

Entwined

The Life of Anna, Part 2



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The Life of Anna, Part 2: Entwined

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

All portrayals of sexual acts are between adults (aka, over the age of 18).

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WARNING

This book is for grownups. This book is not for people who are easily offended, get nightmares easily, or have difficulty reading books about tough subjects. I do not glorify bad things, but bad things do happen to my poor characters. This is not your typical love story. My heroine does not fall in love and live happily ever after... at least not like the typical heroine. There is a happily ever after, but it is a long, painful journey to that end.

This is not a stand-alone novel. The series must be read in order.

Anna's story is told in five, novel-length books. There is a subculture within our own world that you've only heard whispers of. The conspiracy theorists wish they knew Anna's story. What the conspiracy theorists think they know is only disinformation, put out there to keep them from the real story.

This book will likely offend you. This book might make you cry; it might make you throw up. It is a dark book. As my friend, Heidi, said, "It's dark. It gets darker. It gets even darker, and then it gets even darker. And then, just when you think it can't get any darker, it does."

But, don't worry. I take you to the deep end gradually. ;)

There are many sexual situations in this series of books. People die. People get hurt. Things aren't always truly the way they appear. The antagonist isn't just a bad guy; he's EVIL. My heroine's worldview is skewed; things that may appall you are perfectly normal to her.

Any violence in this book is non-gratuitous and crucial to the plot and character development.

Do not read this if you are under the age of consent in your country. Do not get angry if the subject or actual book upsets you. If you're reading this, you've been warned.

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CHAPTER ONE

Alex sensed Anna the moment he walked into the Great Hall. He didn't understand why he could sense when she was around, but he was glad nonetheless. Sometimes it was stronger than others, like now. Sometimes it was nearly impossible for him to keep himself from pulling her into his arms and kissing her like there was no tomorrow.

He caught himself before he started tapping his fingers on the arm of the chair. It wouldn't do to appear bored or uninterested, even though listening to Devin's moronic speech took him to the edge of his sanity. Devin's arrogance grated Alex, and he was thankful that his hood sheltered his face from view, else he'd have to school his features as well as still his fingers.

As it was, he relaxed his hand and turned his thoughts to the girl across the room. *Anna.*

Anna's obvious, deep-seated fear confounded Alex. An Elder-Mistress rarely showed any emotion at all; to see one so beat down and frightened struck him at his core. The other Elder-Mistresses he knew were beautiful, confident women that took the breath away of every man they came in contact with.

Anna was beautiful, yes, and breathtaking; no one would deny that. The innocence mixed with fear in those beautiful green eyes made the protective lion inside his chest want to steal her away and shelter her from all the evil in the world. What had happened to make her that way? What

was she so afraid of? Alex had asked himself the questions a million times since he saw her last week, and still had no satisfactory answer for them.

In the dark, far corner of the room, Alex could just see a figure wrapped in white. His heart pounded as he realized that it was Anna. *His* Anna. Kurt might think that Anna was a fun toy to have around, but his brother would never be able to care for her the way Alex could. Alex's heart had been bound to hers long ago by her own father.

Vati elbowed Alex gently and Alex pulled his hood down and looked away from the corner. It wouldn't do for his precautions to be undone now. He had to remain aloof or Devin would become suspicious. Neither he nor his father knew exactly what Devin had planned, but Alex's gut told him it was nothing good; they would be required to intercede before the night was over.

He composed his features to appear uninterested as Anna walked up the aisle to join Devin on the platform, but when Devin removed her cloak, Alex's breath caught in his throat. Kurt had spoken of the beauty of Anna's naked body, but to see it firsthand took his breath away.

He shifted in his chair as his gaze moved down her body, from the sable-brown hair that hung down her back in waves, to her shapely calves. Her neck was long and slender, her breasts full and round. Her nipples were pink and taut and oh-so tempting. The lines of her torso, the swell of her hips.... Alex gripped the arms of his chair tightly. God, she was beautiful.

Alex growled slightly as Devin mauled her in front of the men. Devin might think that Anna belonged to him, but before the end of the night, the American Elder would know the truth: Anna belonged to Alex.

Devin pushed her to her knees and Alex frowned. What was Devin doing? A Deacon handed him...a piercing gun? Her kind weren't supposed to be marked as....

Anna looked at Alex suddenly and he saw the panic in her eyes. He resisted the urge to shove Devin out of the way and take her from him now. Marking an Elder-Mistress as a slave had been forbidden for centuries! What the hell was Devin thinking?

Devin spoke softly to Anna. She looked back at Devin and her eyes glazed over slightly.

“What did he do to her, Vati?” Alex hissed.

“I don’t know, Alex,” his father whispered back. “But I can’t believe he would—”

There was a click and a sharp inhale of breath as Anna’s nipple was pierced.

“Vati, you can’t let this happen,” Alex pleaded.

Why didn’t she cry out? Tears glittered in her eyes and she clearly felt pain.

Vati didn’t reply, but stared at Devin and Anna.

“Vati?”

Devin pierced Anna’s belly button.

“The piercings can be undone, Alex,” Vati said in a calm voice.

They both winced at the third and final piercing.

“Let him be, son. He’s not doing anything permanent. You can still take her after.”

Anna began shaking and Devin spoke quietly to her. Tears filled her eyes and she nodded before standing and walking over to Alex and his father, eyes filled with pain. She bowed and then motioned to the ground between them.

“Devin told you to come sit between us?” Vati asked, affection in his tone.

She nodded.

“Then do so. I would be honored to have you next to me, Anna.”

Sebastian! Alex’s mental voice was a shout. *I can’t sit and watch this!*

The reply from his friend came a moment later. *You must, Alex. This is your chance to save her.*

Vati said the piercings could be undone.

He’s not done, Alex. You must stay.

She’s in so much pain. I can almost feel it.

Put your hand on her head and concentrate.

Alex stroked her silky hair and then rested his hand lightly on top of her head. He felt warmth flowing through his body and into hers. After a few moments, she visibly relaxed.

Devin gave him a suspicious look, and Alex removed his hand. Her pain had been minimized, though Alex wished he could do more for her. He took a deep breath to calm his heartbeat and regain his patience.

While new Brothers were being initiated, Alex’s thoughts wandered once more. He wondered what else Devin was going to do tonight. What else *could* Devin do? Marking Anna as a slave was insulting enough.

Ian approached, and Anna stood and then followed him across the platform to the table. Alex’s stomach filled with dread as he saw Ian produce a set of manacles.

“Vati...?”

Vati’s jaw clenched, but otherwise his face was inscrutable. It was the ‘angry, but under control’ face he used when dealing with arrogant government officials.

“Alex,” Devin said, stepping smoothly in front of him with a slight smirk on his face. “Would you mind assisting me with something?”

Alex glanced at Vati who nodded slightly. “Of course, Devin.”

Alex stood and followed the Elder to the back of the platform where a goat stood tethered to a post. A ceremonial knife and bowl lay on a nearby table. Ian was fastening the manacles around Anna's wrists, chaining her spread-eagle to the table.

Alex felt anger bubbling to the surface. He closed his eyes and breathed deeply. It would not help anything if he lost his temper. He had to stay calm. He *had* to.

Sebastian, what is going on?

Tell me what you see.

Alex looked around again. *A goat, a knife a bowl.... Oh, God, Sebastian, what the hell is he going to do to her?*

What color is the goat?

Black.

There was a pause. *Where is Anna?*

On a stone table. I've never seen anything like it.

If the goat hadn't been there, Alex would have feared for Anna's life.

Devin walked to the front of the platform. "My Brothers, tonight you are fortunate to witness something not seen in a very long time. Something that will help us rein in those who think they don't need us anymore."

The men applauded and looked with interest at Anna, compliant and chained to the table.

What's going on, Alex?

He said he's going to do something that hasn't been seen in a long time.

Another pause. *I could get into an enormous amount of trouble for helping you.*

Please, Sebastian. I failed her once already.

Sebastian didn't answer and Alex grew nervous as Devin walked over to Anna. He trailed his fingers over her body and she grimaced. His mouth

latched onto her nipple and Alex suppressed a growl.

Devin stepped between her legs and stroked her pussy and she gasped in pain. She struggled against the bindings for a moment, but relaxed as Devin walked away.

Alex gazed down at Anna with concern for a moment before the lights went out. He looked up to see Devin pick up the knife and begin murmuring. Alex resisted the urge to look back at Vati. He also resisted the urge to punch Devin in the face.

Devin swiped the knife across the goat's neck and it collapsed onto the stone platform, its lifeblood flowing down into the bowl at the lowered edge. Alex swallowed as his mouth filled with hot saliva. He normally wasn't squeamish, but the whole situation set his stomach on edge.

Devin glanced at him with an arched brow and amused eyes as he walked to him. "You'll need to help her drink this," he lifted the bowl slightly, "and then hold her down if she starts moving. I wouldn't want her to hurt herself."

Alex forced a smile. "Of course, Devin." *Sebastian!*

Tell me what he does as he does it. I will guide you through what you must do. But you must trust me.

Alex hesitated. What would Sebastian have him do? *I trust you. I always have.* He'd known Sebastian for eight years and his friend had never led him astray.

Alex moved to Anna's left side, his back towards the Brothers sitting on the benches below. Her guardian stood across from him with a smirk on his face, and Devin's deacon stood at her head.

Devin stared intently at Anna and she returned the look. He began to murmur again in a language Alex didn't recognize. Devin lifted the bowl

over his head, said something loudly in the unknown language, and then brought the bowl to his lips.

Devin passed the bowl to Jack, who drank, and then passed it to the Deacon. The Deacon did likewise and passed the bowl to Alex.

You're acknowledging that you're a witness to the ritual. Drink, Alex. It's the only way you can help her. You must be intimately part of this to save her.

Alex stared at the bowl and then tipped it towards his mouth. *Disgusting.* He swallowed and looked at Devin, who nodded towards Anna.

Why do I have to feed her?

Devin doesn't realize it, but he's giving you the opening you need. By feeding her, you will be able to interfere with the bonding.

Bonding?

Feed her, Alex.

The Deacon lifted her head and Alex lowered the bowl to her. "Drink," he said gently. As her lips touched the bowl, he felt a surge of warmth run through his body. "Open."

Obediently, she parted her lips and Alex poured some of the blood into her mouth. She coughed and shuddered, blood droplets landing on her perfect breasts.

Alex handed the bowl back to Devin. Devin took another drink and then handed the bowl to Ian, who had been waiting a respectful distance behind him. Anna trembled and Alex brushed his fingers over her temple in an attempt to comfort her.

He is going to take her mind, Alex. You must watch carefully what he does and be prepared to do the same thing. It will weaken his bond with her and hopefully bond you to her at the same time.

Hopefully?

It's never been done before. But I believe it to be true.

Alex would have to trust his friend.

Devin moved around Anna, stroking her skin, as Alex and the other men stepped back. Devin stopped at her head and placed his hands on her temple. She looked up at him and terror filled her eyes. Her mouth moved and she shook violently. Alex could see the wild pulse against her strained neck muscles as she stiffened.

Alex's heart raced as Devin walked back to the bottom of the table. Anna was shaking so badly that Alex was afraid she'd fall off the table, despite the chains. The Deacon and Jack loosened the manacles and Devin pulled her hips down towards him.

Anna's eyes met his, her terror ripping at his heart. *What must I do, Sebastian?*

Devin opened his robe and stroked his hard cock a few times before thrusting violently into Anna's body. She arched off the table and opened her mouth in a silent scream. Why wasn't she making any sounds?

The other men pushed her back down and Alex did likewise, if for no other reason than to keep her from falling.

It took all his strength to hold her down as Devin fucked her. Sweat glistened on Devin's forehead and his eyes were closed. His mouth dropped open as if in ecstasy. After what seemed like forever, Devin grunted and pulled out. Tears rolled down Anna's cheeks as she stared at Devin, eyes wide as if she felt betrayed.

Devin smirked and then walked away. Anna looked up at Alex with such a hopeless look in her eyes, it stabbed at his heart.

Sebastian!

Go to her head, I will give you the words to say.

Anna's eyes drooped and she shuddered as Alex put his hands on her temples. He repeated the words Sebastian gave him and her eyelids fluttered.

"Stay with me, Anna," he whispered, fearing he was losing her.

You must bond with her, Alex. You must consummate the bonding.

Alex moved down to between her legs and flinched as he saw her pussy. She was bleeding, and from more than just her new piercing. *What the fuck...?*

Devin turned and their eyes met. Devin stepped forward and Alex steeled his mind.

"Forgive me, *Schatzi*," he whispered. He opened his robe, surprised he was hard. How could he be hard at a moment like this?

Do it, Alex. If he touches her, it's over.

"Forgive me," he said, positioning himself at her brutalized entrance. He pushed forward and Anna's mouth opened in another silent scream.

And no wonder. Getting into her body was like trying to shove his cock into the barrel of his rifle. He knew he was above average in size, but this was ridiculous. It was painful for him; no wonder she was screaming...silently.

"No!" Devin screamed and reached for her.

Without thinking about it, he thrust his hips forward, tears filling his eyes, for Anna's pain and his own. He was certain he'd torn her. Would she ever forgive him?

Tears streamed down her face and he leaned forward to hold her body in place as he thrust in and out. It was not even remotely enjoyable and he prayed he'd be able to finish.

Miraculously, his balls tingled and he felt himself release into her body. It wasn't even an orgasm. Just release. Painful release. As soon as he was

done, he pulled out and rested his head on her knee, gasping for breath.

What did I just do? I tore her, Sebastian.

If everything went right, you've bonded with her. You are both her Master now.

Master?

You just performed the Bonding Ritual, banned centuries ago for its cruelty. It bonds a Master to his slave.

I don't want to be her Master, Sebastian. I want to be her lover...and husband someday.

You will have to tread carefully, Alex. Her Masters have been cruel to her in the past. You will have to show yourself to be different.

Then why become her Master at all?

Because if you didn't, she would be Devin's puppet now. She would no longer be an independent being, but an obedient, dangerous tool in Devin's hands. You have saved her, Alex. You have done what you set out to do. Now you must win over her heart.

Can the bonding and slavery be undone?

I believe so, when she is older, but that is a matter to deal with later. Nothing can be done about it for now.

Alex felt his temper rising and he clenched his fists. I'll just kill him now. Then it will be over.

If you kill Devin, you will kill Anna.

Fuck. Now what?

CHAPTER TWO

Anna's eyes snapped open and she squinted against the muted sunlight that made its way through the sheer curtains. She tried to move, but a strong, muscular arm wrapped around her waist held her in place.

Being held in place wasn't necessarily an unusual occurrence; when she slept with Jack, he often held her tight against him to make sure that his cock stayed in her ass. But Jack's arm wasn't nearly this muscular. Or long.

This arm obviously didn't belong to Jack, so who lay behind her? She knew she was in her room at the Manor, in her bed, under the comforter. The body behind her was very large, very warm, and very masculine, especially with the bulge pressing against her rear. Her head rested on the man's hard bicep with his forearm snug against her upper chest. Their bodies fit together like adjoining puzzle pieces. She also felt safe; something she hadn't experienced in many years.

Don't be ridiculous, Anna. There is no such place as "safe."

Tears stung her eyes as she thought about the previous night. Devin had been so kind to her when she moved into the Manor. She thought he'd changed back into the man she knew as a child. Her kind, sweet, loving Devin.

But his eyes had turned so dark and cold as she lay on that stone table. What had angered him as he gazed down at her?

Devin had warned her that the night wouldn't be pleasant. Her piercings had certainly been painful. Maybe he had to act that way for the

ritual? The thought made his coldness more bearable. But if it were true, why did his eyes remain cold after the ritual was complete? Why had he sneered at her?

Who was the real Devin? The nice one or the cruel one?

Devin had marked her as his slave; a slave complete with piercings. Just like the other girls. He had told her that the diamonds she wore made her special, but how could she know if he'd been telling the truth? Everything she'd come to accept about Devin in the last weeks seemed in doubt now.

What would happen now? Didn't slaves live downstairs? Would she lose the beautiful room she'd come to love? Would she be given to any man at the Gatherings now? Was she just another one of his girls now?

She sighed, confused and hurt. What did it mean to be Devin's slave?

Alex woke in a strange, feminine bedroom. This wasn't so unusual. He'd woken up in many women's beds over the course of the years, especially after his wife died. His mother had coined them his "years of insanity." It had happened before that time, too, but his mother didn't know about it, or didn't want to know. He was thankful that his era of stupidity was behind him...mostly.

He looked down without moving his head and saw the silky brown hair of the woman he held in his arms. She smelled like heaven; like making love outdoors in the spring back at his family's estate in *Deutschland*. His cock stirred at the thought of making love to her.

He knew the woman he held. Well, she was barely a woman. *Anna*. His *Schatzi*; his little treasure. He'd seen her for the first time four years ago, thinking it was a dream. The beautiful teenage girl had just appeared in his room that night....

Being a light sleeper, he'd awakened and sensed her before he could see her. His ability to wake automatically with the slightest sense of something amiss had saved his life several times.

He thought he saw a shadow near the door, but when the girl stepped into the moonlight, it had shocked him so much he'd actually gasped, sat up and rubbed his eyes. He never did that; never betrayed his position. But he'd also never had a teenage girl show up in his room in the middle of the night. Well, at least since he'd left for college.

At his movements, the girl had frozen in the bright moonlight, eyes wide with fright. Alex stared at her as his mind tried to wrap itself around the fact that there was an unknown girl in his room. Was this it? Was this the girl he was supposed to help?

"Who are you?" he asked in German.

She didn't respond and it pissed him off for some reason. Alexander Johannes Kunze Herzog von Hesse did not get ignored. Especially by females.

He jumped out of bed and glared at her for a moment before he realized he was naked. Cursing to himself, he reached around for the pants he had discarded earlier. He was glad to see she'd turned away. Perhaps this wasn't the girl Vati had spoken of; her kind were rarely shy. But as he walked towards her, his irritation melted away and he felt the connection that his father had told him about. She was the one who was in danger.

He knelt in front of her and gave her a gentle smile. "Who are you? How did you get in here?" he asked softly, so as not to frighten her. She just stared at him with her beautiful eyes, which he knew were green though they just looked dark in the silver moonlight. She was very pretty and he could imagine her getting plenty of attention from the boys at school. She

would certainly continue to garner male attention as she matured. For multiple reasons.

She took a step forward and reached out to him. His heart beat rapidly, realizing that this could be his chance to save her.

“Alex, where are you?” his wife, Mina, called from the bed.

The girl froze. Alex didn't want to shout, but knew he needed to answer Mina. “I'm using the bathroom. I'll be there in a minute,” he said as quietly as he could, but needing Mina to hear him.

He looked back at the girl. He and his father had argued about his elopement with Mina a year ago, almost to the day. The reason for the argument was standing right in front of him.

The girl blinked and her eyes filled with tears. Alex desperately tried to think of something to say to her, but to his dismay, she faded into the darkness.

His shoulders fell as he sat back hard on his heels, feeling, for the first time in his life, the pain of failure. He didn't like it.

Alex stood and pushed the feelings away as he returned to his bed and his wife. He kissed Mina's neck and reached around to caress her breast. Sex would make the pain go away. He was sure of it.

Anna's sigh brought Alex back to the present.

“Good morning, Schatzi,” he said in a low voice that rumbled from his chest.

She tried to move and he loosened his vice-like grip, allowing her to turn onto her stomach. Her eyes widened as she looked at him. Clearly, she hadn't been expecting him. Who could blame her? He'd been careful to maintain his distance to prevent Devin from finding out that Alex and his family knew about her. They'd barely spoken at all in the few days she'd been at his house.

“Good morning, my lord,” she said in a soft voice. She trembled and didn't make eye contact.

He relaxed as much as he could so she wouldn't feel threatened, if that were even possible, and caressed her cheek. She shivered and goose bumps appeared on her arm. “How are you feeling?” he asked softly.

She looked thoughtful for a moment. “Fine, thank you,” she answered, but winced as she shifted on her chest. He wondered if her piercings were still sore. “Almost healed,” she added with a nervous smile and sat up on her hip. “How may I please you, my lord?” she asked in a soft, seductive voice.

Her breasts were right in front of his face. She reached out to his bare chest and trailed her fingers down to his stomach. His muscles rippled under her touch and her perfect breasts with their rosy nipples were very, very alluring.

He was about to lean forward and take one of those nipples into his mouth when something stopped him. She was not just another Manor slave. Yes, she was his slave, but did he want to treat her as such? Did he want to reinforce the lies that Devin and Jack had likely been filling her head with all these years? How likely was she ever to learn to love him if he treated her that way?

The last question cooled his blood immediately. No. If he treated her like a slave, then she would believe that he saw her that way. He needed to treat her as she was: a sweet girl who, if all went right, would be his wife someday. He needed to treat her with respect, which meant he needed to keep his body under control.

From what little Alex had learned over the last week, Jack had kept her hidden away the majority of the last four years, and Vati was almost certain

she had been abused. From the way Devin treated her, he didn't hold her in high regard either. She was a slave to Devin; a tool to be used and abused.

Alex wanted her love and affection, not her body. Well, no, he wanted her body, but not *just* her body. He wanted all of her. He was twenty-eight. He could keep himself under control.

Alex looked at her and grimaced. She frowned slightly, and stopped her hand, then took a breath and began moving her hand downwards again. She smiled seductively as her hand glided lower to the waistband of his underwear.

He snaked his hand out and grabbed her wrist firmly, holding it in place, but not squeezing hard enough to hurt.

She blinked, staring hard at his hand, obviously perplexed. Had a man ever stopped her hand before? Why would he?

She looked back up at his face, eyes wide, and then gave him a timid smile. "Please, my lord, let me...."

"No," he growled.

She blinked rapidly and then tried to pull her hand away, wincing as if expecting him to hit her.

"Why are you wincing? I'm not going to hit you."

"But you're angry with me," she said.

"Anger is not justification for abuse," he said firmly, and released her hand. Who on earth would hit her just because they were angry? What kind of sick world did she grow up in? "And I'm not angry with you."

She frowned again, studying his eyes. "I know you're angry. I can feel it."

Ah, she was sensitive to his moods. He needed to watch himself around her. He cupped her cheek gently and softened his voice. "Yes, Anna, I'm angry. But not at you."

She snorted. "What's the difference?" Her eyes widened with horror and she clapped her hand over her mouth. She looked at him with tears in her eyes. "I'm sorry!"

His heart ached at her reaction. He tilted his head and brushed his hand lightly down the side of her face to comfort her. "You don't need to fear me," he said in a gentle voice. "I won't hurt you."

"It's okay if you want to." She shrugged slightly and gave him a timid smile. "I heal quickly."

A wave of nausea flooded his body. "Why would I want to hurt you? Why would anyone want to hurt you?"

"Men seem to like it."

He clenched his jaw. "Did Kurt hurt you?" He would kill his brother if he had hurt Anna.

She gasped and shook her head. "No. No, not in the least. He actually..." She blinked back tears. "He's the kindest man I've ever met. And your father too," she added quickly.

Alex arched his brow in amusement. He could think of many words to describe his brother: fickle, unreliable, erratic...but kind? Well, Alex supposed in his brother's own way he was. He certainly wasn't mean or cruel. "And what about me?" he asked.

Anna's eyes widened and she chewed her lip. She didn't answer right away. "I...I don't know," she said slowly. She paused. "You seem to be angry a lot," she whispered.

"I do?" he exclaimed in surprise. He knew his temper was a weakness and worked very hard to keep it under control. He didn't remember losing his temper this week, at least not in front of Anna.

"I'm sorry, my lord, I shouldn't have said that," she whispered, closing her eyes and wincing again.

It distressed him that she assumed he would hit her simply because he was angry. He berated himself for his tone; he'd spoken louder than he meant to. He caressed her cheek, trying to assure her that he wasn't angry at her.

She opened her eyes and looked at him, eyes full of fear.

“Anna, I told you, I will not hurt you,” he said, intentionally speaking in a soft, gentle voice. Would she ever be able to learn to trust him? Was she capable of trusting anyone? What had happened to make her this way?

She cleared her throat and watched as he lowered his hand to the bed in front of his chest.

“My lord,” she began tentatively. “If you don't want me to please you...why are you here?”

He studied her for a minute. Why was he here? “Because I didn't want Devin to put you somewhere I couldn't find you.”

After Alex had seen her in his room when she was younger, he and Vati had searched for her, but she had disappeared off the face of the earth. Vati concluded that someone was shielding her from his view; it was the only explanation.

Alex wouldn't risk losing her again. He had told Devin to fuck off when he tried to take her from him after she'd fallen asleep. Devin hadn't taken that well, but couldn't prevent Alex from taking her. Alex smiled, remembering the fury in Devin's face.

Anna traced a wrinkle in the sheets and sighed. “Why does it matter what Devin does to me?” she asked, her voice sad. “He's my Master. He can do as he likes.”

The finality of her statement made his heart sink. He wanted to give her hope. “No, he can't do solely as he pleases with you, despite his original plan. He has to deal with me now.”

Her head snapped up and her brow wrinkled in confusion. “I don’t understand. What do you have to do with me?”

It suddenly occurred to him that she might not know what the ritual had been about. Alex would bet anything that Devin had told her very little, if anything, about the truth of it. “He doesn’t have sole authority over you, Anna. He shares it with me.”

His gaze moved unconsciously down to her breasts, as they had several times in the last few minutes. That was not helping his resolve to keep his hands off her. He chuckled. “Perhaps you should lie down. Your nakedness is a bit distracting.”

He succeeded in receiving a shy smile from her and his heart lightened. She was absolutely stunning when she smiled.

She lay down with her head on the pillow and he brought the blanket up to cover her breasts before propping his head up on his fist.

He grinned. “Now I can concentrate better.”

She giggled softly and it warmed his heart. *What a wonderful sound.*

“What do you mean you share authority over me?” she asked. Her eyes had lost much of the fear that had consumed them moments before.

“The ritual from last night, it was a bonding ceremony. A uniting of a master and a slave. If I hadn’t interfered...Anna, your mind would have been completely his. You would have lost...you.” He grimaced. “You would have become his puppet.”

“Oh.” She looked baffled. “And you stopped it?”

He frowned, wishing he’d been able to do more for her. Sebastian had enabled him to keep the worst from happening and Alex was grateful. He hoped Sebastian was still around and not in trouble. “Partially. He still can control you, but so can I. If either of us commands you to do something, you must obey.”

“I already try to be obedient.”

“I’m sure you do, but if I hadn’t interfered...if he commanded you to go jump off a cliff, you would have without a second thought.”

“But I wouldn’t now?”

“No. Any command that would end your life would have to be doubled by me. There are other restrictions too.” Alex sighed. “It’s complicated. Everything in the Brotherhood seems complicated.”

“What’s the Brotherhood?”

He waved his hand around vaguely. “All this is part of it. We...well, we control the world.”

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CHAPTER THREE

Anna frowned at Alex's words. Something called the Brotherhood controlled the world? How was that possible? She might not have finished high school, but she was fairly certain there were elected officials in most countries. Devin was the CEO of a bank, not a politician. America was an independent country...and Alex was German...oh, she was confused!

She could feel Alex watching her. She shouldn't question him. He'd get angry. He might say that he wouldn't hit her, but she knew enough about men to know that when they got mad, they hit.

"Oh." What else could she say in response to that? Instead, she thought about what he had said about Devin. Why did Devin want to control her so completely? "So, you...saved me?" she asked quietly.

"Yes, Schatzi, I did." He tucked a lock of hair behind her ear and she shivered.

His hand lingered in her hair and she found herself leaning into him. "Why?" She closed her eyes. It felt good when he touched her; he was gentle.

"Because I had to." He sighed and his hand dropped away. "We don't know what Devin has planned, but we know it's not a good thing for a man like him to have so much power. Devin would use you to control many people. We can't allow that to happen. The entire world would be at risk. I had the opportunity and obligation to stop him."

“Oh.” She paled and pulled away from him, staring at his chest. She had been mistaken. He hadn’t saved her because he cared about her. He saved her because he had an obligation to do so. She rubbed the backs of her tingling fingers. “So, both you and Devin are my Masters?”

Alex grimaced and looked at the window behind her. “*Ja*.”

He was her Master. She needed to please him. “Master, please,” she said, reaching out to him once more. “I am well trained. I can please you...”

“No, Anna,” he growled.

She snatched her hand away and swallowed nervously as a cold chill ran through her body. Why wouldn’t he let her please him? Why did he become her Master if he didn’t want to use her?

“Anna, tell me how you were trained,” he said softly after a long silence.

She looked at him, surprised. Why would he ask such a question? His father was an Elder. Surely he knew how slaves were trained. “In the normal way, I suppose. Though Jack said he could be harder on me because I healed quickly.”

“What does training have to do with a quick healing ability?”

She stared at him, not understanding his question. “Aren’t your slaves trained?”

He frowned. “Of course they are.”

“Wouldn’t the trainers enjoy it if a slave had a quick-healing ability?”

He looked confused. “I don’t understand your connection. What does training have to do with healing?” He inhaled sharply and then looked her directly in the eye. “Anna, tell me how you were trained,” he said in a firm voice.

Her eyes widened slightly as she *felt* the command. So that’s what it would feel like when she was told to do something. She took a deep breath.

“When I was sixteen, Jack brought me here and Devin and I had sex. Then Jack took me home and started training me. Well, he told me that my training had really begun when I was twelve, because I started learning about sex then, but—”

Alex frowned. “What did he do to you when you were twelve?”

Anna shrugged. “He started touching me and stuff.”

Alex was bewildered. Jack had started molesting her when she was twelve? How could someone want to touch a twelve-year-old little girl like that? He shuddered at the thought.

“Jack said it would help me feel better after my parents' death,” she continued with a shrug. “It did.”

“When did you go to live with your guardian?” he asked.

“After my parents died,” she said softly. “Right after, actually. I was with Jack when they died.”

Alex frowned. There was more to this story than just molestation and painful training. “Why don't you start from when your parents died and tell me how your guardian raised you.”

Anna nodded obediently. She stared hard at his chest and began speaking softly. “We were driving home from the opening night of the Nutcracker performance when my parent’s car flipped off the bridge. I was in the car with Jack. He took me home with him and I stayed with him from then on. After the funeral, Jack and Devin.... They...they touched me and it felt good. It made my heart not hurt so bad. It gave me relief from missing my parents.”

“Touched you how?”

“They kissed me and played with my pussy. Devin gave me my first orgasm with his mouth that afternoon. After that, they were constantly

giving me orgasms. It felt good and I liked it. A lot. From things they said, I'm pretty sure he did it to me when I was a baby too, but I don't remember it."

Bile rose in Alex's throat. The thought of a young Anna being molested by those men made him want to punch someone. He growled without thinking about it and regretted it when he saw the fear in her face. He forced himself to relax and she continued, staring at his chest and twisting the sheet around her fingers.

"They did it a lot: several times a day. Two girls lived with us that Jack was training. I didn't know what that meant until later." She shuddered. "The day before my sixteenth birthday, Jack brought me here, to the Manor. They undressed me and tied me to a bed and left me alone."

"Why?"

"I don't know, but I'd been touched almost constantly for four years by then. Not just sexually. They'd hold me and hug me and stuff, too. But they tied me to that bed and I was alone for hours. My body started to ache for touch. It started to hurt. I remember screaming and crying for someone to come to me. It was tortuous. I couldn't sleep and I got really...my brain got all mushy and I couldn't concentrate on anything. I thought I was in hell." She shuddered again.

She'd twisted her fingers into the sheets and pulled at them, but couldn't get free. Alex untied them with gentle movements and then kept hold of her hands. Both of hers fit into one of his. She looked up at him with wide eyes and he gave her a gentle smile.

She swallowed and looked back at his chest. "Finally, I felt someone touching me. When I was able to think straight, I realized that it was Devin on top of me, kissing me and touching me all over my body. It felt so good.

He was naked and...well, he had sex with me. It was my first time. It hurt.” She chewed her lip. “Then Jack and Devin changed.”

“Changed how?” He fought against his desire to go and beat Devin’s face in.

Her brows twitched slightly and she swallowed before answering. “They came to see me the next day and they were mean. Cruel. Devin hit me. Jack, too. They told me how my life was going to be different. That they were now my Masters and I had to obey them.” She sighed and played with the sheet. “Jack took me home and began training me. He trained me until last week when he brought me back here to Devin.” She looked up at him and offered a shy smile.

He frowned. Why was she so reluctant to tell him anything?

She blinked and looked back down at the sheets.

“What was involved in this ‘training’?”

“I learned how to submit and to please a man.” Anna shrugged. “Jack hit me a lot. He used whips and...did other things to teach me to submit. And he and his friends had sex with me a lot, too.”

Alex listened in horror as Anna described some of the lessons Jack had taught her in her training. Alex didn’t know which upset him more, the descriptions of the training, or the offhand manner in which she spoke of her guardian’s abuse. How could she speak of it so casually?

She shifted her body away from his, but he barely acknowledged it.

“They tortured and raped you?” he asked.

“I wouldn’t exactly call it torture....”

Unconsciously, Alex's left hand curled up into a fist. Anna winced and pulled back even more. Seeing her wince made him realize what he was doing. He took a deep breath and willed his body to relax.

“Anna, I will never hit you,” he promised and put his hand on top of hers.

“It’s okay. I don’t mind so much.”

“No, Anna. It’s not okay.” Frustration arose in his heart and he ran his fingers through his hair. “It’s not okay that they betrayed your trust like that. You weren’t raised in the *Schloss*. You should have been raised in a loving home by your parents.”

She shrugged. “I survived. How else would I make it, now that I’m...Devin’s?”

“You shouldn’t be Devin’s. You should be your own person with your own life.” His words were quiet, but they reverberated in the room.

“I don’t understand,” she said, her voice so faint he could barely hear her.

“You weren’t born in the Manor. You weren’t raised here. Dirne who are born in the Schloss work there, not little girls born into loving homes.”

“Devin claimed me at birth. He said so.”

“He had no right to do so. He shouldn’t have done it. I wouldn’t be surprised if—” He wouldn’t be surprised if Devin and Jack had some hand in her parent’s death, but he stopped himself before he spoke the words aloud. She didn’t need to be burdened with that knowledge unless it could be confirmed.

“You wouldn’t be surprised if what?”

“Nothing, it’s not important,” he snapped before he realized it and instantly regretted it.

“I’m sorry,” she whimpered, squeezing her eyes shut.

He sighed, hating how scared she was, though he understood now. “I shouldn’t have snapped, Anna. I’m sorry.” He moved his hand back to her

hair and played with it again. “You’ve grown into a beautiful woman, Schatzi.”

Her eyes opened again. “What does shatsey mean?”

“Schatzi?” Alex silently cursed at himself. He’d been calling her that without thinking about it. It came to him more naturally than *Anna* did. Now she would know how he felt about her. He hoped it didn’t bother her. “It means ‘little treasure.’”

She twisted her fingers in the sheet. “Why do you call me that?”

He looked at her, puzzled. “Why shouldn't I call you that?”

“You don't seem to like me very much.”

His jaw dropped open in surprise. She thought he didn't like her? He could barely control himself around her. He was rapidly falling in love with her. He wanted to take her home with him and make up for all the love she'd missed out on. “Anna, I...that's not true. I like you a lot.”

“You do?” She looked shocked.

“Yes.” He smiled and stroked her hair.

“Master, why won't you let me please you then?” she asked with desperation in her voice.

He grimaced at her calling him Master and closed his eyes. He didn't want to be her Master. He wanted to be her friend and lover and someday, husband.

He felt her shrink away from him and he opened his eyes. “I’m not angry at you, Anna. I'm sorry. I need to control my emotions better.” He stroked her cheek with his knuckles. “I’m angry at the situation, Schatzi. I don't like the idea of you being my slave. I don't like the idea of you being anyone's slave.” He smiled wryly. “But if being my slave keeps you safe, then we'll figure out a way to make it work until it can be undone.” It would have to be undone. She needed to be free.

She reached for his chest again, but he shook his head. “I don't want you to please me out of obligation, Anna. I want you to do it because you want to.”

She blinked. “I want to please you because you are my Master.” She smiled hesitantly. “Isn't that enough?”

“No, Anna. It's not enough.” He gazed into her eyes and felt his willpower diminishing.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Anna couldn't understand why Alex wouldn't want her, given his statements. He was so confusing. He didn't act like men were supposed to act.

A sharp knock on the door made Anna jump and pull her gaze away from Alex. "Come in," she called.

The door opened and Maggie walked in holding a large tray. "Good morning, my lord. Good morning, Mistress."

"*Guten Morgen, Fräulein.*" Alex greeted her with a smile. Maggie smiled shyly and turned to put the tray on the table.

"I've brought your breakfast. Sarah will be up shortly with your clothing, my lord. Mistress, would you like me to help you dress? Master would like to see you after you've finished eating."

Anna glanced at Alex. It didn't seem right for her to be dressed before her Master.

Alex motioned towards Maggie. "Get dressed. My clothes will be here in a minute."

Anna turned back to Maggie and gave her an uncertain smile. "Okay, Maggie. Thank you."

Maggie went to the closet and retrieved a green dress for Anna. As Maggie was zipping the dress, the door opened and Sarah entered carrying

several hangers with clothes. “Good morning, my lord. Good morning, Mistress.”

Alex stood and reached for his clothes. He looked magnificent standing next to the bed in gray boxer-briefs and nothing else. “*Guten Morgen, Fräulein.*”

Anna couldn't tear her eyes away from him. He stood as tall as the high canopy of her bed, and his chest, shoulders and arms were so beautifully sculpted that she longed to become an artist just so she could capture the beauty of his body. His shoulders were wide and tapered down to a narrow waist.

Her knees weakened at the sight. *Oh my!*

Alex gave her a boyish grin as he raked his fingers through his sleep-mussed hair, then turned to walk towards the bathroom. She followed him with her eyes as he walked across the room, body erect and straight. How impressive his stature was! She'd never seen someone that large move so gracefully.

After he disappeared into the bathroom and closed the door, Anna realized she'd been staring with her mouth gaping open. She turned around to face Sarah and Maggie and saw that they'd been having similar reactions as they stared at the closed bathroom door.

Maggie shook her head and cleared her throat. She looked down at the ground. “Forgive me, Mistress. I shouldn't have stared like that.”

Anna's heart ached at the thought of Maggie feeling ashamed for staring, especially when Anna had done the same thing. Sarah stared at the ground as well. Anna thought desperately for a way to reassure them and take away the shame.

She grinned suddenly. “It's hard not to be overcome by a beautiful work of art, isn't it?”

They both looked at her wide-eyed and Anna giggled. They smiled, seemingly relieved.

“Hasn't he ever come to the Gatherings before?”

They both shook their head.

“He comes other times with his friends,” Sarah said. “But not to the Gatherings. Those would be memorable nights if he did so.”

The three of them grinned sheepishly at each other for a moment.

“Is there anything else you need, Mistress?” Maggie asked.

When Anna shook her head, Sarah and Maggie left the room, playful demeanor deliberately erased before leaving.

Anna wandered over to the door that led out to the yard and leaned her head on the sheer curtain that covered the cool glass. She tried to make sense of what had happened last night, but it still confused her. She knew only one thing for certain: she now had two Masters: Devin and Alex.

Devin had been so angry last night. Was he still so this morning? Devin's anger frightened her more than anything else she could imagine. If for no other reason, she was obedient because she feared him. When she'd tried to kill herself, a year into her training, she had experienced the full wrath of his rage. Devin had done things to her and in front of her that still haunted her nightmares.

Anna let out a shaky breath that fogged the window, desperately hoping that Devin was no longer angry.

The bathroom door opened a few minutes later and Alex emerged wearing a long-sleeved blue dress shirt and black dress pants. The color of his shirt made his eyes appear even bluer than earlier. She lost herself in his eyes, momentarily forgetting he was her Master and just enjoying his powerful, yet gentle, presence.

“Shall we eat?” he asked with a gentle smile.

Anna nodded and followed him to the table.

They each took a plate and began eating in silence. Anna's head was bursting with confusing new thoughts and emotions. Alex was quiet and Anna didn't dare break the mood. She looked up at him surreptitiously every few minutes and he appeared to be deep in thought.

"How would you feel about having your own place to live, Anna?" he asked suddenly.

She blinked. "What?"

He smiled at her. "I would prefer it if you didn't live here at the Manor. You've been cooped up for too long, and I want you to experience some freedom."

Freedom? "I don't know if I know how to do that. Besides, I don't have any way to support myself."

"Part of being a good Master is taking care of those who belong to him," he said softly.

Anna stared at her plate. A good Master? She didn't think such a thing was possible. "I'm fine here, Master. You needn't waste your money on me." She wasn't worth worrying about.

"I wouldn't consider it a waste of money. Besides, you'd be closer to both myself and Devin if you lived in the city."

"Oh." She understood now. Yes, it would be more convenient for them. The Manor was many miles from Alex's house. "Whatever would please you, Master."

Alex sighed internally. He'd made a poor word choice, making it sound like he didn't want to be inconvenienced by having to come out here to see her. Yes, he wanted her near him, but he wanted her to gain some

independence. To learn how to be a normal twenty-year-old young woman. She'd been kept hidden away for too long and needed to experience...life.

How could she freely choose him if she hadn't ever been free? If she didn't know what was out in the world, then how could he be sure of her feelings for him? She needed to go out with her friends and go to parties and...other stuff.

Alex frowned at the thought of other stuff. He didn't like the idea of anyone being with her except him. But was it fair to pursue her if she felt obligated to him? She would do anything he asked, even if she didn't want to. If he wanted her to go out with him, she would. If he wanted her to make love to him, she would.

That was not how he wanted their relationship to start. But how could he handle it without hurting her feelings? He wanted her, God, how he wanted her! But even more, he wanted her heart freely given.

She needed to experience life. To do that, she had to be out of the Manor.

"Anna, I want you to have your own place so you can be out from under the thumb of your guardian and Devin."

She looked up at him with those sad eyes that made his heart ache. "Why? I'm just a slave."

Not to me, you're not. "You're not supposed to be a slave and I refuse to treat you as such."

"You keep saying that, but I don't understand why."

Alex stared at her for a long moment. Was it possible she didn't know what she was? Why wouldn't Devin...?

He felt his temper rising again. Devin had never told her. By keeping her unaware of her heritage and powers, Devin would be able to keep her feeling defeated and weak. If she knew the truth, she would be empowered.

Fuck. She needed to know, but this was not the place to tell her. He needed to get her out of the Manor before he told her, otherwise, Devin would never let her out. Alex needed to be smart about this. He needed to speak to Vati before he said anything.

“Like I said before, you weren’t born here. You don’t belong here.”

She gave a slight nod and took a bite of her breakfast.

Alex sighed. This was going to be more difficult than he could ever have imagined.

“Kurt said that you take ballet lessons.”

Anna nodded. “I do. Twice a week.” Though she’d missed her Thursday class this week. She’d not been in any condition to dance after trying to get her necklace. She bit her lip, remembering what Devin had told her. Had he really meant what he said about contacting Isaak, the Ballet Master of the San Francisco Ballet Company? If she was supposed to become a puppet after last night’s ritual...had he been lying when he told her that? The thought made her chest hurt.

“Anna, what’s wrong?”

“I....” She shook her head. “Nothing. It’s not important.”

“Please tell me.”

It wasn’t a command. She wondered at his interest in her thoughts. “Devin had said something about letting me dance more....” She trailed off, feeling foolish.

“What did he say?”

“He asked if there was something he could do to make up for...well, the last four years.” She shrugged.

Alex snorted.

“The first thing that came to mind was that I wanted to dance more. So, that’s what I asked. He said that he’d call Isaak...” She trailed off, her heart breaking at the realization that it probably wouldn’t happen. “Now, I don’t know if he really meant it,” she whispered, dejected.

Alex reached across the table and put his hand on hers. “I will make sure you get to take those classes, Anna.” His voice was firm.

She shook her head. “If Devin doesn’t want me to...”

Alex shook his head. “Anna, he doesn’t have sole authority over you, remember? He shares it with me now. And I will make sure you dance as much as you want.”

She stared at him. Why did he care so much if she danced? “Why?”

“Because I watched you during *Sleeping Beauty*. You were enthralled. If you danced with Aaron when you were twelve, and with your parents being as talented as they were...well, you must be good.” He gave her an affectionate smile.

Anna suddenly remembered their conversation at the ballet. He had said that his best friend was a principal dancer. “Is Aaron your best friend?”

He grinned. “I thought you'd have figured that out by now.”

“I hadn't connected the ideas. You were...not especially friendly when we went to the ballet.”

Alex shook his head. “I'm so sorry for the way I acted toward you, Anna. Believe it or not, I'm actually a pretty fun guy to be around.”

She smiled shyly. He did seem nice, now that she was getting to know him a little better. “Kurt said it was more fun to stay at your house than the hotel.”

He rolled his eyes. “*Mein Brüder...*”

Anna thought about Kurt. She’d had a good time with him. He’d been so nice. Would she be able to see him again? What would Alex expect from

her?

“Is there anything I can do for you, Master?” she asked as he put his fork down on his empty plate. She wanted to make sure he was taken care of before she went to find Devin. That would be one less thing for Devin to be angry about.

“Nein, Schatzi.”

She wiped her hands on her napkin. “I should go find Devin.”

“I imagine he'll want to speak to me as well.”

Alex held out his hand to Anna. “I believe I might know where Devin is.”

She reached for it timidly and he took her small hand in his big one. She gave him a smile that melted his heart. How could anyone want to hurt this precious girl?

The more he thought about the abuse that her guardian and Devin had heaped on her, the angrier he got. It was all he could do to stay in the room and not start planning an assassination of his own design. He couldn't remember the last time he'd been so angry.

But he would kill Anna if he killed Devin. That was the only reason that man was still alive. Jack, on the other hand.... No. As much as he desired to remove the man's head from his body with his bare hands, he couldn't without permission, and he was unlikely to get it. Jack was a Brother and had just been doing what his Elder told him to do.

Alex just had to be patient. He would get his revenge. Of that he had no doubt.

He saw Anna look at the door and hesitate. He didn't blame her for being nervous about going to find Devin. Alex wasn't especially looking

forward to it either. It would take every ounce of his self-control to keep his hands off the cruel Elder.

Alex walked to the door to open it and found it locked. He glanced back at Anna, confused.

“It's always locked from the outside,” she explained. “Devin said it's to keep me safe.”

Alex turned away from her to hide his frown. How could being locked in her own room keep her safe? More likely it was to keep her contained so that Devin knew where she was.

He knocked on the door and it opened. Glancing back, he held out his hand again. He loved the feel of her skin. It was so soft. “*Komm mit mir.*”

She slipped her hand into his and he led her out into the hallway. They had taken only a few steps when Anna tried to pull away, but he refused to let go.

She stopped, tugging hard against him. He didn't want to let go; he liked the assurance that she was next to him.

“Master, please,” she implored in a whisper. “I shouldn't walk with you like this.”

He pressed his lips together. She was right. She would get in trouble if Devin saw her trying to be “equal” to him by walking next to him. When she pulled again, he let her go. She let him walk ahead a few steps, then followed behind him, eyes downcast.

Alex led her to the bottom floor and to the set of double doors that led to Devin's study. He knocked once and the door opened. Ian stood in the doorway and they eyed each other for a moment before Ian stepped back and allowed them to enter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Devin sat behind his massive wooden desk, waiting for Anna to arrive. His fingers were tented and his mouth rested on his index fingers as he stared out the window, lost in thought.

Despite the wall of tall windows across from the desk, the room had a dark feel to it, which suited his mood perfectly this morning. The wooden bookshelves that made up one wall and his desk were all made from the same dark wood. The chairs and sofa that sat next to the windows were covered in dark green brocade. The floor, covered with a large, dark green rug, matched the dark wood of the rest of the room.

Devin clenched his jaw, remembering the previous evening. To say he was angry would be an understatement; he was enraged. Twenty-three years of planning had gone down the drain because of that fucking German. Damn fucking Alex for interfering in the ritual. How could he have underestimated the man? How had Alex known what to do to interfere?

His anger extended to Anna as well, although his rational side told him she had nothing to do with Alex's actions. She couldn't have possibly done anything to encourage or prevent the derailing of his long-term plan. She knew nothing. Nothing of his plans for her; nothing of her true nature. Exactly the way Devin wanted it.

Devin had thought he'd been clever in having Alex participate in the ritual. Alex would have spent the rest of his life regretting the fact that he'd

been right next to Anna and watched her fade away, knowing he hadn't saved her.

When Anna had told him that Alex had been cold to her, Devin had been certain that Alex knew nothing of his plans and nothing of Anna's true nature.

Devin had been wrong. Dead wrong.

How did Alex know and how did he know there was a way to interfere with Devin's plans? *Fuck!* Devin had studied for decades and he'd seen nothing in the old tome that indicated a slave bonding with two Masters was possible. *How did Alex know?* Someone must have told Wilhelm.

Fucking Germans.

Alex's interference had even denied Devin the pleasure of fucking Anna after the ritual. He had been looking forward to having Anna in his bed, playing with her and testing her obedience and lost self-will. She'd been coming around nicely, learning that her pain gave him pleasure and getting off on it. Had he lost everything he'd been working for these last few weeks? He didn't know because Fucking Alex had stolen her away after they'd argued.

The rest of the Gathering had been one of the most difficult Devin had ever attended. He'd had to play nice and pretend everything was fine. Making a scene would have just exacerbated the situation. Devin knew he could still fix it, to an extent. He just had to figure out how. There had to be a way. There *had* to be.

Since he couldn't be with Anna last night, he'd gone into the Red Room and worked over one of his girls so badly, he was fairly certain he'd killed her. He'd taken two more to bed with him and roughed them up pretty good as well. At least one of them was still alive this morning because he'd

fucked her hard and made her scream. The maids were going to have their work cut out for them, cleaning up his room.

He slammed his fist on the desk, causing Ian, who was sitting on the couch across the room, to jump. *Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!* Years of planning and now this! He'd have to somehow share Anna now. *Fuck.*

How could he manipulate the situation to gain the advantage for himself?

The bottom line was that he had to get rid of Alex somehow. Devin understood that he couldn't kill him, but maybe he could just make him disappear until after Anna's twenty-sixth birthday, when the final bonding was to be performed. Then he could re-perform the ritual, as prescribed in the tome, without Alex's interference and she would be his forever. But how could he make an Elder-Son disappear for six years?

This required some serious thought. And research. He had to be careful. Alex and his family were well-liked and Devin couldn't risk anyone finding out that he'd had something to do with the disappearance.

These thoughts calmed him. Having direction allowed his rage to settle into a dull simmer. Yes, he could do this. His plans hadn't failed, they'd just taken an unexpected turn. He would step back and regroup. It would all work out. It had to.

His thoughts turned to his sweet little Anna. She was the key to making his plans work. But first, he needed to find out how much control over her he still had.

How would this double bonding affect her? She was supposed to have been turned into his mindless slave, happy to do whatever he told her to. Would that still be the case? How independent would she remain? She had to obey him...right?

Devin did not like being unsure. He would have to find out. Quickly. He had a banquet to take her to on Wednesday and he'd been expecting to take his sweet little puppet.

Someone knocked on the door and Ian stood to answer it. Devin had been expecting Anna by herself. What he got was Alex, followed by Anna. *Fuck.*

One look at Alex's face and Devin knew that Alex had been keeping Anna at a distance this week on purpose. Fortunately, looks couldn't kill. But Alex himself was unquestionably capable of killing; that Devin had learned last night when he saw the unmistakable ring on Alex's pinky. For the first time since the ritual, Devin was thankful for Alex's obvious concern for Anna. Otherwise, Devin wouldn't have woken up this morning.

Devin stood and walked around to the front of the desk as they entered the room. Anna stood with her mouth gaping, looking around like a child in a candy store. Her fondness for reading would make the fifteen-foot-high wall of books in front of her look like heaven.

Devin cleared his throat and Anna looked at him with a shy smile. He frowned and pointed to the floor. Her eyes widened and she rushed over and dropped to her knees in the proper bow before him. She was trembling, and her fear pleased him. He was half-tempted to kick her in the ribs, but didn't think that would be a smart thing to do in front of Alex. The man might not be able to kill him, but Devin was fairly certain Alex could do some serious damage without breaking a sweat.

Devin stepped over Anna and walked to the seating area near the window. He motioned to Alex. "Please, Alex. Sit." He said it as pleasantly as he could through clenched teeth.

Alex walked over, face now impassive, and sat on the couch. Devin motioned to Ian as he sat and Ian left the room.

“Anna,” Devin snapped. “Come.”

Anna hastened to her feet, nearly tripping over her dress and hurried across the room to sit at Devin's feet. Devin smiled as he saw her still trembling.

Devin stroked her hair as if to comfort her. “You didn’t brush your hair, Anna,” he said in a low voice, combing his fingers through her hair until he found a tangle.

Her hair was unkempt, but it was still silky from the night before and a tangle was difficult to locate. He yanked his fingers through it and she gasped in pain. He grabbed a fistful of hair and yanked, pulling her head back until she was looking at him upside down. She struggled for air and looked at him with frightened eyes.

“Never come to me with unbrushed hair again. Do you understand?”

She moved her mouth, trying to find enough air to form words. “Yes, Master,” she answered in a hoarse whisper.

He released her hair and her head snapped forward. She coughed and Devin would have sworn he heard Alex growl.

“Is that really necessary?” Alex asked in an icy voice.

Devin hesitated. Not knowing how the interrupted ritual had affected Anna, being a cruel master to her might backfire, especially with Alex around. She clearly wasn’t mindless this morning and she looked at him in absolute terror. If he wanted her to be the effective tool he needed, she needed to trust and love him. Otherwise, she'd be acting out of fear and wouldn't be as persuasive. She needed to believe in him.

Fuck, this was exactly why he had performed the ritual in the first place. So he didn’t have to worry about all that shit.

He took a deep breath to calm himself. “No. I suppose not. I didn't sleep well last night.” He petted Anna's hair again, gently this time, and he

felt her begin to relax.

“That can happen when events progress in unexpected ways,” Alex commented, raising his brows, his eyes glinting with amusement.

“Yes. My evening certainly didn't go the way I expected it to.” *Fucking arrogant bastard.* “I suppose we need to discuss our *unexpected* situation, then. Don't we?”

“I agree,” Alex said. “I want her to live outside the Manor. In an apartment downtown. I will gladly pay her living expenses.”

Straight to the point. Devin could respect that. The sooner they were done with negotiations, the sooner he could fuck Anna and see how she would react to him.

He considered Alex's request. Anna living downtown had its appeal. Yes, there was a risk in her living alone, but the GPS tracker in her necklace would ensure he knew where she was at all times. She wasn't stupid enough to go out without it again, not after her afternoon with the Russians. She certainly learned the consequences of going out without her necklace.

But did Devin want Alex paying for everything? The idea made him uneasy.

“Do you have a place in mind?” Devin asked, curious.

“I do. There's a two-bedroom apartment in the Sapphire that is being held for her.”

Anna looked up, subtly. Apparently, she hadn't been informed of this.

Devin narrowed his eyes. How was it possible that he had an apartment for Anna already? Unless.... “You knew something was going to happen last night?”

Alex nodded and Devin's jaw clenched. How had he known? Who could have told him? He glared at Alex. “How?”

Alex only arched an eyebrow and looked amused.

Fucking bastard!

He knew the building that Alex was talking about. It had a good reputation and the location couldn't be better; only a few blocks from his office. It would be more convenient for him to visit Anna there rather than driving all the way out to the Manor. He could send men over to fuck her, or do whatever to her. *Yes, this is good...even if it comes from him.*

His cock twitched at the thought of being with Anna on a regular basis. Maybe he would have her come over to his house occasionally, too. That would drive Sandy crazy, seeing him with a beautiful twenty-year-old. He smiled at the vision of his wife's hurt face as he fondled Anna in front of her. It would serve her right for getting knocked up by her lover. Maybe he'd even make Sandy watch as he fucked Anna hard in their own home. That thought cheered him and he decided he would act upon it on Wednesday after the banquet.

“Agreed. But I want to pay half of her expenses. After all, I'm her Master too.”

A hint of a smile appeared on Alex's face. “I can afford it far better than you can.”

“You mean your family can.”

Alex shrugged. “There are benefits to belonging to one of the wealthiest families in the world.”

Devin's eyes narrowed. Was that a slam on his own personal finances? “I can afford my share.” He could. Easily.

“All right,” Alex said after a pause. “I want her to have her own car and credit cards.”

“Fine. I will notify the bank on Monday.”

“I have her car for her already.”

“Really? What kind of car do you think she should have?” Alex really had been prepared for all of this. Devin didn’t like that idea one bit.

“A Mercedes, of course.”

Of course he would pick a German car. “Fine.” It didn’t matter. Devin paused. “I have certain plans that I’ve made for her. Social engagements that I need her for.”

“Fine. As long as you treat her as a person and not as a slave.”

“I wouldn’t do that in public, Alex,” Devin chided. “That would be counterproductive.”

Alex’s jaw muscles clenched, but that was his only reaction. He was silent for a moment, then smiled with a glint in his eyes. “I want her to have a chance to dance again. Full time. I’m certain that she’s too talented for you to have kept her away from that.”

Devin didn’t answer right away. *Fuck*. It’s not that he didn’t want Anna dancing. He didn’t care what the hell she did when he didn’t need her. And it did keep her body beautiful and her mind sane. “Agreed. I want her every Friday for the Gatherings.”

Alex’s jaw clenched. “What if she has performances?”

“She hasn’t even begun dancing again, Alex. Let’s take things one step at a time.”

Alex was quiet for a moment and then lifted his chin. “Agreed. I want the option to take her to social events as well. And travel.”

“Then we should probably set up some sort of calendar so we know when she’s available,” Devin said sarcastically.

“That’s probably a good idea. Then we know exactly what’s going on and our interactions will be kept at a minimum.”

Devin chuckled. Alex made a good point. “Agreed.” Now for the *coup de grace*. He leaned forward. “I want to be able to send men to her

apartment for her to have sex with. That's part of why I agreed to her own apartment in the first place.” Devin's hand still rested on Anna's head and he felt her flinch.

“They might hurt her,” Alex said with a frown.

“She's tough. That's why we trained her as we did.” Devin enjoyed Alex's discomfort.

Alex growled. “Yes, I heard about your training methods. You're barbaric.”

Devin's eyes flashed with anger and he yanked Anna's hair back so she was looking at him upside down again. He glared at her. “You shared your training experiences with him?”

“Let her go,” Alex demanded. “I ordered her to tell me about them. She didn't volunteer them.”

Devin released her hair and she coughed softly.

Alex gave him a deadly look. “I knew there was a reason I didn't like you.”

“Oh, believe me. The feeling is mutual.” Devin smirked. “My training methods have served this Manor well for many years. Didn't you enjoy her training this morning?”

Alex didn't answer.

Devin laughed. “You didn't fuck her? Why the hell not?”

“Last night was difficult for her. I'm not that selfish.”

Devin rolled his eyes. Alex and his goodness. “It has nothing to do with being selfish, Alex. Men have needs. She is very, very good at meeting those needs.” He stroked her cheek from behind. “You really should sample your slave.”

Alex huffed. “Can we please get back to the subject? I have things to do today.”

“What else do you want?” Devin snapped. What else was there to discuss?

“When she's not needed by either of us, I want her to be free to do as she pleases, as long as it is not dangerous and is of a respectable nature. I want her to have a social life. She's been isolated for far too long.”

Devin studied Alex for a moment, wondering about his motivations.

“Anna, look at me.” Devin said.

She obeyed instantly, turning around on her knees. He studied her for a long moment.

As much as Devin was loathe to admit it, Alex was right. Anna needed to be around people. More than just sexually. She was very awkward in situations that didn't involve sex.

He realized he had to play the nice card again and smiled at her. “Yes, I would agree, Alex. She has been isolated for too long.” Devin deliberately softened his gaze as he looked at her. “Maybe I was wrong, keeping you away from people. You've never even been on a date, have you?”

Anna blinked and looked at him with wide eyes. “N-no, Master.”

Devin gave her a gentle smile. “That is a pity. My girls are at that age...” He sighed. His girls were growing up too fast. “Anna, you should go out and have fun. Be young for a while. As Alex said, we only ask that you act respectably and be available when I or Alex needs you.” *And when they break her heart, she'll come crawling back to me and never want to go out again.* This idea had merit.

Anna's mouth opened, her lips forming a beautiful pink ‘o’ that he wanted to ram his cock through.

“That's...very generous of you, Devin,” Alex said slowly.

Devin cupped Anna's chin. “What do you think, Anna? Does that sound good?”

“Yes, Master. Thank you.” She gave him a timid smile.

He stroked her cheek. “You'll live close by me,” he said softly, giving her another gentle smile. “I'll have to come visit you often.”

He leaned down and kissed her, his lips enveloping hers. His fingers trailed down her neck before he pulled her up into his lap and cupped her breast.

“You should mark her, Alex,” Devin said, pushing her breast up and bending down to kiss the top of it. She leaned her head back and sighed. He loved how responsive she was. He pulled her dress down to reveal her left breast. “This nipple is free.”

“Elder-Mistresses aren't supposed to be pierced,” Alex responded coldly.

Devin rolled the nipple between his fingers. “I'm sure the others would understand. Elder-Mistresses aren't usually slaves.” He pinched her nipple and she moaned. “Masters are supposed to mark their slaves. You can't deny that.”

“*Ja*, that is true.” Alex sighed. “Do you have a place I can do it?” he asked without emotion.

Anna looked over at him, startled. She clearly wasn't looking forward to another piercing session. Alex looked back at her impassively. She blinked and looked down at her hands.

Devin chuckled. “Of course. You can do it in her room if you'd like. Or here.”

“Her room will be fine.” Alex stood.

“I'll have Ian bring the piercer to you in her room. You know how to get back to her room, correct?”

“Of course,” Alex said in a short tone.

“Yes, you would remember. You must have an uncanny knack for remembering where things are.”

“It does tend to be beneficial in...what I do.”

Devin wondered if Anna knew her new Master was a highly trained killer. “Of course it is.” He pushed her off his lap and stood, looking at Alex. “When did you want to set her up in the apartment?”

Alex stood as well and smiled slightly. “It’s ready for her whenever she is. I’d like to take her to it this morning.”

“You took her from me last night. I want her before she leaves.”

“Her car is at her apartment.”

“I’ll drop her off at your place on my way home,” Devin said with a shrug.

“When?”

“When I’m done with her,” Devin growled. He needed to get rid of this man soon.

“I want her at my home by dinner. I’ll take her to her apartment tomorrow.”

“Watch it, Elder-Son. I am still your superior.”

Alex narrowed his eyes, making Devin thankful once again of the bond between him and Anna.

“You’re lucky you’re bonded to her,” he said in a low voice.

CHAPTER SIX

Anna returned to her room with Alex. He instructed her to undress and lie down on the bed as he walked into the bathroom. A moment later she heard the water running.

Anna thought about the conversation between Alex and Devin. An apartment and car of her own? It sounded wonderful and terrifying at the same time. Shame threatened to rear its ugly head as she thought about being a “kept woman,” but the truth couldn’t be denied. Alex and Devin owned her. She belonged to them. She needed to do as they asked. It could have been worse. A lot worse.

She sighed in happiness as she remembered she would be allowed to dance full time again. If nothing else, being a kept woman would allow her to do the one thing that made her happy deep down inside.

Her smile faded, though, as she thought about the impending piercings. Why had Alex been so upset about the idea of piercing her? She already had been pierced the night before, what were a few more?

What was an Elder-Mistress? Was that what Alex was referring to when he said she didn’t belong here? But if she was the mistress of an Elder, where else would she belong?

She reached behind for the zipper, but couldn't find it. She moved desperately, trying different positions. Alex would be angry if she didn’t obey him. The bathroom door opened and she whimpered.

Alex walked up behind her and she trembled. He put his hands gently on her shoulders.

“Shh, *Schatzi*,” he whispered.

He unzipped her dress and kissed her shoulder as the dress fell to the ground. Her eyes closed as his lips touched her skin, savoring the touch for a moment, but she grew afraid and began to tremble again.

“Anna, I don’t want you to be afraid of me,” he murmured against her hair. His hands rested on her upper arms and he slid them down to her hands, intertwining his fingers with hers. “I’m not angry with you.” He brought her hand up to his lips and kissed her palm.

She leaned back against him, eyes still closed. His lips trailed down her hand and to the sensitive inner skin of her wrist.

Anna sighed as he sucked her inner wrist and brought his other hand down to her stomach and pressed her back against him. His hard cock pressed against her back and she swallowed nervously. Maybe he'd let her please him at last. She wanted to show him how grateful she was for his kindness downstairs.

She turned towards him and looked up into his eyes with longing.
“Please, Master...”

He looked at her, eyes unreadable. Her heart leapt for joy when he gave her a slight smile and nodded.

“Would you like to sit?” she asked, trying to keep her voice from trembling with excitement. She motioned to the chair by the window. Some men liked to stand, lording their authority over her.

Alex nodded stiffly and she led him over to the chair. He sat down and stroked her hair as she nervously settled between his feet. She looked up adoringly at him, both relieved and excited that he was going to let her please him at last.

Her hand trembled as she worked to free his cock and then sucked in a sharp breath. He was...huge. Absolutely the largest cock she'd ever seen, and she'd seen a lot of them. He exhaled through pursed lips as she wrapped her hand eagerly around his shaft. Her fingers didn't meet her thumb.

She looked up at him, both afraid and excited. His eyes were dark and he looked at her with such intensity she could feel it. She smiled nervously and looked back down at the cock in her hand, biting her lip and figuring out the best way to handle his size.

Not surprisingly, he had the double-ring piercing of the Brotherhood. The veins running along his length were almost rigid and he throbbed in her hand. She studied him for a moment and then leaned forward to take him into her mouth.

Alex groaned as she sucked on his tip for a few seconds before pushing her head down further over his head. He gasped. It wasn't easy, but she pushed even lower and he filled her mouth, her jaw stretching to its limit. But he was her Master. She had to please him. No, she wanted to please him. Her tongue swirled along the underside, savoring his taste. She moaned in pleasure and he groaned again.

When the tip of his cock reached her throat, a good portion of him still remained outside. She took a deep breath and pushed down, swallowing him down.

He exclaimed loudly in German and grabbed fistfuls of her hair. She swallowed again and again, then began to pull back, half afraid he wouldn't let her, but she needed to breathe. She pushed forward again, quickly, trying to get as much of him inside her mouth as she could. She swallowed and pushed several times until he was quite a ways down her throat and almost completely inside.

He moaned so loudly she almost jumped. “*Ja, Schatzi. Ja.*” He massaged her head and moaned again.

She pulled back for a breath and then swallowed him down again. Every time she swallowed, he moaned loudly and tightened his grip on her hair.

He allowed her to control her movements as she continued to swallow him and pull back when she needed to breathe, grateful for his kindness.

She heard his breathing start to shallow; he was close to release. His head fell back and his hands tensed in her hair. She took a good portion of him in and sucked as hard as she could and used her hand to stroke his lower shaft up and down. She just couldn’t do it all with her mouth. His hips flexed as he groaned loudly, emptying himself into her mouth. She eagerly swallowed everything he gave her.

As his breathing slowed, his only movement was his hand caressing the nape of her neck. She rested her head on his thigh, cock still in her mouth. She wouldn’t move until he moved her off him.

He exhaled slowly and pulled her up into his lap, wrapping his muscular arms around her. She laid her head on his shoulder and stroked his chest.

“Did I please you, Master?” she whispered.

“*Ja, Schatzi.* You are incredible.”

Anna beamed at the compliment. “Thank you, Master.”

He stroked her hair until there was a knock at the door a few minutes later.

“*Herein,*” Alex called.

Ian opened the door and walked inside. He and Alex looked at each other for a minute. She couldn't understand what was being expressed

between them, but she didn't sense the hatred between them that she'd sensed between Alex and Devin.

Ian held up the piercing gun. "I apologize for taking so long, my lord. I was trying to locate the proper rings."

Alex nodded. "Anna, go lie down on the bed," he commanded softly.

Anna obeyed and lay back on the bed, trembling slightly. Alex came and sat down on the bed next to her.

"My lord, would you like...me to locate some pain reliever for her?" Ian asked in a low voice.

Alex studied Ian for a moment. "Would your Master allow that?"

Ian cleared his throat. "You are her Master as well."

They looked at each other for another moment. "Would you please locate some pain reliever for her?" Alex asked with a slight smile on his face.

Anna glanced between the two men. Didn't Ian just ask Alex if he wanted him to go find some?

"Yes, my lord." Ian bowed and left the room.

Alex watched the door close, then turned back to Anna and brushed the hair away from her face. "You are a very special woman, Anna." He examined the piercer in his hands and looked pleased, then looked back at her. "I hate to have to do this to you, but Devin is right. I have to mark you. If I don't..." He shook his head. "I can't *not* do it, Anna."

"It's all right, Master. You don't have to justify yourself."

He grimaced. "I don't want to cause you pain," he said softly. He leaned down and kissed her cheek. "You've been hurt enough." He sat up suddenly. "I'll be back in a minute. May I use your yard?"

She blinked, confused. "Of course, Master."

He gave her a sad smile, then went outside and made a phone call. He left the door open slightly, but spoke in German and she couldn't understand his conversation. He looked upset, but not angry.

Ian returned a few minutes later. He gave her a small smile. "Hasn't done it yet?"

She shook her head. "He's outside."

Ian looked out to where Alex was pacing outside. "Too bad I don't speak German." He smiled at her and handed her two brown tablets and a glass of water. "If you take them now, they'll kick in sooner."

She smiled gratefully at him and took the pills, wondering at his kindness. Jack never allowed pain medicine and she never got sick. She swallowed them and took a drink of water, then lay back down on the bed and looked at Ian. He was watching her carefully.

Alex walked back in the room. "Did you find some?" he asked Ian.

"Yes, my lord. She just took them." He glanced at Alex. "I'll wait in the hallway and when you're done, I'll let Devin know."

"*Danke*, Ian. It shouldn't take too long." Alex smiled gently down at her and took a deep breath. "Better to get it over with now."

Ian gave a slight bow and then left the room, closing the door behind him.

Alex sat on the bed next to her and cupped her cheek with his hand. The gesture soothed her and she relaxed. He looked so reluctant to do what he had to do.

She smiled up at him. "Master, you don't need to worry about me. I can take quite a lot of pain."

His eyes saddened. "I know, *Schatzi*." He sighed. "I'm going to have to do three piercings as Devin did." He leaned down and kissed her deeply.

She stiffened at first, wondering why he was kissing her, but the wonder melted away under his skilled lips. Her heart raced as his tongue explored her mouth. Without thinking about it, she slid her hand around his neck and into his hair. He gave a little moan as she pressed her mouth harder against his. Why did kissing him feel so right?

His hand skimmed her ribs and cupped her left breast. She moaned softly into his mouth as he tugged gently on the nipple. He straightened slightly and reached for the piercing gun that sat on the side table.

She watched his face as he looked down to position the instrument, then looked back into her eyes. His eyes were determined, but she could tell he didn't want to hurt her. She smiled at him and touched his other hand with her own. He said something in German and she felt the same stabbing pain in her breast that she'd felt last night.

She tried to stifle her cry and Alex leaned down and kissed her, being careful not to put any pressure on the fresh piercing. She felt a little dizzy as his lips caressed hers. She felt a similar type of peace she'd felt with Devin, but it was more...substantial. More powerful.

“*Schatzi*, there are only two available places for the piercings. He took this one.” He ran his hand over her new belly ring. His finger trailed lower to her pelvis and then to her pussy, gliding down the outer skin. She felt the rush of heat and blood to the area, blossoming the lips open. He smiled and leaned down to kiss her pussy, darting his tongue out to dip inside the folds. She groaned as his tongue teased her clit. It made her forget about the fresh piercing above.

He traced her outer pussy lip with his finger again. He moved the other ring and she shivered.

“Was that a good shiver or a bad shiver?”

She gave him a shy smile. “Good, I think.”

He smiled and licked the skin below the ring. "I will mark you here," he whispered. "And here." He flicked her clit with his tongue.

She gasped and bucked her hips.

"Well, the hood, not the clit," he explained.

He looked up at her. "Anna, these will hurt. I am so sorry." He sat up and pulled at the outer lip, positioning the gun carefully. Then he looked back at her. "You are mine, Anna. I claim you for myself." She nodded, wide-eyed, and bit her lip. She heard a click and felt the stab as she had last night.

Tears sprang to her eyes. She pressed her lips together and clenched her fists, trying to stay silent.

She felt him brush her clit and then a tugging and he looked back at her. "Mine," he whispered. His eyes glistened with tears as hers did. *Click. Stab.*

She couldn't keep silent on this one. She shrieked in pain and started sobbing.

Alex tossed the gun aside and lay down next to her, holding her tight, whispering to her in German. She didn't know what he was saying, but his voice was soothing and his chest rumbled against hers as he spoke. He lifted her knee onto his hip to keep her legs from pressing together. He petted her hair and kissed her. She began to shake and he pulled the covers on top of her. His body heat radiated into her. His warmth of spirit did as well.

His presence was soothing and slowly the pain began to subside. "Sleep if you can, *Schatzi*. I'll stay with you as long as you need me."

She didn't want to sleep. She wanted to enjoy his presence, but her Master's allowance for her to sleep overcame her own desire and she soon drifted off to sleep.

Devin opened the door to Anna's bedroom and scowled. "You're still here?" he barked, and then smiled when he saw both Alex and Anna jump. Their intimacy irritated him.

"Six piercings in less than twenty-four hours can be a bit wearing, Devin," Alex said dryly.

Anna opened her eyes and looked up blearily at Devin.

He gave her a gentle smile. "Hey, Baby."

"Hello, Master Devin," she said softly.

Devin frowned. He didn't like being one of two Masters and had to remind himself that he had a plan to work on once that Fucking German left. That calmed him. A little.

"How are you feeling, Anna?" Alex asked in a gentle voice.

She turned her head and smiled at Alex with sparkling eyes. "Much better. Thank you."

Devin's eyes narrowed. He didn't like the way Anna looked at Alex.

"*Gut.*" Alex sat up slowly and kissed her forehead. "I will see you tonight, *ja?*"

She nodded and smiled shyly. Devin held back a growl.

The two men nodded stiffly to one another and then, finally, Alex was gone.

Devin sat on the bed, carefully calming himself. He had to play nice. "You really feel okay, Baby?"

She nodded. "Yes, Master. Master Alex gave me some pain medicine before he did the piercings."

Alex's niceness could be the weakness he needed. "That was very nice of him. He...seems like a good guy." Devin cupped her cheek and kissed her deeply, then rested his forehead on hers. "I wanted to have you last night,

but Alex...was better situated to take care of you last night. I had to attend to my Brothers.”

“I understand, Master.” She hesitated. “Are you angry with me? For last night?”

He looked at her for a moment. “Anna, last night was not what I expected, but you didn't do anything wrong.” He trailed his fingers down her neck. There was something he needed to find out before she left today. “Baby, do you remember the first time we were together and you had that dream?” His fingers moved down to her collarbone and cupped her right breast gently.

“Yes, Master,” she said softly.

“Was it Alex you dreamed about?” He looked at her intently with his black eyes.

She nodded timidly and he tamped down the rage inside of him.

“Did he recognize you when he saw you last week?”

“Kurt asked Alex if he knew me and Alex said no.”

Devin studied her. She wasn't telling him everything. “Did you recognize him?”

“Yes,” she whispered.

He barely kept himself from hitting her. She had known and she hadn't told him! Stupid bitch. He ought to drag her down to the dungeon for not telling him. But that would make waves with Alex, and he needed Alex to leave him alone while he figured out how to get rid of him. Then he could do as he pleased to Anna. “Baby, if you have dreams about people you know, or meet, will you please tell me?” he asked in a strained voice.

“Yes, Master.”

“Good girl,” he whispered, bringing his lips down to her neck. She sighed as he pushed her back on her bed and began to fuck her. He might

not be able to take her down to the dungeon, but he could make her hurt. At least a little bit.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Alex had arrived back at his house before he realized it. He parked his silver Mercedes SLS in the garage and walked into the house, deep in thought about Anna. How would he win her heart? How could she learn to be her own person?

After learning more about her, and getting a glimpse of how Devin treated her, he felt more determined than ever to make sure she felt safe enough to explore her freedoms.

She needed someone safe to explore them with. Jenna was a natural choice. But Anna needed a male. Someone she could be with and learn that not all men were like Devin and Jack. Someone whom Alex could trust, and would treat her well.

Seth liked her. That much was obvious. Tony, too, but Seth had connected with her somehow. That was a good thing. Seth could be good for her. But, Seth lived with him. Seth worked for him. No, he was too close to Alex. Alex didn't know if he could deal with knowing Seth was dating her.

Aaron. Aaron liked her a lot. He'd talked about her every time they'd gotten together since that night at the ballet. Yes, Aaron would be good. He was an honorable guy who wouldn't shy away from the truth about her. They had a history.

Alex tamped down the jealousy and nodded to himself. He would encourage Aaron to ask her out. Alex could use Kirsty as an excuse to

encourage Anna towards Aaron. The two of them would date for a while, Anna would learn about freedom, and then they'd break up and Alex could pursue her.

Yes, that would work. He hoped.

Okay, so maybe it wasn't the smartest of plans, but he didn't have a better one.

Alex felt the heavy weight of owning Anna. He didn't mind the responsibility, although he hated the fact that she was a slave. But if she wasn't his slave, she would be Devin's puppet. This was by far the best alternative. He had to accept it and work at finding a way to free her.

"Is Anna all right?" Alex's father asked as he walked into the downstairs living room.

Alex nodded. "Devin will bring her back here this evening."

"Good. I'd like to see her before we leave in the morning."

"Devin and I negotiated. He will allow her to live in the apartment."

Vati nodded. "I hated the idea of her being in that Manor all the time. It's not right."

Grief hit Alex hard in the heart. "I know, Vati," he said humbly.

"I wasn't criticizing, Alex," Vati said, walking over and putting his hand on Alex's shoulder. "You've prevented Devin from taking her completely. I will be sure to thank Sebastian when I see him."

"Will he get into trouble for helping me?"

"If he is found out, yes, he could get into a tremendous amount of trouble. But whomever is helping Devin would be the only one who would know, and if they said something, they would be in trouble for helping Devin. I believe Sebastian is safe."

Alex sighed in relief.

“Alex?” Kurt walked into the room and looked around. “I thought you were bringing Anna home with you.”

Alex frowned. “She’ll be here tonight.” He knew Kurt wanted to take her to bed with him tonight. Alex didn’t like that idea.

“Good. I want to see her before we leave.”

Alex interpreted his brother’s words. “You mean you want to sleep with her.”

Kurt shrugged. “She’s an incredible lover.”

“She’s more than that,” Alex snapped.

Kurt’s eyes widened. “I thought you didn’t care about her.”

Alex closed his eyes. “I do. More than you know.” He ran his hand through his hair and sat down hard on the couch.

“What are you talking about?”

Alex looked at Vati. Kurt knew nothing about Alex’s visions of Anna. His brother knew very little about the Brotherhood, aside from the Dirne that he visited frequently at their father’s Schloss.

“Kurt, we’ve known about Anna for a long time,” Vati said, sitting down in the easy chair across from Alex. “That’s why Alex moved here.”

Kurt looked between brother and father. “I thought you moved here to get away from the memories of Mina,” he said to Alex.

“I did, but didn’t you ever wonder why I moved here and not New York, which is much closer to home?” Alex asked.

Kurt shrugged. “I figured you wanted to be as far away from home as possible.”

Vati shook his head. “I was given information about Anna many years ago, but she was kept hidden until last week. I couldn’t find her, but the information we had led us here. Then we just had to wait until she was revealed.”

“You knew about her abuse and didn’t do anything?” Kurt asked, accusation in his eyes.

“I couldn’t find her, Kurt,” Vati said with remorse. “I looked. She was nowhere to be found.”

Kurt’s face filled with disbelief. “How is that possible, Vati? You can find anyone.”

“Not when there are outside forces hiding them. Elders can do things like that. And I’m fairly certain Devin had help, too.”

“By who?”

“By someone with the power to help.”

“Who?”

“It’s nothing you need to worry about, Kurt. Please trust me.”

Kurt huffed, but didn’t question more. Vati was an honorable man and both sons trusted him implicitly.

Alex was surprised at Kurt’s concern over Anna. His brother was never lacking female companionship when he came here. Women were a dime a dozen for him. Alex could say the same thing about himself.

“Why did you encourage me to be with her?” Kurt asked in a low voice and slumping down onto the couch, arms crossed.

“Devin has been watching us for some time. We needed a way to gain access to Anna in a way that wouldn’t raise flags with Devin. We thought that he would find you innocuous and take advantage of you being part of our family, but not part of the Brotherhood.” Vati smiled. “It worked, and Anna is in a much better position than she has been in a very long time.”

“So I was bait? Is that why you insisted I come on this trip?”

Alex laughed. “It’s hardly difficult to convince you to travel, Kurt.” Alex stopped laughing when he saw the hurt look on his brother’s face.

“Kurt?” Alex wasn’t sure he’d ever seen that look on his face.

“You used me!” Kurt stood and glared at Alex. “Did it ever occur to you that I might have actually fallen for her?”

Vati and Alex both stared at Kurt.

“To be honest, no, the thought had never crossed my mind,” Alex said softly, not quite understanding where all this emotion was coming from. His little brother was happily irresponsible, flitting from girl to girl. Yes, he was a good father, but a terrible husband. Then again, Gretchen was a terrible wife. “You really have feelings for Anna?” Jealousy bubbled up inside. Did Anna feel the same way about Kurt?

Kurt walked over to the window and looked out. “Yes,” he said softly.

Alex glanced at his father, wide-eyed. He’d rarely known Kurt to be so sentimental. Vati looked as baffled as Alex felt.

After a moment, Vati walked over to where Kurt was standing. “I’m sorry, Kurt. But you really did help Anna. Devin has lost much of his control over her. She is much safer than she was when you met her.”

“Why? What happened last night?”

“Devin tried to take over Anna’s mind and your brother stopped him.”

“How?”

Vati shook his head. “I can’t share that with you.”

Kurt clenched his jaw and turned away from him.

“Kurt, Anna belongs with Alex. In order to keep Devin from doing what he did, he had to...bond with her. She is his slave now.”

Kurt whipped around. “What do you mean, slave? Like the Dirne?”

Alex didn’t know whether to be concerned or thrilled that his brother was actually showing concern over someone over the age of five. “She was already Devin’s slave, Kurt. I had to. I had no other choice.”

“You said she wasn’t a slave.”

“We didn’t think she was. Devin was deceptive. But she is pierced now.”

Kurt would know what that meant. Pierced women meant ownership, although Anna wasn’t totally Alex’s. Elder-Sons couldn’t own slaves, so she technically was owned by Devin and Vati. But Alex was still her Master.

“Do you care about her?” Kurt asked after a pregnant pause.

“I do,” Alex said sincerely. “More than anything.”

Kurt turned and studied Alex for a long time. “I thought you swore you’d never fall in love again.”

“With anyone except Anna,” Alex said softly. He glanced at Vati who nodded. “I’ve been having visions of her for four years. I’ve seen her mature. Seeing her with you last week nearly killed me.”

“That’s why you were so pissy?”

Alex grimaced, but nodded in admission.

The room was silent for a long time.

“All right,” Kurt said, face inscrutable. “You’re the unmarried one. I’m stuck with Gretchen.” He turned and walked out of the room.

Alex looked at his father. “Did you have any idea about his feelings?”

Vati grimaced. “I saw the way he looked at her, but....” He shook his head. “I never imagined they went so deep. It’s unlike him.”

Alex nodded. Very unlike him.

Kurt walked back in a few minutes later, an even more sober expression on his face. “I just got a message from *Mutti*. They’ve taken Gretchen to the hospital. I need to go home.”

“Oh, Kurt!” Alex exclaimed. He glanced at Vati.

“I’ll call the pilot,” Vati said, reaching for his phone.

“You don’t need to shorten your trip on my behalf. I can fly commercial.”

Kurt’s calmness disturbed Alex. He stood and walked over to Kurt, embracing him in a tight hug. “I’m sorry, my brother.”

Kurt nodded, sadness in his eyes, though Alex didn’t know if the expression was about Anna or from the phone call. “Take care of her.” He turned to Vati. “You should stay. Anna will want to see you tonight.”

“Then you take the jet, Kurt,” Vati said. “You need to get home faster. I will fly out in the morning.”

Kurt grimaced and nodded. “I’m going to go pack.”

Anna stared at the houses passing outside the window of Devin’s BMW sports car. A few of them looked gold in the glowing light from the setting sun.

She winced as she shifted in her seat. Devin had been rough with her this afternoon. Mixing pain and pleasure was messing with her head and she didn’t understand why she came so hard when he did it.

“There is a banquet on Wednesday night that I’d like you to attend with me. The bank is sponsoring an event on the fourth and I am the MC for the evening. I’d like you to be there.”

“Yes, Devin,” she said quietly. “What time?”

“I’ll text you the information. You need a cocktail dress. Do you need help getting one?”

Anna bit her lip. Her only shopping experience had been with Kurt and Wilhelm. Maybe she could call Jenna. “Could I ask Jenna to help me?”

“Luke’s daughter?” He didn’t answer right away. “Yes, that would be fine.”

“Thank you.”

Anna felt awkward around Devin now. She had been foolish, thinking that he loved her. He wanted to use her, for what she didn't know, but she knew he didn't have feelings for her.

Devin reached over and put his hand on her thigh, stroking it gently until he parked in front of Alex's house. Eager to escape him, she reached quickly for the door handle.

"Anna, wait." She turned to Devin and was surprised to see regret in his eyes. "I'm sorry for what happened this weekend. I am trying to grasp all the things that happened this weekend." He paused. "I hurt you, didn't I? This afternoon?"

Anna bit her lip and nodded.

"I'm sorry for that." He smiled. "I promise I will get my head on straight and be better on Wednesday."

Anna studied him. He looked sincere. She knew he liked to be in control and dealing with disappointments wasn't easy. She gave him a timid smile. "Yes, Devin."

He stroked her cheek and leaned forward to kiss her deeply. "I love you, Baby."

"You do?"

His face was soft as he nodded. "I do, Baby. I always have. I just need to get my head around what happened. I'm sorry for hurting you."

Anna felt her heart lighten. Maybe she hadn't been as foolish as she thought. "I love you too, Devin."

"Get settled into your apartment and get to know your old friends in the next few days." He caressed her cheek again. "Be young. Just be careful, too. I'd be devastated if anything happened to you."

Anna thought for a moment. "Aaron invited me to a party tomorrow night. May I go?"

“Who’s Aaron?”

“A dancer. I danced with him in my last performance.”

Devin smiled. “You don’t need to ask permission to go places, Anna. I will talk to Alex about getting a calendar set up for you so you know when we need you. Aside from that, do as you wish.”

“Really?”

“Of course, Baby.”

She gave him a bright smile. “Thank you.”

He kissed her again. “I’ll see you Wednesday night. I’ll pick you up at your apartment.”

“Okay.” She gave him a last smile and got out of the car, wincing slightly. As she walked up to the front door of Alex’s house, butterflies started fluttering in her stomach.

Devin watched Anna walk towards the house and then drove away. It was easy to lie to her. She ate up anything that was remotely affectionate.

He’d enjoyed every minute of hurting her this afternoon. Pulling on her new piercings, fucking her hard and using his spikes had made her whimper and cry out. Even now, the thoughts of her whimpers made his cock twitch.

He was careful not to leave bruises, though. Alex would certainly fuck her tonight and Devin didn’t want questions raised. He had to play the nice guy until he got rid of him.

Frau Gersten opened the door and told Anna that Alex and Wilhelm were waiting for her in the living room. Anna walked into the room and smiled when she saw Alex and Wilhelm, both sitting on the plush couches,

reading. They looked up as she appeared in the doorway. Alex stood as she stepped down into the room, walking over to her.

“Anna, are you all right?” he asked.

She nodded, realizing she must have winced in discomfort. She tried to play it down. “Tired.”

“Are your piercings still bothering you?”

“A little, but I’ll be okay.” She gave him a bright smile.

“I’m glad you’re here.”

She gazed up into his blue eyes. “Me, too.”

He cradled her cheek and she closed her eyes and leaned into his hand. Why did she feel safe around him? His warmth radiated out from him and she longed to rest her head against his chest.

He pulled away slowly and she opened her eyes, confused. Why was he backing away from her?

“Are you hungry?”

Anna nodded. She hadn’t eaten since breakfast.

“*Gut*. We have reservations in an hour.”

She looked down at her shorts and T-shirt. “I don’t have anything to wear.”

“I got you a dress to wear. It’s upstairs.”

She gave a nervous smile. “Thank you.”

Wilhelm walked over and kissed her cheek. “Hello, Anna.”

“Hi, Wilhelm.” His affectionate smile warmed her.

She looked around. “Where’s Kurt?”

Wilhelm’s face turned sad. “He had to return to Frankfurt this afternoon. Gretchen, his wife, is in the hospital.”

Anna blinked. “Oh.” She hadn’t totally forgotten about Kurt, but with all that had happened, thoughts of him had been pushed to the back of her

mind. She had been looking forward to seeing him again.

“He said to tell you goodbye for him and that he hoped to see you soon,” Alex said stiffly.

Anna looked up at him, wondering about his changed demeanor. She gave him a hesitant smile. “Thank you.”

“I’ll take you upstairs so you can get ready.”

Alex walked back into the living room after getting Anna situated in one of the guest rooms. The look of disappointment on her face when she realized Kurt was gone haunted him.

Vati looked up. “Are you all right?”

Alex frowned and sat down. “She was disappointed that Kurt was gone.”

Vati’s eyes twinkled with amusement. “She spent quite a bit of time with him last week. It’s natural for her to be disappointed.” Alex let out a soft growl and Vati chuckled. “You needn’t be jealous, Alex. I saw the way she looked at you when she walked in. She likes you.”

“More than Kurt?”

“She doesn’t know you very well, but I believe you will change that.”

“I’m going to encourage Aaron to ask her out,” Alex said quietly after a few minutes of thoughtful silence.

“Why?”

“Because she needs to experience life. She’s never even been on a date.”

“So take her on one.”

Alex shook his head. “I want to, Vati. But if I ask her out now, I’ll never know if she’s with me because she wants to be or because she feels

like she has to be.” He paused. “I wouldn’t make love to her this morning either. I want her to know that—”

“You didn’t make love to her?”

“I bonded with her at the ritual. Isn’t that enough?”

“Why don’t you want to be with her?” Vati sounded irritated.

“I do, but I want her to know I’m different. That I’m making love to her, not just fucking her.”

“You need to be with her, Alex. It will solidify your bond with her. Until you do, she may not have confidence in her connection to you.”

Many of the Brotherhood’s rituals revolved around sex. All types of sex. Alex didn’t mind. He liked sex. “I want her to know the difference,” he said softly.

Vati frowned, but didn’t say anything. Alex could tell he was upset. But how could he have sex with Anna and still differentiate himself from the other men?

“I want it to be different, Vati,” Alex repeated, running his hands through his hair. He was quiet for a few minutes. “I don’t know what else to do. I don’t know how else to be sure of her feelings for me. To be sure that she knows I’m different.”

“You are different, Alex. She will learn that in time.”

“I don’t want her to get hurt.”

“Part of being alive is getting hurt, Alex.”

Alex glared at his father. “Don’t you think she’s been hurt enough?”

Vati didn’t answer right away. “Yes, Alex. She has. But avoiding her and encouraging her into a relationship that cannot last is not going to keep her from getting hurt.”

“Then what else should I do?”

“I don’t know, son. I wish I did.”

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Anna sat down on the bed, holding the program from the ballet. She should call Jenna and see if they could go shopping sometime soon.

She put the number into her phone and then hit send. It rang once...twice...three times.... "Hello?"

"Jenna? It's Anna."

"Anna? Omigosh! You called! I'm so happy!" she exclaimed. "You have a phone now?"

Anna smiled. "I do."

"Yay. So, did you get things figured out after moving out of Jack's place?"

"Yes. At least I think so."

"So where are you living?"

Anna hesitated. "I guess I have an apartment downtown."

"You guess? You don't know?"

"I haven't seen it."

"You haven't seen your apartment? Anna, you're not making any sense."

Anna sighed. "It's...really complicated."

"Okay...but, you're not with Jack anymore?"

"No."

"Good. So, when can we hang out?"

Anna laughed softly at Jenna's eagerness. It was nice to be wanted. "I need to find a cocktail dress for something on Wednesday. Could you help me find one?"

"Shopping? Hell, yeah! How about tomorrow?"

"That would be great."

"Cool. Are you going to Aaron's party? He was asking if I'd heard from you this morning."

Anna smiled. "Really?"

"I think he likes you, Anna. He kept talking about how pretty you looked on Saturday."

"Aaron wouldn't feel that way about me. I'm his 'Little Giselle' remember?"

Jenna laughed. "He's aware that his 'Little Giselle' is all grown up now. Very aware."

Anna shook her head. "I don't think I'm really his type, Jenna." Besides, she needed to be available for Alex and Devin.

"Why not? You've turned into a sexy woman. Guys will be tripping over themselves to ask you out. I mean, Kurt's a cool guy and all, but he's married. You shouldn't pin your hopes on a married guy, even if he is one of the hottest guys in town."

"He left to go back to Frankfurt this afternoon."

"Oh. Well, then you've gotta come to the party and meet the guys."

Anna reminded herself that Jenna didn't know about what had gone on in Anna's life the last few years. The last thing she needed was a bunch of guys to be around. But, at the same time, going to a party with Jenna sounded like fun. "I'll come."

"Cool! You should call Aaron and tell him."

"Can't you tell him?"

“He gave you his number and invited you himself. You should call and let him know that you’re coming.”

Anna couldn’t argue with Jenna’s logic. “Okay.”

“What time do you want to go shopping tomorrow? The party’s at seven.”

“How long do we need?”

“Who knows? I could spend the whole day shopping. Call me in the morning and we’ll figure out what to do.”

“All right. Sounds good.”

They said good-bye and Anna hung up. She stared at the program with Aaron’s number on it. He had nice handwriting.

Aaron sat on the floor in his dressing room, stretching for the matinee of *Sleeping Beauty*. His thoughts inevitably strayed to Anna, as they had been doing constantly since he’d seen her backstage last week. She had been pretty when she was twelve; she was gorgeous now. His Little Giselle, all grown up.

She’d been such a sweet girl when he knew her before. Big green eyes that sparkled when she danced. He would forget that she was only twelve sometimes; she was such a mature, amazing dancer. She did things he’d only seen Russian ballerinas do.

After the initial shock of being told he, the best dancer in his class, was dancing with a twelve-year-old, he looked forward to every rehearsal. Dancing with Anna was like dancing with an angel. He’d had to remind himself he was just acting when he flirted and declared his love for her in dance.

He never would have admitted it at the time, but he’d developed a little crush on her. Nothing inappropriate; he just loved dancing with her and she

was so sweet he'd wished they were closer in age.

And now she was older. And prettier than ever.

Aaron sighed. He'd been hoping to hear from her this week about coming to the party tomorrow night.

Unexpectedly, his phone rang. "Hello?"

"Aaron, it's Anna."

Aaron's heart leapt in his chest. "Anna! Hi, how are you?" He tried to suppress his grin but failed miserably.

"I'm fine. Are you busy?"

"Just stretching before the evening performance." He needed to get out there soon, but he had a few minutes.

"Oh, I don't want to bother you-"

"I'm glad you called, Anna," he interrupted. "I'd let you know if I couldn't talk. So, to what do I owe the honor of your phone call?"

"I was calling to let you know I could come to your party tomorrow night."

His heart skipped a beat. "Really? That's awesome! D'ya need me to pick you up or anything?"

"No, I...I think I have a car."

"You think?" How could she not know if she had a car or not?

There was a pause. "It's a long story."

"Okay, I'll text you my address. It starts at seven, but you can come any time. It's all really informal."

"I'm looking forward to it," she said, sounding sincere.

"Me, too," he said, his voice soft.

There was a pause and Aaron chewed the inside of his cheek. Had he been too forward? Alex had said she scared easily. *Shit*. That was the last thing he wanted to do.

“I should let you go so you can get ready.”

Aaron swallowed back the disappointment and let out a strained laugh.

“Okay. I guess I'll see you tomorrow.”

“Sounds wonderful, Aaron. Break a leg.”

He smiled at the artistic way of saying good luck. “Thanks.”

He dropped the phone back into his bag. She had said, “Sounds wonderful.” And it sounded like she meant it. He grinned again. Maybe he hadn't been too forward.

Wilhelm watched his oldest son fidget with the small boxes he held in his lap as they waited for Anna to come downstairs. He hadn't seen Alex nervous about a woman in a very, very long time.

She smiled shyly at the two men as she walked into the room. The green silk dress that Alex had picked out for her fit perfectly.

“You look very pretty, Anna,” Wilhelm said, standing and walking over to her. He kissed her cheek and inhaled as he did so. She smelled heavenly. He might admit to himself that he was in danger of falling in love with Anna as much as his sons, but was, at the moment, keeping his feelings at bay. Knowing that he, as an Elder, had the right to bed her tempted him even more, but he wouldn't do that to Alex.

Alex walked over and gave Anna an affectionate smile. “You really do look beautiful, Anna,” he said in a soft voice. He, too, kissed her cheek.

Wilhelm could see Anna's eyes close as Alex kissed her, and knew she felt about Alex the same way Alex did about her. It would be an interesting evening.

Alex took Anna's hand and led her to the couch. “Come. I have something for you.”

They sat next to each other and Wilhelm sat nearby.

“How are you feeling, *Liebling*?” Wilhelm asked when she winced as she sat.

“Better, thank you,” she said with a smile that went straight to his heart. He would miss her terribly when he left in the morning.

Alex turned to Anna and opened the jewelry box he had been holding. Inside was a bracelet made of linked diamond circles. Each link consisted of a small cluster of white diamonds surrounded by a circle of black diamonds, linked together by another, larger black diamond. On either side of the clasp was a small silver disc with an etching of a double-tailed lion holding a sword, like the one on his own ring.

Alex pulled it out and handed it to Anna. “Do you like it? The black gems are black diamonds.”

She took it from him and looked at it closely. She looked up at Alex, clearly confused. “It's very pretty,” she said, looking apprehensive.

Alex took it from her hands and fastened the clasp around her right wrist. “This tells people that you belong to me.” He pointed to the etched discs. “This is my family crest.” He held up his right hand and showed her his signet ring. It was like Wilhelm's, except that every other diamond was black, making a black and white circle around the lion. “The black diamonds are specifically representative of me.”

She looked down at the bracelet and back at Alex's face. “It's my mark from you?” she asked.

Alex cupped her cheek and looked at her with love in his eyes. “Yes. And it means that I can, and will, protect you,” he added softly. “Anna, please, unless you have a very good reason, don't take this off. It is nice enough to wear at formal events and speaks much louder than your necklace does. The black is...it means something very significant. Even if

Devin gives someone permission to...hurt you, if they see that, they will think twice.”

“Why?”

Wilhelm wondered if Alex would tell her the nature of his position in the Brotherhood.

Alex shook his head. “Now is not the time to talk about it. I will tell you sometime. Just not now.”

She studied his eyes for a moment, then nodded. “I won't take it off,” she promised.

Alex was pleased. “Good girl.”

Anna beamed at his words. It amazed Wilhelm how much a simple word of praise lit up her entire face.

Alex grinned and handed her the other package, a flat, rectangular box wrapped in white paper with a pink ribbon. She stared at it for a moment, hesitant to open it.

She looked up at Alex nervously and he gave her a gentle smile. “Consider it a late birthday present.”

She blinked back tears and stared at the present. “I haven't had a birthday present since I turned sixteen,” she said in such a soft voice Wilhelm wasn't certain he'd heard correctly. She stared at it a moment more, lips pressed together, and then timidly pulled at the ribbon. It came loose and fell into her lap. She turned it over to slide her finger under the taped paper and pushed it aside to reveal a brown box with a picture of something that looked like Wilhelm's tablet.

“What's a *Kindle*?” she asked, studying the box.

Alex chuckled. “An e-reader.”

“E-reader? Like, books?” Her eyes sparkled with excitement as she gazed at Alex.

He grinned and nodded. “Yes. An entire library at your disposal. Kurt said you mentioned that you liked to read.”

Wilhelm chuckled softly. That was putting it mildly. Kurt had teased Alex mercilessly about Anna saying she read for fun. Alex was also an avid reader.

Anna clapped her hands over her mouth, blinking rapidly. “An entire library...?”

“Well, any book that is available electronically.” Alex chuckled, obviously thrilled that Anna was pleased. “It's set up with an account, so you just tap on the book you want, it will download onto the tablet, and you can read it within seconds.” He pulled it out of the box and turned it on. He tapped on the screen several times and showed her how it worked.

“Oh, Alex!” Anna launched herself into his arms and hugged him tight.

Wilhelm laughed. “Apparently the way to Anna's heart is through a good book.”

Alex held her briefly and then took a deep breath and gently sat her back on the couch. Anna's expression fell as he did so. She likely could sense the wall Alex was erecting again between them.

“Shall we go?” Alex said in a strained voice.

Anna nodded and Wilhelm gave Alex a disapproving look as they stood. He was giving her mixed signals. Alex returned the look with a “what else do you suggest?” expression.

CHAPTER NINE

Wilhelm smiled as Anna laughed at a silly joke Alex had just told her. He loved how easily she laughed. Her sweetness was such a refreshing change from other women he knew.

Anna sat between Wilhelm and Alex in a booth near a floor-to-ceiling aquarium. Dinner and conversation flowed freely between the three of them. Wilhelm enjoyed Anna's company tremendously. She asked intelligent questions and delighted in everything. Her smile lit up the entire room. Alex deliberately told silly jokes to make her giggle.

It pleased Wilhelm to see his son caring for her the way she needed and deserved to be cared for. Alex had truly matured into a good man.

Toward the end of the main course, Alex's phone buzzed. He frowned when he looked at it. He glanced up at Wilhelm. "My girlfriend," he said in German.

Wilhelm frowned as Alex excused himself from the table to answer it.

Anna watched him as he walked outside, then glanced at Wilhelm. "Is he okay?"

Wilhelm frowned in the direction Alex walked. "Yes, Anna." He turned and smiled at her. He didn't know what to do for Anna, aside from assure her that she belonged to his family. He had come to care deeply for her.

He didn't feel any conflict between being in love with his wife and caring for Anna. Men in his position often took mistresses and although he'd never been tempted before now. Even knowing that Anna would be his

daughter-in-law someday didn't bring any concern. His own father had been very fond of his wife, Ilsa, though Wilhelm was fairly certain they'd never been intimate. It wouldn't have surprised or bothered him if they had been. It was just the way things worked in his family's position.

In fact, Wilhelm couldn't help but have a degree of desire for Anna. For one, because of who she was in the Brotherhood. But also because if something happened to Alex, she would become, in a manner of speaking, a second wife. Not in the legal sense, but he would become Anna's protector and provide her with a son if she and Alex didn't have one already.

The same thing had been true when his father was alive. Had something happened to Wilhelm, his father would have become Ilsa's protector. People outside of the old families of the Brotherhood didn't understand why they did things that way, especially in America. But that was the way it was done and had been done for generations.

The wives of the Elders were not stuck at home while their husbands did what their positions required of them. Many of them had lovers, Ilsa included. Wilhelm considered Ilsa's lover, Maurice, a friend of his, and the two of them had shared Ilsa multiple times. As long as she didn't bear Maurice any children, there were no problems. Wilhelm and Ilsa were confident in their marriage and in their love for each other. Ilsa was not a jealous woman and he was not a jealous man.

"How was Devin this morning?" Wilhelm asked, dragging himself out of his thoughts.

Anna's face darkened and he regretted that he'd brought up a painful subject. "He was angry, but not overly so, I think. He said I could do what I wanted to as long as he didn't need me." She glanced up at him with a sheepish smile. "He doesn't seem to like Alex very much."

Wilhelm chuckled. That was to be expected. “That's good. Anna. I'm glad he's giving you some freedoms.” Wilhelm smiled as a thought occurred to him. “Perhaps you'll be able to visit me in Germany sometime.” He reached over and put his hand on hers.

“Could I do that?” she asked in wonder as her eyes sparkled.

He loved watching her face light up. “Of course, Anna.” He pointed to her bracelet. “You belong to Alex and myself as much as you belong to Devin. If I want you to come to Germany, there is little Devin could do to stop me.”

She looked perplexed. “I thought I belonged to Alex.”

“You do, but because Alex is not an Elder, you are mine as well. An Elder-Son cannot fully own a slave.”

“A what?”

“Elder-Son. The oldest son of an Elder. Alex will be Elder once I am gone.”

“Oh.” A strange look appeared on her face. She looked sad. Perhaps she was beginning to feel abandoned. He would have words with Alex before he left. Anna needed to feel secure and be able to trust him and his family.

He stroked the back of her hand with his and gave her a warm smile. “Anna, don't worry. Neither Alex nor I are going anywhere anytime soon. Except myself to Germany in the morning.” He squeezed her hand with a sad smile. “I wish I didn't have to go so soon.”

She smiled at him and squeezed his hand back. He leaned forward and stroked Anna's cheek. Thankfulness filled his chest as she leaned into his caress. It would have been a tragedy to lose such a beautiful creature to Devin's schemes.

A few minutes later Alex returned, looking unhappy.

“Is everything all right?” Wilhelm asked Alex in German.

Alex frowned, but didn't respond with anything other than a short nod.

Anna watched Alex for a minute as he played with the food on his plate. She opened her mouth as if she was going to say something, but then closed it and pressed her lips together. Alex looked up and saw her looking at him and she quickly looked back down at her plate.

The mood at the table had changed dramatically. Alex was upset about something and it was disturbing Anna, but Wilhelm knew better than to press his son. He assumed it had something to do with Kirsty, but he resigned himself to the fact that Alex needed to deal with that problem.

Wilhelm tried to make light conversation and eventually Alex's mood lightened a bit, but not totally. By the time they were finished eating, his son at least was smiling.

On the way back to the house, Anna wondered what had transpired on the phone call to make Alex so upset. She'd been enjoying his company so much before that phone call. She smiled to herself, remembering the silly jokes he'd told her. His eyes had sparkled with life when he watched her and she'd felt her heart open up to him.

They pulled up in front of Alex's house. Alex stared at a small red sports car parked in front of his house and then growled and muttered something in German.

Frau Gersten opened the door as they approached the house and greeted them. Anna heard a series of quick, light footsteps and then a squeal.

Kirsty ran up and hugged Alex, who looked less than thrilled to see her.

Anna turned away as Kirsty kissed Alex, making a serious study of the fireplace. Anna had forgotten about Kirsty. Why had Alex acted as he had

when he had Kirsty in his life? Then again, why wouldn't he? Kurt was kind to her, even though he had a wife at home.

Anna reminded herself of her place around men. She was a sexual object to be used. Nothing more, nothing less.

“What the fuck is she doing here?” Kirsty asked, noticing Anna at last.

“Kirsty, what are *you* doing here?” Alex asked slowly. “I told you I would see you tomorrow.”

“And I told you I wanted to see you tonight,” Kirsty said, running her hand over his chest. She narrowed her eyes when she looked at Anna. “Is this why you didn't want me to come over? Because you were with *her*?”

Anna swallowed and rubbed the backs of her hands, desperately wanting to escape upstairs. She had been a fool to think Alex had feelings for her more than any other nice man did. Yes, she was thankful that he was nice. But that was it. And she needed to be content with that.

“Anna went out to dinner with Vati and myself because he's leaving tomorrow.”

Anna turned and gave Wilhelm a pleading look. Could she escape to her room?

Wilhelm gave her a sad smile and nodded his head slightly. She took that as permission and ran up the stairs to the third-floor room that Alex had given her for the night.

She glanced down the hallway to where Kurt had stayed and tears stung her eyes as she turned to her own room.

No wonder Alex had put her up here. He must have known Kirsty was coming over. She closed the door behind her and fell onto the bed, sobbing into her pillow.

Wilhelm walked to his room a while later and paused with his hand on the doorknob. He heard a noise coming from Anna's room and walked quietly across the hall. His chest ached when he realized she was crying.

"Oh, Anna," he whispered to himself and knocked on the door.

The crying stopped. "Come in," she said in a cracked voice.

He opened the door and saw Anna wiping furiously at her face, looking ashamed. She sat up and clasped her hands tightly on her lap.

"Oh, Liebling," he said quietly, sitting down on the bed next to her. He wrapped his arms around her and pressed her head gently to his chest.

He didn't know what to say to comfort her. He knew why Alex stayed with Kirsty, but Wilhelm didn't want Anna getting hurt in the process. Then again, it wasn't Alex's fault that Kirsty showed up. She wasn't supposed to be back in the country until next week.

"Anna, would you like to stay in my room with me tonight?" he asked softly.

She looked up, eyes wide with hurt. "Whatever you would like, Wilhelm."

He realized suddenly what his question had sounded like. "Liebling, just to sleep. I will hold you. That is all."

"We can have sex if you want, Wilhelm. I'm fine."

Wilhelm shook his head. "Let me hold you as you sleep." He helped her to her feet and guided her to his room.

CHAPTER TEN

Anna felt fingers stroking the skin on the back and side of her neck as she woke. She was curled against Wilhelm's warm body and she smiled, remembering his kindness from the previous night.

“Guten Morgen, Liebling,” he whispered.

She smiled at him. “Good morning, Wilhelm.” She ran her hand down his lean chest towards his cock but he stopped her hand.

She blinked back tears. Would he reject her like Alex had?

“Anna, I am fine. You do not need to.”

Anna had learned not to keep trying if they said no. “Yes, Wilhelm.” She stared at his T-shirt covered chest.

He kissed her cheek. “Shall we get some breakfast? Then, unfortunately, I need to get to the airport.”

She nodded and sat up. He didn't want her either. “I'll go get dressed,” she said softly.

She slipped out of bed to go to her bedroom. Wilhelm had offered her one of his T-shirts to sleep in and she had left her clothes on the dresser, but they were missing.

“Wilhelm?” She walked back into his bedroom and saw him standing there, looking quite handsome, with his shirt off.

“Ja, Liebling?”

“Do you know where my clothes might be? They're not in my room.”

“Frau Gersten must have washed them. Check with Alex. He is probably downstairs having breakfast.”

She went down the stairs to the bottom floor, below the floor with the entryway. Seth and Tony were reclining on the couch watching the TV that hung on the far wall.

She'd taken a few steps into the room when she saw Kirsty and Alex sitting at the table together. Alex was kissing her neck and Kirsty was giggling. She looked kind of nice when she smiled.

Anna froze where she was. Alex saw her and his eyes widened. He pulled away from Kirsty, who looked at him strangely and then followed his gaze to Anna. Kirsty frowned and narrowed her eyes at her.

“Anna,” Alex exclaimed. “H-how did you sleep?” he asked politely. He put his arm back around Kirsty, but didn't look especially comfortable. Kirsty looked back at him and smiled, and the smile he gave her broke Anna's heart.

Kirsty looked back at her, giving her the once over and smirked. Anna had an unexplainable urge to walk over and slap her.

“Anna!” Seth walked up to her and hugged her. “Damn, you look good this morning.” He leaned down and nuzzled her neck. “When're you gonna spend the night with me?” he whispered, sliding his hand down her rear, giving it a squeeze through the shirt.

She wrapped her arms around his neck automatically and then smiled. She liked Seth. “Do you know where my new apartment is?” she asked softly. She really didn't want to spend more time in Alex's house than she had to.

Seth grinned. “I do,” he said in a husky voice. “I'll have to visit very, very soon.” His hand slipped under the shirt and caressed her bare ass.

Alex said something sharply in German. Seth grinned at her and responded in German, though he sounded amused. But he loosened his hold on her and walked away after winking at Anna.

“Alex, I was wondering if you knew where my clothes were,” Anna said softly and noticed Kirsty looked confused now. Confused and pissed. It wasn’t a pretty combination.

Alex’s brow wrinkled. “Frau Gersten should have cleaned them and put them back in your room.”

“*Her* room?” Kirsty asked with narrow eyes.

“Yes.” Alex didn’t elaborate.

“I looked but I didn’t see them.” Anna hated to contradict Alex, but she was at a loss. She only had a few items of clothing and didn’t think it was appropriate to wander around in Wilhelm’s T-shirt.

Alex looked confused. “I can’t imagine her....” He tilted his head. “Unless she put them in the room Kurt had been staying in. I don’t remember if I told her which room you were in. I put your dress in there myself.”

Kirsty’s face turned pink and her jaw clenched.

“I’ll check. I’m sorry to bother you.”

Seth popped up. “I’ll help her look.”

Alex frowned, but didn’t say anything. Anna wasn’t sure what that meant, and turned to leave.

“Anna, have you seen my father this morning?” Alex asked.

She turned back around and glanced at Kirsty. “I stayed with him last night. He was getting dressed.” That urge to slap her was still there. Where were these rebellious thoughts coming from? Anna smirked at Kirsty before she realized what she’d done.

Anna gasped and ran out of the room. She heard Seth running after her and he caught up a second later.

“Oh, God, I can't believe I just did that. Alex is going to be angry with me.” She felt sick as she climbed the stairs.

“What'd you do?” Seth asked.

“I smirked at Kirsty.” She looked up at him and shook her head. “Alex will punish me, won't he? I was disrespectful to his girlfriend.”

She grasped the railing and tried to imagine what his punishments would be like. He was much stronger than Devin or Jack.

Alex sat at the table, eating next to Kirsty. It took more and more effort on his part to be affectionate towards her as time passed. She acted so spiteful towards Anna, it made it difficult to find the energy.

“Alex.”

Seth stood in the doorway, looking anxious. Not a good sign. Seth rarely showed anxiety and he cared a lot for Anna. More than Alex's jealous heart liked.

Something must have happened to Anna.

He stood quickly, pushing the chair back so hard it almost toppled over, and followed Seth out of the room, leaving Kirsty at the table alone without a word.

“What's wrong?” Alex asked quietly as they approached the stairs.

Seth shook his head. “Honestly, I don't know. We got upstairs to her room and she just kinda collapsed onto her knees. She was mumbling something about being disobedient and needing to be punished. I tried to talk to her about it, but....” Seth looked at Alex with a concerned look in his eyes. “I'm sorry, Alex.”

Alex ran up the stairs three at a time, followed closely by Seth.

Anna was so concerned about being obedient, and it worried him to no end.

Damn fucking Devin!

Every time he thought about the man, he wanted to grab his rifle from downstairs and take it up to the roof and—

Alex shook his head. No, killing an Elder without permission was a death sentence. He needed to do the one thing he could do, reassure Anna that she was cared for.

Alex sighed. He was doing a terrible job at that, too.

Okay, concentrate on the task at hand. Anna was distressed and he needed to help her.

“Thanks, Seth,” he murmured and walked into Anna's room.

Anna sat on her knees, hunched over and staring at the floor with wet, frightened eyes. Alex's heart broke as he walked over to her.

She bowed before him. “I'm sorry, Master,” she whispered. “I wasn't thinking.”

“Anna...” Alex knelt in front of her and pulled her up into a sitting position. “Anna, look at me.” He looked into her beautiful green eyes. “What did you do that you feel deserves punishment?”

“I smirked at Kirsty. I was disrespectful.” She looked at the floor again.

Alex wanted to laugh, but held it in check. “Anna, Schatzi, it's all right. It's not a big deal.” He cupped her chin to bring her face up to his again.

“Really, Anna.”

She looked into his eyes with such distress his thought of laughter disappeared. “I'm sorry, Master,” she whispered again. “I'm ready to receive my punishment.” She winced, bracing herself for a blow he had no intention of delivering.

Alex frowned. “Anna, I'm not going to—”

“Alex, you need to discipline her.” Vati spoke softly in German from the doorway, a pained expression on his face.

“You can't be serious, Vati. She didn't do anything wrong.” Alex responded in German.

“If she smirked at Kirsty, she was disrespectful. It doesn't matter if you don't think it was a big deal. It certainly would have been to Devin if she acted that way to his wife.”

Alex glared at his father. For the first time in a very long time, he resented his father's presence in his life and in his home. “Vati,” he growled. “I will not let her think of me as she does Devin and that horrible guardian of hers. I won't—”

“Alex, I highly doubt she will.” Vati continued speaking gently. He wasn't angry; Alex was. “If you don't discipline her, you will confuse her and she won't know what to expect from you.”

“Yes, but how does beating her make her feel better?”

“I didn't say beat her. I disciplined you as a child, but I certainly didn't beat you.” Vati sighed. “You must think of her as a child. Children feel secure when their parents set boundaries and enforce them. Have you sat down and told her what you expect from her?”

Alex frowned. “No. I didn't think about it.” It hadn't even crossed his mind. Vati had a valid point. Anna was very childlike and she did need to know what he expected of her. She knew exactly what Devin expected. Alex just wanted her to be free. Perhaps that would be enough. He sighed. “How do I discipline her?”

Vati's eyes twinkled. “Perhaps a spanking. Then you should make love to her.”

Alex frowned again. “Vati, Kirsty is downstairs.”

Vati's eyes turned from mischievous to angry in a flash. "That is not my problem, nor is it Anna's. You should have made love to her already. It will bond her to you."

Alex closed his eyes. He couldn't. Not while he was with Kirsty. Not for Kirsty's consideration, though. He didn't want Anna to think he was fucking her then leaving her to make love to Kirsty. When he made love to Anna, he wanted it to be the beginning of his commitment and love for her.

"Vati, I can't. I can't hit her. She'll never forgive me." He looked at his father and shook his head.

Vati gritted his teeth. "Sometimes we have to do what we don't want to do," he snapped. "Both as Elders and as parents." He looked pointedly at Anna then at Alex. "If you don't discipline her, things will be much more difficult for you and her." He turned and walked out of the room.

Alex ran his hand through his hair. As often as he got frustrated and repeated this motion, he wondered how he still had a thick head of hair.

He looked back at Anna, who was cowering in front of him. His father was right; she was like a child. He hadn't given her any boundaries and she had been disrespectful. If he didn't discipline her, she wouldn't respect him, and she needed to respect him.

Alex sighed and picked her up off the floor before sitting down on the bed. The undisturbed comforter reminded him of the fact that she'd been with Vati last night and not him. He pushed aside the remorse and lay Anna across his lap.

He lifted up her shirt and rested his hand on her smooth, bare ass. She jumped slightly. Any other time he would have enjoyed her in this position, sexy ass up in the air. He imagined all the things he could do to her, making her feel incredible pleasure.

But now was not the time to be thinking about that. He needed to correct her behavior and this was the gentlest way he could. He'd never considered spankings in the same category as hitting other places on the body. He hoped she felt the same way. He took a deep breath and smacked her bare ass. The sound of his hand hitting her flesh made him wince.

She cried out in surprise. Perhaps this wasn't as bad as she'd expected?

“Count, Anna,” he instructed softly.

“One, Master.”

He smacked her again.

“Two, Master.”

Again.

“Three, Master.” Her ass was turning a bright pink. He wanted to delve his fingers into her pussy to ease the pain, but this wasn't for pleasure. This was real discipline, not playtime.

He continued spanking her until she reached twelve. Aside from her counts, she made no noise past the first cry. Her voice began cracking at four and by the end he could tell she was crying.

As soon as he made the last stroke and she announced the count, he pulled her up to cradle her in his arms. She sat stiffly in his embrace, making him wonder if anyone had ever held her after a discipline session before. Perhaps he was showing himself different. He rocked her and spoke words of encouragement, telling her how brave and strong she was. After a few minutes she was completely relaxed in his arms and had stopped crying.

Alex kissed the top of her head, amazed. His father had been right. She had completely relaxed into his embrace.

Vati walked in a few minutes later with a small bottle of oil. Alex nodded to his father and gave him a grateful smile. Vati nodded back with a

small smile and left them alone.

He laid her gently on her stomach, pushing the shirt back up to expose her now very red ass and debated the appropriateness of kissing the inflamed skin. He leaned forward and kissed her gently on each side and she gasped softly.

Alex couldn't understand the depth of his feelings for her at this moment. He wanted nothing more than to turn her over and make love to her. But he'd promised himself....

He uncapped the bottle and began to apply the oil gently. It was sheer torture, running his hands over her silky skin and listening to her soft sighs as his hands moved. His cock throbbed against his jeans. He wanted her so badly it hurt.

He promised himself he'd allow the luxury of jerking off to thoughts of her as soon as he made sure she was okay.

Alex picked her back up when he had finished and cradled her in his arms again. It would be impossible for her not to feel his erection pressing into her hip and the fact that she didn't say anything about it humbled him. Perhaps his father was right. By rejecting her advances, she felt rejected personally.

He shook his head again. He'd think about that later. Right now Anna trembled in his arms and he didn't understand why.

“Does it feel better?” Alex asked softly as he rocked her.

“Y-yes, Master,” she answered warily.

“Are you cold?”

“No, Master.”

“Then why are you shaking? The discipline is over.”

She was quiet for a moment. “I don't understand why you're being nice to me now.”

He stopped rocking her and tipped up her chin to look at her face. “Why wouldn't I be nice to you?”

Her eyes filled with tears again. “Because you had to punish me.”

Alex felt the sadness in her words and cupped her cheek. “Anna, just because I had to discipline you doesn't mean I dislike you.” His eyes filled with emotion. “Quite the contrary...,” he whispered. He loved her. But he couldn't tell her that now. It wasn't the time. He stroked her cheek and looked at her intently, hoping she could see how much he cared about her.

Gazing into her eyes made him lose himself. He found himself moving his head closer to hers, then stopped. He blinked several times and pulled away slowly, lowering his hand at the same time.

He sat her up and pressed her head against his shoulder. He should give her his expectations so they didn't have to go through this again. “Anna, from now on, I don't want you to worry about what I think of your behavior, except when we're at the Manor. If you want to smirk at...someone, then smirk.” Kirsty deserved to be smirked at. “I prefer you to be kind and polite to people, but I want you to be free in your emotions.” He sighed. “I want you to learn to be your own person and not worry about what other people think.”

“But I want to please you, Master,” she protested softly. “That is my duty.”

He sighed. How could he get through to her? “Then please me by learning to enjoy yourself and have fun,” he suggested gently. “You should come to Aaron's party tonight.”

“I called Aaron yesterday and let him know I would be there.”

Alex blinked. “You did?” This jealousy thing was becoming quite annoying; one of the most miserable feelings he'd ever experienced.

Fear filled her eyes. “Should I not have?” She gasped. “Oh, Master. I’m sorry. Devin said I could go, but I didn’t ask you.” Tears filled her eyes. “I’m sorry.” She winced.

Devin had said she could go? “Anna, it’s fine. Devin and I both agree that you need to have some freedom. You don’t need to ask permission to do anything, as long as you don’t have previous obligations.” He smiled. “I’m pleased to see you took the initiative.”

Suddenly the text from Aaron last night made sense. He’d just gotten a “She’s coming to the party!” and nothing else. He hadn’t had a chance to text him back because Kirsty had been with him.

She smiled back timidly. “I had called Jenna and she said that I should call him myself.”

“I believe he’s glad you’re coming.”

“Are you going?”

Alex nodded. “So, when you’re there, remember that you don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. Don’t think of yourself as a slave. Think of yourself as a beautiful young woman that is going to be the most popular girl there.”

She frowned. “I don’t know if I know how to be my own person, Master. I’ve never done so.”

“You were doing a wonderful job when you were with my brother.” He didn’t want her thinking about Kurt, but it made the point.

“But I was told to do that.”

“You don’t like my brother?” He frowned and looked down at her. Was she that good of an actress? Was she totally incapable of emotion? Had they broken her that much?

Her eyes widened. “No, Master, I do.”

Alex sighed internally.

“I am very fond of him. But that came after I was told to...treat him well.”

Alex thought about that for a moment, then smiled. “Then consider this my...instructions for you. Enjoy yourself unless told otherwise. That way you know that by enjoying yourself, you are pleasing me.” He winked at her.

She giggled and he grinned. He'd made her understand at last! This might actually work.

“I like hearing you giggle,” he said softly, and he meant it. Her giggles were like music to the ear. Like her smiles were beauty to the eyes. “I like seeing you enjoy yourself. Can you do that for me?”

She looked up at him with bright eyes and nodded. “Yes, Master.”

He raised his eyebrows in mock rebuke. “No more 'Master' unless we're at the Manor, remember?”

“I'm sorry,” she said quickly.

He smiled reassuringly at her. “In this case, it was appropriate, Anna. I suppose if I have to discipline you, you should call me Master. But we're done with that. Now you will call me Alex.”

She smiled shyly. “Yes, Alex.”

“Good girl,” he said, pushing her to her feet gently. “Now, let's go find your clothes so you can get dressed.” And he could go get some relief in private.

“Alex?”

“Yes, *Schatzi*?”

She looked nervous again. “Did Seth...approaching me this morning upset you?” She was watching his face carefully.

Alex kept his face impassive as he thought. God, he hated the idea of her being with someone else. Knowing she'd spent the night with his father

nearly killed him. But, he'd rather see her with someone who would treat her well than someone that would hurt her. After spending years having sex multiple times daily, she certainly had a strong, active sex drive. Better Seth than some random man.

“Seth is a good man, Anna. I trust him with my life. I would entrust your life to him.” He hoped it would never come to that. He didn’t want to think of her in danger. “It wouldn’t be a good idea for you to publicly date him,” he said, looking up at her after a long moment of silence. “But if you have...needs, I don't mind you being with him.” He spoke slowly and carefully. He'd rather she be with him than his friend, but he'd already decided he wouldn't make love to her until she knew it was more than just sex.

She looked at him questioningly, but accepted his answer. “Yes, Alex,” she said softly.

Alex located Anna’s clothes in Kurt’s room and then went into his own bathroom. He opened his jeans and lost himself in thoughts of Anna naked in his bed.

After an awkward breakfast, Wilhelm headed off to the airport and Alex said a terse goodbye to Kirsty so he could take Anna to her new apartment.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Anna hated that she seemed to be getting in between Alex and his girlfriend. She hated that Alex had needed to discipline her too. She never would have acted in such a way if Devin or Jack had been around. Why did she do it around Alex?

She craned her neck to look out at the tall buildings as Alex drove through the streets of downtown San Francisco. They'd hardly spoken during the drive. Alex seemed deep in thought, and Anna didn't want to interrupt him.

He drove into a parking garage and circled around until he parked in a spot near a bank of elevators. "This is a spot for guests," he said quietly and then motioned to his left. "That's the car we picked out for you. If you don't like it, we can go pick out something else."

Anna glanced at Alex before getting out and walking around the car. She gasped at the cute little car sitting there. The white, two-door coupe looked like the top might be retractable. She felt a grin spreading across her face and she glanced up at Alex, who watched her with a nervous expression on her face.

"It's beautiful," she said, drawing her hand gently across the trunk lid. "You didn't have to do this, Alex."

Alex chewed his lip for a moment. "I wanted to," he said quietly. His eyes bored into hers and she could feel his intense emotions, and then he

looked away. He opened the car door and showed her how everything worked, and then handed Anna the key fob.

“The building has a valet service, so you just call the concierge desk and they’ll have it waiting for you out front when you need it.”

“Do I have to use the service?” The concept sounded weird.

“No, of course not. Just...know it’s an option.” He ran his hands through his hair. He shook his head slightly and then smiled. His mood seemed to have lightened. “Shall we go see your apartment?”

Anna nodded and her heart leapt slightly when he took her hand and led her to the elevator. He pushed the button with a 26 on it and the elevator sped upwards.

When they arrived at the door at the end of the hallway, Alex handed Anna the key. “Go ahead and unlock it.”

Anna did so and walked into the apartment that Alex had found for her.

“Two bedrooms, two baths,” Alex explained as she walked inside.

Anna walked into the master bedroom to see it decorated in soft purple and cream. The guest bedroom next to it had been decorated in a blue that matched Alex’s eyes. Alex was waiting in the furnished living room, which had two walls of windows, allowing her to see an amazing view of the bay. It too had been decorated in shades of purple and cream. The adjoining kitchen had a breakfast bar that Anna imagined using every morning.

“Oh, Alex, it’s beautiful.” She turned and hugged him around the waist. She didn’t deserve such a beautiful place to live.

Alex hugged Anna back, savoring her soft form against him. Kirsty had said some rude things about Anna before she left and it had been bothering him the entire way here. He’d never thought Kirsty a petty person, but

apparently he'd been wrong. He didn't know how much more he'd be able to put up with.

Anna seemed thrilled with both the car and the apartment. He'd had the apartment decorated with her in mind. Her smile made his heart swell in his chest.

"Anna, I need your driver's license number so I can register the car in your name."

She stiffened. "My license?"

Alex wondered at her reaction. "I want the car in your name, not mine. But I need your number to do that."

"I don't have it."

Was her face turning pale?

"You don't carry it with you?"

"I rarely drive. It's at Jack's house."

"Anna, are you all right?" Her face was definitely pale now.

She looked up at him with fear-filled eyes. "I need to go get it," she whispered, and then looked down at his chest. She nodded. "Okay."

"Anna, what's wrong?"

She forced a smile onto her face, but it didn't reach her eyes. "It's all right. I'll go get it and call you with the number?"

Her expression bothered him. He knew she'd been abused and couldn't blame her for not wanting to go back to her guardian's house. "I'll take you, Anna. You don't have to go alone."

"I don't want to be a bother."

He cradled her cheek. "You're never a bother, *Schatzi*."

Anna's stomach started jumping around as they drew closer to the hell-house she spent the last eight years of her life in. By the time Alex pulled

up in front of the light-gray two-story townhouse, she was ready to throw up her breakfast.

Maybe I can get my memories box while I'm here.

It would likely be her only chance to retrieve the box she'd kept hidden under her bed. It contained the things of her parents she'd managed to salvage before Jack destroyed everything else.

"Do you want me to come with you, Anna?" Alex asked.

Anna shook her head, not wanting her voice to betray her fear. She opened the car door with a shaky hand, and took a breath before slowly walking up the steps to the front door.

Please don't let Jack be home, she begged silently as she rang the doorbell. She trembled more as the seconds ticked by. No one answered, and Anna finally breathed a sigh of relief. She could go in the garage side door, which was always open.

She walked down the stairs. Alex opened his window. "Did you get it?"

Anna shook her head. "Jack isn't home. I'll go in the garage. My room was down there anyways." She smiled, trying to look braver than she felt, and walked to the black-painted door. *A dark door to a dark place.* She took a deep breath and turned the knob, pausing in the doorway as it opened. The familiar scent flooded her mind with memories. Bad memories.

"Anna?"

Anna jumped at the sound of her name. But it wasn't Jack's voice. She turned and saw Alex behind her.

"W-what are you doing?" She frowned at him.

"You haven't moved in a few minutes. Are you all right?"

"I haven't...?" Anna realized she was still standing with her hand on the knob. She was petrified to go through the door, but she knew she needed to. She needed her license. "I'm sorry. I'll only be a minute."

“I’ll come with you,” he said, pushing open the door and walking in.

The front of the garage, where Jack parked his car, was empty as Anna expected. She walked quickly through to the back room where her bedroom and the “lessons room” were.

The room was well soundproofed. Anna opened the door and heard muffled groans and cries. *The twins. Jack’s new girls.* Anna hesitated and looked back at Alex. *His father’s an Elder. He knows how we’re trained.*

“What’s that noise?” Alex asked, pushing past her and into the room. He stopped with one foot in the room, mouth open and shock in his wide blue eyes. Anna stepped in behind him and saw one of the twins on the “machine.”

Alex stopped and stared at the sight before him. It was little better than a dungeon, with various apparatus of play or torture, depending on one’s tastes, but Alex knew better than to think this was Jack’s playroom.

There were two teenage girls in the room. One was bent over a long table, arms stretched over her head, ankles cuffed to the table legs. A machine of some sort was thrusting a large dildo in and out of her swollen pussy. The end of a butt plug was visible between her ass cheeks. A gag was in her mouth to muffle her cries.

The other girl was cuffed spread eagle in the archway. She had on weighted nipple and pussy clamps. Alex could see her cheeks, damp with tears. She also had a gag in her mouth. She looked up at them as they stood there, her long brown hair coming loose from her braid and her brown eyes red with pain.

“Anna, what the hell is this?” he asked in English.

Anna didn’t look at him as she pushed past him. “Training,” she said with a slight shrug. She walked to the nightstand and opened a drawer. Alex

could see the tears in her eyes as she pulled out what he assumed was her driver's license.

"What do you mean, training? It looks like torture," he spat, afraid he would lose his lunch. Was this how Anna was trained? Hearing about it and seeing it firsthand were very different. Bile rose in his throat as he imagined Anna in either one of those girls' places.

Anna knelt down next to the bed and began looking underneath. She pulled at something and then frowned.

"What are you doing?"

"Trying...", Anna grunted again as she pulled. "...to get my box."

"Box?" Alex knelt down beside her. "Move."

Anna moved aside and he reached under the bed. After a moment, he pulled his arm out holding a flat square box. It was about eight inches high and two feet square.

"Thank you," Anna said with a grateful smile.

He nodded and glanced at the tortured girls. "Who are they?"

Anna looked back. "Jack's new trainees. Sex slaves that were born in the manor, I guess." She pressed her lips together and took the box from Alex.

Alex turned around and stared at the girls. Trainees? What the hell kind of training was this? He stood and hurried to catch up to Anna.

He caught hold of Anna's shoulder and spun her around. "Does your guardian train Red girls?"

Anna looked back at the closed doorway. "I don't know."

"You weren't trained like that, were you?"

Anna looked up at him, tilting her head. "Of course I was."

Alex looked back at the doorway. He clenched his jaw as the anger bubbled up inside him. His knuckles turned white as his hands clenched

into fists.

Anna backed away, clearly frightened.

He glanced at her and pulled out his phone. Seth picked up the phone a moment later. “Seth,” he said in German. “There are two girls in Jack’s basement. I want them out of the house and out of the country by the end of the day. Take them to my father’s *Schloss*.” He hung up the phone without waiting for an answer. It would be done.

Alex turned and pulled the box from Anna’s hands.

“No, please...,” Anna begged, reaching for it.

“I’m just going to carry it for you.” He took a deep breath, knowing the girls would be safe in a few hours.

Anna closed the outside door carefully behind them and followed Alex to the car. He started the vehicle and drove away without speaking.

“I’m not upset with you, Anna,” Alex said, reaching for her hand and squeezing it as they walked down the hallway towards Anna’s apartment. He hadn’t spoken since they’d left Jack’s house. “I hadn’t realized...” He glanced at her out of the corner of his eye. “You’re such a strong woman to have survived all that.”

Anna wondered at the emotion in his voice. She didn’t know what to say and instead concentrated on unlocking the door to her apartment. She handed Alex her license and went to put the box under the bed in the spacious master bedroom.

“Here,” Alex said as she walked back out into the living room a few minutes later. He handed her an envelope.

She opened the envelope and saw three credit cards inside. “What are these?” she asked.

“So you have money," Alex explained. "The black one is a credit card. Use that one when you can. It's American Express and sometimes not taken, so use the Visa if you can't use the other. The silver one is a bank card. Your PIN is your birthday, 0512. Use it to get cash at an ATM.”

Anna nodded, a little overwhelmed. “Do you want me to ask you before I buy something?”

Alex shook his head. “That's not necessary.” He laughed. “Well, I suppose ask before you buy a car or a house. If something costs more than four or five thousand dollars, give me a call, but other than that, don't worry about it.”

Four or five *thousand dollars*? Wow.

“Anna, you need clothes. You need general things to live.”

“Jenna is taking me shopping today. I hadn't considered how I was going to pay for stuff.”

Alex chuckled. “Well, now you don't have to worry about it. Buy whatever you need.”

Anna gave him a doubtful look. But, she was his slave. He said he needed to take care of her. She was a kept woman. At least he was nice.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Anna called Jenna after Alex left.

“Anna! I’m so glad you called. I was getting worried.”

She glanced at her watch. “It’s barely noon.”

“Yeah, but we were supposed to have lunch. I’m starving.”

“Sorry. I was busy this morning.”

“Doing what?”

“Just...stuff...”

“Oookay. Well, do you want me to pick you up? You don’t have a car, do you?”

Anna smiled, thinking of the cute car downstairs. “Actually, I do.”

“Do you want to drive?”

Anna smiled. “Sure. Can you text me your address? I don’t know if I remember where you live.”

Ten minutes later, Anna’s heart pounded in her chest as she drove to the three-story black townhouse that had almost been lost in her memory. She’d been intimate with Luke, Jenna’s father, almost as long as she’d been intimate with Jack. She and Luke knew each other very well and she had a certain level of affection for him. He’d been cruel to her when Jack had demanded it, but otherwise he’d been reasonably nice. He came to see her often, but he didn’t hurt her for the fun of it like other men had.

She knocked on the door. No one answered right away, and she was looking around to make sure she was at the right place when the door

opened.

“Anna?”

She turned to find Luke in the doorway wearing an amazed expression on his face.

“Hello,” she said awkwardly. Usually when they met, it was to have sex. Now, she was here to see Jenna.

He grinned. “Jenna told me you were coming over. I hardly recognized you.”

“I just saw you a couple of weeks ago,” she said softly.

“Yeah, but you look...different.” He looked her over appreciatively and then stepped back to let her enter. “You look like a normal young woman.”

She smiled shyly. “Is that bad?”

He shook his head and closed the door. “Not at all,” he said in a seductive voice. He stepped toward her and took her hand, pulling her close. “I like it,” he said softly.

Anna looked at him nervously. “Is Jenna home yet?” she whispered as he pressed his body to hers, sliding his hands down her back and onto her ass.

“No, not yet.” He kissed her neck and she sighed. “You smell good.”

He kissed her mouth and she wrapped her arms around his neck. He slanted his mouth against hers and his tongue slipped between her teeth to dance around hers. His hands cupped her ass and he pressed his hips against her. She moaned softly into his mouth as his tongue stroked hers.

She clung to him as they kissed and he pushed her backwards until she ran into the wall. He ground his hips into hers and slid his hands up her waist and ribs under her shirt. He cupped her breasts, kneading them over her bra.

She sighed as he trailed his lips down her neck.

Suddenly he pulled away. She frowned as he grinned and pulled his phone out of his pocket. He pressed the screen. "Jenna...Hey, baby...would you mind stopping and getting some milk on the way home? No, she's not here yet...." Luke grinned at Anna mischievously. "Okay...I will...love you, too."

Her eyes widened as he hung up. "We have a few extra minutes alone," he murmured, and pulled her into his office across the hallway. "Oh, God. Anna...," he moaned, then kissed her hard while he walked her backwards. "I always wanted to fuck you on my desk."

She smiled against his mouth as he lifted her onto his desk. He pushed her back and lifted her shirt. He pulled down the cups of her bra then frowned.

"What's wrong?" she asked nervously. He'd not frowned at her in years; she knew he delighted in her body.

"I thought Devin only gave you one nipple ring." He used both hands to tug on each nipple. "You have two."

"I have two Masters," she said, sitting up and kissing his neck. "So I have six rings." It seemed almost normal now. Two masters, six rings.

"Two Masters?" he asked softly, raising one brow. "I can't imagine Devin allowing that." He tugged on her nipple rings and she sighed.

"I don't understand exactly what happened, but it did." She grinned seductively. "Do you want to see the others?"

He looked down at her with desire in his eyes and nodded.

She scooted off the desk, kicked off her sandals and unbuttoned her jeans, pushing them down to the ground along with her panties. She sat back on the desk with her legs spread, leaning back on her hands. "Here," she said, pointing to her pussy.

He knelt down and spread her legs further apart. “That...,” He kissed her clit and she shuddered. “...is one of the sexiest things I've ever seen.” He stood and unbuttoned his jeans. “I want to see more of it, but Jenna will be home soon.”

He pulled his cock out of his jeans as he moved closer and then pushed her knees into her chest.

“Oh, God!” she moaned, leaning back onto his desk as he submerged himself inside her. “Oh, Luke!”

He began thrusting in and out of her quickly. He groaned as she squeezed him with her vaginal muscles. She knew they didn't have much time and wanted him to enjoy himself as much as possible. He fucked her hard as he held her hips, her ankles on his shoulders.

“Oh, yes...,” she groaned.

His movements quickened and he moaned loudly.

She cried out his name as she came. He shouted her name as he stiffened and climaxed, digging his fingers into her hips.

He leaned forward onto her chest, forehead wet with exertion. His eyes glinted with desire. “That was hot, baby,” he said huskily. “Reality better than fantasy.”

She smiled at him and nodded.

He pulled out and kissed her, then fixed his clothes.

As she stood and reached for her jeans, they heard a door open. She looked at Luke, alarmed.

“Bathroom under the stairs,” he instructed.

She nodded and skidded across the hall into the bathroom. She dressed and straightened her clothes and flushed the toilet, then walked out calmly. Jack had taught her how to act in case a situation arose in which the man she was with could get in trouble.

“Anna!” Jenna exclaimed and hugged her. “I didn't see a car out front. I didn't think you were here.”

Her heart jumped in her chest and she ran to the door. “My car's not there?” What would Alex say if her car was stolen? She slammed open the door and was relieved to see the white Mercedes was still parked where she'd left it. “No, it's still there....” She sighed in relief.

Jenna stood behind her. “Don't tell me that little white thing is yours?” Anna nodded and Jenna arched her brow at her. “You have a Mercedes?”

Anna shrugged. “Yeah.”

Jenna glanced at her dad and then back at Anna. “Okay....” She rolled her eyes and then grinned. “Let me get my bag and then I want a ride!” She ran up the stairs to get her bag.

Jenna practically moaned as she sat in the passenger seat of Anna's car a few minutes later, which made Anna giggle. They went to the mall and spent a few hours shopping. She felt awkward using her credit cards, but evidently Alex had called Jenna to tell her to make sure Anna bought what she needed. Anna found a cocktail dress for the banquet on Wednesday and a swimsuit for Aaron's party. Anna hadn't known it was a pool party.

While they were shopping, the realization of what she'd done with Jenna's dad hit her. Why had she done that? Before when they had sex, it was because she was obligated to. She had to or she would get punished. But now...now she was supposed to be free.

Shame filled Anna as she thought about what Jenna would say if she knew what had happened...why her dad had asked her to stop for milk.

But, if she'd told Luke no, Devin would have gotten angry. She wasn't supposed to say no to any man who wanted her.

Mid-afternoon, Anna and Jenna returned to Anna's apartment.

“You live in the Sapphire?” Jenna asked, eyes wide as Anna parked. “How are you affording all this stuff, Anna? And why did Alex give you credit cards?”

Anna bit her lip as she parked the car in her spot. “It’s a long story, Jenna.”

“We have time. Tell me.”

Anna was quiet in the elevator, trying to decide how to explain her life.

Jenna whistled at the apartment. “Nice place.” She turned around with a concerned look on her face. “What happened, Anna? Why are you living here? Why’d you practically disappear?” The hurt was evident in her voice.

“Jenna, if I tell you, you can’t tell anybody. I could get into a lot of trouble.”

Jenna nodded and Anna sat down on the couch. She slowly began to tell Jenna about what had happened the last few years. Including the ritual and how she belonged to Devin and Alex now.

When she was done, Jenna had tears in her eyes. “I never knew it was that bad. I thought Jack was just being an ass.”

Anna laughed bitterly. “He was.”

“Oh, Anna!” Jenna hugged her fiercely around her neck. “Oh, you poor thing. I wish you would have told me. I could have done something. My dad—”

Anna shook her head. “He couldn’t have done anything.” He participated, but Anna didn’t want to tell Jenna that.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Anna parked down the street from where the GPS had indicated Aaron's house was. Cars lined the street for almost two blocks in either direction. Jenna had said Aaron's parties were well attended, and it looked like she was right.

She and Jenna walked up the steps to the large wooden house. Throbbing base and pounding drums of the latest dance music greeted them as they approached the redwood front door. Jenna opened without knocking and Anna looked at her questioningly.

“If we knock, we'll be waiting forever,” Jenna explained.

Anna smoothed her short pink t-shirt dress and took a deep breath before following Jenna inside. The house was very modern looking, white and open.

Jenna greeted the few people sitting in the chairs in the front living room and introduced Anna to them. Anna greeted them politely and quietly, feeling out of place.

They walked into a large, modern kitchen where a few people were milling about, including Aaron, who stood near an open sliding glass door. He wore blue swim trunks and Anna could admire his lithe upper body from across the room. She heard splashing and laughter outside.

Aaron turned and saw Anna as she walked into the room. He grinned and waved. Anna waved shyly back to him.

“See, he totally likes you,” Jenna whispered.

Anna shook her head, but nerves crept into her stomach as Aaron approached them.

He picked her up and spun her around, hugging her. "I'm so glad you came, Anna. You look fantastic."

Anna's shyness came on full force. "Thank you," she said, looking at the ground.

"What am I? Chopped liver?" Jenna pouted.

Aaron laughed, keeping his arm around Anna's waist. "Nah. I'd at least call you strip steak."

Jenna giggled. "Well, that's something."

"C'mon outside. There's food and drinks on the deck."

Aaron kept his arm around Anna's waist and led them through the sliding door out onto a huge redwood deck. Wide stairs in the middle led down to a lit pool filled with people laughing and playing some sort of game with a white ball.

The moment Anna stepped outside, she could sense Alex nearby. *My Master*. She looked around and saw him in the far side of the pool talking with Seth and a couple of other guys unfamiliar to her.

Alex looked up at her as if he'd sensed her gaze and gave her a warm smile. She smiled back and gave him a questioning look to ask if he wanted her near him. He grinned and shook his head, motioning to Aaron. She nodded and followed Aaron to the refreshments table.

"What was that about?" Jenna murmured in her ear.

"What was what about?" Anna asked innocently.

"Anna, you want something to drink?" Aaron asked, reaching for a red plastic cup. "I'm not picky about the drinking age as long as you don't drive home."

Anna gave him an apologetic look. "I drove here. Just some water is fine."

"I've got soda and tea too," he said, motioning to the table.

She shook her head. "Water's fine."

"I'll take a drink," Jenna said filling a red plastic cup with beer.

Aaron handed Anna a cup with ice water. "You hungry?"

"We had dinner at my apartment," she said, shaking her head.

"My God, Anna." A catty female voice came from behind them. "Can't Alex go anywhere without you showing up?"

Anna turned to see Kirsty with her hands on her narrow hips, giving her a dirty look. She wore a very skimpy gold bikini with a sheer black sarong tied around her hips.

"Aaron invited me," Anna said softly. Why did Kirsty have to confront her here?

She raised her brow and looked at Aaron. "You certainly get around, don't you?" She smirked, then turned and sauntered away, shaking her hips seductively as she walked.

Anna sighed. Couldn't she go anywhere without Kirsty showing up? Jenna gave her a questioning look.

"She doesn't like me very much," Anna said quietly.

"I hope the feeling's mutual," Jenna muttered.

"She's never been very nice to me."

Anna noticed Aaron watching Kirsty walk away and felt hurt, though she didn't understand why. Why should she care if Aaron was looking at another woman? It wasn't any of her business. Something bubbled up inside her, though, and it took her a moment to understand what it was. Jealousy? Kirsty walked in a way to make sure that all the guys watched her. And they did. She frowned, feeling irritated for the first time in a very long time.

Jenna giggled. "She's a bitch to everything female. She loves lording it over all the girls that she's with Alex and they're not. I honestly don't see why he's with her." She glared at Aaron.

"What? I don't control what Alex does." Aaron put his hands up in defense then shrugged. "She's hot and good in bed."

Hot and good in bed? Anna had never imagined Alex could be so shallow. But then again, what did she know? She barely knew him.

Anna frowned at Aaron. "Did you share her too?" she asked, her irritation venting suddenly.

His eyes widened at her question and she could see the yes in his eyes. Hurt and angry, she spun around and walked away. Alex had said that he wanted her to act as she felt and not worry about what other people thought. So, that's what she was doing, though she chided herself with each step, knowing she had no right to feel as she did.

Jenna followed quickly behind down the stairs to the main yard. They dropped their bags near the deck and Anna looked at the people in the pool. Kirsty was in the pool in front of Alex, and from where Anna stood, it looked as if he held her against his chest. Anna pushed aside the twinge of irrational jealousy.

Alex said that he wanted Anna to flirt and have fun. Well, that is certainly something she knew how to do...at least the flirting part. These new emotions were disconcerting and made her want to do things she'd never done before. Like make someone jealous. Someone like Aaron or Alex.

"Hey, Jenna. Who's this?" Two guys in their mid-twenties walked up to the two girls. Both were tall and thin and walked gracefully, like dancers. One was blonde and the other had dark hair.

“Hi, guys,” Jenna said cheerfully, hugging them both. “Garrett, Bryce, this is my best friend Anna. Anna, this is Garrett Salinas and Bryce Wilkinson. They're Aaron's roommates.”

“Hello, Garrett. Hello, Bryce.” Anna greeted them with a smile.

“You going swimming?” Bryce asked.

“Of course,” Jenna said with a grin and began taking her shirt and shorts off. “Coming, Anna?” she asked, looking at Anna.

Anna hadn't been swimming since she was a child. She wasn't afraid of water, but didn't know if she could keep herself from drowning. She nodded and kicked her shoes off, putting them next to her bag. She pulled out her towel and put her cell phone on the top so she could hear it if it rang. She didn't want to be punished for missing a phone call from Devin.

Anna slowly pulled off her dress, meeting Garrett's gray eyes with a soft smile. She held his gaze as she adjusted the green bandeau top of her bikini, but when her hands moved to the skimpy bottom she wore, Garrett's gaze moved downwards.

“Man, I wish I was that confident,” Jenna mumbled.

Garrett and Bryce looked Anna up and down with appreciative glances. She'd never had any complaints about her body and never expected to. Talking made her shy. Being naked, or mostly naked in this case, was nothing to her.

Anna lifted her head and stood in a subtly seductive pose. She knew men. She knew how to handle men. She had a feeling she was treading in dangerous waters, but she was angry and frustrated and was bordering on not caring. She decided to make the most of her training and show Kirsty what she was really made of. She smiled at the thought of making Kirsty the jealous one.

She gave Garrett and Bryce her special smile and instantly felt their attraction.

Jenna watched her, wide-eyed.

Anna grinned at her. "Shall we?"

"What just happened to you?" Jenna murmured as they walked to the pool with Garrett and Bryce behind them. She could feel them watching her hips sway as she walked.

"What do you mean?" Anna whispered.

"You went from quiet, shy Anna to hot sexy Anna in the blink of an eye." She glanced at Anna and grinned. "I like it." She giggled. "I might take you into the bathroom later and take advantage of you."

They looked at each other for a moment, then giggled as they walked to the edge of the pool. Both Garrett and Bryce were instantly at Anna's side as she stepped down into the water.

Jenna made introductions as people swam up to them. Anna was sure to be charming and flirtatious and did everything she knew to be desired, both to the guys and the girls.

Jenna giggled and whispered in Anna's ear to look at Kirsty. Anna did and could see the jealousy and rage written all over her face. They'd stolen away several of Kirsty's admirers. Anna smirked at Kirsty then turned back to the conversation nearby.

Seth and Tony came up a while later. Seth grabbed Anna around the waist and nuzzled her neck.

"Damn, you look hot, Anna," Seth murmured, his breath tickling her ear. "I could eat you up."

The thought of Seth's tongue on her pussy made her wet. She turned to whisper in his ear, her hand resting on his muscular shoulder. "Is that a promise?"

He gave her a seductive smile. “You bet.”

Anna giggled and almost missed the strange look on Aaron's face as he watched her. Apparently her attempt to make him jealous worked because he looked upset.

“Hey, anyone up for some volleyball?” Aaron asked the group, holding up the white ball she'd seen earlier.

Those in the pool divided up into groups. Anna and Jenna were on a team with Aaron, Garrett and Bryce and a few others. Alex and Kirsty were on the other team. Anna stood in the back between Aaron and Garrett, who had been very open with his flirting with her. She regularly glanced at him and smiled.

Anna looked at Aaron apologetically, “I'm not very good at this.” She'd played in middle school PE a few times, but never did very well.

“It's all right.” Aaron gave her an encouraging smile. “It's just about having fun. Hit the ball and enjoy yourself. Just try not to hit it in the neighbor's yard.”

The game started. The ball flew in Anna's direction quite a few times and she was proud of herself for managing to hit it a few times. At one point the ball was coming in high and Garrett picked her up out of the water so she could hit it. She hit it harder than she meant to, and it soared out of the water onto the other side of the yard.

She winced. “Sorry,” she called to the other team.

Alex laughed and pulled himself out of the water and went to look for it in the dark corner of the yard.

Garrett held Anna around the waist after he lowered her back into the water. “Are you having fun?” he whispered in her ear.

Her breath caught in her throat as she nodded. She turned around to face him and heard a phone start ringing. It took her a good ten seconds to

realize that it was her phone ringing and that it was Devin's ring.

Her heart pounded in her chest and she pushed against Garrett. "Garrett, that's my phone. I have to go answer it," she said quietly.

He held her tight and grinned. "It's just a phone, sweetie. They'll leave a message."

Anna didn't think he wasn't trying to be mean, just flirty. She struggled against him. "Please, you don't understand," she implored softly. "I have to answer that. I promise I'll come right back." She was running out of time and began to panic.

Someone yelled from the deck that there was a phone ringing. She struggled to turn around and yelled, "That's mine. I'm going!"

Garrett still wouldn't let her go. He leaned in and nuzzled her ear. "Let it go to voice mail," he said in a husky voice.

"Garrett, please..." She gave him one last push and he let her go, frowning. She pushed her way through the resistant water to the side of the pool and lunged for her phone...just as it silenced and went to voice mail.

She sank onto her knees, staring at the "One Missed Call" notification on the screen. She covered her mouth to mask a sob and started shaking. *Devin is going to be so angry! I'm going to be punished!* She took a shaky breath in and reached out with a trembling finger to push the call back button when Alex knelt next to her.

"Anna, what's wrong?" he asked softly.

She turned the phone to show him the missed call message. "I missed a call from Devin," she whispered. "I tried to get to it, but Garrett..."

"Is that why you were struggling against him?"

She brought the phone back into her lap and stared at it as she nodded. "Devin's going to punish me," she whispered, terror replacing the shock and fear of missing the call.

“Punish you? For missing a call?” He sounded bewildered.

Anna looked up at him with tears in her eyes. “He said...,” she began, trying desperately not to cry and failing, “...that if I didn't answer his call at any time, he'd consider it disobedience.”

“Anna, that's ridiculous...,” Alex began and then stopped, studying her. “You're serious?”

She nodded again.

He clenched his jaw and took her phone out of her hands. “What are you doing?” she asked, panicking and reaching for it.

He stabbed at the screen. “Calling Devin to keep him from punishing you for something that wasn't your fault.”

Alex made the call and waited for Devin to answer. “...No, it's Alex...yes, she's right here.... I saw her trying to get to her phone, but she was prevented from doing so....”

Kirsty walked up to him and started to say something, but he put his hand up in the air to block her and turned and walked away to the other side of the yard.

Kirsty stared after him for a moment, then glared down at Anna. “You little bitch,” she said through clenched teeth. “You think you're something special to him, but you're not.”

Anna stood. “I could never hope to be something more than I am to him, which is very little,” she said humbly. “You're a very lucky woman, Kirsty.”

Kirsty's eyes narrowed. “Don't play games with me, you little cunt. I know you want him. I've seen the way you look at him.”

Anna tilted her head and looked at Kirsty curiously. “Every girl here wants him. Why come after me?”

She huffed, then looked at Alex a few yards away. “Who is he talking to?”

“Devin Andersen,” Anna answered softly.

“Devin Andersen? Why...?” Kirsty looked at Anna again, then looked at her neck and her stomach. A wicked smile crept across her face. “Nice belly ring,” she commented, giving her a knowing look. “What's it like, being a sex slave?”

Anna gasped and looked at her, horrified. *How could she know...?*

“Wondering how I know?” Kirsty smirked and waved her hand in the air. “Please. I travel the world. Devin doesn't let his out, but others do. Other...whatever they're called, are more open with their slaves.” She laughed. “I must admit, you all are very well trained.” She took a step towards Anna, who took a step backwards. “I didn't think you were allowed to say no.” She raised her brow.

Anna's eyes widened in fear and she stopped, clenched her hands together and looked at the ground.

“Garrett's bedroom is on the second floor, the door immediately to the left at the top of the stairs,” Kirsty said in a low voice. “Go there and wait for me.”

Anna nodded obediently and did as she was told. Kirsty knew she was a slave. Anna couldn't say no. Her slave programming wouldn't let her. She had to serve women as well as men.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Alex looked around for Anna as he was finishing his conversation with Devin. “Devin, she must have gone to the bathroom. I'll have her call you as soon as I find her.”

Devin growled. “You better, or I might not remember what I said earlier.”

Alex frowned and disconnected the call. He'd spent the last ten minutes negotiating and threatening him if he punished Anna for something that wasn't her fault. Alex had seen her struggling against Garrett and was making his way over to rescue her when she got free. But the look on her face as she ran for her phone had confused him.

When he found out she was terrorized because she'd missed a call from Devin, his temper flared. He hadn't lost his temper so many times in so many days in a long time. It exhausted him, but when it came to Anna, he couldn't help but be defensive of her. No one else seemed to care. And he was her Master; he had a responsibility to her.

Alex looked at the people in the pool. He couldn't imagine where Anna would have gone. It wasn't like her to run away from punishment.... Alex's heart dropped. The only reason she would have left was if someone made her.

“Seth! Tony!” he called, walking quickly over to his bag to find his phone. He was thankful for the advanced GPS tracker he'd had placed in the

bracelet he'd given Anna. It would lead him to her exact location within a foot.

Seth and Tony were by his side in an instant, dripping wet from the pool.

“Anna's disappeared,” Alex said, pulling his phone out of his bag.

They both cursed. “Is her GPS working?” Seth asked.

Alex looked down at his phone and pushed several icons. He sighed in relief as he saw the red dot blinking nearby and not moving. “She's still here. C'mon.”

The other men grabbed their towels and dried off as they walked into the house. Alex was anxious that one of the guys at the party had seduced her...or worse...and taken her to one of the bedrooms.

Anna stood in the middle of Garrett's room for a moment, looking around. It was a big room. She settled on her knees next to the bed and awaited Kirsty's arrival.

Kirsty opened the door a few minutes later and Anna sighed silently in relief when she saw the other woman entered alone. She'd been afraid Kirsty would bring Alex along. Anna stared at Kirsty's perfectly manicured toes as she stood in front of her.

She grabbed a handful of Anna's hair and brought her head up to look at her. “You eat pussy, right?”

“Yes, my lady,” she answered softly.

She grinned. “Remove my swimsuit and eat me,” she commanded.

Anna obediently reached for the strings of Kirsty's bikini bottom and pulled until they came loose and the scrap of fabric fell to the floor. Kirsty lay down on the bed with her legs apart and knees tented. Anna crawled up

between her legs, took a deep breath and leaned down to Kirsty's wet, pink pussy.

She tentatively extended her tongue to touch her. Anna knew what to do, but didn't have much experience with women. She licked her from bottom to top once and Kirsty moaned. Anna did it again, this time with more pressure, and Kirsty moaned again. She buried her tongue in the silken folds and sucked and licked her, eliciting moans repeatedly. She pushed two fingers inside the wet pussy and swept her tongue across the erect clit, and felt Kirsty shudder. Thrusting repeatedly, Anna sucked on Kirsty's clit and Kirsty cried out loudly.

She pulled her fingers out and pressed her tongue at the opening and Kirsty bucked her hips. Anna's tongue slid between the swollen folds and thrust it in and out. She stopped for a moment to suck in the pussy juices and Kirsty cried out when she did so. Anna repeated the motion again and Kirsty cried out again.

Anna licked and sucked Kirsty until her hips squirmed.

"Make me come, bitch," Kirsty growled and Anna sucked hard on her clit and thrust her fingers in and out over and over again.

Anna's fingers were wet with Kirsty's juices. She rubbed the top of her passage, eliciting another deep moan. Anna kept rubbing the spot and sucking on her clit. Kirsty's pussy clenched around Anna's fingers and she moaned loudly.

"Oh, fuck yeah," she mumbled.

Kirsty clenched even harder and climaxed hard. As Kirsty relaxed, she opened her eyes slowly. She glared at Anna, but something caught her attention by the door. Her eyes widened in fright.

Alex took the stairs two at a time and opened the door to Garrett's room to find Anna lying on the bed. Between Kirsty's legs.

Alex's hands clenched into fists and his jaw muscles twitched. He'd never been as angry with Kirsty as he was right now. He had no doubt Kirsty had somehow lured Anna up here and he was going to find out why.

He slammed the door against the adjoining wall to get their attention. Anna turned around quickly, Kirsty's juices still on her chin. He let out a low growl.

If he lost it, he would terrorize Anna. Alex closed his eyes and counted to ten to gain some semblance of control. He opened his eyes and looked at Anna, who jumped in fright and clambered off the bed to bow low in front of him. He hated that Anna was clearly feeling his anger.

“What the fuck do you think you're doing?” Alex growled, entering the room. Seth and Tony entered behind him and closed the door. Alex stepped carefully over Anna.

“She knew what I—” Anna's muffled voice came from the floor.

“Not you, Anna,” Alex interrupted her with a tone that was sharper than he'd intended. *Fuck*. He didn't want to upset her more than she was already. Whatever the fuck Kirsty had done to her was clearly enough to make her fear him again. That made him even angrier.

He took several deep breaths, for Anna's sake and not Kirsty's, and stepped towards the bed. “You. Kirsty.” His voice was quiet, but full of rage.

Kirsty shrank back in fear. She'd never seem him angry like this before.

“What the fuck do you think you're doing?”

Kirsty looked at Anna and her arrogance returned and she became defensive. “She's a fucking sex slave, Alex. I was taking advantage of the

situation. They're well trained, you know.” She tried to sound nonchalant, but her voice trembled as she spoke.

“I'm aware of their abilities. What I don't know is how you knew and why you thought it was okay to take advantage of it.”

“Alex,” Kirsty said, exasperated, and gave him a knowing look as she tried to lighten the mood. “That's what they're for, silly. You know that.” She gave him a seductive smile and moved her legs to reveal her glistening pink pussy. “You should take advantage of it, too.”

Alex frowned and closed his eyes again to keep his pulse down. The rage surging through his body disorientated him. He had half a mind to have Seth remove Anna from the room so he could deal with Kirsty properly, but doing so might make Anna feel worse. And he really didn't want to make a scene at his friend's party. He'd just have to keep himself under control. A good exercise, he supposed.

“Her owner will never find out. And I doubt he'd care if he knew.” Kirsty looked down at Anna bowing on the floor then back at Alex suspiciously. “Wait a minute. Why did she bow to you?” she asked slowly, eyes narrowed.

“It's a defense mechanism.” Alex said, temper and voice softening, as he fully realized what Anna was doing. He closed his eyes as he continued. “When a slave senses her owner is angry, they put themselves in the most submissive position they can.”

Alex knelt in front of Anna and pulled her arms to have her sit up.

She trembled and stared at the floor. “I'm sorry, Master,” she whispered.

Alex glanced up at Seth and Tony and saw the concern in their faces. He cupped her cheek and lifted her face. He smiled softly, his heart aching

for the trembling girl in front of him. "Schatzi, the only thing you did wrong was doing something you didn't want to do," he said softly.

"Master?" Kirsty exclaimed. "What the fuck, Alex?"

Alex's jaw clenched. He couldn't deal with Kirsty's shit anymore. He might as well tell Kirsty some of the truth. She wouldn't tell anyone. Of that he was certain. "Show her your bracelet, Anna."

Anna stood and held out her bracelet for Kirsty to see. Kirsty stared at it for a moment, then grabbed Anna's wrist, none to gently, pulling her onto the bed. Kirsty touched one of the silver discs. "This has your family crest on it, Alex," she said slowly.

"Yes, she is a slave. And she belongs to my family." He hated saying those words aloud, but they were the truth.

"Shouldn't she be in Germany?" Kirsty asked sarcastically, letting go of Anna.

Alex pulled Anna back onto her feet. "Kirsty, it is a long story which you have no need to hear," he said impatiently. "This is why she is around so much. She is mine." He put his hands on Anna's shoulders and Kirsty frowned. "You had no right to use her as you did."

"What do you need a sex slave for, Alex? Aren't I enough?" Kirsty pouted.

"As I said, it is a very long story," Alex sighed. "I didn't seek out a slave, Kirsty. But she is here to stay. If you have a problem with that, you are free to go."

Kirsty's jaw dropped and she stared at Alex with wide eyes. "You would choose her over me?" she accused.

"I have obligations to Anna that were in place long before I met you," Alex said solemnly.

He felt Anna tense under his hands.

She narrowed her eyes at Alex. “I can't believe this, you son of a bitch. You'd pick a fucking slave over your girlfriend?” She scooted to the edge of the bed and reached for her swimsuit bottom, tying it with jerked motions. “Fine. Have her. There are plenty of men that would be thrilled to have me.” She finished the knots and stood to put it on.

Alex snorted. “You going to Rio?” he asked sarcastically. “Or Paris? Or how about Düsseldorf?”

Her eyes widened. “You know about—”

“Of course I do, Kirsty. I'm not an idiot.”

“Alex. I—”

“I don't give a rat's ass,” he said irritably. “Really, I don't. Go find some other poor sucker to latch onto.” He sighed, realizing he was being harsh. He didn't want to end things like this. As much as they weren't getting along lately, there had been a reason they'd gotten together in the first place. “I'll take you home,” he said, his voice softer. “Go get your things. I'll meet you downstairs.”

Kirsty stood and glared at Anna, then left, slamming the door behind her.

Tony and Seth glanced at each other and then looked at him with amused expressions. They, too, had wondered why he was still with her.

Alex sat on the bed and ran his fingers through his hair, stopping halfway and resting his head in his hands.

“Seth, go make sure she keeps quiet about what happened,” he mumbled in German. “Tony, get the car. I need to speak to Aaron before we leave.”

Seth and Tony both responded with a “Yes, sir,” and left the room.

“Anna, why didn't you tell her no?” Alex asked in English, still staring at the floor.

Anna sat down on her knees in front of him. “She knows what I am. She ordered me.”

“You're not obligated to follow orders from someone that's not your Master, are you?” He gave her a bemused look.

“It's not like obeying you and Devin, but...” She looked up at him. “Jack punished me if I ever said no to someone. I'm not allowed to say no. Even Devin warned that his girls aren't allowed to say no.” She twisted her hands together. “If I said no to someone and they told Devin or Jack, I would be in so much trouble.”

Alex felt so hopeless to help her. The whole situation was so fucked up. What had he gotten himself into? “Oh, Schatzi... I don't want you to be punished. Ever.” He sighed. “Well, Kirsty won't bother you anymore.” He pressed his lips together. He would make sure of that tonight.

“Alex, I don't want to cause problems with—”

He shook his head. “Anna, the relationship has been dying for a while. I just didn't see the point in ending it just yet.” That wasn't the whole truth, but he couldn't tell Anna he was in love with her. Not yet. As he gazed into her eyes, he was tempted to kiss her and take her home with him. But he wanted her to come to him in freedom, not out of obligation. He looked away and stood. “Come. Let's go back downstairs. I'm going to take Kirsty home and deal with her.”

Alex turned and opened the door. “You need to call Devin. I told him I would have you call him when I found you.” He gave her a firm look. “If he punishes you, or threatens to punish you, tell me immediately. I don't care if it's three o'clock in the morning.”

“Yes, Alex.”

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Anna went to the downstairs bathroom to wash her face, then outside to locate her phone. It was sitting on top of her bag. Nervously, she picked it up to call Devin. Her heart pounded as she waited for him to answer.

“Hello, Anna,” Devin answered coolly. “What took you so long to return my call?”

“I’m sorry, Devin,” she said in a shaky voice. “Alex’s girlfriend found out...what I was and used me.”

Devin laughed. “Really? Did you enjoy eating pussy?”

Anna cringed at his condescending tone. “It wasn’t bad, but I don’t really like it.”

“Well, then, fortunately for you, it doesn’t happen very often. But it will happen, Anna.”

“Yes, Devin, I understand,” Anna said softly.

Alex watched Anna from the kitchen doorway as she picked up her phone. She had that sad, hopeless look in her face again that stabbed his heart. *Damn Kirsty!* He’d almost gotten his temper back under control.

Anna had been having a good time at the party before the phone call. He could admit to himself that he was a little jealous, watching all the men flirt with her. But it was good for her, he’d told himself. She needed to see what it was like to be normal.

He'd also seen Aaron watching her. Oh, his friend had it bad. He'd suspected it when they'd hung out earlier in the week, but watching him watch her it became obvious. *Good.*

He looked around for his best friend and saw him standing at the end of the deck, looking out at the yard. Alex walked up and stood next to him as he looked out at Anna. Her face had softened and much of the fear seemed gone. Devin must be behaving himself.

“You really like her, don't you?”

Aaron jumped and glanced at his friend. “Not as much as you do.” He gave Alex a knowing look.

“It wouldn't work right now, Aaron. I told you that.” He inhaled deeply. “I think you should ask her out.”

Aaron turned to look at him, surprise evident on his face. “Me? Why?”

“Because it's obvious how much you like her and I trust you to treat her the way she should be treated.”

“Why are you so concerned about her, Alex? I don't recall you ever being so protective over someone. Especially someone you hardly know.”

“I know her better than you think,” he said without thinking about it, and Aaron rewarded him with a startled look.

Alex sighed, realizing he'd said too much. He trusted Aaron implicitly. Aaron knew things about him that only his father knew and even things his father didn't know.

Aaron also knew about the Manor, at least as much as anyone not in the Brotherhood could know. He should warn him about Anna's piercings. If they were going to date, they'd have sex eventually and he'd see them. The last thing Anna needed was Aaron getting the wrong idea about her.

Alex looked around to see if anyone was listening. They were the only people on this side of the deck. “Aaron, Anna is my slave. She belongs to

me and my family.”

“She...what?” Aaron exclaimed loudly, then clapped his hand over his mouth. He gave Alex the dirtiest look he'd ever seen Aaron give anyone. “How the fuck is that possible?”

“It was the only way to save her...” He briefly explained how Anna came to be his slave. Aaron's eyes got wider and wider as Alex spoke. He also told him a little bit about her abusive past and explained about the ritual, telling Aaron what would have happened if he hadn't interfered.

“And you're not with her...why?” Aaron looked at Alex doubtfully. “You're obviously crazy about her.”

Alex sighed. “She needs freedom. I don't want her with me because she belongs to me. I want her to come to me willingly.”

Aaron frowned, but nodded. “I guess I could understand that.”

“Aaron, being with her could be hard, but she's worth it.” Alex sighed. “She has...obligations to Devin. I think she's attending something with him on Wednesday. You can't get upset with her when she has to do those things.”

Aaron grimaced. “He's gonna fuck her, isn't he?”

Alex nodded solemnly. “I would be incredibly surprised if he didn't. But you can show her what real lovemaking is and she will blossom.”

Aaron stared out at the yard where Anna was now talking with Jenna, and Alex followed his gaze. She seemed so sad. So different than when she'd been in the pool just a while before.

“What happened tonight?” Aaron asked.

Alex told him what Kirsty had done to Anna.

Aaron's reaction was similar to, though less volcanic than, Alex's. “Please tell me you're ending it with that bitch.”

Alex nodded. “I am. That's why you need to ask Anna out tonight.”

“What if I've changed my mind?”

“She's still the same person, Aaron,” Alex snapped. “The only difference is if you hurt her, I will hurt you.” He glared at his friend.

“Jeez, Alex. I was just kidding.” Aaron laughed. “You really are protective of her, aren't you?”

Alex frowned and looked out at the yard. “Someone needs to be.”

“Where'd you disappear to, Anna?” Jenna asked, walking up to Anna.

Anna had just finished a relatively pleasant conversation with Devin. He had told her that she was going to stay with him at his home Wednesday after the banquet. That had surprised Anna. Why would he want her at his house? Wouldn't his wife be upset?

But, it was her job to obey, not question, him.

“Oh...I...had to go to the bathroom...,” Anna answered lamely. She didn't want to relive her experience with Kirsty.

Jenna gave her a look. “Okay,” she said with a doubtful expression on her face. “So, let's get back in the pool. Garrett's been asking where you were.”

Anna looked over at the pool. Garrett seemed like a nice guy, aside from not letting her go get her phone. How could he have known how important it was for her to answer the call? There were several nice guys. Alex wanted her to flirt and have fun. Okay, she could do that.

She nodded to Jenna and they started walking towards the pool when Alex came up to them.

“Is everything okay, Anna?” he asked, glancing down at the phone in her hands.

Anna nodded. “Yes....” She glanced at Jenna. “Everything's fine.”

“*Gut*,” Alex said. “Well, if you're okay, I'm going to take off and take Kirsty home. Do you...want me to come back later?”

Jenna's brow raised at his words.

Anna shook her head. “No, that's okay, Alex,” she said quickly. “I'm all right. Really.” She smiled. “Jenna's here.”

Alex seemed reluctant to leave. “Okay...” He glanced behind him, then back at the two girls. “Call me if you need anything, *Schatzi*,” he said softly. He hesitated for a moment, as if he wanted to say something else. “I'll see you later.”

“Okay,” Anna said softly, watching him carefully.

“Bye, Alex,” Jenna said cheerfully, with a glint in her eyes.

Alex made a face at her, then turned and walked away.

Jenna laughed and watched Alex as Anna stared at the ground. “He's totally into you. Lucky girl.”

Anna's head snapped up. “Hardly,” she said. She was not lucky. Not by any stretch of the imagination. She still didn't understand Alex.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Anna sat on the side of the pool while Jenna jumped back into the water. Her feet dangled in the water and she watched the ripples created by the movements of her legs. She was tired and wanted to go home. What a strange concept: the ability to go home and be alone. Too bad Seth had left with Alex. A warm body would have been nice tonight.

“Hey, Anna, having a good time?” Aaron asked, sitting down next to her.

Anna looked at him out of the corner of her eye. She didn't want to be rude. “It's...a lot of people. I'm not used to being around crowds like this.”

Aaron nodded. “That's understandable.” He smiled suddenly. “C'mon. I have somewhere quiet we can go.”

Anna gave him a startled look.

Aaron grinned mischievously. “Not my bedroom...well, maybe later.”

Anna smiled and allowed Aaron to pull her to her feet. He led her around to the side of the house to a small garden with lots of vines and flowers.

“My parents bought this place after I graduated high school. When they decided to move to LA about three years ago, they sold it to me for a good price. This was my mom's garden.”

Anna looked around in the dim light. It smelled delicious. Roses and jasmine and other flowers she didn't know. Anna felt herself relaxing in the peace and quiet.

“It's lovely,” she said, walking around.

Aaron took her hand. “I want to dance with you,” he said softly pulling her close.

“Aaron...,” she protested, but didn't pull away. “There's no music.”

Aaron smiled and started humming the music from the *pas de deux* from the second act of *Giselle*.

Anna shook her head. “No, Aaron. I haven't danced that since we—”

“So what?” he interrupted in a low voice. “I know you can still do it. Anna, your dancing is from your heart. I knew that eight years ago. I want to see it again.” He turned her around to face her away from him. “Please,” he whispered in her ear. “Close your eyes and dance with me.”

He stepped away and began humming again. It brought back powerful memories long pushed away and she was helpless to resist.

She closed her eyes and Aaron's humming faded in her ears, replaced by the orchestra's strings calling her to dance. Her arms and legs began to move, almost of their own accord, to the music in her mind. Aaron joined her at the appointed moment and they moved as one, limbs moving in sync to the unheard music. Aaron lifted her as if she was a feather, all grace and beauty.

They danced only for themselves. The harshness of Anna's life released its hold on her heart for just a moment and she and Aaron were of one mind and body. A cocoon of intimacy wrapped in music bound them together in that moment, and didn't release its grip until the last strings faded in their minds.

Anna opened her eyes slowly and blinked several times. Aaron was kneeling in front of her, her upper body resting against his back in the final pose of the dance. They were both breathing deeply and she fought the

invasion of anything in her mind that wasn't the present moment. She relaxed and Aaron stood and turned around, taking both of her hands in his.

He pulled her close, placing her hands around his neck and wrapping his arms around her waist. They gazed into each other's eyes and felt the connection that had been planted in her heart years before. Aaron slowly leaned down and caressed Anna's lips with his own. Her eyes closed and she leaned into his embrace.

Their kiss was a continuation of their dance. Gentle, graceful, and beautiful. Aaron's tongue was as graceful as the rest of him, stroking, coaxing, cajoling Anna to open herself up to him. She moaned softly and allowed Aaron in, both into her mouth and her heart.

No one had kissed her like this before, not even Kurt or Wilhelm, though she was fond of both of them. The only one who came close was Alex, but he didn't care for her in any way more than just as a good Master.

Aaron pulled away slightly and she opened her eyes to look at him. His eyes met hers and, before the fear could set in, his warm gaze settled her heart. He brought his hand up to her cheek and stroked her skin gently.

“Anna...,” he whispered. Her heart leapt to hear her name on his tongue.

He brushed his lips against hers again and was about to resume the intimate kiss when a male voice came from behind Anna. They both jumped, pulled so abruptly from their moment.

Aaron glared at his roommate, Garrett.

“Oops. Sorry dude. We're out of beer. Where'd you put the extra keg?”

Aaron sighed. “Hang on,” he said, then smiled apologetically at Anna. “I'm sorry, hon,” he said, brushing her hair back from her face.

Reality hit Anna in the heart and she felt...well, she didn't know what she felt. Being with Aaron back here, dancing with him, had been

unbelievably wonderful. But good things never lasted and she tried to step back to allow him to do what he needed to do.

Aaron tightened his arms around her. "Hey." He cupped her chin. "I'm not done with you," he said in a tone that conveyed more than lust. "Let me take care of this and I'll find you in a few minutes, okay?" His eyes were soft and tender. "I won't abandon you, Anna," he added in a whisper, and kissed her gently on the lips.

For some reason Anna believed him, and they walked hand in hand around the side of the house. Back to the noise of the party. It was so loud it hurt her ears after the quietness of the garden. Part of her wanted to stay and wait for him there, but she felt she could be brave for him. Aaron kissed her temple and squeezed her hand, then turned to follow Garrett into the house.

Jenna appeared at her side a moment later. "You were gone for a while," she grinned mischievously. "What were you two doing?"

Anna blushed and gave a shy smile. "We danced," she said happily. "And he kissed me."

Jenna looked sharply at the house, then back at Anna and grinned. "Aaron kissed you?" she asked excitedly.

Anna's face fell. "Was that wrong? Should I not have let him?"

Jenna shook her head. "No...I mean, yeah...fuck!" she exclaimed then smiled. "I just didn't think he would..." She shrugged. "He was complaining about you and Alex earlier."

"Me and Alex?" Why would Aaron complain about her and Alex? Alex owned her; that was their only connection.

"Well, yeah. Alex was watching you like a hawk tonight. Aaron thought Alex would break up with Kirsty and go after you. Aaron didn't want to be in his way."

"I think Alex watches me because of his family. He's so...confusing."

“He can be that way, that's for sure.” Jenna shook her head.

“Do you know him well?” Anna asked.

“Alex? Well, yeah. I mean, he's Aaron's best friend, so I've hung out with him a lot.”

“Did you and Aaron ever sleep together?”

“Nah, I was like his little sister. He doesn't think about me that way.” She giggled. “Not that I haven't thought about it.”

Anna giggled, too. When she and Aaron had danced together, she'd had a bit of a crush on him and had thought about him a few times when one of the other men had been playing with her. She'd wondered what it would have been like to have Aaron touch her like that. But that was so long ago. She hadn't thought about him in years. And now he'd kissed her. As if he liked her.

She realized she hadn't been trying to read him in order to find out what he wanted from her. She'd just enjoyed being with him. What a strange, new experience for her. Maybe that's what Alex was trying to say when he wanted her to be free. Anna smiled to herself.

Anna and Jenna headed back to the pool. With Alex gone, she felt that she could relax more. She didn't have to worry about him and could just try to enjoy herself, like he'd wanted her to. But, at the same time, him not being there made her feel like a part of her was missing.

It was all so confusing!

Aaron returned a few minutes later and stayed by Anna's side. When they chatted with the other dancers in the pool, Aaron stood behind her with his arms around her waist, and sometimes he would rest his head on the top of hers. The attention he gave Anna caught the attention of the other dancers, some of whom teased Aaron about it. When Anna tried to pull

away because she didn't want him to be uncomfortable, he wouldn't let her, telling her he liked her right where she was and didn't mind the teasing.

One of the guys, Travis, had arrived when Anna had been upstairs with Kirsty. When they were introduced, Anna saw him look at her necklace closely then raise his brow. Anna's heart had sunk, but he just gave her a big smile and continued his conversation with the rest of the group.

Did he know what she was? But he didn't leer at her or make her feel uncomfortable. In fact, he seemed to be almost...happy for her? Strange. He himself had a single nipple ring. She found herself staring at it, wondering what that could mean.

“It means I'm an illegitimate son.”

Anna looked up sharply at Travis's face, blushing at being caught staring. Travis was very good looking, with bright blue eyes and longish, straight brown hair. He was thin, as many male dancers were, but with well-defined muscles that she could see in his upper body.

He was grinning at her. “This,” he said softly, pointing at his ring. “It's what you were looking at, right?”

“I...,” Anna began, not knowing how to respond. “Illegitimate son?” She frowned in confusion.

Travis nodded, still grinning. “Illegitimate son of an Elder...well, an Elder who cares about it. Ya don't see them often because a lot of them don't care. But mine did.” He beamed.

Anna's facial expression didn't change. “I don't understand. You're...the son of an Elder?” she asked, keeping her voice quiet and looking around for anyone listening.

He nodded again. “My mother was a slave. I have two brothers that live here too. Different mothers, same father.”

Anna's eyes widened. "You're Devin's son?" She couldn't believe that Devin would admit to having a son by his slave, or let him out.

Travis threw his head back and laughed. "Devin? Hardly!" He laughed again. "Good grief, I'd be lucky to be alive, let alone out in public." He shook his head. "No, Brandon Seay, from LA."

"You're from LA and your...father let you come up here?" Anna's head was spinning. Why would an Elder allow such a thing?

"Sure, why not? My dad loves me. He knew I loved dancing and wanted me to be able to dance professionally. San Francisco's company is one of the best in the country. Why wouldn't he...wait—" He stopped abruptly. "You are what I think you are, right?"

Anna's heart pounded as she stared at him. "What do you think I am?"

Travis touched her necklace. "Some sort of slave, though I've never seen diamonds before. Must mean you're pretty special." He grinned. He must have noticed the fearful expression on Anna's face. "Hey, believe me, I'm not judging. My dad lets his girls out sometimes, but I didn't think Devin did. Has he changed his policies?"

Anna shrugged. "I don't know. I don't think so...Devin says...that I'm special, but I don't really understand why."

Travis chuckled. "Anyone looking at you could see you're special," he said warmly.

Anna felt herself blush, which made Travis laugh again. "You're definitely not normal. I don't think I've ever seen any..." he looked around, "...you know...blush before." He looked at her curiously. "Why are you out? I mean, Devin's a control freak. Why would he let you come to a party? And..." He nodded towards Aaron. "...does he know?"

"Aaron know?" Anna was puzzled, then it hit her. "That I'm a..." Her voice trailed off and Travis nodded.

Anna shook her head slowly as she realized Aaron didn't know that she was a slave. Her shoulders slumped. She'd even forgotten for a bit that she was a slave. What would Aaron's reaction be when he found out? Would he be disgusted or thrilled?

The final bit of the cocoon that had enveloped her heart while dancing with Aaron ripped away and she was left with the reality of who she was and what she was for. The pain was unbearable. Yes, the good feelings were wonderful when they were there, but when reality came back it hurt worse than before.

Tears sprang to her eyes and she struggled out of Aaron's arms and out of the pool before Aaron realized what was happening. She grabbed her towel and walked away quickly. She didn't realize she'd headed towards the garden until she sat on the bench along the side of the house and looked around.

She leaned forward and buried her face in her hands. She was a slave. She needed to remember this. Her slavery was safe. She knew what to expect from those men. Good or bad, it was mostly predictable and her emotions stayed out of it...for the most part.

This...this *freedom* was dangerous. The small amount of control she felt over herself made her—

“Anna?” Aaron walked over to her quickly and sat next to her. “Anna, what's wrong?” He took her hand and pulled her towards him.

She didn't resist, though she didn't really want to be close to him. It hurt. She didn't like the emotional rawness she was experiencing. So she did the one thing she knew to do: she kissed him. Passionately. Her hands moved expertly over his shoulders and caressed his neck. Her mouth moved sensually against his, her tongue teasing and tantalizing.

She heard him groan against her mouth and knew she was getting to him. Not that she doubted her ability to seduce him. But did she want to? She hesitated.

Aaron took advantage of her hesitation and pulled away, breathing heavily. “Anna, what are you doing?” he asked breathlessly, holding her at arm's length. Alex had warned him if she was feeling frightened she might try this. He just hadn't expected it to be so...alluring.

Anna looked at him with wide, frightened green eyes. If Alex hadn't told him about her past, he'd be either dragging her up to his bedroom or running away. As it was, he knew she was scared and it pained his heart.

She'd been such a sweet young girl when he knew her before. He wanted to go to her guardian's house and pummel him for hurting her.

He reached up and brushed her hair out of her face. “Anna, why are you afraid?” he asked softly.

She looked down and seemed to be making herself as small as possible. “You don't want me,” she said.

“I don't want you? Why would you think that? Why would I be here if I didn't want to be with you?”

She shook her head and looked up. “No, I mean...” She frowned and wrinkled her brow. “I'm not who you think I am.” She absently played with her necklace. Alex had told him that was a sign of her slavery, as was her bracelet.

Aaron took her hand in his. If this was what she was concerned about...? “I know who you are, Anna.”

She shook her head again. “I'm not twelve anymore, Aaron. I'm...not the same....” Her voice trailed off.

Aaron touched her necklace and looked deeply into her eyes. "I know, hon. I know who and what you are. And I don't care. I still want to be with you."

Anna's eyes were doubtful. "You...know I'm a...?" Aaron nodded. "How?"

Aaron hesitated. He didn't want her to be angry at Alex. "Alex told me."

Anna winced. "Oh." She looked more hurt than angry.

"He wanted to make sure I knew so I didn't hurt you," he explained. He slipped his hand around her neck and pulled her head close to his. "I don't want to hurt you," he whispered and kissed her gently. Her lips were so soft and inviting. He could kiss her all day and never tire of it.

Anna's head spun at Aaron's words and kiss. He knew? He knew she was a slave? He didn't seem to mind: his lips against hers, his arms around her, holding her tight. She concentrated to read him and an overwhelming amount of emotion hit her. He had told her the truth of what he was feeling. She could trust him. Inexplicable, but true. He kissed her and her fears flew out of her mind.

He pulled back. "Why did you run away?" he asked, keeping his hand in her hair and caressing the back of her head.

"I thought you wouldn't...see me the same way if you knew..." She didn't doubt that he would want to sleep with her, but the connection that they'd made while dancing was so wonderful, she didn't want to lose it. "You know about the...Manor...and stuff?"

Aaron nodded. "A little. Alex has told me about it and he took me to the one down in LA about a year ago. He wouldn't go to the one here. He hates Devin."

Anna giggled. "That's very obvious."

Aaron chuckled. "'Course, I can't say I'm exactly fond of him either. Not after finding out what happened to you." He turned serious again. "I know your life isn't easy. But I think you're worth it." He smiled, eyes tender as he gazed at her. "Is that okay?"

Anna nodded shyly and Aaron grinned. "Good," he said and kissed her again.

A while later they were back in the pool. Jenna gave her a big smile as she flirted with Bryce. Aaron and Anna were at the side of the pool by themselves, Aaron holding Anna, when Travis swam up a while later. "Hey, Anna. I wasn't trying to be antagonistic. I was just trying to...figure out...what you are. I don't mean that to sound offensive," he added quickly.

Anna smiled, comfortable with Aaron's arms surrounding her. "It's okay. I suppose it is unusual for, you know, to be out in public around here."

Aaron kissed her cheek and nuzzled her ear. "I'm glad you are," he said softly.

Anna blushed.

Travis shook his head. "I don't think even normal girls blush like you do." He looked back down at her necklace. "I know what diamonds mean with my dad, but I've never seen a girl wear them."

Anna shrugged. "Devin called me...something...last week. Mistress...." She frowned as she tried to remember what Devin had said that caused the Brothers to murmur. "Elder-Mistress. He called me an Elder-Mistress and it caused quite a stir."

Travis paled and his jaw dropped. "Are you sure that's what he called you?"

Anna nodded. "Why?"

"Don't you know what that means?"

She shook her head. “Well, Devin's an Elder...and he's called me his mistress...” She tensed, remembering Aaron behind her.

“It's all right, Anna, I know,” Aaron said in a soothing voice and she relaxed.

How could she be so lucky to have Aaron interested in her and so accepting of who she is?

Travis was still staring at her as if she was some sort of mythical creature.

“Travis, what the hell is wrong?” Aaron asked, laughing.

“Elder-Mistress?” Travis repeated.

Anna was beginning to be concerned. “Is that a bad thing?” she asked, stomach churning with nerves. Why did he look at her like that?

Travis shook his head slowly. “Not at all. I've just never met a half-Immortal before. I've heard of them, but never had the privilege of meeting one.”

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

“A what?” Both Anna and Aaron exclaimed at the same time.

Travis's face went from awe to concern. “A half-Immortal...?” he repeated, almost apologetically. “Shit. Anna, you do know who your dad is, right?”

Anna gave him a funny look. “Everyone knows who my dad is...Trevor Perkins,” she said with a shrug.

“That's your dad? Well, that explains...wait, I thought he died?”

Anna winced. “Yeah, when I was twelve.” The memory still stung.

Travis looked confused. “That doesn't make any sense...,” he said softly, voice trailing off into deep thought.

“Dude, what are you talking about?” Aaron asked. “What the fu—” He glanced at Anna. “What's a half-Immortal?”

Travis shook his head and looked at Anna again. “You're sure Devin called you an Elder-Mistress?”

Anna frowned. “I think so. I might have heard him wrong. It was kind of a stressful night.” She looked at Aaron. “Alex was there. He'd know.” Anna looked back at Travis. “Is it important? I can call him and ask...I think.”

Travis looked nervous. “Well, no. I guess...it's not that important, but...” He sighed. “Anna, if Devin called you an Elder-Mistress that means you're a half-Immortal. Your dad is an Immortal...and he can't possibly have

died. But if he did die, then you're not. If you're not a half-Immortal then you can't be an Elder-Mistress.”

Anna began feeling dizzy and nauseous. “I don't know what any of that means.” Only Aaron’s arms around her kept from slipping under the water.

“I think we better get you out of the water,” Aaron said, lifting Anna to sit on the side of the pool. “You better explain more,” Aaron said, looking at Travis. He'd never heard the term either, but if it was as significant as it sounded, Alex had a lot of explaining to do.

The three of them went into the house and upstairs to Aaron's large bedroom. Two comfortable chairs sat near the window and he led Anna to sit in one of them. Her face was pale and her eyes were wide with fear.

He shot off a text to Alex: *Is Anna an Elder-Mistress?*

That would be enough to know if he needed to be concerned. Anna trembled in the chair. “Are you cold, hon?” he asked, putting his hand on her shoulder.

She nodded and he pulled the blanket off his bed and wrapped it around her.

“What's an Immortal?” Anna asked Travis softly.

“I don't know much about them, but my dad said they're kinda like angels. Different ones have different roles. Some are guardians of certain humans. I don't know what all they do, but I do know that the Elders and Immortals work together.” Travis glanced at Aaron. “I don't know how much you know.”

“I've never heard the term. I don't know much about the Brotherhood aside from the, uh, girls.” Aaron shrugged sheepishly.

Travis chuckled. “My dad said that the Immortals are all male. Sometimes they will...well, breed, for a lack of a better term, with a human

woman and have a daughter. They're always girls. These 'half-Immortals' are really special and they help the Elder that is their Master. That's why they're called 'Elder-Mistresses.'" Travis looked apologetically at Anna. "But the Immortals can't die. I mean, that's pretty obvious. So, I don't know why Devin would be claiming that you—"

Aaron's phone rang. "Hey Al—"

"Where did you hear that term?" Alex interrupted him with an anxious voice.

"Travis and Anna were talking and—"

"Travis?" Alex cursed in German. "I didn't see him at the party."

"He came when you were upstairs. Why?"

"He's the one person that would know as much about Anna as I do." He cursed again. "I'm on my way back. Don't let him tell Anna anything else until I get there."

"Okay...why?"

"Because she is, but she doesn't know the significance of it, and if she gets upset I need to be there. Jack and Devin never told her." He sighed. "I'll be there in...ten minutes. Keep her calm and do not let her out of your sight. If she tries to leave, hold her if you have to. I don't think she will, but just in case—"

"Okay, I will," Aaron assured him. He put the phone down and looked at Travis then at Anna, who was staring at the ground. "Alex is on his way back. He said don't say anything else until he gets here."

Alex had been in the middle of a shouting match with Kirsty when his phone had buzzed. Without looking at it, he opened the bedroom door and tossed it to Seth, all without missing a step in the argument. Kirsty yelled at him about Anna and he got more defensive than he'd ever imagined

possible. If Kirsty had been a man he would have tackled her and beat the shit out of her for what she dared to say about Anna.

Alex knew this was the end and didn't know why he was bothering to defend himself to her. The worst thing you could do to Kirsty was ignore her. But Alex was in the mood to fight. He felt that his decision to encourage Aaron to date Anna was the right one, but it still frustrated the hell out of him.

Seth opened the door, wincing, but holding up the phone for Alex to see the text.

“What?” Alex shouted in German, glaring at Seth. He didn't often yell at his men, but he was on a roll and didn't like to be interrupted. The only reason he could imagine Seth would dare interrupt is if there was a call about a mission and he didn't want to think about any missions right now.

“You might want to read it, Alex,” Seth said firmly.

Seth knew Alex's temper as well as Alex did, so he realized it must be important. Alex quickly read the message. *Fuck!*

“Get the car started,” he barked to Seth. He turned back to Kirsty. “I have to leave. It's been an interesting six months, Kirsty, but it's time we acknowledged it's over.”

Kirsty stared at him. “That's it?”

Alex shoved his phone in his pocket. “Yes. You've spent the last fifteen minutes insulting the woman that I—” He stopped himself before he finished the phrase. “...that is important to my family and I won't listen to it anymore. Anna is here to stay. You are expendable.”

With that, he turned on his heel and stalked out of her bedroom. As he closed the door, he heard a thump as Kirsty threw something at the door. Seth and Tony were already outside in the SUV parked in front of her condo.

Alex cursed again as got into the SUV. “Aaron's house as fast as you can, Tony,” he ordered in German.

After he ended the call with Aaron, Alex leaned back in the seat and ran his hands through his hair. Anna didn't need this right now. He had planned to tell her soon, but wanted her to get used to life before he went and told her the truth about her father. That Aaron was with her was a good sign though. Perhaps things were progressing as he'd hoped.

He knew Travis well enough to know he wasn't trying to cause trouble. He was a good guy and fortunate enough not to be Devin's son and have a life. Most people who were born in a Manor lived their entire life there. Travis was an excellent dancer and a good friend.

Alex clutched the seat as Tony took a sharp corner. Tony certainly knew how to drive and it had come in handy many times over the course of the years. It had saved all their lives more than a few times as well.

He sighed. A mission right now sounded easier than the thought of telling Anna that her father wasn't dead.

He'd met two of the other Mistresses in the world. They were beautiful, confident women that were a joy to be around. And yes, amazing in bed. But they had to be. The Brotherhood controlled the world using sex.

He understood why Devin and Jack hadn't told Anna who she was. They might not have been able to control her as much as they did.

Once Anna knew who she was...how would she react? She could almost take Devin on all by herself, but Alex had a feeling she never would. Fear ruled her, which is exactly what Devin wanted.

Devin kept her under control through fear. He kept her isolated, so she didn't know she wasn't “normal.” She attributed her attractiveness to men to her training. The fact was, even if she'd never been “trained,” she still would have attracted men in droves. There was just something about a half-

Immortal that was irresistible to men. Alex wondered if they had special pheromones.

Tony pulled up in front of the house. "I'll park and meet you inside."

"Thanks, Ton," Alex jumped out, ran up into the house and went right up to Aaron's room where he assumed they would be. He knocked once and opened the door.

Anna was curled up in Aaron's lap, stopping him cold in the doorway. He'd momentarily forgotten he'd encouraged Aaron to pursue her. Aaron stroked her hair and kissed her head. Like Alex had done yesterday morning.

Alex swallowed and tried to ignore the lump in his throat and the pain in his heart as he watched his best friend love on the girl that he himself was in love with. Aaron whispered something in her ear and she looked up at him adoringly.

Alex rubbed at his chest as he watched them together. *It's better this way.* Aaron was better for her right now. More stable. Aaron didn't have a temper like Alex, and he didn't disappear for weeks on end without an explanation. Right now Anna needed stable and safe.

He could tell just by watching her that she had no fear of Aaron. Something had happened between the two of them and she was content. Peaceful even. Anna at peace was the most beautiful sight he'd ever seen. He hoped he'd be able to make her feel that way someday. She deserved nothing less.

Anna looked up to see Alex standing in the doorway. She stood quickly and stepped away from Aaron, nervously twisting her fingers together and watching him.

"It's all right, Anna," Alex said, lowering his hand and walking into the room. "Stay with Aaron. You looked comfortable." He sat on the bed and

looked around. "Where's Travis?"

Aaron reached for Anna and she returned to his lap. He wrapped the blanket around her again, but she didn't seem as relaxed as before she had seen Alex.

"Travis went down to get his shirt. It's kinda cold up here." Aaron motioned to the blanket Anna was wrapped in.

Alex nodded absent-mindedly and looked at Anna with a tender expression. "What did Travis tell you, Schatzi?"

Anna stared at her hands and repeated what Travis had told her. She glanced up. "Am I really an Elder-Mistress?" she asked timidly.

Alex sighed and nodded. "Yes, Schatzi. You are."

Travis had returned as Anna was speaking and settled into the chair next to her and Aaron. He looked at Alex with a wary expression. "Was I wrong to tell her?" he asked after she'd finished.

Alex shook his head. "No, Travis. You didn't know that she didn't know. It's wrong that she didn't know before. I just—"

"You knew?" Anna asked him, eyes full of hurt.

Alex nodded. "I didn't realize you didn't know until we were talking yesterday morning and then I wasn't sure how to broach the subject." Alex stood and walked to the window. "What Travis told you is correct, though it's a simplistic explanation."

"It's all I knew..." Travis began.

Alex turned to his friend. "It's all right, Trav. I wouldn't expect you to know much more than that. I figured if anyone would know what she really was, though, it would be you."

He looked back out the window. "Yes, Anna. Your father is an Immortal. Sometimes an Immortal will fall in love with a woman and decide to put aside their immortality for a time. They choose to live as

normal men and get married and have a family. In that situation, they can only have one child, a daughter. When that happens, we're supposed to leave the daughter alone. Let her live as a normal person. At some point, when she's an adult, her father will tell her the truth, and she can have the choice whether she wants to become an Elder-Mistress or not.”

Alex turned to look at Anna. “They live longer and age slower than other women. That can make a normal life difficult. The Brotherhood offers a safe place to live, where they'll be protected and cherished. Or at least they're supposed to be.”

Alex felt the old regret return and he took in a shaky breath as he looked back out the window. He didn't want Anna to sense his emotions...not that he was sure she wasn't doing it anyways. “Sometimes they will marry and have a family of their own. Sometimes they just remain a servant of their Elder. It's up to them.”

He turned back to Anna, his eyes hard. “That should have been your life, Anna. But Devin didn't give you that choice. He just took you.” He clenched his jaw. “And abused you.”

“How did he take her?” Aaron asked. “I mean, I knew her parents....”

Alex frowned. “Before the Elders and Immortals started working together, the Elders would find and take their daughters. They treated them...well, like Anna was treated. There were tomes that were written with instructions on how to ‘tame’ them. Once the two groups started working together, the old ways were outlawed and the tomes were supposed to have been destroyed. The Immortals agreed to give the Elders their daughters when needed in return for the promise that they would be treated as they would their own daughters. Or wives,” he added, avoiding Anna's gaze.

“One of the old methods mentioned in the tomes was to find a married Immortal and claim the daughter at birth. There only has to be one witness

and it didn't have to be another Elder.”

“Jack?” Anna asked softly.

“Most likely,” Alex answered. It was the most logical conclusion.

Anna nodded silently.

“That's why you heal so quickly, Anna.” Alex added quietly. “That's how you survived all those horrible years with your guardian.”

“Immortals can't die?” she asked.

Alex sighed. “No, they can't.”

Anna looked up at him with questioning eyes. He knew what she was asking.

“It wasn't possible for anyone to survive that type of accident, Anna. He had to leave. If he'd stayed, it would have raised too many questions. He did what he could to protect you.”

By coming to Alex's father before he “died” with a desperate request. *A girl with brown hair and green eyes*, Trevor had said. *You'll know her when you see her.*

If Alex had only listened to Vati, Anna could have been saved from so much pain. The knife of regret stabbed deeper into his heart.

“Can't he come back now? Now that I know?” Her sweet little voice twisted the knife.

“I don't think so, Anna. I don't know how it works, but I do know that if they ‘die’ there is a period of time that they cannot return. And your father was rather famous. I don't know if he'd ever be allowed to return.”

She didn't say anything for a minute, staring at Alex's chest. “Where did he go?” she whispered, eyes moving up to look at his.

Alex shook his head and sighed. “I don't know, Schatzi. I've never asked.” He knew there was a “place” but he'd never thought to ask about it.

His friend Sebastian was an Immortal. He was Alex's guardian and the one who guided Alex in saving Anna from Devin's ritual. They'd met about eight years ago. Right around when Anna's parents had died. Alex had to wonder if there was a connection. Sebastian kept pretty tight-lipped about most things. Alex didn't even know he was an Immortal until a few years ago when Sebastian got shot...and didn't die.

Sebastian preferred living in Frankfurt for reasons unknown to Alex. Alex suspected it had something to do with Devin. But he could and would be here in San Francisco in seconds if needed. He seemed to know when Alex was in trouble.

Now Alex wanted to know where the place was. Not for his sake, but for Anna's. Sebastian would never tell him about it, though. Alex was mortal and had no business knowing.

Not for the first time, Alex felt helpless when it came to Anna. Things just seemed to get worse and more complicated as time went on. He wanted to help her, to save her, but he could only do so much. He didn't like feeling helpless. It was against his nature. He always knew how to fix things, how to get things done, and what to do. With Anna...this was such a different arena than he'd ever fought in. His enemy was right in front of him, but he couldn't eliminate him because it would hurt her.

Alex looked up to see Aaron playing with Anna's hair. He felt like an intruder. He should let them be together.

He stood suddenly. "Anna, are you all right?" he asked, wanting to leave the room as quickly as possible, but needing to make sure she was okay before he did.

Anna nodded, not looking at him. She was hurt. The knife sank even deeper, its edge growing ragged, making the pain almost unbearable.

Aaron nodded to him, letting him know he'd take care of her.

“Thanks,” Alex said softly. “Call me if you need anything.”

Aaron nodded again and Alex turned to Travis and raised his brow to see if he was coming. Travis jumped up and walked quickly out of the room with Alex following. He glanced back once and wished he hadn't. Watching his best friend kiss the girl he loved and failed to protect was just too much.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Anna didn't know how to process what she'd just learned. She half-heard Alex ask if she was all right and she nodded absently, staring out the window. She was...okay.

Aaron brushed away her hair from her face. "What can I do, Anna?" he asked softly.

She looked up at him, his kind blue eyes full of tenderness. She shook her head. "I don't know what to think. Or do."

Aaron leaned down and brushed her lips with his. "I'm here for you, Anna," he whispered against her mouth.

Anna closed her eyes and savored his kiss. It dulled the pain that had crept into her heart as Alex spoke.

Aaron's lips were firm but tender, enveloping hers. He sucked gently on her lower lip and she sighed. She struggled to get her hand out of the blanket so she could touch him. When she succeeded, she slid it around the back of Aaron's neck, fingers sliding through his hair. She kissed him desperately, as if he were her lifeline. Away from, or back to, reality she wasn't sure. But she needed him.

Aaron pulled away, breathing heavily. "Anna, I don't want to do something we'll regret," he said quietly.

Anna searched his eyes. "You would regret being with me?" she asked, not understanding.

He gave her a weak smile. "We only just 're-met' a week ago."

“So?”

“I don't want to rush things. I don't want you to wake up in the morning and regret staying here.”

“Why would I do that?” She really didn't understand what the big deal was. Was he rejecting her like Alex and Wilhelm had? Her shoulders slumped. “You don't want me either?” She started to pull away, embarrassed about her desperate need for him.

“Either?”

“Alex wouldn't have sex with me or let me please him,” she explained in a soft voice. “Neither would Wilhelm.”

He didn't answer right away. “I do want you, Anna. I think you're the most beautiful girl in the world.” He stroked her cheek. “I just...” He sighed. “In the real world, people don't just jump into bed with each other if they want something more than a one night stand.”

Anna contemplated his words. “What's a one night stand?”

He gave her a strange look and then softened his face. “Um...sex only. Sleep together and never see each other again.”

She frowned. “Oh. And you don't want that?”

He chuckled and kissed the palm of her hand. “No. I don't. I want you. All of you. Or at least as much of you that is available.” He gave her a tender smile.

She chewed her lip. “I don't know if I know what that means.”

He smiled again. “I know you belong to Alex and Devin. I know you have obligations to them. But, I want to see you more. A lot more. And take you out and other stuff. If you're interested, of course.”

Anna was astonished. “Why? I mean, I'd really like to have sex with you. You don't have to take me out or anything for me to—” She stopped

talking at the look on his face. He looked upset. "I said something wrong, didn't I?"

Aaron frowned. "Anna, I'm not saying that because I want to have sex with you. I really want to...to get to know you. Spend time with you." He twirled a piece of her hair around his finger. "Maybe have you as my girlfriend..." He trailed off, giving her a sheepish smile.

Anna bit her lip. "Aaron, I can't, I mean, I have obligations to Devin and Alex. Devin is taking me to something on Wednesday night. He said he might send someone over to have sex with me."

"I know it's not going to be normal, but I'd like to try at least." He cupped her chin. "When we danced together tonight, I felt something between us click."

Anna's fear melted away at his gaze. "I felt it too," she said softly. "I feel safe with you. More than any other man I've ever known."

"I'm glad," Aaron said softly. "I want you to feel safe with me." He leaned forward and kissed her again. "Always."

His lips pressed against hers, firm but gentle. He trailed the tips of his fingers down her neck and across her collarbone. She wrapped her free arm around his neck and rubbed just under his ear. He shuddered under her touch.

He trailed kisses along her jaw and to her neck, pausing to suck gently below her ear before nipping her earlobe. She inhaled sharply. He kissed down her neck, and she leaned her head back as he kissed her collarbone. He tugged at the blanket, but he'd wrapped her too well. He glanced at the bed. Anna followed his gaze, then smiled at him.

"Do you want to stay the night?" he whispered.

Anna swallowed nervously and nodded. Why was she nervous?

Aaron stood her on her feet and pulled the sheets back on his bed before unwrapping her from the blanket. He tugged her gently to him and her body pressed against his. She shivered as he ran his hand down her back. He kissed her neck again.

“God, you smell good,” he mumbled against her neck.

He kissed his way back to her mouth, then backed towards the bed, pulling her with him, and laid her down gently, never moving his lips from hers.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him towards her. He lay on top of her and she felt his hardened cock against her inner thigh. She pushed her knee up gently and he moaned and kissed her deeper, tongue thrusting in and out of her mouth.

He kissed her neck again, then trailed his tongue down to her collarbone, sliding his hand up the side of her ribs. She giggled as it tickled.

Aaron looked at her, eyes sparkling with affection. “You're so beautiful, my little Giselle,” he whispered, then dipped his head lower to kiss the top of her breast.

“Oh, Aaron,” she sighed as his tongue trailed along the top edge of her bikini top.

He brushed the side of her breast with his thumb and she arched her back, pressing her breasts up towards him. Her tight nipples ached for his touch.

He slid his hand up and caressed her breast, making her moan. She sighed as he kissed the other nipple through the fabric, then gently bit the hardened peak.

She reached behind and unclasped her top, pulling it slowly until she was able to drop it on the floor beside the bed.

He straightened slightly and gazed at her breasts. "Perfect," he murmured before taking her nipple into his hot mouth and sucking gently.

She moaned loudly and pressed her thigh against his erection as she ran her hands through his hair and across his back and arms, exploring his body through touch. He pulled on her nipple ring before moving to her other breast, sucking her nipple into his hot mouth.

"Oh, God!" she moaned softly.

His tongue swirled around the peak, moving the ring up and down, and sending waves of pleasure directly to her clit.

She squirmed underneath him, wanting more of everything from him. Her hands moved down to the waistband of his swim trunks and slipped underneath, her fingertips brushing against the head of his cock. He groaned and flexed his hips toward her.

She could only reach the ridge of his cock and ran her fingertips along the edge, then to the slit where pre-cum had seeped out. She brought her fingertips to her lips and he watched with wide eyes as she licked drops of his cum off her fingers.

"Oh, fuck, Anna...."

He sat up and pulled her bikini bottom off, then trailed his fingers down between her breasts to her belly and down over her swollen sex.

He grinned slightly. "You're definitely all grown up now, aren't you?"

She giggled and sat up, tugging at his trunks. He sat up on his knees so she could pull them down off his hips. When his cock was free, she took his cock fully into her mouth and wrapped her arms around his hips, making him gasp.

He cursed and buried his hands into her hair, holding her head as she sucked on his cock. She thrust her mouth up and down, taking him deep into her throat. He was long and thick, so hard and smooth. No piercings,

though. She clenched her thighs together as she imagined him being inside her.

He groaned loudly as she swallowed him, but she didn't stop. She eagerly sucked and swallowed him, wanting to please him. Not out of obligation, but because she wanted to make him happy. Because she liked him. A strange new concept to her.

“Oh, Anna. Oh, God, you're gonna make me come,” he groaned and pulled away from her mouth, pushing her back onto the bed. “I want to bury myself inside you,” he said as he pushed his trunks off the rest of the way and tossed them to the ground.

He kissed her and trailed his fingers down to her sex, gliding along the slit until he reached her opening where he slowly pushed a finger inside her.

“Ah!” she cried as he pushed his finger through the silky, very wet folds. He slowly thrust in and out of her, making her squirm more. “Please, Aaron. I need you,” she moaned. He kissed her neck, then leaned over her to his night stand. “What are you doing?” she asked.

“Getting a condom.” He grinned at her. “I really like you, Anna. But I'm not ready for fatherhood quite yet.”

“A condom?” She frowned. “Oh, those long rubbery things?”

Aaron gave her a funny look. “You don't use them?” He looked wary.

“No. I've never even seen one in real life. Only on TV.”

Aaron looked confused. “You've never even seen one?”

She shook her head. “I can't get pregnant. And I've heard they're rather annoying. You don't have to use one if you don't want to.” She gave him a small smile.

Aaron looked doubtful. “What about, you know, diseases and stuff?”

Anna shrugged. “I've never been sick.”

“Never?”

She shook her head. “Never even a cold.”

Aaron was thoughtful for a moment, then smiled. “I haven't had sex without a condom for a long time.” He leaned down and kissed her again. “God, you're wonderful.” He trailed his fingers back down to her pussy and slipped inside her again. “So hot and wet,” he groaned.

She moaned as he moved his fingers inside her. “Aaron...,” she sighed.

He lay on top of her again and positioned himself at her entrance. His eyes closed as he pressed forward. She flexed her hips and he entered her body, slowly.

Anna moaned and pressed her head back into the pillow as he filled her. He felt so good inside. More than just physically. He filled her emotionally as well.

When he was in to the hilt, he kissed her for a long time before he started moving. It was so intimate; she wanted to give herself to him, completely. She kissed him back, wrapping her arms around his ribs.

They began moving together, finding the rhythm quickly. Anna moaned as he moved in and out of her.

“God, you feel so incredible,” he said softly.

They quickened their pace and Anna felt the tingling sensation that led to her climax. Their hips thrust against each other, over and over again, until they both cried out in ecstasy, soaring through the stars together and slowly returning to earth to rest in each other's arms.

Aaron pressed his lips to hers as he rolled to his side, keeping his arms around her and turning her with him. When they finally broke apart Anna looked up into Aaron's eyes and was astonished at the depth of emotion she saw there. Only Alex and Wilhelm had ever looked at her like that. It made her feel warm and tingly inside. She liked it. A lot.

Suddenly she remembered where they were and that Jenna was probably worried about her. She told Aaron. “We came together. She might need a ride home....” She started to sit up but Aaron pushed her gently back down.

He stood, his naked body delicious to her eyes, and reached for his swim trunks. “I’ll go find her. She was flirting with Bryce and is probably staying here tonight as well.” He grinned at her. “Stay here. I’ll be back in a couple of minutes.”

He walked around the bed and went out the door. Anna pulled the blankets up and snuggled deeper into the bed to await his return.

Aaron returned a few minutes later, turned the lights off and slipped back into bed with Anna, shoving his trunks off before doing so. His body was cold in the warm cocoon she’d made herself in the bed, but she didn’t mind. She curled up next to him and he wrapped his arms around her.

“Is she okay?”

Aaron chuckled. “Oh, yeah. Bryce and Levi are taking good care of her.” Levi was one of the other principal dancers.

Anna nodded, suddenly tired. She snuggled her head against Aaron’s shoulder and fell asleep as he stroked her hair.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Devin's home office phone rang as he was researching ways to get rid of Alex. "Hello, Jack."

"My girls are gone."

"What?" What the hell was he talking about?

"My girls, the twins. They're gone."

"What the fuck did you do with them?"

"I didn't do anything," Jack growled. "I went out for a few hours earlier today. When I came home, they were gone."

Devin leaned back in his chair and contemplated the situation. How the hell could he have lost his girls?

Fuck. Devin had been looking forward to those twins in the Red Room. "Any idea who might have taken them?" Who would dare steal slaves? Even Alex wasn't ballsy enough to steal from an Elder. Was he? No. He played by the rules. Both he and his father.

Jack hesitated. "It looks like they managed to free themselves."

Devin swallowed down a flash of anger. *Fucking idiot.*

"Maybe you should try locking the doors to the basement, Jack."

"So this is fucking my fault?"

"I give you the privilege of training them. They're your responsibility."

"Fuck you, Devin. I've trained your girls for years. I've never lost one."

“This better be the only time, Jack.” Devin’s voice was full of warning. “I can’t have those girls loose in the city. You better find them.”

Alex’s phone rang in the middle of the night. He groaned as he reached for the glowing annoyance, but woke immediately when he saw his father calling. Had something happened to Kurt’s baby?

“Hello, Vati. Is everything all right?”

“I just had two young American girls show up at my Schloss.”

Alex’s heart sank at his father’s tone. He could practically feel the anger radiating through the phone. “Vati, they were being tortured. Jack was —”

“It doesn’t matter, Alex,” Vati shouted and Alex winced. “You don’t interfere with another Elder’s Schloss.”

“They were at Jack’s house, not the Schloss.”

“By Devin’s order, I’m sure,” Vati growled. “But, again, it doesn’t matter. They are Devin’s property. You had no right to take them and bring them here. If Devin finds out, I will be in an immense amount of trouble.”

“You? I’m the one who did it.”

“And I am your Elder!” Vati paused. “You performed this act using your men, correct?”

“Of course.” What did that have to do with anything?

“That places your misdeeds in the category of your secondary duties in the Brotherhood, Alex.”

Alex’s stomach churned.

“If you had done it yourself, I might have been able to persuade the others that it was an Elder-Son misbehaving. But as it stands, I cannot do that.”

“Please don’t punish my men, Vati. They only did as ordered.”

“If that is what you wish.”

“Yes, Vati.”

There was another pause. “You need to come home and face judgment.”

Alex took in a shaky breath. “Will I be killed?”

“It’s not up to me. Disobedience is severe, Alex. You know this.”

What would happen to Anna if he were executed? “Vati, please...I was trying to save them,” he whispered, tears coming to his eyes. “I looked at them and all I could see was Anna in the same place.”

Vati sighed. “I know, Alex,” he acknowledged in a softer voice. “What you did was admirable, son. I doubt the others will call for your execution. If you had killed Jack or Devin, it would have been different.”

Relief spread through Alex’s body like a cool breeze. “Thank you, Vati.”

“You still need to come home. Immediately.”

“What about Anna?”

“Did Aaron ask her out?”

“Yes.”

“Then trust your friend to take care of her.”

“Yes, Vati.” The call ended and Alex stared at the ceiling in the darkness. He knew he’d done wrong, but to have done nothing would have been worse than the punishment to come.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Aaron woke with the smell of jasmine in his nose and a soft body in his arms. He smiled, remembering Anna had stayed the night with him. How could he have been so lucky to catch Anna's attention? Especially after learning how special she really was.

He took a lock of her silky hair between his fingers, and she moved and moaned softly as she cuddled closer in his arms. Her arm lay across his chest and he ran his hand over the soft skin on the back of her hand.

He was in danger of losing his heart to her, and understood Alex's desire to take her and hide her away, but Alex had said that would be dangerous to her, though Aaron didn't know why.

She lifted her head and looked around, her sleepy gaze finally landing on his face.

He brushed her hair back away from her face. "Hi," he said softly, with a tender smile.

She smiled shyly back at him. "Hi." She tentatively reached up and stroked his cheek, smiling as she did so. She traced his cheekbone forward from his ear and down to his lips. Her index finger traced across his bottom lip, then down his chin and neck and across his chest.

He shuddered as her touch gave him a thrill. He felt the blood rush down to his already hard cock, making it ache. The thought of her mouth on him last night made his cock jump.

Aaron watched her intently as she familiarized herself with his body. When her fingers moved sideways to his nipple he hissed as she traced around the dark pink skin, causing the nub to harden instantly. Her eyes were almost wide with innocence as she moved her fingers, even though he suspected she'd been with many, many men and knew men's bodies probably better than most of the men knew themselves.

He didn't want to contemplate any sort of number. Innocence and seduction in the same body. No wonder a man like Devin would want someone like her.

She looked at peace and he didn't want to bring up the previous night's conversation, though he wanted to make sure she was okay. Then again, how could she be okay learning all that she had? He was glad he'd been there when she found out.

He thought back to the previous night. Why had she tensed when Alex walked into the room? He'd never known a woman to be tense around Alex, unless she was getting ready to orgasm or Alex was playing with her and intentionally causing the sexual tension. Alex was the type of guy women loved.

He was also the best guy he'd ever known. All those things that made a man a man, that was the essence of Alex. Strong physically and mentally, tall, well-built, handsome, disciplined, smart, protective as hell of those he loved, and sometimes even those he didn't love. He was a perfect gentleman...most of the time. He was considerate, an excellent lover, and a friggin' duke. God, sometimes he felt so inferior next to his friend. But Alex wasn't arrogant. At least not now; he freely admitted to being so when he was younger.

Women could be nervous around him, but Anna was almost afraid of him. Maybe he'd lost his temper in front of her? That was Alex's one

weakness...okay, he probably had others, but it was hard to see them. His anger was certainly something to behold. No one wanted to be around him when he was out-of-control angry. Aaron had only seen it once and never wanted to see it again.

Only Seth and Tony dared to be near him when he was that angry. They could take what Alex dished out. The three of them had been to hell and back together, along with a couple of other guys Aaron had met several times. Aaron called them the “Band of Brothers.” Alex had told him it was amusing, though appropriate.

Aaron wasn't paying attention to what she was doing to him, making Anna wonder what could possibly keep him from reacting to her touch. She leaned forward and bit the nipple that she'd been tracing around and he jumped, then laughed.

She looked up into his eyes adoringly as she caught her breath. She felt so...she didn't know the words to express how she felt. Cherished? Adored?

“What would you like to do today?” Aaron asked softly. He ran his fingers up her belly and around her breasts.

“Don't you have class?” Anna asked, sighing as he glided his fingers over her taut nipples.

“Nope, have the week off. I'm glad. I need the break.” He grinned. “So, you didn't answer my question. What shall we do today?”

Anna's eyes widened. “I don't know. What's there to do?”

“Lots of things. We could go to the park. We could see a movie....”

“A movie?” Anna repeated. She hadn't been to a movie in years.

“You wanna go see a movie?” he asked with amusement in his eyes. She nodded eagerly.

He laughed. “Well, that was easy. ‘Course the movies don't start until later. We could do lunch, then go see a movie. Maybe wander around one of the parks or something? Or just hang out.” He stroked her cheek. “I just want to be with you,” he said softly.

Anna felt like her heart was going to burst from happiness. She heard the sincerity in his voice. She allowed herself to read him briefly, then stopped. She liked not “pleasing” but just “being.” Though she wanted to make him happy because he made her happy. She felt so free. It was wonderful.

Aaron walked out of his bathroom as he pulled his shirt over his head. Anna sat on his bed in the pink dress she'd worn last night. Sexy pink dress with that skimpy little bikini underneath....

He looked closer at the dress as he walked to her. “Are you wearing anything under that dress?”

Anna shrugged. “No.” Her eyes widened. “Should I?”

He pulled her to her feet and slid his hands around her hips, cupping her ass and kissing her neck. “Mmm. Not if you don't want to. I think it’s sexy.” He pulled her dress up and caressed her bare ass, feeling himself growing hard again. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pressed herself against him.

He groaned and pulled away. “If I start kissing you again, we'll never leave the room.” He pushed her dress back down.

“Is that a bad thing?” she asked.

Aaron grinned. “Well, on one level, no. But I don't want you to think I just want you for your body.”

“What's wrong with my body?” she asked, giggling.

He looked her up and down and his mouth widened into a seductive smile. "Absolutely nothing. I'm looking forward to seeing it again later. But I am actually hungry and really looking forward to taking you to a movie."

She smiled up at him as if she thought the world of him, which warmed his heart.

"I want to drive you to the movies and stuff," he said. He might be considered old fashioned, but he didn't care. "Where'd you park?"

"On the street. I think about a block down."

"Hmm. I should've had you move it. My neighbors can get a little persnickety about my friends' cars. Next time you can park in the garage."

"I have an extra spot at my apartment you can park your car in, too."

"How about we each drive our cars to your apartment and then I can drive from there?"

She nodded. "Okay. Do you know where I live?"

He shook his head.

"The Sapphire. On Mission Street."

Aaron stared at her. "You live in the Sapphire?" He hadn't really thought about where she lived. He wasn't even sure if she had a job. That was a pretty swanky apartment building; several thousand a month for a studio. He shook his head, wondering how she afforded it. Then he wondered if he really wanted to know. "Okay, well. My garage is in the back so I'll meet you and follow you to your place. What color is your car?"

"A sparkly white."

They went downstairs and he walked her to the door. She pointed in the direction her car was parked and he told her he'd be there in a few minutes.

He went to the garage and pulled his yellow Nissan Xterra out of the garage and pulled around front looking for a "sparkly white" car. The only

car he saw was a really nice Mercedes and he didn't think that could possibly...no, that was Anna in the driver's seat? *Holy shit. How is she affording all this stuff?*

He pulled up next to her and rolled the window down. "Hey. Nice car."

She blushed and smiled. "Thanks." She pushed a button on the dash. "I have to use the GPS to get around. Otherwise, I get lost."

Aaron shook his head again. However she got it, it didn't change who she was. And that's what mattered.

His phone rang as they pulled onto the freeway. Aaron hit the speaker button. "Hey, Alex."

"Hello, Aaron. How are things going?"

Aaron grinned. "Great." Was he calling to check up on him and Anna?

"Aaron, listen, I'm on my jet heading home. I need you to keep an eye on Anna for me."

"Home? Are you going on one of those mystery trips?"

Alex laughed bitterly. "I wish." There was a pause.

"Alex?"

"I got into some trouble and have to go see my father. I'm hoping I'll be back in a few days, but...I don't know for sure."

Aaron blinked. Trouble? What on earth could Alex have done to make him sound so depressed? "Are you okay?"

"I don't know." The crack in his voice concerned Aaron.

"What did you do?"

"I can't say, Aaron. Just, please, take care of Anna while I'm gone. If something happens, call Seth. I won't have access to my phone."

"I will, Alex."

"Thanks. Don't tell Anna anything about the call. If she asks, just say I had to go out of town unexpectedly."

“That’s all you told me.”

“Don’t tell her I’m in trouble. Please, Aaron.”

“I...okay.” What a strange request.

Alex sighed and dropped his phone on the seat next to him.

“She’ll be okay, Alex,” Seth said, giving him a sympathetic look.

“Why’d you tell Aaron not to tell her you got in trouble?”

“If she knew I was in trouble, then Devin might find out from her and come to a logical conclusion. I can’t let my father get into trouble because of what I’ve done.”

Anna took her customary place in the corner of the ballet studio to warm up on Monday evening. She smiled, remembering the previous day with Aaron. It had been the best day she could remember in a long time. They went to lunch and talked about all sorts of things. Aaron told her about dancing professionally and what he'd been doing since he'd graduated high school. Anna didn't have much to say about what she'd been doing and mostly listened to Aaron. He asked her questions, but the answers were rather sad and she kept them as short as possible. Besides, she'd been taught to let the man speak most of the time.

They’d gone to the movies that afternoon and Anna had a wonderful time. He’d kept his arm around her the whole time and she savored his embrace. After the movie, they’d walked around Fisherman's Wharf and had dinner at a nice seafood restaurant. They’d gone back to her apartment after dinner, curled up on the couch, watched TV and talked.

She found herself energized for class tonight; more than she had in a very long time. For the first time in years, Anna was here with hope for a

future in dancing. Aaron had been so encouraging to her, and Alex had convinced Devin to let her dance more. Most of the time Anna had just gone through the motions. Jack wanted her to exercise and dancing kept her grounded in reality during the worst sessions with him. But her heart hadn't been in it.

Tonight her heart was in it. Anna smiled to herself as she stretched and moved to get ready for class. Maybe if she worked hard enough, Isaak would let her dance with the school in the fall. It would give her a few months to get her strength back.

Tatiana, the instructor, walked in a few minutes later. Class began and, for the first time in years, Anna lost herself in dancing. She closed her eyes, and the music and her body moved as one. She was the music. She was the dance.

They moved from the *barre* to the center of the room. This had been her favorite part of class as a child. This was where she danced. Anna watched the demonstration, then closed her eyes and became the dance and the music again.

Faintly, Anna heard the music stop. She opened her eyes and blinked. Tatiana and the other dancers were staring at her. Her eyes widened and she started to panic. *What did I do?* She twisted her fingers together and looked nervously at Tatiana.

Tatiana beamed at Anna. "Isaak always said you had it in you. I never believed him until today."

Anna frowned, confused. "Did I do something wrong?" she asked, embarrassed.

Tatiana shook her head. "Anna, what you just did...that was so beautiful. I've never seen anyone dance like that before."

The other dancers nodded. Anna's cheeks burned and she stared at the ground.

"See me after class," Tatiana said.

Anna nodded, still staring at the ground.

The class continued. Anna tried to just concentrate on doing the steps and not draw attention to herself, but inevitably, she'd find herself closing her eyes and losing herself again. Tatiana just beamed at her. She even got a couple of gasps during a *grande jeté*, the cross-floor jumps.

After class, Anna waited for the other dancers to leave and walked up to Tatiana. "You wanted to see me?"

Tatiana smiled at her. "Anna, you have completely changed since last week. I've been your instructor for three years now, and I've never seen you dance like you did tonight. Whatever changed, keep it up."

Anna didn't know what to say, but she felt a glow building in her heart.

"I'm also going to speak to Isaak about you taking the summer intensives."

Anna's heart soared at her words. The summer intensives were for the best students of the school, by invitation only. They consisted of two month-long, incredibly focused and demanding sessions. She'd participated in them when she was younger, before Jack pulled her from the school.

"I... Thank you, Tatiana. I would love to participate." She couldn't wait to tell Aaron.

"Good. I'll speak with Isaak tomorrow."

Anna nodded and gave her a grateful smile. "Thank you."

"Have a good evening, Anna."

Anna smiled and skipped out of the room.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Alex rubbed his face as he sat in his bedroom at his father's Schloss, waiting to be called into the Elder's Chamber. All the German Elders had come together for the trial. He was thankful that they were keeping it to themselves. Vati didn't think they would turn him over to Devin.

Alex had always performed his duties to the Brotherhood to the best of his ability. Yes, he was an Elder-Son, but he was also a Brotherhood Assassin. He was proud of both titles, especially since there had not been an Elder-Son who was also an Assassin before. Vati had bargained with the other Elders to allow him to become an Assassin after he proved his abilities, shortly after graduating from secondary school.

He had been tested thoroughly and Alex had been given permission to train with the American military and form his own team. That was where he met Seth and Tony and the other members of his well-respected team.

But with the additional title came additional responsibilities and rules. And one of the rules was that you didn't take any action against a member of the Brotherhood without permission. There were no rogue Assassins. If an Assassin killed an Elder or Brother on their own volition, they were executed. There was no appeal process.

But what happened if an Assassin stole a slave from an Elder? Alex hadn't thought of it as stealing; he thought of it as rescuing.

Well, he would find out soon.

A few minutes later, a knock sounded at his door and Sebastian walked in. Alex stood and looked nervously at the Immortal. He was almost as tall as Alex, though thinner with white-blond hair and wise, crystal-blue eyes.

“Are they terribly angry?” Alex asked softly.

Sebastian frowned. “You shouldn’t have done it, Alex.”

Alex’s shoulders slumped. “I couldn’t leave them there, Sebastian. I had the power to rescue two girls from Jack’s hands. They would have been raised like Anna had been raised.” He gave a despairing look to his friend. “I couldn’t, Sebastian.”

Sebastian’s expression was inscrutable, but his eyes were intense as he read Alex. After a few minutes, he nodded. “It’s time to go.”

They arrived in the chamber a few minutes later. The seven German Elders were seated in a semi-circle, wearing their white robes. Brenton and Gavin, the other Immortals that watched over Germany, were there also.

Alex moved to the center of the circle and swallowed nervously as he looked at the Elders.

“Where are your men?” Gerhard Staudegger, Elder of Saxony, asked.

“The fault lies with myself and only myself. They acted only upon my orders.”

Gerhard nodded.

Edwin Reising, Elder of Bavaria, was seated in the middle. It humbled Alex that his father, who normally took the position of leadership, had been pushed aside. Alex respected all the Elders, and each were honorable men, but he’d always been proud that they deferred to Vati’s judgment.

“You are charged with taking action against an Elder without orders from another Elder.”

Alex nodded. “Yes, my lord.”

“Tell us what happened.”

Alex told them about visiting Jack's house, and how he had found the girls. He told them why he had acted. "I know now that I shouldn't have acted as I did, but if I hadn't..." He shook his head. "I couldn't have lived with myself."

A pregnant silence filled Alex with dread. Would they call for his execution? Would the girls be sent back to America? "Please, my lords..." The Elders looked at him. "Whatever your judgment upon me, please don't send those girls back to Devin."

"Thank you, Alex. You may go. We will summon you when we have made our decision."

"Thank you, my lords." He turned and walked out of the room.

Although it was a little less than an hour until he was summoned back to the chambers, it felt like days had passed. He debated with himself the entire waiting period. Should he have not done it? Should he have left the girls to their fate? But he always came back to the same conclusion: he couldn't have done differently and lived with himself.

He walked back into the chambers humbly, but confident in his decision and ready to accept his punishment.

The Elders regarded him impassively as he walked to stand in front of them. Even Vati.

"Alexander Johannes Kunze Herzog von Hesse, you have been found guilty of the charges brought against you," Edwin announced.

Alex swallowed. "Yes, my lords." What was his punishment?

"You are sentenced to twenty lashes with a cat-o-nine-tails, to be carried out immediately following these proceedings."

Alex let out a shaky breath. He wasn't going to die, but he wasn't looking forward to being whipped. "Thank you, my lords." He paused. "What about the girls?"

Edwin's face softened for the first time. "Alex, we admire what you did. You went with your conscience and were willing to face the consequences." He glanced at Vati. "Your father raised an estimable son. They will be coming to live in my Schloss. They are less likely to be discovered there. News of what you did will not go beyond these walls." His eyes hardened again. "But be warned, Alex. Do not do it again."

"Yes, my lord." The praise relieved some of his apprehension. Some. Vati stood. "Come, Alex. Let's go get it over with."

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The first few days of the week were heaven for Anna. She and Aaron hung out and went to movies, made love and all sorts of other mundane things new couples do. It was all new to Anna and all wonderful. But Wednesday evening came too soon and Aaron had to leave so that Anna could get ready for the banquet.

“Call me when you get home and I'll come over...if you want me to.” Aaron said as he was getting ready to leave. “If you get home at three in the morning, call me if you need me. Or want me.”

Anna chewed on her lip. “I don't think I'll be home until tomorrow sometime. Devin told me what he had planned.”

“Do I want to know?” Aaron asked, wincing.

She looked at him apologetically. “How much of my other life do you want to know?”

He stroked her cheek. “I don't ever want you to be ashamed, Anna.”

Anna's eyes filled with tears. “I don't deserve someone like you.” She wrapped her arms around him and kissed him.

Anna walked him to the door and they had a long goodbye kiss, then Aaron reluctantly left.

Anna had been looking forward to the night with Devin, until Alex told her the truth about herself. Now, she was afraid and didn't want to see Devin. If she was braver, she might have been angry at him for not telling her the truth about who she was. But she wasn't brave.

As soon as Devin walked into Anna's apartment and saw her, he knew something was wrong. She barely looked him in the eye and didn't come to him as enthusiastically as she should have.

He'd been very busy this week and hadn't taken advantage of Anna's new location. His cock was hard and throbbing and he had intended to fuck her as soon as he got there. Just a quickie before they went to the party. He reigned in his irritation; she was a delicate creature and needed to be treated accordingly.

This wouldn't have been a problem had Alex not interfered.

He had a few minutes to sort this out, and took her hand to lead her to her couch.

"Anna, Baby. What's wrong?" He stroked her cheek and she tensed. He cupped her chin gently and looked into her eyes. There were always ways to find out what was going on in her head.

He kissed her gently until she relaxed. Then he stroked her cheek again.

"What's wrong?" he asked gently.

"Alex..." she said reluctantly. "He...he said..."

Devin's intuition told him this was not good. "What did Alex tell you, Baby?" He kept his voice as even as possible.

She haltingly repeated what Alex had told her about being a half-Immortal and Devin just barely kept his anger in check.

He didn't have time to deal with this right now. Fucking Alex. He would deal with the fucking German first thing in the morning and have a long, hopefully painful, discussion with him. He might not be able to kill him, but he could certainly hurt him.

But right now he had to deal with Anna's fears.

“Anna, Baby. What Alex told you was technically true.” He stroked the side of her head, intending to take temporary control of her mind and change her thoughts.

“Baby, it's not as bad as it sounds. When your parents died, I wanted to make sure you had a chance to be a great helper to me. Remember, I told you what Jack did to you couldn't be helped, but that I'd make it up to you? You asked to be able to dance, remember? And I'm letting you, Baby.”

She looked at him, eyes glazed as he twisted the truth in her mind.

“I love you Anna. It was the only way I could have you, and I need you so badly. If your father didn't want me to have you, he would have stopped me.”

He continued changing the story in her mind, making Alex seem frightening and controlling, until Devin was sure that she would react positively to him, then released her mind and watched closely to see what happened. He hadn't done this before, and there would be consequences if he'd done it wrong.

Anna blinked, dizzy, but her head clearing. She looked up at Devin. Something nagged at her, that she should be afraid of him, but she couldn't for the life of her remember why. He loved her. He needed her.

She timidly reached her hand out to touch his cheek. He smiled and took her hand in his, kissing her palm sensually. Her eyes closed as his lips caressed her palm.

“Devin....”

“That's my girl,” he said softly. He leaned forward and kissed her, cupping the back of her head to bring her closer. “I've missed you,” he murmured against her lips.

She moaned softly and pressed into him. She needed him as much as he needed her. It didn't matter that she and Aaron had made love many times that day already. She needed Devin. She brought her hand to his knee and moved it upward to cup his cock. He groaned as she stroked him over his luxuriously soft wool pants.

“Devin...”

“Yes, Baby. I know.” He turned her around to face the back of the couch and kissed the back of her neck as he pushed her blue satin dress up over her hips.

“I love the panties and stockings, Baby.”

She wore a dark blue silk thong and matching garter belt. He stroked her ass with one hand as he unzipped his pants with the other. His cock sprang out, hard and throbbing as he ran the hot flesh across her ass, then moved aside her thong and traced it down her cleft to the entrance of her pussy. She was hot and wet and moaned softly as he teased her, rubbing himself along the lips but not entering her.

“Please, Devin...,” she moaned, pushing back against him.

He pushed forward and slipped into her hot, silky slit.

“Oh, God, Anna, I've missed you,” he groaned again as he thrust in and out.

He unzipped her dress and reached forward to cup her breasts inside her bra, playing with and tugging on her nipples.

She moaned as he thrust harder. “Oh, Devin...yes!”

He grabbed her hips and slammed into her over and over again. “Come for me, Baby. I want to hear you scream for me.”

The pressure built and she screamed out his name as her climax hit her forcefully. Devin came a moment later, crying out Anna's name and pressing himself deeply inside her.

He leaned forward and kissed her back, then pulled out and zipped up his pants.

She turned and looked up at him, smiling adoringly.

“You look beautiful, Baby. Your cheeks are nicely colored from your orgasm.”

She felt her face warm at his comment. “You look very handsome too, Devin.”

Devin grinned. “I'm glad you think so. It's always nice when your date thinks you look nice.” He looked around. “Do you have your bag packed, Baby? I'm still taking you home tonight with me.”

Anna nodded. “Yes. It's in my room.” She felt a little nervous about being at his house. “Will your wife be there?”

Devin smiled. “Yes. She will. But she has her own bedroom. You'll be cuddled up in my bed, naked with me.” He stroked her cheek. “We need to get going. Are you ready?”

“Let me check myself in the bathroom quickly.” She scooted off the couch and walked quickly to the bathroom, where she straightened her dress and smoothed out some of her curls. She grabbed her purse and overnight bag and went back out to the entryway where Devin was waiting. He smiled and took her bag and they went downstairs to the waiting Town Car.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Anna had never been in a hotel before. She stood in the lobby and gazed around until Devin tugged her hand gently to get her to move.

“I'm sorry, Devin. It's just so beautiful.”

The high ceilings and carved woodwork continued to catch her eye as she walked with Devin to the elevators.

“It's all right, Baby. I feel the same way about you.” He led her onto the elevator, where they were alone. “Anna, I expect you to be your beautiful, charming self tonight. There are a few men I will introduce you to that I might want you to...get to know better.” He gave her a knowing look. He meant to have sex with. “I'll let you know. There is one young man I know for certain I want you to charm.” He glanced down and smiled at her. “If you do that, you will please me greatly.”

Anna's eyes lit up. “I want to please you, Devin.”

“I know you do, Baby, and I have no doubt you will.” He leaned down and kissed her, sliding his hand down to cup her ass. “I'll have to leave you for the ceremony part, but you'll know the people at the table by then. Just remember to be discreet in what I ask of you. I would be very upset if you were caught fucking someone. Do you understand?”

She trembled beneath his gaze. “Yes, Devin,” she whispered.

His face softened as the elevator doors opened. Devin took Anna's arm and they walked around a corner and into the reception area. Anna's stress level instantly increased at the number of people, but she knew Devin

would be upset if she panicked. She took slow, deep breaths to get control of her heartbeat.

Devin's presence became even more impressive as he began greeting people, shaking hands and introducing Anna to them. She received several questioning looks, mostly from women, and there were more than a few inquiries about Devin's wife.

He brushed the questions off, explaining that Sandy was ill and Anna was his delightful date for the evening. A few men thought she was his daughter, to which Devin informed them she was not, with a certain type of smile to hint that she was his lover.

“Anna, this is Jayce Corbin,” Devin introduced her to a tall man with gray hair and piercing, ice blue eyes. “You may remember Jayce from Friday night. He was standing at your head.”

Anna looked closer at the man she'd just been introduced to. He looked vaguely familiar and when she glanced down at his right hand, she saw an emerald ring on his pinky. She glanced back up, wide-eyed at him.

He smiled warmly. “It's a pleasure to meet you under more normal circumstances, shall we say?” He brought her hand up to his mouth and kissed the back of it, eyes never leaving hers.

“It's a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Corbin,” she said softly, with the slightly flirtatious smile she'd been taught to offer when meeting a man.

“Please, call me Jayce.”

“Jayce,” she repeated with a bright smile.

“Where's Lily?” Devin asked, putting his hand on Anna's hip and drawing her close to him.

Jayce waved his hand around. “Somewhere.”

A few minutes later a voluptuous woman with blond hair walked up to them. She looked Anna up and down, then turned to Jayce.

“Dear, the Boswells were asking about you,” she said in a sultry voice, glancing again at Anna, then at Devin with a raised brow.

Devin gave her a flirtatious smile. “Lily, you look lovely tonight,” he said and leaned forward to kiss her cheek. “I'd like you to meet Anna. Anna, this is Dr. Lily Jones-Corbin, Jayce's wife.”

She gave Anna another suspicious look before smiling at her and extending her hand. Anna took it and greeted her politely.

“Where's Sandy?” Lily asked, looking pointedly at Devin's hand resting on Anna's hip.

“Ill,” he said simply, not offering any other information.

“Really? I spoke with her this morning and—”

Devin gave Jayce a look and Jayce interrupted his wife.

“Lily, darling, I'll be with you and the Boswells shortly.”

Lily glared at her husband, but did as she was told. The two men watched her walk away and Jayce turned back to Devin.

“You knew there would be questions when you brought her out,” he said.

Devin frowned. “I know. But it's worth it. They'll get used to it eventually. You and the others need to keep your wives under control, though, or they won't help the matter.”

“You know how Lily is—” Jayce began.

“I do. And I warned you about her before you married her. She's too independent for you, Jayce.”

Jayce grinned and shrugged. “You can't help who you fall in love with.”

Devin looked at Anna. “That's true,” he said softly, then kissed her temple.

Anna blushed.

“Ah, Zach is here,” Devin murmured to Jayce, indicating towards the window.

Jayce turned around and nodded. “With a date?”

“I told him he needed one. He needs to settle down soon if he wants to further his career.” Devin smiled. “Anna is here to show him settling down doesn’t mean settling. If you’ll excuse us, Jayce. I should go say hello.”

“Of course. It was nice to meet you Anna,” he said.

“Likewise, Jayce.” She gave him a seductive smile as she turned and walked away with Devin.

Devin led Anna over to the side of the room towards several couples standing together and talking. “Anna, Zach is the man I spoke to you about. I want you to get him to seduce you. Do whatever he wants you to do sexually. I want him well satiated after he leaves your company.”

“Yes, Devin,” she said softly.

Devin greeted everyone and introduced Anna.

Zachary Vail was a good looking, clean cut man with dark blond hair and dark brown eyes. He had an “All-American” look to him, wearing a well-made black suit and powder blue tie. He looked to be in his mid- to late-twenties and had a very charming smile. The woman with him, Patricia, also had an “All-American” look to her: bright smile, blond curly hair and blue eyes. She was slender and looked elegant in a pink, A-line cocktail dress.

“I need to go freshen up, Devin,” Anna said softly, but loud enough for Zach, who stood next to her, to hear.

Devin nodded with a slight smile and Anna walked away slowly. She glanced back subtly, giving Zach an innocent look, then walked away, swaying her hips just-so as she moved. She headed out of the reception area

to the bathroom, conscious of Zach watching her. She paused deliberately, looking in her purse before walking into the bathroom.

She could sense Zach behind her and turned to give him a shy smile. “Zach, right?”

He nodded and trailed his eyes down her body hungrily. “How do you know Devin?” he asked casually.

“I’ve known him all my life,” she answered softly, looking at him with bright eyes. Sweet and innocent was how the game was played. Give them enough attention to let them know that the interest is there, then play shy about it. “How do you know him?”

“He’s helping me fulfill my political ambitions,” Zach said, grinning. “And other ambitions.” His eyes were intense with desire as he looked at Anna.

She turned away coyly and looked out the window. “Devin is a very resourceful man,” she said absently.

“He is,” Zach agreed, stepping closer to her. “Beautiful view, isn’t it?”

Anna nodded. “I’ve never seen such a beautiful one.” One of the bridges lay straight ahead, lit up brightly.

“I bet there’s more windows through here,” Zach said, walking across the hall and pushing a door open. He looked inside. “Oh, you should see this,” he said, motioning for her to come.

Anna knew his game: getting her alone so he could have sex with her. He played right into Devin’s hands. She looked at him shyly, then slowly followed him through the doors.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The large room had tall windows on three sides, similar to the room they'd just left. But this room had only the few emergency lights on. Zach took her hand and led her to the corner where they would be hidden from the doorway.

He stood behind her with his hands on her arms, stroking up and down. Her body prepared itself for whatever he wanted to do. He ran his hands up to her shoulders and caressed the exposed skin above her breasts. She sensed he liked a challenge and pulled away slightly.

“Zach...,” she said softly. “We shouldn't—” He kissed the side of her neck.

“Shouldn't what?” he asked, biting her earlobe.

He had a boyish look to him, but she knew his sexual appetites leaned in the hard direction. He would be rough and she would be hurting soon, but she couldn't leave. She had been trained so that she could handle the rough stuff.

His hands slid down to her hips. She struggled and he held her tight against his chest, his cock hardening against her ass. He liked the chase and conquer, she decided. He would be turned on by defeating her struggles.

“Zach, please let me go,” she whispered. “Devin will—”

“Devin wanted me to have you,” he said in a low voice, bringing his hands up to cup her breasts. “He told me to follow you.”

She shook her head. “No, he wouldn't do that,” she whimpered. It was all an act, but he had to believe it. She knew exactly what she was doing and it was working. His desire for her was increasing by the second as she pulled away from him.

He forced her back against him. “Hey,” he whispered harshly as she tried to pull away. “Hey!”

She stopped moving.

“If you do as I say, I won't hurt you. But either way, I am going to fuck you. Here and now.”

She pulled against him again. He wanted her to continue struggling, so she did. He grasped her hands in his and pulled them up over her head. Her back arched and her breasts jutted out.

He unzipped her dress and reached in to grasp her breasts, pinching and pulling her nipple. She whimpered at the pain. It really did hurt, but she could handle it. It's what she'd been trained for.

He pushed her forward and moved her hands to hold them against the wall. He pulled her skirt up and caressed her ass.

“God, what a great ass.” He moved closer and whispered in her ear. “You like taking cock in the ass, Anna?”

There had only been a few times that she'd enjoyed anal, and they had all occurred within the last few weeks.

She shook her head. “Please don't. It hurts,” she begged. Thinking about the other men, Aaron included, made her heart ache. Having had someone care for her made this situation worse. She stopped acting and her pleas became real. “Please don't.”

He chuckled and moved her thong aside to caress her asshole. He pressed a finger through the tight band of muscle and she cried out,

struggling to get away. She didn't want to feel the pain. She wanted to be cared for. She wanted to be with Aaron, not here at this hotel.

“So tight, Anna. Doesn't your ass ever get a workout?” He pushed in another finger as he asked the question.

Tears started running down her cheeks. She hoped he would at least use some sort of lubrication. Even her pussy; she was wet.

“Please don't dry-fuck me,” she whimpered.

“Maybe I'll be nice this time. I wouldn't want you bleeding all over your pretty dress.” He pulled his fingers out and shoved several unceremoniously into her pussy.

“Thank you,” she sobbed, pressing her forehead to the wall.

She heard the sound of his zipper and a moment later her pussy was filled with his cock. He thrust in and out a few times then pulled out and moved to her ass, pressing in without any more preparation than he'd already given her.

He let go of her hands and grasped her hips as he plundered her tight hole. Her fingernails dug into the wall as he fucked her ass hard and painfully. Though she wanted to scream, she held her tongue, except for the occasional cry or sob that escaped her mouth. He didn't care if she came and she didn't exert the effort to do so.

His thrusts became sharper and he grunted as he approached his climax. Finally, he stiffened and groaned softly as he shot his load deep inside her ass. He pulled out when he was finished and let go of her hips.

Without his support, her legs collapsed under her and she slid down the wall to her knees, wincing as her ass hit her heels. Tears ran down her cheeks. She'd have to fix her makeup before she went back in.

Zach stood over her and zipped up his pants. “It's almost seven. Devin'll wonder where you are.” He smirked. “You live in the Sapphire,

right?”

She nodded warily.

“Apartment 2604?”

Her eyes widened when she heard her apartment number and nodded again.

“I may come visit you. I'm on the 35th floor.” He turned and walked away, leaving her alone in her misery.

The thought of being visited by him frightened her. What would he do to her if he wasn't in a public place?

Anna sat for a few more minutes and then dragged herself to her feet. She concentrated on not limping as she walked in her four-inch heels to the bathroom. After quickly cleaning herself up and fixing her makeup, she took several deep breaths to calm herself.

She forced a smile on her face and walked back into the reception area, looking around for Devin. He stood near the window on the opposite side of the room. She carefully guarded her facial expression and made her way to him, giving smiles to people when appropriate.

When she reached Devin, she approached him shyly, not sure of how he would receive her. She didn't know what, if anything, Zach had told him, though Zach was nowhere to be seen.

Devin gave her a warm smile and a kiss on the mouth when he saw her. He nuzzled her ear. “Zach looks well satiated, Anna. Good girl.”

She warmed at his praise and gave him a timid smile.

He studied her for a moment. “Are you all right?” he asked softly.

She hesitated. She had to tell the truth. She shook her head, but added, “I will be, though,” and gave him as bright a smile as she could manage.

“Thank you for being honest, Baby.” He kissed her again. “Let's get a drink and go in. It's almost time for the dinner to start and I need to be in

there to greet people.”

Devin took her arm, led her to the bar and ordered two drinks. When Devin handed her a glass of white wine, she frowned and shook her head.

“Devin, I'm not old enough,” she said softly.

Devin gave her a look and handed her the glass again. “It doesn't matter Anna,” he said in a voice she knew she should obey. “I want you to have it.”

“Yes, Devin,” she said softly and took a sip of wine, trying not to make a face at the strange taste.

He picked up his short glass of amber liquid and ice and put his arm around her to lead her away. “There are advantages to going out with me, Anna. One of which is you can drink. No one will question your age when you're with me. Eventually, you'll be well known enough that you'll be able to drink even if I'm not around.”

They walked into a huge room filled with dozens of large round tables. Many people were already in the room. Some were seated. Others stood around talking, drinks in hand. Devin greeted people as he passed them, always introducing Anna to them. Certain people he talked with for a bit longer.

Anna started studying the men's hands. Many of them wore sapphire rings on their pinky fingers and they looked at her knowingly.

She and Devin meandered to the table that they'd be sitting at for the evening, Table One. The man that Anna had seen when she'd had lunch with Devin sat there, and he stood to greet them. He was slender and slightly shorter than Devin, with stormy gray eyes and hair the color of milk chocolate, fashionably spiked with gel. She also recognized him as one of the men on the platform that Devin had her please at the first gathering. She hadn't looked at him very closely when she'd seen him at lunch.

“Anna, this is Trenton Needham,” Devin introduced after greeting the man. “Trenton, this is Anna.”

Trenton gave her a big smile. “It's a pleasure to formally meet you, Anna.” He leaned forward to kiss her cheek. “The girl with the amazing mouth,” he said softly, then straightened.

“It's nice to meet you, too, Mr. Needham,” she said with a shy smile. Anna looked at his hand and saw he wore an emerald ring.

“Call me Trenton, please, Anna. Mr. Needham makes me feel old.” He laughed and Anna giggled. She guessed he was about Devin's age, around forty.

“Trenton,” she repeated softly, gazing up at him.

Devin put his hand around Anna's waist and nuzzled her hair. “You're doing very well, Anna. Keep charming the men. Don't let the women intimidate you. Pity them. You are the one their husbands will be thinking about as they're in bed tonight.”

For some reason, the thought of men thinking about her tonight made her wet. Her cheeks flushed and Devin chuckled.

“You like that thought, don't you, Baby? Men fucking their wives, thinking about your pert little tits and sweet pussy,” he whispered in her ear. “I'm the luckiest man in here, because I won't have to be imagining it.” He kissed the top of her ear and she shivered in anticipation of going home with Devin.

“Hello, Devin,” a woman standing next to Trenton said pleasantly. She was short and thin, with slanted dark brown eyes and black hair put up in an elegant bun. Her pale green satin sheath dress had an Asian feel to it.

Devin smiled at the woman and leaned in to kiss her cheek in greeting. “Hello, Maki. How are you tonight?” he asked pleasantly.

Maki glanced at Anna then back at Devin. "I'm well, Devin. How are you doing?" She gave him a bright smile.

Anna felt something pass between them and a surge of jealousy welled up in her heart.

"I'm excellent, Maki." He turned to Anna. "Anna, this is Maki, Trenton's wife. Maki, this is Anna."

Maki inclined her head to Anna. "Hello, Anna," she said in a musical voice.

Anna smiled at her. "Hello, Maki."

Maki looked back at Devin with a knowing look and nodded. "Perhaps the four of us can go out for dinner sometime soon, Devin."

"That would be delightful, Maki," Devin said.

Trenton grinned. "I agree. You could join us for drinks after the banquet."

Anna had a feeling she was missing something in the conversation, but couldn't figure out what it was.

Devin sighed. "That sounds wonderful, but Anna and I have plans for later tonight." He squeezed her waist. "I'm afraid I need to go get the dinner started." He kissed Anna on the cheek and then looked at the other couple. "Will you keep Anna company while I'm up there?"

Both Trenton and Maki nodded and Devin turned and walked away. Anna looked at them shyly and they smiled at her warmly. Trenton held out a chair for Anna to sit, did the same for his wife, and then sat between the two of them.

Several other couples had seated themselves around the table and Trenton introduced Anna to them as Devin's date. They were other executives from Devin's bank. She didn't see any other pinky rings.

The rest of the room filled up over the next few minutes. Shortly after that, Devin appeared on a platform in the front of the room.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen...” He went on to talk about what the banquet was about and the course of events for the evening. He spoke eloquently and in a commanding tone, easily catching the attention of everyone in the room. Devin was nothing if not charismatic. “Enjoy your dinner and we'll begin the awards ceremony afterwards.”

Devin walked off the platform and returned to the table, sitting next to Anna and kissing her temple. He greeted those around the table, making sure that Anna had been introduced.

Dinner was served and the people around her conversed about business topics. Anna didn't have much to contribute, never having worked or even been inside a bank, save when she met Devin for lunch. A few of the women asked questions, discretely trying to figure out who and what Anna was. Devin named her profession as a ballet dancer. Anna blushed at his pronouncement.

Anna sipped on her wine as people talked around her. Devin was charming and engaging, and amazing to watch. He knew exactly what to say at any moment and seemed to be able to manipulate people into believing the way he did.

At one point, Trenton put his hand on her left leg and caressed the inside of her knee. She glanced discretely at him and he wasn't watching her, but Maki was. Maki looked down at her husband's hand and smiled at Anna, then turned back to her conversation with the woman next to her.

What was that about? Why would Maki smile at Anna that way? Anna was confused. Jack had made her think that all wives would hate her and be upset if they saw their husbands showing an interest in her.

Devin placed his hand on Anna's other leg and caressed her inner thigh. Having two different men's hands on her excited her. She had trouble concentrating on anything but their hot, heavy hands. She took another sip of wine and Devin's hand moved up and under her dress. He pulled at her leg, spreading her thighs apart and moved up to brush his little finger against her pussy.

She gasped softly and Devin pinched her thigh. She looked up at him and he leaned over.

“Do not react to anything Trenton or I do to you,” he growled softly. “Scoot your chair forward.” She did as he said, her entire thigh now hidden under the long tablecloth.

“Yes, Devin,” she whispered.

He pulled at her leg again and she opened her thighs. Both men moved their hands up, while their upper bodies remained still. Their fingers met at her pussy and both caressed her wet folds. Her thong was soaking and Trenton tugged at it and moved it aside. Devin thrust a finger inside her and she did everything she could to not react. It went against all her training to just sit there and let a man touch her without reacting.

They each took a lip and pulled her open. Her breathing caught in her throat and she quickly took another sip of wine. Devin pinched her outer pussy lip in reaction to her ragged breathing. She swallowed a cry. Trenton's finger slipped inside her then brushed her clit. Anna tried to think about anything that wasn't her body.

Devin's hand disappeared for a moment, then returned and pushed something inside her slit that wasn't large, but began to sting after a minute. Both hands disappeared a moment later as dessert was served.

Anna blinked several times, trying to keep the tears at bay. She shifted in her seat slightly as the stinging increased.

“Devin...?” she said in a halting whisper.

“Shh, Baby. It's not going to do any damage. It's just a tampon soaked in cinnamon oil.” He kissed her cheek. “I know you can handle it.” He smiled at her and pushed his seat back. “I need to go start the awards ceremony. When all the awards are done, excuse yourself and go to the restroom and take it out. Then wait for me there.” He stood, nodded to the table, and walked back to the platform and began speaking.

The ceremony seemed to take an eternity and the pain increased as time passed. She plastered a smile on her face and tried to pay attention to what the people on the platform were saying. Anything to get her mind off her burning pussy.

When Devin finally gave his closing remarks and everyone had applauded and the lights came back up, Anna stood as quickly as she could and excused herself to go to the restroom. As soon as she was out of sight of the room and other people, she ran.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Devin took Anna into the same room that Zach had taken her.

“You were very good during the ceremony. I could hardly tell you were in pain and you didn't cause a scene.”

Anna looked at the corner where Zach had raped her with wary eyes.

“Thank you, Devin. I tried.”

“Did Zach bring you in here?”

She nodded, but Devin didn't say anything else. He led her across the room to where a glass door led to a darkened balcony. He opened the door and they stepped out to a breathtaking view.

“Oh, Devin. It's beautiful,” she said, enraptured with the sight of the city.

Devin stood behind her and kissed her neck. “You're more beautiful,” he whispered softly.

She turned around to look at him and smiled. He kissed her passionately, pulling her dress up above her hips. The cool air against her wet panties made her shiver.

“Spread your legs apart,” he whispered and she did so.

She shivered even more as her whole pussy was exposed to the cold air.

Devin unzipped her dress enough to bring the straps down her shoulders, then lowered the bra cups and exposed her breasts. Her nipples instantly tightened, from the cool air and Devin's gaze.

“You're such a good girl, not fighting me on this, Baby.” He pulled at her thong and ripped it off her, tossing it aside. His fingers probed her pussy opening the lips. More cold air made her shiver, but it excited her as well.

She grasped the railing behind her as Devin knelt down and began licking at her pussy.

“Mmm. Cinnamon flavored pussy,” he mumbled. His tongue delved inside her and she tried not to react. “It's okay, Baby. You can react now, just keep it quiet.” He resumed his tongue movements, licking, sucking and tugging on her piercings.

She leaned her head back and moaned. His tongue was amazing!

He pushed one of her legs up so her thigh was resting on the railing and ate at her pussy hard. She moaned and clung to the railing, enjoying his mouth on her.

“So wet, Baby. Sweet, spicy and wet,” he mumbled, coming up from below and pushing her up and back.

“Devin...Devin, I'm scared,” she whimpered, knuckles now white on the railing. They were on the thirty-second floor and she was only half-Immortal. She didn't know if she could die, but she didn't want to test it right now.

“Nothing to be scared of, Baby,” Devin said, standing and unzipping his pants. “But I do want you to know that your body is mine to do with as I see fit.”

Her juices were dripping down her leg as he approached with his hardened, pierced cock. He put his hand on her hip and pressed forward, making her moan. She moved her hands to cling to his upper arms and he shook his head.

“Don't hold on to me,” he commanded. Anna's eyes widened and she put her hands back on the railing. “Don't hold onto the railing either,” he

said.

Anna whimpered as he thrust into her hard, the metal railing flexing as he did. She didn't know what to do with her hands and looked pleadingly at Devin.

“Let them hang behind the railing,” he said, thrusting into her again.

Frightened, she did as he told her. He only held onto her with one hand, and if her supporting leg slipped, she'd fall backwards. He thrust hard and she felt her foot slip slightly. She cried out and unconsciously reached for Devin's arms.

“I said, don't hold on to me,” he growled, pushing her hands away.

She trembled, adrenaline and fear coursing through her body. He grasped her other hip and thrust forward several times, making the railing shake, and then curled his arm around the thigh that rested on the railing. He stopped thrusting and Anna relaxed, thinking he was going to move her somewhere safer.

Devin grinned wickedly. “Bring your other leg up so you're sitting on the railing, Baby.”

Anna's heart pounded. She'd fall!

Devin frowned at her hesitation and smacked her hip. “Do it,” he growled. He had hold of both her hips; the only thing keeping her from falling.

Shaking uncontrollably, she lifted her other leg off the ground and Devin grasped it tightly. He brought her hips closer to him and he held onto her thighs. Her strong abdominal muscles were the only thing keeping her upright.

“Lean back, Anna.” Devin said in a soft, but demanding, voice. “Lean back or I will let go.”

Terror filled her as she slowly leaned back, her body hanging upside down off the railing of the thirty-second floor of the hotel. She started to wrap her legs around Devin. “Don't,” he growled.

She couldn't stop the tears of fear from flowing down her forehead and into her hair. Her hands clenched into fists and she whimpered loudly.

Devin began moving again, thrusting hard into her. He held her hips tightly and she clung to the only part of him she could, his cock.

“Oh, yeah, Baby. You're so tight when you're terrorized. You feel so good.”

He continued fucking her hard. Every thrust made Anna feel like she was going to fall. His steady rhythm was the only soothing part of her position. She at least knew when he was going to move. She squeezed her eyes shut and told herself she was just hanging off her bed, but the echoes of the traffic below made it difficult to believe.

Harder and harder he fucked her until he grunted and came inside her. She was clinging to him so tightly she could feel every twitch and throb of his cock.

Would he drop her now? She felt lightheaded from being upside down for so long.

He leaned over and pulled her up and back onto the balcony. Her legs collapsed under her and she fell onto the ground.

He knelt in front of her. “You are such a good girl, Baby, you know that?”

Anna looked up at him, surprised. “I am?” she whispered.

Devin stroked her cheek, his hand hot against her cold skin. “Yes, Baby. You are. You did exactly as I told you tonight.”

She couldn't stop shaking. “You weren't punishing me?” she whimpered.

“No, Baby. I wanted to see how much you trust me.” He smoothed her hair. “You're such a good girl,” he whispered, pulling her into his arms and sat down on the bench along the side of the balcony. He held her and whispered soothing words to her, telling her how much she pleased him.

Anna's terror slowly went away and she was able to stop trembling. She clung to Devin as he held her, praying that he'd never do that again. It might not have been punishment, but it had been one of the most terrifying things she'd ever experienced.

Once she fully relaxed, Devin helped her fix her dress and make sure she was presentable. They went back to where a good number of people were still mingling. Devin got her another glass of wine to help calm her and he talked with several people while she drank it. She began to understand why people drank. It really did relax her and help her feel better.

After she finished her wine, Devin made his rounds to say good-bye and they headed to the elevators. As they moved downward, Anna's stomach lurched and she grabbed onto Devin for fear of falling. This wasn't good. She had to ride an elevator to get up to her apartment.

Devin put his arm around Anna and hugged her close. “Shall I show you my home, Baby?”

Anna smiled up at him. She'd get to spend the whole night with him. “I'd like that.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Devin relaxed in the back of the town car with Anna leaning against his chest. He couldn't wait to get her home and start tormenting his wife.

The night had gone well and Devin was pleased. Anna had done as he wanted her to. It pleased him especially that she hadn't had a panic attack or a meltdown at any point. Her training had been planned exactly for nights like this. Hanging her over the balcony had been incredibly erotic, and an excellent final test for her. Tonight had removed any doubts he had from the botched ritual regarding her ability to be at his side as his plans progressed.

Zach was taken with her. Devin had watched him watching her throughout the night. Zach would be in political office soon, and even had the potential to be president one day. He would be State senator within a few years. Devin just needed to keep him under control.

Underneath Zach's 'All-American' appearance was an ambitious young man that would do anything to get where he wanted to go. He had a cruel streak in him, as demonstrated by his willingness to rape Anna in the middle of a public gathering. Anna had played along superbly. Devin knew that being taken against her will was normal for Anna; it wouldn't bother her for long.

Her face had been a bit pale when she returned from being with him, but she had kept her composure. When he'd been devouring her delicious pussy he'd noticed her asshole was red and open. Zach must have fucked her good. That would explain her paleness. She never enjoyed anal, but,

then again, she wasn't supposed to. Her ass was purely for the man's pleasure and her torment. He'd given Zach her apartment number and told him that he could visit her anytime. He was sure that Zach would keep her body busy and her ass sore.

An interesting development had been Maki's interest in Anna. Devin and his wife socialized with Trenton and Maki on a regular basis. They'd go out for drinks or dinner, then go back to one of their houses, take some ecstasy and indulge in their carnal desires. One of the women would be forced to play the pet for the evening, sitting at their feet and doing whatever the others wanted. Of course, he couldn't have Maki play pet when Anna was there, unless she wanted to, which would be unlikely. Maki didn't like being the pet. The thought of watching Anna lick Maki's tiny little pussy got him hard again. Yes, they'd have to have dinner soon.

Devin stroked Anna's soft hair and exhaled slowly. There were things Devin needed to deal with soon. Alex being the main one. He just had to figure out how to get him subdued. Devin would not let Alex get away with telling Anna the truth about her heritage. Fortunately, Devin had been able to change her thinking about it, but Alex still needed to be taught a lesson. Devin didn't care that he was an Elder-Son.

He also anticipated many inquiries about Anna. He would use these to his advantage, using her to get what he wanted and needed. It would be interesting to find out how much impact Anna had made on the men tonight. If he was right, the men would be willing to do almost anything for a taste of her.

Devin smiled to himself. Things were going as planned. Alex's interference hadn't ruined anything yet. But Devin would have to keep his eyes open.

The town car pulled up in front of his three-story Italian-style mansion. It was one of the nicest homes in the city and he was very proud of it. He had a beautiful wife and three beautiful children. His girls, Chloe and Celeste, were popular in school and his son, Tyler, would be starting Harvard in the fall. Yes, his life had the appearance of perfection, which is just as it needed to be.

His wife getting pregnant by her fucking lover was not perfect, and she would be punished. Starting tonight.

I love you, she said. I'm sorry, she said. Please don't take the baby, she begged.

Devin had decided to wait until he found out if it was a boy or girl before he made a decision as to what to do with it. If it was a boy, Sandy was going to have a miscarriage. If it was a girl, Sandy would be on bed rest and “lose the baby” after her birth, when he would take her to the Manor and raise it as a sex slave. To the public, she would have had a difficult labor and the baby was stillborn, but Sandy was thankfully alive! Or some bullshit like that.

Either way, Sandy was not going to raise some other man's child in his house. That was unacceptable. Maybe he'd sterilize her after the baby's fate was decided. Then he wouldn't have to worry about it anymore.

The car door opened and he and Anna stepped out into the cool evening. They walked up to the decorative wrought iron and glass front door, which opened as he approached, revealing his housekeeper, Julie.

Julie had been a slave in the Manor and had been a favorite of Devin's. When she had gotten too old to serve his brothers, he offered her a chance to keep her life and become his housekeeper. She jumped at the opportunity and had worked here for the last five years. She was still pretty and still a

good fuck, a skill both he and his son took advantage of. She was petite and blonde, with large breasts. She was also an excellent housekeeper and cook.

Julie greeted Devin and Anna politely. He'd told her he was bringing Anna home with him tonight.

“Is Sandy awake?” Devin asked.

She nodded. “Yes, sir. Would you like me to let her know you are home?”

Devin thought about it. He wanted to surprise Sandy. She didn't know Anna was coming. “Let her know I'm home, but don't tell her Anna is here.”

Julie curtsied and walked away.

Anna turned around slowly in the large marble and carved wood formal entryway. Her eyes were bright, which made her look especially pretty. He walked up to her and kissed her passionately.

“Shall we go up to my room?” he murmured.

She smiled at him and nodded.

He led her up two elaborate staircases to the third floor where his and Sandy's rooms were. His daughters' rooms were also on this floor and he hoped they wouldn't come out. He didn't want to explain Anna to them. Tyler, yes; he would meet Anna soon. But he preferred to keep his daughters innocent of the things he did.

He led Anna into his room. The master suite consisted of two bedrooms and en-suite bathrooms. He and Sandy had stopped sleeping in the same bed shortly after their youngest daughter was old enough to have her own room.

His current room had originally been the nursery, but when he got tired of Sandy's nagging, he'd had it redecorated and moved in. He liked having his own space. He went into Sandy's room occasionally when he wanted to

fuck her, which was not often. She was compliant and did whatever he wanted her to. He loved humiliating her. She played pet very well when they were with Trenton and Maki. At least Sandy could be happy she wouldn't have to perform that role anymore.

He left the bedroom door open and kissed Anna, pushing her back to his bed. He expected Sandy to come in any moment. She'd been very attentive since she'd told him she was pregnant. He was counting on her continuing the same tonight.

He unzipped Anna's dress and it fell to the ground, leaving her standing beautifully in her bra, garter belt and stockings. Her pussy was still pink and swollen.

He caressed her ass. "Your ass looked pretty tender when I was eating you, Baby. Did Zach fuck you there?"

She nodded. "But he seemed to enjoy it," she said quietly.

She tensed as his fingers drew close to the tender hole.

"Let me see it, Baby," he whispered. "Get up on the bed on your hands and knees."

She obeyed him, facing away from him, legs apart and back arched so he could see her pussy and ass. As he'd thought, her ass was gaping and red around the ring. Her pussy glistened, wet and pink and beautiful. Her inner thighs were damp as well.

He heard a soft exclamation behind him and smiled. Sandy. He left Anna as she was and turned to his wife. She was still attractive and, despite the slight bulge of her lower belly, had a nice figure. Her brown hair had been styled and highlighted as fashion dictated. She wore name brand yoga pants and a white chemise which showed off her pregnancy-swollen breasts. Right now, her hazel eyes were wide and staring past Devin to Anna on his bed.

“D-did you have a good time tonight, Devin?” she asked softly, tearing her eyes away from Anna and looking at him, hurt evident in her eyes.

He smiled. “I did. The evening went very well.”

Sandy looked back at his bed. He could tell she wanted to ask who it was, but was too nervous. Devin loosened his tie and removed his jacket, placing both on the back of a nearby chair. He enjoyed the bewildered look on Sandy's face as she stared at Anna's wet pussy and gaping ass.

“Baby, relax and turn around,” he said to Anna, who did as instructed.

Anna leaned on her hip, her perfect breasts filling her blue lace bra. Her pussy was perfectly framed by her stockings and garter belt. Her green eyes widened as she recognized Sandy. They'd met many times when she was a child. Anna had even called her Aunt Sandy. He could see her internal struggle of wanting to cover herself and being afraid of displeasing him. It pleased him to see that her fear of displeasing him won and she stayed still.

Sandy looked at Anna, not recognizing her at first, but when it came, her jaw dropped and she clasped her hand over her mouth. She looked in horror at Devin. “Devin, is that...that's Anna!”

Devin walked over to Anna. “Yes, it is.”

He glided his fingers across the top of Anna's breasts, making Anna sigh.

“I can't believe you, Devin. She's Anya's daughter! You've known her since she was a baby!” Sandy exclaimed, clearly disgusted with him. She looked at Anna. “Anna, sweetie, you don't have to do anything you don't....”

“Yes, she does, Sandy. She belongs to me.” He pointed to Anna's necklace and Sandy became even more disgusted.

“How can you—”

“Please, Sandy. Don't be so naïve about me. You know what I do.”

“But those girls are born there—”

“Anna's been mine since she was born,” he sneered. “I had my mouth on her pussy when she was three days old.”

Sandy's face went green and her hand returned to her mouth.

“Go throw up and come back when you're done.”

Sandy ran out of the room, clutching her stomach.

Devin looked at Anna, who was looking at the door with fear in her eyes. She looked up at him with questioning eyes, but didn't say anything. He leaned down and sucked on Anna's neck and caressed her breast. She moaned softly at his touch. So responsive.

“Take your bra off, Baby,” he said, pulling away and unbuttoning his shirt.

She reached behind her and did as he asked.

“Everything else. I want you naked in my bed.” He grinned at her. “I've imagined this so many times.”

He watched as she stood and kicked her shoes off, then removed her stockings and garter belt and looked at him.

“Lie down on your back and open your legs so I can see you,” he said softly.

She did as she was told, tenting her knees and spreading her feet wide apart.

He undressed as he gazed upon her perfect pussy. The rings were attractive and added to her perfection. He tried to ignore the fact that two of those rings marked her as Alex Fucking Kunze's slave as well.

When he finished undressing, he walked around the side of the bed and lay down next to her, kissing her and caressing her body. He was waiting for Sandy to return so he could fuck Anna in front of her and then have Sandy lick his cum out of Anna's sweet pussy. Sandy didn't like eating

pussy and Devin loved making her do it. She didn't like sucking his cock either and he made her do that too.

Devin was kissing and caressing Anna's breasts when Sandy returned. She gasped and tried to back out of the room.

“I didn't say you could leave, Sandy,” he said in a low voice without looking at her. “Come in and close the door behind you”

Sandy knew better than to disobey her husband. Usually. Though Devin really didn't think that she would have gotten pregnant on purpose. She wasn't that stupid.

He pulled Anna up onto her hands and knees again. “Have a seat, Sandy,” he said, motioning to the bottom of the bed.

Sandy was pale and shaky, but did as Devin told her. When she had settled on the very edge of the bed, he sat up on his knees and put his cock to Anna's lips. Anna opened her mouth and began sucking on him. Reluctantly at first, because of the audience, but he tweaked her nipple and she became more enthusiastic.

“You really pissed me off, Sandy, by getting knocked up by Marshall,” he said as he held Anna's head.

Sandy's eyes were wide as she watched Anna take him all the way down her throat.

He moaned and closed his eyes as she swallowed him. “Oh, yeah, Baby. Good girl.”

He grasped fistfuls of Anna's hair and fucked her mouth. The sounds of Anna slurping on his cock filled the room.

His cock throbbed in her mouth. She was very good about keeping her teeth away from his piercings. He held her hair and pulled his cock out. She whimpered and Devin smiled. Sandy's face was still pale.

He pulled Anna up onto her knees and pulled her back against him, his chest against her back, so they were both facing his wife. He caressed Anna's breasts and brought his hand down to circle her clit before delving his finger inside Anna, who moaned softly.

He pulled his finger out a moment later and held it out to Sandy. "Open," he commanded.

Sandy shook her head and tried to back away. "Devin, we've known her since she was a baby. How can you do this to her?"

"How can I do this to her?" he asked with a laugh. "How can my cock throb in desire for her tight little pussy? How can I desire to be with the most beautiful woman in the city?" He laughed again. "It has nothing to do with how long I've known her. I've had this in mind her whole life." He leaned towards Anna's ear. "Baby, grab my cock and put it inside you."

Anna obeyed, reaching down between her legs and positioning him at her hot entrance. He thrust upward and they both moaned as he filled her to the hilt.

"Sit, Sandy," he barked as his wife tried to scoot away. "Watch my cock thrust in and out of her."

He held Anna back against him and thrust up into her. One hand caressed her breast and he played with her clit with his other.

Anna quickly began to moan, her muscles clenching against his cock. She was ready to come. He wanted her to come multiple times in front of Sandy.

"Come for me, Baby," he whispered against her ear, keeping his eyes on his wife.

Sandy's jaw dropped as Anna came on demand, moaning and crying out as he worked her clit. His fingers dripped with Anna's juices. "Come

again, Baby,” he said in a louder voice and Anna's muscles clenched around him, making it a challenge to keep fucking her, but an enjoyable challenge.

He loved how she tightened around him when she came. She cried out again as she came a third time. He let her upper body drop gently to the bed as he clutched her hips and pounded her. The sound of flesh and wetness was loud in his ears.

“Again, Anna,” he groaned and she grasped the bedcovers and cried out again. She didn't fake orgasms. She didn't have to and he would know if she was. They were all real.

He kept his eyes on his wife, whose nipples had hardened under her camisole; she was getting turned on watching him fuck Anna. He grinned and commanded another orgasm out of Anna.

Anna writhed on the bed in front of him. He pounded into her pussy and she began another orgasm on her own. Her back arched and she clawed at the sheets. She came over and over again, never coming completely down before another orgasm started.

Without pulling out of her, he turned her over onto her back and pressed her knees to her chest, angling his cock so the piercings hit her g-spot. Her eyes closed and the veins bulged in her neck as the orgasmic waves became more powerful. He knew eventually she would start hurting, but she'd been so good tonight, she deserved the continuous orgasms he was eliciting.

He hooked her ankles over his shoulders and held onto her thighs and slammed himself into her hard. He could feel himself close to coming. Anna's head was thrashing from side to side as the orgasms slammed through her body, one after another. She was close to overload and he didn't want Sandy to see that.

Devin's gaze locked on Sandy's for a moment before his climax shot through his body. He leaned back and was careful to cry out Anna's name as his balls clenched and felt every ounce of his cum shoot out of his balls. He thrust gently a few times as he watched Anna convulsing beneath him before leaning down to kiss her mouth.

Anna gave one last shudder and then became still. Devin lay on his side next to Anna and her legs splayed open, displaying a deep red pussy dripping with their combined juices.

He trailed his fingers over Anna, dipping them into her pussy, and then held up his finger towards Sandy. "Taste us together," he said. He hoped Sandy would refuse, and she did, backing away until he grabbed her wrist. "I'm not asking you, Sandy," he said behind clenched teeth. "I'm telling you." He held his wet fingers up to her mouth again and she turned away.

He grinned wickedly and grabbed a fistful of her hair. "Fine," he said. "I'll make you do it, and you won't like it. But I will enjoy every moment." He stood, still grasping his wife's hair and picked her up, depositing her between Anna's splayed thighs. He pushed her head down towards the glistening pussy. "Eat," he commanded.

Sandy resisted, pushing back against his hand, but he was much stronger than her and he pushed her face down into the wet flesh. Anna jumped slightly at the touch, but otherwise didn't move. He didn't know if she was conscious, but it didn't matter. What mattered, and what he wanted to see, was his wife licking his cum out of his mistress's pussy.

He leaned towards Sandy's ear. "I can suffocate you in her if you'd like." She shook her head. "Then stop resisting me." She stopped pushing away and he relaxed her hold on her head. "Eat," he repeated.

"Devin, please. She's a child." Sandy begged, but didn't move her head away from Anna.

“She's twenty-years-old and my sex slave and Mistress.” Sandy shuddered at his words. “Lick my cum out of her, then you can leave.”

Devin smiled in satisfaction as he saw his wife's tongue dart out and begin licking Anna's pussy. He was pleasantly surprised when, after a few minutes, Sandy became enthusiastic about it, licking and sucking as if she were enjoying herself.

Anna moaned softly when Sandy's tongue flicked her clit. Sandy's gaze moved up to Anna's face and she repeated the motion, making Anna moan again. She did it a third time, and when Anna moaned again, she took her clit into her mouth and began sucking on it, causing a deep moan to erupt in Anna's chest.

Devin watched with interest as his wife, who had been so adamantly against Anna even being here, sucked on Anna's clit trying to make her come again. There had been some mention in the tome about some addictive qualities to a half-Immortal's juices. Some men had been known to be willing to do anything for the privilege of licking their pussies. Apparently it worked on women as well. He'd never seen Sandy enthusiastically lick a woman's cunt before, and he'd seen her mouth on quite a few women of his choosing.

This was a very pleasant surprise. Anna began squirming and soon stiffened and cried out as she came under Sandy's ministrations. Sandy's eyes sparkled at Anna's reaction and devoured her even more enthusiastically, making her come two more times before Devin recognized the pained look in Anna's eyes as she stared up at the ceiling.

“That's enough, Sandy,” he said, gently pulling her away from Anna.

“But...,” Sandy protested.

“She's had enough tonight,” he said softly, looking into Sandy's eyes. They were dilated and slightly out of focus. Interesting. “I'll let you do it

again sometime, if you're good.” Devin smiled in amusement. He'd let his wife lick Anna's pussy anytime she wanted to. “But she needs to sleep.”

Sandy looked disappointed, but allowed Devin to help her off the bed.

“Good night, Sandy,” he said, gently pushing her away.

She looked longingly at Anna, who stared up at the ceiling, then Sandy turned and left the room.

He pulled the covers down and placed Anna on the bottom sheet. She'd fallen asleep and her body was limp. He turned out the lights, then crawled into bed next to her, pulling her close.

Devin realized he could afford to be less harsh with Anna. She was well disciplined, but if he continued to play harsh with her, he'd probably break her. He didn't want that. He'd be kind and gentle and let the natural roughness of life keep her polished and humble. She'd naturally run to him when life hurt too much.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

“Anna.” A soft voice called to her. “Anna, Baby. It's time to wake up.”

Anna's eyes slowly opened to the morning sunlight streaming through the windows. The clock next to the bed indicated it was just before seven o'clock. She blinked a few times and then turned to the voice that had wakened her. Devin. He was looking at her with soft eyes and a gentle smile.

She smiled at him. “Good morning,” she said softly.

He cupped her cheek and kissed her. “Good morning, Baby. How did you sleep?”

Anna thought for a minute. She felt well rested and the bed she lay in was very comfortable. “Good, I think.”

Devin chuckled. “Did you enjoy yourself last night?” he asked, resting his head on his fist and trailing his fingers across her breasts and nipples.

Anna felt very satiated sexually. She remembered the countless orgasms he'd given her last night. She'd pleased him and he was happy. At least she thought she had.

“I pleased you?” she asked, wanting to be sure.

“Oh, yes, Baby. More than I'd hoped.” Devin gave her a big smile and nuzzled her breasts before taking her nipple into his mouth.

She moaned softly as he sucked and played with her ring. Oh, what he did to her body! She reached out for his cock and stroked him with her fist.

He moaned and flexed his hips, then rolled on top of her, pressing the head of his cock against her slit.

As he pressed forward, she hissed. She was tender from last night, but did her best to mask her pain.

“Does that hurt, Baby?” he asked, pushing in more.

“A little,” she admitted in a halting voice. She didn't want to upset him.

“Anna, don't hide your pain from me,” he whispered. “Give it to me.” He pushed in even deeper.

She pressed her head back into the pillow and cried out as her tender lips were pushed apart. He went slowly and kissed her. She moaned into his mouth, somehow giving him her pain. He moved in ways that made it almost too much to bear, but somehow she enjoyed the pain. She saw the look in his eyes when she cried out. He hungered for it. He devoured her pain and it pleased him.

He thrust in hard and pulled out slow. Over and over again, pulling the pain out of her and feeding it to himself. The eroticism of the give and take was palpable and Anna felt herself becoming part of Devin. She felt his craving for her and felt her pain turn into his enjoyment. A continuous cycle of pain turning into pleasure circled between the two of them. Faster and faster it spun until they both let out primal screams and climaxed together.

Anna breathed heavily. Devin panted above her, resting his weight on his elbows. She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed his chin. He looked down at her and kissed her mouth.

“Such a good girl,” he whispered, nuzzling her neck.

Anna beamed. Him calling her a good girl was the best thing he could say to her. She never wanted to make him call her a bad girl. She wanted to be good for him.

He pulled out of her and she winced slightly. "I'm really looking forward to our trip in August, Anna. Then we'll be able to spend all our time together."

Anna loved that thought. "When do we go?" she asked excitedly.

"I believe middle of August, but I don't know right at the moment. I'll make sure it's on your calendar."

"Okay." She smiled.

"But now, we need to get up and moving. I have things to do this morning before I go into the office." He frowned but didn't say more.

Anna sat up and looked around at his elegantly masculine room.

"Your bag is over there," he said, motioning to a dresser between two French doors that led to a balcony. Her bag sat on top. "I'm going to get dressed and then I'll take you home." He kissed her, then stood and walked through a door to his bathroom.

Anna got out of bed, wincing slightly, and slowly dressed in the jeans and T-shirt she'd brought. She brushed her hair and made sure her makeup wasn't all over her face. She was putting on her shoes when Devin came back into the room dressed in dark jeans and a black polo shirt.

She looked at him, surprised to see him dressed so casually, but he had said something about doing things before going into the office.

"Ready?" he asked.

She nodded and followed him out of the room and down the stairs to the bottom floor. This wasn't the floor they'd entered on last night. This floor looked like a family room, with a large TV, wet bar and table and chairs. A guy about her age lay on the leather couch playing some sort of video game. He looked up when they came down the stairs.

He looked like Devin, with dark brown hair, but had Sandy's hazel eyes. He was very good looking, though a bit unkempt, as if he'd been up

all night.

“I didn't expect you to be up so early, Tyler,” Devin said.

“I haven't gone to bed yet,” Tyler said, looking Anna up and down and smiling appreciatively. “I got caught up in the game.”

Devin shook his head and rolled his eyes.

“Dad, it's summer break. Give me a chance to relax for a bit before I start college.”

Devin sighed. “Eighteen months touring Europe wasn't relaxing enough?”

Tyler laughed. “Did you relax when you went, Dad?”

A smile tugged at Devin's face, but he didn't say anything.

Tyler grinned at Anna. “Who's this? New housekeeper?”

“Tyler, please. This is Anna. Anna, this is my son, Tyler.”

“This is Anna?” Tyler's smile grew wider and he looked her up and down again. “I don't remember her being so...grown up.”

Anna had a vague memory of a younger version of him. She smiled politely. “Hello,” she said softly and moved closer to Devin, who held her hand.

“She's twenty now, Tyler. Not twelve.”

Tyler grinned at her. “I can see that.” His grin wasn't unkind, but she could tell he was attracted to her. “Hi,” he said, looking her over again.

“If you'd have slept I would have let you take her home for me.”

Tyler's eyes lit up and Anna looked up anxiously at Devin. He wouldn't....

“I'm not that tired, Dad. I didn't get up 'til yesterday afternoon. I can get her home safely.”

Devin frowned. “She is very precious to me, Tyler. I don't want to see her hurt.”

“I’m a good driver dad, and I did fall asleep for a couple of hours, just down here instead of in bed.”

Devin was quiet for a moment and Anna's anxiety increased. He wouldn't give her away to his son, would he?

“It would help me out. I need to go out to the Manor this morning.” Devin looked at his son then at Anna. “All right, you can take her home. Go change your clothes.”

Tyler raced up the stairs and Anna looked fearfully at Devin.

“He won't hurt you, Anna. He's not that sophisticated in bed yet.” Devin chuckled. “Just let him fuck you and then he'll leave. He won't expect anything fancy.”

Anna hid her hurt as best as she could. Devin owned her; she had to do as he wanted her to. She watched him walk over to the corner and make a phone call. She sat on a nearby chair and waited for Tyler.

“We need to talk...yes...no, today. All right, fine, tomorrow...yes, I understand you told Anna some things about her past without consulting with me first.” Devin glanced at Anna and saw her watching him. He gave her a smile and continued talking.

He had to be talking to Alex.

“...that wasn't your call!” he shouted, making Anna jump. “I don't care...the Manor, tomorrow morning...say, ten or so...yes, see you then.”

Devin ended the call and walked towards Anna.

“I-I'm sorry, Devin. I should have considered that it was his point of view that he was sharing,” she said, putting her hand on his arm. “I'll keep it in mind if he tells me those sorts of things again.”

“Good girl,” Devin said affectionately. “You're learning quickly. If you hear anything like that from anybody, come talk to me before you jump to

any conclusions.” He stroked her hair back from her forehead. “You know I want what's best for you, don't you?”

Anna nodded, her heart warming to him. “Yes, Devin. I do. I wish you were taking me home, though.”

Devin smiled. “I know and I'm sorry. But I do need to get out to the Manor, and if I took you home, I might be tempted to stay again.” He kissed her, wrapping his arms around to cup her ass. “I'll see you tomorrow night, though. Gathering,” he said when she gave him a confused look.

“Oh, yeah.” Her face flushed.

“It's informal tomorrow. No painful rituals or anything. Just the Brothers and guests.” He stroked her cheek. “I will enjoy showing you off and watching you make my Brothers happy. You'll be able to get to know them better now.”

She wasn't afraid of the Gatherings now and she was excited for Devin to show her off. “I'll behave myself so you don't have to punish me, Devin. I promise.”

“I know, Baby.” He kissed her again.

Tyler stomped down the stairs having changed his clothes and brushed his hair. The three of them walked out to the garage where Tyler took Anna's bag, walked to Devin's red sports car and put it in the trunk.

Devin kissed her goodbye, telling her to treat Tyler well, and got into a black SUV.

Alex groaned as he lay on his stomach in his bedroom in San Francisco. Fuck, his back hurt.

When Devin had called, the first thought that came to mind was that Devin had found out about him taking the girls. But, no, Devin was just pissed because Alex had told Anna the truth.

Well, she had the right to know the truth, even though Devin didn't think so. And now, Devin wanted Alex to go out to the Manor and 'talk'? Right, there was nothing to talk about.

The punishment for taking the girls had been harsh. But it had to be. Alex had a high pain tolerance and a few lashes with a whip wouldn't do much to him. But twenty lashes with a cat? Fuck, yeah. His back stung like nobody's business.

Vati had tried to urge him to stay in Frankfurt until he was healed, but Alex wanted to get back to San Francisco. He didn't like being so far from Anna.

But if he had to see Devin tomorrow, he would be suspicious of Alex walking around injured. Maybe the Elders would make an exception and allow the Immortals to heal him. He didn't want his father to be in danger.

Sebastian.

How are you feeling?

Like shit. Devin wants to see me tomorrow about telling Anna the truth about herself. Is it a good idea for me to go to his Manor as I am?

There was a pause. No. I will speak to your father.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

“So, you want me to carry your bag up to your apartment?” Tyler asked as they neared her building.

“If you'd like to,” Anna answered softly. Tyler made her nervous. If she didn't please him, he would certainly tell his dad.

Tyler put his hand on her knee. “Sure.”

She directed him into the garage and to the extra parking spot next to hers. They rode in the elevator up to her floor and Anna clung tightly to the railing, her body reminding her of being on the balcony with Devin. When she got into her apartment, she stayed away from the windows. She didn't want to see the view that had captured Tyler's attention.

She wished Tyler would just leave; she wanted to call Aaron. Not to mention her body ached from last night and her pussy still stung from being with Devin this morning. She also didn't like the idea of having Tyler in the same bed that she and Aaron made love in.

She smiled. That's what she could use the second bedroom for. She could keep her bedroom private and use the other one for the men Devin sent over. She took her bag from Tyler and put it into her bedroom.

When she turned around, Tyler was behind her.

She swallowed and gave him a nervous smile. “Hi,” she said softly.

“Hi,” he said and pulled her to him and kissed her.

His tongue demanded entry into her mouth and she parted her lips for him. She put her hands on his muscular upper arms and kissed him back.

He pushed her back into her bedroom. She tried to speak, to get him to go into the other bedroom, but he kept his hand on the back of her head and kept moving her backwards until her thighs hit her bed. He moved his lips to her neck and she was able to speak.

“The other bedroom is...um...well, we should go in there,” she said.

Tyler looked at her with a raised brow. “Isn't this your bedroom?”

She nodded. “Yes, but—”

“I'm not good enough for you to be in your room?” he asked with a frown. So much like his father.

Anna's eyes widened. “No, that's not it. I just—”

He let go of her and crossed his arms over his chest. “What?”

She was going to get into trouble. Defeated, she shook her head.

“Nothing,” she said softly and put her hand on his arms. “Nothing. Here is fine.”

She smiled at him, hoping he wasn't too angry. She trailed her hands up his arms and to his broad shoulders. He was nicely built and she wondered if he'd played sports in school.

She stood up on her tiptoes and kissed him, trying to defuse his anger.

“I'm sorry if I angered you,” she said softly when he wouldn't kiss her back.

She watched him, afraid of what he was thinking.

His hazel eyes searched hers and she began to tremble under his gaze.

Was his anger as terrible as his father's?

“I'm not my father, Anna,” he said, stroking her cheek. “You don't have to be afraid of me.”

He cupped the back of her head and kissed her gently. She kissed him back eagerly, running her hands over his shoulders and arms. She reached down and lifted the hem of her shirt, pulling it over her head.

Tyler's eyes dilated at the sight of her bare breasts. She hadn't bothered to put her bra or underwear on this morning.

He cupped her breasts and caressed them. Anna sighed and her nipples tightened more than they already were.

He laid her back on the bed and leaned down to kiss one breast and caress the other. She sighed as his tongue circled her nipple and played with the ring. He moved to her other breast and kissed and caressed it as well.

He kissed down her body and unbuttoned her jeans. She pushed them down over her hips and lay naked in front of him.

He pulled his shirt off, revealing a nicely defined upper body with a smattering of chest hair. He unfastened his belt and jeans and pushed them down. His cock sprang loose and Anna reached for it. It was smooth, hard, and without piercings.

She pulled him onto the bed and onto his back and stroked his cock. It was much easier to do that without piercings.

She glanced up at his face. "You're not pierced?" she asked, stroking him up and down.

Tyler grinned and put his hand behind his head. "No, not yet. August. It's kinda a big deal when the oldest son turns twenty. We get our piercings at the big Gatherings. My buddy Tommy is getting his then, too."

She smiled. "I'll be there. At least, I think I will."

"Dad's bringing you? Sweet!" He took a lock of her hair in his hands. "You're really pretty, Anna."

Anna blushed at his gentle tone. "Thank you," she said and returned her focus to his cock. She took it into her mouth and sucked on the smooth skin while she stroked him up and down.

He moaned loudly as she did so and she tugged at his sac, making him moan louder. "Fuck, Anna. That feels good."

She continued to suck on his cock, running her tongue around the head. He was of similar size to his father, giving her a pleasant anticipation, if he decided he wanted her to have sex with him. Sometimes the younger guys just wanted blowjobs. She almost hoped he'd be content with just her mouth, remembering how sore her poor little pussy was. But she felt herself getting wet just the same.

Tyler pulled her up and rolled her onto her back and knelt over her, smiling. He pushed her legs open and positioned himself against her slit. She bit her lip to keep herself from wincing as he pushed in. Closing her eyes, she concentrated on the good sensations.

She could do this. She'd done it before.

He leaned forward and kissed her, thrusting in and out of her. She moved her hips to maximize his pleasure and tried to conjure up an orgasm. He moaned and she could tell he was close. They didn't last very long at this age.

She closed her eyes and concentrated, and felt an orgasm building inside her. She wrapped her arms and legs around him and exploded as he did, crying out and clinging to him.

"Fuck," he said, rolling to his side. "That was awesome." He tugged on her nipple rings. "You are really good, Anna." He said kissing her. "I don't know why I bother with the girls my age. They suck, and not literally."

Anna giggled. "I'm your age," she reminded him.

Tyler grinned. "Well, you're...different. Maybe sex-ed in school should actually teach a girl how to please a man instead of just teaching how to put a condom on." His eyes widened. "You're like the other girls, right? I mean, you can't get pregnant or anything?"

She giggled again. "Of course, Tyler. As I understand it, condoms suck."

He threw his head back and laughed. “Yeah, they do. But it's better than being a father too early.” He traced a circle around her breast. “Do you mind if I come visit you some other time? Here, I mean.”

Anna shook her head. “I wouldn't mind.”

Tyler got up and began to dress. “Cool.”

When he had dressed, Anna got out of bed and walked him to the door, naked. He kissed her. “Thanks, Anna. Hope I see you soon,” he said, and turned and left.

A few minutes later, Anna found herself staring at the tiled wall in the shower. Conflict and guilt filled her heart as she thought back to the previous night. And even this morning with Tyler. Was it fair to Aaron for her to be doing all this? Why did he want to put up with all her crap?

When she'd dried off, she called Aaron as she'd promised him.

“I've been staring at my phone, willing it to ring for the last two hours, Anna,” Aaron said with emotion in his voice. “I've been worried and missing you so much.”

“Really?” Anna felt tears burning her eyes.

“Really.”

“I missed you too,” she said after a moment, her voice catching in her throat.

The realization of all that had happened since he'd left was catching up with her. His voice was so soothing, her heart ached to see him and be wrapped in his arms. “Will you come over?” she asked in a cracked voice, tears running down her cheeks.

“Anna, are you crying?”

“Yes,” she whispered through her tears. She didn't know why she was crying. She wasn't hurting that bad. She just wanted him here with her.

“You don't have to come over if you don't want to.” Her heart squeezed at the thought, but didn't want to pressure him.

“Hon, I'm already in my car and out of my neighborhood. I grabbed my keys as soon as I saw your name on my phone.”

She sniffed. “Really?”

“Mmm hmm. I'll be there in ten minutes.”

Anna was overjoyed. “I can't wait.”

Ten minutes later, there was a knock on the door, and thirty seconds after that, Anna was on the couch in Aaron's warm embrace. Tears still streamed down her cheeks and she started sobbing. Aaron held her tightly and stroked her hair. It felt like she would never be able to stop crying.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Aaron asked softly as her tears slowed. Anna shook her head. She was too ashamed.

“You don't have to. I just wanted you to know you can if you want.”

Anna walked into the Ballet studio that night with a happy heart. She felt like the luckiest girl in the world to have Aaron in her life.

Tatiana stood in the corner speaking to a gray haired man and he turned around when Anna walked in. It was Isaak, the Ballet Master in Chief of the San Francisco Ballet Company. Anna had known him her entire life.

Isaak beamed and walked over and hugged her tightly. “Anna, I'm so glad to see you,” he said. “Tatiana told me what an impression you made on her on Tuesday.” He studied her intensely for a long moment. “Are you still living with Jack?” he asked carefully.

Isaak knew a little bit of what had happened. He'd had several arguments with Jack about Anna, suspecting that Jack was abusive. He had even encouraged her several times to call the police, but he also knew it

wouldn't do any good. Devin owned the police and Isaak knew about Devin.

Anna shook her head. "No, I belong to Devin now."

He pressed his lips together and nodded. "Are things...better?"

She smiled. "Yes. Much. I have my own place. Devin said I could dance more too."

Isaak's eyes filled with tears and he hugged her again. "I'm so happy, Anna. I'm so glad you're out of that...out of Jack's control." He kissed the top of her head then pulled away and looked at her. "Anna, I want you in the summer sessions. If you do well, I will seriously consider you for the Company in the fall."

Anna's jaw dropped open. "Isaak, you haven't even seen me dance...."

"I don't need to, Anna. You are your parents' daughter. Tatiana finally saw that." He chuckled. "Finally." He looked over at Tatiana, who shrugged with a pretty smile on her face.

Anna smiled.

"Find out about the intensives. They start a week from Monday. Even if you have to start late for some reason. I want you there. Let me know, all right?"

She nodded, her heart beginning to soar again.

"I have to get going. Call the studio when you find out."

"I will."

Isaak kissed her head once more and then left for the theater. Anna watched him leave, her heart filling with affection for him. He had always believed in her; always been her advocate. He was like a father to her.

Anna took her place in the corner, dreaming about dancing more often. Class flew by and she felt as if she were flying as well. Tatiana watched her

with an approving look on her face and Anna drove home feeling very proud of herself.

Aaron came over after she got home and Anna told him the good news.

“I knew you could do it, Anna,” he said, kissing her deeply. “C’mon. Let’s go celebrate.” He grinned and she giggled as he pulled her into her room.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Alex regained consciousness and was very uncomfortable. Without moving, he took stock of what he knew. He didn't sense anyone else in the room, but that didn't mean an especially skilled someone wasn't there. He was cold and his arms were bound to something above his head. Without opening his eyes, he tried to move his feet and found that they were bound as well.

Where the hell was he? The last thing he remembered was sitting in Devin's study, talking about Anna. Then he got a little dizzy....

Fuck! Devin must have drugged him. He was normally on alert for that type of thing, but, once again, he'd underestimated Devin. There were unspoken rules that one didn't bother the children of Brothers, especially children of the Elders.

Fuck! He opened his eyes slowly. The dimly lit room had walls of gray stone. It looked like a dungeon, with various instruments lining the walls.

He looked down and saw that he was naked. That was odd. Devin had never struck him as being interested in men. And even if he were, Devin would never proposition *him*. So why was he here, naked and bound, most likely in Devin's dungeon?

Something caught his eye and he looked closer at his cock. In the dim light, he couldn't be certain, but it looked like...blood? Oh, hell, what had he done? Or what had been done to him? He wasn't in pain, aside from tired

muscles. Sebastian had healed him last night. By the feel of his joints, he figured he'd only been in this position for an hour maybe.

A light flickered to the side of him and he turned his head to see a TV on the wall come to life. He nearly vomited when the images began flashing on the screen. It was silent footage of himself and three young girls.

Oh, God. He couldn't have done that. No, it had to be a trick. It couldn't be real. He would never do that. Even in his rages, he'd never hurt a young girl. He'd go after the things he wanted, but he'd never had a taste for young girls, except when he was younger, but they were still his age. And never forced. Once he turned eighteen, he swore off any girl who wasn't an adult.

As much as he wanted to turn away, he forced himself to objectively look at his face on the screen. He wasn't raging. He wasn't angry. He was just...enjoying himself.

His stomach churned as he watched the girls silently scream as he forced himself inside them, one after the other. He could imagine how much he was hurting them. Hell, he had to be careful with full grown women. Being as large as he was did have disadvantages sometimes.

He couldn't take anymore. His stomach heaved and emptied itself down his chest. He didn't even try to keep himself clean. He continued to puke until his stomach was empty, then continued to dry-heave.

Tears sprang to his eyes. He'd never been so miserable. The blood was on his cock. He'd done it, but he had no recollection of it.

The screen went blank and he sagged against the chains. He was thankful the footage had been silent. Seeing it had been bad enough. Their screams would have echoed in his ears. He could almost hear them anyway.

The door on the opposite side of the room opened and Devin walked in, an amused look on his face. Ian followed him. Devin walked towards him and Ian waited impassively by the door.

“You didn't like seeing your work? I'm surprised. You certainly seemed to enjoy it while you were doing it.”

Alex's rage came on full force and he tugged hard against his bindings. “I never would do such a disgusting thing,” he spat as he struggled against his bonds.

“Oh, but you did. You just saw it.” He laughed again and leaned against a table across the room. “I normally punish men who rape my little ones. But this time I think it was worth it. The look on your face when you saw it was priceless.”

It didn't surprise Alex that Devin had been watching him. “What did you do to me?” he demanded, glaring at his enemy. If the footage was real then Devin must have played with his mind. It was the only explanation.

“I can only imagine what Anna will think when she sees it.”

Alex blanched. No, Anna couldn't see that. She'd never forgive him, even if he could convince her he hadn't really done it. “You wouldn't dare,” he growled.

Devin chuckled. “No, I won't right now. I just wanted you to know I had it. I'll keep it for use later. Imagine what your father and the other Elders would think of their precious Alex raping three little girls with his huge cock.” He smirked. “You really tore them up. One I think you even tore into her ass. I do hope she can be repaired. She's rather pretty, you know.”

Alex's stomach heaved again, but there was nothing left to spew.

Devin leaned back on the table and studied him silently.

Alex glared at him again. “I never would do such a thing on my own. What the fuck did you do to me?”

Devin stood. “That's true. You wouldn't. You're such a 'good guy' that I wouldn't have been able to trick you even if you were in one of those

infamous rages of yours.” Devin cocked his head. “Maybe you should consider a new nickname. Hulk, maybe? Though you don't turn green...except for at the present moment.”

Devin walked around the room, trailing his hands on the whips along the walls. “No, I had to get creative. You really angered me, telling Anna the truth. She was afraid of me.”

“She should be afraid of you, you fucking ass. You're a fucking lunatic.”

“Lunatic?” Devin was amused. “No, hardly a lunatic. I made my plans long ago, and have methodically worked towards their culmination for twenty-five years. I don't think a lunatic has that kind of mental capacity.” He turned to Ian. “Get one of the girls to come in and clean him and the floor up. Someone over eighteen.” He smiled at Alex. “Better?”

Alex growled.

“But you'll be happy to know that Anna and I are getting along wonderfully now. She spent Wednesday night curled contentedly in my arms.”

Alex's heart pounded, not only in anger, but jealousy. The thought of Anna in Devin's arms twisted at the knife that had been in his heart since he'd met her in real life. “What did you do to her?”

“Nothing that hurt her. I just adjusted some of the thoughts in her head. She knows how badly I need her and how sorry I am for hurting her.” He smirked. “I think she may even think that you lied to her to make me look bad.”

Alex didn't respond. How could Devin control her mind like that? Alex couldn't fight against things like that. He preferred his sniper rifle to mind games. The rules were clear in warfare: shoot the enemy. Now he was in a completely different battlefield, one his opponent had been working in for

two and a half decades. He was disadvantaged, unprepared, and also hopelessly committed to the fight – Anna was on the line.

Damn his fucking pride! If he'd just listened to Vati none of this would have happened. He slumped again. He was failing. Failing his father. Failing his Brothers. Failing Anna. He couldn't protect her the way he should; the way he wanted to.

The door opened and two young women entered carrying a bucket and towels. One set to work cleaning the floor beneath him. The other worked on cleaning his body. If he hadn't been so miserable, he would have enjoyed himself. The girl who was cleaning him was a pretty brunette with very nice cleavage and strong hands.

“Oh, all right, Alex. You look so miserable.” Devin smirked. “Not that it will matter to outsiders, but for your own peace of mind, I drugged you. I gave you Scopolamine, which—”

“I'm familiar with it, thank you.” A truth serum that turns the user into a tool, making them do anything and everything, even if it is against their natural instincts. The Brotherhood was known to have used it in the past, but it was an expensive drug and they found that seduction worked as well and was longer lasting. “You made me rape those little girls? Why?”

“Blackmail footage is always helpful. Plus, I knew it would be an effective deterrent from you telling Anna things you shouldn't be telling her. If you do it again, I'll use the drug again. Maybe I'll have you rape Anna.” Devin was very casual about the whole thing.

“She had a right to know,” he growled. The girl washing his chest was distracting him and pissing him off. But at the same time, it wasn't her fault and he was tired of smelling his vomit. He closed his eyes and let her finish.

“There are certain things that Anna may have a right to know, but it wouldn't be good for her to know. Her thinking of me as a heartless bastard

who killed her parents isn't good for her to know.”

“I never said you killed her parents,” Alex said in a low voice.

“True, but you're not an idiot. I'm sure you figured it out.”

“I had my suspicions. It was the only thing that made sense. The timing was rather suspect.”

Devin shrugged. “No one noticed at the time.”

“No one knew about her at the time.”

“No? Well, that was fortunate for me. I thought someone kept tabs on them.”

“They're supposed to, but something kept her hidden from the rest of us.”

Devin grinned. “I told you I'd been planning for a very long time. I don't know why you're bothering to fight me. You won't win.”

His arrogance angered Alex more than anything, but he gritted his teeth and said nothing. He needed to hold his thoughts close to his chest, otherwise he really wouldn't be able to defeat Devin.

The girl knelt in front of him and washed his legs and cock.

“Amber, why don't you make sure his cock is clean enough,” Devin said, looking at Alex's face. “You too, Holly.”

Alex and the floor were clean. The girls eagerly grasped his cock and began sucking and licking him. He groaned. This is not what he wanted right now. But his body wasn't listening to the right mind and his cock began to stiffen. The girls let out appreciative sighs and took turns sucking him into their mouths. They were very good at what they did.

Alex gave in and enjoyed their touch. The faster they were done, the faster he could get back to dealing with Devin and make sure Anna was safe.

He moaned low as one girl sucked on his balls while the other sucked on the head and stroked him. He leaned his head back, not caring that the two men were probably watching. One thing he never worried about was cock envy, at least on his part. He'd never seen anyone larger than himself and he knew he was good looking. Women flocked to him, even when he didn't want them to.

So, the men could watch and envy if they were so inclined. He groaned as he felt his climax approaching and cursed in German as he came into one of their mouths. He didn't care which one. It was over and he could get back to business.

He looked down and smiled at the girls. "Thank you. I enjoyed that immensely." He spoke in a gentle voice. They giggled and kissed him and then scurried out of the room under Devin's frown.

He looked back at Devin. "Happy?"

"I'm glad you enjoyed that. Because what comes next won't be as pleasant." Devin gave him a wicked grin.

Alex laughed. "You're going to torture me? Really?"

Alex had been trained to withstand immense amounts of pain. He pushed the thought of the recent punishment to the side. He deserved that and had put down the mental barriers that time. With this, he would not allow Devin to know he felt anything.

Devin held up a syringe. "Yes, Mr. Big Shot Assassin can handle pain. But perhaps not like this." He walked up to Alex and injected him with a clear liquid.

Alex laughed, amused that Devin thought he could break him with a shot. He'd felt everything that could possibly be felt, pain-wise. But when the pain began, he realized this was something new. His eyes watered and he gasped. Even breathing hurt. Devin walked around him and the slight

breeze that resulted from his movements felt like razors on his skin. Devin ran his finger down Alex's chest and it felt like a dull knife.

“What the hell did you give me?” Alex asked, choking from the pain and gritting his teeth to keep from crying out.

“Something I've been working on. Basically, it amplifies your nerves by about a thousand percent and registers everything that you feel as pain. Even a breeze...,” Devin blew air on his face and Alex cringed, “...feels like needles in your skin. Am I right?”

Alex closed his eyes. It was unbelievably painful. God, what would happen if he used a whip?

Devin seemed to have read his mind and walked over and picked out a bullwhip and cracked it a few times. Alex jumped at the sound.

“Poor Duke Alex is afraid of a little whip?”

Devin laughed and stepped back. He drew the whip back and sliced it through the air where it landed with a satisfying crack on Alex's chest.

Alex couldn't help it. He cried out in pain. He knew he could handle a whip, but this wasn't just a whip. Yes, he could see with his own eyes that it was a normal whip, but it felt like it had a million tiny razors lining the leather.

Crack!

He cried out again and strained against the chains, but even that was painful. He looked at Devin wide-eyed. *What kind of man develops something like this?*

Devin cracked the whip several more times against Alex's chest. He looked down and saw several welts across his chest, but they looked so tame compared to the fire he felt.

Devin cracked the whip again and Alex screamed before he realized what he was doing. He never screamed, but he did now. He kept telling

himself it wasn't real, but his body wasn't listening.

Over and over the whip hit his chest and legs. Devin circled around to his back and worked there, then back to the front. When Devin aimed one at his cock and hit, Alex thought he would die from agony. He braced for another one, but Devin had stopped. Alex blinked to clear his vision and saw Devin looking at his phone.

Devin shook his head and tossed the phone on the table behind him.

“Anna's calling. I'll call her back later.”

The phone immediately started vibrating again, and Devin pushed the screen to stop it. He pulled the whip up and cracked it at Alex a few more times.

Alex could see Devin's phone light up again. Devin growled and pushed the screen to silence it again. It lit up again within seconds.

“Something's wrong, Devin,” he said in a hoarse voice. “You know she's not that persistent.”

Devin looked back at his phone after refusing the call, but it didn't ring again. “Maybe not.” He smirked.

Alex knew something was wrong. He could feel it in his bones. A movement caught his eye in the corner and he saw Ian looking at his phone. He looked up at Devin.

“It's Anna.”

Devin threw the whip down and stalked over to Ian and grabbed the phone. “Anna, if I don't answer—”

Even in the dim light, Alex could see Devin's face pale. He walked back over to Alex and held the phone up to his ear.

“Anna?” he said in his hoarse voice.

“Alex, thank God.” It was Aaron.

“Aaron, what—”

“There's something wrong with Anna. She's screaming and rolling around on the bed like she's in massive pain, but there's nothing around that's hurting her. She's getting red lines on her chest and—” Aaron's voice broke. “Alex, I don't know what the hell is going on. She's in so much pain.”

“Where are you?” Alex had a suspicion of what was going on.

“Her apartment. Where are you?”

“At the Manor. Just...keep her still and try to comfort her. I'll be there,” he glared at Devin, who nodded and motioned to Ian, “as soon as I can. Keep her from hurting herself.”

He nodded at Devin, who took the phone away. Ian unlocked the chains at his ankles and wrists.

“How fast can you get to her place?” Alex asked.

“As fast as Ian can drive. Ian,” Devin turned to Ian. “Get the car out front. I'll get Alex up there.”

Ian ran out of the room and Devin looked at Alex, the question in his eyes.

“Did you know pain transferred as well?” Alex asked.

“I never read anything like that. I never even read about each of us not being able to kill each other.”

“I'm not certain that's what's going on, but Aaron said she was getting red lines on her chest.” He looked at his own chest and gritted his teeth. “If I didn't think I'd hurt Anna in the process, I'd crush every bone in your body. Where are my clothes?”

Devin pointed to a pile in the corner and Alex shrugged into his clothes, his skin on fire every second. But that's not what mattered. What mattered was getting to Anna.

“Is there an antidote?” he asked Devin.

He shook his head. “Never thought about the need for one.”

Alex sighed and opened the door. They walked out the door, Alex wincing with every step. “How long does it last?”

“It depends on the person. For you, it’ll probably wear off soon. It only lasted an hour on Ian.”

Alex looked at Devin. “You tested it on Ian?”

Devin shrugged. “Had to test it on someone your size.”

Un-fucking-believable. “What about on someone Anna's size?”

Devin winced. “Couple of hours, maybe. I don’t know. Maybe it will wear off as yours wears off.”

They were out to the SUV a few minutes later and Ian tore around the driveway and was on the freeway within a few minutes.

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CHAPTER THIRTY

Aaron paced naked in Anna's room. She'd stopped screaming and was quiet now. The welts had deepened and reddened, but they didn't seem to be bothering her at the moment. Where the hell was Alex?

They'd been making love when she screamed out suddenly. Aaron was terrified that he'd done something to her and jumped away from her. She started shaking and saying that her skin hurt. He tried to rub her arm, but she cried out that it hurt. A while later her body started convulsing as if she were being hit, but he knew it wasn't true. He was scared and had no idea what was going on. The only thing he could think to do was call Alex. He called him about fifteen times and there was no answer.

He sat next to Anna, staring at her and not knowing what to do. He was afraid to touch her.

“Anna, I can't get a hold of Alex. He's not answering.”

“Devin,” she moaned. “...was going to see Devin,” she whispered, and then screamed in pain again.

He found her phone and found Devin's number and started calling. He didn't answer, but it went to voice mail quicker, making him think the call was being ignored, which meant someone was seeing his calls. He redialed over and over again. But no one would answer.

He yelled in frustration. “Hon, I'm so sorry. He's not answering either. I don't know what to do....” Maybe Wilhelm would know.

“Ian...,” she whispered.

Okay. He didn't know who Ian was, but there was a number for an Ian in her phone. It rang...and rang...and then someone picked up.

He didn't even wait to listen to the voice. "There's something wrong with Anna. She's screaming and in pain. I need to talk to Alex."

Relief filled his body when he finally heard Alex's voice and told him what was going on. Now Aaron just had to wait for him to get there.

Aaron looked down and realized he was naked, so he grabbed his jeans to put them on.

Anna moaned on the bed. He was afraid to touch her.

"Anna, hon...," he said soothingly. He tentatively reached out to smooth her hair and she cried out at his touch. "I'm sorry, hon. God!" he growled. He hated feeling helpless.

They had been together since she'd called him yesterday morning when she got home. Wednesday night had been the longest night, imagining Devin doing all sorts of horrible things to her. He had been so relieved when she finally called.

She hadn't wanted to talk about the evening, and he held her while she cried. After a while, she calmed and they just sat on the couch in silence, but he didn't mind. He was just happy to be able to comfort her.

He looked at Anna on the bed. She was still quiet, though her face contorted in pain every once in a while.

Where the hell was Alex?

"Are you cold? Do you want a blanket?" he asked softly. He could see goose bumps on her arms.

She nodded gingerly, then winced.

He went into the other room and took the blanket off the guest bed. He didn't want to risk more pain by moving her around on her bed.

He began to cover her gently, when she started crying again. “No, no! It hurts! It has knives.”

Aaron was confused and looked at the blanket to make sure there was nothing on it, then tried again, but she cried out again. He pulled the blanket off her and threw it on the floor, once again helpless as to what to do to help his sweet girlfriend.

At last, someone knocked on the door. Aaron looked at Anna to make sure she was as “okay” as she could be, and then jumped up and ran to the door.

He was surprised to see Devin and another tall man with Alex. And Alex looked like hell warmed over. His face was pale and he looked like he was in an incredible amount of pain.

“What happened to you?” Aaron asked, as concerned for his friend as he was for Anna.

Alex shook his head. “I’ll be all right. Where’s Anna?”

“In her bed,” he answered, and Alex pushed past him with a groan and limped quickly to Anna’s room.

Aaron turned to give a dirty look at Devin. He’d never met the man, but knew who he was and didn’t like him.

“What the hell are you doing here?”

Devin looked at him like he was a peon. “You must be the new boyfriend?”

Aaron narrowed his eyes. “Yes, I’m Anna’s boyfriend. You must be the one who had her abused for the last four years of her life.”

Devin’s jaw clenched. “Watch yourself, Aaron. You don’t want to cross me.” He pushed past Aaron and followed Alex into Anna’s room.

Aaron looked at the other man. He was almost as big and tall as Alex. “Who are you?”

The man walked in and gently closed the door behind him. "Ian," he said, extending his hand. "I'm Devin's assistant. You called my phone."

Aaron shook the man's hand and studied him. Though he had an intimidating façade, his eyes showed worry as he glanced in the direction Alex and Devin had disappeared.

Ian looked back at Aaron. "She'll be okay," he said quietly, then followed Devin.

Aaron walked into Anna's room, where it was getting very crowded. Her room was a decent size, but four large men filled the area quickly.

Alex sat next to Anna, looking at her closely, but not touching her. "Give me your arm, Devin."

"What?" Devin exclaimed.

"I won't break it, unless she doesn't react." Alex winced as he reached for Devin's arm. "But we need to know."

Devin frowned and Alex grabbed hold and began to squeeze. A moment later, Anna began to whimper and held on to her arm. The same arm that Alex was squeezing on Devin. Alex immediately let go and a moment later Anna relaxed, though she still cradled her arm.

"Alex, what the hell is going on?" Aaron asked, stepping forward.

"The pain transfers," he said to Devin, who nodded with a frown.

He heard Devin curse under his breath.

"Alex...", Aaron growled. "What the fuck is going on?"

Alex turned to him with sad eyes. "Devin decided to get even with me for telling Anna the truth about her and her family." Alex glared at Devin, then winced. "He gave me something that makes everything hurt like hell, then used a bullwhip on me." He lifted his shirt and showed Aaron the welts on his chest.

Aaron quickly walked over to the bed and looked at Anna. The welts matched. Hers were fainter, but they were clearly related. “What the...”

“The pain transfers. We didn't know. We knew we couldn't kill each other. I don't think even Devin would use this on Anna without cause.”

“I wouldn't. It would be counterproductive,” Devin said. He gazed at Anna with sad eyes. “No, I had no intention of using it on her, unless I absolutely had no other option.”

Alex growled. “There are always other options.”

“I didn't develop it for her,” Devin snapped.

“So, will she get better?” Aaron interrupted. He was pissed at both men. Their bickering wasn't helping Anna. “What can we do to help her now?” Anna looked at him and gave him a weak smile. He sat next to her and gazed into her eyes. “You're still hurting?”

She winced and nodded.

“Is it getting any better?”

“I don't feel like I'm getting hit anymore,” she whispered.

Aaron smiled sadly at her. “I wish I could hold you and take it all away.”

She moved her arm, wincing and put her hand next to his. “I want to hold your hand,” she whispered.

“Won't it hurt?”

She grimaced. “It already hurts.”

He took her hand in his and held it as lightly as he could. She smiled weakly and closed her eyes. Her face contorted every so often, but was otherwise still.

Aaron looked up at Alex then Devin, who were both staring at her with remorse.

“There's nothing you can do?” he asked them.

“He doesn't have an antidote,” Alex growled and grimaced.

Aaron realized his friend must be in pain too, if it really was his pain that had transferred to Anna.

Devin looked thoughtful. “I could put her to sleep,” he said reluctantly.

Alex and Aaron both looked at him with bewildered looks.

“You what?” Alex demanded.

Devin sighed. “I can put her to sleep. It wouldn't be the most restful sleep, but it might relieve some of the pain.”

“How can you do that?” Aaron asked.

Devin shrugged. “I can make her do almost anything I want.”

Alex glared at him.

“You told her to sleep and she obeyed you after the ritual. It's like that, but...different.” Devin said. “But I don't think that would work this time. It's not just a simple obedience thing in this situation. I'm not even certain it would work.” He looked at Alex. “Do you want me to try?”

Alex glanced down at Anna. “It won't hurt her?”

“I don't think so. It shouldn't, but I haven't tried it before.” Devin frowned. “But it's the only thing I can think of.”

“Do it,” Alex said, moving out of the way.

“Don't I get a say in the matter? I'm her boyfriend.” Not that he really wanted to prevent it, he just didn't like the others making decisions without his consideration.

Alex looked at him calmly. “No. I am her Master. Devin is her Master. We decide what's best for her.”

Aaron's jaw dropped and his eyes narrowed. Alex had never spoken to him like that. How dare he! He was the one who encouraged him to ask Anna out, then he pulls the “Master” card on him? He'd never wanted to hit Alex before, but he sure wanted to now.

Devin moved to sit next to Anna. "Anna, Baby," he said softly.

Anna opened her eyes and looked at Devin. They were so full of pain it made Aaron's heart hurt.

"Baby, I'm going to put you to sleep. It should help, okay?"

Anna turned her head to look at Aaron. "Stay with me?" she whispered.

"I won't leave you," he assured her.

She looked back at Devin. "Yes, Devin," she said softly.

Devin put his hand on her head and closed his eyes. She winced at first, but after a few moments her body relaxed and her breathing calmed. Devin removed his hand and watched her for a few minutes. She was asleep and somewhat peaceful, though she still grimaced a few times.

Aaron breathed a sigh of relief. She'd been like this for over an hour and he was relieved to see her have at least a little bit of comfort.

Devin stood. "She should be okay in a few hours at most. Hopefully sooner." He looked at Alex. "Do you want me to take you back to the Manor? Your car is still there."

Alex grimaced and shook his head. "No, thank you," he said coldly. "I'll have Seth and Tony pick me up and I'll get my car later."

Devin looked at Anna one more time, then glanced at Aaron. "It was nice to meet you, Aaron."

"I can't say the same thing about you, Devin. But thank you for putting her to sleep," he said in a low voice.

Devin gave him an amused look, then looked at Ian. "Shall we?"

Ian glanced at Anna. "Yes, sir."

Devin and Ian turned and left the room. Aaron heard the door open and shut a moment later.

Aaron turned to Alex and glared at him.

"What?" Alex asked defensively.

“I'm her Master. I decide what's best for her'? I didn't think you were such an ass, Alex.”

Alex sighed. “Aaron, I have to maintain control of Anna when Devin is around, or what little control I have, I will lose.” He shook his head. “He already has a major advantage over me.” Alex ran his hand through his hair. “I am so fucked, Aaron. I don't know what to do.”

Alex's admission surprised Aaron. Alex never showed any weakness.

“What do you mean?” he asked, his anger softening.

“He doesn't fight fair, Aaron. I'm fighting an enemy I don't understand. He doesn't play by the rules.” Alex sounded like he was in despair. “You're not supposed to mess with the *kinder* of the Elders, but he chained me up and—”

Alex stopped. When he spoke again, his voice was so low Aaron could barely hear him.

“Fuck, Aaron. He made me rape three little girls.”

Aaron stared at him. That was impossible. Alex loved the female species, but he'd never go for an underage girl and he'd certainly never rape one. He couldn't imagine Alex doing something that horrible.

“How is that possible? You wouldn't...”

Alex was sitting on the window seat, slumped over his knees and head in his hands. When he looked up, tears were streaming down his cheeks.

“He gave me Scopolamine. It...turns you into a puppet. All he had to do was tell me....” He shook his head. “He recorded it. He made me watch it and threatened to show Anna.”

Aaron could do nothing but stare at Alex. He'd had an inkling of what Devin was like from the conversation at the party. But this was over the top of anything he could imagine.

“Why would he do that?”

“Because he was furious that I told Anna the truth about what she was. He didn't want her to know.” Alex sighed and sat up, wincing. “I deserve how I'm feeling. She doesn't.” He motioned to Anna. “*Mein Gott*, I can't do anything right with her.” He stood. “And she won't want me here when she wakes up.” He pulled out his phone and left the room.

Poor Alex. Aaron had never seen him so despondent. It was very un-Alex like. Whatever Devin had done had really gotten to him.

Aaron carefully stretched out on the bed and looked at Anna. He wondered if he could put the blanket on her now. She still had goose bumps all over her skin. He kissed her hand and was glad when she didn't wince.

Alex returned a few minutes later. “Tony's on his way. I'll wait downstairs for him.”

“Okay. Can you put the blanket on Anna? She's cold.” Aaron didn't want to let go of her hand.

Alex nodded and picked the blanket off the floor. He carefully lay it on top of Anna. She whimpered slightly, but then stopped once the blanket was in place.

“Thanks,” Aaron said. “You gonna be okay?”

Alex frowned. “I need to figure some things out.” He gave Aaron a wry smile. “Want to go out tonight? She has to go to the Manor.”

Aaron frowned. He'd forgotten about the Friday night obligation. “Yeah. Anything's better than sitting at home worrying about her.”

Alex grunted. “I'll call you.” He left the room and Aaron heard the apartment door open and close a few moments later.

He turned back to watch Anna sleep. Peacefully at last.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Pain. Excruciating pain. Pain that has no source and no reason. It comes from within her own body, but didn't originate there. The pain comes from another.

The pain is directed towards another. But why? Why does she feel his pain?

Yes, it is a him. She doesn't know why she knows, she only knows.

The him loves her and thinks of her. He is in pain because of her. More than physical pain. His heart is in pain as well.

She knows him. He saved her. He rescued her. But she can't see him. She can only feel him. Feel his pain. Feel his torment. Feel his doubt.

A strong man brought to his knees by the feelings of failure. His anguish is too much to bear. He torments himself because of his own failure. Grief, sorrow, agony. They all fill his heart.

A man appears in the darkness of her mind. She reaches toward him. It is the man in pain. He kneels on the floor by a bed. Too many times I have failed, he cries to himself.

No, you have not failed. You cannot have failed. I am still here. Do not give up.

I need you....

The man fades back into darkness and she awakes.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Anna sat up and immediately started trembling. She felt the after effects of pain; the emptiness the pain left behind.

“Anna.”

Strong, warm arms pulled her back down and held her close. The sun, high in the sky, lit the room with sunshine.

She turned her head and looked up into Aaron’s face. She sighed and gave a soft smile. Oh, she was happy to see him.

“How are you feeling?” he asked.

“Weird,” she answered truthfully. “I had the strangest dream. I was in so much pain...and I didn't know why.”

Aaron smiled and kissed her forehead. “I'm glad you're feeling better. It was sheer torture not being able to comfort you.”

“Comfort me?”

“The pain. Anna, it wasn't a dream. You were screaming in agony and I had no idea what was going on.” Aaron told her about what had happened when Devin and Alex had come over and what they’d learned.

“I don't remember that. I thought it was a dream.”

Aaron shook his head. “I'm glad you don’t remember. It was awful.” He looked as if he were going to say something but changed his mind. “I'm glad you're better.”

“Me too.” She rolled over so that she was lying on his chest with her head resting on her chin. She traced his bottom lip. “I don't want to think

about anything bad for a while.”

Aaron grinned. “We had talked about going to the dance store to buy your things for next Monday. Are you up for a walk across the street?”

She frowned. “I haven’t asked Devin or Alex if I can participate.”

“I’m sure they’ll let you, Anna. Especially after this morning. Call Alex. He’ll make sure you get to do it.”

Anna frowned. Alex had fought for her to be able to dance before, but had he really meant it? He lied to her about Devin. Could she trust him?

“I’ll call Devin.” She got her phone and made the call.

“Hey, Baby. How are you feeling?” Devin’s voice was tender and she smiled.

“Fine, thank you.”

“I’m so sorry about what happened. If I had known....”

“It’s okay, Devin. I understand.”

“Did you have a reason for calling, Baby?”

“I....” She hesitated. What if he said no? “Isaak invited me into the Summer Intensives. They start next week.” She paused, nervous to go on.

“Do you want to go?”

“Yes,” she whispered.

Devin was quiet for a moment. “Have you talked to Alex about it?”

“No, I was scared to ask him.”

Devin was quiet again and Anna twisted the hem of her shirt. “Yes, Baby. I think I’d like to see you do that.”

“Oh! Oh, Devin! Thank you!” Anna jumped up and down in joy.

“Do you want to call Alex or shall I?”

“Will you do it?”

“Of course, Baby. I’m sure he’ll agree to it as well.”

“Thank you, Devin.”

Anna ran into the bedroom after saying goodbye to Devin.

“He said yes!” she exclaimed, launching herself into Aaron’s arms.

Aaron laughed. “Of course he did, hon. Why would Alex not want you to dance?”

“No, I called Devin.”

Aaron was confused. “Why would you call Devin?”

Anna bit her lip. “Alex is scary.”

Aaron’s eyes widened. “What?” Alex scary? What the hell was going on in that girl’s head?

“He tells me things because he wants to keep me from Devin.”

“Anna, what are you talking about?”

Anna huffed. “I know he’s your best friend, but I don’t like him. He’s scary and controlling.”

“Anna, I don’t understand what you’re talking about.” Shit. Had Devin done something else to her mind besides make her go to sleep?

Aaron stared at Anna, this girl that he was falling in love with, totally bewildered as to where this hostility towards Alex was coming from.

“Anna, Alex cares for you a great deal.” More than Aaron was comfortable with. Why would Anna think such a thing?

Anna frowned at him. If Devin had done something to her mind, then arguing with her about it would likely do more harm than good. He would see Alex tonight and talk to him about it then.

“Okay, Anna, shall we go shopping now?” he asked, changing the subject.

Anna grinned and went into her bathroom. Aaron shook his head. Who the fuck was Devin that he could control Anna’s mind like this?

Devin put his phone down and grinned to himself. Anna was afraid to call Alex. Good. His attempt to change her mind had worked and was holding. Alex would find out and then realize the futility of fighting Devin and give up. Then Devin could proceed with his plans.

Alex listened to the message from Devin, bewildered. Anna had been too afraid to call him to ask for permission to dance with the school this summer? What the hell did Devin do to her?

He ran his hands through his hair and stared at the ground. How the hell was he going to keep Anna safe?

Hopelessness filled his heart with despair.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Later that afternoon, Anna headed to the Manor, her heart aching from leaving Aaron behind. She missed him terribly and every mile she drove seemed to make it worse. She arrived at the Manor at a little before four.

She saw Ian waiting for her and exited the car after grabbing her overnight bag from the passenger side seat. She removed her shoes and then followed him silently to her room.

Ian closed the door behind him as he followed her inside.

She turned around and looked at him. “How may I please you, my lord?” she asked quietly.

Ian's face registered shock. “Anna, that's not why I came in with you,” he said. “I wanted to make sure you were okay.”

“Okay? Why?” Why was Ian showing concern towards her?

“Because of what happened this morning. You were in so much pain.”

Aaron had said that Alex and Devin had been there. “You were there too?”

Ian nodded. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. It was weird, but I'm okay.”

“Good.” He looked around, looking like he felt awkward. “Okay. Well, I'll see you in a few hours.”

As Ian was leaving, Maggie entered carrying a tray of food.

“Good evening, Mistress,” Maggie said with a curtsy. “How was your week?”

“Um. Interesting. And good.” She was confused about Ian’s kindness, but pushed it aside. Thoughts of Aaron filled her heart and she began to miss him again, making her heart ache.

Maggie looked at her carefully. “You look sad, Mistress.”

“I miss someone,” she said softly. “It's all right. I'll be okay.”

Maggie gave her a doubtful look, but placed the tray on the table.

“Sarah and I will be back in a half hour and we'll start getting you ready.”

Anna turned on the TV after Maggie left and watched a silly old movie to get her mind off of Aaron while she ate dinner.

Later, Anna sat on her bed waiting for Ian, dressed for the Gathering. She was tempted to call Aaron, or text him, but had a feeling Devin wouldn’t approve, and she didn't want to anger him. She'd pleased him on Wednesday and she didn't want to displease him tonight.

As much as she tried not to show it, her body still ached from whatever had happened earlier in the day with the pain. Aaron had watched her like a hawk when they’d been shopping and had been so gentle with her.

He hadn't asked questions about what had happened Wednesday night either, which she appreciated. She was ashamed and didn't want to tell Aaron what she did, even though she was fairly certain he knew at least some of what went on. She didn't want Aaron to get any more upset with Devin than he already was. He would be furious if she told him about what happened on the balcony.

Anna had a feeling that if Aaron tried to cross Devin there would be trouble. Devin didn't like being challenged, as evident by his actions toward Alex yesterday. She didn't really understand why Devin had gone after Alex, though. It seemed pretty extreme for just giving her some information.

But Devin always had his reasons for doing things, and she trusted him, even when he didn't explain. He had explained his reasoning for what he'd done to her, and she understood and forgave him.

A knock sounded on the door a moment before it opened and Ian entered.

"Ready?" he asked with a kind smile.

Anna nodded and smiled back. She still wondered at his kindness. "Is anything painful going to happen tonight?"

Ian shook his head. "Devin is really happy with how things went on Wednesday night. Just obey him tonight and you'll be fine."

The two of them walked silently through the building to the Hall. Ian removed Anna's cloak at the door.

"Go greet him and sit at his feet." He said in response to her nervous smile. "You'll be fine."

He opened the door and Anna walked into the hall

She kept her head down as she walked toward Devin on his platform, but could see around her a little. It was set up as it had been the first time she'd been here. Clusters of comfortable couches filled the room and men socialized and enjoyed the girls. She stopped before the platform and glanced up for a moment before bowing low to Devin, who sat on his throne talking with several other men. She recognized Trenton, Jayce and... *Oh, no! Jack.*

"Come, Baby." She heard Devin's voice and quickly stood and walked to sit at his feet.

"You think the reaction will be positive?" Jack asked.

"I don't see why not," Devin said, stroking Anna's hair. "They'll see the power and not want to cross me."

“What if it backfires?” Trenton asked. “I think they will all be rather taken with her. Hurting her might turn them against you.”

“Of course they will be taken with her. That's the idea.” The men chuckled. “But bringing someone back to life is more impressive than a nice figure. At least to the Brothers. Maybe not to the politicians, but they won't be there yet.”

Devin pulled Anna into his lap and leaned her back against him, legs spread over his knees. Her right leg was exposed, but her pussy and other leg were still covered. She saw the men glance down at her lower body.

“Besides, I have enough support to ensure it goes as planned.” He pulled her dress down to expose her breasts, and caressed them as he kissed her neck. “Hi, Baby, you feeling better?” he whispered into her ear.

“Yes, Master,” she sighed, leaning her head back against his shoulder. Her pain seemed to disappear at his touch.

“If I'd known that was a possibility...I never would have done it, Anna. I hope you know that.”

She turned her head and kissed his cheek. “Yes, Master,” she said, pressing her breasts into his hands.

“Mmm. Good girl.” He bit her earlobe and she gasped. She felt the blood rush to her pussy and the moisture increase. “Show them your pussy, Baby.”

She bit her lip nervously, but pulled her skirt aside to expose her pink swollen pussy. The men groaned and she felt a rush of heat course through her body, exciting her more. She liked that they were staring at her wetness with a hungry look. Even Jack.

She felt Devin chuckle. “You like that, don't you?” he whispered in her ear. “You like the power you have over them by showing them what they want?”

She nodded, her breath shallow. She could feel the heat of their gazes on her and she whimpered, wanting their touch.

“Just showing them your beautiful pussy, Anna, will make men do almost anything for you. You just have to want it.” He bit her neck and kept his teeth buried in her skin. She clenched her thighs, but didn't close her legs.

She stared at Jack, amazed at the look in his eyes. His hand strayed to his cock and stroked it over his pants. She licked her lips, remembering what it was like to have him between her legs, and she sighed.

“You want Jack?” Devin asked quietly, his voice sounding slightly surprised.

Anna nodded. She wanted to feel his cock deep inside her.

“Go,” Devin said, pushing her to her feet.

Jack's eyes met hers as she walked towards him. They widened slightly at the intensity of her gaze, but remained locked on hers as she straddled his lap.

She brought her face close to his. “Hi, Jack,” she said in a soft, sensual whisper. She brushed her lips to his and pressed her bare breasts to his chest.

“A-Anna?” he said in a broken voice.

“I want you, Jack,” she said sweetly, but with a hint of seduction in the timbre of her voice. She felt empowered. He was under her control and he knew it.

She pressed her lips to his, tongue tracing his lips until they parted. He groaned as her tongue stroked his, like she'd stroked his cock so many times. She sucked and teased his tongue, making him think of his cock in her mouth.

She took his hand and brought it to her chest as she moved to his ear, nipping the lobe. He cursed under his breath and kneaded her breast, pulling at the nipple and making her moan in his ear.

“Yes, Jack...,” she moaned.

She rocked her pelvis against his cock, eliciting more moans out of him. A thought came to her mind and she leaned forward to his ear.

“I want to see you suck off another man,” she said in a low sexy voice.

He pulled away from her and looked into her eyes with shock. She gave him a soft, seductive smile and his eyes softened, glazing over a bit, and he nodded. She kissed him again, then stood and motioned to Devin.

Jack walked over to Devin and knelt between his legs.

Devin raised his brow at him. “What are you doing, Jack?”

“Pleasing the Mistress,” he said absently. He reached towards Devin, who grabbed his wrist.

Devin looked sharply at Anna. “Call him off, Anna,” he said sternly.

Anna stared hard at her guardian, wanting to see him humiliate himself in front of everyone in the room. She heard Devin's command but didn't want to obey.

“Anna!” Devin said sharply and Anna looked at him with the same intense look. “Call. Him. Off.”

Her will battled with her mind. If she didn't obey, she would be punished. If she didn't obey, she would have the pleasure of watching her guardian humiliate himself.

Her fear of punishment won out and she closed her eyes and released Jack from her control. She dropped to sit on her heels, with her hands on the floor in front of her, trembling, and heard Jack cursing at Devin.

“Why do you think I had my hands on your wrists, Jack? I wouldn't have let you do it.”

“You fucking bastard. After all I've done for you?”

“You lost those girls, Jack, I didn't. Besides, she saw you were susceptible and pounced on it.”

What was that? Anna asked herself. She sucked in deep breaths, desperate for oxygen. Why did she just tell her guardian to go suck off Devin? Jack was furious. How did she do that? Was this the power that Devin told her about? Was Devin as angry as Jack?

She looked up fearfully and saw Devin watching her with a curious look. Tears filled her eyes as she anticipated his anger. She didn't know why she just did what she did. It was so unlike her to go off on her own...to initiate anything like that without being told to do so.

She looked at Jack, who glared at her. “I'm sorry, Jack,” she whimpered.

Jack's jaw clenched and he glared at Devin.

She looked back at Devin, who held out his hand to her. She stood on trembling legs and walked to him.

He pulled her into his lap and held her against his chest. “Good girl,” he said softly, stroking her hair. “I'm very impressed Anna. You did better than I anticipated you would.” He spoke softly so no one else would hear. “Jack is pissed at me. Will you go ease his anger with your mouth? I think it would calm him.”

“Yes, Devin,” she replied. She walked nervously over to Jack and knelt between his feet.

“Don't hurt her, Jack. She did well and I won't allow you to punish her.”

“She did well by manipulating me into wanting to suck your cock?” Jack sneered.

“Don't get pissy, Jack. This is what we trained her for.”

Jack snorted. “You weren't supposed to use it on me.”

“You can leave if you'd like.” Devin's voice was cold and low.

Anna saw Jack’s face pale slightly. “No,” he said, less forcefully. “I'm fine.” He put his hand on Anna's head and looked down at her and gave her a stiff smile. “Good job, Anna.” He leaned back and rested his hands on the arms of the chair.

Anna reached tentatively for his pants, watching his face. When he nodded, Anna pulled the strings of his pants loose and leaned forward as she pulled his cock out. She stroked it a few times, in the way she knew he liked, and he began to relax.

As he relaxed, she was able to relax and gave him the best blowjob that she knew how to give. She knew him well, having sucked on him pretty much daily for many, many years. She knew what he liked and didn't like. She knew the amount of pressure he liked and how fast to move her tongue around his swollen head. When he stiffened and groaned, she accepted his cum into her mouth and sat on her heels, sucking gently until he pulled himself away from her.

He put his hand on her head and looked down at her. “Good girl, Anna.”

She beamed under his praise and he smiled. A genuine smile that she hadn't seen in a long time.

They looked at each other for a few moments, then he pulled her into his lap and held her. Anna melted into his arms. It had been so long since he'd held her like this. She felt like she was a little girl again, resting safe in his arms. Never mind the taste of his cum still lingering in her mouth. She basked in his presence and snuggled closer.

He stroked her hair gently as the conversation continued around them. Anna didn't pay any attention, but liked the way Jack's chest rumbled when

he talked.

A while later, Devin asked Jack to go get someone for him and Anna went and sat at Devin's feet again. She realized she was aroused and wet and wanted a cock inside her. Her juices trickled onto her ankles and she squirmed uncomfortably.

Devin put his hand on her head and she stilled. He hadn't touched her aside from caressing her breasts earlier. Why? Was he not interested in her tonight?

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

“Baby, I'll get to you soon, I promise,” Devin said, looking down at her as if reading her thoughts. “I have to attend to something first, though.” His attention was drawn to the man approaching the platform.

She recognized him as Luke, Jenna's dad. He greeted Devin politely. Devin indicated a chair with a flick of his fingers. He gave Anna a smile as he sat and she smiled brightly back at him.

Unexpectedly, she sensed Devin's anger rise. Was it because she and Luke smiled at each other? She thought that was part of it, but Devin wasn't angry at her. He was angry at...Luke? Why?

After a few minutes of polite conversation, Devin became cold. “Luke, I understand you've known Anna almost as long as I have.” It was a statement more than a question.

Luke looked warily at Devin. “Of course, Devin. You know the...relationship I've had with her.”

Devin nodded and stroked his chin. “I do. But you do realize that as of a few weeks ago, she became my property rather than Jack's, correct?”

Luke nodded hesitantly. “Yes....”

Devin cocked his brow. “So, you can imagine my surprise when I found out that you'd taken her, fucked her, without my permission.”

Luke looked confused. “Devin, I've been fucking her since Jack had—”

Devin glared at him. “She is an Elder-Mistress now. Do you wear a diamond?”

“No,” he answered weakly. “I didn't think—”

“You didn't think? Well, that is a problem. Because I've been trying to think of a way to make sure you and everyone else knows to keep their cocks out of my property without permission.” Devin's voice was quiet, but as cold as ice. He motioned to the side of the room where Ian stood near a door.

Ian opened the door and led a naked girl was led out of the side room, bound at the wrists. Anna didn't think anything of it until Luke gasped.

“Devin, what the fuck are you doing?” Luke exclaimed.

Anna looked back up and realized it was Jenna who was being led, naked, to the platform.

“No!” she exclaimed before she could stop herself.

Devin grabbed her hair and pulled her head back. “I suggest you keep quiet if you don't want to visit the Red Room, Mistress.”

Tears filled Anna's eyes as she looked into Devin's cold eyes. How could he bring Jenna here like this? She wasn't one of his girls. Devin clenched his fist, tightening his hold on Anna's hair and Anna nodded as best she could. He released her and she bit the inside of her lips to keep from speaking again.

Jenna was brought onto the platform and made to kneel in front of Devin. The two girl's eyes met, both full of fear. Anna wanted to reach out and comfort her friend, who didn't belong here.

Luke looked helplessly down at his daughter as Ian held him down in his seat. Jenna and Anna stared at each other.

“Anna,” Devin snapped and she tore her gaze from Jenna and looked at the ground in front of her.

“Luke, you fucked Anna without my permission,” he said slowly.

Anna heard Jenna gasp.

Devin chuckled. “Your daughter didn't know you were fucking her best friend?”

Anna surreptitiously looked at Jenna. Her eyes were wide with shock as she looked at her father.

“She didn't know that you'd fucked Anna before you fucked her?”

Jenna's eyes filled with tears, from humiliation or hurt, Anna wasn't sure.

“Devin you've no right to expose her like this,” Luke protested. “Please don't punish her for what I did.”

Anna saw the other Brothers turning toward them, drawn to the scene unfolding on the dais.

“But how else will I emphasize that no one is to touch Anna without my permission? She is mine.” Devin stood and addressed the room. “Luke dared touch my Mistress without my permission. I believe it was made clear that she was not available for general use by the Brothers. Only Elders have the right to unhindered access to her.”

He looked at Luke, then down at Jenna trembling at his feet. “So, I will take something of his.” He grasped Jenna's hair and pulled her to her knees in front of him. “Suck my cock like you suck your daddy's,” he said in a cruel voice.

Jenna shook her head.

Oh, Jenna, don't anger him, Anna pleaded silently.

Devin chuckled. “Anna, perhaps you'd like to help your friend?”

Anna glanced up at Devin's face. He had a cruel, amused look on his face. A look that was not to be messed with. She nodded and crawled forward next to Jenna.

“Jenna,” she whispered. “Don't make him angry. Please. For your own sake. Just do as he--”

“Shut up, bitch,” Jenna said in an angry whisper. “How dare you act like my friend.”

Jenna’s tone stunned Anna and she stared at her. Jenna only glared back.

“Anna, I hear whispering, which means that my cock is not in her mouth. This is your last warning about your disobedience.” Devin looked down and glared at her.

Now it was her security on the line. How could she force Jenna to give Devin a blowjob? If she didn't, she'd go to the Red Room.

“Please Jenna, just do as he says. His cock is very nice.”

Jenna turned her head in refusal.

Devin glared down at Anna then turned his eyes to Jenna. Jenna didn't see the hardness in Devin's eyes, but Anna did.

In desperation to spare her friend, Anna reached for Devin's cock, but he smacked her hand away.

“Please, Master,” she begged.

Devin's knee made contact with her shoulder and she fell backwards.

He pulled Jenna up by her hair and dragged her over to Luke. Anna didn't move as she watched Devin sit Jenna in Luke's lap and push her bound wrists up and behind Luke's neck, which Ian held in place. Devin then undid his own ties, held Jenna's hair in his hand and forced his cock into her mouth.

Anna saw and heard Jenna choking and grunting as Devin fucked her mouth as she sat in her father's lap. She unconsciously moved towards Jenna, and a pair of hands grabbed her around her waist and pulled her up into a lap.

“Anna, don't,” a male voice said softly by her ear. “He's in a rage and won't stop until he's done with her.”

She turned to see Trenton's face next to hers. "She's my best friend. She didn't do anything wrong," she whispered in despair, watching Jenna's eyes bulge as Devin forced his cock down her throat. She hoped that Devin wouldn't use his spikes on her.

Trenton held her tightly, but Anna knew better than to fight to get to Jenna. She was in enough danger as it was. Would Devin really send her to the Red Room?

The entire Hall was silent as all present watched the events on the platform.

"Stand Luke," Devin said, stepping backwards and giving him room to stand up.

Luke struggled to stand with Jenna's arms wrapped around his neck.

"Stand and hold her legs open."

"Devin, please," Luke begged softly. "Not Jenna."

"What, you're not willing to share her? You want to keep her for yourself?" Devin mocked him. "I want to find out what's so special about this little pussy of hers."

Luke had managed to get to his feet and was holding Jenna up under her thighs, but they were clenched together.

Devin attempted to spread her legs apart, but Jenna was a dancer and had strong legs. He pushed her knees up towards her face and Devin shoved his fingers inside her pussy. Jenna screamed and kicked her legs, almost kicking Devin in the face.

Devin grabbed her ankles and held them still. "I would love to break you, Jenna," he said with an evil grin. He motioned to Ian, who went to stand behind Luke and grasped Jenna's knees and spread them open, exposing her pussy to Devin. Jenna struggled, but Ian was extremely strong and she could only buck her hips, which amused Devin.

“Play with her tits, Luke. You know you want to.” Devin commanded softly. “Let her enjoy herself, now that she's subdued.

“You fucking bastard,” Jenna yelled at Devin.

Luke clamped his hand over her mouth and caressed her breast, tugging on her nipple. Jenna's eyes widened, then closed slightly as Luke continued playing with her breast.

“She really is a little sex kitten, isn't she?” Devin said as he glided his fingers down her exposed pussy.

Jenna's eyes opened and she watched Devin's face as he pressed his finger inside her. She moved slightly and her eyes half-closed again as Devin thrust his finger in and out of her. Jenna moaned as he pressed in another finger.

Devin smiled as Jenna moved against him. “I think you can release her mouth, Luke. I'd love to hear her little sex sounds that you've been enjoying for so many years.”

Luke frowned slightly, but moved his hand away and to her other breast.

Jenna moaned loudly as her father kneaded her breasts and Devin finger fucked her.

“Oh!” she cried. “Oh, God!” She bucked her hips and cried out loudly as she came.

Anna was in shock to see Jenna subdued so quickly. Of course, she knew Devin was an excellent lover. Jealousy tore at Anna's heart as Jenna gazed at Devin in her post-orgasmic state. She tried to keep her face impassive, but Jenna caught Anna watching her and smirked at her.

Jenna looked back at Devin. “Fuck me?” she begged, then glared back at Anna.

Devin grinned at Luke's horror and lifted Jenna off of him. Devin led her back to his seat and she straddled his lap, his cock disappearing into her pussy.

Anna stared at the floor to avoid watching, but she could not block her hearing. She pressed her lips together and tried to not pay attention to the grunts and moans coming from both Devin and Jenna as they fucked near her.

“Yes! Oh, Yes!” Jenna exclaimed.

Anna clenched her hands together. Trenton hugged her towards him, feeling her discomfort. She heard Jenna cry out her orgasm and Devin followed shortly after.

For some reason Anna didn't like the idea of Devin having sex with anyone else, and that he'd had sex with her best friend hurt even more.

She dared a glance at Luke, who looked like she felt. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Devin push Jenna to her feet and towards her father.

Devin stood and addressed the room again. “If you dare touch Anna without my permission, I will do the same thing to your daughter.” Devin looked intently at the men in the room. “Do you understand?”

“Yes, my lord,” they responded as one.

Devin nodded. “If anyone is interested in sampling Luke's daughter, feel free.” He grinned maliciously. “She'll only be here tonight. Probably.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Devin turned and went back to his seat.

“Anna,” Devin said, holding out his hand.

She stood obediently and walked to him, heart still hurting.

She heard Jenna shriek and saw a man grab her and lead her away.

Luke started to protest, but Devin stopped him with a word.

“She's mine for the night, Luke.”

Anna stopped and watched Jenna, horrified at what was happening. Her smirk was gone, replaced with fear as multiple men started touching her. One man forced her to her knees and shoved his cock in her mouth. Another pulled at her hips and started fucking her from behind.

“Anna,” Devin repeated.

Anna turned back to him and began to sit at his feet. He reached out to grab her hand and pulled her into his lap.

She sat stiffly as he petted her. She felt hurt and scared. Would Devin send her to the Red Room? Why did he have sex with Jenna in front of her?

She'd lost her best friend, she was certain. Jenna hated her for having sex with her dad.

Devin sighed after a few minutes. “Anna, I had to make a point to my brothers. I wasn't trying to hurt you, but I know you got hurt in the process. I'm sorry, Baby.”

Anna looked up at Devin with tears in her eyes. “Are you going to send me to the Red Room?” That was her main fear.

“I did threaten that, didn’t I?” Devin frowned and shook his head. “I shouldn't have threatened you with that, Anna. It wasn't your place to make Jenna do anything.” He cupped her chin and looked at her. “No, I'm not going to send you there. I was angry. I'm sorry.”

Anna let out the breath she hadn't realized she was holding and bit her lip to keep from crying in relief.

He smoothed her hair. “I didn't mean to scare you, Anna. I know you were doing what you could.” He kissed her shoulder. “Did I hurt your shoulder?”

Anna shook her head and gave him a timid smile. “You're not angry with me?” she asked.

“No, Baby. I'm not. You've been a good girl tonight.” He brought her face to his and kissed her gently. “I saw the nasty face Jenna gave you. That wasn't very nice, was it?”

“She's never been angry with me before,” Anna said quietly, daring to look out where she'd last seen Jenna. She was still there, bent over a couch and being fucked hard. She almost looked like she was enjoying herself.

“That's why I sent her out there, because she sneered at you.”

“You're punishing her for something she did to me?” Anna looked at Devin in shock. Why would he do such a thing?

“Of course, Baby. You're my precious girl. No one gets away with doing anything to you that I don't approve of. You were trying to help her and she called you a bitch. I won't allow that to happen.”

Anna was in shock. Devin was...protecting her in a way. He was exacting revenge on someone for hurting her. She didn't know what to think about that.

“Look at her, Anna. She's enjoying herself. Her dad turned her into a little slut. She's no better than the other girls here. You are better than her.”

Devin nuzzled Anna's neck and caressed her breast. "I would much rather fuck you than her any day, but I had to do it because of Luke. And Luke has learned his lesson."

Anna looked at Luke, who was watching Jenna. He stroked his cock as he watched. Anna realized that she was finding the whole situation rather erotic. Luke was enjoying watching his daughter being fucked like a dog. Jenna was bent over a chair and enjoying it.

Anna was the only one who hadn't had sex tonight.

Devin chuckled and nipped at her lip. "Why are you pouting?"

She looked at Devin, who was watching her with an amused expression. "Jenna got to fuck you, and now she's getting pounded down there. I haven't gotten to fuck anyone."

Devin laughed and kissed her. "I know, Baby. I'm sorry. I am taking you to bed with me tonight. But I'm not ready for another fuck yet." Anna's lip protruded more and Devin laughed again. "Why don't you go sit on Luke's lap?"

She looked at him in shock. "I thought you just punished him for having sex with me."

"I did. Because he didn't ask first. I would have, and still will, give him general permissions with you. But he shouldn't have taken you without asking first. You belong to me." He pinched her nipple and she moaned softly. "I know you and he have a long history and wouldn't want to deny the two of you being together. But he, and the others, needed to be taught a lesson first." He pushed her gently off his lap. "Go, enjoy yourself. Watch and see if Jenna notices. Or go down and do it in front of her. She'll get the message that you're better than her."

Anna walked over to Luke and sat on his lap. "Hi," she said softly.

Luke looked alarmed and looked behind her at Devin. When Devin nodded, he turned back to Anna with a smile.

“Hey, sweetie.” He kissed her. “Jenna seems to be enjoying herself, once she got over the initial shock.”

She looked back down at Jenna, who was still being pounded from behind. Jenna glanced up and her eyes widened when she saw Anna in her father's lap.

Anna narrowed her eyes at her and leaned into Luke and kissed his neck. Luke moaned and reached up to caress Anna's breasts. She nipped his neck, making him chuckle, then smiled up at him before he cupped her cheek and kissed her. His hand trailed down her neck to her collarbone and breast. He tugged on her nipple and she moaned into his mouth.

Anna opened her eyes briefly to see Jenna still watching. “She's watching us,” she whispered.

Luke's cock jumped against Anna's thigh. He kissed down her neck and took a nipple into his mouth. She moaned and ran her hands behind his head.

“I need you, Anna,” Luke said, grasping her hips and making her straddle him. She adjusted her skirt and settled onto his cock, sighing at the feel of him inside her. She leaned forward and laid her head on his shoulder and watched Jenna as she rode his cock.

Luke cupped her ass and guided her up and down. Faster and faster they moved, their hips rocking together until Anna leaned back and cried out her orgasm, clinging to Luke's upper arms. Luke came a moment later and dug his fingers into her ass and cried out her name.

She slumped against him, eyes closed and breathing hard.

“Anna,” Devin called.

She turned around to see Jenna standing behind her, looking at her with fearful eyes.

Anna looked at Devin, confused. Devin walked over and forced Jenna to her knees in front of Anna. “She's going to lick her father's cum out of you.”

Anna stood and turned around.

“Sit down on Luke's lap. Luke, hold Anna open for your daughter to eat.”

Anna sat and leaned back against Luke, who held her knees up and open.

Anna had a vague recollection of something similar happening on Wednesday night but couldn't remember anything other than the chain of orgasmic pleasure that Devin had induced in her body. She smiled up at Devin.

Devin grasped Jenna's hair and forced her face to Anna's wet pussy. “Eat,” he commanded.

Jenna's tongue darted out and Anna sighed at her friend's mouth on her. They'd done this many times when they were younger, but it was usually done mutually. Jenna's soft mouth against her pussy was heavenly. She reached down and held her head close, moaning as Jenna sucked on her clit.

“That is a sight to behold,” Devin commented.

“Mmm,” Luke said against Anna's neck. “I would have to agree.” He cupped Anna's breasts and rolled her nipples between his fingers.

“Does she like anal?” Devin asked Luke of Jenna.

“I think she likes anything,” he answered softly, gazing down at his daughter.

Anna saw Devin slide his finger down Jenna's back and Jenna's eyes widened a second later and she whimpered. “She hasn't taken any in her ass

tonight. She's tight.”

Jenna whimpered again and pulled away from Anna to cry out in pain. Devin pushed her face back into Anna's pussy. “I didn't say you could stop,” Devin growled in her ear. “You were rude to my precious girl and were enjoying yourself far too much down there.”

Jenna jumped again and tears formed in her eyes, but she kept licking.

Jenna's discomfort seemed to arouse Anna more and she snapped at Jenna. “Suck my clit.”

Jenna immediately obeyed and sucked hard on her.

“Oh, God. I'm coming!” Anna cried out. She kept her eyes on Jenna and when she jumped again, obviously in pain it shot Anna over the edge and she screamed out in pleasure as the waves of her orgasm were sprinkled with painful whimpers from Jenna. Anna kept her eyes closed, enjoying the sensation and the sounds, clinging to her pleasure until the last possible moment.

Jenna had stopped sucking on her, but was still whimpering and crying out. Anna opened her eyes to see Ian on his knees behind Jenna. Tears streamed down her cheeks and she bit her lip hard to keep from crying out, but the cries still escaped.

“No, please,” Jenna begged. “Please, stop.”

“Now, why would I tell him to stop something that was arousing us all?” Devin asked, with a wicked grin. “You gave Anna quite the nice orgasm with your whimpering.” He nodded to Ian, who pushed himself forward suddenly and Jenna screamed and tried to pull away from him, but Ian held her hips in place.

“Please...,” she sobbed. “Please. It hurts.”

Devin sat in a nearby chair and pulled Anna onto his lap. Anna could now see Ian's enormous cock shoved into Jenna's ass. Anna gasped at the

sight. She knew how much that hurt.

“How's it feel, Ian?” Devin asked.

Ian turned and grinned. “She's tight, but loosening up.” He pulled out to show Devin her gaping ass.

“Beautiful,” Devin commented. “Luke, you should see this. Ian does marvelous work with asses.”

Luke stood and walked around. “Nicely done.”

Jenna sobbed and collapsed, her chest to the floor. Ian turned and thrust back inside her with one swift movement, causing Jenna to scream again. Ian continued moving in and out of her ass as the others watched.

Devin spread Anna's knees apart and began playing with her clit. She leaned back against him and watched Ian and Jenna. Jenna clawed against the floor.

Quicker than she expected, Anna's orgasm hit her and she cried out from Devin's hands on her.

“Oh, Oh, Master. Yes, oh God, yes!” He didn't let her come down, he made her come again and again, giving her an orgasm chain similar to the other night. He removed his hand and turned Anna around to face the back of the chair and thrust into her pussy. She shrieked with immense pleasure as he fucked her hard.

“Oh, Master, yes!” She moaned loudly as she came again and felt Devin come inside her.

He leaned forward and rested his head on her back. “Such a good girl, Anna,” he whispered. Devin turned around and collapsed into the chair with Anna in his lap.

Jenna had curled into a ball on the floor and Anna could see her shaking. Her ass gaped open. Ian lounged on the ground next to her, talking to Luke. Anna curled up in Devin's lap, content.

“Mmm, I'm being selfish with my girl,” Devin murmured. “But I don't want you out of my sight tonight. I want you here. With me.”

Anna looked up at him adoringly. “I want to be here, too.”

The next morning, Anna woke up sore from all of Devin's lovemaking. When he'd taken Anna back to his room, much later that night, he'd been rough on her, but it had been incredibly erotic.

She rolled on top of Devin and kissed him. “Good morning, Master,” she said softly.

Devin smiled, even though his eyes were still closed. “Good morning, Baby,” he rumbled. He snaked his hand around the back of her head and kissed her soundly. He moved her hips to straddle him and pushed her down on his cock.

She hissed as she stretched around him. The erotic pain/pleasure was intense.

“Still sore, Baby?” He held her hips and thrust up into her.

“Yes,” she sighed and moaned.

Devin chuckled. “You like it?”

“Yes,” she breathed, and clenched her muscles around him.

Devin's eyes opened and gazed at her. “I love that you like the pain, Anna. It's so erotic,” he murmured, thrusting a few times, hard.

She moaned as he hit some especially sore areas. “Yes, Master...”

“Look at me, Baby,” Devin whispered. Anna pulled back and gazed into his eyes. His eyes took on a look that was becoming familiar to her. The look of concentration that he got before he pricked her.

She licked her lips in anticipation.

“You want it, Baby?”

“Yes,” she whimpered.

Devin smiled and stared at her and she felt the pinch inside. She hissed, not taking her eyes off him. Her eyes watered from the pain, but gazing into his eyes turned the pain to pleasure.

Devin walked Anna to the front door of the Manor and she put her shoes on. "Master?" she said timidly.

"Yes, Baby?"

"Is...is Jenna okay?"

Devin frowned. "Why do you care?"

Anna blinked. "I...she's my friend."

Devin seemed to think for a moment, then sighed. "I suppose it's all right for you to remain friends with her. Don't let her disrespect you, Anna."

Anna wasn't even sure if Jenna would talk to her again, let alone disrespect her.

"But is she okay?" She winced, fearing that she would anger Devin by repeating the question, but he simply looked at her.

"I made sure she would be taken to Dr. Ansen when the night was over. Ian was to take care of it personally."

Ian would do it. Anna was certain of it. She could call Ian later. "Thank you, De-, er, Master."

"I will see you sometime this week, Anna." He kissed her. "Enjoy dancing."

She kissed him back then walked to her car and drove home.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Aaron paced back and forth in his bedroom. It was almost noon and he hadn't heard from Anna yet.

He'd gone out to dinner the previous night with Alex, Tony and Seth and then to the bar after for drinks. Lots of drinks. Despite all the alcohol in his body, he still hadn't slept well.

Alex had tried to reassure him that Anna would be fine. That Devin wouldn't do anything to really hurt her.

“Really hurt her? That's not very comforting, Alex”

“He can't kill her.”

Aaron glared at him. “Again, not really comforting.”

Alex shrugged and took a swig of his beer, then set it back on the table with a thud. He'd had several already. “I don't know what else to tell you, Aaron. She's...strong. She can survive anything.”

Aaron huffed. “How can you just sit there and say ‘she's strong?’ You claim to care, but just...I don't know...” He could hardly contain his frustration with his friend. Alex was usually so action oriented. And now, he just sat drinking his beer, looking calm. “Why can't you go get her?”

“Because he is her Master, too. And much more powerful than I am.”

Aaron laughed until he saw Alex was not laughing. “You're serious?”

“I told you this morning that he doesn't fight fair. I don't know how to fight him.” Alex sighed. “I'm not an Elder. I don't have his resources or his knowledge.” He ran his hands through his hair and stared at the table. “I've

failed her so many times,” he lamented before he finished his half-full beer in one chug and waved to the waitress for another one.

Aaron looked at Seth and Tony, who watched Alex carefully but kept quiet.

“Alex, you can't blame yourself for Anna's situation,” Aaron protested.

“*Ja, ich kann,*” Alex mumbled.

“How?”

Alex sighed and leaned back in his chair. “There was a chance. One chance when all this could have been prevented. Or, at least most of her abuse could have been prevented.”

Aaron looked doubtfully at Alex. What on earth was he talking about?

“I first saw Anna four years ago. She...appeared in my bedroom in the middle of the night. Vati had told me to watch for a girl with brown hair and green eyes a year before, but I'd put it out of my mind.” Alex stared at his bottle of beer. He smiled slightly. “I spoke to her. In German. She had no idea what I was saying, but...we connected. I could sense that she wanted to come to me, but then Mina woke up and spoke, and Anna backed away and disappeared.” Alex rubbed his eyes. “If I had listened to Vati, Anna wouldn't have gotten frightened or hurt or whatever it was that made her back away. And she would have come to me and been saved from...all that shit.”

Aaron was stunned. A few weeks ago, he would have laughed at the idea of Alex's vision and that a person could be transported from one place to another. But after seeing her writhing in pain caused by Devin attacking Alex far away, he no longer doubted that it could happen.

“So, that's it? She's doomed?” Aaron, an easy going guy for the most part, was getting riled up and wanted to hit his best friend for the second time that day. “Why are you here? Why didn't you just...I don't know...let

her turn into that puppet you were talking about? At least she would have been spared some misery.”

“She's not doomed,” Seth interjected. “At least we don't think so.”

“What?”

“There is a final...bonding ritual that must be performed when Anna is twenty-six,” Alex explained. “We believe that there is a chance to undo the bond between her and Devin, but we don't know for sure that there is a way or how to even go about finding out if there is a way. The tomes that explain everything were supposed to have been destroyed centuries ago.”

“But Devin obviously has a copy,” Tony said. “Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to do what he did.”

“So if Devin’s family didn’t destroy their tome, there is a high likelihood that other families didn't either,” Seth added.

Alex groaned. “Damn my family for being honorable.” His words were a little slurred and Aaron knew he wasn't serious. Honor was practically his middle name.

The waitress brought another beer for Alex and gave him a bright smile. Aaron knew how much despair his friend was in when he ignored the buxom brunette.

Aaron asked for another beer before she left. He didn't want to think about all this miserable shit right now. They'd gone out to not think about Anna. He knew he was the one who brought it up, but he couldn't help it. He cared about her and was worried about her.

Alex confused him. One minute he was “her Master” and then the next minute he was talking about her like a forlorn lover. For once, Aaron was glad of Anna's fear of Alex. It kept him from worrying about Alex stealing her away. Aaron didn't stand a chance against Alex in the dating scene.

Not that Aaron wasn't good looking or that women didn't like him. He and Alex, and Seth and Tony for that matter, had many very enjoyable nights going out and hooking up with women. Many Friday and Saturday nights had ended up at his or Alex's place with them and their dates and nakedness and sex. There were times bodies and limbs were all over the place and he didn't know who he was fucking or kissing, or who was sucking on his cock. Okay, he knew when he was fucking one of the guys versus the girls, but it didn't matter.

He wasn't gay. He wouldn't even consider himself bi. Neither would the other guys. But they were comfortable enough around each other that if the mood struck them, they weren't ashamed to enjoy themselves.

If he hadn't been dating Anna, he'd be tempted to suggest picking up some women to take them back to his place. Hell, he'd love to have Anna and enjoy her with his friends, if she wanted to. He knew she'd been with Seth and Tony. But Alex? He wasn't sure. Alex wouldn't talk about it, which was weird. Alex was generally very open about his sexual conquests and adventures.

Aaron chuckled. If he looked like Alex he'd probably be open about it too.

“Aaron?” Tony waved his hand in front of Aaron's face. “Dude, you still with us?”

Aaron blinked. “Huh?”

“You spaced and almost spilled your beer.”

Aaron looked down. “Oh, sorry.”

“Where'd ya go?” Seth asked with a laugh. “Thinking about Anna?”

Aaron sighed and took a drink. “Sex in general, but yes, Anna, too.”

“Sex and Anna kinda go together,” Tony remarked.

Aaron hated to admit it, but it was true. You couldn't really think about her without thinking about sex. She exuded sexuality, without being overt or even obvious about it. He doubted she even realized it. Her full, pink lips beckoned him to kiss her. He lost himself in her beautiful moss-green eyes every time he looked at her. She had an incredible body, almost too curvy for a ballet dancer, especially her perfect c-cup breasts that fit so nicely in his hands.

He was getting hard just thinking about her. He adjusted himself and shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

He glanced around. The other guys had gone quiet as well. It wouldn't have surprised him if they were thinking about her too. She got in your head and made it difficult to *not* think about her.

Alex looked miserable. Anna was the only thing Aaron could remember that made Alex miserable every time he thought about her.

Thankfully, Tony started talking about a new gun he saw in a magazine. It lightened the mood, even though Aaron had little interests in guns.

The rest of the night Aaron managed to not think about Anna...much. He'd taken a cab home much later, as had the other guys, stumbled up to his room and fell face first into his bed. And started thinking about her. Wondering if she was okay. Worrying that she wasn't. Then worrying she was enjoying herself too much.

He'd been to a Friday evening event once, in Los Angeles. He'd gone with Alex and Travis. It was a big room with guys all over the place having sex with women. There were a few areas where it had turned into a mini orgy. The three of them had sat with Brandon, Travis' dad who was the LA Elder, on his platform. Many girls had come to them throughout the

evening. They were all beautiful and very talented. Brandon was a nice guy, too. He didn't seem to have an evil streak like Devin did.

At one point, Brandon had asked Alex if he went to the Gatherings in San Francisco. Alex said no. Brandon hadn't responded, but the look on his face indicated that he wasn't overly fond of Devin. Now Aaron knew why.

Eventually Aaron drifted off into a fitful sleep, only to awaken with a hangover when the sun came up a few hours later.

God, he hoped not every Friday night/Saturday morning would be like this. He'd die of a heart attack from the worry. Was she worth it?

Yes, she was. Even if he hadn't been in love with her, which he could admit now, she deserved a friend and lover that wouldn't hurt her and that she wasn't afraid of.

By noon, he estimated he'd walked over a mile, pacing first in his room and then downstairs. His roommates laughed at him.

“You never get this worked up about a girl.” Garrett commented

“You'd be the same way if she'd looked twice at you at the party,” Aaron growled.

“She did look at me twice. Probably would have hooked up if you hadn't butted in.”

Aaron frowned, but didn't respond. He wasn't in the mood to fight. Garrett had no idea who Anna was. Let him think what he wanted. He shuddered to think of what would have happened if Garrett had been the one with Anna when Travis started asking her questions. Not that Garrett would have hurt her, he just wouldn't have understood and Anna could have gotten even more screwed up mentally.

His phone finally rang at 12:57. He knew the exact time because he'd been staring at his phone, wondering if he should try and call her.

“Anna!” he exclaimed.

“Hi, Aaron. How are you?”

Oh, her sweet voice was wonderful to hear. But she sounded tired.

“Missing you,” he started walking up to his room to get his keys in anticipation of driving to her place. “Are you okay? You sound tired.”

She sighed. “I am. It was...a long night.”

He paused, keys in hand. “You want some company for the afternoon?”

She didn't answer at first and he started getting anxious. “Yes. I'd like that.”

He pushed his feet into his shoes and ran back down the stairs. “I'm heading to my car right now,” he said. “I'll see you soon.”

“Okay. I can't wait.”

“Me too.”

Aaron drove with a happy heart. When he was at a stoplight, he dictated a text message to Alex: *Heard from Anna. She's fine and I'm heading over now.*

A few minutes later, he received a text back from Alex: *Thanks*

Aaron laughed at his friend's apparent nonchalance. He would bet anything he'd been waiting for Aaron's text with as much anxiety as Aaron had been waiting for Anna's call.

Fifteen minutes later, he knocked on Anna's apartment door. When she opened it, he grabbed her and hugged her tight, making her giggle. He picked her up, closed the door with his foot and carried her to her couch, holding her in his lap.

He nuzzled her hair. It smelled delicious. “I missed you.”

Anna turned to him and kissed him. “I missed you, too,” she said, cupping his cheek and looking deeply into his eyes. She looked tired and maybe sad. He wanted to ask, but knew she didn't like talking about the things that involved Devin.

Anna felt at peace. Real peace. There was a semblance of peace when she was with Devin and he wasn't angry at her, or anyone else for that matter. Being with Aaron, however, was an entirely different feeling.

She snuggled close to him and he tightened his arms around her. She was glad he didn't ask details about what had happened the night before. How could she tell him about what had happened to Jenna?

Oh, how could she have enjoyed watching Jenna get hurt? The more she thought about it, the more it didn't make any sense to her.

Why would watching her best friend get hurt and humiliated turn her on? The thought of what Ian did to her, the pain he'd caused her, right now made her nauseous. But last night it had aroused her. How could that be?

She hoped Jenna was okay. She'd forgotten to contact Ian and was hesitant now because she didn't want Aaron to know. 'Course, he'd probably find out on Monday.

She buried her face in his chest. What a mess! She wanted to stop thinking about it.

“How was your evening?” she asked, playing with a button on his shirt.

“Long.” Aaron chuckled. “It involved a lot of alcohol.”

Anna looked up at him with a frown. “What did you do?”

“Went to Barney's with Alex, Seth and Tony.”

Anna cringed at Alex's name. “What's Barney's?”

“A bar that we go to a lot. It's not overly crowded, but there's enough people to keep things interesting.”

She smiled. “Did you pick up any women?”

Aaron coughed and looked at her. “Anna! No, of course not. Why would I do that?”

Anna blinked in shock. “Well, I mean, I was busy and you went out with your friends. You guys are all good looking....” Her voice trailed off and she shrugged.

The idea of Aaron being with another woman made her uncomfortable, but she couldn't blame him. She was, after all, not available to him last night.

“Anna, I don't want anyone but you.” He stroked her cheek and kissed her. It started soft and gentle and became more passionate.

Aaron cupped her breast. “I missed you,” he murmured against her neck.

“I missed you too,” she said, kissing him soundly, then she stood up and led him to her room.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

“Wake up, sleepyhead.”

Anna opened her eyes to see Aaron looking at her with a sweet smile on his face. She smiled back.

They’d been dating for two weeks; the happiest two weeks that Anna could remember. Aaron was so nice, so sweet, so considerate. This freedom thing that Alex had talked about was wonderful.

Aaron started back dancing all day last week, so they hadn’t had as much time together as previously, but the time they did have together was precious to her.

“Hi,” she said softly.

“Hi.” He leaned forward and kissed her gently. “I like waking up with you.”

“Me, too.” She grinned and then suddenly gasped. “It’s Monday!”

Aaron chuckled. “You just remembered?”

Anna shrugged. “I was thinking about how happy you’ve made me.” She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him again.

Today the Summer Intensives began. She and Aaron would both be dancing all day. They’d be in the same building; different floors, but they’d still be able to see each other during the day.

Anna couldn’t wait to start dancing full-time again, but she felt nervous, too. She hadn’t danced so much since her parents died.

Aaron followed Anna into the shower and pressed her back against the wall. He buried himself deep in her body and they both groaned as they fucked, slow and hard.

“God, this feels good,” Aaron murmured in her ear. “I’m going to do it to you again after we get back tonight.”

She grinned and leaned the back of her head against the tiles of the shower.

“Uh, huh,” she breathed.

He was so deep and it felt so good. His fingers pressed into her ass cheeks as he moved in and out.

He continued thrusting into her. They’d had so much sex the last few days she was surprised she wasn’t sore, but making love to Aaron was different than other men. He never hurt her, was never rough. He never even went for her ass. He just...loved her with his body. And she did her best to make him as happy as she could. At one point he’d said he thought he would die from so much pleasure.

They moved together, the pace quickening until they both exploded against each other, crying out into each other’s mouth as they kissed.

He continued kissing her as he lifted her off him. “Mmm, maybe we can sneak away at lunchtime.”

Anna smiled at the thought. Finding a private spot at the studio wasn’t difficult. She loved the idea of sneaking off and being together.

They finished showering, then dressed for class. Anna felt like she was floating as she pulled on her tights and leotard. She’d never, ever imagined that she’d be this happy again.

Sad thoughts threatened at the fringes of her mind, but she pushed them away. The only way she’d be able to survive would be by keeping her life segmented; enjoy the happy parts, deal with the not so pleasant parts later.

She gathered up her things, including her new *pointe* shoes. She kissed them with delight before putting them in her bag.

Aaron's laughter made her jump and she looked up at him, face flushed.

He pulled her to her feet and kissed her deeply. "I think that was one of the cutest things I've ever seen. I'm so happy for you, hon."

Anna smiled shyly up at him.

He cupped her cheeks in his hands. "I love you."

Anna's eyes widened in surprise. "You...what?" Did he really just say what she thought he'd said?

"I said, I love you." The tenderness in his eyes warmed her heart. He kissed her lips. "I can't wait to show you off as my girlfriend today."

Anna's heart soared as she gazed into his eyes. "I love you, too. I was just thinking about how happy I am."

Aaron beamed. "I'm glad you're happy. I want nothing else for you."

They gathered their things and headed down to Aaron's X-terra. He held her hand and kissed it frequently during the short drive to the studio.

Aaron parked and they walked, hand in hand, to the studio. When they walked in, they received several surprised looks, but Aaron just put his arm around Anna and greeted his fellow dancers, many of whom she'd met at the party.

Aaron led her over to Travis and a couple of other people that she remembered from the party, but couldn't remember their names. Aaron stood behind her and clasped his hands under her ribs.

"Anna," a slightly accented voice called from behind her.

Isaak.

She turned and smiled brightly at him.

"I heard you'd arrived," he said with a smile. He glanced briefly at her and Aaron together and his smile faltered a little, but he regained his

composure immediately. “Come. I’ll introduce you to your instructor.”

Aaron released her, but not before a lingering kiss. “Break a leg. I’ll see you at lunch.”

Anna beamed at him and then walked to where Isaak stood near the stairs. She saw Isaak give Aaron a look before turning and walking up the stairs with Anna.

“How are you doing, Anna? Excited?” Isaak asked.

“Yes, very much so,” she responded enthusiastically.

“Good, I’m glad.” Isaak looked at her uncertainly. “What is going on with you and Aaron?”

Anna blushed. “Oh. We...I mean...” She flushed deeper. “He’s my boyfriend.”

Isaak gave her a sad smile, then opened a door to a studio. “Here we are.”

Several girls, ages 11 to 14, were milling around, stretching and chatting. They all wore the same light blue leotard that Anna wore, tights and ballet slippers. They looked up when she and Isaak entered, greeting him eagerly.

“Hello, girls. Excited for the first day?”

They all nodded enthusiastically.

“Good, good.” He looked to the corner of the room. “Patty,” he said with a smile.

A tall, thin woman with strawberry blond hair looked up and smiled at Isaak. Anna stepped back slightly behind Isaak.

Isaak put his arm on her back and brought her forward. “Patty, this is Anna Perkins. Anna, this is Patty Cottrell. She will be your instructor and will let me know when you are ready to move up to your own age group.”

Anna smiled shyly at Patty, who gave her a very big smile. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Anna. I’m very excited about having you in my class.” Her face softened a little. “I danced with your parents,” she said softly. “You look just like your mother.”

Anna swallowed back tears and tried to smile. “Thank you,” she said softly.

Patty looked back at Isaak. “I’ll take good care of her,” she said with a smile.

“I know you will.” Isaak turned to Anna. “Anna, dear, dance beautifully.” He paused, looking troubled. “Come see me before you go to lunch.”

“Yes, Isaak,” she answered, confused and a little worried at his facial expression.

Isaak left and Patty walked her to the center of the room. “Girls,” she said loudly.

The girls in the room turned to look at her and Anna. Anna instinctively took a step back.

“We have a new student with us today.” She looked at Anna with a smile. “Well, not really a new student.” She looked back at the girls. “This is Anna Perkins. She...” There were whispers throughout the room. Patty laughed gently. “Okay. You are smart girls. Yes, this is *that* Anna Perkins. The daughter of Trevor and Anya.” She looked back at Anna. “You’re already famous,” she said gently.

Anna blushed.

“She was unable to dance for a while and is joining us for a week or two to build up her strength to join the older groups. I hope I can count on you to welcome her warmly into our family.”

The girls all gave her warm smiles.

Patty pointed to a spot on the *barre*. “Nicole, Jackie raise your hands.” Two girls in the center did so. “Go stand between them. We'll begin in a few minutes.” She then walked back to the corner where the pianist sat.

Anna hesitantly walked over to the spot Patty had indicated. Nicole and Jackie smiled brightly at her and made her feel at ease. They chatted easily for the few minutes before class started.

They'd both grown up dancing together in San Francisco. Nicole had brown hair that Anna was fairly sure was very curly, looking at the waves that led back to a thick bun. Her brown eyes glittered with delight at everything, and a smattering of freckles across her nose and cheeks complimented her fair complexion.

Jackie had many tiny black braids pulled back into a bun and beautiful ebony skin that glowed in the light from the window. Her eyes were black and cheerful and glinted with mischief.

A few minutes later, class began. The next two hours were like heaven to Anna. Dancing in a class full of potential professional dancers rather than adults that sometimes cared and sometimes didn't was wonderful. Every dancer in the room was there because they wanted to be there and was striving for her very best. It was thrilling and exhilarating.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

“Aaron, may I see you in my office?” Isaak said as Aaron picked up his bag after morning class was over.

“Sure,” Aaron said, pulling off his slippers. He'd been wracking his brain as to where he could sneak off with Anna for some “private time” and had come up with one of the small rooms up on the third floor that were rarely used. Especially in the summer.

He hoped he'd see Anna on the way to Isaak's office so she wouldn't worry that he'd run off. “Isaak,” he said, jogging up to the Ballet Master. “I just need to find Anna so that—”

“That's not necessary. She should be there already.”

Aaron stopped in his tracks, dread filling his stomach. “Why?” he asked in a low voice.

Isaak turned and sighed. “It's not something to discuss out in the open, Aaron. Please,” he motioned to the stairs.

With every step Aaron's stomach churned more. Something was up. Isaak looked troubled and if Anna was there already... Had something happened to her? Aaron hurried to Isaak's side and followed him into the bank of offices.

Anna sat on a chair in front of his office. She looked up when Aaron approached, greeting him with bright eyes and smile.

“Hey, hon,” Aaron said relieved. She was fine. “How was class?” He kissed her soundly.

Her eyes sparkled with life. It was a beautiful sight. She was truly in her element. “Heavenly.”

Isaak stood in his doorway and looked pointedly at Aaron.

“Sorry, Anna. Isaak wanted to see me, then we can go to lunch.” He winked at her, making her blush.

“Actually, I need to see both of you,” Isaak said, motioning for them to follow him into his office.

Aaron frowned and he and Anna went in and sat in the chairs opposite Isaak’s contemporary wood and metal desk.

Isaak gave both of them a sad look. “I understand the two of you are dating right now?”

Aaron nodded and took Anna's hand. “Yes.”

Isaak looked at Anna with the saddest expression Aaron had ever seen on his face. “Anna, I...” He sighed. “God forgive me for doing this. You look so happy.”

Aaron's stomach churned again. Was he going to kick Anna out of the program? Had Devin worked his evil magic against Isaak and told him to not let her dance?

Isaak’s sad eyes turned to him. “Aaron,” he said softly. “You are a professional dancer. A member of the Company.”

Aaron nodded. Everyone in this building knew that.

Isaak sighed. “Do you remember the rules we have about Company dancers dating students of the School?”

Aaron frowned. He had some vague recollection about it, but it had never been an issue. Most of the students were under eighteen and he had no desire to go to jail.

“Aaron, you and Anna can't continue to see each other if you both want to remain in the positions you currently have.”

Aaron's heart dropped like a rock. "What?" He looked at Anna, who stared at her hands, face as white as a sheet.

Isaak looked as miserable as they felt. "I'm sorry, Aaron. I truly am. The last thing in the world I want to do is hurt either of you."

"Isaak, you can't be serious! You can't do that to us." The pain in Aaron's heart was unbearable. Both for his own grief and fear for Anna's heart.

Isaak sighed. "I called up Melinda to see if the rule could be waived in this circumstance." Melinda was the President of the Board of Trustees. "She said no. It would set a bad precedent." He looked at Anna, who still stared at her hands. "I'm so sorry."

The Board of Trustees. *Alex*. Alex must have something to do with this. That son of a bitch set him and Anna up knowing this was the rule. Oh, they were going to have words.

He took a shuddering breath to calm his temper. He would deal with Alex soon. First, he needed to tend to Anna. He reached for her hand, but she snatched it away.

She looked up at Isaak with red eyes, but no tears. "I understand, Isaak." She turned to Aaron. "You're done before I am this afternoon. I'll call the front desk and have them let you into my apartment to get your things. I can walk home."

"No, Anna. We can work something out."

Anna shook her head. "We can't. You can't quit. Neither can I." She stood. "I loved every moment of being with you Aaron." She turned and walked out of the office.

Aaron glared at Isaak. "I can't believe you just did that to her," he said through clenched teeth. He stood violently. "I might be late to rehearsals. I

have someone to go deal with.” He walked out of the office, slamming the door behind him.

Anna sat on the floor near Isaak’s office, staring at the opposite wall, inconsolable. She pressed her shaking hands against her mouth to keep from sobbing. She could hardly breathe, her chest felt so tight with pain.

It had been too good to be true. She wasn't meant for happiness. She was a slave. She had no right to expect anything other than to be used for men's pleasure. Her brief time of happiness was over, and she was back to the reality of life.

She heard a door slam and jumped. Aaron walked out of the office alcove, face red and fists clenched. He glanced towards Anna and his face softened.

He stepped toward her. “Anna,” he said softly, reaching for her.

No, it hurt too much to look at him. To be near him. To hear his voice. She stood quickly and ran past him, down the stairs and out the front door.

Nicole and Jackie had said they were going to lunch nearby and she briefly considered joining them. But no, she wanted to be alone.

Why couldn't Alex have left her to her fate? To lose herself in Devin's will sounded so much better than feeling the pain of a broken heart.

Oh, the pain! It felt like her heart was being squeezed by Ian's big hands. Maybe if he squeezed hard enough, it would burst and she'd die and the misery would be over.

Thoughts of Aaron came unbidden to her mind and she shoved them away. She didn't want to feel right now. What she wouldn't give to have a drink of wine right now. She wondered if there was enough wine in the world to make her feel better.

Aaron pulled up to Alex's house, chest heaving. His rage and hurt had only built as he drove.

Anna! How could this have happened? The only thing he could imagine was some sadistic “Master” thing of Alex's. Alex was on the Board. He had to have known about the rule. Hell, even Aaron remembered hearing about it. But Alex had encouraged him to go after Anna. And he had. And he had fallen for her. Hard.

He got out of the SUV, slammed the door behind him and stormed up the long walkway. He pounded on the glass until Frau Gersten opened the door. He hadn't been paying attention and almost hit her. Poor woman.

Her eyes were wide as he walked past her into the house.

“Alex!” he yelled, his voice echoing off the wooden walls. He spun around to the housekeeper. “Is he here?”

She nodded.

“Alex!” he shouted at the top of his lungs. “Where the fuck are you, you fucking bastard?”

He walked into the living room, but Alex wasn't there.

He was about to go up the stairs when Alex appeared from downstairs.

“Aaron.” Alex's face registered extreme shock. “Is something wrong with Anna?” he asked anxiously.

Aaron glowered at him and walked to him. “You should know,” he growled, then brought his arm back and punched Alex in the face.

Aaron swung back for another one, but Alex caught his hand before he made contact. Seth and Tony clambered up the stairs and stood there in shock as they watched the two men fighting.

Alex released him and Aaron took another swing. This time Alex grabbed Aaron's hands and pinned them behind Aaron's back, turning him

to face away from Alex.

“What the hell is going on, Aaron?” Alex growled.

Aaron struggled against the hold, but Alex was far too strong and well trained to let him go.

“What is going on, Aaron?” Alex asked again, calmer this time. “Tell me.”

“Why the fuck did you tell me to go after her? What the hell kind of game are you playing with her? And me? I thought we were friends.”

“Aaron, I don’t know what you’re talking about.” He released Aaron and pushed him away from him, but watched him carefully. “Is Anna okay?”

“Don’t act like you don’t know,” Aaron growled.

Alex looked helplessly at Seth and Tony, then back at Aaron, who was breathing heavily. “Is. Anna. Okay?”

“No!” he shouted. “She’s not okay. Why the hell would she be okay? Isn’t that what you wanted?”

Alex was alarmed. “Where is she? Seth, find her.”

Seth turned and hurried out of the room.

Alex ran his hands through his hair. “Aaron. What the fuck are you talking about? What happened?”

“You, Mr. Member of the Board,” he said sarcastically. “You made us break up. You knew about the rule and you told me to go after her. What kind of sick bastard are you?”

“Break up?” Alex looked truly bewildered. “Why would you break up with her? I thought you were in love with her.”

“I am.” Aaron groaned. “I’ll deal with it, okay? But why would you do that to Anna? I thought you cared about her. Are you as sadistic as Devin? If so, let me know and I will keep my distance.”

Alex stared at him with such a confused look on his face Aaron began to wonder if he was wrong. He took a deep breath. “Did you know about the rule?”

“Rule? What rule?” Again, Alex looked confused.

“The rule about Company dancers not being allowed to date students.”

Alex's eyes widened and his face paled slightly. “That's a rule?”

Aaron realized that he'd been wrong in accusing his friend. His anger evaporated and he slumped to the floor, pressing the heels of his hands against his eyes. He nodded.

“Isaak called us into his office after classes and told us that we couldn't be together. Anna...didn't say much, and left.”

“She's near the studio,” Seth returned holding his phone. “In a deli down the street.”

Aaron looked at Seth surprised.

“There's a GPS chip in her bracelet,” Alex explained. When Aaron glared at him, he continued. “It's for emergencies. In case Devin takes her somewhere.”

Aaron traced the pattern on the wood floor with his finger. “So you didn't know that we'd have to break up?” Aaron asked quietly.

“*Nein, mein Freund,*” Alex answered in a pained voice. “I never would have done that to her. Or you.”

Aaron sighed and leaned his head back, looking up at his friend. “God, it hurts,” he said softly. “I know it was only two weeks, but I can't imagine not going home with her tonight.”

“I never would have encouraged you if I'd known, Aaron. I hope you know that.”

Aaron nodded sadly. He knew his friend better than that. He'd overreacted in his blaming Alex for the situation.

“Maybe I should call Melanie—”

“Isaak did already. He said she wouldn't change the rule. That it would create a bad precedent.”

Alex sighed and slumped in one of the chairs near the fireplace.

“Should I go find her?”

“She's afraid of you, Alex,” Aaron responded in a soft voice.

Alex grimaced at the comment. “What will she do? I don't know how she'd handle such a thing.”

Aaron pulled out his phone. “I should call Jenna and let her know. If Anna hasn't already called her.” He pushed the screen a few times, then waited for Jenna to answer. The corps had classes in a different studio and so he hadn't seen her yet today. He usually saw her at lunch though.

“Hello, Aaron.” Jenna's voice was cold.

“Jenna?” His brow creased. “What's wrong?”

She was silent for a moment. “Anna didn't tell you?”

“Tell me what?” When had Anna seen Jenna? She'd been with him all weekend.

“Ask her.”

“Jenna I can't. I...” He sighed and closed his eyes. “Isaak made us break up because she's a student.”

“He did?”

Aaron would have expected her to sound sad for him and her best friend. She sounded almost...happy?

“I'm sorry, Aaron. But you're probably better off without that bitch.”

Aaron's jaw dropped and he looked up at Alex. “I'm probably better off without that bitch?’ What's going on, Jenna?”

Alex stared at Aaron and he shrugged. He never would have imagined Jenna would turn on the friend she'd been constantly worried about for

years.

“She fucked my dad. In front of me. And various other places, apparently.”

“What?” he exclaimed. Why would Anna do that?

“Devin had me taken to his...whatever it's called...on Friday. He told everyone...” She stopped mid-sentence. “He told me he was punishing my dad for fucking Anna without his permission. And he had the men there rape me. And Anna watched and laughed along with them.”

Aaron stared at Alex horrified. “He took you to the Manor and had you raped?”

Alex frowned.

“Are you okay? Is there anything I can do?” How was he supposed to react to something like that? It's not like you could call the police.

“No. I can't dance this week 'cuz my ass is ripped to shreds. I had to get stitches.”

“You sound angry.”

“I am angry. The person I thought was my friend watched and laughed at me as it was happening.”

“Jenna, there must be some misunderstanding. Anna wouldn't—”

“What, and you know her so well? Right. Do you know how many guys she fucked that night?”

Aaron felt nauseous. “Jenna, I don't really want to know about what she does with Devin.”

“She's fucking with your head, Aaron. She likes her high-and-mighty position. She's some sort of fucking princess. Literally. A princess who fucks anything that has a cock. And she likes it.”

“Jenna, enough. I saw her Saturday morning. She wasn't exactly jumping around excited about what had happened.”

“I thought you said she didn't tell you anything.”

“She didn't. But she was very subdued about it.”

Jenna snorted. “Probably was tired from all those cocks.”

“Enough, Jenna. I don't want to hear about it. Her situation is...difficult, at best.”

“Yeah, it looked really difficult Friday,” she muttered under her breath.

“I'm very sorry for what happened to you, Jenna. Is there anything I can do?”

He felt bad for his friend, but she made it difficult to feel any sympathy. What happened to her was horrific, but it wasn't Anna's fault. Devin was the cruel Master. Anna was merely his manipulated slave. Literally. He doubted Anna's reaction was as terrible as Jenna was making it out to be. And since Devin had admitted that he could make Anna do anything he wanted her to do, Aaron wondered how much of the “laughter” was truly Anna's and how much of it was Devin's influence.

“No,” Jenna grumbled, then sighed. “It wasn't really as bad as it sounds. I actually enjoyed most of what happened. I think that pissed Devin off.”

“So you weren't raped?”

“I dunno. Well, the big guy in my ass wasn't pleasant by any stretch of the imagination. But I did enjoy the first part of it.” She sighed. “All those men....”

Aaron rolled his eyes. Yeah, that sounded like Jenna. “Jenna, you do know that Anna is a slave, right? It's not like she has a lot of choices in life.”

“How can she really be a slave? I thought that sort of stuff was illegal.”

“You think Devin cares about the laws? He kidnapped you to get even with your dad.”

Jenna was quiet.

“Anna needs a friend right now, Jen.”

She sighed. “I’m angry at her.”

“I’m at Alex’s place right now and the first thing I did when I saw him was punch him in the face.”

“You got a hit in on Alex?”

“I don’t think he ever expected me to get that angry. But yeah. I got one.”

“Why?”

“Because I thought he was in on the whole thing of having to break up with Anna.”

“I thought you two were good together.”

Aaron sighed. “Me too. God, I love her.”

“You managed to fall in love?”

“I did. I couldn’t help it.”

“Well, maybe she’ll make Company soon. Then you guys can start again.”

Aaron sighed. He hadn’t thought about that. “That’s a real good point, Jen. It’s only a few months away. I can handle that.”

Alex stared at his best friend as he sat talking to Jenna. He felt terrible. Had he known, he never would have encouraged the relationship. The rule made sense, he supposed, but...fuck. Another fuck up with Anna. Couldn’t he do anything right with her? He asked himself this question a lot. And the answer was always “no.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Anna stared at the sandwich she bought for lunch, and realized she had no appetite for it. After years of not eating on a regular basis, the idea of going back to class without eating wasn't concerning at the moment, though it might become so later.

She felt miserable. She'd briefly thought about quitting the summer intensives so she and Aaron could continue to date. It was so tempting. But she couldn't. Not after being back in the real dancing environment for the first time in years. She felt alive when she danced. She felt like herself; that part of her that Jack and Devin took away had returned.

But she missed Aaron terribly. She hated the idea of sleeping alone tonight. She would miss his peaceful presence; the safety she felt in his arms.

Maybe she should quit. Who else would accept her for who she was? Did it matter if she didn't date? Devin had wanted her to go out and experiment. She could say she had and now slip back into her small world. It would just expand a little bit to include more dancing. But no more dating. The taste had been oh-so sweet, but the sting at the end was too painful. She'd rather be whipped with Jack's bullwhip than feel the way she felt right now.

Yes. Dance, sex and Devin. That would be her life. Her safe life.

The rest of the afternoon passed quickly. Anna lost herself in dancing. The first class after lunch was *pointe*. It turned out not to be as bad as she thought. Her skills weren't as terrible as she'd expected.

She was exhausted by the end of class, but she felt like she could do it. She could dance *en pointe* again. Even Patty had been impressed.

As she walked home later that evening, alone, she tried to think about her love of dance rather than her broken heart. It wasn't that long of a walk; only about fifteen minutes.

She walked into her apartment and felt Aaron's absence. She looked in her room and sure enough, he'd gotten his things and left.

Tears filled her eyes unexpectedly. She felt so alone. She backed against the wall and slid down until she hit the floor. She sat and sobbed. And sobbed. And sobbed.

About everything and about nothing. Aaron. Kurt. Wilhelm. Alex. Her parents. Things Devin did to her. Things that happened to Jenna. All the hurt and pain that had been bottled up for years came rushing out in the torrent of tears. She screamed. She kicked her feet. She hit the floor with balled-up fists.

Finally, she lay on her back and stared at the ceiling. The catharsis complete, she had a semblance of quiet. Not peace. Her life was not meant to be peaceful. But she felt quiet and calm. The storm had been allowed out and was done.

She got up and called Jenna. It went straight to voicemail.

“Hi Jenna,” Anna said, hoping Jenna would listen to the message. “I’m so sorry about what happened the other night. I...I have no excuse for it. Devin...does weird things to my head. Even now, thinking about what happened makes me sick. Please, Jenna. Forgive me. Please call me back.”

She put the phone on the table and stared at it, tears streaming down her face.

Later, after she had eaten dinner, as Anna lay on the couch in her pajamas watching TV, she heard a knock on her door. Was it Aaron? She didn't want to face him right now. Devin? That could be okay.

She opened the door to find Zach standing there with a grin on his face. "Hello, Anna."

She smiled at him as her heart fell into her stomach. *Not tonight*, she begged silently. She'd just gotten her emotions under control.

"Hello, Zach," she said quietly.

He raised his eyebrow. "Aren't you going to invite me in?"

"Oh, of course," she said nervously and stepped back so he could enter.

She closed the door after he walked through. Without warning, he slammed her up against the door, face first, and pressed against her.

"I've been thinking about you all week, Anna," he said into her ear. He pressed his hard cock against her rear. "My girlfriend isn't nearly as adventurous as you are." He brought his hands up to cup her breasts over her tank top and groaned. "God your tits are fantastic." He squeezed them hard and she gasped in pain. "Where's your bedroom?"

She pointed behind him. He turned her around, grasped her right nipple and pulled her down the short hall into the guest room, which was the first room he came to.

She stumbled slightly as he pushed her to the bed.

"Take off your clothes," he growled.

She nervously pulled at the hem of her tank top.

"Turn around so I can see."

She did as he said and then pulled her top over her head. She pulled at the ties of her pants and slipped them off, then stood nervously as he stared at her naked body and caressed his cock through his jeans.

He took two long strides to stand in front of her, then grasped her hair and pushed her to her knees. He unzipped his pants and pulled out his cock. He was not a Brother; he had no piercings.

He grabbed her hair again and shoved his cock into her mouth. He pressed in deep, shoving himself down her throat. He moaned as he fucked her mouth and throat.

Anna gasped for breath when he pulled out, but that was it. He didn't care about her need for oxygen.

"You suck good cock, honey," he said with a wicked smile as he looked down at her.

She did her best to make sure he enjoyed himself. She hoped that he'd take his blowjob and leave, but no such luck. He yanked his cock from her mouth.

"Get on the bed and show me your pussy."

She crawled on top of the bed and sat with her legs spread, knees near her chest. She bit her lip nervously as Zach removed his shirt and stroked his cock. Taking a deep breath, she calmed herself long enough to read what he wanted: he wanted a struggle.

Anna didn't want to play that game tonight. She was worn out from the day, both physically and emotionally. But if she didn't give him what he wanted, he would call Devin and then anything that Zach might do tonight would be a picnic compared to Devin's punishments.

Anna stared at Zach and started to back away. His grin confirmed her initial read of him. She continued moving backwards slowly until he lunged at her, grabbing her hips and pulling her back to him.

She tried to push him away, but he was much stronger and it did little to stop him. He flipped her over onto her belly and held her hands above her head. He reached down between their bodies and positioned himself at her asshole.

“No,” she begged. “Please don't.”

Zach laughed. “You're not really in a position to decide what we do, are you?” He pressed forward and she struggled to get away, which turned him on even more. His hard, dry cock pressed against her hole and breached the opening, causing Anna to scream in pain.

“Don't. Please don't.” She sobbed as he continued pressing forward. Her hole burned and her insides resisted the harsh entrance.

But he continued his brutal invasion until he was seated all the way inside. He grasped her upper arms and squeezed as he began to plunder her tight hole. In and out he moved, groaning with pleasure as she cried in pain.

His thrusts quickened and he moaned loudly as he emptied himself into her ass.

He lay on top of her when he was done, breathing heavily. Anna whimpered, hoping he would get off her so she could take in a full breath.

After a few minutes, he pulled himself out of her and sat up. He spread her ass cheeks apart and chuckled appreciatively.

“Beautiful,” he murmured, then slapped her cheeks, causing Anna to yelp in pain.

He stood and dressed. Anna lay on her stomach, hoping he was dressing to leave.

“I'll come see you again soon, sweetheart,” he said after he was fully dressed, then left the room and the apartment, closing the door behind him.

Anna stared at the back wall for a long time. She felt so alone. She wanted to call Aaron. For him to come over and hold her.

But she couldn't. They weren't allowed to see each other. Everyone else wanted her for sex and she didn't want sex. She wanted...love. To be held and cared for.

It occurred to her to call Wilhelm, but it was only six in the morning in Germany. Too early to call.

Alex came to mind, but Alex scared her. Though she could likely trust him to not try anything sexually. But it didn't seem right for a slave to call her Master for comfort. Besides, he was probably with Kirsty.

No. She would have to face tonight alone. Like she'd done when she lived with Jack. Why did it seem so much harder now?

She dragged herself out of bed and into the front room to turn the TV off, then stumbled into her own bed and went to sleep.

CHAPTER FORTY

Anna awoke after a fitful night of sleep, still exhausted. Zach had been cruel to her and she ached all over. She hated that he had done that to her.

Why did what he did bother her so much? It wasn't as if she hadn't gone through that before. How many times had men come through that black door of her guardian's garage to do similar things? Jack kept it unlocked for precisely that reason.

She dragged herself into the shower and felt slightly better after she was done. Her ass still hurt, but had mostly healed and she was confident she'd be able to dance.

As she dried off, she caught sight of bruises on her arms and sighed. This was why she always wore long sleeved leotards: to hide the bruises she inevitably wound up with. She wondered if Patty would let her wear her dance sweater during class. She would be hot, but at least the bruises would remain hidden. Maybe she'd ask Isaak before she went into class.

She tried to push away the ache in her heart as she dressed. She missed Aaron terribly.

After breakfast, she drove to the studio and went straight to Isaak's office.

"Hello, Anna," Isaak said, standing and walking to her. He put his hands on her upper arms and she winced. "What's wrong?"

Anna looked at the floor. "I...rough night," she answered lamely.

Isaak put his hand under her chin and raised her face to his. “Who hurt you Anna?”

“Nobody you know. Just...someone who lives in my building.”

“Anna, you can't....” Isaak sighed. “I thought things would be better since you moved out of Jack’s place.”

She shook her head. “Devin controls me whether I live with him or not.” She looked back at the ground. “As I understand it, many men know where I live,” she said softly, then looked back up at him. “Can I wear my sweater during class?”

Isaak’s eyes were sad. “Let me see the bruises.”

Anna slipped off the wrap-sweater that she wore over her leotard.

Isaak frowned. “Oh, Anna,” he said softly with a sigh. “You deserve so much better than this.”

“They’ll be better tomorrow, I’m sure,” she said, trying to change the subject.

“I’ll walk with you and speak with Patty.” He walked to the door and opened it. “I understand you did well yesterday *en pointe*,” he said, changing the subject as they walked down the hallway.

Anna nodded. “I think I did. I really enjoyed it,” she added with a bright smile.

Isaak beamed at her as they approached the studio. “I think you’ll be in the advanced classes in no time.”

They walked into the studio and he went immediately to Patty. Anna dropped her bag at the side of the room and began readying herself for class. She watched as Isaak spoke with Patty, who nodded and glanced sympathetically over at Anna.

Isaak turned and headed towards the door, nodding at Anna before he left the room.

She glanced at Patty as she walked over to the *barre*. Patty watched her with sad eyes. Nicole and Jackie greeted her brightly and they chatted for a few minutes before class began.

The morning technique class went as well as the previous day. Anna decided to go to lunch with Nicole, Jackie and a couple of the other girls in the class.

As they walked downstairs, Anna saw Aaron coming out of the studio. They both stopped and stared at each other for a moment, and then Anna gave him a sad smile and turned and walked out the studio door with her dance mates.

The other girls whispered excitedly about seeing the Company dancers. When they started talking about how cute Aaron was, Anna could barely keep the tears out of her eyes.

At the deli, Anna played with the french fries on her plate and leaned her head on her hand, trying to ignore the conversation around her. She knew she should eat, but she had trouble swallowing over the lump in her throat. Seeing Aaron had opened up the healing wound in her heart.

Suddenly the girls got very excited and Anna looked up. She looked to the doorway and saw several of the Company dancers walking in, including Aaron.

He looked at her and she stared back. He got a determined look on his face and walked over to the table where Anna and the others were sitting.

Aaron walked determinedly to the table where Anna sat with the younger girls. He could hear the giggles and whispers as he approached. He didn't want to cause undue attention or questions for Anna, but he had to know that she was okay.

He'd called Alex to find out where she'd gone to lunch and Alex had happily obliged him, after eliciting the promise that Aaron would call and let him know how she was.

“Anna,” Aaron said, hesitating at the giggles and looks he got as he stood there.

Anna stared at her food. She didn't answer him so he knelt down next to her, glad she was sitting at the end of the table.

“Anna,” he repeated. “I need to talk to you.”

She looked at him with tired and hurt eyes. Yeah, she looked like he felt. He'd barely slept the previous night and it looked like she'd suffered the same.

He took her hand. “Please,” he said, standing and pulling her to her feet.

She didn't resist and for once he was thankful at her docile nature. The whispers from her table increased as he led her away to a table in the corner. Fortunately, they were there before the lunch rush.

He pulled out a chair for her and she sat, albeit reluctantly.

“Aaron, we shouldn't be together,” she said softly.

“Isaak said we couldn't date. He didn't say we couldn't be friends.”

“Friends?” Anna's head snapped up with a surprised look on her face.

It was obvious she hadn't considered the possibility of remaining friends. But why would she? Aaron was certain the only interest most men had in her was sex, and if there was no sex, why would they bother with her?

“Yes. Friends.” He looked her directly in the eye, wanting her to know he meant it. He still loved her. God, how he loved her! And she'd be in the Company soon. Then they could pick up where they left off.

She studied his face for a long moment then gave him a tentative smile. "I'd like that," she whispered.

He leaned back in his chair, relieved that she seemed somewhat comforted. Her eyes regained some of the sparkle that he loved, though not completely.

"Anna, did you think I would abandon you completely, just because we can't date?"

She looked down at her hands clasped in her lap and nodded. She looked up a moment later with teary eyes. "I missed you last night. I felt...so alone."

His heart ached at her words. "I missed you too." He gave her a wry smile. "I could hardly sleep."

She nodded again, then started to push her sleeves up on her sweater. She seemed to notice what she was doing and quickly pulled them back down, blushing and looking away.

His heart squeezed with a premonition. Why would she wear a sweater on such a warm day?

"Why don't you take your sweater off? It's rather warm in here."

She shook her head and gave him a nervous smile. "No, I...I'm okay. Little chilly, actually." She rubbed her upper arms to emphasize her words, but winced as she did so.

Aaron leaned over and untied her sweater and pulled it off her shoulders. He hissed when he saw the finger sized bruises up and down her upper arms. She pulled away and pulled her sweater back up quickly.

"Anna, what happened?" he asked angrily.

"I'm okay...really..." she mumbled, not looking at him.

He put his index finger under her chin to make her look at him. "Did someone come over last night?"

She blinked several times, then nodded. “Someone I met at the banquet.”

Aaron leaned back in his chair and ran his hands through his hair. “Did he hurt you? Other than the bruises?” The bruises were enough, but he had a feeling there was more.

She shrugged. “A little, but I'm okay.”

“He raped you?”

She shrugged again. “He likes it when I struggle...when I fight him.”

He stared at her, disbelieving how calm she was. Though he supposed, according to Alex, she'd been so abused that rape was just another thing that happened on a regular basis. How fucked up was her life that she didn't think anything of being raped?

“Why didn't you call me?” he asked softly, though he knew the answer already.

“We weren't supposed to see each other,” she whispered, blinking back tears. She looked up at him. “I never felt as hopeless as I did last night. Being happy with you, then...,” she swallowed, “...going back to my old life. It's so much worse than before we were together.”

Aaron felt like he'd been hit in the stomach. Did she regret their relationship? “Do you wish we'd never met?” he asked reluctantly. Did he want to know?

“No,” she answered hoarsely. “I thought about it, but no, I'm glad we met. I'm glad I have a friend.” She looked up as if to confirm he really meant what he said earlier.

“I will always be here for you, Anna,” he said firmly.

And he meant it. No matter how much it hurt, he would be a good friend. It was the only thing he could do for her now and he would make sure he didn't fail her.

“Thank you, Aaron.” She looked around nervously.

The Company dancers he'd come with were watching them. They knew how miserable he'd been yesterday and he'd told a few of them why. The girls at the table that Anna had been sitting with watched them with avid curiosity. They obviously didn't know what had happened.

“I should let you get back to your lunch,” he said slowly. He didn't want her to think he was trying to get rid of her.

She nodded. “Yeah, I should. I think I could eat some now.”

His heart lightened. “I'm glad to hear it, hon.” Oh, he shouldn't use his term of endearment for her. Too painful.

But she beamed at him and he guessed it was worth it. He stood and pulled her into his arms for a brotherly-looking hug, trying not to inhale her scent and enjoy her softness too much. She hugged him back, leaning her head against his chest. Oh, the agony!

He pulled away before he lost what little control he still had over his body. He held her cheeks in his hands.

“Anna, call me anytime you need, all right? Especially if something like that happens again.”

She tried to shake her head, but he wouldn't let her.

“I mean it. That's what friends are for. To be there when you need someone.”

Her eyes welled up with tears and she nodded. “I'll have to get used to this friendship thing again,” she rasped.

He kissed her forehead, then released her. He chuckled at the wide eyes of her fellow dancers. “I think you're going to have some questions when you get back to your table.”

She turned and looked at her friends, then turned back around and blushed. “What do I tell them?”

Aaron grinned. "The truth. I'm not ashamed that I fell in love with you. We're adults. We didn't do anything wrong."

She nodded. "Okay."

Anna returned to the table with a much lighter heart. Aaron wanted to be friends with her. She wasn't abandoned.

"How do you know Aaron?" Nicole asked as Anna sat gingerly down in her chair.

Anna glanced over at Aaron's table. "Um, we dated for a while," she answered shyly.

Audible gasps were sounded around the table. "You're so lucky!" Isabel, a small redhead, sighed. "He's so hot!"

Giggles and nods circled the table.

"Did you kiss him?" Jackie asked in a hushed voice.

Anna nodded.

"Is he a good kisser?" another girl asked.

Anna nodded again and blushed. He was a good everything. Oh, the things he'd done to her body! She chided herself. She didn't need to be thinking about that right now.

No one asked if she'd had sex with him and she didn't volunteer the information. It struck her suddenly that her childhood had been anything but typical. Some of these girls hadn't even kissed a guy before, let alone have had sex with one. The idea of not having sex was such a strange concept to Anna. She'd been doing it for so long, she didn't think anything of it.

After they'd finished eating, the girls headed back to the studio for their two afternoon classes.

When classes were finished, Anna walked downstairs to leave. She spotted Travis in the entryway, reading.

“Hi, Travis,” she said softly, not wanting to startle him. She knew how she got when she was really into a book and someone speaking too loudly could be very disturbing.

He looked up and grinned at her. “Hey, Anna. How's it going? Have a seat.”

She looked around and then sat next to him, leaning against the wall. She liked Travis. Coming from somewhat similar backgrounds made her feel comfortable with him.

“Things are going good. I feel stronger than I did yesterday.” She smiled. “I didn't expect to progress so quickly, but I'm already comfortable back on *pointe*.”

Travis shrugged. “That's not really surprising, considering, you know, your heritage and all.”

Anna frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Well, the...ones like your dad, they're natural artists, dancers or singers usually. Didn't you know?”

“Travis, I didn't even know what my dad was.”

“Oh, yeah. That's so weird.” He shook his head. “Anyways, yeah. Considering who your dad really is, and I should have realized it when I looked at his picture. He looks like them. Tall, blond, thin and ethereal looking. Well, I suppose not all of them are blond. Just most of them. Like elves.” Travis chuckled. “If you know what you're looking for they're not hard to spot. Fortunately, most people don't know they exist.”

Tall and blond? “Is Alex...?”

Travis laughed. “Nah. He's totally human. He's too temperamental to be...one.” He lowered his voice as a group of dancers walked by them. One

girl reached out and tousled his hair. Travis winked at her and she giggled.

“Girlfriend?” Anna asked.

“What?” he looked shocked. “Girlfriend? Ugh, no. Why would I want to limit myself to one girl?”

Anna laughed.

“Anyways. So, yeah. Don't be surprised that it comes back so naturally. It's in your blood. Literally. You'll be in the Company by the end of summer.”

Anna's eyes widened at the thought of her dearest wish coming true. “Travis, don't tease me.”

“I'm not. Believe me.” He grinned at her. “Maybe we'll get to dance together.”

Anna rolled her eyes. “I don't think I'll be doing any *pas de deux* anytime soon. I'd be content in the Corps.”

“Not gonna happen, Anna. As I understand it, your dad went straight from the ballet school to a principal. And Aaron said you're still amazing.”

Anna blushed. “Does Isaak know about me?”

“I'm pretty sure he doesn't. But he does know you are your father's daughter.” Travis looked at his watch then stood. “I gotta get back to rehearsal.” He helped Anna to her feet and hugged her. “Keep working hard and don't be surprised at your progress. I can't wait to see you dance.”

He said goodbye and left Anna in the entryway, head full of new and wonderful thoughts.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Anna walked from the elevator to her apartment, still amazed at what Travis had told her earlier in the afternoon. She almost didn't notice the tall man standing in the doorway of the apartment next to hers. He was holding a very large box and struggling with his keys.

She hesitated a moment before speaking. "Do you need some help?" she asked nervously.

He turned his espresso-brown eyes on her and gave her a bright smile. "I'd love some help."

Anna guessed him to be in his mid-to-late-twenties, with short dark-brown hair and broad shoulders. He wasn't overly bulky, but she could see his biceps bulging under the weight of the box he held.

"Can you grab the keys and unlock the door?"

She realized she'd been staring and felt her cheeks warm. She took the keys from his hand and unlocked his door, pushing it open so he could enter.

"Thanks," he said with a grin. His teeth were very white next to his tan skin. He walked into the apartment and Anna waited outside. She had no intention of walking into a strange man's apartment unless she had to.

He returned a minute later and Anna handed him his keys.

"I'm Greg," he said with a nice smile. He spoke in a gentle tone and Anna was not afraid of him.

"I'm Anna," she said softly.

He grinned. "Well, aren't I lucky to have such a pretty neighbor?" His voice had a slight drawl to it.

Anna blushed and backed away slightly.

He looked alarmed. "I didn't mean anything by that, Anna. Just...trying to make conversation. I just moved in today." He motioned behind him.

Anna nodded, not knowing what to say. She looked at her own apartment door wistfully.

"Well, I need to unpack. It was nice to meet you, Anna." Greg said with a slight bow of the head. "I hope I'll see you again soon."

Anna smiled shyly. "It was nice to meet you too." She turned and quickly unlocked her apartment and went in, locking the door behind her.

Alex's phone rang as he'd expected it to. "Hey Greg."

"Hey, Alex. I've made initial contact."

Alex sighed with relief. "Any problems?"

"No, though you're right. She is skittish. I said something about being lucky to have such a pretty neighbor and she backed away." Greg chuckled. "She's cute."

Alex knew he meant that in a respectful manner. And he couldn't help but agree. "Yes, she's beautiful."

"I kept it brief like you suggested."

"Good. The less you approach her, I think the less she'll feel threatened. I don't want her to be scared of you."

"Alex, it's not like I make it a habit of going around and scaring women. But I understand."

"Does she suspect you know me?"

"I don't think there was an opportunity for her to get much of a read on me. Why do you want to keep it from her?"

Alex sighed. "She's afraid of me."

Greg was quiet for a moment. "She's afraid of you? What'd you do?"

"I don't know exactly. But that's what Aaron said. And I don't want to scare her any more than I apparently already have. She'll probably be relieved when I tell her I'm leaving."

"Do you really think that's wise? I mean, considering all you've told me about what's going on, don't you think it would be better if you stayed here?"

"In the short term, yes, it would be better. But going back to Frankfurt is the only way I'm going to be able to figure out how to fight Devin. In the long run, staying here will only hurt her further."

"Do you think you can trust Devin to not hurt her? I mean, I can only do so much as her neighbor."

"But you can keep an eye on her, and get to her quickly if needed. I'll only be gone for a few months, I hope. And I'll come out and visit. But Devin needs her. I really don't think he'll do anything to harm her." He sighed. "I hate the idea of her hurting in any manner, but I'm going to have to risk it for now. I suppose I should be grateful that she's a strong girl."

Aaron had called and told him what had happened to Anna the previous night. He shuddered to think about what had happened to cause those bruises.

"Are Michael and Jesse here yet?"

"They'll be here tomorrow. I want them out of sight as much as possible. But they're here if you need backup."

"What happens if we get called out?"

Alex ran his hands through his hair. "Michael and Jesse have contacts they can bring in temporarily while we're in the field. But I hope we won't be. I considered spreading the word to not contact me unless absolutely

necessary, but I think that would draw attention from Devin. I don't want him knowing what I'm doing, though he'll probably suspect something.”

They hung up a few minutes later.

On Saturday, Alex had reached the decision that he needed to go home. He'd called his father several times that week and each time Wilhelm had told him the only way to truly help Anna was to come home and learn more about what Devin was doing.

But Alex was reluctant to leave her. Even if she was afraid of him, he was still in the city and could do...well, that was the problem. He was limited in what he could do to fight Devin. He just didn't know enough. So, he had spent the weekend developing a plan so that Anna would be watched while he was gone.

His communications man, Greg Sims, had come into town and agreed to move in next door to Anna to keep an eye on her. Of all the men on his team, Alex had a feeling Anna would trust Greg more than any of them. Not that any of his eight men were untrustworthy by any stretch of the imagination. Greg was quiet and unobtrusive and Alex hoped Anna wouldn't feel threatened by him. Maybe she would even accept him as a friend.

It was unfortunate that she and Aaron had to break up. It would have been easier for Aaron to help. But as much as he'd harassed Melanie, she wouldn't budge. Under normal circumstances, he would have agreed with her decision. He just worried about Anna, and wasn't completely rational when it came to her.

A knock at the door made Anna's stomach clench up. Was it Zach, returning for another session of pain? She trembled as she walked to the door and winced as she opened it.

“Trenton?” Anna gasped in surprise at seeing Devin’s Deacon and co-worker standing in her doorway. “W-what are you doing here?”

Trenton gave her a bright smile. “Devin said I could...visit you.” He cocked his head. “Are you busy?”

“I...” Anna shook her head and stepped backwards. “No. Come on in.”

Trenton closed the door and looked her over, gray eyes smiling. He reached for her and pulled her close, kissing her deeply. “Where’s your bedroom?” he asked in a husky voice.

Anna pointed to the second bedroom and Trenton walked her backwards into the room, undressing her on the way.

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CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

“Damn, Anna,” Seth murmured against Anna’s neck as they lay in her bed together Thursday morning. “Call me anytime you’re bored. I’ll be happy to keep you company.”

Anna giggled and turned to face Seth. “I’ll keep that in mind.” She stretched her arms over her head and smiled. Two nights in a row of nice men in her bed.

Trenton, the night before, had been a pleasant surprise. Even though he was a close friend of Devin’s, Trenton was not in the least bit mean or cruel. She would welcome him into her apartment anytime.

Last night, Anna had been lonely. She’d briefly thought about calling Aaron, but it hurt too much to see him. She wanted someone who would distract her from her sad thoughts and Aaron was part of those thoughts. Seth came to mind and, when she called him, he happily obliged her. As much as she was afraid of Alex, she really liked Seth. Alex had said it was okay for her to spend time with him and he was a very good lover.

Seth reached up to caress Anna’s breast and she let out a sigh. “You better keep it in mind,” he said with a smile. He glanced at his watch. “I need to get going, though.”

Anna covered the hand resting on her breast and leaned forward to kiss him. “Thank you for keeping me company.”

Seth grinned. “Anytime.” He sat up and Anna caught sight of the tattoo of Alex’s family crest on his right forearm. She had asked him about it the

night before, but he shrugged her question off. It seemed that he was marked by Alex, just like her. Anna was glad Alex hadn't tattooed her, though.

He dressed and then leaned down to kiss her again. "Call me."

Anna nodded. "Definitely."

Later that evening, Anna walked into a small, dark restaurant with Devin and they were led to a table where the mayor sat. Devin had called earlier in the day, telling Anna he needed her tonight for a last-minute dinner meeting with the mayor.

"Anna, this is Mayor George Burt. George, this is Anna."

The mayor stood and gave her a smile after dragging his eyes up and down her body. Devin had told her to dress in something sexy but not slutty, so she wore a figure hugging black lace dress. It had a high neckline and hit mid-thigh, but the back was very low.

The mayor looked at Devin with a cocked brow. "You think a pretty face is going to change my mind, Devin?"

"You never know, George," Devin said with a smile as he settled into the leather booth with Anna between the two men.

Devin and the mayor engaged in small talk during cocktails while Anna studied and subtly flirted with the mayor. She used the skills taught by Jack to gain George's attention, and soon the mayor was distracted from Devin. He paid more attention to Anna than Devin.

Anna glanced at Devin, worried that he would be angry, but Devin gave her a knowing nod and encouraging smile. George seemed quite taken with her, which was the whole point of her attendance at the meeting.

Devin had said that this was the type of place that overt sexual touch was acceptable, just no outright sex. It was a private restaurant, and

negotiations and manipulations were common here.

Anna ran her hands up and down the mayor's thighs after they finished eating, seemingly innocently, as the mayor and Devin discussed some sort of budget matter.

Her hand moved higher and higher with each slow brush, eventually coming to brush his hard cock. The mayor jumped and she played the innocent card, blushing and moving her hand away quickly. He took her hand back and placed it on his crotch.

She massaged him over his dress pants, biting her lower lip and watching him subtly.

“Don't you want to help Devin out, George?” she whispered in his ear, careful to keep her voice breathy. She leaned back and saw his eyes glaze over slightly as he nodded.

Devin spoke and she repeated the words to the mayor. The mayor seemed happy to do whatever she asked him to do. She slipped under the table and rewarded him with a blowjob, and then he and Devin shook hands, having come to an agreement. In Devin's favor, of course.

Anna tried calling Jenna again on Tuesday evening, but she still didn't answer. She left a message apologizing again for what happened and asking Jenna to call. Anna hadn't heard back from her.

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CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

Friday night, Anna sat between Trenton's feet with his cock in her mouth. One of his hands rested on her head and he moaned deeply as she sucked on him.

“Maki has been asking when we're going to get together, Devin,” Trenton said in a strained voice as Anna swallowed him. “Fuck, sweetheart. I love your mouth.”

Devin chuckled. “It is a rather delightful mouth, isn't it? I'd love to take the credit for it, but I mustn't upset my best trainer, or he'll stop doing such a good job for me.”

Jack laughed. “Why would I do that when I enjoy the job so much?”

The three men laughed. Devin was in a good mood this evening and Anna was grateful.

“What about tomorrow night, Trenton?” Devin suggested.

Trenton pet Anna's hair. “I think Maki might be agreeable. We don't have any plans that I'm aware of. But she does keep the calendar.”

“Call me tomorrow and let me know.”

Trenton's hand tightened on Anna's head and she felt him stiffen just before his cum shot into her mouth. She swallowed eagerly. She liked Trenton. He was nice to her. The thought of going out with him and his wife made her a little nervous, but his wife seemed to like her as well and didn't mind when he'd been caressing Anna at the banquet.

“Ah, Bryson. I'm glad you were able to make it.”

Anna glanced up as Devin stood and shook hands with a tall man with short gray hair.

“I’m sorry I’m late. I was in a meeting, and the traffic was terrible,” the newly arrived Bryson said in a pleasant voice.

“Anna, come,” Devin said.

She quickly gathered her skirt, stood and walked to Devin's side, kneeling beside him. Bryson took a seat nearby, watching her with interest. He wore the standard tunic and pants that the other men wore.

“Anna, this is Senator Bryson Morrell,” Devin introduced. “Bryson, this is my Anna.”

A senator? Anna looked up at him shyly. He smiled down at her, his gaze lingering on her exposed breasts. Devin put his hand on her head and she understood what he wanted her to do.

Anna looked at the senator for a moment with innocent eyes. She glanced down at the bulge in his pants and bit her lip, then stood and walked slowly towards him. Her breasts were at his eye level and she could feel his gaze on her nipples.

“Hello, Senator,” she said softly.

He pulled his gaze away from her breasts to look up at her face.

“May I sit?” she asked in a soft voice.

He nodded, but didn't speak. His lips parted slightly and he began breathing heavily as she sat in his lap, making sure her breasts moved right by his mouth as she did so. He moaned slightly as she settled.

She traced his high cheekbones with her fingers. He was a very handsome man.

“I've never met a senator before.”

He stared into her eyes as if mesmerized. “I've never met such a beautiful girl before,” he said in a soft voice.

He traced her jaw down to her neck and down to her breasts. She sighed as he cupped her breast and then she leaned forward and kissed his neck.

He tugged at her nipple ring, causing her to moan softly. She pressed her breast into his hand and moved her lips to his ear, blowing softly then nipping the lobe.

“Oh, God,” he groaned as she sucked on his earlobe.

He pulled on her nipple, then kneaded her breast as he captured her lips with his, kissing her deeply. She brought her hand around to the back of his neck and returned his kiss.

His hand strayed to her leg and up her thigh to her wet pussy. He stroked her outer lips gently before pressing his fingers into her tight channel. She hadn't had sex yet tonight. She'd just given several blowjobs, but had no cock inside her. Anna moaned and squirmed as he thrust his fingers in and out of her.

“Please, my lord,” she begged softly.

Devin watched his beautiful Anna work her magic on the state senator. Bryson was a stubborn man and had been avoiding Devin for a few weeks, so he sent him a picture of Anna and told him she would be here tonight. He had been a little concerned that Bryson wouldn't show, but if he hadn't, Devin would have taken Anna to see him in his office.

After Anna finished softening him, he would broach the subject of the banking bill that needed to *not* pass, and the issues he had with the budget. The fucking state congress was threatening to pull funding from some key pet projects of his.

He watched as Anna pulled the senator's cock out of his pants and stroked him several times. She glanced up at him with sparkling eyes before

lowering herself onto him, and Bryson looked like he was in heaven.

Devin had not let anyone fuck Anna yet. He wanted her fresh and tight for the senator and it was paying off. He was glad because he really wanted to bury himself in her tight pussy soon. But, business before pleasure. Sometimes.

He chatted with Jack and Trenton while keeping an eye on Anna. Bryson was enraptured by her. She had done well with the mayor the other night. He would be extremely surprised if she didn't have the same success with Bryson.

A few minutes later he tested his theory, and as expected, Bryson was convivial to Devin's request, despite the previous week's disagreements. Anna had softened him and Bryson was willing to turn his back on the stand he'd made just this morning against Devin's wishes. Devin had no concerns about Bryson changing his mind. He wasn't a stupid man: if he wanted to keep his seat, he would honor his word to Devin, despite being manipulated into it.

Devin would make sure Anna was well rewarded for this. In private of course. It wouldn't do for the other men to see his affection for her.

“You did very well tonight, Anna,” Devin said as he closed the door to his Manor bedroom behind him.

Anna turned to him with hopeful eyes. “I tried my best, Master.”

“Oh, Baby. You did so well. I'm so proud of you. And so glad you're by my side.” He pulled her into his arms and she melted against him. She really would do anything for approval. He held her head against her chest. “How would you like to go to DC a few days early and we could do some sightseeing before the Gathering in August?”

She looked up at him, eyes wide with excitement. “Oh, Master. Do you mean it?”

Devin grinned and nodded. Her enthusiasm was beautiful. “Is that a yes?”

She nodded her head so hard the chains of her circlet jingled.

He stroked her cheek. “Then I will make the arrangements.” He pulled her to his bed. “Come, let me show you how well you pleased me tonight.”

He slipped her dress off her shoulders and undressed himself, then lifted her gently onto the bed. He knelt between her legs and brushed her pussy lightly. She shivered with anticipation.

He adjusted himself so he lay between her legs and buried his tongue in her sweet nectar, quickly bringing her to her first of many orgasms of the night.

Anna slept peacefully in Devin's arms until late morning. He had utterly exhausted her, bringing her to orgasm after orgasm, strung together like a pleasure chain. He only stopped when she was at her breaking point of pleasure turning into pain. He didn't want to cause her pain, only pleasure. She had earned that.

Devin played with her hair, contemplating the future. He'd received word that Alex was in the process of returning to Germany. This pleased him immensely. It would be so much easier not worrying about him. Perhaps Alex had finally accepted that he'd gotten in over his head and would leave Anna to Devin. What other reason would he have for leaving sweet, sweet Anna?

Anna seemed at ease last night. She didn't seem as frightened. Devin was hopeful she'd finally made peace with her situation and accepted it. Although it could also be the fact that she was dancing more. He knew that

Immortals needed a way to keep in touch with their true selves. They did it through music, art or dance usually. Sometimes through writing as well. Anna's obvious outlet, considering her father, was dance.

When she sat at his feet last night, he'd seen her moving her fingers slightly as if she were dancing in her mind. It had been subtle and he didn't mind, as long as it didn't interfere with her duties, and it hadn't last night. She seemed happy and that pleased Devin.

Anna stirred in his arms and opened her sleepy green eyes to smile at him. "Good morning, Master," she said quietly. Her braids were slightly frizzed from a night of lovemaking.

"Good morning, Baby," he said with a smile.

He felt her hand moving down his stomach to his cock and grasped it. His eyes closed and he moaned as she stroked him with her small but strong hand. He could get used to waking up with her. She was so intuitive about what he wanted.

Maybe he should bring her home with him a few times a week. But then he might have to explain her to his daughters and he was reluctant to do so. Maybe he'd just stay at her apartment a few nights a week. Hmm. That idea had merit.

He pulled her up onto his front, her entrance at his tip. She giggled and wiggled her hips as he held her in place, not letting her pierce herself on him.

He chuckled at her pout. "Sit up, Baby." She pushed herself up on his chest and he held her above his cock, the tip resting just inside her. She squirmed, wanting him inside her.

"Please, Master," she whimpered.

"Be still, Anna."

She instantly stopped moving and looked at him in surprise. He didn't use her name often. But he wanted her still. He smiled so she'd know he wasn't angry. He held her above his cock then abruptly pushed her down on him in one swift thrust. Her eyes widened and mouth opened in surprise. She tried to move, but he held her hips and shook his head. He wanted to be in complete control. He held her in place as he thrust up into her.

“Oh!” She sighed and closed her eyes. He felt her clench her vaginal muscles and he groaned. She was so fucking tight naturally. When she clenched it was amazing.

“Baby, you feel so good,” he groaned as he fucked her. A tiny smile played at her lips.

He pulled her off of him and flipped her onto her knees with her chest pressed into the bed, then slammed himself back into her wet slit. He held her hips and fucked her hard. She moaned and clutched at the sheets. He didn't care if she came. She came plenty last night.

Devin felt the tingling in his lower spine, then thrust hard and stiffened as he emptied himself into her tight sheath. Anna shrieked into the mattress as she came, her muscles pulsing around his cock making him groan.

He breathed heavily and fell back onto the bed, pulling Anna with him. He felt very satisfied with his relationship with her and kissed the top of her head affectionately. He couldn't allow himself to feel too deeply for her. There were things that needed to happen in the future that would be made difficult if he fell in love.

But Devin didn't worry about falling in love. Love got in the way of bigger plans. But if Anna needed to feel that he loved her, then he could allow himself to show some affection. Besides, it would keep her happy, and a happy woman is much more effective than a frightened one.

“I love you, Baby. I'm so glad you're here with me.”

Anna looked up at him with wide eyes. She bit her lip and then finally smiled. "I love you too, Master." She leaned up and kissed him with her soft lips.

He'd forgotten how nice it felt to kiss her. He'd have to remember that in the future. He tangled his fingers into her hair and kissed her deeply, allowing the luxury of losing himself in her love for him.

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CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Anna stared at herself in the mirror. Devin had said to wear a sexy dress. She hoped the short black dress would be sexy enough. It was low cut, but not as low cut as some other dresses. But the skirt flared slightly and she thought he would appreciate that. Easier access to her. She wore stockings and a thong and a push up bra underneath.

She checked her makeup and was slipping into her three-inch black heels when she heard a knock at the door. She rushed to open it with a smile, expecting Devin.

But it wasn't Devin. It was her new neighbor, Greg.

“Oh!” she exclaimed when she saw him.

He wore a black shirt that strained against his well-developed chest and arms. Her eyes widened at the sight.

Greg grinned, looking her up and down. “Wow,” he said. “Going out, or is this what you wear to hang out at home on a Saturday night?”

Anna blushed. “I'm going out,” she answered softly.

“That's good. Otherwise that would be a waste of a very sexy dress.”

“You think it's sexy?” she asked, hoping he wasn't lying to make her feel better.

Greg gaped at her as if she had grown a second head. “Are you kidding?” He laughed. “I can't imagine much sexier.”

She smiled in relief. “Thank you.” She hoped Devin would agree. “Can I help you with something?” she asked, looking behind him nervously for

Devin.

“Oh, yeah.” He shook his head. “You made me forget.” He gave her a disarming grin and she bit her lip. He really was handsome. “I was wondering if your cable was working. Mine stopped a while ago and before I called the cable company I thought I'd check and see if it was just my line or if it was the building.”

“Um. I don't know. I haven't had the TV on all evening.”

“Would you mind checking? If it's not too much trouble.” He gave her an apologetic smile.

“Sure,” she said hesitantly.

“I'll wait here,” he said with a smile.

She smiled back, relieved. He wasn't just trying to trick her. She went to her TV and turned it on and back off.

“No, it's working...” Her voice drifted off as she saw Devin standing in the doorway. He was looking at Greg suspiciously, then turned a questioning look on Anna. “Hello, Devin,” she said nervously. “I was just —”

“I just moved in next door and I asked her to check and see if her cable was working,” Greg interrupted. “Mine isn't.”

He ran his fingers through his hair and something on his arm caught Devin's attention. Devin frowned at Greg and Greg simply looked at him with an almost haughty look. Did they know each other? Anna saw a mark on Greg's right forearm, but was too far away to discern what it was.

“So it's working?” he asked her.

She nodded.

“Okay. Cool. It's something on my end then. I'll talk to ya later, Anna.” Greg flashed her a smile, cocked his brow at Devin and turned and walked away.

Anna looked at Devin nervously as he looked out the door. He turned and studied her. “Who is he?”

“He moved in this week. His name is Greg.” She shrugged. “That's all I know.”

Devin looked at her for a few more moments, then smiled. “Ready?”

Anna nodded, relieved he wasn't angry.

Anna smoothed her skirt as Devin pulled up in front of a restaurant near the Golden Gate Bridge. He left the car in the care of the valet and then they went inside. Trenton and Maki were waiting for them at a table in the bar area and Devin and Anna joined them.

After greeting them warmly, Devin told Anna to go to the bathroom with Maki. She gave him a confused look, but did as he told her.

“I'm looking forward to getting to know you better, Anna. My husband has enjoyed doing so.” Maki smiled as they walked into the bathroom together.

Anna didn't know how to respond to that and so smiled back at her nervously. When they were inside, Maki took her hand and led her to the handicapped stall, where she pressed Anna against the wall and kissed her.

After the initial shock of Maki's lips against hers, Anna kissed her back. Maki's hands roamed Anna's body and Anna moaned softly as Maki squeezed her breasts.

“You like that, pet?” Maki asked softly. Anna nodded and she squeezed again. Maki smiled and trailed her hands down Anna's side and to her hips, then knelt in front of her. “Open your legs, pet.” She commanded softly, lifting Anna's thigh and moving her thong aside.

Anna grasped the rail behind her and gasped as Maki's tongue invaded her wet folds. Maki hummed her appreciation as she devoured Anna, then

sucked hard on her clit until Anna came, hard but quietly. Anna's supporting leg would hardly hold her up, but Maki didn't let go of the leg she was holding.

“I have something for you,” Maki said softly. “Keep your leg up.”

Anna did and saw Maki searching her purse for something, then smiled up at her. Maki probed Anna's pussy for a moment, then Anna felt her push something inside. A moment later the sting began and Anna's eyes began to water.

“No, please not that,” she whispered.

Maki stood and kissed her. “Don't fret, pet,” she said softly. “Consider it foreplay.” She squeezed Anna's breast again. “Devin told Trenton about your cinnamon-flavored pussy and we couldn't resist trying it tonight. I can't wait until we get home.”

Anna wasn't sure what awaited her tonight. She'd been looking forward to spending the evening with Devin and his friends, but she hadn't been expecting this. What had she done to upset Devin? Maybe talking to Greg made him angry?

She followed Maki back to bar table, eyes downcast and afraid. She sat quietly as the others talked about things she didn't know anything about. When the hostess came to let them know their table was ready, she obediently followed Devin and sat next to him. She wasn't very hungry and had a difficult time deciding on what to order. Not to mention the pain deep inside her.

Devin put his arm around her shoulders. “What's wrong Baby?” he asked, nuzzling her ear.

“Did I anger you, Devin?” she asked quietly.

Devin looked genuinely surprised. “Why would you think that, Anna?” She looked up at him with hurt eyes. “Why do you want me to hurt?”

Devin looked confused for a moment, then smiled gently. “Oh, Baby. I'm not angry with you. Sometimes to please me or my friends, things might hurt for a bit. But I know you can handle it.” He leaned down and nipped her ear and she sighed. “And you are going to taste so delicious later. I can't wait to get my mouth on you.”

Anna blushed. “Really?”

Devin nodded. “You don't need to equate pain with punishment anymore, Baby. Sometimes pain is pleasure, remember?”

She remembered. Pain could be very erotic. “So you're not angry?”

“Absolutely not, Baby. I'm very happy with you.”

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CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Alex cursed and threw his phone on the couch beside him.

He rubbed his eyes. This was not what he needed right now. He was trying to finalize plans for his return home. He didn't need a mission to interrupt him. But when an Elder called, you obeyed. That's how it worked.

It didn't matter that Alex himself was an Elder-Son. What mattered was that he was the best sniper the Brotherhood had and when an important job came up, he and his team were the ones called.

From an early age, he'd had an interest in the military, beyond just playing with his little army men as a child. When he was old enough to read, he read everything he could on military strategy, military heroes, warfare...anything he could find in the home and public libraries related to the subject. When he announced, at age thirteen, that he wanted to join the military after secondary school, his father was livid.

Alex had more important things to do than play soldier, Vati had said. Alex was dumfounded to hear his father say such a thing, considering how highly he always spoke of the military. And that was the day Vati had taken him to the Schloss for the first time and told him what was expected of him.

He'd known Vati was an important man. People in the city respected and deferred to him. When they had parties at the Kunze Landgut, important government officials were always in attendance. Alex had always just assumed it had something to do with the fact that they were wealthy

and titled. And now he understood why; because they were really the rulers of the State, just in a backroom manner.

So, Alex was expected to grow up to become the next Elder of Hesse, not a military hero. His extreme disappointment was temporarily pacified by the introduction to the Dirne. So many beautiful women overwhelmed his senses. His father laughed as Alex stared at the scantily clad women.

“Pick one,” Vati had said. “They will all gladly help you in becoming a man, Alex.”

He'd chosen a sweet looking brunette with green eyes as his first lover. She'd taken him to a room and introduced him to the pleasures of lovemaking.

By the time Alex had graduated from secondary school, he was an expert lover and an expert marksman.

His love of the military never died and he had taken it upon himself to find a tutor to teach him to shoot. His friend Jean-Luc was the son of the French ambassador. The security men at the Embassy were all ex-military, and one in particular was a skilled retired sniper whom Alex had the utmost respect for.

Alex had spent hours with Gaidon, learning everything there was to know about being in the military, especially as a sniper. Alex thought maybe if his father saw that he had talent he would let him join the military. At least for a while, until Elder duties became necessary.

When Alex broached the subject with his father shortly before graduation, he brought Gaidon with him as a witness of his skill. Gaidon told Vati that Alex was a natural and could shoot impressive distances with extreme accuracy. Vati had coldly dismissed both of them and stubborn young Alex was ready to leave the country and join up somewhere else.

The night of the graduation ceremony, Vati took Alex aside and told him that he had arranged for him to be tested. If he passed the test, Vati would allow Alex to train with the American military during the next two summers, with the intention of creating his own team that would do work solely for the Brotherhood; he would have the best of the best to choose from.

Alex was ecstatic. He beamed during the commencement ceremony that night, giving an enthusiastic valedictorian speech about pursuing one's dreams, no matter the cost.

The next week the test began without Alex knowing.

He'd been walking in the woods with his little sister, Greta, when a group of seven men came up and surrounded them. They were all big men, probably in their thirties.

One grabbed Greta and Alex grew enraged and proceeded to take out the men with his fists, one by one, until he faced the last and biggest one.

The man wasn't as tall as Alex, but he was broader. Alex was fast, but he was still young and inexperienced and after a long fight, the man had Alex on his knees with his knife against his neck. The man held him until Vati appeared a few minutes later with another man. Vati and the other man, Eliah, were impressed by what they saw. Eliah was a Brotherhood assassin.

The next week Alex spent every waking moment with Eliah, learning what he could and showing Eliah what he knew. By the end of the week, Eliah reported back to Vati that he was impressed with Alex's determination and prowess, and it would be foolish to not allow Alex to train. Alex would be a valuable asset to the Brotherhood, if Vati could convince the other Elders to allow a Son to take on such a profession.

Ten years later, Alex had become everything and more than the Brotherhood had expected of him. And this was the first mission he could

recall dreading. Not because of the target, but because of leaving Anna. He'd planned on spending time with her this week, letting her get to know him before he left so that she'd look forward to seeing him when he visited.

Now, he not only had to delay his move, he had to leave on Tuesday for who knew how long, without having time with Anna. He ran his hand through his hair and sighed. Damn Devin for making her afraid of him! That was the only explanation he could think of for her fear.

He needed to call her. As he reached for his phone, it rang. He half hoped it was Anna herself and was disappointed when he saw it was Greg.

“Yes?”

“Made contact with Devin. He saw my tat and knows who I am.”

“Good. How did he react?”

“Suspiciously, but didn't say anything.”

“All right. Thanks.” Alex paused. “I got a call.”

“Shit,” Greg said. “When do we leave?”

“Tuesday. Come on over, We'll start planning. I'll have Seth call the others.”

He got up to go find Seth. He'd have to call Anna later.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

Anna unlocked her apartment, exhausted and hurting. Playing pet to Devin, Trenton and Maki was not easy. Especially when doped up on some sort of sex drug. The whole evening was a blur once they arrived back at Trenton and Maki's house. She had vague memories of lots of sex, but couldn't pinpoint any one particular event. Devin had woken her after a few hours to take her home.

Her phone rang sometime later. She didn't know how long she'd slept, but she wasn't ready to wake up yet. But she got up and answered her phone anyways.

"Hello," she said with a hoarse voice without looking at the Caller ID.

"Hello, Anna," came a deep, accented voice. Wilhelm? Kurt?

She looked at the phone and saw Alex's picture. Alex! She shook her head and rubbed her eyes. "Hello, Alex," she said nervously.

"Did I wake you?" he sounded amused.

"Late night."

"Oh." He didn't say anything for a minute.

Had she angered him by being out late? "H-how are you?" she asked politely.

"Busy," he answered vaguely then didn't speak again.

"Oh." Why had he called her? "Did you...need anything, Alex?"

"Was? Oh, I'm sorry." He cleared his throat. "I was wondering if you were busy tonight."

“Tonight? Uh...No, I don't have any plans.” For unknown reasons, butterflies appeared in her stomach. Why did he want to know?

“Would you like to have dinner with me? Tonight, I mean.”

Anna wasn't sure, but he sounded almost... nervous? “If you'd like,” she said softly. Why would he be nervous?

He said something quickly in German then stopped. “I was speaking in German, wasn't I?” He chuckled. “I'm sorry. I do that when I get excited sometimes.”

Alex was excited about taking her out to dinner? His slave? Maybe she'd been wrong about Alex. Maybe he wasn't so scary. “It's all right. I...I like hearing you speak in German.”

“You do?”

“Yes.” Anna flushed at her honesty with him.

“I'll have to remember that.” She could hear the smile in his voice. “How does six o'clock sound? I know you have to be up in the morning.”

Anna glanced at her clock. It was just before one. She could sleep for a little bit more before she needed to get ready. “That sounds good.”

“*Sehr gut*. Then I will see you at six.”

They said good-bye and Anna put the phone down on her bed after setting an alarm. Dinner with Alex? Was it a date? She shook her head. Don't be silly, she told herself. He wouldn't ask his slave out on a date.

She cringed at the remembrance of her position with Alex. *Slave*. She lay down, excitement gone. Maybe he finally wanted to have sex with her. But why would he bother to take her to dinner first? Oh, he didn't make any sense!

Why did Devin take her out to dinner? Business reasons. Or to have sex. Maybe Alex did feel like he needed to take her out to dinner first. It seemed silly, though. Other men just came over and did it.

Her alarm went off at four-thirty and she found herself, again, contemplating Alex's reasons for asking her to dinner. She still hadn't come to any conclusions by the time she was ready to go, dressed in a silver and gray silk A-line dress and silver-heeled sandals.

At six o'clock precisely, a knock sounded at the door. She answered the door, trembling slightly, and her breath caught in her throat at the sight of him.

Why did she always forget how handsome he was? He was even more so tonight, dressed in a tailored black suit with a dark gray dress shirt and black silk tie. His hair was tousled fashionably and his piercing cobalt blue eyes looked at her with such emotion, she had to look away.

"Hello, Anna," he said in his deep, accented voice. "You look beautiful."

She glanced up shyly at him with a timid smile. "Thank you, Alex. You look very handsome as well."

His boyish grin lit up his face. "*Danke.*"

She hadn't noticed he'd had one hand behind his back until he brought it forward, holding a bunch of pink roses bundled in clear cellophane and wrapped with a pink ribbon. "These are for you," he said, a tremor in his voice as he handed them to her.

Anna's eyes widened at the beautiful flowers. "Oh, Alex, they're beautiful!"

She accepted them from his hand and brought them to her face. They smelled as beautiful as they looked. She was briefly transported back to her mother's rose garden as she buried her nose in the bouquet.

Alex watched in silence as Anna smelled the roses he'd brought her. A thrill ran through his body, seeing that she liked them.

He'd spent the better part of an hour in the flower store that afternoon, looking at every possible combination of flowers, but he kept going back to the pink ones. Finally, he just decided to go with his gut feelings and his gut had been right. It usually was right, except when it came to the precious girl standing in front of him, lost in some happy memory.

He was curious about what the sparkling eyes represented, but hesitant to intrude. She surely didn't have that many happy memories and it would be cruel to deny her something that most people took for granted. Besides, he was perfectly content to simply watch her.

She looked up at him suddenly and her face turned pink. "I'm sorry, Alex," she said with a trembling voice. "Let me see if there's something to put these in."

He mentally hit himself in the head; he should have anticipated she didn't have a vase. She walked into the kitchen and he let out a small sigh of relief when she located one in a high cabinet.

It was on the top shelf and he easily pulled it down and handed it to her. When their fingers brushed accidentally, warmth spread through his body like a spring day in his mother's flower garden.

"I'll unwrap them if you want to fill the vase with water," he said.

He took the roses from her and laid them on the counter to untie the ribbon as she went to the sink.

Within a few minutes, Anna had artfully arranged the roses in the vase and was tying the ribbon around it.

She stopped as she finished the bow. "Is this all right? Or should I just throw the ribbon away? I haven't gotten flowers since...." She swallowed and didn't finish the sentence.

He suspected since before her parents died, but didn't want to upset her by voicing it. Instead, he gathered her into his arms.

“I like the ribbon around the vase,” he said softly, deeply inhaling her scent of raspberries, vanilla and musk.

She leaned her head against his chest and wrapped her arms around his waist, melting into him. Oh, he could stay like this with her forever. It was heavenly, having her in his arms willingly. As he stroked her silky hair, he imagined what it would be like to have her with him all the time.

They stood like that for what felt like a charmed eternity, until she stiffened suddenly and pulled away. His heart broke as she stepped away and looked up at him with frightened eyes.

“I’m sorry, Alex. I shouldn’t have—”

“Anna, never apologize for being comfortable in my arms,” he said in a soft voice, stepping towards her and cupping her cheek. “I wouldn’t want it any other way.”

He gazed down into her softening green eyes and fought with himself about the wisdom of kissing her. When her tongue darted out to sweep across her bottom lip, he lost the battle and lowered his head to brush his lips against hers. She sighed softly and he slid his hand around the back of her head, pulling her towards him and capturing her lips with his.

Anna clung to Alex's formidable upper arms as he pressed his lips to hers. He took her lower lip between his and sucked gently, eliciting a soft moan from her throat. His tongue slipped between her parted lips and gently invaded her mouth, dancing and swirling around hers. His one hand held the back of her head and the other wrapped around her waist, pulling her close.

Her mind spun at his kiss. It was a welcome invasion into every part of her: body, soul and mind. As his lips caressed hers, she felt herself melting into him, as if they were becoming one person. He groaned as he thrust his

tongue against hers and she imagined other parts of his body thrusting against her.

She stepped closer, her body touching his and feeling the expected bulge against her belly. Would he finally have sex with her? She desired him. She wanted to connect with him on so many levels and she wasn't thinking about him as her Master, but as a lover.

When he pulled away moments later, panting and staring at her, she looked up into his eyes, begging him wordlessly to take her to bed.

He shook his head, wide-eyed, still gasping for breath. "Anna, I can't...", he said in answer to her unasked question. "I don't want to begin things in lust."

Hurt, she started to turn away, but he held on to her hand and pulled her back to him, pressing her head against his chest.

"Do you hear it?" he asked in a hoarse whisper. "Do you hear my heart pounding for you?"

She could feel and hear his heart pounding fast and hard in his chest. She sucked in a ragged breath as she realized his desire for her, and looked up at him.

"Why?" she whispered.

He knelt in front of her and held her hands in his. "I've never felt for any woman what I feel for you, *Schatzi*. You are my treasure. I want you to know that before...before I make love to you."

She looked at him with tears in her eyes. "Why does it matter?"

"Precisely because you asked that question, *mein Liebe*. Because I want you to know the difference between lovemaking and fucking."

Aaron had made love to her. She frowned at him, hurt. "I know the difference, Alex."

“Do you?” he asked, firmly but gently. “Do you know that my desire for you is more than physical? I want you. All of you. Body, soul and mind. I won't accept any less.”

Aaron had said similar things to her, but this was different. Aaron could never have her fully. As much as she loved him, there was a very large barrier between them in the form of Devin.

But Alex? Could he truly take her? All of her? The thought was both thrilling and terrifying.

She stared into his passion-filled eyes. The intensity overwhelmed her. She wanted to say yes: that she wanted him to take all of her, but something stopped her from saying the words. Her lower lip trembled.

“I'm afraid,” she whispered finally.

“I am too, *Schatzi*.”

His admission astonished her. Alex wasn't afraid of anything, was he? He was too big, too strong for fear. But the apprehension she saw in his eyes told her differently.

Alex studied Anna for a long minute. He wanted her; wanted to possess her as he had the right to, but he didn't want to force her or scare her. It didn't seem so much that she was afraid of him anymore, only of being taken so completely. But he was afraid too, and he saw that she understood. Maybe it was time.

Her eyes widened as he took her hand and pulled her close to him again. She gazed down at him on his knee, and hesitantly touched his cheek. He closed his eyes as her fingers trailed across his smooth cheekbone and lips. She giggled as he nipped at her fingers as they passed his mouth.

He opened his eyes at the sound and delighted in the sparkle in her eyes. She continued to trace his other cheekbone, then around the top of his ear and along the outside to the lobe.

He could feel his already hard cock painfully throbbing at her gentle touch. He ached for her, both with his heart and with his body. But he would be patient and not make her feel obligated.

That was the crux of the matter: she felt like she had an obligation to have sex with any man who was attracted to her. He didn't want her obligation; he wanted her desire, and he saw it in her eyes as she trailed her fingers down the pulsing vein in his neck. He trembled like a teenage boy under her hand.

She gave him the sweetest smile he'd ever seen and cupped his cheek before leaning down and kissing him gently on his lips. If he were a lesser man, he would have thrown her down on the floor and fucked her right there. But no, she deserved better than that. He *wanted* to give her more than that.

He searched her eyes and saw nothing but passion and desire and his resolve melted. It was time. He stood, sweeping her up into his arms, and carried her into her bedroom.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Anna looked up at Alex, wide-eyed as he sat her gently on her bed. Was he finally going to be with her? Why did her heart pound so?

He sat next to her and took her hand in his, gazing into her eyes with such tenderness it took her breath away. He lifted her palm to his mouth, kissing it gently, his lips caressing the sensitive skin. She sucked in a deep breath as he nibbled his way slowly down each finger. Her whole body trembled when he stopped at her fingertips to dart his tongue against the very center of the pads of her fingers.

He trailed kisses back down her palm and to her inner wrist, where she watched his tongue stroke at the pulse point for a long moment. She sighed, trembling at the surprisingly intimate touch. Goose bumps appeared on her arm and she shivered as he began kissing up towards her shoulder. He moved slowly, seemingly in no hurry, stopping to give attention to the spots where she sighed.

When his lips finally met her shoulder, she gave a great shudder. How could such simple touches make her nerves feel like they were experiencing an uncontrollable electrical storm?

He had moved closer to her on the bed and one hand rested behind her hip as he oh-so-slowly kissed his way across her collarbone. He moved her hair aside and gave butterfly kisses up her neck that felt like a sensual stun gun. The electricity shot through her body and she felt it all the way down to her toes.

He stopped just below her ear and pulled away, but not before she drew in the scent of cedar and lavender and some other seductive scent that she couldn't quite pinpoint...maybe it was just *Alex*.

He repeated the nibbles and kisses on her other palm and fingers. A soft moan escaped from her throat and he looked up into her widened eyes and smiled, sensual and tender at the same time. With no hurry, he kissed his way up her arm again, goose bumps even stronger this time.

“Alex....” She sighed. He'd barely touched her and she was trembling by the time he reached her neck.

“Are you all right, *Schatzi*?” His tone was so soft, so sensual, it surrounded her like a warm mist.

“Uh, huh,” she squeaked.

He chuckled softly and met her eyes as he trailed a finger down the side of her neck. His eyes were dark with desire as he moved his finger upwards and across her lower lip.

She leaned forward, wanting to kiss him, and he smiled and pulled away, moving so smoothly it was sensuous. He stood to remove his jacket and tie, placing them carefully on her dresser, and returned to the bed, this time sitting at her feet.

He unbuckled one shoe at a time, massaging her ankles and arches after dropping the shoe to the floor. She saw the calluses on her toes that were beginning to form from dancing and tried to pull her foot away, but he held firm.

“Never be ashamed of having dancer's feet, Anna,” he said in a soft voice, kissing the rough skin over her stockings. “A ballerina's foot is the most beautiful thing in the world.”

When she danced before, her feet had never gotten as ugly as Jenna's had, but they were still rough. A ballet dancer's ugly bare feet made the

beauty of the dance possible.

He smiled and slid his hand up her calf and thigh and her breath hitched as his fingers reached the edge of her stockings, but he stopped there. He moved his fingers in a strange way and it took her a moment before she realized he was unfastening her stockings. He tented her leg so that he could reach the back fastener and then slowly rolled the stocking down her leg, letting it drift to the floor.

Her eyes fluttered closed as he resumed her foot massage.

“Lay back, *Schatzi*,” he said in a husky voice.

She did and opened her eyes to watch his strong thumbs move in circles on her arch. Another soft moan escaped and her eyes closed again as he pressed firmly.

She cried out softly as a rush of warmth flooded her body and went straight to her pussy.

He slowly moved his hands all around her foot, pausing at certain points and making other parts of her body react. When he set her foot back down on the bed, she was panting and her nipples were hard and aching for his touch.

He slid his hand up her other leg, bringing goose bumps up again, and unfastened her other stocking, rolling it down slowly and dropping it to the floor. He massaged her foot and ankle for a time, pressing on those magic spots like he had on her other foot.

“Alex....” She groaned as he continued the sensual assault on her foot.

Her head pressed back into the bed as a lick of fire erupted from his touch and flooded her body with warmth.

Putting her foot down gently on the bed, he kissed her ankle and moved up to her calf. Her leg muscles tightened as his lips grazed the skin, moving slowly up to her knee.

He kissed the inner side of her knee and massaged underneath. He nipped at the skin with his teeth and warmth spread throughout her body.

Anna trembled as he kissed her legs over her skirt and up to her hip. His breath was hot against the silk and threatened to ignite the skin below.

Who was this man who would take the time to tease her fingertips and toes? Areas of her body that had never been touched in a sensual manner, but ignited strange new sensations that were deeper, more powerful, than any orgasm she'd ever had before.

Her eyes widened as his face came into view, eyes blazing with passion.

“*Schatzi...*,” he whispered in a voice that went straight to her heart.

This was more than just physical touch. He took her, consumed her, made her his own.

And she wasn't afraid.

He rested his arms on either side of her upper body and nuzzled her nose with his before nibbling her lower lip. She gasped softly and he smiled against her lips before penetrating her mouth with his tongue, thrusting slowly.

The soft, sensuous movements made her body melt against his and she wrapped her arms around his ribs. She teased his tongue with her own, dancing around lightly and evading his touch. She felt a rumbling where his chest pressed against hers, and his lips tightened slightly.

She pulled away, afraid she'd angered him, but saw the smile in his eyes as he caressed her cheek and kissed her gently. His tongue probed her lips again and she gladly allowed him in.

They explored each other's mouths forever, it seemed. There was no hurry, no urgency to do anything except know each other in this intimate manner.

Eventually, though, she wanted more. She wanted to know him more; more intimately, more bodily. She wanted more than his tongue in between her lips.

He seemed to feel it too, and broke away from her lips to explore her neck with his mouth while sliding his hand around her back and slowly unzipping her dress.

The slow, sensual burn inside her flared into a fire of need. She worked at the buttons on his shirt as he pulled the straps of her dress down her arms, kissing after them.

He sat up and unclasped his ebony cufflinks. His shirt opened and she licked her lips at the sight of his bare chest. She sat up to caress the skin and the top of her dress slipped down to her waist.

His skin was smooth and satiny. He pulled his shirt off, moving gracefully as it slipped down his prominent triceps and biceps.

“You are so sexy,” she said in a breathless voice, devouring his upper body with her eyes.

He laughed in delight and she blushed, but knew he enjoyed her comment.

“So are you,” he said, turning serious quickly.

He leaned down to place lingering kisses along the cleavage visible above her silver-gray lace bra.

“So beautiful,” he murmured against her skin.

He gently pressed her back down onto the bed and pulled the dress down and off her hips. His eyes filled with hunger as his gaze slid down from her face to her thighs.

His stomach muscles contracted as he bent down to kiss her belly, swirling his tongue in her navel before tugging on the ring with his teeth.

“Oh!” she cried as he ran his fingers across her lower belly. He pressed firmly on a spot below her navel and she could have sworn it was a button for arousal. Her panties were soaked and her pussy ached for his touch.

He skimmed his finger along the edge of her lace panties and then up to the bra strap that he pulled off her shoulder. He kissed the skin that had been under the strap and then did the same to the other side before reaching behind her and unclasping her bra with one hand.

She ran her hands up his chest as he pulled the bra off and dropped it to the ground. Her fingers circled his pink nipples and they tightened into hard pebbles, making her smile.

His hand trailed down from her collarbone and he cupped her breast, squeezing gently, and then bent down to place butterfly kisses on each nipple.

The lighter his touch, the stronger the fire of need burned inside her. She wanted him to take her nipple into his mouth, but he continued to lightly kiss on and around the nipple.

“Please, Alex...” She moaned as he continued to circle her breasts with soft kisses.

“Please what?” he asked in a raspy voice against her skin. His hot breath teased her nipples further and she writhed beneath him.

“Please...I want...” She moaned loudly as he enveloped a nipple in his hot mouth and sucked on it. His tongue teased the tip as he continued sucking and she clenched her hands. “Yes!”

He feasted on her breast, sucking, licking, devouring until she panted with need, and then he moved to the other breast. He teased the tip with his tongue until she moaned and then took it into his mouth and sucked on it while she writhed beneath him.

“Please, Alex...I need you,” she begged as he kissed down her belly. He didn’t speak, but sucked on the skin above her hip as he unfastened her garter belt and tossed it to the floor.

She felt his chest rumble as he pulled her panties down and tossed them aside. His lips pressed against the swollen lips and a delicious tingle surged through her body. His tongue darted out and she jumped slightly. He hummed, stimulating her clit with the vibrations, and he licked her gently.

“Oh!”

His tongue was magical. It swirled around her clit and penetrated her between the silken folds. Her eyes closed as his touch consumed her.

“Alex...”

Something inside her mind released and she felt as if she was giving him part of herself as he devoured her.

He groaned and his licking and sucking became more intense.

“Take me, Alex...,” she whispered, releasing herself into him.

He stopped suddenly and she looked down to see him staring up at her with concern. “Don’t, Anna. I don’t need it.”

“I want to,” she said softly, without understanding what she was talking about. She wanted to give him all of herself. To take her, consume her.

He pushed himself up on his arms and leaned forward to kiss her. “That is the most wonderful thing I could hear from you, *Schatzi*,” he murmured against her mouth. “But I want you to be fully you when our bodies come together.”

She gazed up at him with hooded eyes. “I need you,” she whispered, drawing her hand down his cheek. She reached for his belt and began tugging on it.

He smiled and played with his belt and pants until he pulled them down, kicking off his shoes and boxer briefs at the same time.

She reached for his cock and wrapped her hand around it as best she could so she could stroke him. He groaned and put his hand on hers and then slid his hand up her arm to her jaw. He pulled her to him and kissed her deeply. His tongue mimicked the movements of her hand and she groaned.

She ran her thumb over his piercing and he hissed before pushing her onto her back. His eyes blazed with passion again and he positioned himself at her entrance. He pressed forward and she winced in pain.

“Anna, are you okay?”

She nodded quickly. “Yes,” she said in a strained voice. He started to pull back, but she grabbed his ribs and shook her head. “Just give me a moment.”

Though she didn’t remember many details of the previous night, she remembered the sensations of the erotic abuse they had heaped on her. She knew that sometimes, after an especially painful night, she would be extra tight the next day. Jack always enjoyed that.

Abuse plus Alex’s enormous cock equaled pain. She willed her pussy to relax. She wanted him, needed him, and was relieved when the pain subsided.

She opened her eyes and saw concern in his eyes.

“I will go as slow as you need me to, *Schatzi*.”

“It’s okay, Alex....” She would gladly take him, even if he ripped her open.

“*Nein*. I don’t want to hurt you. I want to see you enjoy yourself as much as I am enjoying myself.”

He leaned down to kiss her again, tenderly this time. When he pulled away and she looked up at him she saw such emotion in his eyes it made her heart glow with warmth.

She moved her hips beneath him, letting him know she was ready, and he smiled and pressed forward slowly.

She sighed as he gently, slowly, eased into her intimate space. It tingled, bordering on pain, and he would stop anytime she gave the slightest hint of discomfort.

“Alex...,” she murmured, putting her arm around his neck and pulling his head down as she felt their hips meet.

She’d never felt as full as she did at this moment. Not just the physical sensation of him being inside her, but the intimacy he had created. She was his, fully and completely. Mind, body and spirit, as he had said.

He kissed her tenderly as he began to move inside her. She did everything she knew to make sure he enjoyed himself fully.

“Anna, you don’t need to work at pleasing me,” he whispered into her ear and then pulled back to look into her face. “Just being with you is more pleasure than I have ever known.”

She pulled him back to her and kissed him, flooding the kiss with her emotions. She wiggled her hips and he moved again, circling inside her and thrusting gently.

They both moaned as their movements quickened. She clung to his upper body and gasped for breath as his thrusts grew deeper and deeper.

“Oh...Oh...Alex!” She screamed as she came, her body shaking with the tremendous sensation.

Alex stiffened and then cried out in German, pulling his arms tightly around her. She melted into him, feeling his shudders and throbs as he came deep inside her.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

Anna felt a peace she'd never known before as she lay in Alex's arms. He was truly a skilled and gentle lover. She giggled at the remembrance of what he did to her feet and toes.

"What are you giggling about?" Alex's chest rumbled as he spoke.

She giggled again. "I was thinking about what you did to my toes." She'd never considered toes an erogenous zone, but had been proved very wrong by the naked man lying next to her.

Alex chuckled. "No one has ever played with your adorable toes before?"

Anna shook her head. No one had done a lot of things that Alex had done to her. All amazing.

But his gentleness is what she remembered the most. He had been so patient with her discomfort, never once making her feel bad about having to go slow. Her eyes welled up, remembering his loving manner. Yes, loving was the appropriate word. She felt loved with every touch of his hand, every kiss from his lips.

"Oh, *Schatzi*. Why are you crying?"

He turned on his side and caressed her cheek, looking at her intently. He wiped away the tear that had slipped from her eye.

She stared at him for a moment, overwhelmed by his tenderness and then suddenly burst into tears. He pulled her to him and held her tightly, stroking her hair and whispering in her ear words of love.

Alex held a trembling, sobbing Anna tightly against his chest. Had he upset her? He'd been as gentle as he could be, wanting to show her with every move how much he loved her. He thought he'd accomplished his objective, but apparently not. And now she was sobbing. What had he done?

Every inch of her body was delectable. He'd held himself back the morning after the ritual for reasons that had made sense to him at the time. Now he wondered if he'd ever be able to deny himself again.

Her skin felt like satin, tasting of cream and smelling of berries and vanilla. Her mouth tasted as sweet as honey. Her nipples were delicious cherries and her sex reminded him of a rose on a cool dewy morning.

He'd never met such a woman. If he died right here, right now, he would die the happiest man in the world, save one thing: her tears.

“Anna,” he said softly as her tears began to subside. “Schatzi, did I hurt you?”

She gazed up at him with a bewildered look. “No, not at all,” she whispered.

He brushed her hair out of her face. “Then why do you cry?”

Her lip trembled and he leaned forward to kiss her before she cried again. He cupped her head and caressed her as he kissed her deeply. She eagerly returned his kiss, wrapping her free arm around his back. He pulled back a few moments later.

“My love, the thought that I may have hurt you is tormenting me,” he said with a gentle smile. “Please tell me what I did so I can try and undo it.”

She gave him a timid smile and shook her head. “You didn't do anything...well, anything bad.”

Alex was confused. He remembered how perplexing women were and how much he didn't understand their inner workings sometimes. No, make that most of the time...if ever.

"You...made me feel amazing things that I've never felt before," she said in a soft voice. "I was crying because you made me..." She hesitated. "...happy." She looked embarrassed.

Alex's heart soared at the same time he sighed in relief. "I was afraid I'd hurt you."

She looked up at him adoringly. "Quite the opposite." She frowned. "I'm sorry if I upset you."

"No need to apologize, Schatzi." He kissed her again. "Absolutely no need."

"You are a very talented man, Alex," she said, cheeks turning pink.

Alex grinned. "I pulled out all my tricks for you."

Anna giggled. The most beautiful sound in the world to him.

"I'm honored."

Alex chuckled and nuzzled her neck. "No, my love, it is I who am honored." He kissed down her neck to her chest and tugged on her nipple rings with his teeth.

A low rumbling sounded from Anna's stomach. She blushed and clutched her midsection. He'd forgotten he had come over to take Anna to dinner. This, however, was much more satisfying than a meal at an exclusive restaurant. But she was hungry and he felt bad. He wondered if she'd eaten today.

"I promise I did have reservations for us tonight. I didn't come over to make love to you."

Anna looked at him shyly. "I don't mind."

“But you're hungry. I feel bad for not taking you out. Perhaps I can make it up to you tomorrow night?”

The words spilled out of his mouth before he realized it. Well, he'd just have to make sure everything was ready for the job before tomorrow night so that he could keep his word to her. He'd keep it whether things were ready or not.

Anna beamed at him. “I'd like that.”

“Good.” He kissed her head. “So, what would you be up for now? Do you want to go out somewhere? Or I'm sure something is still delivering this time of night.”

“If we went out, we would have to get dressed,” she commented with a glint in her eye.

Alex grinned. “Yes, that is true.”

“You are far too sexy to be wearing clothes,” she said, stroking his chest, then blushed at her words and hid her face in his arm.

He laughed. “Don't hide, Schatzi. I would have to say the same thing about you. However,” he pulled her out from hiding against him. “You do need to eat. Would I be correct to assume that you haven't eaten today?”

He could see another teasing remark forming in her head, but she bit her lip and didn't speak. “I can see you want to say something. I love hearing what comes out of your little head. Tell me.”

She blushed. “I could be satisfied with a snack,” she said softly and reached for his cock.

He groaned and flexed his hips into her hand. She stroked him and he felt himself harden under her touch. “My God, Anna,” he groaned, leaning in and nuzzling her hair. “I'll never feed you if you start again.”

She giggled. “You could feed me quite well,” she murmured, moving her hand slowly up and down.

He knew if he grabbed her hand to stop her, she would be hurt. But he wanted to be sure she ate. As she continued to play with him, his resolve lessened and he leaned back and enjoyed her touch. He would pursue the other subject later.

Anna scooted down the bed as she stroked Alex's cock. God, he was beautiful. Every part of him. Inside and out, though at the moment she was more focused on the outside of him. His abdominal muscles tightened as she trailed her tongue across his navel.

She sat up slightly and looked at him out of the corner of her eyes. He had turned onto his back to watch her, his hands behind his head and a smile on his beautiful lips. Oh, she was falling for him. Or had she already fallen for him? That was something to think about later. Right now she wanted to think about this thick, long shaft in front of her face.

She moved so she could watch his face. As she dragged her tongue up from base to tip, his eyes closed slightly. He inhaled sharply when she sucked gently on the very tip, running her tongue along the slit. She took the entire head into her mouth and sucked on it like a lollipop until he opened his eyes, looking at her, slightly exasperated. She grinned and he gave her a playful frown.

“If you keep teasing me like that, I will pull you back up and make love to you again,” he teased.

“I thought you liked it.”

She knew he did. Before he could answer, she took more of him into her mouth and he moaned loudly. She tugged at his sac as she swallowed him down.

He mumbled in German as she continued to tease and tantalize him. He clenched fistfuls of sheet and panted as she continually took him down her

throat. She enjoyed the reaction she got from him.

His speaking in German was especially sexy to her, for some reason, and she did whatever she could to elicit the words from his mouth.

“Anna!” he cried a few minutes later and Anna eagerly swallowed his offering to her.

She sucked every drop from his softening cock and looked up at him. His eyes were open and he was watching her again.

He gave her a tender smile and pulled at her hand until she moved up to lay next to him with her head on his chest.

“You are truly an amazing woman, *Schatzi*,” he said tenderly, stroking her hair.

She snuggled closer to him and sighed contentedly. She could stay here forever and be perfectly happy.

She was drifting off to sleep when Alex nudged her. “Anna, you really need to have some dinner.”

“Most places are closed,” she mumbled. “It's all right. I'll have breakfast in the morning.” All she wanted to do right now was sleep.

“*Nein, mein Liebe.*” He sat up. “You need to eat tonight. Do you have any food here?”

“I have some cereal. It's just easier to pick something up than cook most of the time.”

Alex chuckled. “I understand. If Frau Gersten wasn't there I would do the same thing.” He stood and pulled his phone out of the pocket of his jacket. “Let me see what's open.”

He sat back on the bed and played with his phone for a few minutes while Anna stroked his leg. He absently took her hand in his and stroked the back of her hand.

“There is a grocery store right around the corner that's still open. It likely won't be anything gourmet, but will be food. And it's faster than taking you to my place.” He looked at her. “Do you want to come with me?”

Anna was torn. If she stayed, she could doze. But she didn't want to be away from him. She smiled brightly. “I'll come with.”

They dressed quickly. Anna slipped on a pair of sweats and a hoodie, while Alex had to put on his shirt and slacks.

“You're a little wrinkled,” she said running her hand down his chest.

Alex shrugged and grinned. “I don't care. Unless you have clothes here my size, it will have to do.”

He held her hand the entire time they were out, except for at the register when he needed two hands to get his credit card out of his wallet. By the time they got back to her apartment she was yawning like crazy.

He looked at her sympathetically. “I should have had you stay so you could have slept a bit. I'm sorry, *Schatzi*.” He chuckled as she yawned again. “All right, you don't have to eat. But I am going to get you a big breakfast in the morning, and you must promise me you will eat every bite.”

Anna looked at him with hope in her eyes. “You're staying the night?”

Alex blinked. “I was planning on it,” he said slowly. “Is that all right?”

Anna grinned and nodded enthusiastically. “I would love it if you stayed.”

Her heart leapt for joy as he turned out the lights and led her back to her bedroom. They undressed, then he waited for her to crawl into bed before he turned out the light and joined her under the covers, pulling her against him and holding her tightly.

She fell asleep immediately.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

Alex woke with the sun as he normally did. But this time he held the woman of his dreams, which was definitely not normal. Last night had been one of the best of his life, though he still felt bad about Anna not eating, and would more than make it up to her this morning and tonight.

Knowing that he had to tell her he was going out of town made his heart ache. And then that he was moving back to Germany, albeit only for a few months at most, he hoped. He struggled internally trying to decide whether to talk to her about it this morning and risk ruining the magic of last night, or waiting until tonight and letting her have a happy day.

Part of him felt like he'd failed her again. Finally giving in and making love to her the day before he left. He felt as cruel as Devin. Maybe he'd push off his move back home for a month or so after he returned so they'd have more time together. The last thing he wanted was for her to feel abandoned.

More than ever he wished there was another way for him to learn what he needed to fight Devin, but if he tried anything here, Devin would find out about it and Alex would lose any advantage he might have gained from his learning. No, he had to go home. And going home meant leaving Anna. And that broke his heart.

But on the bright side, she had come to him willingly and that gave him hope for the future. They had a beginning. When he returned from Germany, he would court her and then ask her to marry him when she was

ready. He'd be able to fight for Anna and against Devin. Someday she would be free. He was determined to make that a reality. Then all would be right in his world.

She snuggled closer against him, pressing her back against his front. She moved her hips just-so and made him inhale sharply as she pressed her supple rear against his hard cock. He exhaled slowly through his mouth, trying to calm his rampant heartbeat.

He didn't want to wake her. Whatever Devin had done to her Saturday night had exhausted her. At least he assumed it was Devin. He knew he'd awakened her when he called after lunch. And she still looked tired when he'd arrived that evening.

He loved the feel of Anna pressed against his body. They fit together perfectly. He tried not to let his mind succumb to his baser self, but he couldn't help but remember how incredible it had felt to finally join his body to hers. How his cock had fit so snugly inside her tight core, hot and wet. He let out a groan without realizing it and Anna stirred.

Anna woke to the sound of a deep groan and a hot, hard body behind her.

Alex.

Last night had really happened. She smiled before she opened her eyes. His arms around her felt heavenly. She pressed her hips back slightly against his erection and he groaned again. She giggled softly and he stiffened.

He turned her onto her back and looked at her with mock disapproval.

“How long have you been awake?” His raspy voice made his accent stronger. The sound stirred dormant coals deep inside her belly.

“Just a few minutes,” she answered innocently.

She traced the inner lines of his pectoral muscles and his nipples tightened. She scooted down before he realized what she was doing and flicked her tongue against the hard nub, eliciting another groan.

He hissed as she took it between her teeth and bit gently, then pressed the flat of her tongue against it. He mumbled something in German and rolled on top of her, pressing his cock against her thigh. He looked at her adoringly before he leaned down and caressed her lips with his.

He cupped her head and pressed his lips against hers. His tongue invaded her mouth and she moaned against him. She was in heaven again, his kisses, his touch, his affection. He trailed sweet kisses down her neck to her breasts and kissed the pierced nipple before sucking it into his mouth and making her feel amazing things down in her belly.

And her heart. Every touch made her feel that he wasn't just touching her skin, but touching her heart. She never wanted it to end.

He caressed the side of her breast as he swirled his tongue around her hardened nipple. She grasped his arms and arched her back, moaning loudly.

“Alex,” she sighed. She wanted him inside her desperately.

He looked up into her eyes and seemed to understand her need. He nudged her thighs apart and positioned himself against her entrance. She bit her lip, nervous that it would hurt.

“I will always go as slow as I need to, *Schatzi*,” he whispered. He slowly pressed against her and slid into her silken folds.

Anna moaned as he filled her unlike any other man could. She stretched around him, but it didn't sting like it had last night.

“More,” she gasped when he stopped.

He chuckled softly and nuzzled her neck as he moved forward. She wrapped her legs around his hips, impatient for his fullness deep inside her.

“Am I going too slow?” he asked.

She nodded, breathing heavily. “Yes. Too slow.”

“I don't want to hurt you, *Liebe*.” But he increased his speed slightly.

She pulled him deeper with her legs and he grinned and thrust forward suddenly. She gasped, eyes widening as he hit something deep inside her.

“Are you all right?”

“I liked that,” she said breathlessly.

“Really?” he looked surprised.

She nodded, eyes sparkling.

He grinned and pulled back slightly, then thrust forward again.

“Oh!” she exclaimed.

Alex could hardly believe that Anna enjoyed his powerful thrusts. He could rarely indulge in such things unless he didn't care about the comfort of his partner. But she really did. Her eyes were closed, lips parted, cheeks flushed, and she moaned in pleasure with every thrust. God, she really was the woman of his dreams, able to take him fully and completely.

She stiffened suddenly, mouth in an 'o', and he almost froze, concerned that he'd hurt her, when her back arched and she cried out his name. She clenched around him so tightly he came unexpectedly and lost himself in the pleasure, vaguely hearing her screams of pleasure through the pounding of his own heart in his ears.

He rolled onto his back, pulling Anna on top of him. He brushed her hair away from her face and gazed into her sparkling eyes.

“You really enjoyed that? Tell me the truth,” he commanded. He wanted to know the truth.

She blinked. “Yes, Alex. I really did. Is that bad?” She looked confused. She knew he'd issued a command.

Now he felt bad. “No. I didn't want you to say yes if you didn't mean it.”

She bit her lip and contemplated his words, then nodded. “I really did,” she said softly.

“I know.” He beamed at her. “You are the first woman I've been able to...indulge in with strong movements like that.”

At least the first who'd enjoyed it. He was certain he was forceful like that in his rages after a mission, but he intentionally went to see Devin's Red Girls immediately after returning so he didn't worry about hurting someone who didn't want to be hurt.

Maybe if Anna could fully take him...maybe he didn't have to go to the Manor anymore. But did he want to risk it?

Anna sat up and frowned. “I have to get ready.”

And he had things to do today too. “Well, while you get ready, I will go get us some breakfast.” He watched Anna's bare ass sway as she walked to the bathroom. “Down boy,” he told his stirring cock and then rolled his eyes at himself.

Anna stood in the shower, dazed. She wasn't afraid of Alex anymore. He really was everything that other people said he was. And what a lover! She could easily imagine spending every night with him in the near future. He could become a sweet addiction.

As she pulled her hair up into a bun, she bit her lip nervously. But did he want the same thing? No, she was sure he felt the same way. She could sense it in him.

She heard the apartment door unlock and open as she was dressing and looked up a moment later to see Alex looking at her tenderly. She smiled shyly at him.

“I got lots of food,” he grinned, holding up a large paper bag. “I’ll go set it up in the kitchen.”

Anna got a delicious whiff of something as he left the room. She finished dressing quickly, acknowledging the growling of her stomach.

Breakfast was delicious and she ate quickly. She had ignored how hungry she was and she probably ate too much, but at the moment she didn’t care.

Alex didn't say much, but just looked at her with a tender, but sad expression. Something was wrong. Had she misread his feelings for her?

She looked at him nervously. “Alex, is something wrong? Did I upset you?”

Alex sighed sadly. “I can't hide anything from you, can I?”

Anna's heart dropped and she put her fork down on the table. What had she done to upset him? She looked at him expectantly, bracing herself for rejection once more.

“Anna...,” he began reluctantly. “I...I have to go out of town tomorrow.”

She blinked, confused. “You're not angry at me?”

He looked shocked. “Why would you think that? *Nein*, absolutely not. I am about as far from angry as I could possibly be.” He took her hand and kissed her palm. “I hate that I have to leave you, *Schatzi*,” he said sadly.

Anna was torn. She was very relieved that he wasn't angry at her. But he was leaving. Tomorrow.

“Where are you going?”

He frowned. “I can't tell you that, *Schatzi*.”

She felt chided. “Oh.” She shouldn't have asked. She would have to remember that in the future. “Can I ask when you'll be back?”

“You can ask me anything you want, *Liebe*. Unfortunately, I don't know when I'll be back. Sometime next week, I hope.”

“You don't know?” Weren't trips normally planned before one left?
“What are you going to do when you're...wherever you're going?”

“Business,” he answered vaguely.

“Oh.”

Another impertinent question? She stared at her plate, uncertain of what to say.

Alex watched her face fall at his incomplete answers. He had hurt her.

“Schatzi, it's not that I don't want to tell you. I just can't right now. Someday I'll be able to tell you.”

He didn't want to frighten her by telling her he was a highly trained killer. He needed to think about the best way to tell her. And not be leaving the next day for who knew how long.

She looked up at him doubtfully for a moment, then her gaze intensified. Was she reading him? Her face softened after a moment and she smiled uncertainly. “Okay.”

“But I still want to take you out tonight,” he assured her.

Her smile brightened. “I'd like that.”

They finished eating breakfast in a lighter mood. He was relieved that she knew he was leaving and she wasn't overly upset. Maybe it was just because she thought he was angry at her when he wasn't, but he'd take her cheerful mood any way he could get it.

All too soon it was time for them to part ways. Anna needed to get to the studio and he needed to get home. He would get ribbed by his men for staying out all night, but it was worth it. He hadn't planned on it. He'd

planned to get home not too late and get working. But being with Anna was much sweeter than his empty bed at home.

They took the elevator down to the garage where he'd parked his car next to hers.

“What time will you finish tonight?” he asked as he pulled her close to kiss her goodbye.

“About five,” she said, looking up at him with a smile.

“If I pick you up at six-thirty, will that give you enough time to get ready?”

She nodded. “I think so.”

He leaned down and kissed her. “The hours will drag by until I have you in my arms again.”

Her face glowed as she gazed up at him. “I can't wait,” she said with bright eyes.

He opened her car door for her and she tossed in her bag before getting into the tiny white car. Well, tiny for him. He preferred the meatier SLS that he drove. But this suited her. He closed her door and she opened the window.

He kissed her through the opened window. “I will see you tonight.”

She grinned, then turned the ignition.

He watched as she drove away, then got into his car and put the convertible top down. He turned the radio on a little louder than normal and sang all the way home.

CHAPTER FIFTY

There were several cars parked outside Alex's house when he pulled up. He walked into the house and was greeted by a variety of amused expressions and vulgar comments from his hand-picked special ops team.

"Where have you been all night, my cousin?" came the bold question from a man that looked remarkably like Alex himself.

Alex stood in the doorway and grinned stupidly at his cousin, Erich. Erich and the other men in the room burst into laughter.

"You finally let yourself have her?" Seth asked from the couch. "I don't know how you held out so long, man."

Alex frowned at his friend. "It's not like that, and you know it."

It irked him a little that Seth had been with Anna several times before he did. But the cold reality was that a lot of men had been with her before he had. He hoped, somehow, there wouldn't be too many after him.

Seth laughed. "I know. But I still admire your willpower. What changed?"

Alex dropped his large body on the couch, which creaked in protest. "She did. She wanted me."

"I didn't realize women wanting you had become a problem," Jason, one of his weapons guys, commented. "Is this a recent development? Because if you're having problems, there's no hope for the rest of us." He laughed.

Alex growled, but wasn't especially upset. "No. She's...special." Only Sebastian knew everything about Anna. Seth and Tony knew a lot of it. Speaking of.... "Where's Sebastian?"

Erich shrugged. "I talked to him yesterday before I left. He said he'd be here, but had something to do first."

"Let me go shower and then we can get started." Alex stood.

"We already did," Erich laughed. "We'll fill you in when you get back."

Alex rolled his eyes and left the room. He trusted his men implicitly and knew they were capable of starting without him. But he felt like he had been irresponsible by staying out all night. But only to them. Had he left Anna, it would have been equally irresponsible, and more difficult to make right.

No, he did the right thing. For once.

Anna arrived at the studio practically floating. She almost didn't notice Jenna standing near the door talking to some girls she didn't know.

"Jenna," Anna said, walking up to her with a nervous smile.

Jenna frowned and turned her back on Anna.

Tears stung Anna's eyes as she slowly walked away. Not that she could blame Jenna for being angry. But it still hurt. Her one friend who had been loyal to her all these years, and Anna had betrayed her. She felt like a horrible person. Anna walked up the stairs more sober than she'd entered the studio, though thoughts of Alex inevitably returned and cheered her.

The day went surprisingly quickly, and before she knew it, she was driving home to get ready for her dinner with Alex. Once again, she was plagued by the question of whether it was a date, but at least this time she knew how Alex felt about her.

For tonight she chose a strapless lavender chiffon dress that fell to her knees, with a dark purple ribbon around her waist.

At six-thirty there was a knock on the door and she hurried to answer it. Alex stood in the doorway holding a single pink rose. He wore a blue-gray suit and black shirt, but no tie. He looked very fashionable.

She beamed when she saw him.

“Hello, Anna,” he said, stepping into the apartment and leaning down to kiss her.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him back. She was so happy to see him.

He cupped her cheek and looked at her tenderly. He looked like he wanted to say something, but didn’t speak. He handed her the rose and she smelled it.

“It’s beautiful,” she whispered.

“I’m going to wait right here,” Alex said. “Following you into the kitchen last night is what got us in trouble.”

Anna giggled and put the rose in the vase with the others. Her whole dining area smelled like a rose garden.

Alex held out his hand and they made their way down to the garage hand in hand.

Alex had not gotten everything done that he needed to today. And by going out, he was dragging Seth and Tony away from planning as well. But keeping his word to Anna was important. The others seemed to understand. Especially since Sebastian had backed him. They respected Sebastian’s word as much as they respected Alex’s, though Sebastian never usurped his authority. Alex appreciated that about his friend.

Even though he knew he was doing the right thing, and he enjoyed every second of his time with Anna, he felt ill at ease. He didn't like feeling unprepared this late in the planning stage. But he trusted his men, and he was determined to enjoy his time with Anna. Especially since if he wasn't fully engaged with her, she would know and be hurt. So he pushed the thoughts aside as he drove through the streets of San Francisco to the restaurant.

"So, how are the intensives going?" he asked after they were seated a short time later.

Anna's face glowed with happiness. "Wonderful. Isaak is putting me in the advanced classes starting on Wednesday."

"That's wonderful, Anna. I'm so proud of you."

She beamed at his words. It was refreshing to be with a woman that could be made so happy by something as simple as a compliment.

Anna chatted happily about the previous week's dance classes while they waited for their first course of the tasting menu offered by the French restaurant. He gazed into her sparkling eyes and found himself falling even harder for her than he already had. He made a mental note to put the school's performance on his calendar. He wouldn't miss it for the world.

He told her about growing up in Germany as a duke's son. She asked intelligent questions and seemed very interested in his story. He asked her about her parents and she told him about growing up as the daughter of famous dancers.

It amazed him that, after all she'd gone through, she could still be so sweet and almost innocent. The only explanation for that would be the Immortal part of her. As happy as the Dirne were in his father's Schloss, they did not have innocence or naiveté like Anna did.

Dinner went far too quickly and too soon he was paying the bill and driving her back to her apartment. He was torn as to whether or not he should stay the night with her. Oh, how he wanted to make love to her, but he had to leave very early in the morning and had things he really needed to do before he left.

They walked back to her apartment and went inside. She looked at him expectantly. He sighed and took her hand, leading her to the couch. He kissed her and held her close.

“Schatzi, I can’t stay tonight.”

She searched his eyes for an explanation. “Why? You want to.”

He smiled and smoothed her hair back from her face. “More than anything. But, I must leave very early in the morning and I have things to finish before I leave.”

Anna searched Alex’s eyes once more. He was sincere and not just blowing her off.

She nodded. “I understand.” She cupped his cheek. “I wish you didn’t have to go.” Being with him, talking with him tonight had been wonderful. She wished the evening didn’t have to end so quickly.

He took her hand in his and kissed her palm. “I wish I didn’t have to go either,” he said softly. “Thank you for understanding.”

She wished he wasn’t so reluctant to tell him what he was doing. Maybe it was so boring he would think her uninterested. She had learned that he had studied politics, business and international studies at the university. She didn’t know what someone would do with such learning, but maybe it wasn’t very interesting.

“What are you thinking about?” he asked.

She giggled. “I was wondering if what you were going out of town to do was so boring that you thought I wouldn’t be interested.”

Alex burst out into laughter. “Oh, *Schatzi*, if that were it, I would tell you. But, I simply can’t tell you right now. But someday.”

She curled up next to him and lay her head on his chest and they sat together in a comfortable silence for a long time. Every once in a while he would stroke her arm or kiss the top of her head. She was drifting off to sleep when he stirred.

“I have been putting off the inevitable, but I really must be going, *Schatzi*.” He sat for a moment more, then stood and helped her to her feet.

Anna walked him to the door and gazed up into his tender eyes. She didn’t want to speak for fear of losing control and crying.

“I will come see you as soon as I can when I get home,” he said with a trembling voice. “I hate to leave you, Anna.”

“I hate for you to leave,” she whispered.

He drew her tightly to his chest and pressed his lips to hers in a desperate kiss. By the time he pulled away her lips were swollen and bruised, but she didn’t care. He caressed her cheek with his hand and stared into her eyes, reluctant to leave.

Finally, he sighed. “I must leave, or I won’t.”

She nodded and smiled bravely at him. He kissed her once more, then turned and left, closing the door behind him. She stared at the closed door for a long moment and allowed the tears to fall down her cheeks. But she knew he’d be back.

She wasn’t afraid of him anymore. She felt quite certain that she loved him.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

Tuesday passed in a blur. On Wednesday, she walked into the advanced class for the first time. It was nerve wracking, walking towards the large studio.

These were students closer to her own age. The first class of the day had both guys and girls in it and she hesitated in the doorway, unsure what to do. A few of the male students smiled at her and she smiled shyly back. Her heart was with Alex, though, and she hoped they would leave her alone.

A few minutes later one of the advanced instructors, Delia, walked in and spoke to her.

“Isaak told me you’d be joining us today. I’m so happy to have you in my class,” she said with a pleasant smile.

Anna smiled nervously back at her. “Hi,” she said softly.

“Where would you be comfortable standing?”

“In the back corner?” she asked, half joking.

Delia laughed. “If you’d like.”

Before class started, Delia introduced her to the rest of the students. She received some curious looks, but most were friendly. Delia put Anna on the side wall between two girls named Madison and Olivia. They were friendly and Anna liked standing near them.

The entire class was conducted *en pointe*, though Delia told her she could switch to slippers if she needed to.

As expected, this class was much harder, but Anna loved the challenge. The exhaustion she felt at the end of the class was exhilarating.

The rest of the week was uneventful, save her nightly visitors that Devin sent over. She spent Friday night at the Manor, and Devin told her he was very pleased with the attention she gave to his friends.

The advanced classes were intense, but wonderful. She was quickly regaining her strength, just like Travis had said she would.

Anna drove to the studio the following Tuesday morning excited for the day. It would be her first *pas de deux* class after lunch. There had been one on the previous Thursday, but she had just watched. Delia wanted her to have more of the advanced classes before she started with a partner. She'd enjoyed watching the couples dance. The girls were elegant, the guys were strong. She couldn't wait for her turn.

The morning dragged, though she continued to enjoy the challenge of the harder classes. After lunch, and after a pointe class, she finally walked into the class she'd been anticipating since last week.

Delia matched her with a dancer named Nate, which surprised Anna. He was considered one of the best students in the school.

Anna apologized to Nate quite a few times throughout the class, but he was easy going and didn't mind when she made mistakes. He seemed to really be enjoying dancing with her and offered encouragement and adjusted her when he thought he could help.

He was not only a very talented dancer, but he was also very good looking, with straight brown hair parted in the middle and hanging over the

sides of his forehead. His whiskey-brown eyes were kind. He reminded her of Aaron, which made her smile.

“What are you smiling about?” Nate asked as he held her waist in preparation for a pirouette. Delia had the couples working on their own for a few minutes, without music.

Anna blushed. “Oh, you just reminded me of someone.”

Nate grinned. “I hope it’s a good someone.”

Anna caught his eye in the mirror in front of them and nodded. *Fifth position and push*, she said silently and executing a perfect double pirouette.

Nate’s hands skimmed around her waist as she turned, but held her up on point when she finished.

He grinned mischievously. “Who?”

“Who what?” Anna asked, completely forgetting what she’d said.

Nate turned her around to face him. “Who do I remind you of?” His warm eyes glinted with mischief.

“Oh,” she blushed. “Aaron.”

Nate blinked in surprise. “Aaron Schroeder?” His jaw dropped. “Really?”

Anna was horrified. She hadn’t meant to insult him. “I...I meant it in a good way,” she said quickly.

Suddenly Nate grinned again. “You’re not just saying that to be nice?”

Anna was confused for a moment, then realized that he had taken it as the compliment she’d meant it as. “No, you really do remind me of him. You’re very talented,” she added softly.

Nate’s grin expanded. “Well, thank you. I think that’s the nicest thing anyone’s ever said to me.”

“Nate. Anna.” Delia called from across the room. “That looks more like talking than practicing.”

Embarrassed, Anna turned quickly away from Nate. “What next?”

The class continued and Anna enjoyed dancing with Nate. He was easy to dance with and his confidence helped make Anna feel secure.

Nate walked with Anna to the garage after class was over. His easygoing manner put her at ease and she liked being with him.

“Hey, Anna,” someone shouted from behind. She and Nate turned to see Aaron jogging after them. He caught up and looked at Nate.

“You’re...Nate, right?”

Nate looked surprised. “Yeah, I am.”

“I’ve heard good things about you. Looking forward to seeing the final performance.”

Nate beamed. “Thanks.”

Aaron turned to Anna. “Hey, how are you doing?” he asked in a tender voice.

Nate looked between Anna and Aaron and his face fell. “I, uh, gotta get home to dinner,” Nate mumbled. “I’ll see ya tomorrow, Anna.” He walked away quickly, head erect but shoulders slightly slumped.

Confused, Anna watched as Nate walked away, then looked up at Aaron, who was watching him as well.

He looked amused. “I think you have a new fan,” he said with a grin.

“What?” she asked.

Aaron grinned at her. “He likes you.”

Anna shrugged. She’d suspected as much. “He’s nice. He reminds me of you.”

Aaron glanced at her. “Really? Hmm. Then I should be careful.”

“Why?”

“He might usurp my spot as first principal someday.” Aaron grinned, letting her know he was teasing.

Anna giggled. “Are you threatened?”

He shrugged, then grinned. “Maybe.”

They chatted for a few minutes about dancing, then Aaron walked with her the rest of the way to the garage. He walked her to her car and said goodbye. He was a good friend, she thought to herself.

On the way home, Devin called and told her he was going to come over. He needed to fuck someone.

Nate gave her confusing looks all day Wednesday, but didn't speak to her. Thursday in the partners' class, Nate asked her if she and Aaron were dating.

“No,” she answered. “Company dancers and students aren't allowed.”

“Oh.”

He was quiet for a few minutes as they performed the steps as instructed by Delia.

Anna felt bad. She knew Nate liked her. She liked him, but didn't know how Alex would feel about her going out with someone.

A thought seized her heart. What if that's what Alex was going out of town for? To see someone. A woman? Maybe that's why he couldn't tell her what he was doing.

No, that didn't make any sense. Why would he feel like he needed to hide seeing someone? Did Alex's previous desires of him wanting her to go out and date and have fun still stand?

“Anna,” Nate whispered motioning to the door.

Anna looked at the entryway to see Isaak standing and talking with Delia. The students were to be practicing on their own.

“Sorry, Nate,” she said, giving him an apologetic smile. She’d drifted off into her own thoughts.

They began practicing again.

After class, Anna went with Nate, Olivia, Madison and several other dancers to a nearby pizza place. She hadn’t been to a place like this since before her parents died. She didn’t even remember what pizza tasted like. Her first bite tasted heavenly.

Nate laughed. “You look like you’ve never had pizza before.”

Anna blushed. “I haven’t had it in a really long time. Since before my parents died.”

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

Anna went to unlock her apartment door when she got home and realized it was already unlocked. Her heart pounded in her ears. Who was in her apartment?

She slowly opened the door and peeked in. A light was on in the living room. She put her bag on the ground and walked silently around the corner.

“Where have you been?” came a deep voice with a German accent.

Alex!

Her heart leapt for joy and she hurried to him, until she realized that he sounded angry. She froze mid-step. He sat in the corner of her couch with a long arm along the back edge. He wore jeans and a black shirt and a deep frown on his face.

She didn't have to read him to know he was angry. Very angry. But why? What had she done to anger him? Why didn't he call her if he was home and wanted to see her?

She backed slowly away as he stood up, a frightening tower of anger and strength in her living room. When she finally dared to look up into his eyes, it was unlike anything she had ever seen. His eyes were dark and filled with fury. It didn't look like Alex at all. He looked...inhuman. And it terrified her.

Her mind went wild trying to figure out what she had done to anger him. Was she supposed to have known that he was home and wanted to see her?

He stepped towards her. "Where have you been?" he asked again.
Her mouth gaped as she tried to find her voice.

"Well?" he shouted.

"I went out with some friends from the studio," she answered weakly.
She felt the wall behind her and pressed against it. What would he do to her?

"Who?" he demanded.

"Some people from my dance class." She cringed at the flash in his eyes at her words.

"You are mine," he shouted. "You belong to me. You are to be available to me when I want you."

His words stabbed at her heart and tears stung her eyes. She wasn't anything special to him. She was his slave. Plain and simple.

With a trembling lip, she lowered herself into her submissive pose and bowed low.

"Go shower and present yourself to me properly," he growled.

She ran to the bathroom and cried as she quickly showered and washed her hair for him. She dried herself off and braided her hair, then went back out into the living room and assumed her pose once more.

She felt him looking at her and trembled under his stare. A few seconds later she was lifted up into the air and he carried her into her room and he threw her onto the bed. He undressed and stood next to her, hard cock jutting out from his hips.

He grabbed her hair and dragged her up to a sitting position, then put his cock to her lips. "You know what to do," he growled.

She opened her mouth and took him in. He pushed himself in deep, choking her, to which he made derisive remarks about her abilities.

Tears came to her eyes. He was so cruel. As cruel as Devin and Jack. And she had been so wrong about him. He didn't care about her. He wanted an accommodating slave. But, then why had he said all those things before he left? Why had he been so loving? Was he trying to fuck with her head? Did he like mindfucks?

He pushed her backwards, ripping his cock from her throat. Her throat burned and she coughed as she fell onto her back and he straddled her upper body. He pinched her nipples hard and pulled up, raising her back off the bed. She cried out and tears ran down her cheeks. He ran sharp fingernails down her belly, leaving trails of fire behind. He violently slapped each breast from the outside in several times.

He slapped her across the face. Shocked, she raised her hand to her cheek and he yanked it down, trapping it under his knee. He did the same with her other hand.

Her breasts jiggled as he slapped them again and again. Her face stung as he slapped her cheeks. He pulled her up by her nipples again, further this time and she cried out in pain.

“Oh, come now, Anna. You've taken far worse. I'm sure of it.”

The rage distorted his handsome face, making him look almost demonic.

He backed off her hips and turned her over to bend her knees and raise her ass in the air. She started to raise up onto her hands, but he pushed her back down.

He pressed his fingers inside her. They were so big! She moaned. It felt good. Maybe he changed his mind about hurting her? She felt him slip another one in and then another one. The opening burned as he slid in and out and she stopped moaning.

“You like being fisted?” He laughed. “Not that it matters if you like it or not.”

She whimpered as she felt pressure and then intense pain as something enormous made its way into her channel. Bigger than his cock. She groaned as her opening stretched and then let out a scream as she felt herself tear. He laughed and she sobbed.

A huge knot pushed its way into her body. She groaned and cried as he punched her cervix.

“No, please,” she begged through her tears.

She tried to wiggle her hips away from him, but he held her with his free hand. He continued to move his fist inside her. She knew how big his hands were; she didn’t know how he fit in there.

He pulled away from her and pulled her backwards. He laughed and shook his arm around, moving her hips up and down and sideways. She sobbed and clung to the covers on the bed. He pulled her backwards more until she felt her hips at the edge of the bed. He put his hand under her chest and picked her up, then dropped her upper body so her hands were on the floor, supported only with the fist inside her.

“Pull off of me,” he growled. “Pull your cunt off my fist.”

She shook her head. “Please, Master. Please don’t.”

He wiggled his arm. “Pull!” he commanded.

She cried and began lowering her body to the floor in obedience. It hurt so badly!

“Pull. Tear yourself away from me.” His voice was so cold. He punched down into her cervix again and she groaned.

She slipped to her elbows and begged him to stop.

“Stupid bitch.” He pushed down once and then ripped his fist out of her pussy. She screamed in agony as she flipped over onto her back.

She lay with her legs spread on the floor and felt something trickle down the front of her ass. Was she bleeding?

He stood between her splayed legs and looked down at her, frowning. She covered her face with her hands. Her chest heaved with sobs. She couldn't move, she hurt so badly. He grabbed an ankle and tossed her back on the bed, her head hitting the footboard on the way up.

She lay on the bed face down, dazed and dizzy. Her head pounded from hitting the footboard. She whimpered when she heard him behind her. He pushed her ass back up in the air with her knees wide apart and smacked her ass hard. Then he smacked her pussy. She screamed in pain. He repeated the movements until she didn't have the wherewithal to scream anymore. She was exhausted and could only groan in pain.

The mattress sank between her knees and she felt something hard and long in her pussy. It was his cock. But she was stretched out so much that it didn't hurt that much. Except where he pressed against the tear.

He grunted. "I can't feel your pussy around my cock. Guess I'll have to try one of your other holes."

She closed her eyes and waited. Her body was done. He rammed his cock into her ass and he found one last scream inside her. He pulled her braid and pulled her body up, arching her back. She sobbed as his cock pounded into her ass and his balls slapped against her sore pussy. Finally, she heard his breathing shallow and he growled out a massive release.

He pulled back and she fell forward onto her face. He lay down next to her and fell asleep immediately.

Anna scooted as far away from him as she could, curled up in a ball and lost consciousness.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

Alex didn't know if the pounding was coming from inside or outside his head. He opened scratchy eyes to an unfamiliar ceiling. The pounding continued and he realized it was someone pounding on a door nearby.

He sat up suddenly. He was in Anna's room. He looked beside him and saw Anna curled up in a ball, sleeping.

How did he get here? He stood to answer the door and realized he was naked.

"Alex! Alex open the fucking door!"

That sounded like Seth outside the apartment door.

He grabbed his jeans and put them on as he walked to the door. He glanced back uneasily at Anna as he walked out of the room. Something was very wrong here.

He opened the door to the anxious and angry faces of Seth, Tony and Greg.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" Seth demanded between clenched teeth, slamming Alex back against the wall. "Why are you here? Why did you leave the Manor?"

The three men glowered at him and Alex stared at them, bewildered. "I don't know," he said defensively. "I just woke up and I was here."

"Where's Anna?" Greg demanded.

"Why do you have blood on your hand?" Tony asked.

Alex looked at his hand. Sure enough, there was dried blood. His heart pounded and he pushed Seth aside and ran to Anna's room. He thought she had been asleep. Was she?

He knelt by where Anna was curled up and felt her neck. "She's alive," he said, sighing in relief. But she was pale. And he could see bruises on her cheeks.

He fell back on his heels, stomach churning. What had he done? Why was he here?

He looked up at his friends in desperation. "I don't know what happened. The last thing I remember is going into the Red Room."

Seth gently pushed Anna onto her back. She didn't wake. He brushed her hair back away from her face. She was so pale.

Alex's heart pounded. What was going on? "Call Sebastian."

"He went back to Frankfurt," Greg said.

"Then he can come back," Alex barked, more out of desperation than anger. He was afraid he'd hurt Anna and Sebastian would be able to figure out what happened faster than anyone.

Greg left the room to make the call. Alex moved towards Anna and Seth gave him a warning look to back off. He leaned against the wall for support and watched helplessly as Tony and Seth attended to Anna. Greg returned a few minutes later accompanied by Sebastian.

Sebastian looked at Anna with a sober expression on his face. "So this is her?"

Alex nodded, hopelessness filling him. "I don't know what I did," he whispered.

Sebastian turned his intense blue gaze on Alex, who cringed under his scrutiny. Sebastian nodded a moment later and then turned his gaze back to Anna.

Seth and Tony moved aside as Sebastian sat next to her and put his hand to her forehead. Alex watched as Sebastian closed his eyes and was very still for several agonizing minutes.

“I need a wet washcloth and some towels,” Sebastian said.

Seth nodded and went into the bathroom.

Sebastian turned to Greg. “If Alex wants your connection to him to remain hidden from her, you need to leave. She will wake soon.”

Greg glanced at Alex, who nodded, and he left. Tony went with him.

“Alex, go wash up.”

Alex went into the hall bathroom and washed his hands. He felt so defeated. He had hurt Anna in some horrible way and didn't even remember doing it. He looked at himself in the mirror and noticed dried blood on his stomach, and unfastened his jeans. He cursed in German when he saw the blood on his cock. A wave of nausea swept through his body.

His knees gave out and he leaned against the wall and slid to the ground. He buried his face in his hands and wept. The woman he loved. He had to have hurt her in some horrible way to have blood all over his body.

She would never trust him again. He dreaded the look in her eyes when she looked at him again. *If* she would look at him again.

He didn't know how long he sat there before Sebastian came in. His mouth went dry as Sebastian stared at him with that frightening intensity he got when he was reading somebody.

“Alex,” Sebastian said after a long moment. “It's not your fault. You were drugged.”

A glimmer of hope kindled in his heart and he took a deep breath. He had been afraid that some deep dark hatred had emerged out of his rage.

“Drugs?” A flash of understanding hit him. “Devin!” Devin must have drugged him again. This time he made him hurt Anna. A new rage erupted

in his body. More than ever he wanted to destroy that evil man.

“Alex, you need to calm down. You cannot go out there in a rage or you will terrorize Anna again.”

“Does she know? Did you tell her?”

Sebastian nodded. “She believes me partially. She said you didn’t look like you when she first saw you. You looked...inhuman.”

Alex looked up at his friend with tear-filled eyes. “What did I do?” Sebastian looked hesitant. “Please. I must know, Sebastian.”

Sebastian sighed and told him what Anna had told him. By the time he finished speaking, Alex’s face was green and he rushed to the toilet to vomit. Sebastian handed him a towel when he finished.

“Is she all right?” he asked.

“I healed her body and cleaned her up. Physically, she’s fine. Emotionally...I don’t know. I think it is going to take time.” Sebastian leaned against the vanity. “I think you need to return to Frankfurt as originally planned.”

Alex shook his head with a heavy heart. “No, I need to stay and make things right with Anna. I can’t leave her like this.”

“Alex. If you stay you will continue to be vulnerable to Devin. The only way you will be able to help her is if you go home and learn what you need to learn. And figure out a way to resist the effects of Scopolamine.” He smiled to lighten the mood. “That seems to be a favorite of Devin’s.”

Alex sighed and closed his eyes. “Am I fighting a battle that is already lost? Answer me truthfully, Sebastian.”

The Immortal looked down at him kindly. “The only way it is already lost is if you give up before it has truly begun.”

“Daddy?” Anna’s bleary eyes opened to see a man that looked very much like her father sitting next to her. The room was dimly lit and the sky outside her window was dark. Night had fallen.

“No, Anna, I am not your father,” the man answered gently. He had a nice smile.

Anna blinked again. No, it wasn’t Daddy. But he definitely had a resemblance. “Are you an Immortal?” she whispered.

The man smiled, but didn’t answer her. He wiped her forehead with a cool cloth. “How are you feeling?”

She thought about it. It seemed like she should be hurting, but she wasn’t. But she felt empty. “I don’t know,” she answered honestly.

“Do you remember what happened?” he asked.

Anna searched her memory and tears filled her eyes when Alex’s face came to her mind. “Alex hates me,” she whispered.

“Why do you say that?”

Anna told him what Alex had done and said. The man listened patiently and quietly. “I’m just his slave,” she said without emotion at the end of her story.

“I don’t think that’s true, Anna. He cares for you very much.” The man told her that he believed that Alex had been drugged and didn’t know what he was doing. “Do you believe me?”

She studied his face then tried to read him, but she couldn’t. She frowned and tried again, but for some reason was unable to do so. “Why should I believe you?” she asked accusingly.

“My name is Sebastian. I am not your father, but I am his brother.”

Anna’s eyes widened. “You are an Immortal?”

Sebastian nodded. “I am. I have known Alex for over eight years and can testify that he never would have attacked you without an outside

influence. Have you heard of his rages?”

Anna shook her head.

“Alex has quite the temper and, in certain situations, can lose control. But he knows himself well enough to not put himself in situations where he would hurt people he cares about. Alex was in a situation like that today and he put himself in a place where he could...relieve himself safely. But someone took advantage of his weakness and drugged him to make him take it out on you.”

“Who?” Who would want to do that to her? Or Alex?

“I’m not at liberty to say, Anna. But please believe me when I say Alex would never intentionally hurt you.”

Anna looked at him doubtfully. She wanted to believe him, but she was scared. Alex had terrified her this evening.

“Anna, you can believe him.” Anna turned to see Seth leaning against her dresser. She hadn’t realized there was someone else in the room.

“Sebastian wouldn’t say that if it wasn’t true.”

Anna was suddenly very tired. “Where is Alex?”

“In the hall bathroom.” Sebastian frowned suddenly. “I should go check on him.” He stood and left the room.

Seth came and sat next to Anna on the bed. “Can I get you anything?” he asked, petting her hair.

Anna shook her head and turned onto her side, staring at the closet door across the room. She didn’t hurt physically, but her heart ached. She couldn’t get the picture of Alex’s angry face out of her mind. Even though Sebastian said Alex didn’t mean to do it, it was still his enraged face she saw.

Seth sat next to her and held her hand. She liked Seth. He was nice. He didn’t hurt her. As scary as Alex was, before tonight she could say that he

had never hurt her. Now she couldn't. And she hated that she couldn't.

A while later a very pale Alex walked into the room with Sebastian. Anna sat up. He looked like he had been sick.

“Alex, are you okay?” she asked, concerned.

Alex shook his head and slumped against the wall. “Anna,” he said in a dull, raspy voice. “I can't even begin to apologize for...for what I did to you. Saying I'm sorry sounds so trite.” He took a step forward and hesitated, searching her eyes for permission to come closer.

Anna's heart went out to him. He looked wretched. His shoulders slumped and he stared at the floor as he spoke. When he finally did look up, she saw that his normally bright blue eyes were dull and red, as if he'd been crying. She could hardly imagine the great Alex Kunze crying over something he did unless he was truly remorseful. She'd never seen such a sight. It was painful to read him and she stopped as soon as she started. The anguish in his heart overwhelmed her.

“Alex,” she whispered, holding out her hand to him.

He rushed to her side and pulled her into his arms. She could hear his heart pounding in his chest as he held her tightly against his chest. She could hardly breathe, but she didn't care.

“I am so sorry, Anna,” Alex whispered against Anna's hair, kissing her head and holding her tightly. He stroked her hair and felt his eyes tear up with regret. He whispered words of endearment in German because he couldn't get them out in English. He had a feeling she sensed what they meant.

He felt so unworthy of her. He *was* so unworthy of her. Sebastian was right. He had to go home and become the man she needed him to be. He dreaded telling her.

“Alex, what’s wrong?” she asked in a muffled voice. She pulled away from him and searched his eyes. She cupped his cheek. “Tell me,” she whispered.

Alex’s shoulders slumped. He didn’t want to tell her now. He glanced up at Sebastian, who gave him a look which he took to mean “Tell her.”

Alex sighed and brushed her hair back from her face. Her sweet, sweet face that he would miss terribly. Her eyes were full of hope and affection. But worry too. She knew something was wrong. Would she forgive him for leaving her?

“Anna...,” he began reluctantly. “I have to leave. I have to return to Frankfurt.”

Her expression became guarded. “When?” she asked quietly.

“Within the week.”

Her lower lip quivered. “For how long?”

He shook his head. “I don’t know. A few months maybe.”

“A few...months?” she repeated. She didn’t ask why. Her eyes hardened and she pulled away. “Yes, Alex.” She looked down at her hands.

“I will come visit, Anna. I want to see you dance next month,” he said, desperately trying to keep her from retreating.

“Whatever would please you, Alex,” she said quietly and without emotion.

Her posture became submissive. He looked desperately at Sebastian.

I can’t do this to her, he yelled silently at him.

Sebastian gave him a sympathetic look. *You don’t have a choice, Alex. Staying will hurt her more.*

Alex closed his eyes in defeat. Sebastian was right. But how could Alex make her understand?

“Anna,” he said, cupping her chin and bringing her face up to look into her eyes. She looked at him with calm, expectant eyes. The eyes of a slave. “Anna, I’m going to call Devin and tell him you won’t be available this weekend, including the Gathering tomorrow night,” Alex said. “I want you to stay home and rest. Or you could come over to my house.”

“Whatever would please you, Alex,” she mumbled.

She looked exhausted. He needed to let her sleep. “Anna, lie down and go to sleep. I’ll stay with you tonight.”

“Yes, Alex,” she mumbled and lay down. She fell asleep instantly.

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CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

The moment Anna woke, memories flooded back into her mind of how Alex had been the previous night. She couldn't think of a reason why an Immortal would lie to her about Alex's temper. Besides, the pain she'd felt in his heart when he'd come into the room had been so overwhelming, she could hardly stand it.

But if he was so sorry, why was he leaving? Why was he abandoning her, too? She was supposed to belong to his family, but no one ever stayed with her. How could a slave not be with her owner?

"Anna?" Alex whispered from behind her. His arms wrapped around her waist and she pressed back against him.

"Yes, Alex?" Her body stiffened.

He was quiet for a moment. She didn't want to turn and look at him. She loved him and he was leaving her. At least Devin was here. Yes, he hurt her sometimes, but he was here.

"How are you feeling?" he asked in a soft voice.

"Fine."

He released her. "Anna, please look at me."

She turned over and looked at his t-shirt-covered chest.

He let out a shaky breath. "Anna, please believe me, leaving you is the last thing on earth that I want to do."

Then why are you doing it? "You must do what you need to do, Alex," she said softly.

“If there were any other way, Anna, I promise you I would do it.”

“Alex, you don’t need to justify yourself. I’m just a slave.”

She saw his jaw clench. “You’re not....” He swallowed. “I don’t think of you that way. I was so excited to get home to see you, to pick up where we left off. I was going to push off the move for a month....” He sighed. “But I can’t.”

Anna didn’t say anything. What could she say?

“Do you want to stay the weekend with me? At my house?”

“If you want me to.”

He lifted her chin with his finger. “Tell me honestly.”

She searched his eyes. “No,” she whispered, and almost changed her mind when she saw the intense pain in his eyes.

But no, he was leaving. She needed to get over him as quickly as possible so she could be attentive to what Devin wanted from her. Staying the weekend with him would only prolong the hurt.

His jaw clenched as he lay silently next to her.

“I will come if you want me to, Alex.”

He shook his head. “*Nein*, Anna. I only want you there if you want to be there. I will not force you to do things you don’t want to do.”

How could he do this to her? How could he abandon her? After the night they’d shared? She knew that night had been more than just sex. They had connected. She had felt it. She felt more connected to him than she did to Devin.

Maybe she’d been wrong. Maybe the connection was only on her side. It would make sense. Slaves are dependent on their Masters, not the other way around.

He sat up and swung his feet over the side of the bed, turning away from her. “I will call Devin this morning and tell him you are unable to

attend tonight's Gathering," Alex said softly. He bent down for his shoes and began putting them on. "Maybe you could go out with Jenna or something."

Anna shook her head. "Jenna's still not talking to me." She didn't know what she wanted to do. She just wanted to stop hurting. "I'm fine, Alex. You don't need to call Devin." At least there would be sex there to distract her.

Anna's head hung low as she walked into the studio an hour later.

It had been awkward saying goodbye to Alex. She hated and loved him at the same time. She wanted to beg him not to leave her and she wanted to yell and scream at him to leave and never come back. In the end, she remained quiet, as a good slave would, accepted his kiss on the cheek and closed the door quietly after he left.

Nate arrived after class had begun, earning a disapproving look from Delia.

Dancing helped lift her mood a bit and by lunchtime, she felt better. She was quiet as she ate with the other dancers in her class, including Nate.

As she finished her salad, her phone rang. It was Alex.

"Hello, Alex," she said quietly. The deli was busy and there wasn't really anywhere to go for privacy.

"Hello, *Schatzi*. How are classes going?"

Anna flinched at his use of the nickname. "Fine. How is your day going?" She glanced up to see Nate watching her, but he looked away when he saw her look at him.

"Busy."

She could imagine packing up his large house could be a bit time consuming.

“Anna, I spoke with Devin and he agreed to give you the weekend off.”

“You didn’t have to do that, Alex. I’m fine.”

“*Nein*. No, you’re not. Stay home and rest. Devin promised not to bother you over the weekend so you could rest.”

She wanted to be bothered. She wanted to be distracted. But Alex had made the decision. “Thank you.”

“I know you’re at lunch, so I’ll let you go. I just wanted to let you know about tonight.”

On the way back to the studio, Nate walked next to her. “Are you doing anything tonight?”

Anna glanced at him out of the corner of her eye. “No.”

He cleared his throat. “Do you want to...um...go see a movie or something?”

Anna looked back down at the ground. She knew Nate liked her, but she really wasn’t in the mood to go out. Too bad she wasn’t old enough to buy alcohol. But could she say no?

“I don’t think I would be very good company, Nate. I’m not feeling very well.”

She could see the disappointment in his eyes.

“Oh. Okay.”

Anna swallowed, feeling horrible. Is this what it felt like? To be free? Feeling guilty because of saying no? Oh, this freedom thing sucked.

She drove home, wishing she could erase the uncomfortable feeling inside from saying no to Nate. As she waited for the elevator in the parking garage of her apartment complex, two guys in their mid-twenties walked up

and stood behind her. Anna barely kept herself from shaking as she stared at them in the reflection of the elevator doors.

When the doors opened, she got in, praying they wouldn't hurt her. She pushed her floor button and moved into the corner, watching them warily.

The guy with light brown hair went to reach for the buttons, but chuckled and turned around to smile at her. His gray eyes were kind, but it didn't keep Anna's fear at bay.

“Seems we live on the same floor.”

Anna's eyes darted to the guy standing next to him. He had curly blond hair and blue eyes. He chuckled too. “Lived here long?” he asked, his eyes flirtatious.

“No,” she whispered, clinging to the handrails. She was relieved that they stayed on the other side of the elevator.

The brown-haired guy gave her a kind smile and studied her for a moment and then turned back to face the elevator doors. They weren't going to hurt her?

When the doors opened, they stepped aside, letting her out first. She gave them a timid smile and then hurried to her apartment. She glanced back and saw them go to the opposite end of the hallway. The brown-haired guy looked back and smiled before walking into his apartment.

Anna unlocked her door with trembling hands and closed it quickly behind her, locking the door and trying to calm down.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

Alex called Anna on Saturday morning to see if she'd like to go to dinner with him Sunday night. He was leaving on Monday and wanted to see her before he left.

She wasn't enthusiastic about it, but she did say yes. Of course she would. She was obedient that way. It pained his heart, knowing how much he'd hurt her, and was hurting her by leaving, but he had no choice. Staying here would leave him vulnerable to hurt her again. He prayed that she would understand someday.

Alex arrived at Anna's apartment right on time, as usual. He gave her a bright smile when he saw her. "Hello, *Schatzi*," he said, leaning down to kiss her.

She kissed him back, though not as enthusiastically as he'd hoped. She was being an obedient slave, that was all. And it broke his heart.

He took her to a restaurant near Fisherman's Wharf and tried hard to make conversation with her, but she remained polite and distant.

He couldn't blame her. Not after what he'd done to her. He let himself show her how much he loved her and then told her he was moving away. It was no comfort that he'd only be gone a few months.

Why couldn't he do anything right with her? Maybe he shouldn't have stayed that night. He should have maintained the distance. Then she

wouldn't have been hurting now.

But he couldn't find it in himself to regret it. Not one little bit. Somewhere, deep inside, she had to know that he loved her. He'd done everything except say the words. Words were cheap. Actions spoke louder and he knew he'd shown her.

He looked across the table where she sat, quietly eating her chocolate mousse dessert. Her eyes remained downcast, back straight, small smiles when appropriate. All to keep her safe from his anger. But he had no anger towards her. Only towards himself.

Even now, leaving tomorrow, he wanted to take her home and tell her he was staying. But he couldn't. He couldn't stay and learn to protect her at the same time. Vati always said that you sometimes had to hurt the ones you love in order to help them. He just didn't mention how much it stung to do so.

Alex didn't want to leave like this. He couldn't leave Anna like this. When he walked her to her apartment later that evening, he was determined to do whatever he could to break down her barriers.

"Anna," he said, closing the door behind him. "I'm leaving in the morning. I don't want things to...." He sighed. "I don't want to leave you like this."

"Then don't leave," she said, so softly he wasn't sure he heard her correctly.

He saw the tear slip down her cheek and his heart broke and felt relieved at the same time. She didn't hate him. She was hurt. Incredibly hurt. She was protecting herself.

He stroked her cheek, wiping away the tear. "Anna, if there was any way to not have to leave...I would do it in a heartbeat."

"You have to do what you have to do, Alex."

He saw her desperately trying to control her emotions and lifted her chin with his index finger, his own eyes burning with emotion. “I will miss you, *Schatzi*.” His voice broke.

She blinked and tried to look away, but he cupped her chin and captured her lips with his. She didn’t resist him, instead she clung desperately to his arms. He picked her up and carried her to her bed.

Anna went to class the next morning with a heavy heart. She had cried as Alex had kissed and hugged her goodbye that morning. He was really leaving. She would miss him terribly.

“Hey, Anna,” Olivia said as she walked into the studio. “Did you see the casting list for the end of summer performances?”

Anna shook her head. “No. I didn’t know that they were being posted.” She’d been too caught up in her misery to notice the crowd of people around the bulletin board.

Olivia grinned and pulled her out into the hallway. They stopped in front of the bulletin board. Anna looked up.

First act of Giselle:

Giselle: Anna Perkins

Duke Albrecht: Nate Devereaux

Giselle? The notice lifted her spirits. That would certainly keep her distracted from Alex’s departure

She smiled at her friend. “I can hardly believe it.”

The next few days were a blur. Between regular classes and intense rehearsals, Anna went to bed exhausted every night.

She started to have trouble sleeping, though.

Thursday night came and she realized that she hadn't had sex since Sunday; an eternity in her life. She tossed and turned Thursday night, trying to ignore her swollen clit.

God, she needed someone to touch her. She wished she was allowed to touch herself, but she knew better. She would get into so much trouble if she did. Devin would know. He knew everything.

When morning finally came, she had barely slept more than an hour or two. She had circles under her red eyes and could barely keep them open. After packing her bag for the night, she headed to the studio where Nate greeted her with much concern. They had become good friends from spending so much time together.

“I didn't sleep well,” she explained.

“Did something happen?” He studied her face intently.

She shook her head. “Just...stuff.”

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CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

While Maggie and Sarah were preparing Anna for the Gathering that evening, Devin came in to see her. Maggie was brushing Anna's hair and they were giggling about something when Devin walked into the bathroom.

Maggie and Sarah dropped to their knees and Anna turned around nervously. He didn't seem angry. He was dressed in his white tunic and pants.

Anna was confused. Why was he here?

"Girls, I need to speak to the Mistress alone."

"Yes, Master," they murmured and hurried out of the room

Devin smiled at Anna, who in return smiled nervously. He stepped closer and stroked her cheek. She closed her eyes and leaned into him.

"You look tired, Baby. Are you dancing too much?"

Anna blushed. "No, Devin. I couldn't sleep last night."

"Why is that?" he asked softly, brushing his fingers across her collarbone, then down the opening of her robe.

She shuddered and leaned into his hand. "I...I haven't had sex since Sunday." She sighed as he cupped her breast and squeezed gently.

Devin chuckled. "No wonder you couldn't sleep. I'm surprised you're still sane." He undid the tie of her robe and she moaned as he tugged on her nipple ring. He trailed his fingers down her belly, leaving hot trails across her skin.

He pulled her into his arms and kissed her deeply, pressing his hips against hers. She clung to his shoulders and moaned as his tongue invaded her mouth.

“So eager,” he murmured against her lips. He pulled away from her a minute later. She breathed heavily and looked at him wide-eyed. He stroked her cheek again. “I will see you downstairs,” he said softly. “You need to finish getting ready.”

Tears of frustration filled her eyes, but she simply nodded. “Yes, Devin.”

“Don’t fret, Baby. You’ll be riding my cock soon enough.” Her eyes brightened and he chuckled. “I like your enthusiasm.”

He left and Maggie and Sarah returned and finished preparing her for the evening. By the time she arrived in the hall, she felt like her pussy was dripping with desire for Devin. She’d been unable to think of anything else since he’d left her.

She bowed low before him and trembled as she waited for him to acknowledge her.

“Come, Mistress,” he said, and she stood quickly to join him.

He pulled her to straddle his lap and pulled the top of her dress down. Her nipples were engorged and ached terribly. His touch was almost painful, but she didn’t care. She moaned softly with every touch.

“I’ve missed you, Baby,” he said, taking a nipple into his mouth and sucking hard. Anna’s head fell back and she whimpered as he sucked and kneaded and squeezed and pulled.

When he trailed his hands down her belly and reached her pussy they both sighed. “Oh, Baby. You’re so wet and swollen.” He pushed a finger inside and she jumped and whimpered from the pain. “And tight.”

His finger inside her felt like Alex's cock. She hadn't realized how tight she'd gotten. When he eased another finger inside, she cried out softly.

"Give me your pain, Anna," Devin reminded her, then pulled his fingers out and positioned her over his erect cock.

She stared into his eyes as he pushed her down. Tears of pain spilled down her cheeks as he pressed himself into her tight channel. It hurt so bad, but at the same time his presence inside her felt so good.

"Oh, Master," she sighed.

Every thrust was painful, but so good at the same time. He fucked her hard and she came several times at his command. Her screams echoed in the hall. When he finished with her, he had her service the other men sitting around him. She was eager to suck cocks and let them fuck her.

By the end of the night, she was exhausted and sore. Devin took her back to his room and fucked her painfully and she bled. But it felt so good she didn't care.

When Anna woke up the next day, Devin wasn't there. It was mid-afternoon, according to the clock next to the bed. She felt stiff and a little achy as she sat on the bed contemplating what she should do.

The door opened a few minutes later and Devin entered. "You looked so peaceful sleeping, I didn't want to wake you," he said, coming to sit next to her.

"I'm sorry, Master," she said softly.

Devin kissed her. "It's all right, Baby. I had some things to do around here before I left, so I let you sleep."

"Thank you, Master." She gazed up at him and smiled.

"You did very well last night, baby." He cupped her breast and squeezed. "Your pussy felt incredible. Maybe I should forbid you from having sex during the week."

Anna looked at him alarmed. "Please don't, Master," she implored. Devin studied her. "Why shouldn't I? Do you have someone to fuck?" She shook her head.

"Then, unless I say otherwise, no fucking during the week. I like your pussy tight."

"Yes, Master," she whispered.

"I need you Tuesday night for a dinner meeting. I will pick you up at six."

"I don't finish classes until five."

Devin glared at her. "Then leave early," he said between clenched teeth.

Anna cowered. "Yes, Master." She bit her bottom lip for fear of his anger.

Devin relaxed and leaned forward to kiss her neck. "I want you one last time before you leave." He stood and undressed, then joined Anna in bed.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

Alex stood in his bedroom in Frankfurt, looking around. He'd been back several times since moving to San Francisco, but only for short visits. A couple of weeks at the longest.

He stared at the bed he'd slept in since he was a very young boy. The same bed that he'd shared with Mina. The same bed, Heidi, his daughter, had been conceived in. The same bed he was sleeping in when he got the news that they were gone.

Tears filled his eyes, but it wasn't as painful as usual. The pain of loss was a dull ache instead of a ragged, open wound in his heart. It was a relief, in some ways, to just feel the ache instead of the pain, but was he betraying Mina's memory?

No, he decided. It had been three years since she died. It was all right to move on. Falling in love with Anna certainly had helped dull the pain.

Oh, sweet Anna. That was the hardest thing about being back here: being away from her. Her tears Monday morning had been torturous to his heart. But he'd left knowing she cared for him. He'd assured her he'd be back for the student performance at the end of the summer, and he would be. No matter what.

"So, are you ready to begin?"

Alex jumped at the voice and turned around, shaking his head. "I hate it when you sneak up on me like that."

Sebastian laughed. "I'm not sneaking. I'm appearing."

Alex rolled his eyes. “Same thing.” He sighed. “Yes, I’m ready. You will help me, right?”

“I will guide you as I always do. If you’re on the right track, I will tell you. If you’re on the wrong track, I will...hint as such.”

“You didn’t get into trouble for helping me save Anna, did you?”

“Kaveh tried to confront me and I warned him that if he turned me in, he would be turning himself in. He hasn’t said anything.”

“Why didn’t you turn him in?”

The Immortal sighed and frowned. “Because this is a human matter. These are the choices that have been made. I don’t think it’s right for us to interfere, aside from giving you guidance about how to help.”

“Do you know what Devin has planned?”

“Some. Which is why I’m helping you. He must be stopped, Alex, and you are the man who will do it.”

Alex laughed bitterly. “No pressure, huh?”

“Fate lies down the path for those strong enough to walk it.”

Alex shook his head. “So, where do we begin?”

Sebastian raised his brow at him; Alex took that to mean it was his own decision to make.

“I thought I should start with Vati’s Book. I need to learn the ancient language, don’t I?”

Sebastian nodded. “A wise decision.”

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

Time flew by, and before Anna knew it, it was time for dress rehearsals for the student performances.

Nate had asked Anna out again and she said yes. He was very sweet and treated her nicely. But she was afraid to get close. They'd gone out several times with the other dancers over the last few weeks, and she was beginning to open up to him a little.

Alex had called a few times, but with the time difference, it was difficult to have a normal conversation. He'd been gone six weeks now, but she hadn't heard from him in the last two weeks. Anna wondered why, especially since she'd received a text from Kurt letting her know that they'd be arriving on Wednesday. Why hadn't Alex told her? Why Kurt?

During the dress rehearsal on Thursday afternoon at the theater, Nate was whispering in her ear about taking her out later, when movement in the aisle caught Anna's attention. She looked and saw three figures walking down the center aisle. They were men. Tall men. She squinted and her heart dropped into her stomach.

Alex, Kurt and Wilhelm.

As they came closer to the stage, Anna reluctantly pulled away from Nate.

Alex met Anna's eyes. She saw him glance briefly behind her at Nate, then back at her with an inscrutable expression on his face. Her pulse increased as he stared at her. But he didn't smile at her. Why?

Isaak turned and greeted the three men. When Alex looked away, she looked at the other men, who were greeting Isaak. Isaak motioned to some seats near the stage, and the three men sat down in them.

Kurt looked at Anna and smiled broadly. She gave him a shy smile and stepped further away from Nate. She glanced at Wilhelm, who gave her an affectionate smile.

After Isaak and Delia finished speaking, the dancers got ready for one last run through. Anna ran backstage, breathing heavily and heart pounding. Knowing the three Kunze men were out there watching made Anna's nerves rise to almost unbearable levels as she waited for her own cue. She closed her eyes and tried to forget their presence. Especially Alex. She didn't want to disappoint him. He was the reason she was here. She owed him the best she could do.

When it was time, she stepped out on stage and became Giselle. Nothing mattered except the dance and Nate.

When they were done, there was a quick break so that the older students could change. The second part of the performance consisted of showcases by the individual classes. Anna was glad she was not the primary focus of her class's performance, though she and Nate were center front.

After rehearsal ended, she went out to greet Wilhelm, Kurt and Alex.

"Anna, *Engel!*" Kurt exclaimed, picking her up and spinning her around. "You look so pretty!" He kissed her then set her down.

Wilhelm hugged her and kissed her cheek. "Hello, *Liebling.*" His deep accented voice comforted her to the depths of her heart.

She turned, giving Alex a bright, albeit nervous smile. She reached for him, to hug him, but he didn't hug her back.

"Hello, Anna," Alex said stiffly. He didn't give any indication that he was happy to see her.

A cold chill ran through her body and she backed away from him. She looked at the ground and clasped her hands together, blinking back tears at his rejection. Maybe he hadn't left because he needed to, as he had told her. Maybe he really did just want to leave her and go back to Germany. He didn't care for her as she thought he had.

"*Liebling*, why don't you get your things and we can go have dinner?" Wilhelm said in a gentle voice.

Anna nodded, still staring at the floor. She turned and walked as fast as she could backstage to her dressing room.

Alex watched Anna walk away. He could see that he had hurt her by his stiff greeting, but he had to remain distant because of Devin. When he'd spoken to Devin a few days ago to let him know he was coming into town, he let Devin think that he didn't care for Anna anymore.

After getting a grasp on the language, and with his father's help, they were beginning to get an idea of how to keep Anna safe. A plan was forming in Alex's mind, but he had to be very careful how he went about executing it. Devin could know nothing about it or he would be able to prevent it.

Unfortunately, doing this, once again, meant keeping his distance from Anna. It had been easier to agree to when she wasn't around. Once he saw her, though, his resolve wavered. He'd seen her standing next to that other dancer when he'd walked in and jealousy flared in his heart.

If Devin suspected affection on his side, any chance of the plan working would be lost. He also didn't want to give Devin cause to use him to hurt Anna again. Alex wouldn't underestimate that man again. Devin would do anything to keep Anna for himself. And, as long as Devin

believed that Alex had lost interest, Anna would be much safer until Alex could bring her fully under his protection.

The last thing Alex wanted to do was hurt Anna, but he had promised her that he would come. And he wanted to see her dance. But when she wrapped her arms around him and he inhaled her sweet scent, it had almost undone him. Not embracing her as he desperately wanted had been harder than taking out a target at a thousand yards in a stiff crosswind.

Vati had agreed that Alex needed to maintain his distance and they decided that Kurt would attend to Anna as he had when they'd first met her.

They were planning on having Anna visit Frankfurt in December, though they hadn't told her yet. Alex promised himself that he would make up his distance when she visited. He would make sure she knew exactly how he felt about her. How desperately he loved her. These few days here with her, not being able to hold her or kiss her, would be pure torture. But he had to keep her safe.

When Anna returned a few minutes later, she was dressed, but still looking down at the ground. When she glanced up at something his brother said to her, he saw that her eyes were red. She had been crying! Alex felt like he'd been hit in the chest. He'd wounded her.

Alex glanced at his father, giving him a pleading look. Surely he could at least explain to Anna why he was keeping his distance. It would take some of the edge off the hurt if she knew why it had to be this way.

Vati gave him a sympathetic smile and shook his head.

No, he couldn't. Devin could read her like a book. She wouldn't be able to hide it and then there would be no point in keeping his distance. Alex had to be strong. Doing the right thing now would enable him to keep Devin away from her later.

“Would you like to stay with me at our hotel, Anna?” Kurt asked softly when she returned from the dressing room.

Anna glanced up, hoping her eyes weren't too red from crying over Alex's coldness. She'd been expecting to stay with Alex, but Alex clearly wasn't interested anymore.

She glanced at Alex, who gave a small nod, though he wouldn't look at her. Was he that disgusted with her? She didn't understand why. What had she done to anger him?

“Yes, Kurt. I'd like that.”

If that's what her Master wanted her to do, then that's what she would do. She liked Kurt. It was no hardship to be with him, but Alex's rejection stung. Once again, she was reminded that happiness wasn't for her. She was meant to be used by men and that was that. Love was something she would never experience.

“Kurt, why don't you ride with Anna to her apartment so she can pack a few things for the rest of the week,” Wilhelm said as they exited the Opera House.

Kurt agreed and walked with Anna to her car in the garage. They had left Wilhelm and Alex to take the limo to the hotel.

“I am so glad to see you, Anna. I've missed you.” Kurt kissed her hand and looked down at her adoringly.

“I've missed you too, Kurt.” She was glad he was here. They hadn't gotten to say goodbye when he'd left the first time. She liked Kurt. But her heart ached from Alex's rejection.

She pushed her disappointment in Alex aside as she drove to her apartment. They chatted about Kurt's children and the journey from Germany.

He praised her dancing and told her he couldn't wait to see the full performance on Friday. They had come to the rehearsal because he was so eager to see her.

“Is that all right?” Kurt asked.

Anna smiled at him as she parked in the apartment garage. “Of course, Kurt.”

When they arrived at the hotel, Alex was nowhere to be seen, but Wilhelm was waiting for them. “Alex is spending time with friends this evening,” he said, watching Anna carefully.

Anna lifted her chin and willed herself not to tear up. If Alex didn't want to see her, then she didn't want to see him. He probably went to see Kirsty or some other old girlfriend.

Not that it really mattered to her.

She didn't lie to herself very well.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

Friday passed quickly. Much quicker than she'd expected.

Late Friday afternoon, Anna and Nate warmed up and then spent time together in her dressing room before the performance.

They were talking on the couch when a knock sounded on the door. A messenger stood there with a dozen pink roses in a vase, but no card. They had to be from Alex, which made her angry. She was tempted to drop them in the trashcan, but that would be disrespectful. She may be angry at him, but he was still her Master. She put them on her vanity.

Nate looked at her, bewildered. "Who are they from?"

She looked at him and sighed. "No one."

He didn't ask anything else.

A little while later there was another knock at the door.

Nate laughed. "You're very popular tonight."

Anna opened the door and saw Devin standing there, tall and handsome in his black suit and silver tie.

"Devin!" she exclaimed.

Devin looked past her to see Nate behind her. "I hope I'm not interrupting anything." He gave her a pointed look.

She quickly turned to Nate. "Nate, I'll talk to you later."

Devin stepped in and closed the door after Nate left. "I'm certain you're not letting your boyfriend get in the way of your duties, Anna."

“He’s not my boyfriend, Devin. We were just resting before we had to get ready.” She hadn’t realized he was going to be there.

“You didn’t think I would come to your debut, Baby?” He turned and looked at her. Had he read her mind? “Jack’s here, too. We’re very excited to see if all these classes have been worth it.”

Anna bit her lip. “I hope I don’t disappoint you, Devin,” she said softly.

“This is your chance to show me if it’s worth letting you continue to dance.” He smiled. “Don’t forget, we leave Monday to go to DC.”

Of course. The trip with Devin to the big Gathering in the nation’s capital. She had forgotten, though Devin had emailed her the travel details. She’d been too caught up in dancing to give it much thought.

“You did acquire the appropriate clothing that I emailed you about, didn’t you?”

Anna’s eyes widened. She’d completely forgotten. How was she going to get everything in time? “Devin, I...”

Devin’s eyes flashed. “You didn’t, did you?”

Tears rolled down her cheeks. “I-I’m sorry, Devin. I’ll go out tomorrow and...”

“You don’t have time this weekend, Anna. You are spending time with the Germans, remember?”

Anna looked up at him, not knowing what to say.

Devin frowned down at her, his jaw tight, his eyes narrowed. “Since you are incapable of following directions, I will have your things purchased for you,” he snarled. “We leave first thing Monday morning.” He inhaled deeply and then looked back down at her. “I will see you after the show, Anna.”

He left, closing the door behind him, and Anna collapsed onto the couch, staring at the ground.

Nate came in a few minutes later. “Anna! Are you okay?”

She gave him a small smile. “Yeah, I’m fine.”

He sat down next to her and looked at her. “Who was that?”

“Devin Andersen. He’s...a family friend.”

Nate frowned. “What happened?”

“Nothing, I’m fine. I just...forgot to do something and upset him.”

He reached for her hand and she felt tingles run through her body.

“Anything I can help with?”

“No, he’s going to take care of it.”

He gazed at her, a small smile on his face. “I’ve really liked getting to know you these last few weeks.”

Anna smiled. “Me too.”

It was true. Nate was a sweet guy. She even thought about maybe letting him into her life a little more.

They gazed into one another’s eyes for a long moment before Anna realized that their faces were only inches apart. He brought his hand up to her cheek and leaned forward to kiss her.

He had very nice lips. She pressed her lips against his and their kiss slowly deepened.

CHAPTER SIXTY

After the final bows had been taken, Anna rushed to her dressing room to get ready for the party. Nate had said that he'd come get her when he was ready. She'd already told him that she had to spend time with some friends who had come to visit her.

"You look beautiful, Anna," Nate said, grinning at her from the doorway. He looked very handsome in his navy blue suit and tie.

They walked through the hallways to the lobby of the theater where the reception was. Before they opened the door, Nate pulled her to him and kissed her. Her eyes widened as he pulled away.

"You said you were going out of town for a week. I wanted to make sure I kissed you goodbye."

He squeezed her hand, then let go and opened the door to the crowded lobby. They were greeted by many people. Kurt walked up and she went to him, glancing back briefly at Nate. Their eyes met and shared one last brief moment of tenderness, then she turned back to smile at Kurt.

"Anna, you danced so beautifully. My heart broke when you died."

"Thank you, Kurt." Anna smiled. The first act of Giselle ended with Giselle literally dying of a broken heart.

The two of them circulated for almost an hour. She received many congratulations from other dancers she knew, including Jenna, Aaron and Travis.

She and Jenna had made up the previous week after Anna made a dozen calls, begging Jenna's forgiveness. Jenna finally called back and they worked things out. Anna was surprised that Jenna admitted to enjoying quite a bit of that evening.

"Anna." Isaak walked up to where she and Kurt were standing, talking with Aaron and Jenna.

Anna gave him a smile. "Hi, Isaak."

"Come with me. I have someone I want to introduce you to."

Anna and Kurt followed Isaak across the room to where Nate was speaking with an older man with gray hair and the bearing of a dancer. When Anna approached, he smiled broadly at her.

"Anna, I'd like to introduce you to Vincent Marsellis. Vincent, this is Anna Perkins." Isaak looked at Anna. "Vincent is the Ballet Master in Chief for the New York City Ballet Company. He and I danced together in New York when we were much, much younger." The two men chuckled at Isaak's remark.

Anna just stared at Vincent. What was the Ballet Master from New York doing here at a student performance?

Vincent smiled at Anna and Nate. "I enjoyed your performance this evening. Both of you. Isaak told me that he had some wonderful dancers that he wanted me to see."

Anna looked at Isaak then back at Vincent. *Why?*

"I would like to extend an invitation to you both to come dance in New York. You are both excellent dancers, and together are truly amazing. I would love to have you in my Company."

Anna's jaw dropped. He wanted her and Nate to come to New York? To *dance* in New York?

Nate grabbed her and hugged her tightly as she processed Vincent's words. "Oh, Anna. How awesome would that be?" Nate whispered in her ear. "We could dance in New York together."

Anna grinned as the idea sank in. How wonderful! The more she thought about it, the more ecstatic she became. Her heart soared at the idea of leaving San Francisco.

Nate released her. "I have to go tell my parents." He kissed her cheek then hurried away.

Anna looked shyly at Kurt, who was grinning at her. "That is wonderful news, *Engel*. It would be good for you to get away."

Isaak nodded and smiled.

She saw Devin close by, watching her. She would be able to tell him that the classes had paid off! And now she would dance in New York. She excused herself from Kurt and fairly skipped over to Devin.

Devin looked at her with an amused expression. "What's all the excitement, Baby?"

She excitedly told him what Vincent had said. At the end of the explanation she clapped her hands in joy and gazed up happily. "Isn't it wonderful, Devin?"

Devin frowned at her. "No. Absolutely not."

Anna looked at him, hands tingling with fear at the expression on his face. "What do you mean?"

He looked directly into her eyes with an intense stare, then took her arm and pulled her to the side of the room. "You may not go, Anna. I will not allow it."

Anna stared, bewildered. "What? Why?" Her heart squeezed in her chest as her chin trembled.

“Why?” He laughed. “I would never allow you to leave San Francisco. Your duties are here. With me. I will not have you on the other side of the country.”

Tears stung her eyes as she looked at him for a long moment before blinking and looking at the ground. Her heart felt as if it had been stabbed by a ragged knife.

He put his finger under her chin and lifted her face. He looked at her sternly. “I suggest you go tell Vincent that you will not be going. I also suggest that you...encourage your boyfriend to take the offer.” Devin smirked. “For his own...safety.”

“He’s not my boyfriend.”

Devin frowned. “I don’t fucking care what he is, but you’d better encourage him to go without you.

She stared at him, horrified. Was he threatening Nate? Why would he do that? Was it because of what happened in the dressing room?

His eyes flashed with rage when she didn’t obey him immediately. “Has it been too long since you’ve felt the sting of a whip, Anna? You are slow to obey.”

“But Devin. Please. This is such a wonderful opportunity.” She implored him with her eyes and words.

“Yes, it is a wonderful opportunity. It is a wonderful opportunity for Nate to...get away before things get messy. For you...Anna...you will remain in San Francisco the rest of your life.” His tone changed to low and gravelly. “And if you want to continue dancing, you will obey me immediately or I will shut you away in the Manor like the rest of my girls.”

She wiped the tears from her eyes as she turned to walk quickly back to where Vincent and Isaak were talking.

“Anna, what’s wrong?” Isaak asked, face full of concern.

“I...” She looked at Vincent and swallowed. “Thank you for the offer, but I can’t accept it.” She stared up into his kind brown eyes. “I wish I could,” she added in a whisper before turning and fleeing to the bathroom where she let her tears flow freely.

When she emerged about fifteen minutes later, there was no trace of her misery anywhere, save her red eyes. She had resigned herself to her fate. And she would send Nate away to keep him from Devin.

She had taken no more than a few steps out of the bathroom when Nate appeared in front of her. “Anna, what’s wrong? Isaak said you rejected the offer for New York.”

Anna’s lower lip trembled, but she didn’t cry. She couldn’t. “I can’t go, Nate.”

Nate laughed nervously. “What do you mean you can’t go? You’re an adult. You can do what you want.”

“No, I can’t. Devin won’t let me go.”

“Devin won’t let you? What the hell are you talking about?”

Anna twisted her fingers in front of her. “Devin’s my...guardian. He...needs me here with him.”

Nate’s face turned red in anger. “You can’t be serious, Anna. Doesn’t he realize what a chance this is?”

Anna was in danger of losing the composure she’d just gained. “It doesn’t matter. I...I’m never leaving San Francisco. He said so.”

Nate took a step forward. “You can’t let him control you like that, Anna. Isn’t there anything you can do to change his mind?”

Anna laughed bitterly. Change Devin’s mind? Yeah, right...wait. “Alex!” Maybe Alex would be more open to the idea.

“Alex? Who’s Alex?”

“Someone who might be able to change Devin’s mind,” Anna said absent-mindedly.

Alex could talk to him. Alex was just as much her Master as Devin. But would he? It was worth asking.

She smiled, heart light, and went off in search of Alex. The lobby was crowded and she couldn’t see very far. She hurried over when she finally saw him across the room.

“Alex, you have to talk to Devin....” She told him about the offer to go to New York and Devin’s reaction. She was talking so quickly she hoped he understood, but she couldn’t slow herself down. Hope had risen anew.

When she finished, she looked up into his eyes, hope filling her heart. His face was impassive again.

“Alex?” she asked tentatively. Why wasn’t he reacting? She looked desperately at Wilhelm, who gave her a sad smile.

“*Nein*, Anna. Devin is right. You cannot go to New York.”

The hope that had blossomed wilted at Alex’s words. She raised her hand and rubbed over her heart. “What? Why?” she whispered.

“You heard me, Anna,” he said sternly.

Anna’s eyes filled with tears as she stared into his eyes. The eyes that had looked at her so lovingly in the past now looked at her coldly.

“Why?” she asked in a broken voice.

“Because neither he nor I live in New York,” Alex answered simply.

Anna shook her head in disbelief. “I don’t understand.” Her knees shook.

“You cannot live apart from us, Anna. You have obligations to Devin, which cannot be performed when you are not with him. It would be unsafe for you to be there alone and...bad things could happen if you were away

from us for any length of time.” Alex remained cold as he spoke. His eyes flickered briefly to look behind Anna.

“Did Anna tell you her news?” Devin’s voice came from behind. He walked up and greeted Wilhelm and Alex with a handshake.

“She just told us,” Alex said, eyes hard as he looked at Devin. “I was telling her that I agreed with your decision.”

“You agree?” Devin looked surprised, then looked coldly at Anna. “You came to plead your case with Alex?”

Anna shrank under his gaze. She saw Devin look at Nate, who had just walked up. Nate took her hand and Devin looked at her with a raised brow.

Anna’s eyes widened. “I...” She swallowed nervously.

Devin frowned and leaned down to whisper in her ear. “I think we need to have a conversation at the Manor before we leave on Monday.”

Anna bit her lip to keep from crying out.

“End it with Nate. Now.” Devin straightened and gave her a look.

She nodded timidly and looked at Nate. “Nate...c’mon.” She pulled at his hand and led him away from the other men.

“Anna, I was thinking...we can leave, without telling anyone,” Nate said softly. “New York is a huge place. No one will find you there.”

Anna shook her head sadly. She looked up intently into his beautiful brown eyes. The eyes she’d gotten used to gazing into. “Nate. You should go without me.”

Nate pushed her hand gently away. “No, I’ll stay here with you. Maybe we can....”

“No, Nate,” she said more firmly than she felt. But she couldn’t let him stay here and risk something happening to him. “I can’t.” She looked at him. “You have to go without me.”

Nate began to protest, but Anna stopped him. “Please, Nate. You have to go without me.” She paused, wondering if she should tell him about Devin’s threat.

He frowned at her. “I thought we had something special, Anna.”

Anna blinked back tears. “I like you, Nate. I really do, but I can’t leave here. It’s...hard to explain.”

Nate looked at her, bewildered. “So that’s it?”

“I’m sorry, Nate.”

He gave her a dirty look and then turned on his heel and stormed away.

She stared hard out the window, trying to get control of her emotions. A few minutes later, she felt a warm body move in close behind her. She looked over her shoulder to see Wilhelm standing there. He turned her around and hugged her to himself.

“*Liebling*, it will all work out. I know it hurts now, but you’ll feel better soon.”

“Why does Alex hate me?”

He pulled her away and cupped her cheek. “He doesn’t hate you, *Liebling*. He’s trying to protect you.”

Anna snorted.

“Why would I lie to you?” Wilhelm gave her a stern, but gentle look.

She knew Wilhelm wouldn’t lie, but she didn’t understand. Alex was so cold. Maybe Wilhelm just didn’t *think* that Alex hated her.

Kurt walked up at that moment. “I heard what happened, Anna. Are you all right?”

Wilhelm guided Anna into Kurt’s arms. Kurt held her and Anna leaned her head against his chest. Anna couldn’t speak over the lump in her throat.

Kurt and Wilhelm talked quietly as Kurt stroked her hair and she calmed under his touch.

Isaak came by a while later. “Anna, how are you doing?”

She looked at him and gave him a sad smile.

“I’m so sorry, Anna. I had hoped....” Isaak sighed. “I know you can’t go to New York, but would you be content dancing with my Company?”

Anna straightened and her heart leapt. “You want me to dance with you?”

Isaak laughed. “Of course, Anna. I’d much rather have you here than send you to New York, but I thought that if you had the opportunity to leave....” He stopped and shook his head. “I spoke to Alex and Devin already and they...agreed to allow you to join the Company, if you’d like to.”

Anna smiled and nodded. “I’d like that very much, Isaak.”

Isaak laughed. “Wonderful. I’m so glad. I am bringing you in as a soloist until the board members understand your value. Then I’ll be able to promote you to principal.”

Anna stared at Isaak. She wasn’t going into the corps? “Thank you, Isaak. I’ll try not to let you down.”

“I have no fear of that, Anna,” Isaak smiled warmly. “When you get back from your trip you can begin classes with the Company. You can spend September and October learning the repertoire and Nutcracker will be your first performance with us.”

Anna couldn’t help but grin. “It was already my first performance with the Company.” She performed in the first act of Nutcracker the night her parents died.

Isaak frowned in confusion, then laughed. “That’s true, Anna. But this time you won’t be in the first act.”

It was Anna’s turn to be confused. “I won’t?” It was primarily principals in the second act.

“Anna, just because I can’t give you the title of principal doesn’t mean I won’t use you as one. I was thinking Arabian, and Devin approved.”

“Arabian? You’re going to have me partner?”

Isaak nodded. “With Travis. You know him, correct?”

“Yes. He’s a nice guy.”

“Good. Don’t tell anyone yet. I haven’t posted the cast list.” Isaak winked and kissed her cheek. “I’ll see you when you get back.”

Anna watched Isaak walk away, the sting of the previous hour dampened by Isaak’s words. At least she would be able to keep dancing.

She smiled up at Kurt and Wilhelm. “Travis is the son of the LA Elder,” she told them.

Wilhelm looked intrigued. “I had heard Brandon let some of his sons out and about. He’s a good man.”

Wilhelm gazed down at Anna, who had been pacified with Isaak’s offer. Wilhelm had a suspicion that Isaak’s motivations were more than simply giving Anna an opportunity to dance with the premier dance company in the country. He saw the way Isaak looked at her; he cared deeply for Anna, but it was purely platonic. Was Isaak trying to get her away from Devin? If only that were possible.

But Alex was right. She couldn’t leave Devin. She was bonded to him and this city. Only a stronger bond elsewhere would allow her to leave.

Devin walked up a few minutes later to let Anna know he was leaving. She thanked him for letting her continue to dance.

“Don’t make me regret the decision, Anna,” he said sternly.

“I will do my best, Devin.”

Devin looked at Wilhelm. “I have need of Anna Sunday afternoon. Would it be all right if she cut her weekend short with you?”

Wilhelm saw Anna's face pale at Devin's words and studied Devin for a long moment. What was going on? "I suppose so," he said slowly. "May she spend the night with us when you are done?"

"I'm afraid not. We are leaving early the next morning for the airport and we won't be done until late."

Wilhelm frowned, but nodded. He didn't like this. But he didn't have a reason to say no. His gut instincts weren't enough to protest a Master taking his slave back.

Devin turned to Anna. "I will have Ian pick you up at your apartment at four."

"Yes, Devin," Anna responded nervously.

The fear in her eyes made Wilhelm uncomfortable.

"Good." Devin shook hands with Wilhelm and Kurt, then turned and left.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

Anna waited nervously at her apartment for Ian to arrive. She had been looking forward to the trip to Washington DC. Devin knew that Anna had never traveled and wanted her to enjoy the trip. Now she wondered if he still felt that way. She knew he was angry at her and knew the reason she was going to the Manor this afternoon: punishment for disobedience on Friday.

She trembled at the thought of Devin's punishments. She would be lucky if she could walk tomorrow. How would she get on the plane if she couldn't move?

A knock at the door made her jump. She quickly answered it and Ian came in.

"You ready?" he asked in his low voice.

Anna nodded nervously. Something about Ian's demeanor frightened her. They had started becoming friends in the last few weeks after she'd found out he was a really nice guy. He'd even come out and stayed the night with her several times. With Seth gone, she didn't have anyone else to call when she got too antsy. Devin had lifted the restriction after a couple of weeks when she started having trouble functioning after a week of no nightly visitors. Her body was addicted to sex and she needed release, so Devin said that Ian could come over when she "needed" someone.

She backed against the wall and stared at him. He looked at her with dark eyes.

He sighed and closed his eyes for a moment. “Anna...,” he began. “I...please know that what happens this afternoon....” He shook his head. “I wish I didn’t have to do it....”

Tears came to Anna’s eyes. She was to be punished. He had just confirmed it.

Ian crossed the room and hugged her. “I have to obey Devin. You know that, right?”

Anna nodded. She knew and couldn’t blame him. She hugged him around his waist.

After a moment, he released her. “C’mon. Let’s get your things so Devin doesn’t get any angrier.”

The drive to the Manor was quiet. Anna’s fear built with every mile. Ian would pat her knee every once in a while, but his kindness only made what was coming more frightening.

When they arrived, Ian took Anna inside. Devin approached as they entered the building. Anna quickly removed her shoes and bowed before him.

“Come, Anna. There is a lot to do before I’m done with you.” Devin said, his cold voice echoing off the hard surfaces of the entryway.

She stood with shaky legs and followed Devin with Ian right behind her.

Devin led her down to the stone-walled dungeon. Whips, paddles, crops and other instruments lined the walls. There was also a comfortable looking chair in the far corner. She supposed he needed somewhere to sit and watch her punishment. It certainly wasn’t for her.

“Remove your clothing.” Devin ordered in a low voice.

She quickly obeyed, then stood quietly with her head bowed. Maybe if she were quick to obey now, some of his anger would lessen. Ian led her to

the archway where he cuffed her, arms above her head and legs free, though her arms were so high she was on her tiptoes. Then Devin came over and reached behind her neck, removing her necklace.

She gasped as Devin handed it to Ian, who put it in his pocket. Tears formed in her eyes as she looked at Devin questioningly.

“You don’t deserve to wear that necklace right now.”

Anna hung limply. His removal of her protection, his affection for her, hurt her more than she would have expected.

The room was cool and goose bumps sprang up all over her body. She watched as Devin selected a whip and positioned himself in front of her.

“Do you know why we’re here, Anna?” Devin asked, giving the whip a few test cracks.

She flinched at every crack. “I was disobedient,” she said softly.

“I’m glad you know.” *Crack!* “I’m not sure if you living on your own is such a good idea. You’ve grown rather lazy in the last few months. All the years of training seem to have gone away. Turn around.”

Anna quickly did as she was told. As soon as she faced the wall there was a crack and fire erupted across her back.

She cried out. She hadn’t been whipped in several months and had somehow forgotten how much it stung.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Each crack across her back blazed fire on her skin. It hurt like hell, but she wasn’t screaming. Yet.

After several minutes, Devin told her to turn back around. He proceeded to do to her front what he’d done to her back; her front was more sensitive. Tears began streaming down her face as she bit her lip to keep from screaming. He landed a particularly accurate shot at her left nipple, which broke the screaming dam. She began twisting away from him to avoid the lashes. But he simply hit whatever side was facing him.

She knew better than to beg him to stop. She screamed with each lash. Her entire body felt like it was on fire. There were few places that he didn't hit. When she couldn't scream any more, he stopped.

She hung limply from her wrists, face wet with tears. Her head hung down and she saw angry red lines all over her body.

"I'm sorry, Master," she whispered.

Devin didn't answer, but walked over to her and examined her body, touching the sore areas and making her jump. She groaned in pain. Was he done?

The door opened a few minutes later and two naked women entered. They looked vaguely familiar, but Anna's brain felt like mush and she couldn't recollect their names. They looked at her and giggled.

"Look at the poor princess," one of them mocked and both giggled.

Anna squinted through her pain to look at them. It was Tabitha and Zoe. The girls that had lived with her and Jack! She had watched them get raped many times, and she had thought herself above them. She clearly wasn't anymore, if she ever was.

"Come, girls," Devin said, walking over to the chair in the corner. They eagerly followed him and sat at his feet and began playing with his cock.

Anna looked away, hurt. She didn't want to see them touching her Master.

At that point Ian walked over with several long strings. No, wires with clips on the end. She looked up into his face, frightened of the unknown. He didn't look at her, but clenched his jaw as he attached the clips to her nipple and pussy rings. The wires ran to a black box sitting on the floor. Ian walked over to where Devin sat and handed him something. A moment later heated pain surged through her veins and she screamed. She tugged at her

restraints, trying desperately to free herself, but Ian was excellent at restraints. This she knew from past experience.

When the pain stopped, she panted, cheeks wet from her tears. She looked wearily over at Devin. Tabitha was between his feet sucking on his cock noisily and Zoe was lying on a table next to him with her legs spread as he licked her pussy. Her heart ached as she watched him lavish attention on the two women. Zoe looked at her and smirked, then closed her eyes and moaned.

Unexpectedly, another surge of pain swept through her body. She twisted and turned, trying to escape the pain. But the wires were firmly attached and not going anywhere. She screamed and begged her Master to stop. He only laughed.

The pain stopped for a moment, then began again. The pain stopped and started at irregular intervals. Sometimes lasting just a second, other times lasting for what seemed like forever. She screamed and screamed and cried and begged.

Faintly, above her screams she heard Zoe cry out an orgasm and then saw her switch places with Tabitha. The pain continued and she heard Tabitha cry out and then heard Devin moan his orgasm as Zoe sucked him dry.

The pain stopped for a longer time and Devin stood and zipped up his pants.

“If you’ll excuse me, ladies. I have something I need to attend to.” He walked across the room where Ian opened the door for him. “You girls play nice,” Devin said, smiling at Tabitha and Zoe.

Oh, God, he was going to leave her alone with them? Would they do anything to her? She got her answer as soon as the men left the room.

“Well, well, well. If it isn’t Princess Anna,” Tabatha said nastily, then laughed. “Master left you all alone with us.”

“Maybe we should get some revenge,” Zoe suggested. They both giggled and whispered in each other’s ear.

“Master took it easy on you with the electricity,” Tabitha said. She removed the clips from Anna’s nipple rings. Anna sighed in relief and Zoe giggled.

“Oh, no,” Zoe said. “We know a much more painful way to take it.”

They moved the clips to her outer labia, then removed the other clips and put them on her inner labia and clit hood and then one directly on her clit. Anna whimpered at the pinching and dreaded the other pain. Zoe walked to the other side of the room and picked up a small black box and returned. “Shall we?” she asked Tabitha.

“No, please,” Anna begged, tears flowing freely. They simply laughed and Zoe pushed a button on the remote.

Anna screamed. The pain was unbearable. White-hot heat erupted onto her pussy. It felt like someone had thrown molten lava directly onto her most sensitive area.

She convulsed and screamed at the pain. They didn’t turn it off. The pain just went on and on and on...until blackness overcame her and she felt nothing.

Devin returned to the dungeon a while later. It was quiet, though he had heard the screaming earlier. Whatever they had done to Anna had elicited screams even he hadn’t heard from her before.

When he opened the door, the girls were sitting in his chair talking and giggling. Anna had passed out in her restraints. For a moment, he thought they’d killed her, but he saw her chest moving slightly. He sighed in relief.

He'd wanted to punish Anna, not kill her. She wouldn't do him any good dead. At least not yet.

Her body was striped with the marks from the whip and her pussy was bright red and had multiple wires attached. He walked over to see what the girls had done. Intriguing. Right on the skin. Ooh! And one on the clit. He imagined that would hurt a lot.

"You girls may go," he said.

He hadn't figured they would be so cruel, but then again, they were some of the meanest girls he had. They'd been known to bully some of the other girls. Most of the time it wasn't a problem. And soon it wouldn't be a problem at all. They were twenty-four and very near the end of their useful lives. Very near. Their attitudes would not make them useful for anything else. Some of his girls he kept around if they showed promise for other duties around the Manor. These two, while very, very good sex slaves, had little inclination for anything except having sex. A useful trait when they were young. But they were getting old. Men were losing interest. In fact....

"Ian," he said quietly as the girls left. "Prepare them for Elimination. They are too old to be any more use to me."

Ian nodded and followed the girls out of the room. He would take them to a holding room where the men of the Manor would be notified that they were available for anything they wanted to do. After the men were done with them, if the girls were still alive, then Ian would give them a lethal injection and have their bodies disposed of.

Devin turned to look at Anna. He wasn't done with her yet. No, there was more punishment to be doled out. He would make her think twice before disobeying again. Fortunately, the Immortals were willing to heal her body before he left tomorrow. Otherwise he would have to stop now.

He unchained her and moved her bindings behind her back. When Ian returned, he would chain her up so she stood bent over enough to expose her pussy between her legs. Then the punishment would continue, focusing on that lovely part of her body. Devin's cock twitched in anticipation. The opportunity to do whatever he wanted to her ass and pussy was unbelievably arousing.

A sharp scent brought Anna back to consciousness and her body jerked awake. She ached all over. Her arms were tied behind her back, but raised up so that she leaned forward. Her ankles were cuffed several feet apart and she wore a collar that was attached to something above her, holding her head up level with her back. She coughed and shook her head as best she could in her position.

“Did you have a nice nap?” Devin asked from above.

She could see his booted feet beside her, but she couldn't look up at him; the collar was also attached to the ground. Her head could move side to side slightly, but not up and down.

Devin slapped her face. “I asked you a question,” he said sharply.

“I...I don't know, Master,” she whispered.

Her throat was raw from screaming. God, everything hurt! How long had she been out? Did she even want to know? Obviously Devin wasn't done with her yet. Oh, she just wanted to go to sleep.

Devin walked away. She heard him say Ian's name and saw a big shadow approach her. Something touched her ass and she jumped. *No! Please not that!* The something was hot and hard and big and pressed against her asshole, demanding entry. It was Ian. His hands were on her hips and he pressed himself against her. Anna tried desperately to relax the

tight muscles, but it had been so long since she'd had anal, there was little she could do.

She grunted, then cried out as his cock gained entry to her body.

“Ian....” Devin’s voice had a ring of warning to it.

She heard Ian take a deep breath, then thrust forward hard and ripped into her tight hole, making her scream as the muscles tore. Her back and leg muscles clenched painfully as she tried to brace herself against his powerful thrusts. Every time he pushed forward, her body pressed forward, making the collar choke her.

Ian fucked her hard, as he had been ordered to do. Anna could do nothing but take the enormous cock into her. She couldn’t even tighten the muscles around him to help him come faster. Her stomach cramped as he pounded into her body over and over again. She sobbed at the intense pain. Ian continued his pounding until she heard him grunt and curse as he came, shooting his cum deep inside her ravaged hole. He pulled out hard, making her jump, then smacked her ass before he walked away.

The floor under Anna’s head glistened with her tears.

She heard a whistle and a crack before her body registered the pain of being struck by a riding crop right on her sore ass. She screamed. Over and over her poor hole was hit. It sounded like it was hitting liquid. She could see slightly behind her on the ground and saw dark drops on the floor between her legs. It had a red tinge to it though it was hard to see in the dim lighting. Ian had torn her so badly she was bleeding and now one of them was hitting her and making her bleed more. Her body jerked with every lash and she cried out repeatedly.

The lashes stopped suddenly.

“Your ass is a mess, Anna,” Devin commented from behind. “A beautiful, fucked up, bloody mess.”

She felt something against her pussy and it pressed inside. It was Devin. He fucked her hard for a moment, hitting her sore ass with every thrust, then stopped for a moment until Anna felt a pinch inside her. His spikes! He began moving again and the spikes scraped her channel. He pounded into her over and over again and she screamed in pain. When she looked down she could see Devin's feet between hers and a steady drip of blood coming from her lower body.

He hit her as he fucked her and leaned down to pinch her nipples. When he finally came, he shouted out and pressed hard inside, then pulled out and smacked her pussy hard several times with his hand. But he still wasn't done with her. A few minutes later she felt the sting of many tiny whips against her pussy. The cat-o-nine tails. It had sharp things at the end and Devin used it brutally on her lower body, concentrating especially on her pussy and ass. She screamed until she lost her voice, then grunted. She was certain her pussy would be a bloody mess. The drops of blood continued to pool between her feet.

The pain was unbearable, but she couldn't scream anymore. She couldn't move. She could only cry silently and pray that she would die. When the darkness began to creep in, she hoped it was death and not just unconsciousness.

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

“Anna.”

Anna jumped and opened her eyes. Devin sat next to her stroking her hair. She looked at him with frightened eyes. Was she to be punished again?

She looked around with jerky movements. She was in her bedroom at the Manor. Morning sunlight streamed through the sheer curtains that covered the windows and French door, bathing the room in pink light.

Morning? The last thing she remembered was extreme pain down in the dungeon. She took stock of her body. She didn't hurt anywhere. In fact, she felt remarkably well.

Devin wore a white dress shirt and slacks and his hair was slightly damp. Was it Monday morning already?

“I'm sorry, Master,” she whispered, tears running down her cheeks.

“I know you are, Baby. You've been punished and I'm sure I don't have to worry about disobedience again, do I?”

“No, Master,” she whispered.

“Good girl,” he said, leaning down and kissing her. He stroked her cheek and she relaxed. “Good girl,” he repeated.

There was a knock at the door and Sarah entered, carrying a tray.

“Oh!” she exclaimed when she saw Devin. “Good Morning, Master,” she said with a curtsy.

“Good morning, Sarah.” Devin stood and looked at Anna. “Eat breakfast quickly, then get ready. We'll leave in about ninety minutes.”

“Yes, Master,” Anna said softly, sitting up, surprised to find herself dressed in a soft cotton nightgown.

Devin smiled warmly at her then left the room. Anna got up quickly and went to the table where Sarah had laid out her breakfast.

“Good morning, Mistress,” she said cheerfully. “Are you excited about your trip?”

“I hadn’t really thought about it,” Anna answered honestly. After last night she was rather apprehensive about anything with Devin. She didn’t want to anger him.

“Is there anything else you need, Mistress?”

When Anna shook her head Sarah said she’d be back in a bit to retrieve her tray.

Anna ate quickly, then went into the bathroom to get ready. She dressed in a navy travel skirt suit and white silk top, and then made sure everything was ready with her luggage. Satisfied that all was in order, she sat in the chair by the window and read from the Kindle that Alex had bought her. She didn’t like to think about the fact that it was from Alex, but it was easier than carrying multiple books and it fit nicely in her new white travel purse.

She allowed herself a trace of excitement to build as she thought about her upcoming adventures. She’d never been on a plane before. She grew up in Oakland, across the bay, but she hadn’t left San Francisco since her parents died. And now she was going all the way across the country to Washington DC!

Ian came into her room a little while later. She stood nervously when he entered. He looked handsome in his dark suit.

“How are you feeling, Anna?” he asked in a gentle voice.

“Fine, thank you,” she said quietly.

“I’m sorry I had to hurt you, Anna,” he said softly, walking up to her.

She looked up into his soft hazel eyes and nodded. “I know.” She took a step forward and hugged her arms around his waist. He hugged her back tightly.

“Are you ready?” he asked when he pulled away.

She nodded and gave him a timid smile.

A while later, Devin, Ian, Tyler, Maggie and Anna were in the back of a limousine heading down the freeway to the airport. Maggie looked around in amazement. Anna sat next to Devin and stared excitedly out the window. Devin had been very kind and gentle with her since they’d been in the car and he had his hand on her knee.

“Oh, I almost forgot,” Devin said suddenly and pulled something out of his jacket pocket.

He held out a pink diamond ring to Anna. The large pink diamond was square and surrounded by tiny white diamonds. On either side of the large diamond were two smaller square white diamonds surrounded by smaller round diamonds. The setting looked antique.

“Oh, Devin!” Anna exclaimed, looking at the ring. “It’s beautiful!”

Devin slipped it on her left ring finger. “This way, other men will know that you are mine with just a glance.” He smiled and captured her lips with his, kissing her deeply and caressing the side of her neck. “I love you, Baby.”

Anna’s eyes sparkled. “I love you too, Devin,” she said shyly, and cuddled next to him.

Tyler, Devin’s son who sat across from them, frowned as he stared out the window.

“Tyler,” Devin said. “You don’t need to pout. I’ll share.”

Anna, feeling much more secure in her relationship with Devin now, smiled at Tyler. He looked so much like his dad, but his eyes weren't as hard.

After the fright of takeoff, Anna was able to relax and enjoy the flight. Of course, Devin's hand up her skirt made it enjoyable as well. He was obviously over his anger with her and gave her several orgasms during the course of their flight. During the stopover in Chicago, he took her into one of the first-class bathrooms and fucked her hard against the vanity, all the while telling her what a good girl she was and how much he adored her.

As they were settling in for their flight from Chicago to DC, Devin looked behind him and grinned.

"Well, well, well," he said in a strange voice that Anna had never heard from him.

Anna turned to see a handsome man with medium blond hair and broad shoulders walking up the aisle with a grin on his face.

"Devin!" he exclaimed.

Anna's mouth opened in astonishment when they hugged in greeting. Who would Devin greet in such a way? She'd never seen such a thing.

"Tom! I didn't expect to see you until tomorrow." Devin laughed as he leaned against the back of his seat. "What are you doing in Chicago?"

"Last minute business trip." Tom shrugged.

"Is Tommy there already?" Tyler asked eagerly, walking up to the two men.

Tom laughed. "Hey, Tyler," he said, hugging the younger man. "Yeah. They're all waiting at the hotel. They arrived this morning. Poor Kelsey. I hated to leave her to manage everything, but I made sure the older ones helped out."

Devin rolled his eyes. “I never understood why you had such a big family.”

“I love my family.” Tom smiled. “I happen to love my wife as well.” He looked at Anna and gave her a friendly smile. “You must be Anna,” he said.

Anna stared at him nervously. How did he know who she was? She glanced down at his hand and saw he wore a diamond ring on his right pinky. An Elder? She looked back at him. But he looked so...nice. And normal.

“Yes, Tom. This is my Anna,” Devin said, hugging Anna to his side. “Anna, this is my best friend, Tom Pendleton.”

Devin has a best friend? “Hello, Mr. Pendleton,” Anna said softly, clinging to Devin’s arm.

“Call me Tom,” he said with a grin. “She’s adorable.” He looked back at Devin. “Bet it was hard to wait.”

“You have no idea,” Devin groaned.

“Ian, how are you?” Tom said, moving across the aisle when Ian stood. They shook hands.

“Good, Sir. And you?” Ian asked in a friendly manner.

“Good, good. Thanks. Glad to see you.”

The men chatted for a few minutes. Tyler obviously looked up to Tom as much as he looked up to his own father.

Anna stood quietly and clasped her hands as she listened to them talk. She wanted to sit down, but didn’t think Devin would approve. She glanced at Maggie, who sat quietly in the seat behind Anna’s. They shared small smiles, but didn’t dare talk.

The cabin filled with mostly businessmen and soon the fasten seatbelt sign lit up. Tom moved to a seat across the aisle and two rows back.

“Tom is the Elder for New York,” Devin explained as Anna buckled her seatbelt. “We’ve known each other since we were boys. We went to college together. Much like Tyler and his son, Tommy, will be doing this fall.” A soft expression appeared on Devin’s face, making Anna wonder if Devin had always been as hard as he was now.

“I saw his ring,” she said.

“Good girl. It’s a good idea to keep a look out for rings while we’re here. Make sure you treat the Brothers with respect. Unless they’re wearing a diamond, they shouldn’t touch you. But if they do, do as they want and then come and tell me and I will deal with them.”

“Yes, Devin.”

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CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

They arrived in DC in the early evening. Tom rode with them in the limo to the luxurious hotel.

Tom called his family when they arrived and, as Devin was checking in, a pregnant woman with short brown hair and sparkling blue eyes arrived in the lobby a few minutes later. Anna stood next to Devin at the reception desk.

“Hello, Darling,” Tom greeted the woman with an affectionate kiss. “How was the trip down?”

The woman smiled, but rolled her eyes. “Tiring, but Tommy and Denise were a huge help.”

“Good. I’d tan their hides if they weren’t.” They both laughed.

Tyler laughed too. “I’d pay to see that.”

“Tyler, I didn’t see you. How are you, dear?”

“Good, Kelsey, you?” Tyler answered politely.

“Oh. Looking forward to a dinner I don’t have to cook.” She smiled prettily. “Where’s your dad?”

Tyler motioned over to where Devin and Anna were standing.

“We’re in the third floor suite, west wing,” Kelsey told Tyler.

“Tommy’s there now. He can show you the room you boys will be staying in.”

Tyler grinned. “Cool.” He disappeared to the elevator bank.

Devin received the key card from the hotel attendant and turned to greet Kelsey. “Ah, Kelsey. How are you dear?” He kissed her cheek and looked at her swollen stomach, shaking his head. “Are you trying to repopulate the city on your own?”

Kelsey and Tom laughed. “Maybe,” she said with a glint in her eyes. “How’s Sandy?” she asked. “Did she come with you?”

Devin frowned. “No. She’s at home.” He didn’t elaborate.

Anna stood by nervously.

Kelsey’s eyes flickered to Anna then back at Devin with a questioning look.

Devin smiled, almost wickedly, and pulled Anna closer to him with his hand around her waist. “Kelsey, this is Anna. My mistress.”

Kelsey didn’t hide the shock on her face as she looked between Anna and Devin.

Anna flushed and looked at the ground.

“I...uh,” Kelsey stammered. “It’s nice to meet you, Anna,” she said stiffly.

Anna peeked up at her and gave her an uncertain smile. “It’s nice to meet you too, Mrs. Pendleton,” she said softly, then looked back at the ground. Would she be here the entire time?

“Well, shall we refresh ourselves, then go get a bite to eat?” Devin suggested, ignoring the uncomfortable silence between the two women.

They agreed that Anna and Devin would meet Tom and his family in their suite in a half-hour and they parted company. A bellhop led Devin, Anna, Ian and Maggie to the elevators and up to their fourth floor suite. One of the presidential suites.

Anna stared at the room when she walked in. Well, it wasn’t a room. It was multiple rooms. The huge foyer had a door to the bedroom and an open

archway that led to a huge living area. The living area had windows on two sides with amazing views of the city and some sort of waterway. Multiple seating areas were scattered throughout the room, which was decorated in hues of light blue, gold and green. A dining table with room for eight sat to one side of the suite. It was so opulent!

The bedroom had a king sized bed, a seating area, and gold walls. Anna could see a dressing room through a doorway next to a walk-in closet. Past that was a huge marble bathroom.

Maggie and Ian each had adjoining rooms on the far side of the suite.

“Wow!” was all Anna could say as she looked around the huge place.

Devin came up behind her, put his arms around her waist and kissed her neck. “You like it?”

He moved her hair aside and sucked on the top of her ear, making her knees weak.

“Mmm hmm,” she mumbled as his hand slid under her jacket and cupped her breast.

“Undress,” Devin commanded softly.

Anna did as commanded, draping her suit and underwear over the chair, and then stood naked in front of Devin with her head bowed. Devin had undressed as well. His cock bobbed in front of her and she longed to touch him. He pushed down on her shoulders to make her go to her knees. She did so and eagerly took his cock into her mouth. She could taste herself on him from when they had fucked in Chicago.

Devin moaned. “Good girl,” he mumbled as he guided her head with his hands.

Anna worried that he would poke her throat, but tried to do a good job for him anyway. A while later, Devin pulled away and told her to get on the bed on her hands and knees. She did as she was told and he knelt behind her

and pounded himself into her. She moaned in pleasure, but still feared that he would hurt her.

“Come for me, Baby,” Devin cried out.

Anna concentrated and soon felt the stirrings of heat in her belly and moaned. Her body obeyed even though her mind was afraid.

Devin leaned forward to kiss her back and cup her breast. “Good girl,” he murmured as he softened inside her.

Anna felt warmed by his pleasure. Maybe he really wasn’t angry with her anymore. He hadn’t acted angry at all today.

Devin stood up. “We need to get dressed and get down to Tom’s room. Kelsey looked pretty hungry.”

“Yes, Devin,” Anna said, standing and walking to the closet. Her bags were there, but not unpacked.

“Maggie will unpack your things while we’re gone. Wear something nice. We’ll eat in the restaurant downstairs.”

Anna picked out a sleeveless black sheath dress with a high neckline. She went into the bathroom to freshen up her makeup and hair. She was checking herself in the mirror one last time when Devin came up behind her.

“You have been a very good girl today, Anna.” He reached into his pocket and pulled out her necklace. “Don’t disobey me again. Do you understand?”

Anna nodded enthusiastically. “Yes, Devin.”

Devin gave her a warm smile and fastened the necklace in place. He kissed her neck. “Eat well at dinner. It will be a long night.”

Anna followed Devin out of the room wondering what he meant. They took the elevator down one floor and walked to a door very similar to their

own. Devin knocked and a moment later the door opened to reveal a girl a little younger than Anna with blond hair and blue eyes.

“Uncle Devin!” she exclaimed, and lunged into his arms.

Anna frowned as jealousy clenched at her heart. How dare she greet him like Anna used to! He was her Devin! She stepped back and behind Devin.

“Hey, Denise,” he said affectionately, hugging her back. “You’ve grown.”

Denise giggled. “I’m eighteen now.”

“Are you really?” Devin teased. “Your poor dad.”

Tom came up behind his daughter. “You have no idea. Phone calls day and night. From boys.” Tom rolled his eyes.

Devin laughed. “Yeah. We get that with Sierra too.”

Anna felt so out of place. They were talking about their daughters who were only two years younger than her. But she was Devin’s Mistress. And she was fairly certain she’d be having sex with Tom before the week was out. He was, after all, an Elder.

“Well, come on in. See how much the others have grown.” Tom said opening the door. “Where’s...oh, there you are, Anna.” He smiled at her. “Thought Dev had left you upstairs.”

Devin grabbed her hand. “I wouldn’t do that.”

Devin pulled her inside to a foyer like theirs, though slightly different colors. It was much noisier than their room, though. Shrieks and laughter from several children reached her ears. How many kids did they have?

They walked into the living room and Anna was shocked to see so many kids in the room. They were loud and Anna was quickly overwhelmed. She squeezed Devin’s hand and trembled.

There was another shriek of “Uncle Devin!” and they all ran up to Devin and hugged him. Devin let go and she pressed herself against the wall behind her. This was a side of Devin she’d never seen. Or, hadn’t seen for a very long time. She supposed he was like this with her when she was younger. The thought brought tears to her eyes.

They all looked at Devin with big, innocent, happy eyes. It was clear they all adored him.

Anna had a chance to count now that they were somewhat still. One...two...three...oh, my! Five plus Denise. Six kids? And Kelsey was pregnant too. Very pregnant.

Anna looked over at Kelsey, who sat on the couch with a smile on her face as she watched her children. Anna’s throat tightened at the sight of Kelsey’s obvious joy in her children. That was something Anna would never get to experience. When Kelsey looked over at her, Anna quickly looked at the floor, willing the tears away.

A few minutes later, Tyler walked in with a guy about the same age as him and Anna. He was tall and thin, with blond hair the same color as Tom’s and blue eyes like Kelsey. This must be another son. Tommy? Was that his name?

That made seven kids total ranging in age from twenty to four. Wow! And another one on the way. Anna couldn’t imagine a life like that.

“Hi,” the blond guy said, walking up to her with Tyler at his side. “I’m Tommy. You must be Anna. Tyler said you were pretty,” he grinned and looked at Tyler. “That’s an understatement.”

Anna blushed. “Hello,” she said shyly.

“Is this your girlfriend, Ty?” Denise asked with a giggle, walking up to them.

“Uh, no,” Tyler stammered, looking at Anna. “She’s...uh...friend of my dad’s.”

Denise looked at Anna with avid curiosity. “How old are you?” she asked after a moment with accusation in her voice.

“Twenty,” Anna answered softly.

She looked around for Devin, who was sitting on the couch talking to Kelsey. He looked up when Anna located him and smiled. She gave him a desperate look and he motioned for her to join him.

“Excuse me,” she said and walked quickly over to Devin.

Devin patted the cushion next to him and Anna sat stiffly on the edge of the seat, clasped her hands in her lap and kept her face downcast. She could feel Kelsey watching her, but didn’t dare look up.

“I see Tyler and Tommy have arrived,” Tom said. “Shall we?” he stood and helped his wife to her feet.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

The younger children were remarkably well behaved in the elegant restaurant downstairs. Tom introduced Anna to the kids as Devin's "friend" and told Devin later that he didn't feel like having to explain what a mistress was to a six year old.

After dinner, Kelsey took the kids upstairs and Devin, Tom, Tyler, Tommy and Anna went back to Devin's suite. Kelsey had offered to let Anna come with her, but Devin said no. Kelsey didn't seem to like the answer, but Tom put his hand on her arm before she could say anything else.

Devin had Anna get drinks from the wet bar for the men, Tyler and Tommy included. He told them that as long as they stayed in the hotel they could drink, but if they wanted to go out they couldn't.

"Take off your dress, Anna," Devin said after she handed out the drinks.

Anna gave him a bewildered look. He raised his brow in warning when she didn't move immediately and she quickly reached for her zipper and tried to pull it down, but couldn't get it to work.

"I'll help you," Tommy said, jumping to his feet.

Anna lowered her arm and turned to allow Tommy to unzip her dress. His fingers strayed down her back where her dress opened, then back up to push her dress off her shoulders.

The dress dropped to the floor around her ankles and she stood nervously in her black lace bra, thong and garter belt while the men looked at her.

“Beautiful,” Tom said, standing and walking over to her.

He trailed his fingers along the edge of her bra then up her neck where he cupped the back of her head and leaned in to kiss her. His lips caressed hers gently, his tongue probing at them to open up to him. When her lips parted, his tongue thrust into her mouth, sampling her taste and moaning softly. His other hand slid around her back and down to her hips as she ran her hands up his arms to his shoulders. She could feel his lean, hard muscles flexing under his maroon dress shirt. He pressed her hips to him and she could feel his arousal against her belly.

His fingers slid under the strap of her thong and she moaned as he traced the lace around to the front and cupped her mound. His fingers rubbed at her clit and she moaned again, feeling the wetness in the fabric between her legs. When his fingers slipped under the lace and into her silken, wet folds, her knees buckled and she clung to his shoulders. He chuckled gently and led her back to the couch.

He sat down and had her stand between his thighs. She could see the bulge in his pants and she chewed her lower lip, wondering what he looked like.

“Take off your bra,” Tom commanded gently.

She looked into his ocean-blue eyes and reached behind her to unfasten her bra, pulling it off her shoulders and dropping it on the ground next to her. He smiled as he gazed at her breasts, then took a ring between his fingers and tugged gently.

“Why does she have two rings?” he asked, looking around her at Devin.

“Alex.”

Tom seemed to know what Devin meant and nodded. “Take off the rest of it, hon.”

Anna gave him a shy smile, and quickly removed her garter belt and rolled her stockings down. Then she pulled her panties down off her hips and kicked them aside.

Tom trailed his fingers down her belly to her swollen lips below, caressing them gently. She closed her eyes and moaned when he pushed his fingers inside her wet folds.

“God, she’s so fucking wet,” Tom commented.

“She’s well trained,” Devin chuckled. “And being half-Immortal helps there, too.”

Tom chuckled. “I’ve never had the privilege of being with an Elder-Mistress,” he said, gazing up at her while he stroked her, eliciting soft moans.

“You haven’t? They’ve been around.”

“I always seemed to miss them. It’s all right.” He smiled up to Anna. “I think it’s worth the wait.”

Anna could hardly think. His fingers were skilled and long. It was all she could do to keep her legs supporting her.

Tom removed his fingers and brought them to his mouth. “Mmm. Sweet,” he murmured, then put his hands on her hips to bring her pussy to his mouth. His tongue delved into the folds and she put her hands on his shoulders for support.

Anna gasped and sighed as Tom ate her enthusiastically. She heard the sound of a zipper, then Tom pulled her down and she impaled herself on his cock.

“Oh!” she said as he filled her with one movement. It hadn’t hurt, just surprised her.

She looked into Tom’s eyes as he began moving inside her. She moaned as his cock slid in and out of her. He was long and thick. Were all Elders so big? He moved her hips up and down.

“Come for me, sweetheart,” he groaned.

She cried out as she came and clung to his shoulders. She felt him throb inside her and squeezed around him to heighten his pleasure.

“Holy fuck,” Tom mumbled as he held Anna against him, still sitting on his softening cock.

He stroked her hair and back. Anna kissed his neck and nipped gently, which made him chuckle. Anna smiled to herself. She liked Tom.

He continued stroking her back as he talked with Devin. She wasn’t paying attention to their conversation until Tom asked about additional rings.

“Shouldn’t she have more rings on her pussy? I only saw one.”

Anna sat up suddenly and looked at Tom startled. “What did you say?”

Tom smiled at her. “I asked if you were supposed to have more pussy rings. You should have three from each Master. You only have the one nipple ring from Alex.”

Anna turned, frightened, to look at Devin. Where did her rings go?

“Baby, when I punished you last night,” he shrugged. “They came out. Mine did too. I just re-pierced you when you were sleeping.”

“Good God, man. What did you do to her?”

Devin frowned at him. “What needed to be done.”

Anna turned back around and stared at the wall. Alex’s rings were gone. She felt...empty and sad. She knew Devin had punished her severely, but hadn’t imagined he had done so much that her rings had come out.

Tom hugged her to him. She rested her head on his shoulder and stared at the ground behind the couch. Why did it bother her so much that Alex's rings were gone? She was angry with him. It would serve him right for abandoning her for her not to wear his rings anymore. But even as she told herself how much she hated him, she had to blink away the tears and deny the truth: she missed him terribly.

Several hours later, Anna knelt by Devin's feet. Her pussy was sore from use and her jaw was aching. She could hardly keep her eyes open and felt her upper body swaying with sleep. She had pleased each of the men orally and otherwise several times. Especially Tommy and Tyler. They were insatiable. Devin and Tom had laughed about young men and their sexual appetites. Anna was glad that most of Devin's acquaintances were not teenage boys.

At long last she realized that the group was saying goodbye at the front door. She hadn't even realized that they'd left the room. Devin walked back into the room and stood in front of Anna. She heard him chuckle, then scooped her up and carried her to the bedroom.

"You were such a good girl tonight, baby," he whispered as he lay her down on the bed. "Get some sleep. We'll go sightseeing tomorrow."

Anna gave Devin a small smile as she drifted off to sleep.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

She watched him as he sat in a large room that looked like a library. His hair was unkempt and he had several days' growth of beard on his face. He hunched over a desk with the largest book Anna had ever seen in front of him. Her heart leapt involuntarily when she saw him.

She was not happy about her reaction to the sight of him. He didn't seem to notice her at first, but looked up a moment later and saw her.

"Schatzi...", he said with a tender smile on his face. He looked down at the book and pushed it away from himself, further from Anna. "I miss you."

Anna shook her head. She didn't want to be captivated by him.

He chuckled. "It's good to see you, mein Liebe. Are you okay?"

Anna bit her lip. Should she tell him about the missing rings? Would he be angry?

"Anna?"

She looked at him, wide-eyed and took a step back. Devin would be angry if something had happened to his rings. She shook her head, felt something hard behind her give way and then she awoke.

When Anna opened her eyes again, she was lying in bed in the dark, staring up at the ceiling. Devin snored softly next to her. She didn't like the ache in her heart. She felt lonely.

Anna moved closer to Devin and snuggled close to him. He awoke and pulled her close. But it wasn't the same. As much as she wanted to deny it, she missed Alex. She closed her eyes and tried to think of anything but him.

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CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

The next thing Anna knew, the sun was peeking past the curtains of the hotel bedroom. She saw the light behind her eyelids. Her head and left hand were resting on Devin's chest. His breathing told her that he was still asleep, and she slid her hand down his chest and belly to his semi-hard cock.

She stroked him up and down slowly but firmly; the way he liked it. He moaned and flexed his hips against her hand.

"Baby..." he mumbled, and rolled over to lie on top of Anna, spreading her legs apart and pushing his cock into her body.

She gasped in pleasure as he moved inside her, thrusting in and out sensually. He kissed her neck and groaned as his movements quickened.

"Oh, Baby. You feel so good," he murmured against her neck. She wrapped her legs around his hips and matched his thrusts until they both came.

"Good morning," Devin said gently, propping himself up on his elbows above her.

Anna smiled. "Good morning, Devin," she said softly.

He nuzzled her cheek, then ear. "I could get used to waking with you in the mornings. I'm glad we have these days together."

"Me too," she said with a smile.

She liked it when Devin was happy. She wanted to make him happy. He loved her when she made him happy.

Devin rolled off her. “Why don’t you get ready while I order breakfast?” He looked up at the clock. “We’re supposed to meet Tom and his family in about an hour to go sightseeing together.”

An hour and a half later, the large group was downtown wandering around the National Mall. They were on the way to lunch when Anna’s phone rang. She looked nervously at Devin, who was holding her hand.

“Who is it?” he asked.

Anna pulled it out of her purse and looked at the screen. “It’s Kurt,” she said, surprised. She glanced up at Devin, who nodded.

“Go ahead and answer.” He let go of her hand and motioned that she could walk away from the group. Denise and Kelsey looked at her curiously.

Anna strayed behind the rest as they walked towards the place they were going to have lunch. “Hello?”

“Anna, *Engel*, how are you doing?”

“Hello, Kurt,” Anna smiled at the sound of his voice. “I’m good. I’m in Washington DC right now.”

“Are you really? Only eight hours away from me right now. Tempting to come see you.”

Anna giggled. “I don’t know how Devin would feel about that.”

“Hmm,” Kurt said. “You’re there with him?”

“Yes.”

“Are you with him now?”

Anna looked up. The others were walking into the Italian restaurant. Devin looked back at her and smiled, indicating with his hand that Anna should stay outside. “He’s just gone into the restaurant.”

“*Gut*. Alex wants to talk to you.”

“Alex?” Anna’s dream rushed back to her and she nervously awaited Alex’s voice. She didn’t have to wait but a few seconds.

“Anna, are you all right?” Alex asked, sounding anxious.

“Y-yes Alex. I’m fine. Are you?”

“*Ja, Schatzi.*”

There was a pause and Anna winced at his use of the pet name. Why did he call her that? He hated her.

“I saw you. Last night. You came to me.”

“I did?”

“*Ja, Schatzi.* I always see you.”

“You do?” Anna stared at the ground. Her dreams were...real? “Did you...see me that night...when I was sixteen?”

“*Ja, Anna.* And other times as well.”

Anna’s head whirred. All those times she’d seen him, he’d seen her too? Why hadn’t he told her? “Oh.”

“What’s wrong?”

“N-nothing. Is there something I can do for you, Alex?”

“Anna, I know you. I know your voice and your facial expressions. Something’s wrong. What happened?”

Anna fidgeted for a moment, but she knew she had to tell him. “My rings,” she said softly. “They’re...gone.”

Alex exclaimed loudly in German and Anna pulled the phone away from her ear slightly. “Did that bastard take them out?”

“Not on purpose...,” she said in a shaky voice.

Alex was quiet for a moment. She heard a low voice in the background. Wilhelm?

Alex sighed. “I’m sorry I shouted, Anna,” he said in a softer voice. “Please tell me what happened,” he urged gently.

It wasn't a command. She began telling him about the punishment that Devin had dealt out on Sunday night.

Alex listened in horror to Anna's sweet voice explaining what had happened on Sunday evening. His stomach churned. Picturing poor sweet Anna being beaten so hard brought tears to his eyes. He looked up at his father with horror in his eyes. Vati's eyes grew concerned as Alex's facial expressions changed.

When Anna finished speaking, Alex was silent. Devin's cruelty never ceased to amaze him. It was so far outside of anything Alex could even imagine. Beating such a sweet girl so badly for her behavior on Friday...he shuddered. He had been there. He had seen her. She was excited and then heartbroken and had acted accordingly. It wasn't intentional disobedience. She was just a normal girl. But that's not what Devin wanted from her.

He was now more determined than ever to find a way to defeat him. He felt he was making good progress, but not quickly enough for Anna's sake.

"Anna, are you okay?" he asked, fearing Devin had permanently hurt her.

"I'm fine. Devin said something about Immortals healing me. I passed out."

"The Immortals healed you?" Alex asked, surprised. He glanced at his father who frowned. It wasn't unheard of for Immortals to heal. Sebastian had healed Anna when Alex had...he didn't want to think about that night.

"Is that a bad thing?" Anna asked softly.

"No, Schatzi. I'm glad you're okay."

"I don't think I would have been able to travel if they hadn't."

"Did you see them?"

"Who?"

“The Immortals.”

“No. I didn’t wake up until Monday morning. I don’t know when Devin...finished with me. There aren’t windows in the dungeon.”

Alex sighed. “I’m so sorry he did that to you, Anna. I...I wish I could have stopped him.”

Anna was quiet for a minute.

“Anna, are you still there?”

“Yes.” She paused. “Are you angry with me?”

“Why would I be angry with you?”

“Because of the...rings. Because they’re gone.”

“No, Anna, It’s not your fault.” He spoke in the gentlest voice he could. “There’s nothing to be angry about.” *At least not at you.*

He heard Anna say something away from the phone. “I...I have to go. Devin is calling me.”

“Anna, I’m going to give you a command to protect you, all right? I don’t want you to get in trouble for talking to me.”

“Why would I—”

“Anna, you are not to tell Devin about your dream last night or speaking with me today,” he commanded. “You are to tell him that you had a pleasant conversation with Kurt and he told you that he would be out to see you opening night of the Nutcracker.” He paused. “Do you understand?”

“Yes, Alex.”

He couldn’t read her tone, but hoped she wasn’t hurt.

“Are you coming to Nutcracker?”

“I don’t know yet,” he answered truthfully. Being near her and not being able to be with her was torture. Not to mention seeing her with his brother. He didn’t know if he could do it.

“Okay,” she said without emotion. “I must go to Devin.”

“All right, Schatzi,” he said in a pained voice. “Call me if you need anything.”

“Yes, Alex.”

“I’ll talk to you later, Schatzi.”

“Good bye.” She ended the call.

Alex handed the phone back to his brother and collapsed in the easy chair nearby.

“Is she all right?” Kurt asked in German. “Did that bastard hurt her?”

“Yes. She was *disobedient*.” Alex snarled the last word. “So he punished her. Brutally. So badly she passed out. Twice.” He told Kurt and his father what Devin had done. “Can’t you do something, Vati?”

Wilhelm shook his head sadly. “No, Alex. I have no authority to do anything. She’s his slave.”

“She’s mine too!” Alex exclaimed, running his hands through his hair. He stared out the window of his father’s study. “I can’t stand the thought of her being with him, Vati. It drives me crazy.”

“I know, Alex. And that’s why you’re here. To learn what you can do.”

Alex stood suddenly and walked towards the door.

“Where are you going?” Kurt asked.

“To study.” Alex stalked out of the room and towards the library. He was determined to find out what he needed to find out as quickly as possible.

Anna put the phone back into her purse and walked to the restaurant door where Devin waited. She was thankful for Alex’s command. She didn’t want to tell Devin that Kurt had only called so Alex could check on her.

“Everything all right?” Devin asked, moving aside so that she could enter.

Anna smiled. “Kurt is going to come to opening night of Nutcracker.”

Devin smiled “Good. I know he enjoyed seeing you last week.”

Anna nodded. “I enjoyed seeing him too.”

Devin put his hand on her back and led her to a large table at the side of the room where they were sitting. She sat next to Devin and Tyler.

“Everything all right, dear?” Kelsey asked, smiling at Anna warmly.

Anna nodded. “Just a...friend calling to say hi.”

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CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

After lunch, Devin and Anna went to the Capitol; they had passes to sit in on a Senate session. They sat in the front row of a balcony on the side of the room and when they entered, more than a few Senators looked up at them. Some looked startled. Others looked pleased. Several made eye contact with Anna and smiled.

“Devin...?” Anna said, looking around, a bit frightened.

“They know us, Baby,” Devin whispered in her ear. “We’re the ones who put them here.”

“Oh,” she said, biting her lip.

A balding, gray-haired man with glasses sitting behind a big desk at the front of the room looked up at them and politely nodded. He made eye contact with Anna and smiled, then turned his attention back to the proceedings of the Senate.

“Do you know who that is, Anna?” Devin asked quietly.

Anna shook her head.

“That’s the Vice President of the United States.”

They stayed in the room for about a half hour, then left and went to the House of Representatives. This room was much larger with many more people down below. Again they were noticed when they sat down with much the same reaction, though the woman sitting behind the big desk at the front of the room looked startled when she saw Devin.

After another half hour, they left the chambers and headed to another building down the street a bit. The hallways were crowded and loud. Anna clung to Devin's hand as they went to the third floor and Devin opened the door.

A young man sat behind a large wooden desk looked up with a haughty expression. "Can I help you?"

"We're here to see the Senator," Devin said in a cold tone.

"Do you have an appointment?" the young man asked in the same manner, bordering on rudeness.

Devin frowned and looked down at him with narrowed eyes. "I am Devin Andersen. I don't need an appointment."

The young man's eyes widened. "I...I apologize, sir," he stammered. "The Senator is not back yet."

Devin growled. "Then call him and let him know I'm here." He turned on his heel and went to sit down in a leather chair against the wall. Devin looked at Anna and spoke softly. "Go find the bathroom and take your panties off."

Anna bit her lip and turned back to the man at the desk to ask where the bathrooms were. After being given instructions, Anna left the office, returning a few minutes later with her panties in her purse. She wore a khaki skirt and the cool air flitting up her skirt was somewhat arousing.

When she walked into the office, Devin was not in the room. "Where's...?"

The young man behind the desk pointed to the door next to him. "They're in there. You can go in."

Anna glanced at the door, then walked over and opened it, revealing a large, sunlit office with a huge desk covered in papers.

"Ah, Anna," Devin said from the other side of the room.

She turned to see Devin and a tall, thin man with dark skin and hair sitting in a comfortable looking seating area. Anna quickly walked over to Devin.

“Anna, this is Senator Weir,” Devin introduced. “Jerry, this is Anna.”

“Hello, Anna,” the Senator said with a smile that made Anna uncomfortable.

“Hello, Senator,” Anna said quietly.

Anna shifted from one foot to the other as the Senator studied her. He looked at her as if he were appraising her.

“Can I touch?” he asked Devin with a grin.

“A sample? Of course.”

The Senator grabbed her hand roughly and pulled her to him. He pushed her legs apart and slid his hand up her inner thigh to her pussy where he unceremoniously thrust his fingers inside her.

“Oh!” she cried at the unexpected intrusion. He was rough and it made her eyes water. She bit her lip to keep from crying out again as he thrust his fingers in and out of her.

“Wet and tight. Nice.” The senator commented. He removed his fingers and pulled her down to her knees. “Suck my cock,” he said in a harsh voice.

Anna moved in front of him and shakily undid his pants and took his cock into her mouth. He groaned and leaned back with his hand on her head, pushing his cock down her throat repeatedly.

She heard the men talking, but couldn't hear what they were saying; the senator's hands were over her ears. She did decipher the words President and election. A few minutes later the senator's thighs tightened and he groaned as he came in her mouth.

“Will she work?” Devin asked as the senator pulled her hair to remove her head from his lap.

The senator studied her face. “Yes, I believe she will.”

“Good,” Devin stood. “I’ll drop her off at eight. Come Anna.”

Anna stood and followed Devin out of the office and out into the hallway.

“I’m going to see him tonight?” she asked nervously.

“Yes. He’s going to be the next president. I want to establish authority over him before the weekend.”

“Establish authority?”

“Yes. You do as he asks tonight and in the future he will do anything to be with you again.” Devin stopped in front of another office. “We have several stops to make this afternoon.”

Alarmed, Anna looked at him, but didn’t speak.

Devin faced her and put his hands on her shoulders. “Anna, I need their support. You will help me get that support. Do your best and I will be happy. They will all be at the Gathering this weekend. You will be the most popular girl there.” Devin kissed her forehead. “Make me proud, Baby.”

Anna and Devin visited various senators the rest of the afternoon. They had dinner and then returned to the hotel to let Anna rest before she had to see the future president.

When it was time to leave to see the senator, Devin called for a car and they drove to a nearby apartment building. Devin told the driver to wait, and then led Anna inside to an apartment on the fourth floor. The door opened after he knocked and the senator answered with a big, almost nasty, smile on his face.

“I’ll pick her up in the morning,” Devin said, pushing Anna inside. She looked nervously back at him, but he gave her a stern look and turned and walked away.

“Come on in, sweetheart.”

Anna walked into the apartment. It had a large living area, pleasantly furnished. The senator led her through a doorway and told her to take off her clothes. After she complied, he came up behind her and put his hands on her shoulders. “Devin said you have a high pain tolerance.”

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CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

Anna's eyes widened, but she didn't say anything. Why would Devin tell him something like that? She closed her eyes, wishing she could run away. This would be a long and painful night.

He pushed her towards the bed and told her to lie down. He removed cuffs from a dresser drawer and cuffed her hands above her head. Then he turned back to the dresser and pulled more items out of the drawer.

"I don't restrain the legs because I like to see you thrashing about on the bed. You move, you're likely to hurt yourself, which I like."

He turned back to Anna, holding a black plastic box, about six inches long with a u-shaped indentation in the top.

Stun gun! Oh please no!

He smiled. "This has been modified so I can control the voltage." He looked down at her pussy. "Have you ever been fucked with one of these?"

Anna couldn't control her terror and started shaking. "No, sir," she said, voice trembling.

He smiled. "You're in for a treat, then."

He sat next to her and started trailing the plastic down her neck. She pulled away in fear and he smiled. "Are you afraid?"

"Yes, Senator," she whispered.

"Good. You should be."

Her eyes widened and she struggled to get enough breath in her lungs for the terror of what the night would bring.

He reached the base of her neck and she felt a million needles shoot into her neck. She screamed in pain and her body convulsed.

“Did that hurt, sweetie?”

She panted for breath and tears filled her eyes. “Yes,” she whispered.

He smiled. He trailed the gun down to her breasts, running it around her breasts and up across her nipples. She trembled with terror. He leaned forward and sucked on her nipple, running the gun around the other breast. It pressed into either side of the peak and the pain of a million needles shot into her breast. Her back arched and she screamed.

He chuckled and leaned over to the hurting nub, taking it into his mouth. He bit and she screamed out again and thrashed her legs.

“Please, sir. Please don’t use that on me. It hurts so badly!” she begged.

But he just chuckled and continued to suck.

Anna hurt everywhere. She had passed out at some point and had embraced the painless blackness. But the blackness had given her up and she had returned to the land of the living. She tried to move her arms, but she couldn’t. They were tied together above her head. She opened her eyes slightly to a dimly lit room.

Her breasts felt like they were on fire as did her pussy. But her nipples felt heavy and numb. She felt pinching at her pussy. She moved her feet, finding them unrestrained.

“You’re back. Good.”

A deep voice came from her side and her eyes snapped open.

It was the senator. He grinned with malevolence and reached to her belly and pulled at something. Chains. They were attached to her nipples and further below. He jerked the chain and she whimpered as it pinched her clit.

“I put these on you after you passed out. Several hours ago.”

She looked up at him, tears in her eyes. Oh! It would be unbelievably painful when he pulled them off.

“Your clit has been lacking blood for several hours.” He slid his fingers down and into her pussy, flicking the clamp at the same time.

She squealed at the pain

He flipped her over to her stomach, pushing her nipples into the mattress. He pressed down on her ass, mashing the clamp into her clit. She whimpered as he thrust his fingers in and out of her pussy while pressing her into the mattress.

He removed his fingers and Anna sighed in relief, hoping against hope that maybe he was done with her. But the mattress moved again and the senator lay down on top of her and pushed his cock inside her. He grunted as he fucked her with his heavy body pressing her into the bed where the clamps rubbed against the sheets. His breathing grew shallow and he reached down under her hips and yanked the clit clamp off.

She screamed in agony, body writhing beneath him. He yanked again and the nipple clamps tore off, ripping another scream from her throat. He fucked her hard as she sobbed in pain. He shouted out as he came and then rolled off her.

A moment later, she heard a familiar crackling sound. *Stun gun*. She whimpered.

He chuckled and spread her ass cheeks apart. “This should help you sleep.”

She felt the plastic on her asshole, points digging into the sides. Nothing happened for a moment, and then...

It felt like he punched his fist directly into her ass without lube and straight up into her stomach. She arched herself off the bed and screamed as

her body convulsed. He held it there for an eternity until the blackness consumed her once more.

Anna awoke to the sound of men's voices. She was lying on her stomach and her body still hurt.

"No permanent damage, I assure you."

"I appreciate that, Jerry. I'd hate to have to kill you for hurting her permanently."

She heard strained laughter, then silence. "Of course, Devin."

"Is she awake?"

"I don't know. I, uh, knocked her out pretty good last night."

Devin sighed. "I have things to do today, you know."

She heard footsteps get approach and she opened her eyes to see Devin standing next her. "Anna? Are you awake?"

Anna grunted and turned onto her side.

"Hey, Baby. How are you feeling?"

Anna managed a small smile at Devin's gentle tone. "Hurt," she whispered.

Devin turned her onto her back and helped her sit up. "Get me some water for her, Jerry."

The senator hurried out of the room. Devin stroked her hair. "I'll get you back to the hotel room and you can take a nice bath. How does that sound?"

Anna smiled wearily. "Good."

The senator returned with a glass of water, which Devin handed to her. Anna drank it thankfully, then dressed slowly so Devin could take her back to the hotel.

“He’s quite taken with you, Anna,” Devin said as he opened the door to their suite. “You did a good job.”

“Thank you, Devin,” she said quietly. She was looking forward to her bath.

Devin led her to the bedroom. “I’ll go get Maggie. She has some bath treatments that will help you feel better. We have some things to do this afternoon, so I hope you feel better quickly.”

“I’ll do my best, Devin.”

Two hours later Anna felt much better. The bath salts that Maggie had put in the water had done wonders for her aching body. She had dressed and eaten breakfast and was on the way to the Representatives Office Building with Devin.

She spent the afternoon much as she had the previous day, though there were more women. Devin had a special camaraderie with the Speaker of the House who was also the Representative from San Francisco. Anna personally didn’t like her very much, but did as she was told to do. She didn’t want to be punished.

That evening Tom, Tyler and Tommy came to their hotel suite and Anna spent the evening tending to their sexual needs. She slept hard that night and was somewhat disappointed she didn’t have a dream about Alex.

But of course, she didn’t want to dream about him.

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

Thursday during the day, Devin took Anna sightseeing, along with Tom, Tommy and Tyler. Anna desperately wanted to go to the Library of Congress and asked Devin if they could, but he said it would be boring. Anna didn't ask anything else the rest of the day.

Everywhere they went, Devin or Tom seemed to know somebody. Anna was introduced and leered at. A few times she was led to a private area and fucked or she gave a blowjob.

That evening, Devin told her, they were to have a dinner party. A private meeting of the Elders.

She spent the afternoon with Maggie getting ready. Much of the preparation was how she was prepared for Gatherings, though she wore a dinner dress instead of a sheer gown.

The floor length white silk dress had a deep 'V' neckline that dipped well below her breasts. It was sleeveless with beaded straps and a beaded belt around her waist. She wore no shoes and no panties. But at least it wasn't see through.

Anna waited in the bedroom until Devin came and got her. When he did, he led her out into the living room where six men stood around talking. She could feel their power as she entered the room and looked around at them, bewildered. These were the men that ran the country, Devin had said.

They all turned when she walked in. It was all she could do to stand there and not shake. Devin had told her that tonight was very important to

him. What would happen?

Devin introduced her to the other men, then told her their names: Marcus Reece from Chicago, Connor Diaz from Philadelphia, Javier Hollingsworth from Houston, Oscar Silverman from Boston, and Brandon Seay from LA. Tom she already knew was from New York.

Each man nodded his head slightly as Devin said their names. Brandon gave her a big smile. Anna remembered that he was Travis' father.

"Anna," Brandon said, walking up and kissing her cheek. "It is truly a delight to meet you. I've heard so much about you from Travis."

Anna smiled. "It's wonderful to meet you too, my lord. Travis has spoken very highly of you."

Brandon chuckled. "He's a good young man. He said that he would be dancing with you for Nutcracker. Did you know?"

Anna nodded. "Isaak told me before I left. I'm looking forward to it."

"Travis is as well." Brandon glanced behind her where Devin stood across the room talking with Marcus and Tom. "Anna, if you ever need anything...." He trailed off and shrugged his shoulders. "Tell Travis and he'll get in touch."

"Thank you. That's very kind."

"I know Alex. And Wilhelm. Good men."

"Yes," Anna responded vaguely. "I adore Wilhelm."

"And Alex?" Brandon smiled knowingly.

"He is my Master," Anna said, softly, not wanting to think about Alex.

Brandon looked at her curiously, then smiled again. "I'm looking forward to seeing you dance," he said, changing the subject.

Anna smiled brightly and they talked for a few minutes about dancing. He was knowledgeable about the subject and obviously very proud of Travis for what he had accomplished.

Dinner was served a few minutes later. Devin sat at one end of the table with Anna at his right hand. It was clear that the men respected Devin immensely and sought his opinion on various issues. Devin in turn asked each elder about something specific.

The main subject matter of the dinner seemed to revolve around the willingness of people to do as the Elders asked.

“You know, it would be much easier to deal with these types of issues if we went back to the old ways,” Devin said slowly over dessert. He seemed nonchalant about it, but Anna could see a glint of something in his eyes.

Oscar chuckled. “Yes, but there’s no way that the other countries would let us.”

“Why do we care what the other countries think?” Devin asked. “We’re Americans. We can do as we please.”

“But we’re supposed to be working together,” Brandon interjected. “The old ways were outlawed years ago.”

“Outlawed.” Devin snorted. “America wasn’t even a country then. How do we know they won’t work here?”

“It’s not that they didn’t work...,” Javier said slowly. “Isn’t it better to work with the Immortals than against them?”

“What if the Immortals were willing to help us go back to the old ways?”

A silence fell over the room.

“What do you mean?” Connor asked after a long pause.

Devin leaned back in his chair and tapped his fingers on the table. “I mean, what if the Immortals preferred the old ways?”

The men laughed. “They don’t,” Brandon said. “That’s why we abandoned them.”

“Maybe not elsewhere, but here, they might,” Devin said with a small smile. “I’ve spoken to them about it.”

There were gasps around the table.

“You can’t be serious. Why would they want to take second seat to us?” Brandon protested.

Devin raised his eyebrows. “Maybe they’re tired of the responsibility. Or maybe they realize that we should be in charge of our own country.”

“I understood it to be a partnership.” Brandon frowned.

“It will always be a partnership. But we would be the stronger partner.” Devin waved his hand. “All this *equality* of power is really ridiculous, if you think about it. There is always someone stronger in a partnership. And I think it should be us, rather than the Immortals. After all, they don’t deal with the day to day aspects of running the country.”

There were murmurs of ascent around the table.

Devin smiled and suggested they adjourn to the more comfortable seating area across the room. The men settled in and Anna went to sit by Devin’s feet, but he stopped her.

“Shall we have some beauty to look at as we talk?” Devin asked, unzipping Anna’s dress and letting it drop to the floor.

Anna stared at the coffee table as she felt the men staring at her.

“You’re a lucky man, Devin,” one commented. Anna thought it was Marcus.

Devin chuckled and pulled her down into his lap to nuzzle her ear. “I am at that,” he said in a low, seductive voice that resonated through Anna’s body. He sat her with her back leaning against his front with her legs on either side of his. He rubbed her inner thighs with his fingertips and she closed her eyes and sighed.

“Where did you get her?” Oscar asked.

“I claimed her at birth. Using the old ways.” Devin’s fingers strayed across her swelling outer lips.

“Old ways?” Connor asked. “You mean she really is a half-Immortal?”

“You don't think I'd dare claim to have an Elder-Mistress if I didn't, would you?”

“There were rumors that you had one...I must say I didn't believe it,” Oscar said, looking at Anna closely. “How do we know she really is one?”

“Why would I lie?”

Oscar laughed. “Come on, Devin. I'm not an idiot. If you're really suggesting that we go back to the old ways, by claiming she's a Mistress you're claiming the head council position.”

“Would that be such a bad thing?” Devin asked, caressing Anna's breasts and nibbling her ear.

Both Brandon and Oscar stared at him with concerned eyes.

“We are all equally fit for the position, Devin,” Oscar said.

“True. But I have her and you don't.”

“She should belong to all of us,” Oscar said in a low voice.

“She will,” Devin said. “In a way.” Devin narrowed his eyes. “Would you be willing to do what it takes to take the position, though?”

Oscar looked flustered. “You're serious about this.” It was more a statement than a question.

“I've never been more serious about anything in my life.”

“Devin,” Brandon said. “Don't you think we should talk about this more? Using the old ways is...well, I don't know if it's a good idea.”

“The old ways will ensure our power remains strong and unquestioned,” Devin said. “The politicians in this country are growing arrogant and forget about us. That is dangerous. I spoke to several over the last few days. Their attitudes are truly disturbing. If we don't do something

drastic, we are in danger of losing our influence over them. That would be bad for us and bad for the country. A Council is a much more effective way of governing than a *Brotherhood*.”

Several of the men nodded their heads.

Brandon frowned. “I think there are other ways.”

Devin had suspected that Brandon would be a dissenter. Oscar protested, but only because he wanted the position himself. Brandon just didn't like the idea. Well, he could be persuaded.

Devin looked at Brandon, then ran his hands over Anna's body and whispered ancient words into her ear. Her eyes glazed over for a moment, then she looked intently at Brandon with a seductive smile.

“Go to him,” he whispered in her ear.

He watched Anna's hips sway as she walked around the table and straddled Brandon's lap. He saw her whisper in his ear, then work her seductive magic on him.

Devin glanced at Tom and Marcus with a smile. They were his biggest supporters. Javier frowned, and Devin realized he might need some persuading as well. Connor might fight him for the position as well, but Devin doubted either Connor or Oscar would be willing to do what was needed to prove themselves worthy of the position. They wanted power, but Devin doubted they'd be willing to kill to get it.

He watched as Anna worked on Brandon. Devin could see Brandon's self-will failing him. The persuasion would wear off in a few days, but by then it would be too late.

Yes. Devin saw Brandon submit to her touch. Brandon was his.

Devin closed his eyes and communicated to Anna to go to Javier. The bonding ceremony had ensured his ability to connect their minds. Since

Alex was nowhere around the bond was stronger than ever. It was almost as if the Alex problem had never happened and Devin was content to pretend it hadn't. Especially since Devin had managed to get rid of Alex's rings "accidentally," Devin's influence over her had grown.

The other men chatted softly while Anna worked on Javier. In no time, Devin could see Javier turned. Devin smiled satisfactorily as Anna returned to his lap and cuddled close.

Javier and Brandon looked a little dazed and watched Anna's every movement. Devin chuckled at their desire.

"So, do we agree that a return to the old ways is necessary and good?" Devin asked.

All the men nodded.

"But then the question is, who shall lead the Council?" Connor asked.

"I think Devin should lead," Tom said with a wink at his friend. "He has the Mistress."

"Technically, she belongs to all of us," Oscar said in a scathing voice.

"Do you want to be the Chairman, Oscar?" Devin asked.

"I'd at least like to be considered," he answered sullenly.

"That's reasonable," Devin conceded. He had no doubt that he would be made Chairman, but it would at least give a good show to consider the others. "As Oscar said, we're all fit for the position, otherwise we wouldn't be Elders."

"Then how do we decide?" Oscar asked.

"We believe we might be able to help," said a deep voice behind him.

Devin smiled as the other men jumped. Kaveh and Val, the Immortals, suddenly appeared in the room. Devin stood to greet them, pushing Anna off his lap.

Anna stared at the two men in awe. They didn't look like her father or Sebastian. They were tall and muscular with light brown skin, glowing golden eyes and long black hair pulled back in a tail. They wore white tunics and linen pants with golden belts around their waists. A glow emanated from them and she could feel their power.

The men greeted them with reverence and respect. Anna couldn't move. She'd never seen anything like them. They frightened her.

One of them looked at her. "Hello, Daughter," he said with a sensuous smile. He walked over to her. "I am Kaveh." He stroked her cheek and she trembled under his touch.

Anna's mouth moved, but no sound came out.

"What a pretty thing you've grown into," he said moving closer. "Your father would be proud."

He leaned down and crushed his lips against hers. It was not a gentle, giving kiss; it was harsh and taking. His tongue invaded her mouth and she struggled for breath.

She clung to his muscular arms for support. He roughly caressed her breasts and she moaned against his lips. When he pulled away suddenly her lips felt bruised. He turned her to face the men with his arm across her shoulders and pressed her back against his body.

"We understand you want to go back to the old ways, Elders," Kaveh said in his deep voice. Anna could feel his chest vibrate. "We are hoping we can find a compromise. We detest the idea of giving up all our power."

Devin's eyes narrowed. "Compromise?" He looked suspicious.

"Yes. We grant you the powers you desire, but we reserve certain powers that we have gained over the centuries." Kaveh's hand strayed down to Anna's breast. "We are loathe to give up entire possession of this beautiful creature."

“We will continue to block the eyes of the other Immortals so you can rule your country as you wish,” Val said, coming to stand next to Kaveh and Anna. “We simply wish to be partners with the Chairman.”

“There are aspects of this country which are quite pleasing to us and we would hate to see things change,” Kaveh explained.

Devin frowned. “The old ways do not include a partnership. We do as we wish.”

“We will give you what you want. We will not interfere in most aspects. It would be...wise to include our perspective when making decisions. We have not steered you wrong before.”

Devin lifted his chin and studied the Immortals. He appeared to consider their words. “That is true.” He turned to the other men. “Do we agree?”

They nodded. Brandon and Javier were still dazed.

“We agree,” Devin said.

“Good,” Kaveh said. “Then who is your Chairman?”

“We were just discussing that when you arrived,” Oscar said.

“Perhaps we can help,” Kaveh said. His hand kneaded Anna’s breast as he spoke. “An Elder must show he is willing to do what must be done by his piercings. A Chairman must go further.” His gaze intensified. “How far are you willing to go to prove you will do what it takes?”

“As far as I must,” Oscar said arrogantly. Connor nodded in agreement.

Kaveh smiled. “Show us. Kill the Mistress.”

Anna gasped and looked fearfully at Devin. He calmly looked back at her. She wanted to struggle out of the Immortal’s grip, but knew it would be fruitless.

Both Oscar and Connor’s eyes widened. “K-Kill her? But she is the source of the Chairman’s power.”

“You must be willing to do what it takes,” Val said. “Whatever it takes. A Chairman is not a mere Elder. He must go further. He must seize the power offered and be willing to sacrifice anything to hold on to it.”

Anna’s eyes widened in terror. They were going to kill her.

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CHAPTER SEVENTY

Devin watched the internal struggle of both Oscar and Connor. They had their moments, but they were not ruthless like Devin. Devin would do whatever it took. The last two and a half decades had proven that. Kaveh and Val knew that, but were playing the game so that Devin would not be contested.

Kaveh took hold of Anna's hair and brought her to her knees. She looked at Devin with terror-filled eyes.

"Rape and kill the Mistress," Kaveh said in a low voice. "Take possession of her. Make her bleed. Then you must kill her."

Anna trembled.

Devin saw her looking around for an escape and smiled to himself. It would be quite dramatic to see her try and run away. His cock twitched at the thought of chasing her down. He enjoyed a good hunt.

Connor shook his head, refusing to play. Oscar stared at him, then got a determined look on his face and approached Anna's trembling form.

She stared up at him with frightened green eyes.

Oscar grabbed her hair and yanked her to her feet. She cried out as he pushed her back onto the stone coffee table. Her head hit the hard surface and Devin saw confusion cloud her gaze. Oscar slapped her face and she jumped, snapped out of her daze.

Oscar yanked on her nipples and she cried out as he lifted her to almost sitting before letting go, her body slamming again onto the table. She

groaned and held her head. He pushed open her legs and slapped her pussy hard. She jumped and cried out again. His eyes glinted with lust as he pulled at her pussy lips, pulling her body down to the edge of the table and spreading her legs even wider.

He pinched her clit hard and she groaned. Tears streamed down her cheeks as he pressed his face against her pussy, taking her clit in between his teeth.

“No!” she screamed as he increased the pressure on her clit. He sucked on it for a moment, then bit it again, causing her to first moan then scream in pain. Anna’s screams increased in pitch as Oscar’s teeth came together, and then he pulled away. She began bleeding profusely.

Devin had to admit he was impressed with the man. Maybe he was as ruthless as Devin.

Anna sobbed and tried to wiggle free, but Oscar held her thighs firmly as blood trickled down her pussy onto the floor below. He unfastened his pants and his cock sprang free, then he rammed it into her abused pussy with one hard thrust.

She screamed and tried to squirm away again, but Oscar held on tight. He rammed his cock into her over and over again, eyes full of lust as he watched her face screwed up in pain. Finally, he cried out, then slowed his thrusts, panting hard.

Anna’s face was pink and wet with tears. Oscar leaned forward and put his hands around her throat. She gazed at him in terror, her wet eyes pleading for mercy, and Oscar hesitated. Her self-preservation mode had kicked in and she used all of her female power to stop his hand.

They stared at each other for a long minute. Oscar’s hands trembled, then moved away.

He slumped back onto his heels and bowed his head. "I can't. I can't kill her." He rose back onto his knees and stroked her cheek. "I'm sorry," he whispered, then stood and looked at the Immortals and shook his head. "I can't do it," he said in a broken voice. He went back to where he had been sitting and slumped down, covering his face with the crook of his arm.

Devin looked around. They all were staring at Anna's sobbing form on the coffee table in front of them. She had curled into a ball and was hugging her knees to her chest. No one moved. He glanced at the Immortals standing stony-faced a few feet away. Kaveh raised his brow slightly, then nodded to Anna.

Devin stood and went to stand in front of Anna. "Who do you belong to, Anna?"

"Y-you, Master," she whispered.

Devin yanked her down to the edge of the table and pulled her legs apart. She whimpered as he undid his pants, but was clearly too hurt to run or fight. He would have to elicit the pain in his own way. He pushed her legs up to her chest and positioned his cock at her ass. One strong thrust was all it took to ram himself through the tight ring and deep into her ass.

She screamed and arched her back as his entry, but he didn't wait for her body to accept him. He thrust repeatedly, stretching her forcefully to adjust to his presence. After she was sufficiently open to him, he pulled out and moved to her pussy.

He moved back and forth between her pussy and ass. When she stopped reacting, he paused for a moment, concentrating inside her and brought his spikes out. She screamed again and Devin smiled. Several thrusts in each hole with the spikes would ensure plenty of blood flow from her body. Blood was necessary to fulfill the requirements of becoming Chairman.

When he felt ready to climax, he pulled out of her and dragged her by her hair onto her knees. She looked up at him, giving him the same look she'd given Oscar. But he could withstand it. He stared back.

“Open,” he commanded.

She opened her lips and accepted his bloody cock into her mouth. He grabbed hold of her hair in two sections to ensure she couldn't escape, then slowly began to fuck her mouth.

Down her throat several times, she began to choke and struggle against him. He was too large to allow any airflow when he was in her throat. She pushed back with her hands, but his grip held her head steady and he ignored the grunts and held her head in place.

“Oh, yeah. Fuck yeah,” he moaned as he fucked her throat.

There was only a short moment between each thrust. Not enough to get enough air. Her face was red and beginning to darken more as her need for oxygen increased. She continued to try and push away, but was unable to beat his strength.

Her eyes rolled back into her head, her struggle lessened and he knew she was close. He brought forth his spikes and gave several more thrusts down her throat, ensuring the tissues were shredded. By the time he came, her body was limp and blood trickled out the side of her limp lips.

He released her and her body slumped to the ground.

There were several exclamations as the men stood to look at her unmoving body. Blood trickled from her mouth and between her legs. Marcus came forward to check her pulse and shook his head.

“She's dead,” he said in a low voice. He glanced at Devin, who looked at him impassively.

Devin walked to the bathroom to clean himself up. When he returned the men were quiet and staring at Anna's battered body. He calmly sat down

and glanced up at the Immortals talking quietly to one another.

The Immortals turned back to the Elders. “Devin has shown himself willing to do what it takes. Do you accept him as your Chairman?”

“Yes,” the Elders replied.

Devin smiled to himself.

“Then we will install him tomorrow night at the Gathering,” Kaveh said solemnly. They turned to leave.

“Immortals, I would ask that you restore life to my Mistress,” Devin said in a firm voice, standing with his chin high and eyes narrowed. He would show his power over the Immortals. This was their plan. Devin was shown to have power over them in exchange for a few favors for the Immortals.

“You killed her willingly,” Val said, turning back to him. “It cannot be undone.”

Devin’s eyes narrowed further. “I am nothing without her. Restore her life,” he demanded with a clenched jaw.

Kaveh frowned. “Elders do not give orders to Immortals.”

“I am the Chairman, not a mere Elder. Chairmen may give orders to the Immortals and they must obey.” He heard murmurs of assent behind him. “Restore her.”

Kaveh narrowed his eyes, then knelt beside Anna’s body. He picked her up and carried her into the bedroom.

Air rushed into Anna’s lungs suddenly, making her throat burn. She grabbed her throat. What happened? She sat up, coughing. She was in the hotel bedroom.

Her body hurt. Her throat...she opened her eyes and looked up into the hard, golden eyes of the Immortal...what was his name? Kaveh? She

blinked several times and tried to speak, but her throat was on fire.

“Hush now,” he said in a low voice. “Let me heal you.” He pushed her down on the bed, then trailed his hands down her body. A strange pulling sensation filled her and her body began to heal.

Anna tried hard to remember what had happened, but the memories were vague. She remembered Oscar hurting her. Yes, he bit her hard. Then Devin. Devin had...Devin had fucked her throat hard. So hard and fast she couldn't breathe. The Immortals had said whoever wanted to be Chairman would have to kill her. Had Devin killed her? But she was alive.

Why did Devin keep hurting her? She tried so hard to be obedient. To be a good Mistress and slave. But nothing was ever good enough for long.

Tears stung her eyes and she closed them so that Kaveh wouldn't see. She had a feeling he wouldn't be very sympathetic.

After about twenty minutes, Kaveh straightened. “How do you feel?”

“Much better, thank you,” she said quietly.

“The Chairman wishes you to clean up and then join him in the other room.”

“Yes, Kaveh.” Anna sat up and rubbed her arms against the cool air in her room. She stood, then turned to ask Kaveh a question, but he was gone. *Strange.*

Anna went into the bathroom and took a shower. She stayed as long as she dared, then wrapped a robe around herself and went out to the living room.

She stopped in her tracks just a few steps inside. The Elders were dispersed throughout the room, each with at least one woman. Devin had two at his feet, both attending to his rigid cock.

Anna stood and looked at Devin. He had hurt her then gotten rid of her so he could have someone else? She blinked away tears and waited for him

to notice her so she would know what to do.

She was tired and wanted to go to sleep. It was early, but obviously Devin didn't need her tonight. Would he kick her out of the bed and make her sleep somewhere else? She almost wished he would.

Logic told her that Devin had indeed killed her and she had somehow been brought back to life. She could tell by his words and actions earlier that he clearly wanted to be the Chairman, whatever that meant. In order to gain that position, he would have had to kill her. She knew he had raped her. Or at least had very painful sex with her, which most people, she guessed, would consider rape. For her, it was the norm. There was sex that didn't hurt so bad and sex that hurt.

Except with Alex. And Aaron and Kurt. Anna closed her eyes at the sudden loneliness that encircled her heart. She wanted to go home. She felt weary. What else would happen this weekend? The Gathering hadn't even started and she was already tired.

She sighed and hugged her arms around herself.

"Anna."

Anna opened her eyes to see Devin watching her. The girls were sitting at his feet. Anna narrowed her eyes at them. That was her position. Her place by Devin. She looked at Devin, wondering what he would have her do.

He held out his hand to her and she crossed the room and stepped over the naked girls. Devin pulled her into his lap. "How are you feeling, Baby? I was worried about you."

Anna looked away. "Fine, Master," she said in a quiet voice. She sat stiffly in his lap and avoided looking him in the eye. She doubted he had even thought about her. He had, after all, killed her. She blinked several times to clear her tears.

“Oh, Baby,” he said, pulling her head to his shoulder. “I’m sorry I hurt you. You know I have to do things sometimes I don’t want to do, right?”

Anna didn’t answer. Did he really not want to hurt her? If not, why did he do it so much? Why did he look like he enjoyed it?

“Anna? You know that, right?”

Devin watched as Anna’s jaw clenched. He frowned at her unexpected reaction. She was angry. At him. She wouldn’t give him a dishonest answer. She knew better than that. But to not answer him at all?

Maybe it wasn’t such a good idea to let her out of the Manor. She was becoming far too independent. But he had to admit to himself, she was flourishing. When she was happy she was captivating. He sighed. It took so much effort to keep a woman happy. He gave up trying with Sandy long ago. It wasn’t worth it.

But with Anna.... No, she was different. It took very little to make her happy. A kind word kept her going all day. Maybe he should just send her home. Avoid the trauma of the rest of the weekend.

No. He had his plans. He must continue with his plans for the weekend. She just needed a firmer hand. She would act appropriately if he made her. It didn’t matter if she wanted to do something. She had her obligations and she must fulfill them.

“Anna, look at me.”

She did, her green eyes accusatory. Devin frowned.

“Why don’t you get dressed and go spend the night with Tyler and Tommy?” Kelly and Jessica, sitting at his feet, could certainly keep him occupied for the evening.

He saw the hurt in her eyes as she glanced at the girls at his feet, then at her hands. “Yes, Master,” she said softly and stood.

“They’re down the hall in Room 412.”

“Yes, Master.” She turned and walked back to the bedroom. A few minutes later she emerged dressed, and walked out of the room without looking at him.

He hoped being with some boys her own age would cheer her. Tyler and Tommy both adored her.

Devin looked down at the girls. But Anna needed reminding of her place. She belonged to him, not the other way around. He could fuck whomever he wanted to. She needed to remember that.

Anna knocked on the door of room 412. Tyler answered a few minutes later wearing nothing but a pair of sweatpants.

He looked at her with a surprised expression. “Hey, Anna. What are you doing here?” he poked his head out of the doorway and looked around.

“Your dad said I should come spend the night with you,” she explained. She hoped they didn’t have girls in there already with them.

Tyler’s face broke into a grin. “Really?”

Anna nodded.

“Cool!” he grabbed her hand and enthusiastically pulled her inside. “Look what my dad sent over,” he said, laughing as he led her into a small living area.

Tommy stood when he saw her. “Hi, Anna,” he said, giving her a warm smile.

Tyler pulled her to the couch and sat her between the two guys.

“We’re just watching a movie,” Tyler explained, and named some movie Anna had never heard of.

Tommy reached for her and put his arm around her. Tyler grabbed her legs and laid them across his lap.

Anna relaxed after a while, and her mood lightened in the guys' company. They were fun and laughed heartily at the silly things the hero and heroine did on the TV.

Tommy kissed the top of her head frequently. He reminded her of Nate, and she wiped away tears that threatened to fall, hoping they hadn't seen.

"You all right, Anna?" Tommy asked softly. "Why are you crying?"

"No...I...." She sighed. "It's been a long day." That was the truth.

"My dad can be pretty harsh, huh?" Tyler commented. "He means well."

Anna didn't reply. She wondered how well he knew his father. Anna didn't think Devin "meant well" about anything at the moment. She turned her attention back to the movie, trying to forget about anything except where she was.

She enjoyed Tyler and Tommy's company. They had mentioned that they were starting college this month after returning from a long tour of Europe.

After the Gathering, Devin, Tyler and Anna would spend the night at Tom's house, then drive the boys up to Harvard and get them settled in. They would fly home to San Francisco from New York.

New York. Would Nate be there already? Probably not. He'd just received the offer. She didn't know how long he had in San Francisco before he had to move.

Anna felt the tears welling up and quickly pushed aside the sad feelings. She needed to be present. Here with Tyler and Tommy. Otherwise, she would anger Devin again, and that was the last thing she wanted to do.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

Anna awoke to the sound of a knock on the door. She was naked in bed between Tommy and Tyler. After the movie, they had gone into the bedroom and enjoyed themselves with each other's bodies. She had to admit she'd had a very enjoyable time with the two of them. They were nice and appreciative of her ministrations. Tommy especially. She had fallen asleep with his arms around her and slept very well.

There was another knock, louder this time. She sat up slightly and Tommy and Tyler stirred beside her.

Tyler glanced at the clock, "Fuck. I forgot to set the alarm."

Tommy cursed and jumped out of bed, pulling on his boxer briefs as he walked out of the room to answer the hotel room door.

"Why did you need to set the alarm?" Anna asked.

Tyler stood. "Because we have to leave soon to drive to where the Gathering is."

Anna rubbed her eyes. She was still sleepy. They had been up late. "When do we need to leave?"

Devin walked in at that moment, fully dressed and frowning at her and Tyler. "We need to leave in twenty minutes. What do you think you're doing?" His anger seemed directed at her.

"I...I didn't know, Devin," she said, quickly standing and reaching for her clothes. "I'm sorry. I'll go get ready." She dressed as quickly as she

could as Devin frowned at her, and then ran out of the room and back to her hotel room.

She glanced at the bed as she walked past it. It was clear that three people had slept in the bed last night. Pain filled her heart as she walked into the bathroom.

She dressed quickly in a denim skirt and black shirt. She was tying the bottom of her braid as Devin walked in behind her, obviously upset.

“I’m ready, Devin,” she said nervously dropping her hands and looking at him in the mirror.

Devin grabbed her braid and turned her around. “You’ve made me look bad, Anna.”

Anna winced at his harsh words.

“We’re late and I don’t do late,” Devin said through clenched teeth. He slapped her across the face and she grabbed her cheek, tears burning in her eyes.

“I’m sorry, Devin. I didn’t know. If I had known....”

“I don’t want any excuses, Anna. Get your shoes on and let’s go. Maggie packed your things and is waiting in the van.”

“Yes, Devin,” she said in a cracked voice as she hurried to the closet for her sandals.

Downstairs, several vehicles waited in front of the hotel, including a black van and huge black SUV-looking-limousine.

“I should put you in the van,” Devin muttered as they walked outside into the morning sunlight. “But someone might want to use you.”

Anna bit her lip as Devin led her to the open door of the limo. Why couldn’t she do anything right? Why did she have to anger him all the time?

The interior was luxurious and huge. It looked like a long narrow living room with hardwood floors and several long black leather benches along the length of the vehicle. There was a mini-bar and an area set up with breakfast foods. Anna stomach growled as she passed by the food.

The other Elders were already in and talking and laughing. Tom arrived a few minutes later with Tyler and Tommy.

Anna saw three other young men that she hadn't met before at the front-most section of the limo. Other Elder-Sons? They all seemed to know Tyler and Tommy, but were older than them. Two were in their mid to late twenties and another was about thirty.

The younger men gathered in one corner and started joking around with one another. Anna sat quietly next to Devin in the middle of the vehicle, facing the hotel.

Ian poked his head in. "All ready, sir?" he asked Devin. He gave Anna a small smile. She realized she had hardly seen him at all since they'd arrived.

"Yes, Ian," Devin answered. "We can head out now."

Ian nodded and closed the door, then a moment later the huge vehicle pulled away from the curb and into traffic.

Anna stared out the window in front of her. She was ignored as Devin conversed with Tom and Marcus. She was having a hard time keeping her eyes open, so she curled up on the seat and went to sleep.

"Anna."

A sharp voice cut through her sleep and she jumped and fell off the bench where she had been sleeping. She looked up to see Devin frowning at her.

"If I wanted you to sleep, I would have put you in the van."

“I’m sorry, Devin,” she said, crawling back onto the seat.

His frown deepened. “I’ve been hearing a lot of apologizing from you lately, Anna. It’s getting tiring.”

Anna looked at him, not knowing what to say. Should she stop apologizing for her mistakes? She didn’t mean to upset him. She certainly didn’t want to upset him.

He stared at her angrily for a moment longer, then glanced at the far corner where the younger men were sitting. “I think the Elder-Sons haven’t had a chance to be with you.”

Anna followed his gaze. They had all stopped talking and were staring at her. She bit her lip nervously. They didn’t give her particularly friendly looks.

“Maybe I should let them punish you for your impudence,” Devin murmured. He chuckled and turned to the younger men. “Would you gentlemen like a chance to enjoy Anna for a bit? She can be quite...accommodating.”

“Sure,” said the oldest one with a grin. He had brown hair and eyes and looked a little bit like Oscar.

Oh, no, Anna thought to herself. Was he like his father?

“She needs some...shall we say...reminders of her place. Think you’re up for that?”

They laughed. “I think we can handle that, Devin,” said a guy with dark blond hair and blue eyes.

Devin pushed her forward towards the corner and the guys grabbed her and pulled her to them. The blond man grabbed hold of her braid and kissed her roughly while other hands pushed her skirt to her waist and pulled her panties down. Fingers pushed inside her and she grunted.

“Damn, she’s tight,” Anna heard from behind in a voice she didn’t know.

Hands pulled at her shirt and it was removed along with her bra. Her breasts were squeezed and pulled and her pussy lips were tugged on. She tried not to listen to the comments from the guys. She heard Tyler’s voice occasionally, but not Tommy’s. She found out the one who looked like Oscar was named Rylan. The blond guy’s name was Chris and the other guy’s name was Joel.

Chris unzipped his pants and shoved Anna’s mouth onto his cock. He had the double ring piercing and the piercings on the top of his cock like Devin, except without the spikes. Anna worked on his cock and another guy rammed his cock into her pussy and fucked her hard. When the guy behind her rammed forward, Chris’ cock was shoved down her throat, which scared her. Would they try to kill her as well?

They all took their turns using Anna’s mouth and pussy. Someone pressed into her ass, making her cry out. He wasn’t dry, but it still hurt. The men in the car all laughed at her cries. Anna closed her eyes so they wouldn’t see her tears. They smacked her ass and her face.

“C’mon, Tommy, use her,” she heard Tyler urge his friend. She could tell by his voice that he was the one in her ass. He shouted out as he came, then pulled out of her. Anna sat on her knees and folded her body over so her head rested on the floor.

Tommy didn’t answer.

“Tommy, how are you going to be an Elder if you can’t fuck the Mistress?” Devin accused from across the vehicle.

“I fucked her plenty last night,” Tommy protested.

“But you need to be able to punish your girls, Tommy,” Tyler said.

Tommy protested again, but by now all of the younger men were giving him a hard time. She looked up at him and gave him a brave smile. She didn't want him to be ridiculed because of her.

"Aw, I think Tommy likes her," Rylan taunted him. "Look at him."

Tommy's face turned red and he muttered something under his breath that Anna couldn't hear, but the younger men laughed.

"C'mon Tommy. Show us you deserve your rings." Joel taunted him as well.

Tommy looked across the vehicle at his father, who nodded, though his jaw was clenched. Tommy took a deep breath, then grabbed Anna's braid and pulled her up to her knees. He gave her an apologetic look, then told her to unzip his pants and suck his cock.

"God, Tommy, you're such a wuss," Rylan said. "You don't apologize to the girl before you use her."

Anna took his wonderful cock into her mouth and began her work.

"I'm not a wuss, Rylan," Tommy growled. "I just don't see why you have to be mean."

"She's being punished, you fucker. You're supposed to hurt her."

Tommy didn't answer, but caressed her neck and moaned softly as Anna sucked on him. She heard voices around her, but didn't pay any attention to them until she heard Devin's voice.

"Tommy, if you want to get your rings tonight, I suggest you show me you have what it takes," Devin said in a warning voice.

"You can't do that, Devin. I'm the oldest son."

"I can do whatever the fuck I want to, Tommy. We are changing the way we do things from now on. I am not just an Elder. I am your Chairman and if you want your rings, you will do as I say."

Tommy stared at him for a long minute. “What do you want me to do?” he asked in a resigned voice.

“Rape her. Hit her. Show me you know how to punish someone.” Devin pulled Anna’s braid so she pulled away from Tommy’s lap. “Slap her.”

Anna looked up into Tommy’s eyes. She could see that didn’t want to do it. He shook his head.

Suddenly Devin’s hand struck out and hit Tommy in the jaw. Anna gasped and Tommy grabbed his chin and stared at Devin. “Ow! What the fuck, Devin?”

“She’s a fucking slave, Tommy. I won’t have a weakling as an Elder. Attack her now or I will send you back to your mommy and sisters.”

“I’m not weak,” Tommy said between clenched teeth. His eyes flashed at Devin.

Devin laughed wickedly. “I have a hard time believing you, Tommy. Maybe you’d rather bend over for me. Is that it? You want my cock in your tight little ass? You’d rather take it from a real man than be the real man and give her what she deserves? If I hadn’t seen your cock, I would doubt you had one.”

Anna could see the anger welling up inside of Tommy. His hands were balled up in fists and he was shaking with his jaw clenched.

Devin smirked. “You don’t have what it takes. Tyler, pull your cock out. Your buddy here is going to suck it.”

Tyler laughed. “He’s not really my type, Dad. I don’t like weaklings.”

Devin’s hand snaked out and grabbed Tommy’s hair. He pulled him down onto his knees on the floor, almost on top of Anna. Tommy twisted and lashed out at Devin, trying to get free, but Devin was stronger.

“Come on, gay boy.” He grasped one of Tommy’s hands and pushed it towards Tyler’s lap. “You know you want it,” he growled.

“No!” Tommy shouted, pulling free from Devin. His chest heaved and his hands were still balled into fists. He turned his angry gaze onto Anna. “I am not weak and I am not gay.”

Anna tried to scoot away. Tommy’s anger was frightening. He lashed out and grabbed her hair with one hand and swung his fist into her cheek with the other. Anna screamed and curled into a ball, cradling her cheek.

“Oh, no you don’t,” he growled. He grasped her wrists and pulled her onto her back, trapping her hands above her head. He straddled her hips and smacked her across the face again.

She struggled against his hold as he grasped her nipple rings and pulled. She cried out as he tugged hard on the ring. Did it tear?

Devin watched in satisfaction as Tommy attacked Anna on the floor of the limo. She struggled to get away, which meant she was truly frightened. Not that he could really blame her. Tommy was obviously infatuated with her and had treated her with the utmost respect and kindness. But Tommy needed to learn that she was a slave and needed to be treated accordingly. He just had to get Tommy angry enough. His father had a temper that he worked hard to contain. Devin was glad to see Tommy had inherited it.

Anna screamed as Tommy pulled on her nipple ring. A trickle of blood skimmed down the side of her left breast. He hit her again in the face, then smacked hard down on her breasts. Devin could see Tommy’s cock throbbing and he smiled. He liked the violence. Good. He needed to embrace his dark side.

Devin glanced at Tom, who frowned at him, but said nothing. Devin was well within his rights to do what he did, even though Tom didn’t

approve. Well, that was his problem. Tommy was behaving as he should.

Anna grunted as Tommy thrust hard into her, still holding her hands above her head. Tommy was no weakling physically. He was tall and muscular, having played many sports in high school.

He released Anna's hands and grasped her thighs, pressing them into her chest, then pulled out of her pussy and rammed himself into her ass. Anna screamed in pain and Tommy yelled at her. She looked at him wide-eyed through the tears, now streaming down her cheeks. Tommy thrust hard into her, leaning his head back in ecstasy. Anna sobbed and Tommy groaned in pleasure.

Devin looked out the window. They were almost there. Good. Once Tommy was done, she could clean up and be ready for the Elders, if they wanted her.

Tommy groaned out his climax and thrust hard and deep into Anna's ass, then pulled out and let her legs drop to the floor.

Tommy gave him a "See, I told you so," look, zipped up his jeans and sat back in his seat, face flushed with triumph.

"Guess you proved me wrong, Tommy," Devin said in a fatherly voice. "I'm impressed. You've removed my doubts."

Tommy grinned at him.

Devin went back to his seat near the rest of the Elders. The car pulled off the main road. They would be there in about ten minutes. He glanced down at Anna, curled up in a ball and trying to stop crying. Her eyes looked empty as she stared at the bottom of the seat in front of her.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

Anna lay on the floor of the limo after the men exited. It was quiet. A welcome moment after the hell of the past hour and a half.

Younger men were vicious. And Tommy...she hadn't felt so betrayed since Alex hurt her. She was glad for Tommy that the others had stopped taunting him, but now she really was alone. She had thought of Tommy and Tyler as her allies, somewhat, especially after last night.

But no, Tommy and Tyler were their father's sons. Their duties were to them. They had no use for her aside from her primary purpose: to please men.

Anna sighed. She needed to get moving or else Devin would be angry with her. Again. She pushed herself onto her knees and reached for her clothing. After dressing she made her way to the open door and stepped out of the limo.

She stood in the middle of a forest. Tall pine trees surrounded her, filling the air with their luscious scent. She inhaled deeply and enjoyed the last certain moments of peace until she got home.

Her cheek hurt. She had been hit multiple times on her left cheek. It felt swollen. Maybe Maggie would have something to ease the pain.

She limped around the side of the limo to see an enormous clearing down a slight hill. It was about half the size of a football field with one side bordered by a lake. Deep green grass covered the ground and a large stone eagle sat at the edge of the lake with a large half-circle dais in front of it.

Along three sides of the field were pavilions of various sizes, the fabric walls fluttering in the breeze. At the corner closest to where she stood was a large pavilion containing what looked like a kitchen with smoke billowing from various metal boxes.

Scantly clad women were all around. Some were fucking men, others were lying in groups on the grass. Several swam in the lake as well.

As she limped down the hill, she saw that the women wore short, sheer blue dresses with a few purple and red scattered throughout. The straps were thin and the bodices low.

“Mistress!”

She turned to see Maggie running to her, wearing a purple dress with her blond hair tied back with a purple ribbon.

Anna smiled at her friend. She had barely seen her since they arrived in Washington DC. Anna wondered what she had been doing all this time. Maybe she got a chance to go sightseeing.

“Mistress, Master sent me to find you. Oh!” she exclaimed as she got closer. “Are you all right?”

Anna put her hand to her cheek and sighed. “I’m all right.” As all right as she ever was these days.

“Come,” Maggie said, taking her hand. “I’ll get you cleaned up. Then Master would like to see you.”

Anna looked around as Maggie led her towards one of the pavilions near the lake. “Who are these girls?” She didn’t recognize any of them.

“They’re slaves from the other Elders’ Manors.”

They stopped in front of a large pavilion. There were two rooms with the walls tied open. The ground was covered in soft-looking brightly colored rugs with a large bed in the corner of one room. The other room had a circle of low white couches.

Maggie went through an opening in the back wall of the room with the couches and returned a few minutes later with a bag. “Come, Mistress. Let’s get you ready.”

Maggie led Anna down toward the lake and around a corner to a stone path. The path led back through the trees to a large wooden building. A few girls were lounging on chairs on the front porch. They looked at Anna curiously as she walked up the steps and inside.

It was a huge, open room with beds filling the room. A doorway in the middle of the back wall led to a large bathroom, similar to the bathrooms at the Manor.

Maggie put some sort of ointment on Anna’s cheeks, then filled a bathtub with hot water and oil scented with the perfume Anna had come to associate with the Gatherings. She stepped into the tub and sighed as she immersed herself in the soothing water.

Anna was prepared as she was for Friday Gatherings. Her hair was washed and her body scrubbed. By the time Maggie finished, Anna felt very refreshed. Even the swelling on her face had gone down considerably and there wasn’t much bruising.

Anna put on a dress like the other girls were wearing, though hers was white. Maggie left her hair loose, but put a thin circlet on her head. Her bracelets and anklets were fastened in place, then Maggie declared her ready.

She wore no shoes as they made their way back to the field. Fortunately, the stones were smooth and kept clear so they didn’t hurt her feet.

When they arrived back at the pavilion, Devin sat in the couch room with the other Elders. He looked up and saw her and smiled.

“Ah, Anna. You look much better.” Devin held his hand out to her and she went to sit at his feet. He petted her hair as she sat next to him.

Anna was careful to be still and silent, so as not to upset Devin. It seemed to be working. He simply stroked her hair.

She didn't pay much attention to what the Elders were talking about, though it seemed to have something to do with the activities of the weekend. Her sleepiness increased. She tried hard to stay awake, pinching the insides of her hands surreptitiously, but when the Elders suddenly stood and dispersed Anna jumped slightly. She winced, waiting for a blow from Devin, but it didn't come.

Devin took her hand and led her to the room with the bed in the corner. “Why don't you take a nap, baby? The guests will be arriving soon and I want you alert.”

Anna looked up at him gratefully. “Yes, Devin.”

Devin frowned. “Baby, you need to call me Master, or my lord. Consider yourself at the Manor.”

Anna winced. “Yes, Master,” she said, hoping he wouldn't be angry.

But he didn't say anything. He just pulled the blankets up over her shoulders and kissed her head. He untied the ropes holding the walls back and the room darkened. Anna was asleep within moments.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

Anna felt a big hand on her forehead, brushing her hair away from her face. She slowly opened her eyes to the dimly lit room and saw Ian kneeling beside the bed. He smiled when he saw her look at him.

“What time is it?” Anna asked, sitting up and looking around. The sunlight that had been streaming in between the hanging fabrics was long gone.

“A little after seven, Mistress.”

Sounds from outside began creeping into Anna’s consciousness. She could hear male voices being projected by a microphone, but the words were muffled.

Panic rose in Anna’s chest. “Did I sleep too long? Dev...I mean, Master will be so angry!” She flung the covers off and stood.

Ian put his hands on her shoulders. “It’s all right. Devin said to let you sleep. You aren’t needed for a little while yet.”

Maggie entered the room, pushing the fabric aside. “Good Evening, Mistress,” she said softly with a smile.

Ian moved aside and let Maggie brush Anna’s hair and refresh her perfume. Maggie gave her a fresh, unwrinkled dress, and then Ian took her outside through an opening in the back of the pavilion.

“Ouch!” Anna exclaimed, stepping on something sharp.

Ian scooped her up into his arms. “Sorry. The areas outside the Pavilions aren’t meant to be walked with bare feet.”

He walked along the back of the row of pavilions and around to the side away from the lake. Anna caught sight of firelight and a huge crowd of people in front of the giant eagle.

“There’s so many people!” Anna exclaimed in a whisper. The women were kneeling around the edge of the open-air field while in the middle hundreds of men sat on the grass wearing robes or tunics and pants like those worn at informal Friday nights.

Tom spoke from the dais in front of the eagle. The silver edging of his robe glittered in the light from the fire contained in two long curved box-like-things that bracketed the dais. The shadows the fire cast on the giant eagle made it look alive. Anna shivered.

The other Elders, including Devin, also wore white robes edged with glinting silver and were seated on thrones at the back center of the dais. A large, empty throne sat in the back center of an additional raised section of the dais. Along the sides of the dais the Elder-Sons sat on small thrones in white robes without the silver edging. Tommy and Tyler sat with them, making Anna suppose that they had already received their piercings.

Anna stood with Ian at the edge of the field in the dark, still unable to grasp what Tom was saying. His words were met with head nods and approving sounds from the men in the grass. Something about making the country great and powerful. And about honored guests.

Suddenly there was a round of gasps and shouts. Anna looked to the dais and saw the Immortals, Kaveh and Val, standing in the center. Two other Immortal-looking men stood with them. Tom gave them a small bow and went to sit next to Devin.

Kaveh moved to the front to address the crowd. He spoke loudly and with a deep voice. Anna couldn’t make out all the words, but heard more than when Tom was speaking.

“Mortals,” he began. “The Elders have made the decision to put aside the foolishness of the rest of the world and embrace the old ways. This country has never had the privilege of embracing...”

“Anna,” Ian whispered. “Did Devin tell you about the hunt?”

Anna shook her head. “A hunt?” She couldn’t imagine Devin going hunting. It just didn’t seem his style. “What does he hunt for?”

“...Chairman who will provide ultimate guidance for the Elders and the other leaders of the country...,” Kaveh’s voice drifted in their direction.

Ian’s brow furrowed as he knelt down next to her. “Anna, it’s...for you girls,” he said in a soft voice. Anna frowned, not understanding. “The Elders and Deacons send the girls out that way,” he pointed in the direction opposite Devin’s pavilion, “and the men ‘hunt’ for you and do whatever they want. You’re naked and barefooted. Devin’s changing the rules this year: There are no restrictions on what they can do to you because there’s no one there to watch.”

Anna’s eyes widened and her heart pounded in her chest. “He’s sending me out with the other girls?”

Ian nodded.

Anna looked at the dais.

“...is well equipped to bring the country back to its former glory...,” Kaveh was saying.

“Why are you telling me this?” Anna asked.

“Because I wanted to warn you.... I don’t want you to get hurt any more than you...have to be. Stay away from the politicians as best you can. Especially Wier. He’s brought some toys with him and they don’t look nice.”

Anna nodded. “How long does it last?”

“Until the sun comes up. There are always...girls that don’t make it through the night.” Ian glanced at the dais. “The best thing you can do is find a hiding space and stay there until the sun comes up. It will start after all this is over.” He motioned towards the dais. “It’s time for you to go. Just...be aware and start thinking about a way to protect yourself.” Ian took her hand and led her to the back of the crowd. There was a long pathway left in the middle of the sitting men. “Walk up slowly. When you get to the front, do as you usually do. You’ll be given instructions when you get up there.”

“Thank you, Ian,” she whispered and gave him a small smile.

He nodded and gave her a little push.

Anna glanced ahead of her to the dais. Devin was naked and kneeling in front of Kaveh, who was also on his knees and had his arm across Devin’s chest. Devin’s face was pink and he looked as if he was trying to mask some sort of discomfort. As Anna got closer it looked like Devin was being made Chairman the same way other men were brought into the Brotherhood by showing submission. But something about it was different. Devin’s face didn’t look submissive, and he appeared to have a tiny glow, almost like the Immortals had.

As Anna got closer to the dais, she bowed her head and saw the men look up at her as she passed. The men closer to the front were wearing tunics and pants. The men further away were wearing robes. She wondered who the men in tunics were until she spotted a few of the men she had met at the Capitol. Out of the corner of her eye, she could have sworn she saw the President and Vice President sitting in the front row.

She arrived at the dais, knelt and bowed with her head to the warm grass. She could feel the heat from the fires on both sides of her.

She felt a presence above her a moment later. “Stand, Daughter.” It was Kaveh.

Anna stood quickly and Kaveh took her hand to lead her onto the dais. He stopped in the middle of the platform and turned her around to face the men on the grass with his arm across her shoulders. Devin still knelt where he had been, head bowed and still. The only movement was the slight expansion of his ribs as he breathed.

“Behold, Mortals. A daughter of an Immortal. Claimed at birth by your Chairman and raised to become his Mistress.” Kaveh reached down to the hem of Anna’s dress, lifted it above her head and tossed it to the side. His hands strayed down to her breasts and squeezed. “Beautiful, isn’t she?”

There were appreciative chuckles from the seated men. Kaveh kissed her neck and his hand strayed between her legs. Anna gasped as his long fingers parted her flesh and entered her. Incredible sensations filled her body as he moved his fingers inside her. She grasped the arm across her shoulders as her knees shook. She felt like she was going to....

She screamed as she climaxed suddenly. She became dizzy with pleasure as Kaveh’s fingers moved expertly on her wet flesh. She rocketed into the stars and spun around in the air in weightless ecstasy.

As her body relaxed she felt herself lifted up by several hands and placed on a flat hard surface. She tried to open her eyes, but couldn’t for some reason. She was dizzy from her orgasm and felt like she could come again with minimal stimulation. Her whole body felt like it was floating. Her knees were spread apart and fingers spread her pussy lips apart.

“Perfection, is it not?”

Suddenly an enormous cock was thrust inside her and she cried out in surprise and pleasure and pain. It felt bigger than Alex. Anna managed to open her eyes. The head of the eagle was high above her head. She looked

down and saw Kaveh holding her thighs and fucking her. He grinned when she looked at him and gave a particularly strong thrust which sent Anna over the edge of pleasure again.

Her back arched and she cried out as the waves of pleasure came hard and fast. Over and over again Kaveh pushed his enormous cock inside her, which just pushed her higher and higher into pleasure. She felt her mind and body overwhelmed with it and she let herself ride wave after wave.

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CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

Devin knelt, naked and unmoving on the dais. He felt lightheaded and invincible. Allowing Kaveh into his body gave him the most incredible feeling he'd had in a long time. He felt the power transfer between himself and the Immortal.

He had not submitted himself to the Immortals authority, like many might have assumed. That wasn't the purpose of the ritual. It was to grant Devin Immortal powers; more than what was given when he became an Elder. The infusion would be solidified in the spring with the proper sacrifice, but in the meantime he would be satisfied with even more powers of persuasion, charisma and understanding of human nature than he already had.

His cock throbbed at the sounds of Anna's orgasms. Kaveh had a huge cock and it had felt amazing. Devin could imagine how Anna must be feeling. Kaveh put Alex to shame. Devin smirked. Anna might come to crave the Immortal's cock more than her other Master's.

As Devin looked down at his pierced cock, he could have sworn that it looked bigger. Perhaps mind power wasn't the only thing given to the Chairman. He smiled to himself. He'd never had a problem with his size before. But bigger was always better.

Anna would be fucked by each of the Immortals, then they would present her to Devin. The connection between he and she would be intensified and he would be able to channel her powers even if she wasn't

around. But she would be more persuasive as well. Together they would be able to do amazing things.

God, his cock throbbed. He wanted Anna's pussy so badly he could taste it. And what a sweet taste it was.

She was going hoarse from the screams of pleasure and cries of ecstasy. The grunts and moans from the Immortals only served to whet his appetite more. He wanted to reach out and caress his cock, but he was to remain still, as if in a trance.

At last, Kaveh turned to Devin and touched his shoulder. Devin looked up and stood before the tall Immortal.

“Our Daughter is ripe for your cock, Chairman. Take her and make her your own.”

Devin grinned up at Kaveh and turned to Anna. She was naked and writhing on the stone table. Her legs were splayed open, displaying a very wet swollen pussy to the men seated on the grass. Devin could see several of the men closest to the platform stroking themselves.

Devin knelt at the end of the table and drew his tongue across the sensitive flesh. Anna moaned and jumped. Val and another Immortal, Sohrab, stood at her side, holding her on the table. Devin licked her again, then thrust his tongue into her open slit, tasting the Immortal's seed on his tongue. He eagerly lapped at the fluid, knowing it would help the powers solidify in his body. Besides, she didn't need it. At least not right now.

When Devin had licked and sucked all he could from her body, he stood and pressed his cock against her opening. Her eyes opened and he smiled at her. As he pressed himself into her body, her eyes widened and her mouth opened in surprise. He must be bigger. Why else would she be surprised like that? He hooked her ankles on his shoulders and grasped her thighs, then began moving himself in and out of her.

As his thrusts increased she began to moan. “Come for me, Baby,” he said softly.

She moaned again, then her body stiffened and she thrashed her head back and forth as she climaxed, clenching her muscles around him and bringing on his own release. His head leaned back and he held onto her thighs to keep from falling. He became dizzy as the bond between them fortified.

Anna cried out in pain as her soul merged with his. It wouldn't normally be painful for her, but the part of her that was bonded with Alex rebelled against Devin's intrusion. There was a chance he would regain full control over her, but it was very small. She screamed again and pulled against the Immortals hold.

Her back arched off the table and her face contorted with pain. Fucking Alex! Devin would have to make sure to tell Alex how much his interference had hurt Anna again. Of course, there was a high likelihood that Alex had not even considered the possibility that Devin would perform this particular ritual.

He'd wanted Anna to be part of the hunt, but he doubted she would be in any shape for that after this. He would have to content himself with letting her take part in the meetings tomorrow and perhaps the orgy tomorrow night.

Devin cried out as another wave of pleasure erupted in his body and Anna screamed again. He was still trying to merge fully with her, but was coming to the realization it wasn't going to work. *Fuck!* Devin pulled out of her and leaned his hands against the table on either side of her hips, panting. Devin was exhausted. Maybe he would just take Anna back to his pavilion and go to sleep. The other Elders could deal with the hunt.

“Have you taken possession of our Daughter, Chairman?” Kaveh asked loudly.

“I have,” Devin declared. “I have claimed her as my own. She is a part of me as I am a part of her.”

Kaveh reached for Anna and helped her to sit up, then kneel at Devin’s feet. “Behold your Master, Daughter.”

Anna looked up at Devin with exhausted eyes, then bowed with her head on the ground.

Val and the other two Immortals, Sohrab and Cyrus, brought forth a new robe for Devin. It was white, as the other robes were, but was edged with gold and green with seed diamonds stitched in alongside the sacred pattern. They helped him don it and tied a golden sash around his waist.

“Behold your Chairman,” Kaveh said loudly.

Devin stood with his chin held high and watched as the Elders bowed to him and then the rest of the men followed suit. All in the park bowed to him. He had done it! He had achieved his desired place. Two and a half decades of planning and working had paid off. Even the President and Vice President bowed to him. Devin grinned.

“My Brothers,” Devin said loudly. “Let us celebrate this joyous occasion with a hunt.” Devin grinned as he saw the girls remove their dresses and move quickly into the forest. “There are hundreds of girls to be had in the woods beyond. No one will be watching, enjoy yourself as you please. It begins now and ends at dawn.”

The men cheered and began dispersing.

Devin looked down at Anna’s naked form, bowing at his feet. He retrieved her dress, then returned to her. “Anna.”

She looked up at him with glazed eyes. “Yes, Master?”

He handed her the dress. "Get dressed. We will go back to the Pavilion and sleep."

She nodded and stood, donning her dress quickly.

Devin looked out at the grassy field as she dressed. Some of the men remained in the field and stood chatting with one another. He took Anna's hand and stepped down to speak to the President.

"Mitch, let me introduce you to Anna," he said to the smiling man. "Anna, meet the President."

Anna curtsied. "Good evening, my lord," she said in a soft voice.

"Hello, sweetheart," the president said with his southern drawl. He reached out to stroke her cheek. "So pretty."

Devin hadn't agreed with his election, but had little say in things back then. Not so anymore. Eight years had brought about many changes. Devin's choice, Wier, would be the next president.

"Are you going on the hunt?" Devin asked. Some of the men chose not to go. They had chosen companions earlier and would take them back to their rooms or pavilions.

Mitch shook his head. "I've never really enjoyed that aspect of the weekend. I prefer them coming to me, rather than me chasing after them. I'm too old to chase."

Both men laughed. Devin saw how Mitch watched Anna carefully. Anna stood silently and stared at the ground.

"I can understand that. I had planned on going, but this evening has tired me more than I expected." He looked at the president. "I would offer Anna to you, but I'm afraid she wouldn't be very good company tonight. She's exhausted as well. Perhaps tomorrow?"

The other man nodded. "I would like that." He smiled at her. "I'd like that a lot."

“Good,” Devin said with a nod. “If you’ll excuse me, I’m going to put Anna to bed.”

“Of course. I’ll see you tomorrow, Devin.”

Devin put his arm around Anna’s shoulders and led her to their pavilion near the lake.

Ian was coming out of the living area when they arrived. He looked surprised to see Anna. “I thought you were sending her out,” he said with a frown.

“Hoping to get a piece of her?” Devin laughed. “I wore her out and she wouldn’t be much fun tonight. Grab her tomorrow.”

Ian grinned. “Any chance I get.”

Devin chuckled as his friend walked away. He knew Ian cared about Anna, but as long as it didn’t interfere with his duties, Devin didn’t care.

He led Anna to the bed and laid her down, covering her with the blankets. It was quiet. After such a long day, Devin appreciated the absence of distraction.

He removed his new robe and hung it on a nearby hook, then crawled into bed with Anna. She had been good this afternoon and evening. He was pleased. He gathered her into his arms and fell asleep almost instantly.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE

Saturday morning was spent mostly in meetings. Anna stayed by Devin's side and pleased the men when he told her to. It seemed easier to obey him now, for some reason, and she wondered if last night had something to do with it.

At lunchtime, Devin said she could have some time to herself. She took some food and sat down at a table under a tree by herself. The men around were Brothers, instead of politicians, and they left her alone. She was glad to have some quiet.

She was lost in thought when someone sat down across from her. She looked up to see Tommy smiling hesitantly at her. He wore a white tunic like the Elders.

"Good afternoon, my lord," she said with a shaking voice, and looked down at her plate. She trembled and wondered what he wanted.

"Anna...", he said, reaching across for her hand. He shook his head. "Anna, I'm so sorry for what I did...to you."

"You needn't apologize, my lord," Anna said. "I am only a slave."

"I don't see you that way."

"Then you don't see the truth." Anna clapped her hand over her mouth and looked up at him in fear. "I'm sorry, my lord!"

Tommy chuckled and squeezed her hand. "Don't apologize, Anna. And you don't have to call me 'my lord.' I like it when you say my name."

“It’s inappropriate, my lord. You are an Elder-Son. I must treat you with the utmost respect.”

“I’d prefer you to treat me normally.”

“My Master would be upset if I were to disrespect you, my lord.”

Tommy frowned. “All right. I don’t want to get you in trouble.” He squeezed her hand again. “Anna, look at me.”

She looked up at him nervously.

“What I did yesterday, Anna....” His eyes were full of grief. “My temper got the better of me. Devin was egging me on....”

“It’s fine, my lord. You had to do what you had to do. I’m fine.” She gave him a polite smile. “Is there something you wanted?”

“I wanted to apologize.” He gave her a shy grin. “Maybe you’d let me make it up to you?”

Anna frowned. “How?”

“Are you done eating?”

Anna looked down at her half eaten lunch. “If you’d like, my lord.”

Tommy shook his head. “Finish eating.”

“No, really, my lord. I....”

“Finish eating, Anna. I can wait.”

Anna smiled shyly and ate quickly. When she was done, he took her hand and led her to the side of the field and into a pavilion.

He untied the ropes to close the walls and pulled her into his arms. “I like you, Anna. A lot.”

He cupped her chin and captured her lips with his, caressing them and making her feel warm inside. She slid her hands up his chest and over his shoulders to clasp them behind his neck. His hand slid behind her head to cup the back of her head and he deepened his kiss, slipping his tongue between her soft lips.

Anna moaned softly as he held her close. One hand slid down her back and to her hip. He pushed her back gently and onto the bed behind her. Anna sighed as he lay down on top of her and she wrapped her arms around his neck, kissing him deeply. His hand slid up her side and caressed her breast, eliciting a soft moan.

“God, Anna. I could stay here with you forever,” Tommy said, kissing her neck and trailing his tongue down and across her collarbone.

Anna pressed her head back into the bed and pressed her chest up. He chuckled and pulled the top of her dress down, taking a pink nipple into his mouth. They both moaned as he sucked the hardened nub. She pressed her hips up against his, feeling his erection against her.

“Tommy,” she sighed, running her hands through his hair as he moved to her other breast.

He sucked and licked at her breast and she squirmed beneath him. She wrapped her legs around his hips, her pussy aching for him. She had given plenty of blowjobs today, but hadn’t had sex except for early that morning with Devin. He had been surprisingly gentle with her.

But she didn’t want to think about her Master right now. She wanted to think about Tommy. Sweet Tommy.

Tommy pulled her dress over her head and tossed it on the floor next to the bed, then removed his tunic, revealing his well-defined upper body. Anna smiled and ran her hands across his pecs. He said he had played football in high school and was hoping to play at Harvard too.

He moved up and kissed her cheeks and jaw and lips and moved down to her neck and breasts. She realized he was kissing all the places he had hurt the day before. He moved down to her belly and moved lower, spreading her legs apart.

“Oh, Anna,” he murmured against the sensitive flesh.

His tongue flicked out and into the silken folds, humming his pleasure as he tasted her sweet juices. He leaned forward and buried his tongue deep inside her slit.

Anna moaned loudly as he thrust his tongue inside her. “Tommy...,” she mumbled, lacing her fingers through his thick hair.

His lips clasped around her clit and sucked gently, making Anna sigh and cry out softly.

“Oh! Oh, Tommy,” she mewled. She felt tingling deep in her belly and she moaned; the stirrings of an orgasm grew stronger and stronger until her world exploded into bright colors.

Tommy moved back up to kiss her. “Hmmm,” he said in a deep whisper. “I still have my pants on.” He chuckled and rolled to his side.

Anna quickly sat up and untied the waistband of his pants and helped him push them down his hips. She saw he now had the double ring piercing. “Does it hurt?”

“It did.” He lay on his back and caressed her hip. “Doesn’t now. ‘Course, I took a shit load of pain relievers this morning and last night before I went to bed.”

Anna leaned down and kissed the new piercing. “Did you go on the hunt?” she asked carefully, then took him gently into her mouth.

Tommy groaned. “Nah. My dad said it wouldn’t be a good idea. That I’d be hurting real bad this morning if I did. Tyler went and he was really sore this morning.”

Anna smiled to herself. She was secretly glad he hadn’t gone. She gave him the best blowjob she could muster until he sat up and pushed her onto her back.

“I want you,” he murmured positioning himself between her legs. He thrust forward and groaned as he sank himself deep inside her. “Oh, God,

Anna.”

He moved slowly at first and Anna wrapped her legs around him, savoring his presence. He pressed his lips against hers and quickened his movements. They both moaned and sighed as their bodies moved together in rhythm. Faster and faster they moved against each other until they both exploded in each other’s arms.

Tommy pressed his damp brow to Anna’s and smiled at her. She smiled back. She really liked him. It was too bad he lived across the country. He kissed her several times, then rolled off and hugged her to his side. He pulled the blanket up over them and they lay in the quiet together.

She was about to drift off when she felt a strange sensation inside her. Like Devin was calling for her, but with his mind instead of his words.

She sat up abruptly. “I have to go.”

“Huh? What?” Tommy asked, confused. He had fallen asleep.

“I’m sorry, Tommy. I think Devin wants me.” She crawled out of bed and put her dress on, then smiled down at him. “Thank you. I really enjoyed that.”

He reached for her hand. “Me too.” He grinned. “I might steal you away again later.”

Anna giggled. “You better ask Devin first.”

“I will. I don’t want you getting into trouble.” He tugged her down and kissed her. “I’ll see you later.”

She smiled at him affectionately and nodded. “I hope so.” She looked at him a moment more, then hurried away to find Devin.

Devin watched as Anna quickly walked towards him as he stood outside his pavilion. The unspoken call for her had worked. Good. She had a spring in her step as she walked. Where had she been?

“You look happy,” Devin commented as she approached. Her cheeks turned a pretty shade of pink. “Where have you been?”

“With Tommy,” she said nervously.

Devin nodded. Tommy had hurt her badly on the previous day, and her affections were still there? She really did bounce back quite nicely. Of course, that had been evident when she had forgiven Alex for brutalizing her. Or did she like the abuse and just go back for more? She always came around to Devin too. Perhaps he had created a masochist? Interesting thought.

“You felt my call?” Devin asked.

“Yes, Master.”

“Good girl.” He pulled her close. “Keep pleasing me as you have today and we will go on more pleasantly than the last few days. Do you understand?”

“Y-yes, Master,” she whispered, looking up at him. “I do try, Master.”

“I know, Baby,” he murmured against her neck. He slid his hands down and cupped her ass, pressing her hips against his erection. He’d been watching her mouth on cocks all morning. He wanted to see her lips wrapped around his cock now. “Suck me, Baby,” he mumbled.

Anna dropped to her knees and untied his pants. She took hold of him and he couldn’t help but smile at her widened eyes. She glanced up at him in bewilderment. “Master...”

“You didn’t notice this morning?” he asked with a chuckle.

“I thought....” She blushed. She studied him for a moment more, then took him into her mouth. Her beautiful mouth.

He’d love to drag her into bed right now, but he had promised Mitch her company this afternoon. He still had to deal with the man for the next

few months and could still get some good use out of him, especially with Anna's help.

He closed his eyes against the sunlight and held her head on his cock. She flinched at his touch, but didn't move away. He couldn't blame her for being nervous around him. He had killed her, after all. He could see the fear shadow her eyes every so often. Well, it had to have been done. Otherwise, he wouldn't be where he was right now.

He groaned as she worked her magic. Her lips were even tighter around him with his expanded girth. Incredible. He found himself approaching climax. When he came, he groaned low, feeling his fluid spew into her mouth. She licked him clean, then he pulled her to her feet and tied his pants.

"Come, Anna. You have an appointment with the President."

Anna hadn't expected such luxury out in the woods. The place was a palace, with marble floors and walls. It was a long, two-story building built for the "special guests" of the Brotherhood. Namely, the politicians. The Brothers stayed in the pavilions or another lodging house in another part of the woods.

Anna liked sleeping in the open air of the Pavilion last night. She'd never been camping and probably never would. But she liked the outdoors. Probably because Jack had kept her cooped up in the house most of the time. That was one nice thing about her room at the Manor. She had her own private yard, whereas her apartment didn't even have a balcony.

Devin led her up one of the two curved staircases and to the end of the hallway where a set of double doors stood. "Ian will wait for you downstairs. When you're done, just come downstairs and Ian will return you to me."

“Yes, Master.”

Devin walked away, leaving Anna alone in the hallway. She knocked on the door, and the President answered a moment later.

He smiled broadly when he saw her. “Hello, sweetheart,” he said.

“Good afternoon, my lord,” Anna said with a small curtsy.

He stepped to the side to let her enter a large room. It looked similar to Tyler and Tommy’s hotel room, but with a step up in luxury.

Anna waited until he had closed the door. “How may I please you, my lord?” she asked.

He grinned. “I’m sure there are many ways you can please me,” he said, and led her into the bedroom.

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CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

Anna returned to Devin's pavilion several hours later, but Devin wasn't there. The President hadn't hurt her too much and she was able to walk. Nothing like her time with the senator. He seemed happy when she left, and that's what was important.

"What should I do?" she asked Ian, who had brought her back.

"Just wait here," he answered. "You can lie down if you want, but leave the curtains open. I'll go see if I can find Devin."

Anna lay down on the bed and watched people in the field. The Eldersons were playing football with some of the other men. She saw Tommy jump and catch the ball over Rylan's head and she smiled. It really was too bad he lived across the country. She wondered how often she would see get to him, if at all.

The sun was getting low in the sky and Anna's stomach growled. She was wondering if she would be able to go get dinner when Maggie arrived with a tray of food.

"I've brought your dinner, Mistress," she said with a smile. "When you're finished, I'll take you to get ready for tonight."

Anna ate dinner and then followed Maggie back to the place she'd bathed yesterday. The place was much busier tonight, filled with girls going about getting ready. It was loud. Anna felt out of place, especially when the girls stopped what they were doing to stare at her.

She flushed when she walked by a group of five girls who looked at her then giggled.

“...wonder what she did to get such a high and mighty place,” she heard one of them say loudly.

“She thinks she’s better than us,” another one said, giving Anna a nasty look.

“You should treat the Mistress with respect,” Maggie said, defending her. “It’s not her fault who her father is.”

The first one snorted. “How do you know? Maybe she just claimed it. How can you prove it?”

“The Immortals said she was,” Maggie said. “And the Chairman.”

The other girls rolled their eyes. One grabbed her hand. “Look, she wears a diamond ring like she’s engaged or something.”

“Dev...my Master gave that to me,” Anna said pulling her hand away.

“I wanna see the ring.” The girl tried to pull it off Anna’s finger. “I wonder what it’s like to wear so many diamonds.”

Anna clenched her hand, but the other girl was stronger. Another girl grabbed her other arm.

Anna looked around for Maggie, but she was gone. The other girls noticed too.

“Oh, your little bitch abandoned you,” the first one said. “Maybe we can have some fun with you now. No one ever comes back here, you know.”

Anna yelled as someone pulled her hair. She struggled against the hold and broke free. The one girl was still trying to get her ring off her finger and finally succeeded.

A fury built up inside Anna and she lunged at the girl and hit her in the face. “Give me back my ring.”

Another girl grabbed Anna from behind and pulled her off, pushing her to the ground.

“Look, I’m a princess!” said the girl who had taken her ring. “Bow to me, all of you.”

The girls in the room all laughed.

“Maybe she’s got a great mouth. Maybe that’s how she gets the diamonds.”

Anna felt her hair grabbed again and was pushed forward to the spread legs of the girl who held her ring. Anna fought as hard as she could, but there were too many to fight. Her mouth made contact with the girl’s pussy.

“Eat me,” the girl growled.

Anna struggled to get away, but was beginning to realize the struggle was pointless. She’d never win. Her shoulders slumped and she stuck out her tongue to taste the girl. Maybe they’d let her go if she cooperated.

But she couldn’t lose Devin’s ring. He’d be so angry.

Anna pushed back and lunged at the girl again, reaching for the hand with the ring on it.

Through the yelling and screaming Anna faintly heard a loud male voice. Instantly all the girls dropped to their knees. Anna wheeled around to see Devin, Tom, Connor, Oscar and Ian standing in the doorway. They all looked pissed. Anna could see Maggie behind them. Devin gave Anna a look and she dropped to her knees.

“What the fuck is going on?” Devin growled.

Footsteps echoed through the silent room as Devin and the rest of the Elders walked to where Anna was. She was trembling and blinking rapidly.

He stood over her and looked down, then sighed. “Stand up, Anna.”

Anna stood quickly and stared at his chest. He cupped her chin and lifted her face. “What happened?” he asked in a soft voice. Her eyes were full of fear. From what Maggie had said, the girls had been rude to her and practically attacked her.

Instantly tears spilled from Anna’s eyes. “I’m sorry, Master,” she whispered. “I wasn’t trying to start a fight. I promise.”

“I know, Baby.” He ran a finger over her cheek where a bruise was forming and she winced at the pain. He hated petty jealousy. Especially from women, and it was even worse with slave women.

He let out a little growl. How dare someone attack his precious Anna! When men did it, it was for conquering. When women did it, it was just annoying.

He looked down to take her hand and frowned. The ring he’d given her was missing.

“Where’s your ring, Baby?” he asked in a gentle voice. He wasn’t angry at her. She hadn’t done anything wrong.

Anna looked around and motioned to the girl kneeling next to her. She also had a bruise on her cheek. He hoped it was from Anna. The girl had Anna’s ring on her little finger. Devin narrowed his eyes and stepped in front of the slave.

He turned to the men behind him and pointed to the girl. “Who does she belong to?”

Connor stepped forward. “She’s mine, Devin.”

Devin frowned. “Perhaps you’d like to explain to me why one of your girls is wearing the ring I gave Anna?”

Connor’s eyes widened. “You gave...?” He stepped forward and told the girl to stand. “Lily? Explain yourself.”

The girl had the grace to look nervous. “I...she...” She looked angry. “She was acting all high and mighty and it pissed me off, Master.”

Devin swallowed a comment. She was lying. He could feel it. That and Devin knew that Anna wouldn’t act that way. She was almost as shy today as she was when she was ten. Though Devin was pretty sure that Anna had caused the bruise on Lily’s face. It was rapidly darkening.

If she was his, she’d be outside already, but she wasn’t his to discipline. He never would have stood for that kind of attitude.

“So you took her ring? I know there’s no other way that you would have acquired such a ring.”

Devin saw a small smile at the corner of Anna’s lips, which amused him.

Lily didn’t reply to Connor, but her shoulders drooped.

“Who hit you, Anna?” Devin asked.

Anna looked up at him. “I-I don’t know.”

Devin studied her. She really didn’t know. God, how many girls attacked her? He looked around. Several of the girls were disheveled. Devin let out a low growl.

“Sir.” Ian walked over with a tablet in his hands. Good, the footage of the fight. There were cameras all over the camp, including in here.

He kissed Anna on the forehead. “I’ll be right back.”

Devin motioned to the men to follow him outside. They would watch the video, then make a decision what to do. In Devin’s mind, attacking Anna was like attacking him. There needed to be punishment. With a camp full of men it was sure to be interesting.

Anna stood nervously next to Lily. She had given Anna her ring back and was nervous as well. With the men gone outside, there were low

conversations throughout the room. Anna had tried to smile at Lily when she returned the ring, but Lily had only glared at her.

“Why does he call you ‘Baby?’” Lily asked.

“He’s always called me that,” Anna replied. “For as far back as I can remember.” Back before he got angry.

“He was involved in your training?”

Anna looked at her. “My guardian trained me.”

“Your guardian?”

Anna nodded. “My parents died when I was twelve. I went to live with Jack after that.”

“You had parents?” another girl asked astonished.

“She wasn’t raised in the Manor, Brittany,” Maggie said, coming to stand beside Anna. “She doesn’t live there now, either.”

“Where do you live?” Lily asked.

“I have an apartment downtown. It’s close to Dev...I mean, Master’s work and the dance studio.”

Anna was inundated with questions about living outside the Manor. She told them about dancing and just joining the ballet Company. About going out with “normal” guys. They were in awe.

The men returned a few minutes later and the girls returned to their knees. Connor and Tom took several of the girls outside, including Lily and Brittany.

“A warning, girls,” Devin said loudly from the doorway. “Attacking Anna is the same as attacking me. Remember that in the future. Now, finish getting ready for the evening.”

When the men had left, the din of the room grew louder. The girls were very respectful of Anna and asked her lots of questions as Maggie got her

ready. Maggie put her in a long dress, similar to what she wore on Fridays, then took her back to Devin's pavilion.

Anna didn't see the other girls return.

The sun went down and the stars sparkled high above the field. The fires in front of the Eagle were lit, once again casting eerie shadows on the stone bird.

When it was time, the men started gathering in front of the eagle. Men in black tunics and men in robes. Anna watched from inside the pavilion.

"Anna, you will sit at my feet tonight, then participate in the orgy."

"Yes, Master." What would that be like?

The Elders and Sons walked up to the dais on the pathway between the men. Anna walked next to Devin, but kept her head down in a submissive pose, as he had instructed. When she got to the platform, she glanced surreptitiously toward where Tommy was sitting and saw him watching her. They smiled at one another, then Anna went to sit at Devin's feet on the raised area where his throne was.

The evening was dull to Anna. Men gave long speeches about boring topics. It was all she could do to not drift off. Devin gave a long speech at the end, which the seated men seemed to enjoy, but went right over Anna's head.

A sweet smell wafted through the area as Devin was finishing up and Anna began to feel dizzy, then very aroused. She clenched her thighs together as Devin finished his speech.

"Enjoy yourselves tonight, gentlemen," he said at last, and returned to his seat. Devin looked down at Anna, and she swayed slightly. "How are you feeling, Baby?"

“Dizzy,” Anna answered. She was having a hard time concentrating on anything.

Devin chuckled. “Airborne ecstasy. Tonight will be fun.” He pulled her up into his lap and onto his already exposed cock.

“Oh!” she exclaimed as his bigger-than-before cock sank into her body. She moaned as he filled her.

“Like it, Baby?”

Anna nodded, unable to think of anything but him. He held her hips and she rode him hard, the world exploding into colors shortly after. He pushed her gently off his lap, then led her down to the grass where all manner of sex was occurring. It was a giant blob of naked bodies. Tongues, cocks, breasts, hands, pussies. Moans, cries and groans filled the air as no orifice was left empty. Men fucked men who were fucking women. If there was an available organ, it was used. If there was a hole, it was filled.

The night was a blur of sex and orgasms and pain and ecstasy.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

Anna awoke Sunday mid-morning naked in the midst of a sea of naked men and women. It looked as if people had simply fallen asleep where they lay. Some looked as if they had fallen asleep in the middle of sex.

She had a slight headache and rubbed her eyes before she sat up to look around. Most everyone was still asleep, but she saw some up and about. Clothes were strewn all about the field; there was no way she was going to find her gown. She stood to make her way back to the pavilion.

She saw Devin on the way back with two brunettes in his arms. She closed her eyes and turned away. As much as she knew that Devin slept with other women, it still hurt.

She saw Tommy on the way, too. He was curled around a small redhead. Anna turned away from that sight as well and sighed. Why did she allow herself to care about men? Caring just meant getting hurt in the long run. Or maybe the real question was, why did it bother her when certain men slept with other women? Surely she was weak to feel that way. It was the way of the world. Men slept with whom they wanted to. Anna slept with whomever the men wanted her to. It was as simple as that. Why did it bother her?

She sighed as she walked into the pavilion. After retrieving a gown from the back “closet,” Anna made her way to the girl’s dorm, as they called it. She used the toilet, then took a quick shower to remove the stickiness that seemed to cover her body.

As she was leaving, a movement caught her eye through the trees. She heard a moan coming from the same direction, then the sound of something being hit and a cry. Slowly and carefully she made her way through the woods over rough terrain that hurt her feet. After a few minutes of walking she came upon an open field. It was much smaller than the other field, but what she saw there almost made her throw up.

Five girls were tied to a wooden beam with their hands above their heads. They were bloody and bruised. Three of them appeared dead, or at least Anna hoped for their sake that they were dead. Their bodies were so mutilated the only reason she knew they were female was because of their long hair and bloody stumps where their breasts had been. One's legs were gone. The other two girls were still alive, though barely, it seemed. Their bodies were mutilated as well and a man was swinging a long sword up between one girl's legs, seemingly chopping her in half from her pussy up. She grunted with each stroke. Anna couldn't imagine why she wasn't screaming until she realized her lips had been sewn together. The other girls' too. The last girl was being whipped with a vicious cat-o-nine-tails, her flesh ripping with each stroke.

Anna gasped and clasped her hand over her mouth when she realized that these were the girls who had attacked her the day before.

Anna stumbled backwards, tears streaming down her face, horrible memories flashing back into her mind from when Devin had punished her for trying to kill herself. He had tortured a woman to death in front of Anna, much like these had obviously been, or were being, tortured to death.

Anna collapsed to her knees and vomited. She was sobbing when strong arms wrapped around her. She jumped and looked up to see Ian behind her.

“Devin didn’t want you to see,” he said in a quiet voice. He handed her a towel to wipe her mouth.

“Why would he care if I saw or not?” she asked in a cracked voice. Devin didn’t make any sense to her sometimes.

“Because he was afraid you’d get sick...like you did.” He gave her a wry smile as he helped her to her feet. “C’mon. Let’s go back to the pavilion.” He scooped her up as if she weighed nothing and carried her back to the field.

He put her in bed, then went to find Maggie to bring her some food. He and Maggie returned a few minutes later. Anna was surprised she had any appetite, but she ate her breakfast quickly, trying not to think about the girls in the other field.

When she was done, Maggie took the tray away and Ian stayed with her, brushing her hair back from her face as she lay on the bed.

“Will you lie down with me?” she asked in a weak voice. She felt so lonely.

Ian slid under the covers behind her and held her close. His big body made her feel protected. It also made her think about Alex, which made her feel even lonelier. When Ian started kissing her neck it was a welcome distraction, and it helped to push her lonely thoughts aside.

The day was once again spent in meetings, but there was no official Gathering that evening. In the late afternoon the Elders, Elder-Sons and Anna got back into their enormous limo and went back to the hotel. The Elders had a dinner meeting in Devin’s suite and Anna was told to spend the evening with the Elder-Sons.

She hadn’t spoken to Tommy since they’d had sex. She had put up her wall and been very formal with him, as she was with all the rest of the men.

She could see the hurt in his eyes, but thought it best to keep herself distant.

Rylan, the oldest Elder-Son, had a large suite that the Sons had dinner in that night. Anna was used as they wished. They weren't overly cruel, but weren't nice either. Tommy sat on the couch and watched without participating.

The Sons drank a lot and when they either passed out or were mostly incoherent, Tommy took Anna to his hotel room.

Tommy filled the bathtub and got in, pulling Anna with him.

"Tommy, you don't need to be nice," she said as he held her hand to assist as she stepped into the tub. "I'll do whatever you want."

He chuckled. "Why wouldn't I want to be nice?"

"Because...." Anna sighed. "It's just not necessary. You are an Elder-Son. My job is to please you."

"Anna," he said softly, pulling her back against his chest. She allowed him to, but didn't relax. "Why are you so stiff?"

Anna stared at her hands in the water. "I am here to please you, Tommy. That is my duty."

"I brought you here so we could be together without the others." He nuzzled her neck. "I didn't bring you so you could perform your duty. I brought you here because I wanted you with me."

"How would you like me to please you?"

Tommy sighed. "By relaxing and enjoying yourself. Yesterday when we were together was...hell, it was the best part of the weekend for me."

Anna turned her head to look at him. "Why?"

"Because...God, Anna. Can't you tell that I like you? Am I being too subtle?"

She shrugged her shoulders then sighed. She knew he liked her. "I'm afraid of getting hurt," she whispered.

“I don’t want to hurt you, Anna. It’s the last thing in the world I want to do.”

Anna didn’t say anything.

“I woke up this morning with some girl and I wished it had been you. I looked for you when I got up, but couldn’t find you.”

“I went to clean up at the girl’s dorm and then I saw....” Anna closed her eyes and shuddered at the memory of the girls in the field.

“Saw what?”

She shook her head. She didn’t want to think about it.

“You saw the girls?”

Anna nodded. “You knew about them?”

“Dad told me about the fight. They had to be punished. Two of them belonged to us. We had to be involved.”

“Why did they have to be punished?”

“Because they attacked you, Anna. You’re the Elder-Mistress. They can’t get away with something like that.”

“You saw them?”

“I had to help.”

Anna stared at him, mouth opened. She couldn’t imagine Tommy doing such a thing. “Why?” she whispered.

“Because I’m pierced, Anna. I have duties now, too. Dad said it was time I learned...about that sort of stuff.” He shuddered. “I hope I never have to do it again.”

“It was awful,” Anna whispered.

Tommy hugged her to him. “I know. But if they weren’t punished, your position wouldn’t be respected and you would be in danger. America’s never had an Elder-Mistress before. Precedents have to be set.”

Anna leaned her head back on his shoulder and sighed. Life was so complicated.

They were silent for a few minutes.

“I wish you didn’t live so far away from me,” he said softly, intertwining his fingers with hers in the soapy water.

Anna swallowed. “Me too,” she whispered

“Think Devin would let you move out east? Elder-Sons can...um, be with Mistresses, ya know.”

“Of course they can, Tommy. I can be with anyone who wears a diamond.”

“No, I mean...like...dating and stuff like that.”

“Devin would never let me move to New York. Believe me, I already asked.”

“You did?”

Anna realized how he might have taken her words. “Well, I mean, I was offered a position with the New York City Ballet Company and Devin said no.” She sighed. “So did Alex.”

“Who’s Alex?”

“My other Master.”

“You have two Masters?”

Anna nodded and told him a shortened version of how she ended up with two masters.

“I didn’t think that was possible.”

“I don't think Devin did either. But apparently it is. But Alex moved back to Germany a few months ago and I don’t think he wants anything to do with me anymore.”

“Why Germany?”

Anna shrugged. “He’s German. He’s an Elder-Son like you.”

“Oh.”

There was silence for a few more minutes. Tommy caressed her stomach, then moved his hands up to her breasts, caressing them gently. Anna moaned softly and turned her head to kiss his neck.

“Mmm, Anna,” he mumbled. “I think we should get out of the tub.”

They got out and dried each other off, then Tommy dragged her into the bedroom. He kissed her and they fell onto the bed. Anna giggled as Tommy kissed her neck and it tickled. He was a little scruffy from not shaving over the weekend.

Unexpectedly, there was a knock on the room door. Tommy gave Anna an apologetic look. “It’s probably Tyler.” He pushed off the bed and walked out of the room. He returned a few minutes later, scowling, with Devin behind him.

“Anna, I thought I told you to spend the evening with all the Sons, not just Tommy.”

“I did, Devin. We just got here—”

“Devin, the other guys were drunk or passed out so I brought her back here,” Tommy interrupted.

Devin turned to look at Tommy. “Well, then. Thank you for taking care of her, but she needs to come back to the hotel room with me now.”

Tommy started to protest, but Devin stopped him. “Tommy, I realize you like her, but she is my slave. Her duties are to me, not you, unless I tell her to.” He looked back at Anna. “Get dressed.”

Without looking at Tommy, Anna went quickly to the bathroom for her clothes and put them on as fast as she could. Tommy was glaring at Devin when she returned.

“Remember your place, Tommy,” Devin said, then put his arm on Anna’s back and led her out of the room.

They walked down the hallway to their hotel suite. Devin took her immediately to the bedroom and told her to undress. Anna tried not to think about Tommy, but to think about what Devin wanted. Anything to keep his anger at bay.

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CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

The next morning after breakfast, they headed to the train station and boarded a train for New York. The trip was three and a half hours long and Devin kept Anna by his side the entire trip. Tommy sat with Tyler in the seat across the aisle from them. She felt Tommy watching her, but she couldn't bring herself to look at him. She had been so disappointed that she hadn't been able to spend the night with him and had a feeling that if she looked at him, she would begin to cry.

They spent the day with Tom's family and spent the night in their house. Ian and Maggie flew home that afternoon. Devin kept Anna with him and away from Tommy.

The next morning Anna, Devin, Tom, Tyler and Tommy drove up to Massachusetts to drop Tommy and Tyler off for their first year at Harvard.

Tom parked near what looked like a townhouse, but was actually Tommy and Tyler's dorm. The door was open, with people going in and out of the building carrying boxes and bags and a host of other items.

Most of their things had already been shipped there, but there were several boxes and bags, and everyone helped carry their things inside. Both Tommy and Tyler had their own rooms in the same suite. This, Anna found out, was a rare luxury, and wondered if it was because they were Elder-Sons.

As Anna was carrying a box for Tommy up to his room, a man stopped Tom and Devin in the hallway. He appeared to be in charge of the dorm and

knew both of them. Anna looked to Devin for permission to go on with Tommy, and Devin nodded.

“Where do you want this?” she asked Tommy as she walked into the small bedroom. There was a bed, desk, chest and chair.

“Anywhere is fine,” he said, dropping a heavy suitcase near the window with a dull thud. “Wow, look at this view.”

Anna walked over and put the box carefully down next to the suitcase, then looked out the window. It looked out on a beautiful green yard with trees and grass. The red brick buildings around the yard were old and full of character.

Tommy slipped his arms around Anna’s waist. “I thought I wouldn’t get a moment alone with you before you left,” he murmured against her neck.

Anna leaned her head to the side and Tommy kissed and nipped at the soft skin of her neck and upper shoulder. “Tommy...,” she sighed.

He turned her around to face him and pressed his lips against her, kissing her deeply. She hugged him around his neck and kissed him back.

A throat clearing from the doorway made them jump apart.

Tom stood there with the man from the hallway. Tom gave them both a disapproving look before introducing the man next to him. “Tommy, this is Jake Cloverfield, the House Master of your dorm.”

Tommy walked over to the man and shook his hand. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, sir. I’ve heard a lot about you.”

Jake laughed. “Don’t believe everything your dad says about me. I’m more fun than I used to be.”

“God, please make sure my son learns *something* this year,” Tom chuckled. “If you’re more fun than you used to be, then I’ll be paying a lot of money for Tommy to party.”

Tommy laughed along with the older men. Anna stood nervously near the window. She was glad Tom had found them together and not Devin.

Jake looked beyond Tommy at Anna. “And who’s this pretty little thing? High school sweetheart?”

Tommy looked back at Anna with an adoring look, and she felt herself blush. “I wish. No, this is Anna. She’s...um....” Tommy trailed off and looked at his dad.

“She belongs to me.” Devin appeared in the doorway behind Jake, who turned and gave him a strange look.

“I thought Tyler was your oldest, Dev,” Jake said.

“Tyler is my oldest. Anna is not my daughter.” Devin slipped through the door and motioned for Anna to come to him, which she did immediately. He caressed the back of her neck. “She’s my mistress.”

Jake looked at him wide-eyed. “Mistress? Damn. I’m in the wrong profession. Or the wrong city.” He gave Tommy a disapproving look. He had seen Tommy and Anna kissing. “Are you going to be in trouble, Tommy?”

“What? No, I...,” Tommy stammered.

“We walked in and saw Tommy and Anna kissing, Devin,” Tom explained.

Devin chuckled. “You can’t keep your hands off her, can you Tommy? It’s a good thing Harvard’s not in San Francisco.” Devin looked at Jake, who was giving Tommy a look. “I’m very generous with Anna, Jake. Tommy didn’t do anything wrong.” Devin petted Anna’s hair.

The men talked for a while and Anna stared at the floor, trying to contain her emotions. It had felt so good to kiss Tommy again. Something about him made her feel safe.

Unexpectedly, Anna felt something touch her hand and looked up to see Jake reaching for her. The door had been closed and Devin was looking at her expectantly.

Jake took her hand and pulled her towards him. He slid his hand around the back of her hip and walked her back against the wall behind her. He lifted her skirt up to her hips and slipped his hand into her panties.

“God, so fucking hot.” He turned her around, pressing her into the wall, and pulled her panties down to her ankles. A moment later he pushed himself inside her.

Anna closed her eyes as he pumped himself against her, grunting and holding her hips tightly. She moved as best she could, but he pressed so hard against her it was difficult.

To Anna’s relief, he didn’t take long and was quickly groaning softly as he had his release. When he finished, he pulled out and walked back over to where Devin and Tom were standing and talking. Anna leaned her head against the wall for a moment longer, then fixed her clothing and went to stand quietly next to Devin. She could feel Tommy watching her, but didn’t want to look at him for fear of the look in his eyes.

Tyler came in a moment later. “I was wondering where everyone went.” Over the weekend, he had started treating Anna more like Devin treated her. She got nervous every time he came near her for fear he would hurt her. This time was no different. While the others continued to chat, he bent her over Tommy’s desk and fucked her ass hard.

“I wanna go look around,” Tyler said, zipping up his pants and slapping Anna on her bare ass.

She leaned her cheek against the desk, her ass throbbing from Tyler’s assault.

“Do you have all your boxes, Tommy?” Tom asked looking around.

Tommy nodded.

“Good. Shall we look around the campus?”

“Sure,” Tommy answered in a low voice, looking at Devin with a clenched jaw.

The group walked back downstairs, had lunch and then wandered around the campus for a few hours. Tommy tried to get her attention whenever Devin was distracted, but Anna was too ashamed to look at him.

Devin watched as Tommy tried to get Anna’s attention throughout the afternoon. Anna was polite to Tommy, but stayed by Devin’s side the whole day. Devin was pleased that she didn’t go running off with Tommy again, though he wished she would cheer up a bit. He liked it better when she was happy. When she was happy her whole demeanor changed and she attracted much more attention. *Damn women and their moods.* Men were so much simpler.

Of course, he wouldn’t be having this problem if Alex hadn’t interfered. Then again, she might not have had as much life in her if he hadn’t. Devin sighed. Having Anna was far more complicated than he’d expected. It wasn’t as if Anna was difficult to please. She was much easier to please than his wife and daughters. It took hardly any effort at all. But though Devin didn’t like having to manage her moods, he knew enough about her, and people in general, to know that you couldn’t command genuine happiness.

Devin looked at Tommy again. He was completely infatuated with her. And she was happy when she was with him. Perhaps allowing Jake and Tyler to fuck her right in front of Tommy hadn’t been the best idea. Devin had simply wanted to show Tommy that Anna was Devin’s, not just some girl. But it hadn’t changed Tommy’s thoughts about Anna. If anything, it

had made him more determined to get Anna's attention and, probably, cheer her up. Fucking Jake against the wall had more of an effect on Anna than it had on anyone else.

Investing in Anna's happiness took very little. Perhaps it wouldn't be so bad if he let her and Tommy spend time together. Anna knew enough to go to Devin when he wanted her. But once they were back home, Anna would have happy memories of Tommy and look forward to seeing him in April. Hopefully Tommy would have found a girlfriend by then and Anna would be content to just fuck him at the Gathering. It was unlikely that she would begrudge Tommy a girlfriend. Devin would tell her that Tommy needed to begin looking for a wife, but that didn't mean that the two of them couldn't be together or even have affection for one another. But Tommy needed to marry after college and would find a suitable woman here at Harvard.

The same went for Tyler, though if Tyler wanted to marry Anna, Devin wouldn't mind too much, as long as Tyler remembered that he had limited powers until he became an Elder. But with Anna by Devin's side, that would be a long time from now. A very long time.

Devin put his arm around Anna's shoulders. "Why don't you go spend time with Tommy?"

She looked up at him questioningly. "Don't you want me with you?"

"I always love having you with me. But we'll be leaving soon and Tommy likes you. And if I'm not mistaken, you like him too?"

Anna's blush was all the answer he needed.

"Go. You'll stay at the hotel with Tom and myself tonight, but you can spend time with Tommy tomorrow. How does that sound?"

She looked at him warily. "If it would please you, Devin."

Devin smiled at her. She was sufficiently submissive to him now. “Yes, Anna. Go have some fun.”

Her eyes brightened and she smiled, her beauty emerging like the sunrise. “Thank you, Devin,” she said shyly and bounded off up the path to where Tyler and Tommy were walking.

Tommy’s face lit up when she approached and he took her hand. Tyler frowned and looked back at Devin. It amused Devin that his son was jealous and it would be interesting to see what he did with it. Though jealousy was unnecessary, and ultimately a waste of energy; Tyler could have Anna anytime when he was home.

“What are you doing, Devin?” Tom asked as they walked along the path. “You’re okay with Tommy and Anna together?”

Devin shrugged. “It’s not like she’s staying here for long. Let them have some fun together. It makes her happy and when she’s happy, she’s much more useful to me.”

“You do realize she’s a young woman and very sensitive? If you push them together, when Tommy finds a girlfriend here, she’s going to be hurt.”

“She’s just as likely to find a boyfriend back home. Believe me. I know of at least one young man back home who is dying to date her again, and I’m sure there are several more.”

Tom shook his head. “Messing with her head will only cause trouble, Devin.”

“Messing with her head will solidify her bond to me. She’ll realize eventually that it isn’t wise to date and she’ll be happy with being my mistress.”

Tom snorted. “If you want her to be happy being your mistress, you better start treating her better.”

“I do treat her well,” Devin protested.

Tom cocked his brow. “By killing her? By having the Sons rape her? By having an old friend of yours push her up against the wall and fuck her in front of everyone?”

Devin frowned. “It’s what she’s for, Tom. I had her raised the way I did so she could handle that stuff.”

“Physically, but not emotionally. She’s still human. And barely twenty. She wants to be loved. That’s why she adores Tommy so much, because...” Tom sighed. “Because he acts like he loves her and treats her accordingly.”

“Love is for the weak,” Devin said with derision.

“Thanks,” Tom said dryly. “I appreciate your assessment of my mental strength because of my love for my wife and family.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

“Really? You married Sandy because you loved her. At least that’s what you said when we were here.” Tom motioned around. “I married Kelsey because I loved her, and I still do. Who’s happier now that we’re in our forties?”

“Sandy’s a whiny bitch.”

“And you had nothing to do with that?”

“I don’t control her emotions.”

“Husbands always have something to do with their wife’s emotions. If I treated Kelsey the way you treat Sandy, she’d be a whiny bitch too.”

“So what are you saying? I should go home and try to fix my marriage.”

Tom rolled his eyes. “I’m not telling you to do anything. I’m just suggesting that if you want Anna to be ‘happy’ then you need to at least act like you care about her. If you want Sandy to stop whining, then be nicer and treat her like you did when you guys were dating.”

Devin sighed. He was beyond caring what Sandy did. But Anna.... “I can’t not have Anna sleep with other men. That’s where her power is.”

“I don’t think that’s what upsets her, Devin. She wants to please you. I can see that. But having her punished because she disobeys you accidentally isn’t the way to keep her affections.”

“If I punish her when she accidentally does something, then there will be fewer mistakes. It’s been effective in the past.”

Tom frowned, but didn’t say anything else. He stared hard at Tommy and Anna up the path with a sad look in his eyes.

Tyler stopped and waited for Tom and Devin. “Why’d you have her go to Tommy and not me?”

“Because he likes her,” Devin sighed.

“I like her too,” Tyler protested.

“You want to fuck her, which is fine. Anna needs some...emotional connection. Besides, you can have her anytime you’re home. Tommy won’t see her until April.”

“True.” Tyler grinned. “I hope I can find a girl here that can fuck half as good as Anna can.”

Devin chuckled. “Well, if you can’t, call up Oscar. The Manor’s not far from here.”

“I forgot about that. Good. My dick won’t fall off from non-use.” Tyler turned and jogged back to Tommy and Anna.

Tom and Devin walked together in silence for a bit. Tommy said something and Anna giggled, her eyes sparkling at him.

“She’s a good girl, Devin,” Tom said, watching her. “Don’t hurt her too badly, or you’ll break her.”

CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

They ate dinner at a nearby restaurant that evening. Tommy and Tyler had an informal party at the dorm that night, so Anna went back to the hotel with Tom and Devin. It was within walking distance of the dorm and Devin said that she could walk over in the morning.

“Come over when you wake up,” Tommy said, standing close to Anna as they stood by his dad’s SUV.

“I don’t know what time I’ll be up,” she said glancing at Devin.

Tommy grinned. “If you come over early, you can get into bed with me.”

Anna giggled.

“I wish you could stay the night with me tonight.” He ran his hand up and down her arms then pulled her close and kissed her.

“C’mon, Tommy!” Tyler called.

Tommy pulled away slowly, his lips lingering on hers. He rested his forehead on Anna’s and cupped her cheeks. “I’ll miss you tonight.”

“Me too,” Anna said softly.

“Tommy!”

Tommy groaned, then sighed. “All right. I’ll see you in the morning?”

Anna nodded.

“Okay,” Tommy grinned. He kissed her once more on her lips then turned and followed Tyler into the dorm. She watched as he greeted other guys entering the dorm with them. He glanced back and waved at Anna.

The guys he was with looked back, too. She smiled shyly as they grinned at her.

“Anna,” Devin said.

She got into the SUV and they drove to their hotel. It was only a few blocks away.

Anna woke early. Devin had given her permission to go see Tommy right away, so she dressed and then made her way through campus and to his dorm. There were people around, but not many. The morning air was cool and refreshing, and as she got closer and closer, her heart beat faster and faster with anticipation.

When she arrived at the door she stared at it for a moment. Did she just walk in? There was an intercom panel at the side of the door, so she looked up Tommy’s name and pushed the call button. It rang a few times, then a groggy voice answered.

“Hello?”

“Tommy?” she said nervously. “Um, it’s Anna.”

“Anna!” His voice cleared and he sounded excited. “Hey. You’re here?”

“Yes.” She bit her lip.

“Okay. I’ll be there in a sec.”

There was a click and then Anna waited nervously on the front steps. She looked around at the street behind her. It was a neat looking street with all sorts of old buildings.

A girl with reddish-blond hair bounded up the steps where Anna waited. Anna stepped aside to let her pass.

“Hi, you get locked out?” she asked.

“What?” Anna asked, looking around.

The girl grinned at her. “Did you get locked out of the dorm? I almost forgot my key this morning.”

“Oh. Um, no,” Anna stammered. “I don’t go here. I was just...waiting for someone.”

“Oh. Boyfriend?” She gave her a conspiratorial smile.

Anna blushed. “I, uh...” She was saved from having to answer when the door opened and Tommy stepped out, bare chested and wearing a pair of gray sweatpants.

“Hey, Tommy,” the girl said with a bright smile.

“Hey, Lauren,” he said with a warm smile, then looked past her to Anna and beamed. “Hi, Anna.”

Lauren looked back at Anna. “Tommy’s your boyfriend?” she looked disappointed.

Anna looked at Tommy, alarmed.

“Yeah, I am.” Tommy stepped out and took Anna’s hand and dragged her inside. “Hey,” he said softer, bringing her close and kissing her. The way Tommy looked at her made her want to melt.

“Hi,” she said softly with a shy smile.

Tommy grinned. “C’mon. See ya, Lauren.” Tommy dragged Anna up the stairs to his room.

They spent the morning in bed together. When someone knocked on the door, Tommy ignored it. He kissed her when she came to keep her quiet so no one would know they were there. They made love many times and Anna felt like she was in danger of losing her heart completely to him.

Around lunchtime, Tommy’s cell rang. He picked it up off the floor and looked at the screen. “It’s my dad.” He pressed the screen. “Hey Dad...yeah. No, we’re here...yeah.... Yeah...okay.... Let me get dressed and we’ll be down.... ’K, ’bye.”

Tommy smiled at Anna. “My dad and Devin are downstairs looking for us. Apparently the last person that knocked was my dad.”

Anna giggled. She had been mid-orgasm when they heard the knock.

They dressed and went downstairs. Tommy said hi to people, guys and girls, as they made their way down. He introduced Anna as his girlfriend, which made Anna blush.

“I wish you didn’t have to go tonight,” Tommy said later that afternoon as they stood outside his dorm. “I’m going to miss you.”

“You shouldn’t, Tommy. You have to find a nice girl to settle down with, remember?”

Tommy took her other hand. “I know who I want to settle down with.”

Anna shook her head. “No, Tommy. You can’t. Devin would never...”

Tommy sighed. “Please don’t bring him into it.” He stepped closer and cradled her cheek. “You can’t stop me from missing you.”

Anna lost herself in his blue eyes. “I’ll miss you too,” she admitted in a whispered voice.

Tommy beamed. “I know. Thank you for being honest.” He leaned in and kissed her.

Anna kissed him back with desperation. She didn’t want to leave him either.

He pulled back slowly, his lips lingering against hers. “Can I call you?”

Anna nodded without thinking about it. He asked for her number and she gave it to him and he beamed again. He leaned in and hugged her against himself. “I wish we had one more night together.”

Anna hugged him back. “Me too,” she said softly, trying not to cry.

“Anna, let’s go.” Devin stood by the SUV, frowning at her.

Tommy straightened and gave her a smile as he opened the car door for her. She glanced at Tyler and nodded to him in deference, then looked back at Tommy with adoration.

“Take care of yourself. If not before, I’ll see you in April.”

He kissed her one last time, then closed the door. He said goodbye to his dad, then he and Tyler waved as Tom started the car and pulled away from the curb.

The flight home the next morning was nice. Anna and Devin had stayed the night at the Pendleton’s and left early the next morning. They flew first class again and Anna enjoyed herself. Devin was kind to her, which helped ease her heartache of missing Tommy.

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CHAPTER EIGHTY

Anna called Jenna when she got home, thankful they were friends again, and invited her over after she finished dancing for the day. Her heart ached and she didn't want to be alone that night.

As evening approached, a knock sounded at the door. Jenna stood there with a big grin on her face. "Omigosh, have you seen your neighbors?"

Anna glanced towards Greg's apartment and shrugged.

Jenna motioned for Anna to follow her into the hallway and pointed down the hall. At the end of the hall where the two men she'd seen in the elevators weeks ago. They were dressed in suits and looked rather handsome. They glanced back at the two girls, grinned, and then went into their apartment.

Anna shrugged. "I saw them a few weeks ago, but haven't met them. Did you?"

"I rode up in the elevator with them. Ben and Matt. We should go say hello."

Anna rolled her eyes. "Jenna...." She had just left Tommy. She didn't want to meet new guys. "Come inside."

Jenna looked around as she did. "I still love this place. You're so lucky."

"Jenna, you do know what I have to do to have this place, right?"

Jenna shrugged. "Have sex? I wish I could get a nice place in exchange for sex."

Anna shook her head. "You should remember what it's like." She sat down on the couch and Jenna sat next to her. Anna was telling Jenna about her trip when there was a knock on the door.

Anna's heart fluttered. Would it be Zach? He had come over quite a few times since she'd met him at the banquet, and each time he left, she could barely move until the next day. Zach had said he'd come see her when she got home.

She nervously walked to the door and opened it. She sighed in relief when she saw Greg there. Behind him were the two guys that had been in the hallway when Jenna had arrived.

"Hey, Anna," Greg said with a smile. "How was your trip?"

"Good, thank you." She glanced behind him. "Did you need something?"

Greg grinned. "Ben and Matt live down the hall. We were going to go grab some dinner and wanted to know if you and your friend wanted to come along."

"Yes!" Jenna exclaimed from the other room.

Anna blushed. "I just got home...."

Jenna walked up behind her. "Yes, we'll come." She pushed Anna out of the way and held out her hand to the guys in the hall. "Hi, I'm Jenna."

"I'm Greg," Greg said, shaking her hand. "This is Ben," he indicated the guy with light brown hair and gray eyes, "And Matt." Matt had the curly blond hair and blue eyes. They both had genuinely friendly smiles.

"Hello," Anna said softly. "I guess we'll come." She glanced at Jenna, who grinned.

They walked to a nearby restaurant. In spite of her being tired, Anna started to have a good time. Matt was easy going and funny. Ben was more laid back. Greg was quiet but very observant.

“So, how long have you lived in the Sapphire?” Ben asked.

“Since June,” Anna answered. “You?”

“A couple of years. We moved in after we graduated college.” Ben laughed. “Matt and I have been friends practically our whole lives. I can’t get rid of him.”

Matt laughed enthusiastically. “You know it, buddy.”

Anna studied them closely. Were they gay? They didn’t seem so. Matt and Jenna were flirting furiously with each other. Greg seemed amused by it.

“So, what do you do for a living?” Anna asked Ben.

“Lawyer. We both are.” He winced. “You don’t have a thing against lawyers, do you?”

“My guardian is a lawyer.”

“Is that a good thing or a bad thing?” he asked with a sly grin.

She shrugged. “Jenna’s dad is one too.”

“That doesn’t tell me if it’s good or bad.” Ben grinned.

“I prefer to judge someone by who they are rather than what they do.”

“Touché.” He laughed. “Good, diplomatic answer.”

Anna smiled.

After dinner, they went upstairs to a huge room full of different types of video games. Anna looked around, overwhelmed. She’d never been in such a place. It was so loud! Jenna dragged Matt over to one area of the room. Greg and Ben stayed with Anna.

She looked at them sheepishly. “What do you do here?”

“Haven’t you played video games before?” Ben asked, bemused.

Anna shook her head.

Greg frowned and muttered to himself. Anna looked at him curiously, but he quickly smiled at her.

“Well, then, I’ll have fun teaching you.” Ben took her hand and led her to various games and taught her how to play. A few times he stood behind her and put his hands on hers to help her. Her heart fluttered in her chest when he did so. Greg watched the two of them carefully, almost as if he were a chaperone.

Ben and Greg seemed to be pretty good friends and they joked around while Ben helped Anna learn how to play skee-ball. Matt and Jenna came over and they seemed to be getting along well. He seemed like a nice guy, and Anna was happy for Jenna.

By the time they left, Anna had learned that Ben had grown up in Seattle, but went to school at UC-Berkley. He had one older sister and one younger sister. He had graduated top of his class, with Matt a few steps down, and began working at one of the best law firms in San Francisco shortly thereafter.

Anna found him very handsome. He was about six feet tall with warm, slate-gray eyes, and she liked the way his caramel-colored hair fell across his forehead. It looked soft and touchable. He was confident without being arrogant, and very gentlemanly. The corners of his eyes crinkled when he laughed or smiled, which was often.

“When will you be in class, Anna?” Jenna asked as they were heading back to the apartment building.

“Probably Monday. I have to be...somewhere early afternoon tomorrow, so I thought I’d just wait until after the weekend.”

“I can’t believe you’re coming in as a soloist. I mean, I can believe it, but that means we won't get to spend as much time together as I’d hoped.” Jenna stuck her lip out.

“You better put that back in or I might bite it,” Matt teased.

Jenna grinned, then stuck it out more. Matt pulled her to himself and kissed her as they stood on the street corner waiting for the light to change. When the light changed, they were still kissing and Ben pulled Matt across the street with a giggling Jenna at his side.

They rode the elevator up to their floor and the guys walked Anna and Jenna to Anna’s apartment. Greg said goodnight and went into his apartment.

“So you said you have somewhere to be tomorrow afternoon,” Ben said. “Does that mean you’re free for dinner later?”

Anna bit her lip. “No, I...the thing I have to do will be until late.”

“Oh. What about Saturday night?”

Anna hesitated. He was asking her out. Did she want to risk it? But she was feeling lonely from missing Tommy. “I think I’m free. I won’t know until the morning, though.”

Ben studied her for a moment. “Anna, if you don’t want to go out with me, all you have to do is say so.”

Anna’s eyes widened. “No, Ben. I...” She smiled. “I’d like to go out with you. My...weekends are just kind of up in the air a lot. I’m sorry.”

He gave her a half smile. “So, if you are free Saturday evening, would you like to go out and do something?”

She nodded. “I’d like that a lot.”

“How about you text me Saturday morning and let me know if you’re available, okay?” Ben gave her his number.

“Okay.”

Jenna and Matt were kissing nearby. Ben kissed her cheek. “I’ll hopefully see you on Saturday.”

Anna nodded. “Okay.”

Ben smacked Matt on the back of the head. "C'mon, man. Let's go."

Anna unlocked the door and waited for Jenna. Both girls waved to Ben and Matt then went into Anna's apartment.

They went and sat on the couch and talked and giggled about the guys. About twenty minutes later, there was another knock on Anna's door.

"Ooh!" Jenna exclaimed. "Maybe they couldn't stay away from us."

Anna rolled her eyes as she stood, but was giggling when she answered the door. She stopped when she opened it and saw Zach standing there. A cold shiver ran down her body.

"Hello, Anna," he said with an amused look. "Devin said you were back in town." He moved to step forward.

"Wait. Please."

Zach narrowed his eyes.

"Please," she whispered. "My friend is here. Just let me get rid of her, okay?" Anna looked at him nervously until he nodded.

She went back into the living room. "Who is it?" Jenna asked with a grin.

"Jenna, you need to go home now," she said reluctantly. She didn't want to be alone with Zach, but she didn't want Jenna getting mixed up in it either, or for Jenna to hear her screaming. "Please," she said when Jenna didn't move.

Jenna frowned. "Why? What's wrong?"

Anna shook her head. "I just...have something I need to do." She went to Jenna and pulled her to her feet. "I'll call you...um, Saturday maybe. I have to see Devin tomorrow night."

Jenna walked reluctantly with Anna to the front door and saw Zach standing there. "Who's that?" she whispered.

“Someone I have to...talk to. Please go, Jenna.” Anna could see Zach’s impatience.

Jenna looked like she was going to say something, but Anna pushed her out the door. “I’m sorry, Jen. I’ll talk to you later.” She closed the door and turned back to Zach.

“C’mon, baby. Let’s make up for lost time.”

Two hours later, Zach left and Anna lay on the bed in pain. Zach had brought some toys with him and had tied her to the bed and used them on her. He had done something incredibly painful to her clit and pussy, then fisted her. Her nipples were raw and she had cuts up and down her legs and sides. She knew she had screamed quite a bit and hoped the walls were thick enough that Greg hadn’t heard.

She heard pounding on her door. “Anna!” It was Jenna.

Anna didn’t have the energy to answer the door and hoped Jenna would just go away like Anna had told her to.

She heard a key in the lock and then the door opened. The only people that had keys to her apartment were Alex and Devin. Who was coming in? She trembled in fear.

“Anna?” It was a male voice, but it wasn’t Devin or Alex. But it did sound familiar.

“Anna?” Jenna called. Who was with Jenna and why did they have a key?

She didn’t respond. She was in so much pain and so tired, she just wanted to go to sleep. She was closing her eyes when a tall figure appeared in the doorway. It was...Greg? How did he get into her apartment? Did he have a key? Why did he have a key?

“Wha...?” she whispered as he came nearer.

“Shh.” He brushed her hair gently back from her face. “It’s all right, Anna. I’ll take care of you.”

Anna felt light headed and dizzy. She wanted to close her eyes and just go to sleep. She heard Greg and Jenna talking in urgent tones but their voices were going fuzzy. Blackness was overtaking her. Sweet, sweet blackness.

Anna’s eyes fluttered open. She was still in the guest room of her apartment. Her neighbor, Greg, sat in a chair brought in from the living room, snoring softly. His black t-shirt stretched across his muscular chest and biceps. She had to admit that he was a good-looking guy.

A dark mark on the inside of his right forearm caught her eye. A tattoo? Something about it looked familiar. She sat up to take a closer look and he stirred.

“Good morning,” he said, yawning. “How are you feeling?”

“Fine,” Anna said, still looking at his arm. She got out of bed and walked over to him, but he crossed his arms as she approached. “What’s your tattoo?”

He looked at her, stony faced. “Nothing. Don’t worry about it.”

Anna frowned. “Let me see it. Please.”

Greg shook his head. “No.”

“Why not?”

“Because you don’t need to see it. Now forget about it.”

Anna narrowed her eyes. Why was he hiding it? She suspected she knew the answer, and if it were true...well, she was not going to be happy. But anger wouldn’t get her anything.

Seduction would.

She smiled at him and went to sit on his lap. She was wearing a cami and shorts, and knew she looked hot and tempting.

“Anna, what are you doing?” He straightened in his chair.

“Nothing.” She repeated his words as she straddled his lap and nuzzled his neck. “Don’t worry about it.” She ran her hands up his chest and kissed his neck, then nipped at his earlobe. He groaned and shifted in his seat. Taking his hands, she put them on her breasts, and moaned as he caressed them with strong hands over the thin cotton. Her hands trailed down his biceps, then his forearms. She took his right hand and turned it palm up so she could see his forearm.

On it was a tattoo, about five inches long, of a red striped, crowned, double-tailed lion holding a sword. The Kunze family crest. The same tattoo that Seth had.

She stood suddenly and Greg blinked. “Why do you have Alex’s crest on your arm?” she demanded. Greg looked up at her dazed. Anna hesitated a moment before she slapped him across the cheek.

“Ow! What the fuck?” Greg looked at her with angry eyes. “Why’d you hit me?”

“Why do you have Alex’s crest on your arm?” she repeated.

“How did you...?” He looked down at his arm, which was still facing up. “Fuck. You seduced me,” he accused.

“You wouldn’t answer me,” she retorted.

“For good reason. You weren’t supposed to know.”

“Know what?”

Greg sighed and leaned back in his chair. “Alex brought me here to keep an eye on you. To protect you.”

Anna snorted. “Protect me? From what?”

“From...things that he would normally protect you from.”

“Things he’s incapable of protecting me from, you mean? He did a rotten job when he was here. Why do you think you can do any better?”

“I’m just following orders.”

“Orders? From who?”

“From....” He sighed again. “I can’t say. And don't you dare try and seduce me again,” he warned when Anna took a step closer to him.

Anna hesitated and then frowned, irritation rising to the surface. “Get out. And tell Alex I don’t need his protection. It’s never done me any good,” she added bitterly. She wouldn’t admit that he had protected her from many things in the past. If she wasn’t important enough for him to stay here, then she didn’t want to have anything to do with him. She glared at Greg, who hadn’t moved. “Get out. And stay away from me. I don’t need a useless babysitter.”

“I won’t stay away from you. I don’t answer to you.”

“This is *my* apartment.”

“Which Alex’s family pays for.”

She narrowed her eyes and clenched her jaw. “So, that gives you a right to be in here?”

“Yes.”

“Fine.” She turned on her heel, stormed into her room and got dressed. As she packed the things she would need at the Manor, Greg came in.

“Where are you going?” he demanded.

“None of your business.”

“It *is* my business.”

She turned around and glared at him. “Then figure it out yourself.” She picked up her bag and went to find her car keys. Keys, purse and bag in hand, she stormed out of the apartment. A few minutes later, she was on the freeway, driving toward the Manor.

Why did Greg's presence bother her so much? Because it reminded her of Alex. She didn't want to remember Alex. Alex had abandoned her. She didn't want anything to do with him. He hurt her too much. She'd thought that he was different from other men, but he wasn't.

He was just the same as the rest of them.

The ringing phone startled Alex out of his reading. It was Greg.

"Greg, is Anna all right?" he asked hurriedly in German.

"Yeah. I mean, I think so. She kinda...stormed out of her apartment."

That didn't sound like Anna. "What?"

"Anna had a visitor last night, and when she kicked Jenna out, Jenna knocked on my door and told me what had happened. Said the guy that had knocked hadn't looked very nice and Anna seemed nervous. So we waited and listened for the guy to leave, and he left approximately two hours later. Jenna went to knock on the door, but Anna didn't answer. I got the key and let myself in." Greg sighed. "God, Alex, she was all torn up. I don't know what that bastard did to her, but she was in bad shape. Cuts all over her body. He had...raped her or something. Her pussy and ass were pretty fucked up, too. She passed out as soon as I walked into the room. I patched her up as best as I could and promised Jenna I'd stay with her."

Alex gritted his teeth. He was going to have words with Devin. This had to be something of his doing.

"I'm sorry, Alex. I fell asleep and she woke up before I did and saw my tat. I tried to keep her from seeing any more, but damn if she seduced me and made me lose my mind. Then she slapped me."

"She slapped you?" What was going on in that girl's head?

"She's pretty strong. It hurt." Greg chuckled. "Anyway, she knew that I had something to do with you and she got all mad about it. She, uh, wasn't

very kind when she talked about you. Claimed you abandoned her and wouldn't protect her."

Alex's heart ached. God, couldn't he do anything right with that girl? No wonder she was angry with him.

"Alex?"

"What?"

"I asked what you wanted me to do."

Alex ran his hands through his unkempt hair and across his scruffy chin. He had barely been out of the library in days. "Stay there. Stay out of sight, don't upset her, but keep tabs on her. I'm going to call and have words with Devin."

"She, uh, met my neighbors, Ben and Matt. Remember them?"

"Yes."

"They saw her and Jenna in the hallway and wanted me to introduce them."

"What happened?"

"She and Ben seemed to have hit it off pretty well. We all went out to dinner and he asked her out on a date afterwards."

Alex didn't know how he felt about Anna dating someone. Devin would only stand for her attention to be drawn away from himself for so long. Alex liked the idea of her being happy, but didn't like the idea of another man touching her. Not that he had much choice in the latter area.

"Is he a good guy? Ben, I mean?"

"Yeah. He is."

"All right." He couldn't do anything about it right now. He would just have to hope that she'd be over him by the time he got back to San Francisco. Or at least that he'd be able to woo her away from him. "Just... keep her as safe as you can without her knowing about it."

“Yes, sir.”

They hung up, and a few minutes later Alex called Devin.

“Why are you allowing men to go to Anna’s apartment and abuse her?” he demanded as soon as Devin answered the phone.

“What are you talking about, Alex?” Devin sounded bored.

“Someone went over to her apartment and tore her up real bad. Was he sent to punish her?”

“Oh, that must have been Zach. He has...unusual appetites.”

“And you let him satisfy them with Anna?”

“Why not? She can handle it. Did she call you and complain?”

“No, of course not. My man told me.”

“The babysitter?”

“Devin,” Alex growled, “you better tell this Zach to treat Anna with more respect or I will have Greg tear his head off the next time he tries to touch Anna.”

“You can’t do that,” Devin sputtered.

“I can and I will. You have Red Girls. Have him use them.”

“You can’t tell me what to do.”

Alex gritted his teeth. “If you allow men to go over and hurt Anna like that again, you will start having a tremendous number of unsolved murders in your city. I may not be able to kill you, but I *can* kill a fuckload of other people that you need in your life.”

“You wouldn’t.”

Alex let his tone reflect the hardness he felt. “I would. Having Anna does not mean you have the right to arbitrarily abuse her.”

Devin was quiet for a long moment, and then he huffed. “Fine. I’ll tell Zach to back off.”

“Good.”

“Anything else?” Devin asked sarcastically.

Alex made him wait for it, then spit out a single word. “No.”

“Good.” Devin hung up.

Alex ran his hands through his hair again. If he hadn’t been making so much progress, he would have given up and gone to steal Anna away. But he was finally getting somewhere in his studies. Finally. The very fact that he had been able to threaten Devin successfully was encouraging.

Alex smiled. Very encouraging.

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Marissa Honeycutt

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About Marissa Honeycutt

Marissa's story of Anna began with a dream about being kidnapped with Adam Savage from the *Mythbusters* (Yes, really). Over the next year and a half, it morphed into the story you just read. She has several other stories in progress, one of which is based on her kidnapped dream.

When she's not writing or editing, Marissa is taking care of two young boys, training to be an astronaut, running her household, wrestling with gorillas, playing around on Facebook, promoting whirled peas, and busting her tush for her accounting degree. She enjoys chocolate, air conditioning in the desert's summer heat, really good strawberry margaritas, sleeping, and shopping.

Stalk Marissa:

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Reader's discussion & support group for Part 1: <http://on.fb.me/1qlo0Iq>

Reader's discussion & support group for Part 2: <http://on.fb.me/1szorn9>

Deleted scenes coming soon to Marissa's blog:

<http://marissahoneycutt.wordpress.com/>

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