

BOOK ONE

DOVES & DEMONS

FREAKS OF NATURE
DUET

CLIO EVANS

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OceanofPDF.com

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Hello Creatures.

DOVES & DEMONS IS DARKER THAN ANY OF MY PREVIOUS works. Please read the content warning below.

Violence, torture, body mutilation, child abuse (off page, bruises seen, not done by any main characters), mental abuse, gaslighting, manipulation, being locked into a box, somnophilia, forced orgasms, forced breeding, dubious consent, CNC, humiliation, breeding kink, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sadism, masochism, fisting, double penetration, triple penetration, blood play, blood sharing, monster cocks, past parental death, grief, pregnancy fears, breeding without pregnancy, discussions of sexual assault, murder, breath play, spitting, choking, and more.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions.



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THE DOVES

London 1708

THERE WAS NOTHING TASTIER THAN A HEART IN DESPAIR.

Humans liked to create. I liked to destroy. I liked to watch them come apart at the seams as their creations failed...but even so, I'd never been able to truly prevent them from their growth.

It had started with sand sifting through the delicate bodies of hourglasses.

That was when I knew their world was changing.

I was created from the magic that was first imbued in their precious metals, a creature drawn up from the *other* world. I had been ravenous at first, devouring the little mortals. Stealing their inventions. I'd grown stronger and stronger, feasting on their ingenuity.

Over time, I stopped. Eventually, I became a watcher.

I liked to see how humans created their devices. The more they learned, the louder the world grew around me. The more monsters had to stay out of their way.

There had been a time when monsters didn't have to lurk. They didn't have to cling like urchins to the darkness, to keep themselves away from the mortals that surrounded us.

Unfortunately, those days were long gone.

Now, I watched a man from the shadows. I could hear the burr of gears as he tinkered away. Yellowed papers were scattered across his oak desk, his notes scrawled in ink.

He was ahead of his time. I could see that by the aura around him, the energy that bled out from his soul.

His fingertips were black with grime. He had been working for hours non-stop, all while I had watched him.

I couldn't tear myself away. I was sure there were plenty of other interesting humans, but this one in particular drew my interest.

"I can feel you," he whispered.

I was nothing but shadows and darkness. I didn't move, still waiting to see if it were true.

Could this human sense me?

The man turned in his chair, looking straight at me. His eyes were dark brown, his expression kind. He smelled of oil and ink, remnants of both leaving smudges on his hollowed cheekbones.

I glared. Humans never sensed me, and if they did, they surely didn't acknowledge me. I was the chill up the spine, the hair standing on the back of the neck, the feeling of dread that sent heartbeats thrashing. Humans knew of me, but liked to say I was nothing more than their imagination.

"Who are you?" I hissed. "*What* are you?"

"Just a man," he said gently. "I am creating something. Something for men and monsters. I've been waiting for you."

"*How do you know me?*" I growled, my voice rattling.

I pulled forward from the brick walls of this home, oozing from the dark cracks like oil. My body clicked and scuttled, my bones constantly forming and reforming. My claws dragged over the floorboards as I crept closer.

"What is your name?" I hissed.

"Peter Ellis," he said. "I know you. You devoured my grandfather's soul. I saw it happen when I was a child."

Even in saying so, it was clear he didn't fear me. Instead, his violet gaze was almost sombre.

“Come closer, creature.”

He swivelled back in his chair, turning his back on me. I did come closer, drawn in by my curiosity.

I looked over his shoulder, staring down at the array of items on the table. Bronze plates, screws, polished gears, scattered pieces of metal that he was working into different shapes. All of them were laid out in a way that reminded me of one of the horrible flying creatures that screeched in the air during the day.

“What are these abominations?”

“Doves,” he whispered lovingly. “They'll look like doves, but they'll be so much more. I just need something that will bring them to life and help me complete their purpose.”

I cocked my head and then he turned in his chair.

I felt the pain before I realised what had happened.

The human had driven a blade straight through my chest, straight into my heart. I didn't move, but I did draw in a gargled breath as reality dawned on me.

I was only weak when I was in this form, and only my heart could be destroyed.

“*How did you know?*” I breathed, slowly sinking to the cold floor.

“Perhaps it was just my imagination,” he whispered, twisting the knife.

Blood gurgled in my throat and I growled, but it was no use. After killing humans for so long, I had become accustomed to being the hand of Death—but now I could feel her cold touch embrace me. A fickle beast, death.

“Why?”

“I needed it,” Peter said, his expression becoming hungry. “I needed it to complete my plans. Humans won't cower in front of monsters any longer. All this time, you've been

hurting us over and over, but now... Now, you've helped create the beginning of the end for monsters.”

I blinked, my vision beginning to darken.

“I'll see you in Hell,” I rasped.

He only smiled, and I realised that perhaps I'd been wrong about humans this whole time.

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CHAPTER I

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INTO THE SHADOWS



New York City 1921

IRENE

“CLOSE THE CURTAINS, Irene. I don’t want strangers to peep in on us.”

I sighed dramatically and yanked them shut, watching as dust bloomed from the fabric. I turned, going back to the long iron framed mirror that sat in the corner of the room, giving myself a once over.

“I doubt anyone would want to see inside,” I said, running my hands over my dress.

Despite the fact that my sister and I were handling business that was sad, we still dressed perfectly. My midnight blue dress was covered in sequins, my auburn hair in short waves. A brown mink fur shawl clung to my shoulders, keeping the winter draft from reaching me. A pearl necklace draped my neck, gleaming in the amber lighting that washed over the old living room.

I smoothed down one of the flyaways, meeting Florence’s gaze through the mirror.

Florence rolled her green eyes at me, setting down a tray with three steaming mugs on it. Her hair was much longer than mine, and she had it pinned back into a bun—the same

hairstyle she'd insisted upon since we'd been 9 and 11. Where I liked bronze and glitter, Florence loved florals and gold.

“No, *who* in their right mind would ever want to spy on two young ladies,” she teased sarcastically, rolling her eyes.

I giggled, but then heard the door to the house open and close, a familiar voice echoing through.

“Evening, ladies!”

I grinned, winking at Florence as she lit up. Anytime George was near her, she always seemed to glow a little brighter.

We were in our parents home for the first time since their death. It had been written over to us in their will, but I had already told Florence I did not want it. Neither did she. We had many memories here of growing up, but without Ma or Pa around, it wasn't the same. I could no longer find life in the colours that bloomed through the home, or comfort in the odd objects my father had enjoyed collecting. As time went on, everything continued to collect dust and become nothing more than a sad memory.

Both of us had moved on with our lives after their passing, dealing with our grief in different ways.

I had met the world of science and parties, she had met George. They had been together just over six months, falling madly in love.

I didn't want a love like that. He seemed to absorb her in ways I never wanted. I liked him a lot, though, and enjoyed seeing her happy. Still, I was devoted to my studies.

George's footsteps echoed over the worn hardwoods as he came into the living room, rain sticking to his glasses. There was a second cerulean lens over one of them that allowed him to magnify words or details— and it looked rather silly to me, which made him all the more endearing.

George was the reason the New York Institute of Steampower, NYIS, had accepted me in the first place. Typically, they only allowed men through their lofty doors, but he had vouched for me and my supposed brilliance.

Regardless of if they believed him, I was there to prove them wrong. Like my father, I enjoyed creating things. To figure out how they worked, to pull them apart and put them back together again. Just last week, I had been part of a study on blimp engines and dissected one in my room. Never mind that everything had been covered with oil and grime after I had finished.

After that, I'd gotten cleaned up and made my way to one of the most anticipated parties in NYC. It had been a grand time, and I'd danced the night away in a flapper dress and heels until the sun rose, and then I did it all over again.

I prided myself on being a double edged sword; a woman of science, and a woman that knew how to have a good time. Meanwhile, Florence was getting ready to settle into a married life that would be full of children and... well, I wasn't entirely sure what else she wanted in her life.

I pretended to continue to smooth my hair as he gave Florence a quick kiss on the cheek. "We won't be here long, darling," he said earnestly. "I have just met with the appraiser and he will be here first thing in the morning. I know both of you must be feeling exhausted already. Grief wears on the mind."

Florence nodded, giving him a soft smile. "Thank you, George. Irene and I have no wish to stay here longer than necessary."

George cupped her face tenderly for a moment. I found myself staring through the mirror. Would someone ever look at me that way?

Did I even care?

George let go, his eyes wandering around the room in awe. His dark brows raised, his moustache twisting as his lips pulled into a broad grin. "This is incredible. Thomas Ellis was a brilliant man."

I looked away for a moment, not showing that the mention of my father's name stung.

When our parents died, my sister and I had taken to living together in an apartment at the heart of New York City. We had been left a large sum of money that had allowed us to live a comfortable life. It had been that way for the last year, even though I barely remembered the first six months of it. The rest of the time, up until now, had been filled with studying and having fun.

“Come and sit, Irene,” Florence said, gesturing to the couch. “And drink your tea. It’s one that George bought for us to enjoy. An English breakfast from London, was it?”

My nose wrinkled. I’d never been a tea drinker, and I couldn’t force myself to be that polite. Even for George.

“Yes, it’s a nice one from London,” George said with a smile.

“I’ve been sitting all day it seems,” I said. “Just let me stand, Florence.”

Her eyes narrowed in annoyance, but I ignored her.

George paced around the living room, turning items over and inspecting them. Our father had enjoyed collecting odd objects, and it showed. There were the models of different flying machines that hung from the ceiling, and the many clocks that clung to the pastel green walls, ticking in unison. Supposedly, my father had gained his love for oddities and trinkets from his father, whom I’d never met. My grandfather had been an inventor too and his father before him. He had even made some of the objects in the house— like the bronze birdcage that sat next to the fireplace with a silent automaton dove perched within.

The room still smelled like my father. Steam, tobacco, and coffee.

I felt that greedy ache in my chest, the one that would overtake all of my other emotions if I let it. I blinked back tears, my cue that it was time to go to sleep.

“I’m going to bed,” I announced, turning to offer both of them an imitation of a brilliant smile. “I am simply exhausted and would like to rest before tomorrow. It’ll be a long day

handling matters here before I have to attend a party tomorrow night, if either of you would like to join.”

“Irene,” Florence sighed. “You go to too many of those. What will the men think of you?”

I snorted, giving her a dry smile. “That I’m a capable and exciting woman. And quite honestly, Florence, I don’t care. I can drink and dance the night away and still wake up and turn in a better project to the university than they can.”

George laughed and Florence gave me a sour look.

“I don’t think we’ll join you, dear,” George said. “As wonderful as it would be.”

“It would be great! Get Florence out in the world instead of doing whatever you do.”

She rolled her eyes now. “I thought you said you were tired.”

“I am,” I said.

“Of course, dear,” George said. “Let us know if you need anything. Oh, and perhaps take the tea up with you. It should soothe any worries.”

“Thank you,” I said.

For a moment, I’d been able to *stop* worrying. Maybe arguing with Florence helped.

I went to the coffee table, one that had been fashioned from old boiler room pipes, and plucked the cup of tea from the tray. I paused to give Florence a peck on the cheek.

“Don’t be too unforgiving,” I teased her.

She swatted at me, but ultimately let out a little laugh that told me she wasn’t that annoyed with me.

I left the two of them and went down the familiar hall, one that had wallpaper that was peeling in some spots. The scent of tobacco, bourbon, and linseed oil lingered, an echo of my parents. Paintings hung, pieces that showed London in all of its glory. Silver blimps decorated the skies, steam blurring the suns.

My mother had been an English painter, my father an American inventor. You could tell which parts of the house were decorated by who just by walking through.

Their death had been a tragedy and still did not make sense to me. I would never forget when the inspectors had arrived to deliver the news. I'd never heard Florence cry like that.

Florence took more after our mother, and I took after *him*. The inventor Thomas Ellis, who had helped refine the steam engines that now ran the largest blimps in the world. I loved to create things that were helpful, to learn about the sciences. After we dealt with this business of the house, I would go back to my studies at NYIS.

I went up the stairs to my room, closing the door behind me. I lifted the mug and sniffed, then wrinkled my nose and put it down. It smelled like dirt and something else that didn't sit well with me. I only drank tea when I was being forced to, and would just dump that into one of the plants in the morning. Despite having a mother who had never missed a day without it, I much preferred coffee.

The lamp on my side table cast an amber glow over everything, illuminating the brass bed frame and desk. I went to my suitcase and pulled out my night clothes, my thoughts starting to unravel.

I would try to sleep and forget about everything until the morning. By this time tomorrow, I would be back in my apartment, surrounded by books and blueprints.

I changed and then climbed into my childhood bed, knowing that soon I'd get to go home.

THE SOUND of crying tore me from my dreams.

I sat up straight in bed, my heart pounding in my chest as I blinked away the sleep. I stared at the door, listening intently.

Had it just been a nightmare? I had them more often than I cared to admit, but this...felt different.

There was silence for a few moments, but then the cries started again.

Muffled voices echoed through the house, voices that I didn't recognize.

I stilled for a moment, frowning as I tried to decipher what was happening— but then I heard Florence screech.

Any fear that I had was overshadowed by the need to help my sister. I jumped out of bed and grabbed an umbrella, the only item within reach that I could use to defend myself.

I yanked open my bedroom door and took off down the steps, not even attempting to disguise that I was awake.

A pair of hands grabbed me just as I hit the bottom step, and I screamed, hitting the intruder in the shin with my umbrella. He let out a growl, releasing me.

“Florence!” I said, running down the hall.

My breaths became faster, my heart pounding in my chest. My ears began to ring as I stopped, my world falling to pieces.

I froze in the doorway of the living room, trying to understand what was happening before me. I looked back, seeing only shadows in the hall where the intruder had been.

Florence lay on the floor, unmoving. Her dark curls were splayed around her, blood inking the ends like sable paint brushes.

George stood over her, his expression one of a madman.

The furniture was all turned over, the walls smashed into. The clocks were smashed around us, some of them still ticking but no longer in unison.

A chill spread through me, panic creeping in. Was this a nightmare? Was I still dreaming?

George looked up, raking fingers through his dark hair. He cleared his throat, his expression once again of the composed man that I knew.

I realised in horror that the man I had thought to be my future brother-in-law had merely been wearing a mask this

entire time.

“You’re supposed to be in bed, Irene. Asleep. What happened to the tea?”

“I didn’t drink it,” I whispered.

“You stupid girl,” George said, shaking his head. “Stupid, stupid girl. Now, you’ve involved yourself in matters you shouldn’t have known about.”

“What did you do to Florence?” I whispered, my voice trembling.

He nudged her with his foot, his lips tugging into a dry smile. “She’s still alive, Irene. I had to do this so that she wouldn’t see. But then you had to come downstairs and ruin it all.”

I was frozen, my mind still trying to understand what I was seeing. I could feel terror latching onto me, holding me in place even though I should have jumped into action.

George was *good*. He’d always been good.

And yet, my sister was on the floor unmoving.

George let out a low snarl and marched over to me, grabbing me by my hair. I screeched, elbowing him and trying to fight, but he was stronger.

“*Where is it?*” he growled. “You must tell me, Irene. *Now.*”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about!” I screamed. “George, this isn’t you!”

“You don’t *know* me!” he thundered. “The *doves*, Irene. Where is the other dove? Your grandfather made them, but only one is here.”

His grip tightened, pain bursting across my scalp. I stilled, my chest heaving with pants.

I had no idea what he was talking about. I squeezed my eyes shut for a moment, thinking about the dove. The automaton, the one that had always been silent. My father used to take it out of the cage once a month, taking it downstairs to

his study where he tinkered away at it. I had never known why, because nothing ever changed.

The memory of him burned in my mind. My mother used to take him cups of coffee, giving him a soft kiss before returning to her art.

I swallowed hard, pushing away the memories. They were too pleasant to be thought of at a time like this.

“I don’t know.” I blinked back tears, staring down the hall into the obsidian darkness obscuring everything. “I don’t know. I’ve never seen a second one. I know nothing of the first.”

George cursed, letting go of my hair. I immediately reached up, covering the spot that now ached.

“It’s not here, *human*,” a voice rasped. “You lied to the Rippers.”

“No, no,” George said, his voice a desperate whisper.

I watched as he paced for a moment, his eyes wide with fear. His voice shook as he spoke. “I thought this was the truth. I swear it.”

“You *lieee*,” the voice whispered.

“I would never lie to the Rippers!” he yelled, his breathing rapid.

“We don’t like *liars*, George.”

The softness of their words was frightening. There was a bite to them, an inhumanness. A chill worked through me, tears rolling down my cheeks.

“Take her,” George said, shoving me forward.

I hit the hard floor in the hall, my wrists and knees burning with pain.

“Take her, Egor. She is the child of Thomas Ellis. She knows where the dove is, I’m certain.”

“What of the other woman?”

“She knows nothing. You’ve seen into her mind.”

I sat up slowly, dread working its way through me.

“Take her as collateral to Jack. We have one dove.”

The darkness seemed to chuckle, and I felt something touch my face even though I couldn’t see it.

“You were asked to locate both, human. Or are you so forgetful? Jack *needs* both doves. They have something that belongs to *her*. She will not rest until it is found.”

“The other may not even exist,” George exclaimed.

He sounded scared. I’d never heard him sound like this, but I apparently hadn’t known him at all.

“Why would I want Peter’s great granddaughter? She is of no value to us.”

My eyebrows pinched, confused by the mention of someone I’d never heard of before. I inched back, trying to crawl away.

George reached down and grabbed me by the hair again, growling. He shoved me back, sending my body down the hall again.

I rolled to my feet, even as I felt a hand grab onto me.

“Let me go,” I said, trying to push *it* away.

“Perhaps they can break her,” George said, his voice almost a plea. “Perhaps the memories are hidden in her mind. Perhaps she’ll just be another meal for you, Egor.”

“A lot of *perhaps*,” the darkness chuckled.

I let out a scream, trying to pull away, but it was no use.

Something heavy hit me in the back of the head, and I felt myself fall into the shadows.

CHAPTER 2

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THE FREAKS



London 1921

JAMES

“SHOULD BE ANY MINUTE NOW, LADS,” I muttered, staring down at the streets.

I was perched on a rooftop of one of the shops that owed me money, my wings pulling in tight. The moon was absent, clouds of dark steam blotting the midnight sky. London hissed and buzzed around me, the factories in this stretch never stopping. If I looked behind me, I could see the lights from signs and buildings burning like candles across the night. It was colder than I preferred, but it didn’t matter.

I could feel the blood lust warming me, the taste of victory so close sweet on my long tongue.

This part of the Thames had been cleared out, the street below silent. Any of the shops that might have bustled with customers had been cleared out by my men, and I watched as they sent the last of the bystanders away.

I avoided casualties when possible. Not because I cared about killing, but because it created a fucking mess otherwise.

By now, word would’ve gotten out that the Freaks were attacking— but the Rippers would be too far away to thwart us immediately. The Rippers were the mob that ran London, a group of monsters and humans heralded by a creature known as Jack the Ripper. They owned most of the business, the

mayor, the warehouses, and banks. They took whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, and didn't do anything to help anyone other than themselves.

There was a saying that once you were a Ripper, you were always one— but that wasn't true. I had left and formed my own mob known as the Freaks. I absorbed the leftovers, the forgotten, the hated and misunderstood. We killed people when it was needed, but we also helped them too. Monsters as well.

I wanted to live in a world where creatures like me didn't have to claw their way up from the pits of hell just to be able to get a fresh breath of air.

Tonight, the Freaks had their business on the Westside, a deal with a business man that had sworn his loyalty to me. Well, that had been foolishly betrayed, but I was using it to my advantage.

I'd let Morte deal with that slimy bastard after we achieved our goal here.

I turned my gaze upward, watching as a silver blimp began to sink down towards the docks below. Its rotund body moved slowly, inching lower and lower. The undercarriage had windows, and I could see shadows moving back and forth as they readied for landing.

The aircraft held the key to the downfall of the Rippers, and I was salivating over it. I could feel our triumph—the first stab into the heart of the gang that I hated so much.

Hated, but respected. Jack ran an empire, but if history proved anything, it was that every kingdom could and would fall eventually.

“Almost,” I whispered.

My claws tightened into fists, my mechanical wing clicking as the gears turned. I let out a low hiss, my patience growing thinner.

“All the civilians are clear, boss.”

I looked down to see one of my men, Boris, leaning out of a window, his expression one of respect and fear.

I gave a subtle nod, which was enough to send him on his way.

Good. The men of our gang, although human, were reliable. I had found the best of the best, the ones that had been fucked over by the Rippers in one way or another. I might not have been warm and fuzzy, but I had a reputation for being fierce, honest, and loyal.

I heard a shout. My lips tugged into a wry smile as the humans on the docks, unsuspecting of what was about to occur, began to prepare for the landing of the aircraft.

The engines cried out, steam bursting from one of the many valves as it began to land. Ropes were sent down, the docking process beginning.

The humans went back and forth as they secured the ship. The lights of the undercarriage burned, the shadows within moving like little ants. Did they know? Was that the reason for their frantic movements?

It creaked and groaned as it made its landing, screeching as the gears slowed.

“The dove has landed,” I whispered, knowing that both Morte and Charles could hear me.

This would be a quick operation. We had been nipping at the Rippers’ heels for years, but after moving all the pieces into the right places— we would finally sink our teeth into them.

I had started as a nobody in the underbelly of society, a creature born into the darkness of our monstrous world. It had corrupted me, broken me, burned me— but I had clawed my way through the filth until I was close to the top.

There weren’t many monsters like me left in the world. Many even took the pretty pattern on my one wing as a sign of weakness. I was tall and lithe, my shoulders broad but not nearly as wide as my brothers.

Not brothers from birth, but the three of us had made a blood pact.

Charles and Morte.

Charles. He was an Unseelie with a brilliant mind— one that he used to wreak havoc on everything around him. There wasn't a blueprint in London that he didn't have memorised, not a monster or human that dared cross him— no. No one in their right mind would risk hearing the cursed melodies he could sing, the ones that could force a being to dance until their bones crumbled, or laugh until they went mad.

Charles was one of the only creatures that I felt anything for. He infuriated me, but he also made me a better leader.

It didn't hurt that he was a good lover either.

Then there was Morte. A creature so foul that even I shivered in his presence at times. He was always covered, clothed in dark fabrics and a haunting plague mask befitting his name. It always made me smile to watch fear overtake those that even glimpsed at him, even as I felt its icy trickle down my own spine.

I had never seen his face or body, but I knew that it was sewn together from those that he murdered. He used his magic to create his physical form however it satisfied him, even if it meant carving the eyes or lips from one of his *dolls*.

To Morte, humans were merely toys for him to use however he pleased.

Of the three of us, he was the most twisted. Our bastardly trio made up the leaders of the Freaks— the most feared gang in London next to the Rippers. We had created our kingdom on the fringes of their world, ruling the pieces they neglected. We collected the businesses and people that they overlooked, using their negligence to our advantage.

This was a game. A game of power, of control.

I quite liked being in control.

The Freaks were out to destroy the Rippers, and tonight would be the beginning of the end for them.

Let the game begin.

Charles walked toward the docks, his silver hair gleaming like the moon. He carried a cane, swirling it in his fingers as he whistled. The melody was one I was all too familiar with, and I felt a shiver of excitement.

His stained glass wings were pulled in tight, his walk one of a drunk. He staggered forward, approaching the humans on the docks that were working to tie down the blimp.

One of them shouted at him, their hand gesturing for him to leave.

I could hear Charles' gleeful laugh from here.

His whistling stopped and he lifted his cane. He hit one of the men, sending them sprawling.

For sure a broken jaw from that swing.

The other men began to shout, a couple of them running at him. Charles allowed them to tackle him, his laughter growing more unhinged.

I narrowed my eyes, glaring. *Come on, you bastard. We don't have time to play.*

While Charles claimed to never read my mind, it seemed as though he heard me. His voice lifted into the air, beginning his eerie hymn.

I closed my palms over my pointed ears as I continued to watch, not wishing to be caught in the dark enthrall of his song. I could hear the agonised screaming even with my muffled hearing, the other humans on the docks falling like flies. Dominoes being knocked over by an invisible force, one by one until no one was standing.

Charles sat up, turning his head. Even from this distance, we could see each other.

I could see his smirk at our win.

I let out a sigh, lowering my hands. If we weren't being watched by our men, I would have given him a rude gesture.

My sources had been correct about there being only humans for this landing, as the Rippers were busy on the other side of town with the oily scumbag.

I had orchestrated this with a precision that even our enemies would appreciate when it was all said and done. If our enemies appreciated anything, it was when they were outmanoeuvred in a way that made them scramble.

Jack would be furious, and undoubtedly there would be repercussions.

My wings spread behind me, my mechanical one clicking as the gears shifted to allow its movement. I fixed my top hat and goggles, and then grinned as I stepped off the roof.

The wind caught my wings and I soared down. I watched as a human sprang up out of nowhere and ran towards Charles like a fool, but he didn't make it far.

I landed right behind him, immediately grabbing his head and snapping his neck. The satisfying crunch edged the adrenaline running through me.

The body fell to the side, thumping as it hit the wooden planks. I turned, already moving towards the blimp.

Charles turned, scowling. "He must have been wearing ear plugs."

"Sloppy, Charles," I teased.

"No, no," Charles said, the Irish lilt to his voice making me smile. "That was *stunning*. I serenaded them with my song ___"

"Focus," I growled.

I glanced up, seeing that several of our men had joined us. A few of them were with us as backup, while the rest wreaked havoc on the west side of London, keeping our enemies distracted.

I reached into my coat pocket, pulling out a watch. It was almost midnight now, and everything was right on time.

“They should be realizing they have been fucked by now,” I said. “We need to move fast. Get in, get the dove, and get the hell out of here.”

Charles gave me a fanged grin, shrugging as he withdrew two rayguns with golden gears that only turned when he was holding them. At their centre were clear glass bulbs with holstered electricity that was already buzzing to life.

He waved them at me, imitating gun noises. “*Pew, pew.*”

“Don’t point those at me,” I growled. “For fuck’s sake, be serious, Charles. Our men are watching.”

His eyes shifted to glance at the men in question, while the third eye on his forehead winked at me. “Go on, boss. I will stand guard.” He turned, planting his feet far apart and spreading his wings as if it would make a statement.

My eyes fell to his backside for a moment and then I let out a growl, tearing my gaze away.

Later, I reminded myself.

Shouts echoed, their panic making my heart thump with excitement. I let out a chuckle as I went to the door of the blimp that the humans were so desperately barring from the inside.

“Silly little humans,” I chuckled, amused.

I looked up, glancing at all the windows, and scowled.

Was that...blood on the glass?

No matter. I reached into my coat, pulling out one of the many bombs I carried with me. I leaned forward, sticking it on the door.

I could hear their panicked screams as they realised what I was about to do.

We might have more casualties than I had planned, but the chief of police owed me for rescuing him from his most recent mess. The bastard had fucked the mayor’s wife, and needless to say— that didn’t end well. We now had a new mayor, and a list of people to call favours on when needed.

Some could say I was generous. I certainly liked helping in times of need.

I smirked to myself, stepping back from the door to the blimp.

“James!” Charles barked.

I turned to look at him, raising a brow. Charles tilted his head, his three eyes burning with irritation as he gestured towards the road and buildings. Three creatures were headed our way, undoubtedly lackeys that Jack had sent.

“Morte will take care of them,” I said. “I’m sure their deaths will be swift.”

Charles raised a brow but didn’t argue, his guns still crackling and ready to go. Whenever he used those things, strands of his silver hair floated around him from the static energy.

It made him look like a madman.

I lifted the device in my clawed hand, clicking the button to the bomb.

It immediately exploded, shrapnel spewing out. Grey smoke surrounded me, followed by the screaming.

“Oh, I like that sound!” Charles exclaimed. “Reminds me of the courts when we’d have a feast of mortals.”

He did mean *of* mortals.

“Oh look, Morte has graced us with his presence.”

I glanced up, watching as Morte intercepted the group of monsters in a blur of darkness. One of the creatures managed to knock his top hat loose, but it was quickly placed back on his head by a shadowy tendril that came out of his cloak.

Charles made a face, looking back at me with a blank expression. “You let him have more fun than me.”

“Pout later,” I growled, going through the smoking doorway.

I ignored the coughing and groaning as I stepped inside. I heard other shouts, my antenna twitching as I felt the vibrations around me.

I stepped over the bodies, looking left and right for any sign of what I was searching for. I had grown used to carnage long ago, and only sighed in annoyance as I stepped through blood.

I'd make Charles clean my boots later.

Hell, maybe I'd have him lick it off.

The thought stuck with me as I went further in, looking through my goggles for the item we had come here for.

The *dove*. An item invented by a human that was able to turn any monster powerless, even creatures like Charles with their dark, raw magic. The rumour was that it had been sought out by the Rippers, brought all the way to London from New York City.

I couldn't allow them to get their grubby claws on an item of power such as that. To be able to render another creature powerless meant that we would be able to finally overtake London, and turn the Rippers to dust.

Jack would come begging to me, fangs and all.

I went into the main cabin, looking around for any signs of the device, anything special. There were none.

The engines whined, the sounds of the aircraft whirling around me. It hummed with life, even though it was now a grave for the dead.

I scowled, making my way to a small room where cargo should have been stored. I looked inside, expecting to find cargo.

It was empty.

I went in, looking around the room with an annoyed grunt. Anger began to make my antenna tick, my jaw stiffening.

There weren't even crates here, not even a speck of fucking dust.

“What the *fuck*,” I sneered.

A flash of anger worked through me and I tore through the blimp, checking every room. Every nook and cranny, even overturning some of the bodies.

One of the humans groaned as I rolled him back and forth.

“Fucking hell,” I cursed.

I worked my way to the captain’s cabin. The door was already ajar.

The bomb shouldn’t have worked that far. What had happened before this had landed? There wasn’t another gang that was aware of the dove— and even if there were, there were none stupid enough to interfere with our plans.

I went to the captain who was slumped in his seat. I reached for him, shaking him.

“Wake up, man,” I growled.

He let out a moan, his eyes fluttering.

I backhanded him, which woke him up. He let out a cry, but my grip tightened on the straps of his vest.

“Where is the dove?” I snarled. “Where?!”

He blinked, his lips quivering. “G-gone,” he stammered. “She left. She broke free.”

“*SHE?*” I thundered.

He nodded mutely and I heard a trickle hit the floor. I looked down and scoffed, shoving him back.

“Piss on yourself,” I muttered.

I looked through the glass windows, staring out at the city.

Had all of this been for nothing? Had I been a fool? Had Jack and their gang one-upped me again?

The thought enraged me. We’d been working to screw them over for years now, and I felt the weight of that clawing at me.

I snarled as I turned back, grabbing one of the chairs in the cabin. I threw it with all of my strength into the windows, the glass shattering in a wall of diamond pieces. I leapt through it, ignoring the shards that tore through my skin.

My wings spread and I flew straight back down to the docks, landing next to Charles. He turned, giving me a curious look. “Where’s the dove?”

“I don’t fucking know,” I said. “I looked all over the ship, up and down. There were people that were dead in there before I killed more. I’m not sure what happened, but the captain who pissed himself said it was her.”

“*Her?*” Charles growled.

I nodded and started to turn, only for a figure to smash straight into my chest. I stumbled back with a growl, staring down in horror.

The person that had crashed into me was a woman. Before I could grab for her, she landed on her ass in front of me.

She rolled to her feet with a panicked gasp, mumbling an apology before attempting to take off again. I watched in disbelief as she ran away, my thoughts not registering what the hell had happened until—

“Fuck. I think that’s her,” I said.

“That’s the dove?” Charles asked sceptically.

We both watched as she ran, moving like a lithe gazelle.

I cursed under my breath and took off after her, feeling the thrill of a hunt kick in. She was fast, but not fast enough to get too far.

I growled as I reached for her, my claws outstretching.

I snagged her and slammed her down onto the ground right as the dock ended. The two of us rolled and she cried out as we fell. I felt bones snap, but they weren’t mine.

We tumbled until her body went still. I pinned her beneath me with a snarl, letting out a low growl.

“*You,*” I snarled.

“Sorry I ran into you!” she cried. “Sorry! You’re built like a wall!”

Her scent. I breathed it in, freezing. I had never smelled anything so good before. It was sweet and heady, intoxicating.

We stared at each other, our chests heaving with pants. I could feel her tremble beneath me, tears slipping from her dark eyes.

I stared down at her, glaring.

Was the dove really just a human? It was impossible then. All of the rumours about the device being able to render monsters powerless, it was all a farce.

What if Jack was just sitting and laughing right now?

“Please,” she cried. “Please. They kidnapped me. I don’t even know where I am. I’m just trying to get to the police.”

“Shut up,” I snarled. I clamped my claws around her neck, squeezing. She gasped, her cheeks turning red and eyes going impossibly wide as I held her there. Still, her gaze never left mine. “The police won’t help you here.”

I breathed in her scent again, feeling the burn return to my blood. Whatever she was, she was a problem.

“What are you?” I growled. “Are you the dove?”

“James.”

I should break her neck. I should kill her.

A human was useless to me. Useless to us. We had been fucked over by the gods yet again, and I just wanted to see the life drain from her eyes.

Still, if this was the dove... then her running straight into me had been a fortunate twist of fate.

Charles gripped my shoulder, yanking me back.

“James! We have to go! Jack is closing in.”

Her eyes fluttered, her gaze growing dim.

“Please,” she rasped, her voice barely above a whisper.

I didn't let up until her eyelids slowly slid shut, and she went limp beneath me. I let go of her neck with a growl, sitting back on my haunches. The sounds of the world around us returned to me, hitting me with full force.

I realised that Morte was standing in front of me, his head tilted to the side. The long black beak of his mask stretched down, his gloved hands curling into fists.

Charles let out a low growl. "What are you doing, James?"

I stood up, looking down at the human. My head was pounding with decisions.

I should leave her. She was just a human. This had been a failure, somewhere the information must have been false.

Still...

"We take *her*," I growled. "Pick her up. One of you. I don't want to touch her."

Even though I couldn't see Morte's eyes through his mask, I could feel his gaze drilling into me.

"The *toy*?" he asked, his disbelief apparent.

"Now!" I barked, shoving past him. "Obviously she is part of this."

I stomped down the deck, leaving the two of them behind with her. I headed towards the street, seeing the faces of my men that were waiting for direction.

"Clear out!" I shouted.

They scrambled immediately, scattering off into the alleys and the streets. The docks became a ghost town, inhabited now only by three monsters and a human I should have killed. Blood turned the ground damp, some of the creatures that Morte had taken care of littered in pieces.

I looked up at the city, at the world that I was so hungry to control. I had fought to own it, clawed my way through the trenches to make it mine.

I glanced back, not surprised to see that Charles had been the one to pick up our new cargo. He cradled her to his chest,

his expression unreadable.

I didn't like that.

Morte stood unmoving, his black coat fluttering as a breeze lifted over the Thames. Smoke billowed from the blimp, the sirens already crying out into the night.

My wings lifted, and I took off, knowing that they would do exactly as I said.

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CHAPTER 3

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SONG OF DESPAIR



IRENE

PAIN. It was the only thing that I could feel as my eyes slowly opened.

I was in darkness. I blinked rapidly, my thoughts slowly clearing as I tried to see, but I was trapped.

Again.

All of the events from the last two days came rushing back. My eyes would have watered, but I was done crying. I couldn't feel anything anymore except the pain.

My ribs ached, my head throbbing. I stared into the darkness, trying to make out shapes. Any shape.

How had I even gotten into this mess? George had been a spy that had been lying in wait, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

There was nothing special about Florence or me. We came from a single house family— no long lost relatives that I knew of. I hadn't known either of my grandparents, but it had never mattered. My parents, despite being absorbed by their passions, had been good to us. They had raised us right, and had given us every opportunity to succeed. A regular upper middle class family, with no skeletons in the closet.

Normal.

Except all of that had been a lie. The last 48 hours had been a jarring revelation of life's cruel caprice, from being

blindsided by someone I had trusted to being locked aboard the blimp, a seemingly endless captivity in that small dark room. It seemed I didn't know anyone in my life at all except for Florence.

But even then, did I know her? The last few months, we'd drifted apart. I'd spent my days and nights being absorbed by my scholarly and social proclivities, and barely talked to her unless I had a reason to.

I'd been a terrible sister. What if she'd been secretly trapped by George?

My eyes burned, but still no tears came. I drew in a ragged breath through clenched teeth, trying to steady my heartbeat.

This was a nightmare and yet I still wasn't dead. I'd managed to escape the bastards that had taken me, only to run straight into a creature unlike anything I had ever seen before.

Literally. If I would have looked where I was going, maybe I wouldn't have smacked into a wall made of moth monster.

My mind grappled to understand the creatures that I had seen. The shadows that had taken me from my home, the creature that had bound me in the blimp.

I swallowed hard, trying to think back to being captured, but couldn't remember a damn thing. Everything was a blur. My thoughts were only crystal clear from when I had been taken to running into *him*.

Stupid. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

Freedom had been so close. I had tasted it for a brief moment, a light at the end of the tunnel. It had been a dream I had almost woken up from, only to be dragged back down into the darkness.

I was determined to live.

Determined to survive this.

What if Florence was here and I didn't know it? Was she okay?

Had she even survived?

My stomach flipped, my breaths growing uneven again. It was the only sound that I could hear in this place, aside from the soft clicking noise.

I ran my hands down my body, feeling the fabric of my nightgown that was damp with sweat clinging to me. The same nightgown I'd been wearing the night I was taken.

I wanted out of it. Desperately. I wished that I could rip it off and burn it. I never wanted to see the hole-ridden garment again.

All my life, I had believed I would become a lady of science. I would balance between the world of great minds and great fashion. I believed I would be a prized member of society, and would bring my name to the lips of every household in the world.

That was the dream, and yet it had slipped through my fingers. Every month that went by had been another where I'd found myself becoming more and more lost— and then we'd gone to my parents house.

I reached out, moving my hand up only for it to hit a wall. Horror washed over me as I realised that I was in a box. I kicked my legs out despite the burning pain, gritting my teeth.

I felt the world closing around me. No one would find me here. I would be left here to rot.

“Hello?” I whispered.

My throat was dry and it hurt to speak. I moved my hand up slowly, touching the sides of my neck. I could feel the scabs from where claws had dug in, dried blood flaking from my skin.

“Hello?” I said louder. I cleared my throat, making a noise. My voice broke between sounds, the pain still prominent. “Hello?”

I heard movement. I sucked in a breath, reaching up to touch the box. I hit it, trying to make a noise.

“Help!” I cried as loudly as I could. “Please!”

“You have a pretty voice, little dove. Even when it’s broken.”

I couldn’t help my sigh of relief, even as butterflies erupted in my stomach.

Was this the voice of my captor?

The sound of gears clicking and turning echoed around me, a rusted latch being yanked open. The lid to the box suddenly lifted and I squeaked as light flooded my vision.

I blinked until I could see, my eyes adjusting. A face was hovering over mine, long silver hair falling forward.

He was a monster. But unlike the others, he was beautiful. His skin was soft grey, his *three* eyes black. His jaw looked as though it had been sculpted, and his fangs were bright white.

He raised a brow, giving me an almost gentle smile.

I wanted to fall into his arms and sob. I wanted to hold onto him, to tell him everything that had gone wrong for me.

This time, tears did fill my eyes. He made a crooning noise, tsking.

“No, no, no, little dove,” he crooned. He had a soft Irish accent, one that made me want to swoon against him. His voice was like velvet, relaxing me further and further.

He leaned down, and to my shock, the tip of his tongue flicked out— lapping up a tear. I let out a gasp, and while I should have been horrified, I felt a stab of heat run through me.

He licked up another tear. His tongue had a rough texture to it, and was longer than a human’s. His breath was warm against my face, the silence between us a beast all on its own.

I was holding my breath even though it hurt to do so. I was frozen in place, my ears burning.

He let out a low hum. “You are too gentle for this world, little dove,” he sighed, almost mournfully.

Another tear slipped free, but this time he brushed it away with a finger. His hand was cold, but there was still a warmth

to him that I found myself craving.

Even though he had just *licked* me.

Another throb of longing assailed me, but I ignored it.

You can't possibly be feeling anything. He is your captor.

The voice of reason fell silent as he spoke, his melodic tone luring me in.

“You mustn’t cry anymore. You simply must answer some questions, and then our time together will be over. Okay?”

I nodded, sniffing.

He reached into the box, his hands sliding around me. He slowly lifted me and I whimpered as pain spidered through my entire body. I looped my arms around his neck, gripping his soft shirt. It reminded me of what a pirate might wear, with an open neck and long sleeves with a frill— but then there was the black leather corset that hugged his torso.

Even monsters looked divine in corsets.

I shook the thought away, my head spinning.

“Are you an angel?” I croaked.

He chuckled as he carried me to a bed. He laid me down in the centre, sitting on the edge of the mattress next to me. He stared down at me, and I felt a flicker of pain in my ribs.

I winced, wishing that it would stop. I reached down, cupping them for a moment until it finally stopped.

“No, little dove. Far, far from it. I’m afraid I might have to hurt you too, unless you can answer some questions.”

I sucked in a sharp breath at his grim admission, fear making itself known once again. “Please don’t,” I said. “I’ll tell you everything I know.”

“Good,” he crooned. He reached up, running his fingers through my hair gently. “Tell me everything. What’s your name?”

His voice reminded me of a song. I let out a breath, sinking into the feeling of the bed. My body ached, my heart was

pounding in my chest, but I could slowly feel myself letting it all go. I looked up at him, my breath hitching as I stared into his third eye.

“Irene,” I whispered. “Irene Ellis.”

“Good girl,” he said, offering me a fanged smile. “And what are you?”

“A human,” I said. “I’m just a human.”

He cocked his head, humming still. “Are you certain, little dove?”

“I am,” I croaked. “I didn’t even know monsters were real until...until that *thing* took me. From New York.”

I started to shiver, but he shook his head slowly, still petting me. “No, no. Let’s not shiver or cry. Focus on me.”

I swallowed hard, drawn into his dark gaze. He was mesmerising, and I wanted to *please* him.

“Tell me everything,” he said.

My voice trembled as I spoke, but I still spilled everything to him. “My sister and I went to my parents house because we were going to sell it. They died a year ago in a blimp crash, and since then, we haven’t been there. Florence’s fiancé, George, also came. They had tea and I was supposed to drink some and I didn’t—” I let out a choked breath, blinking back tears. “I went to bed, but I woke up to hear screams. I went downstairs, and a monster tried to grab me but I ran into the living room... My sister was on the floor. There was blood. George had wrecked all of our furniture and had torn into different things my father had there. He then went on about the dove, and if I knew where the other was. I had no idea what he meant. We had automatons in our home growing up, but the dove was made by my grandfather. I never met him though. Then George sent me with that monster, and I ended up on an airship.”

“That’s not where it ends,” he said. “Continue, Irene.”

His words were colder now, his tone commanding. I felt another flicker of sharp pain and I gasped, squeezing my eyes

shut for a moment.

“What’s your name?” I asked.

“I will tell you when you finish your story. You agreed to be a good girl, Irene. Tell me what happened next.”

“I don’t know,” I whispered.

It was true. All I remembered was darkness. I remembered someone opening a door, and nothing after that until I was standing at the open door of the blimp, bodies behind me slumped on the ground.

The pain increased and I cried out. I started to arch up, but he leaned over, grabbing my wrists and pinning them above me.

“I thought you were going to be good for me, Irene,” he said, his voice breathy.

I squirmed against him, pain bursting through my body. He straddled me now, pinning me beneath him. We struggled for a moment, but ultimately he held me still.

I stared up at him, wishing I could die. I didn’t want anymore pain.

“Stop hurting me,” I cried.

He let out a low growl, his expression warping into something much more monstrous. Gone was the angelic beauty that had lifted me from my cage, replaced by a devil that wanted to flay me open. A melody began to echo in my mind, a song growing louder and louder.

“I’m protecting you right now,” he snarled. “I’m keeping the others from interrogating you, and they won’t care if you scream or beg. They’ll hurt you much more than I will, little dove. They’ll break your wings over and over until you can’t fly. Do you understand?”

The song grew louder and louder, my body feeling like it was about to be ripped apart at the seams.

“I don’t know what happened!” I screamed, letting out a panicked cry. “I don’t know, I don’t know, I don’t know.”

He leaned in, his lips lifting in a snarl. “I don’t *believe* you. There were monsters and men dead on that ship when it landed. You are just a human, you claim, but you managed to escape an airship run by the *Rippers*. A *human* can’t best Jack.”

“I don’t know,” I cried. “I don’t know.”

“*You have to know,*” he growled. “You have to, Irene.”

The pain increased and I let out a shrill scream, panic now fully gripping me. I couldn’t trust anyone, and I had been a fool to relax just because he had a gentle touch at first.

“Stop,” I cried, trying to shove against him. “*STOP!*”

The song abruptly stopped, the pain disappearing with it. He let go with a gasp and then leaned back, staring at me with an expression I couldn’t read.

He moved off of me and I rolled to my side, curling up despite the pain.

This was a nightmare. I wanted to live one moment, but then the next I wished for death. I wished for all of this to end.

At least if I died, maybe I’d see Florence again.

The thought made me sob. I curled deeper into myself, hugging my knees.

I felt a hand touch me and I immediately flinched, trying to roll away, but then his arms were wrapping around me and lifting me with infinite gentleness.

“Little dove,” he sighed. “Just cry.”

I sobbed. I sobbed and sobbed as he held me, and then I realised he was carrying me.

“My name is Charles,” he said softly.

I was being lowered back into the box.

“No,” I gasped, holding onto him as he pushed me down. “No, no.”

“I will come back for you. I promise.”

“You can’t leave me here!” I screeched.

He slammed the lid of the box down, returning me to the darkness despite my screaming. I kicked, shoving up against it as hard as possible until I couldn't stand the pain anymore.

“I will come back,” I heard him say. “I promise, little dove. I promise.”

“FUCK YOU!” I screamed.

I was met with unyielding silence, a prisoner of eternal darkness once again.

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CHAPTER 4

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NEW PET



CHARLES

IT HAD BEEN three days of me taking Irene out of the box, asking her questions, and putting her back in. Not only did her story never waver, but her haunted gaze became more and more angry. I had expected her to cave, to sob, to beg and beg and beg but no.

No. She was stronger than we had expected.

Strong— and able to resist my songs.

No human had ever resisted my song.

None.

I was an Unseelie. A creature that was ancient and twisted, beautiful and deadly. I was made to torment, created just to drive mortals mad. To trick them into being pets for our court or even food.

I kicked open the door to James' office, slamming it shut behind me. The walls of the house rumbled, the wood door frame splintering from the force.

James was sitting at his desk, his eyes never lifting to meet mine. He was pouring over a massive map of London, one that helped keep track of our territories. Since our stunt at the Thames docks, the Rippers had torn into us in a way that stung more than the three of us cared to admit. Between my interrogations with the human, I had taken my frustration out

on some of the brave little Ripper cunts that had set foot onto our soil.

I was growing frustrated. I was being driven mad. Because between all of the violence, gore, and torture— all I could think about was *her*.

I was starting to look forward to opening the box. I felt a rush every time I did, and I craved the hatred her dark brown eyes poured onto me.

There was something about Irene. Something about this little dove who's wings I couldn't seem to clip.

Today, when I saw her, I would treat her to something different. Perhaps kindness would unravel her more.

I was about to blurt something out, but then I realised we weren't alone. My gaze slid over to the corner of the room. Morte stood silently, an endless void of darkness shoved into a knit together body and black cloak and one of those plague masks.

I liked Morte—perhaps even feared him some— but he annoyed me when I wanted James to myself.

Morte was looking out the window at the streets below. This house was our hideout, one that blended in with the lower class civilians. I could see that the steam was heavier than usual this morning, clinging to everything like sticky smog.

There were stormy days where the rain would be too acidic for the humans. I would watch as they changed into their gear, their steel umbrellas protecting them from any drops that might have burned their fragile flesh.

If Irene was human, would the rain hurt her?

“Morte,” I said. “I need to speak with James.”

He ignored me, while James continued to look down at his map.

“Please,” I added.

Morte turned ever so slightly, just enough to show me that he was acknowledging my presence.

“We have a meeting scheduled,” Morte said. His tone was always flat, his accent distinctly French despite the mechanical sound to him. I wasn’t sure who’s voice box he’d taken, but even after having it for so long, it felt like he was still learning how to use it. “I have other things to take care of, *crétin*.”

“Just sit down,” James sighed. “Both of you. Morte is correct, we do have a meeting.”

That *woman* was a problem. For the last three days, I’d watched her silent tears fall. Angry tears. Defiant ones. And for the first time in all of my existence, I was beginning to hate seeing a human cry. The taste of her tears had soured my tongue, her pain echoing through me.

I had *felt* her.

I had *wanted* her.

The creeping realisation was tearing me apart.

“James,” I growled.

“I’m busy, Charles,” he quipped. “I thought you had a task to do. Three days with hardly any results, and yet you’re here early.”

“James!” I shouted.

He was silent for a moment and then slowly looked up, leaning back in his chair with a blank expression. I went to the desk, slamming my hands down and leaning forward.

I didn’t care that Morte was here. I usually saved my tantrums for when we were alone, but I needed to make a point now. Morte could hear it all, I didn’t care.

“*What the bloody hell is she?*” I whispered.

James blinked, one of his antennae twitching in annoyance. “That’s what you were supposed to find out, Charles. Or did you forget that while you were fucking around?”

“Look me in the eyes and say that again, you gobshite,” I growled.

He raised a brow and leaned forward. Most of the time, I enjoyed looking into his eyes. His irises were midnight blue, with flecks of beige and gold that reminded me of the patterns of his natural wing.

I knew Morte wasn't watching us, his head still turned towards the window. He would ignore us until we were done, like always.

“What is your problem? She is just a human,” he said.

“She told me to stop singing,” I whispered. “And I have. I've been going to her, questioning her over and over. And I can't break her. I can't get through.”

James' gaze flickered. If I weren't close to him, I wouldn't have been able to see it, but I did.

“What do you mean?”

“She's... resistant to my techniques.”

Morte turned now, coming towards the two of us. I glanced up at him, feeling his gaze burn into me behind the mask goggles.

“So what you are saying is that you failed to get the information,” Morte said. “*Tête de noeud.*”

“Fuck off, Morte, and stop insulting me in French. It's not that simple. I don't think hurting her is how to win.”

James shook his head, and Morte made a noise of disgust.

“She must be a witch,” I said, leaning back. The tension was finally diffusing between us.

I turned and plopped into one of the chairs that sat across from him. Morte stood for a moment, glaring down at me before he took the other chair.

James glared at me, his shoulders stiff. He had taken his coat off, wearing only a leather vest over a soft black shirt tucked into black pants, and boots. Everything we wore was functional, which meant that the vest could hold all types of weapons, as well as the pant pockets and boots. His

mechanical wing clicked loudly as it lifted, spreading behind him.

I scowled at the noise. “When we’re done bitching at each other, I need to fix that. It’s annoying.”

James sighed, sitting back into his chair and running his fingers over his face. “I can’t be angry with you for too long, even when you are the bane of my existence.”

“Yes, I know. But I’m telling you both...” I drifted off, deciding if I should tell the truth.

But, even though the three of us had our quarrels, we’d never hidden things from each other. It’s what made us strong. It’s what made us successful.

“I want her.”

The silence in the room was murderous.

James’ eyes darkened, his brows drawing back together as he looked at me. “You’ve never wanted a human before.”

“I’m aware,” I said. “But when I licked her tears, all I could think of was how I wanted to taste her instead. To make her scream out in...different ways.”

James shook his head. “I forbid it. She is off limits. She’s our prisoner. And she is hellishly injured. We’re going to make her talk and then kill her, like we normally do.”

“I won’t kill her,” I said staunchly.

Silence settled over the room. I looked over at Morte, holding the eyes that burned into me behind the mask.

“Neither will you, Morte. You won’t touch her. She will not be one of your fucking science experiments or dolls.”

James’ jaw ticked, his gaze narrowing further. “What if I commanded you to kill her?”

“Then you can tie me up and whip me for a couple of days, for all I care. I will not be the one to kill her. I am a monster, a murderer, the right hand creature to London’s second most feared gang leader. I have killed countless humans without a shred of remorse, but when she told me to stop, I did. I am too

curious not to find out why. I want to know what makes her tick.”

“Why?” Morte asked. “You have never shown interest in a human.”

Why indeed?

I was silent for a moment, thinking. She had a face that I couldn't forget. I liked her dark brown eyes, and the colour of her hair. Her curls were soft and smelled sweet, and even when she was screaming, her voice appeased me.

I didn't want to kill her, I realised. I wanted to crush her. To destroy her.

To devour her.

I wanted to turn her innocence, to watch her be bathed in the darkness that had turned me into what I was today.

She was sweet. She was innocent.

And I hated that.

I hated that, and yet... I hadn't been able to stop myself from holding her.

She was innocent and yet sometimes, the look in her eyes reminded me of...me. Of someone that was on the brink of burning the world down.

Maybe that's what made me soften my touch.

Maybe that's what made me want her.

A beast like me shouldn't be allowed in the presence of something good. They would either die or become one of us.

Could I turn her into one of us? Could I make the pretty human into a monster?

“Just promise me you won't kill her,” I said. “Not yet. Let me play with my food.”

They both stared at me like I had lost my mind. The office became silent, the muffled bustlings of the city outside the only sound. I had known James and Morte for a long time. We

had killed together, worked together, screwed women and men together whenever the mood struck.

What I was asking for was insane. Out of character.

I knew that because if either one of them were asking me for this, I would have told them they had lost their minds.

We didn't keep humans around. We had our men that worked for us, but we still didn't allow them into our home. No human had been allowed to live for more than a couple of days here.

James sighed, shaking his head. "I don't like this, Charles. The Rippers are tearing up London for her, and the only thing we know is that she is a human who cries a lot."

"Oh," I said, my lips tugging into a frown. "Are her screams that loud?"

James blinked at me, his head tilting. "I will let you keep her for now."

I fought the urge to breathe a sigh of relief.

"On the condition that you get more information out of her. And if you feed or water her, then you must buy the provisions on your own. No using anything that is ours. She's your pet."

I suddenly had the image of making a leather collar just for her, one with a leash that...

I shifted in my seat, clearing my throat. "Thanks."

James nodded, his gaze still picking me over. Trying to read me.

"I want to meet with her alone," Morte said. "I won't kill her."

"You can't hurt her either," I said. "She's mine to hurt."

Morte let out a humourless chuckle, which was alarming. I stiffened in my seat, unsure of what to make of that noise.

Coming from anyone else, I wouldn't have felt the alarm bells going off in my head.

“Right. Well. Back to business then,” James said. “We’ve managed to get the item that the Rippers so desperately wanted, but right now her only use is that she is desired by them. They know that we did it, and the repercussions of challenging Jack to this degree have started. One of our shops was blown up this morning, the shop owner and anyone else inside going with them. Some of our aircrafts have been taken down, and there are kidnappings happening left and right. Some of our men have shown weakness, concerns that this could affect their families. It’s created an imbalance.”

“Great,” I said, sighing.

“We need to make them believe that their dove has escaped so that they refocus their efforts on finding her,” Morte said.

“Jack isn’t that easy, and you know it,” James said. “They will want our blood. An eye for an eye, a fang for a fang. My plan was flawless up until the end and we have embarrassed them.”

“Then I say we steal some of their connections,” I said. “I can work on seducing some of their current doubters to our side. We can use them as pawns.”

“Speaking of pawns,” James said. “Who will be taking care of Arthur Lackman?”

Arthur was the business man that had been playing both gangs like a fool. There was one thing the Freaks didn’t tolerate, and that was being betrayed. We wouldn’t be satisfied until Morte had decorated the Westside with his intestines.

“Me,” Morte said. “I will take Charles’ pet with me so she can see what happens to our enemies.”

“That’s a wonderful idea,” James said.

I didn’t like that, but I didn’t argue. Why *would* I argue?

Irene had to be a witch. A siren. Something. I could barely tear my thoughts from her, even now.

“Right then. I will handle our new acquaintances,” I said.

“I will take care of the shop that blew up,” James said. “And work with Boris and Avi on putting the doubts to rest

with the men.”

“I will handle Arthur,” Morte said, rising from his seat. He turned his head, the long beak of his mask staring down at me. “I won’t harm her, but if she comes back broken, that is not my problem.”

I shrugged. “So be it.”

“Get her ready for me. I don’t want to bring along a crying, broken human.”

“Fine,” I said. “Give me some time.”

“I’ll return later, in the evening. Fuck James and then get her ready.” Morte left with that, slamming the door behind him and leaving the two of us flustered.

I looked at James, shaking my head. “If he breaks his promise...”

“Morte has never done that, Charles. What the hell is wrong with you? This is the thanks I get, *fairy*?”

My muscles tensed at the pet name. Whenever he called me that, it was his way of telling me to forget our current circumstances. It was a way to let our defences fall, to let ourselves be with each other.

Usually his command worked instantly, as I was always eager to obey. But today, it was harder to let everything go.

Still, a warm chuckle left me, and I did my best to put all of my problems away. All of our worries, starting with the woman who’d I’d just asked to keep like a pet.

I looked at James— really looked at him. He had long dark brown hair that fell in soft waves, pointed ears, and antennae that twitched when he was annoyed. He had a human face, but with fangs, and eyes that were often midnight blue. There was a soft down around his neck, and I knew in other places as well, the black stark against his tan skin.

One of his wings was mottled black, grey, and brown, with the lower part patterned with golden shades. His other wing was entirely mechanical with gears and a material I had

constructed to mimic the pattern of the other. I had made it years ago after the accident.

That had been when the Rippers had truly made their mistake. Once James decided on something, he never let go. The day that they cut off his wing was the day the Freaks were born, with a mission to take down the mobsters that ran our world.

I stood up from my seat and went around his desk. I turned his chair, straddling his lap. James let out a low grunt as I tipped his chin up, our cocks rubbing together through the fabric of our pants. I could feel him growing harder as I leaned down, my lips hovering over his.

“Is this better?” I whispered.

“Much better,” he said, smirking. “You’ve never wanted someone before, other than me. Not like this.”

I nodded, swallowing hard. “I want to devour her.”

“Devouring her would kill her.”

I nodded again, his silence making my heart beat a little faster. At the end of the day, I was a big bad scary bastard that still craved the approval of his mobster mate.

James took a deep breath, letting out a soft moan. “It’s been too long,” he murmured.

“Well,” I said, stroking his jaw with the tip of one of my fingers. “You know how you are when you get fixated. Once you lock your jaws on something, you never let go.”

I leaned in closer, our lips almost touching. He reached up, his claws winding up in my long silver hair. He tugged me closer, closing the gap.

I groaned, melting into him. I parted my lips for his long tongue, his kiss consuming me entirely.

Reaching between us, I unbuttoned his pants and let his cock free. It was already out of its sheath, his cock dark red and cum dripping from the tapered tip. I gripped the base where his knot was and looked down as the rest of it wrapped

around my wrist and forearm. I could feel the vibrations already starting and smirked as I gave him a squeeze.

“Already vibrating,” I whispered.

James growled and in one swift movement, lifted and placed me on the edge of his desk.

“Strip,” he snapped.

I started to yank loose the ties on my leather corset, but he grew impatient. He grabbed it and ripped, tearing it in half like it was a piece of paper. The sound echoed through the office, followed by him shoving me back and sending items falling to the ground.

“I’m on your precious map,” I gasped. “And that was my favourite corset!”

“I’ll buy you a new one,” he said, his cock unwinding from my wrist and arm. “I told you to fucking strip, fairy.”

I glared as I tore off my shirt and tossed it to the side. The map was cold beneath me as I leaned back, watching as he undid the buttons of my pants and yanked them down.

My cock sprang free, one that was so different from his. My glare melted as he gripped my shaft, running the pad of his thumb down the ridge on the underside. It was long and thick, black and red, splitting into two heads. I shuddered as James continued to stroke the ridges.

“Fucking hell, Charles,” he breathed. “You’re so hard.”

He dragged my hips off the edge of the desk, pushing my legs back as he leaned over me. I gasped as I felt his cock wrap around me, stroking me as his tongue ran down my chest and then to my nipples.

I cried out, losing myself to the heat between us. I didn’t care who stumbled upon us, didn’t care that we were supposed to be the bad guys.

Could villains fuck? The answer was yes. And better than the good guys.

I reached up, gripping the soft fur around his neck, and tugging him down for a kiss. His cock began to vibrate, still wound around mine. I gasped, pleasure working through me.

His tongue met mine, a low groan leaving the two of us as he stroked me. I let out a low growl and arched up, sinking my teeth into his shoulder. He gasped and then chuckled as his blood filled my mouth, my hunger for him overtaking me.

His vibrating cock unwrapped from mine, and I groaned as it moved down lower. His claws dug into my thighs, shoving them back further as the head of his cock teased my hole. He let go for a moment, reaching down into the desk drawer and withdrawing a bottle with a light blue liquid.

He dripped it on his cock, and then on me. I moaned as he used his claws to tease me, making sure that I was ready for him.

I broke my bite, licking my lips as his hot blood dripped onto them. “Go slow,” I rasped. “I want to savour you breeding me.”

James groaned, his blue eyes squeezing shut for a moment as he did his best to control himself.

“Only for you, fairy,” he breathed.

I smirked as I leaned back up, sinking my teeth into the wound I’d made. I was thirsty for his blood, my Unseelie appetite only quenched in moments like this where I was able to feed freely.

The head of his cock slowly eased inside of me, the two of us moaning together. He shoved my legs back further and I reached between us, gripping my cock as he slowly began to fill me.

I was so close to cumming already, pleasure burning through me. My cock pulsed, my head spinning as I licked up his blood. The red was beautiful, mesmerising me as I let it drip further on me.

James gave a hard thrust, filling me entirely. I cried out, my head hitting the desk as he pulled back out and drove in again. His cock began to vibrate, drawing another moan from

me as he began to move painfully slow. Every movement was measured, his eyes burning with a mixture of frustration and delight.

I gasped with each thrust, stroking my cock faster. The vibrating intensified as he growled, his hips moving harder but not faster.

“Gods,” I gasped. “*James.*”

He smirked, his thrusts becoming merciless. I stroked my cock harder, getting closer and closer to the edge.

“You want that human,” he breathed.

Fuck. Why would he bring her up now?! The thought of her immediately made my blood burn hotter.

James narrowed his eyes, but his lips tugged into a cruel smile. Bastard wanted to torture me, it seemed. He stopped thrusting, his body stilling. Even his cock.

“James!” I growled.

“Tell me,” he breathed. “What would a human be able to do for you?”

“*James,*” I said, groaning. My body pulsed around him, my cock throbbing even harder now. Precum dripped onto my stomach. “Don’t bring her up now. Don’t be jealous.”

“I’m not jealous,” he said, leaning down so that his lips hovered over mine. I could see how long his lashes were, his face one that had haunted my dreams and nightmares. “I’m just imagining a little human trying to take this cock of yours.”

He shoved my hand away, replacing it with his own. He stroked the ridges, the tips of his claws teasing me.

“Just fuck me,” I whispered. “*Please.*”

“Is it true then? Do you like the idea of our little fucking problem riding your monster cock?”

His words made my cock twitch and my breath hitch. He let out a low growl, and his cock began to twist inside of me. I groaned as I felt it turn into a knot, spreading me wider and

pressing right against the spot that would make me scream in ecstasy.

“She’s a human,” he snarled. “You’ve *eaten* humans.”

“I know, James!” I barked, even though the heat of desire had me trapped. “I fucking know that!”

“You should fuck her,” he whispered. “Get this stupid desire out of your body and mind. I’m sure she’ll be disappointing. And then get the information and kill her.”

“*James*,” I whispered, squeezing my eyes shut.

“Look at me, fairy.”

I kept my eyes closed for a moment longer, but then he growled. I opened them, looking up at him.

“Do what I tell you,” he said.

“Is that a command?” I growled.

“It is,” he snapped. “Fuck her, use her, do whatever you fucking want. But get me the fucking information and get rid of her. We don’t keep humans.”

“Finish fucking me, and then we have a fucking deal,” I growled, feeling my temper beginning to flicker.

His cock began to vibrate, and I was immediately thrown close to cumming. A yelp left me as he began to fuck me again, pumping into me faster. He stroked my cock as he filled me, not letting me do anything but make noises and take him. The desk screeched as it was shoved over the wooden floors, the room echoing with our grunts and gasps.

“Fill me,” I begged.

“Cum for me,” he commanded. “Cum for me and then I’ll fill your greedy hole.”

“Fuck you,” I breathed, but it didn’t matter.

My hips bucked up and I cried out as my orgasm crashed into me, my hot cum shooting out. He pumped my cock as I came until every last drop was spent, and I melted against the desk beneath him.

He lifted his hand, his long tongue curling around and lapping up my cum. He then groaned and fucked me harder, until finally he let out a snarl.

I watched as he came, feeling him cum inside me. Filling me with every bit of his seed, his knot shoving inside and trapping it within.

I groaned as he tied himself to me, and the two of us fell silent aside from our pants.

“You’re cruel,” I whispered.

“I can be,” he breathed.

He leaned forward, his cock still buried inside of me as he relaxed on top of me. I found myself smiling as he pressed his face against the crook of my neck, breathing in my scent.

Still, he hadn’t been wrong.

I did wonder about Irene.

I wondered what she would feel like.

Taste like...

I wondered how it would feel to fuck her and make her scream.

I even wondered what it would be like to share her between the two of us.

To see her take his knot...

“Even now,” he chuckled. He knew me too well, knew that my thoughts were already turning back to her. “Are we certain she’s a human? Perhaps she’s a witch that cast a spell on you.”

“No,” I sighed, relaxing. “I fear there is more to all of this.”

“You? Scared?”

“Not scared. Just...”

James lifted his head, cupping my face. “Get her ready for Morte. But then do as I say. We can’t keep humans like this.”

I was silent, but I nodded ever so slightly. “Fine.”

James relaxed again, letting out a soft hum. “You can never forget this, Charles. Demons don’t love doves. They devour them.”

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CHAPTER 5

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PLAGUE DOCTOR



IRENE

I WAS JARRED from my sleep by the lid of the box opening.

I'd run this scenario through my head a thousand times, but instead of springing to action like I'd convinced myself I would, I simply stared up at the three eyed demon that had trapped me here.

Charles.

"Hello again, little dove," he said, smiling as if I were not his prisoner, gods knew where.

I only glared at him.

I'd lost track of time, but the body aches that now plagued me told me I'd been here for a while. He would come to me, let me free, then ask me the same questions. He'd try to sing his stupid fucking songs, get frustrated I wasn't manipulated by him, slam me back into the box and leave. Over and over again.

It was torture. It was cruel. I should have been begging him to let me free, grovelling at his feet. But no.

I was angry. I had never wanted to murder someone before, but all I could think about was driving a knife through his heart. I'd thought about how victorious I would feel watching the life drain from his monstrous gaze.

He raised a brow, but then smiled. “I have brought you food and water. I have also prepared a bath for you and new clothes.”

“You will not bathe me,” I hissed.

“I will,” he said. “I have to heal your wounds.”

“Why? So you can make them all over again?”

He let out a little laugh and leaned down, lifting me out of the box. I was too weak to fight him, which was a depressing reality. I sank against his chest, wishing I could drive my fingers into his three eyes.

“Will you let me care for you?” he asked.

“Why do you ask, as if I have a choice?”

“Perhaps I’d like for you to think you have one,” he said.

“Don’t do that,” I bit out. “I’d rather have the truth of it.”

I didn’t like liars, and I didn’t want to believe I would magically be okay. I’d been trapped in a box for gods knew how long with no end in sight.

The only thing I was holding onto at this point was my sanity. Everything else had turned to dust.

“Is that the woman of science within you?”

“Yes. Also the woman that’s been kidnapped by monsters.”

He chuckled, holding me to his chest. I looked over his shoulder and realised that the box I’d been trapped in was a... *coffin*. He had literally locked me into a coffin, which was horrifying.

I hadn’t a good chance to look at the room the last time I had been out, but this time I did, searching for any means of escape. There was a window that had been sealed shut, and I could see nothing but bricks on the other side. I could hear the faint sounds of a city, and I was certain that I was in London based on what I had overheard while on the blimp.

I looked up at Charles and realised that there was blood speckling his grey skin. “Did you kill someone?”

He snorted.

“There’s blood on your face. Is that what you’re doing? Preparing to eat me. Are you a cannibal?”

“You have a wild imagination, Irene,” he said, but he didn’t deny a single thing.

Great. Just great.

Charles carried me through the doorway that led to a small bathroom, one that had a copper clawfoot tub. He leaned down, holding me with one arm as he turned on the water. The pipes groaned as the water filled them before it began to pour into the tub.

He slowly sat me down on my feet, making me stand. I wobbled for a moment, and held onto him despite the fact that I hated him.

What else could I do but take what he offered in this moment?

“You’ll find that there’s nothing you can use as a weapon here,” he whispered. “So just be a good girl, little dove.”

“Your hypnosis won’t work on me,” I quipped. “We’ve tried that, remember?”

“Yes. For three days I’ve been trying to use my abilities on you and ever since you told me to stop, you’ve been able to resist. Did you know that when I sing, I can make a man scream and scream until his intestines explode?”

His words didn’t even make me blink. Instead, I sighed, annoyed. “Okay.”

His eyes widened slightly and he laughed in disbelief. “Take off your clothing. I need to inspect you and heal you.”

“Can you really do that?” I asked.

He nodded, his expression becoming unreadable.

I blinked at him, anger rising up again. “If you have the ability to heal people, then why do you hurt them instead?”

“It’s because I can heal them that I hurt them.”

“Then you truly are a monster,” I whispered.

“I’ve never said otherwise. Now, strip, Irene. I don’t have time for games. You are to be ready for the Doctor, and I will not piss him off.”

All of the modesty that had been drilled into me since birth made me freeze for a moment. I was an adult, and I wasn’t necessarily embarrassed by the thought of being naked in front of a stranger, but I found myself hesitating.

Charles let out an impatient sigh and reached up. Before I could say anything, he ripped open the midnight blue nightgown I wore. I watched as the last part of my life before this nightmare began was tossed to the scratched wooden floors carelessly. A ball formed in my throat, and I stared off to the side as he did the same to the lace bralette I wore, my breasts and torso now exposed to the cool air.

My nipples hardened and I felt my cheeks turn iron hot. I ignored the flares of pain as he inspected my body. He knelt down for a moment, pulling my underwear and socks off.

“I’m not going to hurt you,” he said.

“I don’t believe you.”

He was silent, his palm warming as he slid it up over my ribcage. I closed my eyes as the pain flared, but then just as swiftly was replaced with relief. I sighed, all of the sore points on my body mending within moments. His hand became hotter and hotter until finally I felt like I could move normally again.

Charles went around behind me, his fingertips tracing down my spine. He made a noise, almost a growl. “What is this?”

I frowned. “What do you mean?”

“It’s metal,” he said. “It looks like someone put bronze plates on your skin in the shape... of a dove.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I said, my heart beating a little faster.

Charles grabbed my shoulders and guided me to a sink with a mirror hanging above it. He turned me around, and I

looked back, seeing what he meant.

I gasped, but I felt my stomach turn. “Did you do this to me?”

My shoulder blades were covered with the metal plates he had described, but I couldn’t feel them like I would expect. I moved my shoulders and back, twisting.

Charles only stared, his dark eyes piercing me. I met his gaze through the mirror, and I knew the truth. No, he hadn’t done this to me, but this certainly didn’t help him believe anything that I had told him.

He took a step back, his gaze sliding over my body now. I felt my pussy give a slow throb and I sucked in a sharp breath, my heart pounding.

“Bathe. Food and water await you. And clothes that will hopefully fit.”

He left me, going through the doorway back out into the bedroom. There was no door to keep us separated, but it didn’t matter at this point anyways.

I stood still for a few moments, the fear burbling up again. Now that the physical pain was gone, it only allowed my brain to fully realise the anguish I felt.

I continued to stare at the pattern that now adorned my back— one that I hadn’t asked for. I felt sick again, but this time like a piece of my humanity had been robbed.

The sound of the tub being filled thundered, the rush of water drowning out the barrage of thoughts that threatened to drag me into their murky depths.

“Irene, try to hurry,” Charles called.

That broke me from my immobilisation and I went to the tub, dipping my fingers into the rising water. I let out a hiss from the heat, but was already swinging my leg over the side and stepping in. The water sloshed as I sank down and I groaned, my entire body sighing in relief.

I shut off the water before it became too full and sank back, staring at the copper pipes that ran up the wall through

the ceiling. They intertwined, condensation clinging to their surface.

What kind of house was this? Would I be able to escape from it?

I thought about the blood on Charles' face and shivered.

I drew in a deep breath and sank deeper under the water, holding myself under and running my fingers through my hair. I stayed there until I couldn't and came back up, reaching for one of the soap dispensers.

I didn't hurry necessarily, but I didn't take my time like I wanted to. I could feel Charles' impatience growing, and by the time he came to the doorway, I was stepping out of the bath.

He crossed the bathroom, going to a cabinet with towels. He plucked one out, shaking it free before coming back to me, wrapping it around me despite my noise of protest.

"Why are you doing this?" I asked. "You obviously want me dead."

I couldn't understand him. Why was he caring for me when he'd locked me in a box to begin with? His logic made no sense.

Then again, maybe he wasn't logical. Maybe he was just crazy.

"Perhaps," he said. "Perhaps not. But, irritating me certainly won't win you anything, will it?"

"Perhaps," I mimicked.

He chuckled, tugging me closer to him. He tipped my chin up, forcing me to look up at him. "One bath, and it's almost like your spirit has returned. Such a resilient little thing."

"You can go straight to hell," I bit out.

"Mmm don't tempt me. Come on now, dove, let's get you fed and watered."

"I'm not a pet," I muttered as he led me to the room.

The sound he made didn't convince me that he thought otherwise. He took a step to the side, presenting the clothing and food on the bed like it was his greatest achievement.

I stared at it, torn between being unimpressed and grateful. My stomach growled, pulling me towards the latter emotion, but I wasn't going to show it.

No. Fuck him. Fuck every monster that turned out to be real.

Charles flashed his fangs in a grin. "Go on. Get dressed. I've already seen you naked."

"Can I have some privacy?"

"No," he said. "We must hurry, remember."

I sighed, letting the towel drop. Charles made another noise, this one closer to a purr than a growl. I pulled on the clothing he had laid out for me, surprised that it fit so well. He had given me a soft beige shirt and brown pants, paired with a brown vest, and a leather corset with gold embellishments. Once I got to it, I simply stared at it.

"What's wrong? That is my smallest corset, I'm sure it will fit."

"I just don't understand why you are dressing me like this."

"Like what?" Charles chuckled.

"Well. *Nice*. This corset is nice. This leather almost looks real."

"It is," he said. "So are the gold pieces. Here, let me help."

He came over to me, plucking the corset from my hands. He pulled it around my waist, and I froze as I felt his hands linger over my body. He moved closer, his body almost brushing against mine but leaving enough space to create static energy.

He began to lace it. I closed my eyes, ignoring the growl in my stomach and the scent of food. Part of me wondered if his next step would be to kill me. Or worse.

He cinched it, tied it off, and then nodded. His hands slid to my hips for a moment, giving me a squeeze.

“I hate you,” I whispered, my cheeks flushing with heat.

“Excellent. Eat. I’m going to brush your hair.”

I was mortified as I sat down on the bed, pulling the bronze tray of food close. I was starving, but the smell made me want to vomit.

“What is this?” I asked.

Charles came back with a brush, humming that stupid fucking melody again. He had pulled his silver hair back, and again I found myself wondering how the hell an angel could be so damn demonic.

He sat down on the bed behind me, moving closer until my body was pressed against him.

“Eat,” he said again.

“What is this?”

I looked down at my food again, scowling. I was starving, but also this could be poisoned. And if it wasn’t poisoned, it would still probably make me sick because it looked like goop.

“Eat it,” he hissed, running the brush through my hair. He went slow, working through the knots that had formed despite being shoulder length.

My stomach growled again, this time much more insistent. I picked up the spoon and scooped up the beige mush, wrinkling my nose. I took a bite, and found that it was much more savoury than I had anticipated.

It was hot too.

I let out a soft moan, taking another bite.

“Good girl,” he said softly.

My eyes teared up, but I continued to eat while he brushed out my hair. The two of us sat in silence, and I wondered how long it had been since I had eaten.

“How long did you keep me in there?” I whispered.

“Don’t think about that, little dove.”

“Ah yes. Sorry, I hadn’t tried not thinking about it.”

Charles hummed, leaning forward. His breath was warm against my neck, and my muscles immediately tensed.

“Soon you will be going with Morte. He plans to torture someone that betrayed us.”

“Who is ‘us’?”

I took another bite, my muscles tensing even more as he continued.

“We’re the Freaks, a gang that rivals the Rippers. You were taken by them, as you know, from across the world and brought here. So when we saw you, we took you. I am now convinced that you are the dove, but I don’t know what your function is to them. The Rippers notoriously hate humans even more than us, despite employing more of them.”

“What did humans ever do to you?” I mumbled.

Charles ignored my question, continuing. “You have to obey Morte without question. Do whatever he asks you, even if it horrifies you. If he is beheading someone and tells you to watch, you watch. If he asks you to cut off someone’s finger, you cut it off. He, out of all of us, is the one you don’t want to piss off. If you’d like to come home to me in one piece, then I recommend that you behave. Understood?”

My stomach churned with nausea. The thought of harming someone, anyone... I hated it.

“Why would I want to come back to you?” I asked, turning to look up at him.

He gripped my chin between two long slender fingers, his lips almost touching mine. “Because I am the only person in this city that is willing to feed you. Water you. Bathe you. Clothe you. No one else will touch you. If you were to escape, the whole city of London would be after you, monsters and men alike. You would be hunted. You might even be used and abused before finally being given over to the Rippers who

have only made one request— That you be returned alive. Your situation is dire, little dove, and while I might be your cage— I am also the only one that keeps the outside world away from harming you.”

“W—why are you doing this?” My voice trembled as I gripped the tray of food, holding onto it like a lifeline.

“Because when I picked you up at the dock, I felt something. Something I’ve never felt before. I cannot tell if it is merely a curiosity, or something else, but when I see you— my chest feels like it’s being ripped into. It’s the addictive kind of pain, the one that makes me weak. And while I am certain my hand will be dealing your death, I would like to keep you alive until the very last moment. There’s just...something about your face. About your hair. About your scent. I want to devour you.”

Devour you. If he were anyone else, I might have thought that was an innuendo but his gleaming fangs said otherwise.

Great. So he was a psychotic fucking creep that wanted to eat me.

I was being helped by a maniac.

“And who knows. Perhaps it’s just a fantasy, but indulging me is your best bet at living a little longer. So listen to me.”

I nodded right as a chill moved up my spine. The lights in the bedroom flickered, and even Charles tensed.

“Well. Morte has arrived. Remember what I told you.”

He moved the tray and then brought a pair of boots to me, kneeling down to put them on. I didn’t move as he buckled them, watching as this undoubtedly deadly creature knelt down in front of me.

He stood up, pulling me with him and leading me to the door.

“Come back to me,” he said, holding my gaze.

In another universe, maybe I would have liked him. I could see that.

That made me hate him even more.

He opened the door, revealing a being even more vile than him.

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CHAPTER 6

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A GOOD OL' FASHIONED MURDER



MORTE

CHARLES' pet had eyes that I wanted.

That was my first thought when I saw her.

Followed by the fact that her very existence within our hideaway home made me want to end her now. She stood, dressed in Charles' clothes, fed from our food, breathing *our* air.

Charles was trying so desperately to hide what he felt for this little thing, and it was foolish. James might turn a blind eye to it, and allow him to do as he pleased, but the human standing in front of me was nothing but a piece of meat being fought over between us and the Rippers.

That was why I didn't kill her now.

"Hi," she whispered, her eyes wide.

I stared at her silently, narrowing my eyes. That she dared speak to me without me speaking first was—

"Irene, this is Morte," Charles said, his three black eyes fixing on me with a look that said *remember what we agreed on*. "Morte, this is Irene."

She parted her lips and I stared at them for a moment, feeling a tinge of jealousy. Whenever Charles was finished with his game, I'd make sure to kill her so that I could steal parts of her face. If anything, her eyes.

I hadn't always been a monster like I was. Originally I had been a demon, but then I had fallen into the old texts of dark magic. Eventually, I had found delight in killing. The scent of blood was one of my favourites, and I got a thrill out of taking parts of bodies that I liked.

Over time, my own body had started to deteriorate so I simply replaced those parts with those that I took. I had crafted my body however I pleased.

Once upon a time, I had a face. And somewhere hidden amongst my belongings, there were paintings that sat as proof that I hadn't always worn the face I hid under my mask. Not because I cared for them, but because I liked to make sure my memory was still sharp.

Charles cleared his throat. "Are you going to go now?"

I withdrew a gloved hand from within my coat, pulling out a collar with a chain. The vein in Charles' forehead ticked, but he was silent as I reached up and fit it around her neck, chaining her to me.

They couldn't see how my lips twisted into a smile. She didn't argue, but she glared. Those pretty eyes burned a hole into me, and if she hadn't been a human, I might have believed her look could actually kill me.

"Come," I said, turning down the hall, yanking the chain with me.

I heard her gasp and stumble, yanking against the chain. I didn't stop. If she wanted to be dragged to this artful killing, then so be it.

"I hate all of you," she gasped.

I kept walking, and my strength eventually had her falling in line behind me.

We went down the staircase, the steps creaking beneath us. I didn't hesitate in the foyer, opening the door and stepping out into the steamy night.

The sun had set hours ago, and we were creeping upon the eleventh hour. Arthur mistakenly believed that we were

unaware of his doings, of his betrayal, which would make this all the more fun.

We had plenty of men that could have caught him for me, but I liked to hunt. I liked to let my prey know they were being watched, to let their mind build up the ghoul hunting them. A menacing phantom haunting them.

I would take my auto across London, then set out on foot to save time.

I heard a choked noise, the chain yanking and reminding me that I wasn't alone. I ignored Charles' pet and went down a dark alley to the auto that waited. It was sleek and black, and would blend in perfectly.

One of our men gave me a subtle nod. I could see the sweat beading on his forehead. I could smell his fear.

Now that I was thinking about it, I didn't smell fear from the pet.

Strange.

I went to the back of the auto and opened the trunk, dragging the woman and shoving her inside. She squealed, but once I had her in, she just glared up at me in defiance.

I glared back, waiting for her to shrink.

I snarled, grabbing her jaw and forcing her lips apart. "*Petite pute*, I made a promise to Charles I wouldn't murder you, but that doesn't mean I'll interfere if one of my men happened to find you naked and chained up on the street."

She swallowed hard, and finally, that angry look melted just a little.

I gave her cheek a slap, one that wouldn't leave a mark but would at least make her think otherwise of being a stupid bitch.

I slammed the trunk and nodded at one of my men. "Drive."

He nodded and opened the back door for me. I slid inside and he shut the door, taking the driver's seat.

“West side. Lackman’s home.”

“Sir... we heard that his family is currently there.”

“I don’t care,” I said. “Go.”

He didn’t dare utter another word. He cranked on the auto, the engine roaring to life. Steam sputtered from the pipes beneath us as he hit the pedal, sending us down the road.

I heard a soft moan and scowled, focusing my listening on the pet.

What the fucking hell was she doing?

Whatever. It didn’t matter.

Still, my thoughts became twisted. For a moment, I thought about her cumming on my monstrous cock while I cut her open, her blood splashing over me.

Fuck.

James or Charles would say otherwise, but I did have desires here and there. Ironically, out of all of the body parts I had taken, I had always kept my own cock.

My blood began to boil, temper roaring to life. It was disgusting to think about a human like this.

“How long?” I asked my driver.

“Ten minutes, Boss.”

I nodded, looking out the tinted windows as London passed us by. I could tell where the poverty ended and the wealth began, the dilapidated turning into pristine architecture, gleaming signs, and pipes without countless holes. The humans buzzed around, behaving as if monsters didn’t roam around them. No. In their precious world of gears and cogs, science, and dance, there was no such thing as tentacles, fangs, claws, or tails. And heavens forbid they came across one of us or else we’d be exorcised as a freak. As an anomaly.

When I had been born into the world, I had looked human. Back in the ages when humans clung tightly to their gods, ostracising any being that was different. I had been labelled a monster, a demon, unworthy.

I had been broken. Over and over and over again. My father had killed my mother for whoring herself out to the devil, and blamed me for resembling one.

I was never sure if that was true. It didn't matter. His eyes now sat in a very special jar that remained locked away in a chest that no one would ever find.

Plucking them out with fear eternally captured in his irises had been exquisite.

Ten minutes passed quickly and I opened the door right as the auto parked on the street. He had parked outside of gates that stretched up about twenty feet, boxing in London's most wealthy.

Arthur Lackman. Business man that had thrown himself at the Freaks, begging us to help him so his pretty wife didn't divorce him for losing all their money.

I opened the trunk, and was met with that defiant look all over again. I stared down at the pet for a moment, and then shook my head. I gripped the chain, yanking her up and then out.

She was so small compared to me. I towered over her, the top of her head well below my shoulders.

"You will not say anything until spoken to," I said. "You will obey me in every way."

She gave me a subtle nod, her gaze already roaming over the gates.

I pulled her towards the sidewalk and then stopped. I needed to move quickly yet stealthily, and she was dead weight at this point.

Fucking Charles. I was going to punch the fairy fucker when I got home tonight.

Of course, it had been my idea to show her what she faced.

But now that she was with me, she was an inconvenience.

I let out a growl and leaned down, tossing her over my shoulder. She fought off a squeal, and I could feel her muscles coil with tension.

I bet she wanted to kick me. To fight me.

I wanted her to.

If she did, then I could say she attacked me. If she did something so stupid, then Charles couldn't protect her.

But no. She went limp as if I'd knocked her out.

Another stray thought ran through my tortured mind, of fucking her while she was limp like this.

Rage worked through me again as I realized I'd forgotten my fucking suitcase of tools.

No matter. We'd improvise.

I carried her down the sidewalk, blending into the shadows. The city roared around us, even at this time of night. Aircrafts dotted the sky above the buildings, and I could see the grand clock ticking away in the distance.

I went to the side gate, slipping through the walls. Within a few minutes, I was outside of the slimy bastard's house, the human pet still hanging over my shoulder.

I put her down, peering up at the home. It was massive, with brick walls and at least ten windows where warm lights flickered within. The shadows that escaped the seams of my flesh craved to conquer them, to steal their light.

"Follow," I commanded, going up the steps of the house.

I knocked on the front door. It didn't matter if I was seen, that was the point.

To fuck over the Freaks was a death sentence.

I could hear movement inside, and I caught the scent of fear. Oh yes. Arthur at least wasn't entirely a fool. He knew what he had done.

The door creaked open, and I was presented with a child. A little boy probably around the age of 5 or 6. I heard Charles'

pet gasp behind me, and fought the urge to turn and glare at her.

I didn't kill kids. The day someone entered adulthood, they were fair game, but not a moment sooner.

I did have *some* rules and morals. Her gasp annoyed me.

"Hello," I said. "Is your father home?"

The kid nodded silently, his eyes wide. I scowled, noting the mark on his cheek.

"Did your father do that?" I asked, pointing to his cheek.

He nodded.

"What about this one?" I asked, pointing to the other bruise visible on his forearm.

My rage was building and building.

"Ma," he whispered.

I stared at him for a moment and then leaned down, scooping him up. I then carried him down the stairs, handing him off to the pet. The little boy immediately leaned into her, and I ignored the way she immediately softened. "Take him to one of the other houses and then come back. You have five minutes."

She stared at me in disbelief.

"If you try to escape or run from me, I will find you and gut you like I'm about to do to his parents."

I turned and went back up the stairs, kicking open the front door hard enough that it ripped off the hinges. I heard her take off with the child, leaving me to finally settle into my truest form.

A scream echoed through the house and I looked up a grand set of stairs, seeing a woman at the top. The lights in the house flickered and with the snap of my gloved fingers, I snuffed them out.

The darkness swallowed us and I grinned under my mask. I moved quickly, and within seconds I was standing over her.

“Where is he?” I asked.

Her face paled and she just wouldn't. Stop. Screaming.

I let out a snarl and slammed her into the wall, the picture frames that clung to it shaken loose. They crashed to the floor as I held her there, all of my rage finally breaking free.

Her screaming was cut off as I gripped her neck and squeezed, gurgling noises echoing through the house. Darkness spread from my body, long shadowy tentacles reaching out and binding her. I fed on her terror, feeling my cock harden.

I wished this was the other woman.

A low rumble left me at the thought, and I grit out. “Where is that slimy bastard?”

Her eyes moved, directing me up the steps.

Great.

In one swift motion, I snapped her neck and let her body fall to the side. I heard a squeak and turned, seeing that Charles' pet had come back.

She stared at me in horror, her brown eyes filled with disgust.

“Come here,” I said.

My cock was still hard, and I could feel the adrenaline from killing, making me even more edgy. Vines of darkness whipped around me, the energy making me feel stronger.

She came to me, her steps rigid. The moment she was within arms length, I let my darkness whip out and grab her, binding her. She let out a squeal as I turned, shoving her against the wall where I'd just held the other human.

I pinned her arms above her, pressing her face against the wall. I leaned against her, the curve of her ass fitting against me.

I knew she could *feel* me. I wanted her to.

“Doesn’t this excite you?” I breathed. “Seeing life fade from someone’s eyes? Killing a human is exhilarating.”

“You’re disgusting,” she whispered.

I chuckled, leaning in. My breathing was hot under my mask, and I tightened my tentacles over her limbs. The dark magic that coursed through my body was already shoving me closer and closer to the edge, but with her near, I felt like I was already there.

Her hips moved. Ever so slightly. Enough to, for one moment, catch me off guard and draw a groan from me.

Her breath hitched, her body going impossibly still.

“I have someone to torture,” I whispered. “And you’re going to do exactly what I say while I hurt him.”

“I hate you,” she growled.

I thrust my hips forward, and even through the black coat that clung to me and her pants, I knew she felt the press of my cock against her.

“You can hate me,” I said. “I like it. I like hate. I feed off of it. And if you don’t watch your pretty little mouth, I’m going to feed off your fucking pussy.”

What was I even saying? She was driving me insane, and the words were out of my mouth before I could stop them. The idea of fucking a human disgusted me, but it was just the two of us alone, and the man I had to break.

I could do whatever I wanted to her.

I had told Charles I wouldn’t harm her, but making her touch herself while I carved someone alive wasn’t harming her.

“Are you a witch?” I sneered.

“What?” she hissed.

“Are you a *witch*? Or a creature? A mage?”

“No,” she said, and her mouth almost pulled into a smirk.

“You think this is funny?”

“No, I don’t think you getting hard over murder is funny.”

This little bitch.

I could see why Charles couldn’t handle her. I respected Charles, but he did have a soft spot sometimes. Even if he was Unseelie.

I leaned in to say something, but then the sound of floorboards creaking above us had my gaze snapping up.

Right. I was here for a fucking job.

“*Sorcière*,” I muttered.

I shoved away from her, wishing I still had that leash so I could drag her behind me. I went up the rest of the staircase, my steps slow and measured.

Oh yes. I could smell his fear. He had known this would be his time to die, that death was in his home.

“Arthur,” I called, grinning.

A sick thrill ran through me. This was what I lived for, what excited me most. I heard a door slam and snorted.

As if that would keep him alive.

I went down the hall, following the sound of his heart thrashing in his chest. I stopped at a door, darkness bleeding out from beneath my cloak. It spread around me and I let out a low chuckle, reaching for the knob.

I twisted, yanking open the door.

I could see Arthur across the room, opening up a window. Getting ready to dive out.

He turned his head, letting out a terrified yelp.

I lunged, crossing the room in a blink and yanking him back from the window. London’s cold winter breeze filled the stale room as I slammed him down onto the floor.

He was already squealing like a pig.

“I didn’t betray the Freaks! I swear! I swear!”

“Then why were you about to jump out a window, Arthur?” I said, fighting off a laugh.

He was so weak. So pitiful. His death wouldn't be as fun because of that. Plus, he had no body parts that I wanted to keep.

“I thought you were with the Rippers!” he screeched.

I punched him hard in the gut and then dragged him to his feet. There was a chair at a desk and I grabbed it, pulling it to the centre of the room and shoving him into it.

I paused for a moment, despite the euphoria working through me now. Where had the pet gone?

“Irene,” I growled, staring at the doorway.

Arthur let out a little laugh and I looked down at him, glaring. “What the fuck are you laughing about?”

“They knew you'd come,” Arthur whispered. “Didn't realise you'd bring the bitch along.”

Anger lashed through me as the meaning of his words hit.

Gods damn it, I wanted to murder him the right way, but now it would have to be fast. I let out a string of curses in French and then drove my fingers into his chest, breaking through muscles and bone until I was gripping his heart. The gargled scream was broken as I ripped it free, blood spraying everywhere.

It dripped down my gloves, splattering onto my boots. I could feel the warmth of it as it stopped beating.

The Rippers had robbed me of yet another delight, and for that they would pay.

A yelp echoed through the house and I heard boots thundering up the steps. I moved towards the door right as Irene ran through, running straight into me.

“There are monsters here!” she gasped.

I looked down at her clinging to me, heart in hand with blood dripping like *she* was the creature here, not me. Did she

not care that I had threatened her over and over again? And now she clung to *me*?

I heard movement downstairs and growled. “Hold this,” I said, shoving the heart into her hands. She paled, but obeyed, holding it in her palms with wide eyes. “This has been the most inconvenient murder I have ever taken part in. How many were there?”

“I didn’t count!” she yelled, clearly exasperated. “I just ran!”

“They let you escape?” I asked.

“They came through the front door and I ran!” she said.

I stared at her for a moment because that didn’t make sense. Nothing about her made sense.

The Rippers were a gang of monsters with some of the most fearful beings to have lived, and that was a notable statement from me.

I heard shouts below, more movement. I took a frustrated breath and then slammed the bedroom door shut, looking back at the window.

There was no time for that really. I would have to use my magic, but that might kill her. I could take my chances at killing everyone within the house, and most likely I could if I were alone, but I had brought along an inconvenience that I couldn’t let die quite yet.

James was going to be furious.

“Come here,” I said.

She stood still for a moment, but I yanked her close, my magic immediately reaching for her like she was some sort of magnet. I scowled, allowing the dark parts of me to twist around her.

“Let’s hope you live,” I said drily.

“*What?*”

I uttered a spell and a shape lit up around us right as the bedroom door flew open, sucking us straight into darkness.

For once, I wished I weren't wearing a mask, because grinning at one of the Rippers right as I took their most wanted possession through a portal would have at least assuaged my thirst for a good old fashioned murder.

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CHAPTER 7

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DEAL WITH DEMONS



IRENE

MORTE WAS MOST ASSUREDLY a monster from hell. The doorway, portal, path, wormhole of darkness, whatever the fucking hell that was that he had pulled us through had been the scariest thing I'd lived through yet—and that had been the shocking part to everyone.

I had lived through it.

Charles, Morte, and the moth wall I had run into all stared at me like I was from another dimension as Morte finished his story. I still held the infamous Arthur Lackman's heart in my hands, and the faint beating had finally stopped.

I didn't find it as gross as I thought I would have, which horrified me. It was something I didn't want to know about myself. When Morte had killed that woman, I of course had been horrified.

But, I had seen the bruises on that kid as I'd sent him to their neighbours.

I'd felt the rage and helplessness, and had seen Morte feel at least something about it. At the very least, rage.

Silence fell over the room and Morte crossed his arms, glaring through his plague doctor mask. Blood had dried on the black fabric of his cloak, boots, and gloves. He was an obelisk of silence and death, and I should have been scared for my life around him.

Instead, all I could really think about was how his cock had felt against me.

I'd felt a thrill when he pinned me to the wall. There had been a dead woman at our feet, but feeling the binds of darkness wrap around me had made me feel something.

I had survived hell and so far my thoughts could only focus on little things like that.

Like how I wondered what was under the mask.

I was a lot more fucked up than I ever had believed.

Charles had locked me up for days, and during that time, I had come up with a plan. A way to use everything to my advantage, and to hopefully come out of this alive.

I had three goals.

Find out if Florence was alive.

If she was alive, rescue her.

And, get the fuck out of London and far far away from the Freaks and Rippers.

I had drilled those three things into my mind over and over.

Now, I finally had a chance to test the waters.

"I have a proposal," I said.

All three of them stared at me again. Charles cocked his head, Morte scoffed, and the other one who's name I had yet to hear was silent.

"What's your name?" I asked him, curious. It was obvious that out of the three of them, he seemed to be the decision maker.

One of his antenna twitched, his blue eyes gleaming with fury. "James."

"James. So it's James, Morte, and Charles."

James the leader. Charles the manipulator. Morte the murderer. Three monsters that could tear me to shreds in mere seconds...

But now, I held their attention.

“I have a proposal that will help all of us.”

“We don’t negotiate with humans,” Morte snarled, taking a step forward.

Charles raised a brow and swept his silver hair back, tilting his head with his easy gaze. “Let’s hear the lass out.”

“You only want to hear her out because you want a new wet hole,” Morte growled.

Charles turned, the tension in the room growing. The two of them stepped towards each other, but James grabbed Charles by one of his wings and yanked him back.

“Both of you fuck heads stop. Now.”

The three of them settled down, and all of that tension returned back to me. It was now a lot more hostile and uneasy.

I took a deep breath. I had stood in a room with men before, had done presentations of projects at the colleges and had received the same hateful stares. I was smart, and I had survived— and if I played this right, maybe I would get out.

Would that mean I would have to beat them at their own game?

Yes.

But every moment that passed, I found myself embracing the darkness a little more, especially if it was the hand that would pull me out of the pits. Still, I would never sink to their level of insanity...but I could at least pretend to.

Whatever it took to survive, then I would do it.

Florence, if she was alive, would need me.

“Ever since I was kidnapped from New York, everyone has talked about the dove. I’ve already told Charles everything I know, but there are other things that I’m starting to piece together. I’m a lot smarter than you think I am.”

“Can I kill her?” Morte asked.

“No,” James growled. His antennae twitched, his mechanical wing clicking as he brought it in tight behind his back. “Go on.”

“It seems like the doves are an item that my great grandfather made a long time ago. Growing up, there was only one in the house. I have no idea what happened to the second one. But, when I was kidnapped, I think they might have brought the first one with me to the Rippers. But then my memory gets fuzzy, and now I have metal on my shoulders and back that are in the shape of a dove I’ve never seen before.”

Morte and James both looked at Charles, who grimaced. It was apparent he hadn’t told them that information yet.

“I come from a line of inventors. Of scientists. My father, grandfather, and great grandfather all made things. And I was going to school for—”

“Get to the point, little dove,” Charles said softly.

“I just want to find out if my sister is alive and if she is, get to her. And I don’t know who the Rippers are exactly, but I want to see them fucking die after all the shit they’ve put us through. If they have her... then I will do whatever it takes to get her back alive. Whatever it takes. I don’t know what these plates on my back do, if anything, but I will help the three of you if it means I can get Florence back.”

Silence again. They stared at me, and I stared back.

“Prove it,” James said.

“I want your word that you’ll help me if I do,” I said.

“Both of you leave,” James said. He didn’t even look at Morte or Charles, still watching me. “Take that fucking heart with you. Leave her.”

“James—”

“Get the fuck out.”

Charles pressed his lips into a dark grey line. Morte walked over, plucked the heart from my hands, and then turned and threw it like a baseball. I watched silently as it

broke through the glass of the only window in the room, and then fought off a giggle as I imagined it hitting someone on the sidewalk.

Fuck, I really was losing my mind.

Morte stormed past me, followed by Charles whose expression was unreadable. The door to the room slammed behind them, leaving me alone with James.

“Tell me what I get out of this,” James said, studying me acutely.

“My cooperation.”

“I don’t need that,” he said, straightening. He stood up tall, his wings spreading behind him for a moment as he closed the gap between us.

I looked up at him, holding my ground. He was so strange looking, but like Charles, I felt drawn to him.

He can kill you. He would hurt you.

“I can do what I want with you. Right now, you’re alive ___”

“Because they want me. But you don’t even know why. Don’t you want to find out something instead of sitting around growling?”

He snorted, and to my surprise, he gave a soft smile. “I have cut out tongues for talking to me like that, Irene Ellis.”

“I’m sure,” I said blandly. “I’m sure you’ve eaten them too.”

“No, that’s more of Charles’ thing.”

My stomach twisted, but I didn’t dare look away. He was so close now, warmth emanating from him. He smelled like leather and steam, which was the type of scent that drew me in like a moth to a flame.

“If you have my cooperation, then I will actually help the three of you,” I said.

“As opposed to?”

“I don’t know. Dying? You’re men, even if you’re monsters. I’m sure you’ve missed some things.”

James fought off another smile, shaking his head. “You are really in a precarious situation, Irene. I could torture you for days.”

“More torture than the box I’ve been locked in? I pissed on myself,” I said. “Just so you know. Ladies aren’t supposed to do that.”

“More than the box.”

“Don’t you want to take them down?” I whispered.

“Yes. But making a deal with you, a mere slip of a human woman, is not the way to do it.”

“But isn’t it? They brought me here for a reason. You need my cooperation to find out that reason, because clearly I’m the key. And obviously there are things happening that I don’t remember.”

My argument was sound, and I was doing my best to push it as far as possible. I wouldn’t lie to him, because I wasn’t stupid, but I could manipulate the truth.

“Such as?”

“Such as waking up surrounded by dead monsters on a blimp.”

We stared at each other again, the silence returning. He studied me like I was a specimen on a dish, his gaze slicing through me.

“If I agree to this, then you must cooperate in *every* way,” he said.

That sounded promising.

“I can do that,” I said.

“I don’t think you can, Irene. The moment we asked you to do something out of character, you’d fail.” He sighed, turning back.

I reached out, grabbing his soft wing and tugging. He let out a low growl, spinning back to look at me.

“I will do whatever it takes,” I whispered harshly, gripping his wing harder. It was more velvety than I had expected, the mottled black and brown too pretty for someone so deadly. “I will give you whatever you want. All I am asking for are a few small things.”

“What if I asked you to kill someone?” he asked.

Would I go that far?

Would I go as far as giving up my humanity?

This was the question that haunted me, but the answer was yes. If there was a chance that Florence was alive, then I needed to save her. And I wanted to see the Rippers burn.

I wanted to see their whole world turn to ash.

“I’ll do it.”

“You’d kill someone just to find out if your sister was alive?” James asked.

“Have you never had someone you cared about that much?” I asked.

He didn’t answer me. “What if I asked you to spread your pretty legs, hm?”

Heat flared through me, my cheeks immediately burning. I grit my teeth, because yes.

Yes, I would do that.

“Yes,” I whispered.

“Whenever? However we wanted? Whatever we wanted?”

“Yes.”

“What if I bent you over my desk and let my entire mob fill you with their cum?”

“As long as I get food, water, my own room, and revenge on the fuckers that are behind all of this— then fine. Fuck me. Use me. But help me find my sister and help me turn them to dust.”

Fuck. I was selling my soul to Mothman, of all monsters.

“And what happens after? What if I find your sister? What if we defeat the Rippers?”

“Then we figure out how to give you the doves. You get London, and I go back home where I can forget that monsters even exist. I’ll go back to being a respectable woman of science, a student of steam and inventions.”

He let out a genuine laugh now. “Oh, little dove. After you commit some acts, you can never return to such a...mundane life. Once you let this world grip you, there’s no turning back. You’ll start to *crave* it.”

He reached up, wrapping his slender claws around my throat like he had the first time we met. He pulled me close, leaning down so that his lips were hovering above mine.

“Deal,” he whispered. “I’ll take your deal. But only because I want to see how far a human will go before they turn into one of us.”

“We need an oath,” I said.

He gave a regal nod. “We’ll make it in blood.”

He let go of my neck and held out his palm face up. I mirrored him, placing mine next to his. I stared at our hands for a moment, at how huge his were next to mine.

He raked the tip of one of his claws over each of our palms. Blood welled up, pooling over the fate lines that ran over our skin.

Those claws would be too sharp to go inside of me, but they’d be fun for other things...

Fuck. I did *not* just have that thought.

James gripped my hand, our blood mixing together. “I will ensure no harm comes to you. We will find out if your sister is alive. We will do everything we can to take down the Rippers. In return, you give me your full cooperation. You give me your mind, body, and soul. You forfeit all of your rights to me. I own you in every sense of the word possible. You will be fed, watered, given a good room and good clothing. I will even

give you weapons. You will be a Freak, one of us. If you break this contract at any point, you will face death or whatever punishment I deem fit. Do you agree, Irene Ellis?"

"I agree," I said.

"You can say what you want about me," James said, gripping my hand harder. Our blood dripped, running together. "I may be a monster. I may be a mobster. I may be a murderer. But I do keep my word, even if it's to a human."

I nodded, doing everything I could to keep my expression serious.

I had, whether they knew it or not, made one small victory — even if it had just cost me my soul.

He let go of my hand, giving me a terrible smile.

"Are you going to test me now?" I asked, not doing anything to hide the bite in my words.

"No," he said, going back to his desk.

He went around, taking a seat in the chair. He held his palm to his mouth, his long tongue dragging over the blood. His tongue stopped mid lick and he scowled.

"Get out," he said. "Go find Charles and tell him his little plan worked."

"This wasn't Charles' plan," I said.

"Go," James insisted, his tone becoming rigid.

I took a deep breath and turned. I felt a sense of... pride? What was this? I didn't know, but it felt good to walk out of this monster's office alone.

I stepped out into the hall, not surprised to meet Charles. He was leaning against the wall, his arms crossed and expression still unreadable.

"I'm one of you now," I said.

He parted his lips to say something and then just shook his head with a sigh. "Go to your room. I'll be up in a few. If you leave the building, I will personally kill you."

It was hard not to smile, but I managed not to as I went past him. James' office was on the opposite side of the house from the room Charles had kept me in, but it wasn't that large of a place. Within a few moments, I was sailing through the door of my room and throwing myself onto the bed.

I let out a sigh of relief and then looked up, seeing that the coffin-box was still here.

Anger worked through me and I jumped up, going over to it. It was large and heavy, but this bastard needed to go. It didn't matter that I was covered in crusted blood or that my muscles were aching.

I took a breath and then heaved the box up, turning it onto its side. I managed to wedge it between the foot of the bed and the wall, and then slide it straight out into the hall. I left it there and then shut my door.

This was still a shit situation, but I was in a better place than I had been three days ago. I was a glorified prisoner to a mob, but I had managed to work my way in just a bit.

What I had said to James was true. They were monsters, but they were also men. And I knew at least one of them wanted me.

I could use that to my advantage.

They were playing games, but I could play them too. They'd taken me believing they'd captured a pawn when really they'd just bound a queen to their side.

James, Charles, and Morte. A mothman, an Unseelie, and a demonic plague doctor. All three of them wanted to kill me, devour me, hurt me. They hated humans, hated the world around them. More than that, they hated the Rippers.

Their pride would be their downfall, but as long as I was back home with my sister when that happened, I didn't care.

Nothing mattered now except getting what I wanted.

CHAPTER 8

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JACK



JAMES

TASTING her blood has been a mistake. A terrible, terrible mistake.

I didn't make mistakes.

The door to my office opened and then closed, and I knew it was Charles, but my heart was still beating wildly in my chest.

I'd made a blood bond with her by accident. But how? I'd made blood pacts with humans before, but I'd never felt a bond snap to life like I had the moment I tasted our blood together.

Fuck. I'd fucked up.

Already, I craved her. Single handedly, she had talked me into a deal and then I'd tasted her blood and damned myself to hell. She went from being a prisoner to a weakness.

"I was coming in here to throw a fit, but you look like you've found out gods are real," Charles said.

I looked up at him, unsure of what to say. Charles and I had been together for years, and I considered him my mate, but we'd never made something like *this*. We never wanted to completely seal our bonds because we didn't want to feel each other that way.

"She's just... Something else," I said.

And now I was lying to him. To Charles. The Unseelie that had stood at my side through my worst times. He had been by my side after my wing had been ripped off, going as far as to make me a new one. He'd spent months on the device that was now part of me and had allowed me to fly.

But I couldn't look him in the eyes and tell him I'd just awoken a mating bond with the human I was planning to use and kill.

"She's still your responsibility," I said. "I don't want her near me unless necessary."

"Well that's impossible now that you've given her some freedom," Charles snarled. "What the fuck are you thinking?"

"Oh, now you're upset? I thought this was your plan."

Charles scoffed, glaring. "Are you fucking kidding me, you gobshite? I was grooming her! Manipulating her! Kindness was working better with her, and you just fucked everything up. Why would I make a plan like that without telling you? You think Morte planned for her to live through that portal?"

"No," I said immediately.

No. Morte had obviously counted on her dying. Humans couldn't touch magic like that, and yet our precious little dove had managed to survive.

Survive and then trap me.

"I'm going out," I said, sighing. I grabbed my coat that was draped over the chair and pulled it on, reaching for my goggles and hat.

"You're going out after the Rippers attacked us?"

"Yep," I said. "Need some fresh steamy air to clear my head. I'm going to check in with some of our men too. Tomorrow morning, I expect to meet with you and Morte. I might have a change of plans for us. I expect you to relay that message to him."

Charles shook his head, glaring. "You're really unbelievable sometimes, James. And here I was thinking that

maybe you would tie me up tonight or—”

“If I touch you tonight, I’d harm you,” I said, shoving past him for the door. “And even though I like hearing you cry like a bitch, I don’t want that. Goodnight.”

I left him speechless. I went downstairs and through the kitchen where a couple of our men were playing poker. Smoke billowed in the air from their cigars, and they both immediately stood as I passed through.

I paused, turning to look at them. “The human woman that we have taken is now one of us. She is still not allowed to leave here alone, but if she requests something, get it for her.”

Neither one of them could mask their surprise, but I didn’t say anything else. I didn’t need to. They followed me blindly.

I went out the back door and into the night. It was well past the witching hour, but it didn’t matter.

I breathed in the polluted scent of the city and then pushed off from the ground with my wings, flying straight up. There was a taller building next to us, and within a few moments I was landing on its roof.

London never slept. Even through the dense clouds that hung over this part of the city, I could see the blaring lights burning through. An astringent breeze ruffled my clothing as I took off again, my wings pumping to take me higher into the air.

Was I running from her?

The thought drilled into my mind, followed by her. She was ruining everything, a poison seeping into our veins. Irene was playing a dangerous game, but she wasn’t losing at the moment.

I already knew that Charles wanted her, which was crazy. We didn’t touch humans like that, at least not often.

Still, I would be a liar if I said I hadn’t thought about taking her with him. Fuck, even just watching. I would pull on his strings like a puppet, make him fuck her however I wanted.

I flew towards the city, heading towards the Westside. I was curious if the Rippers were still roaming around.

Within a few moments, I was landing on the roof of one of the houses, clinging to the shadows as I watched Arthur Lackman's house. There were humans roaming around, and I was surprised to see the police chief down there.

There weren't just two body bags, like there should have been. Hell, there shouldn't have been any. One of the Rippers liked to devour fresh kills, and I couldn't imagine he hadn't been there to interfere with Morte and Irene.

I reached into one of my pockets, pulling out an amulet made specifically to trick human eyes. I put it on, clicking one of the buttons.

I hopped down from the roof, landing on the ground with a soft thud. I crossed the manicured lawn over to the chaos, scowling as another body bag was brought out.

Michael, the police chief, was standing with a couple of other officers, the three of them talking furiously between themselves.

"Chief," I said as I walked up.

He turned, his fierce expression wavering at the sight of me for a moment. "James," he said, clearing his throat. "Excuse us," he said to the other officers.

They both gave me a wary look, which made sense. Even with the disguise, my presence would make them wary. I was very much a wolf in sheep's clothing and they had enough survival sense to recognize that.

Michael waited until we were out of ear shot. "What can I help you with? We have a bit of a... delicate situation here."

"What happened?" I asked.

"Well..." he drifted off, swallowing hard. "Monsters. Dead. There were four of them that were here. It's a strange situation, and we're keeping it under wraps. We don't typically handle dead monsters, you usually take care of your own. I have a group here that all know to keep their mouths shut."

I felt a chill come over me. This didn't match what Morte had told me. According to him, they had left.

"There was a monster at the door to the bedroom where Arthur Lackman was, but he was dead too. All of them, dead."

"Let me see the bodies," I said.

He nodded and led me to the large auto where they had been piled. I climbed into the back, yanking open one of the bags.

I knew this creature. One of Jack's own, and one I never thought I'd see dead. The werewolf had been responsible for over 300 human deaths over the last decade, and several monsters too.

Dead.

I closed the bag and opened another. I let out a little hiss, confusion working through me. This was a monster without a face, one that liked to torment souls. I shook my head, closing the bag. They were one of Jack's best torturers.

Another bag. I opened it, seeing yet another dead creature.

If Jack blamed the Freaks for this, then there would be a war.

"Guess you're admiring your handiwork, huh?"

I straightened, a chill working up my spine. I turned and glared.

Jack the Ripper stood outside the truck, her red lips pulled into a sneer. Her long red hair was pulled up beneath her hat, her black vest hiding all sorts of weapons. She was dressed like a reporter, and if I didn't know any better, I would think she was just a beautiful woman.

But no. Standing in front of me was the bane of my fucking existence and the reason misery followed me. She'd made a name for herself over the years, and now had a harem of monsters and humans to do her every bidding.

"I didn't do this," I said blankly, hopping out of the truck. "Are you going to fight me?"

“No,” she snorted, her gaze moving back to the body bags. “I could if I wanted, though. I could rip off your other wing and send you home to your little Unseelie cunt.”

A growl worked through me. “Did you come alone, Jack?”

“I did,” she said. “I just wanted to see first hand the deaths that will be the reason you and I tear this city apart. I will slaughter all of you for this, James. I’ve let the Freaks go on for far too long out of...pity. Two of those monsters were lovers.”

“I didn’t kill them,” I said again. “*We* didn’t.”

“You’re a shit liar,” she growled. “And you still have something that belongs to me. Is the human dead now?”

Far from fucking dead, but did Jack really not know?

If I could convince her that we’d killed Irene, would that work to my favour or against me?

“She’s dead,” I said. “She’s been dead since we found her.”

She blinked at me like I was an idiot. “How the fuck have you ended up being my number one enemy, James, with a poker face like that?”

“It’s true,” I snarled, stepping closer.

She hissed, baring her vampire fangs. “One more step and there will be another body going to the morgue.”

“Why are you here, *really*, Jackie?”

She cocked her head, staring at me for a moment. “Sometimes I miss it, when you were working for me. You were good at that, James. But this? This is beyond your skills. You and the Freaks are done. I am going to end you and send every bastard working for you to their graves. Not only have you stolen from me, you’ve also murdered some of my creatures. And I don’t take kindly to that.”

We both moved quickly, and within a blink had knives at each other’s throats. I glared down at her, wishing I could kill her right now.

“You’re a fucking idiot if you killed her,” Jack whispered. “And gods, I hope you did. There’s still another dove after all, and soon, she will be all mine. Then you won’t stand a fucking chance.”

I shoved Jack back and then my wings pushed me up into the air.

That had been a clear message, delivered by Jack in person.

The Freaks and the Rippers were officially at war, and it was all Irene Ellis’ fault.

I DIDN’T LIKE GOING into Morte’s space, but after I got home, I found myself standing at his door. I could feel the darkness bleeding out, could smell the formaldehyde.

I rapped my knuckles against the door and waited.

The door opened, Morte standing in front of me looking like he always did. The plague doctor mask, the long black cloak.

“I just saw Jack,” I said, crossing my arms. “I went to Arthur Lackman’s house, and guess what? There were dead monsters there. So either you lied to me, or you have been fooled.”

Morte stared at me silently and then stepped back, allowing me to come inside. The door shut behind me as I walked past shelves filled with dark tomes of magic, jars with various body parts, and all sorts of torture tools. Morte liked to collect things, and his space was always a hodgepodge of the occult and deadly.

“What did you talk to Irene about?” Morte asked.

I stood in the middle of the room as he went past me to a body that was on a table. Part of their skin had been taken, and blood was slowly being fed into a bronze jar of sorts.

I didn't ask. I didn't care. I never had and never would. Whatever the fuck Morte did down here kept him from murdering the whole world, kept him fed in a sense.

"I made a deal with her," I said.

Morte froze, his shoulders tensing. "Why?" he breathed.

"We made a blood oath. She will give us whatever we want in exchange for us helping find her sister, and taking down the Rippers."

"Oh, joy. So our revenge plan that we've been working on tirelessly for years is now fueled by a girl." A long string of frustrated French curses followed, and he pulled a knife from seemingly nowhere and drove it into the cadaver on the table.

I frowned.

Morte never showed emotions like this. Not even fierce anger. He had always been a steady source of apathy, not this.

"Morte," I growled. "I just need to fucking know. Did you lie to me? About anything that you said."

"No."

I nodded, knowing he was telling the truth. Morte was many things, but a liar was not one of them.

I thought back to what Irene said, to her supposed memory gaps.

Curious.

"Okay," I said. "Did Charles let you know we're meeting tomorrow?"

"No."

Great. Fucking Charles was having another fucking tantrum.

"Breakfast tomorrow. Get some sleep."

"None of us sleep."

I ignored him, going towards the door. I looked around his room once more, my stomach clenching with nausea. I left

him in the silence, in the darkness, wondering what the fuck was happening to us.

Irene. It was her fault.

And yet...

My blood began to rush the more I thought about her. My fingertips buzzed at the thought of touching her as I went across the house to my room, locking myself inside.

I let out a breath, my head swirling.

I was failing. Just like Jack had said. She'd been my mentor, I'd been her right hand monster until things had gone wrong. That had been so long ago. So fucking long ago.

I stripped off my clothes with a growl, my cock starting to harden. Even through the painful memories, I kept returning to her.

Irene.

A human.

It was gross. Humans were gross. I hated them, hated that our worlds remained so separate. I was sure she thought of us as freaks of nature, and was disgusted by our claws and wings and fangs. She probably thought I was hideous.

I could imagine her now, laying in the bed I had given her, wearing the clothes we'd let her borrow. It enraged me, excited me.

She had this look in her big brown eyes. It haunted me, drove me crazy. They were burned into my mind, that look of defiance.

I pulled off the rest of my clothing and hissed as my cock unfurled. My knot pulsed, need torturing me.

I huffed as I climbed onto my bed, reaching for one of the pillows that were rarely touched. Grunting, I fit it beneath me, cursing myself for being mad at Charles.

I could go to him right now and fuck him, but I didn't want him.

I wanted her.

Fuck.

I groaned, my head falling back as I held the pillow against me, desperate for something to grind against.

I imagined her thighs wrapping around my waist, that defiant look on her face as I drove inside of her. How would she take my cock? Would it be too big for her? Would she scream?

Would she cry? Would she beg?

“Fuck,” I breathed, my hips jerking.

I looked down, the veins in my arms straining from how hard I gripped the pillow. My claws dug into it as I humped it, my movements becoming quicker.

This wasn't good enough.

Dark fantasies plagued me, and I finally caved in letting them run free.

I wanted to tie her up and spank her. I wanted to see how red her ass got before spearing her wet pussy with my tongue. I wanted to mark her, to brand her.

Her body belongs to you now.

It was true. Nothing was stopping me from going upstairs and making her prove herself to me.

Fuck it.

Tomorrow, I would.

Tomorrow, I would make her do things that would rot the innocence out of her. I would destroy her.

This war was her fault. The deaths at Arthur Lackman's home had to be her fault too, somehow. The blood bond that I had mistakenly made with her was her fault.

I groaned as pleasure worked through me. I threw the pillow to the side and reached down, my cock wrapping around my hand. I began to stroke myself quickly, gripping my knot with my other hand.

“Fuck you,” I snarled. “You fucking ruined everything.”

I closed my eyes, her face searing through every thought. She tainted everything she touched, and that now included me.

I was so fucking close. I gasped as I imagined pumping into her and filling her, breeding her with my monster cum.

With a cry, I came. Hot cum shot over the bed, my muscles shivering with ecstasy. I kept cumming until every drop was free, and I fell onto all fours with a gasp.

The room was silent but for the sounds of my heavy pants and the clicking of my mechanical wing.

Now, more than ever, I had to be the one to kill the dove.

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CHAPTER 9

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BREAKFAST WITH FREAKS



IRENE

I WAS awoken by a soft knock. I sat up in bed, staring blearily as the door to my bedroom opened, and a rough looking man I'd never seen before stepped in.

I immediately reached for ... well nothing, because I still had no fucking weapons, but he raised his hands.

“Not here to hurt you, lass. The Boss told me to wake you for breakfast. It's already half past 9 and Boss is impatient. Said to bring you down immediately.”

I let out a breath, exasperated. “Fine.”

He nodded, and I could see that he relaxed too. Which meant he'd probably been ready to haul me downstairs if needed.

He looked exactly like a thug. Beefy arms, bald head, and a face that could probably make a cat screech if he looked at it a little too long. He wore a black turtleneck with a leather jacket, all embellished with metal plates. It looked like he was ready to fight, a gun at his hip and countless knives.

“What's your name?” I asked, squinting at him.

“Boris. We don't have time for chatting, lass. He doesn't wait for anyone and I'd like to see another sunrise.”

Fair enough. I rolled out of bed and slipped on my boots. I was still wearing what I had been yesterday, but I'd managed

to get all the blood off of me before sleeping last night.

Really, I wished that I could stay in bed all day. I wished I could curl up and read a book, and then nap.

I'd taken everything I had for granted. Now, I wasn't sure if I'd get that back again, but I would try.

I followed Boris downstairs to a part of the house I hadn't seen. The walls were covered in weapons of all sorts, some of them even made to harvest energy. I tried not to stare as we passed them, following Boris to the kitchen.

There was a table laden with food, and to my shock, Morte, Charles, and James were there. James had a newspaper that he was reading, and I met his gaze over the top of it.

One of his antennae twitched, his annoyance already clear.

There was only one empty chair, and Charles gestured at it. I sat down, and promptly ignored the wisps of darkness that were now waving around Morte as he stared at me.

"Morning," I said.

Of course I got no response. Charles pushed a plate towards me that he'd already made.

"Eat up, Irene," he said.

He was so serious. I wasn't sure how I felt about that, but didn't argue.

"Thank you," I said.

Morte muttered in French as I started to eat the scrambled eggs, biscuits, and sausage. James sighed, putting the newspaper down.

"Last night, I went to the Westside and ran into Jack. We are now officially at war. I have already started making preparations, and our first move will be tonight. We're going to blow up one of their warehouses in the south. She will not show mercy, and neither will we."

Jack was a woman?

“She has taken offence to us taking Irene, and I told her you are dead, but I doubt she believed me. There’s no one alive aside from us that has seen your face, so that’s good.”

I frowned, but didn’t argue.

“Irene and I have made a deal, which both of you know,” James said. “But just so that it’s out in the air.”

“You made a deal,” Morte growled. “I did not.”

“I made a deal for all three of us,” James said. “I’m the leader of the Freaks. Unless you’d like to take over Morte.”

He was silent. Fuming, but silent.

“We will ensure no harm comes to Irene. We will find out if her sister is alive, and now I have reason to believe so. We will do everything we can to take down the Rippers, starting tonight. In return, Irene gives us her full cooperation. She’s promised her mind, body, and soul to us to be used in any way. We own her in every sense possible. She gets her own room, food, water, clothes, and weapons. We will safeguard her from getting devoured by the world around us.”

James leaned forward, his gaze glinting with mischievous evil.

“I’ve already started to fulfil my promise. So now, I want something from you.”

I swallowed my bite of food and took a sip of water, clearing my throat. “What do you want, James?”

He bristled at me using his name, but did his best not to show it. His gaze slid down to my lips, and then down to my breasts.

Heat spread through me and my breath quickened.

All three of them shifted in their seats, and Charles let out a low growl. “James,” he said. “Stop.”

“No, I don’t think I will,” James snapped. “Once you’re done eating, you will come with me. Charles has managed to secure some new potential clients that will visit us at one of

our other places. They will be meeting with me, and while they do, you will be pleasuring me.”

What?

“In front of them?” I squeaked.

“Yes,” James said. “Unless that’s a problem.”

My pussy throbbed and I squeezed my thighs together. “No,” I whispered. My cheeks were red, my blood rushing in my ears.

It wasn’t like I had a choice. He could do whatever he wanted to me, and I couldn’t say no.

I’m doing this to beat them. To get Florence. To be free.

“Good,” he said, standing. “You have about 20 minutes and then we head out. Morte and Charles have other tasks to do today.”

A BAG WAS PUT OVER my head, which was nicer in some ways than being shoved in a trunk. The drive to the next Freaks place was longer than I had expected, and by the time the engine was shut off and we were parked, I was ready to stretch my legs.

All I could think about was what James was going to make me do. He was going to humiliate me. He was going to make me do things to him in front of others.

My pussy pulsed again and I scowled at myself right as the hood was yanked off.

We were in a very nice office, one that had windows that looked out over London’s streets. Blimps drifted in the distance, sailing through puffy white clouds. The steam wasn’t as dense here, which told me that we were in a nicer part of the city.

London struggled with the same issue that New York did. Many of the turbines and engines that powered the plants

weren't efficient enough to capture all of the steam, which meant that sometimes up to two thirds were lost. This wouldn't have been a problem, except many of the companies liked to add chemicals to the water used for generating steam, and those chemicals led to problems like the occasional acid rain.

I sighed. Those were the types of problems I had been studying to resolve. There were real life problems out there, and instead of helping, I was about to be sucking a mobster mothman's cock.

James and I were the only ones in the room. He went to his desk, popping open a bottle of whisky and pouring two shots.

"I assume you want one," he said.

"Yes," I whispered, feeling a flutter of nerves.

He gave a subtle nod and brought the glasses over, handing one to me. He arched a dark brow, studying me. "If you do good for me today, then I'll let Charles take you shopping for new clothing."

"I just...don't understand why this will help."

"These men like it when their business partners have pets. It's a sign of power I've never cared to have until now."

"You don't think they'll recognize me?" I asked.

"No. None of these men know anything about the dove. But they will have heard by now that I killed monsters that belong to the Rippers, and they will be harder to win over because of that."

He threw back his shot, and I followed suit. It burned my throat, but it felt good. I gave a little hiss and he plucked the cup from my hand, taking it back to his desk.

My nerves were finally starting to calm, but I still wondered how this would go.

James came back over, and to my surprise, stepped up right behind me. I sucked in a breath as he pressed his body against mine, and I knew for a fact that it wasn't a gun that was pressing against me.

Apparently, all of the Freaks were packing weapons of another kind.

“It’s not anything like a human’s,” he whispered. “And when you see it, you’re going to pretend like it’s the best cock you’ve ever licked in your life.”

“Do you want me to lick your ego too?” I asked.

He chuckled, his clawed hands sliding down to grip my hips. He yanked me hard against him, letting out a small growl. “I have another question for you, little dove.”

Heat rushed through me as he leaned down, one of his hands sliding down further until the tip of his talons were pressing against my centre.

“Those are too sharp,” I gasped.

“I just want to know. Are you a virgin?”

“No,” I breathed, my heart hammering in my chest.

I wasn’t. But I also wasn’t as experienced as I wished. Florence had always been pretentious about such things, and so I’d always had to sneak in my activities here and there unless I wanted to be judged.

“Good,” he said. “I don’t think you’d be able to take any of our cocks otherwise.”

A chill worked through me and he pulled his hands back, letting go of me. I let out a sigh of relief, but it was too soon.

“Strip for me,” he said. “And then come kneel at my feet.”

He went behind his desk to his chair. He took a seat, his wings settling behind him.

James wore that stupid smile, and I knew that he was thinking this would be what would break me.

Well, he was fucking wrong. I’d suck his soul out of his dick if that’s what it took to get out of this mess.

I stared straight at him as I began to undress. The air was cool against my exposed skin, and I took my time tossing pieces of clothing to the floor.

His antennae twitched, his jaw stiff. He watched me, barely breathing as I stood in front of him with just my undergarments on.

If he wanted a show, then he would get one.

Monster or not, I liked that I held the power over him this time. Even if it were just for a fleeting moment.

I walked over to him, swaying my hips as I reached behind me and slowly unlatched my bra. His eyes left mine for a moment, falling to my breasts as I let them free.

I planted my hands on his desk, pressing them together. A little bit of pink had coloured his cheeks. His tongue swiped over his bottom lip, the tip touching his fangs.

I pulled my panties free, letting them fall to the floor. I crawled on top of the desktop and then turned, sliding off the edge.

Then I knelt at his feet.

“And I thought Charles was dramatic,” he whispered.

I looked over his body, seeing that his cock was straining against his pants.

Dramatic, yes.

Divine, even more so.

A knock at the door broke the reverie and he looked up, letting out a little chuckle. “Alright, little dove. Not a fucking word from you. Get under my desk, and worship my cock.”

He moved back and I crawled under. The front of the desk had a small wall that would block me from the room’s view just enough to keep most of me hidden, but it would be clear what was happening by the bit they would be able to see.

“Come in,” James called.

I closed my eyes for a moment as I heard the office door open. Shoes scuffled over the floors, the grumbles of strangers I hoped I’d never meet filling the room.

“Gentlemen,” James said. “I’d stand to shake your hand, but...”

One of the men laughed heartily. “Finally got you a little whore, eh?”

Disgusting. I glared at the bulge in James’ pants as the room filled with laughter, and James chuckled.

Fuck him. He wouldn’t be laughing by the time they all left.

I leaned forward, running my hand up his thigh. He had left just enough room so that the top of my head didn’t hit the desk.

I cupped him through his pants, and he shifted in his seat.

I listened while I worked, curious about just how fearsome he was to these bastards.

“As you all know, last night there were three monsters and two humans slaughtered on the Westside. Arthur Lackman and his wife are dead, and all of his businesses have now been absorbed into the Freaks enterprises. All of you have an opportunity today to work with us.”

I slowly undid his pants, my breath hitching as the tip of what had to be his cock came free.

Fuck.

I had underestimated the kind of cock a monster would have.

James reached under the desk, grabbing the back of my head and yanking me forward. I fought off a gasp as he forced my lips to the tip.

I paused for a moment, but then mentally said fuck it. I was committed now.

I pulled the rest of his cock free, my eyes widening. It was long and thick, and it could *move* like his tongue. There was a bulge at the base, and I grabbed it gently.

He immediately tensed, his words hitching, halting the conversation for a moment.

I smiled.

His claws curled into my auburn hair as I leaned forward, flicking my tongue over the base of his cock. I closed my eyes, breathing in the scent of him.

I wanted him.

My pussy pulsed as I fully embraced this hellish task... only I was starting to enjoy it. Their conversations turned into background noise as I took the head of his cock between my lips.

I gripped the knot at the base, massaging him as I began to suck. I heard his breath hitch, his muscles tensing as his cock moved down my throat.

It began to vibrate.

My eyes widened in surprise yet again.

Maybe monster cocks aren't that bad.

Tears filled my eyes as his cock thrust deeper, but I continued, breathing through my nose. I pulled back some, swirling my tongue over the head as his cock continued to vibrate.

What would that feel like inside of me?

My pussy pulsed, and I knew that I was almost dripping at this point.

“There was another human brought to London, we heard,” one of the men said.

That caught my attention. It took every ounce of willpower to keep sucking him, to keep pleasing him. I caught my breath before taking him all the way down my throat again, and this time his hand gripped my hair and held me there.

I shoved at him, but it was no use. I raked my fingers down his thighs, fighting off a moan as his cock vibrated in my throat.

“Interesting,” James growled. “The Rippers brought them here?”

“Yes. Being held in one of their warehouses.”

His hips gave the smallest thrust, choking me. I could barely breathe now, but he reached around and pinched my nose shut with his fingers.

This fucking mothman bastard cock sucking...

I could bite him. I could keep fighting him. But I knew that’s not what he wanted.

He wanted the room to know that I was a good girl for him and that I could swallow his monster cock even when I couldn’t breathe.

Every curse in the book flew through my mind as I forced myself to relax. My lungs were desperate for air, my mind spinning the longer I couldn’t breathe.

And yet... I was so fucking wet.

“Good to know,” James said nonchalantly. “So. I take it that you’ll be doing business with us then.”

“Perhaps...”

“Perhaps?” James questioned.

Just as my vision started to dim, he released my head, allowing me to pull back and breathe. I rested my forehead against his knee, dragging in soft breaths.

“I want a piece of the slut under your desk. I can see her ass and—”

“No.”

His voice was colder than I’d ever heard it before, cool but with an undercurrent of rage.

“She’s mine,” James said. “I don’t fucking share. If you want someone to suck your cock, go find someone. And make sure to sign the docs my men have on the way out.”

A low chuckle, but I heard the footsteps recede. The door opened and then slammed shut, and silence fell over the office.

James immediately moved back, dragging me out from under the desk. I squealed as he slammed me on top with a growl, pinning me beneath his weight.

I let out a pant, and I did something that shocked both of us.

I leaned up and kissed him.

He pulled back for a moment, staring at me like I'd lost my mind.

"Please," I whispered.

James shook his head, but he wrapped my legs around his waist and lifted me.

"Fucking crazy," he hissed as he turned, slamming me against the wall.

I arched back with a moan, exposing my neck to him. He leaned forward, his long tongue swiping over my skin.

I wanted him even though I hated every single thing about him.

"I hate you," I gasped as the head of his cock pressed against me.

"I hate you even more," he snarled. "And yet you're dripping for my hard cock, little dove."

"Fuck you," I groaned.

"You will. And hold onto me tight, I'm not going to be gentle."

He groaned and I screamed as he thrust up, his cock filling me. It was unlike anything that had ever been inside of me, and the vibrations sent shockwaves through my core.

I wrapped my arms around him as he began to pump me up and down. His cock was too long for me, the head immediately plunging as deep as possible.

Screams and cries left me over and over as he fucked me harder, his growls in my ear turning me on even more. I'd

never felt so fucking *alive*. Everywhere he touched me was like a live wire, and every shock went straight to my pussy.

He slammed into me hard enough that the wall rumbled, some of the pictures that hung shaking on their hooks. His claws sank into me and I cried out from the pain— not because it hurt, but because it felt good.

“I can feel you,” he groaned. “*Fuck*. I’ve fucked up.”

He didn’t stop though. Instead, his movements became almost desperate as he turned us and lowered to the floor. I gasped as he let go of me, rolling me over onto my hands and knees.

The hardwood hurt, unyielding as he grabbed my hips and plunged his cock straight inside of me again. He leaned over me, his massive wings spreading to either side of us as he growled in my ear.

“I’m going to breed you, you stupid little human,” he rasped.

Terror worked through me, disrupting all of the pleasure for a moment.

I hadn’t thought about getting pregnant.

“No,” I gasped. “No. Don’t cum inside of me.”

“Not only am I going to cum inside your little pussy, I’m going to shove every drop inside and keep it in with my knot,” he breathed.

I cried out as he shoved inside of me one more time, and I felt the bulge at the base of his cock spread me wider than seemed possible. He then leaned forward and I screamed as he sank his teeth into my shoulder, the pain turning into pleasure.

I hated him but everything felt too good. He gave another thrust, pushing deeper into me as he groaned in pleasure. He pulled his fangs free, cursing under his breath.

His hot cum began to fill me, his clawed hands holding me in place even as I tried to pull away. It was no use though, and I felt tears spring to my eyes as he came inside of me.

I had wanted this, but I hadn't thought about what could happen.

He grunted, leaning forward. His cock was still inside of me, and I tried to move, but realised I was going nowhere.

"I hate you," I whimpered.

"I know," he whispered. "You should hate me."

"I don't want your monster children," I cried.

Tears spilled over now, streaming down my cheeks. He let out a dark chuckle, and I couldn't help but gasp as he brushed his lips over my spine. He kissed all the way up until his lips were hovering next to my ear.

"Don't worry," he murmured. "You aren't good enough to have them."

His words stung. They shouldn't have. Somehow that was some fucked up reassurance that no, I wasn't going to end up pregnant.

But still.

He continued to kiss me, his lips running over my neck and shoulders. Blood dripped down from the bite he'd left, although any ache from it was already subsiding. He was gentle as he did it, and I sucked in a breath as his hand slid around to cup my breasts.

My pussy pulsed, and he groaned.

"So fucking tight," he muttered. "You took my cock so well for a human."

I pulsed again, even though I was angry. The very tip of his claw pressed against my nipple and I immediately arched, a cry echoing through the room.

"You like pain," he whispered. "Don't you?"

"No," I lied.

He pierced my nipple again and the pain was sharp and intense— and I immediately clenched around his vibrating cock.

“Liar,” he breathed. “Do you like being a monster fucker? None of the humans will ever see you the same now that you’ve fucked one of us.”

“Fuck you,” I cried.

He kept playing with my breasts, his claws raking over them. I huffed out a moan, the pain and pleasure pushing me towards a headspace that felt like floating.

“You were a good girl for me today,” he whispered. “You know that? They even wanted to fuck you.”

“But you didn’t let them.”

“No,” he said. “No. They don’t get to touch what belongs to me.”

“I’m not yours,” I growled.

His hips gave a slight thrust, and I gasped as his cock pulsed like a heartbeat. “Say it again and you won’t be rewarded.”

Confusion worked through me, but it was dispersed as he reached between my legs and began to stroke my clit with the pad of his thumb. He was careful, making sure his claws didn’t drive into me.

I squealed, my entire body coming to life with a simple touch. I writhed beneath him as he began to move his thumb in tight circles.

He was going to make me cum.

My breaths turned to pants as he fucked with me, my clit and pussy pulsing as I cried out. He didn’t stop as my orgasm tore through me and I screamed, unable to do anything but let it burn me alive. Little shockwaves continued to work through me as I came down, letting out a long groan.

He didn’t stop.

My breath hitched, my body now overly sensitive. I could feel him, could feel the softness of his skin. I could hear every click and movement of his mechanical wing, could still taste his cock on my tongue.

“Stop,” I gasped.

“No. You can cum again for me.”

“No,” I groaned. “Please. Once was enough.”

“Once is never enough.”

I cried out as he continued. His thumb worked its magic while he dragged his claws lightly over my body.

I expected him to scratch me, but he didn't. He just let the tips work over me, sending chills through me.

“Oh fuck,” I gasped.

I came again, this time much harder than the last. It was a deep pull, the kind that shattered the universe and left you in the dark. I screamed, not caring who heard me.

“Good girl,” he whispered.

He slowly pulled back, his knot popping free. I gasped as he withdrew, his cum now dripping out of me and rolling down my inner thighs.

I was a mess.

He let out a soft growl, sitting back on his haunches. He sighed, silence settling between us.

I lowered myself to the cold floor, my head still spinning.

That had been the best sex I'd ever had, but...

I didn't know what to think about any of this.

Use it to your advantage. Remember what you heard.

My thoughts began to refocus. They had mentioned another human being brought here to one of the warehouses.

Florence could be alive.

I had to get her free.

James got up and left me, coming back with a soft blanket. I squeaked as he grabbed my thighs and rolled me over onto my back, kneeling between my legs. I started to shut them but he forced them apart, giving me an annoyed look.

“Let me look,” he growled.

Somehow, out of everything that had happened in the last hour, that humiliated me the most. I looked away, biting my lower lip as he began to wipe away his cum. He spread my pussy, letting out a satisfied hum.

“Get dressed,” he said, throwing the towel to the side. “Charles will be here soon.”

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CHAPTER 10

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POWER



CHARLES

I STEPPED into our Westside building and stopped, breathing in the air. Above the musk and grime and tobacco, there was the scent of sex.

Not just sex. But James' cum.

And something else.

A flare of rage worked through me and I went up the staircase and down the hall. The door opened right as I reached for it, and Irene was standing there.

Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes glassy, and I realised that the other scent had belonged to her.

I stared at her for a moment, my mind reeling.

Had James fucked her?

“Charles. I need you to take Irene shopping for new clothes. Functional ones that are good for hiding weapons. And then take her to pick out weapons, and have Boris and one of the other men show her how to use them. I'm busy.”

I looked past her at James. He was sitting at his desk like nothing had happened, looking down at a stack of contracts from business partners I had secured.

“Irene,” I said. “Wait out here.”

“Nope,” James said. “I don’t have time, Charles. Take her and leave.”

Irene paled as I yanked her forward, leaning in to shut the door. I paused for a moment, glaring at him. “We’ll talk about this tonight.”

He lifted his head, his gaze meeting mine. “Get out.”

Cunt. I slammed the door, not caring if the windows all shattered in his office. The door knob came off and I threw it behind the two of us, letting out a frustrated growl.

“Are you two—”

I clamped my hand over her mouth before she could speak another word. “Shut your mouth, lass,” I whispered, my voice carrying all of the rage I felt.

It wasn’t like the two of us had ever said we were exclusive. And I had wanted to do things to this human with him, but I’d wanted her first.

He knew that. He knew that, and yet he’d filled her with his cum.

Was it jealousy that I felt? Like someone had stolen my favourite toy and played with it? No, that was too basic. That made her sound like she didn’t matter.

She’d burned a hole into my soul with her existence, and somehow had managed to work her alchemy on the other two as well. Even Morte was unsettled, which I’d never seen happen.

Part of me wondered if we’d picked up a viper thinking it was a dove, and now her venomous fangs were sunk into us.

“Come,” I said, letting go of her mouth and leading her down the hall to the stairs.

“No bag over my head?” she asked.

“No,” I said. “How the fuck am I supposed to take you shopping with a bag over your head?”

The two of us went down the steps, hitting the first floor. To the rest of London, this was nothing more than a shoe shop.

Boots made of the finest leather gleamed on the walls, and men and women milled about. Irene drew a few curious looks as she followed me through the shop.

A couple of my men were waiting, their eyes never leaving us. They followed as I went through the back, taking her out the door that led to the alley.

A motorcar was already waiting. I opened the door and pushed Irene in, pausing to look at my men. “We’re headed to the shopping district, and then will be going to our weapons keeper. Let him know we will be needing customs.”

“Yes, Boss.”

One of my guys shifted uncomfortably and I frowned. “What?”

“Nothing,” he answered.

“Out with it, Thomas,” I snapped.

“It’s just... Is the woman one of us now? And shouldn’t we be focusing on the Rippers?”

“She is one of us,” I said tightly. “And we are focusing on the Rippers. And unless you want to be cannon fodder, shut the fuck up.”

He paled as I climbed into the car, slamming the door. Irene and the front driver were in the middle of talking and both stopped once I was in.

I scowled, glaring at him. He met my gaze through the rearview mirror, and I watched sweat break out on his forehead.

“Don’t speak to her,” I said. “Don’t even look at her.”

“Yes, Boss.”

It was fucking annoying. What the fuck was wrong with our guys? They’d never questioned me before.

I sighed, leaning against the leather seats as we lurched forward. I looked over at Irene, studying her.

She was looking out the window, her shoulders stiff and hands clenched together in her lap. Her lips were a bit swollen, her hair ruffled.

I felt a pang of worry. I shouldn't have. I shouldn't have even cared. But I knew how rough James could be and...

I reached over, sliding my hand into her lap. She took it without saying anything, giving me a gentle squeeze.

That breathed life back into my dead soul.

"Can humans get pregnant from monsters?" she asked.

For fuck's sake. My mood almost instantly soured and for the first time in my relationship with James, I wanted to fucking kill him.

"Yes," I said. "Some can. In James' case, no, because he would have to be mated to you."

"Mated?"

"A blood bond would have to be made," I said.

"What's a blood bond?" she whispered.

"It's when you taste each other's blood. Like vampires almost, but when it happens for some monsters, it creates a mated bond. It's like exchanging life forces. So in order to impregnate you, he would need a bond with you. He would need to bite you to completely seal the bond as well."

Which was ridiculous of course.

"Does the bond need to go both ways?" she asked quietly.

She was squeezing the everliving fuck out of my hand.

My jaw ticked as I stared at her. "Yes, both ways. Well, you would need to have tasted his blood, not bite him."

She let out a quiet sigh, her head falling back on the seat. Her worried expression had been replaced with relief, and that obvious transformation confirmed that James was a mothman cunt.

"I'm going to fucking kill him," I whispered. "Turn the motorcar around."

We slowed but Irene shook her head. “No, no. Don’t. Do not turn this car around.” To my surprise, my driver listened to her. “Charles, it’s fine.”

“It’s not fucking fine,” I said. “Turn the fucking car around. I’m going to murder him.”

My driver winced and Irene hissed. “Do not turn around. Charles, look at me.”

I looked at her. Glared at her, really.

Still, she held my hand.

“Why do you even care?” she asked. “You locked me in a box for days. I’m a prisoner of your mob.”

“You’re not a prisoner anymore,” I said. “You’re one of us. James made that deal with you and that changed everything.”

I was still angry about that, but for different reasons now.

I’d been trying to convince Morte and James that I didn’t want Irene, and then James had just decided that he could have her after hating her so much. I’d manipulated him into sparing her life, and he fucked her.

“So if I got out of the car right now—”

“I’d get out with you,” I said simply.

She shook her head, exasperated. “All of you are fucking insane. And I’m sick of your hot and cold act. One moment you are nice to me and the next you’re doing some really fucked up shit.”

“You realise that when he made you a Freak, it wasn’t just bumping you to the status of one of our men, right?” I asked.

Her voice faltered and she just stared. “What do you mean?”

“James has never been the one to accept someone into our gang, except at the very beginning. Morte and I don’t handle that anymore either. Boris and Michael do. When he made that deal with you, he made you a Freak, and there are only three true Freaks in this mob. Well, now four.”

“He never said that,” she whispered.

“Yeah because you wouldn’t fucking understand. And if this car doesn’t start moving in the next three seconds, I am literally going to gut our driver.”

The car immediately lurched forward, taking us onto the busy street. I sighed, trying to relax.

Surely James knew what he was doing.

“Maybe if I add ‘mob’ to my resume when I get back home, I won’t have to deal with men being dicks as much,” Irene said.

I chuckled but then frowned.

I didn’t like the thought of her leaving.

Silence fell over us and stayed that way until we arrived at one of the shops. I opened the door and went around, opening hers and offering her my hand.

“Won’t they see you?” she asked.

“No,” I said. “All they see is a man. We have devices that allow us to disguise ourselves. It makes blending in with humans much easier.”

I pulled on the collar of my shirt for a moment, showing her the amulet I wore. I then pulled her close as an icy winter breeze hit the two of us, keeping it from battering her.

I steered her towards the front doors of the shop, glancing around. I spotted three of my men on watch, and no sign of any danger. I had several knives on me and one of my rayguns, so if something happened, I’d be able to fight.

If I used the full force of my power to murder humans, would Irene be okay?

We stepped inside and I did my best to not think about that. Instead, I focused on the shopkeeper as she fluttered over to us.

“Charles,” she said with a strained grin. “How can I help you?”

“I need you to help Irene pick out a new wardrobe. All items must be suited for fighting...” I drifted off as I looked down at Irene, seeing that her gaze had already wandered over to some of the dresses that glittered on mannequins.

I wanted to see her in one. When she'd run into us, she'd been wearing a nightgown, tattered and torn. But, she'd spoken of her time in New York, the type of company she had kept, and it made me curious to see what she'd look like in a lush dress.

I wanted to see her shine.

“She can have whatever she wants,” I amended.

“Yes, sir.”

I didn't even know the shopkeeper's name, but I knew her husband owed us. And well, when one of the leaders of the Freaks walked in, you did whatever they said.

Irene's cheeks were now pink, and she wore a happy smile as she was whisked off. One that I hadn't seen before.

I scowled and followed the two of them, keeping watch as they started at the right side of the store where leather pants, corsets, and vests were. Some of them were purple with gold threads, others were a deep brown with bronze accessories. Irene reached out, running her fingers over one of the corsets.

She turned, biting her lower lip. “Whatever I want?” she asked.

I raised a brow. “Did I say anything different?”

To my surprise, she actually grinned and then turned to talk to the shopkeeper.

I had a feeling the Freaks were about to have a new budget line strictly for her clothing tastes.

I hoped James knew what he was doing. Hell, I hoped I knew what I was doing.

Still... Her excitement made suffering through this amulet's disguise worth it.

“I’d like two of these please,” Irene said, pointing at a leather harness that would be perfect for hiding knives...and framing her breasts.

“We should get them fitted, miss,” the woman said. “I’ll make notes then we’ll take everything to our seamstress for sizing.”

Fucking hell, we were going to be here forever.

“Excellent,” Irene said. “Grab a good notepad. I’m about to buy you out.”

BY THE TIME Irene was done shopping, I was both amazed and horrified as I wrote the check to the shop. Three of my men held massive bags and boxes with all of the clothing, their expressions ones of pain.

They were mobsters, and yet here they were holding dresses for a woman.

Irene came out of the dressing room. She had tossed the clothing she’d had on the last couple of days, and was now wearing something new.

I stared at her, my thoughts leaving me.

Corsets were a blessing.

She was wearing a cream coloured long sleeve dress with a brown vest over it, paired with a brown leather corset with gold accents around her waist. It cinched her, pushing her breasts up in a way that drew the eye despite her being covered. Around her hips was a belt with holsters for knives and a small coin purse that would hold gods knew what.

Then there was the look in her eyes.

She held her head high, her gaze falling on my men. “You can take those back home,” she said. “Please and thank you.”

James had created a monster.

But fucking hell, I’d be a liar if I said I didn’t love it.

The men sized her up for a moment, but I didn't have to interfere. I watched with raised brows as they all took off.

Were they scared of her?

The thought made me grin.

"Thank you," Irene said. She reached up and gave my arm a soft squeeze, her touch surprising me.

Always surprising me.

"Power suits you," I said.

She smirked, raising a brow. "It's nicer than being locked in a box, that's for sure."

"I don't know," I said. "I liked hearing you cry."

She gave me a little shove and I chuckled as we went to the motorcar. We got in, and our driver sped off, taking us towards our weapons maker.

"So did James really make me one of you?" Irene asked as she watched the city go by.

"For the time being," I said. "It doesn't mean that you have freedom."

"No, of course not," she said, giving me a humourless smile.

I breathed in her scent, feeling a wave of hunger wash over me.

I was still pissed at James, but the idea that his cum was inside of her... I wanted to lick it out. My cock started to harden in response and I looked away from her, scowling as we neared the warehouse.

"I think we're being followed, Boss."

I cursed, twisting to look behind us. Sure enough, there was a black motorcar weaving through traffic towards us.

"What?" Irene asked, starting to turn.

I shoved her down as I watched a gun emerge from one of their windows.

“Speed up, you fuck,” I snapped.

Our motorcar lurched as I pulled out my gun, flicking on the gear. The small glass orb at the centre began to flicker with electricity.

Irene gasped, staring at it. “Is that electricity?”

“Stay down,” I growled, pushing her further down until she was almost on the floorboards.

I cranked down the windows and leaned out, aiming my gun at the motorcar.

They shot first. A bullet sailed past me, narrowly missing my pointed ear.

“You fucking bastards,” I growled.

The wind whipped back my silver hair, and I leaned further out, taking my shot. My gun burst in my hand, and I watched as the energy barreled straight for them.

I’d aimed for the windshield and managed to hit it square in the middle. Another bullet sailed past me but I laughed as their window shattered, glass spewing everywhere.

Their car swerved for a moment, but then another showed up.

“Now you’re just annoying me,” I snarled.

“Charles!” Irene called from within the cabin. “Be careful!”

I made a face, not sure what to even say to that, and the distraction was a mistake.

Another shot fired from our enemies, and this time the bullet hit. I grunted as it went straight through my chest, barely missing my heart.

“FUCKING HELL!” I roared, pain spreading through me.

I sank back into the car as blood began to spread.

“Oh my gods!” Irene yelled. “You’re shot!”

“I’m fine!” I gasped, but that wasn’t exactly true.

A mere bullet wouldn't murder me, but it had been coated in something. I blinked rapidly, staring down as my blood continued to run out like a river. Crimson turned my shirt red, dripping down onto the leather seats.

"I'm going to fucking murder them," I breathed, rage working through me.

Already though, my vision was beginning to dot.

"Get us back home!" Irene yelled at the driver. "I'll shoot at them!"

"What?" I wheezed.

Irene—the human woman that I had locked in a coffin for three days and was our fucking prisoner—grabbed my gun, rolled down her window, and leaned out just like I had.

And there wasn't a godsdamned thing I could do about it.

I reached for her, but my vision turned black, and right before I fell unconscious, all I could see was a woman who had just stolen my heart.

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CHAPTER II

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AN UNSEELIE THANK YOU



IRENE

I'D BEEN to countless parties in New York City, and one of my favourite party tricks had been shooting apples off the top of people's heads. The women would giggle and squeal, and the men would begrudgingly smile.

I had been one of the smartest women in the room, so I'd learned to adapt to any environment, navigate any situation.

Everything had been so much easier then.

Shooting at a car full of, literal, monstrous rivals wasn't exactly the same as shooting at an apple for fun

But still—now more than ever, that stupid party trick came in handy.

I aimed Charles' gun at the car barreling towards us and pulled the trigger, aiming for the engine. With it being an electric gun, the energy beam would pierce the steel, immediately stopping the car.

I sucked in a breath and shot one more time, both of them impacting the front of the car. The driver swerved as smoke and sparks burst from the hood, and they flipped straight onto the path of the other car hurtling after us.

I watched with a squeal as an explosion followed.

Shit, I just killed people.

I didn't have time to register that thought before another car emerged from the destruction.

I held my gun, aiming it straight at them. A wave of excitement worked through me, my heart pumping with adrenaline.

Do you like killing people?

The intrusive thought made me miss my shot. I grit my teeth as it sailed past them, and then gasped as they shot at me.

The bullets sailed past me, but I winced as my shoulders started to burn.

I rolled them, even though I was hanging out of a car window that was going full speed, but the pain only continued.

Do you want to kill them? Let's end these monsters. All monsters should die.

My head began to spin and I let out a sharp cry as the pain in my shoulders became excruciating, but I still took another shot.

It hit one of their tires, which was enough to throw them off.

I didn't take the time to watch, instead pulling myself back inside with a pained gasp. The pain dispersed, and I leaned against the seat panting.

"Get us home," I gasped. "Or to a hospital."

"No hospitals, Boss," Henry said.

I'd gotten his name earlier, and I was slowly collecting them from the men around me. I had a knack for faces and names, and planned to use it to my advantage.

Like now.

"Will he die, Henry?" I asked, looking over at Charles.

I felt a twinge of guilt. Blood coated his pretty body, but there was a cruel part of me—a very dark and twisted part of

me—that wished he would die here and now.

Then there was the other part of me that wanted to hold his hand.

Their world was a mean world, and I was wedging myself in with the worst of them. It was terrifying, but the longer I was with the Freaks, the more I caved to the darkness.

“I don’t think so. The monsters live through a lot,” Henry sighed.

He was a lot more relaxed around me. Gone was the submissive demeanour, replaced by a bitterness that had obviously been gnawing at him for some time.

“Well. Then, I guess take us to wherever they’ve been keeping me. Hopefully you’re right.”

“I am,” Henry said. “Unfortunately for all of us.”

I settled into my seat, occasionally glancing back to check if we were being followed. Charles let out a rattled breath, his body slumped, bleeding profusely.

All I did was stare at him the same way I was sure he stared at the box he’d kept me in.

He liked to hear me scream.

Well, I liked seeing him bleed.

“Henry,” I said. “At the risk of you... telling them I asked. How loyal are you to James, Charles, and Morte?”

Henry swallowed, his knuckles turning white on the steering wheel. “They control all of us.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

I leaned forward between the front seats, looking at him. He had a scar down the side of his face, and there were cigarette burns on his neck between the tattoos. An unlit cigar was hanging from his lips, out of habit I guessed.

“If someone else could lead...”

“You think all of us hardened criminals would follow a woman?” Henry growled, shaking his head. “I like you Irene.

You might survive them. But what you're saying..."

"Isn't Jack a woman?" I asked. "She's leading the Rippers. Aren't they more fierce than the Freaks?"

"For now," Henry said.

"For now, indeed," I agreed.

I sat back in my seat, not saying another word. I'd done enough fishing, and if anything got back to Charles, Morte, or James—I'd twist it to my advantage.

I was playing a dangerous game. But every hour that went by, I saw my goals becoming more and more clear.

Everything that had happened with James... My stomach clenched, along with my thighs.

Everything with him had felt good. But it didn't matter.

It didn't matter how good anything felt with any of them.

I looked at Charles again, feeling another pang of guilt. His face was peaceful, his blood still oozing out of his chest. It had slowed at least, and if what Henry said was true, then hopefully he'd live.

It would be easier if he didn't.

"I want it noted that I saved our lives today," I said as the car slowed.

Henry nodded, pulling us down a garbage-strewn alley. The car parked and I jumped out, yelling at the men. "Charles is shot! We need help!"

It was like I'd tapped a domino and made all of them fall. Immediately there was chaos, and I watched as a group of hardened grown men jumped at my command.

A chill worked up my spine and I turned, seeing Morte standing in the doorway. He stared, his head ever so slightly cocked.

"Charles is hurt," I said, exasperated.

"Take him downstairs," Morte said quietly.

The men carried Charles inside, and he let out a little groan at being jostled. I moved to follow them, but Morte reached out and grabbed my arm, hauling me through the house and up the staircase.

“Morte,” I gasped. “What—”

He dragged me to my bedroom, kicking open the door and shoving me inside.

“Stay,” he said, slamming it behind him.

Godsdamn it. My chest was heaving with angry pants as he left me. I could hear his boots trodding down the hall and then down the stairs.

Two steps forward, one step back.

I sighed, turning to look at my room.

All of my clothing had arrived.

Well, at least now I could unpack all of it and brood.

I WASN'T sure how long I was left alone before I heard footsteps. It had grown dark outside, and the house had been mostly silent.

My door opened, and to my surprise, Charles stood in the doorway. He was no longer covered in blood, and looked fine except for the stitches that covered his chest beneath his open shirt. Always dressing like a forlorn poet, but instead of handing out beautiful words, he shot people.

“You’re alive,” I said. I was surprised even though I had no reason to think that Henry had been lying.

“I am,” Charles said, hesitating.

I was sitting on my bed, folding some of the silk panties and bras I had gotten. I had half expected him to stop my purchases at the shop, but he’d really let me buy whatever I had wanted.

He was silent, and it was the kind of silence that happened right before a storm. Nerves worked through me. I had said a lot while he'd been passed out and bleeding, but I had been certain he wouldn't hear me.

What if he had?

“What's wrong?” I asked, chewing on my bottom lip. “Did you need something?”

“Yes,” he whispered, his voice hoarse.

He came over to the bed and sat down, leaning back on the mattress. He was tall enough that when he stretched out, his feet hung off the edge. His silver hair splayed around him, his wings too.

I stared at them, realising I'd never truly studied them. They reminded me of cathedral windows, different colours framed by veins of black. Iridescent and beautiful, but strong.

“Morte stitched me up,” Charles said, staring at the ceiling.

Butterflies erupted in my stomach. The plague doctor frightened me, but the thought of him stitching up Charles was...almost endearing.

I still wanted them all dead.

“You're making me nervous,” I sighed.

Charles smirked, one of his fangs poking out boyishly. He looked over at me, his three eyes meeting mine.

“I have to thank you for saving us,” he said. “I heard that you killed a car full of Rippers. Normally a gunshot wouldn't have rendered me useless, but it was close to the heart so the blood loss made me pass out while my body healed.”

“So you aren't invincible?” I asked.

He reached over, grabbing my wrist gently and pulling me towards him. I sucked in a breath as he lifted me, setting me over his hips.

My pussy was still a bit sore from James. His cock more than what I was used to before and yet...

I wondered how Charles' would be.

He stared up at me, that smirk never leaving. "I have to give you a proper Unseelie thank you."

"I'd expect that to be something entirely different," I said, raising a brow.

"And I'd expect that you'd had told me to fuck off by now, and yet I can feel how hot your cunt is against me, even through our clothes."

I bit my lower lip, not disagreeing. It wasn't like I had a choice... Right? He was part of the bargain, which meant if he wanted me...

But do you want him?

"I can see those little gears turning in your pretty head, lass," he whispered, his brogue accent becoming thicker. "And even now, I can smell James on you."

"Do you like that?" I asked, moving my hips in just a way that I ground against his hardening cock.

He let out a low growl, his expression becoming feral. His hands settled on my hips, his fingertips digging in. I gasped as pain flared, realising that I probably had marks from James.

"I do like that," he said. "James and I have been together for a while. We keep it separate from everything, or do our best to. Only Morte knows."

"And now me," I said, grinding against him again.

"Keep it up and I'm going to flip you over and fuck you," he whispered. "I'm trying to be kind, you know. And you're making it difficult."

I leaned down, running my hands over his hard chest. His grey skin was smooth under his shirt, and I lifted it up, taking my time to explore his hard muscles.

I laid over him, pressing my ear against his chest for a moment.

To my surprise, the monster did have a heart and it beat just like mine.

“Shocking,” I said. “If I knew any better, I’d say you’re no different from me.”

He stiffened beneath me, letting loose another growl. “Irene...”

I kissed around his stitches, my lips lighter than a butterfly’s wings. But each touch was searing, and each one made him gasp. I kissed his skin, making my way to one of his nipples before I flicked my tongue out over it.

His groan made me smile, his grip on me tightening. In one swift motion, he rolled me beneath him, his hand wrapping around my neck.

“No?” I whispered. “Too much?”

I knew that wasn’t the case.

Our lips met in a hungry kiss, and I silenced every warning bell ringing madly through my mind. Charles was a monster, a walking red flag, a manipulator, and someone that wanted to use me.

But, making him want me was all part of my plan.

And I wanted him, even if this was now just a game of survival to me.

His hand around my neck was a necklace of desire, of burning need. I wanted him to squeeze harder, wanted him to make me see stars.

“Let me in your mind,” he whispered. “And I’ll give you exactly what you want.”

“No,” I whispered.

He chuckled. “I won’t be able to read everything, little dove, no worries. I’m sure you have your secret plans in there. I just want to be able to *feel* your desires. It’s how I intend to thank you.”

I felt a pressure against my head as I stared up at him, pushing against my thoughts. I scowled, glaring.

“I don’t trust you,” I gasped.

“You shouldn’t,” he said. “Now, let me in, little dove. I want to make you scream.”

I let out a gasp as I felt him. I closed my eyes as he pushed into my mind, but I let him. I let him into the parts I wanted him to see, and in return...

I could feel him too.

The darkness. The yearning. The desires that he kept locked away.

The bloodlust.

Or were those my own feelings? Was I seeing myself, seeing the parts of me I wanted no one to find?

I gasped as the darkness consumed me, and for a moment, I saw one of his memories burn through my mind. It had to be a memory right? Of him in a massive room full of glass, at a table with others like him.

But there was something wrong...

“Stop,” he growled.

The memory slipped away, my eyes flying open. He pressed his forehead against mine, panting.

“You can’t see that,” he whispered.

I wanted to ask why, but his lips crashed against mine again, our lust intertwining like vines. I cried out as he kissed down my neck, his fangs piercing my skin.

Fuck, I’d wanted that. I’d wanted to know what that would feel like. I could feel his cock hard against me, and my core was burning with the need to be filled.

“Such a dirty mind,” he said. “You’ve been wanting my fangs in your neck for a bit, hmm? Ever since you saw them. Did you think about that while you were in the box?”

“No,” I growled.

It was a lie.

I’d been trapped for a while and I’d had nothing but time to...*wonder*.

“Fuck you,” I snarled, pushing against him.

He only laughed, pinning my arms to the side as he fully sank his teeth into my neck. The pain made me yelp, but it was followed by an incomparably intense pleasure, the likes of which I’d never felt before.

I realised I was feeling him. Feeling how good it felt for him to take my blood, to taste me. I was giving it to him, and even as I shoved against his chest, I still didn’t want him to stop.

I wanted him to possess me. I wanted him to own me. I wanted him to tell me I was good, that I was his.

He gasped as he pulled away, my blood dripping down his chin. He leaned back for a moment, and I watched as the veins beneath his grey skin began to turn dark.

“Fuck,” he whispered. “You’re...perfect for me.”

He swallowed with a groan, his tongue swiping up every drop of my blood.

And as he did, his form wavered for a split second, showing me a glimpse of the monster caged beneath his grey skin.

I couldn’t help but squeal, gripping the blankets beneath me.

Charles wasn’t just a pretty fairy man, he was an actual beast.

He stared at me, cocking his head.

He didn’t run away, and I didn’t try to get free.

His wings fluttered behind him, the mirage that shielded his beast melting away again.

“Look at me,” he whispered. “All of me. See me. See the fucking monster that is about to breed your greedy cunt, little dove.”

The bed groaned beneath his weight as he metamorphosed. Beneath the grey skin, I could see his skeleton growing and changing. The colours of his wings paled, and a low growl

rumbled from his chest. I could see what he would turn into, a massive creature with razor-sharp teeth and soul-piercing three eyes that burned with hate, a ghastly creature of nightmares.

Still, my thighs clenched and my pussy pulsed with need.

“You still want me,” he rasped.

His form shifted once again, turning back into the pretty Unseelie that I wanted to fuck me.

“Strip,” he whispered.

I sat up quickly, pulling my clothing free. He helped me, pulling my pants off and tossing them aside before taking off whatever was left of his clothing.

I tore my gaze from his, letting it fall down to his cock.

Fuck.

It was long and thick, black and red, with *two* heads. I stared, trying to understand how I would fit that inside of me. His cock had ridges, the kind that would make me gasp and moan.

“Do all of you...” I drifted off, not even sure how to finish my sentence.

“Yes,” Charles chuckled, smirking again. “All of us have cocks that I’m sure are *interesting* to you.”

Oh gods.

“Spread your legs, little dove,” Charles said. “I want to see you touch yourself.”

I shivered as I parted them for him, a wave of nerves overcoming me. I slid my hand down, sliding two of my fingers over my clit—all while he watched me. His gaze never wavered, his lips tugging into a hungry smile as he watched.

“Good girl,” he hummed.

I could feel how much he enjoyed this and knew he could feel just how turned on I was.

“You like being a good girl for me,” he said. “I don’t even have to touch you. Don’t even have to make you.”

My breath hitched as a wave of pleasure washed through me, a low moan leaving me as I slid my fingers inside of myself.

I was so wet. I was dripping for *him*.

“Good,” he said, his voice lowering. “Eyes on me, little dove. Watch me as you please your clit. I want you to circle it over and over, slowly.”

Fuck me. A cry left my parted lips as I obeyed him, rolling my clit between my fingers. I shivered, my blood rushing in my ears.

“Get her nice and wet for me,” he said. “Before I taste.”

I continued until my back arched and I was hovering on the edge of cumming. I gasped as Charles leaned down, pushing my legs further apart.

He took my hand, bringing my fingers to his lips. I gasped as he sucked them, his tongue lapping up the essence that slicked them. He pricked the tip of one of his fingers with his fang, and then lowered it down to my clit.

“You’re barbaric,” I gasped as he held my fingers against my clit.

“More than you know,” he growled. “If I had it my way, you’d be bleeding now and I’d get to eat you out every morning for a week.”

I was horrified by the thought... at first.

But then, he pushed my hand away and the tip of his tongue flicked over me.

I cried out, the touch immediately sending a bolt of pleasure so strong through me that I felt like I’d been struck. He buried his face between my legs, taking my clit between his lips and sucking right as he pushed two fingers inside of me.

A scream left my lips, but I didn’t care. I arched up, but he clamped his arm around me, holding me in place as he devoured me.

No one had ever touched me like this, had ever made me feel like I could talk to the gods themselves. I cried out as more pleasure wracked my body, and he forced me to take it, keeping me from escaping the intensity.

He pulled his fingers out, replacing them with his tongue. He drove it straight inside of me.

“Fuck,” I gasped. “Fuck. I’m going to cum.”

He didn’t stop, instead tightening his grip as he plunged his tongue in and out of me. I fought cumming for a moment, not sure if I could truly give in— but then he started to rub my clit with his thumb and I lost it.

My voice echoed through the room as I came, shockwaves drilling through me one after the other. I whimpered as he continued moving his tongue, and I clenched around him.

He pulled back with a groan. “The closest to heaven’s gates that you’ll ever find me, little dove, is right between your pretty thighs.”

What did I do? I couldn’t even think. I stared at him blearily, my chest heaving with pants. Did I give him a thumbs up?

He hummed with delight, kissing up my inner thigh. He paused to give me a gentle bite, before kissing up my body to my breasts.

“Someone is tongue-tied after they cum,” he teased. “I like it. Little Irene, can’t even form a word when she cums so hard.”

I wanted to tell him to shut up, but instead I just let out an annoyed breath and closed my eyes, letting the tremors subside.

Just as I felt my body relaxing, I felt the head of his cock pressing against my opening.

My eyes flew open, peering up at him. I looked down between us and paled, shaking my head.

“Charles,” I breathed.

“Look at me, little dove.”

“It won’t fit,” I whimpered. “James was already big enough but —”

“*Look at me.*”

I looked back up at him and he gripped my jaw, keeping me in place as he slowly began to push inside of me.

The two heads of his cock spread me wide and I reached up, gripping his shoulders as he inched into me.

“Beg me,” he whispered. “Beg me for every inch, love. I want to hear you ask for this monster cock.”

I shook my head, groaning as he stopped, pulling his cock back out.

“Charles,” I growled.

“I told you to beg,” he said. “Beg me. *Now.*”

“Fuck you,” I groaned.

“Beg me, or else I’m taking your little virgin ass.”

“No,” I gasped. “Not there.”

“Then *beg.*”

I gave in. I felt my will power crumble, and I gave in to what he was demanding of me.

And it felt fucking good.

“Please,” I gasped. “Please give me your cock. I need you to fill me.”

He moved his hips forward and I wrapped my legs around him, gasping as he pushed inside of me again.

“Please,” I cried. “Please. I’m begging you, Charles.”

Every ridge made me gasp, every inch driving me wild as he gave me more. I dug my nails into his skin, leaving crimson half moon marks as I arched beneath him.

“More,” he groaned. “Only half way inside.”

“Half?” I wheezed.

“Yes, baby,” he grunted. “Only half. You’re so tight, I can feel you squeezing me. Keep squeezing my cock, little dove.”

I held onto him as he gave me more, until he filled me as much as possible.

“I can’t take more,” I whimpered.

“I know,” he said. “I *know*.”

He pulled back and drove into me, the two of us crying out together. A low growl left him as began to fuck me, pumping in and out of me over and over. The sound of him filling me echoed through the room, and I whimpered with each hard thrust.

I could feel my orgasm building again, pleasure binding the two of us. His lips met mine, his tongue thrusting into my mouth. His fangs scraped me, the metallic taste of blood filling my mouth as he kissed me.

He grunted, his movements becoming harsher.

“Charles,” I gasped. “Pull out.”

“No,” he growled. “*Mine*.”

I started to push at him, but it was too late. He let out a cry, driving his cock deep inside of me right as he began to cum. I could feel the heat inside of me as he filled me, his cock pulsing as he held me to him.

He slid his hand between us as he panted, his fingers finding my clit again.

“No,” I cried. “No.”

“Yes,” he whispered. “I need you to cum again with my cum inside of you.”

“Charles,” I moaned.

He pinned me beneath him, his cock still buried inside of me as he began to play with me. I yelped, pleasure burning through me so hot that it almost hurt.

I squeezed his cock, which was still hard inside of me. Still *cumming* inside of me.

I gasped, my orgasm crashing into me. My voice echoed around us as I came until I melted beneath him, sinking into the soft blankets.

“Get off me,” I whispered, looking to the side.

“No,” he said. “Look at me.”

“No,” I said. “I don’t want to.”

“Look at me, little dove.”

I looked up at him, and again saw the nightmarish face that belonged to his other side.

“I will keep you safe,” he whispered. “I promise you.”

“You wanted to kill me. You probably still do.”

“I will always want to kill you,” he said. “I’m a monster. But I’m telling you, I will keep you safe. But you have to trust me.”

He slowly pulled out, his cum dripping out of me.

How could I ever trust him?

He moved off the bed, getting a towel and bringing it back to clean me up. To my surprise, he sank back into the bed with me and pulled me close.

“Sleep, little dove.”



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CHAPTER 12

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ONE OF US



MORTE

THERE WAS fresh blood on my hands, and I took my time cleaning it off. I had stitched Charles up and sent him on his way. Listening to him explain what had happened was bizarre to me, considering he didn't get injured very often.

I gathered all of the bloodied clothes and tossed them into a pile, cleaning up my space.

I knew where Charles was headed now, and it irked me. I also knew that James had fucked *her* in a room full of men, and that infuriated me too.

I was becoming possessive. It was a sickness, a contagion named Irene.

Voices drifted in from outside my room and I turned, listening intently.

"I heard she fucked James..."

"I bet she screamed," another voice snickered.

"I heard she did. I heard that everyone could hear them. She's such a whore."

"I wonder if his cock ruined her..."

Fury began to work through me as I continued to listen. My blood began to rush in my ears, violence consuming me.

“We should find out. They just keep her upstairs like a dog. She’s just a monster slut now. I bet she could take both of us...”

“After Charles leaves her, we could sneak in...”

Another careless laugh.

Another cut that I would leave on him.

I was going to bleed these two sacks of shit out like pigs.

I stalked across the room, unable to stop myself. Black wisps of darkness burst from me, my magic fueled by my rage. I ripped the door open, making both of the men standing watch jump.

“What the fuck did you say?” I asked.

Both of them paled, their breaths and heart rates quickening.

“Wha—what do you mean?” one of them squeaked.

My magic burst forward and wrapped around both of them before they could try to run. Two hulking men that might have been strong in the human world, but were nothing more than spineless runts in mine.

One of them tried to kick out at me. A mistake. I backhanded him, and his jaw snapped.

I dragged both of them inside the basement, the door shutting behind us with the same finality as their lives soon would. They both squirmed as I pulled them behind me, my shadow tentacles binding around them like rope.

Rage. All I could see was red. All I could hear was what they’d said.

I threw both of them down in front of me and they both scrambled to their feet.

“We didn’t mean anything by what we said!” one of them said, holding up his hands.

Liar. He was a bad liar.

“Lies,” I hissed. *“What are your names?”*

“Hey Boss, we’re sorry, we didn’t know—”

I lunged, grabbing him by his throat and slamming him down onto the concrete floor. I heard bones crack, his eyes wide as the breath was knocked out of him and pain crept in.

I kicked him hard in the stomach, and then turned right as the other jumped for me. I grabbed his face and kicked his legs out from under him.

I would keep them alive. *Chain them up. Chain them, and show the little dove how to kill.*

I stood still for a moment, mulling over my decision as the two of them groaned in pain.

It didn’t have to be this way, but mistakes had been made. They’d said things about her, and I wanted them to suffer. I wanted them to beg and cry and sob.

But not to me.

I wanted them to beg the woman they’d just said they’d fuck.

Disgust worked through me and I turned, grabbing chains off one of the shelves.

They had been talking about Irene. About how they would fuck her, how they would touch her, and how she was nothing more than a monster slut now. It didn’t matter that she had just saved Charles and one of them— *no*.

Touching one of us had put a scarlet letter on her, but if that were going to be the case, it would be painted on with their blood.

Rage continued to pump through me as I chained both of them, tying them from one of the wooden beams above. I ignored their begging, their pleas for mercy, everything.

“We didn’t mean it about Irene—”

I grabbed his face, squeezing hard enough that tears streamed down his cheeks.

“You aren’t worthy of speaking her name,” I growled. “I will cut your tongue out and feed it to you if you dare say it

again. Do you fucking understand?”

He nodded, his whimpers pathetic.

Irene would need to know. I wanted to show her. For reasons that I couldn't decipher, I wanted to show her just how fucked up these cretins were.

She had to punish them.

I waited until Charles left her before I went to her room. The two men were bound and waiting for me to bring her to them.

Our little dove.

It was time she learned what it meant to be a Freak.

I stood at her door, breathing in her scent letting it consume me.

She'd killed people today, even if she hadn't meant to. I hated that I hadn't been there to see it. I needed to see just how fierce she could be.

Can she take me?

I could hear that she was fast asleep, and I paused, listening before I slowly turned the door knob.

I'd been fighting myself. Keeping my desires at bay, fighting the demonic part of me that wished to take everything from her— starting with her eyes.

Her room was silent except for her even breaths. I shut the door behind me, my cock already hardening as I watched her sleep. She was curled up in the middle of the bed, the blankets wrapped around her. I could still smell Charles and what he had done with her...and I liked that.

I liked knowing that the others had used her. I liked knowing that she was already filled with another's cum, and soon to be *mine* as well.

I could call her a whore, a slut, a pet, whatever I wanted—but no one else could. *Especially* not those filthy carrions.

Fuck. I wanted to touch her, but I had fresh bodies waiting for their death.

A soft moan left her lips, drawing me closer. I moved silently to the edge of her bed, staring down at her. I inhaled deeply, breathing in her scent, wishing that it could linger under my mask.

She was quickly becoming my obsession. I wanted to know her inside and out. I wanted to steal everything from her, but should anyone else dare to take from her— take their lives in return.

She was one of us. One of the Freaks. I didn't like that James had made that deal, but she had soaked into my bones, straight into the essence of what was left of my soul.

Rotting me from the inside out. Corrupting me.

I had to do the same to her.

I needed her to need me. To want me. To crave me the way I craved her.

Before I could stop myself, I reached down and curled my gloved fingers beneath the edge of the blanket and slowly began to pull it down. I held my breath as I pulled it back, exposing her soft shoulder.

She was sleeping nude, I realised.

Little dove...

I inched the blanket down further. I scowled at her back, at the metallic plates there.

What do these little wings do?

The blanket fell down to her waist, and I paused as her breath quickened for a moment and then relaxed again. My cock throbbed as she slept on.

Knowing that she was blissfully unaware made my cock throb harder. I tugged the blanket back until the curve of her ass gleamed in the darkness.

Fuck, I could smell her arousal.

I grit my teeth together, tipping my head back with a hiss.

I had to keep myself under control.

I slowly pulled back my coat, undoing some of the buttons until I could reach my pants. I unbuttoned them, tugging them so that my cock could spring free.

A low growl left me as I gripped myself. I was so hard, cum dripping from the tip.

We could do anything that we wanted to her. That was the deal she had made with James. She'd sold her soul to three monsters, and now there would be no going back.

Her breath hitched and she let out a soft moan in her sleep. I froze as she moved, turning over in the bed.

I stroked my cock as I watched her, wondering if she would wake up. Would she open those pretty eyes and see me, her demon, standing over her? Would she scream?

I stayed still as her eyes fluttered, but she sank back into sleep. Her lips parted on a breath, her head now tilted at the perfect angle.

The bastards below could wait. I'd let them hang down in the basement until I was done with her, and then I'd show her how to kill a man.

I was doing so much for her. I'd never wanted to show someone how to do something like that, but I *needed* to show her.

"J'ai besoin de toi," I whispered. *I need you.* "Irene."

I had yet to say her name aloud until now. My chest clenched, a deep growl working up from within.

"You're mine," I said, stroking my cock.

I stepped closer, leaning so that the head of my cock hovered above her lips. I stared down at it, cracking a smile. It was a dark purple, nearly black, with ridges at every inch or so, and *large*.

Would she even be able to take all of it?

“I wonder if you taste as sweet as you look, *mon petit oiseau*.”

Precum dripped onto her lips, glistening in the bits of light that found its way through the window. Her breath was warm, her breasts rising and falling as she slept on.

A shiver worked through her and I watched as goosebumps rose over her flesh, her nipples hardening. I reached down, pinching one of them between gloved fingers.

She let out another little moan, but my innocent little dove slept on as I fed her my precum.

This was the first time I'd ever touched a human for pleasure.

A different kind of thrill, one that was dark and delicious, worked up my spine.

I kept stroking my cock, but stepped to the side, leaning over her. I gave her thigh a gentle push, watching her face to see if she would wake. I pushed a little more until I was moving her leg back, rolling her over just enough so that her thighs were spread.

If she woke up, I'd disappear before she knew what was happening. I wanted to draw this out as long as possible.

Tonight, I would just get a little taste of her.

I slowly pulled off one of my gloves, pausing to look at the stitches that ran over the top of my hand. I could see the darkness between them, the dark magic that was me.

I'd never touched a human with my bare hand.

I sucked in a breath and let my shadows free. One of them wrapped around her knee, pulling her leg gently so that I could touch her.

Her pussy was dark pink, and wet with her arousal. I cursed under my breath, lowering my hand carefully.

I placed it right above her pussy, closing my eyes as the warmth of her spread through me. I could hear her heart beating, her breath slow and steady.

I wasn't scared of humans. I knew that they were powerless compared to me, I knew they couldn't do anything to me.

So why was my heart beating so fast? Why did I feel more alive now than ever before?

Why did I want her so badly?

Irene, Irene, Irene. She'd run into the wrong monsters.

We would never let her go now that we had a taste.

I slid my fingers down, gasping at how hot she felt. Her pussy pulsed beneath my touch, and a helpless noise left her. I circled her clit, enjoying the way she gasped in her sleep.

My fingers moved further down, and I dipped them inside of her, gathering her arousal, before I lifted my mask and brought them to my lips.

The taste of her consumed me.

My cock throbbed, desperate to fill her where I'd just gotten my first taste.

But then I heard her breathing shift, a hum leaving her.

I took a step back, letting the darkness of my magic swallow me whole right as she sat up in bed sleepily.

I appeared in the hall right outside her door. I leaned against the wall, and then grunted, shoving my angry cock back into my pants and adjusting my coat. I slipped my glove back on and then went to her door, knocking.

I heard her gasp, the shuffle of her pulling on clothes.

"Hold on," she whimpered from inside.

I could still taste her on my lips. I licked them, wishing that more than anything, I could take her now.

But no. The wait would be worth it though. How long could I go teasing her before she realised why she'd wake up wet in the mornings?

The door swung open, and I was faced with a very frazzled little dove.

“Morte,” she said hoarsely. She licked her lips, her eyes narrowing.

I wondered if she knew what the taste in her mouth was.

“I was sleeping,” she said.

Oh, I knew that. I smiled under my mask even though she couldn't see. “Come with me.”

She was hesitant for a moment but knew better than to argue. I led her down the hall and then the stairs, to the door that was now guarded by two of my men that knew not to fucking look at her.

I pushed open the door, keeping it open long enough for her to come in behind me. I then slammed it shut and turned the lock.

She was frozen next to me, her gaze already on the centre of the room.

“Morte...” she whispered frantically. “Morte, what is this?”

“Come,” I said again, leading her closer to them.

She wanted to run. I knew she wanted to turn away, to cower, to not look at them.

I reached out and gripped her arm, dragging her now. I stopped once we were standing right in front of the two men. They both moaned, their eyes shining with fear and pain.

They were naked, their mouths gagged and arms bound above their heads. I'd allowed their feet to just graze the floor but they couldn't truly relax no matter how hard their little minds tried to reach for it.

“I have a lesson for you,” I said. “One that you must be taught. Our world is dark, and now that you're one of us, you will need to know these things.”

“Where's Charles?” she whimpered.

A flicker of annoyance worked through me. Did she really think that Charles was the better of the three of us?

“Charles left you alone in your bed awhile ago,” I growled. “Filled with his cum and sleeping. He did nothing *good* for you. *I’m* showing you how to do something that will keep you alive.”

I went over to my table with tools that I had already laid out. I’d even organised them for her.

I grit my teeth as I plucked a knife with a grizzly serrated edge. I went back to the men, ignoring their muffled groans.

I pointed at them, looking at Irene. “These men wanted to rape you. They were talking about what they wanted to do to you. They talked about how you’re a monster whore. How you must be desperate. How you’re worthless and they wanted to play with you, use you for their sick pleasures. They said all of these things with ease, because they don’t think someone like you is worth any shred of respect.”

Her eyes had widened, her face pale.

No, no, no. I wanted to see her rage, not her fear. Not her shock.

I let out a frustrated growl. “Come closer,” I demanded.

Her expression was one of horror as she came closer. I grabbed her hand, forcing the knife between her little fingers. She whimpered as I moved behind her, gripping the knife in her hand and directing the tip towards the first bastard’s neck.

“If you cut here,” I said, tracing the tip over the artery in his neck. “He will bleed out and die.” I moved the knife down, leaving a thin red mark as I lowered it to his heart. “If you stab here, then you will pierce his heart. He will die.” I moved the knife further, ignoring the tremble in her body. “Here, right between his ribs. It’ll nick the lung, and he will die. It’ll be slower though, and a bit more fun.”

This time, I pressed the knife down harder, forcing the blade to slice his skin. He let out a muffled cry, and she shook her head, letting out a choked sob.

“Don’t make me do this,” she whispered. “Please. I can’t, *Morte. I’m not like you.*”

“You will be,” I snarled. “You will be, Irene. You can’t stop it now. You made that deal with James for your sister and now you’re one of us. Blood is already on your hands, what’s a little more, little dove?”

“Please don’t,” she cried.

I shook my head and with a growl shoved her hand forward, burying the knife into the human’s gut. He howled with pain, and I felt Irene tremble.

One way, or another, she would be the one to make these bastards repent. If she didn’t want to play God, then I would, and she would be the fallen angel I used to enact my will.

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CHAPTER 13

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BAD SIDE



IRENE

I SQUEEZED my eyes shut as blood sprayed over my face.

Morte held me firmly in place, one hand wrapped around my waist while the other directed my own. His cock was hard against me.

The man that was chained up in front of us screamed as the blade pierced him. A sob worked through me, and I leaned back into Morte as my mind felt like it was fracturing.

His cock is hard.

“I hate you,” I cried.

He sucked in a breath, his cock throbbing against me. Terror made my heart pound in my chest, but then there was that kiss of forbidden lust that made me squeeze my thighs tight.

We pulled the knife free and he shoved my hand fast again. The man screamed as it drove into him, the squelching sound of it making me feel sick.

“Don’t close your eyes,” Morte growled. “Close them and you’ll fucking regret it.”

So I kept them open. Tears fell down my face as I stabbed the man I’d never met before over and over, until he was falling apart. Bile rose in my throat, burning as I tried to hold it down.

“I’m going to throw up,” I whispered.

Morte leaned over my shoulder, his other hand sliding up my body until he gripped my neck.

“Breathe,” he whispered.

He had paused stabbing for a moment, allowing me to pull myself together.

“Breathe,” he said again.

My breath shuddered as I drew it in. He held me firmly, grinding his hips against my ass. Part of me wondered if he’d use me now, but instead he just held me still, forcing me to breathe through the horror he’d put me through.

I was terrified of myself, of my sinister inclinations, but my pussy still pulsed. A throb of need worked through me, one that I couldn’t stop. He breathed in my scent, the edge of his mask rubbing against me. His glove was a dark comfort around my throat, a collar to my sanity.

No, no, no.

“You’re a monster,” I gasped.

He sucked in a breath, groaning until a low, humourless chuckle left him.

“What did you expect? I’m not a fucking fairy like Charles. I’m not a moth creature like James. My magic is dark. I take body parts from people to build my own.”

“What?” I gasped.

“Oh yes,” Morte growled. He let go of my neck and hand, then spun me around.

We were both standing in a pool of blood now, and it reminded me of a puddle of ink. I stared up at him, wondering if he even had a face behind his mask. It was like staring into a void of darkness, shadows wavering around him in long tentacled wisps.

He held up his gloved hand and slowly pulled it off. I gasped as his hand was revealed, stitches binding his skin

together. The stitches seemed to barely hold him together as darkness oozed out of the cracks.

“If it makes you feel better, little dove, I only steal from the bad guys,” he whispered. “I hunt them and kill them, and then if they have something I want, I take it.”

My stomach rolled as he reached up, cupping my face with his cursed hand. His palm was cold and I felt a static shock as he touched me, making me wince.

He pressed his thumb against my lips, forcing them apart. I started to pull away, but he stopped me.

“No,” he murmured. “You can’t run. You’re going to belong to me, Irene. You’re my obsession, my doll, my everything. This is your fault.”

“I haven’t done anything to you,” I breathed, shaking my head.

“You’ve *ruined* me,” he said darkly. “You’ve given me hope for something I’ve never wanted, and now it’s a sickness that has seeped into the depths of hell where my soul is kept. You’re a fucking disease, Irene, and one that not even I have a cure for. Whatever is left of my being aches for you, and I will not stop myself from taking.”

“If you’re going to fuck me, then just do it,” I snapped.

“If I ever fuck you, you’re going to be begging for it, Irene.”

“I would never beg you for anything!” I yelled. “You just made me into a murderer!”

“I made you into a *goddess*.”

I shook my head, grimacing through my glare. “You’re delusional. Delusional and violent and vile—”

“Why? Because my cock is hard?”

He stepped closer, the darkness of his presence swamping me. I felt the shadows that stretched from him wind around my legs, the feeling of them reminding me of soft rope. I gasped

as the tip of one of them brushed over my centre, sending a stab of heat through me.

“You’re wet,” he whispered. “Wet and needy. You stand before me thinking you’re better than me, yet your greedy body is turned on from killing someone. You can’t stand there and lie to me. You can’t tell me you don’t feel a sense of victory after knowing what they planned to do to you.”

His shadows wrapped around my thighs now, and the one that brushed across my heat pulled back, leaving behind a desire I could barely fathom.

“Open your mouth,” he demanded.

“No,” I growled.

“Open your fucking mouth, Irene.”

I shook my head, tightening my lips. Morte reached up, pinching my nose shut just like James had done.

These fucking bastards.

We stared at each other until I finally parted my lips to breathe.

He forced two of his fingers in my mouth, letting go of my nose. I immediately bit down, but he only chuckled.

“Suck them,” he said.

Between him, Charles, and James— I was going to go insane.

I bit down harder, but he gave my cheek a light slap. It still stung though, and I stopped biting.

“Suck them, my little *marionette*.”

I began to suck them, all while glaring at him through the metal eyeglasses of his mask. The black leather gleamed, the ridge of the beak lined with bronze rivulets.

He thrust his fingers deeper until they hit the back of my throat, making me choke. I shoved away at him, but he held me firm, forcing them deeper. The tentacles around my thighs tightened, binding me to the place we stood.

My pussy throbbed again despite the way my cheeks flared with heat from the humiliation. It was just us, a dead guy, and soon to be dead guy in the room— but it was embarrassing for him to do this.

He pulled them back, freeing his fingers from my mouth. I let out a gasp, spit dripping from my lips. Morte gave my face another light slap, and I immediately bit my bottom lip to hold back a groan.

“You’re just as fucked up as me,” Morte whispered. “I just wanted to remind you of that.”

I panted, wiping away the spit from my face with a glare.

“You’re gross. I don’t even know where your hand has been.”

“The same place yours has been before, I’m sure,” he chuckled, pulling his glove back on. “It’s time, little dove. This guy is getting cold.”

Fresh horror washed over me and I shook my head.

“Ready for the second one? He’s already pissed himself, little dove.”

I looked back at him, seeing that what Morte had said was true. I shook my head again, wishing that I could run away.

But there was no escaping him.

“Don’t make me, please,” I said. *“Please.”*

He let out an angry growl, throwing his hands up. “He wanted to hurt you!” Morte yelled. He snarled again, staring at me with venomous disgust. “He wanted to hurt you, Irene, and you can’t fucking defend yourself?”

I felt his disappointment. It filled the room, an elephant weighing down on my shoulders. Tears blurred my vision again as he growled, shaking his head.

“If I let him go now, you know what would happen?” Morte asked. “He’d wait until you were alone and hurt you then.”

“You don’t know that,” I whispered.

Morte let out a laugh. “Little dove, he wants nothing more than to kill you now. Look at him.”

I looked back, and as much as I didn’t want to see it— I did see the hate in his eyes. Even this close to death.

“*Kill* him.”

I wiped away my tears, smearing them and blood over my face. I pulled my hand away, and let out a crazed laugh.

I was falling apart.

These three monsters were the death of me. The old me was gone, and the only way I’d be able to keep living was if I became one of them.

If I truly became one of them.

I’d told myself I’d survive this.

That I would save Florence.

There was no fucking way for me to do either of those things if I didn’t give in to their demands.

They were villains and they wanted to corrupt me. To poison me, to leach out every good part of me. Even Charles, who swore he would protect me.

Where was he now? He was nowhere to be found.

Another crazed giggle left me as I tipped my head back, my thoughts twisting with hysteria. I was losing my mind.

I drew in a soft breath and then looked back at Morte.

If he wanted a villain, then that was what I would be. But he’d regret it.

All three of them would regret it.

I plucked the knife from Morte’s hands and turned, driving it straight into the other man. He screamed, yanking against his chains, but I leaned up and drove the blade straight into his heart as hard as I could.

Whatever good part of me that was left bled out like the lifeless man in front of me. The killing knife still clutched in my hand was a crimson trophy of my morality’s death.

My shaking had stopped, and I felt the resoluteness settle over me. A blanket of dangerous comfort.

“Good,” Morte whispered. “Good girl. That’s what I wanted. Did it feel good to let go, little dove?”

I closed my eyes for a moment, hating him so much that it hurt.

But, I looked back at him, giving him a soft smile. “Yes,” I whispered.

He stared at me silently and then nodded. “You can go back upstairs now, little dove.”

“I’m keeping this,” I said, holding up the knife.

“You should,” he chuckled. “A gift. Your first true kill.”

I nodded and moved past him, sparing the room we were in another glance as I went to the door. I held that bile down as I realised that he did keep body parts, and that some of them were in jars.

I pushed open the doors and stepped out, letting it slam behind me. There were two men there, and they stared ahead silently as I leaned back into the door, trying to keep the panic down.

A breath rattled through me, and I could feel the discomfort of the men, wishing I would leave. I understood why.

And I couldn’t let them think I was weak either.

I composed myself and straightened my spine, pulling my shoulders back as I went up the short staircase to the first story, and then up the second staircase to my bedroom.

The moment I stepped inside, I ran to the bathroom and collapsed to my knees in front of the toilet, throwing up. By the time I was done, I just sat back and stared at the wall, the bitterness lingering on my tongue.

If anything, I wished he would have at least waited a few more hours so I could have slept. Now, I wouldn’t be able to

sleep at all. And if I did sleep, it would be riddled with nightmares.

I would just think about death, how it had felt to kill someone over and over. The sounds that he had made, the way his flesh gave way to the sharpened blade. The scent of his blood as he convulsed in agony.

I hugged my knees, resting my head on them.

I hoped Florence was okay. I was holding on to the hope that we both would be, but that was becoming more and more unlikely for me.

James had said that once someone did certain things, they could never go back to normal.

Would I ever be able to go to a party back home again without thinking about the night I killed someone? Would I ever be able to walk down a city street without thinking about the monsters that hid in the alleys?

Would I ever fly again without thinking about how I'd been held captive in a blimp?

Fuck, they'd all ruined me.

Once again, I found that my tears were gone.

I felt hollow, and the only thing that kept my heart beating was the thought that I could outdo the three of them. I wanted to prove that they weren't better than me.

They'd had devils in their lives that had turned them into who they were today.

To me, they were those devils.

"Fuck the devils," I muttered, glaring.

I had maybe one person that might be on my side. Henry. He would kill me in a heartbeat if it was his life over mine, but if I played my cards right...

I had to get up in the morning and act like nothing had happened.

I had to dine with murderers and bide my time until I had the chance to end them.

Charles had mentioned that if James tasted my blood, he might have created some sort of bond. Could I use that to my advantage? If I tasted his blood, would that seal it with some sort of magic?

The thought disgusted me. I wasn't a vampire. But if it gave me an upper hand on him, I could use it.

Then there was Charles. He'd come into my mind, but he'd also let me into his. And even though he was a manipulator and a liar, he was slowly putting his defences down around me. He was letting me in.

Then there was Morte.

Anger worked through me again. He was the worst of all in many ways, and he kept his distance. He was violent and cruel and liked to see those around him suffer.

He would be hard to beat.

But...if tonight proved anything, it was that he was starting to become obsessed with me. He'd been almost desperate to make me kill, because he held some sort of high moral in his mind. Some sort of code that told him those two men had to repent.

I've already taken two monster cocks, what's one more?

I swallowed hard, trying not to think about that.

That was my weakness.

When I had been with James and Charles, I had wanted them. I had hated them for it, but I had wanted the things they had done to me. That had given me a different type of power, even when I had begged James to stop.

My pussy pulsed and I wished that I could glare at myself. It was dirty, but the things they had done to me.... and how hard they'd made me cum...

"Fuck you, you fucking thirsty bitch," I muttered to my pussy.

I sighed and then got to my feet. I spent the next hour rinsing off, cleaning up the bathroom, tossing the new, and now ruined, clothes into a pile, and changing into a fresh nightgown before crawling into bed.

I tried to forget everything that had happened and shut my eyes, forcing myself to try and find some type of solace in the darkness of sleep.

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CHAPTER 14

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LONESOME DOVE



JAMES

THE WAREHOUSE BELOW WAS BURNING, the flames reaching high up to the sky. The smoke was dense, embers glimmering like fireflies as they drifted around me. I breathed in, feeling a hint of satisfaction at the destruction.

It was a tragedy no doubt. That had been where Irene's sister was supposed to have been kept. One of my men had confirmed there was a human woman there, and now I had the only dove alive.

The fights had already broken out between the Ripper and Freaks through London, and they weren't pulling their punches.

Well, neither were we.

Charles landed on the ledge next to me, his shoulders stiff. "Killed off a few of them. Where's Morte?"

"I don't know," I said. "He didn't show."

We were both silent, because regardless of the anger building between the two of us, we both wondered the same thing.

Was he with *her*?

"If she finds out that you killed her sister..."

"Then what?" I spat out. I looked over at him, glaring. "Then what, Charles? She'll hate me? She already does."

Charles' jaw ticked and he shook his head.

I turned my gaze back on the destruction below. The sun would be rising soon, and all of London would be whispering about us. I was waiting to see what Jack's next move would be.

There was a flicker of fear, but then I snuffed it out.

This is what we had been working towards for years. We had been clawing our way through the filth, through the darkness, all so we could breathe the same air they did.

I would have done this if Irene weren't a part of everything, so I made the decision to go ahead and do it. Trying to take her sister had been a useless idea because of how well-guarded everything was.

It had been better to kill them all.

"You know, it's a little funny," Charles said.

I closed my eyes, letting out a sigh of annoyance before looking at him. He only started conversations like that when he was livid.

"What?" I gritted out.

"Just that we've been together for at least five years, and you've never once taken my blood."

I pulled my wings in tight, ignoring the clicking in the mechanical one that was more annoying now than ever. "When are you fixing my wing?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know, when you stop bullshitting me like a fucking cunt," Charles said.

I spun, reaching out for him, but he was ready. He kicked me back and I hit the roof hard, my head knocking against the concrete. Before I could roll to my feet, he straddled my chest, pinning me down.

"Five years," Charles breathed. "You've known her for what— Five days? And you take her blood. Something you've never ever done for me. She hates you. *I love you.*"

I relaxed under him and shook my head. "Charles..."

“Do you not love me back?” he whispered hoarsely. “Have we been doing this for nothing? I have given you everything of mine, James. Everything. Every part of my soul until I had nothing left to give.”

“You’re an idiot,” I snarled. “Of course I love you, Charles. I just didn’t think I needed to put that in words. Or in blood...”

“Then why did you take her blood? You could have gotten her *pregnant!*”

He slapped me hard across the face, hard enough that my ears started ringing.

“That’s for *me*,” he snarled.

He struck me again with the back of his hand, using almost twice as much force.

“That’s for *her*.”

He then rolled off me, shaking his head.

“I should really kill you for this,” I muttered, sitting up.

“Shut the fuck up, James,” he sighed. “As if you haven’t slapped me before.”

“Okay, but only when I was fucking you,” I mumbled, rubbing my jaw. I looked over at him, trying to read the anger that came off him in waves. “I didn’t expect to bite her.”

“You— James, who always has a devious plan— didn’t plan something?”

I fought the urge to roll my eyes, and couldn’t help but smile a little. The tension between us had almost been too much, and damned if it hadn’t made me a bit more bitter too.

“You know, if you wanted me to bite you, you should have asked.”

“I just didn’t think you were that stupid,” Charles grumbled.

Silence settled over the two of us. Never mind that we were surrounded by smoke, and that the sound of sirens

screamed into the dawn.

Charles got to his feet and then came to me, holding out his hand. I took it and he pulled me to standing, the two of us regarding each other for a moment.

Why hadn't we ever sealed our bond? In my mind, I'd always told myself that he didn't want anything like that. That we shouldn't have any real commitment in case one of us died.

But now, that felt foolish.

"We should go," Charles said. "Before Jack shows up. I'm sure she's almost here anyways, and I've already been shot today."

"What? You were shot?" I asked.

"I haven't had time to fill you in, but yes." He pulled on the collar of his shirt, showing me the stitches Morte must have given him. "Irene saved me and our driver. Don't expect that to happen again if she finds out her sister is dead."

"Well, don't fucking tell her, and it should be fine," I growled. "For fuck's sake. Let's get home, and then you're telling me everything."

Charles went one way and I went the other. Within half an hour or so, both of us were sneaking back into our house.

I stepped into the foyer, shrugging off my coat. I smelled like smoke, and ash clung to me. Charles ran his fingers through his hair, shaking ash free.

The scent of blood hit me and I frowned.

"Morte?" I called.

A heavy thump sounded through the house. I gave Charles a wary look, and the two of us rushed through the den to the staircase that went down to the basement.

One of our men was dragging up a body, blood making the work slippery.

"What the fuck happened?" I asked. "Is that one of our men?"

“Irene,” he answered, wincing.

“Irene wouldn’t do this,” Charles said, scowling.

We both watched as the body was dragged up and plopped on the floor. There was another at the bottom of the stairwell, and another one of our men was hauling it up.

I shook my head and moved past them, Charles close behind. We went to the door and slipped inside Morte’s room.

“Morte,” I growled, heading towards the back where his desk was.

He was sitting on a stool, yellowed pages spread out over the top. He glanced up at us, always unreadable behind that mask.

“Where the fuck have you been?” I asked. “We had a warehouse to blow up.”

He stared at me and then shrugged. “I had other things to attend to.”

“Such as?” Charles asked.

Morte grunted, glaring at him. “Teaching the little dove how to kill, of course. Because despite you leaving all your cum inside of her, you’ve done nothing to actually make her ready for the world we live in.”

Charles made a noise and my lips parted. I looked at him, narrowing my eyes.

It wasn’t jealousy I felt, but him fucking her certainly made things make more sense. Such as why he slapped me.

“*Charles*,” I hissed.

Charles shook his head, baring his fangs. “Don’t you fucking start. You fucked her first, and took her blood.”

“You took her *blood*?” Morte seethed.

I held up my hands, taking a step back from both of them. The three of us now formed a circle, and the tension between us was only getting hotter. Violence seeped into our words, rage making everything more tense.

“I did take her blood,” I said. “I couldn’t stop myself. I fucked her and bit her after she sat under my desk sucking my cock in a room full of enemies. Which are now allies, by the way.”

“But you *took her blood*,” Morte said. “You can see how that is a problem, right, James?”

“She didn’t take mine,” I barked. “She’s not mated to me. I did feel some sort of bond awaken, but I didn’t complete it.”

My words didn’t soothe either one of them. Morte slammed his hand down on his desk, the darkness around him intensifying. Charles crossed his arms, his three eyes stabbing into me.

“You’re going to sit here and be angry with me, when you took the time to teach her how to murder? Never, in all the time that I have known you, have you taken time to show anyone anything. You hate humans, keep your distance from them. Hell, you’ve kept your distance from us, and we run half of the city together,” I snapped at Morte. “What happened to you being disgusted by her presence?”

“You don’t understand,” Morte snapped. He let out a string of curses in French, rising from his seat. “I can’t get her out of my mind. She’s infected me. I want to murder her, to kill her and take parts from her to make my own body, because that’s how close I want her to me.”

Silence settled over the three of us, his words sinking in.

“She’s a disease,” he whispered. “She’s fucked with all three of us. And yet, I find myself needing to show her how to fend for herself. Those two men wanted to rape her after Charles fucked her, and I heard them speaking and I... I needed them to atone for their sins.”

Growls filled the room, coming from Charles and me. The idea of one of our men even looking at her enraged me for reasons I couldn’t explain.

Morte had done the right thing.

“I swore to her I would protect her,” Charles whispered. His expression was stricken, and I hated that. “Fuck. I’ve

already failed.”

“Is that how much you want her?” I asked.

It was a question I already knew the answer to, because that’s how much I wanted her. I wanted her enough to know that if harm now befell her, and I could have stopped it, I would torture myself over it.

This was a problem. She was a weakness now, but I couldn’t find any care. I couldn’t find the logical part of me that told me I should just get rid of her once and for all.

“I’m falling for her,” Charles admitted.

Morte and I looked at him like he was insane, but I knew how he felt. There was this *pressure* when I was around her, one that I was fighting and fighting. I couldn’t understand it.

“We have done some terrible things to her,” Charles said. “All three of us. And I don’t think showing her how to kill was the best idea. I’m sure she was terrified.”

“She enjoyed it,” Morte whispered darkly.

His words hung over the three of us.

“When I am with her, all of my thoughts become erratic and clear at the same time. She is a guillotine over my soul, and she has cut away the part of me that will destroy her. I still want to, but I cannot. I...” Morte drifted off, shaking his head.

It scared me.

I’d never seen him like this. Hell, I wasn’t even sure if the three of us had ever spoken this much before.

“You made her one of us,” Morte whispered. “You started this, James. We are monsters, and now she will become one too. She has to be.”

I shook my head, my shoulders slumping. “I thought we would just kill her.”

“But now we can’t,” Charles said. “Because she has a grip on us. And now we are in a war with the Rippers, one that could very well damn end all three of us. We don’t know how

long we may live. And it didn't matter before, but it matters now."

"Are you saying that you want to live only for her?" I asked. "After you were so angry at me for tasting her blood?"

"I'm saying that I want to see her live," Charles said. "Even when my instincts tell me I should break her wings."

I blew out a breath, my thoughts spinning. The three of us had brought a human into our home, thinking that she was nothing more than a pet. A prisoner. I had believed we would get the information we needed and then kill her.

I was a murderer, not a lover. I wasn't meant to care for someone. I wasn't supposed to be kind, wasn't built to be loving.

But I'd made that deal with her. A deal I didn't need.

And then I'd touched her.

I'd tasted her.

I'd damned all of us. I'd made a deal with a devil in disguise, and had let her take over our home.

"What are we supposed to do?" I asked. "She hates us. She has every right to hate us. How could she ever care about us?"

"Does it matter, so long as we have her?" Morte asked.

"Would it be love if it weren't returned?" Charles asked in return.

"For fucks sake," I sighed. "We are monsters. We are mobsters. We don't *love* anything."

"We love each other," Charles said, giving me a hard look.

"That's different," I muttered.

Charles snorted, shrugging. "Earlier today, I was shot in a motorcar chase. They hit right above my heart, and it was a wound that made me pass out. And then I woke up in Morte's chair, with him stitching me up. And you know what my driver reported to me?"

"What?" I gritted out.

“Irene had taken my gun and she shot at them. She took out two of their cars. She saved us. If she hadn’t done that, then I may very well be a prisoner of Jack’s and they would have...her. She also could have pointed that gun at our driver’s head after and forced him to take her somewhere. She could have shoved me out of the car. But she didn’t do that. She came straight back here, to the cage we’ve created for her.”

“Why would she do that?” I wondered.

Charles shrugged. “She hates us. But I think she wants us just as much as we want her. I’d like to think that maybe, if we were kind to her, she would stop hating us.”

Morte recoiled from his words, and so did I on the outside at least.

But internally, I wondered— did she want us? There had been moments when I had made her do those things... like when she had crawled over my desk...

I wasn’t sure what was real and what wasn’t.

“She’s a fighter,” Charles said. “She may not be from our world, but I don’t think it will devour her the way we think it will.”

“No,” I said. “If it doesn’t kill her, it’ll make her into one of us. And somehow, that is worse than death.”

“Is it?” Charles asked, giving me a softer look. “Are we really so bad?”

“We are,” Morte said. “We’re the villains. The monsters. The creatures that haunt nightmares and murder on a whim. I have dissected humans over and over again for pleasure. I have hurt pretty faces just like hers.”

“Then why haven’t you killed her?” I asked.

We all knew the answer.

Somehow, the three of us had found the one thing in the world that could make us weak.

Now, we just had to convince her that loving three monsters didn’t have to be so bad.

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CHAPTER 15

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SUNNY SIDE UP



IRENE

MORNING CAME TOO FAST. I cracked my eyes open and stared at the ceiling for a while, thinking about everything that had happened over the last few days.

I hadn't slept well. I hadn't expected to anyways. I'd murdered two men last night, and I could still see the life fading from their eyes in my mind.

And if I weren't thinking about that, I was thinking about what was beneath Morte's plague mask.

He'd called me a disease. He'd acted like I was a poison, that I'd made him do the things he did.

As if I'd made him get hard or push his fingers in my mouth.

I was angry with them, but I was even more angry with myself. Because while he had been horrible, he had been right.

I was just as fucked up as him. There were parts of me that I hid that were being yanked out onto a dark stage before the world. A spotlight burning on the worst parts of me, revealing that I wasn't the smart and kind inventor that wanted to change the world. I wasn't the party girl or the curious scientist that pulled apart steam engines.

I was something much more.

There was a small part of me that wondered—If I won this game against the Freaks, would I take over? Would I enjoy being like the infamous Jack? A woman that an entire city feared.

Monster or not, I admired her. Everyone around the world had heard of Jack the Ripper, thinking that title belonged to a man, but no.

I had wanted my name to be a household dream too, but maybe being a household nightmare was just as fun.

I rolled out of bed, got dressed, and managed to pull on my boots right as a knock rapped on the door.

“Come in,” I said, clearing my throat.

The door opened, and to my shock, James stood in the doorway.

He looked...*different*. He was wearing a black vest with a bronze chain, pants and... no shoes?

I looked down at his feet, staring for a moment. They weren't like a human's. In fact, he had six toes and—

“Didn't know you had a foot fetish,” he teased.

My gaze whipped up to him.

“I don't,” I stammered. “I just... yours are different from mine.”

He *grinned* at me.

This was startling. “Did you need something?” I asked, pressing my lips together.

I tried my best not to think about yesterday. I was still a little sore from what I had done with him and then Charles, but it was a good kind of ache. One that reminded me that I had cum several times in just a day, and *that* had felt good.

“Morte is cooking breakfast,” James said. “He would like to know how you prefer your eggs. We're off until this evening, and laying low until then.”

What the fuck was going on? Did mobsters get days off?

“Uh... sunny side up,” I said.

James made a face, humming. “Not sure what that means, love. The eggs?”

LOVE? Had James the mothman mobster just called me *love*? I fought the urge to hiss at him, and instead I crossed my arms and faced him. “Are you okay? Did you hit your head? Where are Charles and Morte? Do they know you’re being nice to me?”

He chuckled. “Yes, they’re aware.”

“Then what’s going on?” I asked. “Are you going to kill me now?”

“No,” he snorted. “Far from it.”

Was this the power of sex?

“Come on. Downstairs you go,” James said.

This was a trap. It had to be a trap. I hesitated for a moment and then followed him, already wondering what kind of hell waited for me below. Was this him fucking with me? Maybe Henry talked.

If he talked and ratted me out, he was a dead man.

See, already quick to kill.

I felt a burning in my shoulder blades, a sharp pain that surprised me. It disappeared faster than it appeared though, leaving me confused.

I gritted my teeth as I followed James downstairs. I ran my hand over the smooth bronze railing, ignoring the cobwebs that clung between the bars.

I expected to come down to guns and more bodies, but instead I was led to the kitchen— where yes, Morte the demonic Plague Doctor was *cooking*.

“Scones are already out,” Morte chimed.

The same monster that had forced me to carve up two men was whisking eggs.

He was wearing an apron.

“This is too much,” I said, shaking my head. I wasn’t sure if I should laugh or cry at this point, but seeing a demonic plague doctor in an apron was about to be my tipping point.

“Good morning, little dove.”

I tore my gaze from Morte, looking over at Charles. He was sitting at the table, his lips pulled back into a soft smile. He had pulled his long silver hair back, and his three eyes were pinned on me. He wore a black shirt today, with a black corset embellished with golden details and black pants and boots.

He had no right to be that pretty for someone so fucking twisted.

“Come sit!” he said, patting the chair next to him.

I wanted to ask him where the fuck he had gone last night. I didn’t even hide the way I narrowed my eyes at him.

He could have maybe stopped me from becoming a murderer, but then again maybe he would have gotten hard from that too.

I took a seat next to him, trying to keep my temper in check.

“The lass likes them sunny side up,” James said. “I don’t know what she means by that though.”

Morte paused his whisking, mumbling in French. “I know.”

“Scrambled are fine,” I said, wincing. “It’s fine. You don’t need to make them like that.”

Morte ignored me, pulling out a skillet from seemingly nowhere. I half expected him to come smack me with it, but instead he placed it on the stove and turned up the heat.

“I know this must seem strange,” Charles said. “But, Morte is an excellent cook. And he’s able to cook for humans too, as he likes their food.”

Cook humans. He had to mean cook humans, not cook for them.

“Oh, you simply have no idea how strange this is,” I bit out.

Charles tsked, scooting his chair even closer to mine. I caught a scent of oranges, which caught me by surprise. One of his wings now slipped behind my chair, and his shoulder pressed against mine. “Before you get angry, would you like a cup of coffee?”

“I want to know what’s going on,” I said. “Are you going to kill me now? And why do you smell like oranges?”

“No,” Charles laughed. “And because I made orange juice for you, and the scent has clung to me.”

“Where did you get oranges this season?”

“I have my ways,” Charles said, grinning.

James chuckled, and even Morte snorted. I stared at him for a moment, and then looked away. I pinched the top of my hand, wondering if I was really awake.

James poured me a cup of coffee and then a cup of orange juice, and brought them over. He set them down in front of me, winking.

“Two of you in corsets,” he teased. “Whatever will I do?”

“You are not ripping this one,” Charles said, raising a brow. “This is a favorite.”

Whatever animosity there had been between them yesterday was now gone, replaced by an ease that surprised me. Charles and James were definitely together, and that made me wonder about...a lot.

There was something almost too surreal about this entire situation. These three criminals were in a kitchen— One of them had just poured me coffee, one was cooking us breakfast, and the other was sitting here humming like it was an easy Sunday morning.

“What is wrong with all of you?” I asked.

Morte cracked one of the eggs into the skillet, the hissing filling the kitchen as he began to fry them. Charles looked at

James, James looked at Morte, and then back at me.

“We have come to... an agreement of sorts,” James said.

“Oh?” I asked. “And what agreement is that?”

“That we should treat you like a human,” Charles chimed happily, like he’d just come up with the best answer to a problem ever. “But not like...how we’ve treated humans.”

“Oh. So like an *equal*?” I asked bitterly.

Charles was quiet for a moment, and I could see him rolling around the concept in his three eyed skull.

“Yes,” he said, nodding slowly. He then grinned, his fangs gleaming in the morning light. “An equal. One of us. A Freak.”

I stared at him blankly and then turned my attention to James.

“How very forward thinking of you,” I said, not even trying to disguise the sarcasm. “Damn near a feminist. And let me guess— I’m free to wander about London now?”

“No,” all three of them growled.

James’ antennae twitched. “For many reasons, we can’t allow that. One being that we burned down a warehouse that belonged to the Rippers last night. Two, you aren’t safe out in the streets. The attack yesterday proved that. Another reason is that we will be moving locations this afternoon.”

“Oh? Great,” I said. I pressed my lips together, watching as Morte piled food onto a plate and brought it over.

He hadn’t even cooked for Charles, James, or himself.

“Eat,” he said. “You’re too frail. Charles let you waste away in that box.”

“Fuck off,” Charles muttered, giving him a murderous look.

Morte slid the plate across the table in front of me, and even through the mask, I could feel his *look*. A shiver worked up my spine as I remembered last night.

How he'd felt pressed against me...

I sighed, annoyed at the way my cheeks flushed, and picked up a fork to start eating.

"You'll need to pack your things," James said. "And then we will be on our way. I'm certain they are close to sniffing out this hideout after yesterday."

I took a bite of one of the biscuits, or *scones* as James had called it, and paused mid chew.

This was actually really good.

My stomach growled in agreement and I swallowed, taking another hungry bite. I was bitter over a lot of things, but I couldn't complain about the food I was being given.

"See," James said. "He's good."

Did I even want to know where Morte had learned how to cook? I continued to eat while watching him.

What did he look like under his mask?

Morte shrugged, leaning back in his chair. "We will meet again tonight, Irene."

Hearing him say my name sent a chill up my spine. A wave of nausea worked over me as I thought about last night again, but Charles' hand slipped under the table and rested on my thigh.

For reasons that I could only despise, that comforted me. He gave me a gentle squeeze, and I felt my heartbeat slowing.

I continued eating, because as much as I wished he weren't, Morte was right. I did need to eat.

"James and I have other plans for you during the day," Charles said. "Well, after we get moved of course. But that won't take much. We each have one bag. James and I usually fly, Morte can use his magic. You'll go with Morte because it's safer that way."

"Great," I mumbled.

"He did make you breakfast," James taunted.

“Yes, he also made me murder two men last night.”

Morte cocked his head. “As if you didn’t enjoy it, *marionette*.”

His voice made me clench my thighs together, and Charles noticed. He gave me a little squeeze and then moved his fingers closer to my core.

Heat immediately flared in my cheeks and I pushed my chair back, the feet scraping over the floor. “I’ll go pack,” I squeaked.

I moved for the doorway, and no one stopped me, so I ran upstairs. I slammed the door behind me and shook my head, breathless.

“What the fuck is happening?” I whispered.

If they thought that being nice now would make me like them, then they were truly out of their minds. I still had blood under my fingernails despite my vigorous scrubbing, and all because one of them had made me a murderer.

A knock at the door scared me, and it cracked open, James poking his head in. “Here are some bags for packing.”

He plopped them on the floor and then shut the door, leaving me alone.

I stared and then shook my head.

They were playing a game, one that was throwing me off, but I would figure it out. I grabbed the bags and put them on my bed, packing away all the clothing. The knife that Morte had let me keep lay on the bedside table, blood turning the metal a rust colour.

I finished packing up the clothes and then snatched it up, taking it to the bathroom sink and cleaning it. He really didn’t think of me as a threat— so much so that he’d let me keep this.

“Idiot,” I muttered.

I heard the bedroom door creak open and rolled my eyes. “Can you at least knock?” I asked, peeking around the

doorway.

Henry, the driver from yesterday, was standing there. He glanced behind him nervously as I went to him.

“What do you want?” I whispered.

“I came here to give you information,” he said quickly. “I have to be quick. I’m supposed to be grabbing your bags, and all three of them are downstairs. Speaking to you can now get one of us killed.”

“Great,” I muttered.

They had already isolated me, but now they were doing it even more so.

“Jack wants to meet you,” Henry whispered. “She asked me to give you this.”

He shoved a piece of paper into my hands and then went to my bed, snatching up the bags. He gave me an uneasy look, shaking his head.

“One word, and I die,” he said.

“Go,” I said, nodding towards the door.

He left, taking my bags with him. I slipped the knife into my belt loop and then kicked the door shut, unfolding the piece of paper.

Irene,

The Freaks attempted to kill your sister yesterday, but rest assured, she is still alive. If you would like her to remain that way, then meet me in one week at the London bridge at midnight.

*I will help you escape them, and will make you a better deal.
No tricks.*

— Jack

P.S. get rid of this note or the driver is dead.

ALL OF THESE monsters sure had a way with words. My hands started to shake, but the sound of movement down stairs had me rushing back to the bathroom. I tore the paper into shreds, threw it into the toilet and flushed it down.

That's why those bastards had been so gods damned cheery this morning.

Rage made my throat burn, my thoughts becoming sharper than the knife in my possession. I felt a wave of calmness wash over me, the deadly kind.

I left my room, going downstairs to the kitchen where James, Charles, and Morte were standing. I fought the urge to blurt out that I knew, and instead offered them a kind smile.

"All packed. Someone came and grabbed my bags."

"Good," James said. "I think that's everything then. Might as well leave now."

"I want to fly," I said. "With you or Charles."

Morte cocked his head. "The portal is better."

"I felt like vomiting last time," I said. "And you want me to be fed. It would be a waste of your cooking skills."

All three of them sized me up for a moment, and James was the one to give in first.

"Fine," James said. "You'll go with Charles. You'll have to hold on tight."

"I can do that," I said, giving Charles a wink.

I hadn't necessarily meant for that to sound the way it did, but the way all three of them tensed gave me satisfaction. James pressed his lips together, his eyes crinkling with a hint of amusement. Charles let out a soft growl, pulling me towards him.

"Well, little dove," Charles chuckled. "Let's fly."

CHAPTER 16

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CASTLE IN THE SKY



CHARLES

IN LONDON, the city was divided into different areas by wealth and status. The Westside was one of the most prized areas, but literally above that was the sky.

Technology was a beautiful thing, and one of the other places we called home was a modified blimp that never touched the ground. It was small compared to some of the massive homes the elite had built in the clouds. Ours looked a lot more run down, with pipes exuding puffs of steam and bronze gears patched with rust. Still, it was a place we were able to hide from the world that wished to tear us down.

Irene wouldn't be able to hide from us here, which had been part of our plan.

She held onto me, her face buried against my neck as I flew up higher. The wind was cold, snow clinging to us. Her breath was warm against my skin, her body coiled tight around mine.

No one would be able to hurt us up here. Jack had many creatures in the Rippers, but none of them could fly. And only an idiot would attack us with Morte around.

It was a good plan to lay low, to wait out the aftermath of burning Jack's warehouses. We'd be able to go down if we needed, but for now we didn't need to.

Instead, we'd take our time to find out more about our human.

Hearing Morte speak the way he did had rattled me. He was evil incarnate, and his obsession with our little dove was disturbing.

It was also thrilling. To think that she could handle someone like him...someone so terribly twisted.

I wouldn't stop him.

That had been the agreement between the three of us, the truce we made about Irene. The three of us wanted her, she belonged to us. She was a Freak, and we would own her body and soul. Each of us had different tastes, and it would be a true test of fate to find out if she could handle us.

She could already handle me, that was certain.

I landed in the outer skybridge, a long hall that stretched beneath our flying home. I didn't put her down until I went to the door that led inside.

The warmth was welcome. I went up a few steps to the foyer, and then let out a little hum.

"We're here," I whispered.

Irene lifted her head, looking around. "You made a blimp into a home?"

"Yes," I said proudly. "I modified the entire thing myself."

Irene let go of me, running her fingers through her hair and shaking free droplets of water. She was wearing a different corset today, with a knife holstered at her waist.

I licked my lips as she looked around the space. There was a massive window on the other side, a circle that looked out into the clouds. Around us, the entire machine hissed and moaned, a mechanical lullaby that I'd always found soothing. There were a couple of desks with papers and books strewn about, all covered in a light layer of dust. A massive bed lay at the centre, one that had barely been touched but I'd made sure to have anyway.

“Only one bed,” she said.

“The three of us don’t need sleep,” I said. “So it is yours.”

“But there’s no privacy,” she said.

I could feel anger simmering right below the surface of her words. I fought a smirk as she crossed her arms and wandered over to my area.

This had always been a creative space for me, and my desk showed it. There were blueprints of different machines everywhere, tools of almost every kind crammed into boxes.

“I didn’t realise you actually made things,” Irene said, peering over them with curiosity.

“I made James’ wing,” I said proudly, leaning against my desk as she looked over my things. “Impressed?”

“No,” she said. “Maybe if you were actually doing something good, instead of leading a mob that murders people.”

“Is giving someone their wing back not good?”

“You know what I mean, Charles,” she muttered. “A demon of science who can heal wounds. You’re really quite extraordinary, but you use your gifts to destroy the world around you.”

“Fae, not demon,” I murmured. I felt the sting of her words, but ignored it. I continued to watch her, unable to stop myself. Her scent washed over me, and I breathed her in as I traced her soft lips and breasts with my eyes.

I wanted her to take my cock again.

“Irene,” I whispered, my voice darkening. “I want you to strip right now.”

She tensed, and I saw a flash of anger in her gaze. She looked up at me, and raised a dark brow.

“How about you ask me what I want?”

I scowled, pressing my lips together. “But, I already know what you want.”

She actually grinned, leaning up so that her lips almost touched mine. “You have no idea what I want, Charles. It could step right on your cock, and you still wouldn’t know.”

My hand darted up and I gripped her throat, a low growl leaving me. “Why are you pushing me, Irene? Do you like the mean side of me more?”

“Maybe,” she breathed. “It’s at least more real than the fake bullshit side you were feeding me this morning.”

I scoffed and pushed her back, lifting her up onto my desk. I pushed between her thighs, my hand still gripping tight around her neck. Her cheeks flushed, her dark eyes never leaving mine.

“It wasn’t bullshit this morning,” I growled. “We want to take care of you.”

“Why?” she snarled. “I don’t understand.”

“Because you’re—”

“Don’t you dare fucking say I’m one of you,” she snapped. “Don’t fucking say it. It’s a lie and an excuse. Even if I accepted that I was, would you ever truly? You don’t think of me as an equal and never will. I’m basically food to you.”

My cock began to harden and I let go of her throat, pulling her close so that she would feel me against her. She sucked in a breath, glaring at me even as I pulled her legs around my waist.

“You know what, little dove?” I leaned forward, pressing my lips against her ear. She was infuriated, but she was also turned on. “Yes, once upon a time you were nothing more than food to me. You were my prisoner. And I wanted to hurt you. I still...want to hurt you sometimes, but I am doing my best not to because I’m finding—” I began to slide my hand between us, pressing my fingers against her heat. She gasped, the sound music to my ears. “I’m finding that I like pleasing you more than hurting you.”

I began to unbutton her pants, pulling her off the desk so that I could push them down. She let out an angry yelp as I turned her around, bending her over the table top.

“But now, I’m realising that you like a little pain. Don’t you, little dove?”

“You’re a bastard,” she snarled.

I splayed my hand over the middle of her back, shoving her down. I looked down at her ass, running my other hand over it.

In one swift motion, I slapped her ass cheek hard. She cried out, and my cock immediately hardened.

Fuck.

“Was Irene a bad girl?”

I glanced up as James came over to us, taking off his coat. Water droplets clung to him and he shook them free, raising a brow.

Irene started to push up, but I forced her back down with a growl.

“She thinks we were tricking her this morning,” I said to James.

“Ohh, I see,” James chuckled. He went to the other side of the desk and leaned down, putting his face right in front of hers. “Is it that you don’t like it when we’re nice, or that—”

“Fuck you,” she snarled.

“Do you want me to fuck you?” he whispered, his voice dripping with the seductive honey tone I always licked right up.

She only struggled against me, letting out a frustrated noise. “It wasn’t even that good.”

James snorted and straightened back up, starting to unbutton his vest. “Morte won’t be here for a bit, so I think we should take this time to show Irene just how good it can be with two monsters.”

“I don’t want either one of you,” she said. “Both of you are fucking assholes.”

James snorted. “Since when did her tongue get so sharp?”

“I don’t know, but I kind of like it,” I chuckled. “I like it when she struggles, even though I offered to just please her. She knows that I could make her cum over and over again, and would...but she wants something else, I think.”

“I want both of you to die,” she said. “A long, painful, slow and *agonising* death.”

“Mhmm,” I hummed, running my fingertips over her lace panties. I slipped my fingers down between her thighs, feeling how wet she was through the fabric. “James, can you check something for me?”

James came over to us, now mostly undressed. His wings spread behind him, his lips tugging up to reveal his fangs. “Check what?”

“It’s just, I think she’s wet and I want to confirm.”

“Oh, fuck you,” Irene growled.

James knelt behind her. I fought a groan as I watched him pull down her panties. “Let’s see,” he said softly. “Let’s check.”

She started to kick out, but he gripped her calves and spread them.

He leaned forward, his long tongue running over the folds of her pussy. She gasped, her muscles tensing beneath my hand and he groaned, tasting her.

My cock throbbed as I watched him tease her, until he pulled back and reached up, dragging me down into a kiss.

I could taste her on his tongue, and it drove me wild. I groaned against him, welcoming his touch. Welcoming his kiss.

He pulled back, his eyes twinkling with mischief. “Confirmed, fairy. I think she’s wet,” he whispered.

I shivered at the use of our pet name and looked back down at her. Her cheeks were pink, her eyes closed. I could feel her fighting herself, and I wondered how much it would take to get her to give in to the pleasure.

James winked at me and pushed my hand away from her. She started to rise, but he dragged his claws over the laces that bound her corset, ripping them.

“I just got that!” she squeaked.

“Ah yes,” I chuckled. “James will always rip corsets off, my love, I’m certain it’s almost a fetish at this point.”

James grabbed the edges of the ripped garment, freeing it from her body.

“He’s a real bodice ripper,” I teased.

She gasped as he turned her over and then moved her onto the desktop so that her head hung off one side and her pussy the other.

“Find out if her throat can take your cock, fairy,” he said. “Irene, look at me.”

She let out a huff but raised her head, looking at him.

“Do you want us to stop?” James asked.

His question hung over the three of us, and I watched as her expression changed from anger to confusion.

We really had fucked up.

The more I wanted to keep her, the more I could see that now. We’d broken any trust she could have had in us, and every word from us now she doubted.

I wasn’t sure how to mend my little dove’s wings.

“If I said yes, would you?” she whispered.

“Yes,” James and I both said in unison.

She swallowed hard, looking from him then to me, and then back again. “I don’t understand why.”

I felt a bit of sadness, and it prevented me from speaking. James took the lead though, answering her.

“Because you’re ours,” James said softly. “You’re mine. You’re Charles’. And Morte’s.”

She shook her head in disbelief and let her head fall back. “Just fuck me, James.”

He froze for a moment, and I saw the flicker of pain. Of the same realisation I felt weighing me down.

“We mean it,” I whispered.

Irene looked over at me, her gaze piercing. “Go on,” she said. “I want both of you to fuck me.”

I looked back at James as he knelt back down, his head between her thighs. “We’ll make it up to you,” he said, kissing her skin gently. “I promise.”

Irene let out a breath and then reached down, gripping one of his antennae. “If your tongue isn’t inside of me in three seconds, I’m jumping off this fucking blimp.”

He snorted. “Fine, Irene. As you wish.”

He drove his tongue inside of her and she cried out, her body arching against the desk as James pulled her legs onto his shoulders. My cock throbbed, desperate to be touched as I watched the two of them.

I stripped quickly, groaning as my cock sprang free. Cum dripped from the heads, and I stroked myself as I stepped closer.

Irene let her head fall back, her lips parting. The heads of my cock slid between her lips and I groaned, all of my thoughts turning into nothing but primal lust.

“Fuck,” I gasped.

I looked down over her beautiful body, to where her thighs were parted and my lover was pleasing her. She whimpered as she sucked, James’ tongue burying deep inside of her.

He grunted, his eyes darkening as he began to lose himself to need. His claws dug into her soft thighs, leaving angry red marks as he fucked her with his tongue.

I thrust forward, filling her throat with as much of my cock as possible. I felt her choke around it, her moan turning me on even more. Every nerve ending in my body was alive as I

pulled out, reaching down to cradle her head as she gasped. Saliva dripped down her face, her breaths coming in short pants.

“Good girl,” I whispered. “You’re doing so good for us, little dove.”

She moaned, her eyes fluttering from James.

“Again,” she gasped. “More.”

I grinned, letting her head fall back again. Her lips parted for my cock and I reached down, ripping open her shirt right as I thrust forward. She cried out around my monstrous cock, her hands gripping the sides of the desk as I pushed aside the lace over her breasts.

Her dusty pink nipples hardened from the cool air. I pulled back, letting her breathe for a moment. My cock throbbed as her tongue slid around it, the sound of her sucking nearly making me cum.

James pulled his tongue free with a growl, cursing under his breath. I pulled my cock free from her mouth right as he thrust his tongue back inside of her, her scream echoing through the room.

I cradled her head, leaning down to kiss her. We both groaned, her whimpers never-ending.

I pulled back, growling. “I need to be inside her, James.”

James didn’t pull back, instead lifting her. She squealed, her legs draped over his shoulders and his head still firmly between her thighs.

“I’m going to cum,” she moaned. “Fuck!”

I watched as she came, her fingers gripping his hair as she rose to his face. I went behind him and guided him towards the bed at the centre, laughing as he lowered her down onto the blankets.

She panted, her cheeks flushed as he finally pulled his tongue free.

“Gods,” she gasped.

“I like it when you’re so mindless after cumming so hard,” I said, climbing onto the bed next to her.

I lifted her onto my lap, moving to the centre so that James and I would have room. He climbed onto the bed, gripping my chin for a moment to steal another kiss.

Irene reached down, gripping my cock to stroke it. I gasped against James, and he held me firm as we kept kissing. Her hand began to stroke me up and down, and my hips bucked.

James broke the kiss with a growl, and then grabbed her face, kissing her next.

This fantasy had been plaguing me for days, and now it was happening. James and me, two monsters who had sworn we’d never be with a human, were sharing one between us.

Irene still stroked my cock as she kissed him. I leaned between them, flicking my tongue over her nipple. She gasped against his mouth, and he hummed in response as I began to suck.

I gave her a gentle bite, enjoying the way her hand lost its rhythm around my cock. I chuckled, and continued to suck as I slipped my hand down between her thighs.

“Fuck, little dove,” I whispered. “You’re so wet for us.”

“She is,” James breathed. “Can you take us both?”

Irene groaned, looking between us, and then down at our cocks.

“You’re both so big,” she whispered. “I don’t know.... We can try.”

“We need more,” I said, “More lube. Something.”

James grunted, looking around the room. “She’s already wet—”

“She can be more wet.”

James nodded and rolled off the bed, crossing the room quickly to his desk. He started rummaging through drawers, which made me chuckle.

Irene let out a breath, looking over at me. She was smiling, her cheeks pink. Her lips were swollen, claw lines marking her thighs.

“Hey,” I whispered, leaning forward to kiss her again. “You’re beautiful, you know?”

Her breath hitched. “You’re not too bad yourself.”

“Unless I’m in my other form,” I teased.

She shrugged. “You don’t scare me that way.”

My throat tightened. I thought about what it would be like to take her while completely shifted...

James came back to the bed, already pouring lube onto his hand. He reached for my cock, rubbing all over it, and making me gasp before he did his own.

“Spread your legs, dove,” he said to her. He handed me the lube, sighing. “For once, I wish I didn’t have claws.”

“Yes, you’re missing out,” I teased.

Irene leaned back, spreading her legs for me. She cried out as I rubbed the lube over her, pushing two of my fingers inside of her with ease. I could feel her clench around me as I added a third.

“I’m ready,” she gasped. “Please, I need you inside of me.”

James and I both nodded and moved closer to each other, our legs intertwining. We moved until our cocks were pressed against each other and I gasped as his wrapped around mine, already vibrating.

“Irene,” I grunted. “Come here, little dove, before I cum already.”

Irene straddled both of us, the two of us holding her as she hovered over both of our cocks. We began to lower her, and she moaned, clamping her hands on James’ shoulders as she began to take us.

“Fuck,” she gasped. “It’s so much,” she whined. “I’ve never taken anything like this.”

James' cock wrapped a little tighter around mine as she took the first few centimetres of us together. The three of us groaned together, her pussy pulsing around us.

“Little dove,” I gasped. “Fucking hell, you feel good.”

“We're going to fuck you like we've been wanting to for days,” James growled. “Have you been dreaming of us?”

Her pussy pulsed, her body clenching tightly around us as she took more. “Yes,” she rasped. “You're all I can dream about.”

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CHAPTER 17

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GOOD VIBRATIONS



IRENE

I WISHED the words out of my mouth were a lie, and in some ways maybe they were— But it was true. Both of them had been in my dreams recently. They'd been in every waking thought too. I couldn't escape them, even if I tried.

Pleasure burst through my body as I took another inch of their cocks. James' vibrated, his cock wrapped around Charles. I gripped his shoulders, moaning as they slowly lowered me. I'd already cum once, but this...this was going to be even more intense.

I'd never been spread this wide before. Their cocks pulsed inside of me, their bodies pressed against mine as they went as far as they could go.

Charles kissed my neck, sending chills through me as he scraped his teeth over my skin.

"I need to taste you again," James whispered, leaning forward to press his lips against where he had bitten me yesterday.

I nodded, needing it too. I was still confused by why they were being kind today, but being touched the way they touched me was enough to almost make me forget everything. There was a harshness to them both, but it was now edged with a tenderness I hadn't been expecting.

That I hadn't wanted.

It was hard to hate them both when they touched me like this. It was hard to remember Jack's note when I felt like I was about to see the gods.

"Fuck," I gasped.

Their cocks filled me, the vibrations making me moan involuntarily. I made helpless noises as Charles lifted me, and then brought me back down on them again.

James began to play with my breasts as we found a rhythm, one that had me panting. His long tongue curled around my nipple before he sank his teeth into my skin.

I cried out, feeling an electric shock of need through my body.

"Good girl," Charles whispered in my ear. "You're such a good girl for us. Taking both of our cocks. You're taking us so well."

Heat spread through my body and I leaned back against his chest as the two of them thrust up into me over and over again.

I gasped as they drove in deep, feeling myself almost lose it. I was so close to cumming again.

"Please," I whimpered. "Please make me cum."

James was sucking my blood from my breasts now, but the stinging pain of his teeth had disappeared and was replaced by a primal satisfaction. I hummed with need, wanting to give him more. Aching for the two of them to breed me with their monster cocks.

"Do you want us to fill you, little dove?" Charles whispered. "I want to fill your pussy with every drop of our cum."

"Yes," I cried as I rode them. "Please!"

James growled, pulling his mouth free. "I want to bond with you," he whispered.

I'd lost my mind because instead of screaming no— all I could think of saying was *yes*.

“Yes,” I gasped. “Please.”

Both of them growled, and Charles’ grip on me tightened. They buried their cocks deep inside of me, but then stopped the movement.

“Don’t stop,” I whimpered.

“Do you really want his bond, little dove?” Charles whispered.

James cupped my face, pressing his forehead to mine. I breathed in his scent, my head spinning.

“I’m losing my mind,” I whispered.

“Tell me no,” James whispered.

I couldn’t. I couldn’t tell him no. I wanted to hate him, to hurt him, but I couldn’t say no.

“Taste my blood,” James whispered.

Charles let out a growl, and I wasn’t sure if he disapproved or not. But James stole my attention, forcing me to look into his crystal blue eyes.

He looked down, and I watched as he dragged the tip of his claw over his chest. He made one slash, and then another that crossed it— marking an ‘X’ right over his heart.

“Bind me to you,” he whispered as the blood began to drip. “I want you. More than anything else in this world. It’s not even a bond to me at this point, it’s a bond to you. I can’t escape you. *Taste me.*”

I leaned down, feeling the pull to him.

He killed your sister.

What if that was a lie?

He kidnapped you.

He made me one of them.

You’re a murderer because of them.

I was becoming more and more true to myself because of *them.*

Still...

“No,” I whispered. “Not yet. You haven’t earned that yet. You’ve done nothing but hurt me since you’ve met me, and even though your cock is buried inside of me, I don’t want your bond yet.”

James made a noise, his eyes widening. I could see a flare of anger there, but then he nodded.

I almost heard a sigh of relief from Charles. Before anything else could be said, he moved his hips, thrusting his cock up, a much needed distraction. We moaned, the thrust melting away the pain of what I’d just said to James.

“Fuck,” I gasped.

The vibrations intensified, pleasure burning through me as they began to move again. James kissed one side of my neck while Charles kissed the other, all while thrusting in and out of me.

A sharp cry left me as my orgasm crashed into me. I came hard, arching between the two of them as the strength of it curled my toes.

“Fuck, I’m going to cum,” Charles gasped.

James nodded, the two of them working together.

“Get ready, little dove,” James growled.

With one final thrust, both of them came together. Their hot cum began to fill me, and I held onto both of them with a groan.

Fuck, there was nothing like it. I loved the way it felt to be filled like this.

I melted against them, the three of us panting.

“No knot this time,” James whispered.

I nodded, dragging in a shaky breath.

Charles laid his head on my shoulder, humming to himself. “You’re dangerous,” he murmured.

“Me?” I snorted.

“Mmhmm.”

He gripped my thighs and lifted me up, pulling both of their cocks free. I gasped as their cum began to drip out, but Charles pushed me back onto the soft blankets and settled his head between my thighs.

“Dangerous little dove,” Charles teased. “Stealing the hearts of monsters.”

I giggled as he bit my thigh playfully.

“I’ll clean up,” he chuckled.

“Hmm, and I think I’ll see where Morte is,” James said. “He should be here soon...and then Charles and I will have to leave again.”

I frowned. I didn’t like the idea of only being with Morte after last night.

“Don’t worry,” James said. “No murdering this evening for you.”

“Makes me feel grand,” I mumbled.

Charles sighed and then made me squeal as he began to lick me. James smirked as he watched the two of us, his wings settling behind him.

“You make very sweet noises,” James said softly.

My breath hitched as Charles pushed my legs back and drove his tongue inside of me.

“Gods,” I gasped, arching against the bed.

James chuckled as he stood, shaking his head. His eyes never left me, searing me as Charles made me cry out. His cock was already beginning to harden again, and I found myself reaching for his hand.

“Irene,” James growled as I tugged him close. “What if Morte is in trouble?”

“*Morte* in trouble?” I gasped. “I think he’s invincible.”

James shook his head in disbelief, but pressed his lips against mine in a hungry kiss. “Fuck. I could forget what I

need to do and spend the rest of my days up here,” he sighed.

“Forget about everything and do that,” I whispered.

Charles pulled his mouth away with a satisfied hum. “We can take a day,” he said, looking at James. “For once. When was the last time we did so?”

“I don’t know, but we’re in a war,” James said, pulling back. He scowled at Charles for a moment. “We can’t. We have things to attend to.”

Charles sighed, licking any wetness from his lips. He gave me a mournful look. “I’m sure you’d hate to have an entire airship to yourself, wouldn’t you?”

I raised a brow. Was he serious?

“You won’t be able to go anywhere,” James chuckled.

He didn’t know that I knew how these things worked.

“Of course,” I said, smiling.

James and Charles looked at each other, exchanging looks I couldn’t quite read before they both got out of bed. I watched as they dressed, pulling the blankets on the massive bed around me.

I wondered why they had chosen one so large, but then again— Charles and James together took up a lot of space.

The afternoon truly had slipped away, and the sun was setting outside the massive window. I arched my neck, looking back at it so that I could watch the clouds turn into soft pinks and golds.

In another life, one where the two of them weren’t mobsters who had supposedly tried to murder my sister, I could get used to floating in the clouds. I could get used to having a life with monsters.

But that wasn’t reality.

“There is some food and water,” Charles said as he laced up his boots. “You can use anything here. Any of our desks or equipment. There is a bath, a shower.”

“Thanks,” I said.

He nodded, letting out a sad sigh. “I don’t want to leave.”

“Just come back to me,” I whispered.

He stared at me for a moment, as did James. They lingered, but then moved together towards the door.

I watched as they left, listening to the door open and slam shut.

I heard the lock click into place.

I sighed. Two steps forward, three steps back.

I still wanted to kill them all for what they had done, but every moment that passed made me wonder if that was truly the solution.

Was destroying myself worth it?

The blankets suddenly felt too warm, and I pushed them away as I sat up. I rolled out of the bed, determined to wander around this room.

The Freaks had their very own sky vessel, their hideaway in the clouds. I looked around, taking everything in again without being watched by Charles.

It was a massive room, the bed at the centre. Pipes ran along the domed ceiling, puffs of steam hissing as it escaped here and there. The window itself was a massive circle, and there were stained glass pieces amongst the clear one. Looking through it reminded me of peering through a kaleidoscope.

I could tell which parts of the room belonged to who. Charles’ area was covered with blueprints and some of the pieces of his creations, which he was obviously proud of. I didn’t know he built anything, but I could see him hunched over a desk working on something meticulously.

James’ area was all maps. Planning. More maps. Some empty glass cups for whisky. I ran my fingertips over the worn pages, thinking about him.

Then there was Morte’s area.

It was curtained off, but I pulled them back. Dust billowed from them and I covered my mouth, letting out a cough as it settled.

I was determined to uncover everything about these three that I could while I was alone.

Behind the curtains, there were many things. Chests, paintings, a couple of dressers, stacks of books with gold embossed spines, and curious objects.

I glanced over my shoulder and then stepped into the area, humming as I looked at everything. I turned over a couple of the paintings and then paused.

There was one, a small one with a simple frame. It was a portrait of a young man, with short black hair and a handsome face.

A chill worked up my spine.

Was this Morte?

I stared at it, propping it up on a stack of books so I could run my fingers over him.

He didn't look like a monster. He looked like a human.

"He's dead."

I jumped, spinning around to see Morte standing there. My heart immediately started racing— one, because I was naked. Two, I'd been caught.

"Is this you?" I asked.

"No," he said. "Not anymore. He died a long time ago, like I said. He was the first to let me in. He was dying during one of the plagues, and I was a demon that needed a host. He gave me his soul, I let him live a little longer so he could try and help others. He died, I kept his body."

Morte's words chilled me. I looked back down at the painting, and felt a sense of sadness.

"No one has ever seen that before," Morte said softly.

I nodded, setting the painting back down. I couldn't help the way that my fingers trembled.

“Discover any other secrets?”

“No,” I said. “No, you interrupted my investigation.”

“I see,” he said, stepping closer. “What happened to your clothes?”

“Charles and James...”

“I see. Well, you can roam anywhere else,” he said as I moved out of his space. He yanked the curtains back into place and then turned, looking down at me. “But not there.”

I nodded and turned, walking back over to the bed to grab my clothes.

“You don't need clothes, *marionette*,” Morte called. “Come with me.”

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CHAPTER 18

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OBSESSION



MORTE

I WAS HANGING on by a thread.

Seeing Irene naked and standing amongst the memories of my past had been startling. It had been erotic. It had completely changed my plans for her this evening.

I had wanted to show her more violent things, but instead, I found myself leading her towards the clawfoot tub on the other side of our home.

The blimp had always made me uneasy, but I could forget that with her around. I wanted to touch her, to taste her sweet pussy again.

I needed to devour her. My soul demanded it of me. Even now, I could feel my fingertips burning through my gloves as I turned on the water.

I turned to look at Irene, tracing her body with my gaze. She was covered in some scratches and bite marks, and I could see where James and Charles had lost control. There were soft bruises on her hips from where they'd gripped her too tight.

I liked seeing those marks too much, and I was jealous that they weren't from me.

"I'm going to wash you," I said.

She stiffened, her eyes darkening as she looked at the tub. "I can wash myself," she said.

“I know that,” I said. “That’s not what I said though, was it? I know you are capable, but I want to bathe you.”

She mumbled a curse, running her fingers through her auburn hair. I stepped closer to her, gripping her chin and tilting her face up to look at me.

We had been in the dark before, but now in the light of the setting sun, I could see all the freckles on her face. I could see how soft her lips were, how long her lashes were.

I memorised every part of her that I wished I could take.

I craved her. I craved her the same way I had craved my first human long ago, but she was far more potent.

Far more dangerous.

“I can’t even see your face,” she whispered. “And yet I can feel your gaze burning me up.”

She had no idea what she was doing to me.

I caught her scent and breathed her in, letting out a low groan.

“I want to see you,” she said. “All of you. I want to see your body. I want to see your face.”

“No,” I whispered.

“How else will you let me touch you?”

“I don’t want you to touch me,” I said. “I want to touch you.”

“Should you not be pleased too?”

“I am more than pleased when I’m making your pussy pulse, *marionette*.”

Her breath hitched as I slid my hand down to her neck. Her cheeks turned pink, her eyes glazing over.

She liked it when I did this. She liked it when I took control.

“Do you want to be my little puppet?” I whispered.

Her eyes flared with heat for a moment, and I knew she was fighting her own demons.

“Just for now,” I said. “You can return to being my angry little dove after.”

She hesitated for a moment, and then nodded. “Yes,” she whispered. “But if I want you to stop, you stop.”

I let out a little growl. Her request would be difficult to adhere to if I were in a certain mindset, but I would listen.

“You need a command for me then,” I said. “A word that means stop. Because I know how you’ll be begging for me to stop when you rather me not.”

She swallowed hard. “My words are ‘sunny side up’. And if I can’t speak, then I will make this symbol.” She held up her hand, index finger to thumb and the other fingers spread wide—showing me the symbol she’d use.

I nodded. “I’m going to make you cry.”

“I know,” she said. She let out a helpless giggle, shrugging her shoulders. “I want you to.”

“Oh, do you?” I asked. I found myself smiling and wishing she could see it.

“Yes,” she whispered. “Fuck. I really hate you. I really fucking do. But...”

“If there’s a but, then you don’t hate me as much as you want to,” I said. I gave the sides of her neck a squeeze, enjoying the way her breath caught. “Remember you agreed to this.”

Excitement worked through me, a dark thrill coiling around my heart. I let my dark magic take control, and watched as the tendrils wrapped around her naked body.

I turned back, letting one of them reach for the bathtub and twist the knob. The sound of the water rushing died, steam rising from the surface.

I brought Irene’s hand to my chest, to one of the buttons that kept my long cloak shut. Her eyes immediately lit up.

“No one has ever seen me,” I said. “I made my own body.”

She paused for a moment, and I knew she was weighing the implications of that.

That didn't stop her from undoing the first button.

My cock began to harden, need coursing through me. I had never wanted someone as much as I did her in my entire long life. I had never desired someone the way that I desired her.

Charles had said that he was falling in love with her, but it went deeper than that for me. She was a cancer that had spread through every part of me, and the only way I could keep living was to have her as mine. I needed to possess her. I wanted her to take my cock over and over again because I wanted to feel her body gripping me.

“Morte,” she whispered.

Her fingertips were light as she moved down to the next button. She undid it slowly before moving to the next, moving all the way down until my long black cloak was open in the front.

She let out a shaky breath and then pushed it off my shoulders. Beneath it, I wore more clothing, and I stood still as she made the fabric fall to the floor.

Irene paused for a moment as she lifted my shirt. The dark tendrils that came from between the stitches on my body bound her, two of them slipping between her thighs.

Her eyes fluttered, a soft moan leaving her.

“Irene,” I whispered.

I had never been so gentle before.

This was the calm before the storm.

She lifted the shirt up, carefully pulling it off and working it around my mask. She gasped as my torso was revealed, covering her mouth for just a moment.

I looked down at myself. My skin was smooth over hard muscles, but there were the lines from where pieces had been

cut away. I was deathly pale, and the veins beneath my skin were inky black, showing the darkness this shell held within.

Her fingers trembled as she undid the first button of my pants. My cock was hard, straining against the fabric, and even the slightest brush of her hand over me was enough to make me moan.

She pulled them down, my cock springing free. Her audible gasp made me smile as she saw all of me— well, almost all. I still wore my mask, but that would stay.

For now.

Irene cursed under her breath, and to my surprise, gripped my cock. I groaned, fighting the desire to bend her over and fuck her now.

She started to kneel down, but I growled, gripping her hair and bringing her back to standing. “Not yet, *marionette*.”

I took her over to the tub and lifted her over the edge, lowering her into the water. She gasped and then moaned.

“Mmm, this feels good,” she sighed.

I could feel her muscles relax in the hot water. I tightened my shadowy tentacles around her, keeping her legs spread. She leaned back against the tub, mostly immersed aside from her head and breasts.

She looked up at me, and I knew she was waiting. The anticipation of what I might do would drive her wild, and I intended to do that as long as I could stand it.

“Tell me about Charles and James while I wash you,” I said.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“About how they touched you,” I chuckled. “Tell me everything.”

She hummed to herself as I reached for a bar of soap. It smelled of roses, a light scent that I wanted lingering on her skin.

“I don’t know what to say,” she whispered.

“Are you embarrassed?” I asked. “It’s only us.”

“Yes, a little,” she mumbled.

“Tell me,” I said, smirking. “I want to know.”

Her breath hitched as I reached down, running my soaped hand over her breasts. I took my time, swirling my fingertip over her nipples.

“Charles spanked me,” she said. “Because I was being... well, me. And then James walked in. His tongue is very long...”

“It is,” I said.

I had never been involved with Charles or James in any sexual way, but I liked the idea of imagining her with them. Even if I felt a hint of jealousy at the marks on her body.

She gasped as I squeezed her breasts harder. I gripped one of them, watching her squirm in the water. There was a bite mark around her nipples, and I wondered who had left it there. Had it been James? Charles?

Had it been both of them?

“Go on,” I said, letting go.

“He buried his tongue inside of me,” Irene whimpered. “And his tongue felt so good. Then, they moved me onto Charles’ desk. Charles took his cock out while James kept fucking me with his tongue...”

I had to close my eyes for a moment as my own cock throbbed. I reached into the water and pulled her to sitting, running the soap over her back and neck.

I paused, studying her back.

It was true what had been said. There were bronze plates embedded into her skin, and they were shaped like wings. I frowned as I traced where the metal met skin.

It was almost seamless.

This is dark magic.

But Irene was completely human.

“I know Charles has questioned you,” I said. “But you don’t remember anything about these?” I asked, tapping the metal.

Irene shook her head. “No. I remember holding the dove, and then darkness. And I don’t know what happened after that.”

I didn’t like that. It sounded demonic, which was worrisome. If there was a demon that had taken over part of her without her knowing, then there was no telling when it might come out. It also meant that I couldn’t help her until it did come out.

If that was indeed what happened.

It was curious though.

“Not today,” I said. “But soon, I would like to inspect these more closely. I am concerned.”

She stiffened, and I watched as the metal seemed to *bend* with her. I continued to run the soap over her skin as I observed, my thoughts slowly returning back to what I had in mind before seeing her wings.

She moaned, relaxing into me.

“Your tentacles feel good,” she mumbled.

“The ones around your thighs?”

“Yes.”

“*Ma marionnette nécessaireuse,*” I teased. *My needy puppet.*

Her breath hitched and I smirked to myself. I hoped she remembered how much she enjoyed my tentacles later when they were forcing her apart for me.

I pulled her back into the water, watching as the soap swirled off her skin. I ran my fingers through her hair, enjoying touching her. I listened to her moans as I rubbed her. I massaged the bite marks they’d left on her, humming to myself.

“You’re scaring me,” she whispered.

I chuckled. “Don’t you like that?”

“Maybe,” she admitted.

I tightened the tentacles around her a little more, moving one of the shadowy tips between her thighs. She immediately gasped, arching back as I flicked it over her clit.

“If you only knew,” I murmured. “How much you’ve fucked me up.”

“I can say the same,” she groaned.

I smiled again and pulled the tentacles away, releasing her. I stood up, running my palm over my hard cock. I tipped my head back for a moment, doing my best to keep my control.

All of the dark things I wanted to do to her...

I went to the opposite side of the tub and stepped in. Her eyes widened in surprise as I sank down, some of the water sloshing onto the floor. My legs were much, much longer than hers, and she giggled as I pulled her towards the centre.

“Is this why you have this big of a tub?” Irene asked. “So two can fit in?”

“Amongst other reasons,” I said.

I reached out, sliding the palm of my hand against her cheek. She took a steady breath, but I could still hear her heart pounding in her chest.

Good.

I gripped the back of her hair, my cock throbbing.

Her eyes widened right as she realised what I was going to do.

I yanked her forward, shoving her head down into the water. She shoved back against me, but it was no use. More water splashed onto the floor as she fought, and I scowled.

She’d figure it out.

Her nails raked down my thighs and I hissed between clenched teeth, yanking her head towards the head of my cock.

I felt her lips part and slide over the head, and I smirked, pulling her head out of the water.

She gasped, her chest heaving with pants as she choked out. “You fucking bastard,” she snarled.

“Wrong answer,” I chuckled, shoving her head back down.

She didn’t catch another breath in time before she was under again, fighting against me. I growled, and then groaned as I felt her lips slide around my cock.

I shoved her head further, filling her hot little mouth until I hit the back of her throat. I felt her nails over my thighs again, her body desperately thrashing as I counted down.

Five, four, three, two, one...

I let her up and she let out a cry, coughing up water. Tears ran from her eyes, spit dripping from her mouth.

“Morte,” she gasped.

I cocked my head as she caught her breath, still gripping her hair. “Yes?”

“Fuck you,” she whispered.

I grinned now, feeling one of the stitches on my face split as I brought her back down. She was more prepared this time though, and was figuring out what I wanted.

She took my cock between her lips and I groaned as it hit the back of her throat. She choked around it, but instead of fighting me this time, she relaxed.

I thrust my hips up with a moan, and her body tensed, but she still didn’t fight me.

I dragged her up for air and she groaned, blinking as water dripped down. She drew in several breaths, but I did it again.

Fuck.

I went longer this time, but I felt her start to relax too much. I pulled her up again, giving her face a light slap as her eyes were closed. She opened them, pulling in heavy breaths.

“Open your mouth,” I whispered.

She obeyed, letting out a helpless moan.

“Good girl. You’re my little fuck puppet, aren’t you?
You’re going to do exactly what I tell you.”

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CHAPTER 19

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MARIONETTE



IRENE

MY HEAD WAS SPINNING as Morte dropped me onto the bed. I was clinging to my deep breaths like they were a lifeline, and all I could think about was pleasing him.

He'd held me down. He'd almost drowned me, forcing me to take his cock like that.

I'd never felt so fucking alive.

Morte moved onto the bed, his tentacles wrapping around my thighs. I gasped as they squeezed tight, forcing them apart.

"I'm going to get your cunt nice and ready for me," Morte said. "You've already taken two cocks together, but could you take three?"

"No," I groaned.

He slapped me a little harder this time, and my head was spinning as he ran two of his fingers over my clit. I cried out, looking down between my legs where he had settled. The room was dark now, but the moon shining through the massive window highlighted his mask.

Fear made my heart pound harder. He was a nightmare, a demon, and yet...

I felt more tentacles of darkness wrapping around me and I tried to roll away, but they slipped around my arms and pulled

them away from my body. Another wound around my neck, giving the sides a gentle squeeze.

I lost my breath again, my thoughts melting. I was riding a different kind of high, one that made me feel like I was completely at his disposal.

I wanted this. I wanted to be used and fucked however he wanted. There was a part of me that had been fighting, but giving in felt sweeter than I thought possible.

Anyone that had known me wouldn't recognize me now—but did they know me the way Morte did? He had seen the part of me I hid from, and so easily brought her out to play.

I craved the darkness, the overwhelming need driving me to a place of no return. And try as I might—I didn't care.

“Open wide,” Morte commanded.

I parted my lips, tears rolling down my cheeks as a dark shadow slid up my face, the tip shoving between my lips. Another tendril hit the back of my throat but didn't stop there.

I started to scream around the invasion, but he began to rub my clit. My body arched, but he held me down, a dark chuckle the only thing I could hear over the blood rushing in my ears.

“My little marionette,” he whispered. “If I pull this string, you do as I wish.”

One of the tentacles pulled my arm, moving me how he wanted.

“If I pulled these two, I spread your pretty thighs even further.”

He did so, pulling them as far apart as possible. I whimpered, still choking around the tendril in my mouth, but I was helpless.

I was completely and utterly helpless.

Another tentacle wrapped around my head, covering my eyes gently. I was sent straight into darkness.

I couldn't see him any more, couldn't see the light from the moon or anything else.

“Just a helpless little fuck puppet,” he murmured.

I felt a warm breath against my pussy and realised he’d taken off his mask. I moaned as the tentacle in my mouth pulled free enough to keep me from choking, but still filled my mouth so I couldn’t speak.

“Relax,” he whispered.

The moment the tip of his tongue touched my clit, it was as if I had been electrocuted. I yelled, my voice muffled as he began to circle it with his tongue.

He groaned, a dark primal noise that reminded me of a wolf with a fresh kill.

“You taste so sweet,” he whispered. “Just like you did the other night when I tasted you.”

I made a noise, and my eyes would have flown open if he hadn’t had me masked. I grunted, trying to kick out at him, but he only chuckled.

“Oh yes,” he whispered. “You were sleeping.”

My pussy began to pulse, and I felt more tears come as I tried to tell myself I didn’t like that.

But I did. I did like that.

“You were so precious,” he murmured. “You tasted my precum. And then I buried my fingers inside of your dripping cunt and tasted this sweet nectar. I’ve thought about it ever since. You’re the apple offered from the tree, Irene, and I can’t resist taking a *bite*.”

He growled as he sank his teeth into my inner thigh. I screamed, the pain sharper than it had been with James or Charles. He sucked, drawing my blood into his mouth, all while keeping me pinned to the bed.

He pulled back with a moan, swirling his tongue over the sensitive flesh. “I can see why he’s so fucked now,” Morte murmured. “One taste isn’t enough, little *marionette*.”

He drove his tongue inside of me and I cried out again, seeing stars. Every single one of my senses was on high alert,

my head still spinning from not being able to breathe earlier, and his *tongue*. Fuck, his tongue felt so good.

I tried to fight it. I tried to fight the mounting pleasure, to shove back the wave threatening to drown me, but I was too weak. I screamed around his shadowy tentacle as I came, orgasming right on the mouth of a monster.

He waited until I'd finished before pulling back, groaning. "Good girl," he praised. "See, that wasn't so hard, was it? Let's try again."

I shook my head, moaning. I was too sensitive now, the rush from cumming so hard turning every nerve ending into live wires.

He didn't care though.

Two of his fingers pushed inside of me, followed by a third. The tentacle in my mouth pulled free, and I gasped as he began to move them.

"I want to hear those sweet little cries," he said. "I like it when you cry."

"Ple- please," I trembled. "It's too much."

"We're just getting started," he said. "You don't even know, *petite marionnette*. Can you feel how wet you are for me?"

I gasped as he added a fourth finger, spreading me wide.

"You took two cocks in this little hole?"

I whimpered, and felt his other hand slap my breast. I cried out, but he only growled.

"Answer me, slut."

"Yes," I cried. "I took them both!"

"And a knot too? All in this?"

"Yes," I gasped.

He began to thrust his fingers in and out, spreading me.

"Do you like it when it hurts?"

“Yes.” I let out on a choked sob.

“It’s okay,” he whispered. “It’s okay, little marionette. You’re with your doctor, and I promise it’ll feel good even when it hurts.”

I nodded, involuntary noises leaving me as he added his thumb. I screamed out as he pushed his hand, and realised what he was going to do.

“You can’t,” I gasped. “I can’t take you like that.”

“You’ve already taken two monster cocks, your cunt can take my hand. You’ll be my pretty little hand puppet, won’t you, Irene?”

I didn’t even have words as I felt his hand halfway inside of me. All sorts of emotions came over me— from arousal to a hint of shame.

“No, no, no,” I gasped. “You can’t.”

His other hand slid down, and his finger began to circle my other hole.

This time, I did scream.

Morte laughed— the kind of laugh that belonged to an evil villain, not the creatures wanting to make me cum.

“Louder, Irene,” he taunted. “Let’s hear your voice soar. I like your song of terror and need.”

His hand eased further in my pussy and I forced myself to relax. I pulsed around him, my mind struggling with the concept that his hand was inside of me.

He pulled his other hand away, and I heard the sound of leather sliding. The tentacle around my eyes slowly pulled away, and he allowed me to lift my head.

He’d put his mask back on. I could see everything perfectly now.

“Look,” he whispered.

I looked down right as he shoved his hand all the way inside of me. He was now in me in a way no one ever had

been.

“Say it,” he whispered.

I took a soft breath, feeling myself relaxing more and more. I was giving in to him, finally letting his darkness overcome my soul.

“I’m your fuck puppet,” I whispered.

“My pretty little whore,” Morte said.

“Your pretty little whore,” I whimpered.

“You like being my little fuck doll,” Morte said. “Don’t you, *petite marionnette*?”

“Yes,” I said hoarsely.

“Good.”

He began to slowly move his hand, sounds of paralysing need and part terror leaving me.

My body belonged to him. With every movement of his hand, he played the strings of my nerves, making me convulse, cry out, tremble, and moan. I was no longer the one in control. My submission was property to a monster. Completely his in every way.

He thrust his hand inside of me, sending me over the edge. I came around him, my scream loud enough to almost shatter glass.

He watched me, his eyes never leaving me as I came back down, my entire body convulsing helplessly. He hummed a dark melody, slowly pulling his hand free.

I felt empty.

“*Morte*.” I could barely speak, but I could still say his name.

His tentacles slowly unravelled from me as he moved between my legs, his monstrous cock throbbing. Cum dripped from the purple head, and I took it all in. His cock had ridges like Charles but was thicker at the base, and was an ombré of purple and black.

“I want you inside of me,” I said.

“I know,” he murmured. “I want to fill you with my cum and then I want to make sure every drop stays inside.”

He grunted as he moved back and then pushed the head of his cock inside of me. I groaned as I took him, arching as he filled me completely.

“You feel so good,” I gasped.

“You were made for my cock, *marionnette*,” he grunted. “And you’re going to take it like my good little whore.”

I groaned as he leaned over me, my legs wrapping around his hips as he buried himself inside me. His skin leaked darkness everywhere the stitches were, but the shadows felt like a feather over my skin.

“Fuck,” he snarled.

I squeaked as he suddenly lifted me, rolling to the edge of the bed. He lifted me off his cock, turning me so that he could grip my hips and bring me straight back down on it. My back faced him, my legs wrapped around his thighs as he began to fuck me.

The sound of our skin slapping together filled the room, his moans turning me on all over again. He was unhinged, his control only seconds away from completely snapping, but he held himself together as he drove in and out of me.

His fingers dug into my skin, leaving dark marks as he took me.

“Fuck,” I gasped. “I’m going to cum again.”

“Cum with me,” he grunted. “I want to feel your cunt squeezing my cock.”

I gasped, planting my hands on his knees as he continued to take me. I cried out, losing myself to the pleasure building between us.

“Fill me,” I moaned, “*please*.”

He growled, giving one last thrust before the two of us came together. I fell back against his chest as his hot cum shot

inside, filling me with every monstrous drop.

He fell back on to bed, his chest heaving with quick breaths. I leaned back over him, silence settling over the two of us.

Every muscle in my body felt sluggish. I closed my eyes, letting out a breath as I felt sleep drift near.

I could stay like this forever.

Morte sighed and then rolled me back onto the bed, pulling his cock free as he pinned me beneath him. I gasped as he pushed my legs back, pushing the cum dripping out back inside of me with two fingers.

“Not a drop wasted,” he grunted, holding his fingers to my lips. I sucked them with a soft groan. “If you stay like this for me, I will get you some water and food.”

I narrowed my eyes, but it was a deal I couldn't resist. “Deal,” I murmured sleepily.

Another deal with a monster I should hate.

He chuckled and rolled off the bed, staring down at me for a moment.

I craved his approval, and I knew I had it. I may not have been able to see his eyes, but I could see *him*.

He left me alone for a few minutes, and I stayed exactly where he'd left me. I stared up at the ceiling, listening to the wind batter the sides of the blimp.

I wondered where Charles and James had gone.

I wished they were here too.

What if all three of them...

Pushing that thought away, I tried to refocus on something else. I couldn't think about what that would be like.

I was supposed to meet Jack in a few days. I needed to find out if they had actually attempted to kill my sister.

I was supposed to be taking over their mob, and instead I was sleeping with them.

Morte came back with a pitcher of water and a cup, along with some bread and slices of cheese.

“You can sit up now,” he said.

I sat up, and felt his cum drip out of me. He poured my water and handed it to me, watching me. Always watching.

“No sex tomorrow,” Morte said softly. “Doctor says.”

I fought the urge to laugh. As if that would stop Charles or James, but then...

“I’m not joking, *petite marionnette*. I will inform the others. You are bitten, scratched, bruised, and thoroughly fucked. You need to rest. You will feel it tomorrow.”

“Fine,” I sighed. “I’m not delicate.”

“There is no weakness in being delicate, *petite marionnette*.”

I pulled my brows together, but didn’t argue. I drained the cup and traded him for the plate, my stomach growling.

“Thanks,” I whispered, swallowing hard.

Morte didn’t say anything. I felt my throat clench and frowned.

I felt *sad*. I didn’t understand why— why now?

I took a bite of bread as fresh tears began to slide down my cheeks. Morte waited until I had eaten as much as I could before taking the plate, and then sitting on the bed.

To my surprise, he pulled me close.

“Sleep,” he murmured. “Your dreams will offer you comfort.”

He was wrong. I rarely dreamed now, and if I did, they were haunted.

He could offer me comfort.

But I wouldn’t ask for it.

So, instead, I curled up and closed my eyes — wishing our fates hadn’t become so twisted.

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CHAPTER 20

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DOCTOR'S ORDERS



JAMES

I LANDED on the skybridge to our blimp right as the sun began to rise. I was covered in dirt, blood, ash, and gods knew what else.

Jack was beginning to hit us harder. The night had taken its toll, and I'd watched four of my men die.

She was testing us. Seeing how far she could push us before she broke the Freaks apart. I was pushing against the Rippers too, and a few sly deals had started to give us the upper hand. They outdid us in numbers, but with careful planning that wouldn't matter.

Was I losing my edge?

It was a niggling fear that was beginning to haunt me. Every thought about the Freaks had a shadow, and that shadow was Irene and her safety.

I shouldn't even care.

I'd told myself that over and over again, but the sentiment wouldn't stick. I did care, and caring was dangerous. A very very dangerous thing for a monster like me.

I didn't know what my tomorrow would look like. I could be staring death straight in its dark eyes, or I could be covered in blood yet again. All I knew about my tomorrows was that they were an opportunity to take down Jack.

It wasn't always like this.

I stared out over the clouds as Charles landed on the opposite side, the flit of his wings a familiar comfort. I felt cold inside, and wanted to go to Irene, but I was being held back by my own discomfort.

"You're looking tired, mate," Charles said.

"Did you make sure you weren't seen?" I asked.

"Of course," Charles said. "When have I ever been seen?"

"She's closing in on us," I whispered. "We need to be even more careful now. If she took the blimp, or found out where it was, then Irene would be taken."

"She won't take Irene," Charles said. He clamped his hand on my shoulder, but I shrugged him off, not sparing him a look. He sighed, humming to himself. "I worry about you."

"I know you do," I whispered. "It was a hard night."

It would only get harder.

"I'm constantly distracted now," I said. "I am planning and pushing men here and there. We're fighting the fight we've been working towards for years, and we haven't crumbled. We've built our strength on the bodies of our enemies, and yet I feel weaker than I ever have."

"We aren't weak," Charles said. "Especially not you."

"We are weak," I growled. "Listening to her was a mistake. I made that deal, thinking that it would make our lives easier. Instead, I've made everything harder than it ever has been."

"It's worth it," Charles muttered.

"To you," I growled, spinning to look at him.

Charles' grey skin was speckled with blood, dark soot smudged under his eyes. His silver hair was pulled back, his muscles tense and eyes filled with the same emotion I felt.

Desperation? Was that what it was?

"I need her," Charles said. "I need her like air."

“You were fine without her before,” I growled.

“I was *empty* inside before,” Charles snapped, throwing his hands up. “The closest I’ve been to feeling something ever since I was banished from my kind was being with you. And yet, you obviously haven’t felt the same.”

I flinched at the mention of his banishment. It had never been something he’d spoken freely about, and it made me wonder. “That’s not true,” I growled.

Charles shrugged. “Doesn’t matter now. I’m going back out with Morte, so you’ll have the little dove to yourself for some time.”

“You need to rest,” I chided.

“No, I don’t.”

My antennae ticked in annoyance as he left me standing there, the cold breeze rippling over me. I looked back out over the clouds, not liking the look of them. We’d be getting snow and ice soon, and that always made anything in the sky harder to maintain. We’d have to switch to burning coal instead of running on steam.

I sighed and then went to the front door, stepping inside quietly. My eyes immediately searched out Irene, where she slept in the centre of the bed wrapped in blankets. I could only see the top of her head peeking out, and it made me smile.

Morte was up, of course, and it was no surprise that he was thumbing through an old book. I made my way over to him as the shower started, Charles’ hum floating through the room.

“Morning,” I murmured.

Morte grunted, not turning his head.

“How was the night?”

“Fine,” Morte said. “There’s colder weather on the way. I’m not sure if this place can be warm enough for a human. We’ve never run the heaters before since the cold doesn’t hurt us.”

“We’ll have to make it warm,” I said. “We can’t hide anywhere else right now. Our old house was taken in a raid last night, and we’ve been hitting some of their dens hard. It’s getting rough.”

“I don’t know what else you expected.”

“Always a way with words,” I muttered.

He set his book down, turning to look at me. Sunlight was starting to crest through the massive window, but my demonic friend still looked like nothing more than a shadow.

“You know the costs of war. You wanted this, James. You set out to do this for years. Do you regret it?”

“No,” I said immediately. “I regret...”

“Her?” Morte whispered. “That a human has become involved? You should have killed her like I said in the beginning.”

“Well, I didn’t,” I growled. “I fucking didn’t. And I don’t see you keeping away from her very much, so don’t give me that.”

“No, I’d cut out her lungs if it wouldn’t kill her just so I could breathe the same air as her,” Morte said with a shrug. “If you want pity, I’m not the right monster for you. I know what might happen, and I will do my best to be on the winning side of this war, but if I’m not and we all die... Well. At least I died with her.”

I looked over at Irene again, at her sleeping form. She was so peaceful, and I wanted nothing more than to curl up next to her.

Fuck. What the fuck is wrong with me?

“Are we ready?” Charles chimed.

He came over to Morte and I, lacing up a new corset that was freshly stocked with weapons. He’d switched out his rayguns, and had knives up and down his thighs.

“I don’t know why you cleaned up,” Morte said, rising from his seat. “Just going to get bloody all over again.”

Charles smirked. “Is that a promise, doc?”

Morte snorted and cocked his head, his mask always giving me a shiver. “No sex for her today,” he said. “She’s taken three monster cocks in just a few hours, and between claws, fangs, and your weird cock— she needs to rest.”

“How do you know what his cock looks like?” Charles teased.

Morte just shook his head. “I’m serious. Freaks will lose a leader if you fuck her.”

“Fine,” I hissed. “Go. Before the world falls apart.”

Morte hesitated for a moment, and Charles fought off a little grin as the two of them left. I watched them go, and then stood silently for a few minutes, thinking about everything that had happened.

I heard a soft sigh and refocused on Irene. She was slow to wake up, her eyes opening and shutting a few times before she sat up. The blanket slid down to her waist, her back facing me. I stared in wonder at the way the light reflected off the bronze plates on her back.

It truly looked like wings, her soft skin creating veins between the feather shaped pieces.

My eyes were drawn elsewhere, and I winced at the marks the three of us had left on her.

Fuck, Morte had been right.

“Morning,” I said.

Irene turned, her gaze turning from sleepy to slightly annoyed. “Hi,” she mumbled, letting out a heavy breath.

“How are you feeling?” I asked, creeping towards her.

She raised a brow. “Better than you. You look awful.”

Right. I was still covered in filth. “We had a rough night.”

She nodded, pulling the blankets back up around her shoulders and wrapping herself in them. I felt a prickle of

annoyance, I liked looking at her naked... Maybe she was cold.

“Is it cold for you in here?” I asked.

“A little,” she said. “Once I’m dressed, I’m sure it’ll be fine.”

“I’d rather make it warmer and have you undressed.”

Irene sighed, plopping back against the pillows. “I’d like some time to myself this morning, unless you demand me to do something.”

I stood still for a moment, feeling that possessive streak rise up. The one that was demanding that she sit there naked, exactly how I liked so I could take her again.

But, Morte had been right.

“That’s fine,” I said. “I need to bathe and work on some things, anyways. If you need anything, let me know.”

“Thanks,” she whispered.

I felt a prick in my chest again as if she’d stabbed it with that one word. I fought every urge, instead turning and going to the shower. Steam still clung to everything from Charles’ hot shower. I stripped off my clothes, letting them fall to the floor.

I wished that I could turn back time. Maybe I could have taken away the pain we caused her.

But you keep causing her pain.

It was true. I’d had her sister murdered, and that would rip whatever humanity she had left to pieces. Charles had trapped her and made her desperate. I had fucked her, used her, and made her hate us all the more. Morte had forced her to kill, and that had shrouded her in a darkness that shouldn’t have been there.

She had made a deal believing that we would help her sister, and I had chosen to take the one thing that was keeping her here with us.

She would never forgive me if she ever found out.

I turned on the shower and stepped in, groaning as the water ran over my tired muscles. I lifted my claws, staring at them as rusty water ran down into the drain.

I was a monster. Why would a human ever love me? Was that what I was holding on to so desperately? The idea that she could accept me?

The world of humans and monsters only overlapped in the darkness. They preferred to live their lives believing we didn't exist. There weren't too many of us either. In London, there were more of course, and every single one of them ended up either with the Freaks or the Rippers.

Then there were the humans that did know of us. A lot of criminals that didn't care how they made money, turning a blind eye to creatures that could rip their throats open with claws. Combined with the connections to the police and certain government officials, it made running a cutthroat mob a little easier.

The problem was— all of us, monsters and humans in the mob alike— were made for this world. We'd been dragged into the shadows over and over until we'd become one ourselves. To see someone like Irene fall into the depths of oblivion made me remember what it had been like so long ago, and I hated that.

I wondered what she was like before this. Before she'd been kidnapped and taken by us. What had her life been like?

I finished rinsing and dried off, wrapping a towel around my waist, and walking out into the main room.

Irene was in the kitchen area making coffee. She'd put on one of the many outfits she'd picked out at the shop, and I was losing track of which one was my favourite. She wore a cream coloured shirt that had a necktie that wrapped around her slender neck, a bow at the front. It worked well with the grey tweed vest over it and the black pants that hugged her hips.

My cock started to harden under my towel, and I found myself holding it a little tighter.

“I’ve decided to change my hair colour,” Irene said, looking over at me. Her cheeks turned pink as her eyes fell to my waist. “Oh,” she whispered.

“We’re not doing anything today,” I said, smirking. “Doctor’s orders.”

“Right,” she muttered, looking away.

I wanted to laugh. She was too cute when she was flustered.

“Would you like a cup?”

“Sure,” I said.

Irene poured us each a cup of coffee.

“So you’re changing your hair? Why? I like the auburn,” I said.

She picked up her mug, regarding me carefully as I took mine. The warmth felt good against my palms, and I held it with two hands as my claws sometimes made it more difficult.

“Because I feel like it,” she said.

Fair enough. “What colour?” I asked.

“It’s a surprise.”

“Just not puke green,” I said.

“Why not?” she asked, smirking as she took a sip of coffee.

“Because I don’t like that colour,” I mumbled.

“OH no,” she teased. “Imagine me doing something you don’t like. You’d toss me from the blimp.”

My cock throbbed as I narrowed my eyes on her. “No, I wouldn’t do that.”

Her gaze fell at my honesty, her cheeks heating again as they fell on my now fully erect cock.

“I want to know about your life,” I said. “Before us. I can listen to you while you dye your hair the colour of vomit.”

She laughed now. “I’m not dying it green. And what do you mean?”

“Just...about your life,” I said. “I’m curious.”

“Hmm.” She mulled over my request and then shrugged. “Fine. I guess it won’t hurt anything.”

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CHAPTER 21

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VIOLET



IRENE

“I DON’T KNOW what you want to know,” I said to James as I started to add purple to my hair.

I’d grabbed dye at the shop where they had sold clothes, taking the chance to get some in case I wanted it. It was a ritual that reminded me of the me before I’d been taken, and telling James about that life while changing my hair colour would feel good and bad at the same time.

“Everything,” he said, taking another sip of his coffee.

I did my best to ignore him. He was still wearing a towel around his waist, and it was clinging on for dear life. I’d seen him naked of course, but him sitting there, watching me the way he was...

I felt a flutter in my belly as I lathered on more of the dye, focusing on that instead of the sexy mothman behind me.

“Well,” I said, thinking over what I wanted to say. “I was going to school.”

I paused, my breath hitching. I hadn’t thought about how fucked up everything would be if I ever went back. I blinked back tears, trying to shove down the anger and sadness at how drastically my life had changed.

“It was a very good one. I was able to get in because of my sister’s fiancé.... Now, I’m not even sure why he ever helped me if he just was going to sell us like pigs.”

James flinched, grimacing.

“I was studying to become a steam engineer,” I said. “I wanted to create things like my dad, continue the family tradition. Of the two of us, I always preferred getting my hands dirty while Florence took after our mother. But, even so, I also enjoyed going to parties.” I smiled a little now, thinking about some of the best ones I’d been to. “I was always the life of the party.”

“You say that like you never will be again.”

I stared at myself in the mirror, giving a slight nod. “It’s hard to think about going back after everything that’s happened. You’re the one that told me that, if I remember correctly.”

James sighed, regarding me carefully. “If it soothes you, I never intended to keep you alive.”

I snorted, a wry smile pulling at my lips. Sure, that was very soothing.

“I just mean that if I had killed you, then maybe we wouldn’t be in this mess.”

“Oh? Is it a mess?” I asked. “Is the part where you’re a mobster trying to overtake London the mess, or is it that you’ve gone soft over a little human woman?”

A low growl left him, but I met his icy gaze through the mirror’s reflection.

“Don’t growl at me,” I muttered. “Besides. You asked about my life. Over the last year, it’s been bad and good. Both of my parents died last year unexpectedly, and Florence and I inherited a great deal of money and property. We were at their home to sell it. George came with us, and that’s where everything went... well, how I ended up here. But, I was making my life. Paving the path I wanted to walk down. A woman of science and technology, wanting to help solve some of the issues we’ve had from the engines. I wanted to help build more efficient pieces. I had plans,” I said, nodding as I applied the last of the dye. “Grand plans. They’ve turned out poorly.”

“Was it your father that made you interested in such things?”

“Yes,” I said. My throat tightened, my voice becoming husky. “He was a good man. He was always up in the clouds, though, and that did create some stress for Ma in raising us. But when he came down, he was a great father. I got my sense of wonder from him, and my wits from Ma. She was a painter, but a businesswoman as well. She knew how to sell her art, and did so with ease. I miss them.”

That pain. It ran deeper than any wound I’d had over the last couple weeks, and hurt more than anything possibly could. I wiped away a tear right as it slid down my cheek, gripping the edge of the sink.

“How did they die?” James asked.

“They say it was a blimp crash,” I whispered. “But, I’m not sure. I was never sure about that, never wanted to believe them. And now, knowing that the Rippers could have been after us, I wonder if something else happened.”

James grunted. “Maybe.”

I turned to look at him, letting out a breath. “Can you find out?”

James tilted his head to the side, his expression one of pity. “I don’t think that will help you, love.”

“It will,” I said. “I want to know. I need to know. If it was the Rippers...”

We stared at each other for a few moments until he sighed in defeat, shrugging his shoulders. “I can try and look into it, Irene, but we have a lot happening.”

He was sitting on a stool, and I stepped up to him. He set his coffee down as I slid into his lap, straddling him.

“Please?” I whispered.

“Irene,” he growled. “*Fuck.*”

I could feel his cock against me, pressing against the towel and the fabric of my pants. He leaned forward, pressing his

face against the crook of my neck to breathe in my scent.

“It’s unfair how you weaken me.”

“Please?” I asked again. “I need to know.”

We sat like that for a few minutes, him breathing me in, me wondering if my parents were dead because of this whole mess. Did they know anything about this? Were they aware that there were monsters in the world?

James nodded ever so slightly. “Yes, little dove. I’ll look into it.”

“Thank you,” I murmured, tipping his face up.

He smirked, his eyes moving up to my hair. “You look a little mad right now, and smell like dye.”

“And yet your cock is still hard for me,” I teased, sliding off his lap.

“It is,” he said, looking down at the towel. “How long must you stay like that?”

“Half an hour or so,” I said. “Plenty of time to drink some coffee and think about my parents’ murder.”

“No, plenty of time for you to tell me other things about you. What’s your favourite candy?”

I shook my head, bewildered by his interest. “It’s dark chocolate, of course. With a drizzle of caramel and pinch of salt.”

He pinched his face, shaking his head. “Awful.”

I scoffed but grinned. “You don’t like chocolate?”

“I don’t like caramel. It tastes like pure sugar.”

“I’d think you like sugar, like other bugs do.”

“Oh fuck off,” he snorted, letting out a bawdy laugh. “I am a monster, not a bug.”

“You have antennae!” I teased. “More bug than man.”

“Oh?” he said, rising from his seat. He stepped forward, pinning me against the sink. His cock pressed against me as he

tipped my chin up, raising a brow. “I think monster fucker has a better ring to it for you though,” he said, winking.

I narrowed my eyes, but couldn't stop the giggle. “You're ridiculous, James. Utterly ridiculous. If the mob only knew how silly you are.”

“I'm certain they would murder me immediately,” he chuckled.

“Maybe they wouldn't,” I said. “Maybe they'd offer their actual souls to dear Saint James the mothman.”

He chuckled again, tilting his head as he looked down at me. “I wish we would have started this way.”

I felt my smile fall, grimacing. “Well, we didn't.”

“Maybe we can restart.”

“No,” I said. “We can't. I can't trust you for anything, and that's the truth of it. You'd use me as a weapon if you could, if that meant winning this city. And you know— fair is fair. I told you a bit about me. What about you, James? Why are you the way you are?”

He scowled, shaking his head. “No.”

“No, you won't tell me? Why not? I couldn't possibly dislike you more.”

He pressed his lips together, glaring at me. “You didn't sound like you hated me yesterday. I wonder what you'll sound like when my cock is in you and you've had a change of heart.”

“Fuck you,” I said. “Stop trying to avoid the answer.”

I gave him a light shove back, making him sit back down on the stool.

“I am a monster,” James said, taking his coffee cup again. “What else do you want?”

“Were you always a monster?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“How were you born? Did you have parents?”

“No. I’ve never met another like me. I was born, and I’m certain I was left, but I survived. Perhaps other monsters cared for me until I could go on, I don’t remember. This was a couple hundred years ago.”

“*What?*” I hissed.

James grinned now. “What? You didn’t know that? Charles is at least a thousand years old. He’s Unseelie. His kind came before humans did. His courts used to hunt men for their dinners, and trap them in their fairy circles. He’s quite dangerous, actually, despite his inability to sing to you for whatever reason.”

“He likes me,” I said, shrugging. “Perhaps that’s why.”

“I doubt it.”

“And what about Morte?” I asked, thinking back to what I’d learned yesterday.

“I know nothing of Morte. One day he showed up, and demanded to help me take down the Rippers. I’d take anyone I could get at that point, and he’s helped me lead this crusade since.”

“Why do you hate Jack?”

“I used to be one of them,” James sighed. “Not too long ago, in fact. I was Jack’s right hand, and helped her reach the power she holds now.”

Interesting. I hadn’t known that, and it made things make more sense. “What did Jack do to you?”

“She used me,” James said. “She used me to get some information, and then when I was caught, I was interrogated. I managed to escape and make my way back to Jack, but by then she saw me as a failure. She cut off my wing and kicked me out of the Rippers. She took away the house I had, every weapon I owned. She left me bleeding and with nothing but the clothes on my back. Charles found me and hid me. We’d known each other for a while then, but were never close. Then he made me a wing...” James drifted off, his gaze softening.

For all the arguing I'd seen between the two of them, it was moments like this that made me like James a little more. When I could see how much he did care, despite him trying to hide it.

"He saved me. And thus the Freaks were born."

"What did you do before the Rippers?" I asked.

James let out a long hiss, shrugging. "Survived. I didn't have a purpose until I came to London. The Rippers have been clawing at power for half a century, slowly overtaking this city. Jack has played the long game, and she's done it well."

I mulled the information over, trying to figure out if all of this could connect to me, to my family. To the doves.

"What do you know about the doves?" I asked. "And why would they want them?"

"Well," James said. "I don't know much. I remember long ago there had been an item Jack was hunting for, but she never told anyone about what it was. I'm not sure if it was the doves. The theory is that they can make any monster powerless. I'm not certain how though. Right now, you're still a fragile human with the exception of that strange metal on your back."

I nodded, not mentioning that there had been moments I'd blacked out. Like on the blimp and at the house Morte had taken me to. I was supposedly harmless, but I still had this feeling of dread clawing at me. It was the same one I'd felt when Morte had forced me to stab one of the men, the fringes of my soul being torn further.

"The weakness that you have given me is not what Jack meant, that much is certain."

"Oh, so I *do* make you weak?" I asked.

"More than I'd like."

Silence settled over us and I pressed my lips together. "It's time I rinse my hair," I said.

"Can I rinse it for you?"

"Well you've already showered."

“I can shower again,” James said. “Please.”

I shook my head. What was I supposed to make of a mobster asking me to let him wash my hair?

“Fine,” I said. “But Morte said no sex.”

“I know he did,” James growled. “He didn’t say anything about no orgasms though.”

My stomach did a slow turn, and perhaps I should have been more firm in my resolve because the thought of James’ tongue inside of me again was enough for me to nod.

“Good girl,” he said softly. “And now I have to undress you. Why didn’t you just do this naked?”

“Well, I would have, but you insisted on being in here...”

He stood, letting his towel drop to the floor. I let out a small whimper as he stood before me, a smirk playing at his delectable mouth, and his chiselled body and hard cock on display.

“I’ll just buy you new clothes, little dove,” James said, with a predatory grin.

“But I like—”

He lunged forward, grabbing my corset and ripping it with a satisfied growl. I gasped as it tore straight down the middle, and he tossed it to the floor.

“James!” I exclaimed.

He ignored me, and continued to undress me until I was standing completely naked in front of him. Shreds of fabrics were around us, but I could only focus on him.

He walked me to the massive tub, reaching up to adjust the shower head. He pulled the curtain around it, turning on the water for us.

“We’ll let it warm up,” he said.

I let out a moan as he knelt down in front of me, parting my thighs gently.

Somehow his gentle touch was harsher than when his claws had gripped me yesterday. There was a yearning there, one that he was fighting desperately, and that made every single brush of his hand sear like a hot brand.

“James,” I gasped.

He hummed in satisfaction as the tip of his tongue flicked over my heat, teasing me. Every nerve ending in my body flared to life, my moan echoing over the sound of the running water.

“James,” I groaned again.

Steam began to bloom around us, and he pulled his face back, licking his lips. He stood, leaning past me to feel the water.

“You tell me if that’s too warm,” he said.

I could barely think now. *Everything* felt too warm with how he made me feel.

You hate him. You have to hate him.

He was making himself harder and harder to hate.

“Irene,” he said softly. “Feel the water, little dove, and let’s get you washed up. I promise I won’t bite.”

I believed him. I leaned back, feeling the water and then stepping beneath it. I groaned as the heat permeated through me.

James stepped in with me, tugging the curtain tight. I giggled as I looked up, realising just how tall he was.

“You’re too tall for this shower,” I said.

“That’s why this shower head is adjustable,” he said. “Charles made it that way. Now, close your eyes.”

I closed my eyes as he lifted his hands, running his claws gently through my hair.

Fuck. The *sound* I made. I couldn’t help myself. There was something about a monster using his claws so carefully that was more potent than the erotic scratches.

“Oh yes,” James whispered. “This will be a lovely colour, little dove. You’ll look very pretty.”

I squeezed my eyes shut a little tighter as he helped rinse the dye from my hair. I’d been called pretty before, although I’d always taken it with a grain of salt. But coming from him, I believed it. I doubted that pretty was in his vocabulary until now.

“I like it when you make noises like that,” James whispered.

I nodded, my eyes still shut as I reached down lower. He growled as I gripped his cock, and I gasped as I felt it wrap around my wrist.

It was bizarre how much that turned me on. I’d been ruined for regular cocks for the rest of my life.

“Little dove,” he whispered. “You’re making it very difficult to keep my promise to Morte, and he threatened to murder me.”

I opened my eyes, wiping the water drops from my lashes with my free hand.

I gave him a fake pout. “I thought you said you could make me cum.”

He narrowed his eyes, reaching behind me to shut the water off. “If you want something, just ask, you little harlot.”

I grinned as he swept me up, making me squeal as he threw back the shower curtain. We were met with the cold, and goosebumps erupted over my skin as he snatched a fresh towel and carted me towards the bed.

“I’m still wet!” I squeaked.

“Good,” James said, setting me down on the blankets. “Let me dry you off, little dove.”

I gasped as he knelt between my legs, parting my thighs and burying his face against my core. His tongue lapped at me, and I screamed as pleasure curled through me.

“James!” I cried.

He drew back, kissing up my thigh. He paused to lick up drops of water, licking up my stomach to my breasts.

I panted, my cheeks iron hot as he cleaned me up. He kissed me, his lips gentle around my nipples.

“Oh, baby,” he whispered. “I really did a number on you yesterday with those bites.”

My breasts were tender, a slight pain around my nipples from where he’d bitten. He soothed it all with little flicks of his tongue and soft kisses, driving soft tremors through my body at his gentle touch.

“Was it worth it?” he whispered, his voice husky.

“Yes,” I gasped. “I wanted what we did yesterday.”

“Good,” he purred. “When you took both of our cocks, I was so proud of you. Your body amazes me, little dove.”

I gasped as he kissed his way back down to my pussy, spreading me wide. His tongue circled my clit, drawing sharp cries from me.

“I can smell you,” he murmured, groaning. “Fuck. I can taste how aroused you are.”

“James,” I huffed.

“Do you want my tongue inside of you?”

“Yes,” I groaned. “Please.”

I was aching to cum now, my entire body craving the waves of ecstasy. I arched up as he growled and drove his tongue deep inside of me.

I reached down, curling my fingers in his dark hair as I thrust against him. He grunted, his tongue finding a rhythm that soon had me screaming.

He grunted as he fucked me with his tongue. An orgasm crashed into me, and I gasped as I came hard.

I collapsed down onto the blankets, moaning as he pulled his tongue free. “Fuck. There’s nothing else like when you cum on my tongue, little dove.”

I could barely form any words, so I just nodded, closing my eyes.

“I’d like to see how many times I can make you cum before Charles gets home.”

I opened my eyes, squinting at him. “One is never enough for you monsters.”

“Right, well is it truly enough for you?”

No. They’d created an insatiable monster.

“That’s what I thought,” he chuckled. “Well. Let’s make sure to keep count, little dove, I want Morte and Charles to know I brought you the most pleasure.”

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CHAPTER 22

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HOME



CHARLES

IT WAS midnight when I landed on the skybridge, my heart pounding wildly in my chest. My muscles burned with adrenaline, a hunger sitting within me that was growing rapidly.

“Fuck,” I muttered, trying to let the cold calm me.

My breaths came out in hot clouds. I was covered in blood and grime again.

I’d killed a couple of monsters today. One of them was a creature I knew back when I was a Ripper, but I’d felt nothing as I’d torn out their throats.

Morte was still down there, doing what he did best. Gathering information and murdering. We’d caught and tortured a couple of humans until they spilled what they knew, but Jack’s men were always difficult to break.

We were fighting claw and fang to stay together, but I felt like all of us were falling apart. The empire that we had built was crumbling, and James would need to go back out tonight to help stabilise it.

I went inside our home, noting that James had at least changed over the power source. I could smell the coal burning as I shut the door behind me, the warmth melting the ice that clung to me.

“Hi.”

Irene surprised me, her eyes meeting mine from across the room. She was sitting on the bed, papers spread out around her, a cup of hot tea balancing precariously on the mattress.

I frowned, studying her. Something was different but I wasn't quite sure—

“Your hair!” I exclaimed. “It's purple! Violet!”

She smiled, running her fingers through it. “It is.”

I kicked off my boots and then went over to her. I caught the scent of sex— her cum and... Just her.

I raised a brow, searching the room for James. He was sitting at his desk, pouring over a map.

“I'm redrafting some of these instructions for him,” Irene said, pointing at the papers. “Some of these bits were outdated, so I'm making a copy.”

I looked down at the papers, and realised that they were instructions on how to fly our blimp. There were several pages about the engine, but Irene had made a copy with some changes.

“Since when do you know anything about this?” I asked.

“Since I went to school for it,” Irene said, raising a brow. “You smell like something dumped you in a vat of shit.”

I wrinkled my nose, and felt my muscles start to relax from the tension of today.

“I'm going to talk to James,” I said. “And you should be asleep, little dove.”

“I'm not tired,” Irene snorted. “I was in bed all day. I'll sleep when I need to.”

James turned to look at me, raising a brow. “How was it?” he asked as I went over to him.

“Fucking terrible,” I muttered. “You have to go back out tonight. Another dozen of our men are dead. They're dropping like flies.”

“I was planning on going out,” James said, nodding. “Morte?”

“Interrogating some of the Rippers.”

James nodded, letting out a breath. “Then it’s your turn with Irene.”

It was. I felt a little flicker of happiness, and looked back over to where she worked quietly.

“You know,” James said. “She’s smarter than we thought.”

“I can’t say I’m surprised,” I said.

“No. I mean... she is *a lot* more intelligent than we thought.”

“If you haven’t believed she was playing the game with us, then you’re mistaken,” I said, shrugging. “It makes everything more entertaining, at least.”

“I learned more about her today,” James said. “One, I discovered that her parents were killed a year ago.”

“And? I knew that.”

“A blimp crash.”

I was silent, not certain where he was going with this.

“I’ve started to look into it,” James said, lowering his voice. “It seems that they were on a blimp that was carrying a package of high value. The police report didn’t have all the details. I called my friend down below, and he’s digging more into it.”

“Do you think Jack did it?” I whispered.

James shrugged. “Perhaps. But it makes me wonder about what was on the blimp.”

Could it have been the missing dove?

“Two,” James said. “We discovered that Irene can cum eight times in one day before she ‘simply cannot’.”

My jaw ticked and I narrowed my eyes on him. James held up his hands, wearing a stupid triumphant grin.

“My cock was never inside her today. We didn’t fuck.”

“You and I both know that fucking someone isn’t just putting your cock in, but maybe that’ll work for Morte.”

“Sure, well, regardless,” James said, standing. “I just want it known that I was able to bring her the most amount of pleasure.”

“Is this a competition?” I asked.

“Of course not.”

That was a lie. I rolled my eyes as he began to pull on his coat, and load up fresh weapons.

“Whatever you say, James. And what is Irene doing? The documents she’s updating.”

“She knows how machines like this work quite well,” James said. “She’s fixing some of the errors you made when you created the instruction manual.”

“Well, she didn’t build the fuckin’ engine, did she?”

“No, but she was right. We followed one of your instructions on changing power sources,” James said, putting on a top hat and his goggles. “Didn’t work. Irene made it happen.”

He gave me a once over and then headed for Irene, pausing to give her a kiss on the cheek before heading for the front door.

“Be safe,” he called to us both.

Irene gave a little wave and then put her head back down. I ignored him, shaking my head in disbelief.

The balls on that fucker. Sometimes I hated him more than loved him, and right now was one of those moments.

“I’m going to get cleaned up,” I said.

Irene nodded. “I’ll be here.”

“Right, where else would you be?”

Irene turned, giving me a dark look as I went towards the bathroom. I didn’t care if I annoyed her right now, I was too in

my head about everything to be able to relax.

Eight times. I can make that nine.

AFTER I CLEANED up and redressed, I made my way to where Irene was still working.

“It’s late,” I said. “You should sleep, Irene.”

She lifted her head, narrowing her eyes. “What’s wrong with you? You aren’t typically so brusque, that’s more of a Morte thing. You haven’t smiled once since you got home.”

Home.

“This isn’t fucking home,” I snarled.

How many humans had I seen die today? How many men had I murdered myself? What the hell was I doing with a human?

“How could it be home?” I asked. “This is nothing like the courts I lived in for centuries.”

Her gaze flickered, and I could feel my body changing. My bones snapped, my form loosening from this pretty form to something beastly, scary.

I didn’t care. She should hate me. She should fear me. She shouldn’t even want to touch me.

I let out a low growl and lunged, slamming her back against the mattress. She gasped, wincing as I lowered my face close to hers.

“I fucking hate this place,” I whispered. “We used to feast and dine on beings like you. I picked the meat out of my fangs with bones!”

She glared at me, her eyes darkening. “And? Why aren’t you there then?”

“Because I was banished,” I snarled. “Banned from the Unseelie realm. I will never be allowed to step foot in my

homelands ever again. Most Unseelie perish here, because we cannot survive in this atmosphere easily. Some kill themselves. Others starve. But not me.”

“What did you do, then?” she bit out.

I stared down at her, a growl working through me again. I could feel her trembling beneath me, but her expression didn't show it. She continued to glare at me— Staring at my monster form like it was no different than my other.

“Would you let me fuck you like this?” I hissed.

Her hand slid down and she gripped my cock in response, making me groan.

“Not unless you tell me what you did,” she whispered.

“Irene,” I snarled.

She began to stroke me, relaxing beneath me. “Go on,” she said. “What was so bad? Did you fuck someone? Did you murder someone? Eat someone?”

“Loved someone,” I whispered.

I grunted as a wave of pleasure worked through me, and it was difficult to keep myself from flipping her over and burying my cock inside of her.

No sex. Morte's warning went off like a gong, but godsdamn it all, I wanted her.

“I loved someone,” I grunted. “Someone I should not have loved. And so I was sent here. And I ended up in London, sucked up into the world of death and politics. That's how I met James.”

She began to stroke my cock a little faster, pausing to swirl the pad of her thumb over the heads.

“Irene,” I grunted.

“I'm sorry it's been so *hard* for you,” she whispered. “You must have had such a hard time, huh? A really terrible life. One that made you so mean and murderous. Why would you ever help anyone after they took your love away?”

Her words stung, and I found myself scowling down at her. “Irene...”

In one swift motion, she rolled me over and seated herself on me, glaring down as she reached back to continue stroking my cock. I was shocked, unsure of how to handle her pulling the manoeuvre on me. Pleasure worked through me though, and I let out a groan as she continued. “You’re not the only one who has had a shitty life, you know. But you’re a little bitch for letting it turn you into this.”

“What?” I hissed, starting to sit up. “What the fuck—”

She backhanded me. *Hard*. She let go of my cock and slid off my chest, seating herself back on the blankets and leaving me wondering what the hell had just happened.

My form changed back into my normal one, and I sat up, rubbing my face. “What on earth is wrong with you?” I asked.

“Me?” she hissed. “You just tackled me for no fucking reason, and expect me to just take it? All because you’re having a tantrum? Put me back in the fucking coffin if you don’t want me to have something to say about it.”

I glared at her, but she did have a point.

“You miss your home,” she whispered. “So do I. It sucks, doesn’t it?”

Fuck.

“At least you can go back,” I said.

She looked at me, her gaze burning right through me. I felt my heart beat a little faster.

“You really think you’d ever let me go? Any of you? And after everything I’ve done, how could I go back? I’m sure I will be kicked out of my school. I have no idea what our financial situation looks like. I have no idea what my sister, *if she’s even still alive*, is going through.”

I flinched, a wave of guilt washing over me. Did she know? Did she know what we had done?

“You were kicked out for loving someone. I was kidnapped for something that shouldn’t have had anything to do with me. We were both wronged, and now we have to make the best of what we can. You seem to love James.”

“I do,” I said, sinking back down into the blankets.

I love you too, little dove.

I couldn’t say that to her though. She would hate it.

So I said the only thing I could think of.

“You’ve broken me all over again, little dove.”

I felt her hand slide into mine, the two of us now looking up at the rounded ceiling. Silence settled over us, neither of us talking.

Finally, I found my voice. “I’m sorry,” I said. “I shouldn’t have acted out.”

“It’s okay,” she said. “I’m sorry that you were hurt.”

I swallowed hard and squeezed her hand.

“I’ll sleep now,” she said. “Good night, Charles.”

“Good night, Irene.”

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CHAPTER 23

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DANCE WITH A FAIRY



IRENE

I WOKE up next to Charles. His arms were wrapped around me, our bodies pressed together. I breathed in his scent, finding comfort in it. The two of us had laid together for a while, me falling in and out of sleep.

Every time I woke up, his hand was a little closer to my pussy.

I bit my lower lip as I closed my eyes, pretending to still be asleep. I let out a little moan, one that could have come from a dream.

He moved, and I could feel him looking at me.

I fought really hard not to smile.

“Irene?” he whispered. “You can’t fool me, you silly dove. I know you are awake.”

I grinned, opening my eyes. He smirked at me, the light from the massive window catching his silver hair. He had bed head, and it was cute to see him like this. One of his wings was lifted, the sheer colours framed by dark webbing.

I reached up, running my fingertips over it. He shuddered, letting out a dark hum.

“Do you like that?” I asked, bewildered.

“It feels good,” he mumbled.

His hand ran over my body beneath the blankets. I couldn't fight off another moan, not this early in the day.

“*Charles.*”

He circled one of my nipples with his fingertip, humming. “You know. The doctor's orders no longer apply, little dove. Do you want me?”

I felt his cock pulsing against me, and felt a rush of need. “Yes.”

“Good,” he said. “Because I'm two seconds from devouring you. I want to hear you scream as you take my cock.”

His other hand slid around my neck, giving me a squeeze. I groaned, turning to look at him. Heat flared in his eyes. His mouth crashed against mine, harder, hungrier than before. His tongue danced with mine with an eager moan, his other hand dipping between my thighs.

I grunted, parting them for him.

I needed him inside of me.

I broke our kiss, gasping. “*Fuck.* I need you inside of me, please. Now.”

“But—”

“*Charles,*” I growled.

He chuckled, and then rolled me over onto my stomach. I started to lift my hips, but he pushed me back down, humming that melody he always stuck with.

“Let's try something new,” he whispered. “Do you trust me, little dove? To give you pleasure? And perhaps a little pain...”

Did I? That was always the question, and the hardest one to answer.

“Yes,” I whispered.

“Good girl,” he hummed. “You're going to stay like this while I get some lube.”

He moved off of me and disappeared for a moment before coming back. I gasped as he pushed my thighs tight together, keeping me flat on my stomach. I tried to arch back to look at him, but he shoved my head back down into the pillow with a growl.

“Stay still,” he whispered.

A shiver worked up my spine as he dripped some oil onto me, his fingers working it around my clit, and then inside of me. I gasped, gripping the blankets with a groan.

He then moved his hand further up, circling another entrance.

“No,” I said, starting to reach back.

He grabbed my hand, pinning it to my lower back. I kicked back at him with a growl.

“I’ve never done anything there!” I hissed.

“I know,” Charles said. “I want to be the first. One, I want bragging rights. Two, I want to fuck you, little dove.” He leaned down over me, and I stopped squirming as he whispered into my ear. “I’ll make it feel good,” he murmured. “I promise.”

“You break your promises,” I bit out.

He chuckled, sitting back and smacking one of my ass cheeks. “Not this type of promise. Do you really want me to stop, Irene?”

Fuck. Did I? Did I want him to stop?

No.

“No,” I whispered.

“Then relax,” he said softly, letting go of my hands. “If you aren’t relaxed, then it won’t feel as good. Give yourself to me, little dove.”

He waited for me to finally relax. I took a deep breath and then forced myself to, even though my heart was still beating hard in my chest.

He leaned down, kissing my spine all the way down to my ass. I squeaked as he bit one of my cheeks, the sharp pain replaced with pleasure as he healed it immediately.

“Hey,” I whispered.

He chuckled. “No, I’m not leaving marks today. I’ll heal them as we go.”

“That’s cheating,” I said.

“Mmmm, yes, and I’m the worst cheater of all,” he hummed with delight, sliding two of his fingers inside of me.

I gasped, pleasure spreading through me.

“Your pussy is so tight,” he groaned. “I bet your ass will be even tighter.”

“Charles,” I gasped as he pulled his fingers out of me and moved them up further.

He spread my cheeks apart and I fought the urge to kick him as he began to circle my other hole.

“I want to own every part of you,” he whispered. “Every fucking part of you.”

He eased one finger inside of me, just a bit. I gripped the blankets, letting out a soft moan as he teased me.

He was right though, it didn’t hurt the way I thought it might. I felt like I was being stretched as he worked it in further, adding a second finger after a few minutes.

Charles straddled the back of my thighs, and I felt his hard cock slap against my ass cheek.

“That won’t fit,” I whimpered, wiggling beneath him.

“Not yet, little dove. This is for your pussy first.”

I gasped as he pushed the heads of his cock against me, sliding inside of me as he began to work his two fingers in and out of my ass. I cried out as he thrust his hips, giving me every inch of his ridged cock.

“Charles,” I gasped.

Even though I'd had two cocks inside of me yesterday, having his fingers playing with my ass as his cock drove in and out of me made me feel even fuller. My pussy pulsed around him, my body shivering in restless delight as he simply waited.

He gave a small movement, pulling his cock out ever so slightly before driving it back in.

“Do you like being good for me?” he whispered.

“Yes,” I cried.

“Are you going to give your ass to me like a good girl?”

“Yes,” I breathed.

“Good. And you're going to tell James that I fucked you here, aren't you?”

I laughed despite the position I was in. “No, you do that yourself.”

Charles chuckled, leaning down to kiss my shoulder. “Worth the shot. He was very proud about how much he made you cum yesterday.”

Heat rushed through me as I thought about yesterday, and Charles chuckled, giving another small thrust.

“Charles, please,” I moaned. “Please.”

He gave me a dramatic sigh, but it was followed by a soft growl as he began to move his fingers a little faster inside of me.

“Such a pretty ass. I can't wait to fit my cock inside of you, love.”

He pulled his cock and fingers free and then lifted my hips, propping me on my knees. My breasts pushed against the blankets, my back arching with pleasure as he pushed his cock back inside of me.

“Fuck,” I gasped.

He pushed his fingers back inside of my ass as he started to fuck me earnestly. I cried out as he savagely thrust into me,

gripping the blankets with every pump of his hips. I could feel every ridge of his monstrous cock, the head hitting as deep as possible.

My entire body reacted to him, every part of me alive with intense pleasure and need.

I felt another finger slowly added and whimpered as he kept fucking me, the sound of our bodies against each other echoing through the room.

“Good girl,” he murmured. “You’re so good for me, little dove. You’re taking me so well for your first time.”

His praise kindled a different kind of flame inside of me. I’d become addicted to darker words, but hearing him tell me I was good...

Made me want to be better.

“More,” I moaned. “I can take more.”

“But you’re already doing so well,” he said.

“I can take more,” I said again. “Please.”

Charles laughed. “You already have four fingers in you, love.”

“I want your cock,” I said. “I want your cock inside of me.”

“I am inside of you.”

“*Charles*,” I moaned.

“You’re such a good little cock sleeve, aren’t you? So desperate for more,” he murmured. “I’m going to fill your pussy and then your ass.”

I started to say something else, but he began to thrust his cock into me harder, and all words were lost. I cried out as he drove into me, the edge of my orgasm curling through me.

“I’m going to cum,” I gasped.

“I love it when you cum for me, little dove,” he said, his words a dark lullaby. “Cum for me, love. Squeeze my cock as you cum.”

A sharp cry erupted from me as his words sent me over the edge, and he grunted in pleasure as I came hard. His cock pulsed inside of me, my thoughts melting as my orgasm burst through me.

“Ask for my cum,” he grunted.

“Please,” I gasped. “I need your cum. *Please.*”

“Needy girl,” he whispered huskily, giving one more hard thrust before he started to cum.

We moaned together as he filled me with his cum, the heat spreading through me as he emptied every drop inside of me. He stayed like that for a few moments, his cock still hard and pulsing inside of me.

I sighed happily as I relaxed completely, my body going loose.

“Good girl,” he murmured. “That’s what I was waiting for.”

He pulled free of my pussy and then I felt the head of his cock against my ass. I cried out, but I was still relaxed from cumming, so he slid the first couple inches of his cock inside of me before slowing.

His breath hitched, his hands gripping my hips. I felt his cock push back out and he chuckled. “No, no. You’re taking every inch, my love.”

I squeezed my eyes shut as he pushed the head back in, and then began to push in further.

“Charles,” I groaned.

“Does it feel good, little dove?”

It was a lot. I felt like I was being stretched, and there was a bit of pain, but it was mixed with a potent pleasure.

He leaned over me, pressing his lips against my ear as he gave me more.

“Now, imagine taking me here and James in your pussy,” he whispered. “Or... Maybe if Morte is willing to play, all three of us will take your sweet body.”

Fuck. The idea of taking all three of them at the same time sounded like a great way to not be able to walk the next day. But it would be worth it.

The two of us gasped as his hips finally pressed against mine, his cock now entirely inside of me. I squeezed him tight as he waited, his lips dancing up and down my back.

“You taste sweet,” he murmured. “Sweet and sinful.”

A shiver worked up my spine. He continued to kiss my shoulders and neck until I felt the prick of his fangs against soft skin.

“Bite me,” I whispered.

Another monstrous thing I’d started to enjoy more than I should. I let out a sigh of pleasure as his fangs pierced me, the pain feeling a little too good. My body hummed with the electric feeling of need, and I pushed my ass back against him.

He began to draw my blood, sucking from me as he pulled his hips back and drove inside. I cried out, his cock filling me in a completely different way.

Hot blood rolled down my neck, my gasps becoming repeated cries as he fucked me harder. He moaned, pulling his fangs free. He swirled his tongue over the fresh wounds.

“Beg for my cum,” he rasped. “Beg for me to fill you.”

“I need you,” I whimpered. “I need you to fill me.”

“You need my monster cum, love?”

“Yes! Every drop,” I breathed.

“Good girl,” he whispered, giving one more hard thrust.

I gasped as he finally came, our pants blended together as he gave me every drop. His wings fluttered behind him, the hurried sound making me smile.

He slowly pulled out, grunting as he rolled to the side.

I collapsed against the blankets with a tired hum, completely drained. I could barely think now, satisfaction

making me close my eyes.

“I’m going to sleep again,” I mumbled.

“Are you now?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Filled with my cum?”

“Shut up,” I said, hiding my smile against the pillows. “Let me sleep, will you?”

“Of course, princess,” he teased. “I’m sure Morte would love to find you sleeping and full of cum.”

I was sure he would too.

And that didn’t stop me from letting myself fall into happy dreams.

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CHAPTER 24

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SLEEPING BEAUTY



MORTE

“SHE’S ALL YOURS,” Charles said, his third eye winking at me. “I took her ass too, so have fun.”

He sailed right past me and out the door with that arrogant declaration before I could even give the motherfucker an update on the condition of our gang. I snorted as he left, leaving me alone.

Well, almost alone.

My gaze was immediately pulled to the bed in the middle of the room. Irene was asleep, face down in the blankets, ass bare and...

The scent of sex made me growl.

Her soft snore echoed, drawing me closer. I was already unbuttoning my dark cloak as I stopped at the edge of the bed, letting it fall to the floor.

I loved watching her sleep.

Everything that had happened in the last couple of days suddenly felt like nothing more than a dark shadow. I had tortured two men relentlessly for information until they had pissed themselves, and watched the life drain from their eyes. I’d gone out onto the street, helping enforce our expanding boundaries. I’d helped our men make new grounds, burned down Ripper enterprises, and killed at least three monsters of theirs.

Death. Death and violence and blood and hate. That was all I had known.

But then, I came home. I came home, and the human that had infected me with lust and need was lying here naked and full of fairy cum.

Sleeping...

My cock was already hard.

I stared at her for a moment, and then turned, moving quietly to my area. I was silent as I found a blindfold and some rope, testing its strength before returning to the bed.

For once, I was thankful that James or Charles had the tastes that they did. The head board was made out of bronze metal, and had gaps between slats that would make this easy.

I pulled off all of my clothing aside from my mask before moving onto the bed carefully. My dark tentacles immediately reached for her, but I restrained them for the time being.

I didn't want to risk waking her.

Not yet.

I didn't want her to wake up until I was buried inside of her.

I didn't want her to know who was fucking her either.

Not at first.

I moved quickly and carefully. I slowly turned her body onto its side, working the ropes around her wrists and binding them to the headboard. Occasionally, she would let out a heavy breath, or start to move—and I'd wait for her to fall back into deep sleep before continuing again.

I grabbed the blind fold and slipped it around her head, tying it tight.

I sat back, biting my bottom lip.

She was fucking perfect.

I hated that, but it was true. My cock pulsed as my gaze ran over her body. I took in every curve, every line. Cum had

dripped down her thighs, leaving marks as it had dried. She was healed from all of the scratches and bites she'd had, aside from one at her neck.

Charles. I fought the urge to smirk. The fairy drove me insane sometimes, but I could learn to put up with him if this was how he'd leave our human for me.

Our human.

My cock was now throbbing. I leaned forward, grazing my fingertips up her thigh. She let out a little snore, and I smiled as I moved closer.

I pressed my fingers against her pussy, sucking in a breath from the heat. She was so warm, her body so alive. I pressed my finger against her clit and began to circle it, listening as her breaths became shallow.

She couldn't see me, so I paused to reach up and remove my mask, placing it to the side.

Without warning, I let one of my tentacles shove inside of her. A gasp left her, and I watched as she came to life and realised her predicament.

“What—”

She kicked out at me, but I managed to grab her ankles and pin them back down, not making a noise as I began to fuck her mercilessly with the tentacle.

She's already so fucking wet.

She cried out, yanking against the ropes. “Let me go! Charles??”

I knew she was searching for the answer. Who had her tied up? Who had blindfolded her? Who was fucking her in her sleep?

She convulsed, letting out a sharp cry as she suddenly came hard. I bit back all groans and noises as her hot cunt squeezed my tentacle, using every ounce of control.

“Fuck!” she wailed. “Fuck you!” she let out a helpless sob of frustration, still trying to fight me even after cumming.

“James? Morte?”

I was grinning now. I let another tentacle slide up to her ass, knowing it would give me away.

“Morte,” she snarled. “You bastard. Let me go!”

I didn’t answer her. She was met with silence as I drove the other tentacle inside her ass, and Charles was right. He had taken her here. I could still feel his cum inside of her, could feel how much looser she was from taking his cock.

She screamed, and I wasn’t sure if it was from pain or pleasure.

“I hate you!”

“Hate me more,” I chuckled mercilessly.

She gasped as I began to move the tentacles in tandem, one thrusting in her pussy while the other took her ass. She kept yanking against the ropes until I changed positions, moving myself up by her face while my tentacles fucked her.

I slapped her cheek with my cock, letting out a low growl as she clamped her lips shut.

“Are we really playing this game, *marionette*? You’re *my* fuck puppet. You took Charles’ cock like a little whore, giving him your ass without my permission. Who said you could do that, hmm?”

She opened her mouth to argue with me, and every word was shoved back down her throat as I pushed my cock between those sweet lips.

I gasped at how good it felt to fill her despite her angry moans, forcing the head of my cock deeper until she was choking around me. I gripped her hair, thrusting forward right as my tentacles filled her.

She screamed, but it was muffled by my monstrous cock.

I stayed like that, holding her to me until she finally started to go limp. I sucked in a breath, my head falling back as I forced myself to pull out.

Spit dripped from my cock, her choking noises making me groan.

“I hate you,” she whispered.

“I like it when you hate me,” I said. “Makes me want to fuck you even harder.”

I caught the slightest smile on her lips and narrowed my eyes.

“You’re a little devil,” I whispered. “Take my fucking cock.”

She started to press her lips closed again, but I forced the head of my cock between them. I started to fuck her throat again, finding a brutal rhythm between all holes.

I felt her cum again with a muffled cry, her pussy squeezing my tentacle and nearly sending me over the edge. I held on, though, and didn’t stop as I plunged in and out of her.

She was mine. Mine to fuck, to breed, to turn into my little fuck puppet. I loved torturing her sweet cunt this way, reducing her purpose down to only one thing.

I looked down, and met her eyes.

Fuck.

I froze, realising that her blindfold had slid off her head.

She could see my face.

She was looking at my face.

Tears streamed down her pretty cheeks, my cock still in her mouth. I waited to see the horror, waited to see the hate.

I didn’t see any of that though.

Horror iced my veins, but I didn’t stop. Instead, I thrust deep into her throat again, watching as more tears leaked from the eyes I wished to steal.

I gasped as I came, losing all control and spilling my hot seed down her throat. She swallowed with a groan until I pulled out, sitting back to simply stare at her in wonder.

She let out deep breaths, her gaze never leaving mine.

“You steal parts from people,” she whispered, her voice hoarse. “And make your own.”

“Yes,” I said.

“You want my eyes.”

“I want your heart.”

We continued to stare at each other, and I felt everything falling apart. Everything unravelling, all of my darkness bared before this little mortal. I was laid out for her judgement, for her approval, and I craved her acceptance. I craved her love.

No one had ever loved me.

Could she? Would she?

“Untie me,” she whispered.

I pulled my tentacles free of her first and then unknotted the rope, freeing her hands. She immediately moved up onto her knees, facing me.

The back of her hand suddenly slapped my face, and I gasped from the slap, looking back at her with a snarl.

“That’s for tying me up,” she said. “Amongst other things.”

It was so absurdly insane, that all I could do was chuckle. “Really? The moment my mask is removed, you slap me.”

“I’m sure you’ll survive,” she said drily. “You have the face of a god, not a monster.”

“I like pretty things,” I whispered.

It was my only defence. I didn’t need this human shell to exist in, but I liked it. I liked what I wore, the image I presented. And I liked my hidden face behind my mask.

But I also liked her *seeing* me.

“No one has ever seen me,” I said. “I should kill you for that.”

She moved closer, leaning in with a soft noise. “Mmmm. Of course,” she said.

Her lips were now almost touching mine, her breath mingling with my own.

“You’ve never kissed me,” she whispered. “*Kiss me.*”

I leaned forward, closing the gap. Our lips met, and I found myself falling into her. Falling into her soul, falling in love with her.

I grunted, yanking her closer as our tongues met in a desperate kiss. Heat spread through me, something I’d never felt before. I moaned, deepening the movement as I held her tight to me.

I never wanted to let her go.

She broke the kiss, cupping my face. “Morte,” she whispered softly. “I should hate you, but how can I when you kiss me like you want to devour me?”

“I do want to devour you, *marionette*,” I whispered. “I want you more than anything else in this world. You have ruined me in every way possible.”

“You’ve ruined me!” she said, shaking her head. “Turning me into a murderess. Making me do terrible things.”

I kissed her again, drinking in everything about her. I kissed her until she was breathless, and then pressed my forehead against hers. “I cannot stop this,” I whispered. “I cannot change what has been done. I can only tell you that I will never be able to let you go, Irene. I will never be able to stop needing you this way. You are a poison that has bled into every part of me. My heart never beat until you, and now every breath I take is so that I may come back to you.”

Her breath hitched, tears filling her eyes. “I hate you,” she whispered. “You shouldn’t feel this way for me.”

“Because you might kill me?” I asked.

Her gaze flickered, her expression becoming guarded.

“I know you think about it,” I whispered. “I know you imagine killing all three of us and going back to your old life.”

“I would do it,” she growled.

“I know you would. And that’s why I can’t stop myself from craving you, *marionette*. There’s a darkness in you that you fight, but I love it.”

Love.

Fuck.

Fuck.

“Do you love me?”

Her voice trembled. Her scent had an edge of fear to it—but so did mine.

I’d never felt fear before, until now.

Irene pulled back, shaking her head. “Sorry,” she whispered. “It’s an absurd question.”

I studied her, unsure of what to say. I didn’t know, and that frustrated me.

I slid out of the bed before I said anything else that could destroy me.

I needed to go.

“Tell me something,” Irene whispered.

“What?” I growled.

“Is my sister alive?”

Her question stilled me. I refused to look at her as pain twisted my already wretched heart.

“I don’t know,” I whispered.

Irene was silent, but her silence spoke volumes.

“I’m going back out,” I said. “James and Charles will need me this evening before the sun sets. It’s going to be cold, so make sure to bundle up.”

“I’ll be here,” Irene said, her voice emotionless.

“Yes,” I said. “Where else would you go? You’re our prisoner.”

Her presence was too much for me now. I put my mask back on, regretting ever showing my face. I pulled on my clothes, anger curling through me like dark smoke.

I didn't say another word to her as I went for the door, hating myself.

It was absurd, she was right. It had been a silly question coming from a silly human.

There was no love between humans and monsters, and there never could be.

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CHAPTER 25

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HUMAN



IRENE

IT HAD BEEN a week since Jack had sent that letter. I'd let all of my thoughts turn to hate, wanting to destroy the three monsters that had imprisoned me. But as I watched Morte leave without another word, I found myself spiralling.

I'd seen his face. He was beautiful, even with the stitches that held it together. He had long dark hair that moved like his shadowy tentacles, dark brows, long lashes, and grassy green eyes. I had never seen eyes like his, and couldn't understand why he wanted mine.

I couldn't understand him at all.

I couldn't understand myself either. I had seen his face, we had kissed, and I'd been ready to sell my soul to him all over again. I'd been ready to say something I shouldn't have.

I kept having to remind myself that I *hated* him. That I hated Charles and James too.

Hate was starting to look alot more like love, but that was insane.

Is it insane?

I wasn't even certain what being sane meant anymore.

The only sound in the room now was the hum of the blimp engines and the wind outside. It was still afternoon, and now I had to wonder how in the hell I was going to meet Jack.

Did I even want to meet her?

I rolled out of bed and made my way to the shower, my thoughts moving in rapid circles. The hot water soothed my overworked muscles, my body aches washing down the drain.

Tears began to stream down my cheeks as I tried to force down the feelings, but it was no use.

I was the fucking idiot that had gone and started feeling *things* for three monsters.

They'd broken me, and this was how I repaid myself. By *wanting* them.

There had been moments over the last few days where I'd started to wonder what it would be like if the four of us had different lives. What if monsters didn't have to hate humans? What if they didn't have to run a mob? What if I didn't have to be a puzzle piece?

I longed to know what they would be like if they were mine. Truly mine. There were small things about each of them that I'd come to enjoy, and that only told me just how much I'd lost my mind.

I turned off the water and got out of the shower, wrapping myself in a towel and standing in front of the mirror.

I didn't know what to do. Did I try to love them? Did I continue to try and hate them? Did I give into these emotions that were clawing their way up from the depths of my soul?

What about Florence?

I'd given Morte the chance to tell me the truth, and he'd lied to me. Knowing how the three of them were, they'd try to kill Florence again and then tell me it was my fault.

My brows drew together and I glared at myself.

Maybe I didn't hate them. Maybe I hated myself. Maybe I hated that I'd been so caught up in a world of science and glitter, that I'd never realised there were monsters living right alongside us humans. Maybe I hated that my father and mother might have died because of the Rippers, and because of the doves. Maybe I hated that no one had prepared me for the real

world or the harsh reality that people died for no reason, and I could be the cause of it.

No one had told me that this would be my path. I'd never dreamed that I might have to try and outsmart three mobsters, three *monsters*, just so I might be able to save my sister and get back to the life I used to have.

I didn't even want that life anymore.

That was the worst part of everything.

I didn't miss the parties or studying or anything else.

A demonic plague doctor, a mobster mothman, and a singing fairy had all ruined my life. Up until now, I'd been perfectly happy trying to ruin their lives in return.

But now? Now, I wanted to be in their lives.

That was the fucked up truth of it.

I got dressed, pulling on warmer clothes. My thoughts were finally quiet, but I still felt jittery from nerves.

I pulled on my boots and stood up, looking around the room. The afternoon had slipped by, and the sun would soon be setting. My stomach grumbled despite the sinking feeling of dread.

I felt my shoulders prickle, the metal that had fused to me stinging for a moment.

Crash!

I gasped right as a dark figure shattered the massive stained glass window, clamping my hands over my ears as the wind began to howl.

"Fuck," I growled.

A monster landed in front of me, one I had never seen before. He reminded me of a giant bird, but with the face of a human.

I took a step back, fear spreading through me. He was terrifying.

I had no one here that would protect me.

Suddenly, I really wished Morte would have stayed.

Bastard.

“I’m here to take you to Jack. Come.”

The creature held out a massive clawed hand, one that was large enough to wrap around my waist. He towered over me, his eyes bright red and piercing.

“What if I don’t want to go?” I whispered.

He cocked his head. “Then you *die*, human. What Jack wants, Jack gets.”

He didn’t give me the chance to argue. Instead, his giant claw wrapped around my waist and I squealed as I was lifted. He carried me out of the blimp through the massive window, the frigid wind chilling me down to my bones.

I looked down, realising that the blimp was descending towards the city.

It would crash and there was nothing I could do to stop it.

The bird man swooped down, taking me towards the city. This was nothing like flying with Charles, and I screamed as he tore us down to the buildings below.

My heart pounded in my chest as he swooped towards a street and then dropped me. I hit the pavement with a thud, cursing under my breath as I stared up dizzily at the sky.

“What a fucking cunt,” I growled.

Well, now I sound like Morte.

“Hello, Irene.”

I sat up, looking up in surprise to see Henry and two other men I didn’t recognize. Henry raised a brow, his gruff appearance rougher than usual. Blood was crusted on his face, his clothing covered in it as well. The other men glared at me with disgust, which made me feel gross and angry.

“We’re here to take ya to Jack,” Henry said, offering me a hand.

I stared at him for a moment. “You work for Jack?”

“Yes. Take my hand, lass.”

I let him pull me to my feet, trying to push away the feeling of anger. I shouldn't be mad that Henry had been spying on James, Morte, and Charles— but I was. I dusted any dirt off myself and then turned, searching out the blimp.

“You couldn't have done that without wrecking the blimp?” I asked. “It was beautiful.”

The two men scoffed, and Henry rolled his eyes as he lit up a cigarette. Smoke curled from his mouth as he spoke.

“We don't give a fuck about that,” Henry growled. “Their castle can fucking burn, for all I care. Why the fuck would you care anyways? It's been your prison, no? You've been a prisoner to monsters for weeks now.”

“Yeah,” I whispered, thinking about Morte's words. “It has been a prison.”

“Right,” Henry grunted. “Come on, lass. We need to get going before one of them notices you're gone.”

My stomach twisted. Would they tear up London trying to find me, or would they even care?

I *wanted* them to find me.

Henry grabbed my shoulder, pushing me towards a black automobile. One of the other men opened the door and Henry shoved me inside before sliding in after me.

I moved away from him but was stopped by the press of a body against my back I hadn't seen. I swiftly turned to confront the asshole behind me but found him unmoving. I scowled, moving my hand forward to touch him, but then his head lolled forward, blood dripping from his mouth.

A wave of nausea came over me as I realised it wasn't a *body* but the corpse of a man.

“Ignore him,” Henry said, taking a drag from his smoke. “And breathe through your nose, the smell gets better eventually.”

The other two men got into the front seats, slamming the doors shut. The engine started and the car lurched forward, starting down the dark road. Henry's arm slid around me, and my entire body tensed.

James would cut off his hand for touching me.

"I bet it feels good to be around humans, huh?" One of the men laughed.

"Instead of fucking monsters," another said.

My cheeks turned hot, rage making my hands clench into fists.

I couldn't show that I cared.

"They're fucking horrid," I growled.

Henry nodded, the smoke from his cigarette making my eyes water. "So they did touch you then, eh? The men have been talking about it. Some of the Freaks think you've worked some witch magic on them."

"Why would they think that?" I asked, turning to glare at him.

"Because they're different," Henry said. "They're doing things they've never done before."

"It's true," one of the men up front grumbled. "I saw James spare a life yesterday. Never seen that before. He's always been quick to put a bullet in your head if you even breathe wrong."

"Yeah, he's a cunt," the other growled. "All three of 'em. I heard the masked one killed two men the other night just for looking at you, girl. Is that true?"

I paled. I wasn't sure how to answer.

No, actually, those men were going to hurt me.

No, actually, I murdered them.

"I think he just murders whoever he pleases," I whispered, swallowing hard.

Henry and the other two men all nodded, that answer satisfying enough.

I turned my head slightly, wincing at the body next to me. I ignored it, looking out the window at the city passing by. We were in a darker area where the glam of the Westside didn't reach, and neon signs didn't glow. There was a part of me that was tempted to try and leap out of the door, take my chances hitting the pavement and escaping— but I knew there was no use.

Wherever I went, a monster would find me. I would be lucky if it were one of my own.

They aren't yours, I reminded myself, despite the ache in my chest.

Would they ever be?

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CHAPTER 26

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DREAD



JAMES

OUR LIVES HAD TURNED into a merry-go-round over the last few days.

The four of us had settled into a rhythm— and for the first time in my life, I felt a sense of happiness. Right behind it, though, was the creeping feeling of dread clawing at me.

Every morning, I'd get into bed right before Irene woke up so that when she did, she would be next to me. Sometimes Charles joined, and once Morte even sat on the end of the bed, watching her.

Then, I would have to leave. I would have to return back to the world below, go back to being the monstrous mobster that was waging war against the Rippers. We'd lost twenty men over the last couple of days, and today we would be wreaking havoc on the Rippers' Westside businesses.

The gloves were coming off. Jack was getting more and more restless. I could feel it. Rule #1 of cornering a vampire was to stab them with a wooden stake, but I wondered if ours was sharp enough.

I was uneasy too. Every moment that passed was another that I worried we would die, and that Irene would suffer. I clung to every moment with her like it would be the last, and hated that I knew Morte and Charles were thinking the same.

I wanted us to be happy. I wanted to be able to stay in our world in the clouds forever.

I had never wanted someone this way. The thought of her made my cock harden, and I'd lost track of how many times I'd knotted her. She was made for the three of us in every way.

A couple weeks ago, I would have sworn up and down that I would never look at a human the way I looked at her. But she reminded me of what I had lost over time, and being with her made me feel alive again.

I had always known that caring for someone was dangerous, but I hadn't realised how all consuming it would be. Charles and I, until recently, had always been able to keep a boundary between us. But now, with Irene involved, that had crumbled, and I found my heart being pulled in different directions.

I was supposed to lead the Freaks to victory, but all I could dream about was somehow escaping this mad world.

I looked out over London, watching as more buildings burned below. Sirens screamed into the sky, the setting sun casting a golden touch over everything bronze and silver in the city. Clouds hung low, and I wouldn't be surprised to find the city covered in a layer of white come tomorrow.

Charles and Morte were down there fighting, and I was moving every piece on our chessboard. I'd sent a group of men to the Southside, a group to the east, and then everyone else was in the west—which is where I was right now. I could see the docks and the blimps that were burning there.

I was supposed to be focused but I found myself still looking up. I couldn't see our blimp, couldn't see where we had Irene, but I still found myself looking for her.

“Boss!”

I turned to see Boris climbing up to the roof. I met him before he did something stupid, like fall off. “What?”

“There's a creature headed this way,” he said. “I think they're coming for you. They're moving fast, our men can't stop them.”

A growl left me and I nodded. “Take the men and head towards Charles and Morte. I will handle this.”

He pressed his lips together but I waved my hand.

“Go,” I growled. “I don’t care if you don’t agree. Go find Charles and let him know, and I will hold them off.”

Boris grunted his agreement and left me. I reached into my coat, pulling out a knife. I had many objects within my coat, but this was my easiest weapon.

Well, aside from a couple of the grenades.

An icy wind picked up, a chill running through me. My mechanical wing clicked as the sky began to darken, a black fog moving around me.

The sound of bells ringing was a dead giveaway, and I grit my teeth. I felt his presence and turned swiftly, swinging out my knife. A giggle followed, a mad one.

I turned again to meet a creature I had always hated— one we simply called Ace.

We stood on the slanted roof, the shingles threatening to loosen beneath our footing. A chimney puffed smoke into the air behind him, the last of the sun setting over us.

“Really?” I snarled. “It’s come to this? I remember a time we fought together.”

“James,” he purred, cocking his head unnaturally to the right. “It’s not like you to be sentimental. You’re the one that left us. Don’t you recall? Has the lamp light already gone to your pretty mothen head?”

I growled, glaring at him.

He wore a smiling mask painted like a mime and wore a jester’s hat with four bells, the fabric a worn-out red and yellow. He had a cloak with red and blue diamond shapes on the back, and wore tight pants with the same pattern that led into boots.

“*Ace*,” I bit out. “I rather not fight you.”

Another giggle, the bells jingling in unison. He moved closer, and I gripped my knife tighter.

“Jack isn’t happy, James,” he said, turning his head the other way. “Are we really going to burn London down over this fight?”

“If that’s what it takes,” I said. “Her era is over.”

“Far from it, old friend,” Ace said, another soft laugh. “Shall we do this the easy way?”

I shook my head, starting to move my other hand to reach within my cloak. Ace shook his head. His eyes began to glow red behind the masks, burning like gas lamps.

“James, James, James.” His head began to twist, bones crunching as it moved until his second face was looking at me.

This was his angry face.

That wasn’t good.

Fuck it. I reached into my coat right as I flung the knife, grabbing for a grenade as he twirled out of the blade’s way. He laughed like a maniac, his voice echoing around me as his body split into two— and then four.

I threw the grenade, taking off into the air. My wings pushed me towards the sky, but I felt a hand curl around my ankle— and yank me down with a force that sent me spiralling towards the ground.

“Fuck,” I growled, trying to twist in a way that would let me land on my feet.

Instead, I hit the asphalt on my back. My metal wing crunched, but I ignored it, rolling out of the way right as Ace leapt towards me. I kicked out, hitting him square in the mask. I heard it crack as I reached into my coat for another weapon.

“You fuckin’ cunt,” Ace snarled. His mask was now cracked in the centre. “I’m gonna kill you for that, James.”

We squared off, the road silent around us. The cold made our breaths come out in white puffs as we both growled, each

gripping a knife.

I needed something other than a knife. Ace had always been a better thrower than me. If he ever missed, it would be because he wanted to.

My metal wing wasn't working quite right, and I felt a new surge of rage. It was because of Jack and the Rippers that I had lost my wing. It was because of them that I had been forced to claw my way through the darkness, begging to see a glimpse of the light.

I hadn't wanted this life, but it was the one that had been forced on me. All because I was a monster, a creature that would frighten the poor humans.

I didn't care if all of London burned. I didn't care if the whole world turned to darkness or if the sun never rose again. The frost could turn everything to ice, the warmth could bleed away—I didn't care.

But, I did care about Irene.

I cared about Charles.

I even cared about Morte, despite how fucking confusing he was.

So I had to survive this.

A growl rumbled in my chest and I flung my blade, rolling right as Ace reciprocated the movement. His blade grazed my shoulder, piercing straight through my natural wing.

Pain burst through me, and I grit my teeth as I drew out a pistol—cocking it and firing.

Ace was quick, the bells of his hat jingling as he leapt into the air, always the acrobat. He landed on top of a brick fence, letting out a laugh.

“You can't win, James,” he called. “This is just a distraction, anyways.”

I fired again, the gun shot echoing around us. *Pop, pop, pop.*

Ace managed to escape every shot, and then leapt up onto another roof. He stared down at me, his head beginning to twist again to reveal a happy face.

He grinned down at me, a monstrous maniac.

Just a distraction.

“Distraction from what?” I snarled.

Ace giggled and then pointed up. He then turned and ran, disappearing from sight.

He’d left the fight.

A feeling of dread crept over, my heart beginning to pound in my chest. I looked up, seeing the belly of our blimp we’d called home the last few days.

Fear. It was an icy pick straight through my heart.

The blimp was coming down.

“Godsdamn it all to burning hell,” I sneered.

I let out a pained gasp, bringing my wing around so that I could see where he had stabbed. I yanked the knife free, flinging it to the ground. Blood was dripping quickly as he’d nicked a main vein, and it hurt like a motherfucker, but I would still be able to fly.

Even if I bled out, I had to get Irene to safety.

I grunted as I took off into the frigid air, flying as quickly as I could. The clouds of steam parted over the city as the blimp continued to descend, headed straight for the Thames. The sirens became louder, and I knew that all of London below had to be watching this.

Some of them might even see me— a monster dying to save a human.

I didn’t care anymore.

My lungs burned as I pushed myself faster. I landed on the skybridge, cursing under my breath as I ran to the door.

It was already kicked in.

“James!”

I turned, seeing Charles landing too. He ran towards me, his eyes wild.

“We’re fucking losing, mate,” he said.

“I know,” I said, wincing.

We both ran inside, my blood running cold.

“Irene!” I bellowed.

I already knew she wasn’t here.

The giant window was shattered, shards of glass sprayed over the entire room. The wind whipped everything around, the lights off and darkness chasing away the warmth she had brought to us.

“She’s gone,” Charles said.

His voice trembled and I turned, giving him a wild look. “We’ll find her.”

“She’s gone,” he repeated.

I grabbed his shoulders, shaking him. “We will get her back.”

“We left her alone even after we knew Morte had gone,” Charles whispered. “They fucking took her. We’ve been careless. We’ve been fools!”

“*Charles!*” I barked, slapping him hard across the face. Blood dripped onto the floor around us, my head spinning as I gripped his jaw. “I promise you,” I whispered. “I will turn this world to fucking ashes before harm comes to her. We will find her.”

“You’re bleeding,” Charles whispered, tears filling his eyes. “We’re all going to die.”

“We’re not,” I said, shaking my head. “You have to have faith, fairy.”

His eyes lit up and he leaned forward, brushing his lips over mine. It was a soft kiss, a quick one— but it was a reminder that we were still alive.

“Bond with me,” Charles whispered. “Now. If you do, then I can heal you faster. We can share our strengths, and we would be able to know where the other is at all times.”

“I didn’t want to rush—”

“James,” Charles growled. “I love you more than I hate you. Mate me.”

I didn’t wait for another word. I ripped back his shirt, and then yanked back my coat, exposing skin for both of us. I leaned forward, and so did he, sinking our fangs into each other’s shoulders.

His blood filled my mouth, and despite the gravity of our situation, my cock still hardened. We groaned against each other as the bond flickered to life, and I felt...

Everything.

I felt *him*. I felt his thoughts, his emotions, the fear of losing Irene a dark ball in his gut. He grunted and pressed his body closer to mine, the warmth of our blood chasing away the icy night.

We pulled our fangs back and I kissed him, our tongues meeting in a heated moment. He wound his arms around me and broke the kiss, his whisper muffled against the fluff around my neck as he spoke a spell.

I felt the healing, the pain chased away. My wing began to mend, and I gasped as I was put back together again.

“There,” Charles said. “We can fight again.”

I nodded, letting out a breath as I looked back at the room. I could see the city nearing, out the broken window.

“We’ll build another one day,” Charles said. “And we’ll make room for Irene.”

“Deal,” I said. “She belongs to us and us alone. Let’s go get our human back.”

CHAPTER 27

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MEMORIES OF MURDER



IRENE

THE LONDON BRIDGE STRETCHED ABOVE, a train rumbling as it crossed over. I could see the faces of passengers pressed against the glass as they stared out, looking at what I was trying to pretend wasn't happening. I felt like I was falling apart as I watched the blimp crash down to the river.

Tears blurred my vision and I looked away, wondering where James, Morte, and Charles were. Were they dead? Were they alive? I had no way of knowing.

The last few days, I'd found myself not wanting this meeting with Jack to happen more and more.

I should still hate them for all the things they had done. But over the last few days, they had become...

Loving. Kind. Nurturing. I would wake up in the mornings to freshly cooked food, snuggled between James and Charles, or sometimes resting against Morte. There seemed to be a silent agreement between all of us to enjoy it, because it felt so fragile.

Everything was breakable, including our hearts, and I knew that now more than ever.

Part of me hoped that they would come rescue me. That they would stop me from meeting Jack, but it was too late now.

As we'd taken that atrocious car ride with a dead body next to me, I'd realised that there were spies in the Freaks' organisation that no one was aware of.

Well, no one but me.

It made me angry for reasons I couldn't fathom. The idea that Henry had been betraying Morte, Charles, and James this entire time filled me with rage.

Still, I had come willingly, right? I hadn't put up a fight.

Pain twisted my tortured heart as I stood in the cold darkness and waited. This could be a trap. I could have just condemned myself to death.

I still didn't know if it was true. Had they tried to kill my sister? Morte's silence hadn't been promising earlier.

Was I even still angry if they had tried to?

Fuck, I was in too deep on this. The darkness inside of me had been pulled forth, and I couldn't do anything to hide from it now. I craved the same things that my monsters did.

They called me little dove, but had turned me into a demon.

"Irene!"

I turned and my knees almost buckled, a sob racking me. Florence ran towards me, her face filled with pure joy. I felt weak all of a sudden, a weight being lifted from my shoulders, but being replaced with an even greater one.

Still, I forced myself to run forward, throwing myself at her.

We both collapsed onto the ground, my heart pounding in my chest as we clung to each other.

"I thought you were dead," I whispered, tears streaming down my cheeks. "I thought," I choked on a sob, not even knowing what else to say.

"I thought you were too," Florence cried. "Oh, how I've missed you!"

I leaned back for a moment, gripping her shoulders and staring at her. She looked...fine.

She looked exactly as I'd left her, but there was no blood in her dark curls. No marks, no scratches, no bruises.

No signs that monsters had hurt her.

No George standing over her.

A chill worked down my spine, my stomach twisting. It was like nothing had changed with her. She grinned at me, her eyes creasing with happiness.

Florence cupped my face, gripping it a little harder than normal. I felt a wave of fear pass through me, a feeling I couldn't understand.

“Did they fuck you, Irene? Did those monsters hurt you?”

I recoiled back from her words, staring at her like she was a stranger.

Florence would never say something so crude.

Fuck.

This had been a trap.

I pushed back from her, scrambling to my feet. My heart pounded in my chest as I took a step back, staring at her.

“You're not Florence,” I whispered. I shook my head, running my fingers through my hair. “Why?” I growled. “Why is this happening?!”

My shout echoed around us, but was drowned out as another train passed overhead. It chugged over the tracks, the bridge trembling until it was gone.

“Because,” an unfamiliar voice said, filling the deafening silence. “Your grandfather stole the magic from a powerful monster, and put that magic into the automaton doves, Irene.”

I looked up, seeing a pair of glowing red eyes staring at me from the shadows. The figure stepped forward, and I knew that the woman I was looking at was the monster known as Jack.

She had long red hair that was pulled into a tight braid, crimson painted lips, and her pale skin was dusted with golden freckles. She was wearing boots, black pants, and a corset that was lined with knives and guns.

“Hello, love,” she said, grinning at me.

Her fangs were visible, even from here. Sharp and deadly.

That was the smile of a killer and someone who had beat me at the game I had foolishly decided to play.

I felt frozen in place, and then I looked back at the fake Florence. I glared, the rage jarring me.

“That’s not my sister,” I said, looking back at Jack. “And you’re a bitch.”

Florence cocked her head, standing and dusting the dirt off from her legs. “She figured it out too fast, Jack.”

“It’s okay,” Jack chuckled. “It was still a sweet reunion.”

My stomach twisted in horror as Florence began to deform and reform in front of me. Her face melted, her body snapping and crushing as she became a creature that was more wolf than man.

A naked one at that.

Jack waved her hand. “Go on. Clothe yourself and return to the others. We’re winning right now, but I’m sure they’re hunting this little dove down.”

The werewolf nodded and left, leaving me with the matriarch of the Rippers.

“Where’s Florence?” I bit out, wiping my tears away. Rage burned through me as I tried to choke down every emotion that I had just felt. “The *real* Florence.”

“Safe,” Jack said. “Not dead, despite the Freaks trying to murder her. But, we have them distracted at the moment. Enough for us to take a few minutes to talk, Irene.”

Jack closed the gap between us in the blink of an eye, moving in a blur. She now stood right in front of me, her face

close to mine. She breathed in my scent, and I felt icy fear trickle down my spine.

“Don’t worry,” Jack whispered. “I can’t kill you, even if I wanted to. The dove is attached to you, and will protect you if I tried. Didn’t you know that?”

“No,” I said, shaking my head.

“Oh? You don’t remember murdering ten of my men on the airship? You don’t remember slaughtering them?”

“I didn’t kill anyone,” I said, horrified.

“Yes you did,” Jack laughed. She grinned down at me, her fangs gleaming. “It doesn’t matter anyways. Those men were weak, and I don’t allow weakness in my world.”

I shook my head, taking a step back from her. “This was a mistake,” I snapped. “I can see that. I’m going back to—”

“You’re not going anywhere, sweetheart, until I tell you otherwise.”

I was silent, my heart pounding in my chest. I was terrified now, terrified that I had truly fucked up.

Maybe they *had* been trying to keep me safe.

They tried to kill Florence.

But she was alive, wasn’t she? Jack could have been lying. I knew a silver tongue when I saw one.

Jack laughed, her voice echoing around us. The other creature snickered too, and I shivered as it watched me.

“If I knew any better, I’d say that you have feelings for those bastards,” Jack sneered.

Unfortunately, I’d never been good at poker, and my face gave me away. Jack’s crimson eyes lit up, her laugh curling through me.

“Amazing!” she cackled, wiping away a tear of joy. “That will make this all the more fun, then. I have brought you here to help you, even though you might not believe it. I have Florence, alive and well and even unaware of what has been

going on. She's been living in a lush apartment in London, where she has been fed and treated well. Aside from the nasty cut on her head from when George attacked her, she has been fine. You, on the other hand... Well, I can hardly tell that you're related. I can't see inside your heart, but one look at you and I can see just how... tortured you are."

"Fuck you," I snarled.

Jack only smiled, flashing her fangs again. "You do like to fuck monsters, don't you? Is that why you have feelings for them?"

She leaned in, her lips hovering next to my ear.

"I had a taste of James once," she whispered. "He isn't too bad. Interesting equipment..."

I shoved her back, a streak of jealousy bursting through me. How *fucking* dare she?

Jack only laughed, grabbing my wrist and holding it tight. I gasped as pain burst up my arm and she twisted, holding it up to her fangs.

Her breath was warm against my skin, but she didn't bite. She only smiled, raising a perfect brow

"I have a way to free you from all of this, Irene. A way to break you out of your gilded cage, and even let you take your sister with you. All I need is the magic that's inside of you, the darkness that's dormant."

"I don't have magic!" I yelled, trying to yank free from her. She held me tight. "And I didn't murder your men. I just want my sister and I want to go home."

Jack hissed at me and then rolled her eyes. "No more games, Irene. I'm going to find out exactly what happened. I'm going to make you relive everything that you've blocked out. And I'm sorry hun, but this might burn a little."

She let out a low growl and sank her fangs into my wrist, and my mind was plunged into chilling darkness.

For a moment, I felt like I was drowning in a dark river, but then I started to resurface. I could hear things, see things,

smell things.

Back in New York City.

“*Whatever you do, don’t let the dove touch her,*” the dark voice said.

My body was moved. I cracked my eyes open, seeing the inside of an airship. I stared at the rivulets of the metal, my sight going in and out.

Focus, Irene. Jack’s voice floated through my mind, but then faded.

What was happening?

My thoughts felt sluggish as I was moved, my limbs bound together. A man leaned over me, and I recognized the face.

Henry.

He’s been following me the whole time. Working for Jack and lying to the Freaks. Traitor.

Darkness fell over me again, and I could feel the vampire in my head, pushing me towards something I didn’t want to see. Towards a memory I didn’t wish to remember. I pushed against her, but it didn’t matter.

My eyes opened again, and I saw a man looming over me. I kicked out, my heart pounding in my chest as I lived through the memory again.

“Feisty little bitch,” he snarled.

He backhanded me, pain rattling my skull.

“Leave me alone,” I croaked. “Leave me alone.”

“No,” he chuckled. “We don’t get new toys very often. And I have a whole crew that would like to play. We’ll even be nice.”

He’d cut open the ropes that had tied me, and even though I felt sluggish, I got to my feet. I was in a room surrounded by boxes.

The man lunged for me, and I was too slow to move out of the way. I screamed as we crashed back into one of the crates,

the wood snapping beneath us.

I felt shards pierce me, pain stabbing through my shoulders. I cried out as the man pinned me down, rage emanating from him.

“Stupid bitch,” he growled. “The Boss said we can’t kill you, but no one said we couldn’t fucking hurt you.”

He pulled a knife from his belt, holding the blade to my face. He turned my head to the side as tears slid down my cheeks. Something cold touched my fingers and I looked over, seeing the bronze wing of the family automaton dove.

Tears blurred my vision and I watched as a dark viscous liquid began to ooze out from the blades of the wings. I stared as it moved onto my hand, inching up my arm and then disappearing beneath me.

Pain radiated from my back again, a stabbing pain that made me scream. The man growled, but his words were cut off as a metal piece shot through his neck.

I gasped, watching as he fell off me, clutching at his neck.

I laid there, more blood pooling around me as the pain continued. A clicking noise started, drawing my gaze back to the lifeless dove.

More clicking, the subtle whirring of gears. I sucked in a breath, focusing on it so that I wouldn’t succumb to the pain.

A soft melody perked up. My eyes widened as the automaton dove began to sing after so many years.

I should die now.

The wood piercing me should bleed me out, but a dark warmth began to spread through me. The dove rose, and I watched in awe as the metal seemed to turn to liquid, sliding up my arm and moving to my back.

More pain, but it was soothed by a continuous warmth. I sucked in a breath, my heart pounding.

This wasn’t a dream. As much as I wanted to it be, it wasn’t.

The door to the room kicked open, a shout sounding. I couldn't lift my head, but I heard the footsteps as several men came in.

I barely made out their demands, but felt a boot in my ribs. I cried out, but the pain was again soothed by the warmth.

I hope they die.

My vision blurred, and I felt something click, burying itself inside of me.

Everything turned dark.

I heard the screams, though.

I felt the crunch of bones.

I murdered them.

My eyes flew open, and I was back to looking at the face of a vampire. My blood dripped from Jack's lips, and her eyes burned with hatred.

She let go of me, letting me fall to the ground. "So that's what happened," she said, rolling her eyes. "Hardly helpful that you didn't see everything, or that it's so buried your mind refuses to show me."

I felt sick. How many had I killed? I was hitting serial killer numbers and not even trying.

Jack sighed, giving me a sickening smile. "I have an offer for you, Irene. One that you won't refuse. Stand up."

I trembled as I forced my legs to stand, my mind spinning.

Did that mean that I was the killer, or was it this thing attached to me?

"I want to know how this works," I whispered.

"It's simple, really," Jack said. "Your great grandfather used the blood of a great monster to create these cursed devices. He hated monsters, and wanted his line to be able to defend themselves from us creatures. It was called to life by your blood, and latched onto you like a leech. The only thing is, old Peter didn't realise that he damned whoever was taken

by that. You're a human, but you have a darkness inside of you that has been dragged forth by that monstrous poison." Jack shrugged, checking her sharp nails. "No matter. I now know how to use you."

My breath was rattled and I wiped away more tears.

I was cursed.

Jack pulled a knife out and handed it to me. "I want you to bring the Freaks' hearts to me tomorrow night. You have twenty-four hours or your sister will die a very terrible death. I will send her head to you Sunday morning if you don't comply."

She tossed me the knife. I caught it, gripping it tight. "How do I know you aren't lying about my sister? You just tricked me, using one of your monsters to make me think it was really Florence."

Jack shrugged, a sly smile playing at her mouth. "You'll just have to take my word for it. Choose, your sister or your monsters."

For a moment, I thought about driving the knife it straight through her chest, but she smirked.

"Try it, and I'll send your pretty head to the Freaks instead, Irene."

"You can't," I said. "The monster would take over."

She backhanded me hard and I gasped, falling to the ground. My ears rang as she grabbed my hair, forcing me to look up at her.

"You don't even know how to use this power," she whispered. "You got lucky, you stupid bitch. The only reason you're still standing here is because somehow, you've become a weakness for James, Charles, and Morte. You know how I know? Because they're tearing up all of London looking for you right now."

I glared at her, ignoring the pain.

"Tomorrow night," she said. "Three bloody monster hearts. Or else Florence will be dead."

With that, she left me sitting there, disappearing into the dark.

I looked down at the knife, my hands trembling.

What did I do now?

I didn't know anymore.

I shoved the knife through one of the leather holsters at my waist right as a shout came from behind me.

I spun around, looking up to see Charles moving towards me. His silver hair was stained red with blood in some parts, and his expression was more serious than I'd ever seen him.

He looked haunted.

I could have run away, but I didn't. Instead, I ran up the river bank, throwing myself into his arms and burying my face against his chest. We sank to the ground, holding on to each other.

"Little dove," he whispered. "We thought we'd lost you."

His arms tightened around me, holding me close to him. I grabbed his face, pulling him in for a deep kiss. He groaned, his hands sliding down to my hips.

"I thought I wouldn't see you," I rasped, kissing him again.

"Fuck," Charles groaned. "I'm covered in blood and just fought through half of London, and yet my cock is harder than ever."

I nodded, swallowing back tears.

I want them.

I heard the whoosh of wings, and watched as James landed next to us. He slid his claws gently through my hair as I looked up at him.

He let out a heavy breath. "We need to hide," he said gently.

I nodded, looking past him. Henry and the other men that had brought me were long gone.

“Where’s Morte?” I asked, my anxiety growing. “Did he leave?”

James and Charles both frowned.

“He’s going to meet us,” James said. “We need to go, Charles. Follow our plan.”

Charles nodded and lifted me, pausing only to let me lean over and steal a kiss from James. He sank into me, pressing his forehead to mine.

“Be safe,” he whispered. “We’ll come back to you. We always will.”

“Please,” I whimpered as he drew back.

His blue eyes darkened as he looked back at the city. Blood stained one of his wings, his shoulders tensing.

“Go,” he said. “Morte and I will be home soon.”

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CHAPTER 28

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HATE



CHARLES

I CLOSED the door behind us and took a deep breath.

I'd made it to another hideaway, this one in a warehouse on the outskirts of London. It was in an area where monsters were more common than not, but they would know better than to come here.

Irene had yet to let go of me, and I could feel her trembling.

“Are you cold?” I asked, concerned.

She nodded, and I cursed. This place didn't have a bed, but it had blankets and I would find something to use as a pillow.

“Here,” I said, putting her down.

I slid off my shirt, wrapping it around her neck like a scarf. Drops of ice were beginning to melt into her violet hair and on her eyelashes, her cheeks rosy.

A little too rosy.

I tapped her nose. “Stay,” I said. “I'll be back.”

I left her standing there, stress making me feel like I was about to implode. I went through the room and grabbed every blanket I could find, along with a couple of Morte's coats—never mind if there was blood on them— and made a pile on the floor.

“It’s okay,” Irene said, pulling my shirt around her a little closer. “I’ll warm up.”

I went to her, and before she could argue, picked her up again and took her to the pile I’d made. I paused, feeling her clothes.

“They’re all a little damp,” I muttered, already beginning to undo her corset.

I cursed under my breath, my worry growing more intense. We’d left her alone— We’d been so caught up in everything, that we hadn’t done what we should have done.

I hadn’t protected her like I’d promised I would.

“I want to tell you what happened,” Irene said.

“Not until you’re naked and surrounded by blankets,” I said.

“And you too?” she asked, raising a brow.

“Woman,” I mumbled, my cock immediately springing to attention again. “You really enjoy driving me mad.”

“I think so,” she said.

I tossed her corset to the floor and then pulled the rest of her clothing free. I stripped quickly too before tackling her to the pile. She squealed as I pulled her close to me, bringing the blankets around us.

She giggled, burying her face against my neck. I held her close, listening to the sound of her heartbeat. I breathed in her scent, and frowned. It was familiar, but not.

“Who took you?” I whispered.

“A bird monster, and then he dropped me onto a street where three men were. One of them was Henry. He’s been working for Jack. He was there from the beginning...”

Fuck. Right under our noses.

Anger made me grit my teeth.

Irene drew back, frowning. “Who bit you?”

“Who do you think?” I murmured.

“Oh? Does that mean the two of you made up?”

Despite how deeply upsetting today had been, and how concerned I was for her, I smiled. “Yes, we made up. Well. Perhaps it was a truce of sorts. We formed a mating bond,” I said.

Irene’s eyes widened in surprise. “That’s a big deal,” she whispered.

“It is,” I said, warmth spreading through me now.

Neither one of us had ever wanted to rush such a thing, but I was thankful for it. We were stronger together than apart, and *feeling* him with me comforted me. We’d been able to find Irene much faster because we’d been able to lean on each other.

“Come closer, little dove.”

Irene relaxed again, snuggling close.

Fuck, I’d really fallen hard, hadn’t I?

What if this was our last night alive?

The thought sent a bolt of fear through me, and I found myself holding her as tight as possible. I pressed my nose into her soft hair, breathing her scent in and ignoring the lingering one of traitors.

“What happened?” she whispered.

“You first,” I mumbled.

“I should wait for James and Morte,” she said softly. “It’s ... it’s a lot.”

I sighed, not liking the sound of that, but nodded. It would be easier for her to tell all of us together, anyways.

I wondered how Morte would feel. I had never been able to read him, but when he’d been briefed on what was happening, I wondered if he was going to turn all of London to ashes. His rage had made everyone around him shrink.

“We led an attack on the Westside but Jack hit us hard. We’ve lost a lot of men the last few days, and definitely felt it

tonight. She's closing in on us, and I don't know...I don't know what's going to happen, my love."

Irene propped herself up, frowning at me. "Why have the three of you been with me if you've had men dying?"

"We've been trading off," I said. "James and I would go out, and then Morte. As you noticed, I'm sure."

Irene shook her head, plopping back down. "Why?"

"You know why," I whispered, running my hand up her body.

"No," she said. "I mean why. Why have all three of you been doing this? Why do you want me? Why have you started to..."

She drifted off, her voice hitching.

"Because we care about you," I whispered, my voice barely audible. I held my breath, the words feeling strange on my tongue. "We've come to care for you. I've started to fall in ___"

The door to the warehouse swung open, interrupting us. Morte and James piled in, a combination of growls and curses.

Irene immediately rolled out of our nest, taking a blanket with her that she pulled around herself, and ran towards Morte. James and I snorted as she jumped into his arms, and the most feared monster in all of London held her close to him.

"You're alive," Morte said softly.

"So are you," Irene cried.

I looked up at James, meeting his gaze. His eyes were burning—and I could feel what he did. A mixture of fear and worry, all stifled by the lust and...

Something a lot deeper.

Morte set Irene down, cupping her face with a gloved hand. "I'm sorry I left," he said.

Now, the world really *was* ending. To hear Morte apologise for something...

Maybe the dove did make monsters weak.

Irene nodded and then went to James, kissing him. He ruffled her hair again with his claws and then sighed.

“I have to talk to all three of you,” Irene said, pulling back from him. She pulled the blanket tighter around herself. “It’s important.”

We all growled, but no one disagreed with her as she came back to the blankets and sat down next to me. I sat up, frowning as Morte and James came closer.

“I have a lot to explain,” she said. “And I need you all three to promise you won’t interrupt until I’m done.”

“So demanding,” Morte muttered.

“She really is,” I said, curious.

James raised a brow expectantly. “Go on.”

Irene’s shoulders tensed. Even though I didn’t have a bond with her yet, I could still feel her anxiety.

“I met Jack, and she talked to me,” Irene said.

All three of us growled, the room filling with our growing rage. The shadows around Morte snapped to life, and James became even more tense.

Irene held up a hand. “Jack also sent me a note a week ago through Henry, the driver. He’s been working with the Rippers since the beginning of all of this and I think he was supposed to keep tabs on me.”

“*A dead man*,” Morte hissed. “I’m going to fucking gut him.”

“When I met with Jack, two things happened. One, she bit me and somehow forced me to relive what happened when I was first taken on the blimp. Remember how you said everyone on the ship was dead, aside from the captain?”

“Yes,” James whispered, his jaw stiffening. “And Jack can do that. She’s a vampire, but has some other abilities as well. She’s very manipulative.”

“She is,” I agreed, pressing my lips together.

I didn’t like how any of this sounded.

“When they took me, there was a man that came and... attacked me.”

The three of us growled again, and I clenched my hands into fists, wishing I could track down every bastard on that ship.

It was a good thing they were dead.

“He threw me against a wooden box, and the shards pierced me. They went through my shoulders and back. The dove, the one that everyone was after, was in the box. My great grandfather made it long ago, and according to Jack, used the magic of a monster to do so. The man that attacked me started to choke me, and I wished he would die. He did die.”

We all leaned in a little closer, the weight of her words drawing me in.

“...and then the dove started to sing. And it fused to me as other men came into the room. That’s where everything... I stopped seeing things, but could hear them. I killed all of them.” Her voice ended in a whisper, her shoulders trembling. “I killed every single one of them.”

“And then the ship landed,” I said.

Irene nodded, swallowing hard. “And then they were fighting something else. You, I’m assuming,” she said, looking at James.

James nodded silently, studying her. “What else, little dove?”

“She has my sister,” Irene said. “She said you tried to kill her.”

Silence settled over the three of us, and I felt the pit in James’ gut. He had never been a liar, and I hoped he wouldn’t start today, but this...

We'd been killers for so long, that a lot of our actions were second nature. But I had known Irene wouldn't react well if she found out.

"I thought I did kill her," James said, his voice soft.

Irene was silent, but I could feel the anger radiating from her. "Why would you do that after the deal we made? You promised you would help me, in exchange for everything that I've done. I've let you hurt me, touch me, *fuck* me. And you broke your promise. All of you did."

"I did," James said, letting out a sigh. "I don't have an excuse, Irene. I tried to kill her. I set the warehouse on fire, moved all of the pieces into place. I tried to make sure we were the only ones with the dove."

"I said I would help," Irene whispered, bringing the blanket around her as if it was armour. "I agreed to help you however I could. And you fucked me over."

James was silent, his expression becoming unreadable. "But she's alive."

"She is," Irene sniffed. "Supposedly. According to another monster who just wants to use me the same way all of you do."

"We've changed," I said hoarsely.

She ignored me, her coldness slicing through me. "And now, I either cut out your hearts and kill the three of you, or her head will be sent to me on Sunday. And I would too," she whispered. "I fucking would. The three of you have turned me into a fucking monster. A murderer. And even worse, you've made me *care* about you. I hate you. I hate you so fucking much, and yet I can't get away."

"Irene," I whispered, reaching for her.

She moved out of the way, glaring at me. "You're no better. You said you would protect me, and you haven't done that."

Fuck. Her words were like knives through me.

“Morte left me earlier the moment we felt anything other than hate,” she snapped, giving him a scathing look. “And James— you’re a fucking liar. I know you hate humans, but I at least thought you had some honour.”

Silence settled over us, and she let out a hitched breath, blinking back tears.

“I have nothing I can say,” James said. “We are monsters, Irene. When we first took you, we had every intention of killing you. Slowly. Torturing you until we got the information we needed. It was supposed to be how it always is. But that’s not what happened.”

She nodded, a tear sliding down her cheek. I winced, wanting nothing more than to comfort her.

She had no idea what she had done to us. She had no idea that the three of us, despite all of the evil that had consumed us relentlessly our entire lives, had completely fallen for her. I would give anything and everything to show her that.

Morte leaned forward, tilting his head to the side. “Irene,” he said. “Look at me. Please.”

“No,” she sniffed. “I don’t want to look at any of you.”

“*S’il vous plaît, marionnette.*”

Irene didn’t move for a moment, but then slowly turned her head. “What?”

“If you wish to take my heart to Jack, then you can have it. It’s yours,” Morte said. “For all of the things I have done to you, I will not ask for forgiveness. I enjoyed it all. I am a monster, a villain, a creature that belongs in the very pits of hell. I do not feel sorry for the pain I have caused you, only that I didn’t cause you happiness too. If you wish to cut out my heart, it would please me that your hands would be the one to wield the knife.”

“How the fuck am I supposed to compete with that?” James muttered.

I couldn’t help but laugh, even though it was humourless.

Morte, as mad as he was, had a heart. One he'd just given to our Irene.

Irene stared at him, her eyes softening. "I don't want to cut out your heart, Morte," she whispered.

"Then what do you want?" I asked. "What can we do, little dove? We are yours."

"I want to kill Jack," Irene whispered. "I want to rescue Florence and get her home. And then I want to rule London at your side."

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CHAPTER 29

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BEGGARS



IRENE

MY WORDS SETTLED over the three of them, and I knew it wasn't what they had expected. It wasn't what I had either, but it felt right.

They'd wanted to break me, and they had, but that wouldn't stop me from being the fucking goddess of London's monsters.

"You want to stay?" Charles whispered.

"Yes," I said. "Despite all the shit the three of you have put me through. I just want to see that Florence is safe. But no. I've changed. I can't go back now. If a man hit on me, all I'd think about is Morte stabbing him."

"That's not all that would happen to him," Morte said.

That brought out a couple of dry chuckles.

All three of them watched me, their eyes narrowing. Each of them had their telling signs— the twitch of James' antennae, the way Morte tilted his head and clenched his hands, and the hum that was always lodged in Charles' throat.

"If we gave you the chance to leave, you wouldn't take it?" James asked.

"I don't want you to give me the *chance* to leave," I said. "I want to know I can always leave, and for you to know that I'm choosing to stay."

“We’d have to survive first,” Morte said. “Jack has us pinned down.”

“And now she’s expecting Irene to bring her our hearts,” James said.

“Or she’s not, and is betting on Irene telling us,” Charles sighed.

I met his dark gaze, trying not to stare too long. He was still naked in the pile of blankets he’d made, and I wanted to be next to him in the warmth, but made myself stay put. I pulled the blanket around me tighter, ignoring the chill in this warehouse.

“I have an idea,” I said. “Although, I don’t know Jack, so the three of you will have to tell me if you think it’ll work.”

“Well, of course we would,” James said, crossing his arms.

I fought off a little smile. He didn’t like it when his leadership was being upstaged.

“If we can get some fake hearts and make it seem like the three of you are dead, I can take them to Jack. While I have her distracted, the three of you can attack. I can get Florence out, the three of you can kill Jack, and then we can live happily ever after until death do us part.”

James snorted, and then pressed his lips together. “I would worry about you, little dove. Jack is smart and she doesn’t like to be fooled. The moment she realises that you have tricked her, she will attack you or your sister. Not to mention, the warehouse where Jack is will have several other creatures around. Some of them are powerful.”

“I thought Morte was the best?”

“He is,” James and Charles both said.

“I am,” Morte said. “But it’s still risky for you. I cannot be in two places in once, unlike other creatures. Such as Ace.”

James let out a little growl. “He fucked up my wing today, so if anything, I will take care of him.”

“He’s very skilled with knives,” Morte muttered.

“Yes, I know,” James sighed.

I felt a little smile creep up again. Mostly, because this felt so natural.

Hearing the three of them go back and forth with their thoughts, I could see why they all worked well together.

“I don’t like it,” James mumbled.

“I can’t think of another way,” Charles said. “If Irene shows up empty handed, Jack will act without mercy.”

“I don’t think she can kill me,” I said.

All three of them looked at me again.

I bit my lower lip, thinking back to the memories that had now resurfaced. It was annoying because Jack had been right — I didn’t know how to control the dove that was fused to me. But, I was certain it would at least keep me alive. Right?

“I don’t know exactly how this works,” I said. “But I don’t think Jack can kill me. I think the dove would act. I would maybe black out again. Who knows.”

“I don’t like the metal on you,” Morte said. “Or the dark magic I feel around it. But if that is true, then the three of us could at least focus on doing what we do best.”

“Which is killing and causing problems,” Charles chuckled.

“We have until tomorrow evening,” James said, giving me a hungry look.

I raised a brow. “Don’t look at me like that.”

“But what if this is our last night alive? What if we lose?” he asked.

“I thought Charles was the dramatic one,” I teased.

James barked out a laugh, and Morte snorted. Charles rolled his eyes, pretending to faint into the blankets.

“I will die, because Irene has left me cold in this bed,” Charles sighed.

“Because I’m mad at you,” I said, sticking my tongue out at him.

“Oh come on, little dove,” he said, his voice becoming seductive. I felt a chill run through me, and couldn’t ignore the throb in my pussy. “Let me make it up to you. How can I?”

“By kneeling in front of me,” I said. “And grovelling. Begging me to let you touch me. All three of you. That’s how.”

Silence yet again, but this time it was apparent the way Charles’ cock had hardened. A low growl left Morte.

“I don’t beg, little marionette,” he said.

“You do today.”

He let out a string of curses in French, and I could feel his piercing gaze behind his plague doctor mask.

Charles sighed. “I will go first, then, but that means my cock gets to go inside of you first.”

I raised a brow as he rolled to his knees in front of me, lowering his head.

Oh yes.

I could enjoy being a queen over monsters.

“Stop, you’re going to give her a new kink,” James muttered.

“It’s too late,” I teased, letting the blanket fall to the floor.

All three of them sucked in breaths, and Charles let out a helpless groan.

“No touching,” I said, even though he was so close that we might as well have been. My pussy was right in front of his face, and I could feel his warm breath against my skin. “Beg,” I whispered.

He was still for a moment and then he lowered himself more. “I’m sorry,” he whispered. “I’m sorry that I’ve failed you. I promise that even if tonight is our last night, that I will make it up to you.”

“I didn’t ask for an apology,” I said. “I asked for you to beg. If this is how you beg, then no wonder James has been irritated.”

That made James gasp, and sent a thrill of power through me. Who was I? What were these words coming out of my mouth?

Fuck.

I was enjoying this too much.

“Please, little dove,” Charles whispered. “Please let me touch you. Let me taste you. I’m desperate for you.”

Heat bloomed in my cheeks, and I slid my hand down to my pussy.

Morte cursed again in French, stepping closer. I could see the bulge under his dark cloak.

My gaze moved over to James. He was frozen in place, his eyes moving back and forth between his mate and me.

His cock was also very, very hard.

I wasn’t sure how I was going to handle all three of them, but I would soon find out.

“Are you not going to kneel for me?” I asked James.

I slid my fingers over my clit, feeling how slick I was. I let out the slightest moan, and the sound had a ripple effect over the three fierce monsters.

“Kneel and beg, James,” I said. “You owe me after trying to kill my sister and lying to me.”

“Fuck,” he breathed. “Only for you, Irene.”

James pulled off his long coat, followed by the rest of his clothes. I watched him strip, all while completely aware of Charles who was still on his knees in front of me.

James stepped next to Charles and then fell to his knees, looking up at me. They were both tall, which made it almost amusing for me to stand over them like this.

His bright blue eyes pleaded, his lips parting on breathless words. "Please let me touch you," he said. "I know I'm not worthy of you, little dove. But I need you. I would give you everything that you asked for, even if it were the entire world. I'm begging you to let me worship you."

I held his gaze for a few more moments, swallowing hard. I was so wet now, the tension in the room rising more and more.

I parted my legs a little further, enjoying the cacophony of growls.

"Morte," I said, looking up at him.

Morte growled, his frustration clear. "I don't beg, marionette. I already promised you my heart."

"You forced me to become a murderer, tied me up and fucked me in my sleep, and then left me to be taken by the enemy. Get on your knees and beg me, Morte."

Fuck, maybe that was a little too far. But, I held my head high, swirling my finger over my clit with light gasps between words.

"You really want me to beg you, marionette?" Morte whispered.

He lifted a gloved hand, unbuttoning his long dark cloak.

"I will punish you later for it," he said, his voice becoming ominous. "I'll make you scream and cry my name and beg me ten times over."

"I don't see how I'd lose in that situation."

He snorted, letting his cloak fall to the floor. He stripped off the rest of his clothing, his smoky tentacles whipping around him in clear agitation.

"Mask off," I whispered.

Charles and James both tensed, but I ignored them.

"If I take my mask off, then I'm going to fit all three of our cocks inside of you, and you can crawl to Jack tomorrow."

“Deal,” I said. “Mask off.”

Morte stood motionless for a moment, his cock hard and throbbing. He gripped the nose of the plague mask and pulled it back, tossing the black mask to the floor.

James and Charles both gasped, and I basked in the respect.

Fucking hell, I deserved this after everything they put me through.

Morte was smiling, and one of the stitches on his face had split. His dark hair blended in with the shadows that bled from him, and he came forward, kneeling down right behind Charles and James.

“*Marionette*,” he said reverently. “Let me devour you. Please. I have never wanted something more in my entire existence. I crave you. I need you.”

I held his gaze, raising a brow.

He narrowed his eyes. “Please,” he said again.

“Perhaps,” I said. “I think I’d like to be devoured first, and then maybe forgive you.”

“I think we can arrange that,” James said. He turned his head, looking at Morte. “Fuck,” he mumbled. “Morte, we’ve never done anything together like this.”

“I’ve seen you and Charles fuck plenty of times, this is not much different,” Morte said dismissively.

Charles shook his head, grinning with his sharp teeth. “Of course. Hmm... we already agreed we’d share you. I’m okay with this.”

“As am I,” James said.

“As am I, but I’m in control,” Morte said. “James can take back over tomorrow.”

James let out a low growl. “I don’t take commands.”

“Then we work the sluts together.”

James turned over the idea in his mind and then nodded.

A thrill ran through me, my breath hitching as I realised fully what was about to happen.

Were they going to all fuck me together?

Fuck.

My pussy pulsed, heat already running through me.

“Very well,” James said, regarding Morte with interest. “We’re all stronger together, right? I want us all to mate her.”

Morte nodded, his bright green eyes glinting with madness. “I want us all to mate her too.”

All three of them looked at me now, and I felt my heart skip a beat.

I took a step back, but Charles’ hand ran up the back of my leg, gripping me before I could run. He let out a low chuckle, followed by a devious hum as he kept me in place.

“Make her cum, fairy,” James said to Charles.

Charles scooped me up, rolling me back down onto the blankets. I groaned as our lips met, his body pinning me down as his fingers slid down lower.

He circled my clit, our tongues dancing as pleasure burned through me. I craved his touch, ached for every kiss.

I needed my monsters as much as they needed me.

“Fuck,” I gasped as he touched me.

I arched against him, my heart pounding and blood rushing. He kissed down my body until his tongue replaced his fingers circling my clit, drawing a sharp cry from me.

“Music to my ears,” James said, staring down at me.

It was intense being watched like this. My eyes fluttered as another gasp was torn from me. Morte and James stood over the two of us, watching as Charles drove me closer and closer to the edge.

Charles plunged his tongue inside of me, and I screamed. I gripped the blankets beneath us, my vision blurring as he kept going.

“That’s right, marionette,” Morte said, his voice dark and gruff. “Cum for us and get your pussy nice and wet. We want to fill you up with our cocks.”

The vision of what was to come was what sent me over the edge. I cried out as my orgasm crashed into me, a rush moving through my body in glorious waves.

Charles’ tongue kept lapping at me as I quivered, my breaths relaxing as the daze settled in.

Of course, they wouldn’t let me stay in that zone for long.

“Turn her over,” Morte growled. “I want her on all fours.”

“Yes, Sir,” Charles said, smirking as he rolled me over.

My muscles trembled as I was propped up on all fours, the after effects of the orgasm still lingering as Morte knelt in front of me. One of his shadowy tentacles slid over my body and I moaned as it wrapped around my neck, squeezing.

“Open up, *marionette*,” he said.

The moment I parted my lips, Morte slid his cock in my mouth. The ridges ran over my tongue, and I sucked in a last breath before he cut it off. I moaned around his cock, the head hitting the back of my throat. He slid his fingers into my hair, gripping me as he gave a light thrust.

“Get under her,” James huffed.

I felt Charles slide under me, and then lift me so that I was now straddling him. Morte pulled back for a moment and I dragged in air, letting out a helpless moan.

“More,” I gasped.

“You’re such a needy slut,” Morte growled. “You need every cock, don’t you, *marionette*?”

The tentacle around my neck loosened right as Charles sank his teeth into my breast. The pain was piercing, but I didn’t have a moment to react before Morte thrust his cock back into my mouth.

I felt James slap my ass, and I moaned in reaction.

“You can spank her more than that,” Morte snarled. “She can fucking take it. She just had you on your fucking knees begging like a whore. Remind her who she belongs to.”

James growled, his claws raking down my back. Tears began to roll down my cheeks as Morte thrust harder, pumping in and out of my mouth.

The pain turned me on more than I knew how to say. Between him fucking my throat, Charles sucking blood from my breasts, and James raking his claws over me— I felt myself falling further and further down the rabbit hole of being used.

And I fucking loved it.

James pushed my ass down, repositioning me ever so slightly. I grunted as I felt the heads of Charles’ cock against me, followed by James.

“You’re dripping,” James said. “Does this turn you on, little dove? Being fucked like this by us?”

Morte dragged his cock back, allowing me to gulp down air. Saliva rolled down my chin, a groan leaving me.

“Yes,” I rasped. “I love the pain, it makes me wet.”

Charles groaned. “Little dove, we’re going to break you,” he breathed, his hot tongue lapping against the fresh bite marks.

Morte and James both growled. Morte cupped my face, forcing me to look up at him.

I felt like I was looking at my entire world. My monster, my creature, my demon.

“I want to hear you scream as they shove their cocks inside you,” he whispered.

His devilish words sent a thrill through me. James gripped my hips, and Charles groaned beneath me. Morte let go of my head, allowing me to look down right as James’ cock wrapped around Charles’. They positioned me, the heads of both pressing against my entrance.

A long moan left me as I expected them to ease in, but no.

James yanked my hips back, forcing me down on the entirety of their cocks. I screamed, my pussy stretching wide as they filled me with every unforgiving inch.

Morte grabbed my face, his fingertips squeezing against my cheeks as tears rolled down them. He laughed, his gaze filled with wild joy.

“You’re too pretty when you cry, *marionette*. Now suck my fucking cock. *Prends-le comme une gentille fille*.” I knew enough French to know he’d told me to take it like a good girl.

I opened my mouth for him, even as another scream left me. It was muffled as his cock filled me again. James and Charles thrust up, and I felt James’ knot against me before they pulled me up and then down again.

I gagged around Morte’s cock and he growled, the tentacle around my neck tightening. He thrust deeper even as I struggled, letting out a snarl.

“Choke on it, *marionette*, I don’t give a fuck. You’re taking this cock deeper.”

I choked around him. Panic set in for a moment, but then he thrust deeper and waited.

“Breathe,” Charles said softly, his groan distracting me. “Breathe, little dove. You’ve taken his cock before.”

Morte chuckled. “Yes, listen to the fairy.”

I relaxed, realising that the three of them were waiting for me. My throat relaxed, and I let out a soft moan.

“Good girl,” Charles said. I felt his hot mouth kissing my body as he and James began to fuck me again. “You’re doing great for us.”

“No, she’s not,” Morte growled. “She can do better.”

Their words sent me in a tailspin, the praise and degradation working together to pull me closer to pleasure.

“Harder,” Morte growled to James and Charles.

They listened. I grunted as they began to fuck me harder, the sound of our skin slapping against each other echoing around us. They both groaned in pleasure as they took me, and then I felt James' cock start to vibrate.

Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

I felt something rising up in me I'd never felt before, and lifted my hand, tapping Morte. He pulled back, letting me breathe.

"I feel like I'm going to pee," I cried. "I don't know what this feeling is, it's like—"

I let out a scream as Charles began to circle my clit, the two of them still pounding into my fiercely.

"She's going to squirt," Charles said.

I didn't even know what that meant, but I screamed again as an orgasm crashed into me. I felt fluid come with it, and Charles moaned as it dripped over him.

"Fuck," James growled.

All three of them groaned, and it wasn't in disgust like I expected. Humiliation made hot tears stream down my cheeks, but Charles forced me to look down at him, cupping my face.

"It's normal, little dove," he said, stealing a kiss. "It can happen when you cum. Nothing to cry about. It's not piss."

I breathed out a sigh of relief, my head still spinning. "I didn't know," I gasped.

"Do you feel good?" James asked.

"Yes," I whispered, my cheeks blazing hot.

"Then don't worry about it," Morte said. "If anything, do it again. Charles is into it."

"True," Charles said, grinning as he kissed me again. He leaned up, whispering in my ear. "Are you going to take our cocks together, little dove?"

"Yes," I whimpered.

I grunted as the vibrations began to intensify, Charles and James taking me in a brutal rhythm. Morte moved back, rising over us before going around. I felt him step over me, and then felt his fingers slide over my ass.

I squeaked, planting my hands firmly against the blankets beneath us. I looked down at Charles, holding his dark gaze as I felt the head of Morte's cock press against my ass.

"Morte," I moaned, looking back over my shoulder.

Seeing him and James behind me like this made my pussy clench, which then made James and Charles groan. Morte let out a heated breath, tentacles wrapping around the three of us as he slowly began to push inside of me.

"*Fuck*," we all moaned together.

I felt so full. All three of their cocks were inside of me now, and I felt like every part of me had been given to them. One of the dark tentacles slid up my body, up my neck and then to my lips.

I opened my mouth, already knowing what Morte wanted.

He let out a dark hiss, the tentacle pushing in.

The three of them began to fuck me, Morte pumping into me right as James and Charles would pull free. I was their human fuck toy, and I loved it.

"I'm going to cum," Charles gasped. "Fuck, I'm so fucking close."

The tentacle in my mouth pulled out, a growl escaping Morte.

"Mate," James groaned. "Mate her as you cum."

I looked down at Charles and he leaned up, kissing me fully as a moan left him.

"Do you want this?" He whispered.

"Yes," I whimpered.

He nodded, his breath hitching. "Bite me, little dove. Wherever you wish. Mark me as yours. I belong to you."

It felt natural, even though it was barbaric in a way. I leaned down, not hesitating to sink my teeth into the softest part of his neck.

I felt his fangs find me too, and then an explosion of... *everything*.

He groaned as he came, and I groaned as his blood filled my mouth with a sweet metallic taste and my heart began to pound in my ears. I could feel him, could feel something snapping to life in my chest. It was like someone had created a telephone line between our souls, and I could feel the tremors of his emotions, wants, and needs.

Pleasure rushed through me— a mixture of his and my own.

Could he feel me this way too?

I pulled back, gasping as his hot cum filled me. His release was my own in a way, and I stared in wonder as I realised that I was now mated to a monster.

To my monster.

“I love you,” he said breathlessly, relaxing beneath me. “Fucking hell. I love you so much, little dove.”

“I love you too,” I whispered.

James and Charles pulled free, but then James thrust back inside of me. I cried out as Morte pulled out, his tentacles never leaving me.

James wrapped his arms around me, pulling me back so that I was now seated in his lap. He turned me around so that I straddled him, his wings wrapping around us.

Morte stood back, still stroking his cock as he watched over us. “Mate her,” Morte growled.

James nodded, letting out a groan as he began to lift me up and down on his cock. His knot pressed against me as I wrapped my arms around him, our lips locking in a kiss. His tongue thrust down my throat, and I moaned around him.

He pumped harder, until his knot finally pushed inside of me. He broke our kiss with a growl, and I knew what he wanted.

I leaned down, biting him just like I had Charles. He gasped as his hot cum began to fill me, and then his fangs sank into my shoulder as well.

The mating bond snapped into place as his knot swelled within me, keeping every hot drop of cum inside of me. I rocked against him as he filled me, my muscles coiled tight around him.

He pulled his fangs free as I pulled my own mouth back, blood dripping from our lips.

“Little dove,” he breathed. “I can feel you.”

I felt Charles too, and even the connection that they shared. Tears filled my eyes and I looked back at Charles. He was watching us with such happiness, his expression one I never wished to forget.

I was now fully mated to two monsters, but I still had one more that I wanted.

CHAPTER 30

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SHADOWS



MORTE

I WAITED UNTIL JAMES' knot pulled free of Irene, and watched as his cum dripped out of her. I had never been a tender being, but watching the way her, Charles, and James interacted melted me just a bit.

I had never wanted either one of them in that way, but now I was curious. I'd felt the vibrations of James' cock while fucking Irene's ass, and well...

It had felt good.

"Irene," I said softly.

She looked over at me, her eyes lighting up. She was already thoroughly used, her lips swollen and body covered in *us*. Her violet hair was mussed, scratch marks lining her hips.

Irene slowly slid from underneath James and I held my breath as she crawled to me. I raised a brow as she stopped in front of me on her knees, looking up at me.

"Are you going to mate me?" she whispered.

"Yes, marionette," I said without hesitation.

I had hated humans for so long, had refused to even touch them without gloves until now. But being with Irene had changed everything.

I wanted her.

I needed her.

She had infected my heart, working her way into every pore of my dark soul.

“I want you to cum inside me first,” she whispered.

“I know you do,” I said, not even hiding my smile.

I pushed her back onto the blankets, crawling over her to pin her beneath me. I hadn't expected gentleness to overcome me, but I wanted to take in every moment with her.

I wasn't surprised to hear a soft moan, and we both looked over to see James had pinned Charles down too.

“Fuck,” Irene whispered, her cheeks flushing all over again.

“You like watching,” I said.

She nodded, biting her lower lip. “I just...I can feel them through the bonds.”

James rolled Charles closer to us, positioning him so that he was opposite to Irene, their heads almost touching. I smirked, raising a brow at James.

“I want to watch,” James said unapologetically. “And now she can listen to her mate get fucked by me.”

“I have no objections,” I said.

Charles let out a whimper, which was cute. Irene arched back for a moment to look at them and then settled back beneath me, her cheeks now much redder than before.

I leaned down, kissing over her body. My tentacles began to bind her, wrapping around her as her breath hitched.

The scent of her arousal drove me crazy. I ran my tongue around the bite marks, sliding one of my tentacles between her legs.

“Morte,” she gasped. “Oh gods.”

The softness was working to my advantage. I slowly slid the tentacle inside of her, her long gasp rewarding. I moved

back, pushing the head of my cock against her opening as well.

I slid inside her with a dark growl, feeling the primal side of me emerge. She was a hot vice pulsing around my cock, her body perfect for me.

“You feel so good,” she moaned.

“So do you,” I said. “You take my cock well, little marionette.”

She let out a breath, reaching up to cup my jaw and bring me in close for a kiss. She groaned as I filled her with my cock, our lips meeting.

She tasted like James and Charles. She tasted like me.

She was one of us.

I began to thrust into her hard but slow, enjoying every stroke. Each one ended on her yelp or moan, her legs wrapping around my waist as I took her.

Charles let out a low growl, their sounds of pleasure mirroring ours. It only made me harder, and I found myself wondering how the fuck I’d gone so long without pleasure.

I looked down at Irene, seeing the life I wanted. Seeing the future I never thought I could have.

“I love you,” she gasped. “I know it scares you. I know...” Her words faded on a sharp moan as my tentacle rubbed over the spot inside of her, the one that had her arching beneath me.

“I ran away,” I grunted, thrusting my cock deeper. “I ran away earlier, and it does scare me. But you are it for me,” I said.

Pleasure curled through me, my control slipping as I drove inside of her again.

“Irene,” I growled. “I’m going to mate you.”

“Please,” she cried.

All of the darkness within me rose up, consuming her completely. I leaned down, choosing to sink my teeth into her

breast as my mating mark. She cried out, riding the wave of ecstasy. I pulled my mouth away from my mark, and pulled my cock out of her. Before she could protest, I leaned in front of her with my cock positioned near her mouth.

I needed the mark on my cock.

She parted her lips, but I could see the momentary confusion in her eyes.

“I want you to mark my cock with your teeth, *marionette*. I want your mating mark on the part of me that has been mine since the beginning, not stolen flesh. I want you to brand me with our bond. I want it to be reminder that every time you wrap your pretty lips around it or it’s buried deep inside you, that you are *mine*.”

She hesitated for a moment, but at the fire burning in my eyes, she sank her little teeth in near the head of my cock, and I felt a rush of power.

A rush of sensations.

A rush of need, of pleasure.

It was like someone had dipped my grey world in colour, everything coming to life inside of me. I pulled away on a gasp as our bond came to life, tying us together for eternity. She continued to suckle my cock, taking my blood before letting go.

She reached up, wrapping her arms around me, and I slid my bloody cock into her pussy. Her pussy squeezed me as she came again, and I groaned as hot cum shot inside of her. I held her to me, rocking back and forth as I filled her up with every drop, breeding her as my mate.

Mate. She’s my mate.

I pressed my forehead to hers, letting out a helpless sound. “Irene,” I whispered. “You’ve made me weak, *marionette*.”

She smiled against me, holding me tight. “You’re mine,” she whispered. “All three of you are.”

I relaxed on top of her, looking up right as James and Charles finished together.

Irene hummed in amusement, running her hands over me. I slowly pulled free, laying down on the blankets beside her.

Charles and James collapsed too, a happy silence settling over us.

It was easy to forget what tomorrow would bring in this comfortable moment with all of them.

“I’m going to fall asleep,” Irene said sleepily.

“Good,” I said.

“Go to sleep, little dove,” James said. “You’re going to need it.”

Irene nodded, curling up in the blankets. Charles, James, and I were silent as we listened to her fall asleep. It took a few minutes, but I found myself smiling at the first soft snore.

I sat up slowly, looking at the other two. “Sleep with her,” I whispered. “I’ll keep watch.”

They both nodded, and I could see that even they were tired for once.

I got up, careful not to disturb her, and got dressed.

I could feel her now, and that only made me want to do everything I could through the night to get us ready for tomorrow.

Jack would die, we would claim London, and our little dove would finally be free.

The thought sobered me.

Would she leave?

I wouldn’t blame her if she did. After everything the three of us had put her through...

After everything I had done to her...

But I couldn’t stand the thought of losing her.

I looked back at the three of them.

I had fallen so painfully in love with her.

She was mated to us, but I couldn't help but wonder if she would still fly away the moment she could.

THE SUN ROSE UP, and I kept watch as the other three slowly woke up. Charles and James had even fallen asleep, which was rare, but good. They would need the energy.

In all of my time, I had never felt so weak and so strong. There was a hint of fear surrounding today, the idea that we might lose sinking its teeth in.

I wouldn't let it happen, even if it meant truly destroying everything.

Last night, I had submitted to a human. I never dreamed I would do so, but it had felt good. Of course, she had paid well for making me bend a knee to her—and enjoyed every moment of that.

The air was crisp, frost clinging to everything. I stood outside in the lingering shadows, listening for anything that was out of place. This warehouse was in a busy district, so the sounds of metal clanking and machines working was a soothing lullaby.

It helped centre me.

The door creaked open, and James stepped out, fully dressed and already wearing a scowl. “We need to get the hearts,” he said.

“Already working on it,” I said softly.

I could feel his gaze on me, and a bit of heat crept up my spine. I'd never thought about either James or Charles in a sexual way, but after last night...

After last night, that was almost all I could think about. All this time, I'd been missing out.

“Do you think she'll stay?” James asked. “Like she says.”

“No,” I whispered. “But I hope she does. And we will find out.”

“I will let her go if she leaves.”

Would I? That was the undercurrent to his statement, a question within his words.

“I don’t know if I can,” I said.

“You must.”

“I will try,” I said, looking at him. “I’m doing as well as I can for someone so broken, James.”

“I don’t think you’re broken,” he said. “I just think that’s what you believe the world sees you as.”

“The hearts will be here soon,” I said. “Boris is bringing them.”

Boris was one of the only men I was certain we could trust. Like Irene, he didn’t hate monsters as most humans did. He’d never looked at us any different.

“We’re going to win,” James said, his voice hopeful. “Jack is desperate, holding onto any lifeline she can, and she thinks she’s won by demanding our hearts on a silver platter. But she’s wrong— She doesn’t know the depths of depravity we’d plunge to for Irene.”

I turned to look at him, cocking my head. “What do you want from me right now?”

“I want you to make sure Irene survives,” James said. “Even if we don’t. You’re stronger than Charles or me.”

“I will make sure she does,” I whispered. “But I’d like for you to live. I’ve only just discovered how entertaining your cock can be.”

James’ lips tugged up into a dry smile, his antennae twitching. “As if I’d bottom for you, Morte.”

I shrugged, looking back out over the buildings. “Survive and we’ll find out.”

He only shook his head, sliding back inside the warehouse. I felt another stitch pop around my jaw as I grinned, the dark tendrils of smoke surrounding me snapping to life with excitement.

At the very least, even if we all died, I knew that the four of us could have been something greater than creatures condemned to the dark.

“ARE you certain she will believe this?” Irene asked, looking at the bloody hearts in the bag with disgust.

“Yes,” I said. “She will. They’re each covered in our blood.”

The sun was setting now, and it was time. James and Charles were healing up the wounds that had allowed us to coat the hearts in their blood.

“She’ll need something more,” Irene whispered. “I could take your mask.”

“Absolutely not, marionette,” I hissed. “The three of you may see me, but no one else may.”

“Besides,” Charles teased. “How else is he supposed to be fearsome with a face like that? Which, by the way, what unlucky pretty boy had their face stolen?”

“I’ll never tell,” I said drily.

James snorted, and then stepped forward, shoving his top hat in the bag. The one he was almost never seen without.

“That should do it,” James said. “Tell her you poisoned us and then cut out our hearts. That’ll explain the poison coursing through those organs.”

Irene narrowed her eyes on me. “Do I even want to know?”

“No,” I said. “Now, Irene. Look at me.”

She looked up at me, and I felt that weakness again. A weakness for her.

“I will be okay,” she whispered. “I promise.”

“You will be,” I said.

“We will come for you, little dove,” Charles said, stepping closer to her.

I watched as Charles stole a kiss, stroking her cheek gently before handing her over to James.

James cupped her face, frowning. “You will be okay,” he reassured her. “Morte will be following you. Charles and I will be ahead of you. We have the men we trust on standby. It will all work out.”

Irene nodded, drawing in a shaky breath. She leaned up and kissed him before pulling away, stepping towards the door. “I will see you all later.”

“Wait,” I said.

I didn't care that we were running out of time. I pulled her close, lifting my mask so that I could brush my lips over hers. She let out a soft moan, and I felt the ache in my chest.

The bond to her.

“You're making this difficult,” she whispered.

“Watching you go will always be difficult,” I said. “I will be your shadow, marionette. No matter where they take you, they cannot hide you from me. Be brave.”

She nodded, and I reluctantly watched as she picked up the bag and left, leaving the three of us in a loud type of silence. One that was filled with unspoken words and fears.

“We will wait,” James said, his antennae ticking already. “And then split up. Morte will follow them, I will head to the warehouse and sneak in. Charles will also head to the warehouse, and will work on quietly taking down men.”

It was the best we had.

I was fighting my instincts now, forcing myself to wait. I tightened the buckles of my mask, my fingertips burning in my gloves. I was ready to hunt, ready to kill.

“We’ve been working for this for years,” I said.

“We have been,” James agreed. “It will pay off. London will be ours as will all of Jack’s businesses.”

Charles smiled as he pulled his silver hair back, hiding it beneath a dark hooded cloak. He had his rayguns hidden away, along with a walking cane that was a better weapon than most swords.

“I’m looking forward to seeing Jack die,” Charles said.

James and I grunted in agreement.

“For the men we trust,” James said. “They will be ready.”

I nodded. There were very few of them, especially now that the Rippers had torn into us. But there were still some left, and we would reward their loyalty.

“Tomorrow, London will belong to the Freaks,” James said. “And we will rule with a new queen at our side.”

The dream. The vision. It’s what we had wanted for so long, and having Irene share in that made it even sweeter.

“See you on the other side,” I said.

We all gave each other the subtle nod, and I turned, heading out the back door. I slipped out into the shadows, the chill in the air clinging to me.

I let my darkness completely envelop me, turning me into something that humans wouldn’t see and monsters would overlook.

I followed the scent of Irene even though I knew she was headed back to the bridge. It made me nervous that she was travelling alone, but I would be there to intercept any danger if something happened.

I made my way through the streets until I came close to the bridge. I stopped, catching the scent of another creature. I waited until it passed, and then moved towards my spot.

I could see Irene. She didn't even look nervous, which was admirable.

Fuck.

I was more nervous than she was.

Now, the games would begin.

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CHAPTER 31

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HEART OF A MONSTER



IRENE

EVERY INSTINCT WAS SCREAMING at me to run as a creature came out of the shadows. A train rumbled ahead as it emerged, the sound of the wheels over the track matching my racing heart.

“Did you bring their hearts?”

This was the shapeshifter. The one that had turned into Florence. I recognized his voice before I recognized his werewolf form.

At least he was clothed this time.

I threw the bag to the ground at his feet, flinging the knife down next to it. “The Freaks are dead,” I bit out. “Take me to Jack.”

The creature crept closer and snatched up bag. My stomach brewed with nausea as he pulled James’ bloodied top hat out, followed by a heart. He held it in his claws, blood dripping down.

He growled, his tongue licking up one of the drops. “Hmm... Tastes like them.”

“I wouldn’t lick too much of that,” I said. “I poisoned them, that’s how I killed them, and then cut out their hearts.”

“Oh? What kind of poison works on monsters?”

Fuck. We hadn’t talked about that.

“One that Morte carelessly left lying around because he trusted me,” I said.

The creature stared at me for a moment, and then nodded. “Alright, I’ll bite. Lets take these to Jack, and see what she says. She thought you’d come empty handed, but I guess you were serious. Stupid girl,” he chuckled. “No one can save you now.”

My heart beat faster as he slung the bag over his furry shoulder, rising up on his hind legs. He was massive, even taller than James, Charles, or Morte.

“Come on,” he motioned.

I grit my teeth and followed him, ignoring the sludge of cold mud under our feet as he led me under the bridge. I fought a gasp as he went to one of the pillars, pulling on a latch that then opened a door.

“Underground we go,” he said. “Even if you’ve fooled us and they’re still alive, they’ll never find you.”

That wasn’t true.

I had to believe that wasn’t true.

I stepped through the door way into the cold darkness, blinking until my sight adjusted. We were standing at the top of a steep staircase, and he gave me a little push forward.

“Go, girl,” he snarled.

I caught myself before I fell forward and started down the steps, my mind spinning.

I gagged as I hit the bottom step and the stench hit me. “What the fuck?” I gasped.

“Just bodies,” the creature snarled, shoving me forward. “On you go. We have a ways to go before we make it to where we need to be.”

I stopped breathing through my nose, my eyes tearing up as we slugged down the hall. There was a lamp every ten feet or so, and enough light that I could see the bodies he spoke of.

This was horrifying.

I had considered James, Morte, and Charles terrible, but this? This was atrocious. There was no redeeming this.

“What did they do?” I whispered.

“Betrayed us,” the creature said. “It works out. One of us creatures prefers to pick on the dead.”

More nausea rolled through me, and it took every ounce of strength to keep myself from vomiting. Tears blurred my vision, and I did my best to focus on getting to the end of the tunnel.

We finally came to a door, and it opened for us. I was pushed into a cylindrical brick room, one that had two other arched doorways, and a grate that let in the last of the evening sun. The smell of death was cut off as the shifter slammed the door behind us, a low growl leaving him.

I drew in a deep breath, nausea still clinging to me. The shifter moved past me with a snarl.

One of the doors was open ever so slightly.

“What the fuck?” he growled.

The door creaked back, revealing another dead body— but this one belonging to a monster.

The sound the shifter made sent a chill through me. It was similar to the screech a lover would make, and for a moment I felt bad.

I knew who had killed that creature.

I knew that we were being followed, just as we’d planned.

It gave me a flicker of hope.

The shifter turned, its eyes burning. “Whoever did this will pay,” he growled.

I only nodded. What was I supposed to say? *Sorry for your lost, hope you’re next?*

“Now you know how I feel,” I whispered.

The shifter snapped his head up, and the rage that emanated from him made me wonder if I’d just signed my

own death certificate. He let out a very low hiss, glaring at me.

“You know nothing, human,” he sneered. “Follow me.”

A chill worked up my spine as I followed him, stepping carefully over the mutilated mess that was the dead monster.

I could only hope that it was Morte or Charles that had done that.

I followed the shifter further, wondering how much closer we were to Jack. This was undoubtedly intentional, meant to shake me to my core.

And hell, it did, but I could still feel the mated bonds alive and clear— so I wasn't scared. After everything I had gone through, this was just another drop in a gross bucket of shit.

We came to yet another door, and I was led up another staircase. My legs ached as I followed him up, and suddenly we were very far outside of the city.

A couple of warehouses stood silently, the sun now gone and evening settling in. I breathed in the cold air, thankful for it even though it made my lungs burn.

I could feel eyes watching me. I felt as though I were being marched to my death. The hairs stood up on the back of my neck, and I fought the urge to run. I held onto the surge of comfort I could feel from my freaks.

I was so close. So fucking close to Florence. To rescuing my sister and putting this nightmare behind us.

He took me around to the back of the warehouse, through another door, and into warmth. My eyes widened as I looked around, realizing that they housed airships here.

Several men stood around, all of them armed with different types of weapons. All of them glared at me as we went past, the sound of our footsteps echoing through the eerie silence.

We came around a blimp, and several creatures stood. Jack was in the center of it all, her crimson lips pressed together.

I held my head high as I came to a stop in front of her. The shifter handed her the bag of hearts, letting out a soft whine.

“Egor is dead,” he whispered.

Her eyes flashed, her expression wavering for just a moment. “What do you mean *dead*?”

There were several grumblings from the others, growls following.

Jack shook her head, yanking open the bag and pulling out a heart. She held it to her nose, breathing in the scent as the blood dripped to the floor. She stared at me, and I felt like I was standing before a god.

“Irene,” she said coolly.

“The hearts are there,” I said firmly. “I want Florence, and then I want to go.”

Jack raised a brow, regarding me with a hateful stare. “We’re nowhere near to being finished with our deal. You have the magic that I need.”

“You can have it once you show me Florence,” I said. “Let me talk to her.”

I was doing my best to keep the desperation from my voice, but it was difficult.

Jack rolled her eyes, but then snapped her fingers.

Movement to the right drew my gaze, two men approaching with a woman with a blindfold around her head. She let out a panicked cry, one that was muffled by the tie around her mouth.

They ripped down the blindfold, but I already knew it was her.

I felt like I was seeing a ghost. After everything that had happened, seeing her alive...

Her eyes met mine and widened, but she didn’t cry out like I expected.

We stared at each other, and I felt a prick of pain in my chest.

Did we even know each other anymore?

Jack let out a soft laugh. “Take off the mouthpiece too.”

One of the men did, allowing Florence to speak.

“Florence...” I whispered, holding my breath.

“You shouldn’t have done this,” she said, her gaze hardening.

My breath left me as if I’d been punched in the gut. I marched over to her, feeling a snap of rage. I expected someone to stop me but no one did.

I stopped when I was standing in front of her. “What the fuck do you mean?” I growled.

“It wasn’t supposed to be you, you know,” Jack called. “It was supposed to be her.”

I felt as if someone had poured ice into my veins. My heart beat a little louder as I stared at my sister. We’d known each other our entire lives, but I found myself thinking about George.

I thought I’d known George, but that had been a mask.

“I thought you died,” I whispered.

Florence raised a brow. “No,” she said. “It’s just that George is dumb. You should have had the tea, Irene. All of this could have been avoided.”

Florence looked up at Jack, letting out a sigh. “Can I explain to her, at least? Before you continue?”

I looked back at Jack, and she nodded. “Yes.”

“Can we speak alone?” Florence said. “I know you’ll still be able to hear us, but I think it would help her.”

Help me?

I shook my head, taking a step back from her. “I don’t want to hear it.”

“You need to,” Florence said.

“No,” I said. “I don’t want to know. I want us to go home. I did this so I could save you and we could go home.”

I could feel the mating bonds to my three monsters growing tighter, and I knew they were fighting their battles. It gave me comfort, even as my mind raced to realize everything.

“We aren’t going home,” Florence whispered, shaking her head. “We have to finish what Ma and Pa couldn’t. They were scared of this power, but I’m not. After they died, Jack sent someone to meet me.”

“I’m certain the Rippers are the ones that killed our parents,” I growled. “Are you telling me you helped our parents killers?”

“Yes,” Florence said, her words stoic. “I helped them to keep you out of this. To give you the life that you wanted. I did everything I did to keep you safe, and you fucked it all up!”

I stared at her in confusion and disbelief. Florence rarely cursed.

I shook my head, not believing her. “I don’t...”

“Think about it, Irene,” Florence hissed. “That night. You came downstairs and saw a monster, right? And you saw George.”

“Yeah, he was standing over you!” I shouted. “And you were on the floor bleeding!”

“Yes,” Florence said. “Because you have to be in danger for the dove to work. But then you came downstairs and ruined everything.”

“Then why did they take me?” I hissed. “Why would they fucking take me instead of you?”

“They took me too,” Florence said. “They just took me on a different airship. They brought me here too.”

“Oh, did they give you a first class ticket?” I sneered.

“They did actually,” Florence quipped.

“Must have been nice,” I said. “I was nearly raped and killed while you were sitting having tea with our parents *murderers!*”

Florence glared at me. “That’s not what happened. You killed someone and stole the dove! And then it fused to you!”

“Are you a fucking idiot?” I snapped. She winced at my language, which I enjoyed. For a moment, I could see the Florence I knew. “You just said you have to be in danger for the dove to work. And you know what? Fine. Fuck you. I’ll save myself.”

“It’s too late for that,” Florence whispered.

“It is,” Jack laughed.

The sound of an explosion rang through the warehouse, followed by shouts. I held Florence’s gaze, enjoying her expression a little more than I should have.

“No,” I said. “No, it’s not too late. It’s not too late at all.”

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CHAPTER 32

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THE DOVE



JAMES

MY MEN SCRAMBLED AWAY from several warehouses, and I felt a sense of victory as I pressed the detonation button.

BOOM!

Explosions went off one after the other, the groaning of the collapsing metal making me smile.

If the Rippers hadn't guessed we were still alive, they would know now. Every warehouse in this district was in flames aside from the one Irene, Jack, and company were in.

I heard a shout and looked down, landing in front of Morte. He was covered in blood, his muscles tense.

"I killed the body eater," he grunted.

"Fuck," I said.

He'd been one of Jack's favourites.

"Go," Morte grunted. "We need to get to Irene."

I nodded and my wings swept me back up into the crisp air, the scent of smoke and blood clinging to me.

I swooped in towards the building, weaving out of the way of the bullets that shot towards me. I looked down, seeing Charles moving as well. His song lifted into the air, sending countless men to the ground screaming.

We were closing in now.

I could feel my bond to Irene tightening. I could feel her distress, her rage.

Whatever had happened hadn't been good.

A knife flung through the air, narrowly missing me. I cursed as another sailed past me and turned to see Ace on the roof of the warehouse.

"Should have stayed dead," he called. "We almost believed it too."

I landed on the roof, reaching for a grenade and tossing it at him. He rolled out of the way as it landed, the explosion making my ears ring.

Ace ran towards me, splitting into two. He pulled another knife from his colourful coat and flung it, followed by another.

I cursed, missing one, but the other went straight into my thigh. Pain burst through me, but I couldn't let it slow me down. I yanked the knife free with a snarl.

He morphed back into one and slammed into me, the two of us hitting the roof hard. I brought the knife up, jamming it in his stomach. He made a noise, and rolled off me, his frowning mask glinting with amber highlights from the fires around us.

"You really gonna burn the world down for a human?" Ace snarled.

"Yes," I grunted, kicking out and hitting him in the chest.

He fell back, but we both rolled up onto our feet. Blood dripped from each of us and we squared off, chests heaving and adrenaline running high.

I licked my lips, my fingers itching. "You know, Morte already killed Egor. He's dead. And soon others will be too unless the Rippers submit."

Ace cocked his head. "I highly doubt Egor is dead."

"He is," I said, smirking. "Very very dead."

"Then you're fucking next," he snarled.

Ace moved in a blur, reaching for another knife, but I knew it was coming. I lunged forward, grabbing his arm and twisting as I slammed him down into the concrete. The breath was knocked out of him as I growled, pulling out a gun and holding it to him.

“A bullet won’t kill me,” he sneered.

“No, but it’ll keep you down for a bit.”

I pulled the trigger, sending the bullet straight through his heart. He grunted as it went through, blood immediately pooling around him. I moved back, staring down at him.

“Jack will murder you,” Ace snarled. “Should have stayed dead, James.”

“I’m going to kill her,” I said. “When the sun rises, the Freaks will be the kings of London and the Rippers will be dead.”

I brought the bottom of my boot down hard on his face, his mask cracking. He went limp, now unconscious.

I turned, and ran towards the roof hatch, ignoring the searing pain shooting through my thigh. The rusty door was already cracked open, and I pulled out another gun. The hinges screeched as I yanked it back, cocking my gun and pointing.

No one was waiting there so I jumped in, landing on the metal bridge below. It ran towards another set of stairs, but I jumped over the side, swooping down to the rafters.

Voices echoed through the warehouse, and I could hear footsteps as men ran to get ready. I moved quickly towards the main entrance, making it right as the doors opened and Charles stepped in.

“It’s *timeeee!*” Charles called in an opera voice, adding a scale after it.

I stared at my mate for a moment, blinking in a mixture of awe and humiliation as his voice lifted through the air, his stained glass wings fluttering with excitement. Now that we were mated, his song wouldn’t outright end me, but it still

made me wince as he started to sing louder— morphing into his monstrous form.

He looked up, his three eyes burning with a message.

Get to Irene.

Men ran towards him, bullets shooting across the warehouse, but as his song lifted they began to drop like flies.

A scream echoed and I jumped down, flying through different air vessels to find our human.

My mate.

I felt the bonds pull tighter as I came around the corner, landing in a circle of men and creatures as horror crept over me. There was another woman being held back, her screams echoing around us as she tried to yank free of the two creatures that held her back.

“This wasn’t the agreement!” she screeched. “You liar! You fucking liar! Don’t kill her!”

Jack had Irene pinned down to the ground and I felt my heart drop as she sank her fangs into her throat and ripped.

The *sound* made my knees weak.

I felt darkness around me, knowing Morte had arrived. He stepped next to me, the shadowy tendrils snapping around him in fury.

“No,” he whispered, his voice broken. “*Mon amour.*”

Irene turned her head, her eyes landing on us. I watched the light fade from them slowly, frozen as reality set in.

Other monsters lunged for us, but neither Morte nor I made a move to dodge them, as we continued staring at our human. Claws gripped me, holding me in place. I felt the cold barrel of a gun against my wing, another against my head, but all I could see was *her*.

I felt the bond fade. I felt the lifeline that I had been clinging to turn to dust, Irene’s gaze becoming dead.

No, no, no.

Jack looked up, blood dripping from a crimson smile. She licked her lips as she sat back, letting out a satisfied hum.

“See, James,” she whispered. “I always win. I will *always* win.”

“You liar!!” the woman screeched. “You fucking liar!”

“Someone shut her up!” Jack shouted, turning to glare at her in fury. “You fucking idiot. As if I wouldn’t take the chance to kill her. You were playing a game with *monsters*, Florence.”

Charles ran up to us and I felt the pain rip through me, a cry leaving him. He fell to his knees, staring at her.

“No,” he whispered. “No. This wasn’t the *plan*.”

One of the monsters hit the other woman over the head. Undoubtedly Irene’s sister.

Fuck.

“Now,” Jack said, standing up. She wobbled for a moment, wiping the blood from her lips with a scowl. “Now, you know I won. And now that she’s dead, I can take that magic from her and make it mine. She didn’t know how to use it anyways.”

A low growl left me as Jack waltzed over to me, my mate’s blood dripping down her jaw and neck.

“Why?” I whispered. “What magic?”

“*The* magic,” Jack said. She let out a short laugh, a crazed one. “If you would have stayed with me James, you would have known. Instead, you chose to go against me. Peter Ellis, Irene and Florence’s great grandfather, captured a monster known as the Ripper. He was an ancient being, one that liked to tear apart everything that humans made.” She stepped up to me, leaning in so that her lips were close to mine. I could smell Irene’s blood, and I felt tears blur my vision, pain ripping through me again. “He was a father to me,” Jack whispered. “That’s how I became Jack the Ripper in the first place. He helped me envision a world where humans were beneath us, and monsters no longer had to hide. He helped

create me, and Peter Ellis slaughtered him and used his dark magic to create these infernal devices. The Doves.”

She stepped back, running her tongue over her bottom lip as she moved on to Morte.

“Look at you,” she said, grinning. “I’ve never seen you so weak before. I think I tasted mating bonds on her, no? Did you mate her, doctor?”

Morte whispered something in French, his voice ominous.

Jack only rolled her eyes, pacing around the circle. She looked at Irene, making a *tsking* noise. She knelt down, running her fingers through Irene’s hair.

“Don’t you fucking touch her,” I snarled.

“Why? She’s dead,” Jack said, smirking. “You know, their parents tried really hard to keep all of this from them. And then Irene’s dear sister went and made a deal I couldn’t resist, but this little human fucked it all up.”

Jack stood, looking at me with pity.

“You see— her parents did manage to hide one of the doves. We still can’t find it. So we were going to leave Irene alone until we did, per the request of her sister. Florence agreed to take on the dove, and was very compliant. Easy to work with. Easy to manipulate. But then Irene interrupted everything. And then, to make it worse, she became the dove and inherited a power that she had no clue how to use. The Dove is meant to protect her from all monsters that wish her harm, and will react quickly.”

“But you just killed her,” Morte growled.

I knew he hated himself.

I hated myself.

My gaze moved over to Charles, and I felt my heart break all over again.

He’d gone silent, his eyes never leaving Irene.

The three of us had bet on the dove protecting her, and it had failed.

“I moved quick enough,” Jack said, shrugging.

The faintest clicking noise drew my gaze back down to Irene, and I fought the urge to frown.

“So now, I get the Ripper’s magic back. London is mine, and soon the other major cities will fall too. Monsters will soon take over humanity. We won’t have to hide in the dark anymore.”

Jack grinned, spreading her arms wide.

“And best of all, I get to watch the three of you die. As if I believed she could over power the three of you,” Jack chuckled. “She’s nothing but a human. Powerless. Weak. Mortal. She was meant to die from the beginning, and that’s the sad truth to their little lives. Humans are nothing compared to monsters. And they certainly aren’t meant to be mated to them.”

The clicking became louder, followed by the slightest *thump*. My eyes fell to the floor, watching as her blood began to *move*.

I looked at Charles and then at Morte, but their gazes were now on Irene too.

I felt a flicker in my chest, the slightest warmth from our bond.

She’s not dead.

“Jack,” I chuckled, unable to hide my happiness. “Jack, I think you fucked up.”

“What do you mean?” she snapped, but then she heard it too.

Silence fell over the circle and we all stared at Irene, watching as her blood began to soak back up into her body. The clicking grew louder, and the breath was knocked out of me as I watched the wound at her neck begin to heal.

I looked at Morte and then Charles, giving them the slightest nod.

If we were going down, we were going down fighting at this point.

The creature that held a gun to my head wasn't prepared for the tentacle that shot out from Morte and snapped his neck. I turned at the same time, bringing my knee up and knocking back the other creature that held onto me. I reached into my coat, drawing out two knives and flinging them into the nearest beings.

Charles began to sing again, his voice lifted into the air in a death melody. Screaming started, and it was music to my ears.

Even Morte laughed as he moved, a mass of dark shadows.

Jack growled, shouting. "Don't just fucking stand there!"

They couldn't listen to her. They were too preoccupied trying not to die from Charles or Morte.

Jack let out another snarl, and I felt her attention on me. I turned around, only for a golden blinding light to fill the room. I covered my eyes, wincing as it became brighter.

The sound of clicking became louder, ticking over and over again until it was the rhythm of a beating heart.

The room burst with dark magic, but this magic did not come from Morte. All of us flew back, and I hit the floor, feeling my mechanical wing crunch underneath my weight. It moved us with a force that was unlike anything I'd ever felt before, and I was unable to do much but sit up and watch.

Our human stood there like a goddess. Her eyes were completely black, her violet hair whipping around her as a violent wind surrounded her. Behind her shoulders were golden wings made of bronze. They stretched out, the metallic blades sharper than knives.

Jack let out a crazed screech, and I watched as she lunged for Irene. I watched in awe as the Dove's wing swept forward and impaled Jack through the chest.

The whole world seemed to stop.

Jack's eyes widened as the other wing swept forward, the tip impaling her all the way through, the bronze edges jutting out of her spine.

Her blood dripped to the floor, crimson pooling at Irene's feet.

The wings swept out, ripping Jack in half. Her body was split in two like it was nothing. She plopped to the ground, blood and guts rushing out.

"No!" One of the monsters roared.

I heard another yell and looked up, watching as Ace appeared, crawling to her mangled body, along with the shapeshifter.

Everyone else was dead or passed out.

Irene stared at us, her eyes still black as night. A shiver went up my spine, a warning that she wasn't quite herself right now.

Morte stepped forward, holding up his gloved hands. "*Marionette*," he said softly. "We are yours, love. Not a danger."

"Little dove," Charles crooned.

"Irene," I said gently, swallowing back more tears. "Irene, we are here. We love you."

This was who had killed the men on the blimp. Who had killed the other creatures at the Westside house.

This was the power they'd been faced with, and now I understood why they had died.

It was almost ethereal—and it made me glad that the first Ripper was dead.

"Irene," Morte said. "Come back to us. We need you."

It was true. We needed her. She was our weakness, but through that, it made all of us stronger.

"We have almost won," I said. "But we need you to come back to us first."

I stepped closer to her, noting that the wings immediately wrapped around her like a shield. They were stunning, the metal gleaming even though Jack's blood dripped from the tips.

I took a deep breath, focusing on my mating bond to her.

We had hurt her over and over before realising just how much she would mean to us, and while our bond was new and passionate, I knew it would take some time for deep trust to happen.

Charles and Morte also stepped closer, despite the feathered blades.

"That bitch," a voice snarled.

I looked over, seeing the shapeshifter rise onto his haunches. Blood covered him, his rage emanating off him.

"Jack is dead," I said. "Go, before you are too. London is ours."

He glared, but then Ace stood, placing a hand on his shoulder. "We need to go," Ace said. "We cannot stop her. We've lost everything."

I watched as they picked up the pieces of Jack and then left, moving through the maze of bodies that littered the warehouse.

"Irene," Morte said, stepping towards her again. This time he reached out, placing a gloved hand on a bronze wing. "You're safe. Put these away."

It took a moment, but the clicking began again.

Click, click, click.

I watched in wonder as the wings began to shrink, the metal pulling back until there was nothing but the plates on her upper back that blended in with skin and muscle. The darkness in her eyes began to clear, and she fell forward.

The three of us caught her, sinking to our knees, holding her to us.

Our little dove was alive, and the Rippers were dead.

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CHAPTER 33

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LONDON



IRENE

MY EYES SLOWLY OPENED, and as my vision cleared I saw the faces of my three monsters.

I blinked several times, dragging in a shaky breath as tears immediately spilled over.

“Fuck,” James whispered. “We thought you were dead, little dove.”

I wasn't sure that I hadn't been.

They pulled me closer, holding on to me. I wrapped my arms around the three of them, their warmth chasing away the dark chills that now haunted me.

It was over.

Dead bodies were strewn around us, the warehouse now silent. I could hear the sirens outside, and knew that the humans were on their way to put out the fires.

The humans.

I smiled, drawing back for a moment.

“London is ours,” I whispered.

“I don't care about bloody London,” Charles growled, grabbing my face and planting a kiss on me.

I melted, the kiss relaxing me. He broke it, letting out a soft snarl.

“I swear to the gods, woman, I’ve never felt like that in my entire existence.”

“Did I really die?” I asked, looking at the three of them.

Morte was the one to nod. His mask was covered in blood, his clothing damp with it. “The dove protected you, it seemed, even though you died. I imagine that the magic brought you back, but I...want to do some studies on you.”

I nodded, and then felt my heart skip a beat. “Florence,” I whispered.

I turned, scanning the bodies until I saw her. I wiggled out of their arms, running over to her.

“She’s just passed out,” James called.

I nodded, kneeling next to her. I grabbed her shoulders, giving her a light shake.

Her eyes slowly opened, and then widened.

“Irene,” she croaked. “Oh gods, I’ve died.”

“No, you haven’t,” I said. “I lived, Florence.”

“Oh thank the gods,” she breathed, throwing her arms around me. “Oh gods,” she sobbed, holding me close.

I held her, torn between being angry and being relieved.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered. “I’m so sorry. I made a terrible mistake. This was all a mistake. I hurt you.” She leaned back, her dark brown hair unravelling from its bun. “I’m so sorry.”

“We can talk more later,” I said gently. “We need to leave. We’ll go with my mates.”

“*Mates?*” she whispered.

Her eyes flitted past me to Morte, Charles, and James. She shook her head, her voice faltering.

“Irene, no.”

“Yes,” I said, leaning back. “Yes. I’m one of them. One of the Freaks. The three of them are mine. You have to accept it.”

Florence shook her head, wincing. “You can’t be serious. They’re monsters. They’re not human.”

“They love me,” I said.

“They’ll just want your power. They’ll use you.”

“Florence,” I whispered, reaching for her hands. I gripped them, forcing her to look at me. “Florence, I’m telling you this, not asking for your opinion. After everything that has happened, I can’t go back to normal, but you can. Now, we need to go.”

Charles came over to us, offering me a hand. I let him pull me to stand, bringing Florence with me. Charles gave her a cool look, one that told me he wasn’t too fond.

She returned the look ten fold.

“Great,” I muttered.

“I won’t go with monsters,” Florence said, pulling her hand free. “I’m done with creatures. Let the authorities find me, and I’ll go home to New York City.”

“What?” I asked. “You don’t even want to—”

“No,” she said, cutting me off. “No. I refuse, Irene. You can do as you wish, you always have. But I’m done with monsters. You can visit me whenever you wish, but I’m going back to my normal life.”

Charles let out a low growl. “Irene has done a lot to get back to you, and this is how you repay her?”

“I didn’t ask her to do anything for me,” Florence quipped. “And much can be said the same for me. I did a lot to keep this mess from you, and it failed. I’m sorry.”

We stared at each other, and I felt a piece of my heart break. My mates growled in unison, feeling the pain through our bonds, but they didn’t lunge for my sister.

“Fine,” I said, leaning into Charles. I kept my head high, even though I felt like I was drowning. “I’ll visit you in a couple months,” I said. “It’ll give us some time to sort through our emotions.”

Florence's shoulders relaxed and she nodded, biting her lower lip. "Irene, I love you. I *am* sorry for everything." Her gaze flickered to Charles again, then back to me. "Come with me," she whispered.

Her words froze me, and I felt the temptation to.

Charles took a breath and then let go of me, stepping away. "We'll let you make your decision," he whispered.

He walked away, leaving me with just her again.

"Come with me," Florence said again.

I heard a growl, and turned, seeing how Morte had tensed.

I turned back to my sister and sighed. "No," I said. "I want to be here."

"Haven't they hurt you?"

"Yes," I breathed. "But so have you, Florence. And the four of us are working to set things right. I want what I have with them. I will visit you," I said. "But I'm not going with you."

Florence sighed and then nodded. "You know where to find me, then."

"I do," I said.

She leaned in, hugging me for a moment. "I didn't mean for things to turn out like this."

How did I convince her that I was glad they did?

"I know," I whispered, leaning back.

I heard the entrance to the warehouse open, shouts echoing.

"Goodbye," I said, kissing her cheek.

"Goodbye," she said.

I swallowed hard and turned, running to my monsters. I jumped into Charles' waiting arms, wrapping myself around him right as his wings lifted us. Morte and James took off too, the four of us scattering before we had to deal with anyone else.

Charles took us up through a roof hatch, and then out into the night sky. I closed my eyes, holding onto him as he carried us home.

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CHAPTER 34

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FREAKS OF NATURE



IRENE

Three Weeks Later

IT HAD BEEN three weeks since the Freaks had taken over London. That was the story that was being whispered about at least, and no one objected.

Well, there'd been a small gang that had, but surprisingly I'd been able to negotiate with them without any bloodshed.

James, Charles, and Morte had finally truly absorbed me into their world and I wasn't looking back.

I wasn't sure if that made me a monster or not, but I didn't care. I was happy.

"Good morning, little dove," James said softly.

I groaned and stretched, turning over in our massive bed to snuggle against my mothman. He pulled me close, kissing the top of my head.

"No fair," Charles grumbled next to me.

I giggled, throwing my hand back to his chest and then sliding it down.

"Hey," Charles whispered. "If you touch my cock, it's going inside of you, little dove."

"I don't see anything wrong with that," I said.

“We have business to attend to soon,” James sighed. “The blimp plans that you and Charles designed. We have to meet with the builders. Then, we have to visit some businessmen. And then you are going on your outing with Morte, while I meet with our accountant and Charles works with some of the new creatures that have joined us.”

“Ah, yes,” I purred, rolling back over so that I was between them. I slid my hand down to his cock too, gripping him and Charles at the same time. “Business to attend to,” I teased.

“Irene,” James hissed, his cock already hard and wrapping around my wrist and forearm.

The door to our room opened and Morte came in, shutting it behind him.

All three of us lifted our heads, watching as he pulled off his mask with a sigh. “I’ve worked my day already,” he said, unbuttoning his cloak. “So either join us or get out.”

I was still surprised when he removed his mask, the trust making me smile.

“We were here first, pretty boy,” James snorted.

“I’m not goin’ anywhere,” Charles said.

Morte grumbled to himself in French, but didn’t hide his smile as he crept onto the bed, crawling up between my legs. I giggled as his tentacles pulled the blankets back and he kissed me, a soft groan leaving the two of us.

“Good morning,” Morte said, pushing my thighs apart. “I need breakfast, marionette.”

I opened my mouth to respond, but his tongue was already on my clit and a groan left me instead.

“*Fuck*,” I gasped.

Charles let out a dark chuckle and turned over, kissing over my body as Morte’s tentacle pushed inside of me. Another gasp left me, my body arching against the blankets.

“Mmm,” James hummed. “I love it when you make these noises, little dove.”

“I thought you had business,” I gasped.

James snorted and turned over, gripping my face and making me look at him. “It can wait,” he said. “You’re quite good at convincing me, little dove.”

I cried out right as he leaned down to kiss me, Morte tugging my clit gently between his teeth right as Charles did the same to my nipple. Pleasure bolted through me, my muscles trembling as they teased and pleased me.

James’ tongue thrust into my mouth and then down my throat, and I began to stroke his cock as Charles and Morte continued. My moan was muffled as another shadowy tendril pressed against my ass, filling me slowly.

Morte let out a low growl, pulling back for a moment. “You’re so wet for us, *marionette*.”

Desperation spread through me, the need for their cocks to be inside of me. I pulled back from James with a breathless groan, panting.

“I need all of you inside of me,” I said. “Please.”

All three of them paused for a moment and Morte cocked his head, raising a dark brow.

“Mm... It has been awhile since we’ve tried that,” he said.

We hadn’t tried since the warehouse, and I was desperate for that feeling of complete fullness again. I slid my hand down to my clit, but James immediately pulled it away with a growl.

“We’ll make you cum, little dove, don’t worry,” James said.

“That we will,” Morte said. “I want all three of our cocks inside of her here,” he said, the tentacle pushing deeper into my pussy.

Fuck.

“If you think you can,” Charles chuckled.

I looked at him, narrowing my eyes. “Yes,” I said. “I want to try.”

There was a silent agreement shared between the three of them. A wicked shiver of excitement rolled through me as Morte pulled me back and on top of him. He laid across the bed, my legs straddling his hips.

The head of his cock brushed against me, and I gasped as his tentacles wrapped around my thighs and breasts like rope, squeezing them.

“Our little sex monster,” James teased.

I gasped as his claws raked down my back, the pain making me even more wet.

“Yes,” Morte hissed. “Our little fuck puppet.”

He leaned up, our lips meeting in a hungry kiss as I felt the head of his cock push inside of me. I groaned as I took him, every ridge rubbing inside of me in a way that could make me cum by itself.

But then I felt Charles move behind us and felt the head of his cock against Morte’s, pressing against my opening.

Morte groaned, breaking our kiss for a moment as he squeezed his eyes shut.

“Fuck, mate,” Charles grunted. “Your cock feels good against mine.”

Morte only cursed in French, his tentacles engulfing us. I looked over my shoulder, my eyes widening as they wrapped around Charles too. He winked at me, the tip of his tongue running over his sharp fangs as he thrust forward, filling me completely.

“Oh gods,” I squealed, gasping as he forced his way inside me.

I felt like I was being stretched wide, my pussy burning for a moment until I began to relax. They waited, and Charles kissed the scratch marks that James had made while Morte

leaned up and kissed the bond scars the three of them had made.

Every time one of them touched those marks, my entire body lit up with pleasure unlike anything else. I gasped as I felt James move over me and lower himself, the tip of his cock pressing against the others.

“Fuck,” he grunted. “Gonna be a tight fit, little dove.”

Morte and Charles both made noises, somewhere between growls and groans.

“Fuck, these tentacles,” Charles gasped.

I let out a giggle, leaning down to kiss Morte. The three of them had become closer since taking me as their mate, and I loved it.

Especially in moments like this. The commentary was gold.

“She’s laughing at me again,” Charles groaned.

“It’s hard not to,” Morte grunted.

“I can take it,” I gasped. “I can take you, James.”

He let out a little hiss, and I felt his cock slowly begin to push inside. I cried out, pressing my face against Morte’s chest as all three cocks slowly settled inside of me.

“Oh fuck,” Morte grunted.

I could feel James’ cock slowly moving, wrapping around theirs until they were bound together.

The first vibration made all of us moan, need echoing through our mated bonds. Morte wrapped his arms around me, thrusting his hips up and causing the same series of noises from us all.

Charles cursed, gripping my hips hard as they pulled their cocks back and then pumped forward again.

My body throbbed, blood rushing in my ears as they started to fuck me. They started out slow, but then the

vibrations increased and they started to move in a coordinated rhythm, the fast pace bringing me closer to release.

“I’m going to cum,” I gasped.

“Cum, *marionette*,” Morte encouraged, thrusting up harder. “We want to feel your tight cunt squeeze us.”

James reached down, his claws gripping my hair as he yanked my head back. I grunted, sharp cries leaving me as they fucked me harder until I screamed— an orgasm crashing over me like a tidal wave.

My head spun as I drowned in the pleasure. I squeezed their cocks, gasping as it kept going.

Finally, I let out a low moan as my release began to ease, my pussy pulsing as the three of them continued to thrust deeply.

“Fucking hell,” James gasped.

“I’m going to cum,” Charles grunted, his hips moving faster.

I relaxed against Morte, his tentacles squeezing me as they all fucked me harder. I loved it when they used me like this, when all I could think about was being their fuck toy.

“Good girl,” James groaned. “You’re such a good girl for us.”

“She’s a monster slut,” Morte growled. “And she can cum again before we can.”

“I’m so fucking close though,” Charles moaned.

“Tough,” Morte grunted. “Pull your cock out if you can’t wait to cum, Charles.”

I gasped as I felt the tip of a tentacle slide between my thighs, pressing against my clit.

“I can’t,” I moaned. “There’s no way!”

“You can,” Morte growled, and I heard the deviousness in his voice.

He loved torturing me, and even when he pushed me further than I thought I could go, I found that I loved it too.

“You will,” Morte said. “Or we all stop, I tie you up, and make you cum all day.”

“Fuck you,” I whimpered, but the tentacle began moving around my clit, and I found myself gasping.

“That’s our girl,” James chuckled.

James gripped my head tighter as they set a brutal rhythm, pumping in and out of me as the tentacle worked my clit. I screamed again as I felt the build up, Morte forcing me back to the edge. It was a sharp kind of pleasure, the kind that consumed you entirely.

I came again, another orgasm swallowing me whole and making me see stars. My pussy convulsed around their cocks as I cried out, gasping as James let go of my hair.

“Fuck,” I whimpered.

“Good girl,” Charles purred. “I’m going to cum now.”

“Do it,” Morte grunted.

The three of them worked together, their hard cocks thrusting in out of me until Charles grunted, followed by James and then Morte. Their hot cum spilled inside me together, and I felt it start to overflow from where we were joined.

I collapsed onto Morte as they filled me, happy as I could be.

“Gods,” James mumbled.

They slowly began to pull out and I moaned, feeling all of the cum start to drip out.

“Push it back in,” Morte grunted. “I want every drop inside of her.”

“Better idea,” James said.

James rolled me over, pushing my legs back.

“James,” I gasped as the head of his cock pushed the cum back inside of me.

He grinned as he thrust forward, filling me completely until his knot was pressed against me, and then it was inside of me— swelling up to keep it all locked in.

“Bastard,” I teased, melting into the blankets with a smile.

“Mmm.” He leaned down and kissed me before leaning back, running his palms over my legs. “I like it when you’re like this, little dove.”

“Like what?” I mumbled.

“Knotted and full of your mates’ cum,” Charles said, plopping down onto the blankets next to me.

Morte settled on the other side too, the three of us relaxing as James kept me knotted to him.

“Just think,” James said softly. “Not too long ago I didn’t even want to look at you, and now you’re all I want to see.”

A blush heated my cheeks and I smiled. “I’m lucky to have the three of you, even though you’re freaks.”

“You’ve taken my soul, *marionette*,” Morte murmured. “I belong to you.”

“I love you as well, little dove,” Charles said gently.

“I love you too,” James said.

I smiled, letting out a happy sigh. “I love you all too,” I whispered. “More than words could ever describe.”

I’d gone through a lot since I’d been brought to London, but it had been worth it.

I was one of them. One of the monsters, one of the Freaks. Their queen, their mate, their love.

I loved them too. From their claws to growls, to their wings and tentacles.

We’d claimed London as ours, defeated the Rippers, and rescued my sister. She’d gone to New York, and there was still

a soreness between us that made my heart ache, but I had found my happiness.

I'd found my purpose.

A Mothman. An Unseelie. A demonic plague doctor. All three of them had captured me, stolen my wings, and dragged me down into the darkness of their world.

They'd devoured my soul, and I had devoured theirs too.

The type of love we shared was terrifying. It was the kind that turned cities to ash and made bridges burn, but it was also the kind that made monsters realise that they didn't have to be alone in the dark.

I was their dove and they were my demons— and we were the freaks of nature who had found love where no one else could.

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