” Coach laughed, but it was full of disappointment. “How your father allows this, I’ll never know.”

“I’m not having this conversation again.” David noticed Archer heading his way, but he waved him off. “I didn’t break the requests they asked of me. I wasn’t even near campus—I was two towns over. I’m not going to hide. My kids are

important to me, and I'll be a boyfriend and father in public. I'm not ashamed of them."

"The top five donors are, though." He let out another laugh. "I don't care how you do it, but you can't be seen publicly with them if you want to keep your position. If Archer can keep a low profile with her, you can too. They want a commitment in writing by the end of the week. I'd advise having a lawyer review the contract they're creating. Have them reach out to make any revisions."

"I'm not signing a contract that says I can't go out with my girlfriend and children."

"They're not your children!" The vein in his coach's neck pulsed. "Dammit, boy, they will ruin your life—your career. All you have to do is keep things behind closed doors. Not even outside your home is acceptable."

David shook his head and walked to where Archer waited for him.

"What was that about?" he asked, falling in step with him.

"Nothing."



David dropped the contract given to him on Luc's desk and sat across from him. He'd chosen to confide only in Luc and Damon about it. He didn't know why he hesitated to tell the others, but he knew Luc could give him advice without becoming emotional.

"They are essentially asking for rein over your private life," Luc murmured, still reading. "It's very thorough, as I'm sure you know."

“Is this even legal?”

Luc smirked but continued to read. “Not exactly, but they have a good lawyer. Understandable if they are the university’s top donors. They are not ordering you to do anything, but they are adding expectations and limitations to what the recipients of their donations can and should do. It’s worded in such a way that they can direct it at every player, but a signed agreement is only required if voted on by the board. They’ve listed various complaints from other donors, alums, staff, and students as cause for the vote to require you to review their guidelines and accept. Acceptance allows the school to keep their donations. However, if the contract’s terms are breached, they will issue hefty fines to the university. Which, without saying, would likely lead to you being benched or removed from the team.”

David sighed, rubbing a hand over his face. “I can’t ask Jane to stay a secret.”

Luc put the contract down and nodded. “I understand your desire to show her and the children off. You’re proud of her and of them, as you should be. But Jane would understand. It’s not like before when she believed you were ashamed of her.”

“Thanks.” He chuckled, shaking his head at the satisfaction in Luc’s eyes. “Still, I won’t ask this of her. I won’t keep it from her and try to do it anyway.”

“Would you like me to draw up a counter proposal? You are a popular player—a star player. That gives you some leverage.”

“But they’re counting on me caving to the pressure.”

“Yes.” Luc opened a file and began to sign. “I can put pressure on them, but you already know I have my own

problems.”

“Just your input is enough.” David knew they were forbidden from speaking about the torture and murder of Dylan Berith.

Damon had a talent for seeing things that were out of place, so after noticing an occupied vehicle near Luc’s office a few times, he’d called someone to investigate.

Jane had no idea that Dylan had followed her, Ryder, and Tercero from her parents’ home. That he’d watched her and the twins with her mom and his dad. That he’d found out where they lived.

Knowing the man had followed Jane from her childhood home to their new home was all Damon needed to put things into motion.

He did it fast, using the intel his guy had given him. Damon, Sin, and Than, had stalked their old teammate. He had changed his hair color and looked different due to how many times his nose had been broken in prison, but they knew who they had in their grasp and wasted no time capturing him.

David had seen the beating Damon had given Dylan, and he approved. He even smiled at the knowledge that Than had ripped off Dylan’s fingernails until Ryder arrived. Even seeing some evidence of how Ryder, after Dylan spouted something about marking Jane with his name in a way she’d never clean off, had carved Jane’s name into Dylan’s stomach, chest, arms, and face before cutting off his hand when it slipped out of a restraint, he’d been pleased.

But seeing what Tercero and Luc had done together ... David never wanted to see it again, and he was thankful Jane would never know. She wouldn’t know Luc had told Dylan

that she knew he'd been caught, and she'd made two requests: Make it hurt. Make him suffer.

They said Dylan still laughed and tried to spit at Luc, promising, even with his death, she'd never forget him—she'd never stop feeling his dick pushing against her cunt. He'd torture her until her last breath. Then he'd haunt her in her next life until he found her again.

Luc had smiled, telling him he'd find him in his next life too. And the next. And the next. Then he'd done as Jane asked. He made it hurt. He made it hurt more than Ryder could because he was so close to ending the asshole every time he touched him.

Maybe Jane knew that. Maybe she knew Luc was the only one who could do it slowly. Well, Luc and Tercero. They'd flayed him alive. They took their time because Dylan still issued threats of horror and promised she'd never be the same, that she was ruined.

Eventually, though, whatever drugs in Dylan's system that allowed him to be somewhat numb to the torture faded, and he cracked, begging for death.

Ryder had told him, "*Death isn't here right now.*"

So it was slow. It was bloody. It was vengeful.

Jane was safe, but part of her soul had darkened, just as Dylan said it would. She was never told the details, but she knew it had been horrific. It was the first time David had understood what Luc always claimed about Jane's vicious side. Her darkness was birthed from suffering and the evil that she'd survived. Luc knew it would never go away, that it would eat at her—faster if they had handed Dylan over to the police. She would've known it was the right thing to do, but

that mean, hurt part that festered inside her wounded heart would despise them for not killing her monster.

Luc knew she would never be the same either way. She would suffer and always fear for their children. So he chose which darkness to nurture and then shielded her from all the hate she could unleash. Luc took in her monster so her goodness could stay and hopefully heal with all their help.

It wasn't easy. They knew it was wrong and would pay the price for it when the time came. But for now, for this life, they'd accept it and keep secret that her darkness had tasted her enemy's blood. That her king had feasted on it.

“My input,” Luc said, pulling David's mind to the present, “is that you are a talented player. Football isn't your life, but you've worked hard to get where you are. Your efforts have gained you wide respect and recognition, and you are on a path to being drafted if that is your goal.

“But Jane is your life, too. The twins are just as important. So it's not which matters more because you already have that answer. Your decision needs to come down to reevaluating your goals, how you want to reach those goals, and where Jane and the children fit in your future.”



Sighing, David looked away from the campfire and over to where Jane sat, sniffing. He'd taken Luc's advice and reflected on everything before finally deciding what to do.

He didn't discuss his decision with anyone. Not even his father. Jane was the first person to know, and he felt like a piece of shit for bringing her to a beautiful campground only to do this.

“Jane,” he said, standing and walking toward her.

She made a pained noise and tried to turn away but couldn't do much from the chair she sat on.

Squatting, he placed his hands on her thighs, rubbing them when goosebumps erupted. “Hey, I know this hurts—I hate it—but it's the right choice for me.”

Her glare was fierce, and she unleashed the full force of it on him as she smacked his hand. “The right choice? You're fucking leaving me! You're leaving me and our babies.”

“Jane.” He grabbed her hand when she tried to push him off her leg. “I'm leaving to go to a different school. I'll only be a three-hour drive away. It sucks that I won't be able to kiss you every day and night or see the twins, but it's only until I graduate. You can visit—I can visit—and we don't have to hide our relationship. You know the school here doesn't care about me or us. The new one does.”

Her eyes brimmed with tears, and her lips trembled. “But what if you find someone else? Someone pretty with no other boyfriends who'll make you happier.”

He laughed, scooting between her legs so he could hold her face. “Baby, no one makes me happier than you. I'm not going to find anyone else because I'm happy. I love you, Jane. No distance or time apart will change that.”

A few tears spilled down her cheeks, and she raised a hand to touch his lips the way she liked to. She whined when he smiled and kissed her fingertips, but he saw she understood he wasn't abandoning her. “Promise you won't hook up with someone? Just because I'm shagging your friends doesn't mean I want you fucking anyone. I'm your only fuck. I'm your kitty, your baby ... your mate.”

“I know.” He chuckled, dropping his hands to her thighs as she traced his lips. It seemed to relax her. “I promise I won’t hook up with anyone. And I love that you have them to love you. I hope they love you extra for me. I’ll even ask Luc to pick out some toys, and I can control it while I’m away.”

Her eyes darted to his, and her cheeks reddened. “My David is having dirty thoughts about me.”

“Every second I can spare is a dirty thought about you.” He kissed her fingers again. It would hurt, and he knew she would stress even if he’d never strayed from her. But in the long run, it would pay off. “Long distance relationships can work. We’ll both have to work for it, but I know you. I know you’ll love me as fiercely as you do now.”

She nodded, lowering her arm. “Imma be a crazy girl about you. I’ll switch off on games between you and Archer. I’ll scream so loud.”

“I love my crazy girl.” He leaned forward, kissing her chin, then her tear-stained cheeks. “We’ll be okay.”

“We’ll be better than okay.” She nuzzled her face against his in a way that confirmed she was his kitten.

“Yes, better.” He slipped his hands beneath her thighs, lifting her enough that she could wrap her legs around his waist, then stood. “No matter what separates us,” he said, brushing his lips against her neck as she hugged him, “I’ll come back to you.”

“Okay,” she whispered, wrapping her arms around him.

“Okay,” he copied, kissing a path along her neck until he reached the spot he’d bitten and scarred. His urge to play with her rose but faded almost instantly. They had several memories of playing hunter and prey—of catching and mating

her. Even the simpler moments of catching her alone at the house, unaware he was watching, stalking her, then snatching her around the waist. She'd scream out a laugh, knowing his touch right away. Then he'd either fuck her right where they were or toss her over his shoulder and carry her somewhere for a rough fuck.

She loved it, as did he, but he could be tender with her too. Tender was what she needed from him.

Keeping one hand on her ass, he dragged a hand up and down her back and began walking. "I was thinking of getting an apartment instead of staying in the dorm they offered."

"You don't want to experience being the star player like a real college boy?"

Laughing, he shook his head. "You mean, do I want to party like I'm single?"

"Maybe not single." She turned, kissing his neck too. "But you'll be able to experience college life without me there to hold you back."

He stopped walking and stared at her. "Jane, look at me."

"I didn't mean it." She refused to look at him and kissed his neck again.

He sighed, tilting his head back to stare at the sky. "Baby, stop."

"You don't want me to." She nipped his neck, grinning against his skin. "Let's play."

Instead of agreeing or arguing, he took control, pressing her against the nearest tree. It allowed him to grip her face and make her look at him. "Jane."

Her eyes sparkled with tears, and she sobbed.

“Oh, baby,” he said, kissing her softly. “It’s okay.”

“I’m gonna miss you,” she croaked, weakly touching his lips again.

“I’m gonna miss you too.” His throat ached because he felt the same way she did. He loved her so much, and often he didn’t want to leave her side at all. But he had to focus on himself too. It was the only way she would be able to breathe and really see him. “I don’t want us to become a habit, though. I made this choice for more than being able to love you openly.”

She continued to cry. She had wanted to wear a mask and pretend to be brave, but this was how she showed him how brave she could be. She could let her sadness spill out. She could bare herself to him.

“This, baby.” He held her cheek, smearing her tears with his thumb. “My brave girl. I don’t want you to slip into a routine of being my kitten just to satisfy my desires. That’s what’s happening to us. It’s not your fault or mine. It’s just something that happens when we put ourselves at the bottom. We all do this, Jane. I see it now. I want you to have the world, so I step back for Ryder. He’s learning to step back for one brother or me at a time. Tercero always moves aside for him. Archer waits for an opening to sneak in. And Luc, fuck, I hate him sometimes, but he literally does everything to make sure every one of us is taken care of for you. He doesn’t indulge in anything but the moments he gets alone with you.”

Her body shook with each cry she let out, and he held her, pressing his body against hers so she would feel all his strength and the heat that she liked so much.

“I have to set the wheels in motion, sweetheart. Pretending that everything is perfect will only break your beautiful heart

down the road.” He smiled even though his eyes burned and his throat felt tight. “We’re not ending. We’ll miss each other, but we’ll make sure that we are not just a routine of seeing each other and you turning on your cute prey act. Every movement from now on will be in the moment. Not a routine. You’re not my habit. I don’t want to be yours, and I want the others to see that we’ve slipped into this, so we don’t lose ourselves. If we do, we will become just a comfort love.”

She nodded, hiccuping as she closed her eyes and breathed in. She was smelling him, and he smiled because she’d not done that in some time. She’d gotten so used to his scent that she no longer even asked for one of his shirts to wear. He was imprinted on her, just as she was to him. It was amazing, but he didn’t want to wake up in ten years and realize they were still following the same pattern. He wanted her to always feel like his girlfriend—like the girl next door who became his stepsister in the next room. The girl he never thought would be his.

“We need this,” he said, even though he wanted to take it right back. “I want always to be your David and look at you like you’re agreeing to be mine all over again. My Jane.”

Her face scrunched up in agony, but she leaned forward to give him a kiss that tasted of tears.

He kissed her back. Slowly. Deeply. Not a brand. Not marking his territory. It was a simple yet complicated thing. It was them. Never-ending. Always drifting through time but beating the odds and finding each other.

“I something you,” she whispered against his lips.

A knot formed in his throat, choking him at the term she’d once used when she couldn’t tell him the three words that would always be true.

He smiled the smile that always made her blush, and nodded. "I love you, too."

EPILOGUE 6

Ryder

Twins' Age: 10 years

“Jesus Christ!” Ryder got to his feet, glaring at the girl and pair of boys. “I told you to keep it down.”

Emerald eyes that matched his own glared right back at him. “It’s Erio, Dad. Not Jesus Christ, even if I am that impressive.”

Jane snorted behind him, where she still sat. He’d been enjoying resting his head on her lap as she told him about her day and ran her fingers through his hair. He did it with her because she’d go through busy mom duties that prevented her from having much time out for herself. He wanted her to feel important and let her know he found the insignificant details about her day interesting. But she was going to get his wrath for laughing.

He turned his head enough to see her in his peripheral. “Shut up, my love. I won’t hesitate to toss you over my shoulder and take you to the nearest empty room.”

Gagging sounds erupted from the trio, and he focused on them again, smirking.

“Did you just imply that me loving your mother is nauseating?”

“It’s gross, Dad.” His brother’s spawn had the nerve to push Elara aside. “My teacher said you’re not supposed to talk about grown-up stuff in front of us.”

“Kai,” he said, pinning the little demon with a darker look, “your teacher’s a moron. Tell her I said that next time she thinks she can tell me how to raise my kids.”

“I like to be called Gojo,” he snapped, crossing his arms. “Mama said I can be called Gojo. So did Daddy.”

He sighed, rubbing his forehead. “Fine, Gojo, tell your teacher she can suck a di—”

Jane smacked his ass. “Ryder!”

“Scream it louder, hon.” He laughed but held out a hand for Elara when she sniffled behind Kai ... Gojo ... whatever the fuck he wanted to be called. “What’s wrong, baby girl? Your asshole brothers do something?”

She darted her eyes over to Erio, who nodded and nudged her toward him. “It’s not something they did.”

He took her hand before picking her up. “Spill it.”

Her little chin wobbled, and she whispered, “The kids at school said I’m a freak. That we’re all freaks—and that I’m not your daughter because Daddy was the one who made me with Mama, and they called her a bad word.”

Sliding his gaze to Erio, he asked, “This true?”

“Yes, sir.” His little mini me stood taller.

“And what’d you do about it?” Ryder rubbed a hand on Elara’s back.

Before Erio could respond, Kai ... Gojo puffed his chest out, grinning. “Me and Erio beat their asses!”

He couldn’t hold in his laugh, which allowed him to see Erio let a real smile lift his lips. “Did you get caught?”

“Nope!” His youngest son beamed up at him. “And Erio told them if they say anything, everyone will know they got beat up by little kids. And I told them, you mess with one

Godson, the rest of us will hunt you down. So don't mess with us!"

Ryder focused on Erio. "Are you both all right?"

"Yes, sir." Erio gestured toward Elara. "She thinks we're going to get in trouble. You can tell Mama to take her away so we can be punished."

"Punished?" Kai took a step back toward Erio. "It wasn't our fault! They started it."

Ryder kept his gaze on his oldest, studying his emotionless features. He really thought he was in trouble for defending their family. "Have I ever hit you?"

Erio shook his head.

"Then why would you think I need to send your sister away?" He knew he was rough on the boys and wasn't affectionate like their other dads, but he was a little unnerved that his son would think he'd spank him.

"You always say punishment fits the crime, so think through what I do before I do it." Erio shrugged. "I beat the shit out of those little assholes. Well, they were bigger than me, but I still whooped their butts. I'm expecting a butt-whooping in return."

"Who's getting a whooping?" Archer walked in, lowering his reading glasses before flashing his dimples at Jane. Then he stood shoulder to shoulder with Ryder, taking in the kids. "Was it mine or yours?"

"Both," he said, kissing Elara's head. "You don't have to worry about your brothers, baby moon. I won't ever hurt any of you like that. Understand?"

She nodded, wiping her cheeks. “But whatever punishment you give them, you have to give me too.”

“Elara,” Erio hissed, ever her protector.

Like her mama, she shook her head, ready to go down with her boys. “I threw the first punch.”

Archer burst out laughing. “Fuck, I don’t know what happened, but I need to record this. Hang on.” He plopped down beside Jane, kissing her as he pulled out his phone and aimed it at him. “Action, Elara. Give us a recap of the bloody battle, my little warrior.”

Ryder kept his face blank, watching her lift her chin the way Jane learned to, and she looked him square in the eyes. *Baby goddess.*

“Don’t listen to her—she’s lying,” Erio shouted. “I did it. She’s saying that so you won’t be hard on me.”

He held up a hand, silencing everyone when *Gojo* also tried to claim he’d unleashed his ‘Unlimited Void.’ “You threw the first punch?” he asked Elara as he felt Jane stand behind him. His girl sent all kinds of nervous energy at him, but he felt all her light too. Just like Elara seemed to glow when she nodded, confirming she’d started the melee. “Then what happened?”

Elara cracked a little smile. “Rachel’s brother swung at me, but Erio tackled him, then Gojo punched their other brother. The older one.”

“You got that right,” Gojo piped up, proud as hell.

Ryder raised a hand to Elara’s cheek, rubbing away some dirt mixed with tears. She looked almost identical to Jane whenever she’d get back up after falling. His beautiful girls. The only difference was that his daughter didn’t have to fall as

hard as her mama. She always had backup, the way he'd wished Jane could have had growing up.

Archer spoke up behind him. "Isn't Rachel the girl who asked Erio to be her valentine?"

Erio scowled but nodded. "I don't want no blondes."

He chuckled, hugging Elara as Jane hugged him from behind to hide her tears. Even if she was proud, she hated that their kids had problems because she loved more than one man.

Archer laughed too. "As a blond, I'd take offense, buddy, but I agree. Brunettes make us Godson men weak in the knees."

Ryder checked Elara's hand. She had some scratches, but she was okay. "Has she been picking on you since Erio turned her down?"

She swallowed, shifting her eyes to Erio. Her brother sighed but nodded, so she spoke up. "She told me to make him like her, or she'd tell everyone I liked to eat cat poop."

"The fuck?" He shook his head. "That's stupid."

Erio glowered at the floor, mumbling, "It was dog poop. She'd already told everyone. They pointed at white dog crap when we were outside for gym class and told me my sister's lunch got left outside."

"These kids are wild." Archer stood up, putting his phone away and squatting to inspect the boys for injuries. "Anything hurt?"

Archer's son shook his head, causing twigs to fall from his shoulder-length white hair.

"Gojo, you're a mess."

“They look worse, Dad.” Their little mini-Archer punched his hand. “I told ‘em next time I won’t hold back.”

“You are the weirdest eight-year-old.” Archer chuckled, ruffling his hair.

Ryder held out a hand for his brother’s sneaky creation, pulling him into a side hug. He was such a mixture of Archer’s and Jane’s mischievous sides; there was never a dull day with him around. “You know we only use our fists to protect our family, right?”

Icy blue eyes stared up at him. “Yeah, I know. I’m no bully, Dad.”

He smiled and gripped his chin, turning his head to make sure his little boy was indeed okay. “You’re not hiding any injuries?”

“The big one only got one hit on me.” He pointed to his side. “I’m fine.”

Archer tugged up his shirt, checking him out. “It’s a little bruised, but he’s good.”

“I don’t want you hiding injuries from us, you hear me?” He plucked a piece of grass from his hair, then squatted so he was eye to eye with his boys. “I don’t care who started it, who was involved, or what it was about. If any of you are hurt, you tell us. If anyone bullies you, you tell us.”

“Yes, sir,” the three of them mumbled.

“You understand that this could’ve been avoided if you told an adult, don’t you?”

“No one at school cares,” Erio said, crossing his arms. “All they do is send the bad kids back to class for the teacher to deal with.”

He knew that was true. It didn't matter what school the kids attended; school administrators were more concerned with the reputation of being 'bully free.' If they had no discipline for bullying, they got to look good on paper.

Elara lowered her head, hiding behind her curtain of black hair.

Erio reached for her, pulling her out of Ryder's arms. He grabbed her little hand and took Gojo's too. "I'm not gonna let them get bullied." He glared at both him and Archer. "I've tried to ignore it, but no one messes with my family."

"Hey," Jane cooed, squatting too. "What else aren't you telling us?"

Erio's tanned cheeks tinged, but he answered his mama. "I made it hurt." He stared at Ryder. "With more than my fists."

"What do you mean, baby?" Jane asked, her hand flexing on Ryder's back. She wanted to wrap them up and protect them, take them away, but she knew it wouldn't help. So she used him to find the strength to let them fight their battles because their daddies would be behind them if it went to shit.

Elara's pale cheeks flushed crimson, and a mean smile tugged at her lips. "Rachel called you a bad word for having all our daddies. Her brothers laughed and called you more bad words." Her smile bloomed with darkness as she stared at her brother. "Erio told them they were just jealous their mom couldn't keep even one dad for them while our mama got us five."

He smiled even though he shouldn't have. Erio was his little clone and could hurt others with the brutal truth, just like he did.

“Erio,” Jane said softly. “Honey, that’s very mean. I know they said mean things too, but don’t say things like that. Not having a dad ...” Her voice cracked, and she turned away.

Ryder nodded and took over for her. “Even if they say bad things about us, don’t make fun of them for that, okay? You know Mama lost Grandpa Eric, and my dad left my brothers and me. It hurts enough as it is. No one should make that pain worse.”

His children looked down, nodding.

“Hey, I’m not mad, okay?” He gripped Erio’s chin so he’d look at him again. “I’m proud you for protecting your sister and standing up for our family. Just learn from this, okay? Don’t let their words get to you. None of the shit they say is true, and they know that. You already won the fight they started.

“And you know what I’ve said about bullies, right? They’re usually jealous or hurt in some way. You have parents who love you, siblings who will always have your backs, and you have Mama’s armies ready to go to war for you if needed. So if they’re making fun of any of that, it’s jealousy because nothing is wrong with us.”

Erio nodded. “I won’t say I won’t fight again, but I’ll apologize for the dad thing. Nothing else.”

He smiled and touched their little hands, which were clasped together. “I think that’s fair. And I never said not to fight. Fight if you need to—just think it through before you swing. Is it necessary? What’s it going to cost you or your loved ones? Right?”

“Yes, sir.” Erio’s little fist tightened around each hand he held.

“Come here,” he said, tugging all three of them into a hug. “Thank you for taking care of each other.” He let them go, knowing a hug from him to his sons was rare, and he saw the faint smile touch Erio’s lips before it disappeared. “I love you.”

The smile came back, and Erio nodded. “Love you too, Dad.”

Ryder patted his cheek. “You tell me if anything else happens.”

“Yes, sir.” They smiled at him in the way Jane said looked like they were staring at a superhero.

“All right,” he said, tugging Jane up too. “Go clean yourselves up and bring your homework. We’re gonna finish it early so I can have fun with Mama.”

“Ew,” they chorused, rushing off.

“I’d be mad,” Jane said once they were out of sight, “but you got my freaking heart fluttering. Sweetest boy in the world.”

“Good.” He grabbed her by the throat and pressed a hard kiss on her lips. “Go bend over now.”

Archer snorted, reaching for Jane. “If she’s bending over for anyone, it’s me. I know you fucked her at least once today already. She’s got the wobble.”

Ryder smirked, never taking his eyes off Jane. “Tell him how good it felt, Bambi.”

Her face pinked as Archer chuckled, kissing her and grabbing her ass. But she smacked his brother’s hand when he slipped it under her dress.

“Ah, come on, gorgeous,” Archer said, holding her face with one hand before kissing her eyelids. “I’m kidding. Did you have a good day?”

“Mhm.” She gave his brother a dreamy smile and hugged him, but one of the kids yelling for her had her pulling away.

“Aw, look at my little Bambi go,” he teased because she did have a funny walk after he fucked her hard.

“Shut up.” She laughed, walking out of view.

Archer sighed, all dramatic watching her. “Please let me make another baby with her. I made a good one, didn’t I? He’s fucking hilarious.”

“He wants to be called Gojo,” Ryder deadpanned.

“He looks like him,” Archer exclaimed, tossing his hands up before flopping onto the sofa. “I’m pretty sure he was conceived when Jane and I were fucking while watching the show. You think he heard?”

“Why are you like this?” He walked over to the table to grab his phone. “And no, we don’t need another Archer. I can barely handle the two of you.”

“You love me, big brother.” Archer took off his tie, tossing it across the room. “Don’t deny it.”

“Shut up.” Ryder read over a text from Than, who wondered if they were still on for business. He replied that they were and put his phone away. Business wasn’t what he wanted to think about right after fucking his girlfriend while she virtually got fucked by David with a toy.

Archer had decided to leave football to raise his son, but David became a football legend and sometimes had to

maintain a long-distance relationship with her, hence the virtual sex.

It kept things interesting. Things were rough for them when David first left for a different college. She only spent a handful of nights at his apartment and cried a lot because she missed him. They would've helped her devote more time to her stepbrother, but she was a hands-on mom. It didn't matter she had more help than most people; she wanted to do everything for their kids.

David had worried she'd not do well when he went pro, but Jane pushed herself out of her bubble of just them to be the football star's girlfriend and finally began leaving the children, or sometimes taking them with her if they didn't have school.

She still made headlines with David on social media, but they owned the drama and looked more in love every time they saw each other.

So Ryder helped out, receiving texts from David to put a toy in Jane's pussy. It obviously wasn't as good as any of them could give her, but it helped the two of them feel connected when they couldn't touch. David encouraged Ryder's involvement, sometimes even Archer's, and they ensured she was fucked good for her blue-eyed boy.

"I saw Damon today." Archer chuckled evilly.

"Yeah?" Ryder turned to give him his full attention.

"Mhm." Archer laughed again. "He's so fucking pissed at Luc. Well, all of us."

"I bet." Ryder smiled and reopened his phone. He checked the cameras to make sure Jane didn't need help, but she must've taken care of whatever they needed because she was

in the nursery, sitting beside the crib and staring at the little three-month-old baby boy asleep there.

Their youngest, Ryu, had been a mistake. Well, not a mistake—just unplanned and completely unexpected. He shouldn't have even been possible.

After Archer succeeded in knocking her up the week after David moved away and Gojo was born, they'd agreed to stop pushing their breeding urge on Jane—postpartum depression was real, and it was a battle to defeat.

Archer went from star quarterback to stay-at-home dad while Jane fought the illness, then became Luc's top business manager so he'd have a regular schedule to still help her as much as possible.

While Archer was closest to him regarding his lack of feelings for others, his love for Jane never stopped growing. His foolish brother was the first to put her above his male desire to procreate and got a vasectomy.

Of course none of them wanted to undergo the procedure, but Jane mattered more. So following his brother's lead, Ryder, David, Tercero, and Luc got it done, too.

Yet, eight years after having Kai—Gojo—she was pregnant with someone's baby.

"I don't know what he expected us to do," Archer said. "Or you, I should say."

Ryder sat, staring at Jane as she reached through the slats to rest her fingers next to Ryu. "He got her pregnant, and they aren't even together. He broke up with her six years ago. He took advantage of her sadness over Tercero."

"Yeah, I know." Archer ruffled his hair. "But he does love her. Threatening him and forbidding him from seeing Jane is a

bit harsh. They're friends. And making him have supervised visits with his son?"

Ryder kept watching Jane on his phone. She was crying. She hated herself for straying even if they didn't consider it cheating. Just because the fucker broke up with her to go off and build his own harem didn't mean she stopped loving him. In her mind, Damon was hers.

They all knew if Damon even whispered about getting back together, she'd leap at it, but fucking her because she lost her mind after Tercero got shot and almost killed was wrong.

"He left his girlfriends," Archer said quietly.

"He should've done that before fucking her in his goddamn car." Ryder sighed. He hated seeing Jane beat herself up. He forgave her. They all forgave her. But in her sad little mind, she'd strayed and gotten pregnant by a man who wasn't permitted to touch her in such a way.

"She loves him," Archer said, picking at the strings on a pillow. "She thought she'd gotten him back."

"I know." Ryder breathed out, thinking over his and Luc's threats to Damon. It was simple—stay the fuck away from her. Touch her again, and you die. Standard threats.

Of course, Damon pushed back, and they fought. And, as expected, Ryder beat him so severely that Luc had to call in a surgeon to keep him from dying.

To Ryder, Damon knew better and that Jane had one goal: to get her dragon back. No one blinked an eye at the fight, but a few of the others were on his and Luc's asses for keeping them apart.

Naturally, they told everyone to fuck off, but Ryder knew he had no right to forbid Damon from seeing Jane or his son.

Damon paid for every little thing Ryu needed, even if they cared for him like they did for their children.

“You gotta be the one to help her, bro.” Archer leaned close, observing Jane breaking down. “She’s not going to forgive herself. Ever. You need to make her see the truth.”

He smiled sadly, watching her compose herself, trying to wipe away remnants of her sorrow and shame. “That Damon wouldn’t have left if I accepted him like the rest of you did.”

Archer nodded, taking the phone from him to zoom in. “I’m not mad at you for changing your mind about him back then. He wouldn’t commit, even when she’d fallen for him. But you pushed him away.

“I’m not saying it’s all your fault. Damon was kinda stringing her along. It wasn’t that he didn’t love her, though. He just didn’t want to change things—they had a good time together. They weren’t like us, but they were more than fuck buddies. But he saw the change in all of us when he never committed, and your threat caused him to walk. He’s not stupid. He knows you and I fought, but I’m your brother. He’s an evil prick who likes to fuck our girlfriend. You would’ve destroyed him if he tried to tell you to leave them alone, and he didn’t want Jane to lose him because you killed him.

“And then the shit happened with Tercero. Fuck, none of us were here for her when he got hurt. He almost fuckin’ died, and you went on a rampage to avenge him. Luc was just as ruthless in his quest to ensure that anyone involved in the assassination attempt would suffer a long and painful death. Then we found out it was linked to Uroš Blackwood, and that set both of you off.

“Our poor girl ... I was gone. David was gone. And she had one person. Him. I’m not saying she’s entirely innocent

but look at the facts. He was there for her. He took care of her and the kids. He handled everything with Tercero's care until Gabriel got there. And yeah, he loved her when she felt it was the end of the world. He knew what she needed in all that pain, so he slipped. They both did."

"What has you both looking like someone died?"

Ryder glanced at Tercero, sighing as his brother rubbed his chest where he'd been shot. He'd made a miraculous recovery, but it never should've happened. His brother always wore a vest. But fate had decided Jane needed one more tragedy, and his brother walked out the door without proper gear the day the remaining Blackwood family had hired someone to take him out.

Archer held up Ryder's phone. "Our girl isn't dying, but she's hurting."

"Ah." Tercero sent him a long look of disapproval as he walked past. "I'm going to sleep. I'm sure she needs a nap, so I will take her with me. Don't disturb us."

Archer chuckled, tossing Ryder his phone as Tercero disappeared down the hall. "He's so blunt now. It's funny."

"He doesn't want to waste time," Ryder murmured.

"Guess brushes with Death will do that to you." Archer began gathering his discarded clothing and shoes. "Anyway, Damon said he'd like to see Ryu this weekend."

"And?" Ryder asked, knowing there was more.

"And I told him I'd take care of it. He thanked me and asked me to tell Jane that even though he isn't here, she can count on him whenever she needs him."

Ryder scowled, shutting off his phone. “Don’t tell her that. She’s going to read more into it.”

“Kinda the point, big brother.” Archer shrugged a shoulder. “He’s her baby daddy the same way we are. He’s a part of her life until the very end.”

Ryder looked over as Erio, Elara, and Gojo entered, carrying their folders and pencils.

Archer tickled Elara on her cheek before telling him, “Imma shower, and then I’ll wake Ryu for a bottle. Luc’s bringing dinner.”

“All right,” Ryder said, waving his kids over. “How much do you have to do?”

Erio sat beside him and opened his folder. “Just supposed to finish this story about my family.”

Ryder plucked up the paper, skimming it and frowning. “You left Ryu off.”

“I didn’t know how to describe him. And I don’t want anyone to know Damon is his dad and not you.”

“Fuck,” he said, handing him the paper. “Okay, let me set this straight with all of you right now. Ryu is your brother. You don’t view him any differently than you do each other. And I know I fought with Damon for being with Mama when she was hurting, but there’s nothing wrong with him being Ryu’s dad.”

Gojo lifted the bandana he had over his eyes. “I told Erio Damon wants to be a dad for Ryu. But him and Mama aren’t like our daddies.”

Sighing, Ryder didn’t know how to respond. Archer’s son seemed to have the same talent for reading into things, sensing

what was to come. But it wasn't right for Ryder to say what Jane and Damon were or were not.

Tercero walked into the room and came over when he spotted the kids, greeting each of them with a kiss on the head. Of course, Elara got some extra love from her father. He lifted her, greeting her in Italian. Elara responded by telling him she got in a fight.

“What?” Tercero glanced at him, then at the boys.

“I handled it,” Ryder said, waving off his brother's accusatory glare. “Go take care of Jane.”

Muttering curses in their made-up language, Tercero lowered Elara, then retrieved a bag before heading back the way he'd come.

“Look at me,” Ryder said, tapping Elara's nose when she kept looking in the direction her father had gone. “None of you are to treat your brother like he's different. He's younger and won't have the support you three have with each other once he starts growing up. You have to take care of him. Love him. Help him get strong. Don't worry about Damon. And don't be gossiping about Daddy's fight with him.”

Erio spoke up. “Are you mad at Mama?”

“No,” he said instantly. “I'm a big boy, all right? I was mad at Damon and myself. I won't give you details, but you know Damon and Mama were together for a while. She always wanted him back, and Damon was there for her when Daddy Tercero was hurt, and they made Ryu.”

“They had sex,” Gojo clarified with his nose scrunched up.

He held in his laugh as he slightly regretted how open they were about how relationships worked and nodded. “Yes, that's how you make babies. But I'm never mad at her, okay? So

don't worry about that because it won't ever happen. She's my moon, right?"

Erio smiled, nodding. "All you see in the dark."

He put a hand on his head. Seeing a smaller version of himself was still weird, and he knew Erio was very protective of Jane as much as he was of Elara. His son didn't want any of them angry with Mama ever, and it helped him to see how much he loved Jane. "Right," he said. "Mama's all I want to see because I don't give a fuck about the stars. Never worry about us, okay? We're always."

"Longer," Elara chirped, grinning. She was like her brother—needing to know he'd always love Jane more than anyone else. She didn't mind that sometimes he struggled to show her and her brothers affection. After ten years, he'd gotten a million times better at it, but his kids still remembered how cold he could be.

"Longer," he agreed, gesturing for them to put their work on the table. "Get started now. Daddy Luc will be home soon with dinner. If you're good, I'll sneak you down to the cellar where he hides the good sweets."

Their eyes lit up, and they scrambled to get situated.

Ryder sat back, opening the security app to recheck the cameras. Archer had already showered and gone to the nursery. His brother wore a genuine smile as he caressed little Ryu's head. All the children were beautiful, and Ryu was no different. He seemed to have a mix of Jane's pale complexion and Damon's dark one. He'd been born only three days before his due date, so he was bigger at birth than the twins had been. Though after he lost weight the month after he was born, he seemed smaller than the others.

Ryder switched the camera to Tercero's room. His brother had already taken her to his bed. She was trying not to cry, but Tercero knew she was in pain. He let her pain mix with his, kissing her to show her he'd never leave the darkness she'd wandered into unless she left it with him.

A text notification had him scowling, and he opened it.

PAPI

Fix this

Of course, David was likely checking the camera feeds. He and Jane had gotten more open with each other, and she probably confided in him more than she did with Ryder now, at least about Damon.

That didn't mean he liked David's orders, so his response wasn't polite:

Bitch stop stalking her.

PAPI

I'm checking on our woman,

Just like you are. I can see the log on too.

Just fix it or I'm coming home to do it myself.

Ryder rolled his eyes and responded:

Fucker I'll break your damn legs if you think you can waltz in and start trying to run things.

PAPI

I'm alpha.

He laughed, shaking his head and typing:

I'm king alpha.

PAPI

Then start acting like it

Gotta run. I ordered her some flowers, so don't let them sit at the gate when they get delivered.

Ryder groaned, tossing his phone aside before tilting his head back and closing his eyes.

“Here’s Daddy.”

Jerking his eyes open, Ryder glared at Archer as his brother laid Ryu on his chest. “The fuck you doing?”

Archer’s smile was full of lies. “Gotta shit. Here.” He handed him the bottle, then bolted from the room.

Ryu wiggled, blinking at him. His cries were still at the cute stage—unlike how he remembered Erio’s angry cries whenever Elara hadn’t been by his side.

“Dammit.” He sat straighter, testing the bottle on his wrist before offering it to the baby. He could tell that Ryu was hungry, but he kept turning his face away from the bottle. “Stop that.”

The twins and Gojo looked at him, concerned, but they returned to their work quickly.

“Come on.” Ryder rocked Ryu, sliding a finger near his cheek to entice him to feed. “You’re too small. You gotta eat so you can be a big boy.”

Ryu continued to wiggle and cry. When Ryder tried to sneak the bottle in, he’d clamp his mouth shut.

“Do this,” Erio said, kneeling beside him. He reached out, taking Ryu’s little fist and unfolding it, then grabbed it and squeezed it. “He calms down just like Elara and Gojo do with me.”

Ryder stared at him, a sad smile tugging at his mouth. “You know I used to do this with Daddies Tercero and Archer. I didn’t know why.”

“Because you didn’t have your moon.” Erio put a hand over Ryder’s heart. “You do now. We’re all half Mama like you always say.”

Gojo sighed in the same dramatic way Archer would and slammed his pencil down to glare at him. “Dad, you just told us not to treat him differently. Ryu’s a baby, and even he knows you don’t accept him all the way. So does Mama. You’re breaking your moon. So stop!”

“That kinda shit would get your father laid out, you know?” He shook his head at the little white-haired monster.

“Yeah, he tells me all the time.” Gojo pointed at Ryu. “Do the hand thing with him. He thinks you don’t want him.”

“How do you even know this shit?” He didn’t know why he asked. It was an Archer thing, and he should be used to it. But usually, he could punch his brother and cuddle with Jane to make himself feel better. He didn’t like a mini-Archer setting him straight.

“I’m a Godson.” Gojo beamed at him, then pointed at Ryu. “I’m waiting.”

Elara giggled, but she waited too, twirling the ends of her hair nervously.

“Fucking hell.” He groaned, sitting back more comfortably. “You three are trouble. Making me feel like a

shitty dad.”

“You’re not shitty, Dad.” Erio let go of Ryu’s hand. “Just not normal. It’s okay.”

Sighing, he held Erio’s cheek and smiled. “You’re a good boy. Don’t turn out like me, okay?”

“I’m both of you.” He sat back on his legs. “Just how I want to be.”

“Damn you.” He chuckled, focusing on Ryu’s balled-up little hand. So many moments of grabbing his brothers’ hands flickered through his mind, and he knew Jane melted a little when someone gave hers a gentle squeeze. It was the comfort of someone stronger showing that they were there, even if they didn’t know how to make anything better.

Ryder carefully unfolded Ryu’s hand so the baby could hold his finger. Again, those little cries sounded, but Ryu appeared to know he was trying something different and never took his eyes off Ryder.

“I’m here, Ryu,” he murmured, gently squeezing his hand. “I’m a dick, but I’m here, and your daddy, too.”

A harsh cry burst out of Ryu’s mouth, but he relaxed in Ryder’s hold.

“What was that?” Ryder laughed, brushing his thumb over the tiny fingers curled around his.

Ryu let out the same cry and wiggled his head, turning as if he was trying to nurse.

Ryder let go of his hand to grab the bottle, and finally, Ryu latched on. He closed his eyes, and cooing noises replaced his growly, little cry. “Now I see why she named you Ryu. Her dragon gave her a baby dragon.”

Erio scooted closer, grabbing Ryu's hand again. "You like him now, Dad?"

"I'm getting there," he promised, gesturing with his chin toward the table. "Get to work."

"Okay." Erio sighed, not thrilled about schoolwork, but he listened because he really was a good kid.

Ryder watched him go, then scowled when he spotted Archer filming him. "What the fuck are you doing?"

Archer put his phone away, eyes wide but his smile sneaky as he said, "What? You know I take pictures. It's the first time you've fed Ryu. You rarely feed the babies."

"You dumped him on me." Archer was right. Ryder cared for and provided for his kids but didn't feed them. It was too intimate and made him uncomfortable. So he could count on one hand how many times he'd fed the twins and Gojo.

"It's good for you." Archer took a step back. "I got one more thing to do. Be right back."

"Leave Jane alone," he hollered after him.

"No, go get her, Dad," Gojo yelled, laughing when Ryder kicked at his little butt.

"You're lucky I'm feeding the baby."

Erio and Elara snickered. They thought it was hilarious to see Archer pushing his buttons.

"Little shits," he growled, leaning back. They giggled louder.



Ryder's eyes trailed after Jane as she moved around the kitchen. She was cleaning Ryu's bottles and had a basket of baby clothes to fold sitting on the counter.

It was late, and while it was normal for him to be up, it wasn't normal for her. She slept like it was a damn superpower.

"Why are you doing this now?" he asked, watching her jump.

"Dammit, babe." She sighed, returning to washing out a bottle. "And doing what?"

"I'm not asking what you're doing. I'm asking why you aren't in bed with Luc or Archer."

She kept cleaning. "I didn't get to this stuff earlier. I wanna clean these instead of them smelling all nasty tomorrow."

"Mhm." He walked to the counter and started folding the baby clothes, smirking when she noticed him doing the chores that she usually did. Or David and Tercero. They were the homey type, and they helped because they liked doing those sorts of tasks.

"I can do that," she said with a baffled expression.

"Hon, I'm capable of helping you out. I just don't because David and Tercero like this shit. But David's not here, and Tercero still has problems even if he acts like he doesn't, so I'm helping."

"And you feeding Ryu?"

He smiled, not looking away from the little clothes. "Can't I feed my son a bottle?"

Her gasp was quiet, and she dropped whatever she'd been holding into the sink.

“I’m sorry, angel.” He folded another onesie and set it aside. “I didn’t mean for the two of you to feel like I didn’t accept him. It’s just hard to work through, you know?”

Even from across the kitchen, he saw her eyes water. She swallowed as though she wanted to say something but was afraid to. He knew why. He’d yelled at her once when she called him after fucking Damon. It was the only time he’d ever truly raised his voice in anger toward her, and it haunted him.

“I’m not mad at you, baby.” He placed a onesie down and stared at her. “I should’ve been there with you. I shouldn’t have left the way I did. I’m so used to one of the others always being there. It’s a bad excuse, but it hadn’t crossed my mind that only one person could be there with you, and it was someone who’d broken your heart. Someone you never stopped loving and wanting.”

He chuckled sadly. “I’m not gonna lie to you—it sucks that you two fucked. In my mind, you two were finished. You were ours, not his. He never made you his.”

He sighed, looking down when she let him see her tears. “But I know why he left the way he did. I know it was my fault for expecting things to work perfectly because we finally found that good balance. But I see it more clearly now. You two were just something different.”

Chuckling, he held up one of Ryu’s onesies. “He’s your dragon.” He stared at the little dragon’s belly and the wings on the back of the outfit. “You’re my silly girl, my moon. My goddess. My queen. And dragons don’t wind up with any of those things.”

She sniffled, swiping at her cheeks.

He smiled sadly. “I’m not saying it’s okay for you to fuck whoever you want, and I’m not saying that’s what you did. But I’m saying this now, okay? I forgive both of you. I understand that it wasn’t a planned thing or even a lust thing. You thought you had Damon back and welcomed him when he was all you felt you had.

“I forgive you, and I’m sorry for showing your dragon I was a knight who couldn’t be destroyed—that I was the knight who’d slay him and do it easily. And I’m sorry I didn’t respect what you’d developed with him because it didn’t match what you have with the rest of us.”

“I shouldn’t have done it, though,” she croaked, wiping her cheeks. “Yeah, it felt like I was breaking in half about Tercero and worrying about you and Luc, but that’s not an excuse. I wanted him back so badly and didn’t even question him or myself. I should’ve paused to make sure he was coming back and talked to the rest of you.”

“I know.” He gestured for her to turn around. “Question him now, then.”

Jane whirled around, covering her mouth at the sight of Damon.

“My queen,” Damon said, bowing his head like he used to.

“What’re you doing here?” She turned off the water, then stared at the floor.

“He called me to come over.” Damon shoved his hands in his pockets when he almost reached for Jane. “He lied for once in his life and said you and Ryu were hurt.”

She faced Ryder, her lips trembling. “Why?”

He smirked, picking up the clothes to finish folding them. “Always forgetting who I am.”

Even sad and drenched in tears, her smile fixed every bad thing he felt inside. “Death.”

Winking, he gathered the basket and walked backward a few steps. “The one and only, babe. And I’m ending this hurt between all of us. He’s welcome to come over whenever he wants, and you don’t have to worry about my reaction if he wants to take Ryu for a night or two. Now it’s up to you two to figure out what happens between you. I’ll respect whatever it is if you’re not hurt. I want equal respect in return and the promise that what happened won’t happen again. Not like that, all right? Don’t let Ryu’s cuteness give you the idea that spontaneous fucking while not in any sort of relationship is a good idea.”

“I love you,” she whispered, laughing when he bumped into the wall.

He glared at her and Damon because he was still going to express his anger with him behind her back—Damon knew that—but then he softened his gaze and locked eyes with his girl. “And I love you.” He gave Damon a long look but nodded to him. Damon loved Jane, and he knew neither of them meant to hurt him. He never should’ve kept her dragon from her. “Be good to her.”

Damon didn’t smile, but he nodded to him.

Ryder decided to go watch over Ryu for the night but stopped before leaving them in time to see Damon hugging her.

When he turned, he stopped again because Erio was in the hall. “What are you doing up, boy?”

Erio flicked his eyes over to Jane and Damon. “He won’t hurt Mama?”

Ryder checked on them, sighing when Damon put Jane on the counter beside him and started washing the bottles she'd been doing, and they talked. "No, he'd never hurt her. Come on." He put a hand on his son's back, guiding him toward his room.

"I wanted to sleep in Ryu's room." Erio looked up at him. "Can I?"

He smiled, ruffling his hair. "I was gonna spend the night with him, too. You wanna have a sleepover with us?"

His son's eyes lit up. "Can it just be us?"

"Yeah, little reaper." He took his hand in his. "Just us."

"We can get Gojo to come next time, though." Erio looked up, as if he wasn't confident he'd want to spend time with him again.

"Yeah, next time we'll do all my boys. How's that?"

Erio nodded and squeezed his hand.

Ryder squeezed back.

EPILOGUE 7

Damon

Twins' Age: 12 Years

Kai/Gojo: 10 Years

Ryu: 2 Years

“Stop,” Jane said, smacking Ryder’s hand so he’d stop going through her packed clothes.

Ryder pulled her onto his lap, laughing. “You’re wifey now, Jane. That’s my ring on your finger—so I’m in charge. I say what clothes you can take on your trip with your fucking stepbrother.”

Damon smirked from where he dressed Ryu. She was going to rip into him.

“I’ll shove this ring up your ass, Ryder Godson.” She pushed his shoulder when her legal husband nibbled on her neck. “In charge, my pale white ass!”

Ryder chuckled. “You know I get hard thinking about your pretty ass, Mrs. Godson.”

“It’s Mortaime-Godson, mister. I should’ve made you change your name.” She sighed, looking at Damon. “Aren’t you supposed to protect me?”

Damon chuckled along with Ryder, lifting his sleepy son. “From bad guys, dearest, not your husband.”

“See?” Ryder kissed her neck again, getting grabbier with her as he slid a hand along her thigh. “King Husband’s in charge, and you know you like it. Plus, Damon’s only your fuck buddy. He doesn’t get to interfere with husband-and-wife

business. Only your fake husbands get to say anything—but they know I’m in charge.”

“Imma tell them you called them fake husbands again,” she said, smiling as she tried to pry Ryder’s hands off her leg. “They’re gonna team up against you.”

Ryder laughed again, sounding meaner, but only because Jane liked it. “You’re gonna let me fight with them? Honey, I knew you fucking loved me.”

Damon shook his head. Ryder always got in dangerously playful moods when Jane was preparing to leave with any of them for a weekend. This time she was heading off with David for a playoff game, and it would be her first time leaving Ryu.

Under other circumstances, Damon would’ve gone, but he didn’t want to add stress considering she’d be traveling with Kingston, Sarah, and the newest addition to their family.

Only nine months old, little Lux was a miracle baby.

After Damon and Jane decided to co-parent, their friendship and the desire to be more than friends returned. Well, truthfully, it never left, and it wasn’t long before Damon chose to commit. He proved his seriousness by getting his vasectomy and asking her to try things out again.

They kept things more—them—by not labeling their relationship, which was why the others still teased that he was her fuck buddy. But it helped Ryder and Luc accept him more, and they knew they were deeper than casual fuck partners. He loved Jane and always would. She was his friend, his queen—the mother of his child. They worked for them, and he was loyal to her.

This all meant that Jane shouldn’t have been able to get pregnant. Yet, shortly after he underwent the vasectomy, she

started showing all the signs of pregnancy.

The pregnancy was confirmed, and all her men pointed fingers, assuming someone had lied about getting cut. They went to get tested and had been surprised to learn that her stepbrother had an incredibly healthy sperm count.

So had Luc.

Ryder was pissed. Furious. He didn't want Jane to suffer through another pregnancy, didn't want her to face the risks that she could encounter with labor, and he certainly didn't want her to go through postpartum depression again. So when they learned David and Luc had been coming in her with sperm-filled loads, he almost beat the shit out of them.

Luckily, David and Luc had proof of their vasectomies and that their bodies had naturally reversed the surgeries. Jane said it was fate, and she was already in love with the baby growing inside her. She promised she'd be okay, and she was.

It felt like Jane's due date was a race to see which of her original boyfriends would father the last baby they'd add to the family.

They did a paternity test but held off on opening the results because Luc and David each wanted the baby to be theirs. But then curiosity won out. Jane had decided to get a hysterectomy when her period never stopped after having Lux, and she wanted to mourn that she'd failed to give one of her loves a child.

Lux, the adorable little girl everyone knew Jane had named in honor of Luc, was a Leodegrance.

Jane was so happy, as she'd always imagined having David's child, but she was heartbroken for her king.

Of course, Luc didn't see it that way. After all, Jane had chosen Lux to honor him when she found out she was having a girl. No one understood her reasoning and probably never would.

"Are you sure you'll be okay with him?" Jane asked Damon, reaching out even though Ryder wouldn't let her go.

"I'm only visiting my family for the day. We'll be home tonight. I'll call you with him."

Ryder tried to push him away, but it was playful.

Still, Damon smacked Ryder's leg and leaned down to kiss Jane. She sighed, holding his face and pressing her lips to his until their son awoke with a cry.

Damon gave her one more kiss before lowering Ryu so she could squeeze him.

"It's okay, baby," she murmured, kissing his little cheeks. He was too young to understand why her eyes were red, why her voice cracked as she told him how much she loved him, and it was just goodbye for a little while.

"Hi, Mama," Ryu said in the cutest voice. "Buh-bye, see you wa-toe."

Ryder comforted her, kissing her hair as he rubbed a hand on Ryu. It had taken some time for his old rival to accept his son, but he appreciated that Ryder gave Ryu equal attention as he did all the children.

Ryu giggled again, his words a little clearer as they sometimes were. "Bye, Mama." He made a kissing noise and blew it to her. "Wob you. See you wa-toe."

Jane made a pained noise and quickly kissed Ryu's cheek before crying, "Take him. I can't."

He grabbed his son, caressing Jane's cheek, then turned to leave so she could let out her sadness.

She sobbed, and he shut the door. Ryder would make it better.

"Is she okay?" Luc asked, exiting his room with Lux in his arms.

"Same as every time she leaves." Damon grinned at the baby girl and told Luc, "Her eyes are gonna stay blue, I think."

Luc smiled, holding up the cooing baby. She had very little hair, but it was dark, and she had adorable dark pink lips against Jane's light skin tone. "They suit her."

Damon shook his head, still amused that his evil boss was so in love with a baby that failed to be his.

"Don't start." Luc put a pacifier in Lux's mouth, and she suckled contentedly.

"She had you harvest her eggs," he reminded Luc. "You could get a surrogate."

"Baby," Ryu said, reaching for Lux, then Luc. "Dada."

Luc produced dragon plush. "You keep leaving this in my room."

Ryu squealed, hugging his dragon, but quickly held it out to Lux. "Wux."

Damon chuckled, kissing his son's head as he took the dragon. "Think he's claimed her as his treasure."

A faint smile touched Luc's mouth before he looked Damon in the eyes. "Lux is my daughter, King. I won't hear this suggestion from you again."

"Fine." Damon nodded. "I apologize."

Luc gave Ryu's cheek a quick caress but passed them, heading for the main room where loud noise could be heard.

He watched his boss and ... friend with a smile. Part of him felt bad for having Ryu when Luc wanted a child with Jane, but he realized there was no reason to pity his cold king.

"Wux," Ryu whined, taking the dragon and holding it out in the direction Luc had gone.

"All right." Damon hushed Ryu and followed after Luc, entering the main room. Almost instantly, he laughed at the sight of Archer wrestling Savaş to help Erio and Gojo steal Elara back from their overgrown uncle.

"She better not get hurt," Tercero said, watching from where he worked on his laptop.

The largest Godson laughed, clutching Elara. "I'd never let her get hurt."

Luc had gone to where David sorted through luggage. Jane and Lux were meant to meet him at the airport, but David didn't want Jane traveling without one of her husbands.

Ryder had become her legal husband three months ago, but she'd said "I do" to David, Tercero, Luc, and Archer privately that same night. They were happy and didn't mind that Damon was something different and would likely never be her husband. And none of them had a problem with Ryder becoming her legal husband.

Of course, some people didn't understand, but it wasn't their job to help anyone else understand their love and relationship.

"Give me my sister," Erio roared, pulling at his uncle when Savaş managed to body slam Archer while keeping Elara shielded in his arms.

“No, she said I’m her favorite uncle,” Savaş said. “She’s mine now.”

Erio’s tanned cheeks tinged burnt red. “You’re our only uncle.”

Savaş laughed, standing and holding Elara up high. “What about Gabriel?”

Gojo shoved Savaş, growling. “Fine, he’s the best uncle. Gimme my sister.”

Savaş put a giggling Elara on his shoulders and shook his head. “Nah, she’s mine. I’m saving her from you little monsters.”

Erio glowered at his uncle. He was very possessive of his sister, and Damon knew she’d been crying earlier about something. That was likely why Uncle Savaş had taken it upon himself to cheer up his niece.

Archer chuckled, pulling Erio to him. He whispered in his ear, probably telling him that Uncle Savaş wasn’t really stealing her. Sure enough, Erio relaxed and wandered off.

“Where you goin’?” Gojo yelled at his brother. “We can still take him.”

Erio didn’t say reply. He just went to where Luc had ended up with Lux and leaned his head on his dad’s shoulder. Luc put an arm around him before settling Lux in her big brother’s arms.

“Grandpa’s here!” Kingston carried a bag to the table and dumped its contents, revealing loads of candy. “With sweets, of course.”

“Dad.” David shook his head as Gojo rushed over and rifled through everything.

“What?” Kingston laughed, ruffling Gojo’s hair. “It’s in the rules! I’m supposed to get them hyper on sweets and gifts, then leave.”

Damon chuckled, walking over to snag a candy bar. “And I thought I was the evil one.”

Kingston still hadn’t completely warmed up to him, but he had no problems with Ryu. “Give me my boy.”

Ryu squealed, reaching happily for his grandpa, and Damon didn’t hesitate to unload him. Kingston and Sarah were wonderful grandparents who never once treated Ryu as less. In fact, they doted on him a bit more. The other kids didn’t seem to mind as they adored Ryu too. His cute toddler stage was irresistible.

“Damon, look at this one.” Gojo held up a set of gummies fused together. “Looks like your balls.”

Savaş, who was drinking some water, spat it all over Archer. “Gojo, where do you get this stuff?”

Archer shoved Savaş out of the way before snatching up his son and rubbing his wet face on his.

“Dad, stop!” Gojo tried to fight Archer off.

“You caused it. You deal with it.”

Damon chuckled before heading to David. “I’ve spoken with Than. He’s meeting you at the airport.”

“Isn’t he going to be tired?” David lowered his voice as Sarah cooed over Elara, who was finally on her own two feet, rummaging through the candy with her uncle.

“He’s used to it.” Damon broke off his candy bar, tossing some into his mouth.

“I don’t know how he can handle so much.” David zipped up a bag before grabbing another. “He’s busier than I am.”

It was true. Than managed Ryder’s fights—both pro and elite, worldwide underground matches—and helped Alpha relocate trafficking survivors.

“You sure he doesn’t mind?” David asked, turning to watch the kids crowd Erio and Lux.

“He doesn’t mind,” Damon promised. “He’s just as dedicated to keeping her safe as I am.”

David grunted. “Yeah, that’s exactly what we need.”

“Not like that, I swear.” Damon laughed, eating the final piece of his candy bar. “You’re the one who first suggested he be her backup guard. He has zero interest, and he’s seeing someone on and off anyway.”

David nodded, lightly punching his shoulder. “Didn’t mean anything by that, by the way. I know you’ve had limited time with her over the past few months, too—she’s gonna miss you.”

He didn’t comment on his lack of time with Jane. “I’m sure you’ll distract her.”

A rare smirk crossed David’s face. “Yeah, I can do that. Dad insisted we take a few nights alone since we didn’t get a honeymoon.”

“You should.” Damon checked on Ryu, noting Savaş had stolen him.

The big bastard was also playing pro, but his team didn’t make the playoffs. He declared he was never settling down, but he’d experience kids and a wife through them. Jane played along, calling Savaş her He-Man and screaming ‘He has the

power' whenever she greeted him. Savaş seemed to adore her pet name for him and had taken to calling Jane his hot tamale. He even introduced her as his wife whenever they were out together. They all knew it was how Savaş shielded Jane from ridicule for having multiple men. In his mind, if she had the entire group of quads—as well as Luc, David, and Damon—her enemies would think twice about harming her or the children.

Damon looked away from Savaş and asked David, “Do you want help loading this?”

“Sure.” David gathered up several bags and led the way outside.

When they returned, Jane was there. She put on a brave face with the twins and Gojo. Ryder slipped her sunglasses on, and Tercero sneakily wiped away her tears as the kids prattled on about ten different things, asking for presents and for her to hold a sign with their names on it when she was at the game.

David sighed beside him. “I hate taking her away.”

“Don't.” Damon crossed his arms, watching her try to be a strong mama. “She needs to get away every once in a while. She loves being a stay-at-home mom, but she can easily lose her identity. You did a good thing when you left all those years ago.”

“You think so?”

“I do.” He smiled when Jane glanced his way. She knew he'd take care of their son, but Ryu had been her solo baby for a while. She experienced a quiet time in life for once. Just her and their baby alone, playing outside or cuddling. He enjoyed it when Luc would dismiss him to be her guard while the older children were at school. He'd come over without telling her

and find her lying by the stream, Ryu on her chest as she hummed songs he didn't know, or she'd play silly games with him or even watch ridiculous baby shows. She seemed at peace, and they all loved catching her that way.

"Just one more year," David said. "I don't want to break my body for this. I want to watch Lux grow up. I don't want her waiting to see Daddy like the others had to."

"That's understandable. Tell Luc so he can review your contracts again. You don't want any surprises."

"I'll do that." David patted his back. "See you when we get back."

Damon nodded, watching him walk over to the kids. They hugged him, excited for him and begging him to make touchdowns for them. David hugged Ryu, kissing his cheeks, only to scowl when Ryu yelled, "Papi!"

Ryder laughed, earning a punch from David, but the silliness between them gave Jane a chance to come to Damon. She sniffled as she walked into his embrace.

"Jane," he said, holding her head when she shook against him. "He'll be fine."

"I know." She wrapped her arms around him. "Tell your family I said hi."

"I will." His family didn't like Jane. She knew it too. She just pretended she was welcome at the King household.

She never would be. His family knew he did awful things for her, that she was married, and that they'd never have a normal relationship. And Jane knew he didn't care. He'd still be her main guard. Her friend. Her lover. The father to her youngest son. "Try to relax, okay? Don't let David see you so down."

“I’m trying, but he knows I’m a mess.” She laughed weakly and pushed up on her toes. “Kiss.”

After spotting Ryder’s scowl, he cupped her face and winked at her husband, kissing the asshole’s wife right in front of him.

Her tears mixed with their kiss, and he savored them. His fierce but fragile queen. She was the only woman he’d ever met that didn’t judge him for his darkness. She didn’t look at him in horror when she learned the things he did to others. She checked on him, even though she knew he wasn’t affected by his dark deeds. No one ever cared to do that, but she did.

She was the light to his dark, but when he saw what she hid inside herself many times, she became a shadow in his dark void. She needed a place for the darkness she didn’t want to touch Luc. He gave her a place where she could protect her king, and he was glad he could do it for her.

“I love you,” she whispered almost too softly. They didn’t say these things to each other, but he smiled and gave her another kiss.

“I know,” he said, using his thumb to wipe her tears away. “Listen to David and Than now. No sneaking off.”

“I only sneak off so we can go fuck.” She grinned evilly and gave him a final kiss before getting off her toes.

Damon made sure the others were occupied, then hoisted her up. “Let me get it out of your system, then.”

Finally, she laughed, wrapping her arms around him as he carried her out of the room and down to the guest bathroom.

They hadn’t been together in almost three weeks, so he wasn’t going to pass up the chance to fuck her before she left.

She nipped his neck, and he growled setting her on the counter and pulling her dress over her head.

“I still can’t get over you wearing regular clothes.” She giggled, tugging at his red T-shirt.

He smirked, taking it off for her because she loved his tattoos, especially the newest one he’d added to his forearm of a dragon and baby dragon flying together to reach the moon. “I wore regular clothes in school.”

“That was forever ago.” She sighed, watching him stroke himself.

“We’re not that old.” He tugged her, shoving her panties aside to touch her. He never let her touch herself until he got to first.

“Oh, fuck.” She gasped, throwing a hand back to brace herself as the other went around his neck. She always tried to line up for him right away.

He shook his head at her when she hooked her legs around him and tried to pull him in. “Stop.”

“I’m ready, though.” She whimpered, staring between them, her eyes glowing at seeing his dick in his hand.

He chuckled, amused at how she shivered every time he did, then spit on his dick. She didn’t need it; Jane got very wet, but he did it out of habit, and it turned her on.

“Oh, please.” She raised her ass, using her heels for leverage to line herself up to him.

“Not yet.” Gripping her thigh with one hand and her pretty scarred waist with the other, he bent down to feast on her. She shouted, trying to brace herself and not break the mirror

behind her, but she fell against it anyway, whining and panting as he drew her closer and closer to climax.

Whenever he was with her, he hated himself for taking so long to view her as more than a friend and charge because she tasted like the boys described—candy. He knew now from Luc that his boss had learned what she did to make her skin so sweet, and he laughed against her cunt at her secret.

“Aw, fuck.”

It was not Jane’s voice that spoke.

He looked up, his gaze connecting with Jane’s wide eyes before darting to Savaş, who stood just inside the bathroom door, his pants undone and his dick halfway out.

“I didn’t know you were in here.” Savaş shook his head. “Sorry, I can’t hold it.”

Damon frowned, watching the big guy proceed to the toilet to piss. “Are you serious?”

“I’ve walked in on Jane getting fucked before. Lookin’ great, Tex.” Savaş groaned, staring down at his dick as he continued to piss. “Fuck, Imma be a minute.”

Jane laughed but reached for Damon to pull him up. “No worries, He-Man.”

Savaş chuckled, peeking over at them. “My hot tamale is waiting for your dick. Give it, or I’m hollering for one of the others so she doesn’t ask for mine. She can’t handle me, and I’d hate to break her for David.”

Damon looked behind them to ensure the door was shut before tugging Jane into place. “You fucking Godsons are the worst.”

Jane reached down, sighing when he let line herself with him. “Oh, yes.”

Knocking her hand away and shutting out the monstrous piss still echoing in the small bathroom, he eased his cock into her with a pleased sigh. Of all the women he’d been with, he enjoyed fucking Jane the most. She got so wet and was incredibly flexible and eager, even when exhausted.

“Atta girl.” Damon smirked, taking in how she kept darting her eyes over, knowing Savaş heard everything and could see whatever he peeked at.

The door opened and closed again, and he growled, slamming into Jane to pull her flush with his body in case it was one of the kids.

“Merely came to keep Ryder from coming to steal her.” Tercero crossed his arms, shaking his head at Savaş. “Really, brother?”

Savaş threw a hand up. “It was here or the one I walked into with her mom! I almost poked the woman’s eye out.”

Damon chuckled, then started fucking Jane as though he was not in the ridiculous situation. She didn’t care—she liked being watched anyway.

She wrapped her arms around his neck, her head thrown back as she cried from pain and her brother-in-law’s comments.

“Quiet, *cara*.” Tercero moved closer, pressing a hand over her mouth as the other moved to massage her breasts. Or perhaps he was shielding her from Savaş.

Her response was to move his hand and suck two fingers into her mouth.

Tercero cut him a look; they did not fuck Jane together. In fact, Tercero had gotten quite possessive of his time with Jane and limited sex to either the two of them alone or fucking her with Ryder to give her her fantasies of two Ryders and two Terceros.

Damon also rarely fucked her around the others, except for Archer. He knew after he'd interrupted Jane and Archer once, the youngest Godson would take joy in doing the same to him. He was a fun person to fuck her with, though. They did all manner of dirty things the others didn't.

Damon shrugged, fucking her harder. "If it keeps her quiet and keeps him away for longer."

A happy hum sounded from Jane, and she leaned away from him to hook an arm around Tercero's neck to kiss him.

"Damn." Savaş peeked but finally finished peeing and squeezed close to use the sink to wash his hands. He didn't hide his ogling. "Married life looks good." He smirked at Damon. "Or is it more fun being side-dick?"

"Hurry up and get out," Damon said, gliding a finger over Jane's tummy tuck scar. She was already coming, but Tercero swallowed her sweet cries.

"I'm going." Savaş dried his hands, winking at Jane when she barely opened her eyes. "Best piss I ever had."

Jane's smile against Tercero's mouth was too pretty—they really were lovely.

"Take her with me," he ordered her third husband.

Tercero's stare was violent, but he gave a subtle nod and moved out of her reach to take off his shirt.

It gave Damon the opportunity to fuck her like he wanted—deep and slow.

“Oh god.” Jane whined, peeking between them to watch his dick slide in and out of her.

He only sped up to enjoy her rhythmic moans, eager to see how she reacted to the two of them fucking her.

“Yes, yes, yes.” She tightened around him, groaning as she came again.

“Good girl,” he cooed, turning to lean against the counter and to offer her to her husband.

Tercero said something in Italian, too quiet for Damon to understand, but he figured it out when the man held her ass with one hand and pushed the head of his cock against her already full pussy.

Jane’s eyes widened, but she nodded, whining and digging her nails into Damon’s neck as Tercero proceeded to fuck her for the both of them.

He laughed at her scream and her, “Fucking shit, fuck!”

Damon kissed her to quiet her screams. But he didn’t care all that much anymore. Ryder would find them anyway at this point. So he kept his movements minimal because he didn’t want her in too much pain.

But Tercero slowed, taking her weight but not pulling out. “She doesn’t have much time.”

He checked his watch, sighing; she’d have to leave soon. So with Tercero holding her, he took his turn to fuck her. She looked so beautiful with her flushed, sweaty skin and pained smile.

Her good hurt got him off, and he felt his release approaching sooner than he wanted, but he didn't hold back. He fucked her, caught up in their combined cries of ecstasy.

“Hurry it up.”

Jane came at the sound of her first husband's voice, which led to him shooting his load deep inside her.

Damon chuckled when he noticed Archer and Luc flanking Ryder. “Just getting it out of her system.”

Archer snorted but motioned for him to pull out. “My turn.”

They would wear her pretty ass out so she'd not have the energy to cry.

Damon winked at her when she smiled at him before her youngest husband pulled her head down to choke on his dick.

Tercero said something to Ryder in their made-up language but went wilder on her. He and Archer praised her when she gagged but didn't slow. She was so turned on, though, so he crossed his arms and watched her ripping her mouth from Archer to hang onto his waist while Tercero plowed into her, finally reaching his release.

Her third husband whispered sweet words before easing out and stepping aside for Damon's boss.

Luc shook his head at all of them as he pulled her away from Archer and turned her to face him. “Really, Jane?”

“Hi, Luc,” she said, yelping when Archer thrust into her.

“I'll be quick, gorgeous,” Archer promised, hooking an arm around her waist but pressing her to lean against Luc's chest.

The elder Godson glared at him but said nothing. He simply steadied Jane and wiped spit and his brother's precum from her face.

"Fuck, Luc, kiss her or something." Archer groaned, rutting into her hard.

Luc ignored him, and Damon chuckled as he wetted a washcloth for himself and one for Luc to use on Jane.

Ryder's gaze didn't stray from Jane's face. He looked pissed, but Damon knew it was an act for her benefit.

Archer was loud and rough, but he was doing more than getting himself off. He touched every scar Jane was self-conscious about, groaning with approval to let her know how much she turned him on. Damon adored her tummy tuck scar—the procedure was more intense than he'd imagined, and he was proud of how much she went through to get what she wanted for herself.

Damon finished cleaning himself and tugged his jeans on, his gaze flickering to Ryder.

"Oh, fuck, baby." Archer didn't try to quiet his climax. He moaned with Jane as he filled her pretty cunt with his cum. "Oh, that's it."

Luc pulled her away from his brother, but Archer still grabbed her face and kissed her hard.

"Love you, gorgeous."

"I love you," she whispered, tearing up as he moved to leave.

"It's okay." He gave her one more kiss. "I'm gonna keep the rugrats from busting down the door."

Tercero cupped her cheeks and kissed her next. *Beautiful.*

Then both men exited, leaving her with the three of them.

“My kings,” she said, touching Luc’s face as he checked her over.

Luc sighed, grabbing her hand and kissing the inside of her wrist. “You should have a quick shower.”

“Take it with me.”

Damon smirked, putting his shirt on and checking the time. “You’ve got forty minutes, my queen.”

“Plenty of time.” Jane tugged at Luc’s belt, but Ryder stopped her.

He pulled her back to his chest and tilted her face up. “Can you take both of us?”

Her exhausted smile made her look like a wounded angel. “Yes.”

“That’s my girl.” Ryder caressed her jaw but made eye contact with Damon. “I get her first and last. You’re lucky I already got a piece of her before this.”

He felt the violence Ryder wanted to unleash, but he didn’t blame the bastard. He’d be the same if Jane were his first the way she was Ryder’s. He’d always need to establish dominance over the others, but he wasn’t a bitch, even if Ryder could kill him. They’d probably kill each other, honestly.

He glared at Ryder and Luc before gripping Jane’s jaw and kissing her deeply. He wanted her to feel her three kings, and he smiled against her mouth when Ryder slipped a hand between her legs, and Luc lowered his face to her breasts.

She was already coming on Ryder’s fingers when he moved away. He smoothed her tangled hair back, chuckling

when she tried to reach for all of them.

“Have fun with your kings, my queen.” He reached for the door, only to have it open first.

David peeked in, concerned. Then he smiled at Jane being pampered by Luc and Ryder. “Savaş said Jane needed me.”

Ryder motioned to the shower. “Get the water running, or she’s going to smell like cum next to your dad.”

Laughing, David entered, shutting the door and greeting Jane.

“Hi, baby.” He kissed her deeply but moved away when Luc had her panting again, his cock lining up to slide in.

Ryder snapped his fingers at Damon. “Scram.”

He almost punched him for that, but he heard the distinct sound of Ryu screaming, so he checked over his reflection once more, smiling at how Luc loved her like a brutal king even though he’d just scolded her for getting fucked too hard.

Ryder growled, moving to block Damon’s view. “Get the fuck out.”

“Fuck you.” Damon knew Ryder needed to butt heads with him. But, honestly, he needed to as well. They didn’t hate each other—they respected each other greatly, and the threats were a sign of that in some fucked up way.

So he nodded, getting a nod from Ryder and David as well. And a sweet smile from Jane until Ryder covered her mouth with his.

Damon ensured the lock was flicked and left just when Luc pulled out for David to have a turn. Their queen would feel every one of them while she was gone.



Five days later, their group and many former high school and college teammates piled into their massive entertainment room to watch David's big game.

Everyone gushed over his son. Sin, especially, liked to hoard Ryu.

"No, he doesn't like your face." Sin shoved Adam away.

Adam glowered at him. "When he's older, I'm telling him you threw hotdogs at his mom's face during his first birthday party."

"She looked ugly," Sin roared, making the group yell and throw things at him. "Stop, I'm holding a child."

Ryder snatched Ryu and waved for everyone to carry on attacking Sin.

"Stop," Sin said, shoving Gojo back, "you little monster. I'm your mama's favorite sinner."

"Don't call my mama ugly!" He poked Sin's stomach hard. "You're fat! Want me to call you fatter?"

Archer fell over laughing. "Gojo, come here. Mama got her revenge on him. You don't have to protect her."

"My dad won't be there to save you next time." Gojo gave Sin a final glare.

"Jesus," Sin said, shaking his head. "Archer, what did you put in that one?"

Archer pulled his son down onto the floor with him. "Guess something else slipped in with all the dirty I gave his mama."

“Dad!” Gojo plugged his ears.

Damon bumped into Elara. “Sorry, baby.”

She glared at him, then stomped around him.

Erio was right on her tail, looking meaner than his father. “Get back here, Elara.”

Damon watched them disappear and shook his head. “Glad mine’s a boy.”

Tercero chuckled, stopping to watch his daughter get an earful from her brother. “He caught some boy online flirting with her. He messaged him to leave her alone.”

“She’s twelve,” Damon said, angry too. “How old was the boy?”

“Fourteen,” Tercero said, not showing any emotion about it. “Erio’s insisting on handling it. I’ve already hacked her phone to ensure it’s only a boy, not someone pretending to be a boy.”

“Is it?”

“Yes, he’s telling the truth about his identity.” Tercero crossed his arms, dark eyes still glued to his daughter in the distance. “Erio can take him.”

“I don’t doubt that,” Damon said, smiling at the glare on Erio’s face. Ryder’s son was the biggest boy in his grade, surpassing Ryder at that age, who had stayed small for some time. Ryder loved knowing he’d made a stronger son. “Does the kid go to their school?”

“No, he’s already in high school,” Tercero answered. “He saw her cheering at one of Erio’s games. His sister is a cheerleader in the year above her.”

“Scandalous.” He chuckled as Ryder walked over with Ryu.

“What is?” Ryder shielded Damon from taking him back. “Nope, he wants his real daddy.”

Damon sighed but didn’t get upset. Ryu adored Ryder.

Tercero gestured toward the twins. “Our son is handling it.”

Ryder took in the situation with a frown. “Handling what?”

Tercero relayed his information calmly, but Ryder was far from calm. His eyes took on that empty look as he listened, then lit up with rage.

“And you’re just standing here?” Ryder glared at his brother before handing Ryu to Damon. “The fuck is wrong with you?”

“Nothing.” Tercero gripped Ryder’s shoulder. “I’m monitoring the situation, and our son is handling it. I’ve already spoken to Jane. She’s going to call Elara tonight for a girl talk. Everything is fine.”

Like a bull angry it couldn’t charge, Ryder breathed out but held himself in place. “If anything ...”

Tercero nodded. “I’m watching, big brother. No one will hurt her.”

Ryder grunted, ruffling his hair. “Fucking hell. I need Jane.”

“She’s already waiting on your call,” Tercero said, smiling.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Ryder growled, stalking off.

“I feel sorry for Elara,” Damon said, watching her argue with her brother.

“Someday, she’ll understand that it means she has been loved intensely.” Tercero held out his hands for Ryu. “I miss this stage.” Ryu babbled nonsense as he pulled Tercero’s ponytail.

“I’m surprised he learned to walk with you all.”

Tercero’s faint smile came and went. “I wish Jane could have enjoyed having one baby for longer. She looked so peaceful when it was just Ryu and her home.”

“I was just thinking about that the other day.” Damon sighed but chuckled at the nonsense Ryu said. He was convinced his son was trying to mimic how Tercero spoke Italian.

Tercero said something in Italian to Ryu but returned to English to speak to him. “Lux is a little ball of sunshine, though. I know Jane doesn’t regret having her—only that she couldn’t give Luc a child.”

“It certainly increased her appetite for sex with Luc.” Damon grinned at the memories of catching Jane at Luc’s office getting fucked hard on his desk. Jane loved to show Luc how much she could take, and her king welcomed the opportunities to ravage her.

They were gentle, too, wrapped around each other on his office chair. After an argument with one of her other men, he’d catch them like that. However, if it was an argument between Jane and Luc, Luc made her beg. She could hold out, and Luc loved to see how long she could last. They didn’t mind if he watched or joined in to torment her.

Tercero nodded. “She needs another date night to Dungeon. Perhaps with everyone.”

“She’d like that. It’s been a while, hasn’t it?” Damon tried to remember the last time they’d gone to Dungeon as a group, leaving the kids at the hotel with Than and Sin.

Luc had trained his brothers in forced play and safe bondage. But Jane liked when the patrons at Dungeon saw her with her kings. They only permitted it if they were all present. They’d take Jane to the center of the party room and show her off the way her twisted little desires craved. She’d developed a mask kink and had permitted them to scare her whenever they wanted.

Ryder had been the one to indulge her fantasy.

Everyone was surprised because Ryder was not the type to scare Jane, but he’d gotten a customized skull mask and given her what she’d fantasized about—with some adjustments.

She’d been at her old house, picking something up and waiting for Kingston, when Ryder let himself in and caught her by surprise in her old bedroom.

After scaring her, which was only seconds because Jane would recognize Ryder anywhere and after Ryder had her first—alone—he tossed her over his shoulder and carried her downstairs, where they waited.

They tied her up, stripped her down, and fucked her hard.

Ryder kept the mask on until her voice had gone hoarse, and her body was pleased beyond her wildest dreams. Then he’d pulled it off and told her, ‘Wake, Sweet Jane.’

Luc had smiled, proud of his brother for ending it in that way. It let her keep her fantasy more exciting and provided the proper emotional return to their life.

“Six months,” Tercero confirmed, swaying with Ryu. “Whatever we plan will have to be outside my trips with her.”

Nodding, Damon thought about his discomfort at Jane and Tercero going on short trips to Italy, where Tercero had bought a home.

Tercero chuckled. “You are more displeased than a fuck buddy should be.”

Damon ignored the jab and noticed his boss. “Luc’s signaling me.”

“I’ll watch him.” Tercero smiled at Ryu, then spouted something in Italian.

Damon said hello to a few of his old teammates and accepted a beer from Savaş as he made his way to Luc. “How are things?” he asked, sitting and opening his beer.

Luc eyed the drink with disgust. “Than asked that I tell you, ‘Next time you guard her.’”

“Why?” Damon sipped his beer, surprised that Than would tell Luc such a thing.

Luc rubbed his thumb over his wrist. “David likes when she’s loud. Despite her soreness interfering, he’s taking advantage of not having the children nearby.”

“Oh.” Damon chuckled, lowering his bottle. “I suppose I could’ve warned him.”

Luc’s bored glance had him laughing again.

“What? It’s good for her.” Damon turned at Elara’s shout, then looked back to Luc when Elara ran to him.

Luc held out his arms, allowing her to hide her face against his chest. “Elara, tell me what’s happened.”

Damon listened to her blubber about Erio embarrassing her by treating her like a child. She said she was old enough to

talk to anyone she wanted, which is when Luc must've put it together.

It was a good thing Elara couldn't see Luc's face. If she had, she would've seen the face of the monster inside him.

Again, Damon thanked the gods that he'd had a son, not a daughter. Although he'd give his life to protect Elara and Lux, he supposed it didn't matter. His woman's eldest daughter was becoming a teenager, and he'd have to add a new little queen to his list of duties—eventually, he'd add Lux there, too.

“You'll tell him, won't you?” Elara looked up just as Luc hid the darkness he kept caged within. “You'll tell him I can talk to whoever I want? I'm a big girl. I can talk and make friends with boys.”

“Little flame,” Luc said, cupping her cheek, “this boy isn't looking to be your friend. Your brother's right.”

Hope vanished from her dark eyes, and they filled with tears. “You said you'd always have my back.”

Luc's gaze softened. “I do. How would you feel if an older girl was messaging Erio?”

Her face reddened, and she looked down at her lap, twisting her fingers. “I wouldn't say anything. He's allowed to have friends.”

“And if you knew this older girl wanted to be more than friends?” Luc placed his finger under her chin and tilted her head up. “Be honest, Elara. How would you feel?”

She hunched forward and sniffled, mumbling, “I'd tell her to leave my brother alone.”

Luc kissed her head. “Your brother is your first and last protector, darling one. He'd never hurt you.”

She nodded, roughly scratching her arm as her breathing quickened. Damon had seen her do it before, and he knew Jane stressed over how she couldn't help her daughter's anxiety all the time. It was one of the many reasons they all encouraged Jane to leave the children from time to time. They needed to grow without their mama trying to fight their every battle.

Damon took the hand she was scratching with and shook his head. "You're hurting yourself. Take a deep breath. I promise it'll be all right."

She breathed in. Her fingers twitched in his hand, trying to scratch.

"*Vieni qui, piccola mia,*" Tercero said, holding out Ryu so he could take his daughter.

She let go, her head bowed as she went to her father.

Tercero always appeared to be the calmest of the dads, but they all knew he was a man ready to carve apart anyone who dared to harm his children. Elara knew that.

"I'm sorry, Daddy." She took her father's hand and was quietly led away from the crowd, discreetly trying to observe things.

"Dada," Ryu said, holding his hand out for Luc. His little fingers made a grabbing motion, and he whined. "Dada? See? Star. Is star."

Luc plucked him from Damon. "He'll have to learn from Erio."

"He will," Damon promised, pulling his phone free when it vibrated. It was a text from Jane.

MINE

Please keep an eye on her. Ryder's furious

I thought you were talking to him.

MINE

He hung up on me

Is she okay? Should I come home now?

Your husbands and son are handling it.

Text me when you're ready to talk to her.

I'll make sure she calls you.

MINE

What if Erio hadn't seen?

Tercero said the boy was too mature.

I think that's his way of saying he was talking dirty without stressing me out.

Damon sighed, wondering if he'd need to put fear into a teenage boy.

I can handle things if you're stressed.

Luc was reading a text, likely from Jane too. She learned to multi-tasked over the years.

MINE

I'll let you know

He chuckled and put his phone away. He'd let Luc or one of the others take over. "I need to check on Ryder."

Luc nodded, replying to the text while offering Ryu a snack.

Damon found Ryder leaning against the wall outside Elara's room with his arms crossed and eyes closed. "You hung up on her?"

"She told me to let the others handle it." He shook his head. "It's like she's forgotten how horny teenage boys are."

"I don't think she's forgotten." Damon put his back to the opposite wall, crossing his arms too. "Jane loved David when she was twelve. She loved him when he was fourteen too."

"Fuck you," Ryder dragged out, his eyes flashing in a way that reminded Damon of how animals warned others that they were the top predator.

"I'm not picking a fight about David. I'm reminding you that Jane was once a teenage girl in love. None of us can understand what that's like. And even if you don't like it, she crushed on Luc. She knows if he'd given her attention, she'd have jumped at the chance to be special to an older boy."

"So I'm supposed to let some little punk get into my twelve-year-old daughter's pants?" It was like talking to a loaded gun.

"Obviously not. I'll cut his balls off if I have to." Damon turned, hearing Tercero's raised voice in the room. Tercero wasn't one to do that, but he trusted that her father was being logical. "But I think Jane wants you to understand that how you handle this—how all of you handle it—will impact a young girl."

“I would’ve fucked Jane if I’d had the chance at fourteen,” Ryder said, clenching his fist. “I know now if I’d made my move after David became her brother, I’d have made her mine in a matter of days. I would’ve fucked her in the same amount of time. If Elara becomes anything like Jane with her urges ...”

“Karma’s a bitch, my friend.” He chuckled, offering Ryder his beer.

“You know I don’t drink.” Ryder sighed, tugging his phone from his pocket. He read something before laughing. “She sent me a picture of her tits and said I won’t get to touch if I ever hang up on her again.”

Damon smiled, pushing off the wall. “You should find Erio. He’s probably beating himself up for getting onto her—he’s just like you.”

“Amazing? Yeah, I know.” Ryder pushed away from the wall, leaving in the opposite direction. “Let me go grovel to the wife first. Check on him for me and tell him I’m coming.”

Almost four hours later, with his sleeping son on his chest, Damon sat on a sofa between Luc and Ryder. Elara sat between Ryder and Tercero, while Erio and Gojo were between Luc and Archer. The crowd was loud, and the kids occasionally shouted when David made a good play.

Jane was filmed several times. Her parents were beside her, looking proud of David as they passed Lux between them. Mostly, though, they saw Jane screaming at the top of her lungs while Than kept her from falling over the railing.

“My poor Bambi.” Ryder chuckled.

Damon focused on the screen. The game was over, and David, like usual, was being interviewed on the field before

the team left. He laughed, holding up a finger to the female sportscaster as he walked over to the railing. He grinned, pulling himself up to kiss Jane, then apparently decided that wasn't enough and helped her over the railing. Once he had her down, he kissed her properly, mumbling something against her dreamy smile. Then he went back to hug his parents and take Lux from them.

He hooked an arm around Jane's waist to support her, leading her back to the interview as he proudly held his baby girl.

"I don't think we've seen this one before," the reporter said, grinning at Lux.

"This is our newest addition," he said, kissing Lux's head, "Lux Leodegrance."

"She's absolutely beautiful." The reporter laughed when Lux made the cutest noises as she gave David's cheek wet kisses. Well, she gnawed at his cheek—her teething had reached a new height. The woman reached out to shake Jane's hand. "It's good to see you looking so well, Jane. Congratulations on the birth of your daughter. She looks just like her daddy."

Jane always got shy on camera except on Luc's arm, but she smiled politely and thanked the woman.

"It looked like you were very proud up there in the stands," she said to Jane. "And your parents and friend—they looked just as excited."

"We're very proud of him." Jane beamed at David. "I don't think my friend enjoyed keeping me from falling and breaking my neck, but otherwise, it was amazing. I'm glad I had the opportunity to watch him play."

The woman turned the mic to David again. “And how did it feel to have them cheering you on in such a big game?”

“Like a dream,” he said, his smile as wide as Jane’s. “I don’t get to have our other children at games as much anymore, but I know they’re watching too.” David smiled at the camera. “Hi, Erio, Elara, Gojo, Ryu ... Daddy loves you.”

Wendy, Jane’s friend from high school who’d always had a problem with David, sighed and whispered to the person next to her that he was such a good match for Jane.

“I’m sure the rest of the family is partying hard in your honor.” The reporter laughed at Lux’s screeching noises. “Do you have any plans for the offseason?”

“Well, we didn’t get to have our honeymoon with my schedule. So that’s a priority, as well as enjoying time with our kids.” He kissed Jane’s head. “And I’ve missed hanging out with my baby’s other husbands and boyfriend. I plan to play hard for all of them and hopefully bring a championship home for my boys.”

“I’m sure your fans and teammates would join me in congratulating you again on your game, your beautiful daughter, and the amazing wedding news. Good luck to you, David.”

“Thank you.” David wasted no time, scooping Jane up by her ass to kiss her.

“Making her melt,” Ryder muttered, but there was a smile on his face as the kids made ew noises.

Sin looked over at all of them. “That could’ve been you. Well, not Tercero, but you guys all could’ve been in his spot.”

Ryder shook his head. “Her golden boy had the dream. I got mine.”

“Mine too,” Archer said, lifting Gojo onto his lap. “I didn’t want to have a baby with Jane until the twins came, but I was going to give it up so the others could have a shot. But this little turd”—he tickled Gojo, making his son yell and push at him—“was totally worth giving up the game.”

“Dad, don’t get sappy,” Gojo said, laughing harder when Archer tickled him and continued talking.

“But David was destined to be a legend,” he said. “And Luc didn’t care about football.”

Luc didn’t respond. He had an arm around Erio’s shoulder and talked to him quietly.

Sin rolled his eyes and looked toward Tercero. “Why didn’t you ever play? I know you’ve got skills.”

“Too busy watching my brother’s moon to give it any thought,” Tercero said, smiling at Elara when she hid her face against Ryder’s side. The big softy put an arm around her but kept his eyes on the footage showing replays of David’s game and shots of David and Jane. The network knew it could use them to boost views. So now there were closeups of him to drive the fans wild. David would always be the pretty boy, perfect player, and the team capitalized on their star player’s scandalous relationship without shaming either of them.

Of course, haters and people still sent David messages that Jane was bad for his soul. Some networks were not afraid to voice their disapproval, but her stepbrother had made good choices to get to the point where he could proudly have her in the spotlight at his side without any shame. Jane even took advantage, often wearing shirts that supported different Indigenous organizations and others related to sexual violence and trafficking. One of her favorite places was where horses

were used as therapy for survivors. She even donated a few of their horses for months at a time.

“What about you, Damon?” Sin asked, pulling whatever date he’d brought onto his lap. He dodged Coach Prince’s swat as the man passed through the room. “He’s jealous.”

Damon chuckled, rubbing his son’s back. “What about me?”

Sin wanted to rile up Ryder. That was what the smile he wore said. “Tell the truth—you gave up the game for a cute brunette with fiery hazel eyes and pretended she was just a friend.”

Ryder laughed, shaking his head. “Jane just read too many bodyguards falling in love with their charge books, and Damon saw.”

“How do you know how it started?” Damon hadn’t elaborated on his interest in Jane. He’d been attracted to her from the first moment he saw her with Luc. Then he’d felt rage when his teammate had hurt her, then protective of her when she came to his school. But beyond that, she was Luc’s queen and just a friend.

Ryder’s smile was mean. “Caught her reading one once. She blushed so hard when you walked in and closed out the book. I checked her app to see what she was reading. And I saw you read the back covers of some of her books. You had one of her bodyguard books in one hand and her dragon shifter shit in the other, then your eyes went over to her, and that was it. The seed was planted, and you no longer saw her as a friend.”

“For real?” Archer laughed loudly. “A dragon fucking a woman book and a bodyguard book is why you and Jane got

together?”

Luc sighed, shoving Archer away. “Not all of us stalk our neighbor and obsess over her in secret for years.”

“My dad didn’t stalk Mama!” Gojo glared at Luc. “Take it back.”

Archer laughed, covering his son’s mouth. “I totally perved on Mama, boy. But so did Luc. And Tercero. And Daddy Ryder perved on her so hard she thought he hated her. He was terrified that he’d lose her if she knew how he really felt.”

Damon glanced down at his son, caressing his chubby cheek as he listened to the brothers insult each other for their dirty deeds regarding Jane before revealing their feelings for her.

All the kids yelled when Sin spilled the beans about Ryder and Jane fucking their second time hanging out.

“What?” Sin laughed, blocking the pillows they launched at him. “It’s epic. Your dad was so hard up for this girl who hated his guts. She was so loyal to David, but this motherfucker—literally—bagged your mom in less than twenty-four hours after their first tutor session. In his fucking car at lunch. Epic!”

“Sin, shut up,” Ryder said, but he smiled triumphantly.

“Want me to tell them about Tercero proposing that you all have a chance before he went down on her? Or about Jane and David in her bathroom?” Sin got up, running from Coach Prince. “It wasn’t me, Prince! Get mad at your golden boy and her fucking ninja over there.”

“Stop fucking cussing around the kids,” Coach Prince shouted, making everyone laugh.

“Fuck, I love our family,” Archer said, letting go of Gojo so he could chase after Sin. “Get him, buddy. Kick him in his balls.”

“You got it, Dad.” Gojo laughed evilly.

Sin yelped, trying to climb on Savaş. “Save me!”

Erio got up and walked over to Elara. He frowned at Ryder, and his father smiled and removed his arm so Erio could tug her up. “Come on, we need to talk.”

Ryder nudged her. “Go with your brother, baby moon. You know you already forgave him.”

Elara’s cheeks flushed just like Jane’s, and she took her brother’s hand and let him lead her out of the room.

Everyone sat quietly, watching the rest of their friends who’d gathered laugh and cheer as more footage of David played on the giant screen.

It was surreal. Not where he’d imagined he’d be after seeing Jane on Luc’s arm at the football game that started it all for their group.

Just then, all their phones chirped. Each of them glanced at the other before opening the text from Jane.

“Fuck.” Ryder groaned before yanking his phone, then Tercero’s. “No one else sees.”

Damon wouldn’t dream of it. He was not sharing a photo of Jane wearing David’s jersey, David’s hand pushing it up to expose her. He was exposing the signatures they’d each scribbled across her body—David’s over her heart and Ryder’s below her heart and to the side. Tercero’s was low on her waist, just above the still-fading tummy tuck scar. Luc’s was on her wrist, above the moon and morning star tattoo they

shared. Archer's was over her right breast, and Damon's was on the palm of her left hand. In the middle of her stomach, David had written something bigger: Jane's Team.

Below it, scribbled in her writing, was *We don't wear clothes*.

Archer stood, a pillow over his crotch. "I'll show her no clothes."

Damon chuckled as he watched the youngest Godson try to escape without revealing his erection.

"I know she hates the scar," Tercero said, "but I love seeing my name beside it."

"I adore it as well," Damon murmured, grinning at Luc. "What are you doing?"

"Sending her footage from when she visited me at work last week." Luc's smile was proud. "She didn't need to be forced."

"Really?" Ryder asked, not looking away from the text.

"She'll never fully be better, little brother," Luc said, hitting send. "But ..."

Ryder cut him off, "Yeah, I know how it goes."

"I'd imagine you would." Luc stood, walking out as his phone rang.

Ryder glanced at the screen when it showed Jane and David again. "I should really thank him for helping her. I don't think she would handle some of the shit I do without him."

"You enjoying the new masks we got for you?" Damon asked.

“Yeah, the new reaper one is her favorite, I think. She gets all dreamy-eyed when she sees it.”

Damon glanced at Ryder’s phone, smiling as he watched his old rival respond to a text from David.

PAPI

Thank you

It’s never for you.

“She’ll swoon over that.” Damon stood as well, his thumb hovering over his reply to Jane.

“And it’ll always be true.” *It’s all for her*, is what he didn’t say. Ryder’s gaze skimmed over his kids before settling on Damon’s phone. “You know, she was into Death before she was into dragons and bodyguards.”

Damon laughed, nodding. “You don’t have to stress—I can’t turn into a real dragon for her, but you’ve checked off the King Reaper thing.”

A faint smile formed on Ryder’s face. “She’s such a little freak.” He tapped Damon’s phone. “Send it.”

Damon glanced at his unsent message and chuckled. “If I didn’t know you were a monster, I’d think you’d gone soft.”

“Jane says the deadliest and scariest monsters are the most beautiful, so it almost seems like you’re flirting with me.” Ryder’s smile turned mean. “I’ll have to kill you if you are.”

“Trust me, I’d rather fight and lose to you than flirt with you—or anyone who isn’t Jane.”

“Good.” Ryder grinned, standing and stepping away, but stopped, adding, “Put the little dragon to bed, Demon King.”

We're training in a few hours. And I told Erio and Gojo we could set up the yard for a night Airsoft battle. The old gang is staying the night to play, too."

"You need to stop taking out your sons when you play."

"They already know King Daddy doesn't go easy on them."

Damon read over his text, chuckling at Ryder's use of his code name.

Then he sent it:

Let David fuck you into a coma. Don't be afraid of playing as hard as he can really go. You know Death won't let you end. You know your ninja's smile will keep you company in the dark. That your king will light that never-ending night on fire should you not want to wake, that his brother will kiss your eyelids and whisper the secrets you so desperately want to hear but fear knowing. And you know I'll be there. Watching them save you. Then I'll destroy you just so you can experience them again.

MINE

Better than an i love you

Go kiss your sun.

I'll keep an eye on your team.

His gaze fell to Ryu before drifting over the twins and Kai ... Gojo. He sent a final text:

I'll join your team and watch over our baby's team.

Well, Babies' Team

RYDER GODSON'S BONUS EPILOGUE

My beautiful girl has no idea I'm watching her. Jane thought I'd dropped her off at the house she grew up in to wait for her stepdad, but he won't be coming home. He'll have no idea what I do to her in her old bedroom.

She stiffens, darting her eyes to the window before shifting to look behind her.

I slide out of view and lean against the hallway wall. There's no noise to indicate she's coming to investigate, but I wait a little longer before returning to my spot just inside her doorway.

She's turned away again, relaxed. Her short white sundress compliments the subtle golden tan she'd managed to get on our recent vacation, and I'm so distracted by her thighs that I nearly give myself away when she bends and the dress slips up.

I breathe out to not groan at the tease of her gorgeous ass. She's wearing her Superman panties to annoy me, but she doesn't know every pair of her anime or comic book panties do it for me more than the skimpy thongs Luc buys for her.

Glancing down at the skull mask in my hand, I decide I'm going forward with my plan. After all, Jane gave all of us consent to do whatever we wished to her whenever we wanted.

So I quietly put it on, pulling my black hoodie over my head to hide my hair.

She's never seen this mask before, but I know my girl. She knows I'm scarier than any monster who's dared to harm her.

I grin when I notice her eyes constantly flitting over to the window. It's the same window she once stared out and fantasized about being abducted by me, her stepbrother, and my brothers. The window I used to stare up at, waiting to get a glimpse of her—knowing she'd thought the worst of me back then, but still unable to stop herself from sneaking glances at me in my old backyard.

That shift in her posture comes and goes as she gets stuck in a daze. Her lips part just a little, and she squeezes those pretty thighs of hers together.

She's imagining it. It's been years, and we're adults now, but she remembers the hundreds of times she'd watch me hanging out at the pool with my brothers and friends—and the fucked up Senior initiation that the varsity football players carried out with the cheerleaders. I never would've thought my feisty, gorgeous neighbor wanted to be abducted the same way my former teammates abducted the cheer team. But she had the fantasy then, and she daydreams about it now.

She'd been in love with her stepbrother then, unable to see that I was always there. So I only thought she'd be sad about David's participation in the event. But knowing now that she'd wanted us to take her against her will—to snatch her from her room, bring her to the initiation like the cheerleaders—strip her in front of everyone as we ran our hands over her body? No, I didn't think that was possible then.

I especially didn't think she'd want something like that after surviving her abduction. But my girl is a warrior. Luc

helped her overcome her fears. He taught her the difference between her fantasies and what had happened to her. Then she roared at her demons and allowed herself not to feel ashamed for wondering what it would've been like to be mine and David's plaything.

A sigh escapes her, and she tears her gaze from the window before digging through a desk. I have no clue what she's searching for, but she won't find it now.

She doesn't hear me approach. She'd already *felt* my presence and dismissed it as her imagination. So I stand behind her, my head tilted as she carries on, oblivious.

I didn't think I'd be okay with this. Jane's my baby—my moon, and I'm her shield, her protector. I'm not supposed to instill fear into her, but I'm eager now. She's gotten glimpses of the monster she has wrapped around her little finger. I want her to see more.

My hand raises on its own, hovering behind her head—and a few strands of her dark brown hair brush against my gloved hand.

Finally, she stills and lifts her head. For a moment, she stares straight ahead, and I smile as goosebumps erupt along her skin. Her breath hitches, but she's panicked and frozen.

“Scream,” I whisper, then roughly grab her by the neck and yank her into me.

And she does—at the top of her lungs. Her arms instinctively reach up to pry my hand off, but she's tiny, even if it's a decent effort. Her strength and short nails do nothing as I fix my grip around her neck and bar her against me with my free arm around her waist.

That's when she catches sight of the mask. Fear blows her pupils wide, and another scream rips from her lungs. She thrashes, but I lift and carry her the few steps to the window.

It's fast, and my pulse is pounding through my ears, but I put her on her feet and shove her against the glass. She tries to brace herself to push away, but I press my larger body against hers, and she has no choice but to stand on the tips of her toes. She's helpless.

“What's wrong, Bambi?” Even though my voice is rough and I'm overpowering her, her body reacts, melting for just a moment against me before struggling again. “You know you like this.”

She knows it's me now, but she's still confused. In her mind, I'd never scare her like this, but her body and soul will always recognize mine.

Her lips part and I squeeze her throat just a little to keep her quiet. Still, she shakes her head.

“No?” I continue in the same dark tone I use on the men I've tortured for her. “You can't lie to me, Sweet Jane. I know that if I stick my hand between your legs right now—you'll moan like a whore. Won't you, baby?”

I release my grip on her throat and give just enough room for her to push back from the window. But I surprise her again, grabbing the back of her head and pushing her face against the glass. “Prove me wrong... . Prove me wrong, and I'll let you go.” Then, with the arm still around her waist, I hike her dress up in the front and slip my gloved hand down her panties. She tries to squeeze her thighs together and fight free, but I push two fingers deep inside her, groaning when she does indeed moan.

Tsking, I scold her. “Naughty girl. Look how easily I slipped in.” I play with her, grinning as she struggles to keep the next moan to herself. I decide it’s okay to turn on the aggression again, and my voice is no longer taunting. It’s cold and mean. “Now spread your legs.”

A cute growl crawls up her throat, and she hisses. “Make me.”

There’s my fiery goddess. I’m hard in an instant.

My laugh is cruel as I tighten my fingers in her hair and kick her legs open. “Oh, Sweet Jane,”—I remove my other hand from her panties and slide it along the swell of her ass until I reach the button on my jeans—“you really shouldn’t have said that.”

Aw, silly reader, you thought I’d let you see?

You should know better. This is mine and hers only.

Scram.

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ALSO BY JANIE MARIE

The world that Jane's Team was birthed from
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Janie Marie is an Amazon Bestseller in Paranormal Angel Romance and an International Bestseller in Young Adult Contemporary Romance & Young Adult Fairy Tale Adaptations.

Her life experiences—good and a lot of bad—are where she has chosen to draw inspiration from to create her characters and stories.

Be ready for raw, emotional tales, as Janie never holds back. With her darkest thoughts she found light is still possible. She learned the sad girl can sometimes glow the brightest.

