

BLOOD BROTHERS  
PART TWO

DEADLY  
*Ties*

ROXY COLLINS



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# **Deadly Ties (A Reverse Harem Shifter Omegaverse)**

## **Blood Brothers – Part Two**

**By Roxy Collins**

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Deadly Ties is a full-length shifter Omegaverse reverse harem romance and is the second book in the Blood Brothers duet. If you are unsure what this means, please check the

Author's Note. **It is a concluding story, so you need to read Part One first.** It is recommended for 18+ due to language, violence and sexual situations, including historical assault and MM activity.

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## Author's Note

A quick peek into the world you'll find in this book. It's full of lies and deceit, but at its heart it's a romance. Only one where people are shifters who mate, and where multiple partners form packs. If this is your thing, enjoy!

**Omegaverse** – this book is all about omegas, with the scent glands, heats, adaptive body parts, and knotting associated with this genre. If you are not sure what that means, the Omegaverse is an alternate universe where humans generally fit into three categories – alphas, betas, or omegas – and have both human and animalistic traits. Relationships are often driven by the sexual, beast-like connection formed between alphas and omegas. This book is a mash-up of this universe and shifters (werewolves), so expect heat, heart and messy knots!

**Shifters** – yes, there are werewolves in this Omegaverse. The three categories – alpha, beta and omega – all come with wolves inside them, that they can shift into under certain circumstances. That means you get all the growly goodness of alphas and the sweet temptation of omegas, in a furry package.



**Reverse Harem** – this is a why choose story, but in the form of a pack. Our heroine is with multiple partners but they will all be part of her pack by the end of the story.

**Steam** – things have definitely heated up in Part Two, including detailed MM (male-on-male) action. If this is not your thing, don't read on, as it is critical to the plot.

**Curse words** – The language other than English is a dialect of Albanian, or so I've been led to believe. My other half isn't all that keen to teach me dirty words in his native tongue (for some reason). If they're wrong, blame him.

There are also a few Britishisms in here, given Kelly's background. I just used ones I liked hearing when I was in London. If they're confusing, just know that most of them are curse words and basically mean "fuck" or "asshole".

### **Trigger warning**

This is a reverse harem romance, so please take care if you are sensitive to some subjects.

- Mild violence and discussions of extreme violence
- Consensual sexual acts, including omega heat with multiple partners and detailed MM activity
- Historical rape (discussed, not depicted)
- Lies and treachery, including false representation, including between sexual partners

- Bad language of all stripes, including lots of dirty talk!



## Link

My contact at the omega auction told me to meet him at the holding pens in the basement. As I ease the stairwell door open, I'm planning on making him bleed for calling them that. Don't care if I have to dump his dead body down here, he's going to eat my fist for comparing omegas to cattle. But my focus right now is on getting my mate Kelly out of this fucking place. Nothing else matters.

*Including my fake stepsister, Elvana Bisha.*

Pushing a twinge of guilt aside, I pause at the bottom of the stairwell and pull my knife out of my shoe. I'm in a tux, the expensive material loose across my shoulders where my gun holster usually rests. Feels fucking naked, but the small blade in my hand is better than nothing. I can always shift if things go sideways, but I don't plan on running through the streets of Boston in my wolf form unless I can help it.

And I always follow the plan.

Which means meeting a bent beta official in a basement after abandoning Elvana to the wolves.

She was my way in. As my contact put it: omega in, omega out. I fed her a bullshit story about bidding on an omega for breeding rights, but it was all a smokescreen to get her here. The only story that matters is the one I linked to the tracking chip in her head. Most omegas are tagged these days and their memories wiped after the fact. They're too rare and valuable

to just roam free, although I didn't really believe the tracking database existed until I saw it with my own eyes. It was easy to hack, and I was able to change Elvana's details from the daughter of the biggest alpha on the East Coast, to a nobody screw-up. It's the only protection I can give her in case she's auctioned off today.

She might have got out. Maybe she realized I was going to double-cross her and went straight for one of the exits. She's naïve and way too trusting, but I've caught a glimpse of a backbone when she's been pushed into a corner. Either way, she's on her own now.

I smell the alpha before I see him. The corridor is lined with doors, some of which are cracked open. He's waiting behind the first one, and I tuck the blade up my sleeve before he steps into view. Which casts a long shadow into the hallway, since he's at least six-four with broad shoulders and about forty pounds on my own muscular frame. He's in a security uniform, with pouchy, pale eyes that watch me from under the brim of his cap. I put his age at mid-thirties, which gives him more than a decade on me. But in the world of alphas, size and experience don't mean as much as raw animal power, and I have that over him easy. "Who the fuck are you?" I growl.

"Mr. Berkely? I'm Mike. Nathan Godfrey asked me to meet you here."

"I didn't agree to any hand-offs," I tell him, my voice hard. "I want to talk to the beta."

He scoffs, his lip curling. "You think those pencil necks get their hands dirty? Here's the paperwork if you need to see it."

I grab the single page printout from his gloved hand. There's enough light in the corridor to see it's a bill of sale, and Liam Berkley, my assumed name, is printed in the Purchaser box. Kelly's specifics are nowhere to be seen, but his serial number from the tracking database is typed in the Property section. From cattle to property, it makes my wolf rake his claws down my spine.

"There's only a serial number," the guard points out. "Does your omega have a name?"

*Little Wolf...*

Why the fuck did I think that? It's my brother's pet name for Elvana, and it has no place in my head right now. "Kelly Starling," I tell him instead. Doesn't matter it's his true name. Once we're out of here, I plan to burn this operation to the ground.

"Right. Well, the omegas ready for auction are already upstairs. We keep the others down here." His narrowed eyes take my measure. "You're not gonna freak out if she's a little banged up, are you? We gotta keep a low profile if you don't want to bring the boss down on our heads."

I look away from him, studying the door at the end of the corridor so he can't see the wolf in my eyes. If Kelly is *banged up*, his boss will be the least of his problems. I could correct him; tell him Kelly is male and the best goddamn omega in the world, but he doesn't deserve to know such things. Instead, I ask in a voice that's so low it's all growl, "Where the fuck are these holding pens?"

There's an amused tilt to his mouth as he gestures to a door at the end, closest to the exit. "Down there. We just need to get

confirmation from Godfrey that the omega you're trading has passed all her checks." He pulls out a cell and taps it on his palm, his head tilted as he studies me. I try to pick the scent coming off him, but it's murky. I can usually sense strong emotions, but I can't tell if this guy is bored or has a death wish as he asks, "You just looking to upgrade? On one hand, I get it; your girl has quite an interesting history. You're probably looking for something new and sweet." His nostrils flare, and it's definitely lust coming off him now. "You meet your old omega at the Fox Den?"

I swallow around a lump of rage in my throat, reminding myself I'm partly to blame for his interest. This slimeball might be salivating over Elvana, but I was the one who fed her fake background into the database. Putting her last owner as the notorious shifter brothel was meant to protect her, since most alphas aren't interested in used goods. But maybe there'd been a little bit of spite at work too, since she'd just come off a four-day sex binge with my two brothers. "Let's just get this done, okay?"

The guard grunts and checks his cell again. "Sure." He taps the screen, then cocks a brow at me. "Seems like you're good to get your girl."

I clench my jaw and follow him to the end of the corridor. I'm braced for the worst, although the excitement is starting to build now, too. Not everything I told Elvana was a lie, and it's been nearly a year since I saw my mate in the flesh. Sweat prickles under my tux, my throat tightening with need as I picture his perfect face. I know it won't look like that now, since the last time he smuggled out a video call he'd definitely been banged up. But it will still be his eyes, his scent...

My brain is too slow to put it together, distracted as I am by memories of Kelly. Instead of being faced with omegas in cages, I step over the threshold and straight into a massive fist. Pain explodes through my skull, but I still manage to drop my knife into my hand. I'm bringing it up to gut whoever just hit me when the guard grabs me from behind, slapping cuffs on my wrists and giving me a vicious punch to the kidneys. Not done with me yet, he kicks my feet from under me, and I land heavily on my knees. I'm still clutching the knife, but that's taken almost gently from my cuffed hands.

Fuck.

I'm in some kind of storeroom, but all I can see are wine barrels and boxes of paper napkins. And Arben Fucking Marku, Doctor Death and the most ruthless assassin on the East Coast. He works for Elvana's father, Roan Bisha, and until recently, I thought we had a deal. He got his little wolf back to do with as he pleased, and he connected me to Kelly.

He's an enormous fucker, a foot taller than the alpha guard, with the musculature of a gorilla. He's in his usual black suit, his raven hair slicked back from his pale face. I realize it's his fist I just ate, so it's not surprising I need to lean over and spit a wad of blood on the floor. "What the fuck, Marku?"

"Are you still working alone?"

I try to blink through the pain, but my head is throbbing. He can't really be surprised to see me here. What did he expect when he gave me access to the omega database and its administrator? That I wouldn't hunt Kelly down, and use everything in my arsenal – including Elvana – to get him back?



The guard shakes me by the scruff when I don't answer, the assassin snarling in my face. "Did your brothers let you take her? Do they know Elvana's here?"

Shit. This guy has a one-track mind when it comes to the little wolf. Not that I can talk since I'll pretty much ruin anyone for Kelly, but he's my mate. "What? No. My brothers have nothing to do with this. I distracted them. Took her without them knowing." My throbbing head swings around the room, even though I know Cam and Rory can't be here. I left them drugged on Kelly's deck, conveniently out of the way so I could bring Elvana here to trade. "Leave them the fuck out of this!"

Marku grunts, amusement twisting his lips as he leans over me and grips my neck. Last time he did this, I pictured him kicking my legs apart and bending me over his office desk. But a hard fuck is clearly the last thing on his mind as he presses against my windpipe. "You are the one who will be left out, kopil."

It means asshole. I know, because I looked it up. But I couldn't give a fuck what he thinks of me. Kelly is all that matters. And if I haven't proven that by now, then he hasn't been paying attention. "I want my mate," I growl. "Where the fuck is he?"

Marku just shakes his head and lets me go, wiping his palm on his pants. "He was never here. Administrative error."

"Bullshit!" I roar. "That administrator died screaming. There's no way he lied."

The assassin shrugs and says something to the guard in their language. A second later, I'm hauled to my feet and a

needle is shoved in my neck. Fur prickles over my skin and I think of Rory, right after I drugged his drink. I'd told him to hold off his shift or it would hurt twice as bad. But my wolf is borderline feral, and agony slices through me as my magic fights the drug. Fuck, talk about karma kicking you in the nuts.

“Stop, wolfling!” Marku barks, his dominance slamming into me harder than his fist. It forces my wolf back, but bloodlust still boils in my veins and I can't stop the agonized whine that tears from my throat. “You deserve this,” Marku says, watching me struggle. “And it will only get worse from here.”

The security guard cocks a brow. “Want me to finish him off, boss?”

Marku stares at me, and I know in that moment I'm dead. He's probably killed more guys than I've passed on the street, and with about as little fuss. But he just shakes his head. “Drop him back at the lake. Let his brothers deal with him.”

The guard grabs my arm, yanking me to my feet, but I plant my heels. “Wait!” I pant, beseeching the assassin with my eyes. I can already feel the drug working in my system, pulling me under. Dragging me away from *him*. “I'll do anything to get Kelly back. Please. Tell me what you want, and it's done.”

Marku's lip curls, like I'm the dumbest bastard he's ever met. “Loyalty. Trust. Your pack before your needs. But you don't understand true sacrifice, wolfling.”

Is he fucking kidding me? Doctor Death is schooling me on sacrifice?

He pulls out his cell and starts scrolling, and my last nerve is shredded. “What the fuck, Marku? Was this some kind of test?”

“If it was, you failed.” He nods at the guard before casting me one last, ominous look. “The next time I see you, run the other way, kopil.”



# Elvana

Lucas Ferrier steps backwards into the office at the auction house and I follow. I don't have much choice, since he's still holding my hand, and there's a bunch of security at my back, watching my every move.

Not to mention the ballroom full of alphas waiting to buy up an omega for breeding rights, or whatever the hell it is they do with my kind.

“What do you mean I'm your daughter?” I demand, frowning up into his golden eyes. A strange color for a wolf, except I see it every time I look in the mirror. “You know who I am, don't you?”

“Elvana Bisha,” he says with a nod over my head. The door shuts behind us and he finally drops my hand, waving me towards a group of armchairs around a mahogany coffee table. I scan the area, realizing it's more of a meeting room than an office. There's a boardroom table and a bar, with more leather armchairs scattered around a marble fireplace. The scent-dampener they feed through the air conditioning is weaker in here, and the lingering cloud of cigar smoke and alpha hormones makes my nose itch.

Instead of taking a seat, I circle around to a door flanked by two sash windows. I nudge the heavy velvet drape aside and look out. There's a balcony, lit by a security light, and a more functional staircase down to a walled garden. Good to know

there's a way out that doesn't involve running through a ballroom full of alphas with hard-ons.

While I'm inspecting the exit, Lucas Ferrier has moved to one of the chairs and stands with a hand on the back, clearly waiting for me to join him. He could get me on my knees with an alpha command, but he seems intent on trying the polite approach first.

I need to sit. My head is still fuzzy from whatever they dosed me with, and the adrenaline high is draining away fast. But instead, I put a hand on the doorknob and twist. It doesn't budge. "You own this place?"

"No." A single word, but full of distaste.

I have no idea what business he's in, but as the Alpha of Boston, this is Ferrier's city. If anyone is peddling omegas, he'd know about it. "Just here for the breeding rights, then?"

The sound that comes out of him now is closer to a growl, and I freeze for a second. But then my hand shoots to the latch on the window. It's an old-fashioned brass fixture and opens easily enough, but then I spy the industrial bolts in the corner. Shit. The tremor in my fingers suddenly becomes a shudder I have to clench in my fist.

His voice is soft. Careful. "Are you after fresh air or a way out?"

"Either would be good right about now," I mutter, then turn my attention back his way. He's tall, even for an alpha, with silver hair that almost reaches his shoulders and amber eyes shot through with gold. He's wearing a three-piece suit instead of a tux, but in every other way, he could be one of the alphas

in the ballroom, bidding on a traumatized omega. “Am I a prisoner here?”

“Of course not. I have a driver who is ready to take you wherever you wish to go.”

*And where is that?* I wrap my arms around myself as the answer to that question burrows into my soul. Not Cam’s house, obviously, since it belongs to the *Hila* brothers. And not the townhouse in the Village I shared with my mom, since it’s the first place Rory will look.

Ferrier obviously knows I’m not exactly flush with options because he says, “Boston is a safe harbor, Elvana. I have a residence in Beacon Hill and a family estate a little further out of the city. You are welcome at both.”

I’m already shaking my head. “I don’t know you. A ring on your finger doesn’t make you my father.”

“What about the eyes, the hair?” He asks mildly, waving a hand between us. “That’s Ferrier blood in your veins.”

“My mom said she was an Old Blood European. That she could trace her line back to the Arbanon in the Middle Ages.” It hurts my heart to do it, but I sneer at him. “Turns out she was just a dirt-poor omega from Boston who was traded away like a box of Cubans.”

Ferrier takes a sudden step towards me, those big hands flexing into fists. I don’t know if he wants to hit me or shake me, but my claws come out all the same. Ten curved nails the length of my smallest finger, they’re as deadly as any alpha in a half-shift. It’s not something an omega is supposed to be able

to do, but then, most omegas don't have violence bred into their bones like I do. "Stay the fuck back."

Instead of rising to my challenge, Ferrier puts his hands in his pockets and grins at me. It's so open and boyish, it transforms his face. And for a moment, I see my own eyes smiling back at me. Holy shit. I'm still trying to deal with the shock of what this means – *who he really is* - when Ferrier sinks onto the arm of the chair, his expression now smug. "That little gift comes from your grandmama, Angela. She was a very powerful omega. It pleases me beyond words that you've inherited the ability."

I shake my head at him. Any other alpha would have me writhing on the floor for pulling a half-shift in his presence. But his relaxed attitude makes my claws retract of their own accord and I sense my wolf inside me, watching him with eyes as big as moons. I feel her confusion and lingering fear, but also more than a little admiration. It's better than the grief and hurt she's been wrapped in since Link's revelations in the glass room, but it's also dangerous. "Words are cheap," I tell both him and my wolf. "Anyone can spin a good story."

"Like Liam Berkely?" It takes me a moment to realize he's using Link's cover name. When I just stare at him, the last of the humor fades from his face. "He has left the city, if that makes you feel any better."

Does it? Unlike my wolf's emotions, I can't really label the churning in my belly. "Was he alone?"

I'm not sure why I care. Link traded me away for his omega sister, Kelly Starling. I came to the auction thinking I was his way in, but what I didn't know until it was too late



was that this place uses an omega trading system. Omega in, omega out. Since I'm still here and he's left, I have to assume he got what he came for.

But Ferrier is shaking his head. "Kelly Starling was never here. It was an administrative error."

That just makes the churning worse, and I lean back against the door, fighting a wave of tears. There's no way I'm crying in front of the Alpha of Boston, but the truth sits in my chest like a stone. *Link sacrificed me.* There's no other way to describe it. He was desperate, and prepared to do anything to get his sister back, including throwing me to the wolves. And maybe it wouldn't hurt so much if he'd stuck around after his plan fell apart. But he'd left me.

I don't know why I'm surprised. From day one, Link told me he'd never needed my help. I was a distraction, and possibly a spy. It was Rory who said I might be a useful hostage against their enemy, Roan Bisha, and was worth keeping around.

*Rory.* I try not to think of my fake stepbrother and almost-mate. He's hovering at the back of my mind, just waiting to shatter me into pieces.

But if I have any kind of plan, it definitely doesn't involve falling apart in front of Ferrier. Which, given the growing ache in my chest, means I need to get out of here fast. "If you have a car available, I want to go to a hotel. Not one you own or control. An ordinary, middle-of-the-road hotel chain, where no one gives a crap about my name. Can you do that?"

"Of course." He's on his feet again, his movements so smooth and flawless they betray how powerful he really is.

“We can leave immediately.”

I frown at his enthusiasm. If he’s here for the auction, why is he so happy to leave? Unless the other omegas have already been sold. I don’t have my cell – Link was adamant they’d take it off me at the door, so I left it in his car – but it has to be close to two in the morning. I feel a pang of sorrow for those poor girls I saw in the holding room. Where are they now? Have they been shipped off with the highest-bidding alphas, or sent back to whoever put them up for sale in the first place?

The thought makes me grind my teeth. I don’t know many other omegas. There were a few pampered princesses at my boarding school, but I could never connect with them. Omegas, in theory, are raised to be cherished. Soft and sweet, because they’re protected by every member of their pack, but also entitled and bratty, because whoever says no to them?

So what went wrong for the girls who ended up here? Were they like me, alone in the world? Or had they simply put their trust in the wrong man? *Also like me*, my stomach reminds me with a painful clench.

I study Ferrier. He has a ring like my mom’s. He shares my eyes, my smile. But can I really trust him with my safety?

I have no idea. But just because he might be related to me is no reason to lower my guard.

In fact, given my track record with family, it’s probably a red flag to imminent betrayal.

Not that I have a lot of options right now. Getting out of this horrible place has to come first. Steeling my spine, I watch as Ferrier pulls out his cell and talks to someone I presume is

his driver. But my heart rate kicks up as my gaze tracks across the room. “Wait. Why is there blood on your boardroom table?”

Ferrier takes his cell from his ear, his gaze following mine. “I had a disagreement with the former occupant of this office.”

I blink at the anger in his voice. There’s a lot of alpha power simmering under his expensive suit, and I realize he’s almost as amped-up as I am. What exactly did I walk into here? “Who? Why?”

Ferrier ends his call, his face darkening as he stares at the blood-stained table. “The man planned to overthrow his alpha in Chicago. But a coup is an expensive endeavor, and he thought to make up the shortfall in his funds by trading in omegas. He was foolish enough to bring his business to my city.”

“So he set this auction up?”

“And I’ve shut it down.” He gives me a careful look, like he doesn’t quite trust me with the information he’s sharing. “All the omegas who were up for sale are safe. I promise you that.”

I walk over to the table, staring at the pool of blood on the shiny surface. There’s a lot of it, and the wood is slightly dented, as if someone slammed something hard against it. Like a thick skull. As I breathe in a shallow breath, I smell alpha and something acrid, like bleach. I’m pretty sure it’s terror, and it’s not hard to imagine a guy face-down on the table, Ferrier looming over him with blood-stained knuckles.

Satisfaction ripples through me, but I don't fool myself that he did it out of any real sympathy for the omegas. More likely retaliation because an outsider brought his business into Ferrier's city and didn't give him a cut.

*Just more power games and betrayal.*

The thought makes me exhausted, but it reminds me of where I am, and the danger I'm still in. "Can we leave now?"

"By all means." Ferrier is already crossing the room and unlocking the external door. I follow, the cool night air greeting us and clearing some of the fog from my brain. Ferrier starts down the stairs, clearly unconcerned about having me at his back, and I grip the railing as I follow. My wolf is close under my skin, her need forcing my gaze up to the cloud-streaked sky. The full moon is about a week away, and she twitches along my spine. I can't help thinking of the last words Arben Marku said to me: "*No matter what happens, we are mated, princeshë. We will have the ceremony on the next full moon, but you claimed me years ago. The bites and bonds will just tell the world what is already a fact.*"

I cross my arms tightly across my chest as we reach the bottom and start across the garden. Facts, I'm finding, are as slippery as the dew-coated path under my bare feet. Right now, my mind is a stew of memory gaps and outright lies. They all manipulated me. They either used me, or kept me in the dark. I can't trust anything I've been told for the last week. Not to mention the last twenty years, where I've lived as Bisha's baby, daughter of the most ruthless Head Alpha in living history.

Ferrier opens an iron gate in the garden's ivy-covered wall, and when I step through, I find a long black car idling at the curb. It's a stretch limousine, the windows blacked out and the back door ajar. Ferrier gestures for me to climb in and I pause for a moment, casting a glance down the quiet street. There's no one around to watch me disappear into this car, and I'm not sure if that's a good thing. But it's only when I've hitched up the tight sheath of my dress and I'm sliding across the cool leather seat I realize this is a set-up.

And I'm not alone.

The door closes behind me with a nearly inaudible click. Ferrier isn't getting in. But I don't turn around to curse him for tricking me like this. Because my attention is consumed by the alpha sitting opposite me, his face mostly in shadow.

"Arben...." His name leaves my lips as a whine I can't hold back. "What are you doing here?"

The silence between us is thick and sticky, hot and heavy.

My head spins, and my heart aches.

*Is he going to betray me, too?*

"Come sit beside me, princeshë."

I hiss, my grip on the seat slipping until my claws punch the leather. I stare down at my hand, as surprised by the way it's trembling as by the partial shift I didn't mean to pull. I fight another wave of dizziness, and I can feel sweat sliding down my overheated spine. If I wasn't skewering the seat with my claws, I'm sure I'd melt into a puddle on the floor. "I don't understand. What's going on?"

“Come to me.” His hands are on his spread thighs in what I think of as his kingly pose. But even though he fills the space around him with his presence, there’s no alpha command in his voice. “Crawl, if you need to, princesshë.”

I don’t stop to argue that princesses don’t crawl. This is Arben, and what he says goes. And it’s not that far. He’s sitting in the middle of the car, and if I swapped sides, it would be easy to slide down the seat to reach him. I could do this the careful way, claws out in case this is another trap. But my wolf and I are in perfect agreement as I drop to my knees on the floor.

The passage is narrow and the carpet is rough, rubbing the tight lace sheath against the sensitive skin of my legs. But I keep my head up, our eyes locked. Midnight eyes, shrouded in shadow. I should be terrified, but I’m panting by the time I reach him.

Arben is the biggest man I’ve ever met, but he’s perfectly proportioned, his legs as long and muscled as the rest of him. Still, he has no difficulty parting them, and I scoot into the space he’s made for me, breathing in the scent of leather and musk.

If I was dizzy before, I’m reeling now.

“It’s not my heat,” I tell him, even though I can’t help rubbing my face against the smooth fabric stretched over his thigh.

“No,” he says quietly, reaching down to cup my face. I only realize I’m crying when he rubs his big thumbs across my cheeks and they come away wet. “It’s grief.”

I shake my head, even as I know he's right. It might be the adrenaline of the night making me so shaky, but the hollow feeling in my chest has been with me since long before I arrived at the auction house.

*Unwanted. Tricked. Traded.*

I suck in a painful breath, tipping my head back so he can see the misery painted across my face. "I don't want to be sad anymore, Arben."

"Then let me take it away, Elvana."

My name falls from his lips like a promise, and then he's drawing me up off the floor and tucking me tight to his lap. The sheath dress strains across my thighs, but he fixes that with the slice of a single claw from hip to knee. I barely notice, because all I can feel is the heat of his body and the throbbing erection he's making no effort to hide. He wants me, and he's honest enough to show it.

"Arben," I whisper, melting into his warmth.

His breath feathers across my face, and I turn to him, a needy flower to the sun. "Let me give you something better than sorrow, princeshë."

"Wait." My heart pounds as my vision shudders and I see Rory hovering over me. I'd think it was some kind of masochistic dream, only I'm wide awake and staring into Arben's hooded eyes. I can see his need mingled with his concern for me. And I know that look. I've heard those words, or some just like them.

*"Sorrow is raw. It's messy. Leaves you torn open and scooped out."*

“Empty.” I whisper.

*“I can fill you up with something better. Want me to show you, pretty omega?”*

And like a switch flicking inside my head, I remember *everything...*





# Elvana

I'm stretched over Arben, my thighs spread over his hips, but in my mind I'm back in that hotel room, the spark of life draining from my mom's pale face as she gasps out her last words.

*"With my death, the contract ends, Elvi. Alpha Ferrier will come for you. You were never part of the deal."*

*"Mom, don't worry about that. I can look after myself..."*

*"Elvi, this ring proves you are his. Hold on to it and use it when the time is right. It's the only thing I can give you that's mine."*

She'd given me her ring – the one I always assumed marked her as Luna of the Night River Pack - but I'd tossed it away, leaving it in that hotel hallway in a puddle of my puke. I'd been on a rampage, fueled by grief and so angry at my dad for the lies and neglect. All I could think about was hunting him down and making him pay. I'd had my gun, maybe I even planned to kill him, but then I'd run into Rory and Cam in that elevator and...

I squeeze my eyes closed, my hands fisting the collar of Arben's shirt as the crack in my chest opens into a gaping wound. Distantly, I can feel my wolf staggering from the emotions clawing through me. But I'm too angry to reach out to her, my teeth grinding as I spit, "Link was right. It was all

bullshit. They never cared about me or my mom. They were just *using* me. And I fucking let them!”

Arben’s hands cup my cheeks again, as if he can wipe this pain away as easily as my tears. But I shake him off. “I was a fucking idiot, Arben! I *believed* them. I let them make me forget.” I’m shaking now, his hands sliding down my spine but I buck them loose. I don’t want his soothing touches. I don’t fucking *deserve* them. “I didn’t fight them at all. I just let them take my mom from me, Arben!”

He doesn’t try to tell me it wasn’t my fault. I know they manipulated me. They used the accident – getting run down in the street by a freaking cab – to crack me open and then filled me up with the worst kind of lies. They even warned me. Cam is a head-twister, and Rory is the one they send out to screw girls into giving them what they want. And it’s not like Link ever hid his loathing of me. They must have thought I was such an easy target. That I was a stupid little omega, so eager to be fucked over by them all...

I give a brutal shake of my head, barely able to catch my breath. If I could scratch off my skin, I would. Instead, my wolf drags her claws down my spine, and as I writhe on Arben’s lap, he makes a low, desperate sound. “Tell me what you need, Elvana. Anything... How can I make this better, baby?”

Baby. Baby. *I’m not Bisha’s baby.* I never was.

But then, who am I? Because whoever this girl is, no one seems to want her.

“Just... get me out of here!” I beg, a moment before I lean down and bury my howl in the thick column of his throat.

I don't just scream; I *bite*. And I don't even try to suck away the bruise. I'm too lost in my pain, and the only way I can ground myself is by burying my teeth inside his skin. I taste the coppery flavor of his blood and know I must be hurting him, but Arben just grunts, his hand cupping the back of my neck. He growls directions at his driver and the privacy screen rolls up, the car pulling away from the curb. If Ferrier – my supposed father – is still standing there, I don't bother to look back.

“I remember,” I pant as I finally pull free, knowing I must look insane with his blood on my teeth. But I just run them up his neck and across his jaw, my hands tearing at his white shirt. “I remember my mom, Arben. She told me about Ferrier.” I hiss as the memories swirl around me, making my head throb. “I remember meeting Rory in the hotel elevator right after she died. He was dressed as a maintenance guy and he said he wanted to fuck away my pain.”

Arben falters for a moment, no doubt making the same connection I just did. I could tell him his offer to relieve my grief is nothing like Rory's obsession to fuck broken girls, but I don't even know if that's true. Arben has only really spent time with me in my heat. And the first time I was a battered mess, raped and bitten and bleeding on my living room floor. But I don't want to add that shit to the nightmare swirling in my brain, so I grab his hand and press his fingers under the torn skirt of my dress. There's not much room between us, but I rub them across my panties, already slick with heat. “But Rory didn't get any further than this,” I tell him, grinding on his hand. “He was on a mission, after all.”

Arben winces at my bitter tone, but I don't want his pity. Instead, I pull the wet silk aside and slide down on his fingers, sinking all the way to the knuckle. I don't even feel the stretch, and I know my body needs this. Not to push the sorrow away, but to sharpen it. I want to flare as hot as my aching core, to take these feelings of shame and helplessness and burn them to ash.

“Fuck me, Arben.” I clench around his fingers, my teeth pulling roughly at his earlobe. “Show me it wasn't all a lie.”

He shreds my panties, his tongue invading my mouth with deep, slick kisses. He doesn't give me his words, and I'm glad. There's nothing he could say that would make my memories any less cruel. And my wolf is beyond words. I've never felt her so close to the surface. She's there in the impatient roll of my hips, and the way my nails rake across the back of his neck, just shy of cutting him. I don't want to hurt him, and neither does my wolf, but we need him to *show* us. We need proof that what happened in his room in the Red Poppy was real – at least for one of our so-called mates.

Mates.

I want to scoff, but instead I moan out my pain, my pussy throbbing as I bear down on his hand. If my brain wasn't twisted by all the lies, I'd probably realize this is the last of my heat. That the needy demand for a mate connection is driving me to claim this last one – the only one – who's still here with me and my wolf.

But I'm not thinking, and Arben seems just as lost to his beast. He tears his shirt off, leaving it in tatters, then presses

my hands to his chest, digging my nails in. “Mark me up, princeshë. I’m yours.”

*Mine.*

The word drives me forward and I latch onto his nipple, sucking hard. I brutalize the other one, even biting when his arousal floods the car. But I’m not so far gone I don’t lick him better, arching up on my knees so I can tear at his belt, my hands desperate for his cock. As soon as the buckle is loose, I mimic his earlier action and claw through his suit pants. Instead of flinching, he snatches my mouth again, sucking on my bottom lip as I squirm to free him from his boxers.

The angle is all wrong, but it doesn’t stop heat from exploding in my belly. I know I’m half-drunk on his blood and his scent, but I’m lost in a delicious haze. And my wolf is riding me so hard – literally panting in my ear - I don’t think I could stop even if Ferrier was sitting in the seat across from us.

And then Arben’s cock is pulsing against my palm, my wolf now purring as I stroke his warm, hard flesh. Before he can stop me, I slide back between his knees, my mouth watering as I study the prize in my hands. My brain might have been fried during my heat, but I remember *this*. A perfect cock, as big as the rest of him, the skin smooth around the heavy veins, the head as plump and hard as a fist. And then there’s his knot, already swelling as I lick across that delicious tip. He shudders above me, widening his thighs and curling down to watch me. I flash my teeth at him as I take another lingering lick, my nails chasing the pulsing vein that runs all the way to his knot. “So pretty,” I coo, leaning in to trace his

slit with my tongue. The tart juice makes me shiver, and I hum as I wrap my lips around the head and suck. He almost comes out of the seat and I let him go with a pop. “And delicious. Makes me want to gobble you down.”

“Then eat me, princeshë,” he growls, his hands fisting the leather seat. “But know that I will *consume* you when it’s my turn.”

I cock a brow at him, wondering if that’s meant to be a threat. But I have better things to do with my mouth than challenge him, so I rise up and suck him into the back of my throat. I purr at how full it feels, the weight of him on my tongue, the way he thrusts just enough to scrape along my teeth. Shifters like a little pain with their pleasure, and I feel a thrill at the idea of pushing this indestructible man to his limit.

*Easy, Elvi... You’re not the one proving something here.*

But I still want to impress him, and there’s a very omega way to do that. As soon as he’s all the way down my throat I begin to hum, my scent gland vibrating around his throbbing length. My thighs clench as he groans, one hand cupping my head in place while the other grips his knot. I suck and swallow, kneading him with my throat, while he tries to wrestle his flesh into submission. But I can feel the edge he’s teetering on as he jerks and grinds, a strangled roar finally punching from his chest. When he pulls me back, painting my lips with his pre-cum, my wolf purrs to see his own beast shining in his eyes.

“I remember this, too,” I tell him from under hooded lids, circling his throbbing head with my fingers. “The way your

skin flushes when you're about to come. This pretty red blush, like your heart is in your cock..."

"Fuck!" Arben wrenches me up, spewing a string of curses in our native language. I'm as pliable as wet clay, but he still shoots me an apologetic glance as he slams me down on his raging, red cock. Sucking him made me wet, but all the slick in the world couldn't ease this stretch. It burns, but I just throw my head back and grind down harder. I want to mark Arben, but I want him to mark me, too. I want to remember this moment when I'm alone and the other memories come circling...

"Fuck! I'm coming, Arben!" We're both so far gone, he only pumps into me a few more times before I'm screaming my release. I claw his chest, feeling him swell inside me. But the familiar strain of my pussy around his knot is missing, and as soon as I can open my eyes, I blink at him. One look at his cautious expression, and I'm wailing. "Why? Push it in me, Arben! I want it all!"

But that just makes him pull back even more. "I'm not knotting you in the back of your father's car, little one." He tries to soothe me with a kiss, but I jerk away. "Let me take you somewhere safe..."

I'm already shaking my head, my eyes narrowed to slits. I don't want more promises. And I don't want to wait for him to bond me. He said we were already mated; that he'd claimed me years ago. So, why is he looking at me like he needs to put some distance between us?

"If you won't knot me, then bite me!" I seethe, ripping my hair away from my throat. He's still there between my legs,



but the wild lust is fading from his scent. I might be sitting on his cock, but his brain is back in control. *And he's thinking of all the reasons this is a bad idea...*

The hurt and shame I'd thrust behind my flimsy barriers suddenly engulfs me. "Get the fuck away!"

I tear myself off him, throwing myself at the door. I'm covered in slick and sweat, my ruined dress slapping wetly against my legs as I brace my feet and haul on the handle. But of course it has a goddamn child safety lock. I squeeze my eyes shut and scream, "Let me out! Let me out! Let me out of here right *now!*"

The howl burns my throat, my skin rippling with my wolf's desolation. I've never felt so feral, and as I hammer a fist on the window, I watch her fur ripple across my arm. When I turn to glare over my shoulder, Arben's pupils are blown, his chest heaving as he sucks in air. But he manages to call out to his driver, and the next moment the car is slowing. I snarl as I try the handle again, the silvery fur now thick on my arm. "Open it, Arben!" My fangs slice my lip, but I just shake the blood away, staring him down. "Let me the fuck out! Right. Now."

As furious as I am, I hold my breath as I wait for him to tell me to calm down, to stop shouting like a brat, and to tuck my wolf away like a good omega... But instead, he shakes off his ruined pants and slides across the seat towards me. "You can get out, but you're not getting away from me, little wolf."

I snarl, but the door pops open and I leap out. We're on a quiet road, a long way from Boston's privileged streets. Thick trees loom up on both sides and my wolf gives a howl of joy at the wash of moonlight, the fresh, biting air, and the scurry of

wide-eyed creatures in the bushes. *We will run, and hunt, and lose ourselves in the blood and the meat and the dark... And then we will forget...*

“Don’t follow me!” I hiss, backing towards the trees.

Arben just laughs, dark and rich, his teeth flashing in the moonlight. “You’ll never outrun me, princesshë. Not even if you beg me to let your wolf out.”

I grind my baby fangs so hard they shred my lip. This is the curse of the omega. To have to *beg* an alpha to let us shift. But my wolf has had her fill of bossy men holding her leash. “Fuck you, you conceited asshole!”

I turn my back on his smirk, shivering at the surge of magic under my skin. It feels like sparks in my blood, my belly twisting as if it’s trying to turn me inside out. I’m staring at my fur-lined arms, my claws throbbing under my fingertips, but I’m still not prepared for when my wolf tears through my body. The only thing sweeter than her victorious howl is the way Arben’s eyes snap wide with shock.

*Kiss my omega ass, Alpha!*

And then my wolf runs, the trees whip past us, dark and welcoming. *It’s been so long... so long...* So long since she ran under the moon, her body stretched to its limits. I want to weep at my wolf’s almost manic joy.

And she feels so strong. So dangerous. The curse of her kind is to be trapped in my weak, omega body. To have to live through my pain, never able to do more than wield her claws in a half-shift.

But tonight the moon is hers. The forest shivers around her flashing form as she dashes through the trees. She runs so fast, the world is a blur, and I have to assume she's just happy to be free from my control. I have no idea where we are, or how long we were in the car. But it only takes a flicker of annoyance from her to realize we're not alone.

And the big black wolf on our flank – who happens to smell like leather and musk - is *herding* us.

Every time she tries to dart away, he's there, nudging her back in the other direction. She snaps at him with her vicious fangs, but he just darts aside with an amused rumble and then harasses her some more. My wolf shoots him a filthy look before leaping over a fallen tree and veering off through thicker scrub. She's smaller than Arben's wolf, and navigates the tight spaces with ease. Not that he gives up. Instead, he comes crashing through the most overgrown bushes, ignoring the thorns that tear at his coat. But it's only when we come to a clearing and I see the cabin in front of us that we both realize the truth. We're exactly where the black wolf wants us.

His den.

I can smell leather and musk in the wood smoke and cooking oil, but she knows this is Arben's territory down in her bones. Her flash of outrage is so strong, I almost feel sorry for his beast as she rounds on him with gnashing teeth.

Shit, but he's a beast. As big as Arben in human form as he stalks towards us across the clearing.

But my wolf refuses to back down. Her blood is singing with her magic, and she's as far from submissive as I've ever felt her. But then the wolf stops in front of her, and there's

something about the gleaming look in the black wolf's eyes that makes her pause. In fact, I'm pretty sure it says... *mine*.

She shudders, torn between her primal need to claim her mate, and my wounded pride. My feelings are too messy, too human, and I can feel them bubbling under her skin like poison.

*Let me... talk to him.*

She bares her lip, both at the stalking wolf and my suggestion. She doesn't want to give up this moment of freedom any more than she wants to back down from Arben's wolf.

*We will shift again. Soon. I promise.*

Her trust in me is humbling, because she doesn't fight me, and the next moment her body gives way. I feel myself forming from her parts, my human mind growing sharper as my other senses weaken. And then I'm standing in front of Arben's wolf, naked except for an impressive set of claws.

Arben doesn't hesitate to shift as well.

"Princeshë!" He breathes, his eyes bright as he takes me in. "You shifted on your own!"

"Seems my wolf is a bit of a badass." I don't try to hide the pride in my voice, but it quickly gives way to darker emotions. Hurt. Shame. Anger. Embarrassment. They beat at my throbbing head like fists, and I know Arben can sense them all. "Maybe all this shit got too much for her. I can't blame her for wanting to escape me."

The truth is, I'm screwed-up. The people I can trust don't even fill one hand, but I keep trying. I keep looking for a place

to land and people to love. “I thought I was cursed being Bisha’s baby. A weak omega who had to hide away from the world. But the real curse is how much I love you, and how hard I want you to love me back. And that sucks for you, because things have to change. I have to be stronger for my wolf. So if you just want me because I’m a good little omega, you need to end it now. Because I don’t see how we can give you up unless you push us away.”

Arben freezes, every muscle in his body tensing until he blends with the shadows. But then he drops to his haunches, his hands planted on the ground like it’s the only thing holding him up. When he speaks, his voice is a ragged whisper. “Love isn’t a curse, princeshë. It’s a knife. It slips between your ribs and carves out your heart, even if it’s black and broken. Between one breath and the next, love steals it away, leaving you staring across a crowded room at a young angel who doesn’t even know you exist. And who certainly deserves better than a devil with blood on his hands.”

I cross to him, my claws retracting so I can stop right at his knees. He tilts his head back and I trace the bite mark on his throat, shivering at the heat under his skin. I chewed him up bad, and even though it’s not a claiming bite, it feels that way under my fingers. “You’re not a devil, Arben. And you’re not heartless. I might have stolen yours, but you’ve had mine for nearly as long.”

He presses his mouth against my palm, so I can feel his long, aching sigh. It feels like a prayer, a vow, and it’s enough to lower me to my knees so I can nuzzle his throat. “I don’t need the full moon, or a ceremony, Arben. I just need your bond.”

I turn at the hips, ready to present for him in an omega pose, but he stops me. Lifting me onto his thighs, he peels me open, a thick finger opening my folds like he's unwrapping a precious gift. I bite my lip, my entire body tense as he replaces his finger with the head of his cock, but doesn't push forward. "You must know... this is forever, princeshë."

I smirk at him, my perfume lifting on the air as I wiggle impatiently on his lap. "And you say that like it's a threat." I lean in and press a soft kiss to his strained mouth. "Take me, Arben. Bite me and bond me. I want you to be mine."

He nods and presses forward, both with his cock and his fangs. He's big all over, his bite covering my scent gland and then some. And while the pain at my throat is deep and sharp, my mind is distracted by the powerful thrust of his hips. I jerk down, slick enough to feel pleasure twist my spine as I take him to the hilt. But even as I gasp at the dual invasion, he presses his wrist to my lips. "Bite me and bond me, Elvana. I want you to be mine."

My wolf sings. There's no other word for the joy twisting through me as this beautiful man offers us his heart. So I sink my fangs into his hard flesh, taking his flesh and blood for us both. And then the bond snaps tight, as perfect as the release that tips me over the edge and shakes me to the core.



## Rory

Waking from whatever crap Link drugged us with is up there with one of the worst mornings of my life. My eyes feel like they're crusted over with a week's load of old cum and my mouth is so dry, I actually think about crawling down to the lake and drinking until my stomach bursts. But feeling physically wrecked has nothing on the sharp, burning pain in my chest. Because... *fuck*. Link might be a psychotic asshole, but he's a planner. And if he's back here sitting in that stupid egg swing he bought for Kelly, then something must have gone wrong. Especially because his head is in his hands, and there's not an omega in sight.

"You goddamn fucking lunatic!"

But it's only as I roll onto my hands and knees, my stomach backflipping at the abuse, that I realize I'm not the only one ready to tear him to shreds. There's a massive sandy-brown wolf crouched in front of Link, a murderous snarl revealing three-inch fangs.

"Cam," I say cautiously, even as my own wolf pushes at the surface of my skin. "How you doin', buddy?"

Cam's wolf doesn't even glance my way. He just crouches lower, his hackles rising, the muscles of his back quivering as a deadly growl rips through his body.

I shoot the asshole in the egg a disbelieving glance. Is he even aware how close he is to getting his throat torn out? "You



better start talking, Link. Either that or shift your stupid ass, because Cam's looking a little feral right now."

Which just makes Cam's wolf growl that much louder. But it also makes Link look up, and I see that his lip is split, the skin around his mouth starting to bruise. But it's the devastation in his eyes that claws at my heart. Fuck. He wouldn't look that way at a little setback. Whatever he's done, it's going to hurt like hell. "Where is she, Link?"

My stomach clenches tighter at the heavy pause, but then he growls, "Where is she? *She*? Is that all you care about, Rory? Getting your fake stepsister back?"

Not a good time for him to be tossing that shit in my face, but I hold my beast at bay with my fingertips. "What did you do to Little Angel?"

Something flashes in Link's eyes that might be regret, but then he glares down at Cam's wolf. "I did what I had to do. What you fuckers wouldn't. We had one chance to get Kelly back, and I took it." He shakes his head at us, his disgust twisting his swollen mouth. "She must have been some magical omega pussy for you to forget we already have a mate."

Cam's wolf is launching through the air so fast, I don't have any choice but to throw an alpha command at him. I'm more than tempted to just let him land and make Link eat his stupid fucking words, but killing the asshole won't get our omegas back faster. So I toss everything I have into the command to *shift*, although Link barely flinches at the massive killing-machine bearing down on him. But my power hits Cam before he can make contact, stripping away his wolf

and shoving him back into his human form. It still means well over two hundred pounds of infuriated muscle, but at least when Cam's fist hits Link's swollen jaw, he doesn't tear his stupid head from his neck.

An image that makes my beast slam against my ribs like they're a cage. He wants *out*. He wants to hunt down his mates and bring them back to us. But I have to keep more than just my skin right now. I need to stay clear-headed. Especially since my fuckwit brothers are rolling around like it's fight night at the insane asylum.

"Hey!" I roar, stomping a flying fist onto the ground and pinning it there. "Enough, you lunatics! This isn't gonna help us get our omegas back! And as much as I want to kick Link's ass, he's the only one who knows what he did!"

Cam shoots me a furious look over his shoulder. The medic is definitely AWOL right now, and the thug is fueling the beast. But it's his meaty hand I have under my boot, so unless he decides to half-shift and skewer me through the balls, he has to listen up. "You can fuck him over later. Right now, he needs to tell us what he knows."

"I'm just glad to see he's worked up about someone," Link spits, a glob of blood and probably a few teeth hitting the deck. His left eye is pulped, his lip now a ragged mess. But he still manages to shoot Cam a grim smile. "I thought those head-twisters had screwed the beast out of you, brother."

"Don't *brother* me, asshole," Cam rumbles, eyes flashing wolf silver. "What did you do with Elvi?"

Link's anger suddenly wilts, his shoulders drooping. It draws attention to his clothes – or the ruined remains of a

dress shirt and tuxedo pants. They're both slashed and bloody, but Link clearly got all dolled up after he left us here. "I took her to Boston. I had a contact who said Kelly was there, and I asked her to come along."

I swallow a howl of frustration. The more he holds back, the worse it has to be. "And she went with you? Just like that?"

"No. I told her the truth. Or some of it, anyway." He lifts his chin, his undamaged eye as belligerent as ever. "Only I said Kelly was our real sister."

The words drop between us, somehow worse than all the rest of his bullshit. "Our *sister*? What the fuck?"

Link just stares at his hands, leaving Cam to give a barking laugh. "You wanted her to feel expendable. Like we already had a better sister, and she was just a stand-in." Cam narrows his eyes, his scent prickling with disgust. "Let me guess. You told her we're all Hilas, and her dad screwed up our lives, meaning she *owes* us. And she owes our precious omega sister who's suffering because of her and her fucked-up family."

Link snarls, but he doesn't deny it, and my stomach pitches into my boots. "What the fuck do you want to hear? I wanted her to do what I needed her to! If I'd said Kelly was male and my mate – not to mention one of the richest, most famous shifters on the planet - she might've turned me down. Told me to sort out my own fucking mess. But if she thought Kelly was an omega in need, and that he was one of us..."

I throw my hands in the air at his twisted logic. "He *is* one of us, you gigantic shit!"

“I know that! But I mean *yours*. Really yours. Not just because of me, or because we had to form a pack to keep him safe, but because we’re a proper fucking family.” His black eyes drill into mine. “I knew she’d do it for you!”

Meaning he used her feelings for me against her. I can just see her listening to his bullshit and imagining our sister up in her nest. Thinking that if she sacrificed herself, she could save Kelly. That our missing sister meant more to us than our Little Angel.

“Okay, enough of that crap!” I snap. “You took her to Boston, and then what?”

Link shrugs his shoulders. “You’re not gonna like it.”

Cam throws his hands in the air, a vein bulging in his neck. “Are you fucking kidding? Just spit it out. You’re wasting time we can spend getting our omegas – and I mean *both* of them, you asshole – out of whatever shit you got them mixed up in.”

Link doesn’t deny it, which might be the scariest part of all, and then proceeds to tell us about a database that tracks omegas, and his secret side business with Arben Marku, deadly assassin and our almost-mate. Cam and I exchange a silent glare as Link lays it all out – the auction house, having to offer an omega up for entry, going to meet his contact and getting punched in the face by Arben. It answers a couple of things, like the barcode I saw stamped on the back of Elvi’s neck, and why Link was so eager for us to all go to the Red Poppy. But it doesn’t explain why Link is sitting here, and not being tossed in a landfill in a hundred different pieces. But before I can voice my skepticism, he mutters, “But it was all bullshit. Kelly was never there. They said it was an

administrative error, but I think Marku was just fucking with me. Kelly's still as lost as he's ever been."

Instead of launching at him again, Cam just laughs. He laughs so hard, he has to walk over and lean against a tree. Although, the smile falls off his face fast enough when he plucks the drugged bottle of Champagne off the ground. Sniffing the neck, he dumps the dregs on the ground, then tosses it into the lake. When he turns back to Link, his face is a stony mask. "For the planner in the pack, you've got the perception of a fucking rock. I get you want Kelly back so bad you think it gives you a license to do whatever you want. But Arben Marku is *devoted* to Elvana Bisha. So much so, he let Rory and me tend her through her heat, because he thought he wasn't good enough to touch her. But she brought him round – in some of the best sex of my goddamn life - and then the most powerful and deadly wolf on this continent invited us to join their pack. We were gonna talk to you about it, but she didn't want you to think we'd forgotten our mission. She was worried about your *feelings*. And then you drug us and drag her off to be sold to some horny fucking alpha. Just like Kelly was, in case you've forgotten. And then you're surprised Marku won't give you another omega to fuck over."

Link is on his feet, his face twisted with a weird mix of hope and fear. "You think he knows where Kelly is? If you talk to him and smooth shit over, do you think he'd help you find him?"

Instead of answering, Cam turns and starts walking back towards our rental house. I follow, shooting Link the finger just so he doesn't get any ideas about coming with. We don't speak until we're back at our deck, and we both stare in the

glass window at the urn sitting in the circle of flowers and candles. Fuck. Little Angel has already lost so much, and now she thinks we screwed her over, too.

“We fucked up, Rory,” Cam says, clearly in mind-reader mode. “Link might have traded her away, but he just fed off the bullshit we planted.”

I grind my teeth, tempted to put the blame all back on him. It was their stupid fucking plan to convince her we were her stepbrothers. But as much as I hated the lies, I had plenty of time to come clean. I sure as hell shouldn't have joined her heat without telling her the truth.

Goddamnit. Last time I felt this devastated, I slunk off to a bar in Bisha's territory, my bruised ego joining forces with a death wish. But not this time. Our omegas deserve better than a bunch of unhinged alphas chasing their tails. I groan and rub at my throbbing head. “We've gotta talk to Marku.”

Cam sighs, looking as ragged as I feel. “Yep. He either has her, or he knows where she is. There's no way he'd let some other alpha buy his mate.”

My wolf snarls at that; both pissed I didn't let him out to rip Link a new one and because Elvi is my mate just as much as she's Arben's. “Okay, but how are we gonna find him? We didn't exactly swap deets after her heat.”

Cam grins and I know we're both back there in that orgy of omega need. It was like someone cracked open my skull and pulled out all my filthiest fantasies, while taking a good chunk of my heart in the process. I've always loved to fuck, but during Elvi's heat I was all in; no part of my body was off limits and in turn, nobody denied me a thing. I fucking loved

every moment of it and the idea that we could form a pack, that we could be together every day, made me happier than any asshole deserves to be.

And despite all the shit that's gone down, nothing's changed for me. I still want it all, with all of them, again and always. Maybe that makes me a greedy shit, but I'll do anything to make it right.

And Link can go suck a bag of dirty dicks.

"We have two choices," Cam says, jerking me away from all things dick-related. "We either sit back and wait for Doctor Death to pay a house call, or we retrace our steps."

I wince. "The Red Poppy?"

Just because it was the scene of our heat-fest doesn't mean I want to go back to Bisha's club any time soon.

"Yeah, but it beats another trip to the Tower, doesn't it?"

Not fucking wrong. "Okay, but I think we should check in with Rita first. See if the Omega Underground knows about this auction house."

Cam nods his head, and while he heads inside to replace the clothes he shredded with his shift, I grab my cell and call the Balkan restaurant where Rita works. Her dad owns the place, so she's been pulling shifts there since she was a kid, but her heart is with the work she does for the Omega Underground. No idea who runs the organization, but when we started our search for Kelly, one of the girls I hooked up with mentioned Rita. She wasn't interested in my dick, since she's happily mated with two firecracker kids, but she took pity on me and said she'd ask around. I'd been checking in with her

the night Elvi stormed into the alley and threatened to drag me away by my lying, cheating ankles.

I smile a little as Rita answers, sounding as breezily happy as ever. No one would ever guess her own sister had been kidnapped by rogue alphas and only released with the help of the shadow network. “Hey, Rita. I need to ask you about some shit that went down in Boston last night. Has anything hit the underground radar?”

“Jesus, Rory. That’s not the sort of thing you just blurt out over the phone.”

“Okay, but this is urgent.” She knows enough about our situation to keep quiet. “If you can tell me anything about the players, and how I could get in touch with them, I’d owe you big time.”

She sighs, cupping the phone so I can barely hear her whisper. “One name. But it’s a doozy.”

“Anything will help.”

“Ferrier,” she says, and I can hear the wince in her voice. “As in the Alpha of Boston. I heard he’s taken over management of the omega trade.”





# Elvana

I roll over with the deep, throbbing kind of stretch you only get from unexpected exercise... or having your brains fucked out by a lusty alpha god.

Everything we did last night – from my meltdown in the limousine, to the chase through the woods, and Arben finally, *finally*, admitting we're meant to be together and accepting the bond – runs through my mind. I want to find his wrist and suck on my bite mark again, but it was starting to look like a chew toy before I finally fell asleep. As if he can read my mind, a warm hand strokes lazily along my spine and I smile into the soft bedding. Which is topped by the green blanket Arben's been hoarding since he stole it from my apartment all those years ago, and which is now drenched in his scent.

Goddamn, my lusty alpha god is delicious.

*Not quite a god, princeshë. But happy for you to call me your dark prince if you like.*

I give a little humming laugh, rubbing against the hard, muscular body at my back. *Not my king?*

*I prefer to stand at your side, princeshë. Or in this case, stay close behind you, so I can spoon your very regal rump.*

My snort is cut off by the way he rocks his hips forward, his cock nudging at my warmth. I press back eagerly, humming with happiness despite the state of my overworked

pussy. He teases me with just the tip, our hips circling languidly as I blink at the grainy dawn.

We're lying in his very sex-rumpled bed, in his very cozy cabin in the woods, and I have zero idea where we are in relation to anything or anyone else. Not that I give two shits, since I feel perfectly at home, and have no interest in moving ever again.

*Because home is where the heart is.*

A cheesy but totally accurate sentiment in this case. Although, I'm not sure which one of us said it...

As the reality hits me, I jerk upright. "Did we just flirt... *inside my head?*"

"*Our* heads," Arben corrects me, his hand gripping my hip and rolling me onto the cushion of his bicep. I stare up into his sleep-softened face, trying to read his expression. His voice is rough, proving it's the first time he's used it this morning, but his eyes are glowing with satisfaction. "It's the bondlink."

I shake my head, not completely missing the delicious way his muscle clenches under me at the movement. "A bondlink? But that's just a fairytale. No one can actually do it."

Arben smiles, his teeth so white and perfect it makes me want to offer something up for him to bite. "Well, like all good stories, it came from somewhere. Back home they' said it was part of the *lidhje shpirti*. The soul connection. It allows bonded shifters to communicate mind-to-mind, like we do with our wolves. It's so rare because it's only granted to the strongest of alpha and luna pairings." His finger traces my

bottom lip, which is gaping open in shock. “I imagine you got the ability from your grandmother, Angela.”

I remember Ferrier telling me the same about my half-shift and I feel a warm glow bloom in my belly. As Bisha’s baby, my bloodline never gave me anything but trouble. Could I really have inherited something like this from a woman I’ve never met? “You know her? What is she like?”

A shadow darkens the obvious pride in his face. “I *knew* her. I’m sorry, but she’s passed, princeshë.”

“Oh.” That warm glow fades so fast it leaves me with a sick, hollow feeling in my stomach. As I curl into Arben, I feel his wolf brushing up against mine, offering comfort for the grief that echoes through us both. “Will you tell me about her one day?”

“It would be my honor.” He tips up my chin, pressing a soft kiss to my mouth. “But right now, you need food, and I have half a pig in my deep freeze.”

I screw up my nose until I make the connection. “Bacon!”

My stomach roars back to life, but when Arben goes to move from the nest, my wolf makes a keening sound and my teeth latch onto his hand. It’s not a love nip either, but a deep, warning bite. The growl that slips from my lips is almost feral and his brow crinkles in surprise. “Princeshë?”

“Sorry!” I blurt when I’m finally able to force my jaw open. “You moved, and my wolf just went nuts...”

A look of animalistic satisfaction darkens his features. “That’s because she wants to complete the bond, too.” A grin

stretches across his face, his teeth gleaming in the early morning light. “She wants my furry ass.”

I gape at him. Never in a million years did I imagine these words leaving Arben’s lips. “As in...?”

He gives a low, belly-clenching chuckle. “Doggy style, princesshë.”

The throb of arousal through the bond is so strong, I feel a gush between my legs. I don’t know if it’s me, or Arben, or my hornbag of a wolf, but it’s as embarrassing as hell. “Oh my God... You’re not just making this up? Our wolves want to get it on right now?”

“It’s the old ways.” He runs a possessive hand down my spine, and I know it’s as much for my wolf as for me. “The wolves of powerful lunas demanded it. If her mate can’t keep up, he wasn’t worth having.”

I have an image of Arben’s wolf herding me towards his den last night. But my wolf quickly changes it, until she’s the one doing the chasing. I’m not exactly sure what Arben can see through the bond, so I decide I better warn him. “Well, just so you know, my wolf is feeling all kinds of predatory right now.”

Instead of looking worried, my mate grasps his impressive hard-on in one hand and offers the other for me to take. “Then we better give her some room to stretch those fine legs of yours.”

My wolf preens at the shared compliment, but my human eyes are glued to his busy fingers as I let him draw me from the bed. We’re both naked, and badly in need of a bath, but I

figure from the way my wolf is panting down the bond, cleaning up would just be a waste of time. When we're standing near the open front door, the scent of the woods swirling in on the brisk air, Arben releases his erection and runs his hands down my prickling arms. "Do you want to let her out yourself, or would you like me to give her a nudge?"

I feel a deeper shudder run through my wolf at that. This is her mate, even if she needs some kind of doggy style ceremony to cement the bond, but our reaction to an alpha command comes from our hindbrain. We know Arben's offer of help is genuine, but we proved last night we don't need it. And my wolf goes one step further, sharing an image of her snapping her teeth at Arben's very muscular butt cheek. "Um... I think we're good to go."

He smiles, and I wonder again exactly how much he can see down the bondlink, but I just shake my head. I really didn't expect this when I promised my wolf I'd let her out again, but a deal is a deal. And her excitement puts a bit of a skip in my step as I smirk at Arben over my shoulder, "See you on the other side, my dark prince."

He rumbles at that, but I'm already running into the clearing in front of his cabin, my wolf pushing at my skin. She slides right out between one step and the next, and I feel myself move effortlessly into the back seat as she takes over. It already feels more comfortable than last night, more in tune with the surge of her primal instincts. She doesn't waste a moment looking back at Arben's wolf; we can both feel him behind us, the surge of his magic brushing over us like a possessive hand.

*You better run your ass off*, I warn her, but she sends me another image of Arben's butt cheek between her teeth. *Ew. You're serious about that?*

She just gives a barking kind of laugh, veering sideways after a blurred black shadow. If that's Arben's wolf, he's moving like the wind. I feel a momentary clench in my chest that we'll never catch him, but then my wolf's competitive spirit kicks in. She takes off, head down and tail whipping behind. Her prey doesn't make it easy for her, using his larger bulk to crash through the underbrush, but my wolf doesn't give up. In fact, I think she might be drawing it out a little, savoring what I'm pretty sure is a wolfy kind of foreplay.

And then she flies over a thorny bush and I see a flash of white through the trees. It doesn't mean much to her distracted brain, but I'm aware enough to recognize a massive stone building before my attention snaps back to Arben. His wolf is at the edge of the woods – beyond him are the sloping green lawns of the human world – and it's clear he won't go any further. My wolf gives a satisfied yip at having run him to ground, but as I eye his massive chest, I notice he's not breathing very hard. Clearly, he's been saving something for the next part of the chase.

My wolf doesn't make him wait for long, strutting towards him like a victor to the spoils. Thankfully, she shoves me down deep, locking me out of the grand finale. I'm vaguely aware of the pleasure coursing through her body to a backdrop of snarls and howls, until a coppery tang fills my mouth, filling me with a humming energy. We shift back, and I'm grinning at how smug she feels until I see the massive bite on Arben's ass cheek. "What the hell?"

He smirks over his shoulder at me, looking thoroughly pleased. “I told you. Your wolf wanted my furry butt.”

Oh. My. God.

My wolf really is a feral little bitch.

Of course, he chooses that moment to wave his hand in front of my face and I see his chewed-up wrist. Okay. So, maybe I’m also a little feral when it comes to Arben Marku.

Not that he seems to mind. He’s grinning as he pulls me into the shower, and after thoroughly washing the dirt and sweat and cum from every inch of my body, he dresses me in a plain white tee that smells like him and props me on the kitchen bench. He’s wearing only a pair of old black fatigues, which I guess is an assassin’s version of sweatpants, since they hang low on his hips and give me a delicious view of his eight-pack. I’m pretty sure he has a few knives slotted away in his pockets, but he uses the ones in the kitchen block as he goes about preparing an omelet. As soon as the bacon hits the pan with a sizzle, I give a happy sigh and look around the cabin, finally letting myself soak it all in.

It’s a perfect blend of rustic male and expensive flourishes, the walls and roof unvarnished wood, but the stone floor covered in beautiful silk rugs. The furniture is old but elegant, each piece clearly handcrafted and lovingly tended. It’s mostly open plan, with just Arben’s bedroom, the bathroom, and a study off the main living space, but the height of the ceiling makes it look larger. From where I’m perched on the counter I can see to the far wall, and I can easily imagine Arben sitting at the head of the ornate dining table, or sprawled on the long



leather sofa in front of the fireplace, reading one of the stodgy biographies from the bookcase by the window.

“What are you smiling about?” Arben asks as he pops a *sheqerpare* in my mouth. The little butter cookies are soaked in sugar syrup and I groan as the flavor curls over my tongue. When I’ve got my mouth back under control, I tell him, “This place looks like the lord of some royal manor had a yard sale, and you snapped up all the best bits.”

He grunts and nods me towards the table, two loaded plates in hand. I follow with a watering mouth and slide onto one of the velvet-topped chairs. When he sets a steaming plate in front of me, I obediently eat a bite of the egg-white omelet with red peppers, onion, and spinach. Yummy, but it has nothing on the pile of bacon I devour like a ravenous wolf. Since there’s thick Turkish coffee to wash it down, you could say I’m in foodie heaven.

But when I come up for air, I focus on his face, feeling a niggling unhappiness in my chest. It’s different now we’ve bonded, but that doesn’t mean all my insecurities and hurts are gone. It just means he can feel them more keenly, and he puts his fork down, clearly waiting for me to speak. “You knew they weren’t my stepbrothers. Why didn’t you tell me?”

He studies me while he chews, the silence giving me his answer. Until a few days ago, Arben wasn’t exactly a close confidant. In fact, he’s always been ruthless about keeping his distance from me. He never returned my phone calls or answered any of the lovesick letters I sent him from boarding school. I thought he hated me and regretted every part of my first heat. And while he more than made up for it with my

second, the bruised part of my soul needs some clear boundaries going forward. Lying to me – even to spare my feelings – is a hard no. “If you’d told me that day you came to the house, their plan would’ve been blown wide open. I could have left with you.” *And shared my heat with only you.*

Maybe he can feel that unspoken part through the bond, because the air prickles between us. He’s now staring at his plate with a frown, and I guess I must have killed his appetite because he gets up to clear the table. He doesn’t speak until he’s stacked everything in the sink and is gripping the counter, his head hanging low. “You were safe with them, for a time. I kept watch, and planned to take you away the night you came to the club.”

“But I went into heat instead.”

Arben strides back to the table, drawing me up from my chair and brushing a rough thumb over my pale cheek. “I was a fool. I could see the connection you had with them and I thought better two scheming wolflings than an assassin soaked in blood.” He tips my neck, nuzzling at his bite mark as if to reassure himself it’s really there. “You went into heat and they proved they were useful to you. They promised to come clean, to tell you everything. But then the kopil double-crossed them and took you to the auction.” His hand tightens on my chin, his lips claiming mine in a long, hard kiss. I can feel his tension through our bond, but he forces it back, his dark eyes steady on mine. “You were never in danger, my love. Ferrier was monitoring everything. The only way you’d have left that building with another alpha was if his eyeball was stuck to the bottom of your very sexy shoe.”

I gape at him. “You heard me say that?”

“I was dealing with another matter, but I had people in the security team. I assure you, the male who dared put his hands on you will never think about touching an omega again.”

From the wicked gleam in his eyes, he must mean Sinclair, the alpha who wanted to feed me to his pack. I feel a surge of satisfaction that Arben caught up with him, but I’m frustrated, too. Maybe I wouldn’t have been threatened, drugged, insulted, or chased if people just started being honest with me.

I ease away from him, crossing to sit on the black leather sofa. He follows, but only as far as the back of the chair, leaning on his elbows so he can stare down at me. My wolf likes the view, but I refuse to be distracted by his alluring biceps. “So, tell me the rest of it. Who are they really? Hila’s sons, like Link said?”

Arben rubs a hand over his jaw, his scent growing muggy between us. So many emotions flood the bond, but mostly I can feel his concern for me. His need to protect me from further hurt. “Keeping me in the dark isn’t the same as keeping me safe, Arben. I’m tired of all the bullshit. Just tell me what you know.”

He finally gives a nod, but his hand drops to my back, where he strums my spine like a taut string. Shivers ripple out from every careful stroke. “After Roan took over the Head Alpha position, Enkel Hila’s widow went into hiding upstate. She’d taken up with one of Hila’s lieutenants. Erik Steiner.”

Okay. This part gels with Link’s version of events. “Rory’s dad. His real name is Erikson, right?”

Arben's lips turn down at the edges. "Yes. Lincoln was Hila's only son, but the other two were born to his lieutenants, so they all grew up together in the pack."

Friends, but not brothers. I'd guessed as much, especially with how close Rory and Cam had been during my heat. But it's good to hear the truth, even if it does just lead to more questions. "And Erik Steiner took them all north with him?"

"Lincoln's mother was fragile. An omega, and rumored to be very gentle, which must have been hell mated to Hila. She was a kind of surrogate mother to the other two since they'd lost their mothers young. All three of the boys were very protective of her."

It hurts my heart, thinking of another vulnerable omega mother, but I don't let myself project my own feelings on the brothers. It explained their close bond, though, and how I'd been so easily fooled into thinking they were my stepbrothers.

I push that thought away, focusing on the soothing circles of Arben's thumb on my spine. "So Kelly really is Link's sister? She's an omega like her mom?"

Instead of answering straight away, he leans down to kiss me. It's soft, careful, with more than a touch of adoration, and my wolf purrs at the gesture. I let it go on for longer than I should, but eventually pull away. "Why does it feel like you're trying to distract me? Just tell me, Arben."

"Remember Prior's prince?"

I frown at him, surprised by the change in topic. "Of course. I was at boarding school in Europe when he went missing." Prior's prince was even more famous than Bisha's

baby. The son of Barkley Prior, one of the wealthiest men in the world, Kellman Prior was heir to a billion-dollar fortune and one of the largest packs in Europe. He'd gone missing on his sixteenth birthday, presumably abducted by his father's enemies, and there were endless rumors about what had really happened to him.

“Just before he turned sixteen, Kellman Prior presented as an omega. The abduction rumors were a cover-up. His father hid him away and brought in designation experts from all over the world, subjecting him to brutal treatments to activate his latent tendencies. To make him the alpha Prior believed his son was meant to be.”

Indignation makes me sit up straighter. “That’s ridiculous. We don’t choose to be born this way.”

“His father had a god complex. When the treatments didn’t produce the alpha heir he wanted, Barkley sent Kellman to his old ally, Enkel Hila. He was known for extreme discipline within his pack. Hila kept Kellman Prior for six months until he was overthrown by Roan. In all the chaos of the takeover, Kellman disappeared. We assumed he’d been extracted by his father, but when Barkley died a few years later, his widow reached out, asking Roan to find her son. Roan put me on it as a priority, and I tracked Kellman upstate.”

“You found him...” I almost can’t believe it. Kellman Prior’s disappearance was the subject of endless conspiracy theories and true crime documentaries. To hear that he was here, tangled up in my own story, makes my skin tingle in shock. It’s only as I think it through that my stomach clenches. “But my dad – Bisha – didn’t send him home, did he?”

Arben brushes a hand down my spine. It's sensual, because any touch by my mate is exquisite. But there's sympathy there, too. "That is not how men like Roan work, my love."

"No." I grit my teeth, my hatred for Roan Bisha making me see red. "That asshole! Prior's prince was the king now, right? One of the richest omegas in the world? Bisha would want a piece of that."

Arben gives a tight nod. "I took the four of them to the Tower. I didn't know until later that Roan was already shopping for an alpha for the prince. He knew I would disapprove, so he got another tog to do the hand off. After he forced Kellman's mother to sign over all of their American interests to him, of course."

"Of course." So, Roan Bisha got richer, and the prince was sold into omega slavery. My hands are squeezing so tight, I can feel the tips of my claws biting into my palms. "We have to find him, Arben. We have to fix this somehow."

He studies me with his dark eyes. "He really is Lincoln Hila's mate. That was one of the true threads in his web of lies."

I think about that for a moment, then shrug. Giving Link what he wants isn't high on my agenda, but I wouldn't be doing it for him. This is omega business, and like Glo told me, omegas need to stick together. Even ones who are as rich and famous as Link's missing mate.

I remember some of the stories about Prior's prince. Every article began with detailed descriptions of his beauty, the paparazzi salivating over his looks as much as his eye-watering inheritance. I'd seen a few pictures of him taken at

his boarding school in England, and I remember thinking he looked like an innocent angel growing into a delicious devil's body. He had masses of red-gold hair and sparkling brown eyes, and even at sixteen he had a long, lean build, the promise of strength in his sculpted arms and broad chest.

And then there was *that* picture. The one of him playing rugby at his boarding school that had melted the internet. It was taken on a rainy day, his tawny skin splattered in mud and his soaked jersey lifted to show a defined six pack as he wiped his grinning face. Dimples, dancing eyes, and abs for days. It had instantly become the most sought-after screensaver at school and graced my roommate's wall for the rest of the year. Most nights ended with her fingering herself to his perfect, flushed face, crying his name into her pillow. I'd waited until she fell into a sated sleep before I'd done the same, most of the time the prince's face blending with Arben's in my mind.

I try to hide my blush at the memory, but Arben can already feel the wisp of my arousal through our bond. I expect his fingers to slide away from my spine, but instead they lift to grip the back of my neck. He holds me still as his eyes rake over face, his lips pressed to my ear. When he speaks, it's a heady whisper that makes my toes curl. "You want him."

There's no anger in his voice; just curiosity and the usual heat that licks over my skin when we're touching. I rub my cheek against his wrist, but don't try to deny my interest in Prior's prince. "I... want to help him. I don't know if it's because of Bisha. Making amends. Or because he was a fantasy, once upon a time. A prince on a bedroom wall." I shake my head, feeling a little silly. "Just a schoolgirl's dream."

Arben purrs at that. “I thought *I* was your dream. Your many detailed letters told me so. You called me your *princ i errët*.”

*My dark prince.* Ah, so that’s where his fascination for the title comes from. It’s embarrassing even thinking about those letters now, but he’s not wrong. Kellan Prior was an untouchable, sunlit fantasy. A dream alpha who soothed my lonely heart. But Arben Marku was already firmly under my skin by then, buried inside the scarred places of my soul. I cringe at my younger love-sick self, but it doesn’t take a therapist to work out why they were both necessary for me at the time. “Maybe I called you that at first, but after ignoring me all those years, you were definitely the *princ i errësirës*. Prince of Darkness. As in, the Devil.”

He mock-growls, leaning over the sofa until his teeth are back on the mark on my throat. As soon as I feel the pressure on his bite my body turns liquid and I sink into the leather. I should probably be embarrassed by how wet I am, but it’s not like Arben gave me panties to go with his shirt. If I puddle on his elegant couch, it’s hardly my fault...

I mumble something like this as he laps at his mark, his growl deepening until he hauls himself over the back of the sofa. I smirk at the wolf in his eyes, then very happily sink under his looming body. “I plan to rut you into every surface in this cabin,” he tells me, his weight balanced on one hand as the other plays between my legs. “I want you soaked into every chair, your perfume dripping from every wall.”

I arch my back as his fingers curl inside me, his thumb strumming my clit. “I’m up for that,” I whimper, grinding my



pussy against his hand. “Anything. Everywhere.”

The rumble in his chest makes the leather sofa groan under us. “Do you know how long I dreamed of this, princesshē? Luring you into my den, laying you down like a feast...”

I lick my bacon-flavored lips. “Fit for a king?”

He smirks, his thumb still on my clit as he lifts my leg over his shoulder and sinks his cock to the hilt. His knot isn’t far behind and we both cry out at the sensation, our bond vibrating with our mutual pleasure. As he pushes it inside me and I fall open under his hands, he grins down at me. “No, now I definitely feel like a god.”



# Elvana

The next morning Arben wakes me up with his mouth on my sore pussy, licking away the evidence of a day spent rutting into every horizontal surface in the cabin. The claw-footed tub in his tiny bathroom was my favorite, especially when he filled it with his shower gel and then fucked me over the side, our bodies slipping and slapping in the Arben-scented water. We let our wolves out for an afternoon run – along with some more doggy-style fun in the bushes – and after another shower he showed me a chest of drawers full of clothes in my size. I spent some time modeling his more daring choices, one particularly flirty sundress earning me a place on his lap, his mouth sucking on my bond mark while his cock knotted me to the brim. When we finally settled in his big bed for the night, he tucked my favorite green blanket around us, his big thigh slotted between mine. Every sweep of his fingers down my spine made me shiver. But with his purr under my ear, I was relaxed enough to fall asleep, both parts of my soul content that when we opened our eyes again, our mate would still be there.

*One of our mates...*

It's a strange thought to open my eyes to, but it's quickly lost as Arben's hungry tongue flicks over my clit, his lips sucking at my folds. By now, he's an expert at feasting, his appetite seemingly unquenchable despite his many, many meals, and I quickly shudder through a long, whining release.

It's only as I try to slide under the covers to return the favor that he shows some restraint.

“But I'm hungry, Alpha,” I pout, eyeing the impressive tent in the middle of our messy blankets.

He groans, but keeps my hand firmly off his cock. “I promised your father I'd bring you by for brunch,” he tells me, watching as the flirty smile slips off my lips. “We don't have to go, but I think we should. There's more to Lucas Ferrier than just the Alpha of Boston.”

I have to admit, I'm intrigued. It's not like we didn't talk yesterday, but we stuck mostly to light topics, neither of us keen to be distracted from our more pleasurable pursuits. But now our bond has settled a little, I'm curious about my supposed father. And exactly how Arben knows him. “I'm more interested in getting to know *you*, although I can sit through a breakfast, I guess,” I tell him with a hint of a pout. “But can you give me the highlights now? I don't want to walk in there unprepared.”

He nods, and we both climb out of bed, sorting through our jumbled clothes as he fills me in. “The main thing is, he's been working to help omegas for most of his life.” At my skeptical look, he sighs. “I know. Your mom. That's something you'll have to hear from him directly, but what happened to her, and being apart from you, it gave him a purpose. He started an organization. A network of supporters, all hidden from the authorities and protected from alpha influence.”

I blink at him. “You're talking about the Omega Underground? I thought that was just an urban legend.”

“Like the bondlink?” He flashes those perfect teeth at me. “It’s one of the reasons I joined the Night River Pack. New York has always been the center of the illegal omega trade, and we agreed I should get all the way into the underbelly.”

I sink onto the edge of the bed, completely breathless. It takes me a moment to meet his eyes. “I didn’t know. I thought...”

“I was nothing but a ruthless assassin, doing Bisha’s bidding?” He gives me a soft smile, although it doesn’t quite meet his shadowed eyes. “I was that, too. I’m not trying to whitewash my past, my love. It’s just that many of my jobs met two purposes – those of the Head Alpha, while also satisfying the interests of the Underground. Ambitious, powerful men are too often involved in the seedier side of our world, princeshë.”

That’s not a revelation to me, but I’m still looking at Arben in a whole new light. It’s not like I want to remake him into some pure, virtuous image. I like my dark prince exactly as he is. But I *love* him for his part in helping vulnerable omegas. “That makes me very happy,” I tell him softly. “To know you and Ferrier have been trying to help.”

He nods, coming around to button up my dress, his smile now reaching all the way to his hooded eyes. “Your father is a good man. I wouldn’t have let him near you if he wasn’t. But he’s also a way of getting closer to your missing omega.”

I gape up at him. “He knows where Kelly Prior is?”

“We have our suspicions. I’ve narrowed it down to two properties, both owned by the alpha I believe is responsible.”

“And how does Ferrier fit in?”

Arben brushes a thumb over his bite mark, watching my shivery reaction. “He’s been invited to the Fall Ball at the Crouch Estate this weekend.”

My lip pulls back on my teeth. I might not exactly be a social butterfly, but I’ve heard *that* name. “Quentin Crouch is a disgusting slime of an alpha. Why would I want to step foot inside his house?”

He leans down to kiss the snarl from my lips. “Because that’s exactly the kind of man who buys an omega and locks him away from the world.”



I’m not really surprised to learn that Arben’s cabin is located on Ferrier land. Once we’re both dressed in our best brunch clothes – including suitable walking shoes – Arben leads me through the trees to the edge of the estate I caught a glimpse of while in wolf form. She’d taken little interest; with Arben’s hot wolf in her sights, she hadn’t cared much for something as boring as bricks and mortar. Or not until Arben took me back to his den and painted the cozy little cabin with my scent. But in the bright light of a new day, Ferrier’s house looms up through the trees like something out of a fairytale.

It reminds me of the châteaux I saw in the French countryside when I was at boarding school. Enormous, square, with lots of narrow windows, a sloping slate roof, and circular turrets rising up to sharp steel points. To gain access to the

house, we have to pass through an ornate iron gate and then walk up a long crushed-stone path, massive trees on both sides. We pass a fountain with a pair of snapping wolves at the center, and I can see formal gardens and gleaming greenhouses through the trees. It's all very impressive, and for a moment I wonder what it would have been like to grow up here, surrounded by so much beauty and space. Would the house in front of me have felt like a sanctuary, or a prison? Despite this morning's revelations, I don't really know enough about Ferrier to hazard a guess. But I'm almost certain it would've been a better life for my mom.

The thought churns in my belly as we reach a grand set of stairs, not so different from those outside the auction house. Arben must sense my unease because he stops at the bottom, his hand on my spine. It's a gentle touch, but grounding, and he bends to rub his cheek across my temple. He doesn't need to ask if I'm okay – he has a direct line to my emotions through our bond – but he gives me a moment to steady myself. “We can go back to the cabin,” he murmurs, his chin the perfect level of roughness against my skin. “Everyone else can wait.”

*Everything*, maybe, but not everyone. I want to know more about the omegas Ferrier is supposedly working to help. With a little effort, I keep thoughts of Kellman Prior's flushed, muddy face away from our bond, but I'm honest enough to that I'm at least partially here for him. “I want to know what Ferrier knows about other omegas.”

Arben tilts my chin, those dark eyes drinking me in as he drops a kiss on my lips. It's what I think of as his soothing kiss, designed to wrap me in a reassuring haze, and I melt into

him for a moment. “As you wish, princeshë, but tonight you sleep back in my bed. Our bond demands it.”

“My wolf would literally tear her way out of my skin if I kept her from your den,” I tell him with a smirk. “And you’ve taken my favorite green blanket hostage, after all.”

His eyes flare – probably because of the word hostage, given who he is at heart. But all he does is lead me up the impressive staircase, his thumb grazing the top of my ass in a way that makes me wonder why we left his den in the first place.

*Because omegas have to stick together, Elvi.*

An important reminder as we reach a huge oak door that could probably repel an invading horde, although it swings open before we can knock. A tiny, elderly woman waits to greet us. She’s white-haired, her back a little bent, but there’s the faint wisp of omega about her. The word grandmother passes through my mind, but from her starched, formal uniform, I have to assume she’s some kind of housekeeper. I kind of want to roll my eyes at Ferrier. Not that he could take care of this massive house all on his own, but would it be too much to offer the poor woman a pantsuit?

“Miss Ferrier, I’m Mrs. Lewis, and it’s an honor to welcome you to the estate. Alpha Ferrier is waiting for you in the drawing room.” I think that’s all she’s going to say, but then she turns to Arben with a twinkle in her eye. “Master Arben,” she purrs, her tiny hands going out to pull him close. She looks a bit like a kitten trying to hug a bear and I’d laugh if I didn’t feel the warm wave of affection through the bond.



“It’s been too long,” she tells him. “But what a lovely surprise to have you back, and looking so happy.”

She turns those dancing eyes my way. “Thank you for bringing him home to us, Miss Ferrier. Although, perhaps I should say Mistress Marku, since you’re clearly smart enough to snatch up this wonderful man.”

I’m still gaping at her as she turns to lead us through an impressive entryway. My bond mark is hidden under the collar of my cotton shirt dress, so I’m not sure how she guessed. But I’m more curious about how she knows *Master Arben* so well. There was more than just friendly affection in her face, and their hug went way past an alpha-omega show of respect. But as we pass a couple more staff, I notice they both greet Arben with easy smiles. I’m so used to seeing him intimidate people with a single glance, I’m growing more confused by the second.

I’m still shooting him sideways looks as we skirt a formal staircase and enter a room with mint green walls, polished wooden floors, and a marble fireplace with angel wings carved into the chimney breast. Arben looks perfectly at home amongst the fancy furnishings, but I’m distracted by Ferrier, who’s sitting on a padded bench in front of one of those long, narrow windows. As soon as he sees us he leaps up and strides our way, his hand out. I think he’s headed towards Arben until he stops in front of me, lifting my reluctant fingers so he can kiss the back of my hand. His bright golden eyes take me in, their intensity unsettling. “He is treating you well, my dear?”

I frown. “Arben? Of course!” I cast my mate another puzzled look, but he just stares back at me with lazy eyes.

“Why wouldn’t he be?”

Ferrier makes an amused sound in the back of his throat before giving my hand a pat. “Because when a man finally gets the mate he’s dreamed of for so long, he doesn’t always remember his manners.”

I have to stop myself from clapping a hand over the bite mark under the collar of my dress. I wouldn’t change a thing about Arben and my bond, but this is uncomfortable on so many levels. Ferrier is definitely not my father in my mind, and I really didn’t think we’d be getting personal so soon.

Especially since my mate has clearly left me in the dark about their relationship. Are they friends? Employer and employee? I don’t sense any awkwardness coming down the bond, but Arben is a master at hiding his feelings. “Everything is great. And Arben is always a complete gentleman.” Assuming we don’t include the part where he edged me into a soggy mess in front of his fireplace last night. “And if anyone was getting their dream mate, it was me. I’ve been chasing Arben for years.”

When his arm snakes around my back, our bond humming with satisfaction, I know I’ve said exactly what he needed to hear. But Ferrier surprises me by giving a broad smile and clapping Arben on the shoulder. “Then I’m a happy man, twice over.” He sweeps a hand towards the other end of the room where an enormous table is set with every possible breakfast dish. “Come and eat, and then I’ll tell you how I met your mate.”

The table is groaning under platters of fruit, pastries, and hot dishes, but I barely give it a glance as we sit. Arben

immediately starts piling food on the plate in front of me, but I'm hungry for information. "Tell me everything."

My mate grumbles a little but Ferrier just laughs and pours us all a cup of steaming coffee which I'm surprised to see is made in the Turkish way. Ferrier sounds French, if anything, although maybe he's just being polite serving it in the way of his guests. "You may not know it from Arben's sunny disposition, but he grew up in a *jetimore*. A state-run orphanage, back in Albania. My father arranged to have him come to this country when he was ten, and we were raised as brothers, even though I was a decade older."

"But then you sent him to Bisha's pack?"

It's the first time I've felt a strain in our bond, but I shrug. Arben is obviously happy here, feeding me bits of buttery pastry as if he's perfectly at home. But he either left, or was sent to New York. Which might have been for a good cause, since he was helping omegas, but at the end of the day, Ferrier is living in luxury while Arben's in the underbelly of the worst part of our world. And then there's the fact I'm nearly twenty-one, and this is the first time I've seen this place. "I'm glad your dad brought Arben here, but what about my mom? Did you ship her off to Bisha too?" Arben's hand comes down on mine, but I push him away. "Just before she died, she talked about a contract. I know she was dirt poor, so she wouldn't have fit in this fancy house. I'm guessing she was just a breeder you didn't want anymore. Why else would you give her a ring, but then send her off to a man like Bisha?"

Shadows instantly darken Ferrier's golden eyes. "No. Not a breeder. She grew up on the estate because her uncle was one

of our ground staff. In the cabin you're in now, actually." My eyes widen at that, but I don't spare Arben a look. We've obviously got a lot to talk about when we get back to *my mom's childhood home*, but right now, I want to hear the truth from Ferrier. "This house was a bleak place in those days." He swallows hard, his hand shaking violently as he places his cup down on its saucer. "I never brought your mother through those doors, but not because I didn't want her here. I would have left if I could, and taken her with me..."

He stops abruptly, and I expect Arben to try to distract me again, but he's as still as a statue by my side. It's hard sitting and watching an alpha as strong as Lucas Ferrier struggle with his emotions, but I don't help him. Maybe he needs to get this out, too. Either way, I need to hear it, and finally he recovers enough to say, "You won't find a single item belonging to my father - Jarvis Ferrier - in this house. Not so much as a handkerchief in a drawer, or a portrait in an attic. But when he was alive, he ruled this world with an iron fist. He was naturally cruel and ruthless to the core. As Mrs. Lewis likes to say, he was colder than any man not already in the ground. And he always followed through on his threats. Which in this case was if I ever intervened in your mother's life, he would take you from her body - or later, from her arms - and end you both in front of my eyes."

I sit back a little, the buttery pastry turning to ash on my tongue. "Not a cuddly grandfather, then."

Ferrier gives a bitter sigh. "You were better never knowing him at all. And by the time he died, your mother wanted nothing to do with me or any other alpha, and I didn't push. My family had made her life hard enough." He reaches out to

touch my cheek, and I don't pull away. My mom might have been scarred by her time here, but I don't think Ferrier had it much easier. "The only time I regretted keeping my distance was when those Lightning Ridge enforcers broke into your house. But Arben was there to chase them off, and for that, I owe him an immeasurable debt."

I look at my mate, wondering at the contented look on Ferrier's face. But a slight tremor through the bond tells me Arben never told him the full truth about what happened to me that night. "Me too," I tell him quietly. "Even if Jarvis was an asshole, at least he brought Arben here to us. At least he did one thing right in his life."

I have so many more questions about him and my mom, but I push them down. Talking about her isn't easy for either of us, and I guess if this is Arben's home, we'll be spending more time here, anyway. And then Ferrier turns the conversation back to our bond. "Do you intend to go public with your happy news?"

I open my mouth, but nothing comes out. Clearly, we've been too busy cementing our relationship to talk through the tricky parts. "I don't think so..." I say carefully, watching Arben's face.

But he's already nodding his agreement. "I don't like to hide it, but Bisha won't be pleased by the news. Until I can ensure Elvi's safety, we'll need to keep a low profile."

He's right, but my wolf is *pissed*. She's a possessive bitch who's insanely proud of her mate, and ready to howl it from the nearest mountaintop. I have visions of her staking her claim somewhere more visible than his butt cheek, and decide

to try for the middle ground. “We need to be careful, but I’m not keeping it a secret forever.”

Arben gives me one of those rare smiles that light up his dark eyes. “The day will come, princeshë, when the whole world will envy my good fortune.”

I want to roll my eyes at that, but I’m too busy picking my swooning heart off the floor right next to my wolf.

Ferrier rubs his chin like he thinks this is all very cute. “We can always announce you as part of the Ferrier family, with all the associated protections. The identity of your alpha mate can be left unconfirmed for the moment.” He smirks at me, a look I’ve seen plenty of times in my own mirror. “Give the old bastards something to gossip about.”

I’m surprised by the prickle of excitement at the idea. It would definitely kill off the Bisha’s baby bullshit, once and for all. But this isn’t something I have to decide now. What’s more important is using Ferrier’s reach and connections to help other omegas. “I think maybe I should just stay incognito for now. I like the idea of putting Bisha behind me, but Arben’s told me what you’ve been doing to help omegas in trouble. It’s more important that I can be part of that.”

Ferrier taps the table thoughtfully, but doesn’t look insulted by my refusal to broadcast our relationship. “You want to help the Omega Underground?”

I let out a slow breath. “Omegas need to stick together. Arben says I was safe at the auction, but I saw how easily it could have gone a different way. Those other omegas...” I shudder, remembering their blank, broken stares.

“They’re safe, I assure you.” Ferrier’s hand comes down over mine, while my mate strokes the bond between us. It’s a strange feeling being comforted by these two men, and I realize how little I’ve had this in my life. It also reminds me that some omegas might never feel this safe again.

“But if we could make it work, I’d like to go to the ball at the Crouch Estate with you.”

“Ah. Arben told you about the missing prince.” He nods, his lips tightening. “I should warn you, Quentin Crouch is cut from the same cloth as my father. It may not be the safest place to take you, and even if we do locate Kellman Prior, it may not be possible to extract him during the ball.”

Arben makes a growly sound that doesn’t just resonate through our bond; the silverware dances across the linen tablecloth, the knives particularly jiggly. “She will never be unsafe again.”

Ferrier smirks, then widens his golden eyes at Arben. “Does that mean you plan to join the social circuit, brother?” My mate gives him his best murderous look, but Ferrier just tosses his head back and laughs. “Splendid! The Fall Ball it is, then.”





## Arben

I've always considered people fools for chasing happiness. An absence of feeling makes much better armor, and that served me well until about five years ago. I was busy with a target – an abusive alpha with an omega farm in his basement - when Roan Bisha dragged me away on an errand for his daughter. I'd always kept my eye on Elvana – as per my arrangement with her real father – but I'd never entered her home. Since Bisha was lying low before his High Alpha challenge, he'd sent me to hold her hand after a break-in. I'd been irritated, given my wolf was already far too interested in Bisha's baby, but as soon as I finished the call, I tossed the target in my trunk for safe-keeping, and ran three lights to get there. Little did I expect to find a broken and bleeding angel on her living room floor, red raw bite marks on the soles of her delicate feet.

Despite all the darkness I'd endured over the years - first in a horror of a boy's home, then later, under the ruthless hand of Jarvis Ferrier – finding Elvana like that had snapped something inside me. To Roan Bisha and his pack, I was an emotionless butcher, ruthless to the core, but mostly untouched by the bloody business I engaged in. They likened me to a doctor, although one dealing in torture and grisly death. But one small girl had ripped away my mask. I was no longer playing a part so I could hide my true motives. Now I didn't just want to kill, I wanted to *consume* her enemies.

The darkness inside me grew, but to my surprise, so did the light. After tending Elvana through her heat, I no longer wanted to just survive, I wanted to live. And I didn't just want to help omegas, I wanted to possess one. All those feelings I'd suppressed, the need I'd never acknowledged, had come roaring to life. And from that moment forward I knew Elvana Ferrier was mine.

My mate.

And I'd failed her.

But now I've been given a second chance, and I've grabbed it with greedy hands. Elvana is *mine*. And I've proven it like the beast I am at heart, knotting her, biting her, taking her in both forms so I am forever under her skin. And I haven't stopped there. I've fucked her against every surface inside my den, and a few outside. I've filled her so full of my cum, her perfect strawberry scent is lost beneath my own raging musk. But it's not just my body that's desperate to imprint on her. I want her happiness, too...

The man who has looked inside literally dozens of skulls and never seen anything more than gray matter and worm food... is now chasing that fickle, foolish dream.

Happiness.

It's enough to make the clinician in me wonder if I've lost my mind.

And maybe I have, because on the night of the Fall Ball, I take the bracelet I made for her with the fangs of her dead rapists and lock it into a box. I dress in a custom tux and collect a corsage from the gardener. I wait at the bottom of my

brother's sweeping staircase, my weapons hidden, my beast leashed. I stand there, nervous, but with a smile I can't extinguish, and the reason for this transformation is simple.

I want to be Elvana's happiness.

And then she descends the long staircase like the angel she's named after. Her dress is a shimmery fabric of tiny beads that move like quicksilver. It's strapless, so I'm not sure how it stays up, skimming her breasts and hips, and then flicking around her ankles in a gleaming puddle. I know nothing of women's clothing – the things I picked out for her were recommended by a wide-eyed sales assistant – so I can't explain its design. Or why it makes her float down those stairs like she has wings. All I know is my heart is thumping against my ribs like a manic drum, and even when Lucas appears at my side, I can't tear my eyes off his daughter.

“You've struck him speechless,” her father notes helpfully, but I ignore his sly grin. I'm too busy reaching out and touching her, just to make sure she's real. “And I'm not surprised. You look magnificent, my dear.”

He bends to kiss her cheek, and if it wasn't for the quiver of happiness I can feel in our bond, I would snatch her out of reach.

“Thanks.” She looks us both over, her eyes lingering on my tux. “You look amazing,” she says a little breathlessly. “I mean, you're always in suits. But this is next level.”

“Hmmm.” Some of the amusement leaves Lucas' face. “With those goggle eyes you're giving each other, it might be time to just let nature take its course. Bisha's on a side trip to London, so he won't be at the ball. This might be a good way

of softening the news. Let others see you together and report back.”

Elvana looks at me with wide eyes, not able to completely suppress the hopeful bubble in our bond. She wants to walk into that ballroom on my arm. And that makes me hate Roan Bisha with the fire of a thousand suns. “Not yet. I want to have him standing in front of me when he finds out. I want him to see what she means to me. And what I’ll do to protect her.”

Elvana’s gaze dips to her shoes, but then she takes my arm, a whisper of arousal pulsing through our bond. “Okay, but there better be a really good cloakroom, because there’s no way I’m getting through the night without kissing the hell out of you in that suit.”

The growl that leaves my lips makes Ferrier sigh, but then he’s ushering us to the door, muttering about the insanity of mate bonds. I let him have his grumble, and don’t begrudge his moment with Elvana on his arm. Besides, from the in-depth review I’ve made of the building’s blueprints, there are more than enough cloakrooms to satisfy my beast.

The Crouch Estate is a sprawling compound on the outskirts of Hartford, halfway between Ferrier and Bisha territories. It was once an elegant, historic manor, but paranoia and a distinct lack of taste have turned it into an ugly fortress. While Connecticut is technically within Ferrier’s domain, as High Alpha Bisha has command over the state, meaning Crouch has two masters. It has made him both paranoid and greedy, and of all the second-tier alphas on the East Coast, he’s the most ambitious. He clearly sees himself moving up a rung in the future, hence the desire to play lord of the manor with

his foolish balls. He might think security is a high priority, but I have intimate knowledge of all the weak spots and how best to exploit them.

Which is at the forefront of my mind as Ferrier's driver drops me at a dark patch of trees on the circular drive. "If anything happens, collect Elvana and head to the East Gate. Crouch hasn't got around to reinforcing that section and this tank should be able to take the gate out easily. Once you're through, use the old service road to get back to the interstate. If for some reason the car is disabled, there's an old gazebo near the fence-line you can use to get her out. And if she gets so much as a scratch, you'll be answering to me. We clear?" I feel a throb of alarm through the bond, but it's Ferrier's chuckle that makes me narrow my eyes. "You think I'm not serious?"

"Oh, I doubt anyone has ever made that mistake, brother," he smirks, waving me away from the door. "Now, go lurk in the shadows while I present your mysterious mate to the world."

I gnash my teeth, but give Elvana a quick kiss, stepping back reluctantly to let the white-faced driver continue up the drive. I hug the road in their wake, slipping in and out of the trees as other guests arrive. It's a long, frustrating walk – my wolf furious he doesn't get to track his mate as she enters the building – and I know I'm all teeth when I step out of the tree-line. Which happens to be right into the path of the estate's valets and doormen.

"Shit! Where did you come from?" A dazed valet takes in my face and goes as white as a sheet. "Sorry, Alpha Marku.

Um... do you have a car you need parking?"

There's an awkward pause as they all peer into the thick foliage behind me. "I'll be entering by the side door," I tell them, stepping through their huddle and scattering them like startled hens. "When you announce my arrival to security, tell them I'm armed, and if anyone tries to pat me down, they'll lose an eye." I immediately think of Elvi at the auction house, threatening a bunch of alphas with nothing but her shoe. It must soften my mood a little, because I add, "And I'm here for pleasure, not business, so no one needs to bleed tonight."

Feeling better about clearing that up, I leave them fumbling for their radios and head towards the alternate entrance. Crushed shell crunches under my dress shoes as my gaze sweeps the building. It's definitely on a historic register somewhere, given the original brickwork under Crouch's garish additions. Every window has a reinforced steel balcony, and most of the flat surfaces, a surveillance tower. But the foundations are original, and I think of the dank underground rooms I studied on the blueprints. If Crouch really did purchase Kellman Prior, I hope he's locked up behind one of those fancy balconies and not wasting away in a damp basement.

Something I plan to discover before the night's out, given the way my mate reacted to news of the prince. There's a connection there, which isn't surprising given the similarities in their upbringings. He's also close to her age, and from what I saw of him around the Tower and in his personal file, extremely good-looking. Although, as I mount the stairs to the kitchen, I have to wonder if a year in Crouch's hands has taken some of the shine off the little prince.

A thought that makes my wolf bare my teeth. If Elvi wants him, he better not be broken, or there will be hell to pay.

*All okay?* She suddenly checks in down our bond, no doubt wondering at my murderous mood.

*Just doing the rounds.*

I project as much comfort as I can back at her, ignoring the side-eyes from the kitchen staff as I walk through their domain. To some, my face is probably known, circulated by security as a potential threat. To others, I'm just an alpha whose size and attitude are alarming. Either way, no one stops me as I enter a plush hallway through a swinging door, the blueprint clear in my mind as I take in locked rooms and dark corridors. The ballroom is the largest space on the lower floor, accessible by a grand foyer cluttered with arriving guests. But there is a private stairwell that leads to a mezzanine, and I take that, the noises of the party rising as I step out onto a small railed walkway. The lighting is dim, the carpet plain, but it offers a perfect view of the ballroom down below. And despite Crouch's claims of world-class security, there's not a guard in sight.

Instead, they're all down there lurking amongst the guests. Double his usual roster, as I expected, and all dressed in blood-red tactical gear. Maybe it's to go with the fall theme, which looks to me like a cross between a barn and a séance. Although the burgundy tablecloths are probably good for disguising blood splatter.

And then Lucas enters the room with Elvi on his arm. She looks like a pool of shimmering moonlight, all the gaudy reds and dull browns fading into the background. The whispers and

pointing immediately start up, and the flush of pride at seeing Elvi is smothered by a possessiveness so strong, I barely stop myself vaulting off the mezzanine. But instead, I head back down the interior stairs, an all-consuming need burning through my blood. I need to touch her and smell her. To stand between her and all those gawking, calculating gazes.

And if one of those stuck-up bitches so much as *sneers* at her, there won't be a functioning eyeball left in the place.

Given my murderous mood, I stick to the walls, circling behind them as I track Elvi's progress across the ballroom. But the gossip and innuendo are impossible to miss. Everyone, including some of the guards, assumes she's Lucas Ferrier's new plaything.

"Do you think he's finally settling down?" A middle-aged omega dripping in yellow diamonds asks her friend. There's a note of competitive hostility in her voice that sets my teeth on edge. "I haven't seen anything in the papers. She looks very young, but there's no denying that mark on her neck. Some wolf has taken a nice big bite out of the juicy little thing."

Rage writhes under my skin. Some wolf?

*Mine. Mine. Mine.*

A hint of my turmoil must leak down the bond, because Elvi's head snaps towards my hiding place in the shadows. I doubt she can see me, but I send her a reassuring smile, while at the same time trying to convince my surly beast this is for the best. As Ferrier's companion, she will have his protection, while claiming her as mine will put a target on her back.



But then the host for the evening is cutting in front of her, his worm-like tongue slipping over shiny lips. Crouch is an ugly bastard, but Elvi smiles at him prettily enough. My gut churns as he gestures to the dancefloor and she nods. Ferrier doesn't look thrilled, but that might be because he's waiting for me to appear and dismember our host. Is she planning to pump him for information while his fat little hands grope her through a waltz? If she is, she better make it quick, because I can already hear the crack of each joint as I bite his fingers off at the knuckle.

*Calm down, lover.* Her voice drifts to me through the bond. *I'm pumping him, like you guessed. And this guy loves to hear himself talk.*

Every muscle in my body goes taut. *Mention pumping him again, and I'll show you what arterial spray does to a pumpkin centerpiece.*

Perhaps I've gone too far, but I think I can see her lips twitch from across the room. It's fucking beauty and the beast brought to life as she glides along in Crouch's lumbering embrace. I'm doing everything I can to not flood the bond with my jealous rage, but when his groin slides against hers, my control snaps. I barely see the guests tumbling away as I surge up out of the shadows, stalking towards them with my wolf in my eyes. The violinist slips and hits a painful note, but Elvi just smirks up at me as I drop a hand on Crouch's shoulder. He gives a squeak, all the blood rushing from his flushed face as I tighten my grip. "You're done," I mutter as I thrust him aside. "I'm cutting in."

Crouch all but scurries off the floor and my thumb goes straight to the mark on Elvi's throat. "Well hello, stranger." She looks me over as I lead her around the room, more stomping than dancing. "Based on our little bond exchange, I thought you'd be drenched in blood by now."

I don't reply, my teeth clenched too hard to form words.

"This is working out really well. I'm so much safer wearing an anonymous bite mark than being claimed by the deadliest assassin on the East Coast." She hums as my fingers spasm on her hips. "Of course, now half these people think I'm nuts, dancing in the arms of the Prince of Darkness. But that's probably better than the rest of them, who think I'm fucking my father..."

I growl, startling the last of the dancers off the floor. It leaves a nice wide gap straight to the nearest exit. "Not another word," I mutter as I sweep her in front of me, "or I'll drop you on my cock right here on the dancefloor."

"Promises, promises," she grins, but then I'm thrusting her through the first doorway, my wolf pressing hard against my skin. It's not a cloakroom, but some kind of reception area, empty except for a row of champagne glasses set out for a toast. I back her up against the opposite wall and plunder her lips in a savage kiss. When I let her go, she's breathing hard, her pulse fluttering under my bite, and I dive down and drag the whole throbbing gland into my mouth. "Holy shit!" She arches against me, then glances at the door. "You're not worried half the ballroom is trying to peek in the keyhole?"

I think of how many eyeballs I could fit under my size 18 shoes. "Not if they want to see midnight."

She giggles and presses tight to my chest, but her smile fades as she tries to part her legs. “This dress is a nightmare. I’m basically a mummy wrapped in aluminum foil.”

I run my hands over those dazzling thighs. “You’re fucking perfect. Definitely too good for the assholes out there.”

Her eyes soften, and she stands on the tips of her pretty toes to kiss my lips. I always thought blood soothed my beast, but a little puff of air from her mouth and I’m putty in her hands.

“We should go look around,” she says. “But we need to be careful. Crouch spent the whole time telling me about all his security features, including doubling his usual guards for tonight.” Her lips curl up. “I think he was expecting some hot as hell assassin to make trouble.”

A purr rumbles up through my chest at her hooded smile, but then she looks past me and it shrivels, her body turning to stone in my arms.

I know before I look over my shoulder who’s just entered the room. Their scent is a combination of musk and sweet notes, forged during Elvi’s heat. There are only two of them – the kopil is wisely nowhere to be seen – and their faces are matching masks of frustration, groans rumbling out of their chests as they take us in. It’s music to my ears, and as I tuck my mate close to my side, my fingers trace the exposed line of her neck. When their eyes lock on my bond mark, I give a slow, scornful shake of my head.

The message is clear.

*This could have been yours, fuckers...*



# Elvana

I'm prepared for the rude whispers, our host's groping hands, and the stench of pumpkin spice and alpha musk choking the air.

But I'm not ready for this.

Seeing Rory and Cam is like a one-two punch to the gut. Somehow, I'd made them smaller in my mind. Peeled off a few of their glossy layers, softened some of their sharp edges, and leached a little color out of their striking eyes. Self-preservation had taken my feelings for them and stuffed them in the back of a mental drawer. But seeing them here in matching tuxedos, so beautiful it physically hurts not to walk into their arms, brings all my shame and anger straight back to the surface. My wolf lifts her head in a silent howl and my fingernails dig into Arben's palm. The only thing that stops me from wolfing out is the fact they're staring at my neck as if they're the ones in pain.

"Elvi."

"Little Angel..."

Just hearing their voices sends a shudder through me. But right as my knees start to buckle, a wave of warm comfort sweeps through our bond, drawing my gaze back to my mate. All I can see in the sharp planes of his face is love and acceptance. He doesn't need to speak or use the bondlink to tell me he has my back. And that it's my choice whether I talk

to them, or sweep out of here without even acknowledging their existence.

But before I can decide, Rory steps forward, his eyes flicking between us. “We heard you were with Ferrier, but it’s pretty clear you two are bonded...” He swallows hard, his wolf gleaming in his eyes as they settle on Arben’s mating mark. “I’m happy for you. You guys deserve it...”

His voice is so upbeat, I can’t keep the snarl off my face. “Is that it? Because you could have just sent a card.”

His face falls, those leaf green eyes losing their wolf sheen. “Baby girl...”

“Only, you wouldn’t have known where to send it,” I go on, as if they’re not all choking on my hurt feelings. “And I wouldn’t have known who it was from, since you lied about *everything*, including your goddamn *name!*”

It’s only as the last word leaves my lips on a howl that I realize my finger is buried in his chest. It stirs the musky warmth beneath his pristine white shirt, and I’m suddenly reminded of exactly what kind of shifter Rory is. He might look like god’s gift to needy, stupid women, but there’s a scarily powerful wolf under his skin. One who peers down at me now, turning his voice to gravel and smoke. “I’ll do anything to make it up to you, Little Angel. Just tell me what to do.”

I huff out a frustrated breath, but it quickly turns to a snarl as he tries to grab my hand. When I jerk back against Arben, his big arms closing protectively over my body, it finally brings Cam away from the door. His hands are buried in his tuxedo pants and his shoulders knotted with tension, but he

leans one of them into his brother's back, a mirror of the support Arben is offering me. If it wasn't for the hunger in his eyes, I'd think he was only here to back Rory's play.

But he wants me.

They both want me.

And they both want what Arben and I have.

And just like that, I'm back in the hazy heat of the Red Poppy...

*Arben is behind me, holding me on his haunches as I ride his knot, his big hands rolling my nipples until they're throbbing against his palms. Rory is sprawled naked at his knees, his fingers digging into Arben's thighs as his tongue lashes over my swollen clit. And Cam is standing over his brother, his hands on Arben's shoulders as he thrusts his cock between my eager lips. We're a heaving, aching mess, riding a wave of bliss that never ends. And that perfect pleasure is only heightened, because it's all of us together. A pack I'll defend to the death...*

I slam back into myself, horrified to find my perfume is so thick, it's pulling at them like needy hands. Rory staggers towards me, his fingers clawing over the beads on the sides of my dress. "Fuck. Please, Little Angel. Just come home with us. Let us show you what we were too fucking stupid to tell you."

And then he's nuzzling my neck, his teeth grazing my bond mark as Cam crowds in behind. Unlike his brother, he doesn't go for my throat. Instead, Cam's pale eyes burn into mine as he cups my chin. With that firm, steady pressure I remember

so well, he tilts my head, opening my throat to his brother's lashing tongue. I moan as Rory nibbles at the edges of the bond mark, his hands sliding along my spine. I know they must be touching Arben, their knuckles grazing his chest as they press me back against him. But my mate doesn't push them away, or try to draw me back out of their reach. Instead, he keeps his arms loose across my breasts, his purr rumbling under my ear as he watches them explore the mark he stamped on my soul.

Watching.

And waiting...

*Waiting for me to get my shit together and punch my stepmonsters in their lying mouths...*

"No!" I hiss, pushing them both off me a moment before my wolf steps up and bares her teeth. Her anger ripples down my arms, silvery hairs sprouting along the surface. They've barely stumbled out of reach before her claws slide into place.

I expect them to freak out at the sight, but Rory's eyes are wide with admiration. "Fuck, little wolf. A half-shift?"

I'm tempted to tell them a half-shift is nothing. *My badass bitch can shift at will.*

But they haven't earned the right to talk to me, let alone learn my secrets. And my wolf is still rumbling in my chest, her glare a silver warning in my eyes.

"Time to go, princeshē?" Arben asks in my ear, his familiar scent washing over me and soothing my beast. "Your father must be wondering where we are."



“Father?” Cam’s suddenly in attack mode, his muscles bunching under his jacket. “Bisha is here?”

“No,” I snap, pissed off all over again. “Despite hijacking my life and fucking with my memories, you got that wrong. Lucas Ferrier is my father. Which means forcing me into your mission was a complete waste of time. I was never Bisha’s baby. And I was never your enemy.”

*Until now.* I want to say the words, but they refuse to leave my tongue.

Which is as good an indicator as any I need to leave the room quick fucking smart.

But Cam steps in front of me before I can move. He’s so close I can smell his sunshine scent, the heat of his body calling to something inside of me. I try to tell myself it’s just the hooks he put in my brain, trying to draw me back under his spell, but the pain in his eyes seems real. “I can’t ask you to forgive me, Elvi, but if there’s any way I can make it up to you...”

“How?” I snap, that closeness lost in a surge of anger. “By giving back my memories? My mom? You took her from me, Cam. You got in my head and twisted it all up, so I thought I’d abandoned her. That I’d left her to be murdered in some cold hotel bed. How can you ever make up for that?”

“I can reverse it. If you let me put you under, I can retrieve them...”

I gape at him. Does he really expect me to let him stick me with a needle again? Let alone rummage around in my head? Rory mutters something under his breath, but I keep my eyes

narrowed on Cam. “You think you take care of people, Cam? You’re a cold, heartless prick. Maybe even more so than Link. You never putting yourself on the line for anyone, and I honestly don’t know if anything you do is real. You fake your friendships, maybe even to your brothers. And that’s going to make you one lonely fucking wolf.”

I think I’ve finally struck them speechless, because Cam just drops his gaze to the floor and even Rory closes his eyes. And as I move past them with Arben at my back, they don’t try to convince me to stay. Which pinches at some stupid, needy part of me, and I barrel out of the door, almost running directly into our slimy host. He takes one look at my strained face and gives a nasty smile, although he tries to hide it behind a show of concern. He puffs himself up, no doubt because of the armed guards at his back, pinning Arben with a haughty look. “Alpha Marku, I don’t know what they let you get away with in New York, but in my home you will mind your manners and not harass my guests.” He looks at Rory and Cam, his mouth pinched tight. “I assume one of you is her mate?”

I swallow a strangled groan as I duck past him, but Rory follows me, hissing in my ear, “Wait! You need to know that Cherise is here. That girl from Slick who was fucking your... Bisha. Well, she’s here, and she recognized you.” I shoot him an aggravated look, but he takes my arm. “She saw us together in the Red Poppy. Remember the clingy chick in the demon horns who forced me to dance with her?”

It clicks into place – Cherise was the beta using an omega mist, dancing in a circle of alphas, but still greedy for Rory’s attention... I give a slow nod, because that was right before he

got me off with his fingers, and I shared my first kiss with Cam.

“Right now, she thinks we’re still together. So if you’re trying to keep this thing secret with Arben, you can use that. I won’t deny it.”

I give him a flat look. “That’s really generous of you, Rory, but now I have to go.”

I look back over my shoulder to see Crouch walking our way, Arben one second from ripping the heads off the two guards standing between us. I bite my lip and send a mental hug down the bond. *I’m fine. Let’s just get through this and go home.*

He gives me a stiff nod, but Rory is glaring at Crouch. “I can distract that fucker if you want. Give you a chance to get away without your mate losing his shit.” I must look surprised by the offer because his eyes darken. “The only thing I lied about was my name, little wolf. Everything else was so real, I don’t fucking know what to do with myself now.”

I swallow at the pain in his voice, but this isn’t the time or place to hash our shit out. “I can’t talk about this now.”

An eager light sparks in his eyes, turning them electric green. “Then where? When? I’ll meet you wherever, Little Angel.”

Shit. I forgot how intense it feels to be this close to him. “I just can’t...”

“I get it. This is a bad time. Fucking Crouch is a slimy prick, and those guards of his are twitchy as hell. You should get out of here before any trouble starts.”

I look past him to see our host right on our heels and it's on the tip of my tongue to tell Rory why we're really here. That their bondmate – their real omega – could be somewhere on Crouch's lands, and we planned to search the premise in the guise of guests. But I hadn't counted on our host's interest, or his desire to play the big alpha by hassling Arben. Before I can say anything, Rory drops a kiss on my temple and nudges me towards a door I realize is a bathroom. He gives me a wink before he turns back to Crouch, and there's more than a little wolf in his sharp smile. "See you soon, Little Angel."

I duck through the door and immediately check in with Arben. I can feel a smirk through the bond just as there's a loud thud in the hallway. *The wolfling just threw up on Crouch's shoes. Now he's yelling something about the champagne tasting like piss, and the pumpkin pie like old ass.*

I bite back a smile and press my ear to the door. There's definitely yelling now and I can hear Rory dry-retching while Crouch curses up a storm.

*They're showing us the door, my love. I'm happy to redirect them and come back to you, or you could exit via the kitchen. It's straight down the hall and the car will be waiting outside.*

I can just imagine Arben's approach to redirection. *No, I'll meet you.* I pause for a moment, then add, *Don't let them get too rough with Rory.*

I cringe a bit, instantly regretting the words, but Arben just sends a purr through the bond. It makes me straighten my spine and I quickly open the door, relieved to find the hallway empty. I walk in the opposite direction to the ballroom, and I'm almost at the kitchen when a security guard steps out of a

side door. Luckily, he turns the other way, so I don't have to pass a strange alpha in the hallway...

But then his scent hits me, and I quickly duck inside the room he just left.

Which is freaky as hell, with a fluorescent strip on the wall, and a set of stairs that disappear down into the dark. I press a hand to my chest, cautiously sucking the alpha scent into my lungs.

*Damn.*

He smells like pine needles, sweat, and... something that's off-the-charts delicious.

Holy crap. Unless my nose is playing tricks on me, it's an omega wrapped in sunshine, lightning, and the sharp bite of gun oil.

Cam. Rory. Link.

Down those stairs – wherever the hell they lead - is Kelly. Prior's prince and their real mate.



I have two choices. Use the kitchen exit to find Arben and bring him back here to help search, or descend into a dark basement and look for Kelly on my own.

It's not really a choice, especially since I know Arben will lose his mind in I'm not in his line of sight in a minute. But as I go to use the bond to reassure him, I feel a blockage like a mental wall, thick and impenetrable. I frown, trying to reach

past it for Arben, but there's no hint of him anywhere. Just my own wolf, crouched down low and watching me from the shadows of my mind.

*Shit! Arben!*

I instantly lunge back towards the door, imagining him dead at Crouch's feet. *I need to get out there! I need fangs and claws!* But before I can rip the door open, my wolf brings me up short. Instead of pushing through my skin in pursuit of my mate, she whirls me round, until I'm facing back towards the stairs. I'm still trying to make sense of that blockage in my brain, but she presses her paw against my spine, and I realize I don't have a choice at all.

*Down.*

It's almost painful, fighting both her instincts and the need to go check on Arben. But I remind myself that my mate is more than capable of looking after himself. All those extra guards are worrying, but there isn't an alpha on this estate who could out-command Arben. And Rory and Cam aren't exactly lightweights, either.

Something my wolf must have already decided, because she gives me another push towards the stairs. It's pitch black down below, the air both stuffy and sour. Old food. Body odor. And all of it covered in a liberal layer of piss and puke.

My nose wrinkles, but when I reach for the wall, I feel a railing under my damp hand. Gripping it tight, I take a few careful steps in my high heels. But before I get very far, I hear a faint grunt and something that sounds like a slap.

*Oh, shit.*

There's definitely more than one person down there. And from the low moan that drifts up the stairs, whatever I'm about to walk into is going to be ugly.

*Maybe it's a good thing I can't see for crap.*

Barely has the thought formed before my wolf takes over, and the room comes into grainy focus. Using her sight, I can see the steps ahead of me – at least twenty more - and then a huge basement divided up into small rooms. Along with the wolf vision, my ears prick up and I can hear a pained cry from the other end of the room.

I hurry down the rest of the stairs, grimacing as I pass the first room. I look in the door and see a basic cot, and a hole in the ground. No water, or windows, but a reinforced door that could keep out a feral shifter. Everything is drenched in the sweet-sour scent of terrified omegas, and the truth hits me like a slap. All these fucking rooms are *cells*. Grouch has been keeping omegas locked in his basement.

The rage that prickles over my skin is so consuming, I feel rooted to the spot. But when a ragged moan is followed by what sounds like a punch, my wolf thrusts me forward. Silvery hair sprouts on my arms as my teeth lengthen into fangs. I reach the last door in the room just as my claws pop out, and then I'm staring at a wide back. There's a torch propped on a table, a bottle of whiskey, and a great hulking, sweating shadow.

It moves, a rough hand fumbling at its belt as it pushes something down on the edge of the table. The torch jumps, sending a wild beam through the room and I see a man in a mask. No, it's more of a muzzle, like you'd put on a rabid dog.

I can't see his face under the old leather, but I know it's an omega. Wearing nothing but a sweat-stained tee and tattered shorts hanging off his hips. The shadow – a fucking guard - is clutching a fistful of long coppery hair as he kicks the omega's legs apart. But his prey isn't going down without a fight. He's kicking and bucking, blood and saliva dripping through the muzzle.

Rage is too gentle a word for how I feel, especially when I see the guard's dick clutched in his hand. He's gripping it like a club he wants to beat the omega with, and I'm swinging at him before he even catches my scent. He screams, the sound of a dying dog, and hurls himself sideways. But he can't go far, because all ten of my claws are buried in his back.





## Elvana

As blood spurts across the front of my dress, my first thought is a practical one: dead bodies are damn heavy. Although, the rapist guard isn't technically dead, just dropping to his knees with an agonized moan. He's in danger of pulling me down with him, so I quickly jerk my claws out of his back. Although, that just causes more blood to pump from the deep wounds, and I think of Arben threatening to shower the pumpkin centerpieces with arterial spray.

*It sounded kind of funny until I'm the one doing the spraying...*

But then I stop thinking altogether, because the omega stretched over the table is pushing himself up and turning around. Even with the muzzle covering the lower part of his face, I recognize him.

Kellman Prior.

The stepmonsters' mate.

He just stares at me, his chest heaving. But my gaze dips to the torn neck of his dirty tee and the silvery mark on his chest, right over his heart. My own pulse kicks up as I realize it must be Link's bite, as deep and claiming as the one on my neck. For some reason, the thought scrapes across my soul, so I look away and focus on retracting my claws. It leaves my fingers a mess, and I try to swallow down the bile in my throat as I wipe

them on my dress. Sequins are not exactly absorbent though, and I just end up smearing the blood all over me.

*Gross.*

Although, I'm not sorry about the dead guy at my feet, especially when Kelly Prior tears the muzzle off his face and tosses it across the room. He's beautiful, just like his poster, which makes his injuries that much more hideous. Old bruises, new bruises, a wound on his scalp that looks raw and infected, and a steady stream of blood dripping from his busted bottom lip. Another surge of rage dances between us, and I realize it's coming from him. I expect him to scream, but he chokes it back and drives a vicious kick into the side of the guard's head.

*Is he dead now?* The asshole's not moving, but I'm not exactly keen to get on my knees to check.

"Angel." I nearly jump out of my skin at the sound of Kelly's voice. I can feel my eyes as wide as moons, but that could be because his accent is hot fudge over ice cream. "You look like an avenging angel in that dress."

Oh. For a moment, I thought he somehow recognized me, but that's stupid. It's not like he had a poster of *me* on his bedroom wall.

"The claws are badass," he goes on, then tilts his head to the side, a cheeky smile peeking out. "Have to admit, I never thought my rescuer would be a sexy omega assassin in a ballgown."

A hysterical bubble of laughter climbs my chest. Along with a heated blush that Kellman Prior just called me *sexy*.

“Um... my mate must be rubbing off on me, I guess.”

He quirks an eyebrow, then snatches up the torch, and swings it around the room, stepping past me to check the rest of the basement. When he comes back my way, he grabs my arm and my breath catches. Both at the tightness of his grip, and the wave of spicy omega that flows over me. “Who sent you, Angel?”

I jerk at the pet-name, but there’s a hint of steel in his amber gaze. “No one. I smelled you.” I nod at the other empty cells. “Or them. There was a guard in the hall upstairs and he had an omega’s scent on him. He didn’t exactly look like the nurturing type, so I decided to see what he was up to.”

“Just like that?” He leans in and takes a big whiff of my neck. “I think you’re leaving out a few details, because you definitely smell like my pack. But there’s something dark and delicious over it all...”

He’s so close to the bite mark on my gland, it has to be Arben’s scent. “We’re friends. Rory and Cam are upstairs, distracting the guards so we can get out.”

His head whips straight to the ceiling, like he can see through the foot of rock to his mates. “Here?” He licks his busted lip and winces, but it doesn’t hide the desperate hope in his eyes. “You’re with them?”

“Sort of.” Damn, why did those assholes have to make everything so complicated? “But we need to go. There are a lot of guards here tonight.”

His eyes darken at the reminder, and he bends to spit on the back of the asshole at our feet. “Let’s get the hell out of here,

then.”

I nod, and he hands me the torch, clearly happy for me to lead the way. I make sure he can keep up, then head quickly back to the stairs. We’re about halfway up when that blockage in my brain eases a little and I sense Arben on the other side. I’m so relieved I stumble and Kelly grabs my waist. But I move out of reach, closing my eyes as my mate’s voice finally sounds in my head. *Are you alright, princeshë?*

I lean heavily against the rail. *Yes, but I took a detour. I have that friend we were looking for. We’re just leaving the basement.*

*Basement?*

It sounds like he’s cracking the word between his molars, and I cast a glance down at the creepy-as-fuck cells. *Yep. And I couldn’t leave him down here, Arben. Trust me.*

There’s a long silence, like maybe he’s counting to ten so he doesn’t combust. But then he gives a deep, rumbling sigh. *Of course, I trust you. But get your sweet ass up to the car, Elvana.*

*We’re on our way.*

Kelly’s jittery sigh brings me back to the present, and I hurry the rest of the way up the stairs. It’s only when we reach the top and pass under the fluorescent light I see how much damage he’s taken. Not just the cuts and bruises, but what has to be both malnutrition and dehydration. He’s gray and sweaty, his limbs shaking from one flight of stairs. And by the time we reach the door, he’s wobbling on his feet and I’m not sure how we’re going to make it to the car. He winces at my expression,

looking almost embarrassed by his condition. “It’s just been so long since they locked me down here...”

I shake my head, the need to reach out and comfort him overpowering. “Crouch will pay for this, I promise.”

He nods and I turn back to the door, pulling on my wolf. She’s so close, I can feel her crouched just beneath my skin. Ready for whatever waits for us on the other side of the door.

Which makes it kind of anti-climactic when it opens to an empty hallway. But it’s definitely not quiet, shouts coming from the ballroom while gunfire tears through the air in the other direction. I’m pretty sure that’s where we’re meant to go and I pause, suddenly unsure. *Arben?*

He rushes through the bond, his voice tense. *Things are escalating out here, princeshë. There’s no path to the car. You’ll need to go through the utility room, not the kitchens. As soon as you’re out, run for the fence. Look for the gazebo and get over it any way you can.*

There’s a pause, and it’s like watching a horror movie with your eyes closed. But then he’s back, his voice dark and urgent. *If I’m delayed, run for the den. I’ll be right behind you.*

That’s all he says before the mental wall slams over the bond again, and I sway. Kelly’s hand is back on my waist, his worried eyes staring into mine. “It’s okay. We just need to take a different exit.”

He doesn’t look convinced, but he nods his head. “Whatever you say, Angel.”

I turn and run towards the kitchens, veering off at the last minute to take a door I remember from Arben’s map. He’d

insisted I memorize all the exits, and I send a mental kiss to my paranoid mate. The door opens into a storage room, and for a moment, I think I've got it wrong, but then I see the yellow wash of light over a row of washing machines. It's a laundry, most likely for the kitchen staff, and I tug Kelly after me. Thankfully, no one is around at this time of night, and I head straight to the back door. There's a bolt up at the top, but Kelly is tall enough to easily flick it back and then I'm easing it open.

Night air rushes in, heavy with pine and the smell of enraged wolves.

I step out, scanning the fence line for the gazebo. But as soon as I catch sight of Arben, I jerk to a stop, my heart in my throat. He's less than thirty feet away, but there's a ring of guards around him, all wielding guns or half-shifted claws. He's wildly outnumbered, and I can hear cursing in the distance from the other side of the house. Is it Rory? Cam? My heart even clenches for Ferrier. But I only have eyes for Arben, watching as the guards all rush him at once. I feel dizzy with fear, but my mate moves so fast, he's a blur between them, his claws carving through the air and sending screams of pain up into the night. He has his back to me, and I bite my lip until I taste blood. If I call out to him now, or flood the bond with my fear, he could take his eyes off his attackers and then they'd be on him.

Instead, I swing towards Kelly, pointing to the tree line. But his face is white as he stares at Arben, clearly recognizing my mate. "He's on our side," I whisper, yanking on his hand. "Now, run!"

He follows me, mainly because I have his fingers in a death grip. We have to cross a crushed shell path to get to the gate, but I keep my eyes on the gazebo, ignoring the way my heels crunch over the noisy surface. Arben, and whoever is fighting at the front of the house, are providing enough cover that no one notices us. Doesn't stop my heart from hammering in my chest, though, and I bite back a cry of relief when we reach the gazebo. It's not in the best repair, but the roof is close enough to the top of the fence to give us a way over.

The problem is Kelly, who's swaying on his feet, and looks like he's about to drop any second. But he just cocks that silky brow at me. "You're not exactly dressed for this, either."

"No, but my wolf is," I tell him, then step back and kick off my shoes. I have a moment to wonder if I'm wrong, and shifting on my own is beyond me, and then my wolf is tearing through my skin in an explosion of bloody sequins. Her heart beats loudly in my ears, but I can still hear Kelly's gasp as he takes us in. "Fuck! You really are a badass omega, Angel!"

My wolf preens at that, but there's no time to waste, and she turns and leaps easily to the top of the gazebo. The roof is warped but mostly intact, and she pads back to the edge to watch for Kelly. He is already scrambling after us, his biceps straining under his ragged tee as he pulls himself over the lip of the roof. My wolf stands back, letting him swing himself up the last bit, but she gives his face a helpful lick when he collapses on the top.

To my surprise, it makes Kelly laugh. He also hooks a trembling arm over her neck, drawing his face up to her



silvery ruff. His voice is a cracked whisper as he says into her ear, “Whatever the fuck happens, this is worth it. Thank you.”

My wolf purrs, but then she nudges him up to his knees, closer to the fence. He bites back a groan, but there’s only determination in his face now. My wolf clearly isn’t going to go over until he does, and he shakes his head, like he can’t believe he’s about to do this. “Here goes nothing.”

It’s more of a stagger than a leap, but instead of aiming for the middle of the fence, he hurls himself over the top. It would be an elegant escape if his arms could hold him, but he immediately loses his grip, sliding roughly down the other side. When he hits the ground, his legs give way, sending him to his hands and knees. A painful groan rips out of him, and he falls onto his face like he doesn’t plan on moving any time soon. But my wolf is already flying through the air, landing perfectly at his side. Kelly might be half-starved, but he’s a big guy. Doesn’t stop my wolf from shoving her snout under his chest to force him upwards, back to his feet. He groans again, but she lifts her head, giving him something to prop himself against.

He grabs her scruff, rubbing his face against the silvery fur. “You going to carry me, Angel?”

*Anywhere.*

I can feel the promise vibrate through her, and I want to ask her to wait, to make sure Arben doesn’t need us, but she’s already heading for the trees. Kelly swallows another groan, leaning heavily on her head as he stumbles at her side. I realize she’s purring, her scent wrapping around him as we push

through the trees. And Kelly seems to be sucking it in, his shoulders lifting a little like he's breathing in her strength.

*Mate.*

If I had the use of my legs, I'd definitely have stumbled at that. But even with the word echoing between us, she gives me nothing more, her whole focus on the dark woods.

And then the road is in front of us, the limousine we arrived in idling on the verge. The back door pops open as we stumble towards it, and then Ferrier is peering out at us. His eyes widen as he takes in Kelly, but there's only pride in his face as he greets my wolf. She doesn't hesitate, leaping into the back seat and giving his hand a welcoming lick.

"Mr. Prior, isn't it?" Ferrier's voice is warm and soothing as Kelly stares at him, his hands knotted into fists. "I'm the Alpha of Boston, and Elvana's father. I promise, you're safe with us."

"My pack," Kelly rasps, staring around wildly. "You said they're here."

"They're right behind us, making sure you get away safe."

Kelly's now peering back the way we've come and my wolf doesn't hesitate; thrusting me back through her skin so I'm suddenly sitting between them, stark naked with bloody sequins and bits of forest dirt stuck to my skin.

Well, crap.

Ferrier instantly passes me his tuxedo jacket, and I give him a grateful smile. "It's okay, Kelly," I say as I cover myself. "This is Lucas Ferrier. He's really is the Alpha of Boston, and... my dad."

I ignore the grin that splits Ferrier's face, watching as Kelly grips the edge of the open door, shifting uneasily from foot to foot. But he's clearly at the end of his strength, and he gives a half-defeated shrug before crawling into the back of the car. "Guess that has to be good enough for me, then."

I open my mouth to reassure him, but then his eyes roll back in his head and he faints, his head planted firmly on my thighs. I look up at Ferrier, not sure what to do about the unconscious guy in my lap, but he just gives me a proud smile. "Well done, Elvana. Let's get him home, shall we?"



# Kelly

I wake to crisp sheets – Egyptian cotton – and a light, floral scent that barely gets past the grime in my nose. I'm in a deep nest, the bedding fresh beneath my own stench, the room all curved edges and soft lighting. Heavy drapes cover the windows, and I can see an ensuite off to the left. There's the faint hum of recycled air coming from the domed ceiling overhead, and the temperature would be perfect if my skin wasn't feverishly hot. But I ignore that problem for a moment, and carefully prop myself up on an elbow. I'm naked to the waist, my dirty, ragged shorts still clinging to my hips, and my torso is splattered in blood and grime. I itch. And stink. But it's reassuring to know no one has touched me since I flaked out like a swoony bitch in Angel's lap.

I quickly scan the room for some sign of her, but I'm definitely alone.

Which gets me rolling to the edge of the nest, my feet sinking into the thick, pale carpet as I study myself and try not to puke.

Fuck me. I was once on my way to being a stocky rugby player, but my thigh muscles are now so wasted, Angel's little hands could probably wrap around them with room to spare. I've still got washboard abs, but that's only because there's not an inch of fat to cushion my six-foot frame. My hip bones rival a catwalk model's, but my ankles and elbows stick out like doorknobs. I'm malnourished, dehydrated, and from the

throbbing on my scalp, probably fighting a blood infection. I'm a fucking wreck, but that's just the view from the outside. Under my skin, shit is a whole lot worse.

“Bloody hell,” I mutter aloud, forcing myself upright and staggering towards the door. But I haven't even made it halfway when it pops open and Angel peeks in. Just her head, with all that silver and caramel hair, and a pair of bright, golden eyes. Her pretty pink lips turn up in a smile and the relief that pours through my body is so strong, I have to lock my knees so I don't end up on my bony ass for a second time. “Angel. Where the hell am I?”

She smiles – maybe at the pet name, or the fact I didn't croak it in her pristine bed – and slips inside, carefully closing the door behind her. When she flicks the lock, I instantly relax, and she gives me an understanding look. “It's okay,” she says in a soothing voice. “You're safe. This is my dad's place, and we're deep in his territory. No one can get to you here.”

“Your dad... He's the Alpha of Boston?” I have a hazy memory of a big, good-looking guy with silver hair and Angel's eyes sitting in the back of a limousine. I didn't get a bad vibe from him, but I'd been moments from passing out in his daughter's lap. Things probably went downhill right after that. “I should get out of here. I've got a pack looking for me. We haven't... I've been gone a long time.”

“I know,” she tells me, and even though she's still using that soothing voice, I sense some cracks. Oh, yeah. She knows the guys. Well enough to have their scent on her, and for something strange to flick through those cat-like eyes. “I'll get you a phone to call them, but you should rest up a bit before

you go anywhere. I'm getting food and meds brought up, and then I thought you might like a bath."

Which all sounds like heaven, except she's looking at my wasted, grime-streaked body with real concern in her eyes. While she stands in front of me in a pale yellow dress that skims her perfect curves and makes me think of daffodils and winter sunlight.

I can feel the red flush burning in my cheeks, especially when her soft hand lands on my knobby elbow and she gently guides me back to the bed. I'm not the kind of guy who lets other people lead him around, but I can't stop my feet from following her. Right up until I reach the nest and realize the sheets are caked in blood and grime. "Shit. I'm sorry. Your bed..."

"It's not mine," she says with another soothing smile. "I don't live here. Well, not right now. It's a long story, but this room is for you. You're not putting anyone out."

It's an omega suite, and even houses belonging to filthy rich alphas don't have those just sitting around. But I'm too tired and embarrassed to push her. "Okay. But I'll change the sheets when I'm done."

"Don't worry about it," she tells me again, and there's so much compassion in her voice, it shoves a lump like a fist down my throat. I know it's just because I'm starved for even the smallest bit of kindness, but I can't help reaching out and skimming her pink cheek with my knuckles. She freezes, her breath making a little squeaking sound as she sucks it in, and a rich, heady perfume suddenly fills the air. If I wasn't staring at

the mating mark on her neck – big enough to scare off even the most motivated alpha – I’d think she was attracted to me.

*Yeah, because a stinky, half-dead scarecrow is so appealing, you dickhead.*

I clench my fist, but before I can pull away, there’s a loud noise in the hallway and my eyes snap to the door. “Who’s that?”

Her lashes flicker like she’s reading the inside of her eyelids, and I remember seeing her do that back in the basement. Her whole body freezes up, and she’s clearly not in this room right now. There’s only one omega I ever saw act like this, and it was because she was mated to a very powerful, possessive alpha. Concern churns in my empty stomach, but before I can ask her about it, she bites her lip and stares at me with her bright, cat eyes. “My mate is back, and he’s got Cam and Rory with him.”

I forget everything in that moment. My intriguing host. The strange house. Even most of the last horrific year. I don’t even care I’m weak as fuck and probably on the verge of passing out, because as soon as she flips the bedroom lock, I can smell them. Rory. Cam. And something dark and dangerous that makes my hindbrain sit up and take notice. But mostly I smell blood, and it’s a hell of a lot more than the random splatters on my chest.

Someone is fucking *hurt!*

“Rory! Cam!” I’m pushing right past Angel, out into a hallway where my eyes strain to take it all in. Rory is staring back at me like he’s seen a ghost, but I can’t even give him a reassuring smile, because Cam is leaning heavily on him, his



thigh wrapped in a makeshift tourniquet. And there's blood caked all over him. So much of it, Cam's tanned skin is the color of dirty paper. But even as the cry of alarm leaves my lips, my gaze is swinging to the guy on Cam's other side. And my hindbrain gives me a slap, every instinct screaming at me to run.

Because that's Arben Marku, Bisha's assassin.

And he has my bleeding mate in his arms!

"Cam!" I shudder, desperate to leap forward and snatch him up, but my feet won't shift. Mainly because I can't look away from Doctor Death. Who is wearing a custom tuxedo and holding Angel's silver shoes in his hand. "What the fuck?"

Not exactly eloquent, but then Angel is at my side, rubbing circles on my shaking back. "It's okay," she tells me for what must be the tenth time. "Arben, what happened?"

It takes me a moment to realize she's using that sweet, worried voice on the assassin.

"Bullet to the thigh," he rumbles back at her, his devil-black eyes focused on the hand that's still stroking my spine. "Thought it best to bring him here so Mrs. Lewis can patch him up."

"Good idea," she mutters, wincing a little as she stares at my brothers. But then her back straightens and she nods. "Bring him inside."

"Wait a second!" I screech. "You got shot!" I grab Cam's arm as they move towards the bedroom, effectively blocking the door. But then Rory is pulling me hard against his chest

and we're all locked in a rough, shaking huddle. "Jesus. What's going on? Are you really here?"

It's a stupid question. I can feel their solid warmth under my hands, their delicious scents swirling around me. And then there's the fact Cam is bleeding. I'd never let that kind of nightmare into my dreams.

Angel is still guiding us backwards with soothing touches, and we crab-walk over to the bed. The guys are looking around, clearly as unfamiliar with the place as I am, and then Cam catches sight of the bed. "I can't bleed on your bed, Elvi."

My gaze snaps to Angel, whose pink cheeks are now bright red. "It's not mine," she says again, but without the sympathy she gave me. "Just lie down, Cam. You too, Kelly."

And then she's looking the assassin over, and her heart is throbbing in her eyes. "Are you okay? Did they get you anywhere?"

Doctor Death makes another of those rumbling sounds, although this time I think it's meant to be a laugh. "It was nothing, princeshë. The wolfling just caught an unlucky round. A flesh wound, correct Mrs. Lewis?"

I stumble around to find a tiny omega who has to be at least eighty striding into the room with a sewing basket over her arm. She clicks her tongue, waving me to the bed, and my ass hits the side of the mattress like she's wielding some kind of voodoo. I'm so confused, the sight of Angel leaving the room arm-in-arm with the assassin almost doesn't faze me.

"Damn, Kelly. You look like shit, bro!"

Trust Rory not to sugarcoat my sub-par appearance. But I don't take offence, scooting back on the bed. It's wide enough to take an omega and at least three mates, and I quickly pull him down beside me. The ancient omega is unpacking her basket, but I just wrap myself around Rory and shove my bony spine in Cam's direction. His hand comes down on my back, right where Angel stroked me, and his alpha purr rumbles in my ear.

"You feel so good!" I hate the needy sound in my voice, but I am completely out of my head now, running on pure instinct. "I thought I'd never touch you again. And shit, you're all dressed up. Are these tuxedo pants?" I rub my cheek against Rory's thigh and it's almost as silky as the thousand-count bedsheet. "I love them, but can you take them off? I need to feel your skin."

Rory makes a choking sound, but it's Cam who eases my shoulders back beside him on the bed. I don't let go of Rory, so he has to fold himself at my side, and I wiggle until my head is on Cam's shoulder. It gives me a perfect view of the omega, who is wearing a black-and-white uniform and smiling at me like I'm not being completely ridiculous. "If that's what he wants, give it to him," she tells my brothers. "I need to check him over after I'm done with my stitching, but then you can all have some privacy. Nest, my dears. It's the best way to settle you all."

That sounds about perfect, but Cam is already trying to escape, pushing himself up on an elbow. "I'm a medic," he says in his no-nonsense way, although he hisses a bit as she starts cleaning his wound with an antiseptic wipe. "I'll take care of us."

“You’ll lie back and let me do my job,” the omega replies, taking a needle and surgical thread from her basket and studying the makeshift tourniquet. It’s his shirt, I realize, the leg of his pants shredded up to his crotch. “Now, Master Arben called ahead and said you didn’t want any medication, is that correct?”

“No drugs,” Cam confirms, but I’m stuck on the *Master Arben* bit.

I gape at the little old woman. “Your boss is Doctor Death?”

The omega clicks her tongue at me. “I work for Alpha Ferrier, but I won’t abide name calling in this house. Especially against someone as sweet as Master Arben.”

Rory gives a coughing kind of laugh, but just shakes his head at me, so I sink back against Cam and watch her work. She’s quick and steady-handed, her stitches neat enough to hang on a wall. Cam takes it all like a champion, and I soothe the pain as best I can with a soft hum in his ear. Just as she’s finishing up and applying a bandage, Angel pops back in with a tray of food. I perk up, but she doesn’t look at any of us as she leaves it on a table. Both Cam and Rory go as stiff as posts, though, which puts me on high alert, too. What the hell is going on? Why are we under the same roof as Roan Bisha’s attack dog? And what’s with the weird, tingling energy coming off my mates every time they look Angel’s way?

All questions I plan to ask as soon as the old omega gives us privacy, but first I have to go through a checkup worthy of Cam. She has a thermometer and a blood pressure cuff in her basket, along with a bottle of antibiotics. I swallow two while

she checks me over. “The lip will heal, but you’re not far off sepsis with that scalp wound.” The antiseptic wipe hurts like a bitch, and I’m too tired to hold in my whimper, but Rory hugs me through it all. “A bath can wait until you’ve eaten. The cook has a nice broth ready for you. And when you wash, watch the temperate. You’re on the edge of a fever right now.”

“We can take it from here,” Cam tells her, and she cocks her white brow at him. But she’s all business as she says, “Take things slowly. Omegas need physical contact, but he’s still very weak. Easing back into things is probably best.”

Which is a polite way of saying don’t rail my brittle bones. I open my mouth to tell her we’re not like that – not really – but she’s already leaving the room and Rory’s lips are suddenly on mine. It’s not a real kiss, more like he’s trying to breathe his life into me, but my stupid body lights up like he’s panting for it, and I groan into his mouth. My cock also immediately springs to life, and I can’t help grinding on his thigh. My omega perfume – still sour from stress – washes over us and I feel them both stiffen.

Fuck. Talk about an awkward reunion.

“I stink,” I tell him, deciding distraction is my only option. “And I want to piss down something that’s not a hole in the floor.”

That gets Rory up off the bed, but instead of giving me room, he scoops me up, holding me bridegroom style. Fuck. I’m not a small guy, but I’m so fucking wasted away he hardly needs to use his shifter strength. I grind my teeth until more of that sour scent seeps out, but he just carries me over to the tray Angel left. Passing me the bowl of soup, he drops the bread

roll in my lap and heads on to the bathroom. I keep my eyes away from the mirror as he props me on a long marble vanity. “You can bathe, shit, whatever you want. But you need to eat, Kel.” He strokes a shaking thumb over my ribs and I can’t blame him for flinching, since the sigh that comes out of me sounds like a death rattle. “Those fuckers,” he whispers. “Crouch is a dead wolf walking.”

I elbow his hand away, trying to hide how much I love the feel of his touch. He’s worried about me, not horny, and the fact *I* look like the walking dead isn’t going to change that any time soon. To stop the whine that’s building in my throat, I tip the bowl up and slurp down a good portion of the beef stew, grinning at him as it hits my stomach. I must be convincing enough, because he turns away and starts filling the giant tub with water. He holds a couple of different bath wash bottles to his nose, then dumps one in, and I hum as the jasmine and chamomile scent fills the air.

He turns away as I drop my shorts and I try not to feel insulted. He’s still hovering, but he doesn’t give my raging erection even a glance as he helps me into the tub. And then I forget all about my bruised ego as the hot, fragrant water envelopes me. I can’t hold in my moan. Food deprivation is one thing, but never feeling clean and soothed? Fuck, that’s torture for an omega.

Rory immediately drops to his haunches and starts running a cloth over my back and shoulders. I tip myself forward to give him better access, and when his hands go to my hair, I have to bite my lip to stop myself panting. His fingers have barely dug into my scalp before I’m jizzing in the water like a horny cub.

“Fuck.” I try to swirl it away under the bubbles, but even the luxury bath products can’t hide the smell of my cum. “Sorry,” I mutter. “I’m just a goddamn wreck.”

“You’re perfect,” Rory purrs, but his hands stay in my soapy hair, and his touch is so careful, it doesn’t feel much different that when Cam checks me over. I try to tell myself it’s not a rejection, but once upon a time, when Rory said I was perfect, I believed him. He was always happy to lend a hand when I got extra needy, and never turned me away when I needed a cuddle. All three of us have been intimate to some degree, but it was Rory who stepped up when Link wasn’t around...

“Wait!” I push him back in a wave of soapy water, half-rising from the tub. “Where’s Link? Why isn’t he here?”

The look that passes over Rory’s face makes my heart give a messy thump. Oh, no! “Was he shot? Rory, is Link *dead*?”

My voice spirals, a crazy screeching that echoes in the acoustics, and there’s a curse from the next room. A moment later, Cam is looming in the doorway, his shredded pants hanging off his muscular frame. Rory is delicious, but Cam is stacked, and at any other time I’d be drooling, even with the bandage on his thigh. But all I can think of is *Link*, and why he’s the only one not here with me right now.

“He’s fine, Kelly,” Cam says, while Rory tries to lower me back into the tub. “He’s at home. On the lake. He didn’t go to Crouch’s with us.”

“Oh.” That makes sense, I guess. Link is the planner in our pack. He’s probably hunched over his laptop, making sure no one is hunting me down. “But he’s on his way, right? He’ll be

here soon?” When a strange look passes between them, I hiss and slap my hands on the water. It’s childish, but I’m dangling by my fingertips. And hiding shit from me is not helping anything. “Tell me what’s going on. Are we not safe here?” My eyes bug as I study their tense expressions. “Are we Doctor Death’s *prisoners*?”

“No,” Rory splutters, then shakes his head at Cam. I don’t know what that means, but then he’s rushing to say, “He’s not really like that. Arben, I mean. Shit. Look, some stuff went down between us. A whole lot of stuff. But you don’t need to worry about any of that right now, bro. Just rest. Get better...”

“What kind of stuff?” I interrupt him, hating the way my stomach clenches around that little bit of soup. I’m hungry, but nauseous. Tired down to my bones, but jangling with nerves. I can hear my pulse beating in my ears, and I know I’m a second away from losing my shit. “Just tell me what happened, Rory!”

“It can wait,” Cam says from the door, back in domineering doctor mode. “You need to focus on getting your strength back, Kelly.”

Fuck that! I’ve been beaten, starved, locked up, and threatened for nearly a year. I might look as rough as guts, but inside I’m shockproof. “If you think I can just sit back and rest when I don’t know what has you all so twitchy, then you’ve forgotten who I am.” I’m putting on my haughty, billionaire brat voice right now, but these guys need a goddamn wake-up call. Settling back in the water, I glare at them both and bark, “Now, stop being a pair of manky wankers, and spill!”







# Elvana

As soon as I deliver the dinner tray to the omega suite, I retreat to the room across the hall where Arben is waiting for me on a pristine nest. There are half a dozen rooms on this floor designed for omegas, something that felt kind of creepy until Arben explained they're used by the Underground. It's not always easy for targeted omegas to escape their alphas, and my dad's estate is a secret halfway house. A refuge, until something more permanent can be arranged. It gives the rooms an impersonal feel, but that's really a positive for omegas, since we can be kind of pissy about strange places and unfamiliar scents.

The bed in this room is enclosed in filmy curtains, with more substantial velvet drapes tied back against mahogany posts. But I'm not really looking at the décor. Not when my mate is spread out on the covers, his shirt sleeves rolled up so my mating mark is on display.

I rush to his side, tossing myself onto the nest and crawling up to straddle his big body. While he gives a dark chuckle, I sneak my fingers between his shoulders and the covers, pressing my face tight to his throat. He smells like musk, blood, and night air. But it's not *his* blood that's peppered on his shirt. Cam is in the next room, getting sewn up by Mrs. Lewis. While Kelly and Rory cuddle up to him for moral support. "It's just a flesh wound," Arben says again, his big

hands holding me close while he strokes my hair. “He’ll be fine.”

“But you brought him here. You must have been worried.”

He grunts, like worrying about Cam never crossed his mind. “I didn’t want you to hear he was shot and not see the evidence for yourself.” He tilts my chin up so he can study my face. “Are you unhappy having them here?”

Am I? It’s only been a few hours since Rory was begging to catch up so we could talk, but I guess that’s a moot point now. “Kelly needs them. They have to be here.”

“But we don’t have to be. We can go back to the cabin. Mrs. Lewis will let us know if we’re needed.”

I nod, even though I don’t like the sound of that at all. I should want to give the guys room, especially if that cuddle pile becomes something more. But I don’t want to walk away from Kelly just because he’s back with his pack. And I don’t want updates from Mrs. Lewis about Cam’s injury. I want to see they’re both okay with my own eyes. “Maybe we should just stay the night here.” I squint at the sliver of dark sky between the drapes. “What’s left of it, anyway.”

Arben gives me one of those gentle smiles he reserves just for me, and then he’s pulling a soft blanket across us. We don’t get undressed; I’m too tired and he’s still on guard. But we sink into a kind of half-sleep until there’s a shout from across the hall. I want to spring up and run to the door, but Arben grips the back of my neck. “Give them a moment,” he says. “They might just be... working out their tension.”

I close my mouth with a snap. He means fucking, but he's too worried about my feelings to say it. "It didn't sound like a happy yell."

He gives another low, dark laugh. "There are lots of different ways to turn tension into pleasure, my love."

I just cock a brow at him, even though my perfume is a dead giveaway to where my thoughts have strayed. "I still think we should go check on them..."

But before I can coax him off the bed, there's another angry shout from the hallway and our bedroom door flies open.

Kelly is stark naked and dripping wet, although he's got a pair of ragged shorts pressed to his groin. His chest is heaving, every rib and muscle on stark display. "They just told me everything!" Shaking his head, he storms further into our room, kicking the door shut behind him. "Stupid assholes," he fumes, grabbing his hair with a hand and tugging as he paces at the end of our bed. I try not to ogle his rock-hard ass, especially because when he looks at me, his eyes are bright with shame. "Shit, I'm so sorry, Angel. About your mom, and your heat, and the auction house. And dragging you into that whole bullshit plan they cooked up to get me back."

"Oh." I look at Arben, who's up on an elbow and watching us both with a gleam in his eyes. The omega in me wants to soothe the problem away, to tell Kelly all is forgiven. But maybe it's because of that instinct we end up dealing with this shit in the first place. We need to remind the jerks of the world that messing with us has repercussions. "I won't say I'm okay about it, Kelly, because I'm still working on that. But I want you to know I don't hold you responsible in any way."

The bond hums with Arben's approval, but Kelly huffs and starts picking at the edge of his bond mark. I notice it's red and a little inflamed, like he's been scratching at it for a while. "Well, you should! You went into that shithole of a basement and risked your neck to get me out. How many people would do that? Not many! And after the way my pack of wankers treated you, I don't know why you bothered."

He's gnawing on his lip and looks close to falling over, even while he keeps up his angry pacing. But it's the lost look in his eyes that gets me the most. How would it feel to finally get back to your mates, only to find they're tangled up with another omega? "We didn't do it for them, Kelly. Arben has been looking for you for a while, and we went to that party because he'd narrowed it down to Crouch. Knowing your pack wasn't why we went there. And I still would have done it even if I'd never heard your name before. Omegas have to stick together."

He hums at that, some of the tension draining from his shoulders. But he sends Arben an uneasy glance before he asks me, "Would it be okay if I stay in here? I mean, I'll just sleep on the carpet. I'm fucking knackered, but if I go back into that room with those knobheads..."

I bite my lip, not totally hating that Kelly is angry at his mates. But all this stress can't be good for his healing, so I wave him towards us. His eyes are still locked on Arben, but then my mate drops a kiss on my head and climbs off the bed. "I need to go check in with Lucas and see if there's any blowback from tonight." He gives Kelly one of his bossy looks. "You both need to sleep, so lie down before you fall down."

He doesn't wait for Kelly to respond, leaving the room with a faint, amused hum down the bond. I would roll my eyes at him if he was around to see it, but instead, I scooch over to his side of the bed. Kelly immediately crawls up beside me, but it's only then he seems to notice he's dripping wet and mostly naked. "Crap. You must think I'm a complete savage."

I just smile and go into the bathroom, coming back with a towel and tossing it to him. There's a bureau full of clothes for the visiting omegas, and I pull out a soft white tee and some sleep shorts. I go to fill some water glasses while he changes, trying not to notice how they hug him like a second skin as I climb back into bed. My mate's scent swirls around me as we both get settled, and I wince. If being near Arben is making him uncomfortable, there are plenty of other bedrooms he could use, but I *like* him being here... "I know you have history with Arben from the Tower, but he's done a lot of good for omegas, too. I mean, just don't believe all the horror stories, okay?"

He gets comfy on the pillow, his face turned my way. It's a big bed, but we're only a foot apart, and I can smell his minty breath and coconut shampoo. His long, golden-red hair is starting to dry, and I think of the photograph in Cam's loft, back when Kelly was still a mystery girl to me. It had looked silky soft and full of sunlight in that picture, and my fingers had itched to touch it. Seeing it spread on my pillow – and attached to a guy I fantasized about for years – is definitely surreal.

"Yeah, Cam and Rory said the same thing," he surprises me by saying, tracing the broken skin of his bottom lip. I follow the sweep of his thumb, almost hypnotized, until his mouth

curves into a grin. “They also told me the four of you were together for your heat.”

“Oh.” I roll onto my back and stare at the ceiling, my cheeks suddenly burning. Here I am *ogling* him, and he’s thinking about me fucking his guys. “I’m sorry you didn’t get a say in that, Kelly. I mean, it was just a convenience thing, but it still must have hurt to hear about it.”

Instead of agreeing, he snorts, like I’m way off base. “Ah, the only jealousy I feel is because I wasn’t there, too, Angel.”

I roll my head and gape at him. “Really?”

“Of course.” He’s still playing with his lip, but now he taps it, his gaze curious. “Although, I’m still trying to wrap my head around Arben Marku being in the mix. I mean, he’s hot as hell. But he’s also... kinda terrifying. What’s it like being his mate?”

I shouldn’t be surprised by the question, but I am. I guess I just can’t see Arben that way anymore, especially now we share so much of ourselves through the bond. I can see the real man behind the reputation – his emotions, his reactions, and even what he thinks sometimes, raw and unfiltered. He doesn’t try to hide anything from me and I appreciate that more than I can say. Not that I have to find the words, since he has exactly the same window into my soul. “Well, it’s still really new, but we’ve known each other for a while. He was my first, and even though the circumstances weren’t great, he took really good care of me. I didn’t see him much afterwards, but I thought about him all the time.” I try not to remember lying on my dorm bed at boarding school, pining for Arben and staring



at the picture of Kelly on the wall. “Um. I guess now... we fit together. It just feels right.”

Shadows flit through Kelly’s whiskey eyes, but then he props himself up on an elbow and gives me a slight smile. It’s not like the one from his picture; it’s tired and a little strained, like he’s out of practice. But it’s still Kellman Prior. And he’s smiling at *me*. “I guess that makes sense. I’ve seen you shift, gut a bastard, and carry my weak ass through the woods, after all. You’re one badass omega.”

I try not to preen too much, but his approval still makes me giddy. And it’s been a long time since anyone other than my mom or Arben gave me a compliment I could take to heart. “Thanks. But this is kind of a new thing. It took me a while to remember omegas have claws, too.”

“Yeah,” he murmurs, his gaze growing distant as he swipes his thumb over his torn bottom lip. “You’re right. And that’s something I’m gonna have to work on. The guys... well, before I was sold to that wanker Crouch, I was never really the center of our pack. Sometimes I don’t think they even remember I’m an omega.”

That lost look is back, and I don’t like it at all. “What do you mean?”

“Well, I grew up thinking I was an alpha. When my dad shipped me out here, I was pissed at the world, hating the way other guys – bastards just like me – could now control me with an alpha command. Rory, Cam, and Link were wild kids, savages who’d grown up fighting for their lives. I thought they were thugs, and they thought I was a cocky shit who didn’t know his place. Those first years together were brutal, until

one day we just decided to be friends.” He stops playing with his lip and huffs out a breath. “Well, friends who like to fuck, in the case of Link and me. Rory and Cam help me out sometimes, but that’s what it feels like. Help.”

Help? The word sounds bitter, and I wonder if he means tending, like alphas seeing female omegas through their heat. I don’t know how to ask without making it even more awkward, but clearly, biology is a bitch, no matter your gender. “I don’t really know many male omegas…” I tell him. “In fact, you’re my first.”

He pulls a rueful face. “Not to freak you out, given our current circumstances, but there’s only one thing to know about male omegas. We’re one hundred percent, twenty-four-seven, horny as a fucking demon army.” My eyes must pop wide because he laughs. “Yep, the slightest thing makes us want to fuck. There’s no need for a sex heat, because we’re down to go all the damn time. Brush up against something soft? *Hard*. Fingers grip my arm while we’re mucking around with a football. *Pre-cum*. Link cocks one of those silky eyebrows at me like a wanker. *I’m on my knees*.” He’s still smirking, but now it definitely has a bitter edge. “I’m basically a dick with a heartbeat. It’s why when we go into our version of a heat, we get so violent. I mean, we have a predator inside us, right? I think our wolves try to make up for how weak and out of control we feel the rest of the time.”

I reach out and grab his hand, giving it a tight squeeze. “I’m sorry it’s like that for you. But I get it. There are plenty of alphas who just see female omegas as a thing to knot and breed.”

“Yeah, but they forgot about the badass claws,” he says softly, running his fingers over the tips of mine. It sends a shiver through me, especially when I see the warmth in his gaze. I can’t quite believe this is Kellman Prior playing with my hand and looking at me with stars in his eyes. The guy belongs in magazines – and on dorm room walls – but instead, he’s here in bed with *me*.

I’m fangirling big time. I know it, but I can’t seem to stop myself. It’s like having a dream about your celebrity crush, then waking up next to them in bed...

*With his mates in the room next door, Elvi, no doubt plotting how to win him back.*

Because no matter what Kelly says about not being the center of their pack, I know the guys love him. Hell, Link proved he’d cross any line to find him and bring him home.

But Kelly doesn’t seem to be thinking about them now, slipping his fingers into mine and resting his warm cheek against our clasped hands. “You have no idea what it was like seeing you push your claws into that asshole guard. He’d told me there was a party upstairs, and a bunch of horny alphas were bidding on my ass. But then you appeared like an avenging angel and took the bastard out. I wanted to kiss you so much right then...” He gives a soft chuckle. “Sorry. Demon army horny, remember?”

“It’s okay.”

It comes out breathy and tight. Kelly must hear it, because he’s suddenly looking at me through hooded eyes. “Angel... Are you thinking about me kissing you right now?”

Oh, crap. That voice. With the British accent he hasn't quite lost, and all the alpha arrogance he once possessed... That voice is my freaking kryptonite. "Um, I might have a small confession to make." He perks up at that, and I know this is going to be *really* awkward. But I'm way past secrets and lies. "My roommate at boarding school had your picture on our dorm wall and I might have fingered myself while I was looking at you. Once or twice, I mean..."

The words come out in a rush, not that there's any easy way to tell someone that. He's so quiet I'm hoping he misheard me, but then a growl rolls out of his chest, like the sweetest, most sinful purr. "Oh, you fucking angel."

Then he's on me. Or, we're on each other, because his lips might crash down on mine, but my mouth is open and ready for him. Our tongues lash together, the opposite of unfamiliar, and we both groan. My hands are on his back, my legs falling open so he can press in between them. He grips the pillow under my head, diving deeper into my mouth, and I welcome him in. He's above me and inside me, invading my every sense. And I forget all about our mates, and his trauma, and just drink him down. Because he tastes better than he smells, sweet like a peach, but heady like champagne.

"Angel..." He groans into my mouth, and I eat up the sound. I need more, so greedy my head spins as I grab his shoulders and push him down on the pillow. He stares up at me, hooded-eyed and breathing hard, but I don't give him a chance to talk. Swinging a leg over his hips, I straddle him, my hair sliding around his face. He grins, grabbing handfuls of the messy strands and pressing them to his nose. "How did I get here, Angel?"

I pull my hair free with a smirk. “I gutted an asshole, and you fainted in my lap.”

His laughter bubbles up out of his chest, vibrating against my thighs. I’m still dizzy from his kisses, but that happy sound makes me so wet, he must feel it against his ribs. Especially when I bend and lick along his neck, nibbling at his pulse while my hips roll against his groin. He’s so hard it almost hurts to grind against him, not that either of us is complaining.

“Angel! I’m not gonna last,” he pants, his hands going to the globes of my ass. “It’s been so long and you feel so fucking good! But I promise to eat your sweet pussy until you fall into a cum-coma...”

“Yes,” I whine, chasing the friction of his cock, which is slipping against my bed shorts, damp from our combined arousal. It’s only then I feel the other sensation sliding over my skin.

*Angel?*

“Wait!” I sit up so suddenly, I have to grab Kelly’s chest for balance. Which, unfortunately, just happens to be over his mating bite. I move my hand to a safer place, holding myself still as I feel the heat shimmer through our bond. Oh, yep. That’s definitely what I think it is. “We have to wait, Kelly. Just for a minute or two.”

“O-kay,” he draws out the word, pressing his head back into the pillow. But after a moment of tense silence, he sucks in a deep breath. “Did I... do something wrong?”

“No!” Crap. I’m killing the moment, but what am I supposed to say? I mean, if my horny mate wants a front-row

seat, he should have kept his sweet ass in the bed in the first place. I flush as his dark chuckle snakes around me in the bond, plucking at my already stimulated parts. “This is all so good. Really. I don’t want to stop. It’s just, you know how I can shift at will? Well, that was kind of a bonus when I mated Arben. And it wasn’t the only thing that changed...”

“You can bondlink?”

I stare at him, amazed he guessed. Bondlinking is so rare, I thought it was a myth. But that’s a mystery for another time, since the other half of my bond is one floor away and closing in fast. “I promise Arben’s not going to hurt you, or be angry about this.” In fact, from the heat pulsing over me in waves, he’s overjoyed. I flap a hand in front of my burning cheeks and huff. “The thing about my mate... have you ever heard of a cock conductor by any chance?”



# Arben

Back in the old country, bitter old men liken omegas to witches. They say an omega's call is a siren's song, designed to lure innocent alphas into their clutches. One whiff of their sweet perfume, and the urge to lose ourselves in their promised bliss is overpowering. The omega will then own us, body and soul. Assuming we're too weak to fight our way free, of course.

In the village where I grew up, the old men bragged of their narrow escapes from wicked omegas. Tall tales, all designed to puff themselves up, to make themselves feel better about their small, empty lives. Of course, there hadn't been an adult omega in our village in decades, since any child who favored the designation was quickly whisked off to wealthy packs in the West. But I still believed omegas were something to be avoided and feared. Born to corrupt strong-hearted alphas and drain us of our potency.

When my parents died, I quickly began to doubt everything I'd ever heard about designations. Both powerful alphas, their fights were legendary in our village. Their bonding was an arranged one, designed to continue the line of strong alphas, but they hated each other with a passion. God knows how they ever stopped fighting long enough to make me, but on my eighth birthday my mother bought a shotgun from a local farmer and blew off my father's head. Five minutes later, after



I'd walked in from school to find him on the kitchen floor, she'd turned the gun on herself.

I was sent to the orphanage after that, and met my first omega. A boy five years older than me, he would have been bought by a western pack if he wasn't so feral. But he'd lived his life with the gypsies in the hills, only being committed to the orphanage when he'd almost murdered the son of a prominent alpha. His days were bleak, even to a boy who came from a family like mine. Most of the time he seemed lost in a red rage, but we both liked hunting, and I knew the local trails well enough to impress him. As soon as we entered those woods, he became another person. Clever and cunning, and as fast on two legs as I was on four. But then his heat hit – the first I'd ever witnessed – and I learned to fear omegas all over again.

Some of my melancholy must leak through the bond, because when I open the door to the omega suite, my mate is watching me with concern in her eyes. All that giddy happiness I'd felt as I stood guard, watching for Crouch's retaliation, is suddenly gone. Which will not do. My princessē deserves better.

As I enter the dim room, Elvi is straddling the other omega, and I give a low purr at the sight. They're both still dressed, but their arousal is thick in the air. I take an armchair from next to the window and move it over to the end of the bed. They both watch me with wide eyes, but I focus on the Prior boy. "Did she explain things to you, *princi*?"

He shudders, whether at my tone or the pet name I can't tell. But he gives a nod, pushing himself up on his elbows so

he can see me better. “She said you like to call the shots. Even when it comes to fucking.”

Elvi sniggers at that, and I let her feel my dark satisfaction through the bond. “*Especially* when it comes to fucking,” I correct him, my hands on my thighs and my bulge on full display. I won’t do anything he doesn’t want me to, and right now, their desires come first. But he needs to know what seeing them together like this does to me. “You will do exactly what I tell you to do, *princi*. Agreed?”

I can tell he’s thinking about rolling his eyes. But the temptation of my mate is too strong to risk pissing me off. “Yeah. As long as we’re talking about right here and now. Outside of the nest, I say what goes for me.”

I don’t miss the warning in his words. Like all male omegas, others of my kind have abused his trust. But that ended the moment my mate risked her own life to rescue him from that basement.

“Good. Then more kisses.” I can tell he’s surprised by that, since they’re both already worked up, but I shrug. “I liked how they tasted through the bond. A hungry omega is a delicious thing.”

And then the prince does something that makes me smile. Tearing his gaze from mine, he cups Elvi’s face in his palms and asks, “Are you okay with this? Do you want more kisses?”

My mate is almost combusting down the bond, but she manages to give him a demure look through her lashes. “Yes. If you do.”

I swallow a chuckle, not wanting to distract them right now, and the words are barely out of her mouth before he's pulling her towards him and his lips are crashing down. The fire I felt burning down the bond is instantly rekindled. An inferno, from the way they are clutching at each other. Prior's hands aren't quite on her ass, but Elvi is grinding down on him and whimpering in the back of her throat.

My cock throbs, and I almost don't blame the old men of my village for thinking this is witchcraft. If one omega can send an alpha into rut, two are the most perfect fantasy come to life. But as their mingled scent lifts from the tangled blankets, I sense something darker hovering at the edges of their passion. It's time to remind them who's in charge.

"Clothes," I inform them, "are not to be removed."

Two pairs of outraged eyes swing my way. They're both panting, their pupils blown with lust, and their snarls would be cute if I didn't know omegas as well as I do. "Take it or leave it," I tell them, not tempering my dominance an inch. "You can still get off, but it's late and you're both exhausted. Fucking will have to wait."

I expect at least one of them to tell me to go to hell. In this game, after all, they hold all the power. But my mate is now studying the other omega with a touch a shame in her face. "He's right," she says quietly, pressing her thumb to his bottom lip. When it comes away wet with blood, the bond turns sour. "You just got out of that basement, and I'm *mauling* you..."

"Hey!" The prince is now pissed, shooting a glare my way.

But I have no intention of cockblocking him.

“Tired, but still needy,” I tell them before he gets too worked up and ruins the mood. I lean forward in my chair, holding his angry gaze. “When you finally sink your cock into her sweet pussy, you will thank me, *princi*. It deserves your very best.”

That has Elvi squirming down the bond, but I’m glad to see the heat back in her cheeks. “Now, turn around my love. I wish to see your face as you lick him through his little sleep shorts.” I smirk at the prince’s expression. “I take it you’re well enough to return the favor?”

They don’t bother answering, both now focused on getting her to reverse her position as quickly as possible. I hum as I watch them, my gaze taking in her pebbled nipples, almost red with need through the sheer top. Their matching shorts are both damp from their arousal, and I can tell from the way their breathing speeds up that they like the view. I can’t see the outline of my mate’s swollen pussy like the prince can, but now that she’s wiggled back over his face, his cock is straining against the front of his shorts. It’s even more erotic trapped in the thin fabric, the thick head fighting to free itself. Elvi moans as she strokes the angry tip. “You’re beautiful, Kelly.”

He doesn’t have the breath to answer, his hands on her hips as he drags her down to his eager mouth. The first stroke of his tongue through her shorts makes her drop her head back on her shoulders and gasp. It gives me a perfect view of my mating bite on her long neck and I palm my cock, loving the burn under my skin. Denial was once a necessity around my princess; now it just heightens my pleasure.

“Make the most of it,” I tell them as I stroke myself. “It will have to tide you over until I let you fuck.”

They’re too busy to glare at me now, although princessē rolls her gaze my way as she bends and licks her way down Prior’s cock. It’s slow and careful, not because she’s teasing him, but because she’s savoring every inch. I smile at the needy way her hands clutch his thighs, her tongue tasting the darker patch of his balls before returning to his tip. She sucks it through the fabric, and his groan echoes from between her thigh. I can’t see what he’s doing, but I know the exact rhythm of his tongue. It is in every undulation of her body as she tries to drive him deeper into her greedy pussy.

The mix of frustration and pleasure is enough to make my own balls ache. I chuckle as their mouths fight with the barriers holding them back from their prize. “Don’t get sloppy,” I warn them, my own hand busy on my cock. “You need to come together. Are you close?”

They both moan in reply, and I watch the beautiful sight of Elvi’s strained face as she tries to swallow his cock. She can barely get more than a third in her mouth, but her gland is vibrating, and I can tell from the way his heels dig into the bed he can feel it. “Just wait until she takes you down her throat,” I tell him. “That gland will send you straight to heaven.”

He almost roars around her pussy, his fingers white where they grip her bouncing hips. Elvi is sucking so hard, her cheeks are hollow, and then I open the bond all the way. Let her feel my need, my love, my admiration... She comes with a scream, Prior bucking under her and flooding his shorts with cum.

“Arben!” My mate gasps, tumbling off the other omega to clutch at her chest. “You nearly killed me.”

“Not even close, my love,” I tell her, gritting the words out as I scoop the ragged shorts Prior wore in the basement off the floor and filling them with my release. I gush almost as much as the boy, who is up on a shaking elbow watching me, his eyes dark and his face covered in slick. Even with the bruises and cuts, it’s far prettier than the sight of my pleasure in the torn, bloody fabric. But it gives my satisfaction a cold, dark edge. Crouch will rue the day he thought he deserved to touch this omega.

When I’m clean, I head into the bathroom and return with two washcloths, throwing one to the prince and looking pointedly at Elvi as I hold the other. She huffs but opens her legs, and I clean up all the slick that didn’t soak into her shorts. They’re a wreck, but she doesn’t even try to remove them. The prince ignores me, going to a dresser for a clean pair, and I don’t try to stop him. Not when it gives me a glimpse of his perfect ass as he pulls them on. But as he returns to the bed, his uncertainty prickles the air, and I grab the back of his neck. “You can dress yourself, but only if you don’t want me to remove them later.”

“What?” His eyes narrow, his puffy lips pulled tight. He still smells like Elvi’s pussy and it takes everything in me not to kiss that petulant mouth. “I had to change. They were soaked, man.”

“Arben. Or Alpha, if you prefer. But I like you soaked.”

He stares at his old shorts like he’s thinking about either retrieving them or tossing them in my face, so I push him

gently towards the bed. “Sleep now. There’s plenty of time tomorrow to learn my rules.”

Elvi makes a disgruntled sound at that, but she’s already under the covers and holds them back for both of us to join her. I wait until the prince is curled up next to her before I take the chair at the end of the bed.

“You’re going to watch us sleep?” she asks, although she doesn’t sound particularly surprised. The prince shoots me a confused look, but Elvi’s eyes are already closing. I smile as he battles his own exhaustion.

“Lie down, *princi im trim*,” I tell him. “I promise, there’s nothing to fight here.”



I see the moment his heat takes him. He’s been growing restless in his sleep for the past hour, his body pulling away from Elvi as he tries to put some distance between her and his churning limbs. It’s a good sign he doesn’t want to hurt her, even when he’s deep in an exhausted sleep and not fully aware of the risk.

It also means his wolf is rising to the surface. It knows Elvi isn’t the enemy, and perhaps even senses the bond forming between them. I’ll need to see them both in wolf form to know for certain, but I remember the old stories about omegas. That in the beginning, packs could only form around a male and female omega. And every alpha only existed to serve the bonded pair.

*What would a pack be like, with two such perfect, powerful omegas at its core?*

It's a question that keeps me vigilant as I watch his heat build.

And then he springs from the bed, so fast and fluid I know his wolf is very close. He sees me almost instantly. There's no pause between sleep and waking. And his eyes narrow, his lip curling back on his teeth.

Fangs. Just the points of them right now, but they're as sharp as the nails hardening on his fingers. It's not a half-shift; more like his defenses snapping into place. And I can only think of all those nights in that basement when he woke like this, forced to fight for his sanity and safety.

"Never again," I whisper as I step in to meet his charge. We crash together almost silently, because I take the brunt of the contact on my chest. And then I lock him in my arms, surrounding him with my scent and strength. I instantly fall into my native tongue, whispering the familiar words of protection as he fights to break free.

*You are safe. You are in control. I won't let anything harm you.*

Grainy dawn fills the room and I can see the moment Elvi realizes he's no longer in bed. Her hand searches the pillow, a frown forming, and then she feels the echo of my words in the bond. She sits up so fast she almost tumbles over the edge.

"Arben?" she gasps, fighting to get free of the blankets. "What's going on?"



I'm tall enough to look right over the prince's head and I give her a reassuring smile, but I also flood our bond with calm. She gives me a slow nod, but she can see the way his muscles are straining where I've pinned his arms to his sides. As much for her sake as for his, I bend my head and murmur in his ear, "You *can* do it." I inject my words with the bossy confidence Elvi knows so well. "It's just biology, *princi*, and you're smart enough to master that."

"You don't know what I'm like," Kelly seethes, jerking in my grasp. But there are tears on his cheeks and the desolation in his voice makes my wolf push against my skin. "I go rabid. It was always bad, but in that basement, it was the only way to keep those fuckers away. I gave into it. It *owns* me now."

"It doesn't," I tell him, like I'm stating an irrefutable fact. "Nothing owns you, not even that alpha whose mating mark you wear. But it served you well against your captors. That's why your power exists. To keep you safe." I lower my voice to a dark purr, my lips skimming his ear. "But you don't need to protect yourself from us. We're not your enemies, *princi*."

Elvi flutters in the bond, clearly liking the sound of that, but it just seems to frustrate Kelly even more. "But I'm protecting *you!*" he bursts out, his nails clawing at his legs. "My fucked-up brain won't be able to tell the difference."

I just smirk and pull him tighter to my chest. I'm more than a head taller than him, and three times his weight. "You think you can hurt me, little wolfling?"

"I'm *telling* you I can." I can feel his heart hammering, the heat rolling off him in waves. He makes a choking sound as he gasps, "Just ask the guys. When I got it bad, they had to lock

me up. Cam would pump me full of drugs, but they didn't always work. Now, after a year of heats in that basement? I don't think anyone can stop me." His shoulders drop, the tense muscles quivering as he rests his head on my chest. "Please," he begs. "Just chain me up. I'd never forgive myself if I hurt anyone."

I don't look at Elvi, choosing instead to use our bond. *Come and rub his back, princeshë. His heat is starting, and he's frightened he will give in to his rage.*

She nods and slides off the bed, making sure Kelly sees her before she circles around behind him. He stiffens, his muscles trembling, but he doesn't try to stop her. Leaning forward, she kisses my knuckles, then rests her palm gently on the back of his neck. Her eyes widen as she realizes how feverish he is, the skin almost painfully warm. But when I give a quiet purr, she echoes it and rests her cheek against his spine. His trapped muscles are still rigid, but he doesn't buck her off.

And then a soft, stuttering purr starts up deep in his chest.

Ah. It is music to my ears, and I feel my beast stretch under my skin. While the idea of both omegas appeals to me greatly, my beast has kept himself aloof. If the wolfling was truly lost to his feral state, I knew in my heart we would have to cut him loose. A feral wolf is caught in a rage, but a rabid wolf has succumbed to it and will never find its way free. It would be tragic to end their bond before it's fully formed, but my beast won't let anyone harm our mate, not even this nearly broken omega.

*He is strong. Think of all he survived. He will grow only more powerful with our help.*

My words are for both my mate and my beast, but it's Elvi who gives a small nod. She can hear the hectic beat of his heart through his back, and I know she's struggling to think of a way to convince him he's safe. But this is a place I have been many times before. "I met my first omega in the orphanage where I grew up. His name was Luca, and he went feral like you describe. He was five years older than me and already a champion boxer amongst the Gabrdýn; what you think of as gypsies. He was dangerous even when he was in control."

"What happened?" Elvi asks, her curiosity keen in our bond.

"The orphanage was worse than a prison. There were no rules, no safeguards. Many of the *banditë* who ran the place were sadists and liked to tie Luca down and torture him for their amusement. It was so much worse during his heats, so we got good at keeping them hidden. We would escape into the wooded mountains behind the village, hunting and living off the land. But when the heats struck, I had to learn to calm his beast. For three years, we lived like this. And as you can see, I survived."

Kelly huffs, his soft purr stuttering out. "Yeah, but I'm not a kid."

"I was eight years old, alone with a boy twice my size." I lean back until I can look him in his silver-tinged eyes. "It's not about physical strength, *princi*. It's down to the will of the wolf." I let him see my smile, my teeth flashing in the dim light. "And my wolf is very willful."

Kelly turns his head a fraction so he can look down at Elvi. She's still purring and stroking his spine, but I can feel the way

her heart clenches at the fear in his face. “What do you think, Angel?”

She wants to weep. Even if I couldn't feel it in our bond, I can see it in the tightness of her mouth. But she just forces a smile and says, “I think Arben's just got bossier since he was practicing on poor Luca.” It might not be the right moment, but I lean over him and press a soft kiss to her lips. When I'm done, the wolfling is flushed, his cock stirring, but Elvi just reaches out and strokes his face. “You can trust him, I promise. He's never let me down.”

*Only once, my love.*

From the hint of sadness in our bond, I know she understands. Finding her raped and beaten in her own home was the lowest moment in my life. But she's quick to draw me away from it.

*This is a shadow that has been given too much space between us for too long, Arben. How can I make you believe that as bad as it was, it led me here, to you, and I wouldn't change that for anything?*

I can't help it. Tears bite the back of my throat at her words. Her kindness. Her *forgiveness*. My mate is more generous than I deserve, but I give her a nod and run my hands up the prince's arms. He shivers, but I grip his shoulders, soothing the tense muscles. “It's your choice, Omega, but no wolf will ever be chained under my roof.”

“Do it, Kel,” a quiet voice says from the door. This might not be my den, but I can feel every wolf in its walls and I knew Rory wouldn't be able to stay away for long. He's in sweatpants and an omega tee, which is about three sizes too

small for his muscular chest. I bite back an appreciative smile as he slowly approaches Kelly. “You know how much we fucking hate locking you up, bro. And if Arben says he can help you through it, he can.” I lift my brows at that, but Rory just grins. “The guy doesn’t make empty threats.”

I open my mouth to tell him I’m glad he remembers that fact, but Elvi jumps in. “Or empty promises. If he tells you he can handle it, you can believe him.”

“We won’t do it here,” I tell them, still gripping Kelly’s shoulders. “My den is smaller, my scent bred into the walls. There’s no escaping me there, Omega, and it will help keep your beast in line.”

Kelly gives another, deeper shiver at that, but he knows he has little choice. And I can still feel the wolf under the surface, watching me like I’m a different species altogether.

It makes my beast purr.

*Yes, wolfling. I am unlike any creature you have ever met.*

As my beast’s dark energy rolls through the bond, Elvi gives me a wide-eyed look and I can sense she almost feels sorry for the little prince. It just makes my beast purr all the more. “Give me time to take him down there and set up,” I tell her, cocking a bossy brow. “Then come join us, princeshë.”

She gulps. “You want me there for his heat?”

“We need you there,” I correct her, flicking a glance at Rory. He couldn’t hide an emotion if his life was at stake, and right now he’s watching us with his heart in his eyes. I think of him lying to my mate, stealing her trust and breaking her heart, and I can feel the violent beast rise inside me. But breaking

what she loves won't make her happy. Or at least, not once the bloodlust settles.

“Both of you,” I tell him, smirking at the flicker of hope in his eyes. “But come prepared. This wolfling won't settle unless we all work together.”



# Rory

Breaking the news to Cam that Kelly is in heat is trickier than I expect. Mainly because he's already got one foot out the door and is radiating tension like his wolf is about to tear through his skin. He's wearing a pair of borrowed sweats, skin tight around the thick bandage on his thigh. With his shifter power, the wound will heal in a week, but right now he's gray and leaning heavily on his good leg.

“Do you need me to stay?” We're in Ferrier's luxurious foyer, but my brother looks like it's the entrance to hell. I can smell his pain, since he refuses to take the drugs he loves to shove down everyone's throat. But I know that's not what's freaking him out.

Our omegas are pissed at us, and my brother is finding it hard to deal.

It was bad enough having Elvi confront him at the ball, ripping him a new one for taking her memories of her mom. But now Kelly knows about it too, and we're both dealing with a whole heap of shame and regret. Although he keeps that shit locked up tight as he scans the foyer with a frown. “Where are you thinking about containing him?”

“There's a cabin on the grounds. It's secure. Marku is gonna help.” I haven't a clue how, since the assassin didn't share any details, but it's best I keep things vague, anyway. “You think Link is back at the lake?”



“Not sure.” Cam runs a hand through his hair, looking so tired I want to pull him into a hug. But when he gets like this, the last thing he wants is physical contact. “He’s not answering his cell, but he has to be holing up somewhere. I’ll track him down.”

“And how are you gonna break the good news?”

Even if he was answering his cell, there wasn’t really time to contact Link about Kelly. Or at least, that’s what I tell myself. Even with the bad blood between us, he deserves to know. But the way our omega blew up when he heard how we’ve been treating Elvi doesn’t bode well for him. We fucked up, but Link targeted Little Angel because of her designation, which is something Kelly won’t forgive in a hurry.

Cam shakes his head like a man besieged.

“Just do what you think is best, bro,” I tell him, slapping him on the back as he heads out the door towards Ferrier’s driver.

I grimace at his slumped shoulders and stilted walk, but that’s a problem for another time. Right now, I need to survive Kelly’s heat without eating a fist. Or getting banished from Marku’s cabin for pissing my omegas off even more than I already have.

I find Elvi sitting at a breakfast table with Ferrier, and even though he invites me to join them, my stomach is too tight to eat. Instead, I study the angel wings carved into the fireplace while Elvi finishes up.

So, you’re Eric Steiner’s son,” Ferrier says, sitting back and sipping his coffee. His eyes are exactly the same color as

Elvi's, which is kind of unnerving, but I just nod.

"I was. I took the name Starling when we formed our pack." Elvi stiffens, but she doesn't comment as she gets up and pushes in her chair. Ferrier watches her like a hawk, a soft kind of awe in his eyes. This little family breakfast both pisses me off and gives me hope. Because if she's forgiven him for abandoning her mom and for leaving her with Bisha all these years, maybe I have a shot at fixing things, too. "None of us particularly wanted to remember our fathers. We were better off on our own, anyway."

Ferrier surprises me by giving a sympathetic nod. "It's the curse of our designation. Fathers who fail their families."

His golden gaze drifts back to Elvi, but she just says goodbye and leads me out of the house. She's quiet as we walk across the massive grounds, but I'm still stuck on the engraving over the mantle. "You don't think Ferrier's a hypocrite? Those angel wings look pretty and all, but he took his sweet time coming for you."

I kind of expect her to snap at me, but she just folds her arms across her chest and keeps her gaze on the tree line. "I don't think they're about me. His mom's name was Angela, so the wings were probably for her. And as to the time he took, Arben's told me enough to know it wasn't a good place to grow up."

"And being Bisha's baby was better?" I grimace as she shoots me a pointed look. "Yeah, I know we didn't help on that front. We fucked up, Elvi. What else can I say?"

She doesn't reply, and all the things I want to tell her suddenly catch in my throat. Like how I'm only half a person

without her pressed up against me, those tiger eyes watching my every move. That even though my wolf is a scary sonofabitch and bigger than life, there's a hollow place inside me that just keeps growing. And that even with all the fights and beatings and bullshit I've taken over the years, nothing hurts as bad as the fact I stole the smile from her face.

But she doesn't want to fucking hear it. Worse, she doesn't *need* my apology. I saw that only an hour ago, when she was plastered to Kelly's back, her mate on the other side of the omega sandwich. Even with Kelly in heat, the three of them looked... connected. I don't know how the fuck it happened, but there's a sick, churning feeling in my gut. To distract myself, I study the marble fountain as we pass it, two giant wolves caught in a leap. From this angle, it's hard to tell whether they're about to fight or fuck. "I just want you to be happy, little wolf. You think you can find that here, being a Ferrier?"

She opens her mouth, like she's finally going to tell me to shut the hell up, but then her gaze grows distant and her shoulders relax. "I think I'm happy wherever Arben is. And I've worked out names don't mean much in the end."

That leaves me feeling even worse, my wolf snarling under my skin as she leads me through the trees to her mate's cabin. It's small but well-built, and I try to picture Marku coming back here after a hard day of killing to unwind before the fireplace.

Whatever Elvi sees in my face just deepens her frown. "You have to trust Arben that if anything goes wrong, he'll handle it. And if it gets too much for you, just leave. Agreed?"

Bossiness seems to be contagious, but I nod, ignoring my stung feelings. Little Angel has no reason to trust me to behave myself, after all. And when she keeps looking at me with doubt in her tiger-gold eyes, I mutter, “I’ve seen this at its worst, so I’m just here to help.”

“Okay. Then brace yourself. He’s on the defensive.”

I don’t know how the hell she knows that from outside the cabin, but when we finally step through the door, my wolf gives a deep, warning growl. Elvi shoots me a glare, but then takes my arm and leads me over to a black leather sofa. It’s in front of an unlit fireplace, but since the living space is open, we have front-row seats to what’s going on. Which looks like a clusterfuck in the making.

Marku is sitting on a wooden chair he’s taken from the dining table, his shirtsleeves rolled back and his hands on his knees. I’m kind of expecting that – it’s not so different from the pose he took at the beginning of Elvi’s heat – but Kelly is a complete shock. Because right now he’s in his golden-red wolf form, and pacing in front of Marku like he’s getting ready to rumble.

The thing about Kelly, he’s a big guy when he’s not half-starved, and his wolf isn’t exactly small, either. He was also raised to be an alpha, so he’s got the arrogance of a top predator, and it’s never clearer than when he’s in wolf form. It was something that used to make us nuts when we were kids and this snotty shit from England refused to bow down to our superior wolves. It only took his first heat to educate us on the power of an omega male when he’s in a pissy mood.

Which means the cardinal rule of surviving Kelly's heat is to never, *ever* let him shift into his wolf.

Too fucking late.

I suck in a breath – nightmare scenarios already playing out in my mind - and instantly regret it. Because the cabin is freaking *soaked*. Not just in the musk of Kelly's wolf, but in the mingled scents of Marku and his new mate. Elvi has always been mouthwatering to me, but together they smell like chocolate-coated sex. My dick is instantly rock hard, and I have to dig my hands into the sofa cushions to stop myself lunging for Elvi.

Because as much as Kelly's wolf is sizing up Marku, he's also super interested in the girl at my side. And I guess I must be sitting too close to her or something, because I'm getting a lot of wolfie side-eye tossed my way.

“Wolfling,” Arben purrs in that deadly sinful voice of his, “if you let your head win, your body will lose. Now **shift**.”

The alpha command rolls through me and I have to bite back a curse as my own wolf strains against my skin. Holy shit. I always knew Marku was a dominating beast, but his power is off the freaking charts. And my shock quickly turns to anger as Kelly's wolf gives a helpless whine and shimmers out of sight. Left in his wake is my naked, shivering mate. And when he gives a pained gasp, power surges through my limbs. It's my wolf's magic, ready to shoot me off the sofa and take the fucking bully down...

“Don't. Move.” I expected a command to be thrown my way, just not from Little Angel. But her grip on my arm is brutal, her eyes all wolf. And I have to say my cock only gets

harder when she snarls at me and I can see a hint of fang. “Watch and learn, Rory. Or I’ll kick you out on your ass.”

Fuck. The disapproval in her voice cuts me to the core, and my wolf instantly takes a step back. I force myself to watch as Marku leans forward a little, his voice curling around Kelly like a caress. “Listen to your wolf, *princi*. He doesn’t want to fight, does he?”

Kelly shudders, probably because of the way his pet name rolls off the devil’s tongue. But his face is desperate as he shakes his head, his eyes scrunched up tight. “No, he doesn’t.”

Arben nods, those big white teeth bared in a smile. “Then tell me, what does he want?”

Kelly sighs, his arms wrapping around himself. His shirt is long gone and I flinch at all those scars and bruises, like a fucking patchwork of pain. His shifter healing will take care of most of it, but it’s going to be a long time before I can look at him and not want to rip someone’s head off.

But Marku seems oblivious to his pain. “If you won’t answer me, wolfing, I’ll just have to talk to your other half.”

Kelly grunts. “You really are the devil, you know that?”

“I’m here to serve,” Marku purrs, but he follows it up with another command and Kelly shifts again. As soon as he’s formed, his wolf lets out a furious growl, his silver eyes instantly turning our way.

I grit my teeth. I’ve seen how this goes enough times to know he’s on the edge of a feral rage. “We need to try something else. You can’t just bully him through his heat.”

Instead of kicking me out of his cabin, Marku nods at Little Angel and she stands up, approaching Kelly's wolf with zero fear. If I wasn't so terrified she's about to get her face ripped off, I'd be hella proud. But instead, I jerk to my feet, ready to jump between them. One look at Marku's face and I know he's going to command my ass if I try to stop her.

I force myself to wait, but tension prickles the air, growing thicker as Elvi reaches Kelly and runs her fingers through the gold-red fur between his ears. The growl that echoes in his chest is enough to raise the hairs on my arms, but Elvi just makes a soft tutting sound. "So this is how you want to play it, *princi?*"

When I interrupted them an hour ago, I didn't pay much attention to her clothing. But now she's wearing a sexy as fuck white halter dress, and I'm pretty sure my mouth drops open when she reaches for the knot behind her head and tugs it undone. The top half slides down to her waist, exposing a white lace bra that makes my eyes cross. But a few seconds later she's removed the rest of her clothes, her fingers hooked in the sides of her tiny panties. None of us have taken our eyes off her, including Kelly's wolf, and I expect her mate to be salivating as bad as I am. But when I glance at him, all I can see is pride in his eyes, which makes no sense to me. Isn't he worried about her? Because she's clearly getting ready to shift. And the second she does, Kelly's wolf won't just be growling at her, he'll be all over her. Either fighting her or fucking her, but most likely trying to do both at the same time.

"Don't do it," I whisper to Marku. "You command her, and Kelly will attack. His wolf can't take other wolves being around during his heat."

Twin growls roll through the room, and I blink at the two wolves suddenly staring back at me. What the fuck? Did Marku command Little Angel, and I missed it? “How did you do that?”

“I didn’t,” Marku replies, his gaze caressing the wolves. “Princeshë takes care of her own shifts.”

I don’t believe it. Even seeing her glare at me from four legs, I can’t accept she has that power. Because omegas *can’t* shift on their own. A rare few can half-shift if their life is threatened, but the ability was bred out of them, since they’re never on their own. My dad, the eternal asshole, used to say that if omegas *could* shift at will, our species would die out in a generation. That’s about how much respect he had for our own designation.

But Kelly looks happy with the outcome, butting the pretty silver wolf with his big golden head. Elvi’s wolf responds by rubbing her nose along his flank, earning her a deep rumbling purr. They look as good together as they did back in that omega suite – like fire wrapped around ice – and the mingling of their scents is both musky and sweet. I have to swallow because now I’m picturing them in their human forms, their bodies fusing together as Elvi rides Kelly’s cock...

Damn. *Down, desperado dick.*

I force myself to focus on whatever back-and-forth is going on. Communication is pretty basic in our animal form, but Elvi gives a little yip like she’s agreeing and then Marku smirks. “**Shift**, wolfling.”

They both do, so effortlessly it just confuses me more. But then it looks like my fantasy is about to play out in real time



because Kelly wraps his naked body around Elvi and hums into her throat. He looks peaceful enough – or at least not like he’s going to rip her bond mark out – but Marku doesn’t let up. “What do you want, *princi*?”

“Your big, bossy cock to join us,” Kelly fires back, although his words are muffled by Little Angel’s neck.

She laughs, making him squirm. When she cocks a brow at her mate – clearly an invitation, the lucky asshole - Marku just shakes his head. “That’s still off the table. My wolf is here to dominate you, not pet you.” He lets that sink in before saying, “Try again. Tell me what you want, wolfling.”

Kelly thinks about it, the silence stretching until I start to twitch. Half of the people in the room are naked, but there’s only one other big cock on offer. I’ve got no problems fucking the heat out of my mate as long as he doesn’t flip back into a frenzy. In fact, taking his perfect ass while the others look on is my new favorite fantasy...

“A bite,” Kelly mumbles, and I feel myself go rigid.

Fuck me. He’s asking Marku to bite him and bond him.

I can feel my wolf thrusting against my skin, but our anger quickly fades into resignation. How can I blame him for wanting that? I was all in on the same arrangement before Link fucked everything up. And look at what’s on offer. A naked angel curled up on his lap, and Marku has to be the dark knight in every omega’s fantasy...

“You want another mating mark?”

“Yes.” Kelly touches his neck, Elvi’s lips chasing his fingers to taste the skin he strokes. “Right here. Where

everyone can see.”

Fuck me twice. Not only does he want the deadliest assassin on the continent to bite him, he wants him to do it where Link will have to look at it every day of his miserable life.

“Good,” Marku purrs, leaning forward and resting his elbows on his knees. It puts the bite mark on his wrist on display, which I guess is the point. “And will you be biting too?”

Kelly doesn’t hesitate. He rises up on his knees, his hand going to the smooth flesh below his hip, only inches above the heavy length of his dick. Elvi looks like she wants to chase his fingers like she did before, but then she turns to shoot me a challenging stare. “You know why he wants it there, Rory? So every time he’s on his knees and you’re down his throat, he can look at it. He’ll know you’re his, in every way he needs you to be. And of course, it will hurt like a bitch when he sinks his teeth into that spot, probably scraping on the bone. But that’s just a bonus.”

The two omegas trade a sly glance, but I’m stuck on the rest of her words. *My dick. Down his throat. Because I’m his. In every way he needs.*

Not Marku.

*Me.*

And of course, the asshole has to double-check. “Princi, is that what you want from your friend over there?”

Kelly frowns, but I prickle. “*Mate,*” I correct him. “Kelly and me are mated. We’re no different from you and Elvi.”

I put as much confidence as I can into my words, but the fucker just cocks a disbelieving brow. As irritating as shit, but not as bad as Kelly saying in a distant voice, “I want him to claim me. Properly.”

Fuck. Why the hell does he sound like that? As if he expects me to turn him down... “I have, bro. You’re mine and I’m yours. But if you want my bite, it’s no problem. I just didn’t take it further before because of...”

“Link,” Elvi says and I sigh. She knows better than anyone about Link’s possessive bullshit.

But Kelly has sat back on his heels, his eyes narrowed on me. “Did you know before Link claimed me in the Tower, I told him I loved you equally? And I wanted to bond you all? He agreed, but when I tried to bring it up, you and Cam kept changing the subject. You’d slap my back, then go and fuck some random heir like it meant nothing. I’d be locked back up with the other omegas, and then... well, our year in the Tower was up, and I was gone, wasn’t I?”

My chest aches as I remember Marku hustling us out of the Tower on our first day of freedom, only to tell us Kelly was already gone. We’d all assumed the assassin had done something to him, and Link had flipped out so bad, Marku had knocked him out. That threw Cam and me over the edge, and we’d all been unconscious when we were dumped on the edge of the lake. When we could drag our sorry asses out of the mud, we’d made a blood pact right there and then. We would get Kelly back, no matter what it took.

I hate going back to those dark days in the Tower, but I force myself to consider his words. Did I really push Kelly

away when he was trying to bond with me? And more importantly, did Link ever mention Kelly's condition that we all bond him together? No, I'm pretty sure the asshole kept that fun fact to himself.

"You like me, Rory," Kelly says now, pulling me back to the present. "You even like to fuck me. But I don't take much solace from that, since we both know you like to fuck anything that floats into your orbit."

Elvi tries to hide her flinch, but Kelly sees it, and I fucking *feel* it. I have a lot of making up to do – to both of them – but right now I drop to my knees in front of my mate. "Maybe that's how I made you feel, Kelly, but those days are over. I love you. Don't ever doubt it. And if you'll let me, I'll bite you in a heartbeat."



# Elvana

I hold my breath as I wait for Kelly's answer.

I'm still sitting close enough to feel the tension rippling through his body as he studies Rory, down on his knees with his heart in his eyes.

I've pushed my own feelings on the matter aside, but it was harder than I liked to admit. Hearing Rory profess his love for his omega was beautiful, even if it made the pain in my chest flare inside me like a flame that just won't quit. I'm pretty sure Kelly doesn't know how close we really got, or the things Rory said to me back when I thought he was my stepbrother.

But I'm not dredging that up now.

"How should we do it?" Kelly sounds off-hand, but we can all smell his stress as he looks at Arben. "I mean, do we do it now, or wait for my heat to finish?" He frowns and presses his fingers to his pulse. "Which is weird, because it feels like it's done, but there's no way it can be. Even in the basement, where I was having them all the time, they lasted a least a couple of days."

"It's still there," Arben says quietly, his dark eyes full of memories. I'm still trying to absorb the story he shared with us about Luca. That as a young child he'd held an older, wilder boy's heat at bay with just his wolf and sheer determination. He'd risked his life, over and over, to keep an omega out of the hands of the assholes in power. "But your heat is a defense

mechanism, wolfling. When your father questioned your designation, you fought. When he sent you here to be fixed, you fought. When your pack brothers were less than welcoming, you fought. When you went into the Tower, you fought. And when Bisha sold you into the hands of a sadist, you fought. Who is left for you to fight?”

We all stare at Arben, almost transfixed by the power in his voice. Right now, he’s speaking for all omegas, and Kelly knows the answer as well as I do. “The next command,” he replies. “The next time my body betrays me because an alpha tells it to.”

“But it won’t,” I insist, absolutely positive of the fact. “My wolf is going to teach yours to shift whenever you need to. Not a half shift, either. Claws, *and* fangs.”

Kelly blows out a harsh breath. “That would be amazing, but I don’t think it’s that easy. You’re... unique, angel.”

I wink at him. “They already talked it out. It’s decided. And just to warn you, my wolf is almost as bossy as Arben’s.”

It’s a poor joke, but it makes Kelly smile. Not like all the broken little ones he’s given me so far, but a grin that’s pure sunshine on a cloudy day. I soak it up for a moment, then get to my feet, scooping my dress off the floor. I can feel their eyes on me, but I’m not putting on a show. This is Kelly’s time to shine.

Not that it means Arben is going to leave them to it. Instead, he pats his knee, and I go to him with a relieved smile. I like this new badass angel I’m finding inside me, but sometimes it’s just nice to curl up on my mate’s lap and let him boss us all around.

“Rory,” he says when I’m settled, his voice full of power. “Your omega needs you. You forgot for a time the truth about our designation. We only exist to serve them. Have you remembered?”

Rory’s mouth twists like he wants to sass him, but he nods. “I have. I fucked up.” His bright green eyes settle on me. “But I’m gonna prove my worth. They won’t ever doubt me again.”

I try to hold his gaze, but Kelly is grinning at me, so I blow a raspberry in his direction instead. “Just get on with it and bite each other, okay?”

They all laugh, masculine chuckles that relieve the tension in the air, but do nothing for the throbbing heat between my legs. Since Kelly ate me out like I was his last meal, I’ve been aching for more. But of course, that’s exactly how Arben wanted me to feel.

*You know my wicked ways too well, princesshë.*

I would stick an elbow in his ribs if his hand hadn’t finally ventured under the skirt of my dress.

But I keep my eyes forward, my breath hitching slightly as I watch Rory approach Kelly. He’s still on his knees, which should look ridiculous, but one thing I can say about the green-eyed demon, he knows how to work a crowd. He falls forward onto his hands, his tee pulling tight over his back muscles as he crawls towards his omega with a hungry look on his face. Kelly doesn’t seem impressed, though, his arms folded over his chest, his chin lifted so he’s staring down his aristocratic nose. He looks so regal and aloof, I’m not sure anyone would pick him as the omega in this picture. And



when he tells Rory to stop in his crisp British accent, I have to clench my thighs around another flush of arousal.

Damn, I definitely have a thing for bossy men.

*Then open your legs for me, princesshë. I want to taste that slick I can feel soaking into my pants.*

I gulp at the dark command in my mate's voice, but I can't stop watching as Kelly tugs Rory's tee over his head, his hands just this side of rough. He tosses it away, his gaze sliding in my direction as I part my thighs for Arben's fingers. Despite the obvious invitation, they linger on my thigh, tracing slow circles on my heated skin. Have they both decided to tease me to death?

Kelly's smile is definitely a little savage. And when he bites his bruised bottom lip, I can't hold in my frustrated groan. "Move your ass, Rory. You're keeping Angel waiting," he says with a grin, like he didn't just order him to keep his distance.

Rory huffs at the unfairness of it all, but allows himself to be maneuvered around until they're facing us side-on. Arben gives a pleased rumble at the unobstructed view, and I don't blame him. Rory's muscled chest is rising and falling with his breaths, and Kelly's long, heavy cock is on proud display. Both make my mouth water, but it's the casual way Kelly nudges down Rory's sweats that makes my heart thump. He doesn't touch him with his hands, but allows their hipbones to meet, their swollen cocks slapping together almost aggressively. They're nearly the same height, and while Kelly's lost a lot of weight, he measures up just fine.

But the best thing is the smug look in Kelly's eyes when he glances my way. I might be sitting on my mate's lap, but it's pretty obvious I'm just as turned on by the way he's taking the lead. But instead of grabbing Rory and biting the hell out of him, Kelly cocks a brow in my direction. "What would you like me to do, Angel?"

I suck in a breath, the tension in the air kicking up another notch. "Kiss him," I pant, desperate to see how their hard bodies come together in such an intimate way. "Taste his mouth and make him beg for more."

"As you command, Angel."

I shiver at the seductive words, but he's leaning in to taste Rory's mouth and Arben's fingers finally slide across my seam. I hiss as they swipe up to my clit, his cock pressing hard against the curve of my ass. I squirm, trying to drive something – anything - inside me, but Arben isn't about to rush things.

*You like watching, princeshë. So, soak them in. See how our omega commands this cruel boy. He's tasting him like they've just met, like he's trying to decide if he finds him pleasing.*

I catch glimpses of their tongues, slow and languid. Rory is holding the omega's hip, but other than their mouths, that's it for touching. Kelly really does look like he's putting Rory through some kind of test.

*Look how needy they are. The sweat on their chests. The veins in their cocks. Every muscle tight. Every inch of skin hot and throbbing.*

God. How does Arben make the simplest observations so filthy?

I turn my head away quickly, panting into the musky heat of his neck, but he just pushes the tip of a finger inside my slit and whispers in my ear, “When he’s explored every inch of his mouth, will those soft lips move over his chest? Will he bite those brown nipples? Will he lick that pearly bead clinging to the tip of the cruel boy’s cock? We know he’s pretty. We know his body is hard and powerful. But is he good enough for our omega, who deserves only the best?” Arben’s teeth have found the soft flesh of my lobe and are nibbling there, sending shudders through me. “Look, princeshë. Let’s see what he does with the cruel boy’s cock.”

I moan, but turn my head just in time to watch Kelly reach out, swiping a finger over Rory’s swollen head. It’s more than a bead now, the pre-cum welling from the tip and dripping down the sides. He must be close to a rut to be leaking so much, and I lick my dry lips, knowing exactly how musky and addictive he would taste. But even though Rory groans and tries to thrust into his hand, Kelly doesn’t give him any relief. Instead, he pulls away, popping his coated fingers into his mouth. And even though he cleans each one with slow, thorough licks, Kelly doesn’t show the slightest reaction to what I know is omega catnip. “Hmmm,” he murmurs, frowning at his mate.

Rory’s shoulders slump at the clear rejection, even while his cock darkens to a painful purple. “Fuck, babe.”

Kelly arches one of his silky brows, the hint of a sneer on his swollen lips. “Oh, *babe* am I now? I thought I was your

*bro.*”

I’d smirk at Rory’s confusion if I wasn’t being stretched open by one of Arben’s thick fingers. I’m well beyond wet, but he wiggles it inside, catching my flesh and testing my walls, and I almost buck off his lap. I grab his shirt, sinking my teeth into the edge of his jaw. “Arben...!”

*Shh, princeshë. The wolflings are having an important discussion.*

I swallow a curse, but deliberately relax my hips and force my body to sink onto his probing finger. Of course, as soon as I’m seated, a second finger wiggles inside, pressing along my tender walls. I decide there’s no good defense for this kind of attack, except to swing my leg over his thigh and bring my wet, stuffed pussy right down on his lap. It lodges his fingers deeper inside me, but with my back to his chest, it drops me right on the throbbing outline of his cock.

“Princeshë...” he growls in a thick voice.

“Eyes froward, babe,” I chirp. “The boys are about to take care of business.”

Except that Kelly’s eyes are on me, staring at the hem of my white dress as it strains along my parted thighs. I’m pretty sure he can see Arben’s fingers wedged inside me, but when I give him innocent eyes, he just smirks. Then turns back to Rory and growls, “Well?”

“You *are* my bro,” Rory insists, a troubled crease between his vivid green eyes. He looks so earnest – and just a little bit hurt – and he’d have the whole scorned boy-next-door vibe

going if he wasn't strangling his cock in his hand. "But you know you're more than that. I said I love you..."

"Saying and proving are two different things."

Arben chokes that moment to lick my scent gland, his teeth scraping the edge of his bite mark. Maybe he's trying to remind the guys why we're here and move them onto the biting part of their discussion, but I think it's just to make me moan. And it comes out so loud, they stop talking altogether. But the sight of me writhing on Arben's lap while his fingers pump my pussy and his teeth nibble my bond mark seems to give Kelly ideas.

"Let's ask Angel. If she's willing to come here and lick the mess off your cock, then I'll think about letting you inside me."

"What?" Even my mate's thick fingers aren't enough to keep the horror from my voice. "No, Kelly."

"No?" Kelly folds his arms and studies me. "If his dick isn't good enough to go into your sweet mouth, then it's got zero chance of knotting my ass."

"No," I repeat, holding myself still by sinking the tips of my claws into Arben's thighs. It has to hurt, but it doesn't stop those wiggling, thrusting fingers an inch. "Leave me out of it. I've got... enough to deal with over here." Kelly snorts at my obvious understatement, but I glare at him. "This is between you two. And it way pre-dates anything I had to do with your pack."

"She's right," Rory says quietly, which surprises me almost as much as the way his gaze has stayed firmly above my neck.

He really is focused one hundred percent on Kelly.

*And why does that sting like a backhanded bitch?*

“Then it’s agreed,” Kelly announces, even though I have no idea where we’re up to in the discussion. “Rory can bite me, but he has to earn my teeth and my ass. Wrist or neck, Angel?”

I gape at him, my muddled mind unable to grasp that he’s asking me to make such an intimate, important decision. Can he not see I’m in an impaired state of mind? But even with my brain a soggy mess, I can recognize the pain in Rory’s eyes. This whole scene has to grate against every one of his alpha instincts; not to mention a blow to his pride. It’s not like I *care*, or anything. But we really need to Move. Things. Along.

“Neck,” I gasp as Arben licks his way up my own mark. “We decided that already, right? It’s what you want, Kelly.”

“Fine,” he says, then meets Arben’s eyes over my shoulder. “We going to time this just right, big guy?”

“She’s going to gush on my hand and scream herself raw. Right as he sinks his teeth into your pretty throat, wolfling.”

“*Fuck*, you guys!” I curse, but Rory isn’t waiting for Kelly to think up any more conditions. He’s on the omega in a flash, cupping his face and tilting his neck to his mouth. Kelly grips his arms, his fingers white at the knuckles, but his bright eyes are watching his alpha’s every move. Rory’s fangs gleam, a possessive rattle echoing in his chest, and then the sweet scent of Kelly’s blood fills the air. Right as Arben strikes in his own way, his fingers nudging me over the edge into a bone-melting climax.

I'm on the verge of passing out right there and then, but Arben scoops me up and carries me into his bedroom. He doesn't bother closing the door, laying me on the bed and flipping my skirt up so he can clean up the mess he made. Right when I'm about to sink into a sated sleep, he rolls me onto my side and finally gives me his big cock. He grunts at how tight I am despite all his probing and wiggling, but I just curl into his pillow and squeeze my thighs together. We both hiss at the added clench, but I'm too wet for there to be any real hope of keeping him out. And of course, my wolf will take his dick any way she can get it, so before I can stop myself, I'm on all fours and biting the pillow as he explodes into me from behind.



“Any chance we get some lunch now you’ve had yours?”

I lurch out of a second near-sleep to Kelly's hopeful voice. Arben just purrs into his pillow, clearly tapped out from his sleepless night. I'm tempted to elbow him again, but it's not often he passes out unarmed. Plus, he looks so cute buck-naked in our bed, I want to savor the sight. Even if I know he can still decapitate a man with one eye shut and a sleepy sweep of his hand.

Kelly is alone in the kitchen when I walk out in a pair of yoga pants and a tee. He has a chopping board and a bowl on the counter and is in the middle of making what looks like an egg-white omelet. I pull a face and grab the tin of *sheqerpare* off the shelf. The little syrup-soaked butter cookies should

take the healthy edge off. “Worked up an appetite?” he asks with a sly look in my direction.

“That was not my fault,” I tell him as I snap a cookie in half and feed us both. “I just went and sat on his knee like a good little omega.”

He snorts, then starts pouring his white, gooey mixture into a pan already sizzling with mushrooms and peppers. “I’m starting to wonder if calling you Angel is ironic.”

I shrug and pull myself up onto the clean end of the counter. The cabin is cozy, but a couple of bar stools would probably push it into cluttered territory. “And is this heat hunger, or I just got rescued from a basement hunger?”

“Not my heat,” he grins. “That really seems to be over. And all it took was shifting five times and then getting bitten by my mate.”

I smile back, ignoring the slight pinch in my stomach. “Can I see it?”

He knows exactly what I mean, and brushes his long hair back from his neck. Rory’s mark is red but not inflamed, the impression of his teeth clear, but not deep. “It’s not a big bite,” he tells me, “but that was deliberate. Rory said he wants to do it again when I forgive him.”

I look around the living area. “He didn’t stick around for aftercare?”

“I’m good. I got what I wanted, even if it’s not the full package just yet.” He gives me another sly look as he flips the omelet. “He headed out to run his frustration off, while I tucked mine away for later.”



I can't help looking down at the sweatpants hanging from his hips. They have to be the one's Rory was wearing, so I assume he means Rory is running in his wolf form. And while Kelly might have put his frustration away, I can tell it isn't going down any time soon. "I could... help you out with that, if you want." Rory almost drops the pan, the omelet landing in a wet splat on the floor. "Oops," I tell him, and nudge the cookies his way. "These are better for you, anyway. Do you really want to eat egg whites after a year in that basement?"

Kelly frowns, clearly distracted. "I didn't see real food once. Everything they fed us was cheap and greasy. It was disgusting."

*Well, I guess you really aren't what you eat, because Kelly looks like prime rib in those sweatpants.*

"Okay, but these are homemade by my mate's loving hands." I wait until he's nibbling on another cookie before I add, "And I mean it about lending a hand, too. I'm partially responsible for your frustration, after all."

His moan isn't just in appreciation of the cookie's buttery goodness. "Angel... That's *not* what I was angling for."

"I know. But I'm guessing you and Arben set that scene up before we arrived. Which means I just had one of the best orgasms of my life, then got fucked into the pillow because Arben was so worked up. I think I owe you."

"A couple of orgasms – even as epic as it sounded from the next room – does not equal risking your life to save mine."

I sigh and climb off the counter to get more eggs out of the fridge. While he starts the omelet-making process over again, I

lean on my elbows and ask, “Can you feel him?” And then I ask the question I don’t really want an answer to. “Do you think Link knows?”

Kelly’s lips thin for a moment as he whisks the eggs. “Yes, I can feel Rory. And Link is still in there, too, so I’d say he knows. But it’s not a bondlink if you’re wondering. Those things are rare.” He looks back at the bedroom door, his gaze softening and his words tinged with wonder. “You two really have something special, you know?”

“We fit,” I tell him again, but I feel tingly at the confirmation of what I already know. I’m lucky as hell to have my devilish mate in my life. “Hey, how did you recognize it, by the way? You guessed without any clues, and up to a week ago, I thought bondlinks were just a myth.”

He turns away, and I’m not sure it’s just to fiddle with the stovetop. “It’s not common knowledge, but my parents had it. They didn’t use it like you do, though. My dad made my mum spy on people, when he wasn’t commanding her for his twisted entertainment.”

Oh, crap. “You don’t have to talk about it...”

“No, it’s okay. The bastard is dead now, and I’m not exactly close to my mum. But I’ll never forget the way he’d command her, like she was a dog on an invisible leash. I think it was why I flipped out so bad when I presented as an omega. The thought that one day an alpha could *own* me like that...”

I reach over and rub his shoulder, smiling a little as he leans into the touch. “I get it, Kelly. My parents didn’t have it – mainly because Bisha wasn’t my dad – but he controlled her

in other ways. It was hard watching it as a kid, but scary as well, thinking that might be me one day.”

He glances back at the bedroom door. “I think that ship has sailed.”

I grin. Yep. The only commanding I have to worry about now comes in the form of three thick digits and a lot of public orgasms. “What about your mum? Is she out there looking for you?”

“I doubt it. She signed over half my inheritance to Bisha before he sold me off. She’s probably holding back the other half so he doesn’t kill me, but I think that’s the most help I can expect from her.” Shaking his head, he fills the pan with fresh vegetables, and from the tension in his shoulders, I know he’s hurting. But when he glances back at me, he forces a chuckle. “I can tell you’ve got another question brewing away in there. Spit it out, Angel.”

I pull a face. What I really want to know is how did a bondshy omega end up with someone like Lincoln Hila, but I ask instead, “What was it like in Bisha’s Tower?”

From his guarded expression, that’s an even worse line of questioning, but before I can take it back, he says, “The guys said you didn’t know much about it.”

“I only went there a couple of times when I was younger for pack stuff. But I didn’t see a lot of Bisha when I was growing up.”

He grunts. “Well, the Tower was boring. I was separated from the guys and not given much to do. No phones or games or anything electronic. Just some exercise equipment, a few

books, and a journal the guards liked to read, so that never came off the shelf.”

I grimace at the picture he’s painting, but he just shrugs. “I spent most of my time just hanging out with the other two omegas. Every couple of weeks, all the heirs were brought together. Bisha gave us a pep talk and any news he wanted to share from the outside world, but mostly I think it was just to check we were still alive. Some of the guards were real wankers, and one in particular was always hanging around. He said he fancied me, and he would get me out of there if I took his bite. Rory found out and nearly killed him, and then Link said we needed to take away the temptation. He claimed me and told the other guards I was off-limits. We were locked up, but it wasn’t forever, and Link was a Hila. They knew he’d fuck them up if they tried anything. They didn’t let us room together, but they left me alone. Well, up until Bisha sold me off to Crouch.”

He shakes his head, straightening his shoulders as he pushes an omelet-filled plate in front of me, keeping the smaller portion for himself. “But enough of that. We’ve got stuff to do.”

I poke my fork at the *stuff* in front of me right now. “Okay, what are you thinking?”

He moans as he gulps down a mouthful of the white mess. “Food,” he says around an enthusiastic swallow. “Sleep. Exercise. And shifting training, if you’re still offering.”

I grin, ready to get started right away. “Of course. Let’s do it.”

He tuts and points his fork at my loaded plate. “Eat, first.”

“Okay,” I grumble, “but instead of *exercising*, can we have a pampering day? The bathroom here is cool, but the omega suites have *hot tubs*. And so many bath products, we could start our own salon. Or is that a bit girly for you?”

“You sound like Tasha, one of the omegas from the Tower. She was always fantasizing about bubble baths and bitching at me to give her a head massage...” The smile slips from his face and he picks up a cell I didn’t notice on the counter. “It’s Rory’s,” he explains. “Cam is looking for her contact number. I heard she was sold around the same time as me, and I want to check in on her.”

Oh, shit. “I’m sorry, Kelly.”

He gives me a look I know too well. Rage and grief, all tangled together. I’m pretty sure it’s the look that was on my face when I first met Rory in that hotel elevator. *Don’t think about that now, Elvi*. Instead, I gobble down what’s left of my eggs and grab his hand. “Okay, then we go see Ferrier. He’s got all sorts of contacts who can help.”

He follows me to the door, although I almost trip over my feet when he says, “And then maybe we can take that bubble bath together while we’re at it.” He chuckles at my stricken look, then pulls me in to nuzzle my temple. It puts me close to Rory’s bite, and as mixed-up as I feel, a wave of calm washes over me at the mingling of their scents. “Angel... I haven’t had sex in a year. The idea of you touching me again, maybe down on your knees with my cock in your mouth... Well, it’s up there with the four of us fucking until we all pass out from too many knots.”

I tilt my head back to stare into his hooded eyes, not hiding my shiver of anticipation. “Me, too.”

“Then I hope we get there, and soon. Both you and me alone, and in the middle of a fuck-ton of knots. But...”

“Link.”

He nods, leaning forward to brush his lips over mine. “And Cam. But Link is going to be struggling. He might not know who gave me my second bite, or how, but he’ll know that I like it. He’s got to think I’m moving on.”

“Crap.” I hadn’t thought of it that way. Link was out of his mind when he thought Kelly was locked up and helpless. How will he feel now, knowing his mate has found a soft place to land that’s not him? “Then you need to get in touch with him soon, Kelly, He’ll be going out crazy.”

“I know. And while he deserves it for what he did to you, I’m not that cruel.”

I smirk, trying to lighten the mood a little. “Rory’s cock would beg to differ.”

But Kelly backs me up against the door and takes my chin in his hand, his whiskey eyes searching my face. “Tell me something, Angel. Were you tempted at all? When I asked you to taste him? Is there any part of you that wanted that with Rory?”

Shit. From friendly handjobs to flashing my soul. “Of course. A lot has happened in a short time, Kelly. I didn’t know those guys a few weeks ago. And... things were said. Promises made. I’m angry, but...”

“You’re hurt and disappointed. I know. Rory and Cam told me we were going to be one pack. Yours and mine together.”

I nod. “And I honestly can’t tell you if I still want that with any of them.” I feel kind of shy as I add, “Other than you, I mean.”

He swipes a thumb over his red bite mark, but then pulls me in close. “I’m putting you first, Angel. Like you said, omegas have to stick together, but it’s more than that. I don’t know if I knew you were an angel before I heard your name, but you were exactly who I wanted to be standing behind me when you killed that guard. You’re under my skin, Angel, and bites or not, we’re a pack of two. The others have to earn their place.”

“Make that three,” a sleepy Arben rumbles from the bedroom doorway, “and if it’s knots and head massages you’re after, I’m more than happy to serve.”





# Kelly

That offer from Arben, while sleep-rumpled and heavy-eyed, takes up permanent residence in my brain over the next few days. At his direction, we all camp out of Ferrier's French Folly, as I like to think of it, since even my father's mansion in Kent didn't have eighteen bedrooms for a regular residency of one. Although, it seems the Alpha of Boston runs an omega halfway house when he's not hosting his long-lost daughter and her tagalongs, so I guess the extra space comes in handy.

We spend the first afternoon in a room on the third floor that doesn't look like it's been used in a while. Maybe omegas in hiding aren't all that into what he calls the entertainment salon, a massive space with polished floors, adjustable lighting, and comfy couches everywhere. One half of the giant room is dedicated to every distraction you could imagine – from gaming consoles, to a full library, to an art studio set up in a corner. The other is what Angel instantly dubs the Pampering Palace, which is a bit like walking into a day spa in a posh hotel, with everything from mini treatment rooms to a menu of wellness packages you can book on a screen mounted on the wall.

Everything feels so big and shiny, it takes a while to get my bearings. But since Arben and Rory seem happy staking out the billiards table, I let Angel talk me into a full wellness treatment. Within minutes of making our selection, a group of therapists in white uniforms appear from an internal elevator.

They're all betas and so professional it's hard to take offence as they gasp over the state of my hair and skin. But three hours later, we're chatting like old friends, and I look as glossy and pampered as the girl lying on the massage table next to me.

We've been scrubbed, waxed, peeled, polished, and deep conditioned, and my bones feel like soup under the hands of the masseuse. "What's next?" I slur to Angel, who's groaning as her own therapist works on the knots in her shoulders. "Gold leaf gilding?"

"It would match your hair," she murmurs back, then rolls her head to look me over. There's appreciation in her eyes, but concern as well, like she's making sure none of this is too much for me. Trauma can be hard to spot, even in yourself, but I've never felt further from an omega rage. It's nice someone gives a damn, but the truth is, I've been dealing with some kind of abuse all my life. A breakdown is not on the menu. "I thought we could practice shifting for a while," she suggests, cocking one of her extra silky brows at me. "The guys want us to hit the gym later, so I think we'll need a nap after that."

I groan, and not just because of the elbow working the knots out of my lats. "We should have kept the massage for after the torture training session."

She leans over and waggles those silky brows. "There's a hot-tub. And then we can take a puppy pile nap in one of the omega suites."

I'm kind of glad I'm on my stomach as that image springs to life. "All four of us?"

She just shrugs a glossy shoulder. "The nests are big. I'd say there's room for all."

That thought gets me through a frustrating shifting session, where I can't so much as sprout a patch of fur, and an hour in the gym which turns me into a soggy, trembling mess. The upside is the view, since my workout buddies are all in perfect shape, and watching beads of sweat slide over bunching muscles is the closest I've got to porn in a very long time. The downside is my how weak and wasted I feel beside them, and despite the pushups I did each day in the basement, I have to accept I'm a long, painful way from peak condition.

"Don't feel bad about it," Rory all but growls in my ear as he half-carries me back to the bedroom suite. "You're an athlete. You know how this goes. Hard work and discipline, and you'll get your strength back and more."

"Sure, but I've never started with the physique of a pre-teen girl," I snap back, feeling my self-disgust almost swamp me as he nudges me against the vanity in the bathroom. Arben has disappeared, which spares at least a little of my dignity, but Angel is already filling the tub with hot water and soothing salts. Clearly this is going to be a recuperating bath, and not a fuck-in-the-hot-tub fantasy.

Still, it's bliss after a year of washing in a cold shower block, which was the weekly treat in the basement – the rest of the time it was a bucket and rag. Once the soothing salts have done their work, I'm so wiped out I inhale the tray of food delivered to the suite without tasting it, and then completely miss the part where all four of us crawl into the omega nest. I have some vague recollection of Angel cuddling close to my chest, her perfume in my nose, and Rory lying at my back. I can feel his breath on the bite mark on my neck, but there's a gap between us I think is meant to be respectful. I'm scheming

up ways to bridge it – and possibly bring Angel along with me - but then I'm lights out. If Doctor Death ever joins us is a mystery, especially when I wake in the morning to a warm but empty bed.

That becomes the pattern for the next few days. Shifting practice. Gym workout. Pamper session. Repeat. It's a series of frustrations that are only matched by my level of exhaustion. I'm always the first one asleep, no matter how hard I try to stay awake. I'm determined to make something happen between the four of us – even if it's just an honest conversation about how awkward this all is – but when I wake up alone for the third morning in a row, I start to wonder if they're sapping my energy on purpose. Maybe they're just putting up with each other for my sake. And any hope for something more will disappear as soon as I no longer have the stamina of a newborn wolfling.

But maybe I'm just deluding myself, anyway. The longer I watch Rory and Angel inhabit the same space, the more I feel the distance between them. When I'd suggested she help me blow him during my heat, I wasn't just getting swept up in the moment. The attraction between them is so strong it sometimes feels like I can taste her skin through my bond with Rory. And when Arben starts helping with the shifting sessions, my wolf can scent her need for Rory woven through her pheromones. She loves Arben, she *likes* me, but her feelings for Rory are imprinted at the deepest level. Which means her hurt runs as deeply as her desire for my mate.

It's a weird dynamic, but I'm just too damned tired to do much about it. And then on Friday night, Angel tells me Ferrier has invited us to a family dinner. By which he means

we have to swap the trays in our room for a meal with him, which I decide is as good a way as any to break the cycle of our nights. Tonight, I'm going to make something happen in the nest. It might not be the steamy foursome of my dreams, but I want defenses down and some honesty between us.

As we dress in the selection of formalwear Ferrier had sent up to the suite, Rory comes up behind me to press a kiss to his mark on my throat. At least *his* barriers have started to crumble, mainly due to me pressing my dick against him any chance I get. There's a lot you can do when you're spotting a guy who's bench-pressing the weight of a small car.

"You look hot in a suit," he tells me, his own groin skimming my ass. I've gone the whole deal with a suit jacket and skinny navy tie, while he's in dress pants and a white button-down, his collar open to reveal his tanned throat. I stare at it in the mirror of the ensuite. Angel and Arben went back to their cabin to get ready, so I let myself ogle him shamelessly, and I have to wonder what it would look like with a claiming bite on the smooth golden skin.

"Do you think they'll be late for dinner?" I muse, fussing with my tie as I watch him study my mouth. There's a vein pulsing in his forehead, his bright green eyes growing hooded the longer I tug on the fabric. "I mean, they've been on a sex drought since we started group nesting, haven't they? Nothing as bad as my lack of dick, but they're probably having a cum party in the cabin right now..."

"Fuck, I love the dirty way your pretty mouth works." Rory turns me around so fast I catch my hip on the edge of the vanity. But that small pain is washed away as his mouth slams

down on mine. He tastes like mint and frustration, and my soul sings at the growl that spirals up his throat. Rory is the fun brother, the one who blurts out the first thing on his mind. While he has a thing for messy heartbreak, he's naturally upbeat, and isn't happy unless everyone else is. He's also all about touch, which means he usually tries to fuck the misery out of others. Link used to grouch that he acts like his cum is a miracle cure, but in some ways it is.

And as I feel the threads of my group fantasy start to unravel, I drop to my knees. "I need it," I grunt, staring up at him. "I want your hot cum on my pretty tongue."

"Fuck." He braces his hands on the vanity behind me, breathing in so deep I can see his abs shifting beneath his shirt. "You sure about this, Sunshine?"

I pause with my hands on his belt. "Sunshine?"

"Your hair," he says, reaching out to stroke a well-conditioned lock. "You're so bright, Kelly, and I don't know... Calling you bro or babe doesn't feel right."

I shrug; it's kind of cute. But then I unzip his pants before he can derail us with any more compliments. And when I finally get a hand around his cock, my mouth waters at the way it flexes and jumps in my hand. All shifters are well-hung, but my guys are on another scale. He's also the same perfect golden color as the rest of him, his skin smooth and hairless. But what I love about Rory's dick is how eager it always feels, not to mention the happy sounds I can pull out of the man it's attached to.

As an alpha male, I'd never imagined I'd suck much cock. Omega males are so rare they're practically unicorns, and as a

horny teenager, I'd been all about tits and ass. Even when my designation hit me like a freight train, I still wasn't interested in dick. In fact, the first guy who tried to feel me up nearly lost his, my anger tipping me into an omega heat. And then I was so pissed off for so long, sex became a kind of trigger: touch my dick and I'll lose my shit.

It didn't help that Hila's son and his friends were scorching hot and thought I was a freak who didn't know his place. Humiliation was already my daily state of mind; they just made it worse by swaggering around and trying to make me feel small. But the first time Rory kissed me, I discovered that dick had some potential. Link might have been my first alpha fuck, but this cock in front of me was the very first in my mouth. And instead of patting me on the head and walking away, Rory had returned the favor so well, I was walking on air for a week.

"I love this," I tell him, licking a stripe up his straining shaft. "I love how much you want to be in my mouth. How you look at me like being down on my knees is some kind of gift."

"It is. And I do. I always want to be inside you, Kelly."

I grunt, also loving the way he digs his fingers into my chin. He's been so careful around me I can't help but feel fragile, but there's nothing gentle about the need in his eyes as he rocks against my lips. The only thing holding me back is the tinge of sorrow I can feel in our bond. We're not exactly synced yet, but he's there, just like Link. Two shadows on my soul that slip away if I try to pin them down too hard. "Are you thinking of me or Angel right now?"

He just shakes his head, his hands sliding to cup my face.  
“Sunshine...”

“There’s no wrong answer, you know. I don’t feel replaced, if that’s what you’re worried about.”

“I’m not. In fact, it’s the opposite. You’re the most irreplaceable person in our pack, cos if anyone can unfuck the mess we made, it’s you.” Instead of pushing me back onto his cock, he grabs me under the arms and pulls me to my feet. I shoot him a curious look; Rory is not the kind of guy to turn down a blowjob, so I know this must be serious. But then he pulls me into a tight hug. “I missed you, Sunshine. And everything that happened while you were gone, that’s separate from us. From how I feel about you. I was fucking wrecked when we couldn’t find you. And those girls I screwed, that was just for information so we could get you back...” His mouth presses against my bite mark, but instead of sinking his teeth in again, he gives it the gentlest kiss. “Elvi was different. She wasn’t just part of the mission for me. But don’t ever say I’m thinking about someone else when I’m with you, Kelly.”

I give him a stilted nod, because I’m kind of choked up right now. “Then be with me. Tonight, after dinner.”

He pulls back to look into my eyes. “Really? What about the others...?”

“Like you said, we’re a separate thing. I can hate what you guys did to Angel, but I love you. And what I can feel down our bond... you’re a good person, Rory. You just cock things up now and then.”

He can’t really deny that, so we sort out our clothes and head down to dinner. I’m relieved to find Angel and Arben



already there, sitting with our host at a long table in the dining room. It's beautiful, like the rest of the house, but I barely take in the gleaming tableware and flickering candles because my eyes latch straight on Angel. We've only been apart a couple of hours, but my heart lifts as soon as she smiles my way. She's wearing a silver slip dress with tiny straps, and it looks like she's been kissed by moonlight. From the strangled sound behind me, I'm pretty sure Rory's semi has blown out to a permi. "Yummy," I murmur over my shoulder at him, then let myself take in the two other men in the room.

Arben still looks like a hellishly hot assassin in his black suit, but I can see the man behind the monster now. His eyes might be devil-dark, but they move appreciatively over us, and I smirk as he checks out Rory's groin. Yep, if I have an ally in getting our two packs to gel, it's him. He might be a possessive, bossy bastard, but the omega in me knows this alpha wants our asses. And more importantly, Arben Marku knows Angel wants us too, and there's nothing he will ever deny his mate.

But I put all thoughts of pornographic puppy piles out of my mind as I face our host. Lucas Ferrier is even more of an enigma to me than Arben Marku. We've had a few short conversations since I arrived, with him checking in to make sure I'm healing and to reassure me I'm safe in his home. But he even went so far as to apologize for not finding me sooner, and that left me a little rattled. I get that he has his own agenda with omegas, but his set-up here goes against everything I know about alphas strong enough to hold key territories. They don't help omegas; they command them. And they don't invite strange alphas into their homes unless they plan to use them.

“Thank you for taking the time to dine with me. I hope you’re all enjoying the house.”

My childhood manners kick in and I respond with something appropriate while Rory pulls out my chair. No one misses the move, and my hair is slicked back enough for Ferrier to see the bite mark on my throat, but he doesn’t comment. It’s probably old news, since I doubt there’s much that goes on in his territory that he doesn’t know.

“I don’t plan to waffle on too much during dinner, but I do want to update you on a few things,” he says as soon as we’re settled and drinks have been poured by his efficient staff. “Firstly, Michael Crouch is no longer the Alpha of Hartford, or any other territory, since his death somewhere between 24 to 48 hours ago. Any attempts to retrieve you, Kellman, or retaliation against other events of the Fall Ball, died with him. His pack is splintered and on the run, and requests for sanctuary in my territories have been denied. They are done.”

Rory breathes a sigh of relief at my side, but my shocked gaze slides to Arben. “Did you...?”

He shakes his head. “I was fighting on Crouch’s side at the Fall Ball, in defense of his territory against a coup from within his own pack. Or that’s the story that’s been relayed to Roan Bisha while he’s in London.”

It’s not exactly a denial then, since Arben seems to still be playing the double agent within the Head Alpha’s organization. But my attention has moved to Angel, whose hand is now tucked inside her mate’s, her shoulders losing some of the strain I didn’t realize she’d been carrying. Because Roan Bisha – her fake father – is still a long way away, and

ignorant of what her real father and his allies are doing behind his back.

“Okay, well thanks,” I tell the table, jumping a little as Rory’s hand comes to rest on my thigh. My dick takes notice, but it’s a reassuring touch, so I just let it ground me while I think through Ferrier’s news. That basement is still so fresh I can smell it, but knowing my tormentor is gone definitely helps. “I’d have liked to put a claw in Crouch myself, but I’m glad he can’t hurt any other omegas.”

Ferrier gives an approving nod. “We still may round up a couple of his lieutenants. They’re in hiding, for obvious reasons, but I have my hounds on their trail.” His golden eyes glow with something that would be terrifying if they were chasing you in the dark. “I promise to keep you informed.”

I just reach for my wineglass to take a hefty gulp and he goes on, “The second bit of business you may prefer to discuss privately, but it has to do with the tracking devices that exist under the skin at the back of your necks.” He doesn’t try to hide the emotions that wash across his face – sorrow, guilt, anger, and disgust – but he clears his throat and asks me, “Are you aware of its existence, Kellman?”

“Yeah. I don’t remember it going in, but my dad had me doped up a lot of the time after I first presented. But Crouch told me about it when he first bought me. Said it can track me anywhere on the planet, and if I try to cut it out, it’ll release a toxic chemical into my bloodstream. That close to my brain, I’d be done in under a minute.”

Rory’s hand squeezes mine so tight his knuckles crack and a growl rattles in his chest, but Arben sits forward, his eyes as

bright as a raptor. “That’s a lie. It’s harmless. It can be removed at any time.”

“And the tracking bullshit?” Rory demands. “Link told me about that. He said it’s connected to a database that lets Bisha and other assholes keep tabs on every omega.”

“It does exist,” Arben says quietly, “but it’s now in my control. I have people who monitor those who access it, and we are keeping tabs on them.”

Rory sucks in a furious breath. “So, you knew where Kelly was all this time?”

“Of course not.” He doesn’t brush Rory off, holding his gaze so he can see his sincerity. “I only identified the administrator recently, but once he handed me control of the database, I was able to work with the Underground to crack his encryption. Not every omega is in the database – only high-value ones, from what we’ve determined – and not all the tracking devices are activated. Kelly was still marked as a ward of Bisha himself and located in the Tower.”

I shudder at the idea. The basement was a living nightmare, but there’s something about Angel’s fake father that makes my skin crawl. He always looked at me like I was something precious, but not in a good way. More as if he was wondering how much a pound of my flesh would get him on the open market. I’d be happy if he stayed out of the country forever, but that’s naïve. He has the most valuable territory in the country and is greedy for more. Whatever he’s up to in Europe, it has to be to cement his iron grip on the East Coast.

“He’ll be back within three days,” Arben says in his quiet, calm way, but his gaze is now on Angel. “What would you

like to do?”

Her hand has gone to the back of her neck, and I know she’s squirming at the thought of something alien under her skin. If ever there was a symbol of alpha power abuse, it has to be this. But she just sighs and shrugs. “If you control the database, I guess it doesn’t matter when it comes out.”

“I’ll organize to have my personal physician come out next week,” Ferrier says. “You can talk to her and find out your options.”

“And it really can’t hurt him?” Angel is now looking across the table at me. “You sure his dad didn’t give him a tracker with something harmful in it?”

I smile at the fact she’s worried about *me*, when my asshole dad is dead and buried and her fake, psychotic one is only days away from returning. “I promise, princeshë,” he tells her, then says something in their own language that makes her blush. Her eyes flit my way and I’d kill to know what he said, but the next course is coming out and Arben says, “But Roan has contacted me. He wants Elvana’s townhouse to be packed up and cleared out. I’ve told him I’ll take care of it.”

I bite my lip, but it’s Rory who’s on his feet. He’s halfway round the table to her before he jerks to a stop. He doesn’t seem to care that Ferrier and Arben are watching him with matching smiles; he only has eyes for Angel. “I’m sorry,” he says, his hand gripping the back of the empty chair so hard the wood creaks. “I just... that’s your mom’s place, little wolf. It has to hurt.”

Something softens in her face, and I know she can feel the same thing I can through my bond. He’s hurting for her. And

he's so damn sorry there's another thing in her life that's causing her pain. "It's okay," she says softly, but reaches out to brush his knuckles. "Arben and I talked it through. We'll go first thing in the morning and pack up the things I want to keep before the moving company comes through."

"There's plenty of room to store them here," Ferrier tells her, although I'm guessing if he had his way, he'd burn her packing boxes and nail her things to his marble floors.

"Okay," Rory tells her, shuffling his feet so much it makes my heart clench. Awkward Rory is adorable. "But if you want us to come and help..."

"Thanks, but we've got this. And I want to spend some time in my mom's room."

He drops his eyes, his awkwardness now lashed by self-disgust. "Shit. We've still got some things of yours. Your camera and phone. Your gun, too, if I can pry it away from Link..." He winces and clears his throat. "I'll give Cam a call and get him to bring them here."

She makes a low sound, then pinches her lips together, and I want to bang my head on the table. How exactly did my pack fuck things up so badly in a few short weeks? "Um, maybe he could just drop them to my place tomorrow? We'll be packing anyway, and it'll be easier for him to go into the city than to come all the way out here."

Rory clearly doesn't know how to interpret that, but gives another nod and heads back to his seat. The bond feels both tight and unsteady for a moment, like his emotions can't settle, but then he gives me a smile and the conversation turns to other things. The food is amazing - even if the chef is French -

but I barely taste it. Cam would be pleased at all the calories going into my body, since there's a noticeable lack of cream and butter in the dishes, but it could be made of cardboard for all the notice I take.

Crouch is dead. Angel is pulling up her roots in the city. No one can track me in a few days' time. I'm free, but my family is still fractured. Link isn't answering his phone and Cam is probably back at their lake house, telling himself everything is fine and his shit is locked down tight. How the hell do I get all those moving parts to come together into a steamy, rock-solid whole?

"Speak of the devil," Rory mutters at my side, and I realize he's looking at his cell. "Cam," he says, tilting the screen so I can read the message. My heart jumps, and a plan quickly starts to take shape. He's watching my face, and he cocks his head, intrigued. "What are you thinking, Sunshine?"

"We need a bonding experience," I tell him, although I'm really just working through the logistics in my mind. "Somewhere none of us can hide."

"Oh, yeah?" There's enough heat in his voice to make me roll my eyes. "I'm all in, especially if there's going to be a show."

"Oh, you'll be doing more than watching," I warn him. "But that comes later. Cam *has* to get in touch with Link. Will you push him, make sure he knows it's important?"

"Okay, I know he's trying..."

"Tell him to try harder."

We both look up as Ferrier says something about dessert, and I realize the whole meal has flown by. But as Arben gets up with his cell in hand, clearly heading out of the room to make a call, I follow. My heart does a little pit-a-pat as he turns to watch me approach, and I suddenly feel like he can see right under my skin. *Get used to it, Kelly.*

I lay out my plan, my voice speeding up the more interested he looks. I fold my arms, pulling on a little bravado so he can't see my nerves. "I can do it. But I need you to be okay with the idea."

"You going to talk to our girl about this, or just spring it on her?"

My skin prickles at the 'our girl' bit, but I know better than to call the shots on this one. "Up to you."

He smiles, and it's got a devilish edge. "She says she doesn't like to be watched... But I think it's growing on her. You could be the thing to nudge her over the edge, so to speak."

"Plus you and Rory," I add, because if bonding a pack was just up to omegas, we'd all be fucking twenty-four seven. "You good with that, too?"

He just smirks. "I'll have a front-row seat."

Right. Great.

*That's exactly what you want, Kelly, and you can tell your heart to stop fluttering around like a trapped bird because he's really just doing this for his girl, after all.*

But before I head back to the table, I ask, "What did you say to her when she asked if my tracker would hurt me? You



said something in your own language that made her blush.”

A low, dark chuckle rolls out of him. “That’s simple, *princi*. I said, *do you think I would risk our beautiful boy like that?*” He steps closer and brushes his massive knuckles over my throat, pressing into the patch of skin that mirrors Rory’s bite mark on the other side. “If you’re still wondering, the answer is a very firm no.”



## Arben

We decide to head back to New York straight after dinner. The disappointment I see in the little prince's eyes is amusing, but no one argues when I tell them I want to get in and out of the city before Roan returns. Elvana needs to be safely back on Ferrier land before his plane touches down, and he's been cagey about when exactly that will be. I get the sense he's waiting on whatever business took him to London; another thing he hasn't chosen to share with me. I'd be suspicious if he wasn't such a paranoid bastard. But it's also why I'm still not certain if we will go through with our prince's plan for tomorrow night.

Although the thought of it kept me hard as nails all the way through Chef Ricard's exquisite coconut cherry gâteaux.

Elvana falls asleep on the drive there, and after checking the surrounding streets for any threats, I carry her inside. She doesn't even stir when I place her on her nest, which convinces me she's been getting as little sleep as I have. Her much talked about puppy piles have been torture on everyone except our prince. He sacks out as soon as his head hits the pillow. Princesshë tosses and turns in her sleep, her fingers reaching past him for something in the dark. And while I lie at her back – or sit in the chair at the end of the bed, watching, waiting – the focus of her torment stares back at me with exhausted silver eyes.

To give him his due, Rory doesn't move a muscle. With his wolf so close to the surface, and his new mate only inches from his fangs, it can only be the worst kind of struggle. Every day since I sank my own claim into Elvana, I've had wild waking dreams of hunting her through the woods, tearing her little floaty dresses off with my teeth, and sinking my cock into every quivering, slick-covered hole. It's the *ëndrra e bishës*. The Beast's Dream. When my wolf is so stirred by our mate, his lust bleeds into my waking thoughts.

Her exhaustion may also be due to the three hours before dinner when we reacquainted every surface of our cabin with her perfectly perfumed slick. The beast must be fed. And he drank of her sweetness until even he grew soft and sated.

But there is no rest for me, not with her enemies still walking this world. After putting her to bed, I triple check the house's security, then spend the night going through new messages, checking in with my contacts in the field, and using her father's extensive finances to undermine the Head Alpha's position in any way I can.

That included knocking Michael Crouch off his dirty little throne and burning him to ash. There was no burial for him on his territorial lands; the guys I hired tore him to pieces and left his head propped on his pillow for Bisha's spies to find.

I know the loss won't mean much to Roan. He's a master at shoring up his weaknesses and acquiring new, equally corrupt, allies. But it was worth it to hear Crouch's confession, his begging and sniveling before my team of indifferent executioners, and to know we have new information on missing omegas. Crouch was lodged deep inside that network

of abusers and defilers, and all he knew is now in the hands of the Underground. But the real reward was the look on our prince's face when he heard his tormenter could never touch him again.

Piece by piece, body by body, I will make this world a haven for my omegas.

But there are some hurts I cannot protect them from. I feel it with Elvana's first waking breath, when she inhales the scents around her and realizes where she is and what she must do today. I'd considered packing up her home for her, but too much has happened under this roof not to give her the chance for closure. It will make her cry, it will cut her soul, but I hope when we leave this place, she will be able to remember it for what it is. Bricks and mortar, and not a cage for her memories.

I cook her a breakfast to make her smile – curling, crackling slices of bacon and thick, Turkish coffee – then pack what she points at and label the things she wants to leave behind. She works quickly, with only a few tears and sighs, until we reach her mother's room. It's already agreed we will take everything in her own bedroom and move it to the Ferrier Estate, but there's nothing of her mother left in the stark, clinical space. It smells of a wolf in deathly decline, and I feel my usual wave of frustrated admiration when I think of Dori Ferrier. For while she lived by Bisha's name, she was never more than a spoil of war to him. A living, breathing reminder that he was the biggest predator in the pack.

“I don't get it,” Elvana says as she stands at the foot of her mother's hospital bed. The room is the opposite of an omega's haven, all sharp surfaces and antiseptic scents. She's quickly

cleared the few things she wants to keep, and is now staring out the small window at the gray morning. “Why did she stay? If she had Ferrier, and he really loved her, why didn’t she just run away with him?”

I don’t answer, because it will only cause her more pain. No matter what I told Dori – or the many messages I passed to her from Lucas once his father passed – she never believed her daughter would survive Bisha’s wrath. Not because he loved her, or wanted her for himself, but because she was valuable. As a symbol. As property to one day trade.

“Fucking fathers,” she mutters under her breath, staring down at the small, stripped bed. “She never had a chance, did she?”

I can’t bear the tears trickling down her already swollen cheeks. All I can give her are my arms and the comfort of my purr. But it feels so little against the deep well of her grief, and my chest throbs as she lets me guide her out of her mother’s soulless room and back to her own nest. “We’ve done enough,” I tell her, lowering her onto her messy pile of blankets. I can’t look at them without thinking of the day I found her bloody and broken on the living room floor. I stole one of those green blankets, the color of old forest moss, as a selfish reminder of the girl who I couldn’t – shouldn’t – ever touch again. But I gave it back to her during her second heat, when I also handed over my heart and soul.

“Thank you, Arben,” she whispers, her fingers tracing the line of my mouth. “You’re always coming to my rescue.”

“You rescued me a long time ago, princeshë. Now we simply hold each other up.”

“I like that,” she murmurs, already half asleep. “But sometimes I wonder... what happens if one of us falls?”

I pull away from her as she drifts off, although it hurts that she takes her uncertainty into her dreams. The answer, of course, is simple. If she falls, then so does the world, quickly followed by myself. And if I fall, she will be picked up by others. Served by the pack she deserves.

I watch her for a while – until afternoon shadows fade into dusk - then text Cam, and he says he’ll meet me at the townhouse in ten minutes. Which means he’s either lurking around the corner, or plans to break the land speed record to get here. I open the door before he can ring the bell and usher him as far as the small foyer. I don’t want him out in the street, but he hasn’t earned the right to cross the threshold yet.

“You have it?” He looks almost as bad as he did at Ferrier’s. His tanned skin still has a gray tint, and I can tell he’s favoring his good leg. But it’s the lost look in his eyes that makes me frown. “You look weak, wolfling.”

“Thanks,” he mutters, but his gaze drifts past me to the hall. And that lost look only deepens as he no doubt scents the grief-soaked rooms beyond. “Is she okay?”

“No.” I hold out a hand for her duffel bag and he lets it go with obvious reluctance.

“Everything’s there, including her mom’s urn. I wasn’t sure if she wanted me to take it to Ferrier’s...”

“Here is good,” I tell him, then narrow my eyes. “Weak wolves can’t serve, soldier. Do you understand what I’m telling you?”

A faint smile touches his mouth, but it doesn't reach his pale eyes. "You just might be the best head-twister out there, Marku."

Perhaps he expects me to strike him, but when I lift my hand, it's only to caress the line of his throat. He might dress like a beach boy, but the soldier still lurks close to the surface. It's in his blood to protect and heal, but his real strength is his mind. I need him sharp. Cunning. Manipulating his way back into my mate's good graces.

"Then listen closely." I caress his pulse, letting him remember how it felt to have my cock straining these muscles. He wasn't as enthusiastic as Rory, but he was intense, and that appealed to the beast in me. I let some of that show in my eyes as I watch him scent my arousal. "You belong with us, Cameron."

He swallows, his throat bobbing under my touch. "She can't forgive me."

"If you've taken something from her, give it back. With interest."

He stares at me, then steps in closer, not touching me back until he is pressing his mouth to my neck. He's the only one tall enough to do it with ease, and I like that as much as I like the feel of his lips. The wolf in him probably wants to nip, but he doesn't try to mark me, and I take it for what it is. Gratitude. Surrender. And perhaps a promise. For a moment he leans his cheek against mine, then retreats. "Okay. I'll think of something. But is there anything I can do right now?"

I smirk. A shortcut might be to simply lead him upstairs and into her nest, but I respect them both too much for that.



“You can follow the instructions you’ve been given for this evening and don’t be late.”

His brow furrows, and he shoves his hands into his pockets. “Yeah, I’ll be there, and I’ll try to get Link to play along...”

“Don’t *try*, wolfling. Bend him to your will, or he really will be left behind.”

He steps away, but not before I can see the cogs turning in his head. The threat is clear: Lincoln Hila will be there, or I will hunt him down myself.



“*You lying, sneaky assholes,*” Elvana hisses as the driver pulls up outside the VIP entrance to The Looking Glass. It’s a restored theater in midtown, and while it still has the graceful curves of the old art deco façade, the inside is now devoted to a different kind of dance. Her outraged eyes swing over all of us. “You said we were going out for ice cream! If I’d known we were coming here, I would have worn something different. Like a freaking hood!”

“You don’t need to worry about that,” our prince assures her. He and Rory met us at the townhouse so we could all travel together, and while Rory is in a suit, the omegas are both in casual attire. “My friend is one of the dancers. She’s got a whole costume department we can use.”

“Use?” Unease is creeping over her, souring her scent. “What does that mean?”

“It doesn’t have to mean anything,” Kelly goes on, like he hasn’t been planning this for twenty-four hours. “We can dress up and look pretty. Or we can just hang back and watch the show from the wings.”

“Oh, yeah?” She turns and arches a brow in my direction, a clear challenge in her eyes. “So why you look like sex on a stick, my love? Am I supposed to get down on my knees and worship my alpha in the middle of the audience?”

“Is that what you want to do, little wolf?” Rory asks before I can respond, and a tense silence fills the car. I’m not sure how many words have passed between them in the last few days, but it can’t be many. Doesn’t stop them from eating each other up with their eyes whenever they think they’re not being watched. But instead of backing down, the wolfling leans across the seat and pins her with his electric gaze. “Your mate looks a little like that guy you picked out last time we were here. Remember him? He didn’t quite fill out his suit the same way, but he was big and handsome, and the blonde on her knees seemed to think his cock was something special.”

I smirk at the emotions flitting across Elvana’s face. There’s annoyance, unease, but mostly lust, and we all watch as she licks her lips. But the longer she stares at Rory’s face, the more conflicted she feels through the bond, and I know she’s perfectly balanced on the edge of wanting to kiss or slap him. But when she finally breaks their heated stare, she says dismissively, “He couldn’t be that amazing, because I barely remember him. Or maybe I’ve just blocked the whole thing out.” Her eyes gleam with snark. “For some reason, my memory isn’t what it used to be.”

Her verbal blow hits its mark and Rory turns his face to the window, his shoulders slumping. The prince sends me a worried glance, as if he can see his plan unraveling before we've even got in the door, but he can't read my mate like I can. I can feel everything she's feeling through the bond, and she's not as unaffected as she'd like to appear. It might take a while for the wound of betrayal to truly heal, but her desire to both kiss and slap comes from the same place.

*One day, my princeshë, I'd like the whole world to see me down on my knees before you. I'd kiss my way up your perfect thighs, then prop them on my shoulders, and nibble at your needy clit until you gush all over my face.*

“Arben!” she huffs, but her perfume now hangs heavily in the air. As if to dispel it, she throws the door open, catching the driver unawares, and leaps out onto the pavement. Rory scrambles after her like they're connected by an invisible thread, but the prince gives me a hooded look, his cheeks perfectly flushed. “Were you just sexing up the bondlink?”

“Simply getting the evening back on track,” I reply with a wink.

Rory and I sign our omegas in as guests, then Kelly takes over, leading us to a backstage entrance and asking a stage hand for Chloe Quentin. It's the new identity Tasha Kuzmin has been living under since she was put under the protection of the Underground. She's now one of the star performers of the theater, and a rarity, being an omega, so she's also under heavy security. Elvi and Kelly are free to go backstage, but alphas have to wait in a small lounge. I spend the time watching Rory, who is pacing more than an omega in heat.

“Can you feel her right now?” he asks me, rubbing a hand over his hair. “Does your bond work that way?”

“Oh, yes. I can feel her.” I cock a brow at him. “She’s looking at your mate like he’s a precious jewel about to be hung between her perfect breasts.”

Rory rolls his eyes at me, then kicks the wall behind him. “For an assassin, you’ve got a pretty smooth tongue.”

“Don’t be jealous,” I purr. “Your tongue is more than adequate. And you did quite well back there in the car. You painted a very interesting picture in our little wolf’s mind.”

He grins at me, but the mood changes abruptly as the door to the lounge flies open and Tasha Kuzmin struts towards us with the grace of a natural dancer. She’s dressed in a silk robe over sheer tights and is beautiful, but our gazes go straight to our mates.

And I hear Rory suck in a painful breath. I can’t blame him, since they’re both dressed in sheer scraps of nothing, Kelly’s chest painted white and Elvi’s hair sprayed with a silver mist. Instead of smothering their beauty, the pale canvas makes their eyes glow, the princes’ hair a living flame. “Holy shit,” he mutters. “Fucking angels.”

But as they enter the waiting room, they’re clinging to each other and it isn’t a passionate embrace. Elvi looks frightened out of her mind and the bond is foggy with panic.

“I think I’ve convinced them to take my spot,” Tasha tells us, her eyes sparkling despite the tension behind her. “It’s a short duet right at the beginning, but they can do whatever they want. The way they look – not to mention how they move

around each other – will probably do me out of my job, but I can't resist. The world needs to see omegas like this.”

My beast purrs at her assessment, but Elvana looks like a deer caught in the headlights. “Hold on a minute! I haven't agreed. We're probably just going to watch you from the wings.”

Tasha makes a dismissive sound. “Kelly can dance. I saw his moves in the Tower.” Her eyes flick over Elvana. “And you're both so damn *omega* you won't have to do much more than twirl under the lights. They'll be begging for an encore.”

The dancer leans over and gives Kelly a soft kiss on the mouth, making our princess twitch. “Now, I'm going to go and relax for a change, and watch the show.” She gives them a sly wink. “Break a few hearts out there, okay?”

With an amused glance in our direction, she heads backstage and I check in with our mate. Elvana's hard to read through the bond, but I'm pretty sure smoke is coming out of her ears. And then our little princess is on her prince in a flash. “What the hell have you gotten us into, Kelly?”



# Link

I'm barely through the front door before Cam has me shoved up against the wall, his arm rammed against my throat. "Where the fuck have you been?"

As much as I don't like being ambushed in my own hallway, it's a fair question. Not only have I been dodging his calls, but I've been in wolf form for more hours than I care to count. Meals have been whatever I've been about to catch on the run, and I didn't exactly clean up afterwards. I stink of old blood, dirt, musk, and despair. I'm surprised he can get this close to me without puking.

"Looking for him," I manage to get out around the pressure on my throat. My voice sounds rusty as hell and he eases back, but it doesn't help much. Hours of howling will fuck up your vocal cords, even in wolf form. "He said pine needles. I've been checking them."

"What? Every pine tree on the East Coast?" He takes a step back, looking both sad and irritated. "That's not a fucking plan, Link."

"I know." I'd snap back at him if I had the energy. "But I can't trust myself anymore. I fucked up with the database. He was so close, and I lost him. I have to let my wolf do it now."

"You've been in wolf form?" Cam wrinkles his nose, like my stench is just hitting him. "Shit, Link. You're half-feral, you know that?"

I laugh. It's raspy and raw and hurts like hell. It also starts to spiral into a howl, but I swallow and manage to keep my wolf at bay. By the skin of my teeth, which in my case is a real thing. "I've got blood under my nails that's definitely not rabbit, bro. And there are patches of the last few days that are only moonlight and meat. Is that feral enough for you?"

Cam frowns, but I don't think he's pissed at me. Maybe he just pities me too much to hate me right now, but that will pass. I lost our omega and fucked up our pack, after all. That's a memory that will stick around.

"Okay," he says, gripping my shoulders like he's about to waste his breath on a pep talk. "Listen to me, alright? I have a plan. But you're gonna have to put your fucking beast back in its box for a couple hours. Can you do that?" I just stare at him, and I'm pretty sure my eyes are pure silver, because he sighs. "Three things. Shower. Shave. Put on a suit. That's all I'm asking."

My wolf instantly pushes against my skin, trying to break his hold. "I don't have time..."

"And I'm telling you, I have a legitimate lead. On *Kelly*, man. But I'm only sharing it with Human Link. The corpse-cold asshole who we put in charge of logistics because his shit is always tight." He pokes me in the chest, hard enough to bruise. "Is he still in there, or are you only good for the cage in the basement?"

Guilt and regret washes over me at that reminder, and I have to bite back another howl. Fuck, he's right. I'm so close to becoming rabid, I can feel my mind hanging on by a thread. But he said the magic words. *Kelly. Lead.* I'll do just about



anything to hold on to those. “You promise? This isn’t just a trick to stop me eating park rangers?”

He jerks, then gives a sharp bark. “Fuck, that’s funny, even though I know you’re not kidding. But Feral Link is staying home tonight. So, get your ass into the shower, and brush those park rangers out of your fangs. They reek.”

I go, because even I can’t take my stench anymore. But I’m still moving like a wolf, and that’s not so great for shaving, so Cam eventually pushes his way into my bathroom and shoves me up against the vanity. I want to stand on my own feet... but well, they’re kind of off-balance since I went from four to two. “You’re a fucking mess,” he grumbles as he lathers me up. “How much weight have you lost? I can feel your bones, bro, and these cheekbones are sharp enough to cut.”

I smirk at him, since my cheekbones are hot. Kelly told me so. But that reminder wipes the smile off my face and when I try to jerk away, he nicks my throat with the razor. My blood smells like gunmetal and old meat, and I feel my wolf twist under my skin. A feral wolf gives into his anger, but a rabid one is lost to it. For a moment, I teeter on that edge of no return.

But Cam hauls me back, grabbing me by the shoulder and shoving a washcloth against the wound. “Jesus. Hold still, asshole. You want to cut your throat, leave me out of it.”

I glare back at him in the mirror, but the silver in my eyes is a good wake-up call. Even though I always thought a bullet would take me out, I’m not so sure my wolf would fight him if he sliced a little deeper. Neither of us want to go rabid.

“Sorry.” I swallow and force myself to hold still. “I think my wolf ate something bad. It’s been hard to keep stuff down, and I guess the weight has fallen off.”

“That’s guilt, bro, but you need to suck it up tonight.” He finishes shaving me and cups my shorn cheeks, which look pale and hollow in the stark light. “You need to own your shit. Apologize.”

I prickle. “I just did.”

He sighs and presses a kiss to my damp cheek. It’s weird; Cam and I aren’t like that. We don’t fuck, and to be honest, we barely touch unless it’s in the gym or because Kelly is around. But even those moments were too rare to make this feel familiar. I shove him with my elbow. “What are you doing, man?”

But he just does it again, this time lingering on my skin. I can feel his big hands cupping my throat, and it’s even weirder. Cam doesn’t do gentle. He likes to think he’s got a great bedside manner, but an inch under his skin, he’s a fucking fighter like the rest of us.

Doesn’t stop him trying to mind-twist me, though. “You need us, Lincoln. Not just Kelly. You need a pack, or you’re gonna go lone wolf.”

I decide to turn the tables on him and grab his ass, pulling him hard against me until we’re rubbing together. “If I have to fuck your ass to prove I’m pack, I will, Cameron. Just bend over and stop squawking at me, okay?”

I expect him to punch me in the gut, but he just looks down at me with his strange pale eyes. Serial killer eyes, I used to

tell him as a kid, especially when they get that silver wolf ring around them. Only he leans in and whispers, “I’m a top, bro.”

I’m a bit embarrassed by the way I choke out, “You wish.”

But he just leans in until he’s so close to my ear, I wonder if he can hear the blood pumping in my skull. “Well, most of the time, I am. Sometimes it’s nice to have a bigger, harder guy take care of you. But you and me don’t have to do that. We just need to have each other’s backs, okay?” He pulls away and flicks a hand at my closet. “Find a nice suit. And hide your guns. We’re not fighting tonight.”

That’s all he’ll give me until we’re driving through familiar city streets and I shoot him a glare. “You brought me here of all fucking places? What don’t you get about triggering a feral state, asshole?”

He ignores me, pulling into the parking lot under an office building that’s permanently up for lease. It provides discreet parking for The Looking Glass, the business directly across the street. But when he turns off the engine, I just stare at him and he sighs. “Rory told us to meet him here and we’re doing it. This isn’t just about you, okay? And you fucking owe us, Link.”

He’s full of good points tonight. But I haven’t seen Rory since he flipped me off at the lake house, right after stopping Cam’s wolf from tearing out my throat. Five minutes after shaking off his drug coma, he issues a command strong enough to paralyze us both. Not that I’d even felt it, since I was still shaking off whatever crap Arben Marku’s goon stuck me with. But none of that hit me as hard as the fact I’d screwed over my brothers, and it had all been for nothing.

Yeah, I owe them. But the part I haven't even told them - that I can barely admit to myself - is that I didn't just screw up with Elvana Bisha.

Because my mate - our brother - has got another claiming bite. I don't know if he wanted it, or it was forced on him, but he's not just ours anymore.

And I'll never forgive myself for that.



We enter The Looking Glass through the VIP entrance. There's a stunning beta on the desk to check us in, though she's mostly there for eye candy and to remind us we pay a lot for the privilege of membership. But tonight she takes one look at my face and melts into the background. Although, it could just be she remembers my dad. He was a founding patron of the place and liked to fuck anything that moved.

No one else bothers us as we walk to our booth down a dimly lit corridor. Every step pisses me off more, reminding me of the times we snuck in here as teenagers to watch the live porn show. Even after my old man was dead and buried, I'd claimed we were here under his membership, and Rory had fucked whatever coat-check girl dared to challenge us. It was just the beginning of the orgy we held in my dad's old booth. We had our hands on enough funds from our dead fathers to buy plenty of drinks and drugs, and the coat-check girl often brought a couple of friends along to party.

But this was also the first place I fucked Kelly. Not in the booth, but in a shadowy corner on the way down to the main seating area. That was a free-for-all every night, so it's not like it raised any eyebrows. We'd been daring each other to go put on a show, and Kelly just looked at me with a half-sneer and a twinkle in his whiskey eyes. I was so gone on him, I bent him over the railing before we even got there and blew my load in under a minute. Of course, like everything with Kelly, I'd instantly felt like a shithead. No prep. No romance. Not even a goddamn view as I railed into him with my unimpressive dick. But I was Hila's son and an asshole, so what did he expect?

My chest hurts as we reach the door to our booth. "I'm really not in the mood to watch assholes get blowjobs tonight."

Cam ignores me and goes inside. The booth is clearly empty, but he doesn't seem concerned. "Sit down, Link. Rory said he'd meet us here."

"When?" I'm close enough to the glass wall to see the audience warming up, which basically means zippers are on the way down. "He's fucking with us. Or he's down there fucking some random chick. This is a waste of time."

Cam is on the velvet couch with the champagne bottle in hand like it's any other night, but he looks back over his shoulder at me with a snarl. "Just sit down and have a fucking drink, you miserable asshole."

More truth, but it's physically impossible to make myself sit. The last time I was here with Kelly – about a week before Arben Marku yanked us out of Steiner territory and took us to the Tower – we were alone, and we'd watched the whole show side-by-side, barely touching except for my hand on his throat.

He thought I was just being a dominating prick, but I'd already picked out where I wanted to bite him.

So no, I can't sit down. And I'm sure as shit not going to drink French champagne when it's Kelly's favorite.

This will be a celebration over my dead body.

I'm on the edge of storming out when Cam's cell pings. He reads the message and grunts, then jerks a thumb at the drinks' cabinet. "Get the opera glasses."

"The fucking what?"

"Opera glasses. *Binoculars*, you savage."

I huff and snatch them off the cabinet, tossing them at his head. He gives me a foul look, but then points them down at the audience. I can't help but feel curious. "Who are you looking for? Or are you perving on Rory's microscopic dick?"

"Just shut up."

I think about punching him in the back of his thick neck, but I really am trying to keep Feral Link locked up right now. So, instead, I drift over to the viewing wall and lean my throbbing head against the one-way glass. The lights have dimmed a little, and the first act is out on the stage, but I only give them a passing glance. A guy, a girl, both dressed in white leotards and wolf masks, but nothing that's likely to impress this crowd. I've seen the show so many times I could probably dance it myself, and the audience is here for flashy group sex. They want the tease, the chase, but mostly they just want a lot of energetic fucking. Shifter dancers are built for it, and while the two on the stage look sweet enough, they're not exactly showstoppers...

The breath whooshes out of me so fast I bounce off the glass. “What. The. Fuck!”

“What is it?” Cam is still swinging the fancy binoculars my way as I almost rip his fingers off to grab them. “Jesus, Link!”

But I ignore him, pointing them at the stage. Only my arms are shaking so bad, I can’t focus, and I groan until I catch the glint of silver-streaked hair. I quickly follow it as it flits across the stage and see a perfect dimpled chin. Then golden eyes, bright as a wild cat, staring through the face of a wolf.

“That’s Elvi,” I grind out, my finger slamming into the glass. “Elvana Bisha. And fuck, Cam... I think... I think she’s dancing with *Kelly*.”

“Link...”

Am I crying? I can’t fucking see through the binoculars anymore, so I hurl them aside, barely noticing as they take out the champagne glass I never touched.

Cam is on his feet, so he must be dealing better with the shock than I am. Instead of dropping to his knees, he’s suddenly holding me by the front of my shirt, pulling my fist away from where it’s pounding on the glass. “Calm down, bro!”

I nod, but I know I’m hyperventilating. Not that it matters if I topple over dead. Because Kelly is down there, dancing around the stage with the girl I fucked over for him. And they are *radiant*. That’s the word they use for people doing something they love, isn’t it? Because everything about them is full of joy. There might be some nerves, since they’re

clearly not professionals, but they look like this is the only place they want to be.

And they look fucking beautiful.

I always knew it about Kelly, from the second he rolled up to my dad's compound, spitting and cursing at us all in his plummy golden boy accent. But now I can admit it about Elvana, too. Because they're a perfect pair. He's a leaping flame to her flickering moonlight. Gold to her silver. Both in sheer white that hugs their lean forms, his chest bare and hers almost visible through the thin fabric. I can see the swell of his cock, the points of her nipples, the movement of their ribs as they lean into each other and dance away. They're both too thin, but that just adds to their beauty. They look fragile. Breakable. A temptation begging to be grabbed, those sweet, lithe bodies giving way as you pin them under your weight and bite down on their necks... And then I realize everyone down there sees it, too.

There are two omegas on stage.

No one in the audience is moving. Usually, by this time, there are tits and cocks everywhere, but they're all transfixed. Rows and rows of silent predators. Watching the two perfect omegas like a pair of angels just floated down out of the rafters.

I don't even try to swallow my howl this time.

*Mine. Mine. Mine.*

“For fuck's sake, *wait*, Link!” Cam hauls me tight, trapping me against the glass. “Just check out the front row center. You *cannot* go running down there in this state.”



“Fuck you!” I hiss, trying to heave him off. I can feel my wolf rising up, my claws pushing through my fingers. “That’s my fucking mate!”

I catch the edge of Cam’s pitying stare. “Yeah, but they’re not dancing for you, bro. Do you hear me? Can you push your beast back enough to see the goddamn mountain in the front row?”

I grit my teeth, but look where he points. And I don’t need the fucking binoculars to recognize the bastard.

Arben Marku.

My stomach burns up my throat, and all I can taste is bile. “That’s who they’re dancing for?”

I didn’t think I’d said it aloud until Cam answers me, his voice almost as bleak as I feel. “Well, it’s not fucking us, Link, is it?”



# Elvana

I. Am. An. *Introvert*.

It's hard for any pack animal to really claim that, but at best, I'm a distant observer. A reluctant participant. I watch, I don't *perform*.

And I love fading into the background. The more shadows, the better. Give me all the omega hoods and the scent blockers and then drive me around in a blacked-out van. The spotlight is for pampered omegas who don't get out of bed unless there's a camera pointed at their face and a live feed running.

But right now, I'm dancing on a stage in front of hundreds of strangers. Me. Elvana Bisha. Daughter of the notorious Head Alpha. Although, to most everyone in this city, I'm more of an urban myth than a real person. Infamous, but invisible.

Except I'm not invisible right now.

And instead of an omega hood, I'm wearing nothing more than a mask and a scrap of white material that doesn't need to be wet to be obscene. All the costumes in a theater, and *this* is what Kelly wants me to wear?

As I twirl under the hot spotlights – because that's what the *professional dancer* told me to do – I catch glimpses of the faces in the audience. It's not blacked out like the one school play I remember from middle school. And they're not just ordinary people, but shifters.

*Alpha* shifters. Because they're the only ones rich enough to hold membership, and entitled enough to think people want to see them get their rocks off in public.

The mask, I have to admit, is a nice touch. It's a wolf's snarl, with tufted ears and oversized canines, and a lot more badass than the feathers I wore to the Red Poppy. I doubt anyone would recognize either of us right now. We might scent as omegas, since neither of us have taken blockers, but the way they painted Kelly's skin pure white and covered my hair in silver spray has turned us into something otherworldly. White wolves from some distant northern land.

"Angels," Rory had whispered as we stood in the wings. "Fuck, I'm also too scared to touch you."

"That's why we're dancing together," Kelly had told him, his eyes like dark gems in his pale face. "Tasha always partners with the biggest alpha in the company. It gives the audience the classic hunter story. But that's not us." I'd stared at him, mesmerized by the confidence in his face. "We're not for touching. We're above all that." He'd caught my eye and given me a slow wink. "Well, except with each other."

Which maybe explains why he's stalking me across the stage.

We'd started out with slow, aimless circles. In our frantic backstage prep session, Kelly had told me to just float along with the music and he'd take care of the rest. Yes, I'd taken dance classes in school, and had a reasonable understanding of how to move without looking like a complete idiot, but I wasn't anywhere near professional. When I'd told him so, he'd taken my trembling hands in his, leaning in to kiss my tight

mouth. “They see betas up there pretending to be us, every night of the week. But we’re the real thing.”

“Real omegas maybe, but not real dancers. What if they ask for their money back?”

“Who cares?” Rory had shrugged, which was easy for him to do since his ass wasn’t going to be flitting across the stage. “They won’t. I promise you that. But even if they do, you’ll have danced with Kelly in public and made your mates as horny as hell.” I’d rolled my eyes at that, but he’d captured my chin, his own gaze intense. “Isn’t it good sometimes to be watched for the right reasons, little wolf?”

Which reminded me of all those nights I’d escaped my empty house and wandered the city streets, peering in the windows at other lives. Although, in recent months, it had pretty much been a one-stop tour, since I couldn’t get enough of watching my neighbor Glo and her pack of adoring alphas.

*Yes. I’d like to be looked at like that.*

I’m surprised by how deeply I want it, in fact. Not necessarily in front of hundreds of strangers, but my new confidence isn’t keen to keep hiding in the shadows. A purr builds in my chest, and I realize my wolf is eager to claim her mates and have the whole world envy her good fortune.

And she rears her head again as Kelly dances towards me under a spotlight that kisses his pale skin and turns his hair to flame. He can *dance* – way beyond a couple of years of high-school classes – and I wonder how hard his alpha-loving father tried to beat that out of his son. Stupid asshole, given dancers are some of the most talented, hard-working athletes on the planet, but a bigot is a bigot. And if he hadn’t been so hateful

about his designation, he might have never sent his son to Hila. And then Kelly would've never met his mates, or Arben... or me.

The thought of never having Kelly in my life must play out in my face and body, because a murmur goes through the crowd, and I drop into a protective pose. I blink out at the audience and warmth floods my chest. In the front row is a man with midnight eyes that burn as they watch me.

*There's a reason he called you Angel before he even knew your name, princesshë. You are meant to be together. Two perfect souls who found each other on this undeserving earth. Just look at how you transfix us, my love.*

He's right. It's as if the audience is holding their breath. I know it won't last for long, but right now, all those powerful, horny shifters can't tear their eyes away from us. I'm tempted to look up at the members' booth Rory took me to, but if Cam is up there watching, that's his choice. And this dance is as much for him as any other alpha in the room.

*Rise, my love. Show them what they desire above all things, but can never have.*

I nod, drawing myself up and into Kelly's arms. As if he can hear the bond between us, his flame-bright head tilts towards the front row, and I smile behind my mask. *Because we're yours, Alpha.*

If my steps faltered before, the rush of gratitude and adoration through the bond gives me wings. And then there are Kelly's hands on my waist, lifting and moving me, so I almost float across the stage. As I twirl and bend, I can see strangers in the wings, watching us, but it's Rory face that stands out in

the darkness. And every time I catch his eyes, Kelly's hands become tighter, his lips more insistent as they brush mine. Our kisses were staged before, but now our mouths cling, our lips and tongues begging for more. His arousal fills the air, heightening my own, and our skin grows slick, our breath starting to catch in our lungs.

“Beautiful,” someone murmurs for the crowd.

But another voice calls out, thick with frustration. “I want to see you fuck! Shove that big omega cock in that pretty pink pussy.”

Someone shouts him down, but just as quickly, another voice rises up, hoarse and hungry. “Ten thousand. Twenty! We'll feather your nests in gold if you fuck like you dance.”

Lust-drenched laughter rolls across the audience at that, but then cuts off suddenly. I have my back to the audience, bent over Kelly's arm as his other hand works its way up my torso. “What happened?”

Kelly's eyes glitter down at me. “Arben moved.”

I smirk. He probably just twitched a jaw muscle and all the randy little assholes went into full retreat. But Kelly isn't looking at them, his gaze burning into me.

“I won't fuck you, because they don't get that part of us,” he says, lifting me for a searing kiss that leaves me panting. “But I want your naked skin under my hands, Angel. Can you give that to me?”

Naked? I shudder, still moving as he guides me, but now with some of my old self-consciousness. I know logically that I'm already almost there – the costume leaves little to the

imagination, and even less as it grows damp with our sweat – but I’m tired of being vulnerable. Will I feel like Glo in her window, or will that alpha who offered twenty thousand dollars for the show make me feel dirty and used?

“Will you cover me? With your hands... and your mouth?”

Kelly suddenly rises over me, every muscle straining. His cock is perfectly outlined in his tights, so flushed with need I can see it throbbing under the tight fabric. He looks like some pagan, flame-touched god as he sweeps me up into his arms. “Wrap your legs around my waist,” he tells me, and we both hiss as my slick core slides over his erection. But he steadies me on his hips, his hands going to my shoulders. I know he’s planning to peel me out of my damp leotard, but I shake my head. “Let me do it, Kelly.”

He nods, a dark chuckle rolling out of him as I pop a claw. I smirk, his hands supporting my spine as I lean back and the tips of my hair brush the ground. The world is upside down, but I still manage to catch Arben’s eyes. Everyone else might be transfixed by my claw, but I hold his heated stare as I run it slowly from my neck to my navel. The thin material curls away from my flushed skin, but before I’m exposed, Kelly pulls me back up, his hands folded protectively over my naked spine.

Groans and curses echo through the theater and it’s Kelly’s turn to smirk. He’s taunting them more than teasing them, and I love the dismissive looks he flicks their way from behind his feral mask. I know he has complicated feelings about alphas, but I want to make it very clear to all of them. Other than my mate, there’s no other male - of any designation - who turns



me on like this. So I arch and writhe on his hips, scraping him with my rock-hard nipples while my fingers circle the tip of his straining cock. I don't want to push him over the edge, but I want him to feel adored. And I want every single person in this place to know that as soon as the show is over, I'm fucking my gorgeous omega.

Kelly feeds off my wanton energy, his fingers sliding along the wet seam between my legs, while he bites and sucks at my breasts. Our masks frame out top lips, and the fur and fake fangs add an erotic touch as he scrapes them over my skin. I have no idea how he manages to keep us moving, because I'm drowning in his scent and the hot whirl of the lights. Our hands are everywhere, and I know I'm flashing the audience as often as not, but I'm too focused on Kelly to care. Before I know it, the music is coming to an end, and I can taste the desperation in the air, zippers sliding down and fabric tearing as the wolves start to turn to the flesh at hand.

"Think we got them worked up enough?" he murmurs, and I bite on his lip as Arben floods the bond with need.

"Can you get us somewhere private?"

His eyes dip to mine behind his mask, and then he's cutting the dance short, the calls for an encore ignored as he rushes for the wings. I glimpse the wide-eyed faces of the dancers going on next and am arrogant enough to feel a little sorry for them. They might be the perfect professionals, but raw, seething need is a hard act to follow.

But even if they agree, they're kind enough to applaud us as we stagger off the stage. I'm blushing, but I just press my chest tight to Kelly and hang on as he strides through the

crowd. I wonder how I'm going to last as far as the car, but then a hand touches my back and a deep, familiar voice says, "I've scoped out a room. It's as private as it gets around here."

I don't know if Rory means to cool off or fuck our brains out, but Kelly lets him lead us, and moments later, we're pushing through a forest of black curtains to a small reception room. It's clean, with a pair of facing sofas, and as we strip off our ragged masks, I flash Rory a grateful smile.

"Don't thank me yet, little wolf," he tells me, his jaw so tight it looks painful. "I know you don't want to wait, but I need to suck my mate's mark or I'm gonna lose my mind."

I don't blame him - I may have nibbled it a few times myself - but I can't stop the flash of disappointment that sours the air. Kelly shoots me a concerned look, but then Arben is stalking into the room, his hand already tearing at his tie. "No one waits," he growls. "Especially not our princesshë."

The declaration definitely has baby-in-the-corner vibes, and I squirm out of Kelly's arms and leap at Arben. He has no problem catching me, even though I'm a sweaty, squirming mess, and then his mouth is slamming down on mine. Behind me, I'm vaguely aware of masculine grunts, the thick scent of alpha arousal making my eyes roll in my head. But just as Arben's lips tug at one of my swollen nipples, a pair of firm hands are peeling me off my mate.

"This is our dance," Kelly growls, spinning me back into his arms. "You can watch, but we earned it."

I shiver, my entire body clenching at the command in his voice. He might not be an alpha, but the other men in the room don't argue with him. Instead, they push the couches back

until they flank the facing walls and park their asses on one each. There's no stage, but this is better, because we're all close enough to touch.

"You okay, Angel?" Kelly checks in with me again, but I just smile into his eyes and peel his tights over his hips. Our costumes are little more than ruined scraps by this stage, but I drop to my knees as I roll them down his thighs. I could cut them away with my claw, but this way I get to unwrap him like a gift, my lips chasing my fingers as I bare him for our audience. When his cock springs free, red and aching, the alphas both growl, and a trickle of slick gushes from Kelly's swollen tip. A quick glance confirms that both our guys have their cocks out and are stroking themselves as they watch. My mouth waters, but Kelly is kicking his way out of his tights, and there's a prize closer at hand.

"Can I suck you, Kelly?"

He groans like he's in pain, his hand sweeping across my lips. "I want that so much, but we just kind of announced ourselves to New York's elite. I'm thinking we don't have a lot of time."

"Five minutes," Arben grunts, his eyes sparkling as I shoot him a pout. "Believe me princeshë, a quick fuck is disappointing for us too, but we promise to make up for it when we get home."

I grunt, not sure who he's including in that statement, but Kelly just cocks a haughty brow. "No one's going home disappointed." I'm still grinning at him when he tips me forward onto my hands and barks, "Omega. Present."

Holy shit. Both alphas curse as my tits hit the floor and my ass pops into the air. I don't know if it's me or my wolf, but a needy whine slips out of my throat as Kelly's groin slaps the back of my thighs. He nudges them wider – he now knows first-hand how flexible I am – and plastering his back along my spine, snakes a hand between my legs. His fingers decimate the last scrap of fabric clinging to my core, and then they're sliding through my slick and pinching my clit. I shout in a mixture of surprise and delight, but he just huffs in my ear, "I think I like you better where I can see your face."

I turn my head to look at him, but he's pulling me up against his chest, his hands squeezing my breasts as his cock rams into me from below.

My core clenches around the unexpected angle and I bite down on my lip hard enough to draw blood. "Kelly!" I hiss as he thrusts into me a couple more times, his hot cheek pressed to mine. "You feel so good."

"Hold on, baby," he grunts, and then he's sitting back on his heels and spreading me over his thighs, my back still plastered to his chest. My tired muscles wobble in protest, but it's my pussy that feels the full stretch. He grinds me down on him, his long fingers circling my clit as he stares at my mate. "Disappointed by the view?"

Arben just grunts, Rory dropping into the seat right next to him. There's no way he got tired of staring at Kelly's ass, but his eyes are now glued to the sight of his mate stuffed deep inside me. "Beautiful," he mutters, stroking his own cock so fast I can barely see his hand. My hooded gaze jumps between

him and Arben, and the sight of them pleasuring themselves while staring at us almost overwhelms me.

“I know, Angel,” Kelly whispers as he picks up his own pace. “We’re nearly there. But we’re gonna take our men with us, right?”

I give a furious nod, panting so hard I have to grip his thighs to stop myself from swooning. His hips roll up into me another few times and when I feel him start to swell, his eyes flick to Arben. Sweeping my hair over my shoulder, he nuzzles my neck for a moment, then sinks his teeth right into my claiming mark.

I give a squealing moan, but Arben roars, and I tip my head to watch great ropes of cum splash into his hand. As he collapses back into the couch, Kelly’s cheek slides over mine, and I can feel his grin. But then he tilts his head, exposing his neck. “Now you, baby girl.”

Rory curses, but then my teeth are sinking into his mate’s neck and Arben’s hand comes down onto his pulsing cock. The big fingers tug at the sensitive head, milking his cum, and the helpless groan that tears out of Rory nudges me over the edge. As soon as my walls start to flutter, Kelly tips me forward and pounds me to his release.

I’m not sure if we kept to the five-minute limit, but we’re all breathing like we’ve run the race of our lives.



## Link

Getting backstage is a fucking test of my non-existence patience. I raced out of the booth as soon as Kelly left the stage, Cam scrambling on his half-healed leg to follow. I'd never had reason to try to see a dancer before; every member signs a contract that agrees they're off-limits. People get round it – no doubt like that asshole in the audience who offered twenty grand to get my mate to fuck onstage – but it's always somewhere away from the theater. Which means the security in the hallway leading to the dancers' rooms is too big to tackle, and paid too much to bribe.

Never has my trigger finger itched so badly.

“I need to get back there,” I seethe, staring at the brick wall in front of me. “My omega was just on stage...”

The seven-foot guard gives me a bored look, complete with an eye-roll. “You and the last three members to try that line, sir.” He looks me over, no doubt seeing how close my wolf is to the surface, and thumbs the safety catch on his holster. “Now, stand back or I'll have to get you removed from the building.”

“Wait up!” The only thing stopping me from snatching the gun from my boot and drilling a hole in his forehead is Cam, wincing as he runs up behind me. He shoots me a pissed off look, then holds his hands up, smiling at the guard. “We're here with Arben Marku. He told us to meet him backstage. I'm

a medic and he's security," he nods in my direction. "We both work in the service of his omega."

I blink. Cam is a fucking puppet master, but this bullshit story is a stretch, even for him.

But to my amazement, the guard just gives him a respectful nod. "Alpha Marku said you might be by." He tilts his head, chewing on his cheek while he studies me. "You must be hot shit if you're guarding Dr. Death's property."

I want to tell him to stop stroking his holster and try me out. But Cam is suddenly dragging me past him, up some stairs, and through a metal door marked Staff Only.

"What did you say?" I demand as soon as it clangs shut. "What was that bullshit about Marku?"

He just flicks a glance down the first passageway. "You want to see Kelly or not?"

"I want to know what the hell is going on."

But even I can hear the lie in my words. I want Kelly. Safe, healthy, and in my arms. But I don't want to know whatever deal Cam made to make that happen. Because my brain instantly goes to that other murky presence in our bond. Kelly has never been exactly visible to me. He's a low-level hum, a static I can barely hear but always feel in my chest, as real as my heartbeat. But then there's the new fucker who bit him. I feel that presence like a burn on my soul. Like he's clomping round my house in a pair of steel toe boots.

"Is he with Marku? Did that fucker bite him?"

"Jesus, Link." Cam sounds as tired as I feel, but he stops to check me over. He's in medic mode, making sure I'm not



about to wolf out. “Are you up for this, brother? We can go home, arrange to see him tomorrow...”

“Fuck you.” I push past him, trying to hone in on that static in my heart. But the blood is pumping too loudly in my head, and then there’s the music. Strangled cats sound better than the shit pumping from their speakers, but at least it points me in the right direction. I rub my chest as I cut down another passageway. The place is a freaking maze. How long have we been dicking around, anyway? Is he still even here? My heart rate picks up at that and I start to jog. Instead of another door, there’s enough black material to sail a cruise liner. The curtains, or wings, or whatever they call them, the music now so loud I’m wincing. Startled dancers leap out of my way, but I ignore them. There’s a scent on the air. Sweet and spicy.

And one hundred percent omega.

I feel Cam tug on my arm just as a door pushes open and they come out. Rory and Marku are at the front, still fixing their clothes. But then the omegas come through in a pair of matching white robes. They’re hooded-eyed and flushed, but it’s not just from shaking their asses on stage. No, even a miserable shit like me knows what an afterglow looks like.

But as soon as they catch sight of us, the joy slips off their faces. I sense Elvana stiffening more than see it; everything in me is focused on Kelly. And he looks so good I almost buckle at the knees. Either that phone he bribed off the guard had a shitty filter, or someone has worked some magic, because he looks totally healed. That white shit he wore on stage has melted off and there’s not a bruise or scratch on him that I can see. And in the sheer robe he stands tall and proud, more alpha

than omega with all that hot, rippling muscle on display. When my hungry gaze reaches my bite mark on his chest, I can't stop the strangled groan that forces its way up my throat.

*Kelly. Is. Here.*

Still, I want to scrub at my eyes to make sure it's not a mirage. That he's really standing in front of me, his chin up and his eyes drinking me in. But when I take an unsteady step towards him, he raises a hand. Not to greet me. Not to pull me into a hug. But to fucking *stop* me from getting any closer.

And then his beautiful face creases into a disgusted frown. "What the hell, Link?"

His voice – with that plummy accent that goes straight to my cock – is full of anger and confusion. But mostly disappointment. And when my eyes drift to the omega at his side, it's clear that their performance on the stage wasn't just for show. She's wound around his arm, staring up at him, her mouth soft and puffy. And when he feels her attention, he dips his head and brushes his fingers over her cheek.

Fuck me.

That static in my chest goes electric, because that's the move he uses on me. First time we kissed, he said my cheekbones were so sharp, he could cut himself slapping my face, so he was going to stroke it instead. Not that he didn't still slap me plenty. Kelly's never shy about putting me in me in place and keeping me there.

But now it feels like he's hammered a rusty nail straight through my heart.

“How did you get out?” I ask, my voice cracking as his brows lower over his amber eyes.

“Angel rescued me.” He pulls Elvana close, his chin resting on her head. It takes my brain a moment to make sense of the action, and then I realize she fits perfectly there. Like they’ve been pulling the move for years, not days. “Crept into my cell like a ninja, and shoved her claws straight through the asshole guard who was trying to rape me.”

His words sound so much worse in his perfect English accent. They must also echo in the wings as loudly as they do in my head, because they clear the area around us, all the pretty dancers moving away from the violence suddenly swirling in the air.

Or maybe it’s because of Arben Fucking Marku, his jacket over his arm so they can all see he’s wearing a double shoulder holster and a rig round his hips for his knives. Fucking overkill for the theater, but it’s the smirk he gives me that cuts the worst. Especially when he moves to stand behind the omegas and Kelly *doesn’t do a fucking thing to get out of his way.*

Rape.

Those guards who cut up his arm, who starved and beat my mate, also tried to rape him.

But now he stands in front of Doctor Death like there’s no trauma there at all.

Every hair on my body prickles as I stare at my mate. “Have you fucked him? Is that what this is? You let Doctor Death bite you and now you’re a thing?”

I can't believe the words actually leave my lips. I have no illusions that I'm an epic asshole - and losing Kelly has only made me more of one - but there are some accusations I'd never throw at my mate. But it's too late to take it back now.

"Nope." He runs his fingers through Elvana's hair, right as Marku's hand comes down on the back of his neck. My fangs throb at the familiar move, but it's Rory who steps in and slaps my cheek. Not hard enough to hurt, but my lip still pulls back on my teeth as I snarl in his face.

"Get your head out of your ass, Lincoln. Arben didn't bite Kelly. I did. And it was about two years overdue, so don't even think about losing your shit."

I blink at my brother's angry face. And a memory swirls back to the surface. Kelly beside me in the shitty bed they gave us in the Tower, my cock inches from my prize and my teeth throbbing in my gums. He'd said I could bite him and make him my mate. But only if I agreed Rory and Cam could claim him, too. Something I'd promised to pass on, but had kept very much to myself.

Guilt swirls in my gut, so I go on the offensive. "And now you're loaning him out? Is that why another alpha has his hands all over our omega?"

I hear Cam groan behind me, but it's Kelly who starts laughing. And that pulls a smile out of me, even while my head throbs and my chest aches, because that's something I never thought I'd hear again. It might be mocking - and the joke's on me - but Kelly is laughing. And then he's standing right in front of me, his fingers on my cheekbone. "Still trying to cut me, sweetheart?"

I flinch at the endearment. It's even more mocking than his laugh. But he can throw shit my way until I'm buried in it. I just need him to come with me. To get in our bed and never leave me again. "Come home," I murmur as his fingers trail down to my lips. "I'm sorry I fucked up, but I've been out of my head. I had to find you. Nothing else mattered. But it's over now. We can go and forget all this shit..."

It takes me a moment to realize he's pushing on my mouth, stopping my words. His skin tastes like heaven, but he's frowning at me. He doesn't want to hear it.

"Link." Cam's hand is on my arm, and I flinch. Because Kelly has used the moment to step away. "Come on, brother, we should go. You can see Kelly another time."

"No!" I try to push past him, but the guy's a freaking wall of muscle. I lunge around him. "Kelly! We're going back home, right? The house is all set up and ready for you."

My mate gives me a sad look. "That's not my house, Link. I've never even seen it."

I feel the others looking at me now. Pitying. Like I'm losing my fucking mind. But I can't keep the words from vomiting out of my mouth. "You'll like it. It's got a nest and a wine cellar. And there's a swing on the deck, right next to the lake. Starlight Lake, but we call it Starling..."

My voice drifts off as they all stare at me. Fuck. They're all looking at me exactly the same way. Like I'm the fucking *outsider*...

My embarrassment hardens, anger bubbling in my gut. "So that's how it is? You're all a pack now? The assassin, my

traitor brother, and their shiny omegas?” I swivel to glare at Cam. “Is that why you dragged me here? Are you in on this, too? Or are you just Marku’s errand boy?”

“Shut the fuck up, Link,” Cam mutters, but I know that look in his eyes when he stares at them. He thinks he’s got his shit locked down tight, but he’s as needy as fuck. As needy as I am. They just haven’t given him a green light yet.

Well, screw that. He can get in line. Because if I have to lick Marku’s boots, I’ll do it. And I’m halfway to my knees when Rory grabs my shoulder, jerking me upright. “You’re missing the goddamn point, Link. We’re not the ones you should be talking to.” He waves a finger between the assassin and him, then thrusts me around, so I can see the two omegas.

I force myself to look at Elvana. She still glows like a goddamn angel, but there’s a hardness in her eyes now. There’s also a monster bite mark on her neck, but I’m not stupid enough to comment on it with her glaring daggers my way. I should probably apologize, tell her I never really meant to screw her over so bad, but we’d both know it’s a lie. So I just ask, “What can I do to make this right?”

She cocks her head, and I’d think her wolf was staring out at me if her eyes weren’t tiger bright. “Before you took me to the auction, you said that once it was over, I could ask anything of you. Remember?”

I nod, but it hurts. Everything hurts. Because I know what’s coming.

“Well, I’m not asking, Lincoln. I’m telling you. Walk the fuck away.”

Kelly gives Rory a grim nod, and then my brother is whisking the omegas through the dark curtains. Cam's hand is on my shoulder, but my eyes are on Marku. I don't realize I'm crying until he swipes a big thumb over my cheekbone and holds it up to the light. "As I said. You will be the one who is left out, kopil."





# Elvana

A subdued air hangs over us as we head back to the townhouse. Kelly is still holding my hand, but I can feel the energy draining out of him the further we get from Link. We're squished together in the town car, with Arben and Rory sitting opposite, but I still feel cold.

Is it guilt? Shock at seeing Link? Or just the whole night getting to me? For a quick trip to get ice cream, a lot of heavy stuff went down. "You could have gone with them," I murmur into Kelly's ear. We're wrapped around each other like a pair of snakes, but even with the blanket Arben got from the trunk and the hot air blowing, he doesn't feel any warmer than me. "You could've taken Rory and talked it out. I wouldn't have minded."

It's a lie. I would have fucking hated it. But I can feel the unsteady beat of his heart under my hand. How would I feel if he'd just told Arben to walk the fuck away?

He just nudges my cheek with his chin and gives me a soft smile. "I'm glad you said it, because it was what you needed to say. It might hurt, but it would feel a hell of a lot worse if you had to lie to him for my sake."

I flush, both pleased he's taking my side, and feeling like a petty bitch, because holding Link to that promise he made is kind of a dick move. Yes, he's a manipulative asshole who tried to trade me away to get Kelly back. But it's not like I

don't understand his motivation. I don't have a fraction of their history, and I've already killed for the man I'm holding in my arms. Besides, at some point I just have to own my past, or it will own me.

*You are a delight to eavesdrop on, my love. So much wisdom, I want to lick it up like ice cream.*

I smirk at Arben, those same midnight eyes that watched me on the stage gleaming back at me. He and Rory are sitting close enough to touch, their thighs only inches apart and Arben's arm across the back of the seat. They look delicious together, but I don't let my thoughts wander. We've already shared a lot tonight.

*Then stop licking your lips, my love. Anyone would think you're still hungry.*

I ignore that teasing comment and twirl the end of Kelly's hair around a finger, tugging gently. "Luckily I have some Ben and Jerry's in the deep freeze, or I might hold the lack of ice cream against someone."

Arben grins at that, but Rory sits forward, his green eyes intense. "Link knows about the townhouse. He's probably gonna turn up here."

I stiffen, because Link is Mr. Logistics. He's probably tracking us right now. But Kelly just shrugs. "As long as he doesn't try any shit tonight, he can camp out in the street if he wants."

Arben grunts, his fingers tapping his thigh. "He tries to pitch a tent near either of you and he'll answer to me."

Kelly cackles at that, but I gape at Arben. He's staring straight ahead, but there's a smile playing around his mouth. "Was that your first ever gag, Mr. Marku? Because it wasn't half bad."

He leans forward and drags me off the seat, plopping me down on his lap. The robes we borrowed from the theater are paper thin, and I can feel every inch of him as I straddle his thighs. But it's midnight eyes I focus on as he murmurs, "Call me sir and I'll show you what I can do with a gag."

I lean forward and lick his bottom lip, because I just can't help myself. "Now you're just getting my hopes up, Alpha."

He's eyeing the sash on my robe like it's giving him ideas, but then his cell pings in his pocket and that yummy smile dies away. I try to move to give him room, but he grips my hip as he fishes it out, then drops me into Rory's lap like I weigh less than a napkin. I stiffen at the feel of his arms closing around me, but Arben shoots us a sideways look of warning and holds the phone out, showing us it's on speaker. "Roan. You're back?"

I jerk, but Rory's arms tighten around me, his breath in my hair as Bisha answers in Albanian. "Just now. Where are you?"

"Midtown." Arben answers in our native language and his voice is deeper, harder, but also more cautious. A zog talking to his pack alpha. "Everything okay? Are you with Leka?"

He's talking about Roan's main driver and bodyguard, but there's a long silence before Bisha replies. "Yeah, he's here. We're just leaving the airport. When can I expect you?"

Arben's fingers flex on his thigh, but he answers smoothly enough. "I can be at the Tower when you arrive."

"Good. Make sure you are." There's a rustling sound, maybe some low chatter at the other end, and then Bisha says, "We have some guests from London. They'll be staying with me, and I want to show them how we operate. All the alphas, and the full entertainment. I want you to lead it, yes?"

Anyone else might miss the wince in Arben's face, but I have it committed to memory. And he's fucking pissed at this order. "Of course. I'll start setting it up right away."

Bisha hangs up without another word and I study Arben's profile as he stares out the window. "You're angry." He shakes his head, but his fingers are tapping on his thigh, his gaze on the street. "What can we do to help?"

He smiles at that, turning all the way around to study us. Rory's arms are crossed over my chest, his bigger body swallowing me up, and I'd like to think it didn't bother me. That it feels no different than if he was the stepbrother he'd once pretended to be. But that would be a lie, and Arben knows it. "Just stay together," he says quietly, then looks at Kelly. "Sit with them, *princi*. I want to see you altogether."

My brows shoot up at that, but they swap seats, Rory's arms opening to pull Kelly into his side. I frown at the sight of Arben alone on the other side of the car, but it's Rory who murmurs against my hair. "You okay, little wolf?"

Am I? It's weird hearing the voice of the man I thought was my dad and knowing it's all a lie. It's strange to see my mate alone, while warm bodies surround me. But I'm mostly disappointed that Arben is leaving. And worried about what

he'll be walking into when he returns to the enemy camp. "I just want us to stick together. All of us."

Kelly takes my hand, but the car is pulling up outside the townhouse. I stare out at the familiar street, wondering why it already feels like I've moved on. Is it because I've found out the truth about my father? Or because once my mom got sick, this was never much of a home to begin with? Maybe a bit of both, but my hearts says it's because of the man sitting opposite me.

I leap off Rory's lap and fling myself at my mate, loving the way his arms open wide. Like I'm not throwing myself at him, but coming back home.

Arben covers me in kisses, then looks at Rory, who's standing at the open door and studying the street. He has a gun in his hand, and I can see his wolf peering out of his eyes. "Stay inside. Alarm on. I have people watching the house, but if you want your brothers as backup, get them here." He tilts my head back, and I open my mouth to ask why, but he just strokes his bite mark. "How close they get is up to you, my love, but I'll deal with the devil himself if it keeps you safe."

"You *are* the devil," I mutter, but he sucks my pout into his mouth. And then he's pulling Kelly in for a kiss. My eyes droop to half-mast as I watch their tongues touch. It's barely more than a few little licks, but the hunger in their faces makes my thighs clench. Maybe it's not so surprising Link thought they were mates. "Come with us," I pull on Arben's arm. "I want us altogether in my nest."

I don't need to tell them I want that and more; my perfume is filling the car with my filthy thoughts. But Arben shakes his

head. “Soon. I need to deal with Roan first. But if you want more, my love, you know it’s yours for the taking.”

Not quite how I was seeing it in my mind, but Arben is holding the back of Kelly’s neck and staring into his eyes. “You dance like a prince, wolfling. Thank you for sweetening my dreams tonight.”

Kelly flushes, but after another couple of kisses, we’re out on the pavement and Arben is driving away. Rory immediately hustles us inside, but Kelly is staring after the car’s headlights. “He’s completely gone on you, you know?”

“Same.” I punch the code into the security system, and kicking off the ballet flats, head into the kitchen. Kelly looks around curiously but there’s not much to see. The movers have already cleared a lot, and I grumble to find it includes the Turkish coffee pot. “Let’s go to bed.”

I smirk a little at the tense silence behind me, but lead them upstairs. Rory stops at the landing and I pause at my bedroom door. “I can sleep on the couch,” he offers. “It’s probably easier to watch things if I’m down there.”

“Depends what you’re watching,” I reply, arching a brow. “And Kelly might find it a little hard biting you if you’re on the couch and he’s in bed with me.”

Rory gapes at that, his eyes snapping to his mate, but I just smile and step inside. The familiar scents of home roll out to greet me, but I realize it’s mostly coming from my nest. And as Arben has already proven, my blankets can be relocated just fine.

Unsurprisingly they both follow me inside, but Kelly is distracted by his first look at where I grew up. His gaze jumps from my empty bookcases to the stack of boxes on my desk, before landing on my bed. “Can you lie down in it?” I shiver at the husky edge to his voice and he smiles. “I want to see what you look like in your nest.”

I nod and touch the sash on my robe. “Dressed or undressed?”

“However you want,” he tells me, licking his lips.

“Do I get a vote?” Rory asks, and I roll my eyes, but he goes over to my closet, studying the shelves until he finds my hatbox. I bite my lip as he carries it back to the desk and when he lifts the lid, Kelly goes over to see. They each take a piece, holding up the silky sleep shorts and lace cami I wore the last time I went to The Looking Glass. “You have to wear this for him,” Rory tells me, his voice all wolf.

I shiver, but Kelly is already beckoning me over and pulling at the sash on my robe. He strips it off, bending to flick his tongue over my tight nipples, while Rory comes in close to see. They’re both still at the edge of my nest, and Rory holds me steady as Kelly helps me step into the shorts and pulls the cami over my head. The lace scrapes my wet nipples and I press my face into Kelly’s neck, breathing him in.

But before I can wrap my arms around him, he eases away, reaching out to pull Rory closer. They kiss, but it’s over too soon. It’s on the tip of my tongue to tell them to do it again when they both look back at me. Kelly’s pupils are so blown, his eyes look as dark as Arben’s, and his voice is a hoarse whisper. “You’re meant to be lying down, Angel.”

I bite back a moan, but there's no escaping the perfume filling the air. I sit down, careful to tuck my feet under a blanket, but take a moment to check in with Arben.

*I know you just left, but I wish you were here.* There's a flush of warm longing down the bond, and I run my fingertips over my lace-covered nipples. *Can you feel what I feel?*

*So much so, my mouth is watering.*

I think on that for a moment, before lifting my eyes to the two men at the edge of my nest.

*Do I invite them in? This is as much your bed as mine.*

I can almost feel his answering purr in my bones. *You honor me, my love. But there will always be pack. You just need to decide how large it is, and I'll share in our bounty.*

I like the sound of that. *It would be better if you were here.*

He laughs, deep and possessive. *Not for them. I'm a greedy beast. But tonight, let them worship you, princeshë. I'll have you all to myself again soon.*

I feel him carefully but deliberately close the bond, although it's more of a window than a door. I can still sense him there, but it's muted, like the sound has been turned down.

While I've been checking in with my mate, Rory has poked his nose in one of the packing boxes on my desk and pulled out a framed picture. It's the one of Glo and her alphas, and his eyes darken. Not so much at the people in it, who I'm not sure he particularly likes, but at the conversation we had about packs. About omegas surrounded by adoring alphas, and if that was something I might want one day. He doesn't need to ask me again.



I hold out a hand, a clear invitation, and he drops the picture on the desk. Kicking off his shoes, he sits down beside me. His eyes stroke my silky sleepwear, but he doesn't try to touch me other than the hand resting in his. "I'm sorry, little wolf. You gave me a perfect gift, and I didn't honor it."

I tilt my head. "Did you feel bad? About lying to me?"

He gulps, his face creased with pain. "So bad. I told the guys I hated it, but it was too late. They'd already fed you all that crap while we were drugged. I'm not excusing my part, cos I had plenty of chances to come clean, but I never liked lying." His finger lifts from my palm and gently traces the edge of my cami. "And I sure as fuck never wanted you to be my sister."

Kelly snorts at that, but it makes me feel a little better knowing he wasn't all in with their plan. Whatever his motivation for keeping quiet, Rory is an honest guy. Which helps me believe maybe there was some truth in the other things he said to me. "No more lies, Rory," I warn him, tugging him towards me. "I catch you again, you're gonna get my claws."

"Fuck yes," he mutters, crawling over me and pressing me back into the blankets. I feel my throat clench as his beautiful face swoops towards me, tears glittering in his eyes. "I'll slit my own throat before I hurt you again, baby. I love you so much." He takes us both in with that electric, adoring gaze. "You guys are it for me, and I'll do everything I can to prove myself worthy of you."

I mumble what might be the beginning of my own vow, but his lips are coming down on mine and I sigh into his mouth.

All the bad shit between us melts away at the first stroke of his tongue. It sends a shudder through me, his flavor so sweet I have to suck on his lips for more. He groans and opens his jaw wider, pulling at my hair until our tongues are lashing together. I squeeze my eyes shut. My heart is hammering so hard, I can't look at him and taste him at the same time, or I'll combust. Instead, I cling to his shoulders, pulling him down into the V of my legs. He's wearing too many clothes, but that's what claws are for...

"Ease back, Angel," Kelly says and I blink at him, my head spinning. "Let me undress him for you."

I nod eagerly, scooping my hair off my hot neck as I watch him peel Rory out of his suit jacket. Kelly is still in his white robe, and there's something beautiful about the way he touches his mate as he unbuttons his shirt. Like he's preparing him for me. And I like that so much, as soon as Kelly's chest is bare, I grab Kelly's hand and pull him next to me in the nest. We come together like magnets, our lips and hands worshipping each other for a moment, before we both look back at Rory. He's breathing hard, his eyes a little wild as he swings from Kelly to me. I know his wolf must be close, the way we're pumping out our perfume, but he doesn't leap on us.

"Will you help me please our alpha?" I ask Kelly, who's fingers are dancing over his bite mark.

"Oh, yeah," he purrs, watching the grimace of longing on his mate's face. "Get those pants off, gorgeous."

Rory is naked in the slash of a claw and I laugh. "I could've done that."

“I’m saving your energy for something else,” Kelly tells me and taking Rory’s hand, yanks him down between us. He hits my blankets with a happy sigh and I echo it, staring at the vision in front of me. “He’s awfully easy on the eyes, isn’t he?” Kelly muses, a devilish curl to his mouth. “Should we start at his luscious head or pretty toes?”

I hum, because there’s no wrong answer here. “There’s two of us,” I remind Kelly. “We could split him up, half each.”

Rory groans like he’s in pain.

“But who’d get the middle?” Kelly goes on, like his mate’s not sprawled between us, panting and aching. “He told me you give magical blow jobs. I guess we could just start with his dick.”

We both stare at Rory’s erection, which might explain the next painful groan that leaks out of him. But I’m not going easy on him yet. “I think he’s talking about my gland,” I tell Kelly, stroking my neck. I tilt it so they can both see Arben’s giant mating bite. “It vibrates.”

“Oh, yeah.” Kelly reaches over Rory to stroke my gland, making my pussy gush with slick. From the wicked glint in his eye, he can definitely smell it. “My gland is in my ass. It kind of does the same thing, only it’s more of a twisting action. If you like, I could give you a demonstration some time.” He looks down at his mate with wide eyes. “Maybe Rory could help out.”

“Fuck. Me.” He tosses a tanned arm across his eyes, his hips jerking up from my blankets. Alpha arousal curls around us, thick and heady. “And I mean that literally. *Please*. Just touch me. Anywhere.”

I snicker, but Kelly peels his arm away and stares down into his face, his expression ominous. “Are you really, really sorry you were an evil, lying shit to our angel?”

“I will regret it to the end of my days.”

“Good.” Kelly looks at me and nods. “Now, tell us how you want us, Angel.”



# Rory

I hold my breath while Elvi twists her lips and gives the question a lot of thought. The longer she's silent, the more my hands twitch, desperate to grab a tit, a cock, anything. But I keep them to myself.

*Don't fuck this up, you stupid fucker. You're so close to heaven, your demon balls are melting.*

Which is a real thing. I'm a nasty piece of crap, who doesn't deserve their forgiveness. But in times like this, when real live angels come knocking on your door, the only thing you can do is lie back and let them torment you for as long as they want.

"I guess..." Elvi starts, suddenly looking unsure, and more like the little wolf I remember. Her golden eyes are glued to Kelly's face. "I want you to bite Rory, and Rory to bite me. Together. But I'm not sure how..."

"Easy," Kelly chirps before I can offer a suggestion. I only have about a million. "He should be inside you for the strongest bond. Deep. Knotted, just to be sure." He slides me a sly wink. "Plus, I'm dying to see our angel bounce on your demon dick."

Okay, so maybe there's some mind-reading going on here, because I couldn't have put it better myself.

"Sounds good to me," I blurt, snagging their wrists and pulling them down to me. They topple off balance, but I

swallow Elvi's shriek with my lips, my hand snaking around to swat Kelly's brat of an ass. He just laughs, since spanking is one of his favorite things. "I forgot how evil you can be," I tell him when Elvi comes up for air.

"Only for the truly deserving," he quips, but he's pushing to his knees and encouraging Elvi to swing a leg over my hips. I'm so hard, my cock is flat against my abs, but Kelly wraps a hand around it and eases it back. Seeing his long fingers around my shaft, Elvi's pussy in her sweet silky shorts only inches away, is the sweetest fucking picture, but then he bobs his head and slurps me down. I give a shout of pleasure, but he's gone just as fast. "Making it nice and wet for you," he tells Elvi, his cheeks pink.

"I'm gushing enough for all of us," she reminds him, but half a second later we're both inside her shorts, checking for ourselves. Kelly slides up one silky slit while I take the other, meeting over her hot seam. And it's dripping, just like she promised. "Oh," she gasps, and I know Kelly is already inside her, the greedy little shit. I go straight for her clit, pinching it gently as she grinds on his finger, her head tipping back. Kelly meets my eyes, and we grin. It's on my tongue to tell him we already named it Rory's slick, but I think it would kill me if she called a takeback.

But then Kelly is pulling her damp shorts away from her thigh and fitting my cock in the gap. I could shred the things with a thrust of my hips, but I let him slot my aching head against her opening. She stares down at me with hooded eyes as he strokes me up and down her gushing slit. I hold my breath, falling into those tiger eyes as I finally slide home. She's tight and hot and so wet I can feel her trickling down my

thighs. Or maybe it's Kelly salivating, because he's still holding the edge of her shorts, peering into the gap. "Oh, Angel. You look so good stretched around our alpha."

I shudder, watching his glistening fingers snake under the hem of his short robe. I know exactly what he's got hiding there and my mouth waters for a taste, but I keep my focus on Elvi. Besides, Kelly has released her shorts and is now rolling my balls against his hot palm. "He's so full, babe," he whispers, staring up into her flushed face. "He's going to fill you up so good, then bite you so hard."

I groan, wishing Arben was here and could stuff something in his filthy mouth. But that just makes me think of Link and Cam, and I quickly blank them from my thoughts. Right now, this is about my angels. My stupid ass brothers can find their own path back to heaven.

"Rory," Elvi huffs, her hands shaking where they grip my shoulders. She's rocking over me, her hips stuttering, and I suddenly realize how tired she is. She's been through so much tonight, she deserves to be floating on her heavenly cloud, not riding my nasty dick.

I shoot Kelly a look, warning him we're on a deadline. "It's okay, baby. Your sweet pussy is so good, it's gonna milk me so fast. I'm gonna knot you and bite you at the same time, and then we'll sleep. Okay?"

She nods her head, but her eyes are heavy, and Kelly's fingers move from my balls to her clit. She makes a whimpering sound when he starts to roll her sensitive bud and I kick up harder, my knot starting to swell. He goes up to his knees, stealing her lips for a kiss, then sweeps her hair off her



shoulder. “I’m going to feed you to him, Angel. You happy to give him your neck?”

She shakes her head and I feel my heart sink, but she just touches her gland. “Same side. Over Arben’s. It’s how he’d want it.”

Of course it fucking is. Every time I lick it, or tend it, or touch it just because it feels so good, he’ll get a little jolt, too. But that seems only fair, since he’s sharing his girl with us, and not hanging our bloody dicks from his belt.

“Okay, baby,” I tell her, my hands sliding up her sides. I cup her pretty tits behind the lace, feeling her buds strain against my palms. She looks like a gold-wrapped dream, and my heart throbs almost as hard as my teeth. “I’m getting close. You ready for me?”

“And Kelly,” she says, snatching another kiss, then urging him down to my groin. “He’s going to bite your hip, remember?”

Lucky me. They both giggle at my grimace, but I grab his head, stealing a kiss of my own. “Sink ‘em in deep, beautiful,” I tell him.

“Down to the bone, brother.”

I roll my eyes at his evil grin, but then his finger slips around to brush my taint and I thrust hard up into our angel. She wails, and I feel her walls start to pulse. My knot is pounding through her slick, her body curling down to me, and I’ve got tears in my eyes as Kelly blows me another kiss. Then I’m wedging my knot into her pussy and biting through her

sweet flesh. Right as Kelly munches down on my hipbone and sticks his finger up my ass.

Fire and ice and electric fucking dreams.

Blood fills my mouth, slick pours around my knot, and pain slices through my side, right as Kelly jizzes all over our angel's nest.

“Hallelujah,” I whisper, and we all collapse in a filthy, tangled mess.



The omegas are both out like a light, and I'm floating in some perfect haze, drained down to my toes, but not wanting to slip away just yet. Every muscle in my body is liquified, and for once, the beast that lives under my skin has passed the fuck out. It's a harmony I don't think I've ever felt, and as I trace the bite mark on my hip, I give a soft, goofy grin. They chose *me* – out of those hundreds of alphas salivating over them tonight – and trusted me enough to invite me all the way in. I roll over a little, my beast sight helping me trace the bite marks on their necks. Kelly's is starting to settle, but Elvi's is still raw, the edges gleaming with the silver of my wolf's mark.

*Mine. Mine. Mine.*

I drop butterfly kisses on their cheeks, then roll to my feet. I must have dumped a bucket of jizz inside our little angel, because I feel a bit light-headed and my mouth is a desert. If they weren't so zonked, I'd drink Kelly's cock dry and then

lick up Elvi's slick, but fucking myself into a cum-coma is not the answer. *Water. You need water, Rory.*

I pad out of the room, not bothering to cover up. My pants are a shredded mess, anyway, which might make getting out of here tomorrow a little difficult. But I guess Arben could always drop me off a pair, maybe sit in a chair at the end of the bed and boss the angels into dressing me...

Hmmm....

Seems my one-track mind is now permanently parked in the sexy station.

*Wolfling!*

The hiss is so close to my ear, I nearly tumble down the stairs. I grab the railing, gaping around at the dark living area. There's the sofa, a bunch of boxes stacked up everywhere, and not much else. What the hell?

*Wolfling, I you need to get them out.*

I shiver, trying to work out why the fuck I can hear Arben Marku in my head. Holy shit. Am I now possessed by Doctor Death?

*Focus, Rory. You can hear me because you bonded Elvana, and we share a bondlink. Are they safe?*

I gulp, trying to wrap my head around the shit *inside* my head. "A bondlink? For real?"

*You can lose your mind later. Right now, you need to protect our omegas. Roan knows I've been working against him and he's got me locked down. They hit me with something.*

*A tranquilizer of some sort. My beast is fighting it, but it's winning. I can't reach Elvi...*

“She’s asleep.” I clear my throat. I know talking out loud to a voice in my head is weird, but I can’t seem to think without forming words. “Both her and Kelly are fine. They’re just tired. We kinda... wore ourselves out.”

*Good. Get them up and back to Boston. I'll be out of it for a while, but I'll keep the bond locked down. I can't expose any of you.*

Fuck. “But what about you? Tell me where you are and we’ll come get you.”

*Your only duty is to our omegas. Keep them safe, wolfling.*

He shuts down the line between us so firmly, it echoes in my head like knuckles against my skull.

Crap. Crap. Crap.

Arben’s in trouble, Roan’s coming after us, and I have to get two sleepy omegas to a city three hours away in the middle of the night. With no car. And no pants.

I turn on the bottom step, ready to charge back to the bedroom to find my cell, but a sound from across the room makes me freeze. And then every hair on my body lifts as I catch a faint scent. It’s hidden under suppressors, but my wolf is so close to the surface, we can’t miss it.

Alphas and gun oil.

“Don’t move, Erikson.”

There’s three of them, all dressed in tac black with headsets, neck gaiters, and SIG Black Mambas. A short-

barreled, all-round package, perfect for the urban psycho.

“Fuck you, perve.” I can’t see their faces, so I take a moment to suck in their scent, quickly cataloging it against every alpha I’ve ever met. Not something most shifters can do, but my beast likes to know who’s who in the zoo. “My ass might be hot, Raptis, but it’s not worth going to war over.”

The alpha closest to me lifts his weapon higher, making sure it’s pointed straight at my balls. “We’re not here to listen to your bullshit. Down on your ass, hands behind your head.”

The guy behind him has a pair of silver cuffs in his hand. Titanium, military-strength, and shift proof. Once those suckers go on, unless you have a master key, the only way out is with a plasma torch.

“Take another step, and my wolf is going to come visit,” I tell Cuff Guy. Since I’m naked, and he’s wrapped in enough Kevlar to protect a tank, there’s no way he can shift as fast as me. My bare ass might just have the upper hand here. “Just tell me what the fuck you want and get out.”

The three guys shift subtly towards Raptis, which doesn’t surprise me. Darius Raptis is a hired gun who works exclusively with his pack brothers. That means they’re not just a unit, but family, and he’s the top dog in their pack. He’s also based out of Boston, which should come in handy right now. “Bisha might be paying you, but Lucas Ferrier is our new pack alpha,” I tell him. “We moved into his estate a week ago. You still want to start trouble with your territorial alpha?”

As Head Alpha of all East Coast packs, Roan Bisha technically controls us all, but these guys were born on Ferrier soil. This is the definition of conflict of interest, and unless

they're planning a coup to take out Boston, they'd be insane to pursue the contract. Ferrier would have every right to hunt them down and turn them into floor rugs.

“Like I said,” Raptis murmurs, “not here to talk.”

Which means he's only here for the omegas.

“Then you're fucking dead.”

Shift. Leap. Blood. Meat.

It's simple.

My wolf doesn't like to chat either. And the way he rips out of my skin is so visceral, I feel myself disappear for a moment. From too many voices in my head, to none at all. Because my wolf is all instinct, and right now it's to decimate the threat in front of us.

All four SIGs try to track him, but he's little more than a shadow, darting for the nearest stack of boxes and coming up behind one of the meat-sacks. He sees only the body and the weapon. One to eat, the other to avoid.

He hamstring the guy with a flick of his claws, and while he goes down with a gurgle, springs towards the next one. He takes him out with a full body tackle, knocking the weapon from his hands, and twists to his feet to rip out his throat. I see the rifle butt coming towards his head, but he ducks it, streaking off to the next set of boxes. The second guy is back up, the three of them converging around the one with the shredded hamstrings. It also puts them against the staircase, and a howl spirals up my throat as Raptis turns and leaps up them, heading to the second floor.

The nest. The omegas.

*Mine. Mine. Mine.*

I try to stop my wolf, but he can't let that threat go. He charges for the kitchen island, leaping over the plastic-wrapped bar stools and skidding across the marble. His claws cut deep furrows in the stone as he regains his balance, and then he's leaping for the staircase.

"Fucking hell!" One of the meat-sacks lifts his weapon, but instead of a bullet, a dart explodes from the end and thuds into the wall. My wolf hits the railing, claws scrambling, and then we're over. But there's another explosive pop. My wolf's legs crumple under him and he gains another stair before he starts to slip backwards. A hand grabs his scruff and he tears the knuckles open, but a boot slams into his head.

"Just lie down, you fucker!"

There's a lot my wolf can fight, but the shit in his bloodstream rolls him onto his back, the meat-sacks panting down at him. And I have a fleeting moment to kick myself. I should have just commanded these guys to eat their guns.

Instead, my wolf arches his head back and howls.





# Elvana

A strange popping sound drags me up out of my dreams. Before I even open my eyes, I know we're in trouble. Rory's scent has faded from the nest and there's a new alpha stench in its place. And then I hear the howl, so raw with terror and fury, it echoes in my soul.

My wolf tears through the last threads of sleep, and the room swings into focus, sharpened by her night vision. Rory left a lamp burning on the desk, but it's out, the only light coming from the moon filtering through the drapes. Her gaze rakes over the figure sitting in the chair, taking in his military clothing and gun. He stinks of blood and anger.

*Kill.*

I pop both sets of claws, but the guy in the chair just taps his gun. A light flares on the top, and I follow the barrel down to where it's pointed at Kelly's sleeping face.

"Your alpha's down." I can feel him looking at the bite mark on my throat. "Messy fucker, isn't he?"

It probably looks like Rory gnawed on my neck, since it's two bites together, but I don't educate him. Kelly is twitching in his sleep, and Rory is *down*.

I retract my claws, but I can feel my wolf staring out of my eyes. "If you killed him, everyone you care about is dead."

It's not an idle threat; if Rory's gone, Arben will hunt them all, and I'll help. Not to mention what Kelly, Link, and Cam would do to avenge their brother.

Still, the vow must sound strange coming from an omega. I'm crouched in a nest, silver spray still matted in my hair and my whole body is crusty with slick and cum. But he doesn't laugh. "I'd expect no less from Bisha's baby," he says instead, and I cock my head. I know that voice. Different clothes, different gun, but that same air of weary violence.

"Darius Raptis. You're Glo's alpha."

He reaches out and clicks on the lamp, pulling the black gaiter he's wearing down to his chin. Tired black eyes stare back at me before dipping to his lap. My breath catches as I realize he's holding the framed picture of his pack. "She's gonna kick my ass for doing this."

He means Glo. But there's a world of emotion in his eyes as he stares at her, his thumb swiping over the pale oval of her face.

"Then don't. Let me talk to her. I bet we can work something out."

But he just places the picture on the desk and gets to his feet. "That's just it. I need you to get her back." He looks down at Kelly, who's just starting to wake up. "I always knew Erikson was a greedy shit, but two omegas?"

"Rory isn't my alpha," I tell him, putting a hand on Kelly to keep him quiet. "Whatever argument you have with him, it has nothing to do with us."

But Darius just presses a button on his headset and rattles out some command in code. I can hear noises from downstairs and I bite the inside of my cheek. Did Rory go down to investigate, and they ambushed him? “Doesn’t matter,” Darius says, and I realize he means about who we’re mated to. He tosses a backpack at my feet. “You’re a trade, and he’s a bonus. Now get your asses up and dressed. You’ve got two minutes.”

I wake Kelly just as another soldier appears in the doorway, wearing the same tactical gear. Kelly gives me a sleepy smile until my tension sinks in, and then he scrambles to his feet. “It’s okay,” I whisper, gripping his hand. “We just need to keep calm. Look for our chance.”

His head snaps over to Darius and his pack mate, who are now huddled in the doorway. Kelly’s nostrils flare as he takes them in, and I catch the glint of silver in his eyes. I’m glad he’s angry and not panicking, but we don’t need him tipping into an omega heat right now. To distract him, I start pulling clothes out of the bag. There’s an expensive black dress for me and black pants and shirt for Kelly. The labels are still on them and my heart dips as I realize they’re from Slick, the boutique Bisha owns.

But Kelly is still glaring at the guys in the corner, and I can scent the sour edge of fear under his rage. He’s gone through so much, and to have to wake up to this... anger burns through me, lava hot. I grab his face, pulling him down for a hard kiss. I can feel the alphas watching us, but Kelly just gives them his back. “What’s going on, Angel?”

“I think it’s Bisha. Here, get dressed.” I hand him the clothes but leave the black dress and walk towards the alphas. Darius immediately lifts his gun, earning a quick glance from his pack buddy. “Watch her hands. She can half-shift.”

“Not with these,” the guy responds, tapping a pair of silver cuffs on his belt.

I focus on Darius, since he’s clearly calling the shots, and because I’ve already got some connection to him through Glo. It’s not much, but I need to keep things as calm as possible until I know what we’re up against. “Will you tell us where we’re going? We just woke up and we need to shower...”

Cuff Guy snorts. His face is mostly hidden by the mask he’s wearing, but his eyes rake over my body. “Don’t worry, princess. You’ll fit right in.”

I don’t try to hide my disgust. If this is one of Glo’s alphas, I feel sorry for her. “Where? We deserve to know.”

But Darius just points the gun back at the nest. “I’ll drag you out of here like that, or you can get dressed. But we’re leaving now.”

I glare at them but scurry back for the black dress. It’s short and tight and the opposite of cute, but if Bisha’s involved, I don’t want to be dumped somewhere half-naked. Kelly provides a bit of a shield as I wriggle into the stretchy material, and I use the cover to catch his gaze. Thinking of the way I talk to Arben through the bond, I pinch my lips closed and try to project my thoughts. *Kelly? Can you hear me?* His eyes go wide and I smile. *I take it that’s a yes?*

He goes to nod his head, but then scrunches up his brow. *Can you hear me, too?*

*Perfectly, Sunshine.* I give him a quick wink. *Looks like our bondlink is adaptable. But don't let on. We might need to use it to our advantage.*

*Okay, but I want you to know something now. Before anything else happens.* His whiskey eyes stroke my face, but it's the emotion flooding through the bond that has me blinking back tears. *I'm completely crazy about you, Angel. I know it's fast, but I think that's just because it's so real. My heart is yours, and always will be.*

Well, crap. Now I want to wrap myself around him and never leave this nest, Darius and his asshole friends be damned. *Same, Sunshine. You're my dream come true. And I'm going to protect it with everything I have.*

He grins, but then Darius calls time and we're marched bare-foot out of my room. The second guy fits the cuffs over my wrists while Kelly stares daggers into the side of his face. But the cuffs are the least of my problems. Yes, it will stop me shifting, but as we head downstairs, I see a big brown wolf slumped on the floor, two other guys standing over him. *Rory.*

Kelly gives a strangled sob, but Darius just steers me towards the door. "I made sure it was a half-dose," he says into my ear. "If your alpha wants to storm the Tower in a few hours and throw away his life, that's up to him. But if you so much as twitch until I get you there, I'll come back and put a bullet in his head. Got it?"

I nod, stepping closer to Kelly and slipping my hand through his. It's hard with the cuffs, but we both need to

comfort. Because as much as this is already a nightmare, Darius just confirmed we're heading to the Tower.

It's a short drive from the Village to Bisha's headquarters, but we see little of it, since we're shoved into a windowless van. Darius and Cuff Guy climb into the back with us, but no one speaks until the van dips and I sense we're heading into an undercover garage. The Tower is a fortress hiding in plain sight on a busy Manhattan street. Bisha has property all over the city, but this is his main residence, and when I was working with my so-called stepbrothers to take him down, this was considered the hardest building on the list to infiltrate. Which means it's almost impossible to escape as well.

Except we have someone on the inside. I hold that hope tight to my chest as the van parks and we're bundled out, Darius and Cuff Guy pushing us forward. I'm not sure where Arben is and I don't want to distract him and put him in danger, but as we're marched over to an elevator, I whisper down the bond. *Arben? Can you hear me?*

But when only silence greets me, I realize the blockage that feels like a mental wall is back, only stronger this time. Pressing on it starts an instant headache, and I shiver hard enough for Kelly to notice. He shoots me a worried glance, but I decide not to use the bond to reassure him. We're badly on the back foot, and I need to keep us both under the radar until we know what we're up against.

I try to put a confident look on my face, but as the elevator door swings open, two things happen. Firstly, Darius Raptis and Cuff Guy are encircled by togs and roughly stripped of

their weapons. They go without a fight, although Darius dips his head at me and says, “Don’t get dead, Omega.”

I’m still gaping at him as they’re dragged off, and then Paige Peters, my mom’s ex-assistant and one of Bisha’s pieces of ass, steps into view. She’s tall and thin, with an edgy platinum bob and cold eyes that rake me from head to toe, before narrowing in triumph.

“Bisha’s little bitch,” she purrs, reaching out and sinking her claws into my arm. She’s wearing a designer dress the color of blood, and matching lipstick on her wide, feral smile. “Not so high and mighty now, are you?”

“And you’re still answering the door and doing Bisha’s dirty work,” I reply, faking boredom. “Just tell me where he is and scuttle back into your hole, you insect.”

The slap she hits me with would be easy to shrug off if she wasn’t wearing a diamond ring the size of a grape. Instead, it rakes across my cheek, drawing blood, and I can’t bite back a whimper. Kelly lunges for her, but a couple of thugs have been watching and haul him back. Paige grabs a handful of my hair and yanks me towards her. “Speak to me like that again and I’ll lock you in a room with the togs who hate your stuck-up ass. And we’re talking double digits.”

I clench my teeth so my wolf doesn’t take a bite out of her, and force my gaze to the floor. With a triumphant smile, she grabs my arm and starts pulling me through a crowded room. I glance back to make sure Kelly is following and his eyes gleam silver as he sees the blood on my cheek. Fuck. I need to distract him. *Do you know where we are?*

He forces himself to look around and grimaces. *It's the entertainment level. Above us are Bisha's private floors.*

Okay. I've been to the penthouse before with my mom. We stuck to a couple of small rooms, but I always sensed there was a lot more going on around us. And this level is a whole other world. The marble floor is cold under my feet, and there are high ceilings and red silk walls, but no windows, giving it a casino feel. I can see a massive chandelier in the distance, but there are smaller ones, including some flashing neon and bright spotlights, in other parts of the room. Strange half-walls divide up the space, and when we enter the first, I realize it's a cocktail lounge, complete with a gleaming wood bar and leather booths. People are drinking and chatting, although they pause to stare at us as Paige struts through the middle of the room. She always loved being the center of attention, so right now she must be living her dream.

But I forget about our asshole escort as we enter the next space and I see a giant steel cage. It's up on a stage, surrounded by rows of chairs, and I know what it is without asking. A fight ring. The floor is splattered with old blood and a cloud of rage and despair hangs in the air. After the luxury of the cocktail lounge, the violence of this space makes my skin crawl. *Male omegas fight here. They put them up against the top alphas and it's last man standing.* I'm trying to picture that when I realize what he means. They put male omegas in heat up against trained alpha fighters.

I look back at him, but he avoids my eye and I feel sick. Did they do it to him when he lived in the Tower? Or did he see other omegas go into that ring and not come out?



I block the swarm of questions from the bondlink – they’re not going to do either of us any good right now – and focus instead on the next room. It’s the largest, with the big chandelier I could see from the elevator hanging from the center of a silk-draped ceiling. It’s a mix of the last two spaces, with high-end booths and cocktail tables, but also a stage at the far end. It’s empty at the moment, but my churning stomach gives an extra flip as I realize it looks like the ballroom in the auction house.

But before I can give into my growing panic, Paige digs her fingers into my arm and steers me over to a door. When she pushes it open, I’m greeted by a circle of pale, strained faces. It only takes one whiff of the air to know they’re omegas, and scared out of their minds. They’re all wearing black dresses, although none of them are cuffed, and I don’t recognize any of their faces until I get to the omega on the end.

“Glo!” I lurch towards her right as Paige gives me a shove in the back and I crash into the other omega. She grabs me by the shoulders to steady me, but a scuffling noise at my back makes me spin around. And I give a cry of rage as I see the thugs dragging Kelly away from the door. He’s fighting, but they’re huge and twisting his arms viciously behind his back. “What are you doing, you assholes? Where are you taking him?”

Paige shoves me back again, holding the door open just long enough to grin in my face. “Roan has something special in store for him.”

Then she slams it shut, and Kelly’s roar of protest is silenced by a thud. I instantly leap against the door,

hammering it with my fists. I'm so surprised it opens again, I'm gaping at Paige as I eat her fist. She's wearing knuckledusters, and I catch sight of Kelly's horrified face as the punch knocks me back into the circle of omegas. Only this time there's no one to catch me, and without the use of my hands, I hit the ground hard enough to see stars. Not that I can see much through the blood pouring from my nose. "I've been waiting a long time to put you on your ass, but this is just the start." She spits and something wet hits my cheek. "You'll be begging like the little bitch you are before we're through with you."

And then a shiny Louboutin kicks me in the side of the head and it's lights out.



# Kelly

“Stop fighting, bitch.”

The snarled command hits me like a second punch, and my entire body goes limp. I don't recognize the guy on my left, but the one twisting my arm behind my back is an older tog, or togerët, meaning a lieutenant of the Dark River Pack. I remember him from when I lived in the Tower, and he clearly remembers me. He gives my wrist a vicious tug, dropping me to his knees. It strains the stomach muscles he buried his fist in a moment ago and I don't need to look at the erection pushing against the front of his pants to know he's getting off on hurting me. “That's more like it.” He grins at the other thug. “We're gonna have some fun with you.”

“Enough,” the blonde beta says in a curt voice, although her eyes are bored. “Roan wants him in one piece for this bit.”

I have no idea who she is, other than the bitch I'm going to take a bite out of for hitting my angel. But for some reason the two alphas listen to her, jerking me back to my feet. We cross the empty room with the big stage, pushing through another door to a set of stairs. I've never been this way before, but as we head upwards, my stomach sinks. We're going to Bisha's private floor.

My bare feet curl against the cold concrete, but too soon we're being buzzed through a heavy security door and my toes are buried in thick, expensive carpet. We're in a kind of den,

with club chairs around low tables and a massive marble fireplace. No windows, because Bisha is a paranoid fuck even in the penthouse of a high-rise, and the air is thick with the stench of alphas, cigar smoke, and top-shelf booze.

The blonde bitch strides off like she owns the place and I take a moment to look inside my head. I can't think of any other way to describe the way it feels to have Angel in my mind. But I don't know how to reach her. I can sense her there, just like I can feel a bond to both Link and Rory, but it feels as thin as mist. I can't *use* it in any way, and I clench my jaw in frustration. Why the fuck didn't I work harder to learn how to shift? If I had better control of my wolf, maybe he could help me reach them now. Make sure she's okay, and call the guys for help.

Not that they'd have much hope of getting into the Tower undetected. After the year we spent locked inside its walls, we all know what a fortress this place is. Maybe it's better they don't know I'm back here. And we still have Arben up our sleeve, a hopeful little voice reminds me. He could be somewhere around here, and if anyone can get Angel out of this place alive, it's him.

But all my plotting is brought to a screeching halt when the blonde bitch returns to drag me over to Bisha. His lieutenants and hangers-on surround him, hard men with their guns outside their jackets and cruel smirks on their faces. I can't see Arben anywhere, but the Head Alpha is impossible to miss. He's sitting at one of the tables, cigar in hand and cold silver eyes roaming the room like he's searching for his next kill. This is the guy who sold me to Crouch without a second thought. He pretended to be Angel's father for twenty years,

although from what I've heard, he never really claimed her publicly. I don't know how deep the wounds from his neglect go, but I'm glad she doesn't share his blood. It'll be that much easier to spill it when I get my chance.

But my bloodlust cools when I realize who's sitting at his table. The woman with the thick red hair has her back to me, but I'd know my mother anywhere. And the man opposite – a thin alpha with mean little eyes and the Prior chin – is someone I'd hoped to never see again.

“Kellman.” My Uncle Phillip is a rapist rat with the brains of a bath plug. He might be an alpha, but even his own brother couldn't stand him. The one good thing my father did for our family was to cut off all contact with Phillip and banish him to Eastern Europe. Clearly, that sentence died with my father. “You've grown.”

Since I haven't seen him since I was about ten, this is stating the fucking obvious. “Why are you here?” I keep my eyes off my mother, since she still hasn't turned her head. “What do you want?”

He looks straight at Bisha, which is explanation enough, but the Head Alpha says, “Since Alpha Crouch has passed, you need a new owner. You uncle and I are considering our options.”

My mouth would fall open if I didn't expect something exactly like this. “I'm twenty-one,” I tell him. “Two weeks ago, actually. That means I have access to my trust and whatever inheritance my father left me.”

“Precisely.” Bisha almost looks pleased we're cutting straight to the chase. “But since you were diagnosed as

mentally unfit while in my care, the trust is under the control of your mother. She is considering her options as well.”

My mom finally looks up at me, although her eyes only reach as far as my chest. “It’s best we don’t make a fuss, darling.”

My mom is a legendary Parisian beauty who was rich and famous long before she met my father. But she’s also an omega and avoids conflict of any kind. I remember thinking she looked like an elegant but untouchable doll when I was growing up. Seems not a lot has changed.

I try to ignore the cramping feeling in my chest, but Bisha and Phillip have moved on from options to haggling. “I want the London pack,” my uncle juts out his chin. “I won’t be able to hold it if you strip us of all our wealth.”

“You won’t be able to hold it without my backing, either,” Bisha reminds him. “Which I’ll give you, in exchange for all your European assets. You keep anything in Britain. I’m only interested in the continent.”

My uncle chews on that like he has any choice. “I have a lot of important contacts in the east,” he blusters. “I’ve lived there for a decade, you know.”

“And I was born clinging to it’s the underbelly.” Bisha says something to the togs standing around the table in their language and they all laugh. Probably at my uncle, although he chuckles along. Stupid fucker. “Alright,” Bisha tells him, “we will talk more about how our families can best carve up the European territories, yes?” His cold eyes slide my mom’s way. “Elizabeth might like to stay here for the discussions. See what the city has to offer Paris’ most dazzling Luna.”

My mom's face is so still, it could be a mask. But then she slowly lifts a hand in my direction. "And my son?"

"I have a couple of local buyers, but they'll need the pot sweetened. His reputation for violent heats is well known, unfortunately."

"My son is *not* violent..."

Frustration burns through me; *this* is what my mom objects to?

"Perhaps you'd like a demonstration?" Instead of talking to my mom, Bisha directs the comment to his togs, who all laugh and raise their glasses. Their eyes rake over me, maybe hoping I'll squirm, but I keep my gaze on the Head Alpha. My Angel put up with this bastard her whole life; I can handle whatever shit he throws at me tonight. "He fought here once before," he goes on. "He drew quite the crowd."

It was after Link had claimed me and Rory has beaten the guard who'd tried to rape me. All three of my brothers had been forced to watch while I was commanded into a heat, and pitted against a local boxer. An alpha and semi-pro, I'd nearly killed myself trying to beat him, and spent a week in the infirmary spitting up blood.

"Do I get to choose my opponent?" I ask, using my plumiest accent and staring down my nose at the togs. "The last dog didn't put up much of a fight."

That makes them snarl, but Bisha just waves a hand and I'm dragged away. My mom rises to her feet, but doesn't follow, and I hear her soft voice pleading with Bisha. *Waste of breath*, I think, but then we're in the stairwell and headed back



to the entertainment floor. The tog who punched me earlier grins in my face. “They brought in someone special for tonight. Guy’s a lone wolf, halfway to rabid, and all teeth. He’s gonna chew your pretty omega ass up.”

I ignore the taunts, the tog handing me off to another goon as soon as we get to the fight ring. The seats are mostly full, but more alphas pile in behind us, plenty of elbows and fists hitting me in the back. I’m forced towards the cage just as a shout goes up from the crowd. The air reeks of aggression and alpha. But it’s not me they’re looking at, since a fight is already underway. The omega is a bloody blur, a head shorter than his opponent, but hitting the bigger alpha with everything he has. For a while it looks like his sheer rage might carry him through, but then the alpha wraps his arms around him and lifts him off the ground. The omega roars, his teeth snapping as he tries to bite the alpha’s face. But the bigger fighter jerks forward, smashing his bony head into the omega, and the smaller guy slides to the floor, unconscious.

The crowd roars again, a mixture of bloodlust and amusement, money slapping into palms as I’m pushed forward by a tog. I block my ears to the omega slurs, insulting bets flying about how long I’ll last. My focus is on my opponent. There’s a giant guy already climbing into the cage, his back to me. He’s as big as Cam, with a shaved head and shoulders like rocks. As he folds his arms across his chest, his back pulls tight, his black sweatpants hanging off a pair of glutes that would make my mouth water in different circumstances.

Fuck, I’m dead.

The crowd seems to agree, cursing and laughing as I'm shoved through the cage door. There's no referee; this is dirty fighting at its worst. But one of the togs leans up against the gate, shaking the metal to get my attention. "Omega! Ready to listen to your master?"

I'm about to tell him to shove his command up his ass when my opponent turns to me. He's six-and-a-half feet of tanned muscle I've seen more times than I can count, but there's barely an inch of his dirty blond hair left, and his eyes are a muddy brown instead of a pale blue. Still, it's on the tip of my tongue to call his name when Cam gives a subtle shake of his newly shorn head. Right. So he's the toothy, rabid, lone wolf I'm meant to fight.

Instead of waiting for the tog to command me into a heat rage, I launch across the ring at Cam. He snatches me out of the air, holding me close enough to whisper in my ear, "The guys are getting into place. We just need to give them another twenty minutes or so. Can you do that, Sunshine?"

*Sunshine?* I feel my entire body sag with relief, even in Cam's iron hold. "Rory's okay?"

"He's pissed they doped him. And fucking furious Raptis took you. But he's back on his feet and ready to get you out."

I want to ask about Link and Arben, but the crowd is getting restless watching us wrestle without throwing any punches. The tog whistles, high and piercing like you'd do to a runaway dog. He rattles the cage again, then yells loud enough for all to hear: "Time to heat up, Omega!"

And damn if my heart rate doesn't spike, a wave of hot, thick anger rolling through me. I throw Cam a desperate

glance as my hands curl into fists, but he just pulls me closer. “You’ve got every reason to hit me, Kelly. Don’t feel bad about this.”

But all I feel is rage. My wolf howls under my skin, and maybe I do too, because a roar goes up from the crowd.

I struggle to hold on to myself. To Kelly. To Sunshine. To Angel’s omega. But a black rage is pulling me under and the echo of Arben’s words fades to nothing: *Tell me what you want, wolfling...*

*I stare at the alpha in front of me. He’s my mate, but I don’t wear his bite. He holds me tight, but his scent has barely soaked into my skin. He watches and waits, never gives me what I want. There for his brothers, but never for me. He offers up easy words, but they’re lies, lies, lies.... And when he sinks into my body, it’s never the comfort of his knot.*

*A poor alpha.*

*A lying friend.*

*An unworthy mate...*

I break free of the prison of his arms and he staggers back a step, but I’m already launching myself at him.

*Him or me.*

*Only one will leave this cage.*



# Elvana

I wake to something cold slithering down my neck. My nose is pulped – I can barely breathe through it at all – so it makes sense I’m drowning in my own snot and blood. But then a gentle hand brushes back my hair and I open my eyes to an Italian film star. Or, that’s what Glo looks like in her black dress, her hair piled on her head and her lips painted a deep red. But her face is pale and strained, her eyes wild and streaked with silver. I don’t know Glo very well – she’s my neighbor more than a friend – but I sense that she’s tough. Or tougher than most omegas. So why does she look like she’s about to shatter into a million pieces?

“Are you alright?” She presses a cold compress gently against my cheek and I realize that’s what was trickling down my neck. “You have a broken nose, I think. And a bad lump on the back of your head. Did that *lupa* cut your cheek as well?”

I wince as I feel all my injuries throb at once. “Yeah, with a diamond ring.” I wince again at the flat, nasal tone to my voice. My nose is well and truly fucked. “Don’t worry. I’m pretty sure Bisha gave her a fake.”

Glo hums at that, but helps me sit up, and I realize I was sprawled in her lap. And that we’re the only two omegas left in the room. “Kelly. The guy I was with. They didn’t bring him back here?”

“Kellman Prior,” she says with a hint of awe in her voice. “I cannot believe he’s here. Who has been holding him all this time?”

It’s such an omega question. Not where has he been hiding, or who has been sheltering him, but who has taken him away from everything he knew in the world and locked him up. Rage prickles through me, and as I suck in an angry breath, my nose throbs. Good. Anger is better than lying on the floor feeling sorry for myself. “A dead man,” I tell her, then press a hand to my throbbing skull. “Have you seen him again?”

She bites her lip, shaking her head. “They come and take one of us every ten minutes or so. No one has come back.”

That’s bad, but I can’t worry about the other omegas right now. “Do you have any idea why we’re here?”

That pale, pinched look is back, and she covers her face with her hands. I think she might be at her breaking point, but then a stream of angry Italian leaves her lips, and when she looks at me, I can see the fury under her fear. That’s good, too. I need all the allies I can get, and a pissed-off omega is better than a cowering one.

“We’re the entertainment,” she spits. “That bitch who hit you told us enough. The Head Alpha has some important guests here, and he wants a display of his power. That means making the other alphas in his territory kiss his boots. Or, in this case, sign over land and business interests he wants for himself.” She shakes her head. “He must be trying to expand his territory. My father is an important alpha back in Roma, but I can’t imagine he’s trying to push that far. How power-hungry can a man be, for God’s sake?”

I grunt, because I'm not sure Bisha has any limits at all, but then my thoughts go to Ferrier. Is that why I'm here? Has Bisha finally decided to use me against my real father? "And if they don't? If they refuse to give into his demands?"

"He gives them a reason to change their minds." She waves a hand between us, and I nod. It's not all that surprising. Bisha has been taking the heirs of other alphas hostage for years. Threatening their bonded omegas would mean nothing to him.

"Okay." I lift my cuffed hands and touch my face carefully, feeling my injuries for myself. I'm a mess, but they don't seem to be swelling too badly. I wonder if I have my wolf healing to thank for that, and when I check in with her, she brushes up hard against my spine. She's pacing, her anger at the cuffs on my wrists almost as strong as her murderous thoughts about Bisha and Paige. "Is there some water somewhere? I need to clear my head."

Glo nods and goes to a sideboard, returning with a full glass. I have a moment to wonder if it's drugged, but I don't think that's what they have in store for us tonight. Bisha wants a show of power, not omegas who can't stay awake. It immediately makes me think of Kelly, and I take a careful sip, then close my eyes.

Checking in with him is as easy as breathing. Well, at least it was before I was snuffling through a broken nose. But as soon as I try to follow the bond back to him, my head throbs and my hands clench into fists. Holy shit!

Fury swells through me, red hot and mindless. The urge to kill something – anything – makes my tongue burn and my

claws throb inside my cuffed hands. I pull back so quickly my head spins and bile tears up my throat.

*No. No. No...*

Glo is hovering next to me, her face panicked. I swallow down the wave of nausea and curl my clammy hands over my churning stomach. “Kelly... he’s going into heat.”

Glo moans. “I saw the cage. I’ve heard stories...”

I surge to my feet, the glass tumbling to the carpet. “I need to help him.”

She grabs my shoulder, and the lingering rage urges me to throw her off. But I look into her frightened eyes and hold myself still. “He hates his heats. He was learning to control it, but he doesn’t have a chance here. He feels so wild...”

“Wait!” Glo is gaping at me. “Do you have a bondlink with him? An omega? How is that possible?”

“Our alphas.” Why didn’t I think of them before now? Arben has to be here somewhere. And Rory could be waking up now, trying to come after us... Another wave of nausea sweeps through me, but puking with a broken nose and possible concussion would hurt like hell. So I focus on my breathing, even while I turn my mind inward. I’m careful this time, inching down the bond. “Rory?”

The static in my head is so loud, it takes me a moment to realize he’s shouting at me. “Rory, are you alright?”

*Jesus, little wolf. I’m fine. Just fucking pissed! But how are you? Are you hurt? You feel weird. Tell me where you are and what’s happening.*



His emotions are as frantic as his thoughts and I back up until I'm sitting on a sofa. "I'm fine. Calm down."

*Then why is my wolf going ape-shit? If Raptis so much as breathed on your wrong...*

I cast a wary glance Glo's way and switch to an internal response. *Don't worry about me. It's Kelly. I think he's going into heat.*

Rory's emotions suddenly coil into a hard, furious ball. *Yeah, we expected that. We didn't have much time to plan, so Cam took out the regular fighter. Well, Link took him out, but Cam shot his manager up with some drug shit and then went in as the headline act. He's not bonded to any of us, so I can't check in, but they should've put them in the ring together.*

"Cam is fighting Kelly?" I'm so shocked, I squeal this part aloud.

*Well, he's letting Sunshine beat the hell out of him. Doubt Cam's doing much to hold him off. We couldn't let anyone else into the ring with him, and Cam knows how to take a punch.*

And he won't fight back – or probably even defend himself - because he feels guilty. I shudder, remembering the last conversation I had with Cam. I'd called him a cold, heartless prick. Accused him of never putting himself on the line for anyone else. Faking his friendship. Faking everything. And now he's here, faking a fight and maybe getting himself killed in the process. Because what will Bisha and the other assholes do if their headline act doesn't fight back?

I rub my throbbing temple. I can't think about that now. At least Cam and Kelly are together, but Arben is still here

somewhere, and the lack of response down the bond is starting to freak me out. *What about Arben? Is he here, too?* The silence is so unnerving, I stagger to my feet. *Rory, what aren't you telling me?*

I can almost feel him shudder through our connection. *He contacted me back at the house. That's what got me out of your nest. He said Bisha was on to him, and I needed to get you guys to Boston. I'm sorry, little wolf.*

I suck in a ragged breath, my heart twisted with so much pain I don't know how it keeps beating. *Do you know what they did to him?*

*I'm not sure, but Link thinks he's in the basement. Bisha has the place set up to hold his enemies, so I'm guessing he's down there.*

Fuck. He means a torture chamber. And Bisha won't take any chances with Arben. He knows how powerful he is. I lunge towards the door. "I have to go. I have to help him!"

*Wait, little wolf. Link is on it. He said to tell you, he'll get him out... or die trying.*

A sob rips out of me, and Glo rushes to my side, but I barely see her. *Don't fucking tell me that, Rory! Goddamn alpha bullshit! We're not losing either of them. And when we get out of here, I'm going to kick Link's ass...*

The door handle suddenly twists under my hand, cutting off my rant and making me leap back against Glo. I shove her backwards, leaping for the sofa right as the door pushes open. I sense her dropping to her knees as I close my eyes and a fog of alpha scents swarm into the room. "She can barely breath!"

Glo jumps straight into traumatized omega mode. “Her nose is all swollen and her lungs don’t sound right... She needs to heal if you don’t want your alpha’s daughter to die on this sofa!”

The command in Glo’s voice is tinged with hysteria, and I imagine it’s the only reason the closest alpha doesn’t knock her to the floor. “Move aside.” A rough hand grips my chin and my eyes sag open, hooded and cloudy. Glo isn’t the only one who can channel an Italian screen goddess when she has to. “Can you sit up, Omega? If I have to carry you, I will.”

Fuck that. I flutter my lashes, but let him prop me up against the back of the sofa as I look into his face.

Uncle Miko! As my gaze sweeps over his dark brown eyes and neat beard, his name is on the tip of my tongue. My hands twitch in the cuffs, desperate to cling to someone safe and familiar, but there’s another alpha standing right behind him, glaring down at me. He’s a tog, and one of Bisha’s most hardcore butt-kissers... Shit. I lower my eyes to my lap, forcing my voice to come out low and frightened. “I think I can stand, but everything hurts. If you could just free my wrists...”

My voice is nasal enough to make Uncle Miko wince, but he shakes his head. “The cuffs stay on. But you can lean on me until you get your balance back.”

The tog is still glaring at me, and when Uncle Miko urges me to my feet, I get the message. He can’t do much to help me with the enemy looking on. But if I could get him alone for a moment...

“Hurry the fuck up,” the tog growls, grabbing Glo’s arm and yanking her to the door. Uncle Miko follows, but before we step out of the room, he presses something into my hand. “It’s the key,” he whispers, “but only use it if you get a real chance.” I can hear the nerves in his voice, but he leans in closer. “I’ve very sorry, my dear. For this... and never helping you before. Your mother...”

But his words are cut off as we enter the main room and a wave of noise rolls over us. I can hear distant thuds, like someone is getting the shit beaten out of them, and I blink back a wave of tears. They’re as much for Cam as they are for Kelly, and I try to push some love down the bond, praying they don’t hurt each other too much.

But I’ve got problems of my own, because we’re being led towards the stage at the end of the room, and all eyes have swung our way.

Every table and booth are full, the air shimmering with the sharp musk of alpha aggression. My gaze sweeps over the familiar faces of togs and pack alphas from neighboring territories, daunted by so many hard eyes staring back at me. There are plenty of men I don’t recognize, but enough to convince me Bisha has called all of his top wolves to the Tower. And as we mount the stairs to the stage, most look like they’re salivating at the sight of my injuries, although a few others frown or glance away.

Not that anyone does anything to stop them from shoving Glo and me onto our knees. My short dress doesn’t protect me from the hard wooden floor, and I wince, but Uncle Miko just gives me a sad look as he walks away. I clench my jaw,

pushing the glimmer of hurt down deep as I clutch the key in my sweaty palm. *All I need is a chance...*

I take a deep breath and look around, feeling my wolf peer out of my eyes. It's smaller than the stage at the auction house, but everything else feels sickeningly familiar. A spotlight is burning down on me, but I use my wolf's sharper vision to blink through the glare and look around for Arben. I can survive anything they throw at me, just as long as I know he's alive. But then Glo gives a low moan and I follow her gaze to a table right at the back. It's surrounded by togs, one hand on their guns as they stand guard over Darius Raptis and Cuff Guy. Whatever is about to go down, Bisha has made sure they're here to see it.

Glo starts whispering in Italian, her body swaying like she wants to leap to her feet and run to them. Fuck. If she tries, her packmates are probably as good as dead. Should I have warned her, tried to prepare her? Would it be better to know they're out here, when they can't do anything to help? "This isn't about my father," she murmurs, low and broken, before her eyes swing my way. "What did they make Darius do?"

I think of him sitting in my bedroom, their picture in his lap, but I just shake my head. Whatever deal her pack made with Bisha to get me here, I don't think it's played out the way they hoped. "We can't let them use us against them," I whisper back. "Whatever they do to us, just survive it, Glo."

She gives me a wild look, but Bisha is now standing, and the room has gone quiet. He's in the booth right in front of the stage, dressed in a dark suit and holding a cigar in one hand and a crystal glass in the other. He looks like he's about to

make a toast, but instead he tips his drink in Glo's direction. "This Italian beauty comes from the Malito pack in Rome. Her alpha missed our deadline, so now she's up for grabs."

Something withers inside me at his words. I've known for a long time that Roan Bisha is a hard, ruthless man. But I never really believed he was as bad as some of the other alphas out there. There are moments when I remember him being kind; when he'd looked at me with something I thought was affection. I didn't see a lot of him growing up, and I knew things were never quite right between him and my mom, but I thought that was just the price you pay to be the family of a powerful alpha.

*But he's a monster.*

The light in his eyes is all beast, and when they swing over me, all I see is a cruel gleam of satisfaction. Like things have finally played out the way he wanted, and I'm exactly where he expected me to be. I shudder, biting on my lip so I don't let the howl inside me spiral out.

Someone calls out an amount – it sounds like fifty thousand – but it's quickly followed by double that, and I realize the second bid has come from Bisha's booth. I didn't notice his guests until now, but I realize the only woman in the room is sitting there. She's as beautiful as an ice statue, with flaming red hair and soft, empty eyes that are glued to the edge of the table. She might be trying to pretend she's not here, but the man beside her – a weaselly-looking alpha – is staring at Glo with pure lust in his eyes.

Bisha tips his drink at his companion. "You like the look of this one, Phillip?"

The alpha licks his thin lips. “She’d certainly sweeten the deal.”

I feel my lip curl at his wolfish smile, but Bisha just turns to look at the back of the room. Right at the table where Darius Raptis and Cuff Guy are now bucking under the grip of grinning togs. “One hundred, hey? Don’t suppose you boys can meet that?” He gives a shrug, flicking his cigar at Phillip, who’s now standing at the side of their booth. “The bitch is yours.”

Glo starts cursing and sobbing under her breath, right as there’s a roar of outrage from the back of the room. More togs head to subdue her packmates, but I tear my gaze away. There’s no helping them, but as I lurch towards Glo, desperate to protect her somehow, Bisha snarls in my direction. “**Stay.**”

The alpha command is enough to send me crashing back to my knees, my bones slamming against the wood. I can’t stop my cry of pain, but Bisha just smiles at the rage in my eyes. “Don’t worry, Omega. Your turn is coming next.”

Fuck him. Fuck all those alphas who grin along with the monster, eating up our fear and pain.

“Fuck you,” I hiss, loud enough for some of them to chuckle. But I push them out of my mind as the alpha with the winning bid mounts the stage. “It’s not you, Glo,” I tell her, even as her eyes swing wildly around for a way out. “Just turn off your mind. They mean nothing. Your pain is nothing. Just get through it, and get back to your pack.”

Her gaze snaps to mine, but then the weasel alpha is pulling her off her knees, and two of the togs are there to help drag her away. They head for a door off to our left, and I wonder if

that's where the other omegas are. If every one of them that's gone before us has been hauled off to be raped by their highest bidder.

I clutch the key in my hand so hard I can feel it break the skin. I really don't care about the pain, but the humiliation, being treated like less than human, that makes my insides shake. And what is it doing to the people who care about us? I think of Rory and Kelly and Cam. I even spare a thought for Link. But Arben... I squeeze my eyes shut. For the first time, I'm glad he can't feel me through our bond.

But I can't escape Bisha's voice. "This one... I think we will do her out here, for all to see."

There's a commotion at the other end of the room and I think it's Darius, finally giving into his rage. But when my eyes pop open, I see Lucas Ferrier walking into the room. He's dressed in a suit, his head held high, but he's all alone. A murmur runs through the crowd, some alphas surprised, others looking uneasy, and in moments he's surrounded by togs. But there's no fear in his golden eyes as he turns to Bisha. "My daughter is leaving with me. Now. And I'll put any man who tries to stop us into the ground."





# Elvana

A small gasp leaves my lips, the only sound I can't swallow down as I stare back at him. My dad, claiming me before his enemies and peers.

*He came for me.*

But Bisha isn't about to let him control the room, waving for a pair of his togs to force Ferrier closer. Rough hands grab him and steer him towards the booth, and when they're only a few feet apart, I'm surprised to see that Bisha is the smaller man. Not just in size, since Ferrier is a head taller, but also in his command. They seem evenly matched as alphas, but Bisha is like a dark hole radiating malice, while Ferrier – my father – glows as bright as the sun. My heart leaps even further when I realize some of the alphas, especially those from neighboring territories, are starting to mutter uneasily amongst themselves.

But Bisha glares at the room, and when the noise dies down, curls his lip at Ferrier. “You're here without an invitation, wolf. That means you're trespassing on my property.”

“My invitation is kneeling on that stage.” Ferrier's eyes flare molten gold as he stares at me, then addresses the room. “You all know who I am, and the territory I hold. Elvana Ferrier is my blood daughter and legal heir, and the papers have been lodged in Washington, London, and Paris attesting

to that fact. This gives me paternal rights to her welfare, and let me assure you, I will defend them with everything I have.”

There are more murmurs from the crowd, but Ferrier holds up a hand. “That’s not the only reason I’m here, however.” Ferrier’s voice holds such command, no one moves, and I begin to feel a twinge of hope. Maybe we’re going to get out of here after all. “While I was lodging her pack papers, I did some digging into our Head Alpha’s activities on the Continent. Roan Bisha has no doubt told you he is snatching up assets and territories in Europe and plans to spread the wealth with you all. But he has legal agreements pending with the Alphas of Prague, Budapest, and Sofia that include giving them a foothold in this country. Whose lands do you think he’s promised them?” An angry rumble now fills the room, and Ferrier’s gaze swings to the beautiful woman in the booth. “If you need a witness, Elizabeth Prior, blood daughter of Claude Vaillancourt, the Alpha of Paris, can attest to everything I’ve said.”

My heart starts to pound as I stare at Kelly’s mom, looking for some sign that she’s on our side. Does she know Kelly is in the other room, possibly fighting himself into a coma? But she doesn’t move even when Bisha puts a hand on her shoulder, draining his glass as if he doesn’t have a care in the world. With a smirk, he shakes his head at my father. “You’re as much a fool as you’ve ever been, Ferrier. Bringing empty threats and false accusations to a dominance fight are the actions of a little bitch.” His gaze swings back my way, the gloating in his eyes clear to all. “Just like the one I raised up there. As weak as her mother, but I fed them and clothed them, as per the arrangement I made with the last true Alpha of

Boston, Jarvis Ferrier.” He gives Kelly’s mom a vicious squeeze, then turns on the rest of the room. “And since everyone here has sworn allegiance to me, what happens to her next is my business. Now, who is alpha enough to mount the stage and put this worthless little bitch in her place? In return, I’ll give you a seat at my table, and a private meeting on my plans for Europe.”

There’s more muttering from the alphas, although some of them now sound like they’re considering his offer. My stomach lurches as someone slams their glass on the table, but my mouth falls open as Quentin Crouch climbs out of a booth at the back. What the hell? Last I heard, this asshole was dead, his pack scattered. I look at Ferrier, but if he’s surprised to see Crouch alive, he doesn’t show it. “I’ll do it,” Crouch calls, puffing out his chest. “But I’ll want that and much more, since you still owe me, Head Alpha. I proved you had a rat in your house, and paid for it with my pack.”

My eyes narrow as I try to make sense of his words. Does he mean Arben is the rat? How would Crouch know anything about him? But Bisha doesn’t look in the mood for more negotiations, waving the other alpha impatiently towards the stage. “You’ll have what’s yours again, soon enough. Now move it along before our guests grow bored.”

Ferrier watches Crouch with murder in his eyes, and the asshole is careful to give him a wide berth as he heads towards me. But instead of trying to stop him, Ferrier turns to face the other alphas. “Right now, you have the chance to remove Roan Bisha from the Head Alpha position. There’s enough of you here from other territories to form a pack majority. Vote him out, strip him of his title, and liberate these lands...”

“You talk a big game,” an alpha calls from another booth. “But why don’t you just challenge him, if you want his position so much?”

Ferrier is already shaking his head. “I don’t want more territory or power. My vote is we abolish the Head Alpha position altogether.”

Another alpha makes a rude sound. “You’ve come here, without your pack and unarmed, just to tell us you won’t fight? How the fuck do you expect to walk out of here alive?”

There are rumbles of agreement, and more than a few sneering looks. But Ferrier just stands taller. “I came here to free my daughter and make you aware of Roan Bisha’s plans. That should be enough to convince you, if only because you know he’ll do exactly the same to you. But don’t mistake me. I will walk out of here, and so will my daughter. The question is, how many of you will do the same?”

The crowd starts to move now, alphas pushing to their feet as shouts volley across the room. The air is so thick with simmering tension it burns my throat, but the upside is Ferrier isn’t complete alone out there anymore. Some of the alphas know he’s talking sense, if only because they’re worried about their own lands and omegas. They’re all still spineless cowards in my book, but at least they’re starting to question Bisha’s motives.

Until everything starts to happen at once. Darius Raptis and his brother move first, fists slamming into the togs as they wrestle for their guns. Bisha whistles at the togs closest to my dad, and they all leap towards him. Clearly he’s not prepared to take Ferrier on himself, and I see the contempt now in the

faces of other alphas. But scuffles are breaking out across the room, and everyone is either joining the fight or pushing to escape it. I expect Crouch to run, but he keeps coming, like he plans to drag me off in the chaos. I try to push myself to my feet, but Bisha's command is still holding me down and I give a frustrated cry. Gritting my teeth, I fumble for the key in my hand, but it's so slippery from blood and sweat, I can't get a grip. And then, to my horror, it slips through my fingers and bounces off the stage.

Fuck! Crouch is only seconds away from me now, and the rest of the room is a massive, heaving brawl. Bisha and some of his togs are retreating towards his private elevator, and I catch a glimpse of Ferrier fighting off a couple of guys while also trying to shield Kelly's mom from a flying chair. It's just me and Crouch on the stage, and I brace myself as his hand comes down on my shoulder, his fingers digging in hard. I growl at him, ready to bite as soon as he's close enough, but then I catch Ferrier's gaze. It's so bright it almost hurts to look at him, but then it slides past me... behind me... and his smile is all wolf.

I twist, trying to see what he's looking at. But all I see is a dark blur and then...

The lights go out.

Every light. From the chandelier overhead, to the spotlight burning on my face, and the hundreds of downlights across the room.

Bullets pepper the air, tearing through the darkness, and then chaos becomes blind panic.

We all have shifter sight, but it needs some light to pull on and without any windows, this place is darker than a tomb. So our beasts take over, and screams quickly turn into howls. Punches become snapping jaws, the crunch of bones and tearing tendons filling the air. A howl lodges in my throat, my skin rippling as my wolf fights Bisha's command. Maybe it's the distance now he's fled, but I feel it finally rip away, savage triumph surging through me. But before I can spring to my feet, a whisper sounds from the dark. "Get your fucking hands off my omega."

I twist to face whatever the hell this is now, but Crouch's fingers are ripped from my shoulder, knocking me off-balance. I roll sideways and pop up into a crouch, watching two shapes struggle in the darkness until one makes a high, squealing sound. Something cracks, followed by a wet, meaty thud hitting the floor. I blink, just as a thin torch beam flicks on and I'm staring up at Link, dressed head to toe in tactical black. His eyes are unreadable as he says, "Time to move, little wolf."

"I can't," I growl, shaking my cuffs at him. "You think I'd be on my knees waiting for that asshole to grab me if I could just waltz out of here?"

"You mean *that* asshole?" He flicks the light and I see white bones and lots of blood, but it's gone before I can dwell on the details. "I don't have the key, so you'll just have to wait." I grimace, but he's right. Getting out of here is the priority. "We're gonna head straight for the service elevator behind the bar. You good to run?"

He means right back across the room, through all those snarling wolves and wild bullets. “What about the others? Ferrier’s here with Kelly’s mom, and I think the guys are in the cage...”

“All under control,” he interrupts me, his voice tight with impatience. “Just focus on your own feet and not losing me in the dark.”

Even now, his assholeness makes me clench my teeth. Not that I don’t appreciate his help, but I can’t stop myself from snapping, “I thought you didn’t go into the field. Who’s looking after logistics?”

He narrows his eyes at me. “Rory. Which means anything the fuck might happen, so keep up.”

I don’t have much choice, so I let him take my hand and curl my fingers through the back of his belt. It throws my balance, since I’m still cuffed, but he moves carefully forward, his torch a sliver of light in the darkness. Of course, as soon as we’re off the stage, it gives me glimpses of the visuals to go along with all those sickening sounds. Most of the alphas are gone, either to escape the carnage or to hunt down whoever they were fighting when the lights went out. But some are still tearing into each other, while others are in the process of dying very messy deaths. Link finishes them off, his gun popping in the dark, while I try not to slip in the puddles of blood and gore and broken glass.

And then we’re moving through the room with the cage in the center, and his torch flicks over the ring. Blood is everywhere and I can’t stop myself from crying out. “They were in that? Are they still alive?”



“I can feel Kelly,” he tells me, his hand curling over his heart. “Can’t you?”

I take a shuddering breath, reaching for my bond, but it’s full of a twisting kind of fury that batters at me like a hurricane. “Jesus! I don’t know,” I whisper. “Is that his heat? He feels so angry...”

Link just grunts, pulling me around broken chairs and softer lumps that make my toes curl in protest. “I don’t think that’s Kelly you’re channeling.”

As soon as his words register, I jerk to a halt, tugging on his belt. “What does that mean?” I suddenly remember what Rory said about Link going to help Arben. “You’ve seen Arben? Is that him I can feel? What’s wrong with him? Is he okay?” Link just shakes his head, trying to pull me on, but I plant my feet. “Tell me the fucking truth, Lincoln!”

“I don’t know what that is,” he grinds out, sounding like he’s on his last nerve. “I got him out of the cage they’d locked him in, but he was beat up. Feral. I don’t even know if he recognized me. I tried to get him to leave through the nearest exit, but he knocked me the fuck off my feet and took off.” He grips my chin, pulling me so close I can see the silver in his eyes. “But if anyone can fight their way out of this place, it’s Doctor Fucking Death, okay?”

I pull free of his grip, my hands curling in frustration. I want out of these cuffs, out of my skin, and out of this nightmare of a Tower. My wolf has had enough, and I’m not far behind. “That’s bullshit, Link! There are hundreds of Dark River shifters in this building. Arben needs our help.”

Link growls at me, but then taps his headset. “Rory, any update on Marku?”

Rory’s voice comes back, full of awe even through the tiny speaker. “He’s on the move. I’m only tracking him by the bodies, but he’s headed your way. Fuck, Link, he’s really on a rampage. I don’t think you should be standing in his path when he gets there.”

“We’re not. We’re moving.” Link cocks a brow at me. “You want to walk, or are you going over my shoulder?”

I instantly try the bond again, but I can’t even reach Rory through the hurricane in my head. “We can move, but we keep on the lookout for Arben. If he needs us, we’re going to help. Deal?”

Link just grunts, but he leads me out into the cocktail lounge. He doesn’t head back to the elevator, which I assume is on lockdown, but pushes behind the bar. I follow, trying not to look at the crumpled bodies around us, and then we’re in the staff area out back. A short corridor leads to the kitchens and some utility rooms, but we keep going towards a pair of steel doors. The service elevator. I look around for the others, but Rory’s voice comes out of Link’s headset. “Ah, I sent it back up to you, but it seems to be stuck at the penthouse level. Wait, it’s moving again...” A light flicks on above the doors, and Link sweeps me backwards right as Rory says, “I think he might be in the elevator right now...”

“Fuck, Rory!”

But the doors are opening, right as something huge and dark and vicious stalks towards me from the depths of my mind. Out of the corner of my eye I see Link lift his gun, but I

dart around him right as Arben steps out of the elevator. My feet falter only for a moment before my wolf propels me forward, and then five-inch claws are coming down on my shoulders.

It's not Arben, or his wolf, but something in between. He's huge – at least eight feet and twice his normal width – with thick black hair all over his body. It takes me a moment to realize the lumps all over him are muscles and not injuries. Which means he's in a half-shift, only there's more beast than man about him right now. I can still see my Arben in the shape of his face, but the rest of him is like something out of a werewolf horror story. Because his silver eyes are staring down at me with a feral cunning that makes my hair stand on end. And when he opens his mouth, there are so many teeth fighting for space, I can barely see his lips.

“Mate.” The word reverberates through me, making my skin twist on my bones. He's calling my wolf as much as me, and she is tearing at my insides to get to him. I try to hold in the whimper of pain, but those wild silver eyes flick over me. As he takes in my injuries, a growl rips from his chest, his huge arms lifting to rake the ceiling. As bits of sheetrock rain down on us, he snarls, “**Shift.**”

The command rips through me, right as Link yells, “She can't. They cuffed her! And you're just hurting her, you rabid shit!”

The fact Link is defending me would make me laugh if I wasn't trying to rip my way out of my own skin. But Arben seems to get the message, because his claws lower to the cuffs, and with barely any effort at all, he rips them off my wrists. I

stare at him in shock, but before I can touch him, he steps around me and hooks those claws in the front of Link's jacket.

“What the fuck?” Link doesn't even try to lift his gun, his boots squeaking on the floor as he's hauled against Arben. And then my mate's head jerks down, his massive fangs sinking into Link's throat. I'm staring at them in shock, completely paralyzed by the sight, when a spiky thread twists to life in my mind. Link's wide eyes lock on me as I feel a new bond snap into place.

Well, crap.

I wince, since there's not much else I can do as Arben chews on Link's neck. And when he's finally done, he sets him back on wobbly legs and licks his bloody fangs. I try not to grimace as his eyes burn into mine. “Call your pack, princeshë.”

I put an arm out to hold Link up – seems the least I can do under the circumstances – and while he leans on me, he curses as he swipes at the enormous bite on his neck. But my monstrous mate is still staring at me like he's waiting for a response. “Um... what?”

“Call your pack,” he growls. “You will shift, and we will hunt.”

Ah. I guess that explains the biting-my-asshole-enemy part. Strength in numbers. “And what exactly are we going to do when we catch them?”

Those silver eyes blink at me, before a feral smile stretches across his face.





Arben

**Vriti te gjithë...**





## Cam

Walking into that ring to face off against Kelly was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. As we'd scrambled to come up with a plan to get into the Tower, Link was the one who suggested targeting the fighters. We have a few contacts in the Dark River Pack and know most of the guys on the circuit, so it wasn't hard to work out who was scheduled to fight. Only problem was, Bisha had brought in an outsider. A rabid fucker who didn't care who he was fighting, or why they were in the ring. Knowing we didn't have time to reeducate him, Link took him out with a sniper rifle and I dosed his manager. I knew they'd just toss someone else at Kelly if his fighter didn't show, so I'd disguised myself as best as I could and then went to fight my omega.

That first glimpse of him, barefoot and jittery, was like a punch to my chest. Rory had caught us up as we worked on the logistics, and I knew he and Kelly had finally bonded. I was happy for them – it was a damn long time coming – but I couldn't stop the pinch of rejection. Which was stupid. Kelly only ever wanted friendship from me, despite a few quick and dirty fucks when we could grab a moment in the Tower. He liked my cock, but he *loved* my brothers. And then Bisha had sold him out from under us, and the only thing on my mind was getting him back.

Part of loving a male omega is living through their heats. Violent, painful days when all they want is to kill anything in

their path. Rory said it was different last time, that Arben and Elvi had somehow tamed Kelly's wolf. But as he stalks around me in the ring, looking for another bit of flesh to sink his teeth into, I can't picture it. Kelly is borderline feral, and he's tearing into me like I'm his mortal enemy.

*Don't take it personally, dickhead.*

But it doesn't matter what I tell myself, my heart is aching. Because Kelly can't see me. He watches me like a predator tracking its prey, but there's nothing more than the flesh and bone he wants to destroy. There's no connection under the fury, no matter what I whisper in his ears. I've tried every trick in the book to get him to recognize me, and that's saying something. But for all my head-twisting skills, nothing is getting through his rage. I'm not his friend, or his brother, or his savior. I'm just a sack of meat standing in his way.

I don't know how long we've been at it, but I can hear the crowd booing and cursing as I grab him in another bodylock. They'll probably try to stop the fight soon – I've seen the asshole togs in the corner with the manager I drugged. They're about a second away from ripping out his throat for my poor performance. I'd feel bad for him if he didn't knowingly put rabid fighters in the ring against omegas. But instead, I block them out, knowing I have to hold on to the charade for just a little longer. And while it's torture feeling Kelly fight so hard to get free of my clinch, I kind of like it, too. I never got to hug Kelly as much as I wanted to, so I guess I'm making up for lost time.

Not that he sees it that way.

“Let me fucking go,” he hisses in my ear, jerking forward to snap at my neck. This time I let him land the bite, and he doesn’t hesitate. His teeth rip into my flesh, digging way too close to the vein. But he doesn’t try to rip it out, like he did when he got a chunk of my arm between his teeth. This time he goes still, his brow furrowing as he swallows my blood and whatever meat he’s taken.

“It’s okay, Kelly,” I tell him, running a soothing hand down his spine. What does it say about me that even while he has my throat in his mouth, I want to breathe in the scent of his hair? I only grew mine long because he liked to play with his, and I thought it might nudge him a little more in my direction. But now he pulls back slowly, some of those warm whiskey tones flashing under the silver in his eyes. “It’s okay,” I repeat, hoping he can see the truth behind the mud-brown lenses I’m wearing. “Do what you have to do.”

But instead of tearing into me again, he leans forward and laps at my neck. A purr echoes softly in the back of his throat, and as his tongue gently tastes the wound, I feel his cock nudge my thigh. Rages get him hard, since it’s just another muscle responding to the adrenaline in his body. But this feels different, and as omega arousal floods my senses, he looks up at me through his lashes. “Mate.”

The word hits me harder than anything his heat has thrown at me.

“Yes,” I tell him, hoping he can hear the promise in my voice, although it sounds as shaky as a wolfling’s first howl. “I’m yours, Kelly. I always have been.”

“Then why haven’t you bitten me?”

I'm still blinking at him when the lights go out.

I should have been expecting this. It's part of the plan, triggered by Link when he's in position to get Elvi out. We knew the fighting would be heaviest around her, since Ferrier had insisted on going in to distract Bisha. We'd all argued it was too dangerous, but the Alpha of Boston had insisted. With so many of the pack leaders in the Tower, Ferrier wanted to give the other alphas a chance to do the right thing. We'd kept our thoughts to ourselves on that, but I'm not surprised when I hear all hell break loose in the next room. So much for appealing to their alpha honor.

"We have to move, Kelly," I yell in his ear, hating the way he jerks in my arms. A heat is bad enough without dropping him into the middle of a fucking war. "I'm gonna get you back to Link and Rory. Do you trust me?"

"Link. Rory." He repeats their names like they're all that's holding him together. "Yes. Mates. Trust them."

It's good enough, and I breathe a sigh of relief, digging the earpiece from the waistband of my sweats and fixing it in my ear. They patted me down before I was allowed into the Tower, but thankfully, none of them wanted to get too close to my junk. As soon as the bud is in, I click the power button. "You there, guys?"

"Here," Rory replies, so loud it rattles my eardrum. "Link's gone quiet. He's retrieving Little Wolf now."

I huff out another relieved breath. So far, so good. "I've got Kelly and we're heading for the service elevator."

"Be safe, brother."

I can feel ripples of Kelly's heat still playing through his body. From previous experience, I'm well aware the smallest thing can drop him back into a feral state. But his survival instinct is strong, too, and when I lift him off the ground, he doesn't fight me. What I'm not expect is for him to lock his ankles behind my back, his arms winding around my neck. Goddamn. I almost hit the side of the cage when he starts nuzzling the wound on my throat.

And if that isn't the perfect distraction from the chaos we step into, walking with a rock-hard cock might be.

There was no way I could smuggle a torch in my sweatpants, so I have to rely on my wolf vision to navigate a path. Problem is, Rory took out all the lights, including the fire exit signs, so I'm as good as blind. But then, so is every other asshole in this place, and I doubt any of them have a helpful voice in their ear. Or a tracker in their butt cheek, injected right before I came into the Tower, so Rory could keep tabs on me.

"You're doing good, bro," he tells me now. "Head more to your right."

I grunt. Easier said than done, since bodies are bouncing off us as the crowd brings the fight out of the ring. Their bloodlust was already up, and losing the lights just tipped them over the edge. Which means I'm dodging blows and kicks, my own rage clawing at my spine when they connect. I was Kelly's punching bag for fuck knows how long, but this is different. This is our enemy in the dark. The beast in me wants to kill them all, but every nibble and lick against the wound on

my throat drops me back into a purr. Like we're in our own little bubble as all hell breaks loose around us.

“Ah, you still moving there, bro? Cos I'm pretty sure Bisha's rats are lapping you.”

I grunt again, but pick up my pace, one hand on Kelly's ass and the other punching anything that comes too close. When we get past the half wall into the next room, the noise dims a little. Seems like most people in this section have already bugged out.

“The bar should be right ahead. There's an entry point at the far end. Takes you straight back to the kitchens.”

I move quickly now, using the smooth wood of the bar to guide my way. When we push through the door into the staff areas at the back, the noise drops away, and the smell of grease and sweat picks up. Following Rory's directions, we make it to the service elevator in no time. I'm grinning in the dark, but Kelly immediately wriggles out of my grasp. “Where are the others?”

“They're coming. Rory has system control, so we can get everyone out this way.”

I can almost see Kelly's frown of disapproval, but he lets me hustle him into the elevator, the gears grinding loudly in the dark. As soon as we're secure inside, Rory kicks the emergency lighting on, and I get a good look at myself in the mirrored doors. I'm a mess of bites, claw marks, and bruises, but I'm grinning like a loon. Kelly looks like I've kicked him in the gut. “Bloody hell. I'm so sorry, mate.”

I know he's using the term in the British way, but my smile just grows. "Didn't feel a thing."

He snorts, but his eyes roam over me, taking everything in. This time, instead of looking guilty, there's a fire in his whiskey eyes. I wait until he meets my own gaze, and then tell him softly, "I lied. I felt everything, Kelly. And I'd do it all again."

He blinks, moving towards me with the same omega fluidity that just kicked my ass in the ring. But instead of punching me, he melts into my arms, and I pick him up again. Goddamn. The smell of his hair is so good, I can't stop myself from rubbing my face all over it. But then the elevator reaches the lobby, and I snap to attention. There's too much in-built security in the parking level below us, so we have to go out the public way. I wait for Rory to give me the go ahead, unlocking the main door through his system access, but Kelly stops me. "We're not leaving. Not until they all come out."

There's enough light from the street for me to see the stubborn lines of his face. "Sweetheart, Rory is monitoring them. He's in a van just outside. We can go watch with him, and if I need to come back in, I will."

"No," he says, pushing against me. His bare feet hit the ground, but he grabs my hand, pulling me around the sleek reception desk. "We'll wait in here."

When he starts pushing open a door, I jump in front of him, but it's just a small cloakroom. I don't like it; there's no room to maneuver and only one access point. But his nose wrinkles for a different reason as he pulls me inside, clicking on a small overhead light. "Ugh. Alpha reek." He bats a rack of coats

aside, standing on his toes to bury his nose in my neck. “It smells like those wankers up there.”

I smile and lean against the wall so I can lift him again. We’re getting good at the move, even though he’s not exactly a small guy. He’s put on a little weight since he’s been out of that fucking basement, but I can still feel his ribs and I cup them gently as he leans into me. A purr starts in my chest and I lift his chin from my neck to kiss his lips.

It’s mind-altering. I know all about screwing with someone’s perspective, but I can actually feel the barriers shifting in my head. That same mouth that was ripping into me in the ring is now slowly exploring mine, teasing and licking and sucking until my brain is thoroughly scrambled. And then my wolf gets on board, breathing in his scent and fixing it in his mind.

There’s only one word for Kelly now: *mate*.

I groan, but then he’s sliding out of my arms, pushing against the wall of jackets to make room as he drops to his knees. He looks up at me, and even in the shitty lighting, his face is so beautiful I can’t quite believe he’s real. “I need to get their stench out of my head,” he tells me, clutching at my hips. “I want you in there instead.”

I just give him a stilted nod, because he’s already peeling down the band of my sweats. His lips brush across my abs, his breath huffing on my skin as he discovers more bruises and cuts. I want to tell him it’s okay, but then he’s nuzzling my dick and I forget how to speak. “You smell so good,” he croons, burying his nose in my groin. “I want to drink you



down, but I want your cum on my face, too. Will you mark me, Alpha?”

He doesn't wait for words I'm not sure will ever come, taking my shaft in his hand and licking the tip. It looks red and angry in the unfiltered light, more like a weapon than a tool of adoration. But Kelly seems to like what he sees, licking his way around the head as he cups my balls. I figured I was in for a quick suck and swallow, given our location, but all that fire burning under Kelly's skin seems to have turned into a soft, hazy hunger. He's stroking and squeezing me, while his tongue explores every inch, and I'm almost disappointed to see my knot start to swell. I could stay here all night – even with the alpha reek and the shitstorm upstairs – if he keeps working me over like this.

Groans and growls start slipping from my lips as he finally takes me all the way in, his mouth a perfect sucking heat. And then a loud sigh sounds in my ear.

“You know I can hear you, you lucky shit.” My eyes snap open at Rory's voice, and I fumble for the power switch on the earpiece. Rory realizes his mistake in speaking up a second too late and starts to squawk, “Don't turn me off!”

But I hit the button, right as Kelly sucks me down to my balls, one hand stroking my taint as the other twists my knot. Pleasure rips through me and I gasp, watching through hooded eyes as he swallows furiously, then pulls back to let my cum splatter his cheeks and chin. Damn. He wasn't kidding about marking him.

“Delicious,” he purrs, one hand still stroking my knot as he rubs me into his skin. “And now I smell as good as you do.”

“Give me a minute and we’ll swap,” I tell him, my back wedged hard against the wall to stay upright.

But Kelly has a strange look on his face, and I feel something scratch the back of my mind. It’s faint, almost like a pressure pop in my ear, but I can tell it’s different for Kelly. He surges upright, dragging jackets from their hangers, and stares at me with wild eyes.

“What is it? Your heat? Are you feeling sick?”

“Arben,” he whispers. “He’s bitten Link.”

“*What?*” I shove my dick back in my pants, but Kelly is swaying and I grab his arms. “What’s going on, sweetheart?”

His throat clicks loudly, the words garbled as he replies, “Claimed him. For her pack.”

Shit. Arben is a wildcard. Ruthless, selfish, and controlling doesn’t even begin to cover it. Most would label him a sociopath. Lacking empathy, with little to no genuine remorse for his actions. Manipulation is as natural to him as breathing, and deceit is second nature.

As a spy inside Bisha’s network, this psychology makes sense. It’s unforgiving, dangerous, dirty work, and he’s been doing it his whole adult life. But there’s nothing cold-blooded about Arben Marku. Nothing unfeeling or detached. If anything, from the little I’ve seen, he struggles with his emotions, and he’s given everything to protect the Ferrier family. Which means he’s also dedicated, selfless, and heroic.

So what happens when you push someone like him too far? When you take away his sense of control and threaten the people he loves most in the world?

I click my earpiece back on to hear Rory screaming the answer. “Arben’s out, he’s wolf is calling the shots, and he’s taking no prisoners!” He makes a strangled sound. “Oh, shit!”

“What?”

But it’s Kelly who drops back to his knees, his spine jerking as he gazes up at me with silver eyes. “*Call your pack,*” he growls. “*You will shift, and we will hunt.*”

The words aren’t his. I get that much. Which means Arben is speaking through him, and like Rory said, calling the shots. And even I can hear a whisper of the command, even though I don’t have any real connection to him. He’s mated to Elvi, has bitten Link, and has a connection through him to Kelly. The loop closes with Rory, who’s mated to both omegas. Leaving me firmly on the outside.

Which might not be such a bad thing as Kelly shifts and throws himself against the cloakroom door. I manage to get it open as his beautiful red-gold wolf tears around the reception desk, his claws scratching at the marble foyer as he runs for the service elevator. I’m one step behind as he leaps through the open doors, turning just in time to see another wolf barrel through the door. My claws snap out, but I quickly scent Rory and shove myself back against the wall. His wolf shoots me a snarl, but when I punch the button for the doors, he stops glaring at me and rubs himself all over Kelly. The mated pair huff and yip as they catch up and I try not to roll my eyes at the public display of affection. It’s just plain old jealousy, after all.

I’m not sure where we’re headed, but Rory obviously had the sense to program the elevator before he went wolf. A

moment later, the doors open and I stare out at what must be the penthouse floor. I've never been up here – when we were held in the Tower, we never got further than the entertainment floor – but I don't need directions. I barely see the luxury furnishings as the wolves run ahead of me, leaping over coffee tables and zipping around club chairs as they follow a trail of carnage into the next room.

Blood, bullet holes, and bodies are scattered throughout the penthouse like gory breadcrumbs. I recognize a few of the senior togs - Bisha's most loyal followers and biggest dirtbags – and don't exactly shed a tear. But then I stumble across a whole new level of violence.

A metal door that could protect a tank has been ripped off its hinges and is lying in the hall. Huge claw marks are raked across the front; a testament to the kind of force used to pry it loose. I suck in a harsh breath, but Kelly and Rory are giving excited yips as they're greeted by Link's black wolf. He flicks me a glance, but then they all sit back on their haunches as I peer through the gap left by the door. The small space is outfitted with a control panel, leather couch, and mini fridge, but not much else. This has to be the penthouse's panic room.

Although, from the stench in the air, we're way beyond panic and well into terrified territory. Only this time it's our tormentor who is all alone and backed up against the wall.

Bisha is a blubbering mess as he holds his hands up in front of him, trying to wave off whoever drove him into this state. A part of me catalogs it all, since it's not often you see a psychopath brought so low, but then I feel a hot wind on my neck and the Head Alpha starts screaming. I spin around as a

silver wolf pushes past me, her metallic eyes taking my measure as she runs her flank across my legs. I vaguely realize this is Elvi, but as Bisha's screams become gurgles, I keep my gaze on the man-monster in her wake. Rory was underplaying it when he said Arben had gone wolf, because Doctor Death now looks like an eight-foot walking nightmare.

I have to crane my neck back to look at him. And then wish I hadn't when he narrows his eyes at me. "You didn't answer her call, wolfling."

I have no idea how he can form words with all those teeth, but I don't insult him by making excuses. "I'm not pack. Well, not her pack." Because it's clear Elvi is the one who called my brothers. Not something an omega is meant to be able to do to an alpha, but then, this isn't an ordinary pack. Which makes my outsider status all that harder to take.

But as the sounds behind me finally die away, Arben looks me over, checking each wound like he's replaying the fight with Kelly in his mind. And then he gives me a wild, wolfish smile. "Then let's go home and fix that."



## Kelly

We stay in wolf form until we're clear of the building and piling into the van Rory abandoned when he answered Angel's call. No one criticizes him for leaving it unlocked in a busy street during rush hour; we're too busy trying to pass ourselves off as a pack of wild dogs to the early-morning office workers. Shifting back so quickly, especially after a heat, zaps the last of my strength and I collapse across Angel's lap. She looks like a bloody Valkyrie as she smiles down at me, her golden eyes still flashing with her wolf. I shiver and press my lips to her naked thigh. Sucking Cam off in the cloakroom filled my head with his alpha scent, but now I want to bury myself in my omega.

"This turns you on?" She asks quietly, running her fingers through my fucked-up hair. "You saw what I did to Bisha, didn't you? Aren't you grossed out?"

I didn't just see it, I heard it. And smelled it, too, which is unfortunate, but a wolf's sense of smell is about a million times stronger than a human's, so it's not like I could block it out. But all I focus on is the sour edge to her perfume as guilt and regret battle to drag her down. "You stopped him. Ended his poison, and maybe finished off the worst parts of his pack." I hold her gaze so she can see how proud I am, how much I admire the hell out of her. "I know revenge played its part, and maybe that makes you feel guilty, but who else was

gonna make him pay for your mom? For the things he's done to countless omegas over the years?"

She dips her head to brush her lips over mine, but I barely get a taste of her before she pulls back with a sigh. "Ferrier wanted to vote him out. Do it all formally, by the law. Not tear him to pieces while he was cowering in his panic room."

Arben is up the front driving – since none of us were going to fight him for the privilege – but he turns to look over the seat back at her. "Lucas knew it wouldn't work. Trust me, princesshë. Your father knew what we were up against, and he won't blame you for what you did. As for how you ended him, it was a mercy compared to what I would have done."

An echo of his monstrous rage plays through my mind, and I don't doubt it one bit. Compared to an omega heat, what Arben unleashed was a living, breathing inferno, and Bisha got off easy, if you ask me. But Angel just twists her lips and sighs again, so I scoot up beside her on the bench seat and wrap her in my arms. Rory has been just waiting for his chance, quickly sliding in on the other side to do the same. Cam and Link keep watch from the corners and I feel a pang at their guarded expressions, but Angel just gives them a small smile. "Thanks for coming for us." She winces at the sight of Cam's injuries and gives my nipple a quick pinch. "Did you at least *try* to pull your punches, Sunshine?"

I spit out a laugh. The rage that consumed me seemed to burn off when the lights went out, but in a way I'm glad it held until I got to sink my teeth into Cam. It's not a claiming bite exactly, since an alpha has to initiate it, but I definitely think we're on the same page as to what comes next. Pressing a kiss



to Elvi's temple, I give Cam a cheeky wink. "Don't worry, I made it up to him in the cloakroom."

Surprised eyes swing his way, although I notice Link stiffen as he studies his brother. Elvi must catch the whiff of jealousy in the air, because she gives me a sympathetic look. "I think we need to talk through a lot of things, but right now I'm bushed. Think we can all just nap until we get to Boston?"

"Puppy pile," I reply, snapping my fingers at Cam and Link. They don't need to be told twice, although there's an awkward moment as they try to fit themselves into the space near our legs. They're all just so damn big, which in any other circumstances isn't something I'd be complaining about. And it's kind of amusing how much they resemble sulky kindergarteners as they shove each other for prime position. In the end, Arben growls at them to quit it and they settle fast enough. Seems no one is going to argue with the monster man lurking inside the deadly assassin.

We all end up snoozing until we reach the outskirts of Boston. I can't exactly say we're soothed by the scent of each other, since we all smell like crap, but there is comfort in feeling your pack around you. A new sensation for me, and maybe for the others too, because when we pull up to Ferrier's estate there's a lot of sideways looks going on. What's next? I have no idea, but Angel screws up her nose at the sight of the French Folly. "Here?" she whines. "I thought we'd go to the cabin and sleep for a week."

"We need to stay together for now, princeshë," her mate tells her, swinging out of the driver's seat and coming to open the side door. She slides straight off the bench and into his

waiting arms, although she still doesn't look convinced as she stares past him at the house. "Just for a little while," he tells her. "Until we know things have settled down."

I don't think any of us expect that to happen for a while, but she sighs and leans her head on his shoulder, her eyes roaming over his face. "Okay, but I want to sleep in our nest tonight. Deal?"

He whispers something in her ear that makes her blush bright red, and I bite back a snigger, but she still turns her head my way. "You know I can hear you, right? It's not as loud as Arben or Rory, but I've got you in my sights, Sunshine. There are no secrets between us now."

I just grin at her. "After a year talking to myself so I didn't lose my mind, you're more than welcome to share my thoughts, Angel. Just don't blame me if you star in every single one of them. And look exactly like you do right now."

She casts a quick glance down her naked, blood-streaked body and blows a raspberry at me. "I can give you something better to fantasize about than this."

That gets us all perking up, but before things can get interesting, Mrs. Lewis, Ferrier's ancient little omega housekeeper, appears at the top of the stairs. She's almost invisible under the mountain of robes she's holding for us, and we all hurry over to grab one. When we're decent, she tells us Ferrier is waiting to speak to us in the drawing room. Angel shoots Arben a narrow look, but she leads us inside, and Link falls into step beside me.

I breathe in his scent – the first time I've really been able to do that in this form – and get an instant headrush. Maybe he's

doing the same because he grabs my shoulder as the others disappear into the drawing room, pressing me up against the wall. My breath catches to be so close to him, every aching, exhausted nerve snapping to attention. I love Rory and Cam, but Link was my first love. He taught me the meaning of the word crush, because the asshole knocked the hell out of my heart for years, but in the end, I got his bite. Something that makes me grin as he cups my head and kisses me so deep I can feel the scrape of his teeth. “Fuck, babe. You taste even better than you look.”

I cock a brow at him, since I’m just as dirty and bloody as he is. “You should let me brush my teeth and then we can try this again.”

He just props an arm on the wall and gives me a heated smirk. “You don’t need to change a thing.”

My heart gives a big old flip-flop at that. When Link is looking at me like this – and I’m face-to-face with the soft man inside the spiky shell – it’s easy to think all my problems are over. But things aren’t as simple as they used to be, and I look past him at the drawing-room door. “Things are different, though.” I lift a hand to touch Rory’s bite on my neck. Link told me he bit me on the chest because it was so close to my heart, but I always wondered if it was really because it was easier to hide. “The guys told me you never had the conversation about them claiming me. Why didn’t you tell them the truth? You know I’ve always wanted them too.”

His dark eyes dip to my lips, but not before I see the turmoil reflected in them. “And you know I’m a possessive asshole.”

True. But major personality defects are not a good enough excuse for all the bullshit he pulls, and he's running out of time to learn that. "Being with the others doesn't take away from what we have, Link. You get that, right? If anything, Angel has taught me the opposite is true."

He tilts me a thoughtful look, but it's so skeptical, I laugh. "You think Arben doesn't want to drag her back to his cabin and never let her leave? But he knows she needs us. Safety in numbers, but it's more than that." I reach out and touch the massive bite mark on his neck. "He bit you for her. For all of us. So that we worked better as a pack." I lean forward and press my lips to the wound, and I swear I can taste some of Arben's smoky scent on his skin. "We took down *Roan Bisha*. Think about that. He didn't just kill your dad, and screw with Angel's whole life. He really was poison. And we knocked him off his fucking throne."

Link's eyes flare at the passion in my voice, his fingers lifting to trace Arben's bite. For a moment I scent something on his breath that could be fear. "He'll never let us go. I can feel that already, in whatever alpha-on-alpha shit he's got planned for me."

I brush his face, lingering over those impossibly sharp cheekbones. "And that worries you?"

"Not if you're at the center of it." He turns his head to kiss my palm. "That's exactly what I want. A big, ferocious pack that lives and dies for you. That will keep you safe no matter what shit they throw at us. But what if...?" He makes a strangled sound, and I watch as he struggles to get the words

out. “What if I fucked up so bad, she tells him to cut me loose?”

So, it's not fear of Arben that is making my hard man tremble, but fear of rejection. That what he wants, and has always fought for, could be taken away now it's within his reach. I could tell him that won't happen, but Angel has already given him his marching orders once before. Right now, we're bound together by bites and bonds, but some of those ties are tighter than others. If Angel can't find it in her heart to forgive Link, he'd have to leave, and the whole thing – this big, ferocious pack – would unravel. *And where would that leave me?*

I push the thought aside as Rory comes to check on us. His eyes flare when he sees how close we're standing, but Link pushes off the wall, sizing him up. “Pining already, Rory? Or are you just here to mark your turf?”

I elbow Link in the ribs for that, but Rory shoots him the finger, then grabs me and pulls me in for a cuddle. “I fucking love him, bro, so get over your possessive bullshit. Besides, Sunshine likes to share, and there's enough of him to go around if you'd stop trying to cockblock the rest of us.”

He proves that by grabbing my ass cheek, which shoots a bolt of pure, molten lust straight to my dick. But before I can flash them the proof of my sharing nature, Rory is dragging me into the living room and I'm trying to hide my boner from the Alpha of Boston.

Most times I've seen him in this room, Lucas Ferrier is seated at the massive polished table, groaning under enough food to satisfy a pack of wild dogs. But now he's sitting on the

sofa before the fireplace with the angel wings carved in the mantle. The rest of the room is silent, watchful, and I quickly realize it's because our angel is crumpled in Ferrier's arms, her shoulders shaking as she cries her eyes out.

My heart gives a painful squeeze at the sound of her anguish, and the only thing that stops me running to her is the look Arben shoots me. It hurts to hold back, but I don't need him in my head to know this is an important moment for Angel. Having a dad who's not a lying, heartless monster is a novelty for her – in fact, it's something everyone in this room can appreciate – but up until now, she's been careful to keep Ferrier at arm's length. I get it. Trust is easy to break, but when it's someone close to you, like a parent, it doesn't just snap. It shatters.

“Some things are just beyond saving.”

I assume Ferrier means Bisha and his whole rotten pack, but Angel doesn't take it that way. She lifts wet, tormented eyes to his face. “But doesn't that mean my mom, too? She had the chance to bring us here, to get me away from him, but she was too broken to trust you.”

A spasm of pain suddenly makes Ferrier look a decade older. “No. She just refused to believe either of you needed to be saved by me. She had a poor opinion of alphas, for obvious reasons, but it was more than that. She wanted you strong, standing on your own feet, not cowering behind an alpha. Until you could do that, she was determined to keep you safe. Which meant keeping you off Bisha's radar.” He brushes a hand over her cheek and I watch as Angel fights her instincts, the very ones that tell her she has to stand on her own. “I want

to believe that if she hadn't got sick, she would have told you about me. Maybe even encouraged you to come meet me. Your mother was a complicated woman, but don't ever think she was beyond saving. Her every breath was devoted to giving you the time to learn how to protect yourself."

Angel snuffles, slowly shaking her head. "But I never showed her that. I thought being an omega meant I was too weak to stand on my own, and I didn't really believe I could... until I mated Arben." She casts a look at her mate that is full of so much pain and gratitude I don't know how he doesn't drop to his knees.

But to my surprise, it's Link who speaks up. "That's not true. You were out for Bisha's blood as soon as your mom told you the truth. And then you survived all the shit we threw at you, including my fuck-up at the auction house. You saved Kelly when none of us could. And you love him, even though he's the mate of the asshole who traded you away." Link shakes his head, not because he doesn't believe what he's saying, but because he can't believe this is who she is. "You want mates, and a pack around you, but not because you're weak, Angel. Because you know that together, we can do anything. You make us strong."

Angel stares at him, a frown on her tear-streaked face. And despite all the bonds in the room, I think I'm the only one who knows how afraid Link is right now. This could be the moment when she crushes his dreams. When she tells him what he did was unforgiveable, and there's no place for him in her pack. But instead, all she says is, "Maybe. I guess... I need to think about it some more, before I can decide if that's really true."

Ferrier uses the lull in the conversation to nod at my brothers. “Boys, will you escort Elvana up to your rooms? Anywhere on the second floor is fine; all the suites are prepared. I just need a moment to speak to Arben and Kelly.”

Angel’s frown now slides my way, but I give her a quick smile that seems to reassure her, and she lets Rory draw her to her feet. Link is the last to leave, his hand lingering on my arm, and I nudge him with my hip. “I won’t be long,” I murmur, hating that hint of fear I can still see in his eyes. “Go tell our girl more about how good she is for us.”

That gets a typical Link scowl, but he follows them out, and I finally let some of my uneasiness show. I don’t know why I’ve been singled out, but Ferrier doesn’t make me wait long to find out. “Kelly, I wanted to let you know your mom is staying in one of my hotels in the city. I invited her to stay here, but she felt it was better to give you some space while things settle down. She has no immediate plans to leave, and she’s welcome to stay there as long as she wants, but this is her number.” He hands me a slip of paper. “It’s a new phone, not connected to your uncle in any way.”

I frown at him, but put the number in the pocket of my robe. “What does Phillip have to do with anything?”

Ferrier tilts his head against the back of the sofa, those golden eyes watchful. “It appears he has been... controlling Elizabeth since your father’s death. Not just financially...”

“You mean alpha commands,” I say flatly. “Yeah, she’s never been very good at resisting those.”

Ferrier’s brows dip, but he just says, “I would call her, Kelly. Give her a chance to explain. Or, at the very least, let



her apologize. There's nothing worse for a parent than knowing you've failed your child." I don't know if the softness in his voice is for himself or my mom, but I give him a reluctant nod. A phone call won't kill me. Unlike Phillip, who I'm pretty sure didn't make it out of the Tower alive.

"Good. Now, go and wash and rest. As much as we all want to feel strong right now, we've had a shock. We've just lived through something life-changing. But know that you're all safe under my roof, and should treat this as your home. Whatever Elvana decides to do, or however long she decides to stay, you are always welcome here."

My good manners get me out of the room without insulting our host, but they don't stop me from lingering in the hallway. I can sense something in the murky bond I have with Arben, and I can't go upstairs until I know what's on his mind.

"Well, fuck," he growls, and I hear his heavy frame hit the sofa. "I bet Roan didn't see that coming."

Ferrier gives a quiet chuckle. "I don't think *New York* saw that coming." He's quiet for a moment, then asks, "How many do you think got out?"

Arben makes a tired sound. "Who knows? The ones you warned would have made it, but we'll have to look at the security feed to work out the specifics. We took out all the top togs. Lincoln got Crouch, and Raptis caught up with Phillip Prior. As for the others, some might have crawled through the cracks. But I don't think the Dark River Pack will live to see another day."

"Good." There's a hardness to Ferrier's voice I haven't heard before. "You should still plan to do some mop up,

especially of any others who double-crossed you with Crouch. And think about your place in what's coming. You know I don't believe in a Head Alpha position, but you'd make an excellent council member if we ever got that off the ground."

Arben snorts. "How many of them do you think saw me in beast-form? It's one way to get a unanimous vote, I suppose."

"We use the gifts we have." Ferrier chuckles again, then asks, "And your plans for the children?"

Arben grunts. "Careful. I'm bonded to half of them, and tempted to bite the others. Don't make this fucking weird."

"There's nothing weird about a fated pack." There's a shocked silence, and I lean against the wall, holding my breath so I don't miss a word. "What? You're surprised I'd call it that, when you have two powerful omegas at your core, and alphas bonded tighter than blood?"

My chest clutches to hear us described like that – something I thought was only in fairytales - and Arben makes a strangled sound. "Yes, but I'm not..."

"What? Guardian material? You know the old stories as well as I do, brother. The omegas are the heart of the pack, but you are the head. You show them the way, keep them safe, pick them up when they stumble..." Ferrier is silent for a moment, and there's a note of sadness to his voice when he goes on, "Can you imagine what this world would look like if others followed your lead? No more omegas being hunted and traded. No more lonely old men wondering why they didn't do more with their lives..."

“If you’re the old bastard in this tale,” Arben growls, some of his monster showing, “you should take your own advice and rest. Because you must be in shock if you don’t think you’ve done enough for this world.”

Ferrier clicks his tongue, but sounds a little lighter when he says, “Either way, there’s still plenty more we can do. I’ve spoken to Mrs. Lewis and if you are all comfortable with it, we will open the house to omegas again. Just the third floor to start, but we have so much room...”

“And so many in need.”

This, they clearly agree on. And as their conversation turns to plans for housing omegas, I sneak away before I’m caught like the kid Ferrier thinks I am.

*A fated pack.*

And suddenly I can’t get up the stairs fast enough.



# Elvana

I'm so drained, Rory plucks me off the stairs and carries me to the nearest omega suite, and I can't summon the will to resist. Despite the carnage of the night, he smells like wet earth after a storm, and it's so easy to rest in his arms. I'm vaguely aware of Cam and Link trailing behind, but my mind is back in that room with Kelly and Arben. I don't know what my dad wants to talk to them about, but I miss them both as if they've been gone for hours. Which is nuts. This is a big house, but they could be by my side in a minute if I really needed them. Or even faster if I sent an SOS down the bond. Not that I want to do that after Link's little speech about how badass I am.

I peek at him over Rory's shoulder as we enter the omega suite. It's his first glimpse at what my dad is prepared to do for omegas in need, and I hope it sends him a clear message. He might be willing to cross any line to keep Kelly safe, but my dad's approach is to build omegas up, not put a wall between them and the world.

"Feeling okay, little wolf?" Rory asks me as he carries me over to the bed. It's another classic omega nest; round and deep and big enough to house an entire pack. But I can't stop the pang of longing for my old bedroom. Or better still, for the well-used nest in Arben's cabin. Yes, that's where I should be. Buried under my alphas, with Kelly sucking on my lips... "What do you need?"

I frown as the question shatters the fantasy and rub at my arms in the borrowed robe. I need to shower and change and work out what we're going to do now. But my skin feels tight and my head is throbbing. And the three alphas at the end of the bed are staring at me like I should have all the answers.

“Elvana?” Cam clears his throat, and my gaze snaps his way. We're still weird with each other, especially after I unloaded on him at the ball, and I don't really know how to get past that. I mean, yes, he put his body on the line to save Kelly, but he screwed with my head in the worst way. I must be communicating some of this with my stare, because he actually looks nervous. “I don't know if this is the right time, but I have something to give you. I mean, give back. I had it with me at The Looking Glass, but... well, after what you said downstairs...”

Okay, so this is awkward, but it's actually painful seeing Cam – the guy with a brain always plotting its next move – struggling to find the right words. So I just thrust a hand out. “What is it? Because if it's my memories, I already got them back on my own, and I remember every fucking thing.”

Rory makes an *oof* sound at that, and Cam looks like I've kicked him in the balls, but he hands my mom's Luna ring over, anyway. And I just stare at it for so long, he starts to huff in distress. “Shit. I should've waited.”

“No!” I turn the ring over in my palm, staring at the angel wings engraving. “I'm glad you gave it to me. This means a lot. But how did you get it?”

Cam looks relieved, but he rubs a hand over his new buzz-cut. “I went back to the hotel. Searched a few rooms on the

floor your mom was on, and then kind of stumbled over it.”

I pull a face, remembering the potted plant and the pile of puke. “Thanks. I wasn’t sure how I’d feel if I ever saw it again, but I’m glad I have it.”

“Good work, bro,” Rory says happily, nudging Cam in the shoulder. “Now, why don’t you assholes use the bathroom next door, so our girl can wash in private.”

But before they can leave the room, Mrs. Lewis pops her head in the door, a phone in hand. She presses it against her hip as she tells me, “It’s a woman, hoping to speak with you. She wouldn’t give her name, but she told me to say omegas should always stick together.”

Glo. I breathe a sigh of relief, nodding that it’s okay to take the call, and Mrs. Lewis leaves as the guys gather round. Seems privacy is off the cards when it comes to dealing with mystery callers. But after what her pack did to get us to the Tower, I figure they deserve to listen in. “Glo, it’s Elvana Ferrier. Just so you know, my pack can hear you.”

There’s a long silence, although there’s plenty of background noise. Link tilts his head then mouths, “airport.”

I nod, but the others look grim. “If you have something to say, this might be your only chance. I’ve had a shit night, and it sounds like you’ve got somewhere to be.”

“Yes,” she murmurs, sounding tired and defeated. “I’m leaving the country. But I didn’t want to go without reaching out. I need to know... Will you be coming after me?”

I don’t even bother looking at the guys. “I don’t have any bad feelings towards you, Glo, if that’s what you mean.”

“And my pack?”

I think of waking to masked men in my house while Kelly was sleeping at my side. Rory downed by a tranquilizer, even though he'd torn up the kitchen to get to us. Being tossed in a van and driven to the one place Kelly should never have had to return to. But I also think of Darius, holding that picture I'd taken through their window, then watching while Glo was dragged away by the highest bidder. “That depends. Are they going with you?”

“Yes, we're traveling together. I've had to slip away, because they wouldn't like that I've called you. But I'm not too proud to beg, Elvana. I want to know that you won't harm them for what they did. Your reach is now infinite as your father's heir. Can I expect to wake one night to *mjeku i vdekjes* at our beside?”

I could ask her the same about her pack, although I'll doubt Doctor Death will ever let anyone get that close again. “Look, I can't speak for the guys, but if you're going away for a while, maybe that will give us all time to cool off. Just make sure you ring before you get in touch again.”

The guys all shoot me different degrees of disapproval at this plan, but I ignore them. “I think you've been through enough, Glo. Stay safe, and look after yourself.”

She says something soft in Italian that sounds like a prayer, but then a hard edge enters her voice. “It's my father who needs to watch his back.”

She rings off without another word, and I drop the phone on the bed. Before it even hits the mattress, I start to pace, and Cam and Link move towards the door. But Rory stops them



with a look, moving around me like he thinks I'm about to shatter. I rub my arms and glare at him, annoyed that I've somehow gone from strong to fragile. I mean, I'm not sad. I'm glad Glo got away from the Tower, and I'm relieved any kind of showdown with her pack has been postponed. But I still feel like something is missing.

“Little wolf,” Rory says, his hands up and his smile careful. “You’re pacing a lot. And you look kind of jittery. Not to mention, you’re giving off enough heat to cook a barbecue on your sweet ass.”

I stop mid-stride and glare at him. “What are you rambling about, Rory?”

“She’s going into heat?” Kelly booms from the doorway, and the next moment I’m in his arms, his lips pressed against my sweaty temple. Oh shit, I really am burning up. *But my heat?*

“I can’t!” I wail, staring into Kelly’s wide eyes. “I just had one! How could I be horny again?”

“New mates,” he tells me, biting his lip to hide what I suspect is a shit-eating grin. “According to your dad, we’re a fated pack. That means you and me are gonna be a mess until we lock down all our bonds. Fucking and fighting...” His grin finally pops out, but he swallows it again at my glare. “Well, less of the fighting now I worked out bites and blowjobs can kill off my heat.”

Cam makes a choking sound from the doorway that sounds suspiciously like a laugh, and I turn my glare on him. “You think this is funny? Because I’m not above punching an injured man.”

Link smirks at him, but I don't know why he feels so smug. "And as for you, I still haven't heard a real apology. Saving my butt means we can be in the same room, but it doesn't mean I want your knot in my..."

"Whoa!" Rory waves his arms like a drunk referee. "How about we all just sit down and talk about this?" He waves the guys towards the nest, while I resume my pacing. When they're all perched on the edge of the bed, he says, "Just lay it on us, little wolf. What are the rules of your heat? I mean, assuming you don't just want to snatch up your sexy assassin and take off for your cabin..."

"Rory!" Kelly screeches, almost knocking him off the bed. "Don't put that idea in her head!"

"No," I snap. "Kelly needs to be there. And you're on the hook as well, since..." I wave a hand at my neck, then throw up my hands. "Everyone should be there, I suppose, but I just don't want this to get weird."

"Then we need some rules," Rory says soothingly. "Are you okay with sword-crossing? Back door entries? Teeth, but no fangs?"

I give him a helpless look, but Kelly leaps off the bed. "We need our cock conductor in here!"

Link looks horrified, especially when Arben walks into the room, his dark eyes snapping to mine. He's changed out of the robe into black pants and a white button-down and looks beautiful and imposing. But I doubt the guys can forget his transformation in the Tower, and the divine, deadly creature lurking under his skin. Not that Kelly cares. He runs at Arben like he's exactly what the doctor ordered. Which, from the

way my pussy clenches at the sight of them together, is probably a fair diagnosis. “Our angel’s going into heat. Rory wants rules, but I figure you’ve got that covered.”

The light that flares in Arben’s eyes is so erotic, I have to lock my knees so I don’t melt onto the floor. “Princeshë, you need your pack?”

I give him a wordless nod, since now they’re all in the room with me, my wolf is sitting up and panting like a thirsty bitch.

“Good,” he purrs, his hand going to the back of Kelly’s neck as he studies the other alphas. “Then the only rule you need to remember is we are here to serve our omegas. If they want your knot, give it to them. If they just want to lick each other until we’re all in a mindless rut, then suffer in silence. They choose who bites and where. Just like every other part of our bodies. If you can’t deal with that, then leave. This heat is for our fated pack. And we will start as we plan to go on.”

I gulp, waiting for Cam to say it’s too much, or for Link to start arguing about the rules, but instead, they all just look at me. “Anything they want,” Rory says, his voice thick with an adoration I can feel through the bond. “We know how fucking lucky we are to be here.”

I blow out a breath, feeling overwhelmed, but open my arms to him. Rory swoops me up so fast I feel my head spin. “Can we start with a shower?” I ask as he pulls me in tight. “I still feel gross from last night.”

It seems to be the right thing to say, because everyone heads into the bathroom, and there’s a comical moment as we decide who is going in the shower and who gets the tub. No

one wants to go to another suite, so we start a kind of procession line, Cam and Link holding the shampoo and body wash while Rory scrubs everyone down. But when he gets to me, Rory's hands feel so damn good, I have to cling to Kelly so I don't leap on him and screw up the process. Which just gets me sucking my omega's perfect pink lips, his slick cock grinding into my thigh until Rory is groaning and groping us both. Arben finally declares we're as clean as we're going to get, and I take my wet, throbbing body over to my mate. He's rolled up his sleeves so I can see my bite mark on his wrist, and every nerve in my body quivers as he traces a drop of water across my collarbone. "Are you ready, Omega?"

"Yes, Alpha."

He gives me a soft smile, nothing like the dominant man who held back his love for so long. "Then into your nest. Let's show your mates what it means to serve our omegas."

I shudder, but grab Kelly's hand and pull him into the other room. We scramble onto the bed, our skin hot and damp, and he looks at me with his wolf in his eyes. "Are you okay?" I ask, suddenly realizing what this might mean for him. "Are you going into heat, too?"

"Not like you think." When he presses my hand to his chest, I gasp at the heat coming off him, but he just smiles. "I can feel you in the bond, and all the guys, too. Maybe I'm just high off the pheromones, but I definitely don't want to fight anyone."

Relief courses through me and I lean forward and kiss him, drenching myself in his taste and scent. Kelly has been addictive since the first moment our mouths met, but right now

I need him more than my next breath. He must feel the same, because he moans against my lips, his hands holding my face so he can delve deeper. I lose myself in the sensation, chasing his tongue and sucking it clean, then licking back inside his mouth for more. We're kneeling in the middle of the bed, our bodies so close I can feel the thud of his heart, but this kiss is too perfect to break.

Until I hear a sigh from the bathroom door and lift my gaze to our waiting alphas.



# Elvana

They're clustered around the threshold, a vision of damp skin and clenched muscles as they watch us with silver eyes. And I remember what Arben said about suffering in silence if they go into a rut. But that's not what I want from them. I want their moans and their gasps, and every other sound I can wring from their bodies. Which sends my gaze lower, taking in their heaving chests and strong arms, the long, thick erections that press against the front of their towels. The needy bitch in me makes a frustrated sound, and Arben clicks his fingers. The towels drop, but he's the only one who approaches the bed.

"Omega," he says, reaching out to cup Kelly's face. "Do you still want my bite?"

"Yes." I can feel the shudder that wracks Kelly's body, his eyes wild as he looks at our alphas. "I want you all."

"Good. But we will work up to that." His smirk is enough to have us both clutching each other. My pussy throbs, both in anticipation of his stretch, and at the thought of seeing him buried in Kelly. But Arben just turns to Rory, waving him forward. "You will ride our prince, while he pleasures our princess. Make sure you tend both their marks."

Rory looks like he's won the jackpot, his grin so wide it burns away the last of my nerves. He's so giving of his body, so ready to throw himself between us, I can't help but giggle. Which earns me a chorus of growling purrs, the other brothers

drifting closer as Kelly snatches another kiss. “You’re magic, Angel,” he tells me, his lips roaming across my flushed cheeks. “Thank you for letting me into your nest.”

“You’re in my heart, Sunshine. Where else would I want you to be?” I pull him over me as I lie back against the soft bedding. It doesn’t smell like us yet, but it will soon, and that makes my thighs fall open, my perfume filling the air. My blood pounds in my ears as Kelly’s face sharpens, the animal inside him scenting my need. “Will you fill me up, Omega?”

He groans, but his hands are firm on my hips, his cock dripping his slick onto my belly. It’s in these moments that Kelly looks every inch the alpha, and it sends a thrill through my aching body. I love his smiles and sunshine, but I admire his strength, too. The best of both worlds, which he proves by bending down and burying his face between my thighs. Right as I feel the sweep of his tongue, Rory drops at my side to kiss my throat. He mimics the long, deep licks Kelly is taking of my clit, his mouth lapping at the double bite on my neck. I watch the color rise in Arben’s face, and knowing he can feel Rory through his bite makes me throb that much harder. And then I’m coming all over Kelly’s face, his purr vibrating against my core as he drinks down my slick.

Rory smacks a kiss on my lips, then rolls away, his hand stroking down Kelly’s back. Our omega shivers at the touch, but he’s already working his cock between my thighs. I open wider, gasping at the sight of Rory rising behind him. He waits until Kelly is all the way in, my sheath already fluttering around his thick length, and then he curls over Kelly’s back. Rory stares deep into my eyes as he whispers in his ear, “Your



cock buried in our angel is the hottest thing I've ever seen. Does she feel as good as she looks, Omega?"

"So good," Kelly groans. "I can feel her trying to suck me in. Looking for my knot."

"No," I moan, rolling up to cover him in kisses. "It's just you, Kelly. You fit perfectly inside me, like we were made for each other."

"I know, Angel," he gasps, his hips rolling into mine. "I never want this to end."

"Then present for our alpha," I tell him, that wanton creature under my skin clawing to the surface. "I want to see it on your face when he opens you wide."

A wave of alpha growls rolls through the room at that, not least from Rory, who's staring down at Kelly's perfect ass. He drags his hands down the back of his trembling thighs, his eyes glinting silver at the view. "You're creaming so hard it's tricking down your legs, babe. Can I open you up, like our angel wants?"

"God, yes!" Kelly's head snaps back, his hips jerking as Rory circles his hole with adoring fingers. The air is thick with our combined arousal, and I don't blame Cam or Link for stroking their cocks as they draw closer. We all hold our breath as Rory pushes into his omega, Kelly's hooded eyes lowering to mine as he feels every inch of the stretch.

"Is it good, babe? Is he taking care of you?"

"It's perfect," he moans, pushing back until Rory is as deep as he can go. "But I need to fuck you too, Angel. Going to give you everything he gives me."

I love the sound of that, edging up on my elbows so I can watch and feel at the same time. And it's exactly like Rory is pushing into me as he thrusts into Kelly, especially when his hands curl around my knees, spreading me even wider. I'm so wet, we glide together without any strain, my mouth watering at the sight of all that rolling, flexing muscle. I snatch kisses where I can, but they just make my thirst grow, and Arben presses a thumb against my bottom lip.

“You need something more, princesshë?”

“Yes,” I gasp, then suck hard on his thick thumb. He's the only one still dressed, and as much as I love his hands, they're a poor substitute for what's pushing against the front of his pants. “Feed me your cock, Alpha.”

He pauses, those midnight eyes flashing, but then he cups the back of Cam's neck and pulls him close. “He's yours too, my love. So ready to serve you, he's leaking all over his hands.” As if to demonstrate, Arben slides his fingers down Cam's cock, before giving the swollen length a firm tug. More pre-cum gushes out, and he lifts a dripping hand to my lips. I suck it clean, while Cam leans against Arben and watches me with hooded eyes. “Does his taste please you, princesshë?”

“Yes,” I say again, because to pretend otherwise would be a lie. My wolf recognizes this man as her mate, and I'm not stubborn enough to deny either of us. Arben gives a satisfied growl at the acceptance in my eyes, his hand back on Cam's cock as he feeds it into my waiting mouth. I'm so overwhelmed by the sight, by Kelly stretching me wide, and the grinding groans falling from Rory's lips, my eyes roll back in my head.

But that just makes everything else so intense. The sense of fullness in my mouth and pussy. The taste of Arben's skin and Cam's pre-cum on my tongue. The groans and gasps as we climb towards release. And the salty caramel scent as omega heat meets alpha rut.

There's no plan to tip us over the edge. I want to savor it all, for it to never end. But as my orgasm rips through me, my gland starts vibrating against Cam's length, and he gushes down my throat with a roar. I gulp as fast as I can, Arben there to push the overflow back between my lips. But then Kelly gives a stuttering shout and floods me with cum. Rory starts working his knot inside, my omega so boneless he has to roll aside to avoid crushing me. Cam is there to catch him, cradling his head in his lap as Rory kisses his spine. I blink away tears as I rise up next to them, watching the vision of my omega quivering on an alpha knot. Kelly rolls his head, begging for a kiss, and I hum as he sucks Cam's cum from my lips. "You're so loved. So perfect," I whisper as he rocks under Rory's gentle thrusts. "We're going to fill you up so good."

"Yes," he gasps, "but you, too. Please. I want to see. I want to feel everything you do."

I look at Arben, because he will always be the first alpha I see in any room, but he tilts his head Link's way. I blink, almost surprised to see the other alpha leaning against the wall. And as his dark eyes meet mine, our pack suddenly doesn't seem nearly big enough. I know Rory is busy right now, and I just sucked Cam dry, but does Link have to be the only option?

“You don’t have to do it,” he tells me softly, clearly seeing the struggle in my eyes. “I will work for it, anyway I can. But it doesn’t have to be now.”

My heat doesn’t like that. It wants alphas falling over themselves to please me. “Get on the bed, Alpha.”

The hard note in my voice gets them all looking my way. The spike of alpha arousal is like electricity through my heated blood and I thrust back my shoulders, pointing to the middle of the nest. Link’s jaw throbs, and my wolf watches it like a lame rabbit. Yes, that’s what we want. But other than that twitching muscle, he doesn’t move, and I feel my wolf flash in my eyes. “What? You don’t like being ordered around by an omega?”

Arben chuckles down the bond, but doesn’t comment. He doesn’t need to. I can feel how much he wants this, how much he likes to see me control the room. “Well, too bad,” I tell Link, who still hasn’t moved. “Right now, I’m in charge of logistics. And you need to get fucked.”

That gets them all laughing, but I silence the room with a look. When Link realizes I’m not about to back down, he takes a hesitant step towards the bed. But it’s the glance at Arben that makes my hand jerk out and slap him hard on the ass. The crack is so good, I barely feel the pain. But Link looks like I’ve grown two heads. “What?” I lift my hand so they can all see my red palm. “Did you seriously look at Arben for direction right now? You think the big, bad alpha is going to save you from your omega?”

“No,” he says, but the answer is a clear hell yes. “I was just checking you really want this...”

I move so fast he backs right up to the edge of the bed, and I don't stop until we're touching. Heat immediately flares in his face to have me so close, but I know it's the angle, my sweet scent, the press of soft breasts on his chest... Not because he really understands what I'm offering. "Why, Link? Because I'm aggressive? Because you're wondering if I actually enjoy pushing you around, smacking your ass?"

He rubs a hand over his face, looking anywhere but at me. "You have every reason to beat me up..."

I would roll my eyes at him if I couldn't feel his remorse through the bond. He thinks I'm going to be cruel, but that's not my nature. And it's not what we need if we're going to be a strong pack. "I'm not going to beat you up, Link. Arben will do that, if it's your kink, but I'm going to break you down another way."

"How?" he asks, and none of us miss the needy note in his voice.

"I'm going to strip you of all your bullshit. Turn you inside out, so you can show us who you really are. And if we like what we see, I'm going to get Arben to bite you again." His eyes flare wide at that, and I smirk. "My neck, you'll earn. It might be in a week, or in a year. But we have to know each other first. No lies, no bullshit. Agreed?"

He's already nodding, and the swell of approval from Arben is almost as strong as the joy and relief on the other guys' faces. Crap. They really thought I was going to toss Link out of the pack. "Okay," I tell them, "so my heat is coming on fast, and soon I'm only going to be thinking about what I want. So, I'll set you up, but then Arben will take over." I

glance at my mate and he nods, those midnight eyes sparkling in a way that makes my thighs clench. Oh, boy. The clock really is ticking.

“Rory.” His head pops up, as eager as usual. “How’s your knot going?”

Our omega gives a shuddering sigh as his mate pulls free of his body, and I grin. “Good. Now, Sunshine, my love.” Kelly’s hooded gaze meets mine, so open, so trusting. Fuck, but I love this beautiful man to pieces. “You will be edging our lying asshole of an alpha into a cum-coma. Is that something you’d like to do?”

The energy in the room suddenly skyrockets, and when Kelly flashes me a heated smile, I give Link’s chest a little nudge. He doesn’t move, his gaze still boring into mine, like he doesn’t understand. “Our omega is going to suck you until you see stars,” I explain, reaching out to pinch at his nipples. “Supernovas. Heavenly bodies. A gaping black hole as dark as your soul. And just when you think you’re about to die from all that endless pleasure, he’s going to open you up and take your ass. And right as you’re about to explode, Arben is going to bite you.”

The flare of Link’s arousal is so strong, I almost consider kissing the asshole. But I need to keep things clear between us. We’re not enemies, but we’ve got a long way to go before we’re friends. Or at least that’s how I’m going to play it until my heat takes over and I try to sit on his pretty dick. “Are you willing to do that, Link? Get fucked by your omega, while another alpha claims you with a bite?”

Link doesn't hesitate. With a wicked grin, he turns and dives on the bed, scooping Kelly up in the process and covering him with hot, needy kisses. *Well, it looks like even a lying asshole of an alpha can take directions some of the time.*

I'm still smirking when a pair of warm hands encircle my waist, and Arben nuzzles my neck. "And what will you be doing next, my love?"

I shiver as his mouth explores his bite, his teeth nibbling at the double mark. "I have a vague memory from my last heat I'd like to explore." Arben draws back so I can look at Rory and Cam. "If you two are up for it, I mean."

"Fuck, yes!" It's Rory who pumps the air with his fist, but Cam is the one who gets to me first. He moves so fast, and presses so close, I can feel his heart hammering in his chest, and my wolf purrs her approval. It sends a warm shiver through my body and I tilt my head, drawing Cam's gaze to the wet outline of Arben's mouth on my neck. "Are you ready to join us, Alpha?"

His throat bobs, but Rory is there with a smile, and Arben with a hand on his neck. I feel his heart rate settle at the contact, and he holds my gaze as he says, "It'd be my honor, Omega."

I nod, but now I have them where I want them, I'm feeling a little overwhelmed. So I turn to Arben and say, "Since my memory is a little murky..."

But it's Rory who jumps in, a wide grin on his face as he slaps Arben's ass. "Time to go to work, cock conductor!"





## Arben

Our omega's heat fades with the afternoon light on the third day, and when I look around at the pile of exhausted bodies, my beast gives a pleased rumble at the display. I can still feel that other part of me – the monster that's lived under my skin since I was a child – hovering at the edge of my mind. But for the moment he's content just to watch. To feel. And to soak up the bounty of happiness rippling through our bonds.

Although the man in me can't resist leaning over in my chair and tracing the three bites on Elvana's neck. Cam's is the freshest, and I watch him twitch as I stroke the skin. His head is in Kelly's lap, where he dropped after licking our omega's cum from Lincoln's back. Kelly more than lived up to Elvana's trust in him, pushing our arrogant alpha until he was a huffing, wheezing mess. The howl he gave when he finally came – after hours of very impressive edging – still rings in my ears. And the warm meat of his throat, now permanently marked with my alpha bite, lingers on my satisfied tongue.

*Pack.*

Elvana must sense my happiness, because she gives me a sleepy smile. “Feeling like the king of the castle, are you, my love?”

Rory's head pops up from where he's licking her navel. He's as gorgeous now as he was riding my knot, and from the

cocky smile on his face, he knows it. “Is that what we’re calling Daddy Death now? The King?”

Elvana gives a tired squawk. “Yuk. No, to both.”

“But you’re our princess.” His hand slides up to squeeze a raw nipple, his smirking mouth licking up the moan that falls from her lips. “And Sunshine is our prince.” He rolls to smack a kiss on Kelly’s temple. “The rest of us are obviously your pathetic little minions. So what does that make him?”

He’s resting his chin on her belly now, grinning at me as she giggles under him.

I just lean back in my chair, my large hands framing my even larger dick. “I’m your throne, wolfling.”

That gets sniggers from all of them, even though they’ve all had their turn perching on my knot. I cock a brow at Rory, who’s chuckling the loudest. “Do you need a reminder of where your ass belongs, Alpha?”

The flash of arousal down the bond has Link leaning over and smacking his brother. “Quit it, Rory. I’m not going to be able to walk as it is.”

“Yeah, but it got rid of the stick up your butt,” Elvana murmurs, and the joke is on Link as they all turn their sniggers his way.

*Children.*

I would sigh, if I wasn’t so busy sniggering on the inside.

“Not to get serious on you,” I tell them when I’m more composed, “but we should think about what we’re naming our new pack.”

The chuckles quickly dry up, and I feel a wave of emotions clamoring through the bond. Now that everyone is connected by bites and blood and vows, we're like a newborn wolfling, struggling to make all of its parts work at once. And because we are a fated pack, formed around our two omegas, everything is heightened, our emotions all magnified.

Which is why a pack like ours needs a guardian. Someone to draw them all together, and to weave them into an unbreakable whole. And as I send a wave of calm through the bond, they settle, turning curious faces my way. I'm sitting close enough to the nest that my princeshë can reach up and thread her fingers through mine. She's a sweat-stained, cum-coated mess, and I love her so hard it hurts. "What name are you thinking, my love?"

"On paper, I think we should be the Starling-Ferriers. It recognizes both packs, while protecting your legal position."

Because as Lucas Ferrier's heir, my princeshë is now a queen in the world of shifters.

"And Lucas is the only one of our fathers worth a damn," Link murmurs, playing with the ends of Kelly's tangled hair. "As long as he doesn't mind a bunch of assholes hitching a ride on his family name."

Rory grunts and shoves his brother's shoulder. "Speak for yourself, Link. Daddy Ferrier already loves me bad."

Elvana rolls her eyes, but I know she likes the idea, a grin tugging at the edge of her swollen lips. "And what are you going to call us in private, Arben Starling-Ferrier?"

I lean down and place a kiss right over my heart, cradled in her perfect chest. “Ours.”

THE END



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