



CLUB DESIRE

A
CLUB DESIRE
NOVELLA

THE WINTER OF LOVE SERIES

**BOUNDED
BY LOVE**

L.D. BLACK

Bound by Love

Winter of Love Series

L.D. Black



CLUB DESIRE

A Club Desire Novella

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Elise

I only went to the party because my best friend and his wife begged me to. Actually, he bribed me with food if I agreed to go. Said I would have the time of my life.

It wasn't a lie.

The party was where I met him. Mysterious. Dark. Sexy. Except I didn't get his name or see his face.

But I remember that voice, and he's found me.

Determined to have me at whatever cost.

It takes everything not to give in because we all have secrets and mine could get others killed. It's best to stay away.

Regardless of how tempting it may be. No matter how free I feel with him. No matter how much I crave his domination.

Castien

Bored with bachelor life, my brother suggested I visit Club Desire to have a few new experiences. I entertained the idea

even more after I met her at a friend's party. She was everything, and I wanted her like I've never wanted a woman before.

Then she disappeared.

I didn't even know her name.

The woman was like no other, and everything about her called to the darkest part of me.

Then I found her.

I refused to be denied anymore.

We both have unspoken secrets that could ruin us both and those we love if they were to get out.

Am I willing to risk it all to have her submit to my will one more time?

Dark Secrets. Dark Desires. Dark Cravings.

What's done in the dark always finds its way to the light...

Bound by Love Playlist

Every time I sit down to write, I curate a playlist to listen to for the duration of writing that novel. The songs I listen to help set the mood and flow of the story. This one turned out to be a great list to vibe to. It's sexy, like the book, which is why I'm sharing. So, sit back and relax. Get the music flowing and prepare to enjoy Elise's and Castien's story.

The songs listed below are not in order, and this isn't the entire list, but just a sample few of what you'll find while listening.

Listen on Spotify.



1. Crazy In Love (Remix slo version) by Beyonce
2. Rope Burn by Janet Jackson
3. Hrs & Hrs by Muni Long
4. Date Night by Jade Massentoff

5. Angel by Massive Attack
6. Butter by Devon Culture
7. My Luv by Rini
8. Discipline by Janet Jackson
9. To My Bed by Chris Brown
10. Cool Breeze by Goapele
11. Desire by Meg Myers
12. Flames by Donzell Taggart
13. Chocolate Legs by Eric Benet
14. When We by Tank

“Welcome to the world of Club Desire, one of the world’s most exclusive BDSM clubs. We cater to your pleasure and your pain. We have everything you could possibly desire.”



CLUB DESIRE

Prologue

Castien

“**Y**ou ready?” my brother asked as he came up to the side of me, matching my pace. “You have that look on your face.”

“I don’t have the look.”

“Yes, you do.”

“No, I don’t.” I reiterated as I picked up my stride. The small warehouse was in the middle of nowhere, sitting on a few acres, and thankfully, no people were out here. To the average eye, it looked rundown and beat up if you were to come across it. The building looked as if we hadn’t used it for many years, but that was the way my brother and I liked it. Kept out unwanted people and intruders.

I made it to the entrance and gave myself a second. “You sure we got the right one?”

“I’m fucking sure,” my brother said with confidence, nodding his head. “This motherfucker was asking way too many questions, and you know me. I will cut a tongue quick,

but he mentioned a few names I thought you would find interesting. So, I had him tailed and now here we are.”

“Here we are.” A slight breeze cut across the way, blowing strands of stray hair into my face. I ran a hand through it, pushing the strays back, making a muss of my hair, but not caring. My brother had a point. Most times he was quick to violence, but he held off on unaliving this guy. If this person had some names to drop, then I needed to hear them. “Alright, let’s do this.”

My brother slapped me on the back. “That’s what I’m talking about.” He wore a malicious grin on his face and if I was anyone else, I probably would have stepped back and got out of his way. Instead, I slowly grinned back. One of these days, these assholes were going to learn to not fuck with us.

I reached out, opened the steel door, and stepped inside the warehouse. The interior was a techie’s dream. Top of the line lighting systems, hidden motion detection cameras everywhere, high-tech keypads to get into any locked doors. And the best part was that the entire building was completely soundproof. A person could scream their last words and not a sound would be heard from outside of these walls.

Immediately inside was a security station where two of our men waited. They acknowledged us as we strolled in and then went back to their posts. We continued down the futuristic-looking hall until we reached a tinted glass door at the end. It opened on its own, allowing us entry. I hurried inside with my brother following tight on my heels.

I let everything that was weighing on my mind dissolve as the cold, hard mask of indifference came down over my face. To do what needed to be done, I had to be in the right frame of mind. Which sometimes was harder to get into than not. Especially when I had too much going on. Being able to switch between my business and personal personas was tiring of late. It wasn't like me at all.

We both knew soon enough I would have to make a decision. One I wasn't ready to make. Not yet. What people saw when it came to me was that I had everything. If they only knew what it took to get here to be in this moment. None of it was easy.

I didn't have it all...

All the sacrifices and bloodshed I had to deal with. The pain. Soul deep darkness I couldn't ever seem to get out of. It covered me like a heavy blanket and every day I sunk further into its cold embrace, while plastering a different face for various situations in my life. People always wanted to test me and my brother. They would never learn. No one ever wanted to cross me. Or my brother. We earned our scars and reputation the hard way and with reason.

Inside, behind the glass door, the room was dark with only one light. The solitary, flickering spotlight shone down on the man tied to the chair. Two more of my men stood on each side of our captive. The size of them, made the prisoner look extremely small. In no hurry, I took my time and observed the

man while making my way to the center of the room where he was being held.

The prisoner was unconscious but not for long. His head hung low with his chin resting on his chest. He still had breath but for how long, I had yet to figure out. The man's clothes were rumpled and disoriented. His arms were tattooed, and I recognized the syndicate affiliation marked all over his skin. Blood stained his shirt and pants.

“How long has he been out?”

“Not too long, boss,” Big Jon said from behind the prisoner. Big Jon was exactly what his name implied. A tall man with a bald head, hard brown eyes, and broad shoulders. A long scar marred his jawline on the left side of his face.

“Well, wake him up,” I ordered. Big Jon snapped his finger at someone else who was waiting in the darkness. The person brought a bucket of ice water and threw it on the prisoner's face. He jumped hard in his seat, shouting as he awoke. His chair tittered side to side, making a creaking noise before settling. He shook his head, then slowly glanced around the room before his wandering gaze landed on me and my brother. Based on the sharp intake of breath he took, he recognized who I was at first glance.

Good. No introductions were needed.

I shoved my hands in my pocket and watched him as his eyes darted between me and my brother. I let the silence linger, and I knew it made the man even more nervous.

“From the way you looked at me, then him, I can accurately assume you know who we are.”

His head bobbed up and down. I let out a frustrated breath. “Use your words. I don’t have all evening for this shit. Right now, I have some hot pussy waiting for me in my bed and instead I’m here having to deal with your B.S. So, I am going to ask again, and you’re going to give me an answer. Using your words, of course.”

“Okay,” the man croaked out. “I know who you are.”

“Good. Now we can begin. What’s your name?”

“Marcellus.”

“Marcellus... what?”

The captive’s eyes darted to everyone in the room before he realized he had no other choice. I saw the moment the resolve left his fight. “Jacobson. Marcellus Jacobson.”

“Thank you. Wasn’t so hard now, was it?”

He shook his head. His knee bouncing hard. A nervous tick. “No.”

I chuckled. He learned quickly. “You’ve been seen hanging around places you shouldn’t have been hanging around, Marcellus. Why?”

“I swear... I didn’t know they were *your* places.”

“Mmm. Sure, you didn’t. Yet, the ink on your arms says otherwise, Marcellus.” I stepped closer to him so he could get

a clearer view of me. “Tell you what. I’ll make a deal with you.”

“Anything,” he said way too fast.

“Hold on. You don’t even know what I’m going to say or offer.”

“Ss—sorry,” he stuttered.

“Don’t be sorry. You are anxious and I totally get it. A young man like you is bound to know a lot. Seen a lot. Probably got some pretty young things at home waiting on you. More than likely, they are probably wondering where you are right about now. So, excuse me if I am wrong, but I think you would say anything to get free. But you wouldn’t do that to us now, would you?”

“No, sir.”

I shook my head. “Don’t call me sir. That’s only allowed if you’re one of my special lady friends. And although you are tied up, you are not a lady.”

The chuckles from my men, including my brother, had the young man sweating hard.

“How long have you been with the Marconi Family?” Marcellus gulped. I knew I had him. He was a dead man, no matter what. If he talked, the Marconi’s would kill him. I was going to kill him if he didn’t talk. If he did talk, well, we’d see how good the information was. I may let him live. Wasn’t quite sure yet. Either way, he really didn’t have a choice.

“Five years,” he answered.

I watched his Adam's apple bob up and down as he swallowed again. He was nervous and had every right to be.

I softened my voice. "Marcellus, if you tell us everything I want to know, then I'll let you live."

His eyes brightened at my words, and I could tell the wheels were turning in his head. He was trying to figure out if it was worth it. If he could possibly get out of here and get ghost because he knew his life was forfeit if he left here alive. The Marconi's would search high and low for him.

"Okay. I'll answer whatever you need to know."

Proven wrong. I glanced at my brother, and he laughed to himself. Poor Marcellus really didn't have any self-preservation instincts. He really didn't think about what would happen if he left here. See, I knew for a fact that the Marconi's had their grunts travel in groups. Marcellus was a high level grunt. There were others out there who probably saw him get picked up by my men. I was pretty damn sure the Marconi's knew all about Mr. Jacobson. That was just the way they worked.

"Excellent. I hear you have got some news for us. Care to inform us about what you have to say?"

Marcellus sung like a bird. It turned out that he knew more than what he initially claimed and for that I was going to be nice. After he expunged everything he knew, someone handed me a blade. I checked the knife, then inched closer to him with it held up. His eyes bugged out of his head.

“Hey man... I told you everything you asked and wanted to know. You promised you were going to let me live.”

“Lift his shirt,” I ordered my men. They yanked his shirt up, exposing his chest to me. It was tattooed as well, but not as heavily as his arms. Didn’t matter, anyway. I got as close as I could to him and held the knife in my hand to the center of his chest. He continued to beg, but I was used to hearing others beg. I wasn’t one to easily be swayed. The tip of my blade touched his skin and I carved the letter E onto his chest. My knife went deep and parted his flesh like warm butter. His screams filled the warehouse and echoed back to us, but it didn’t faze me. I had a point to make. Blood oozed from where I cut and ran down his chest, adding color to his black and grey ink.

After I was done, I stood there and admired my work, then passed the blade off to whoever stood on my left. Marcellus cried like a newborn. He was a weakling.

“I said I was going to let you live, true, but I didn’t say how long I was going to let you live after I got what I needed.” My brother placed the loaded gun in my hand when I reached out to my right. I removed the safety and placed the barrel onto Marcellus’s temple. “And I always get what I need.”

The man pursued a last attempt to save himself, but it would do no good. I pulled the trigger. Marcellus Jacobson slumped and fell forward. I handed the gun back to my brother. “You all know what needs to be done. Take the trash out. Leave him on

the doorsteps of the Marconi's McMansion. Stay in the shadows. Handle this quietly."

I turned back to my brother, and he looked at me with pride. "You did good, little brother. I almost forgot that underneath that three-piece business suit lives a cold-hearted, ruthless motherfucker."

I laughed. "I learn from the best, brother."

"That you did."

"Hey, I'm going to head out. I do have a hot piece tied up at the penthouse."

My brother shook his head with a knowing glint in his eyes. "I should have known you weren't lying about a bitch being tied up."

"I would never lie about hot pussy. Of all people, you should know that."

"Another one of your subs?"

"Of course. I wouldn't have it any other way. They know what they're getting into. No feelings involved and we both get pleasure." He laughed as we embraced in a hug. "Call me tomorrow. Let me know the moment the Marconi's get the message."

"You know I will."

I left the warehouse and got into my Aston Martin and burnt out of there. I knew a war was coming, but it wasn't anything I

or my brother couldn't handle. The Marconi's were going to pay for what they did to our family.

Elise Anais



“Do I really have to go to this meeting?” I plopped down onto the comfy couch in my office. Unease about the meeting caused my current momentary stress. All around, streaks of golden light filled the office as I stared at my best friend and co-creator of our company, Icarus Game Studio. “You’ll be there. That should be enough.”

Yuen rolled his eyes, then got comfortable on top of my desk as he sat down on it. “You know the board won’t go for that. We both have to be there. It won’t be so bad.”

“You say that now, but I got a not so good gut feeling about this.” I leaned back and stared at the ceiling. The company had been doing extremely well with our first game release. An online multiplayer RPG. People were loving it. The game was far superior and better than our competitors in the market right now. Our game developers and crew worked their butts off to

get this going. Also, let's not forget our initial investors who had faith and trust in Yuen's and my vision. I still couldn't believe it.

"You always do this, Elise. Stop it." Yuen wasn't on the desk long. He hopped off, then came and sat next to me on the couch. The pillows let out a whoosh of air when he landed next to me. He bumped my shoulders with his before gaining my attention. "When was the last time you have gone out?"

"It's been too long." Curious, I slightly turned his way. "Why? What's up?"

Yuen grinned, and I knew for a fact it meant trouble. "When was the last time you've been *out*... out?"

Yuen also knew about my little "fun" side as I liked to call it, because he had a 'fun' side too. Now, I was little more than intrigued. "Way too long. What's going on?"

"There's a party. Jaz and I are going. It's the crème de la crème of parties this year and we wanted to know if you'll come along. Maybe you will have some fun. Perhaps find somebody. It's been almost a year since you were with the nameless asshole guy."

I laughed, but inside I was mad at the sudden thoughts of said asshole popping into my head. It took a long time to get him out of there to where I could function. Yuen also made a good point. It had been a long time since I've been to any type of party. Too busy trying to get my baby off the ground. Lately, both Yuen and Jaz have been saying I needed to get out more.

They weren't wrong.

I'm almost thirty and life was slowly enclosing on me. I felt my personal and life goals slipping away. Although I was back on track, my love life wasn't. At this point... it was non-existent. Ever since the '*asshole who shall not be named*' left, I hadn't thought about dating or whatever. I cut a glance back to Yuen. Maybe my bestie had a point.

The loud ticking of the clock on the wall caught my attention. The meeting was in fifteen minutes. With an annoyed sigh, I sunk further into the couch. "Fine, give me the details about this party after the meeting. We can go out for lunch and discuss it."

"Yes!" Yuen said as he pulled me into a hug. "You need this. Trust me, you won't regret it."

"I haven't said yes yet."

"You will. Remember, I know you. We *are* best friends, Elise."

I untangled myself from Yuen and stood. "Don't remind me." His warm laugh filled the room and made me smile. He always had this calming effect on me. "You know if you weren't married to Jaz, I'd so date you. You're like perfect. Are you sure you don't have any brothers or cousins like you?"

Yuen stood up. "You ask this all the time. No, I don't have any brothers. The cousins I have, well, they aren't your type. I've seen the type of guys you've dated. Besides, me and you,

nope. I love you, but we would make it all of three months, then be at each other's throats. We are definitely better as friends."

"Three months. That's all?" I groaned and smiled at the same time. "Ugh, I hate when you're right."

"I'm always right, Elise."

I softly punched him in the arm. "Whatever."

We left my office together and walked the hallways while Yuen kept up the conversation. I just listened. We hadn't talked in a while. He was busy with Jaz and their still very newlywed status. I couldn't believe he was married. Before me at that. We've been friends since freshmen year at university. Somehow, I always thought I would settle down before him. Guess he proved me wrong on that part. He was such an overachiever.

We rounded the corner, getting closer to the large conference room. I stopped in my tracks. Something I had forgotten about had hit me like a ton of bricks. When Yuen realized I wasn't next to him, he backtracked his steps to be at my side.

"What's wrong? We're going to be late."

My mind was running a mile a minute. I ignored his last comment not really caring about being late. "Why is this meeting so important that we have to be here?"

Yuen shrugged. "I don't know. I just know Michael said we had no choice."

“Which Michael? There are two of them.”

“Michael Warner.”

“Shit!” I bit the corner of my bottom lip, a habit I’ve tried getting rid of, but it never worked. “Of the two Michaels, I don’t like him. He’s been trying to get us to meet a few of his friends who want to invest in the company. I don’t know about that. We have enough investors.”

“Not enough for us to take the company to the next level like we want. This was only the beginning. We have the ideas, the talent, and the drive to level up now, instead of later.”

“Recent sales from the game should take care of that.” I was being unreasonable because I knew better. I wasn’t ready to admit it though.

Yuen shook his head. “No, it won’t. We need more funds coming in. The board knows this. We’re blowing up, but it’s going to get crazier. Do we want to be a one game hit wonder? No. We are better than that. Let’s hear them out. The guy has a crap load of money. His friends do too. Their investing in our company means we can get the newest game up and ready much quicker.” Yuen placed his hands on both of my shoulders. “Come on, Elise. Do it for me, okay? It can’t be all that bad. At least hear them out. If we don’t like what is being said, we’ll boot them in the backside so fast.” He snapped his fingers to add the extra oomph.

Yuen pleaded with his eyes. He always knew how to get me to say yes. Unfortunately, my best friend also didn’t know the darker side of Michael Warner. He had a dark history with

some unsavory types who I didn't really want involved with our company. I knew the type of friends he had because I knew the type of friends my brother had, and they knew all about Mr. Warner. He was the one who gave me those details. Also, Mr. Warner was a slime ball in my eyes. I had the unfortunate mistake of seeing him at the last play party I'd attended. He was a total ass to the woman he brought with him. She ended up leaving with bruises all over her arms and they kicked him out shortly after.

I'd rather not deal with him, but Yuen didn't know and unfortunately, he was right. *Again*. We needed the asshole's connections. "Fine. I'll hear him out and see what he has to say."

The excitement on Yuen's face was almost childlike. Which made me feel some type of way. Couldn't believe I was going to fold a little. "Not only will you owe me lunch, I now require dinner for this."

He laughed before grabbing my hand and pulling me towards the door. "I will always have your back, Elise. Food is not a problem. Now let's get this done."

I quietly plopped down into the leather chair and molded myself into it. I watched the others talking amongst themselves, never realizing we had come into the room. Yuen and I sat near the end of the cherry wood table. He sat across from me while the members of the board filled the remaining seats. Michael Warner stood at the front of the conference room with a svelte blonde-haired woman with the palest blue

eyes at his side. She was all grins. For now. I've seen her around before. She was one of his newest assistants. They never lasted, and from all the things I knew of the man, I wasn't surprised. I wouldn't want to directly work with him either. I would give her a month before she's gone, too.

The meeting started. A few of the members gave their spiel but left everything for Warner. I knew unofficially, the small board looked to him as their leader, which I didn't care for either, but there was nothing I could do about it. They found the investors who believed in the company. Even if I didn't want to admit it, they knew what they were doing.

“And that brings us to the last point I wanted to discuss,” Warner said, after a lengthy pitch.

His scheming eyes and grin were met with enthusiasm by everyone but me. Inside of my head, I was visualizing him dying a thousand different ways. Warner licked his dry thin lips and kept looking at me with those beady eyes of his, totally forgetting that Yuen was on the other side of me, and he was just as much a part of this company as I was. Still, it didn't stop Mr. Creep.

“What is this point that you wanted to discuss?” I asked, completely over the waiting. I knew Warner. He would drag this out. I didn't want to be in the room much longer. Yuen owed me food, and I was ready to cash in.

“Of course, Ms. Jones. I know your time is valuable, as is ours.” He pointed to the other board members. “I'll make this quick.”

I watched as he adjusted the cuffs to his sleeves while wearing a devious looking smirk. I side eyed Yuen. He glanced back at me with the same look. We didn't like where this was going.

“Thank you,” I said in a saccharine voice. “Continue on, if you will.”

“With the launch of the game, everything is falling into place as it should. From the few conversations we've had with some of the development teams, in order for the next game launch to be a success, we will need more funds. More money means more investors. I already know how you feel about that, Ms. Jones, but trust me, I have a wonderful solution to our problem. We only need one investor willing to give what we need. I have an associate who is looking to break into this market, and I told him all about Icarus Games. How fast it's growing. How it's already a major player in the gaming world. He would like to meet with us before he decides. You know, tour the campus, meet the people that make Icarus Games... Icarus Games. I figured he could come on Monday or Tuesday. Give us all time to enjoy the weekend.”

I knew it. This slimy bastard wanted to put his own people here, and I could only guess why. Something wasn't right about any of this. All around the table, the others all looked in agreement. I didn't need to look at my best friend. I could feel his uncertainty from where I sat. This wasn't going to end the way we had hoped.

Elise Anais



“I can’t believe you dragged me out, Yuen. I was perfectly comfortable catching up on my shows tonight,” I told my best friend as we got out of his SUV. The parking area was extremely full, and the final dregs of autumn were making way for winter already. I was surprised it wasn’t snowing yet. My nips proved the stiff point to me in a very fashionable way of how cold it was. I had on a slim long coat with barely anything on underneath, which is what he told me I had to wear.

“It won’t be so bad once we get inside,” Jaz, Yuen’s wife, assured me after closing the back door.

From where I stood, I watched as cars pulled into the circular drive to have their vehicles valet parked. They were the lucky ones. No needing to walk in the cold for them. “How come we couldn’t do valet parking?”

“Because I didn’t want to be in the spotlight. Did you?”
Yuen looked over his shoulders at me. “I didn’t think so.”

I frowned but said nothing else. We were already in the spotlight enough as it was of late, and it wasn’t my favorite. I really hated when he was right. I playfully rolled my eyes at him. “Let’s do this.”

Jaz’s laughter rang out behind me. She reached Yuen’s side and placed her arms in his. “Don’t sound so ‘ugh’ about it, Elise. You know you love these types of gatherings. Besides... this one is going to be like nothing you’ve ever experienced before.”

“I doubt it. Once you’ve been to one play party, you’ve been to all play parties,” I said, while staring at the beautiful mansion before us. Even though I denied it, secretly inside, I had a strange feeling Jaz was right. This place was nothing like I’ve seen before. From the outside alone, this was an entirely new level of partying. I could only imagine the type of debauchery going on inside the multi-million dollar mansion. Was I nervous? Hell yes, but I was practically giddy with excitement at the same time. I was a jumbled mess.

Yuen and Jaz simultaneously twisted around and gave me the look. I must have had a frown on my face, but I had good reason. The type of events we had gone to before were nothing on this scale. I didn’t know anyone inside. I cut a glance at my best friend. He knew exactly what the look was about. Jaz whispered something to him. I couldn’t hear what she said, but she released him. He came and stood in front of me.

“Elise. Look at me.” His voice was stern. Commanding. This wasn’t Yuen my bestie, but Yuen the Dom.

My eyes slowly found his. His stern presence did its job and all the tension and nervousness I was exuding slowly dissipated. I exhaled the breath I didn’t realize I was holding.

Perhaps it had been too long.

“There we go,” Yuen said softly. He placed a hand on my shoulder. “You need this. Just like I told you the other day. It’s not very often you let someone else take over. You constantly have to be in charge. You are unbalanced. Being a sub is part of who you are too. Tonight, Elise, promise me and Jaz that you will let go and have fun. Enjoy yourself.”

He was right. It wasn’t very often I let go, but it was hard to after my time with Marquez. That was a disaster, but I couldn’t let that complicate my life any more than it already did. “I promise I will make the best of this evening. After all, you got me an invitation to get inside. Judging by the look of this place, it must have been hard as hell getting those invitations.”

Yuen gave me a lopsided grin. “Nope. Not at all. How I got them doesn’t matter.”

“Whatever,” I said jokingly. “Let’s go inside. I don’t think my nips can handle the cold much longer.”

Jaz laughed. “I second that.”

Yuen led us inside after handing our invites to the door guys. Inside the foyer was a beautiful crystal chandelier that hung just above our heads. It was an abstract design that cast

shadows to the wall to look like a forest. It was unique and something I've never seen before. From where we stood, I could hear the soft sound of instrumental music playing from hidden speakers in the ceiling.

A woman dressed in what looked like a sheer Grecian type gown floated toward us with an enormous smile on her face. Her eyes twinkled with amusement when they landed on Yuen and Jaz. She was pretty, with her long black hair and wide brown eyes. She reached out and took Jaz's hands.

"I'm so glad you could come," she said before looking over at me. "And you brought your friend."

Her eyes raked over my entire body before letting Jaz's hand go and sauntering towards me. "Such a pretty thing. Yuen, you were absolutely right."

I cut another glance to Yuen, and he actually smirked. I had no idea what was going on, but it was obviously more than what he was letting on.

"I'm Nicole," the woman said. "This is my home. Welcome."

Yup, my best friend was definitely keeping secrets. We were going to have a lovely chat tomorrow. "Nice meeting you, Nicole. I'm Elise Anais. Just call me Elise. I already know it's a mouthful."

Nicole chuckled. "No worries. Mine is shortened too. Parent's right?"

"Exactly!"

“Alright. I’m pretty sure Yuen and Jaz told you nothing about the type of party going on tonight. Or did they?”

I eyed my friends. They both had glints of mischievousness in their eyes. *What was going on?*

“They did not. Only told me to have a good time.”

“And that you will, my new friend. Come on and follow me. I’ll show you to the changing rooms.”

Nicole led the way as we followed her. Her hips swayed left and right, and I caught both Jaz and Yuen’s hungry gaze following the woman as she took us down the corridor before turning right off the main hall. This way was even emptier than the main hallway. If this was a party, I surely didn’t see any guests. Not yet, at least.

We reached a set of large mahogany wood doors that looked like it should have been in somebody’s castle. Nicole opened them and went inside. I followed directly behind her and my friends came in afterwards. With each step, curiosity was getting the best of me. What was going on? Directly in front of us were multiple room dividers. There was a table full of masks to our left. They reminded me of Venetian masks during Carnival. Some were scary and others were not. To our right were two men and two women setup at a table with body paint. I didn’t stare too hard at them before glancing at my friends and Nicole. “What’s this?”

“Tonight is special. It’s my birthday. I wanted to have a kick ass party, and I also wanted to do something different from my normal type of parties. I wanted a Bacchanalian type of fête.

You feel me?” I kind of did and nodded. Nicole continued on. “There are a few rules for the evening. Foremost, you will all sign non-disclosures. There are some people here who would like to keep their identities hidden. Unless they decide to give you their name. Second, only I can wear whatever I want to wear. My guests, not so much. All men will be painted in a metallic gold paint. Women will be painted in metallic silver. After you’re painted, then you choose the mask you would like to wear. Never to be taken off in the public spaces. If you decide to play, only then can you take the mask off in the private areas, but you don’t have to, even then. Oh, and if your paint gets smeared, we have artists wandering throughout the house that can touch it up.”

“Let me get this straight. We have to get body painted? No clothes or anything?” I asked.

“Exactly. Of course, you can keep your undies on if you like and it’ll get painted over.”

I’ve never been painted before, but it always intrigued me. It was something I’ve always wanted to do, but never thought about in this capacity before. Nicole’s grin told me everything I needed to know, and a tiny part of me jumped up and down with joy. Tonight was turning out to be just exactly what the Doctor ordered. I would be painted and hidden behind a mask. No one would know who I was. I would be free to do whatever the hell I wanted. With no repercussions. This party sounded like the best thing ever.

“Yuen,” Nicole said in a purr that had my friend cheesing like the Cheshire cat. “These two lovely ladies will paint you.”

I was more than curious as I watched Yuen kiss Jaz on the lips, then walked towards the two women. This was something he would talk about forever. It also had me wondering who Nicole was to Yuen and Jaz. Those two never mentioned her before, and it was obvious as day and night that their relationship was more than just platonic.

“Jaz, darling. Elise. These two gentlemen will have the pleasure of painting you.”

I stared opened mouth at the two men who were to be painting us. Chiseled cheeks. Hard, cut muscles. One had short brown hair and hazel-colored eyes looking like a Greek god. Or in this case... a Roman god. The other was a bona fide chocolate delight. His locs fell down to his shoulders. His beard game was on point, and all I could think about looking at him was sex. The kind that would have you letting him crash at your house and allowing him to keep the car while you're at work type of sex. He screamed the type of trouble that I didn't want but kept going back to because old boy knew how to work the fuck stick just right. This chocolate god was standing there watching me with a megawatt smile. This delicious male will get to touch me while covering my body with paint.

Hell yeah! Who was I to say no to this?

I stood there wondering why I gave Yuen such a hard time deciding about coming to this. All he had to do was give a girl

a hint. Sometimes my best friend knew me better than I knew myself.

Nicole stepped away to another table with empty flutes and full bottles of champagne. She poured each of us a drink, then came back, handing us each one. “Enjoy the pregame. Strip down behind the dividers and I’ll see you after art time. Oh, and don’t to forget to sign the forms. The painters have them.” She winked at us before leaving.

Jaz said nothing else. She smiled and headed towards the dividers. I looked back at the artist waiting for me and threw all caution to the wind. Tonight was all about fun. I owed it to myself. It truly had been too long. As long as it would help get everything off of my mind regarding work, or him, then I was game for whatever.

Elise Anais



My artist had magical hands. Those marvelous fingers of his lulled me into a relaxed state of mind thanks to the mini massage he gave me before he started applying the paint. Said it would relax my muscles and make it easier for him to paint. I didn't care. It had been so long since I've had a great massage I took it for whatever it was. Honestly, I was just going with the flow of things. Following the examples of Jaz and Yuen.

We spoke in hushed tones, my artist and I. Learned his name was Ezekiel. He was married and had a kid with another on the way. Doing this was extra on the weekends to help with the newcomer, and his wife was perfectly okay with it. Especially since they were both in the lifestyle, too. After the small talk, a silence descended between us. It was one of those comfortable ones, and I was okay with it. Gave me time to sink into my own thoughts.

Propped up on the table, Ezekiel painted every single crevice of my body and with the combination of the low lights, the soft music, and the sweet floral scent with hints of ginger, rose, and sandalwood, it had my body humming with delight. The sensuality of the pregame, as Nicole liked to call it, well, it definitely could put a person in the mood to do all sorts of naughty things. Yet doubt had crept inside of my thoughts. I was beginning to feel out of place. This was a class above what I was used to.

Ezekiel had me stand up and finished the paint job. My friends had finished around the same time as I did. Somehow, Nicole knew when to show back up, looking a little more flushed than she did when she left us.

“Ah, you three look magnificent,” she said as she circled us, but her gaze never left Yuen or Jaz. Did they get a third and say nothing to me? They both looked smitten with Nicole. Not that I cared or anything. I was just that nosey as fuck friend.

Nicole pointed to the table. “Pick your mask for the evening and we, my lovelies, will be on our way.”

I ambled towards the table and was in awe at the Venetian style masks that were on display. Some were full masks covering the entire face, while many others were half masks, allowing the lower half to be on display. My gaze stopped at a black half mask with black feathers, hints of lace, and what I imagined were genuine diamonds all over it. I didn't want to be that person and ask, but apparently, it was written all over my face.

“Yes, those are real diamonds. I had these masks custom made for tonight’s bash,” Nicole said, answering my silent question.

Just as I thought. I couldn’t even say anything in response because I knew the costs for these things were probably outrageous. I kept glancing over the selection, and for whatever reason, I kept coming back to the one with the feathers and picked it up. It was beautiful. Sexy. I loved it from the moment I first saw it. It would cover everything I wanted covered and my mouth would be the only thing on display.

Afterwards, our hostess gave us a tour of the house, where there were a few people talking and drinking, but nothing out of the ordinary. It was all non-sexy stuff here. Nicole then led us away from the others. She opened the door to an otherwise empty room and quickly crossed it with us behind her. She stopped at the gray painted wall on the other side. I watched with curiosity as Nicole lifted her right hand to the empty wall space and lightly brushed over it. The whirring sound took me by surprise when a small panel moved back, displaying a biometric security scanner. She placed her hand on it. Once it recognized her bio signature, the wall moved and slid back, revealing a set of hidden stairs illuminated with red LED lights on each step. I took a step back to get a better look.

This was some of that high tech James Bond super spy ish.

Nicole wore a sly smile and angled her head toward the now open door. “The fun begins here.”

Excitement coursed through my body. Yuen and Jaz were both right. This was nothing like I've ever been to before.

The stairs spiraled downwards, and Nicole told us to put our masks on. From here on out, the rules were in effect. I've been to what I used to think were swanky parties, but those were basic bitches compared to this. We reached the ground level, and my jaws dropped, leaving my mouth hanging wide open. The wall to the north was floor to ceiling glass. On the other side of it was an indoor, in-ground pool with waterfalls.

“The other side of the glass is a saltwater pool. It's for show tonight, so no one can take a dip. It helps the aesthetics,” Nicole informed us. She pointed to the left and right where there was a long, curving hall on each side. “Down those halls are rooms to where you can play. Fully equipped with whatever you and your partner may need. If the room is occupied, there will be a sign on the door. Once the room is no longer in use, it's completely cleaned before it'll be allowed for use again. As you can see, this area is free rein to do whatever.”

Which wasn't a lie as my eyes scanned the room. There were quite a few people and their partners in various positions of play. In one corner, a full scene was going on and it had a few onlookers. It was a smorgasbord of unadulterated kink factory. I grinned because I was absolutely here for the voyeurism.

“I'll be back for you two,” Nicole said to Yuen and Jaz before she spun on her heels leaving them alone.

I watched as Yuen and Jaz both stared at the back of the woman who started them on this grand adventure. I couldn't hold my tongue any longer. "Okay, you two. Somebody better talk, and fast."

Amusement was clear in Yuen's eyes. "I knew that was coming."

"Well, don't leave me in the dark. I'm like a curious cat and before I go get into trouble, I want to know who she is to the both of you."

"We met her last year," Jaz said. "Well, I did. Things hit off really well between us and I introduced her to Yuen. We've always wanted a third, and she was perfect for us."

"You had a third and didn't tell me about it. I feel the love. Thought we were besties that told each other everything," I teased.

"She didn't officially become our third until a few months ago, Elise, so don't feel left out yet," Yuen said.

I wasn't being too serious. They didn't have to tell me everything; it wasn't like we were doing the mattress tango, but knowing my best friend and his wife were out here living the life, while it felt like I was stuck in a stasis pod, didn't make me feel any better. It wasn't like I didn't enjoy life or I didn't want to go out there and have fun. I was out there, but not a lot during this last year. Dealing with Marquez took everything in me to come out somewhat unscathed. He was a foul storm that had almost drowned me. If it wasn't for Yuen, Jaz, and my brother, I honestly didn't think I would be here.

The man was seductive, but in the end, he turned out to be my personal brand of asshole that I couldn't get rid of for the life of me. Believe me, I tried. I tried so damn hard and could never get ahead. Marquez was a beautiful shiny apple on the outside, but rotten to the core on the inside.

When I first met him, I was mesmerized by him. Like the many women before me was and the plethora of women he was with while dating me as well. Charming. Sophisticated. Smart. Had a lot of good going for him. That was how he got me. After three months of us being official, that's when the lies rolled in. If it wasn't for Yuen, Jaz, and my brother, I honestly don't think I would have survived the earthquake that was Marquez. That demon of a man was just that bad. They were my personal life support and every day I was grateful for them.

"Hey, earth to Elise," Jaz's voice brought me back out of the dark cesspool I had fallen into. "Lock those thoughts of that person away. You got this, girl."

She was right. I apologized and told her so. I took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. Tonight was about wilding out fun. Something I haven't done in a long time. I was ready. More than ready. "Alright. Do I look fuckable?"

"Hell yeah!"

"I'm ready. Let's do this, and get our freaky on then."

Castien



“How many times have I warned you about this? That something like this would happen.” I brushed a hand over the lower half of my face. The start of a five o’clock shadow was making its appearance. Still, I had no plans to shave it. My brother sat there watching me with a look that said he didn’t care. He was going to do whatever however he wanted. No matter what my opinion on the matter was. “You can’t get caught up. We don’t need the feds on our asses.”

“I told you more than once, little brother, that I have the shit under control. Quit pissing your expensive pants over it. We will not get caught. Trust me, your facade will remain blemish free. And the Marconi’s will go down. Just like we planned.”

My brother sat there, lounging on my sofa with his legs wide opened. Arms rested on the back of the couch. Sebastian was dressed in leather pants, heavily buckled motorcycle

boots, a black t-shirt, and a leather jacket. He had a fresh razor cut fade with his dark brown hair combed over to the side. Bash looked like the proverbial rock star. Not one of the most dangerous crime lords who had his fingers dipped into everything imaginable that would earn him money.

I leaned against my desk with arms crossed over my chest. I didn't know why I was stressing like I was. Bash never let us down. I doubted he planned on starting now. Everything my brother did and everything I did was for the betterment of us both. For our true purpose.

Our vengeance.

“I know you do. I just have a lot of things going on.”

Bash chuckled. “Are your robots uprising yet?”

“It's not even like that.”

“Keep telling yourself that. I've seen those movies. Artificial Intelligence is nothing to play around with.”

I shook my head at his comments. He would never get it. “It's nothing like that, Bash.”

“Then what's wrong? I know something's bothering you.”

“I'm a little stressed, but nothing I can't handle. I got this meeting next week with Warner. Possible new venture for us.”

Bash frowned. “Don't trust that motherfucker, Castien. Something ain't right with him. I wish you would let me take him out.”

“Not everyone needs to be taken out. I know he’s a shady rat, but I’ll be fine. He’s our *in* for the last part of our plan to work against Aurelio. So, let me handle it.”

“Fine. I’m only agreeing because the last six months have been good for us. Especially after getting that information from the Jacobson kid. Things have been on the downside for the Marconi fam. From what I heard, courtesy of my people on the inside, there’s a lot of strife. Way too much fighting going on with each other in the Marconi family. Old man Aurelio Sr. isn’t doing too well. Jr. thinks he’s taking over and his twin is going to contest him for the position. Once old man Marconi bites the dust, the time will be ripe for us to clean house. But with that being said...” My brother unfolded himself from my couch and stood. We were both tall, but Bash maybe stood only an inch or two taller than me. I was a good six foot four or five, and he stood a full six foot five pushing six. “I know that look. What you need is a hard ride, little brother. I got some girls.”

“No,” I quickly said, shutting him off. My brother always had some girls. The kind who would do anything for him if it gave them a chance at him. Including getting the chance to have some fun with me, his single baby brother. Being one of the most eligible bachelors in Seattle, I didn’t have a shortage of women trying to get at me. I was just more selective about who I was with. Which gave me a reputation for being a hardass. Cold, and I didn’t care. I’d taken the moniker and ran with it. “I have a party to attend. I’ll find someone there.”

Bash shoved his hands into his front pockets of his leather jacket and stared at me. I didn't move under the scrutiny. "Still going to those kinky parties, I see. Surprised you haven't found someone to settle down with yet. You know, with the image you are trying to portray to others."

"No, not really one of those parties. It's a birthday party, but according to the invite, it's reminiscent of a bacchanalia. Who knows? I'll figure it once I get there," I said, not wanting to let him know who the party was for. "Not the usual 'kinky' parties, as you so like to call it. And I'll settle down whenever it's right. Now is not the time. If ever. Not really the settling down type. You know this."

Bash shrugged. "Whatever. It's all the same for me. Kinky parties. Marriage. It all involves a legally binding contract. That isn't me. You have fun with that shit."

"Don't act like you don't like those parties. I know the type of kinky shit you like to delve into."

"Which reminds me." Bash pulled out a card from his pocket. "I was intending to give this to you the other day."

I took the card from his fingers. It was all black, with a masquerade mask on it. Two words in elegant font underneath it. *Club Desire*. My brows rose as I stared at my brother. "What do you know of this place?"

My brother grinned his megawatt, Hollywood grin that had women dropping their panties left and right. "It's a great place. I have a membership. I use to frequent it on more than a few

occasions when I stayed in Chicago. You should visit. I plan on it soon.”

“I’ve been here before. It’s been a minute. Used to have a membership.”

“Perhaps you should restart it and go. Let out some steam. It’ll have you lax in no time.”

“Maybe...” I said, putting the card inside of my pocket. “I’ll keep the card. Thanks.”

“Anytime. Have fun at that party tonight. Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

“I plan on having lots of fun and doing things you wouldn’t dare do.” Which I did plan on. It’s been a long time since I’ve been on the scene. Work had a few problems that needed to be taken care of lately and soon as one problem was fixed, another would arise. I needed to decompress. Preferably underneath a beautiful woman with a wonderful mouth on her.

Bash walked to the door. He slowed just midway through the threshold before stopping and twisted around to look back at me. “Come see me tomorrow. We can let off some steam in the octagon. It’s been a while since I’ve kicked your ass into oblivion.”

“You wish,” I said, then thought about it. It would do me some good. “I have a few meetings, but yeah, I’ll come see you. I’ll call you when I’m done.”

“Good thing, bro. Later.”

After Bash left, I hurried and put all of my things away, then grabbed the keys from the edge of my desk. Bash had shown up as I was getting ready to leave. Looking at the time on my watch, I was already late, but I didn't care too much. These types of things lasted forever into the late hours of the morning. Nicole knew my time was valuable. She would be happy to see me, no matter what.

Castien



I was excited about coming to the party. Now that I was here, I'd rather be home. No longer in a partying mood, but I stayed because Nicole was a good friend and I'd promised I'd be here for a couple of hours. She knew me well enough to know I would have jumped ship fifteen minutes after being here. Also, unfortunately for me, and funny of her, she left a particular important detail out about her party.

I didn't know it was going to be an actual themed event.

I wasn't expecting to get fully body painted, either. Nor was I expecting to be wearing a mask, but that part was okay. I looked down at the piece of cloth covering my crown jewels. She really had me out here in a loincloth. If Bash saw the way I looked right now, he would never let me live this shit down. At least I had a mask on and was painted, making it harder for people to recognize who I was.

Seriously, what the hell was Nicole thinking?

The place was crowded, but I wasn't surprised. Her parties were always packed. No matter whether they were like this or one of her high society galas. I've been here for over an hour now, and was more than ready to go. I've watched and still have yet to find anyone and for whatever reason, that didn't bother me as much as I assumed it would.

Guess it wasn't happening for me tonight.

I found a corner and settled near one of the thick columns that wasn't lit up and leaned against it. Semi hidden away from everyone, but still able to see my surroundings. A server passed me by until I stopped them. "Is there anything stronger?" I asked, while still grabbing a filled flute from their tray.

"Unfortunately not, Sir."

I pushed the lower half of my mask slightly to the side and downed the glass and then grabbed another, replacing the empty one back onto the tray. "Thanks."

The server gave a quick nod before leaving me alone again with my thoughts and the drink that wasn't strong enough. I didn't understand what was going on. Normally, I would be out there enjoying the treats, but all it was doing was leaving an unpleasant taste in my mouth. I've had my fair share of women, but lately none have been able to satisfy me like I wanted. Like I craved and demanded. I was beginning to think my person wasn't out there. And that's when I realized

something was wrong with me. I never wanted my own person.

“Hey stranger,” a sugary sweet voice called out from the depths of the darkness behind me. “I’d recognize that tight backside from anywhere.”

I chuckled. “Nicole, why aren’t I’m surprised you recognized me even with a mask on?”

She came and stood next to me. “Like I said. I’d recognize that amazing ass from anywhere. It’s impressive. You should give me workout tips on how to get mine that tight and perky.”

“Come by the gym anytime. You know Bash would love to show you.”

“Aht, aht. I’m not going down that road with him again.”

Nicole and Bash had a thing off and on for the last couple of years. I didn’t think either of them would ever settle down. I’d be surprised if it happened for either my brother or her. They were identical, just in male and female form. They clashed, but from what they told me, they were explosive in the bedroom. I’d stopped them both from going into details. Knowing the exact details about my brother like that wasn’t my forte.

“Good. You two are volatile.”

“Explosive... I know,” she said, with a dreamy smile on her face. No doubt reminiscing about her times with him. “Are you enjoying yourself?”

“It’s not bad. I won’t be much longer,” I told her. “Apparently, the mood hasn’t hit tonight.”

“Hmm... there’s something out there for everyone.” Nicole grinned. “Including you.”

“I doubt it.”

“You haven’t tasted any of the delicious and forbidden fruit I’ve invited?” She tsked. “So unlike you. Are you feeling okay?”

Staring at the sea of people in various play. “I’m fine. I’m just not hungry.”

“Well, you just may be if you leave this dark corner of yours. I’m sure there’s somebody out there you’ve never had before. I can think of a couple of women...”

With masks on, I wasn’t able to tell who was who, but I was pretty sure I hadn’t played with anyone here and didn’t want to. “That’s everybody in this room,” I said. Resigned to my decision. “I’m going to leave, Nicole. Unfortunately, the mood hasn’t hit.”

She shrugged. “I get it and appreciate you for coming. I got to see your pretty face for a hot second and your lovely backside. Even if it is covered underneath a loincloth.”

I crossed my arms against my chest. “Call me later this week and we’ll do lunch. I want to know where in the hell you got this crazy idea.”

“A scene from the Spartacus show sparked the idea. But of course I’ll call.” Nicole reached up, lifted the mask, and kissed my cheek. “I’ll see you later, Cas.”

I watched from my spot as Nicole left to go mingle with her guests. Finding the closest server, I gave them my still full glass, then trekked the path that would get me out of here without being stopped. I headed towards the stairs and almost had made it when I felt a heated presence. The type when you know you're being watched. Slowing my steps, eventually coming to a full stop, I stopped and quickly scanned the room. When I twisted around, not far away from me a woman was watching me. Hidden in the dark like I was earlier, but she was closer to the archway that led into the pool area, Even though she was in the dark, the dim lights from behind silhouetted her entire body, allowing me a seductive peek of her.

Unable to see her face, I still felt a pull towards her and was unsure why. The first thing I noticed about her was her shape. She was thick in all the right ways. Curves for miles along with a set of thick thighs that instantly created dirty images in my mind. I couldn't stop the perusal as my eyes traveled over her from head to toe. She definitely had mine and my cock's attention. All thoughts of leaving suddenly flew out of my head.

The woman wore her hair up. She hid her face behind a half mask. Her very kissable mouth curved upwards in a mischievous smile. She caught me ogling her, just as I caught her watching me. There was no hiding my interest. I was inexplicably drawn to her. My eyes slowly pored over the rest of her body again, and my cock appreciated what it saw. Ample natural breasts were on display, and it was something I didn't see very often. My legs had a mind of its own because I

was walking towards the temptress even though my mind was screaming at me to leave. Yeah, the wrong head was leading me down a path I was sure would be a hell of a good time.

I crossed the room quick as I could and circled the woman, getting my fill of looks. Her lips were begging for me to kiss them until they were swollen with desire. Her ass was just the right amount where I could grab and squeeze. Images of me shoving my cock deep inside of her from behind as she bounced back on it bombarded my mind. I never admitted to others I had a type, but physically she hit all the points on my list. Everything about her was natural. She was just like I liked my women, and I knew right then I was in trouble.

Behind her feathered and diamond mask were alluring eyes that had me wondering about the woman behind them. From her gaze alone, I knew she was intelligent, and that was just another notch on my list. Intelligence was sexy. “Are you liking what you’re seeing?” Her sultry voice sent pleasant chills down my spine.

“Are you liking what *you* are seeing?” I flipped the question around. “Go ahead and get an eyeful. Look all you want. There’s no shame in how I look.”

Her pink tongue slowly made an appearance and darted across those plump lips of hers. I’ve never been jealous of someone’s tongue, but here I was, jealous as fuck.

She tilted her head to the side. “Somebody is quite full of themselves.”

“Not really. I worked hard for my body. I don’t mind showing it off.”

“You definitely worked *hard* for it,” she said, as her eyes raked over me, stopping at the bulge covered by the loincloth. She was the reason I was hard as stone, being this close to her.

“Do I get your approval?” I asked, hoping I did. There was something about the woman that had me in a sudden choke hold. I yearned for her approval. Her acceptance. None of this was normal for me.

“I don’t know about all that. I don’t even know you like that.”

Needing to be closer to her, I took another small step towards the woman. My voice dropped lower. “We can change that.”

“I’m surprised you aren’t out there,” she waved a hand towards the rest of the room, ignoring my statement. “Playing with the others.”

“Didn’t find anyone I wanted to play with... until now.”

“Oh no, sir. I’m off limits.” She smiled, but it was full of mischief. “I’ve decided to be a good girl and just watch the fun.”

‘Sir’... fuck yes! Hearing it come from her had my dick hardening even more at the thought of her submission to me.

“How come?” I had to know. A creature like her normally would be out there having a good time, living it up. “Not your thing?”

“Oh, it’s my thing. I don’t know... I’m just not feeling it now that I’m here. Since I didn’t come here alone, I can’t just up and leave.”

My eyes narrowed, and I was glad that I had a mask on. The heat of sudden rage had a tight hold over me because of the thoughts of her being with someone else. I had no reason to be jealous, yet here I was. Irrationally, jealous. “Your man doesn’t want to leave?”

“Who says I have a man? Could have a woman, you know.”

I inched even closer, no longer unable to not being in her space. I needed to know more about her. “Do you have a name?”

The woman tilted her head a little way to look up at me. “Yes, I do.”

“Mind telling me what it is?”

“I do mind.”

My brows rose with surprise. I loved a challenge. “You’re not going to tell me, are you?”

She moved so close to me we were practically touching. Still looking up at me. “No, I’m not.”

Without thinking, I pushed my mask partially aside and went in for the kiss. It was hard and demanding. She stiffened at first but softened as she kissed me back, giving in. My tongue delved into her mouth, entwining with hers. I pulled her closer to me as our kiss deepened. Her arms wrapped around my waist like they were always meant to be there. My

hands explored her body before resting at the top of her ass, not worried at all about paint smearing. I was a greedy bastard as I kissed her like I was man starved all his life. Perhaps I was, and she was exactly what I was needing.

Excitement flooded my entire being. I felt so alive and could only imagine the possibilities between this woman and myself. After what felt like hours, she pulled away from me. Lust filled her eyes. She peeked around me as if she was searching for something. For someone. I glanced over my shoulders to see what she was staring at but found nothing but preoccupied people.

The woman's playful yet naughty smile was infectious. She grabbed my hand and tugged me towards the archway that led into the pool area. I said nothing as we moved further into the darkness. We stopped somewhere behind another pillar, and I couldn't restrain myself any longer. I needed her right then and now.

Our faces were inches apart. My hands were back on her as if they couldn't get enough. "You want this?" I asked. Even though we were at a party, I still took consent seriously.

"I do."

Two words. Two simple words were all I needed. I didn't know the woman's name, but I didn't care at the moment. She stood there and watched me as I fell to my knees. I reached up and curled my fingers under the bands of her panties and slid them down, baring to me unpainted smooth brown skin. I tapped her thighs, and she spread them wide for me, allowing

me a glimpse of her heated center. Before me was a perfectly trimmed pussy that called out to me.

I lifted her left leg and placed it over my right shoulder. She leaned back against the column that was keeping us hidden. Her pussy wept for me, and I couldn't wait to dive into it.

“Are you sure?” I asked one last time.

“Will you lick it already?”

I chuckled at her slight demand. I'll let her win this round. Next time, she wouldn't be demanding. She would be begging. Over and over again.

I leaned forward and kissed her soft thighs. All around her mons. Her breath hitched as I made my way to the golden center. I took my fingers and spread her pink lips apart and slid the flat of my tongue between them, tasting her sweet heat. She moaned at my touch. The woman was soaked and ready. I inserted one finger, then a second, and worked her over, brushing over the sensitive spot that had her squirming.

From the ground, I looked up and watched as she rode my hand as I finger fucked her. From behind her mask, she closed her eyes as she took her pleasure with wild abandon. Watching her turned me on so bad. I was so stiff it hurt. My cock strained against the piece of cloth as I watched this mysterious woman take what I was giving her.

“Shit,” she moaned in a whisper. “I'm about to come.”

“Not yet...” I told her. I wanted to taste her again. Before attaching my mouth to her delectable pearl, I licked her slit

again. I kept scissoring my fingers inside of her as I sucked and gently nibbled on her like it was the last thing I would ever do. Her walls clamped down on my fingers and I knew she wouldn't last much longer. She fisted my hair when I hit that spot and shoved my face further into her sacred space. When I knew she couldn't hold on any longer, I came up for air long enough she so she could hear me.

“Come, now!” I commanded from my knees. Her hips ground against my face as waves of tremors shook her body. Her soft whimpers had my dick so hard it was hurting for a release.

Her sweet nectar gushed out, and I lapped it all up, not wanting to miss a drop. And when I couldn't take it anymore, I quickly stood. I had an almost primal need to be inside of her. Feel her as she took all of me. Feel her contract against my dick as she came. She reached inside of my cloth and with soft hands, the woman pulled out my cock and guided me to her entrance, smearing the leaking precum all over the head of my cock. My patience was thin as she brushed the head of my dick over her slit. Taking control of my shaft, I took her mouth hard as I shoved my cock inside of her channel.

Her moans and delicious gasps spurred me on.

“So tight and warm,” I groaned, before pulling out and slamming back inside of her.

She panted as I pushed in and out. First starting out slowly, then our rhythm picked up speed. I kept her on edge as our bodies worked in sync. I didn't want this moment to end. It

felt like I was floating as she wrapped her legs around my waist, allowing me deeper access. Our skin slapped against each other as I chased my release. I held her up, the pillar supporting her. She grabbed my ass and squeezed before she shook and came all over my cock. I could feel her juices as they rained down on my dick. Something about it set me off. Whatever this was between us was raw and primal. There was something about this woman that I couldn't quite piece together yet. Before I knew it, I growled in her ear as my orgasm hit me so hard. My eyes rolled back in my head as I quickly pulled out and blew my load all over her pretty tight pussy and belly.

“Damn,” she whispered in between huffs. Still shaking in my arms. “It’s been too long since I’ve come like that.”

In between breaths, I asked. “How long?”

“A long ass time.” She reached down and grabbed my cock, then squeezed, eliciting another moan from me. Instantly hard again. “Ooh, you could go another round.”

I glanced down. With her, I knew I could go plenty more rounds. My stamina was the stuff of legends. “I can.”

“Perhaps another time.” She picked up her panties, then looked around. We both spotted the towel rack and headed for it. I grabbed one before she did and wiped off her belly. “Thank you.”

“No, thank you,” I answered. “Will you tell me your name now?”

She canted her head to the side as she looked me up and down, then she smirked. “I don’t think so.”

Surprised she wouldn’t tell me her name. I didn’t ask why. There could be many reasons she wouldn’t tell me her name, and honestly, me being who I am kind of agreed. Something about her was different. She was already defying everything, and I knew this moment wasn’t enough. She was addicting.

“I’ll respect that,” I said to her, but secretly began to plot how to find out who she was.

The woman reached up, cupped my face, and kissed me once more before replacing the mask to cover the lower half of my face. “Good. Perhaps someday we’ll meet again. If we recognize each other, then we can exchange names.”

I’ve always loved a challenge, and this was one I had planned on overcoming. I would do whatever to find out who she was because I had to. “Deal.”

The woman reached up and kissed the crook of my neck before leaving me standing there blindsided by what just happened. *Damn!*

I couldn’t help but watch and follow as she waltzed out of the pool area and into the crowd. Not liking the weird thoughts of not seeing her again ruin the moment, I tried to replace the darkened thoughts with lighter ones. Letting the memory of her mouth and curves burn into my memory. I moved next to the pillar where I first saw her. When she stopped next to Nicole and two others, I was surprised she knew my friend. Nicole looked in the direction I was in and winked. I already

knew we were going to have a conversation later. I needed to know who the woman was.

Elise Anais



It wasn't hard to recognize Yuen and Jaz standing next to Nicole. I rushed towards my friends, getting far away from the man who just fucked me out of this world with his fingers, mouth, and his sizable dick that could become habit-forming. I had to calm my damn hormones down. Giving him my name would have opened doors I wasn't ready to walk through just yet.

All I could think about was his soft lips. A contrast to the hard, cut body underneath my fingers as I had explored him. Although I couldn't see his face, everything else about him had my body in turmoil. It had been entirely too long since anyone kissed me like that. I didn't want to leave him. I wanted more. So much more. That was reason number two for why I couldn't give him my name. Men like that were trouble. I was a magnet for trouble, and I refused to get caught up again. Dealing with Marquez was enough.

“Have fun?” Yuen asked as we were walking back to the vehicle.

Jaz was curled up under his arms, wearing a big, satisfied grin on her face. Yuen seemed more relaxed than ever. I shivered a little as I pulled my coat tighter. I was freezing. Nicole had let us clean off the body paint before we left the party. The warm shower was just what I needed, but as we walked outside, I rethought on everything. My skin was still damp, and it wasn't just from the shower. I could catch a cold and mentally chastised myself for sounding like an old person. I laughed at myself, finally remembering Yuen's question. “Yes, I've enjoyed myself.”

“Good. Did you find anybody?”

“Meh. Nobody to talk about it,” I said, wanting to change subjects. I didn't even know how to bring up *Mr. I Got That Good Good Devil Dick*. “Thanks for the evening. Tonight, was well needed.”

“Yeah, it was. Now we can tackle this week very relaxed and clearheaded.”

The thought of meeting with Michael's people on Tuesday gave me a foul taste in my mouth. “Why ruin a great evening? We still have two days before that. Let me enjoy this peaceful time, friend.”

“Yeah, Yuen. You promised no work talk tonight, babe.”

“Listen to the wife, bestie. She's a smart woman. I'd bet on her all the time.”

Yuen looked at me, surprised. “I thought we were ‘ride or die’, Elise.”

My hands rose in defense. “Fine. I’d bet on Jaz um... let’s say ninety percent of the time.”

“Much better.” Yuen started the car from where we were. Once inside, the car was already warm. It took little to lull me to sleep as we got on the road. Next thing I knew, he and Jaz were calling out my name when we reached my house.

“Thanks again, you two. I’ll talk to you on Monday, Yuen.”

I rushed out of the car and hurried inside. Exhausted, I couldn’t wait until I got into the soft comfort of my bed while reminiscing about every single thing the roman delight did to me by the pool.



I tried very hard to ignore the dancing and buzzing of my cell phone on the nightstand next to my bed. It eventually stopped. The work week and the party the night before had me mentally and physically drained. All I wanted to do today was relax and do nothing. Maybe watch some cheesy holiday chick flicks on the T.V. but someone didn’t want to let that be.

I opened my eyes, one by one, to a darkened room. At first, I panicked, but realized my blackout curtains were still pulled together. *One of these days, I wouldn’t forget about those damn curtains.* They always had my nerves all over the place whenever I woke up from a good sleep. Not wanting to deal

with the world, I crashed back into my bed. Ignoring the incessant buzzing of my phone.

The moment I closed my eyes, the doorbell started ringing. It was as if someone pressed it and refused to let go.

“What the fuck...”

Then the banging on my front door joined in like it was some damn musical called “*Wake Elise Up Day*”.

I hopped out of bed and stalked towards the bedroom door, grabbed my favorite spa robe, and wrapped myself up in it. It didn't take me long to make my way downstairs and through the house to reach the front door. Beyond aggravated and irritated, I yanked the door open and froze immediately in my spot. I had fixed my mouth to yell, but no words came out.

“Good to see you too, babe.” His voice sent unwanted tingles down my spine, and I hated the fact it still did that to me after everything he'd done to me. He stood there, eyes twinkled with amusement and hands in his pockets, looking all nonchalant. Like this was a normal thing for him. “Can I come in?”

“Hell no!” I stared at Marquez as he ignored my answer and stepped into my house, anyway. The man was six foot four with broad shoulders and trim hips. The definition of athletic, yet he stood there in a fitted suit like he was on his way to church or something. His eyes raked over me, and that cocky grin of his made its appearance that caused the dimples I loved to show up. My body reacted, and I had to remind myself of

every single thing this asshole did to me. My mind was raging a storm and my kitty still had a thing for this jerk. *Traitor.*

“You look good, Elise.”

Defeated. There was no fighting him. Not when I was dogged ass tired from the night before. *And a delicious night it was.* When Marquez was in a mood, he would always get his way. No matter what others thought. Guess the world said it was time to stop ignoring him. Only it happened when everything was looking good for me. I scowled. “What do you want?”

“I came to talk. I miss you.”

“We have nothing to talk about, Marquez. In fact, I am all talked out because *we* have talked enough.”

“Elise, come on. I apologized for everything. I was wrong. So very wrong. Me and you, babe, we’re a team.” Marquez placed his hands on my upper arms and stared down into my eyes. Those same eyes I used to get lost in. Not anymore. If I had a knife, I’d like to think I would have stabbed him. “We are meant to be together in all things. Life, love, and work. It took me too long to figure this out, but I eventually realized it. I want to make right by us. I don’t want either me or you to miss out on us.”

My mouth gaped open and internally, I cringed. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. The entire time we were together, this was what I wanted from him. When we dated, it felt like we were destined for greater and that we were on the right path to that goal. Except he couldn’t keep his dick in his pants

when it mattered. We had a closed relationship, and he still didn't give a care. He knew about "the lifestyle" I enjoyed but gave up for him. I put on hold what I enjoyed because he wasn't part of that life, and he didn't like sharing me.

I thought we could make it work. I was faithful. Marquez... not so much. He thought it was perfectly okay for him to share himself with the likes of "*Brenda, LaTisha, Linda, Felicia, Dawn, LeShaun, Ines, and Alicia,*" as DMX rapped about in his song. I mean, not that many, but I discovered about two extras and one of them was named Alicia. Either way, it was two too many. It was a nasty breakup. It had hurt so badly. Not physically, but damn the emotional pain cut deep. I believed he was my everything to only find out that I was dumb and naïve. I thought I loved the man to only find out that he took my love and trampled all over it.

It will never, ever happen to me again.

I've learned my lesson.

"NO! NO! NO!" I shouted. I shoved him off of me. He looked dejected, but I didn't care and ignored his deceitful face. I placed a hand on my hip and the other poked him in the chest. "You don't get to come in here and say all this now, Marquez. Not after all the crap you put me through. Put us through. It's too late. I want nothing to do with you."

He grabbed my hand from his chest and held it. "It's never too late with love. Love wins always."

What type of corny shit was he about? I snatched my hand back and paced in my spot. There was no way I was going to

stand here and listen to his sweet lies. He was a deceitful man. I could feel his eyes on me, watching my every move. There had to be another reason he was here. Why he popped up out of nowhere to disturb my precious peace. I stopped in my tracks and turned my gaze on him. Marquez Jacobson didn't do things without reason and ulterior motives. "Why are you really here?"

A flash of irritation was there in his face and gone just as quick as it came. See, this was the man I knew and understood too well.

"It's not like that, Elise. Baby, I am here for us."

"When hell freezes over, you are. Marquez, you are selfish and only care about your own welfare. You don't give a damn about me or else you wouldn't have done what you did. Ruining any chance of us getting back together."

"Again, it's not like that, Elise."

I stepped away from him and pointed to the door. "Out. OUT!"

He regarded me angrily, then sneered. His entire demeanor changed in an instant. He was always hot and cold. Especially near the end. Most days it was scary, but I couldn't let on that it frightened me. He would have taken that piece of knowledge and ran with it.

"See, that's the Marquez I know and remember. Don't come back around here unless you call first."

The veins around his temples bulged out. That was how I knew Marquez was angry for sure, yet I didn't care. Not anymore. He stepped into my face, pulled an envelope out of his jacket pocket, and shoved it into my hands. "If you pick up your fucking phone, then maybe you'll know I called before I came knocking on your door. I won't stand here and kiss your ass. Read the documents inside, then call me. Or not. It's up to you."

I watched the man I used to love, who still had my head twisted up no matter how much I didn't want to admit it, walk out my front door. A chilly breeze came in and I shivered before closing the door with a resounding slam. Then locked the deadbolt. The sealed envelope in my hand felt heavy. Not physically, but for sure mentally. I didn't know what all that sweet talk was about, but knowing Marquez Jacobson, it wasn't something I should take lightly.

"Fuck! If it's not one thing, it's another."

Elise Anais



It's been two days since Marquez dropped by my house unexpectedly. There were photos and documents in the envelope he left with me. I couldn't stop staring at them. Yuen wasn't going to like what I had to show him, knowing I should've called him the moment I got the package. I looked over the photos once again. Marquez was an asshole of the highest caliber. The move he pulled proved it.

The letter included with the photos was an offer. Marquez wanted ownership of the company. He wanted majority ownership, even though it was Yuen and I who started Icarus Game Studios long before I even met Marquez.

During a time when I thought we were going to be together forever, and yes, I knew it was naïve of me; I suggested he become a part of the company. He had the knowledge, the schooling, and the connections to help us in the beginning. It

hurt when he declined, saying it was too high of a risk for him and his investment firm.

Now this giant ‘man baby’ thought he could come into my house and drop this into my lap.

“What the hell?” I mumbled under my breath.

“What’s wrong?” Yuen said as he strolled through my office door.

So lost in my problems, I didn’t even realize he was there. Yuen dropped down on my couch and propped his feet on the small ottoman in front of him. I didn’t know how to break the recent development to him.

I glanced at the screen on my phone and realized it was much later than I had expected it to be. I had come to work early because I was tired of being at home. Just in case Marquez dropped by unexpectedly again. I wasn’t ready to see that man any time soon. Or ever. Especially after this mess.

“A little of this and a little of that,” I said, still trying to figure out how to show and tell my best friend the unfortunate news. I shoved everything back into the envelope. “Not ready for the meeting. There’s no telling who Warner is bringing to bribe us into whatever he wants.”

“We’ll be alright. In the end, we have the final say. We will just go in there, keep an open mind, and listen to his people.”

“People?” I had a sinking feeling in my gut. Something wasn’t right. “I thought he was bringing just one new potential investor.”

“He was, now he’s bringing two. It’s fine, Elise.”

I shook my head. My mouth went dry. Heart rapidly beat out of sync. The room closed in on me and I couldn’t catch my breath. I squeezed my eyes shut and hoped this would go away. Instead... all I could think about was that this wasn’t really happening. It couldn’t be happening.

I felt Yuen’s hands before I realized he was by my side. My anchor in hard times.

“Breathe, Elise. Slow and steady.”

His voice was soothing. Controlled. I listened to his instructions and soon enough, my heartbeat wasn’t irregular anymore. My breathing eased back to being normal. I didn’t feel so enclosed. Everything was righting itself.

I lifted my head and wiped my face. “Thanks.”

“Anytime. You know I got you.”

“So you tell me all the time.”

“Damn right. Now what caused the panic attack? It’s been way too long since you’ve had one of those. I know it’s not about who Warner is bringing to the meeting. He’s just doing the same old crap he always does. We deal with it the best way we can. It’ll be alright. Something else brought this on. What is it?”

If only he knew.

My intuition never led me wrong, and I suspected we both knew one of the two investors Warner was bringing. There

was no way I could let Yuen go into the meeting unprepared. He needed to know what was happening and how high the stakes truly were. Needed to know about the possibility of a scandal. I took a deep breath, then exhaled while picking up the envelope and handed it to him.

Taking it cautiously, Yuen opened it while staring at me. “What’s this?”

“You’ll see.”

Although hard, I watched him as he went through the photos, then finally the reaction I expected as he skimmed over the papers. His jovial grin went to a full on frown, marring his normally relaxed face. “When did you get this?”

“He showed up at my house unexpectedly on Sunday afternoon. Banging on my front door like he was the damn police. Still asleep when he came, I didn’t look through the peephole or window like a normal person. I didn’t know it was him until I opened the door and he stood there. Didn’t give me time to slam the door in his face.”

“Damn it, Elise. You should have called me.”

“You live way too far and wouldn’t have made it in time. It was fine. I made him leave. He was there for all of five, maybe ten minutes.”

“Still, I would have known about this sooner instead of a few hours before the meeting.”

“Well, you know now. What are we going to do? Marquez can’t have ownership of this company. Those photos can’t be

leaked. I'm not ashamed of my lifestyle, but those aren't for the public eye. In fact, I don't know how he even got those. Isn't that illegal or something? Cameras aren't allowed at the parties."

"Yours aren't recent. Mine are. PR is going to have a fit if these get leaked. I mean... it could bring us both unwelcomed attention. I don't want to chance it. Also, you're right. Cameras aren't allowed at parties. I don't know how the fuck he got these."

"This is blackmail." I still couldn't believe he had these pictures of me. Suddenly, I wanted to wring his neck and squeeze until his head popped off. "I am going to talk to my brother about this. I refuse to give in to Marquez's demands."

Yuen rubbed his face. I noticed he was starting to let his facial fuzz grow. "You sure? I know your brother is into some deep stuff. Is it really that serious? Is it wise to get him involved?"

The look I gave my bestie shut him up quickly. "I should have gone to him a long time ago about Marquez. This situation doesn't sit right with my soul. I can see him possibly doing something scary if we don't comply. There's something else about this, and I guarantee that Michael Warner, with his creepy ass, has something to do with it. My brother will figure it out. Especially since he doesn't like either man, anyway."

"Well, let me know what he says. I'd go with you, but your brother scares me."

This time, I actually laughed out loud. I already knew this, but it was nice to hear him admit it. “I’m going to call, not meet up with him, but I will keep you updated.”

Yuen exhaled a sigh of relief. I changed the subject, and we sat there like old times and talked some more before he left to go do some work. Honestly, I was glad for the silence. Gave me time to think. I had work too, but I knew I wouldn’t be able to focus. Not with everything going on. It made me mad too, because I had totally forgotten about the heated moment I had at the party because my ex overshadowed everything.

“No time is better than the present.” I picked up my cell phone, found my brother’s number, and called him. Might as well get the ball rolling.

Castien



I arrived about fifteen minutes earlier than what Warner had said to arrive. *Of course, he wasn't here.* The woman sitting behind the desk batted her eyes and tried flirting when she told me the news. Unfortunately, there was no way I could get a tour of the place either while I waited. Upper management was all in a meeting.

I had to wait.

I didn't know how long I sat there, but it was longer than I wanted. Now and then, someone would walk by and stare, but their gaze didn't linger. I don't know what made me get there as early as I did. The more time passed, the angrier I got with myself and wanted to leave. Discipline kept me in my seat. I had to force myself to remember this was for the greater good.

The place was busier than I expected. In fact, the entire place was nothing like I had assumed it would be for a

company like this. The employees didn't dress in business attire. Everyone had on jeans and T-shirts. It was the opposite of my company at CXS Industries. The people wore genuine smiles as they came and went. I was genuinely surprised. The longer I sat there, the more I liked the atmosphere. The laid-back casualness of everything made me really want to learn more about Icarus Game Studios.

My people watching skills were being perfected until the glass double doors opened behind the secretary's desk. A beautiful woman came through them and stopped at the front desk. All thoughts of people watching went out the proverbial window. My thoughts were completely distracted, and I couldn't help but stare at her.

The woman stood there in a pair of form fitting denim jeans with designed stress tears across her thick thighs, a fitted black t-shirt with their company logo on it, and a pair of black high-top J's. The synopsis in my brain must have misfired because all I could do was stare. I tried not to, but damn, I couldn't help it. She had a shape that accentuated her goddess given curves. Those luscious legs of hers could go on for fucking days. The woman spoke animatedly with the secretary, but low enough I couldn't hear what was being said, who then pointed at me. The woman's gaze followed the secretary's finger, and I was struck still by how stunning she was. A goddess among women and yet there was something familiar about her I just couldn't place.

She smiled at me, but then went back to talking to the secretary. Soon after, she left us, going back through the glass

double doors, leaving me wondering who the hell she was.

“Who was that?” I asked the secretary without trying to sound too enthusiastic, although I could tell she didn’t buy it.

“That is one half of the founders of Icarus Games.”

Stunned. I don’t know why I assumed that two males created and founded the gaming company. Sexist. Maybe, but that’s just the way it was.

“Does she have a name?”

The secretary smiled. Mirth twinkled in her eyes. “She does.” I watched as the woman stood just as her desk phone rang. “Excuse me, Sir, I must take this call.”

The administrative assistant picked up the phone and answered. She spoke a few words before replacing the handset. She was busy doing other things, so I took out my phone and internet searched everything I could find out about the creators of the game company I wanted to suddenly invest in without knowing a damn thing about them.



“Castien, so glad you could join us today! Sorry I’m late.”

Warner walked towards me with another person at his side. I kept the frown inside when I recognized the man. He didn’t know me, but I surely knew him from my dealings on the other side of the track. Warner’s grin was predatory with all teeth bared as I stood up and took his offered hand and shook.

“No, thank you for thinking of me.”

“Anytime. Let me introduce you to my associate.” Warner turned to the man at his side. “Marquez Jacobson. This is Castien Armstrong. CEO of CXS Industries. He’s looking to diversify his portfolio. The same as you.”

I faked the pleasantries and shook his hand. What I really wanted to do was shove Jacobson’s face into the desk repeatedly. Wait until I talk with Bash, because he already said Warner shouldn’t have been trusted. He was right. I should’ve listened to him.

“I’ll give you a tour later. The meeting should have already started.”

“No worries.” I no longer cared about the tour. My gaze kept going back to Warner and Jacobson. I didn’t like where any of this was going.

We passed through the glass doors and down a long hall. The place was busy but laid back. There was so much going on around us, but it wasn’t the stifling kind. Eventually we came to a stop and Warner opened the door to a conference space with glass walls. Inside was a bunch of suits and the woman from earlier and a man beside her in jeans. I remembered from my google search that the man next to her was her partner. The other half of Icarus.

There were three empty spaces at the front of the table, completely opposite from where the woman sat. I kept sneaking a glance in her direction, unable to help myself. Drawn to her like a magnet. There was something about her that kept tugging at my mind, and I didn’t know why.

Warner introduced Marquez Jacobson first, and for a quick second, the woman frowned. So did her partner. *Interesting.* She caught me staring at her and the frown disappeared. I looked back at Jacobson and there was a pompous grin on his face while staring at her. It pissed me off. I didn't like the way his grin was so smug when he looked at her. I wanted to show him with my fist why he needed to keep his eyes off her, but I couldn't.

Not yet.

It was my turn to be introduced. I stood and greeted everyone. My eyes went back to the woman, and she stared at me strange. I didn't understand why until after she had spoken to ask me a few questions. The voice was oddly familiar and as she kept talking, my mind went on a deep dive until suddenly I knew why. My body was buzzing with excitement. This couldn't be happening.

Damn!

She was the woman from the party.

Holy shit. I found her! I'd remember that sexy voice from anywhere. Ever since that night, I couldn't get my mind off her. I tried speaking with Nicole, but she reminded me everyone signed NDAs and the person I was with didn't have to disclose their name. She even grinned, because she knew exactly who the woman was and thought it was funny that I got caught up like that.

Now... I just needed to figure out how I was going to get her to talk to me without scaring her away. I couldn't bring up

that night. Not like this. I had to be careful because this conversation wouldn't be suitable for work. There was no doubt in my mind I wasn't going to have her again. The crazy way I needed her submission assured me it was going to happen. I was hungry for her supplication. Craved to make her bend to my will and pull those sexy moans I enjoyed so much from her plump lips. I wanted to dominate that sexy body of hers like no one ever had before. She had a stubborn streak, and I wanted all that feisty stubbornness underneath me. I knew that from the night of the party. Even if it was just for one full night. No matter what, I needed it. That moment between us wasn't enough. It was just a taste.

Elise Anais



I knew I was right!

Knew I was right the moment he showed up at my house uninvited. Marquez was a thorn in my side, and I needed to figure out how to get rid of him permanently from my life. It took everything I had to stay levelheaded while Warner introduced him to everyone.

Yuen leaned over and whispered for me to stay calm and keep a smile on my face. I didn't want to, but I couldn't let on that something was wrong, so I did as he told me to.

My attention shifted when Warner introduced his other associate, Castien Armstrong. He was the man from the hallway who kept staring at me. He was overdressed for our place, but I always appreciated a handsome man in a tailored made suit that fit like a second skin.

I watched him stand up. The way his muscles moved underneath his clothes, there was something about him that seemed strangely familiar to me. I just couldn't place why or where. Mr. Armstrong spoke, introducing himself and telling us about his company. He had a nice, firm voice. Strong, but not what I was expecting. The rich, smoky depth of it had my mind wandering down a deliciously dark path. My eyes wandered to his mouth. He had kissable pouty lips, and as he continued to talk, my mind drifted off to the night of the party. The moment with the man by the pool was living rent free in my head. Talk about a perfect set of lips.

Mr. Armstrong's gaze never strayed away from mine as he talked. Lost to the sound of his voice, I followed the trail of a memory that kept tugging at my mind from the corner. Daydreaming, I sat there and visualized what Mr. Armstrong would look like with a mask on and naked. While that vision got stuck in my head, and he continued to speak, all the pieces were starting to make sense. They were falling into place. I stared harder, not caring if I looked crazy. I was so close to understanding, then, like a bright light, everything had dawned on me.

It was him!

I knew it like I knew my social. He was the man I refused to give my name to. The one I told him if we met each other and recognized the other for who they were, only then would I give up my name.

The universe and her fates thought they were being funny. They had mad jokes. A lot of them. As if my life couldn't get any more crazy.

I still couldn't believe it. At least they were on my side this time. It was rare to find good dick nowadays. But I couldn't go up to him and say 'Hey, remember me from the party?'. No, we had signed non-disclosures.

I wondered if he recognized me.

Probably not, but damn, was he fine as fuck! And that suit... whew. My kitty was already throbbing from the NSFW thoughts in my head. Now, I was even more curious about Castien Armstrong. Especially with the way he seemed to scowl whenever he looked in Marquez's direction. There must have been bad blood between them, and what was that saying? The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

"Do you know him?" Yuen leaned over and whispered.

"Who? Asshole or Mr. Sexy?"

"Definitely not the asshole."

"Well, in that case, I've never met him before." I didn't want to speak on my suspicions about the man who I thought was from the party.

"The way he has been eyeing you makes me think he knows you."

I smiled. Maybe he did recognize who I was. I still didn't plan on saying anything because I wanted to see how this

panned out. “I think I’d remember somebody like him. You know how long it’s been.”

“I can already see the wheels turning in your head,” he chuckled. “I can’t wait until I tell Jaz.”

I rolled my eyes in a playful banter. Yuen chuckled. “Whatever. Go tell your wife everything.”

Once the meeting was over, I rushed out of the room. I didn’t want to be anywhere near Marquez. I left Yuen to talk with the others and did a mad dash out of there to my office.

More pressing matters concerned me. I needed to call my brother. He made me promise to give him any news about Marquez after I spoke with him earlier. This was about as juicy as the news could get. I pulled the phone out of my front pocket and was getting ready to press the speed dial number to call him when I heard someone behind me. Cold creeps slithered across my skin. I came to a halt and turned around slowly.

“Why you run off like that, Elise?”

With a sense of trepidation, I rolled my eyes, not wanting him to know how much he unnerved me. I wasn’t ready to deal with him again. It was too soon from last time when he showed up uninvited to my house.

“This is my job. I have things to do,” I snapped back, hoping he would go away. “What do you want? I’m busy.”

Marquez shoved his hands in his pockets. His sneaky eyes stared me up and down, like he was appraising goods. “You

look wonderful, babe.”

Talk about being frustrated. I was not ready for his hot and cold moods. He was worse than a woman during that time of the month. “We are not going there. Me and you. *We* are done. *We* have been done. *We* are not starting up again.”

“You’ll see enough soon, Elise. We will never be done.” Marquez moved closer to me, where we stood face to face. Well, almost face to face. I had to look up at him since he was taller. He grabbed my upper arm and squeezed tightly. I winced at the sharp pain. “As long as I breathe, you will always be mine. No one else’s. What I say goes, goes. You just haven’t figured that out yet. But you will learn, or I’ll have to show you.”

A multitude of emotions hit me all at once. I was beyond angry and a little scared. This was the first time I had ever seen him like that. I didn’t know what in the hell had gotten into him, but this was not the business. Not here. Not right now at my place of work. I tried to wrestle myself out of his grip, but he only tightened it. “Where is all this coming from? Just out of nowhere. This isn’t like you. Or is this who you truly are, and I was just dumb as hell the entire time we were together?”

“Excuse me... Ms. Jones, may I have a word?”

That voice. The one that made me want to squeeze my thighs tight to ease the throbbing between them. The voice that had my lady parts weeping with joy. That delectable voice that had me ignoring Marquez and peeking around his shoulders to

find the man from earlier walking towards us. His face was a mask of indifference. I couldn't tell what was going on, but his eyes told a different story. And those angry, pissed off eyes were staring right at Marquez.

Did he hear how crazy Marquez spoke to me?

Speaking of the asshole, he kept his grip on my arms but twisted around to the disturbance. I tried to get out of his clutch, but it was like iron.

“If you don't mind, we're having a private conversation,” he snapped at the newcomer.

“The hall is a public space the last time I checked. Not the so private place you think it is to be having a private conversation.” Castien stopped directly in front of Marquez, then looked at me. “Besides, I was speaking to her. Not you, so yes, I do mind.”

Marquez let go of my arms and fully spun around to face the man that inadvertently came to my rescue. He stepped up to Mr. Armstrong, who was at least an inch or two taller and much more muscular, even though he was wearing a well-fitted suit. “I said we are busy. What do you want Armstrong?”

I was intrigued by how well Castien Armstrong kept his composure. The man stood there calm as ever, yet, in his eyes, there was nothing but pure rage. A dark storm of hatred, and it was all directed towards Marquez. I thought this was maybe the first time the two men had met each other, but something was telling me they already knew each other, and their feelings

were mutual about the dislike because it thickened the air all around us.

I took a tentative step backwards. Castien's gaze pinned me in my spot. There was so much unsaid in that look that I knew if I moved, I could really visualize him bending me over and giving me a spanking for disobeying him. When I stilled, not wanting to disobey the silent command, Castien smirked. I had a feeling he knew exactly what I was thinking or even thought about doing.

The heated blood in my veins pounded to the beat of my heart. It's been so long. Many days and nights, I secretly wondered if I would ever find the right one for me. I couldn't stop staring at the delicious looking man surrounded by a dark energy that called to me. There was a connection between us I couldn't explain. Could he be that one person I've longed for? Could Mr. Castien Armstrong, the cold-hearted playboy who was well known all around Seattle, be the one to set my body afire with the darkest delights?

If the night of the party had anything to say about it...

Of course, I thought he was handsome. I mean, what woman who was in their right mind didn't think he was handsome? I even knew some women loving women who thought he was handsome. Finding him on the covers of the magazines and news articles online wasn't hard. The gossips around the city kept his name in their mouths. He was everywhere, yet he wasn't. I didn't put two and two together until now. Me, figuring out the man was a *Dom*. Now that he stood there in

front of me, well, it was obvious as day and night. The way he moved. The alpha energy. He definitely had that B.D.E. for sure.

“I really don’t think what I have to say concerns you. As I have already made clear, I came to speak with Ms. Jones. Not you.” Castien’s voice was hard and unwilling to brook any dissent.

A charged buzz seemed to surround him. The man wasn’t just frigid. No, he exuded dangerous energy, too. The kind you didn’t want to come across when you were in a dark alley alone. There was something more about him. He had many layers, and I already knew we were only seeing just one or two of them. Marquez was way over his head. Armstrong wasn’t a man he wanted to mess with, no matter how much he probably thought he could. If I could see that, I knew his dumbass could. *Right?*

“Marquez... just let it go. I already told you we have nothing to discuss anymore.”

Marquez whipped his head around so quick it gave me whiplash just seeing it. “Bitch, if I said you could talk, then I’ll let you know if you can talk. Men are talking right now. You need to stay in your place.”

Nope.

He did not go there. I froze with my mouth wide open because it took me a few seconds too long to realize what he had just said. “I know you just didn’t—” I started, then stopped. In the blink of an eye, Castien Armstrong had

Marquez by the throat and had thrown him against the wall. He held him up and boxed him in. Castien's face was only inches away from Marquez. I was speechless. Maybe a little turned on by the sudden explosion of violence from Mr. Armstrong. Security was nowhere in sight. The halls were empty. I wanted to help, but a selfish part of me wanted to see how this all played out. I couldn't move and was transfixed by the scene that was manifesting directly in front of me.

Marquez's face was a mask of dark rage, but when I glanced at Castien; his face was blank. Nothing was there. One could even mistake it for disdain. It was scarier than I've ever seen before on anyone.

"You don't disrespect a woman in my presence. I don't care who she is to you. Ever since I was a boy, the men in my family taught me we, as men, respected women, and you will do so while I am around. Apologize to her unless I have to make you," Castien said in a calm and collected voice that said more about the danger that Marquez was in than he realized.

Marquez was a stubborn man, but whatever tension that was brewing between him and Armstrong, his self-preservation for life kicked in. Because I had the strangest feeling that Armstrong meant business. Still caught up by the neck, he couldn't move, but Marquez's eyes cut to mine.

"Listen, I'm sorry, baby. You know how I get when I get stressed. Will you forgive me?"

Castien studied me. His eyes narrowed, as if he was trying to understand what was really going on between me and

Marquez. He gave me a look that said, “*Really?*” If he only knew. Then again, I wouldn’t be surprised if he knew already.

I shifted on my feet and crossed my arms against my chest. There was no need to think about anything. I was done talking with Marquez. “I have nothing to say to you, Marquez. Just... leave me alone.”

“You heard the lady.” Castien let Marquez go, then adjusted his suit lapels as my ex slid to the floor, catching himself before falling over. “Get out of here before you piss me off even more. Trust me... you don’t want that.”

I watched with a perverse and utter fascination. Castien’s words sent a prickle down my spine and the way his voice dropped with those last few words. Hell, even I didn’t want to disappoint the man.

“Alright man. I hear you. I’m out,” Marquez said with a frown. He kept his word. He looked back at me once more, like he wanted to say something else. I knew he wasn’t done with me. He was a man on a mission, and unfortunately, he would be back around.

After my asshole of an ex left, the heated energy that seemed to surround Castien found its way towards me. The full blast of it kind of knocked me off balance, and I quickly had to get myself together. His razor sharp focus as he looked me over had me wanting to cover up and hide from his hard gaze. I felt so exposed and seen. Yet, it also called to my need to do whatever this man wanted me to do.

The silence between us was thick. Somehow, I had to get far away from him. I had a feeling he was trouble. Instinctively, I knew he was trouble. What I needed to do was figure out if it was the good kind or the bad kind.

“Ms. Jones. I really think we should talk.”

I heard him, but all I could hear was the roaring in my ears. The yearning that was pooling between my legs had my mind in a completely different world.

Shit. Shit. Shit.

I cleared my throat and tried to exude a calm that wasn't there. “Yes, sure. Right this way.”

We weren't that far from my office, and I was glad about that. I needed to sit down and get as far away from this man as I could. Somehow, I didn't think being alone with him in my office would do the trick. There was no need to look back behind me. I knew without a doubt that Castien Armstrong watched me like a hawk. I felt his penetrating heated gaze.

Castien



I kept a few steps behind Elise. I didn't know where we were headed, but the view from where I was, well, it was magnificent. I wasn't going to complain. The night of the party played over in my mind as she guided me through the halls. Memories being played out in my mind, remembering those soft curves and how they were perfectly made for me. Although she was clothed, I still could picture her naked and quivering underneath my hands and tongue. No one had to tell me it was going to happen again. That was a given. Now that I knew who she was.

As we turned the corner and went down another hall, a man and a woman stopped her. The woman discreetly kept staring at me, but I ignored her. My attention was on the man who had nothing but eyes on Elise. I almost laughed out loud because the sight would have been comical if it wasn't for my sudden thoughts of violence. He reminded me of one of those cartoon

wolves with bugged out eyes when coming across somebody attractive and all I wanted to do was bash his head in against the wall. For daring to look at her in my presence.

Calm down, Cas. She's not yours yet to be so possessive.

His smile was too charming. I detected a bit of flirtation with the way he handled himself. She didn't see it. No, Elise was totally in her element by being engrossed with work, but I didn't miss a thing. I politely inched closer to her so she would know my presence was there, but still out of the way to not disturb her and allowed her the courtesy of authority in her domain. I moved closer so *he* would know she belonged to me, even if she didn't know it yet. I didn't like sharing my things, and I was a possessive motherfucker when it came to my woman. When I have her in my dark room, and she will be there, then Elise would recognize that it would always be me who held and controlled her chains.

Snippets of their conversation were about some programming problems, and she promised she would look at it after her next meeting. Listening to her talk techie speak was making my dick hard. Never thought that would be sexy, but here we were. A lot of firsts for me. The conversation finished up quickly, and she glanced back my way and said to follow her. We went further down the hall that opened into an enormous open square-like space. Large T.V.'s were mounted and there was a crowd of people sitting on bean bags, gaming chairs, and the floor. All of them were dead set on the televisions, playing some game.

I didn't realize I had slowed down, but it fascinated me with how the work environment here was so laid back and relaxed.

“They're playing our newest baby on the T.V to the left. That one over there, in the right corner, they're testing a new one we have in the works. If there is anything wrong, these teams will find it.”

“Is that all they do? Play video games and get paid to do it?”

She smiled. “Yes. It's a fun job and they love it. Some of them are interns, but a few of them are entry-level workers. They want to move up, so they start here. Haven't had a complaint yet.”

“I wouldn't think so. Most college-age kids would love a job like this.”

“You would be surprised. Not only college-age kids like to play video games, Mr. Armstrong.”

“Castien. Call me Castien.”

Her eyes twinkled with playful mirth. “Alright then. Castien.”

“Much better.” Mr. Armstrong coming from her was not suitable for work. Not with the way my mind was thinking.

“My office is right here.” Elise pointed to her left.

From the outside it was nondescript, but once inside, I was surprised. The office space was much larger than I had expected. Floor to ceiling windows lined one wall, allowing in just the right amount of natural light. The view was amazing. I

could see the water from there. An extremely soft looking dark leather couch was parallel against the other wall. Shelves with tiny trinkets and a few books filled the space behind it. Posters from multiple fandoms hung on the wall as well. On the floor were perfectly placed LED lights that transitioned from multi colors, as it illuminated a path. Overall, it was cozy and not what I was expecting from someone of her position. Then again... this was a video game company.

My eyes went back to the sofa and thoughts of having her bent over the arms of the couch popped into my head until I pushed it back. There was also an ottoman and a glass coffee table that accented the décor in the center of the office. She had a large mahogany desk with double monitors and that's where she stopped. Directly in front of it, then she leaned back onto the desk and faced me.

“You said you needed to speak with me.”

She was straight to the point. I could be as well, and closed the door behind me. “Yes.”

Those same eyes that found me at the party focused on me as I stalked towards her. I stopped directly in front of her, invading her space. I wasn't going to make this easy. She needed to know it was I who was in control. Even though my control was slowly slipping away, being this near to her. The scent of her, both floral and earthy, spicy combined into one, did things to me, and I wasn't sure why.

Elise leaned back and looked up at me. She gave me a knowing half smile. “Mind giving me some space... Castien.”

I laughed quietly but did as she ask. “As you wish.”

“Thank you.” She almost sounded relieved, because I saw in that small instance how much I affected her. “Now, what was it you wanted to discuss?”

“Who is he to you?”

“Excuse me?” Her right brow lifted, silently asking what did I mean or care.

I don’t know why, but I cared a lot. If she was messing around with Marquez Jacobson, then I really needed to look into her background. Could I trust her? Was she on Marconi’s payroll, too? “Who is Jacobson to you? Is he your little boyfriend?”

Elise stood up straighter. “I really don’t think who *he* is to me is any of your business, Mr. Armstrong, but I’ll give you this since you were the one from stopping him getting too handsy with me.”

“It’s Castien. Not Mr. Armstrong. Not yet, and I won’t tell you again.”

She looked taken aback, but said nothing. I was already on edge being so close to that asshole, but him putting his hands on Elise was the final straw. He already had it coming, but him trying to manhandle her. Well, I was going to be more than glad to be the one to show him how to be manhandled.

“No, Marquez is not my *little* boyfriend. He’s an ex ‘man-baby’ that thinks he still has a say in my life. He fucked that up the moment I came to find him in our bed with two other

women. Needless to say, he hasn't been a factor in my life for almost a year now."

"I see." I didn't like the fact that he was with her, but that was in the past and in the past is where he will stay. "Next time he places a hand on you and speaks to you disrespectfully, I will break his hand. Smash his mouth. Whichever suits my mood at that moment."

Elise laughed. She didn't believe me. It was written all over her face, but I was serious. "You'll learn one of these days that I mean what I say and say what I mean."

"No doubt..." she said softly, then shifted on her feet. The way her eyes kept darting all over the room before returning to me made me think she was perhaps nervous.

"Are you alright?"

"Yeah, I'm good." She glanced at the couch, then back at me. "Why don't you take a seat, and we can discuss whatever you're wanting to talk about. I have a few other meetings to get to, so my time is running a little short. I apologize."

"I understand being in a time crunch. You took the time to meet with me. I appreciate that." I moved backwards and eased onto the couch, then crossed my legs, never once not looking away from her.

How did I want to do this?

I couldn't keep my eyes off her. The woman was beautiful. Her smooth, dark mahogany skin glistened as if she was a goddess. If it was Bash sitting here next to me... he would say,

just spit it out. So, I followed my brother's phantom advice. "It was you. The night of Nicole's party."

Her eyes widened at the proclamation. She was already trying to find a way to deny the truth. But it wasn't going to happen. She knew I had her and there was no lying to me. "There's no need to deny it. I wasn't sure at first when I saw you while waiting in the reception area. The moment you walked away, I got a glimpse of you, and those dangerous curves and legs of yours couldn't be ignored or forgotten. During the meeting it was your eyes. The way you looked at me, I was one hundred percent certain it was you. It was the same look you had at the party. The same look you're giving me now. It calls to me. Only I can answer it. When you spoke, I knew I had found you."

She stood there, silenced. The wheels in her head were turning hard, trying to find a way out of this conversation, but I wasn't going to let her get away so easily. "I remember you saying if we were to meet in the real world and if we recognized each other, we would exchange names." I unfolded myself from the couch, stalked towards her and invaded her space. Her breath hitched at our closeness. Her eyes darkened with lust. She exhaled a shuddered breath after her body shivered. The air around us was super charged with sexual energy. I lifted my hands and let my fingers follow the soft contours of the side of her face. Her chest heaved up and down as I reached her throat and rested my grip at the base.

I lowered my voice. "Allow me to officially introduce myself. My name is Castien Xander Armstrong. For now, you

can call me Castien or even X. Eventually, you will call me *Sir*.”

Elise licked her lips. I grabbed her chin and pulled her to me. My mouth crashed against hers. She didn't resist. In fact, she yielded and kissed me back, allowing my tongue access. Elise's mouth was soft underneath mine and her soft whimpers made my dick grow that much harder. She tasted like the sweetest honey. I couldn't get enough, but I restrained myself and let go.

“Have dinner with me. Tonight, at eight. We can finish the conversation then. Since you're at work.”

Within seconds, she got herself together and composed herself in a manner that had me amused.

“I'm busy tonight and tomorrow.”

“What do you have to do that doesn't involve food?”

“Not that it's any of your concern, but I plan on having dinner. Just not with you. Not tonight, nor tomorrow. Ask me again later this week and I may be able to fit you on my calendar.”

There was a knock on the door and her partner, David Yuen, peeked his head through the crack. He eyed me, then back to her, and I caught the subtle smile he sent her way.

“We're ready whenever you are.”

“Thanks Yuen. I'll be right out. We're finishing up here, anyway.” She looked at me. A challenge. “Aren't we, Mr. Armstrong?”

I grinned, accepting it. “Yes, we are, Ms...”

I heard the man’s chuckle as he closed the door to the room, leaving us alone.

“Ms. Elise Anais Jones, but you can call me Ms. Jones until I say otherwise.”

My grin only spread wider. “I’ll ask again later this week. Ms. Jones.”

Elise Anais



After the meeting on Tuesday, the week dragged on. But it was finally Friday, and I was looking forward to going home and relaxing in my hot tub with a glass or two of red. I was exhausted. I even thought to make myself a massage appointment at the newly opened luxury spa that has been the rave among my friends and Jaz. Mainly because my muscles were achy, but also, it was because I could've used the stress relief. I blamed the winter weather and old age, even if I wasn't old. Sadly, time slipped by and I didn't make the appointment, but I'd made dang sure to make one for next week.

The door to my office opened and Yuen walked in. "You're not packing up yet to head home?"

"I was about to. My jacuzzi is calling my name. Along with that bottle of red Jaz gave me."

Yuen smiled at the mention of his wife. I absolutely loved those two and how they didn't care what others thought when it came to them and their relationship. They loved each other hard, and I often wondered if I would ever find my person who made me grin just at the mention of their name.

“You'll find them, Elise. Don't give up,” Yuen said.

My brows furrowed at the center of my forehead. Yuen always had some weird way of knowing what I was thinking without me saying anything. “What are you talking about?”

He came all the way into my office. “You'll find your person. Asshole wasn't it, no matter how much you wanted him to be.”

I didn't want to talk about that giant man-baby. After he got manhandled by Castien the other day, he had been calling my phone, leaving nasty messages, and I swore every so often, I saw him following me around in his car. Eventually, I had to block him on my phone. I've been more hyperaware of my surroundings. I didn't know what to do, and I didn't dare bring it to Yuen's attention. What I needed to do was call my brother again, but if I did that, I already knew Marquez would end up dead somewhere. Hell, he hasn't been right ever since they found his baby brother dead with a bullet in his head and the letter E carved into his chest.

“Yeah, I'm in no rush. It'll happen when I least expect it to. Until then, I am going to enjoy life, travel, come up with new awesome games with my best guy friend and then play them. Let them make us a crap load of money.”

“I’m okay with this supposed to be a job making us a lot of money!” Yuen said. He leaned against the doorjamb. “Hurry and get your stuff together. We can leave at the same time. Maybe you can tell me all about Mr. Armstrong.”

“Ugh, really Yuen?”

“You weren’t getting off that easy, Elise.” My bestie wore a smirk, and I realized he was right. I gave him the look, but he wasn’t to be deterred. At least he gave me a few days before he approached the subject of that fine as wine man.

“Fine.” I had noticed he had his messenger bag already around his upper body. All my stuff was pretty much put up. I turned my computers off and locked my desk. Grabbed my bag, keys, and phone. “Okay, I’m ready.”

We talked like old times as we left the building and headed down to the parking garage. I even told him about Mr. Armstrong and my first encounter with him. He asked a dozen of questions, but I deflected as much as I could. There were some things my best friend didn’t need to know. Yuen talked about him and Jaz going to see her family over the weekend down in Portland, Oregon, which was where she was from. He was excited because he loved her family just as much as he loved her and his own family. He said they were going to do some holiday shopping before heading back home. We were laughing at some joke he had just told me when I looked away from him and stopped in my tracks.

“Are you alright?” Yuen asked, looking back at me before his eyes followed where mine was staring at. He took a step

closer to me. “What do you want?” The question was directed at the man watching us.

Marquez sneered at him before taking a few steps our way. “I’m here for my woman. Not you, Yuen.”

My best friend took a step in front of me and pushed me behind him. Yuen looked unassuming and nerd like, but I knew better. He was a black belt in Tae Kwon Do, and a brown belt in Kickboxing, yet I didn’t know to what degree. He knew some other stuff, too, but I couldn’t remember. Either way, nobody wanted to mess with him and that meant nobody as in Marquez.

The ex stared down my best friend before taking a tentative step backwards. “I just came to talk, Elise. I miss you, babe.”

“You should have thought of that before you had two women laid up with you in her bed. If I were you, I’d get the hell out of here before I kick your ass.”

I touched my friend’s shoulder. “Yuen... don’t.”

“You probably should listen to her if I was you, Yuen,” Marquez taunted.

“I’m being nice and trying to save your ass, Marquez. Now get out of here.”

“Listen here...” he started when a sleek black Aston Martin DB11 sped into the area we were and sharply hit the brakes before coming to a complete stop.

We all turned our heads to see who was driving recklessly in the garage, and not going the speed limit. The driver’s door

opened and the man who departed the vehicle and walked out had all my lady parts screaming with anticipatory joy.

Damn, he sure knew how to make an entrance.

“Ms. Jones. I’ve been waiting downstairs for you, but you were taking too long. I made the executive decision to come and retrieve you,” Castien said as he adjusted his suit jacket. He was dressed in all black and I was wondering if that was the only color he owned. The top two buttons of his shirt were unbuttoned where a flash of smooth golden tan skin made its appearance. To top off all the black, he wore a platinum chain around his neck that accented his outfit. Castien flashed his sexy smile as he strode towards my way.

I had no idea why he was here. I haven’t spoken to him since the day of the meeting. Then, after I declined his request for a date, I thought he would leave me alone. The night of the party was great and all but after thinking about it. I couldn’t go down that path. Not with him now that I knew who the person who dicked me down was. He was in a completely different league than I was. No, Mr. Armstrong was scary in multiple ways. I may have done a little research on him this week. So no, I wanted no parts of him. He was dangerous devil dick territory, and I wasn’t in the mental mind frame for that. Add in the strange feelings I had whenever he was around or even thinking about him. He was going to be a problem. I couldn’t do problems right now. Marquez was enough of one.

Castien stopped next to me and gave me a chaste kiss on my temple before rubbing my arm and letting go. I knew what he

was doing. That was his way of showing dominance and staking his claim in a garage full of testosterone. *Ugh... men.* I gave him a weird look, but he only gave me that half smile that said he was up to no good.

I glanced at Marquez, and he was fuming. He kept looking at me and then at Castien. Yuen didn't even bother trying to cover up the wide, all-knowing grin on his face.

"Remember, we have dinner this evening. If we don't get going, we're going to be late," Castien said while staring at Marquez.

"I don't remember—"

"You must have forgotten," he cut me off with a barely perceptible curt nod. "It's fine. That's why I came to remind you."

I knew for a fact I didn't forget. I blatantly told him to reach out to me later this week. I never planned on agreeing to this. But something was telling me he knew this too, which was why he was here.

Marquez's head bounced between Castien and me like a ping-pong ball. "Hold up. You two are together. This motherfucker here. Should have known you'd let some smooth-talking white boy come get in your panties."

"Ms. Jones, get in the car." Castien's words came out like a whip.

"I can deal with him. It's fine."

Castien's head snapped in my direction. "I won't repeat myself."

The way he said it had me wanting to fall to my knees before him. I know it was crazy and sometimes I didn't understand it myself, but there was something about a man when he exerted his dominance like a whip. I just wanted to fold over and let him have his way with me. *Sexually*. That was the only way because I wished a crazy person would try to play that mess any other way.

Any other time I would have challenged him, but the way he was defensively standing and acting in front of me, I thought better of it. I still hadn't figured out what it was, but there was some serious hate going on between him and Marquez. I needed to know what and why.

After giving Yuen a hug, I promised to text him and Jaz later and that I would be alright. I went to the Coupe and opened the passenger door, but waited to get in. I wanted to know what was going on.

"Don't come around here or her again," Castien warned Marquez. "You won't like what I have to do if I find out you are."

"You think I'm scared of you? Nah, I have connections and know people too. Your little secret ain't as much of a secret as you would like. I know all about you and your brother, Armstrong. Me, you, him. We have business to square away. Yeah, y'all asses are going down," Marquez shouted before retreating to his car.

Castien and Yuen stood there and watched as Marquez started his car and left. I don't know what Castien said to my best friend, but he handed him something that looked like a business card and then walked back to the car. I didn't need to be told to get in. Later, I'd worry about my car.

I sat down in the sports car and buckled up. Castien got in on the driver's side and slammed the door. Fury and anger radiated off him. I didn't want to say anything that might tick him off even more, so I got comfortable in my seat and kept quiet.

"I'll send my men to come get your car. Just give me the key when we get to where we're going and they'll bring it to us."

I nodded, not wanting to question what he meant by '*his men*'. "Thank you."

He started the vehicle and peeled out of there. We were silent on the drive until about fifteen minutes later when he finally spoke. "I wanted to have dinner with you earlier this week, but you turned me down. I didn't like how that made me feel. Then you didn't return any of my messages," he said. "I normally don't act like this, but there is something about you, Ms. Jones, that makes me act out of character."

I chuckled to myself because he remembered what I said. I also tried my best to keep from squeezing my thighs together because the way he said my name made me think nasty thoughts. I mean, everything with this man made me think dirty thoughts. Just pure, unadulterated, raw sex. I had to get a

control on whatever this heated desire I was experiencing for him. “Elise or Anais,” I said. “Just call me one of them. Ms. Jones sounds so.... proper.”

“Elise it is.”

“Can I ask... how did you know where to find me?”

“I was waiting downstairs in your building, but you didn’t come out, so I assumed you would be in the garage. I really don’t enjoy being denied, Elise, and you’ll soon come to find out what happens to those who deny me.”

He placed a hand on my thigh, and I swore it was like white hot electricity that sent a shock from his hand to my thigh.

“I have a life, you know. I had things to do. Besides, I don’t know you like that.”

He quickly glanced at me. “That’s exactly why I am trying to have dinner with you. I want to get to know you. I already know how sweet your pussy taste. I know how warm and snug you are when I am inside you. There will be more of that for sure, but I want to know who you are here.” He touched the center of my chest before placing his hand back on my thigh. “I want to know what makes you move. What makes you who you are. I plan on knowing every single thing about you both physically, mentally, emotionally. I want you totally exposed for me and for me only. That is the only way.”

His words created a deep need inside of me, even if he went about it in a possessive, cave man type of manner. Somehow, I could see him ripping away every single wall of mine,

exposing what I had hidden from everyone. His words... ugh. I wanted him. That night wasn't enough. I wanted him to fill me again and give me pleasure like I haven't had before. The night of the party was just a small, infinitesimal moment. A tease. I wanted an entire night.

Or more...

“I see the wheels turning in your head, kitten. What's on your mind?”

“I'm not sure. Everything is just jumbled right now.”

“Hmm... I'll allow your small white lie just this once. It won't happen again.” He squeezed my thigh harder, and I almost let a small gasp slip out. He was going to be my undoing, and I wasn't quite sure if I was excited or wary of it. Think I was more excited even if I didn't want to admit it out loud.

Castien



Touching her help calmed down the anger that raged underneath my skin dealing with Marquez Jacobson. I already decided. I was going to kill the man. He was living on borrowed time. When I called my brother earlier today, I told him about everything I had discovered this week. I hated to admit it, but he was right. Michael Warner and Marquez Jacobson were on Marconi's payroll, and they were going to pay for it.

Traffic wasn't bad as I drove us far away from her place of work. I was taking Elise to my private waterfront residence. Not the penthouse I had downtown. I would rather take her further west to my home near the ocean because it was my sanctuary from everything, but unfortunately, I still had business in town. The lake house would have to do for the weekend. Maybe in a couple of weeks, I'd take her to Chicago and visit Club Desire, like my brother suggested I do. Except

he wanted me to go and meet people. I planned on showing her off. Let everyone see how she bends to my will. *My kitten*. From the corner of my eyes, I couldn't get enough of staring at her. Oh, the things I had planned for her.

“Are you nervous?” I asked because she had tensed up when I touched her. “Listen, I am a gentleman. I won't do anything you don't want. I just wanted to have dinner with a gorgeous woman, but if that makes you uncomfortable, then I'll take you back to your car. I figured you would want to be out of the media's spotlight for a change.”

If I was being honest, dinner wasn't the only thing I wanted, but that would come later. I'd done my research this week. Ever since her game's release, Elise had been all over the local news, the gaming news and in numerous magazine and digital magazines. She and her partner, Yuen, they were the upcoming superstars in the tech and video gaming world and their company Icarus Games was a bona fide hit. Everybody wanted a piece of them.

“No, this is fine. You're right, I've been avoiding the public lately. The only thing I had planned tonight was going home and unwinding with a glass of red and relaxing in my jacuzzi.”

“You still can. I have a jacuzzi on the lower deck in my backyard. It faces the water. Beautiful sight,” I said while looking at her. Yes, the view from my deck was gorgeous, but nothing compared to her. She answered me with a lazy smile.

“Don't get your hopes up and think you're going to get into my panties tonight, X. You got to work for that privilege.” I

laughed. A genuine belly laugh. Considering I've already been in her panties, this was going to be easy. "I think I like you calling me 'X'. It sounds good coming off your tongue."

"Well, you only gave me a few options. X is a good name. Kind of edgy." Her gaze raked over me. "It suits you."

"Thanks," I said and let my attention fall back to the road. If she only knew how 'edgy' I was. The silence between us was comfortable and in the back of my mind, this was something I thought I could get used to. Which, the thought itself, took me by surprise. I never thought about a woman this way. Never had the instant attraction for another woman like I had with her. It was deeper than anything I've experienced before. It spoke to my more primal nature. My possessive instincts came out whenever Elise was around and more times than not, I wanted to go caveman on the men that was near her or could solicit that laugh of hers that was low and sultry. It had my cock hard just thinking about it. *Not now Big X, I thought to myself after quickly glancing down.* Discreetly, I adjusted myself, hoping she didn't see what she did to me just by thoughts alone.

The drive to my waterfront didn't take much longer. It was a secluded neighborhood. There weren't too many houses, because it would've interrupted the exclusive hard to get lake views. The small community was gated and private. When we reached the entrance, I slowed down to go through the checkpoint with the security guard. He recognized who I was and let us cruise right on through without issues.

“Wow,” Elise said to herself as she stared out of the window at the houses we passed by.

“Wait until you see the view.” I continued down the road and at the very end, I made a turn and pulled up to my home. Elise’s jaws dropped.

“This is some home you have here.”

“Thank you. It’s just a place for me to lay my head down at night. It’s too big and too empty.” I glanced at her and dangerous thoughts of possible future outcomes teased the edge of my thoughts. Quickly, I pushed them back into the box they tried to escape from.

It’s too soon. Right?

The garage doors went up when I pulled into the driveway. I parked the vehicle inside. “Wait,” I told her, then got out, rushed to her side and opened the door for her. I had my flaws, but being a gentleman wasn’t one of them. I wanted to show her how real men treated their women. Treat her so right that it would ruin any chance with others. If it was left up to me... there wouldn’t be any others. Elise said nothing as I led her through the halls and into my home. We ended up in the living area where two of my walls were nothing but floor to ceiling glass windows. We could see out, but no one could see inside. I couldn’t wait to explore her exhibitionist side by taking her against the windows.

“Wow! Now... that’s an amazing view,” she said with awe.

“Yes, it is,” I said, staring at her as she walked closer to the windows. She turned back and looked at me. There, with the way she watched me. I knew she wanted it just as much as I did. We needed food first, before any type of aerobics took place.

“What would you like for dinner? I can order anything you want. Steaks. Italian...” *You* I said silently.

The way her eyes combed me over, I knew Elise and I were of the same accord. “I haven’t had Italian in a while. It sounds good, but how about a paella? It’s one of my favorite dishes and haven’t had it in a long time, too.”

“You’re in luck. My personal chef is from Spain and makes an excellent paella. Get comfortable and make yourself at home. I’m going to call him over and go grab a couple of bottles of wine from the wine cellar.”

Elise nodded, and I moved to leave, then stopped. “Oh, Elise.”

“Yes.”

“Your keys. I’m going to have one of my men go get your car and bring it here. I don’t trust Marquez enough right now for you to get it by yourself.”

“I understand,” she said. “Thanks again.”

She opened the bag she had sat on the couch and pulled out her keys. I took them from her and promised I’d be right back. Although she couldn’t see them, I had my men all around in the shadows. This place was like Fort Knox. Nobody was

getting in unless I wanted them to. I headed downstairs to where my most trusted was and gave him the keys.

“Leo, get Ms. Jones’ car from the garage at her place of employment. Bring it back here. Stay discreet and be on the lookout for anything unusual.”

“Yes, sir.” Leo quickly tapped the shoulder of the man sitting next to him. “Let’s go.”

After they left, I pulled the phone out of my pocket and texted Javier, my personal chef, and told him I needed him for the evening. We were in luck because he was free and had all the ingredients for a seafood paella. I hurried further down into my wine cellar and picked out a delicious red and one of my favorite bottles of white wine that I knew would pair well with the seafood paella and went back upstairs to where she waited.

I held up the two bottles and waved them for her to see. “Javier, my personal chef, is on his way. I hope you’re okay with a seafood paella.”

Elise turned away from the painting she was staring at and smiled. It was the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen. She was so radiant, and I still didn’t understand how I lucked out and got her here. She was in my home and I actually enjoyed having her there.

“I love seafood paella. It’s my absolute favorite.”

“Awesome. I got a red for jacuzzi time and the white for dinner. Dinner will be awhile, so let’s relax some.” I moved to the kitchen, found my wine opener and popped the cork on the

red. I poured us both a glass and handed Elise hers. She took a sip and the soft moan instantly made me want to skip the jacuzzi all together. The look on her face said she was thinking the same thing.

“How about we talk instead of the jacuzzi for now,” she said as she aimlessly removed her shoes then went and sat on my couch. Slowly, she crossed her legs, exposing the smooth chocolate skin underneath the burgundy pencil skirt that came just to her knees.

“Sounds good to me.” I removed my suit jacket and went and sat beside her. “Tell me all about yourself.”

And she did. Our conversation flowed easily and naturally. Her backstory about college and her love for technology were interesting. She didn't talk about her family, and I wouldn't press her about it. It would come in time. I found myself talking easily about myself and my childhood. My family. I could never do that with anyone that wasn't Bash, but with her, it was easy and seamless.

After Javier came and cooked dinner, we ate and drank more wine in my dining room, just enjoying each other's company, and I would argue that this was the best night of my life.

“Dinner was amazing. Give your chef my wholehearted thanks for cooking this on the fly,” she said.

I loved seeing the joy she had. It made me feel good. Seeing her like this was something I wanted to continue doing. Keep

her beautiful smile on her face. Strive to keep her happy. It shouldn't be so hard to do, I had hoped.

The night from the party kept replaying in my head, and I wanted her more than ever. "Are we going to talk about the party? What happened between us? What's happening between us now?"

She took another drink of her wine, then heavily sighed. "Yes."

"You know what I am?"

"I do," she said. She leaned back into the chair she sat in and watched me.

Fire roared in my veins. I had her. There was no doubt in my mind anymore. "What do you want, Elise? Are you willing to step into the flames?"

The need. The desire was written all over her. The deep need to be dominated. Elise eased off the dining chair, walked around the table, and came and stood directly in front of me. Tilted her head to the side and grinned.

"We're two consenting adults. Let's have some fun tonight. If we enjoy ourselves, we'll see about later." She removed her skirt and blouse and stood there in her undergarments.

YES!

Into the fire it was! I mentally shouted, but out loud, I let out a deep laugh. "If you only knew what you just subjected yourself to. I haven't been with anyone since that night with you. Ever since then, you have consumed my waking and

sleeping thoughts. It's always you. I figured I'd try to get you out of my system by being with another woman, but I couldn't. I only wanted you. So, thank you ahead of time for tonight."

I took her hand and led her to the living room with every intention of taking her to my bed, but she stopped me and pulled me close to her. Our mouths melded with each other into a passionate kiss as we discovered each other again. Together, our tongues danced with each other, eventually taking the kiss deeper. Harder. Eliciting those mewling moans from her that sent my mind into a frenzy. Hell, forget making it to the bedroom. I needed her right then. I knew we had to submit test results before going to Nicole's party, but I wanted to make sure we were still good. I didn't want to get or wear a condom.

"Are you clean? You good?" I asked, after breaking away from the kiss.

"I'm good. No change. No partners since you the night of the party."

That was the best news for me. I didn't think I could handle if she said she had been with another man since our brief moment. And I knew it was too soon to probably think like that, but I didn't care. I wanted what I wanted. I was a grown ass man who could do whatever the fuck I wanted.

I took a step back, unbuttoned my shirt, and removed it. Elise followed every single motion. Lust and yearning filled her eyes as she watched me. The act turned her on, and I made

a note of that for later on. I reached down and undid my belt, and unfastened my pants. I motioned for her to come closer. She did. "I'll leave the rest for you."

I knew she saw the way my pants tented from the hard on she gave me and when she looked down acknowledging it, her pink tongue darted out, swiping her lips before she bit her bottom lip. Quickly after, there was uncertainty in her eyes.

"Are you alright?"

She cleared her throat. "Yeah, but um."

"Um... what?" I hoped I didn't do anything to scare her off. I couldn't allow that to happen. Not right now.

"It's kind of embarrassing," she said. As she slipped her hands into the waist of my pants and pulled them down, freeing my erection. She fell to her knees.

"What is?" I asked, now curious as to what could be embarrassing for her. I stepped out of the pants and kicked them to the side. Concerned about what was wrong, even so, I couldn't believe it. I had her on her knees in front of me and the sight did something to me. "I promise I won't laugh, kitten."

She exhaled. "I've always thought I did well with giving head, but after being with the asshole who shouldn't be named for so long, well, he ridiculed my abilities for the act. He never wanted me to do it."

I let my hand run through her lustrous hair. Today it was wavy curly and cascaded down just past her shoulders. It was

soft, just like she was. Her eyes closed as I kept rubbing her scalp, relaxing her. “Stand up.” I commanded.

Elise stood up with the smooth grace of a dancer and came face to face with me. “Listen to me and clearly, okay?”

“Okay,” she said too quietly. I didn’t like this insecure woman. This wasn’t who she was.

“Asshole is the perfect name for that person. Don’t let that ruin anything. Be confident in you and your skills. Okay?”

“Alright, but he constantly said I wasn’t so good at doing that... you know. Kind of have you rethinking your abilities.”

Elise’s eyes cast downward as she got her fill of my dick as it jutted in her direction. She swallowed while I stood there like I was some type of Greek God or something.

The corners of my lips curved upwards into a devilish smirk. I took my right hand and palmed my cock, and at a slow pace, stroked it to the head, smearing my pre-cum around its head, and back to the base. I didn’t want her thinking about Marquez. Not while it was my cock that had her salivating. I needed her to forget that asshole. He was a dead man walking, anyway. Elise couldn’t stop staring. She was caught up in a hypnotic trance. Her mouth watered at what my hands were doing. The timbre of my voice dropped even lower when I spoke. She affected me just as much as I affected her. “You’re not so good at what... Elise?”

She heard me, but there was no way she could tear her gaze away from me. The way she shifted on her bare feet, I knew if

I was to touch in between her legs, she would be soaking wet for me.

“I’m...” she said in an almost pant.

That’s right, kitten. Forget all about that asshole.

“I’m not so good at sucking dick.”

I chuckled low enough that when she moaned; I knew it went straight to her pussy. I stroked myself once more before squeezing hard, eliciting a hiss from my lips. My eyes darkened with hunger for her. If I kept this up, I wouldn’t last much longer, either.

Elise continued. “I mean... I can do it, but it’s not one of my strong suits.”

“All bad girls must learn at some point,” I said. “On your knees, kitten.”

Elise dropped to her knees with no hesitation. I let go of my dick and with a quick come-hither motion with my index and pointer finger; she crawled to me. “I hope you are comfortable, darling.”

Elise stared up at me with a curious look on her face. “I’m fine.”

“Good... because you’re going to be on them all night.”

Her breath hitched.

“Hands behind your back, kitten,” I instructed. Glad she didn’t question me. If she didn’t know how to do something, I would gladly be her teacher. I closed the distance between us.

“Open wide,” I said like a dentist about to exam her teeth, then I shoved my dick down her throat.

Elise Anais



“Stay with me the entire weekend,” Castien said in a hushed tone into my ear. His warm breath brushed the back of my neck as he peppered soft kisses down my spine, waking me up from another cat nap.

For the life of me, I couldn’t remember when we finally made it to his bedroom, but he wasn’t joking about having me on my knees all night. After his version of dick sucking lessons, he had me on all fours, christening every available space in his living area.

I didn’t know what time it was, but it must of have been early in the morning. *I think*. The room was dark, and I didn’t know if it was because of the still closed curtains or if was just dark outside.

Castien’s fingers caressed my body as if he couldn’t get enough of me and the thought of figuring out what time it was

left my mind, leaving a blast of want and need in its wake. I felt his steel-like erection on my backside. When he moved back up to my shoulders and bit the tender space near the side of my neck where it met my shoulders, I pushed back into him, letting out a soft moan as he adored my body with his luscious mouth.

His splayed hands traced lazy circles on my thighs before he lifted my leg up and pushed inside of me from behind. “Damn,” I couldn’t stop myself from saying out loud.

“I can’t stop touching you. I can’t get enough of you,” he whispered in my ear. He continued to stroke me long, deep, and languidly. If he kept this up, I would come too fast and all I really wanted was for it to last.

“You and your pussy are addicting.” Castien pulled out and rolled me onto my back. We kissed passionately before he covered me with his body and positioned himself between my legs. He took his sweet time as he pushed back into my waiting heat, filling me up completely. We rocked and moved together in tandem as we chased after our pleasure.

He reached between my legs as if he knew I was close and brushed my bundle of sensitive nerves in soft circles. “Come for me, Kitten.” My body answered his command and, like a wave, my orgasm started low in my belly and before I knew it, I was trembling and chanting his name like a prayer as I crested the highest point and shattered all over him.

“Fuck,” Castien groaned. “You are so sexy when you come.”

I grabbed his ass and guided him as he pumped faster. He was close. His thrusts were quicker when he hit my spot, causing me to moan even more. Everything felt so good. The way he knew my body and remembered what got me going, alluded to his expert skills in the bedroom. I didn't even have to tell him harder. He did it on instinct. Castien was an attentive lover and kept the rhythmic pace that had me seeing stars. Before I knew it, I was riding another orgasmic wave as he let out a deep, sexy as hell growl and came with me.

He removed himself and pulled me close into his arms, and showered me with kisses along the side of my face. I couldn't stay awake... and felt myself drifting off while in his strong, protective arms. He was saying something, but I didn't even know what he said. I thought he said something along the lines of red or gold as I fell asleep.



I was still high on the night before and from the morning activities. Now, in Castien's backyard, I sat between his legs in his jacuzzi while the sun was setting, a very content and satisfied woman. He was absolutely right. The view was beautiful and serene. From where we were, we could see the outlines of the mountains in the distance. On the lake, a few boats bobbed in the water, but there weren't many like I imagined would be during the spring or summer.

His fingers traced a figure eight on my arm and I had suspected something was bothering him. "What's on your mind?"

He pulled me closer to him. “Entirely too much.”

“Want to talk about it?” He went silent, but I knew he was thinking. “You don’t have to if you don’t want.”

“I really don’t want to ruin the mood, but I have to ask about the asshole. What is up with him and you?”

Not surprised it had something to do with him. Talking about him wasn’t on my list of things, but I understood he had a right to know. Especially with how he was acting lately. “He’s my ex-boyfriend. We were together for a couple of years, but as it turned out, I don’t think I actually knew him. I was blind even when people tried to tell me otherwise. In the end, that hurt even worse and it hurt for a long time.”

“Sometimes, people are exactly who you think they are, even if you don’t want to believe what you are seeing.”

“I realize that now. Why do you want to know about him?”

Castien moved an inch or two, causing the water to slosh around us. “Elise, since you’ve been here, have you ever wondered why there are so many suited security guards around? I mean... they’re hidden, but they’re never far off. I am sure you’ve seen glimpses of them.”

I wondered, but I didn’t want to ask. Figured he would tell me, eventually. “Yes, but it wasn’t my business to know. If it was something important, you would tell me. The one thing I wondered about was why you and Marquez didn’t get along. I mean... I noticed it from the moment you saw each other at

the meeting earlier this week. It was like you knew each other already.”

“Something like that,” he said. “I don’t like him. He’s a snake that’s slithering around shit he doesn’t need to be slithering around. You’ll tell me if comes near you again.”

“He won’t do anything, X.” Suddenly uncomfortable with the conversation, I downed the glass of wine I had in my hand and he took the empty glass from me. My mind raced back to where it felt like I was being watched. I had a feeling it was Marquez watching and plotting. This would be one of those times I should tell him, but it was my problem to deal with. I refused to bring him into it.

“You and I both know better than that. I’m just glad you’re not seeing him still.”

“Jealous much?” I asked.

“No. I’m just possessive about things that belong to me and make no doubt, Kitten. You belong to me, even if we only met a week ago.” He turned me around so that we were face to face. “Listen to me, Elise. I really like you. I want to see what can happen between the both of us. I know there’s something there and I am a man who goes after whatever he wants. Right now, that is you. If you want the same thing, then we seriously need to have a deeper conversation.”

Castien was dead serious. It was written all over his face. From the corner of my eyes near a tree, I saw movement, then thought back to him saying he had suited security guards all over his property. I thought he had them because he was super

famous and loaded, but I was starting to rethink everything. There was undeniably a dangerous aura about Castien, and I was one hundred percent sure the man had a much darker side. I've been around dangerous men long enough, growing up around my brother after our parents died, to know I was right about this, too.

What I needed to do was stop pretending to myself. I really liked this guy. I was extremely attracted to him and his personality. Was even curious enough that I wanted to know where this whatever was brewing between us could go.

“I guess we need to have that deeper conversation, unless that deep, long conversation can be had right here.” I grabbed his dick under the water and squeezed. The sharp intake of breath Castien took told me everything I wanted to know. His lengthy shaft instantly hardened in my hand. The feelings were mutual. He wanted me just as much.

“Damn you, woman,” he said while yanking me to him. I settled in his lap and eased onto him inch by inch. “I can't get enough of that warm pussy of yours.”

“We can have the convo afterwards,” I ground into his hips, then took his mouth in a warm, delicious kiss.



I was starving, but wanted nothing heavy. Castien made us sandwiches, and we talked while we ate. Replenishing all the energy we had spent since last night. The conversation wasn't serious. No, I think he was waiting until we were done. I could

tell he kept putting it off, but if we were to move forward, then I needed to know.

I stood up and reached for his hand. “We can clean up our mess later.”

He wiped his mouth and hands, then took mine and led us to the couch. We sat there silently, holding each other. We both knew it was a pregnant peace that wouldn’t last much longer. I didn’t know what to expect or think, but I was getting nervous. Whatever he had to say must have been serious, but he had to do this on his own. When he was ready. I wouldn’t rush him, even though I was curious. I curled further into his arms and kept silent, enjoying the momentary peace between us. After a while, Castien finally spoke. The rumble of bass in his voice vibrated from his chest into my back.

“There are multiple facets of who I am, yet they all make me who I am. What you see,” he said. When he realized I wasn’t going to say anything but just listen, Castien continued.

“One side is the face the world sees. The rich billionaire AI tech genius that’s way ahead of the game from other companies in the same field. Then there’s the side that is part of my nature just as much as it’s part of yours. You know I’m a Dom. Just as much as I know, you have submissive inclinations. This is why we click so well, Elise. Your need to sexually submit appeals to my need to sexually dominate. In just this short time, your body recognizes who it belongs to and does whatever I want it to. This is probably why your previous relationships never panned out. Am I wrong?”

He wasn't. He actually hit it on the nail. I knew this but denied it for so long, trying to please my previous partners. I've dabbled with a couple of Doms, but damn, none of them knew how to work my body the way Castien did. "No, you're not wrong," I finally admitted.

"I want you and you want me. But if you we are to be, then you must know and accept the third facet of me. The side that very few know about."

I didn't like how that sounded. I touched his arms that were wrapped around my waist and intertwined my fingers with his. My way of saying it was okay to continue. That I would listen with everything and make my decision afterwards.

His chin rested on my head before he moved and kissed my temple. "How I made my money in the beginning was running the streets. My brother, Sebastian, and I made a name for ourselves. We still run that dark world, but with a singular purpose. My brother is the face everyone sees while it's my face everyone sees as I try to make our money and investments legit. But out there in those streets it's *my* name, they fear. And rightfully so. I'm not a nice man and sometimes I have to dive into the darkness that lurks in my heart, so people know not to test me. I do this to protect those that I love and care about. Elise, I've done some things that would probably shock the hell out of you. Any decent woman in their right mind wouldn't want to be around me if they knew what I've done in my past and what I'm willing to do if the need arose. All of that is who I am, too."

The edge. The darkness that encapsulated him. I recognized it from the moment I noticed him at the party. I recognized it and was drawn to it. Hell, I wasn't perfect by any means, and I had my hang-ups, too. I couldn't be the one to judge anyone. The only thing that concerned me was the name. What name would have people fearing him?

Castien didn't have to do this. Expose his secrets and tell me all of this, but he was, and that said a lot about him. He didn't know me well enough, but I imagined what I was feeling was the same thing he was feeling. The walls I'd built around me, they were slowly unraveling, and it was because of him and it was me for him.

“What is this name that has everybody scared of you? Will you tell me?” I had to know. If we were going to move forward, I had to know who I was truly sleeping with.

He exhaled and took a moment of silence before he spoke. “Erebus. They call me Erebus.”

Everything in me stilled. I knew that name. I knew that name because my brother knew that name. The stories he would tell about Erebus were some seriously effed up shit. My brother wasn't afraid of anyone, but he had always told me the one person he would never fuck with or fuck over was Erebus. No one knew the face of the monster. It was some great secret and many had died trying to find out. But there was something else, and it kept tugging at the back of my mind until it punched me dead in the face. I shot up from his arms and faced him.

“It was you!” My voice trembled a little. That tidbit of knowledge shocked the hell out of me, and I wasn’t going to lie, but it scared me. How could the man who had been nothing but a gentleman and kind, be the same well-known monster in the underworld. I remembered learning when Marquez’s baby brother was found dead, he had the letter E crudely carved into his chest with a bullet in his head. He was dumped unceremoniously on some rich guy’s doorstep. I just couldn’t remember the name of the guy who found him. But Castien and Marquez not liking each other... that had to be the cause of the bad blood between them. It was obvious to me now. “You’re the one who killed Marcellus! Or had him offed.”

A mask came down over his face. The cold, hard mask of indifference. I had hit it on the nail. I was right and knew it, but at this point, there was no getting any answers from him. Castien wouldn’t incriminate himself like that to someone he had only known for a week. Castien closed himself off. The warmth that was between us evaporated in an instant, leaving nothing but frozen tundra cold in its place. Startling the silence, Castien’s phone rang next to us on the end table. I moved so he could get it.

I couldn’t believe it. This fine specimen of a man was the most feared criminal mastermind the Pacific Northwest had seen in years. And if they only knew, it was one of their most favored sons. Talk about a double life.

Shit Elise. What in the fuck did you get yourself into?

There was no absolute way I could talk to Yuen about this. That would be a death wish. I couldn't even talk to my brother about this, and he would give an arm and a leg to know what I just found out. But could I even do that to him? This man that in the short time we've been together already had a hold over me and my heart, dare I say.

Whoever was on the other line of the phone with Castien wasn't delivering good news because the conversation got heated the longer he talked to them. When he started cursing, I knew it was bad. A few minutes later, Castien ended the call and rubbed a hand over his face. In his eyes were conflicted emotions.

"That was my brother. I have to go take care of something," he said.

"I understand. Go handle your business. I'll still be here, X. I'm not going anywhere." Soon as I said the words, I knew them to be true. No matter who the man was, all facets of him, like he said, they made him who he was. It didn't change a thing.

Castien grinned, then stood up. He embraced me. "You sure? Are we good? Are we okay, Elise? Please tell me we are, kitten."

I laughed. "We're okay, X."

The man exhaled like a giant weight was lifted off him. "I'm so glad to hear that, baby. After I put some clothes on, I will introduce you to Leo and Miguel. I trust those two with my life. Trust them with everything and that's including you.

Leo and Miguel are my personal bodyguards, but I am going to leave Miguel here with you until I get back.”

“Alright,” I said and pushed the stray strands of dark hair from his face. “I’ll find a movie or two on TV to watch. Maybe raid your wine cellar.”

“I don’t care what you do. Just don’t leave, Elise. I mean it. Too much shit is going on that I don’t like and it involves your shady ex, Marquez.”

“I’ll be here, X. Now, go handle your shit, then come back and fuck me until I can’t see straight.”

He laughed. “I’ll do more if you keep talking dirty like that, kitten. Might even chain you up.”

“Promises, promises...” I said, then kissed the man like it was our last.

Castien



A month had gone by since Elise and I officially started a relationship. After going over our lists together, we decided to have an exclusive Dom and Sub relationship too, where we played a few times out of the month. I knew I couldn't share her in that sense. Bad as it was... I hated when other men stared too long at her when I was around. My kitten wasn't going anywhere, but sometimes I wondered if all my issues would have her running far away from me. It was a secret fear of mine and one I hoped would never come to fruition.

I still hadn't introduced her to Bash yet, but it was only because if we weren't working, we were too busy fucking like horny ass teenagers. I couldn't get enough of being inside of her, and when I wasn't inside of her warm pussy, then I was actually laughing and enjoying her presence. Surprisingly, the woman makes me a happy man, and that absolutely terrified me. I was used to lingering in the cold dark of being

emotionless, especially after the dark day that was branded in my mind forever. I had never felt like this before. Not with any other woman, at least. I didn't know if she felt the same, but I didn't think I could even voice my thoughts about it if I could.

“How long are you going to be gone?” Bash asked, settling down onto the couch with a beer in his hand. We were in my penthouse downtown, and his words pulled me from my happy thoughts.

“A week,” I said. I was looking forward to the trip with Elise. We were going to Chicago to visit Club Desire, but that part was a surprise. I also had some business to handle, and I figured I'd make it a business mixed with pleasure type of trip.

“Are you going alone?”

“Yes... why?”

Bash grimaced before letting it disappear. That look never boded well. “I think you should take some men with you.”

“I'll have Leo and Miguel.”

“I mean more than that.”

I became agitated with him beating around the bush. “Again, I ask why?”

Bash heavily sighed. He took a gulp of his beer. “Let me ask this...”

“Go on...”

“Is your woman named Elise Anais Jones?”

I really didn't like where this was headed. I never told Bash her full name and there was no reason he should have her full name. "Get to the fucking point," I said between clenched teeth.

Sebastian raised his hands up, palms out, in self-defense. "I mean no harm, bro. Calm your ass down." He finished the beer, then sat the empty glass bottle on the end table beside him. He didn't even use the coaster sitting there. That ish really irked my nerves. It was going to leave water ring stains. "You must really like her. I haven't seen you this happy since before they died."

He was right. After Aurelio Marconi had our parents and baby sister murdered for some small slight to him and his family, Sebastian and I have been hell bent on getting our vengeance. We were close. Near the end of this dark road.

All I could do was nod. I wasn't ready to speak the words out loud. "Just tell me whatever it is you know."

"Listen... I think you should bring more than just Leo and Miguel. In fact, I am going with you. I gotta check in on the restaurant and handle some other business ventures I have going on in the city. Plus, I have a few leads and you know Chicago is Marconi territory. He'll know the moment you step foot off the plane."

"This still doesn't explain how or why you know my woman's name. Or why you're deciding to interrupt my trip."

"It's always been me and you, Cas. I'll watch out for you and protect you with my life because that's what family does."

We are all we have. I'm not letting that motherfucker take you, too."

"It's the same for me too, Bash, but I still don't understand. What aren't you telling me?"

I watched as Bash leaned forward after pulling his phone out of his pocket and rested his elbows on his knees. He did something on his phone and made a face before looking back at me. "I asked about your woman because of this."

He turned his phone around and there was a picture of Elise walking on the street with another woman. She had a couple of bags in her hand. The picture had been taken recently. This was the other day when Elise had gone shopping with her friend, Jaz, then came over right after and had on the same outfit. The roaring in my ears started small. My heart pounded in my chest and the blood boiled in my veins. This was beyond rage. "You better start talking and I mean right fucking now, Bash!"

My brother grinned his slick half smile. "Your woman is fine as fuck. You got good taste. Here I was thinking all you liked was those model thin women. Your lady, she's thick in all the right places and you know I'm a sucker for a thick ass woman with just enough curves. I'm a big man. I need meat on mine."

"GET WITH THE FUCKING POINT AND QUIT TALKING ABOUT MY WOMAN THAT WAY!" I shouted.

Bash let out a deep laugh before getting serious again. "You know I have access to things. I have this picture because there

has been a hit put out on your woman.”

I shot up from my seat. I was fuming. Why would somebody do this? There were a few ideas, but I wasn't sure about them. I knew one thing. I was going to find out.

“I know you got questions, and I'm trying to find the answers. I don't know who put the hit out, but I got my techies searching. It came through on the wire as an anonymous request. Right now, it's up to two and a half million. Somebody really wants her dead.”

My mind was racing a mile a minute. I paced back and forth while Sebastian kept talking, giving me the details, and then it hit me. I glanced at my brother.

“What is it?” he asked.

“Put a tail on Marquez Jacobson and Michael Warner. I want to know every single detail. If they're going to the bathroom to take a shit, I want to know. I have a bad feeling they play a part in this.”

“Consider it already done. You know I've been ready to send Warner to his maker. But why does the name Marquez Jacobson sound familiar?”

“Seven months ago, remember our little snitch, Marcellus? Well, Marquez is the older brother.”

“Shit! Why does he need a tail?”

“Because he's Elise's ex-boyfriend. She doesn't know, but Miguel has been watching her from a distance because I don't trust Marquez one bit. After a couple of days with Miguel on

the watch, he discovered Marquez has been following her. The man is unhinged. And he likes to think he's a tough man and gets handsy whenever he's near or around Elise. He tries to play badass. Tries to be macho and tough, but I've had to show him I'm the man he wishes he could be. I've roughed him up twice already. He's a dead man walking for that alone, but it would be nice to know what's up and see if he's in with Marconi like his brother was. It's bad enough he's also good friends with Warner."

"Say no more," Bash said. "But you know, if they're buddies, I'm damn sure they're Marconi's, too. Send me the flight info and I'll have our most trusted on the plane. I promise we won't be in the way. I've been wanting to get back to Club Desire myself."

"I bet you have," I said after finally stopping my agitated pacing. "I'll have the info sent to you tomorrow. We leave Thursday afternoon."

Sebastian rose off the couch. "Don't worry, Cas. Nothing is going to happen to her. Or you. I'll keep you updated with whatever I find out."

"Thanks Bash."

I walked him out after we talked a bit more. It was late, and I already knew she was probably in bed, but I wouldn't be able to sleep knowing there's a hit out on her. I grabbed my keys and locked up. I wasn't going to let her out of my sight.

Elise Anais



Everything was saying and pointing to the theory that I should tell X what was happening with Marquez, but I didn't want to ruin our upcoming trip to Chicago. Something was bothering him, and he refused to tell me what was going on, so why should I say anything about Marquez blackmailing me and Yuen?

He had been calling me nonstop, both at work and on my cell phone. I even changed my phone number, lied to X about why I changed it, and the ex man baby still found it. Marquez popped up in places he had no business being. It had been driving me crazy. Even Yuen noticed something was up, so of course, I had to break down and explain it. Luckily for me, he had been great at keeping his mouth shut even though he threatened to tell X what was happening if I didn't before we left. Unfortunately, I did something I didn't want to do, but

had no choice. I lied to my best friend and honestly; I felt like crap for lying to him.

I knew Marquez well enough and had faith that I could get him to chill out. I just needed some time. Try to understand what he truly wanted and play into that. I just couldn't bring up Castien. Once Marquez realized I was dating him, that was when his hijinks took a crazier turn. Knowing I moved on and it wasn't with him pissed him off like no other.

“What’s got you over there thinking so hard?” My head shot up at the intrusion of Castien’s voice. “You didn’t even hear me knocking on your office door. And I knocked a long time. Eventually Yuen saw me and told me to go in and wait until you came back. But here you are, hiding in your office, lost to the world in your head.”

“I’m sorry, X.” I pushed back from my desk and walked around to embrace my man in a warm hug. “Just a lot going on. Sorry.”

“Care to elaborate?” he asked as he stared down at me.

This was my time. He would know what to do, but I couldn't. Marquez was my problem, and I refused to let him ruin everything I had built. If anything, I would call my brother and ask for his advice. Castien had enough going on.

“Nah, not right now,” I said as I played with the lapels of his suit jacket. Castien gave me a warning look before letting everything slide.

“Okay.” He planted a quick kiss on my lips. “Close up shop. You’re done for the day.”

“I don’t think so.” I moved away from him. “Unfortunately, I have a few things that need to get done around here before we leave tomorrow. I’m behind.”

“Don’t worry about it. Yuen will take care of it. Come on. Gather your purse so we can leave. The plane will be ready to depart by the time we get to the airport. We’re leaving earlier than planned.”

“What do you mean, ‘Yuen will take care of it’ and what about the plane?”

“Exactly what I said. Yuen, *your* business partner and best friend, was more than glad to assist. Please don’t fight me on this. As to the plane, I had my plane fueled for us to get to Chicago. I hope you weren’t thinking we were flying commercial. Besides... I want you to meet my brother. He’s coming with us.”

“Why aren’t I’m surprised you have your own plane.” I realized what he also said. “Your brother? That’s news. Thought it was just going to be us two.”

“It will be. My brother has business in Chicago, too. He’s just hitching a ride.”

“Ohh.”

Castien’s voice dropped lower and with authority. “Don’t worry, Ms. Jones. This will be a trip you won’t ever forget.”

The corners of my lips curled into a wide grin. I loved when he called me *Ms. Jones* because I knew it was my Dom speaking and not my boyfriend. That was enough to do as he said and gathered my things because the rewards for obedience had my little kitty cat purring for approval.

I had my back to him as I quickly threw everything into my bag, but it was his dark chuckle that solidified it for me. The man knew what he was doing.

“Thought you would see it my way, Kitten. Maybe if you’re a good girl, then you can sit on my lap during the plane ride. Or if you’re bad, we could see about you getting inducted into the mile high club.”



“Elise, allow me to introduce my brother,” Castien said to me as a man with tattoos and dark hair walked onto the plane. About eight giant sized men in suits following behind him. If the aura around Castien exuded dark and dangerous, then I never wanted to get on his brother’s bad side.

The eight suits sat down at the front of the plane, while Castien and his brother walked towards the back where I was. I got up and stood next to X when he made it to me. His brother flashed a charming and flirty grin, then winked at me before reaching his hand out.

“I’m Sebastian. But you, my beautiful new friend can call me Bash.”

Castien came off cold, but his brother came off warm and charming. I was sure he probably had a horde of women chasing after him, too, with his bad boy appeal. He was definitely a flirt. I laughed at the antics that had his brother scowling beside us. “Nice meeting you Bash.”

“If my brother hasn’t said it yet, then let me. I won’t interrupt your trip. I figured it would be better if we all went together, since I have business in Chicago as well.”

“Oh, I totally get it. The more the merrier. I’m sure it will be fun.”

Sebastian seemed too amused and chuckled as he took his seat across from us. The flight attendants came and took everyone’s drink order. Then left us alone after the flight took off.

At cruising altitude Sebastian looked at Castien strange before he got up and went to the front where the other men were, leaving us alone. I knew something was wrong, but I didn’t know how to ask without him returning the questions around and asking me what was wrong. Keeping quiet was the only thing I could think of, but it went out the window once Sebastian came back and sat down.

“Elise, how did you and my knucklehead baby brother meet?”

“Well,” I said, then glanced at Castien. He gave me a look, and I knew better to mention the first time. “At work. He was there for an investors’ meeting.”

Bash's mouth dropped open. "Oh, this is the meeting you were talking about with Warner."

I frowned at the mention of Michael Warner's name. I hated that man with a passion. The look didn't go unnoticed. Sebastian caught it then looked at Castien, whose face was void of everything. Typical him when he was trying to keep quiet about anything. They were hiding something. If I wasn't sure about it earlier, then I was sure about it now.

Elise Anais



The flight over comprised of him teasing me, but never enough to have him take to me to the bedroom at the back of the plane. Not with others on the plane. The sexual tension between us was incredibly high. Super intense. More than it usually was between him and I. The entire car ride was a case study on my level of patience. Honestly, it was hard as hell for me not to cross over the bench and onto his lap in the back of the private car and have my way with him as we made our way to the hotel. Thanks to him, I was extremely turned on and it was way too hard for me to be a good girl. I needed him. Craved him like the way I craved a chocolate bar when the evil red lady visited each month. I licked my lips, thinking about warm melted chocolate being poured over his hard cut body and me taking my sweet time licking it off.

I glanced over at him as he talked to the front desk clerk while she checked us in. Her gaze was too thirsty as she kept

looking him up and down. Any other time, my green-eyed monster would have come out, but not today. I didn't blame her for one tiny ounce. The man was sexy, and he knew it. He stood there in a bespoke three-piece black suit, crisp charcoal grey dress shirt, and a black tie. He looked the part of a business mogul. Or a well-dressed criminal. I couldn't decide, but I also knew I didn't care anymore. X was X. What we had together it was the most important thing to us. He wasn't the perfect man, but I was starting to believe he was perfect for me. Hell, plus no one had to tell me about myself because I knew I wasn't perfect either. I couldn't tear my gaze away from him as he stood there and knew if I didn't stop ogling, I would be drooling. Besides, underneath all that was a body made for devilish delight and sin.

A demon indeed.

And it was all mine.

There was something about his presence that had me wanting to drop and spread these thighs of mine every single time the moment the words '*spread them*' dripped off his lips in that special way that had my pussy drenched. Hell, the way I was feeling, I'd do it without him having to ask me.

Speaking of the devil, the object of my daydreaming fantasy turned his head just slightly my way and took me in. The dangerous, sexy smirk he wore so well was on his face lures me in, but it was his eyes that told a different story. Smoldering with intensity and need. My core clenched and fluttered with lustful anticipation.

“Keep thinking those dirty thoughts and we might not make it to the room, Kitten.”

My mouth partially dropped open. I couldn't believe he actually said that out loud and in front of the front desk lady. My eyes cut to hers and watched as her entire face flushed different shades of red.

“You don't know what I'm thinking.” I tried to play off what he said, but knew it was an absolute lie. *He* knew it was a lie, too. His brow rose as if he was questioning me, then the dark chuckle came right after. My aching pussy said it all.

Damn the coming consequences.

He stepped away from the desk while the woman was saying something to him. He ignored her because his attention was fully directed at me. Castien took short, confident strides my way and when he reached me, he leaned in close to my ear. The scent of his woody and spicy cologne was delectable.

“Mmm, you smell so good,” I said, where only he heard me. I couldn't resist. Little kitty was throbbing hard. I was horny as fuck.

He ignored my comment. His lips brushed the lobe of my ears before he bit right under it. “Someone is living dangerously today.”

“I have no idea what you're talking about... *Sir.*” Trying to keep my calm was torture.

Castien's eyes narrowed as he stared at me. The kind that reached deep into my heart and soul. The kind that set fire to

my insides. Sometimes it felt like he knew me better than I knew myself. At times, it scared me.

“I told you earlier if you lied to me again that you were going to be punished.”

I let out a small whimper of eagerness.

He grazed my arm before applying pressure to my biceps. A small gasp slipped past my lips. “When we get to the room, the first thing you need to do is undress.” His eyes traveled down my body as if he was envisioning what it would look like for me to stand in front of him naked. “Leave the heels on. You will stand there presenting yourself to me in the middle of the living room. You’ll stand in position until I say otherwise. Somebody has earned a punishment.”

His voice dripped with intoxicating danger and I couldn’t stop all the dirty thoughts that lived rent free in my head. I couldn’t wait until we got into the room. I was going to strip for him, but if he thought this was going to be a punishment for me, well, he had another thing coming. Two could play this power game. This thing with Castien was everything I needed and yet, he always knew how to take it to the next limit. Castien said nothing else and returned to the desk. My thoughts were all over the damn place. I couldn’t stand still, yet I had to fight against everything. My body and mind were in a frenzy.

The desk clerk didn’t take much longer. If anything, she was efficient. Castien was being extremely nice and flirty to her. The poor woman was so flustered she stuttered every other

word after his little outburst. When he received the keycard and moved away from the desk in my direction, there was a devious smirk on his face. He knew exactly what he was doing. That woman was nothing but putty. And seriously, I totally got it. He had that about him. He was a charmer.

The bellhop came along with all our luggage. Castien said nothing to me as he did a quick head nod towards the bank of elevators. He chatted up the bellhop as I followed him. Even though his attention was on the man with our items, Castien wasn't completely unaware of me. The tension between us had amped up another notch. The ride up to the penthouse was quiet. We had the top floor entirely to ourselves. There were no other suites on our level, and I was beginning to appreciate the finer things of life.

Once we had reached our floor, the doors to the elevator opened after the bell dinged. The bellhop exited first, leaving us in the elevator. Castien lifted his hand and pointed for me to go first. As I walked ahead of him, I put a little extra oomph in the sway of my hips because I knew he was watching. I could feel his eyes burning a hole through my dress. When I heard the low groan coming from him, I knew it worked. I smiled, even though he couldn't see me.

Score! One point for me. Zero for him.

We went inside and I was stunned. The penthouse was elegant. A five-star type of luxurious. I made my way inside and quickly gave myself a tour. There was a full chef's kitchen with everything you could possibly need to cook a full course

meal. The suite had it all. Immaculate dark wood floors, three bedrooms, a dining room with a table that could sit eight, a large furnished terrace, and a Steinway grand piano in the living area. This was bigger than some people's apartments and I knew this must have cost a fortune.

Castien finished with the bellhop while I searched the place, amazed at everything. I've stayed in some fancy places, but nothing ever on this level of plush and lavish.

"Do you like it?" His voice brought me back to the here and now. "This hotel is a favorite of mine."

I stopped near the windows and faced him. Castien stood there watching me. His hands were shoved inside of his pockets. There was too much going on in his head from the way he looked, but the one thing that was for sure. My man was hungry. So was I, and I was more than willing to feed him. "It's beautiful. I love it."

His smile returned as he walked towards me. Castien reached out to touch my face, but stopped. Instead, he circled me like a predator about to devour their prey. He stopped directly behind me, then leaned in really close and placed a kiss on my neck. I held a breath as his soft lips sent a fire straight to my core. "Strip for me, Ms. Jones."

I glanced back as he walked towards the couch. He slowly unbuttoned his jacket and threw it across the back of the sofa. Castien slowly took the cufflinks off each wrist and meticulously rolled up the sleeves of his button-down shirt. The man was delicious as he took his sweet time and

undressed. I never got tired of watching him remove articles of clothing. Especially when he was in his suits. It was the sexiest thing ever. Castien knew what he was doing because his gaze never left mine, wearing that devious grin of his the entire time.

He eased down onto the couch and sat with his legs spread apart. I couldn't help but notice the growing tent between them. I licked my lips and his dark laugh was downright evil.

Sexy, but evil.

“We don't have all night, Ms. Jones. I have plans for us. You can either strip and take your punishment now or add it to the bank and it won't be so pleasing later on. Your choice.”

I made my way to the center of the living room and stood directly in front of him. There was no telling what the punishment would be later, but I didn't want to find out.

My dress was nothing fancy. It was simple yet fashionable and perfect for traveling. Castien pulled his phone out of his pants pocket and pressed something on the screen. The music started low, almost ghostly from the speakers hidden in the penthouse's walls. A seductive and sensuous sound that reminded me of a fusion between hip hop, electronica, and R&B.

“What song is this?” I asked, because it fitted the mood perfectly.

I was more inclined to strip for the man now.

“Angel. It's by Massive Attack.”

I liked it as I swayed my hips to the beat.

“I’m waiting...” he said, his voice husky with desire. With lust.

That he was, so I obliged him his wants. I let the music take over as I began to vibe to it. The only thing on my mind was pleasing the man eyeing me from across the way. The one who made me feel sexier than ever. Reaching to my left side, I grabbed the zipper and pulled it down as I continued to sway to the beat of the song playing.

I passed a hand under my shoulder straps and slowly pushed them down.

“Not too fast...” Castien said, his voice thick with yearning. “Take your time.”

I took my sweet time with taking the dress off. Watching him watching me had my panties soaking wet. I loved seeing his face as the mood consumed him.

Castien unzipped his pants when my dress hit the floor and I stepped out of the crumpled fabric. I stood there in a black lace bra with matching lace panties and a pair of black stilettos. He took his thick shaft out and palmed it. He had the prettiest dick I’ve ever seen with its large mushroom head. I licked my lips because I wanted my mouth wrapped around it. I loved giving him head now that I knew it wasn’t me with the problem.

Back and forth, he lazily stroked himself, as his gaze never left mine. “Now... take the bra off.” His voice had dropped another octave. “Slowly.”

I shifted on my feet and reached behind my back with my left arm to unclasp my bra while covering my breast with my right. I playfully twirled the bra in front of me, then dropped it to the floor.

“Play with them like it’s my hands on them,” he said as he continued to stroke himself with a lazy rhythm. His eyes were heavy lidded as he pleased himself.

I touched my breasts and held them up for him to see. I caressed them as I rubbed and squeezed, just like he would. My nipples hardened when I pinched them, sending sweet pain throughout my body. I was so tightly wound up and needed him inside of me. This was absolute torture, and the man knew it. Castien continued to stroke himself as I flicked and squeezed at my breasts, enjoying the tingling sensations.

His strokes picked up speed, and I couldn’t help but stand there and watch the very masculine show he was giving me. Castien’s eyes had darkened even more. His pouty mouth was partially opened while his faint groans of pleasure filled the space between us.

“Remove the panties,” he demanded hoarsely. I slid my hands down my body like he would. When I reached the top of my bottoms, I slipped my fingers into the top of the band and took my time while I slowly shimmied out of them. “Fuck, Ms. Jones. You are a sight to behold.”

With him, I felt sexier than ever. The insecurities I once had when I was with my exes were long gone. Castien looked at me with lustful adoration. Like I was a goddess he enjoyed

worshipping. I stood there naked as the day as I was born and could feel my essence drip on the inside of my thighs. Watching him pleasure himself was always one of my favorites and he knew it.

“I bet you’re soaking wet for me, aren’t you, baby?” I nodded, not trusting myself with words. “Touch yourself. Show me how wet you are.”

Sliding my hands down my belly and in between the apex of my thighs, Castien’s breath caught. I knew I had him. He wouldn’t last much longer. He was being tortured just as much as I was. Both of us were being punished by him. I inserted two fingers into my pussy, stroking myself before I removed them. I raised my coated fingers up and showed him. Then I shoved them into my mouth and sucked my essence off, wishing it was his lovely dick.

“Damn,” he said, voice gruffer than normal. His eyes were dark as night. He rose from the couch, dick still in his hand, and beckoned me to him with two fingers from his free hand. I sauntered towards him. “Bend over on the couch. Your arms on the back of it, above your head.”

I got onto the couch and into position. Pushing my ass up. Anticipation was a bitch. I’ve been needing him ever since we left for the airport. I was eager to do whatever it was he asked of me at this point if it got me mines at the end.

Castien’s large hands slid along my sides, leaving trails of fire in its wake. “You are so beautiful, Ms. Jones. I’m a lucky man to have this honor,” he said as he lined up to my entrance

from behind. He grabbed my waist, fingers digging into my skin, and pulled me to him. I could feel him at the entrance of my channel. “But you should know, I won’t spank you for now. This is your punishment. You aren’t allowed to come.”

What! I silently shouted in my head as he entered me from behind so hard, I let out a scream. He filled me to the hilt and held still, stretching me as I molded to him. Not being able to come was going to be hard as hell. I was already on the brink of an orgasm as he filled me all the way.

“God, you feel so snug, wrapped around my cock. It’s like you were made for only me.” His thrusts started slowly, but it didn’t take long for him to pick up speed and found his rhythm. He was already worked up from pleasuring himself while watching me undress.

“I’ve been ready to sink into my pussy all damn day.”

Castien had a painful grip on my waist as he plunged in and out. Grunting and growling with each stroke. With each swivel of his hips, his thrusts were rougher. Harder. Just like I liked. The sounds of our fucking filled the room and in tandem with the music still playing. He was hitting all my spots, sending my body into a whirling spiral of pleasurable toe-curling sensations. He had my mind so scattered I thought he was going to actually let me come. I was so close and tittering precariously to the edge of an impending orgasm. Just a few more of his expertly controlled drives, and I knew I wouldn’t be able to contain it. I was going to be floating high somewhere.

He continued to hold on to my waist with his left hand, but his right fondled my breasts as he squeezed them hard. He leaned over my back, the weight a welcome feeling. Low and deep in my core, the building pressure of my impending climax was spreading. I knew I was in trouble. I was going to explode and there was nothing I could do.

“Oh, no you don’t,” he said in between breaths. My walls had a tight hold on him and were milking him hard. Castien quickly pulled out and yanked me around. He shoved me to the ground. “Open wide.”

I eagerly opened my mouth, and he shoved his lengthy steel member inside, hitting the back of my throat. Hollowing my cheeks out, I was greedy and engulfed it all, then sucked as if my life depended on it.

“You like that don’t you,” Cas said. “You like when I shove my cock down your dirty mouth.”

Tears welled up in the corner of my eyes as I choked and bobbed my head. He was right. I loved when he used me like this. Especially when he talked nasty to me like he was. Yes, I was pissed because I couldn’t come, but the joy of having control over him like this sent a thrill down my spine. Made me so wet, I was dripping onto the floor. I couldn’t get any wetter. I loved sucking the man off. His lessons did some good.

Castien’s hips jerked forward when I let my tongue swirl around his head and then took him deeper. He quickly grabbed the back of my scalp, fisting my hair, and guided me as I

bobbed up and down on his dick, working at a faster pace, chasing his end.

His voice was barely recognizable. “Now, swallow it.”

And I did. I swallowed every last bit of him as he let out the deepest growl ever. His body shuddered over me as his orgasm lasted forever.

“You’ll get yours later,” he said, removing himself from me. His chest heaved up and down, like he had run a marathon. “Our bedroom is to the left. Go shower and prepare for a night of fun. I shouldn’t have to remind you that you can’t touch yourself.”

I wiped the corner of my mouth and stood up. I looked at him defiantly, knowing damn well I was tiptoeing on entering being a brat territory.

“I mean it, Ms. Jones. Don’t you dare touch yourself. I’ll know.”

“Yes, Sir,” I answered, almost in a whine because he had me so worked up. Just one touch was all I needed. Instead, I spun on my heels, and in desperate need of a freezing cold shower. Castien slapped my ass as I sauntered past him. At least there was one thing I knew I could depend on. I slyly grinned at him as I walked away from his heated gaze.

I couldn’t wait for my punishment later.

Castien



“Where are we going?” Elise asked. I could tell she was excited. I had been quiet about the activities for the evening. We had a late dinner at the restaurant my brother was a silent partner of. She loved the place and its ambiance. It overlooked the lake, and the view and food were amazing. I timed the dinner perfectly, because after we were done, it would be time for us to head to the exclusive Club Desire.

After Bash had given me the black card a little over a month ago, I contacted the club and restarted my membership when I knew I was coming to Chicago. I just didn’t realize I would bring a partner with me. It’s been a while since I’ve been out on the scene. Normally I would scene with a sub at my penthouse, but Elise was special. I wanted everyone to know she answered only to me. That she belonged to me and me only.

That I belonged to her just as much.

My light in all the darkness.

I didn't tell her about tonight's activities because I wanted it to be a surprise. When we first discussed our relationship, we also went over our lists of hard no's, maybes, and definite yesses of what we were willing to do and try. She wanted to try more exhibitionism and who was I to deny my woman what she wanted? What she needed being who she was.

"It's a surprise, Kitten," I finally answered.

Elise eyed me with curiosity. "Kitten?"

"Yes. *Kitten*. We will play tonight. I'm in the mood. Let me know now if you're not down for it."

She pretended to think about it for the moment, but the moment I called her one of the names I used as her Dom, lust filled her eyes. These moments were what I loved about being a Dom.

What I loved about being her Dominant.

"I'm down for whatever you say we're doing, *Sir*."

"Someone is being a good girl. Keep on being a good girl, and I might let you come tonight." I smirked when her eyes widened with delight at the thought of coming finally. "From this moment on, you will address me as *Sir*."

"Yes, *Sir*."

She would do whatever I wanted at this point. Wanting her in the proper mindset for later on, I pressed the button to raise

the privacy window. “Take your panties off and hand them to me, Kitten.”

Without fail, Elise tugged her dress up, giving me a show, exposing her long, smooth brown legs. I got a great glimpse of her center as she removed the black lace thongs she was wearing. She passed them over when I held my hand out. I sniffed them and resisted the slight groan that was in my chest before balling them up and placing them in my pocket.

“You won’t need those anymore for the evening.” She raised a brow, but I kept my lips firmly closed. Elise was curious about where we were going, but I was keeping tight-lipped. “Move to the bench in front of me. Keep your legs spread wide so I can see *my* pussy.”

She quickly moved to sit directly in front of me. Elise spread her legs wide. “Wider, Kitten. I want to see those lips smiling sideways at me.”

She spread those thighs of hers wider and I couldn’t help the smile that graced my lips. “That’s the prettiest pussy I’ve ever seen. You will keep them like that until we arrive at our destination.”

We didn’t have much longer until we reached the club. Having her exposed to me was just as much torture for me as it was for her. Another ten minutes in the car and I would’ve had my face in her center, taking my fill of her sweet gushy nectar.

The car came to a slow crawl, then a complete stop in front of an industrial looking three story red brick building. Outside the face of the building, the windows were tinted black. I

opened my door and got out of the vehicle. I straightened my clothes, then helped Elise out. The driver handed me the leather bag I had placed in the trunk earlier.

It was late at night with no one around outside. The temperatures were steadily dropping from what they were earlier in the evening. Not wanting to stay out in the cold temps, Elise and I headed into the nondescript building and stopped at the reception desk where a woman with long, wavy blonde hair sat and watched us come in. She wore a bright smile as she eyed Elise, then me. We stopped at the desk where she was.

“Hello, I’m Bethany,” she said enthusiastically. She was an attractive woman, but she was nothing compared to my kitten. “Names?”

“I’m Castien Armstrong, and this is Ms. Elise Jones, my guest.” I handed her the black card with the gold mask on it.

Bethany looked at Elise. “This is your first time here?”

Elise looked at me. She remembered the rules of not speaking to anyone unless I said she could.

“You can speak for now, Ms. Jones,” I told her.

“Yes, this is my first time.”

“Well, let me be the first to welcome you to the world of Club Desire, one of the world’s most exclusive BDSM clubs. We cater to your pleasure and your pain. We have everything you could possibly desire.” Elise’s eyes widened, then cut a glance at me. Bethany took out some paperwork and a pen.

“We are a private club, and all members and guests must adhere to all rules of this establishment. Is that understood?”

“Yes,” Elise and I both said.

It didn't take long for all the paperwork to be completed. I would have gotten her a membership beforehand, but I wanted to wait and see how much she liked the place. Which I had no doubt about. Elise would love the place. She couldn't hide the anticipation showing all over her. I could already tell my kitten was going to shine tonight, like the moon and stars that she was.

After leaving the reception area, we headed into the main area on the first floor where music was playing. Scattered here and there, couples and even singles relaxed and talked while sitting in high back red chairs. Some patrons were at the bar, but there would be no more alcohol for us tonight. I needed my kitten in the proper mindset so we could make the right choices that weren't hindered by being inebriated.

The smell of an aromatic cigar filtered towards us. I wasn't much of a smoker, but now and then, I would light up a cigar. The room was spacious. A couple of shirtless model worthy male waiters wearing nothing but fitted black leather pants hurried past us. Elise's gaze followed them before finding mine. She wore the look of guilt and knew she would be in trouble for it. I may let it slide. Maybe I wouldn't. I had yet to decide. This club played on your senses and that was why I loved it so much.

I pointed to our left where the bank of elevators was. “We’re in the lounge area. Nothing happens down here. That’s for the second and third floor. Behind the bank of elevators are men and women locker rooms. I want you to go change.”

I opened the leather bag I held and took out the smaller bag, which was placed on top inside, and handed it to her. Pointing to the nearest chair, “I’ll be right there when you come back. Don’t take too long, Kitten.”

“Yes, Sir.” She took the bag I gave her and walked off towards the locker rooms. Her luscious hips swayed side to side, and I had to adjust myself yet again as I stared at her. It was going to be a long night.

“Mr. Armstrong.”

My head snapped in the direction I heard my name. Elijah Mason, Club Desire’s owner, walked towards me. “Mr. Mason.”

“I saw you come in. I wanted to welcome you back to the club. I hope you and your lady have a wonderful time tonight.”

I grinned. “I’m sure we will. This place never disappoints.”

“That is the goal,” he said, returning the smile.

Our conversation didn’t last long before he had to leave. I was fine with that because Elise would return soon. I remembered what I had packed in the bag and couldn’t wait to see what she looked like with it on. Fifteen minutes later, I got my wish and was stiff as a board when she walked up to me. I was right. The red looked magnificent on her. She let her hair

down and pushed it over to one shoulder. Elise was an ethereal goddess before me. The way her skin glistened under the light, allowing the red to pop against her perfect brown skin. I couldn't wait until I could bow down at her feet and drink from her fountain of love. But first, the show must go on. My kitten deserved this experience I had planned for her tonight.

I circled her like a panther with its prey. The all red Torrida Silk Bow Louboutins were the perfect addition to the red lace and leather. The top was a red leather and lace harness that crossed over her chest and back with lacy red cups for her breasts, still allowing me a glimpse of her dark nipples. Her bottoms were matching lacy red boy shorts that cut off and curved around her supple round ass.

“Kitten, you got me saying... *‘my, my, my... you sure look good tonight’*.” She gave me that look that said she knew exactly what I was referencing. Oh, yeah... I knew all about some Johnny Gill. It was one of the first songs we actually danced to. The song made me think about her. She looked so good tonight. I couldn't wait to show her off.

“I can't wait to see what you look like with my silk wrapped around you in all the right places.”

Picking up the bag, I led her to the elevators, where we didn't wait long. I pressed the button for the second floor. We entered another large open space with low lighting. Close to the very front, there was an elevated dais. At the far end wall, there was a bed that could be used for scenes, but the scene Ms. Jones and I were doing tonight didn't require the bed.

I led us through the room and found us a seat in the corner away from others. A few couples were in the middle of getting theirs and I caught Elise's gaze watching them as we passed them by. Her eyes were lit up like she hadn't experienced anything like this before. Play parties were one thing... Club Desire was completely another. After sitting, I knew I would have to go over a few things for the scene with her.

I sat down, and Elise dropped to her knees and knelt into position on the floor beside me. "Such a good girl," I said as I let my fingers massage her scalp, then pulled just hard enough to expose her neck and face to me. Her breath hitched. Her eyes met mine. A mixture of heated want resided there. "Tonight Ms. Jones, I will use you how I see fit. I will work you harder than ever before and you will only come when I say for you to come. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, Sir," she answered in a soft breathy whisper.

"Wonderful," I said with delight. "Do you remember your safe words?"

"Yes,"

"What are they?"

"We have the color system. Red, yellow, and green."

"That's my girl. What is the other one?"

She smiled. "Meow."

I leaned forward and kissed her on the lips. "Good. Be at ease. We've a while before our turn to show everyone just how beautiful you are when you give me your submission."



We were the only ones on the raised dais. A table was setup behind us with all the items I required for the scene. I checked it once more before I moved closer to Elise. She had what I would call... an anticipatory excitement aura about her. She didn't know what exactly I had planned, but she knew it would involve others watching us. This was something she had wanted to do for a while and never found the right Dom who would explore her needs and desires.

The room had filled up with more patrons as they realized we were about to do a scene. On more than one occasion, a few men kept watching her. Staring at her and probably wishing she were with them instead of me.

Too bad.

“You look exquisite in my red leather and lace, Kitten,” I said low enough from behind her that only she could hear me. My hands trailed down her sides, following the contours of her sexy curves that I couldn't get enough of. When I reached her ass and squeezed, she let out a soft moan. “See all those people out there? Women wishing they were you. The men wishing they could have you. Taste you. But that will never happen, will it?”

“No, Sir.”

I gently bit the lobe of her ear. “And why is that?”

“Because I am only yours.”

“Damn right, Ms. Jones. I love that you recognize who I am and who this body belongs to.” I tapped her elbows. “Arms up.”

They lowered the chains right before we came up to the dais. Elise raised her arms, and I took her left wrist first, then her right wrist and bound them in the red leather buckles that matched her outfit. I glanced at the person off to the side and they slightly raised the chains, lifting her just enough to where she could stand, but couldn't put her feet down comfortably.

The red spotlight shone down on her, making her the center of attention. I stepped in front of her and caught her gaze. Her mouth was slightly parted. “If I touch you, will my pussy be wet for me?”

“Yes...”

“Yes, what?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Seeing you like this makes me hard as fuck, kitten. I can't wait until I'm able to sink into your lush center and get my fill. I think I will take your sight away for this, too.” I moved behind her and pulled the red silk cloth out of my pocket, covered her eyes, then took a step backwards and got my fill of looks. “You look very nice, Ms. Jones.”

She said nothing, as I knew she wouldn't. I didn't give her permission to speak yet. I went to the table and picked up a two-sided feather crop to start off with. One side would tickle

her and when I was ready, the other side would have her feeling my bite.

Without warning, I took the feather side and gently brushed it down her spine so she would know we had started. Elise jumped at the touch, and I frowned. “You will be still, or I will end the scene and you’ll be punished,” I said firmly.

She stopped squirming. Once I felt we were good to go again, I repeated the action, taking the feather side down her spine again all the way to the top of her tight ass. I moved all around her, tickling all her hot spots, and then I flipped to the crop side and flicked my wrist, allowing the crop to swish in the air and land on her swollen clit. It was just enough pressure to give her a little pain with some added pleasure.

Elise let out a seductive breathy moan, her body asking for more, which caused my dick to grow heavier in my pants, begging to be freed. I kept at it, alternating between the crop and feathers, working her body over the only way I knew how to. And did it hum and sing for me. She was a Dom’s dream. My Elise was a natural submissive, and her submission to me was a beautiful sight to behold.

I was a lucky motherfucker.

My crop had her on the edge and when I shoved my hands down her boy shorts, it did not surprise me to find her slick and greedy as she took my fingers. She wouldn’t hold on for much longer. Her breath hitched after I brushed my thumb over her bundle of nerves, and gave her a few more strokes with my fingers. When she couldn’t take it any longer, I

promptly removed my hand. “Not yet. Your orgasms belong to me. You’ll come when I say come.”

She nodded. Knowing not to say anything.

“You’re doing so well. How are you, Kitten?”

“Green... Sir.”

My lips curled upwards at the corners. I reached out and lightly touched her face. “You’re so beautiful. I love how you look. I wish you could see yourself right now.”

She gave me a blissed out smile and I swore my heart skipped a beat. An overwhelming feeling of emotion came over me and I didn’t know what to do with it, so I stepped away from her. Was it too soon to be experiencing what this was? I wasn’t sure. These feelings were new to me, but with her they felt right. I needed a moment and went back to the table. To get away from her and to gather my thoughts. Get my head back in the proper mindset. I took a deep breath and glanced over the selections that I had brought with us, I picked up the short leather flogger and tested the weight in my hand.

Perfect.

Walking back to her, I rubbed her arms, so she knew it was me, then I began with my whip. Elise loved the flogger and the soft moans and sounds I elicited from her had me ready to bend her over the bed in the corner and take her hard and fast. It didn’t take long for me to whip her into a frenzy. The leather struck her flesh, leaving a reddish mark against her skin in its wake.

Repeatedly, I lashed the back of her thighs. Her back. I made sure not to miss any of her smooth, bare flesh. The fringes of the flogger's tassels brushed against her cheeks, which caused her to lift her butt into the air a little. Elise's breathing had slowly changed. She gasped for a release she wouldn't get as I took her closer and closer to the edge. When I knew she could no longer hold on, I slowed my actions. I never rushed bringing her down and eventually came to a stop. Unable to stop myself, I couldn't help but stare at her with admiration. I was so proud of her and I wanted her climax more than ever, but not here. I didn't want these people to see her orgasms that were mine and mine alone.

"Not yet, love," I murmured softly into her ear as I unbuckled her and let her fall into my arms. This woman. This beautiful, magnificent woman was so amazing. I was so proud of her tonight. At the moment, I knew she was riding the sub high and wouldn't be properly coherent for a little while. She was slow to come down from them. I'd noticed it during the other times we've played. But once she was back in the right mind, we would discuss how beautiful she did tonight. The attendant who was helping me grabbed all of our things and showed me to a private room where I could lay Elise down and attend to her aftercare.

Elise Anais



This was by far the best week I've had in a very long time. The last couple of years had been so busy and filled with work that I never took any time for myself. Perhaps this was what Yuen kept talking about. I needed to take a break every so often. Refresh and reset my body and mind. After this week, I planned on making this my new resolve and start using my actual vacation time more often.

The other delightful side of this trip was the man who wormed his way into the very fabric of me. Castien was the perfect gentleman. The perfect Dom. I saw a completely different side to him and although it wasn't so obvious at first, but this week made me realize I was in love with the man. I wasn't the type of person who thought you had to be with someone for months or years before you admitted you loved them. Love was timeless. I had always believed it to be that way. From the corners of my eyes, I glanced at him. Yes...

strange as it was, I loved the man unequivocally. What I thought I had with Marquez was nothing like what I had with X because he saw me for me and accepted it all.

Both of the brothers were in a hushed conversation with each other, but that was fine because I was so lost in my mind, I didn't even feel like being nosy. Once we land back in Seattle, all the problems I had left behind were still going to be there, haunting me. I still hadn't figured out how I was going to fix it. How I was going to get rid of Marquez for the last time.

Overhead, the pilot told us to prepare for landing. Fifteen minutes later, once we were cleared to land, the wheels of the plane hit the runway harder than normal. I had lurched forward and Castien quickly reached out with his arm and kept me from falling over. I squeezed his hands in thanks after the plane slowed, then came to a full stop.

There was no way to really explain it, but the closer we got back home to Seattle, the more unsettled I felt. I couldn't pinpoint it, but something wasn't right. Everything was just off, and I hated the feeling.

We exited the plane and four blacked out SUVs were waiting for us. Two of the suits went to the first vehicle and two more went to the last vehicle while two more got into the vehicle with Sebastian. I eyed Castien, but that blank, emotional mask he wore when he was keeping secrets had made a reappearance. The remaining two suits got into the vehicle with us.

I got into the ride first while Castien followed me. We took off from the airport. Not sure why, but I had a feeling I needed to tell him what was going on with Marquez.

“Hey Castien, we need to talk.”

He looked at me strange then sighed. “Yes, we do.”

“I’ll go first,” I said. He reached for my hand and held it. “I didn’t know how to bring this up, but I can’t go another day with this on my mind. The only other person who knows is Yuen. I haven’t even told my brother.”

“Your brother?”

“Yeah, my brother.” I rested my head against the headrest before looking at him. “Learning about you wasn’t so surprising after thinking about it. You had this type of dark energy about you. The same as my brother.”

Castien stared at me, but he understood exactly where I was getting at. “This brother of yours. What’s his name?”

“Treon is what I call him. The name he goes by is Vice.” Recognition flared in X’s eyes. “You know of him?”

“If it’s the same Vice that holds Northern California, then yes, I do. Never came across him, but I know of him. So does Bash. This is good...” he said that last part quietly to himself. “This whatever you need to tell me is bad enough that you couldn’t even tell your brother, who, by all accounts, could have fixed or solved it?”

I nodded, hating that he was right, and I still didn’t do anything to fix it on my end. “Yup. My brother tends to go

overboard when it comes to me. I didn't want things to get bloody or deadly.”

“Then we will get along just fine, because I feel the same way. Sometimes a little bloodshed and death does everybody some good.” Castien caught my gaze. “I will burn the world for you, Elise. Don't you ever doubt that.”

He said his words with so much conviction that an icy chill slid down my spine. This wasn't just Castien speaking to me. No, this was *Erebus*. The cold-hearted bastard that no one wanted to fuck with.

“I'm being blackmailed.” I finally admitted. I rubbed my hands across my thighs. My heart was racing. I knew what I said next was major. I could already tell by the way X was staring at me. “By Marquez.”

“WHAT?” he roared. The suits sitting in front of us slightly looked back at us but said nothing.

“Calm down,” I whispered.

“You want me to calm down when that asshole is a dead man walking? I'm going to kill him. This all makes sense.” He looked at me hard. “How is he blackmailing you?”

“The day after you and I met, he came storming over to my house. Woke me up. Gave me an envelope with pictures of me in compromising positions at a play party. He had some of Yuen too. He wants controlling stock of the company, making him a majority owner or else he will release the pictures.”

“How in the hell did he get pictures of you at a party? Those things are iron clad. No cameras are allowed. Is he in the lifestyle, too?”

“No, which is why I haven’t been able to establish how he got the pictures.”

Castien got quiet. The wheels were turning in his head. He was on to something and the way he worked his bottom lip when he was overthinking was cute against the hardness of him. Then his eyes widened. “That motherfu-”

He didn’t have time to finish whatever he was about to say because the suits in front of us began to frantically shout at something. Time moved in slow motion when the feeling of wrongness hit me at an all-time high. I turned to my left to look out the window when I saw a pickup truck coming at us extremely fast.

Castien tried to grab me and move me to the other side, but it was too late. The truck T-boned us, causing us to jerk around hard in the backseat. As glass shattered, the sound of twisting metal filled my ears, along with the screams of myself and others in the vehicle. The SUV we were in took a hard tumble, flipped to its side, then rolled over and over until it finally stopped.

The remaining high pitch screaming I heard took me entirely too long to realize it was me. The sound of pain filled grunts and moans permeated the cabin of the car. Gradually, I opened my eyes and saw Castien slumped over next to me.

Blood streamed down the sides of his face. His chest slowly rose up and down. I let out a sigh of relief.

I tried to move, but everything felt like it was on fire. Immense pain consumed me, but looking at my man sprawled out unconscious was not what I wanted to see. “Baby... Cas... wake up,” I managed to barely get out.

Jagged glass had cut across my skin, piercing my clothes. Unable to see what it was because of the way I was positioned, but it felt like a piece of metal had gouged my side. Reaching down, I touched something cold and sharp, causing an intense pain to radiate from it. My shaky fingers came away sticky with warm blood.

Damn it!

I was lightheaded, and yet I tried to fight through it and stay awake, but it was so hard. My limbs were heavy. Everything spun around me while my head pounded like a bass drum. The unmistakable sound of gunfire sounded too close had me realizing we weren't safe yet, but there wasn't anything I could do. The darkness took a firm hold over me and I couldn't help but succumb to its embrace.

Castien



“I don’t care what you have to do, but you need to find her,” I thought I heard Sebastian tell someone, but I wasn’t sure. Everything hurt. I tried opening my eyes but didn’t have the strength to even do that. Who did he have to find?

“Elise...” I called out, but received no answer.

I forced my eyes open to find myself alone in a darkened room. Enough light from the hall filtered into the room, allowing me to sort of see. My vision was slightly blurry. Searching around, I didn’t recognize the place. I tried to sit up, but failed, and fell back onto the pillow behind me. My head felt like it was being squeezed to a pulp. I needed to know what was going on.

Where was Elise?

I forced myself to get up this time. No longer caring about the blurry vision or the pounding headache. Everything started

to slowly trickle to an understanding in my mind. Last I remembered, we were in a car accident. A truck or something had run right into us on her side.

God, I hope she was okay. Please be okay.

After pulling the covers back, I swung my legs around to the side of the bed. The room spun in fast circles, and I gripped the side of the bed to steady myself so I wouldn't topple over.

The moment I put weight on my legs and stood up, the door to the room slammed open. Sebastian came storming into the space and quickly grabbed me before I fell on my face.

“Why are you up? You are supposed to be resting because you hit your head pretty damn hard. You have a concussion.”

“Elise. Where is she? Why isn't she here with me?”

Bash rubbed the back of his neck. “Listen Cas, we need to talk.”

Whenever my brother said those words, it was never good. I wasn't a praying man, but I sent a prayer up to whoever listened that my woman was okay. “Just spit it out, Bash.” I also wasn't a patient man. Not one to pussyfoot around. Just tell me whatever I needed to know and I would do whatever to fix and solve the problem.

Bash led me to a chair and told me to stay put. “Gimme a second, will ya?”

“Fine,” I grumbled. I needed the momentary respite myself. My energy levels were shot to hell.

Sebastian went out the door and was only gone for a few minutes before coming back into the room with Leo, Miguel, and his personal guard, Dane. A sunken feeling found purchase in the pit of my stomach. Their faces were grim, and I knew the news was bad. Why else wouldn't Elise be here?

“You know I'm not one to bullshit around. Especially when it comes to family. That includes my future sister-in-law,” Bash said.

I looked at him strangely. Sister-in-law? We weren't there yet, but there was no doubt that I loved her. There was no one else for me. I knew that with every fiber of my being now. Elise was my everything and I couldn't lose her after just finding her. She was my small piece of calm in this turbulent storm I called life. I was bound to her just as much as she was bound to me.

“You can sit there and keep silent all you want, but I'm not such a hardass where I can't see when two people are in love, Cas. She's good for you and I am so happy that you found it. Finding love is scarce for people like us. Especially when the one loving you accepts everything about you.”

Leo and the others subtly nodded their heads in agreement. Bash had a point, but I wasn't ready to concede that to him just yet.

“That's why we are going to find her and rain hell down on these streets, so these assholes know not to touch my family.”

I clenched my fists until they hurt. “Who has her? Is she still alive?”

“She’s alive,” Leo said. A kid showed up at one of the clubs with a picture and a message.

“Who sent the kid, and what did the message say?” I asked between clenched teeth. I was trying to rein in my anger, but it was hard to temper it down right about now.

“That she’s alive. For now. They want a meeting with Erebus.”

“Don’t they know if they get a meeting with Erebus that they’re meeting with Death? There’s no leaving the meeting with breath in their lungs.”

“They know. They said if they die, so does the woman.”

“FUCK!” I shouted.

“It’s one of Marconi’s...” Miguel said, finally answering my question. “I saw the mark on his arm.”

Everyone was going to pay. I pushed myself out of the chair and shoved off the help of my men and brother. I looked at Bash and met his gaze. “Everybody dies. I’ll meet them, but they’re going to pay for it. I think I know who is behind this and they’re secretly Marconi’s men, too.”

“Who?”

“Marquez Jacobson. He is Warner’s man.”

“Why does that name sound familiar?”

“Warehouse. Kid named Marcellus.”

“Yeah...”

“Well, Marquez is his older brother. Didn’t I tell you this already?” My brother made a face and was about to speak, but I stopped him. I had to finish. “Right before we got hit, Elise confessed she was being blackmailed by Marquez. He’s her ex, remember? He’s trying to get full control of her company. Somehow, he has compromised pictures of her and her business partner, and threatened to release them if they don’t give him majority control.”

“Wait... your woman is sleeping with her business partner?”

“No. They’re in the lifestyle. These pics are of them separately. But if those get out, their company would take a major hit and they would have to step down. Her company is about to blow up and they know this. It’s a literal gold mine.”

“OH! Is that how you really met her? I mean... I noticed the look she gave you on the plane when I asked.”

“Oh, my god... Focus! Now is not the time, Bash, but yes. We were masked, so I didn’t know who she was, and she refused to tell me her name. I recognized her voice at the meeting.”

“Damn... Much later, I’m going to need the full story because this sounds like a helluva party.”

“It was. Ask Nicole. It was her damn party.”

He frowned and shook his head. “Nope... you know I ain’t asking her a damn thing.”

“Anyway Bash, we’re getting off topic.”

“Sorry, man.”

I shook my head. “Whatever. The thing is, Michael Warner brought him in, and I know Warner dabbles and attends those parties. He’s the only way Marquez would have gotten those pictures. Marquez despises the lifestyle. Elise doesn’t like Warner. She’s seriously uncomfortable around him.”

“Fuck!” Bash drew air in between his teeth. “That’s some shady shit for real, bro.”

“Yes, it is. That’s why I’m about to go scorched earth on all of them. I am going to take and destroy all their assets. Livelihoods. I’m going to decimate them and Marconi’s entire organization for fucking with mines.”

Bash gave me a lopsided grin. “We. *We* are going scorched earth.”

“Thank you. I appreciate this.” I said to him.

“No need to thank me. This is what family does for one another.”

A sudden thought hit me. “Damn it. We need to contact Elise’s brother. He needs to know what happened to her.”

“Sure thing. Give me his number, and I’ll call him,” Bash said.

I shook my head. “I don’t know his number. Right before she told me about being blackmailed, she told me who her brother is and check this out. Her brother is Vice.”

Bash’s mouth dropped open. “No way. Vice? The *Vice*? Crazy Vice down in Cali?”

“The one and only.”

“This ride is getting wilder and wilder.”

“Tell me about it,” I said.



Twelve hours had gone by since I woke up at Bash’s safe house, which meant that it had been an entire twenty-four hours since they snatched Elise from me. Apparently, after the accident, I was unconscious for quite a while. Everyone was worried. I woke up, and that was all that mattered, because I was determined to get my woman back. Finishing up the others was just icing on the cake.

Through the proper channels, Bash got in contact with Vice. He was on his way to my house near the coast now. I didn’t know how the conversation went, but Bash assured me he was pissed off. The coast was where I had only my most trusted with me. It wasn’t far from the warehouse, and I knew for a fact that it was about to be put to some serious use.

I employed only the best. The companies that were legit were private security firms, and of course, my AI technology firms. I had some of the best hackers on my payroll. My private security firms were elite and top of the list in private security all around the world. World leaders used my services, and they didn’t come cheap.

I had faith in my people and that was why I stood in the middle of the room watching Marlowe, Tristan, and Shade do their thing. My estate had levels and sublevels. Currently, we

were on sublevel two. It was protected from distractions. I had rows of servers behind glass walls and my small crew of hackers used them to get into anything. Right now, they were tracking Michael Warner and Marquez Jacobson's digital footprints. I was unraveling those two lives with keystroke by keystroke. I wanted to know every single thing about them. Then, when I was done with that, I was going to bring down the hammer and bury them to never be found again.

"I got something, X," Shade said. He was a scrawny man with long black hair. He kept to himself, but he never let me down whenever I needed him.

"What you got?"

"Warner. He hasn't moved from this spot in the last twelve hours."

"Are you able to hack the cameras in that area and see what's there?"

"Easy as pie," Shade spun around in his chair. "By the way, do you have any cheesecake or pie here, boss? You have everything else. I got a sweet tooth from out of this world."

I chuckled. "Find me Warner and Jacobson, Shade, and I'll get you all your favorite pie or cheesecake."

"You've said nothing but the magic word. I work for food." Shade's fingers were a flurry against the keyboard. I stood back and watched the screens he was using and, in a blur, tabs of satellite images opened up as he did his thing. Shade was a creepy, smart-ass magician when it came to computers. About

five minutes went by before everything slowed down and I was looking at my woman. They had her in some type of cell. She was bandaged and beat up, but she was alive.

All I saw was red.

I said nothing as I pulled out my phone and called Bash. He picked up on the first ring. “Get down here,” I managed to get out calmly, then hung up. He knew where I was while he was waiting for Elise’s brother to get here. Vice didn’t know who I was. Not yet. He only talked to my brother, who gave him his street name Sin, and he didn’t give him much details after that except that his sister was in trouble. We never met. Hell, I didn’t know Elise had a brother until yesterday. It would be best if he met Bash first, because I was down here trying to find her. We needed intel before bringing him into the fold. If the checks on him came back clean, then we would see about him meeting Erebus.

Ten minutes later, Bash ambled into the room with Dane and Leo behind him. “What did you find?” he asked.

I pointed to the screen. “Shade found her.”

Bash and the men glanced at the monitors and cursed under their breath. “Where is that?” my brother asked.

Shade tapped on his keys a few more times. “Close to the Canadian border. He’s in Bellingham.”

It could be a trap, but honestly, I didn’t think Warner was that smart. I paced back and forth, going over my options. My people trusted me to lead them right and I couldn’t lead them

into something that could be life ending. I glanced back at the screen and watched my woman shiver like she was cold. Dark splotches on her skin were evidence of bruises. Her clothes were bloodstained.

The longer I stared, the more pissed off I became.

The stream was live, so everything was in real time. A male figure walked into the room, and I realized it was Warner. He got closer to her and said something, but she shook her head. He raised his hands and slapped her face. Seeing her battered did something to me. I couldn't let this abide while I watched. I looked back over my shoulders. "Leo, you know what to do."

"What about her brother?" Bash asked, interrupting me.

After finding out where she was, I didn't want to wait much longer. She didn't deserve to be there. "When should he be here?"

"Another hour or so." He shrugged. "Maybe less. He was already in Portland. He said he needed to handle some business and then he would be on his way."

"I'm not waiting on him to get here when we know where she is at. I don't trust them," I shouted.

"We'll get her back. I promise, but we need to be here when he shows up."

I yelled and kicked the empty stool that was in front of me. Marlowe flinched, but she kept on doing what I was paying her to do. I took a deep breath. "This is what we'll do. He has

an hour. You call and tell him we found her. That I'm leaving with my people, whether or not he's here."

"Fine." Bash shook his head, but walked off to make the call to Elise's brother.

"Leo, get the team ready. You know how I do. I want to be on the road in an hour. By the time we get there, it'll be close to sunset. We'll wait until dark, then we are going in fast, hard and hot. I don't plan on leaving any witnesses. Fuck having a meeting. They want to meet Erebus, then they will. On my fucking terms. I plan on burning everything down to get my woman back."

Castien



We were getting into the car when Elise's brother finally arrived. He got out and instantly I saw the resemblance between the two. He had two men a step behind him as he walked towards Sebastian and I. Vice was a tall man and was dressed in all black, similar in the same fashion as my brother. I had a feeling they were going to get along just fine.

“Which one of you is Sin?” He looked between the both of us but stopping at my brother.

Bash had on a leather jacket and a pair of ripped jeans and boots. He looked like the badass that could relate to Vice, while I looked the total opposite in my suit sans the jacket. Which my woman loved me in, so why not come to her aid in my version of a dark cape?

Vice and Bash shook each other's hands. “Thanks for calling me about my sister. I appreciate that a lot. We only

have each other and I've been trying to look out for her ever since our mom died when we were kids. I never trusted that asshole Marquez. He was always suspect to me, but she was like he was cool. You know how it is. I indulge my little sister. She's all I got."

"I get it, man," Bash said and looked at me. "I'm the same way about my baby brother."

The man called Vice studied me, then held out his hand, and we shook. "I'm Vice. Well, the name is Treon, but everyone calls me Vice."

"I'm Castien." I didn't volunteer any more information.

"How you know my sister, Castien? Sin told me over the phone that it was you who told him to find me."

"Elise is my lady friend."

He grinned as he looked me up and down. "Oh, she got her a white boy this time. At least she got a rich one. Listen, if I find out you're doing her wrong, I'll put you six feet under, pretty boy. Nothing against you, ya know. It's my obligatory big brother speech, but I mean every word."

I understood what he meant, but I still didn't like the subtle disrespect and got into his face. I wouldn't back away. A cold darkness washed over me. I didn't care who the person was, but they weren't going to threaten me in my face and think they would get away with it without me saying anything. I understood he was my woman's only family member, and that

was the only reason I toned it down and let him live. But he still wasn't getting off too easy.

"I would like to see you try," I said too calmly.

My words were enough. We stared into each other's eyes in a show of dominance, but he didn't know me and what I would or wouldn't do.

"I like you," he said before laughing. "Why you in a suit, Bro? I thought we were about to go wreck some shit to get my sister back."

I donned the suit jacket I was holding. "I wreck shit in three-piece suits. They wanted a meeting, so I'm giving them the meeting they asked for."

"A meeting?" His gaze bounced between me and Bash.

"They wanted to meet Erebus," Bash told him.

Vice's eyes widened. "Don't they know that's a death wish? Nobody knows who that crazy motherfucker is. Whoever meets Erebus never comes out alive. I'm not that curious to request a meeting with whoever they are. I mind mine and make sure not to get on their radar."

"Too late," I said. "You've already met him."

Vice looked at me weirdly, then at Bash, who was grinning. Acknowledgement lit up his eyes. He crossed his arms over his chest. "Aww shit, you're Erebus?"

"The one and only."

He laughed. “Damn, this is getting crazier by the minute. First, I hear from the infamous Sin. Oh yeah, we know all about you down in Cali. Now, I’m learning that he is the brother to *the* Erebus. I ain’t saying shit to no one. Your secret is safe with me and them.” He pointed to his men. “My sister sure knows how to pick them.”

If only he knew exactly what I enjoyed doing to his sister, he may rethink his thoughts. We finished the pleasantries and loaded up the vehicles and left my estate. It was going to be a drive, but it gave us time to come up with the plan and how it would be executed. By the time we reached Bellingham’s city limits. Everything was a go.

We rolled up on Warner’s gated estate. My men rammed the gates and sped through. Alarms went off, but it didn’t stop us. Warner had a lot of men here, but I knew they were supplied by Marconi. He was in deep with him, and this only proved it. I was unbothered, because while he had lifelong gangsters, I had paid ex-soldiers turned personal security on my payroll. There was no contest.

The SUV we were in kept to the back while the four others that came with us got out and started shooting, returning the fire that was hailing down on us. The earpiece in my ear crackled to life as Leo and Miguel spoke to me through it. Both were the heads of their own teams, and their objective was to find Elise and the two assholes who snatched her.

“I got that mofo, Marquez,” Vice said from beside me. He pulled out the gun he had at his waist and loaded it. “I’ve been

itching to pull the trigger on him since my sister found him in their bed with two other women cheating, then acted like she was the problem. He didn't deserve her."

"He's been a dead man walking ever since I saw him get handsy with her. Only reason I didn't do it then was because we were in public, and cameras were all around. I have an image to uphold."

Vice cut a glance at me. The rage I saw there mirrored mine. "The fuck! Naw, he breathed entirely too damn long. Sometimes I'm a saint, but today he's about to meet the reaper."

That was one thing he and I could agree on. The assault on us came to an eventual slow, grinding halt as my forces decimated the borrowed Marconi's. My men spread out, searching for stragglers, which left us with one last team. They circled us as we walked into Warner's vacation home, stepping over dead and dying men.

"Leo has both Warner and Marquez at gunpoint with his team," I said when we entered the foyer of the house. "Found them hiding in a safe room. Miguel just found Elise. I'm going to see her now. You all head to where Leo is at. Go up the stairs and all the way down the hall and make a right. You'll see our men. They'll take you to them."

Vice came up to my side. "I'm going with you."

Who was I to deny the man from seeing his sister? We both loved and cared for her in some type of way. "Come on."

We followed the instructions that were given to me by Miguel when I paused. “We’re being watched,” I whispered, pointing to my right. It looked like Warner still had men stumbling around here. If we kept going, we would be in the open with no cover.

Slight movement caught my eyes, and I counted three people waiting. I held up three fingers so only Vice could see them. With a barely there head shake, he held up five fingers. He was at an angle where he was able to get a better view than I could.

“On my mark,” I said while I reached inside of my jacket and pulled out the twin custom platinum plated Sigs. “NOW!”

With the quickness, we rounded the corner and started shooting. A bullet whizzed past my head. I flattened myself against the wall and crouched. The bullet missed me by a hairsbreadth. I saw the man who shot at me. I raised my right hand, aimed, and pulled the trigger. Bullet hit him between the eyes. He went down with a loud thud. I did it twice more, taking out the two others I had seen at first glance. Vice finished the others. We made quick work of them, but I wouldn’t be satisfied until I was sure they were truly dead. I sped over to each one, keeping my weapons out, just in case somebody else popped out of hiding to take us down.

“You good?” Vice asked.

“Yeah. Let’s hurry and get the hell out of here. The longer we’re here, the more danger we are in with getting caught.”

“Say no more.”

The hall took a turn where we passed the kitchen. I kept alert as I looked for anyone else hiding in the shadows, but it was clean by the time we reached the door that led downstairs into the basement where the cells were.

“Over here, Boss,” Miguel shouted.

I ran towards where they were. Miguel had gotten her out and gave her a blanket. “Elise!” I called out to her.

Her head shot up and tears welled at the corners of her eyes before they fell in a stream down the side of her face. “X. You came for me!”

I darted to her and carefully held her in my arms. “I will always come for you, baby. No matter what. I told you I would burn the world for you, and I meant it.”

She cried into my chest, and I rubbed comforting circles on her back. “I didn’t think I would see you again. I didn’t think I would have the chance to tell you how I really felt.” Elise continued to sob, but looked up at me. “I love you Castien. I love you so much.”

“I know, Kitten. I love you too.”

“Ahem...” Vice cleared his throat.

Elise wiped her face, then peeked around my side and gasped. “Treon! What are you doing here?”

“Helping your boyfriend save your ass, Babygirl.” That got a small laugh from her. “I’m glad you’re still alive, Elise. But that motherfucker Marquez isn’t about to be.”

“It was Warner. Marquez is just dumb as hell and went along with whatever.”

“I know,” I said. “He had put a hit out on you. That’s why we were in the accident. They were trying to kill you, but when they found you alive, they snatched you and took you to Warner. I figured it out after I woke up from the accident.”

“I’m going to kill him,” she growled.

“No, you’re not. That’s my job.”

Elise sighed. “Fine. I’m tired, hungry, and I hurt. Can we go now?”

“Soon. I gotta finish one last thing with your brother, then we’re going to leave. Miguel is going to help you to the car. Get you checked out. Are you okay to walk?”

“Yeah. I’m good,” she said. Her voice sounded detached, and I didn’t like that at all.

I grabbed her chin and kissed her. The kiss soothed the anxiousness that had gotten the better of me while she wasn’t in my presence. She let out a soft sigh, and I knew she had felt the same.

Miguel helped her up the stairs, and we followed closely on their heels. “Let’s finish this,” I said to Vice once we reached the top of the steps from the basement.

“Say no more.” He waved his guns in the air with a wide grin on his face.

Leo and Bash had brought down Marquez and Warner and had them both tied to chairs in the living room. I wanted to hear them beg for mercy, so I had their mouths not gagged.

Vice and I walked into the living room. Warner noticed us and frowned. Marquez kept a permanent scowl on his face when he recognized Vice standing beside me.

“Mr. Armstrong. What are you doing here?” His eyes darted all around as he tried to understand what was going on. It was obvious as day and night that he was putting on a show, pretending to be oblivious. It wasn’t working.

“Cut the bullshit, Warner. You wanted a meeting with Erebus, so you got it.”

Michael Warner stuttered as he tried to talk his way out of the situation, but I had enough to deal with. I had my woman back, and I wanted to go to her. I really had nothing to say to the man. He messed that up when he put a hit out on Elise. “Now that you’ve met me... say good night.”

Warner sputtered and started crying. “Please don’t do this. I’ll give you whatever information you need on Aurelio Marconi.”

“I think I am good with that information. Although, I applaud your efforts.”

“Are you sure? I know about his operations. What he’s dipping into next and why it was your family that he targeted back then.”

Bash stepped next to me. “What the fuck you on about Warner?”

He looked at my brother. “I was further up in the organization than you realize. I know why your club was shot up two years ago in Chicago. When you got caught in the crossfire and was hurt. It was Aurelio. All the documents and transcripts are in my safe. They explain everything. I kept it all, you know... as insurance.”

“Where’s this safe?” Bash asked.

“Back there. On the wall underneath the painting.”

Bash went to where Warner told him and lifted it up. “What’s the code?”

Warner rattled off the numbers. It took Bash no time to get into the safe and pull out a couple of folders. He went through it and found flash drives, a few diamonds, and signed paperwork. “Is this it?” my brother asked him.

“Yes. That’s everything,” he said, as if he was relieved.

“Dont get too happy. You still did some shady mess putting a hit out on my woman and for that, you won’t see the next sunrise. Try again next life, Warner.” I shot him in the head. Double tapped him in the chest, then put my weapons away.

“You’re Erebus!” Marquez shouted in disbelief. It took him long enough to figure it out. “You killed my brother, asshole!”

I caught his gaze. My voice lowered to a frigid coldness. “He shouldn’t have tried to fuck me over. The only person I

liked being fucked by is Ms. Jones. May his soul rest in peace,” I said before turning and walked away.

“I already warned you before, Marquez, about my sister and you didn’t listen.” I heard Vice tell Marquez after he moved to stand in front of him.

“I would never harm her, Treon. I swear. I love her.”

“You didn’t love her enough,” Vice said. I looked back over my shoulder to see him raise the barrel of his gun to the center of Marquez’s forehead and double tapped him.

Good riddance.

I walked out the front door of the house and towards the car where my woman was waiting. They wrapped her up in a blanket. Miguel stood at her side. I heavily sighed. The war had already begun the moment Aurelio killed my family, leaving just Sebastian and myself. This was just another battle towards our ultimate goal. I think we finally found what we needed from Warner’s safe. I couldn’t wait to discover what it was. But for now, it had to wait. There was only one thing on my mind more important than anything, and she was standing next to my vehicle watching me. The thought of losing her had me going crazy inside. I knew I would be lost without her. I knew that for sure now. Elise was my everything.

My men waited in groups outside of the waterfront house. I looked all around at the dead and dying. It was total chaos. I turned to one of my guys beside me. “Burn it all down. He doesn’t need it anymore.”

Epilogue

Four Months Later...



Castien

My eyes traveled over her body as I took a step back to admire my handiwork. I had just finished with the last of her binds. The way the red rope contrasted deliciously against her mahogany skin did indescribable things to me.

“You look so beautiful, Ms. Jones.”

She really did.

Elise responded well as I took my time and focused on her while I used my rope to bind her. I started with a peach waist tie I knew would look seductive and elegant on her. She was a goddess in my eyes and had the perfect goddess given assets to pull it off. I traced a finger over the rope, starting at the base of her spine, where I had placed the knot where all the rope ends converged. I continued down as the red rope perfectly lined and angled across her lush backside, then cuffed her thighs

right under her cheeks. Her body slightly trembled at my feather light touch. I knew she would be hypersensitive at this point. Exactly how I wanted her. I bent down and placed a kiss on each cheek, the scruff of my 5 o'clock shadow tickling her skin, while I showered her with my adoration and reverence. No one had to tell me I was a lucky man to be standing here. I almost lost her and if that would have happened, I would have been no good.

My kitten was so beautiful in her submission. Placing my hands on her hips, I helped turn her around to face me so I could get a better view of her front side. I had bound her chest with a diamond harness tie with a flower weave, making it look more decorative and pretty. The way the knots and rope crossed against her skin and curved underneath her breast was some of my finest work. It only added to her ethereal beauty.

“Ms. Jones, you look picture perfect. I bet you wish you could see what you look like.”

She gave me a lazy smile. The one I loved so much. “Yes, Sir...”

“Maybe later...” I said and leaned over her. Starting from her hips, I kissed every bare inch of her glistening skin until I reached the base of her throat, then up her neck and found my center and home with her lips. Her back arched as I pinched and pulled on her nipples. She softly gasped when my hands went further south and slightly teased her slick folds before entering her with my fingers. She was wet and ready, but I couldn't take her. Not yet. I had to do one last thing first.



Elise

I didn't think I could ever be more content than I currently was. After the incidents that happened a few months ago with Warner and Marquez, I took a leave of absence from work because it really played a number with my head. I was nowhere near in the right frame of mind to lead a company, create games, let alone deal with the trauma I experienced. Being in a terrible car accident. Kidnapped. Injured from the wreck, then Warner had the audacity to lay his hands on me multiple times. He and Marquez both. They deserved all the smoke that came their way.

The nightmares were less frequent nowadays. I thank counseling and therapy for that. Along with my friends and family. Jaz and Yuen have been so supportive. Even my brother stayed around Seattle for a while before heading back to California. I was in a much better mindset and even told X that I was ready to play again. This weekend was the last weekend before I actually went back to work and the first time I've felt comfortable being in the darkroom.

Now, here we were while X worked my body into a frenzy. With the rope, my body was afire with sensations that had me floating. Felt like I was on a sensual cloud nine, craving more and more.

"Your body knows who it belongs to and sings only for me," he said before removing his fingers and I whimpered

from the absence of them. I was so close to coming and he knew it.

“Not yet, love. I want to be inside of you when you come all over my cock.”

I pouted, then whined a little.

“Somebody is being a little brat today.” He flicked my nipple. I moaned at the sharp sting, then the addictive pleasure in its wake. “Patience is a virtue, Kitten.”

“I know, Sir... but it’s been so long,” I whined, knowing it would not change his mind. He had given me permission to speak freely before we started the scene. Plus, it had been so long. He hadn’t let me climax all damn week. The depravation shit was for the birds.

His dark chuckle didn’t do any good to my throbbing pussy. “You want to come, Kitten?”

“God, yes!” I said, exasperated. Castien came and stood over me looking fine as fuck in the three-piece suit I loved for him to wear, and here I was, tied up and unable to touch him or do a thing while bound in the red rope he loved so much. I didn’t know what it was, but my heart pounded hard as I stared up at him. My breath hitched at his commanding presence. It was so overpowering, and I couldn’t help but squirm under his dark, heavy-lidded gaze. He was just as affected as I was. The large tent in his pants agreed with me.

He caught me looking at his covered erection and smirked. “Be a good girl, Kitten. I might let you have a taste.”

“Yes, sir.” I would definitely be a good girl because taking him with my mouth empowered me. To have the ability to allow him to be vulnerable while I gave him pleasure. Allowed him to just feel with his body. And that moment when he was about to come, whew, the shit was hot as fuck. I licked my lips. He grinned at me. He knew exactly what I was thinking.

“But first... you have to answer something for me.” He shoved his hands into his pockets and watched me.

“Anything, sir.”

I don’t know what it was, but there was joy and love in his eyes. Determination. Possessiveness all in one and I had no clue what brought it on. I watched as Castien pulled his hands out of his pocket and held a small black box, then opened it as he fell to his knees before me. “Ms. Elise-Anais Jones, will you marry me?”

There was no point in even thinking about it. He promised to burn the world for me and meant it. He was my missing half, and I would be so lost without him. “Yes... so, so, so much, yes!”

“I am extremely honored, my love.” He leaned forward and kissed me hard, giving me all of him in the only way he knew how. Somehow, the hard man that scared even the toughest asshole had found me and bound me with his unwavering love.

About Author



L.D. Black is an author of diverse Paranormal Romance & Urban Fantasy novels. Her love for all things mythological and the supernatural helps her create so many wild and crazy stories that will keep you coming back for more and more. Just add heroines with plenty of strength, sass, and can hold their own in a fight, along with their very yummy looking alpha males who will do anything to protect theirs. A healthy dash of steamy passion with enough fire to make you need a fan to cool off, and you will satisfy a craving you didn't realize you had.

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Epilogue

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