

FOUND

mega

Knot
My Pack
Omegaverse

LIORA ROSE

Found Omega

KNOT MY PACK OMEGAVERSE

LIORA ROSE



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Found Omega



I'm at the mercy of my enemy...

...too bad he has none for an omega like me.

The most dangerous man in the city plans to destroy me. And he's making good on his dark promises, ripping me from my alphas, the only place I feel I belong.

Now, tossed into a nightmare of my enemy's making, my heart is broken.

So is my hope.

Which gets crushed even more at my enemy's cruel hands when my three alphas attempt to rescue me and fail. Big time.

It looks like it's all over for me.

But my alphas aren't giving up so easily. They'll stop at nothing to save me, even if it means risking everything.

Only I can't help but think the worst, that my sexy alphas might lose their lives trying to save mine. And it looks like I was right to fear the worst. I can't bear to be the cause of their pain.

But I am. I'm the reason all hell has broken loose and the reason it looks like we're all doomed to a painful death and a final goodbye to all that might have been.

Is it all over, is there any hope left among the ruins of our desperate plan to escape?

Prologue



SHADOW

10 Years Earlier

Knowing someone wanted you dead was the hardest. Walking quickly through to a place where the enemy possibly waited, ready to lunge out when you least expected it, put me on edge. At sixteen, I'd faced my fair share of fights and always won. Otherwise, my father would kick the snot out of me, but this was different. We'd arrived in Liberty at night, risking discovery because my father had insisted we were on the safe side of the city. That no one would recognize we were from the Matteis family, considering we had no association with the Matteis mafia family. I still felt vulnerable, fear sliding over my skin as though we were being watched.

Smog hung low in the air, the city appearing gloomy with a hint of rain. Cars raced down the road, storefronts buzzing with activity, and I kept staring at everyone we passed, expecting the worst.

When a car suddenly backfired, the boom carrying through the chatter on the busy sidewalk, my father flinched. He frantically glanced over his shoulder, wearing the same scowl he offered me on too many occasions. Then he straightened, tugging on the collar of his jacket.

“Stay close and hurry the hell up,” he snarled, with a harsh glare toward me.

My father hated loud sounds. They made him jumpy and furious—usually directed at me. I found it easier to stay out of

his way, so there were no explosive arguments.

“You are going to love the cannoli, Shane,” my mom bragged, looking at me. “They serve the best outside of Sicily.”

“Yeah, I can’t wait.” I gave her a smile. I could count on one hand the number of times we left the countryside and came to the heart of the city. Last time we were here was years ago. Father and I had argued. This time, I promised to bite my tongue for my mom’s sake. The least I could do was not argue on my birthday.

A frigid wind raised the hair on the back of my nape on our fast walk as we dodged the crowds. I rubbed my arms as my father embraced Mom, their pace carving through the masses who were out late-night shopping. He kept her close, considering people around us were mostly male Alphas and Betas. Omegas like my mother were rare, but once they were marked by an Alpha, she was claimed, and by law, any other man who hurt her would be imprisoned. It didn’t stop them, the fuckheads, which was why Mom never went out alone. The dangers were too many. I often kept her company if she had to visit the shops, and kept her protected.

We stopped in front of the quaint stone restaurant, windows open, Italian instrumental music streaming out, and fake ivy surrounding the doorway. A hefty man dressed in black pants and a matching button-up shirt that sat open wide at his throat spoke with my father.

A quick exchange of money through a handshake, a slap on Dad’s back, and we were ushered inside. That was how Liberty worked.

Anything or anyone could be bought if you had enough money.

It was a broken city, divided into sectors, each ruled over by different gangs, but at the top of that hierarchy sat two mafia families, the Matteis and Shchavlev families. They controlled everything... another reason Dad had us living in the woods and as far from the danger as possible.

“No guarantees we were safe,” he’d tell us. “So, better we live in the sticks than in the wolf’s den.”

After all, my father was the grandson of one of the most dangerous men in Liberty. My great-grandfather was still the mafia kingpin of the Matteis family. I might be a Matteis by blood, but I had yet to meet most of my extended family, and it would stay that way if my father had anything to do with it, which I resented. What if everything Father told me about them was untrue, especially considering he hated most people he encountered?

Moving through the crammed restaurant, the smell of garlic and pasta sauce had my stomach grumbling, desperate for food. Around us, every seat was taken. I followed my parents to the back of the place, my gaze sweeping over the families and couples enjoying incredible meals—lasagne, pasta, gnocchi, and so much red wine flowed. What everyone had in common were smiles and laughter. I decided I liked it there.

Did I mention we hardly went out? Mom had been so excited, so I agreed for her sake, knowing she hated being stuck in the countryside.

We ended up at a table with a chequered tablecloth along the back wall with three chairs, crammed in tight near the kitchen door, complete with a tea candle.

“Oh, this is perfect for us and so cute,” my mom said, always the optimist. It was what I adored about her.

“This seems a bit small.” My father scowled and glanced around the room. “Take a seat. I’ll be back.”

“Sweetie, maybe...” Her words went unheard as my father vanished back toward the front of the restaurant. “You heard your father,” Mom said, a nervous smile on her lips.

My skin crawled with the sensation of being watched. Looking around, I spotted a few people from nearby tables staring at us. They must have heard Father’s small rant. I tensed with embarrassment. I wasn’t the only one on edge. There was no logical reason for the worry since we hadn’t

encountered any trouble, but the distress on Mom's face deepened the lines at the corners of her mouth, which in turn worried me.

"I told him not to create a fuss tonight," Mom murmured, mostly to herself. Her hair was jet black, hanging in perfect waves down to her shoulders. Her hazel eyes kept glancing around the room nervously, almond shaped eyes that were like mine, along with her dark hair. I'd been told I got everything else from my father—his hard jawline and nose, broad shoulders, and I already stood as tall as him at five-nine. Mom also insisted I'd gained his stubbornness.

But not his anger. Never his fucking anger. I vowed I'd never lose control like he did.

A waiter turned up at our table with a thin smile and a basket of bread, along with two small bowls of olive oil and salt. "Compliments of the house."

Starving, I dove in, and for a moment, I let myself believe the night would be different, that nothing could go wrong, seeing it was my birthday.

But that was my mistake, wasn't it? Because it didn't take much for things to go haywire.

A single moment.

A scream somewhere in the room.

And a sinking feeling that it somehow involved my father.

I should have known, should have insisted we stayed home. Instead, dread clawed through me. Who gave a fuck if I had gotten into an argument with my father—a useless, stupid thing that fear was? It was better than the unknown.

Mother was on her feet in seconds, making a small whimpering sound.

My heart hammered as I jerked my attention to the other side of the room, where Father was shoving another man I didn't recognize.

Fuck. My blood ran cold.

Mom ran toward him, and I shot to my feet, tangled in the fucking chair that caught on my shoelaces. I tugged them free and swung back around just as the ear-piercing sound of a bullet rang through the restaurant. The shot slammed into my father, dead center in the chest, throwing him backward and right onto someone's table.

Blood. Screams.

Then two more aimed at my mother.

Bang. Bang.

I yelled, my world blotting with fury, with dread, with fucking devastation.

“No!”

Then pandemonium broke out. Everyone screamed and ran in every direction.

Fear pummeled into me as my head roared to go fight for my parents, to kill that asshole. But a man grabbed my arm, pulling me toward the back exit door with the rest of the panicked crowd.

“Let me go,” I yelled.

“Run, boy,” he said, ushering me to get out of the restaurant.

Someone else shoved me from behind, but my knees buckled, and I stumbled, freeing myself from the masses who moved like a thrashing river. I strived to push past the panicked masses back through the restaurant, knocked into tables, tripping on overturned chairs, and doing anything to reach my parents. Fear punched into me as I desperately tried to reach them, tears stinging my eyes.

“Don't be dead... don't you be fucking dead,” I mumbled, pushing aside anyone in my way, leaping over chairs, over plates. I stepped into a puddle of spaghetti, lurching back as my foot slid forward. I crashed into a table but drove myself back up and lunged forward as someone smacked into my shoulder in their rush.

The air was charged with terror, and a deep groan roared inside me with a hollowness that felt like someone had just scooped out my insides.

Propelling myself forward, I burst out from the chaos right in front of my father, sprawled on his back across the table, plates, food, blood spilled everywhere. He lay unmoving, blood spilling from his chest and collecting in a pool around him, some of it dripping over the edges like a red curtain.

Wiping the tears away, I tried my best to distance myself from the reality of staring down at my dead father, but the screams around me, the splintering ache in my chest, made it unbearable. Jabs of reality came quick and fierce, driving me back a few steps because I was going to be sick.

As I lowered my gaze, it was my mother I found on the floor, lying on her back, legs tangled, dead from two shots. One in her shoulder, the other in the middle of her forehead. Empty eyes stared up at the ceiling.

A terrifying scream scratched my throat raw as I dropped to my knees, tears drenching my cheeks. They couldn't be dead... not fucking like this. It happened so fast...

I hated this world. Hated that we came into the damned city. Most of all, I hated myself that I didn't stop my father from bringing us here.

Taking my mom's hand in mine, I clung to it, her skin still warm, and I sobbed. My heart pulsing with the loss, I gripped onto Mom harder, willing her to come back, not to leave me alone.

The earlier loathing darkened now that everything had been taken from me. Its grip constricted around my throat as my pulse thundered in my head. I tried to think, to breathe, but nothing worked. A pathetic cry spilled from my lips just as a shadow fell over me.

"Kid, get out of here," a deep raspy voice spoke. But I didn't move, I couldn't.

His strong hand snatched the back of my shirt and hauled me to my feet, ripping Mom's hand out of mine. It flopped

back down, and fury surged through me. Spinning, I savagely shoved my hand against the man's chest.

“Get the fuck off me,” I barked harsh words that felt like acid in my throat. “My parents...” Whatever I was going to say trailed off as I choked on the words because my family was dead. Taken in mere seconds, and I was so fucking angry. A sickening feeling rose through me, one of fierce fury, of retribution.

“Listen up, kid,” the gorilla said with his thick, raspy voice. He fisted my shirt across my chest, hauling me with such speed across the room, he didn't feel my hits to his face and arm. I struck him still the same, tears blurring my vision. I cried out, fucking furious that everything I knew had been ripped away. Lifting me off my feet, he had his face in mine, growling. “I'm doing you a favor, you hear?” he muttered in a hushed voice.

“What the fuck? Let me go. M-my parents were just killed.”

“Rusty,” someone called out from deeper in the restaurant.

The brute glanced over his shoulder in response, then licked his lips almost nervously as he looked back at me.

“Your dad was a Matteis. He knew he was forbidden from coming back into the city. It was just his bad luck that a group of our enemy, Shchavlev mafia enforcers, heard he was at Giuseppe's Restaurant. We're going to get revenge for what they did. Sorry, kid. Wrong place, wrong time for them, but there's still a chance for you. So, get the fuck away from here before they come for you. I'll distract them so you can get away. Understand?”

“Who are you?” I gasped.

“I work for your great-grandfather.”

I didn't get a chance to ask more questions before he shoved me out of the restaurant, where I tripped and hit the hard sidewalk on my stomach. Swiveling back around, the door slammed shut, the windows closing just as quickly. Outside, people were still scrambling to get away.

My whole body was shaking. I sat there, tears blurring my vision, fright slashing through me. The events were on repeat in my head, a terrible jumble of desperate, flashing images. Of blood, dead eyes, and my life ripped out from me in the blink of an eye. My throat tightened like someone had rammed their fist into it, and at that moment, I knew...

I'd never be the same again.

One



SHADOW

Present Day

“Go check on Trinity,” I barked at my Beta, Daniel, my nerves snapping under my skin.

He jumped to his feet, as did my second-in-command, Aspen, both as wired up as me. They burst out of the room, leaving me alone with dark thoughts, with regrets.

I’d told Trinity that her friend, Frannie, had been found dead in a dumpster, and it was a fucking mistake to tell her. I should have taken her aside, just the two of us, been there for her instead of dumping the devastating news on her. She’d run out of the kitchen bawling her eyes out, and I was shattering on the inside.

Up on my feet, I paced, unsure how long I waited for someone to return, but it was killing me. I left the kitchen because I had to fix this and make it up to Trinity—show her that nothing would happen to her, and we’d find who killed her friend. That since meeting her, something had come over me so powerful, so earth moving, I’d tear apart anyone who laid a hand on her.

She’d barely been with us, but I already knew she belonged to me. I’d decimate the fucking city to make it so... I just had to make sure she understood this.

Daniel suddenly burst through the back door, face pale, eyes wide with terror, his hands flying about crazily like they

did whenever he panicked and couldn't find his words.

Dread collided with me at his reaction.

I grabbed hold of his jaw, forcing me to face him, hissing, "What happened?"

"S-she... Trinity's not anywhere. The front gates are open and the guards are dead. Viper's knocked out, too," he gasped.

His pulse drummed against my hand beneath his skin, and I released him from my grasp.

I stumbled from Daniel, fear and anger tearing through me, his words choking me. Had she somehow escaped, gone to find her dead friend? The moment the thought hit my mind, I tossed it aside. She wouldn't have gotten past the guards or Viper, and that was when reality punched me right in the solar plexus.

Someone had taken her.

Fuck!

"Shadow," Daniel started, moving toward me, but I was burning with fury, my heart pounding at the thought of the worst-case scenarios flaring in my mind.

Shoving him aside, I threw myself outside into the backyard. I scanned the place, finding no one, so I pivoted and darted around the mansion to the front of the property. That was when reality started to come into view.

Aspen was kneeling down by the driveway next to Viper, who lay unconscious. The gates at the end of the property sat open, unguarded, and my two guards were on the ground, blood surrounding their bodies.

Ice formed in my veins that we'd had a breach. I sprinted over to Aspen, who jerked to his feet on my approach.

"Viper's alive. He'll survive," Aspen growled, panic twisting his expression. "Fuck, man, someone stole Trinity. They took her from right under our nose." Aspen paced frantically, hands fisted by his side. "We gotta find her. Someone broke in, knocked out the guards, and Viper must

have been in the way. For all we know, it's the assholes who stole my merch the other day and came back for more."

"Where the fuck is she?" I snarled, retreating, needing to turn the yard and house upside down.

"I checked everywhere... she's not here."

"Fuck!" I roared, my voice booming. Thoughts came too fast, my heart thundering in my chest. "Who the fuck took her?" Fear scorched my insides because in this world, I was the first to know Omegas weren't safe. Alphas killed to own one... especially one in heat. And my little Omega was on the verge of going into a full-blown explosive heat. Her scent would drive any Alpha to insanity, and whoever had her would rut her until... I clenched my hands. I couldn't let my thoughts go there, or I'd never return.

Fury ignited within me, and I snapped my attention up.

"Get Daniel to drive to the nearest town and see what he can find out... if there were any newcomers in town." We were located so remotely out of the city, I controlled most in the nearby village, and they were my eyes to anyone coming our way.

Aspen sprinted into the house, and I stared down at Viper, lying on the grass on his back, breathing shallowly, but he survived, so I sprinted up to the front gates. Both guards had been with me for years, and it hurt me to see bullets in the middle of their heads. Clean deaths. They didn't even see it coming. Whoever did it planned this.

Something in my gut told me that this wasn't a coincidence as Aspen had implied.

I reached down and checked the men's throats. No pulse, so I dragged them off the driveway and onto the lawn for now. I moved to the controls outside of the gate and the panel wasn't damaged. That meant the intruders had a way to access the gate after killing the guards, and for both guards to die the same way told me the shooter was a pro. He would have taken them out fast.

“Trinity,” I murmured under my breath. “I’m going to find you.”

At that same moment, the grunt of an engine and the grit of tires on asphalt came from behind me. I turned and stepped aside just as Daniel came roaring up the driveway in our black Mustang. Fury settled on his expression. He flew through the gates like a madman, turning the black car, tires screeching as he swung left and took off.

A manic edge came over me, and I trembled, hands balled into fists. Glancing up at the stone towers on either side of the gates, the cameras were still intact. They would have recorded the whole incident. I spun and ran back down the driveway. Aspen caught up with me.

“What if they’ve—”

I cut Aspen off with a growl. “Fuck no. Don’t say that shit to me. We’re going to find her.”

I missed her scent terribly, the sound of her voice, the taste of her arousal in the air. She was the most delicious thing I’d ever had.

“Shut the gates and bring Viper indoors, then meet me in my office.” Pushing forward, I didn’t waste a second and sprinted upstairs to my room. Frantically, I ripped open my laptop, hitting the mouse madly to open up the surveillance software that kept recorded footage of our property because you couldn’t trust any fucker in this world.

The battery symbol suddenly flashed red, and my screen went black.

I yelled, my fist driving into the table, leaving an indent. “Not fucking now!” Furious and heaving for breath, I desperately snatched the power cord from my bag and jammed it into the back of the laptop and power-socket. Tapping the buttons madly, I tensed. “Fuck, just work already. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.”

The battery symbol flashed once more, and I had to wait, but everything was excruciating. I snatched the mouse, ripped it free, and hurled it at the wall, where it smashed to pieces. I

was short of throwing the whole fucking laptop for making me wait. Rubbing a hand down my face, I was frustrated as fuck and feeling completely useless.

For years, we'd been talking about finding an Omega and had been saving up for one, but deep in my mind, I had been ready to accept that we might never get one. They were close to impossible to acquire, and the chance of finding a pure one was harder than winning the lottery. If by chance we did finally get one, there was always the issue of them being linked to one of the mafia families.

Look how that turned out. We kidnapped Trinity from an institute run by the Shchavlev family, the same monsters who had butchered my parents.

What I never accounted for was how infatuated I'd become with Trinity, how her scent sank into my soul and completely destroyed me. How I craved every inch of her, how I missed her laugh, her voice, the way she touched me. Fuck, if I didn't get her back, her absence would ruin me.

I slid onto the chair, trying to get hold of myself. *Think, man. Think.* Coming up blank on where to start looking, I started manically hitting the keyboard once more just as the screen came to life.

"Yes!" Desperately, I opened up the surveillance application, and several moments later, I had all twelve monitor screens in front of me. With some fiddling, I managed to rewind them until I spotted the intruders. A growl scratched the back of my throat, and I leaned in closer, my pulse on fire. Aspen burst into the room, heaving for breath.

"I found them," I snarled at the footage as I hit play.

Aspen leaned forward, hands on the desk, eyes glued to the screen.

My gaze flicked across the two monitors showing a black, unmarked car pulling up at the front gates. Windows slid down and two shots took down the guards so fast, I knew instantly we were dealing with a big mafia family. Ice chilled my veins

because my thoughts flew right to the news we'd discovered about Trinity. Was it the Shchavlev?

Had they found her?

Aspen grunted and gave me a side stare. He had the same thought.

I kept watching. Three men climbed out of the black sedan with no licence plates. Two of the guys were wearing balaclavas, the third with a wide-brimmed hat, so I couldn't see his face, but he was bigger, wider, and by his movements, slower.

"Who's the old dude?" Aspen asked.

I shook my head, observing one of the men approaching the gate panel outside the property, hitting the pin with precision, then slapping his palm on the panel, and the gates opened.

"The fuck!" I spat. "We had a mole the whole time feeding them intel!"

"Are you kidding me right now?" Aspen smashed his fist into the table, sending everything rocking. "Whoever the hell that is, they had to know about Trinity."

I paused the videos and opened up the registry of everyone who used the gate entry and who the last person had been. A few clicks and the list of names appeared. Mike Rogers sat at the top, and I clenched my jaw. Viper had told me Mike accidentally let Roman into our mansion a week ago, who then attempted to hurt Trinity. Viper said he'd dealt with Mike, but he hadn't done enough. Fuck, the one time he should have killed someone, he didn't.

"That weasel," Aspen hissed. "He double-crossed us. Fucking prick."

My head spun, questions battling in my head.

Flicking back to the surveillance videos, we watched frantically as the three rushed onto our property, Mike taking the lead. At first, it appeared they were headed right for our front door, when Viper appeared out from the woods in our

yard, startled as much as the intruders. The other guy with the balaclava leapt toward Viper before he had time to react, slamming his fist into his face, then striking a fist to his temple. Viper dropped to the ground. Something had them pausing, and they all turned their attention toward the backyard. They changed directions and hurried that way.

Aspen and I leaned in more, following them on the different surveillance cameras as they came up on Trinity, who'd run deep into the yard and fell to her knees crying.

Just watching her in pain tightened my chest. I wanted to reach through the screen, collect her into my arms, and protect her. Wipe her tears and tell her I'd keep her safe, that she would never end up like her friend. Except, I'd fucked that up, hadn't I? I couldn't even keep my word to ensure her safety.

I seethed, watching the intruder with a mask hit her across the back of her head. The older man closed in and reached out for her neck, then she fell.

"What the fuck did he do?" Aspen barked, jabbing a finger into my screen, sending the whole laptop flying off the desk.

"Fuck!" I snarled.

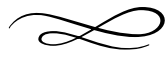
He jumped up to retrieve it while I shot to my feet, pacing, fury washing over me. I kept seeing the image of the men attacking Trinity over and over.

"The older man jabbed something into her neck then they took her from us before any of us had a fucking clue."

Someone cleared their voice from the doorway. I jerked my head up to see Viper standing there, rubbing the huge bruise on his forehead and scowling.

"Well, while you fuckers were wasting your time being sissies in the kitchen, I was trying to stop intruders. And we're in huge fucking shit because the Shchavlev mafia just took Trinity."

Two



TRINITY

When I woke up, my head was throbbing with pain. I jerked up to get off the bed and found a velvet-lined cuff around my ankle.

And it wasn't my bed.

I was in a gilded room with no windows and had no idea where I was.

Climbing out of the bed, still bleary-eyed, the unfamiliar room spun around me. I blinked against the golden walls and ceiling, the matching chandelier dripping with crystals, bedsheets, which were golden silk. It hurt my head, and I squinted against so much gold. All of it was a bit too much.

It was only then that I realized I wore a matching nightdress, and it creeped me out to find I had nothing on underneath. I didn't want to think too much about how I ended up dressed this way.

There was nothing nostalgic about the place to remind me of anything familiar, but the reality of being kidnapped struck me. The last thing I remembered was someone hitting me across the back of the head and something sharp jabbed into my neck. Then everything became a blur.

As if on cue, a throb pulsed across my skull, and I rubbed it where it felt tender beneath my fingertips. Of course, my mind skipped to Bakewell at the Institute and that she'd somehow found me and drugged me. Well, except for the fact that nothing at the Institute I came from was made of gold. The stone building smelled moldy and was always cold. If

there had been any thread of wealth invested in the place, it would have been in Bakewell's office. The Omegas slept with thin blankets on beds that creaked when you moved around in them.

Wherever I ended up was somewhere different, and it had me trembling. Standing, my bare feet cushioned in the fine black rug, I tugged on the chain attached to my ankle and the bed, not going anywhere fast. I kept pulling at it, fear rising up my spine that I'd become someone's prisoner.

The door suddenly opened, catching me off guard. Heart in my throat, I twisted around, blinking to make sense of who stood in the doorway.

An older man stepped forward, salt and pepper hair trimmed neatly with a receding hairline above his temples. He had tanned skin, thick forearms where his white button-up shirt was rolled up to his elbows as if he'd been out working outdoors. Except he wore tailored black pants, shiny black shoes, and I was convinced his outfit cost more than everything I owned.

His smile came with confidence, with expectation. Seeing something dark behind those blue eyes, my memories came flooding back—his square, stoic face, piercing stare. He'd been with the men who came at me from Shadow's compound before he struck.

He eyed me, scrutinizing every inch of me, and I couldn't tell if he waited for me to show weakness, to cry, or to beg for mercy. But I wasn't going to roll over and show him my belly, not when everything I'd been through came rushing over me like a restless storm...

Going into heat at the Glass Slipper Ball, kidnapped by Shadow and his team, me hiding out with them as they took care of me, but a prisoner was still that, right? Then I learned of my friend's death. Frannie had recently become an Omega, then went missing. And when her body was found, I ran out of the mansion in tears, leading me to this current chaotic mess I'd landed in. I had no clue what situation the three Alphas

were in, but I was facing down my new kidnapper... and all I could think was that I had to run at the first chance I got.

“Hello, girl. How are you feeling?” he asked, his voice deep and raspy, as if he’d spent his life chain-smoking. “You had my men and I running around like animals until we tracked you down.”

“Wh-Who are you? What game are you playing at, kidnapping me and locking me in here?” I stepped back, bumping into the bed, but he followed me. Towering over me, he grasped my chin and tilted my head back to stare up at him. The man had to be at least in his sixties, maybe older, but he looked like he could bench press a bear, and there was emptiness behind his gaze, barren as though he carried no soul.

A sense of foreboding raced down my spine, and trying to tame my overactive imagination was impossible since I kept thinking I was going to die. Or worse, that he’d kill me just as Frannie had been. My stomach clenched as my mind frantically calculated how far I’d get if I got him to unleash me from the restraint around my ankle.

“Trinity, I know you have a lot of questions, and I’ll answer them, but all you need to know for now is that you’re safe. No Alpha will harm you under my watch, and your heat has been suppressed for now.”

Alarm bells were going off in my head that he knew my name. He had to work for Bakewell?

“I don’t belong to anyone,” I blurted, bravely holding his stare. “Why am I locked up in this gilded cage? Who are you?”

I wasn’t an idiot and understood what someone like me meant to an Alpha like the man in front of me. He stared at me like an object. My feelings didn’t matter because in our world, Omegas were possessions. We were few in number and instead of treating us with care, we were sold and fought over, abused and killed.

“Trinity, my girl,” he grunted, his thumb roughly rubbing the length of my jaw, keeping his voice calm. “You are finally home. I had placed you in the Bakewell Institute for Girls when you were a child for safekeeping. I don’t exactly have a life made for raising a young girl on my own. A girl who’d one day hopefully blossom into an Omega.”

I held his cold blue eyes as I gasped, my insides rattling, my head hurting. I held onto that confusion, to the tears, and just stared at him.

His lips curled upward, the corners of his eyes creasing from how deeply he smiled.

“Now, don’t make your father wait any longer and look happy to see me.”

“F-father?” My stomach was in knots, and the air knocked out of my lungs. I wasn’t sure if I was breathing at that moment and could no longer feel my body. The room tilted around me, and I blinked at the man who wasn’t what I expected as my dad. I grew up dreaming of my parents swooping in to save me from the Institute, to say someone had stolen me, and they’d been searching for me ever since. To then take me home to a cozy home where my mother would spoil me with her favorite meals, and my father would tell me how hard he’d been working to track me down because he’d never given up hope.

Never in my imagination did that involve him owning a golden room and telling me that he placed me under Bakewell’s care on purpose. My arms shook at my sides, and I hated how my throat thickened, how tears pricked in my eyes.

Not waiting for a response, he dragged me into his arms, pressing me against his broad chest, hugging me. He smelled of gunpowder and perspiration. The heavy sigh falling from his mouth almost made me believe it was genuine. I desperately wanted to believe it, but how could I when he’d been the reason I grew up in a horrible place where I was tortured and abused? My inner turmoil was like acid in my chest, with the desperation of how long I’d yearned to meet my parents, to discover I wasn’t alone in this world.

There I was, with my real father, and he left me feeling like something was really wrong, like I should be recoiling from him.

When he finally released me, he rubbed the tears from under my eyes with his thumbs, offering me a lopsided smile.

“There’s no room for tears. You’re back home now.”

I made a strange, choking sound when I attempted to speak with the heaviness of emotions squeezing the life out of me. On my second attempt, I said, “Why would you put me into the Institute? I hated it there.”

“I have much to tell you.” His lips thinned as he brushed loose strands of pink hair out of my eyes and behind my ear. “But first, let me show you my mansion.”

He crouched down in front of me, unlatching the shackle from around my ankle, and my skin crawled where he touched me. Back on his feet, he slid his arm under mine, and with a tight grin, he walked me to the door.

“There’s so much you’ve missed that I want to show you.”

He spoke kindly, and that battle inside me raged on what I could or couldn’t believe. Part of me just wanted to cry out. I felt trapped, like a bird in a cage, knowing I would never spread my wings and be free again because despite his tender words, there was something dark behind his eyes when he looked at me. Something that made me uncomfortable. I desperately wanted to believe somehow things would be alright, that there was a reason I felt unsafe around my father. Still, my insides quivered.

We emerged from the room into a small foyer that led to a much larger greeting room, completely made of marble and gold trimmings. The handrails from the sweeping staircase glinted, as did the elaborate painting in golden frames—paintings I had to do a double-take, convinced they were all famous paintings I’d read about in books. And right at the top of the stairs was *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais, the lifeless woman floating in the lake. Nearby was another naked woman riding a horse, her head slumped forward... I’d seen that

image of Lady Godiva, but I couldn't recall the artist's name. I must have appeared in awe.

"I'm an avid collector of pre-Raphaelite art." He still held my hand tightly, swinging me away from the steps, while my gaze took in the rest of the elaborate home, the gold on the ceiling, the statues of naked women with flowing hair, and enormous light fixtures with dozens of lights. How rich was my father? With this wealth, he should have been able to afford a nanny to take care of me as a child.

"This way," he said, just as an explosive sound boomed from behind us. It echoed so loud, I jumped in my skin and frantically twisted around. A sting of fear lingered in my chest as I sensed my father's grip on my arm tightening.

Across the expansive entrance room, a man with dark, wild eyes had burst into the mansion, the double doors behind him shoved open, one of them hanging off its hinges. He was wide and built like an ox.

Part of me was thankful we were far from the crazy man, the other part screamed at me to run away from.

"Where the fuck is Arman?" the man bellowed, spittle flying from his mouth like he was frothing with fury.

I stumbled backward, and my father drew me closer to him as the madman charged toward us.

"Arman, you promised me that I'd repaid my debt."

Dread gripped me, while I realized I had no clue what my father's name was until then—Arman. I trembled with the kind of fright I hadn't felt before. My heart was drumming, and I stepped backward to run for my life, but my father held me in place.

"You don't run," he growled. "We're not cowards."

Panting for breath, I found myself sidling up against him because the room was spinning from how scared I'd become.

In a flash, three guards, all in black, darted toward the intruder, tearing him down and bringing him to his knees.

Dread twisted my nerve endings as I watched them, while my father turned me away from the fight and drew me down another hallway lit up by my golden lights. My heart was thumping, and my arms covered in shivers from the intrusion. Behind us, the sound of their struggles continued.

“Who is that man? What’s going on?” I gasped, startled by how calm my father was behaving. The situation since I woke up in this place was growing weirder.

When my father’s gaze found mine, he tried to smile, but it looked strained. “Nothing for you to worry about, my girl. My men will handle it.”

It was at that exact moment that he spoke that two gun shots went off behind us.

Screaming, I shuddered, ducking and covering my head. Father’s face twisted as I glanced at him. He wasn’t even cowering. His lips pursed as he stared back to where we’d come from, and I could have sworn he’d just transformed into something dark because gone was the smiling man who kidnapped me to his home.

“For fuck’s sake,” he hissed and marched back toward the commotion, his arms swinging by his sides.

Of course, I inched forward to watch because I was close to screaming again. I was tightly wound but curious. If given the chance, I’d run out of the house, yet at the same time, I couldn’t run from pure terror.

My father marched toward the intruder who had the gun ripped out of his hand by a guard, clear it was him shooting. *Fuck*. He had just rushed into the mansion and was randomly shooting. Who did that?

Trembling, I studied as my father reached the man who was forced down onto his knees. He was crying, his words incomprehensible, and a part of me pitied him. He was the epitome of someone desperate and at the end of their rope. I wasn’t defending his actions, but why was he crying?

My father reached for something at his waist. The next second, he was drawing a gun and raised it to the man’s head.

Bang.

He shot him without a moment of pause, without care.

Blood splashed from the back of the man's head, hitting the marble floor and a nearby gold statue.

I screamed again, and my heart was thundering so hard, I was certain I'd pass out. My father killed a man, just like that.

Fuck. Fuck.

I recoiled, scared for my life, crying and hugging myself.

"Clean this fucking mess before it stains," my father barked, his voice ricocheting off the marble walls. "Find out who the fuck he is and get rid of the body."

I stared incredulously at him. He was my father, my family. I wasn't sure I wanted to be part of his family because in the end, what if he gets pissed with me to the point that he shoots me? Fear slammed into me once more, rattling me down to my bones. Before I could think of what to do next, I was running down the corridor and away from him, frantically searching for a way out.

When a door sat slightly open farther ahead, I ran and shoved myself into the room, stupidly thinking it was my escape. Instead, I stumbled into a sitting room with more gold trimming and dark wooden furniture. A bar to my right had a wall of shelves filled with what looked like an endless number of whiskey bottles, and black leather couches on the other end sat in front of a stone fireplace with a huge stag's head hanging above the mantle. I stood on a bear rug, complete with the poor animal's head. In front of me was a wall made of glass, floor to ceiling, and I stumbled closer.

Outside lay the city of Liberty, spread outward like a spider's web, interconnected by the bridges over the rivers and roads running through the city. I stared down at the place, instantly recognizing the lofty-brown Bakewell Institute for Girls in the industrial side of the city, which was why we rarely saw anyone down on the streets. Except, from my position in this mansion, it became obvious we were up on one of the hills that surrounded the city, and that my father wasn't

just another powerful Alpha. He was someone dangerous and really important.

The thump of footsteps entering the room had me whipping around to find him strolling into the room with that fake smile on his face. Unease choked me at how much he scared me.

“Trinity, I’m sorry you had to witness that,” he said with less aggression in his voice and a softness in his eyes, as though he’d become a different man from the one I’d just seen.

A shiver danced up my spine, thinking of him killing that man ruthlessly. With my back flush to the window I felt trapped. I watched him stroll across the room, then pour himself a glass of whiskey from a crystal decanter. Fear blared in my head like a pulsing siren. Seeing the splatter of several bloody dots across his forearms made the situation so much more terrifying, and a manic sensation rolled over me. One that demanded I run, and do whatever it took to escape.

He approached me, still smiling, the hardness from his features replaced by a softness that I realized then wasn’t real. He was a chameleon. My father sipped on his drink, and unlike before when he appeared almost purple in the face with fury at the intruder, he now resembled someone who had just emerged from a spa retreat.

“Don’t look so scared. You remind me of your mother too much,” he said, almost amused, then kept sipping from his whiskey.

“You just killed that man in cold blood. Of course, I’m going to be scared. Fuck, you stole me from where I was living, and I didn’t even know I had a father. So, yes, I’m panicking right now.”

He set his glass down on the bar and approached me. I couldn’t bring myself to hold still, taking a sidestep at his approach. A darkness spread through my veins, stealing any light I had held onto. I felt as if there was no escaping this mansion, that whatever my father wanted with me would happen, regardless.

His steps paused in front of me, and I lifted my chin, clenching my jaw to stop my teeth from chattering from the fear swallowing me. Stroking his hand down my cheek, he stared at me.

“You look so much like your mother.”

“Is she here?” I whispered, trying my best not to burst out crying or feel like I’d just been caught by a monster. I tried to push away the memories that came to me of all the times I cried at the Bakewell Institute, how I doubted my parents cared about me. Standing in front of me, there was no emotion of him missing me, just words that sounded hollow.

He shook his head. “She was an incredible opera singer. Before I married her, she filled theatres every night of the week. They came from beyond our city to watch the young sixteen-year-old sing.” He grinned, a gesture that appeared genuine, and it made me think he must have truly loved her. “But after our wedding, she went into heat and fell sick with bronchitis, so she never returned to singing.”

I blinked at him. My mother used to be an opera singer? The only time I sang was as a kid at the institute choirs, but I’d never been told I sounded special. I wanted to know more about her.

“Is she here?” I asked once more, to which he just stared at me blankly. As much as I hated it, I had my answer, didn’t I? Part of me wondered if I should cry for her, but how could I feel grief for something I never had—a mother and a father. They abandoned me, yet something tightened in my chest to know I’d never get to meet my real mother.

“Why am I here?” Thinking about Shadow, Aspen, and Viper, my anxiety escalated that they’d be worried for me. A part of me missed them, which confused me, considering I had tried to escape them, but they’d grown on me and kept me safe. My heart beat faster at my thoughts, wondering how I could reach out to them and find out if they were alright.

Father’s intense stare distracted me from my thoughts, and he appeared amused.

“You’re here because you’re my daughter. Is there any more reason needed? I suggest you stay in your room as it’s not always safe outside.” He collected my arm in his hand, but I pulled away from him.

“Please tell me what’s going on. Why did you leave me at the Institute for years? Why didn’t you visit me?”

He let his head drop, exhaling loudly.

“My girl, I know it’s hard for you to understand, but it will become clear soon, I promise. For now, I don’t want to make you worry.” He held my gaze, then collected my arm once more, his fingers holding me with more force. There was a flash of something dark behind his eyes—just like I’d seen when he confronted the intruder he’d shot dead.

“For now, all you need to know is that you’re safe and should be proud that you have one of the most powerful family bloodlines running through your veins.”

“Yeah?” I asked. “What bloodline is that? I grew up as Trinity Ainsley, but I’ve never heard of anyone in power with that name.” My thoughts scattered as I waited, unsure what to expect, but I knew I wasn’t going to like it.

He smirked. “That was your mother’s maiden name, and how I registered you during your time at the Institute. You, my girl, are a Shchavlev. Your bloodline will open up doors for you. Wait and see where it will take you.”

Shchavlev.

The mafia family.

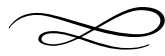
Oh, fuck!

Just hearing that name that belonged to one of the most dangerous mafia families in Liberty had my insides shattering like glass. There was no ignoring who my father was—the leader of a mafia family.

Tears spilled down my cheeks and emotions knotted in my chest. For some reason, the first thing that came to mind was Shadow. He came from the mafia family who was at war with the Shchavlev family—the Matteis.

I had a sinking feeling I'd just lost him and his pack.

Three



ASPEN

Fury burned through my veins as I shot to my feet, Shadow's laptop in hand. I shoved it down on the desk and swung toward Viper who looked like crap. The bruise under his eye had marbled to blacks and purples, his hair wild, blood at the corner of his mouth, and he kept rubbing his temple.

"The fuck! Mike had ratted us out to the Shchavlev mafia." Shadow paced like a starved wolf, hands curled into fists by his side. "Fuck!"

"But it wasn't just Shchavlev minions, the big asshole himself, Arman Shchavlev, came to collect Trinity." Viper paused for dramatics.

Ice ran down my back, anger bubbling in my chest. "Are you fucking kidding me!"

Shadow froze, his face lighting a few shades. "Are you sure you saw right?"

"Yes!"

"What the hell is the leader of the mafia family doing breaking into our home? Why would he personally risk getting shot at to collect an Omega?" I snapped, my hands fisting as anger pooled through my veins.

"Maybe he was in the vicinity?" Viper said. "Stranger things have happened."

"Nope, he came in for Trinity. He had a purpose, and it wasn't us, or we'd be dead," Shadow growled, making the hair

on my arms stand on end.

“Then we go in after her, guns blazing,” Viper hissed.

Anger hummed in my bones that our enemy had stolen from us right underneath our noses and we were completely blind to it. Fury funneled through me, and the longer I kept replaying the video footage in my mind, the harder I seethed.

“Change your tune on our little Omega?” I growled at Viper, considering he was adamant we should get rid of Trinity when we brought her to our compound.

“Fuck you,” he snarled, his voice darkening, and I puffed my chest out as he marched over to me. Adrenaline pumped through me, the urge to fight building inside me, to just fucking punch something.

Shadow snatched him by the back of the shirt and wrenched him back. “Back the hell down. Focus on the real enemy. Where would Arman take Trinity? We know he owned the Institute, but that doesn’t explain why he’d personally come to collect her himself. Is he claiming her for himself? I swear to god, if that old brittle bones tries to fuck our girl, I am going to cut him up into a hundred pieces, then feed them to the sharks.”

“Fuck!” Viper growled, and I shiver ran down my spine at the thought of it. “Arman has several compounds and storage warehouses around the city. We begin there and destroy every damn place until we find her,” he grunted. “We don’t have time to waste.”

Shadow grimaced.

“If we get close enough to her, I’ll sense her,” Viper said exasperated, glaring at us. “But we gotta go do this now.”

I felt my shoulders bunch up, hopeful. “What do you mean, you can *sense* her?”

Shadow watched him carefully.

Viper shrugged, looking smug, a grin splitting his mouth. “I marked her as mine,” he said nonchalantly. “So now, we’re connected.”

“Wait the fuck up!” Anger rushed over me as I moved toward him, driving my hand into his chest. “After we agreed to not mark her as ours, you went ahead and bit her?” I was yelling the words at this stage. “You fucking bound her to you for life! Did you understand what you did?” Practically breathing fire, Shadow threw himself at Viper too, both of them hitting his office desk, which broke beneath their force.

Punches flew as anger thickened the air. I jumped in to tear them apart. Pushing Shadow away, I clipped Viper in the face, punching him, and getting my hits in too because it made me feel better.

“You fucking selfish asshole. Did you even give her a chance to understand what she was getting into?” Shadow growled.

“She’s mine,” Viper’s face turned red as he bellowed. Driving his fists into my chest, he forced me out of his face. “I don’t need your damned permission once I found my mate.” He was heaving for breath. “So, yeah, I fucked her tight pussy, and it was like a drug. Her scent, her taste, it got into my veins, into my heart, and I knew then, I could have no other. Do you know how long it’s been since I felt that way?” he shouted, shoulders rising, heartache flaring in his eyes.

For a moment, my heart twisted for him because I knew the pain he’d gone through and wouldn’t wish it on my worst enemy. But I still wanted to punch his teeth in.

“After losing my first Omega, I swore I would be alone for eternity, then Trinity made me see how wrong I’d been. So, I seized the chance and followed my instinct.” Pausing to catch his breath, he glared at us. “I regret nothing, and maybe you two jealous assholes should thank me, because now, we can find her a lot faster with my connection to her.”

I just shook my head, even if I was livid on the inside. His bite with Trinity meant that they were bound as fated mates. It was how Alphas ensured their Omegas didn’t escape them, how they kept other men away. The Omega she craved him, longed for him to knot inside her. And while it pissed me off, part of me said that the moment we found her, I was marking

her as mine, too. I'd had enough of being the one to follow the rules when the asshole in front of me didn't.

We both turned to Shadow who'd been too quiet. He wore a scowl, his features darkening.

"Don't worry, boss," Viper smiled. "You'll get your chance. Sorry, I lost control and took her first." His prideful grin was the opposite of a genuine apology. I ground my teeth in response.

Shadow approached him, and I wasn't sure what to expect. But when he threw a punch so hard into Viper's face, it threw him backward and into the wall, I startled. Viper smacked his head to the wall and slumped back down off his feet. He groaned but started laughing.

"I'll learn to live with it," Shadow snapped. "Now, get off your fucking lazy ass and find Trinity, or I'll rip your fucking throat out." Shadow marched out of his office, his footsteps pounding the floorboards.

Viper got to his feet and shook himself. He was breathing heavily, cursing under his breath. A look at me, then he sneered as he drove his fingers through his messed-up hair and licked the blood from his busted lip.

"I wouldn't change a thing." Viper straightened and tilted his head in my direction. "And don't pretend you didn't think about doing it. Only difference is I took what I wanted instead of being a good puppy dog."

"Fuck you! Did you even bother telling her what a mating bite would do to her? That she would long to be with you for life?" My heart thundered in my chest as if it would break my ribs. "Why the hell did you touch her when you were adamant that she wasn't for you?"

"Get out of my face. She accepted my mark, so we were meant to be," he growled and stormed out of the room.

I stared at his back as he vanished down the hallway, unable to believe what he'd done. Emotions ran rampant inside me, and white light danced behind my eyes with fury, wanting to make Viper hurt. Jealousy burned inside me.

I should have been the first to claim her to avoid the jealousy, I should have told her about it and marked her too.

I just glared at the empty hallway, roaring in my chest that we'd lost her, and we were turning on one another. Chest heaving, I kept thinking that Viper was now one of her mates, and a sense of desperation sunk through me that she was my fated mate and I hadn't bitten her yet as mine.

The short time I'd known Trinity might as well be a lifetime. She was everything to me, and I wanted more time with her, to make her understand how much I needed to bite her and make her mine, how each breath was like a barbed wire wrapped around my chest when I longed for her. But we had to find her first... then she'd be mine. I charged out of the room, knowing if I didn't get Trinity back, I'd be nothing.

With Daniel still on his way back from the local town, the three of us packed into Viper's black Maserati and were already speeding toward the outskirts of the city where Arman had his warehouses. It was a starting point, and as much as I hated to admit it, Viper's connection to Trinity would help us.

"Why the hell did I have to sit in the back?" I snapped, crammed in the middle of the backseat, taking up most of the space, with my knees bunched up, and practically pushed up to my chest. I felt like a bear trapped in a cage made for rabbits. "I'm the biggest fucking guy among us."

"Stop your whining," Viper grunted. "It's my car, so I drive, and we can't have our illustrious leader in the back, so that leaves you."

"Fucking ass-licker." I shifted, my legs jammed into the back of both seats, feeling completely pinned in place. If we had an accident, they'd need a can-opener to get me out. Shadow didn't say a word, just glanced out the passenger door window.

Viper stared at me through the rear-view mirror, smirking. I wanted to shove my fist into his face. I shifted and twisted,

trying to find more space for my legs, but failed miserably.

“Hold on tight and get comfy back there,” Viper teased as he hit the gas pedal. We flew down the freeway as the lunatic swerved in and out of traffic.

I gripped the hand holders above the doors on either side of me for dear life. Viper was a vindictive bastard, and he was going to make us pay for earlier.

I held on, and I noticed Shadow did the same, but he also wasn't telling Viper to slow the hell down. When our Alpha was pissed, a dark side came out, one where he loved to push himself to the edge, loving the adrenaline to combat his anger. I wouldn't be surprised if he was loving this insane drive as much as Viper.

We served all over the road, and the sharp swings were pure torture, every inch of me tightening as I sat cramped up. When we took the ramp off the highway, the asshole sped up. My heart hit the back of my throat as we were approaching a left turn way too quickly.

“Slow down,” I barked.

Viper only went faster.

Shadow was laughing.

Oh God, I'm going to die with two lunatics in the car.

Suddenly, Viper was playing with the radio and pumping up the volume on a fast tune, tapping his fingers on the steering wheel like nothing in the world bothered him.

“Viper,” I bellowed, but he only put the volume up higher, and the next thing I knew, he was swerving left on the turn. Luckily, there were no other cars around when we started skidding. Fuck, we were going to start a death roll in this canned car. Shouting, I held on as the tires screeched. Viper sang loudly as he took us to our deaths. Shadow held onto his door while I was being forced into the right-hand side corner of the back seat.

Suddenly, we were skidding wildly, the whole car doing a complete spin in the middle of the two lanes, tire smoke

behind us. I held onto Viper's seat, my heart in my throat as my life flashed before me. This was how I was going to die today.

Inches from crashing into a small hatchback we'd been approaching, we finally came to a dead stop, the inertia throwing me forward, then backward. Every part of me rattled, and I was convinced I was about to have a stroke.

"Well, that was fun," Viper sang out.

"You fucking asshole," I snapped, gasping for air between the words. "What the hell is wrong with you," I shouted, punching the back of his seat, my voice gravelly and booming.

"Don't be such a baby," Viper snarled. "If you can give it, then learn to take it."

And there it was, his damn revenge for us berating him for marking Trinity as his.

"You prick. If I wasn't trapped back here, I'd rip your fucking balls off and stuff them down your throat."

He burst out laughing. "I'd like to see you try."

A sudden honk sounded behind us from the building traffic.

"Let's go before the cops are called," Shadow commanded, not sounding miffed.

Between the two of them, I'm surprised I managed to stay alive this long.

"Buckle in, big boy." Viper met my gaze through the rear-view mirror, his gaze narrowing.

Oh, he had no idea what was coming his way.

We were off in seconds. Shaking my head as I stared out the window, I regretted not getting a few more punches into Viper in Shadow's office.

Traveling through the back streets, we came up to the first warehouse. We slowed down to a creeping pace, all three of us checking out the metal building with high wire fences and a mean-looking black dog patrolling the grounds.

“Anything?” Shadows asked, glancing at Viper. “You should sense her from this distance if she’s being held here.”

Viper sucked in a deep breath and closed his eyes. He was still driving slowly, but I didn’t care as long as he sensed Trinity. When he shook his head and opened his eyes, my insides shattered.

“Are you sure she’d be in a place like this?” I asked, scanning the huge metal eyesore.

“I’m not discounting any potential location. Who the fuck knows where Arman’s taken her. So, we’re going to check every damn location in the city if that’s what it comes to until we find her. The longer she’s with them...” He turned to the window. “Viper, get us to their next compound.”

I settled back in my seat—as settled as one could get all squished up—and stared at the houses we passed, the people in the streets, the cars. I couldn’t stop the ache curling under my ribcage. Rage played in my mind that we wouldn’t find her on time, and the darkness in my mind suffocated me that she’d be hurt.

As selfish as it sounded, part of me was glad I hadn’t marked her because her absence would break me. But for Viper, his bond to her would drive him to madness until he could no longer stand being without her. That part scared me because Viper was never a man who hadn’t fully dealt with the loss of his first Omega, so how would he cope with losing Trinity?

As much as I wanted to wring Viper’s neck, I’d already lost my real brother in this hell of a life. I couldn’t bear to lose anyone else I cared for ever again.

Losing Trinity wasn’t an option I’d entertain. I quickly realized that I was nothing without her in my life.

Four



TRINITY

Gold glittered all around me—the walls, the chairs, the waiters dressed up like golden statues. The Glass Slipper Ball was in full swing, the dance floor packed. Wearing a golden silk dress that traced every curve of my body, I felt sexier than I ever had.

I adjusted the elaborate eye mask on my face, the feathers sticking upward over my brow tickling my skin when I saw him.

Viper...

He was on the dance floor, and despite the black mask he wore, matching his fitted black suit, I knew it was him by the smile that melted my knees.

Except he wasn't smiling at me. He was offering it to the blonde in his arms as he swirled her around on the floor to the fast beat, their bodies locked together, his arm tight around her lower back.

Fire erupted across my chest at the sight of him laughing, staring into her eyes. She was stunning—locks cascading down her back and a dress so thin, it might as well be transparent.

My breath caught in my chest.

I couldn't stop staring at him, tears burning in my eyes while jealousy sent my heart into a thundering roar. The rest of the ball fell away. I wanted to scream and tear her out of his arms. He promised to meet me here for a dance.

So, who the fuck was she?

Before I could think rationally, I was crossing the dance floor toward them, my pulse feeling like lava pulsing through my veins. Heat rolled down my spine as anger surged through me.

“Trinity,” he said with that smile meant for me, not perturbed one bit that I’d caught him.

I gave him a flat look. “What are you doing with her?” I hated how envious I sounded, but I couldn’t help myself. Fury punched through me, and I wanted to break her fingers for touching my Viper.

“It’s just a dance,” he teased, tauntingly smirking at me.

“A dance you promised me.” I glared at him, hating the sound of my jealousy, while the blonde draped herself over him, but Viper pushed her off him. “And now I feel stupid for meeting you here.”

“You are adorable when you’re angry and so possessive, but this isn’t what you think.”

Shaking with fury, his half-smile irked me. Instinct took over, and my hand jerked outward, slapping him across the face.

“Fuck you.”

With his eyes widening with shock, I took off out of there before I broke down crying. I believed he cared for me, believed I was the only one for him, believed his promises. I darted across the ballroom, tears rolling down my cheeks because I stood no chance of stopping them.

I burst past the flowing curtains that fluttered across the open French doors and emerged onto the empty balcony. Drawing in fast breaths, I angrily wiped my eyes, then swung right toward the steps, feeling stupid for coming to the ball.

Someone snatched my wrist and wrenched me back around toward them, my feet tangling up, so I ended up face-planting right into his muscled chest. I shoved my hands against him,

glancing up at Viper's pursed lips. He ripped the mask off his face and glared at me.

"Trinity, you're overreacting."

"And you're an asshole." I stumbled away from him. "I don't even know why I thought I liked you."

Shoulders rigid, he came after me until my back hit the stone railing. Pivoting to make an escape, he snatched me by my waist. I turned away, unable to look at him. He pinned me against the railing and pressed his body flush against my back, the erection in his pants grinding against my ass.

"You came because you wanted me, and I always keep my word. But I do adore how jealous you are, though there's nothing to be jealous of. She's my cousin."

I stiffened, my cheeks burning up with embarrassment. "And you didn't think to tell me instead of letting me make a fool of myself?" His hot breaths danced over my ear and cheek as I attempted to wriggle out from under him.

"There's no way you're going anywhere. You are mine, Omega." He slid his hand down my hip and bunched up the fabric of my dress. His fingers slipped into my panties, groaning in my ear, the sound reverberating through my body as his hand moved to squeeze my ass, coaxing a moan from me. "You are never going to leave me, understand? I own you for life."

It was hard to concentrate when his fingers danced between my cheeks, so his words weren't exactly registering. When his touch moved lower, and he pushed aside the thin fabric of my thong, I swore my world danced around me. His fingers pushed between my drenched folds.

"Not here," I murmured between rushed breaths. It was hard enough to draw in a breath, let alone think logically, when a hunk was fingering me in public.

"I'm going to show you how much you mean to me. It kills me to see your tears, Omega." He pushed another finger into me, and I cried out, then silenced myself. "Spread your legs

for me, gorgeous.” With his other hand, he pushed me forward over the railing with my ass in the air.

He drove the rest of the fabric of my dress up to my waist, and I winced at the cool breeze over my exposed pussy. It felt both arousing and filthy. A gush of slick slipped out, dripping down my inner thighs. I was ridiculously aroused.

“Fuck me, you look incredible,” he hissed as I heard him unzipping his pants. I glanced over my shoulder just as his huge elephant trunk of a cock popped out of his pants. My pussy squeezed, even if I still couldn’t comprehend that something so big could fit inside me. “I want to drown in your slick.”

Why was the idea of him stretching me so hot?

“Show me,” I demanded. “Show me how obsessed you are over me.”

“Your wish is my command, my gorgeous Omega.” He groaned, pressing the tip of his cock against my already sensitive entrance.

I had a hard time believing we were doing this in public with people just beyond the curtains. I must have lost my mind. When he slid into me, surging deeper into my tight core, I screamed at how hard she spread me. He finally settled all the way inside me, and I adjusted myself to accommodate his size for what came next.

The world spun around me once more, and I was panting for breath as he thrust in and out of me, fucking me outside in the night on the Glass Slipper Ball balcony. With each plunge, he hit the perfect spot inside me. I loved the way he filled me like we were two broken pieces coming back together again.

“Anyone can waltz out and see us,” he murmured, pumping into me, never stopping. “Would you like that?”

“No,” I gasped, though secretly, the notion of someone seeing us had me gushing more slick as I squeezed down on him.

He hissed, ramming into me harder. God, how could he feel so incredible?

“I think you’re wrong. You want others to watch, don’t you, dirty little girl? It’s why you let me expose your soaking pussy to anyone who came out here, why you gave yourself to me.”

I should have been shocked by his words, but they turned me on furiously. I held onto the railing, my hips rocking back to meet each of his aggressive slaps, and well, two could play games.

“Is that right, Daddy?” If anyone had daddy vibes, it was Viper, and then there’s his huge cock.

He burst out laughing. “I can be your daddy if you want.” Suddenly his large palm slapped my ass.

“Ouch, Daddy.” I wiggled my ass.

“Let Daddy soothe that with my huge cock.” He rammed into me, going faster.

I grinned, loving how good it felt to have him jam that giant thing all the way inside me, and I held on, moaning for more.

“Unless you want an audience, you better be nice and quiet, or everyone will hear you.”

Gasping for air, his cock felt as if, somehow, he was going deeper. Stars danced in my eyes, and with every stroke, I was close to losing my mind. He pumped in and out of me, and I lost track of how much time had passed, but my insides were so tight, I was about to explode.

“Scream my name, gorgeous.” He slammed faster, his fingers sliding around to my pussy and pinching my clit.

I burst, unable to hold back, his name streaming past my lips as my pussy clamped down on his huge cock.

Quivering, I cried out his name again, the orgasm tearing through me just as I glanced back and spotted dozens of people from the ball standing on the balcony, watching us.

I shot upright in bed, a cry on my lips. “Viper.” My thighs were drenched with arousal. Clenching the sheets to my chest,

I panted for air just as the bedroom door swung open.

The shock of the intruding guard had me screaming and frantically bringing the sheets up to my neck. The guard frowned deeply, staring at me like I'd lost my mind.

"Everything alright?" he asked, his nostrils flaring, most likely inhaling my arousal, though my father said he'd injected me with a suppressant for my heat. Yet, that dream had me still pulsing with my arousal. I couldn't get Viper out of my head, and I craved him as much as I needed oxygen. All while, I sat frozen in bed, my face on fire.

"Yeah, all is fine," I finally murmured, my voice croaky. And the man stood there, looking at me during a moment of awkwardness.

"Get ready. Your father has asked for you to meet him for breakfast."

When he finally shut the door and left me alone, I breathed easily. I fell back onto the bed, trying to push aside the dream and the insane desire for Viper, except I knew deep inside it came from me missing him.

But I also wanted answers from my father.

Pushing myself out of bed, I cleared my throat, trying to get myself under control and not let panic come over me. Especially when I noticed a pile of fresh clothes at the end of my bed, placed there while I slept. Instead of overthinking it, I grabbed the pile and headed to the door, opening it up to come face to face with the bald guard with the square jaw.

"I need to go to the shower room," I stated the obvious.

"This way," he said.

On bare feet, I followed him down the hallway, slick slipping between my thighs from my dream, hoping the guard didn't notice.

Thankfully, the mansion was silent, no other guards around and the idea of escape slipped over my mind. But so did the idea of being gunned down by the guard. When he opened the

door to the bathroom, I stepped inside and quickly closed the door behind me.

Gasping for air, I leaned against the door, knowing I was in deep trouble. My father was the devil, and my future wasn't looking exactly rosy. So, I hurried into the shower, ready to find out what was going on. After I finished and dressed, I was taken through the house to meet up with my father.

I stepped out onto the mansion balcony, where a round table was set up with a white tablecloth, a large vase with flowers, and plates with cutlery as though I was at a restaurant. Father was standing by the metal railing, his back to me, staring out at the city below. Two guards stood a few feet away, dressed in black pants and tees, each holding a submachine gun, along with a leather shoulder holster with a handgun and blades on their belt. They were armed to their teeth, and my skin shivered. An eerie sensation came over me as to why they needed so much gun power.

What would happen if Shadow and his pack came to find me? It'd be a full out war, and I didn't want them to get hurt or worse.

"Sit," Father ordered, turning around, his eyebrows knitting, distracting me from staring at his guards. "After yesterday's intrusion by the man my father shot dead, I'd increased the protection around the mansion, especially with you here."

With quick steps, I sat on one of the two metal seats with cushions on them, and he took his place next to me. Instantly, a flurry of maids rushed onto the balcony, carrying plates of food. They placed Eggs Benedict in front of me and my father, with a heaping side of bacon for him. I got mushrooms. Then there were plates of fruit, toast, and every condiment I could think of. I picked up a cup of hot coffee and enjoyed the warm nutty taste that swam down my throat.

"You slept well?" he asked, starting to eat. Silvery wet hair is pushed off his face. He wore a button-up blue shirt with gold cufflinks in the shape of a wolf's head and tailored black pants.

“It was fine,” I answered lowly. “Though I feel a bit uncomfortable with someone coming into my room while I’m sleeping to leave me clothes to wear.” Like now, I wore a white summer dress with thin straps and slip-on white tennis shoes, which I didn’t mind, but I felt completely vulnerable wearing this in the mansion.

He nodded and kept eating.

“Am I your prisoner?” I asked, still holding onto my hot coffee, staring at my father over the rim of the cup.

His bushy eyebrows arched as those blue eyes raised to meet mine. “If you do as I ask, then you’re not held against your will.”

I blinked at him, my heart starting to beat faster. “Isn’t that the same thing?”

He shrugged. “Eat your breakfast before it gets cold.” He spoke harshly, like the kind of man who always got his way.

I started eating, only to discover that whenever I had eaten Eggs Benedict at the Institute, they must have been something else. This dish was absolute heaven. Eating quickly, I couldn’t believe something could taste so good. I could easily eat this for every meal from this moment on. I didn’t finish until my plate was almost clean, and one of the maids came to collect my plate just as I scooped the last morsel into my mouth.

“They didn’t feed you enough at the Institute?” Father said.

“They didn’t do a lot of things,” I replied, reaching for the chopped-up fruit bowl, and a thought came to mind about Shadow saying that the Bakewell Institute for Girls was run by the Shchavlev mafia—in other words—my father. It explained why he chose that place and why Bakewell had so carefully watched over me. Though it didn’t stop her from sending me down to isolation... bitch. “Why did you leave me there from a young age and never come to visit?”

He kept eating before finally placing his fork down and wiping his mouth with a serviette.

“After your mother died, I couldn’t care for you properly.”

“Wait, she’s dead?” I wasn’t sure why it affected me, but I’d always thought I’d one day at least meet my mother. “What happened to her?” I asked softly.

He waved at someone, and a young brunette in a maid’s outfit rushed over, pouring coffee into his cup. Father stared her up and down in a way that left my skin crawling. With a shy grin from her, she slipped away, and I couldn’t help but feel like there was something going on between them, especially as he watched her retreat. I didn’t care because I barely knew this man who gave me shivers. He drugged and kidnapped me, so if he expected any kind of family affection from me, he would be waiting for a long time.

The injuries and abuse I’d endured, the physical and mental ones from the Institute up to now might take me forever to get over them.

“A stray bullet,” he said darkly, his attention swinging back at me with a frown on his face. “There’s no use digging into a past that can’t be changed. You may not like what you find.”

I stiffened in my seat, and that time, a loose tear ran from the corner of my eye. And my father spoke so casually about her like her death meant nothing to him. And I felt the heaviness of her death on my chest like I’d burst out crying any second for something I’d never have. A mother I desperately longed for growing up, and now to learn I’d lost that chance hurt.

“That’s up to me to decide, and I have a right to know, considering you dumped me at the Institute.” A cold feeling washed over me as I learned more about my past.

“If you insist.” His lips thinned, gaze narrowing as he straightened his posture. “I caught your mother with the pool guy fucking her, and nobody cheats on me,” he growled, pushing away from the table and shoving to his feet. “Thanks for ruining my morning.” His voice was a cruel sound in my ears, yet all I could think about was what he’d told me.

My mother died from a stray bullet... then he caught her cheating. A gasp caught in my chest.

He'd killed her! *Fucking bastard.*

Suddenly he glanced up at me harshly. "Girl, I told you it's not something you'd want to hear. Better get back to your room to stay safe." His order almost sounded like a threat.

I got up, trying to hold myself together from shaking so much, trying not to look at him with disgust. How long before he killed me?

"Why am I here?" I asked softly, knowing it might be a mistake, but I had to know what I was getting myself into.

He raised an eyebrow. "After discovering you'd been missing from the Institute, I had everyone searching for you because you belong to me." His jaw twitched as he gritted his teeth. "So, when I finally heard that you were taken by some fucking losers living out of the city, I went to collect you."

Tensing, fear climbed over me that he'd hurt the Alphas, that they lay dead, and I hiccupped a choked breath.

Apparently satisfied that he'd answered my questions, he'd turned his attention to the brunette maid once more, who was pale faced with huge eyes brimming with terror at the extra attention she was gaining.

But I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

"W-what did you do to those men who took me?" I asked, failing at keeping the tremble out of my voice.

My father's head jerked upward, his gaze back in my direction.

"Did they hurt you? Did they take your virginity? Because I was told they kept you locked up in a room, and no one touched you."

"What's that got to do with anything?" I was startled, and the insane urge to throw something at him came at me like a bullet.

A growl scraped his throat, and the next thing I knew, the monster from yesterday made an appearance once more, and he came at me, his iron fingers wrapped around my throat, forcing me to look at him. Panic sliced into me, and I

scratched at his hand, digging my fingernails into his skin, my eyes bulging from dread.

“Listen here, girl. I put you in the Institute to ensure your purity, and if one of those fuckers took that away from you, then I need to know.”

I shuddered, staring into the dark blue pits he called eyes, at the monster who lived inside my father. His nostrils flared with each raspy exhale. My mind screamed while I choked for my breath, and my mind drowned in the reality of his words.

He was going to kill my Alphas.

Pushing down the terror surging through me, I focused on not crying, though it didn't work as his face blurred behind those tears. I shook my head until he finally released me. Stumbling back, I clasped my hand around my neck, where I could already feel a bruise forming from his grip.

“They didn't do anything to me,” I whispered my lie, hoping that with my heat suppressed, he wouldn't be able to tell that I'd already lost my virginity. I'd heard some of those drugs concealed everything in an Omega.

“Good,” he chided, then smiled, the fake mask slipping over his features once more. How easily he changed his expressions scared me. He stared at me for what felt like a long time before he spoke again. “Be sure you aren't lying, or there will be consequences.”

I didn't move, didn't respond, but stared at the leader of the mafia, at my father. A chill flared across my skin, dread icing over my chest.

“How long will I be here? Do you have a match for me now?” I asked, trying to figure out how much time I had to figure how to get the hell away from him.

His scowl was the only response he gave before he huffed angrily.

“Okay, change of plans. I was contemplating holding onto you for a bit longer, maybe bringing you into the family, but I see that was a fucked-up mistake. You are just like your

mother, constantly asking questions instead of just doing as I fucking ask.”

What the hell? I waited for the other shoe to drop because it sounded like he was going to do just that and tell me something else. Except, he marched across the balcony, leaving me behind, and I was so confused.

“What were you going to say?” I called out, but he never responded.

“Take her to her room,” he barked over his shoulder at his men.

Father swung an arm around the brunette maid’s waist and hauled her into a stride with him. She gave a startled yelp to which he laughed.

“I could use a distraction as pretty as you.” Then he vanished back inside with the maid locked under his arm.

My breakfast stirred in my gut, along with a sickness as I pitied the maid.

The guard snatched me by the arm and roughly guided me across the balcony. I wrenched my arm away from him. “I can walk on my own. Where am I going to run? Besides, isn’t this supposed to be my home?”

The bald guy just grinned like he knew something I didn’t. We made our way back through the mansion, and only when we went past a corridor, the screams from who I could only imagine was the maid rippled in the air. I paused, staring down the passage that led to oversized double doors.

“Keep moving.” The guard nudged me in the back. “That’s got nothing to do with you unless you want him to hurt you too.”

Was that empathy I heard in his voice? When I glanced up, his lips pinched as if catching himself being caring.

“Don’t make me carry you,” he threatened.

With the girl’s cries still in my ears and dread squeezing my chest, I moved on fast feet, feeling as though my time was running out.

“Do you know what he meant up on the balcony about changing his mind?” I practically begged the guard, but he kept on hauling me through halls, down stairs until we reached my room. He pushed open the door and nudged me inside.

“You better be sure you weren’t lying about your virginity because he doesn’t give second chances,” he whispered.

I swallowed hard as he slammed the door shut, locking me in my golden cage. My stomach was in knots and tears drenched my cheeks as I stumbled backward.

I was in so much trouble.

Five



TRINITY

Two days had passed. Two days of sleeping, eating, and being locked in the room. With no windows and only the guards as company when they brought me meals, I was slowly going insane.

Especially since the only thing to keep me occupied was my thoughts about my father being a mafia boss who had killed my mother and that I had to find a way to escape from him. I didn't want to end up the same way.

My thoughts kept circling back to my mother—she was an opera singer I'd never get to know. I didn't remember her as a child, and I couldn't help but blame myself for not remembering her, which I should have—she was my mother. It felt strange to miss someone I didn't remember, but I wanted to believe that she was kind and nothing like my father. I hoped that I took after her and didn't have an inch of my father in me.

I sucked in a deep breath that ached as if I'd just swallowed broken glass, then shook off the feelings.

I kept thinking about Shadow, Aspen, and Viper, my heart squeezing at how much I missed them, especially Viper, who kept appearing in my dreams every night. My core throbbed at the memory. And I'd give anything to return to them.

Pacing to keep myself occupied, I was aware the guard would be delivering dinner soon, and like any prisoner, the meals were my only interaction with someone. As if on cue, the door opened, but it was two maids in their black dresses

who came rushing into my room, all a flutter, carrying clothes and makeup bags.

“Hello, Miss,” the brunette maid said, the same girl from the balcony the other day. My stomach twisted at how my father had treated her, how he practically dragged her back to his bedroom.

She gave me a soft smile, then hurried to place the clothes in her hands on the bed.

“What’s going on?” Quickly wiping the tears from my eyes, I glanced up just as two guards carried a full-body mirror and a chair into the room.

“Miss, take a seat,” the brunette said, lifting her chin in my direction. “The master is taking you out and wants you to look perfect. So, that’s why we’re here.” Her thin smile was painful to watch, and my heart tugged as I remembered my father dragging her into his room.

She had to be over twenty-five years old since females below that age were still in their Omega transformation age—waiting to see if they became an Omega, if their hair began to change color, the first clue of the change—but over that age meant, they remained a Beta and were permitted to work.

“Did he say where we’re going?” I asked, sitting in front of the mirror, my knees already bouncing.

She shook her head, and when she turned around to grab a hairbrush from one of the bags, the collar of her dress slipped down, revealing a purple mark around her throat. Catching me staring, she quickly covered herself, and returned with a wide brush, then started working it through my pink hair. The other maid was fussing over the clothes they brought into the room, so I looked at the brunette through the mirror.

“What’s your name?” I asked. “I’m Trinity.” Unsure if she even knew my name, I figured I’d introduce myself rather than assume.

“Mandy,” she said softly, then glanced down at my hair as she combed.

“I’m sorry,” I said without really thinking, twisting around toward her. “That my father hurt you.”

Soft eyes met mine, and she shrugged. “This is a better job than my previous one, where I worked in the kitchen, and the chef forced himself on me every day. So, I’m lucky.” She half grinned, and my heart broke for the poor girl. “Your father didn’t really hurt me too much.” Her cheeks blushed, then she looked away, brushing my hair.

I’d seen her tears, heard her cries, and hadn’t been able to do anything about it. I clenched my hands, acid burned the back of my throat. Even the guard had a queasy look on his face when he heard them. I didn’t buy her lie for a second, but what could I do? I was a prisoner here just as she was.

I sat back in my seat and stared at myself in the mirror—at how pale I appeared, how my pink hair sat messily, though Mandy was doing a great job of untangling it.

“Mandy,” I started. “Did you know my mother?”

She shook her head. “I’ve only been here for six months. Sorry, Miss.”

I fell silent when the second maid joined us. Standing in front of me, she opened up her makeup bag, then studied me.

“Fuck, you’re beautiful,” the shorter woman said. “Every Alpha tonight is going to die to rut you.”

Her words took me off guard, my shoulders drawing back, fear slipping into my thoughts. “Do you know what’s happening tonight?”

“Nina, shut the hell up,” Mandy snapped. “Don’t talk to the master’s daughter so crudely. Get to work. We don’t have much time. He hates being made to wait.”

The girl nodded but still studied me as if I was a superstar, which was crazy. In the Institute, no one ever told me I was pretty. Well, except my friends, but I didn’t believe them as they were too stunning themselves. And I definitely didn’t feel beautiful.

“Do you know where I’m being taken tonight?” I asked Nina as she began to apply makeup across my cheek.

She peered up at Mandy as if waiting for her approval to speak.

I twisted my head to Mandy as well.

“I have a right to know, especially if I’m going to be in any danger.”

Mandy’s lips pinched. “We don’t know much—”

“But we overheard the guards talking about an important gathering tonight at the X Hotel,” Nina blurted, suppressing a smile. Clearly, she loved to gossip. “You can’t even walk into the front doors of the X without showing them your bank account. Your father is a regular. He’s holding a party there and invited only the richest people in the city.”

I swallowed hard. After arriving at my father’s mansion, I didn’t get the impression he did anything for the sake of niceties. So, why was he taking me to his gathering tonight?

“A party for what?” I persisted, then licked my dry lips, eager to find out what I was getting into.

Nina shrugged and started working on my makeup more seriously.

“The ones I’ve heard about in the past are about rewarding those who work for your father, or someone new is joining his force, and they’re being indoctrinated by a wild party. I hear there are drugs and Omegas there for his men. Some end up in huge orgies.”

“Nina!” Mandy chided.

I gasped, my gut tightening at the thought. Of all the things I expected her to say, I wasn’t anticipating her to mention orgies.

“Enough.” Mandy scowled at Nina. “That’s not going to happen to Trinity.”

I wasn’t so sure, and my knees were jumping up and down even more.

“You’re right,” Nina said with a big smile. “You are probably being shown to his men, so no one ever touches you again.”

Nothing she was saying put me at ease.

We fell silent after that as the girls worked on my hair and makeup. I tried my best to not let the ominous feeling crawl through me. It was just a party, like Nina said, to show me off perhaps. My father seemed the type to puff out his chest and beat it with pride.

Before I knew it, I was urged to stand and move over to the bed where they had laid out my dress. Before I could really look at the pink gown that matched my hair, they were tugging at my clothes, undressing me. When they removed my bra too fast, I tried to hold on to it as Nina dragged down my underwear.

“Hey, I need those. I’m not wearing anything under the dress.”

“We’ve got new ones for you,” Mandy explained, handing me a skin-toned thong.

I quickly stepped into and pulled them up my legs, all under the watchful eye of Nina, making me uncomfortable.

“When you find your Alpha, he will be a very lucky man,” she murmured.

All I could think was that I’d found my three Alphas, then my thoughts zipped back to my delicious dreams with Viper, at the way he kissed his way down my body to between my thighs.

“Miss.”

I flinched at her abrupt voice, dragged from my thoughts.

“What happened to your back?” Mandy asked with a concerned voice, drawing Nina’s attention, and I hated when people stared at the ugliness of my back.

“It’s nothing,” I snapped and regretted it instantly. I hated my scars and for so long I used to dream of my parents finally finding me, discovering what Jack, the guard at the Institute

had done to me. Then they'd dish out their punishment. But seeing how my father treated my mother, I doubted he'd care. And yet, I couldn't stop the smile on my face from when Viper had seen the scars on my back and still wanted me anyway. "Can I just get dressed, please?"

"Of course." Mandy appeared coy, almost pitying toward me. She busied herself with pressing skin-toned nipple stickers on my breasts—they completely covered the areola and felt slightly warm to the touch.

I didn't have time to ask about them before the girls picked up the shimmering dress, which was dripping with tiny diamonds.

"Lift your hands," Mandy murmured hastily.

They slipped the dress down over my head, the material feeling incredibly soft against my skin. The fabric cascaded down my body all the way down to the floor. Pushing the thin straps higher on my shoulders, I looked at the sweeping V-neckline, which revealed a bit too much cleavage for my liking. More endowed than most girls, I did my best to conceal all the curves. This dress did the opposite. I turned toward the mirror, but Nina stepped in front of me.

"You're not quite finished," she said. Reaching up, she put dripping diamond earrings on my lobes, then a matching necklace that nestled in the valley of my breasts.

Both of them stepped back and examined me, their eyes glinting and mouths grinning.

"Wow," Mandy murmured.

"Told you she's stunning. They're going to fight tonight to get near you," Nina said. "Your father has no idea what he's doing by taking you to this party. He's going to have war on his hands." She giggled.

While I felt sick to my stomach at the thought. I longed for Shadow, Aspen, and Viper to come rescue me, but there'd be slaughter on both sides, and I couldn't bear to see my men hurt.

I lifted my dress from around my feet, then moved to stand in front of the mirror. My eyes widened at my reflection, my mouth falling open—I didn't recognize myself. The dress flowed down my body, tracing every curve. The material glimmered under the light and appeared so thin, it gave the impression I wore nothing underneath, especially with the skin-toned thong and nipple covers.

I actually had an hourglass figure.

I wished more than anything Viper, Shadow, and Aspen could see me this way. I'd give anything to see the reactions on their faces. A sob stuck to the back of my throat that I might never see them again.

"You look spectacular." Mandy placed a pair of clear heels in front of me. They reminded me of Cinderella's glass slippers.

Stepping into them while Nina kneeled in front of me to help tie the ankle strap, I gained height at once and the dress no longer draped on the ground around my feet. Staring at myself in the mirror, I couldn't believe that it was me. Pink curls tumbled over my shoulders, adorned with tiny diamonds. My eye makeup was dark and smoky, fake eyelashes dramatic, and lips painted a deep pink. I looked incredible and fierce, as if I could command anyone to do whatever I wished.

"Are you ready?" Mandy asked, moving to the door.

A thread of panic came over me that I was going out in public looking like I was naked under the dress. But deep inside, the darker fear lingered about how much trouble I was in, that I had no idea how I'd get out alive. I'd never taste the happiness that I found with the three Alphas who transformed my life.

"I'm not sure I am," I replied.

Nina approached me, her huge brown eyes staring into mine.

"My mother once said that when something scares you, it's okay to feel that way, but it doesn't mean anyone else needs to know what's going on inside your head. Just appear confident,

and everyone will bow down to you because tonight, you are a goddess.”

“Thank you,” I exhaled my response, my breath racing, my heart pounding in my chest.

I can do this, and I might find a way to escape before the drugs Father fed me wore out and my heat came back in full vengeance.

Forcing myself to think of the three Alphas and that I would see them again, I pushed one foot in front of the other, then the next, and sauntered toward the door. I wasn't exactly skilled in mastering heels, but I hadn't fallen over yet.

My arms shook as I left my room. I walked hastily alongside the guard, who sized me up the moment I emerged, clear as day what he was thinking.

“I'm wearing underwear,” I blurted out nervously, feeling stupid for needing to justify myself.

“I'm certain you are.” Then he cleared his throat, cutting me a quick glance. “Just do as your father asks of you tonight, and you'll be safe.”

Blinking up at him, I asked, “Why are you being nice to me?”

“I have no reason to dislike you.” He didn't elaborate, and I lost the chance to ask more questions the moment we stepped outside the mansion, where a black Bentley waited.

The guard took my elbow and helped me down the steps and over to the car. He opened the door, and I climbed inside. Father sat wide legged on the other end of the leather seat, his gaze roaming over my body. I fought the urge to cover myself and quickly sat down. There was a guard in the driver's seat, and another on the passenger's side.

My door shut, and we were driving away from the mansion along the windy path. Manicured lawns covered the yard around the enormous home encased by a metal fence. Armed guards peppered the property.

“You look stunning and worthy of being a Shchavlev. You’ll have everyone eating out of your hands tonight,” my father said.

I tensed under the weight of his words and what they meant. He wore a tux with a black bow tie, and his hair was slicked off his face. Gold rings on his fingers glinted in the lights we passed, and in the dim lights, he appeared younger, maybe even handsome. I could understand what my mother might have once seen in him.

“Do I get to know where we’re going?” I asked softly.

He huffed, his lips thinning, something he did a lot around me.

“No questions tonight, alright? Just enjoy the night for what it will bring you.”

I was feeling more anxious the longer we drove, and he wasn’t helping ease the tension. “And what will the night bring?”

He sighed. “Trinity,” he scolded. “Once we arrive, you’ll see the little surprise I have for you, and you’ll understand everything. Don’t make me spoil the fun I have planned.” He reached out and laid a hand on my thigh, my skin crawling at his touch. “Now be a good girl and enjoy the drive. I want you to stand out tonight, which is why I paid one million dollars for your dress. Those are real diamonds on your gown.”

I choked on my breath and stared at him, wide-eyed. “A million dollars?” Glancing down at my dress, I was terrified to damage it.

“Nothing is enough for my daughter.” When he finally gave my thigh a squeeze and removed his hand, I breathed easier.

His words bit me. If I was worth a million-dollar dress, what about the first nineteen years of my life?

“Every Shchavlev serves an important role in the family. Your mother gave birth to you, and now you will make me proud.”

He wasn't even giving me attention when he spoke, and it left me wondering if my mother even had a choice in marrying one of the biggest mafia bosses in the country or if she'd been forced into it. The thought crossed my mind that I was heading to a similar fate, that my father's surprise might come in the form of an arranged marriage.

Sitting in the car and pretending I wasn't freaking out on the inside grew harder by the second. Struggling to think straight when I felt I was being led to the slaughter, I stared out the window at the few homes dotting the side of the roads. I wondered if I'd survive if I pushed open the door and threw myself out of a moving vehicle? Knowing my luck, I'd end up under the car's tire and run over.

After a long drive, we finally arrived in the city, and my knees were bouncing madly. It wasn't long before we parked at the front of an enormous hotel with a glittering golden X just over the glass entry doors. In front of the doors stood six armed men in suits.

"We're here," my father announced. "This is going to be a remarkable night for our family. You'll see." He got out of the car and one of his guards opened my door. I slipped my feet out first, then pushed myself up on the red carpet that was waiting for us.

I didn't have a choice, and like Nina said, I'd show them I was confident, even if I was scared to death on the inside. Chin high, I ignored all the eyes on me.

When my father reached my side, he whispered, "Be a good girl now and don't embarrass me. Do as I say."

The condescension in his voice had me grinding my teeth. Little did he know that I had been looking out for myself my entire life, and I wasn't a child. I had survived all those years in the Institute—the abuse, the emptiness of believing my parents had dumped me there. So, fuck him on speaking to me that way.

Lips pressed tightly, I tucked away the hurt and the dread that drowned me, deciding tonight I would be a different

person. Someone who lived in the lush and dangerous mafia life, who didn't let lethal words dig under her skin.

My heels clicked against the lobby's stone floor as we entered. Everyone went silent to greet my father with a slight bend of their heads. He commanded attention, and they feared him. They lifted their gazes to me as an afterthought, a sneer on a few of the women's faces. Did they think I stood in their way to my father? I almost laughed out loud. They could have the power-hungry monster.

The lobby was all black, white, and gold. A staircase overlooked the entire place, and an oversized chandelier which resembled a shower of crystals hovered over a fireplace located in the middle of the lobby. There were floor-to-ceiling works of art hanging on the walls and behind the reception desk across the grand entryway. A man in a tux played a soft ballad on a black piano.

I could see why my father liked this place. He must have used their designer for his house, which had the same ice-cold, wealthy, and snobbish vibe.

"Welcome back, Mr. Shchavlev," a thin man in a pin-striped suit greeted father with a smile and slight bow at his waist. "Your party is waiting for you upstairs."

Father acknowledged the man with a nod, then walked right past him. He guided me into the elevator with a harsh grip on my elbow, and his two guards stepped inside with us. No one said a word.

Finally, the elevator doors slid open to a hallway, and we were quickly on the move. Reaching two closed grand doors, my father slid his arm around my back. I tensed, and he must have sensed it because he tugged me closer to him.

"Smile," he insisted. "You're too beautiful to constantly wear a frown."

Fierce anticipation filled me, the dread of what kind of party I'd find morphing into something darker, as though he was about to walk me down the aisle. The doors opened, and we entered the most opulent room I'd ever laid eyes on.

Immediately I scanned the room and when I didn't see anything resembling a wedding ceremony, I breathed easier.

The walls were red, frames and ceilings in gold with decorative trimmings. In the middle of the room rows of velvet-covered chairs were positioned in an arch facing an elevated platform with steps on either side. That was when I noticed all around the room were display tables with glass casings filled with all manner of artifacts and jewelry.

It was an auction room. I exhaled with relief that my father had brought me to an auction to add to his art collection.

People were standing everywhere, studying the pieces to go under the hammer. Many of the attendees were Alphas, all in tuxes, and the few females I noticed were on an Alpha's arm, draped in glittery, slick dresses. They were showpieces—exactly as I was to my father.

Their eyes flicked over me, and I resisted the urge to squirm at how intensely they studied me. The men were like wolves, leaning in to get a better stare, eyes leering over my body, no doubt trying to see if I was naked beneath the dress.

Silence permeated the room as my father stepped forward, dragging me alongside him. Everyone was watching us. He paused to talk to three men, speaking in Russian. Of course, I didn't understand a single word.

A woman approached me, a barrel of a man twice her age behind her. They greeted my father first, then she smiled at me. She wore a black dress that sat on one shoulder and glimmered beneath the chandelier, and her necklace was made of rubies. Every inch of her was perfect, down to every strand of hair pulled tightly into a long ponytail and the ruby-tipped eyelashes. She left me feeling intimidated.

“Your dress is breathtaking. Who's the designer?” she cooed, eyeing me up and down.

I blinked at her when my father interrupted.

“It's one of a kind designed by Christian Dior for my daughter, Trinity.” The smugness in his voice didn't surprise me in the slightest.

The woman's green eyes lit up. "She looks just stunning. You'll have a fight on your hands tonight." My father ignored her, and the woman started chatting to me about where she bought her dress.

This conversation we were having was impassive as if we could be anywhere, talking about anything. Unfortunately, we just happened to be in a snooty hotel with nearly every criminal in the city.

When I glanced around the room, I noticed everyone who was mingling took any chance to peer over at me. I shifted on my heels, not enjoying being the object of attention. Perspiration ran down my back the longer I stood there, voices booming around me, laughter, and discomfort settling into my bones.

What were they all thinking? That I was the missing girl who had been placed in an institute by her family at a young age? Could they tell I was here against my wishes? That if I didn't do as my father demanded, the underlying threat of what he did to my mother could become my demise, too?

The woman who had been talking my ear off left with her husband, and in their place an elderly man with thinning white hair and liver spots on the back of his hands approached. He studied me like I was chocolate cake. I might have spewed a bit in my mouth and stepped back, bumping into my father. His strong hand pressed to my lower back, nudging me forward. Behind the old man stood two lofty men who I realized were identical twins, both broad and ridiculously intimidating. They were maybe in their mid-twenties, and I hated that I found them handsome with their square jaws, piercing green eyes, and chestnut hair hanging loose at their shoulders.

"Trinity, you must meet Nikolai, one of my most loyal clients, and his two sons, Andrei and Axel," my father eagerly stated, drawing my attention.

Under their stares, I felt like a goldfish in a bowl to a cat, ready for it to dive into the water to eat me.

“It is my pleasure,” Nikolai croaked, reaching over to grab my hand and slobbering on the back of it.

Cringing hard on the inside, I tensed and drew my hand back the moment he finished. The twins didn’t move but studied me before exchanging a glance with each other with a grin I didn’t miss. Their smiles made me feel gross on the inside. Then they moved on and more people came to check me out.

One after another, they appeared, and I wondered if this was normal behavior. The guard’s words came to my mind about doing what my father said and I’d be safe. So, I played the games, smiled, and pretended I wasn’t creeped out by the way everyone stared at me. Even when a man with a huge, hooked nose asked me to turn on the spot for him, I did it because my father said I should.

At the next people I was to be showcased to, my mouth fell open at the sight.

Bakewell. I trembled and instantly felt cold to my bones to see her standing in front of me. Dressed in a blue sequence number that fell to her feet, with long sleeves and a plunging V-line that went down to her belly button, it wasn’t a good look on the woman I was convinced was definitely over a hundred. Of course, she wasn’t, but I simply hated her. Blonde hair styled around her face in waves, akin to the 1920s fashion, her beady eyes pierced me. If we were anywhere else, she would have snatched me by my hair and shoved me into isolation for breaking her rule about leaving her institute.

“Trinity, dear,” she purred, coming up to me to kiss my cheeks, her grip on my arm hard, nails digging into flesh. I recoiled, but my father once more held me there. “I’m so glad to see you’re safe and well. You gave us a horrible fright when you vanished from the Institute. I was beside myself with worry.”

Liar. Liar. Liar.

Just seeing her had me trembling, remembering that she was one of the reasons my friend Frannie was found dead in a dumpster bin after selling her to an Alpha. Bakewell never

cared about us girls, only about pleasing my father and her clients. We were objects to her. I shook with anger.

“Well, lucky for me, my father found me. Maybe for the best,” I retorted. “A shame the same couldn’t be said for Frannie.”

She frowned, sighing like she genuinely cared. “Such terrible business what happened to her. I really hope the perpetrators are found and their heads roll for what they did.”

I glared at her, my insides livid, convinced the Alpha she sold Frannie to get rid of her.

“But the main thing is you are back and not hurt.”

“Yeah, lucky,” I mocked, gaining my father’s attention. “Any longer in the Institute, and I might have ended up with more scars, or maybe dead like Frannie.”

Her face turned to milk white at my words. Good, I wanted the bitch to shake in her heels for what she put us through.

“Scars?” My father stepped forward. “Hilda, what is she talking about?”

The woman broke out into a nervous laughter, then peered over her shoulder, pretending to reply to someone. Focused back on my father, she said, “Will you excuse me for a moment?” She practically ran away from us.

My father barely noticed and never even bothered to ask me about my scars because I knew he didn’t care. Instead, he greeted the next man with so much enthusiasm, I almost rolled my eyes.

I had every intention of telling him what Bakewell did. Before I escaped from him, I’d give him enough reason to destroy her for what happened to Frannie.

The longer the greetings went on, the more exhausted I became with all the fakeness, so when the lanky man from the hotel lobby was in the room, clapping loudly, bringing the room to complete silence, I exhaled a breath of relief. I also gained myself a scowl from my father.

“Esteemed ladies and gentlemen. Please find your seats. The event will be commencing shortly.” The lights in the room dimmed, with the focus of spotlights on the raised platform and the rows of seating.

Father went to speak with the lobby manager, leaving me to stand alone as everyone took their seat. It didn't last when the twins approached me with the same cocky stride. Their gazes flicked over me with a predatory look, one of curiosity rather than mere interest.

“You will do,” one of them said, shrugging, then narrowed his gaze on me. “The only question will be which one of us will fuck you first in the ass and your pussy. Or should it be a surprise?”

A shiver raced up my spine, and I recoiled, startled by their words. Of course, they only said them softly and out of my father's earshot.

“Oh, look, she's scared. She's going to be fun to play with,” the second twin mused, wearing the same nasty leer as his brother.

My body tightened, my response flying past my lips. “You two motherfuckers will die at my father's hands before you come close to touching me.”

They burst out laughing, leaving my skin rippling with shivers. Just as my father reached my side, the twins sauntered away, still chortling.

I was furious that they spoke to me that way. To these assholes, I was nothing but an Omega to rut. I keep my gaze low, seething at those assholes.

“Let's take our place,” Father instructed coldly, collecting my arm in his grasp. I kept my head low as we walked, but unable to help myself, I looked out over to the crowd. The twins still watched me with mirth on their faces, but I saw no sign of Bakewell. Did she slip out, scared of my father punishing her?

Before I knew it, we were moving and climbing up the steps to the platform. My body clenched as I stared out at the

audience in their seats, and if I thought I was a show pony before, now I was the entertainment on stage under the spotlight.

“What are we doing up here?” I whispered over my shoulder to my father, who just grinned at me.

Two guards joined us on the stage, standing close behind us, and something about their presence worried me. In truth, it made me sick to my stomach, and I swung my attention back at them as my father welcomed and thanked everyone for attending his auction.

A manic feeling washed over me, an ominous sensation humming under my ribcage, and I wasted no time looking over the crowd, when my father spoke loudly, grabbing my attention.

“Get your paddles ready because the first auction tonight has been in the making for the past nineteen years.”

The crowd burst into excited applause while I was shaking at my father’s words. I wasn’t an idiot and understood he spoke about me. I gaped at him, shivering. My mind swam with his earlier anger about me having my virginity, and I instantly backed away, bumping into one of the guards, who nudged me back to my father’s side.

This can’t be happening.

I slid closer to him, frowning, keeping my voice low.

“You’re not talking about auctioning me, are—”

He ignored me.

“My daughter, Trinity, has recently transformed into an Omega. Right now, her heat is suppressed, but she’s about to blossom and needs Alphas to sate her. To sweeten the offering, she’s still a virgin, so you will have the best of an Omega ready to be bred and will be her first.”

A whimper fell from my lips, tears blurred in my eyes, and my hands curled into fists. Was this really happening?

The excitement in the room was terrifying. I shoved back once more, driving my elbow into the guards, but it was my

father who swung around to face me with a grimace, a threat of what he'd do to me, but nothing could be worse than being auctioned off to the creeps in the audience.

“You can't do this,” I muttered, my voice shaky.

He abruptly twisted toward me and cupped my jaw harshly, the nerves in his temples twitching.

“My girl, why do you think I kept you in the Institute this entire time? You're an important asset to me, and I take good care of what belongs to me, but there are no free rides in this world. You were taken care of for a prize, and now you're going to pay that back. So, be a good girl and shut the fuck up. Just stand there and look pretty.”

Panic wove through me, shaking me down to my bones. Lifting my gaze to the audience revealed all the hungry wolves ready to tear into me. I was sick to my stomach to the point that I was going to hurl.

“I hate you,” I murmured.

“Do me proud, girl.” A grim smirk pulled my father's lips, then he whipped back around to the masses with his head raised. “Opening bid begins at five million.”

Paddles shot into the air eagerly, and I froze. My father was offering me as a sacrifice to the monsters who were ready to destroy me. He wouldn't care if they killed me as long as he got his money.

As the auction spilled into a frantic bidding war, the amount climbed to twenty million in the span of a few minutes. I whimpered and curled my arms around my middle, tears rolling down my cheeks, as I watched gross Alphas bidding, leering in my direction up on stage, some licking their lips. Others drooled as they bid on me. Fucking assholes. The twins groped themselves in their seats as their father led the bidding war.

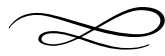
They were going to hurt me so badly, their hands and mouths over my skin, their cocks... I choked on a sob. I broke on the inside like shattered glass, my knees barely able to hold me up. One of my father's guards was at my back, wrapping a

meaty arm around my waist to hold me up, his hot breath on the back of my neck, his erection against my rear.

My skin itched as darkness rose around me, spreading through me, stealing whatever hope I had been holding onto. That was extinguished, and all that remained was an empty girl who would never be whole again.

Desperation rippled over me, my body shaking with the urgency to escape any chance I got, even if it meant jumping out the window. Flying to my death was a far better option than being fed to these demons who'd eat me alive.

Six



VIPER

I shoved myself out of the driver's seat of my Maserati, feeling savage.

Two fucking days and we still hadn't found Trinity.

Rumors flying around Liberty had the mafia boss bragging about having a new Omega. I slammed the door shut, growling under my breath of the putrid stench in the alleyway I'd parked. Was the fuckhead taking our Trinity as his own Omega? Sickness hit the back of my throat at the thought of anyone else touching her, let alone that old prick. Raspy breaths moved through me with raw fury.

I made my way around the car concealed by the night, hands fisted into balls that we had failed to find her. Arman's mansion up on the mountain was guarded better than Fort Knox, making it impossible for us to enter.

"You sure this is the place?" Aspen asked, squeezing his fat ass from the back seat of my car, when something from within the car croaked.

"Shit, man, what did you do to my baby?" My eyes bulged— what the fuck had he broken in the car?

Aspen finally burst out and came at me like a bear, huffing for air, chest puffed out. His penguin suit was crumpled from being a pretzel in the back seat, and I laughed at him.

"I'm never sitting in the back of that tin can ever again, understand?" He jabbed a finger into my chest, rage burning in his eyes.

“Good,” I murmured, and his annoyance flared. “Bring out your inner beast because we’ll need it tonight.”

Shadow just marched past us deeper into the alley to the back door of the hotel door. It suddenly opened—someone was coming out. Shadow snatched the waiter who emerged at the wrong time and slammed him to the wall, while I threw myself forward to catch the door before it shut.

Aspen shoved past me and charged inside the building, while Shadow had the guy in a choke hold until his face turned blue, and he passed out. He dragged the guy into the shadowy spot near the industrial-sized trash bin, then darted inside. Pimped out in tuxes, we rushed through a back hallway that went right past the kitchen.

After two days of going insane, we finally gained our break when we learned about an auction party at the X Hotel. Apparently, the big mafia boss, Arman, was auctioning a rare Omega. Fucking piece of shit was going to profit off Trinity and sell her to some filthy piece of filth.

Heads were going to roll, but I was panicked we’d come too late, and Trinity would be gone, that they’d already hurt her. Not knowing brought out a madness inside me that roared to life.

Shadow took the lead through the hotel, abruptly stopping a pretty little Beta waitress, pinning her to the wall with his smoldering stare. She fluttered her eyelashes under his gaze.

“Tell me, gorgeous. Where will I find tonight’s auction? I’m running a tad late.”

Aspen was rolling his eyes behind him, which had me chuckling under my breath.

She blinked up at him, making a small moaning sound. “It’s up on the twenty-second floor. I’d love to show you since you will need my help. The elevator is security locked at that level.” She had her hand on Shadow’s chest, pushing herself closer.

“And you can get us up there?” He ran a finger across her cheek, and the tiny red-haired girl shivered beneath his touch.

Shadow was a chick magnet, but the difference between our methods was while he liked to sweet talk his way into any situation, I preferred to do it with a bit more force. And the ladies loved it.

All too eager to help us, the waitress took us to the elevator and used her card to activate the private floor button.

We all marched into the elevator.

Shadow quickly walked her out of the elevator, promising all kinds of sin when he returned. He stepped back inside just as the door shut on the doe-eyed girl, who looked like she was on the verge of an orgasm.

Aspen and I stared at him.

“You’re getting soft,” I muttered. “Normally, you’d have her in here with us, fucking her brains out, then sharing. Has our little Trinity tamed you?”

Shadow shrugged. “The maid’s not my type, but you go for it, if you’re after pussy.”

“Fuck that. There’s only one pussy I want, and that’s my little Omega’s,” I stated, grinning. “I’ve wanted to fuck her so badly since she went missing. I’m constantly hard, and I think my balls are going to drop off. It kills me that I haven’t been able to track her down.”

“Way too much information,” Aspen barked. “And stalker much?”

“Don’t pretend it’s not killing you that she’s gone,” I murmured, sliding a hand down my body to adjust my huge cock.

“What do you fucking think?” The muscles in Aspen’s neck flexed. “You’re such an arrogant prick sometimes. Just because you marked her first, doesn’t mean we miss her any less.”

I laughed at the darkness in his eyes. All three of us were completely infatuated with Trinity, but I had a lot to make up to her for being such an asshole to her.

The elevator doors slid open, and Shadow muttered, “Show time.”

ASPEN

The mafia families were ruthless and unpredictable, and we were about to get on the bad side of the Russian mob, the Shchavlev family. Bring it on! We weren’t a large team like them, but we were brutal and a force to be reckoned with.

We stepped out of the elevator, Shadow striding forward first, Viper and me at his sides. The red and gold hallway led us toward enormous double doors and the two guards standing outside them. *Bingo*. That was our entry.

Their defiant glares landed on us, shoulders curled forward, guns trained on us. “This is a private party. “Get back into the elevator if you know what’s good for you,” one of the meatheads stated.

“Must be a misunderstanding,” Shadow stated as the three of us closed the distance to the guards. “We’re running late to the auction.”

My hand slipped under my jacket to the Glock at my back.

The guard snarled, his icy stare chilling, and exchanged a knowing look with his buddy. They knew we didn’t belong here.

“All guests have been accounted for. What are your names?”

His friend grabbed his phone from his pocket, and panic stations hit. Before I could take another breath, I was flying toward the man. He barely had time to react and swing his gun in my direction before I slammed into him, bringing him to the floor. Shadow and Viper jumped the other guy. Silence was the key, which meant no gunshots.

Slamming a fist into the dude’s face, I heard the crack the moment I broke his nose. He cried out.

“Shut the fuck up,” I growled, shoving my gun’s muzzle into his mouth so he was deep-throating it as I straddled the

idiot's chest. I patted down his body, tossing aside his weapons.

Quickly snatching the silencer from the inside of my jacket, I stared down at the guy's huge eyes, the panic behind them because he knew what was coming. In this business, our days were numbered, and his was up because he supported a monster who dared to touch my girl.

"Now, be a good asshole," I snarled, getting up, still holding the gun in his mouth. The moment I retrieved it, I drove my boot into his ribs, giving me just enough time to screw on the silencer as he groaned, curling in on himself.

Up on my feet, I drove the butt of the gun into his face and shot him right in the forehead. Just as quickly, I snatched his shirt and dragged the heavy fucker to the broom closet Viper had just shoved the other dead guard into.

Shadow collected their weapons from the floor, handed one to Viper and me, then we all turned to the door, when I paused.

"Wait, is it a smart idea to just rock in there? You heard the guards. All the guests have arrived."

"But most function rooms have rear entrances for the staff," Aspen added.

I nodded, and without another word, we all darted down the hallway, searching for anything that might resemble another door. Viper slipped open one, sticking his head inside, then glanced over his shoulder at us.

"Think this is it," he whispered as he slipped in.

Panic struck that he'd just rush into the auction, guns blazing. Shadow must have had the same thought because we both darted in after him. There was no auction room, only a smaller storage room where they kept stacked chairs, delivery trolleys on wheels, and all manner of crap for the function room.

Viper had a waiter up against the wall, gun at his head. The man trembled, crying, and by the smell of it, wetting his pants.

“Viper,” Shadow hissed. “He’s not one of Shchavlev’s men.”

“So?”

“So, don’t fucking kill him.”

Viper glanced around, set the waiter back on his feet, then said to him, “Don’t move or make a sound.” Quickly, he searched the cupboards and returned with duct tape. Securing the waiter’s mouth, wrists, and ankles, Viper shoved the man into one of the cupboards, making him cramp up to fit in the bottom section, then quickly taped up the cupboard. Once done, he glanced at us.

“What?” he whispered.

Shaking his head, Shadow moved to the main door, which I could only guess led to the main function room. Viper and I moved in closer, and I glanced over at him.

“I would have done the same with the waiter,” I whispered. “The tying him up part, not wanting to kill him, to be clear.”

He grinned, nodding. “Thanks for the support.”

Viper pissed me off a lot, but I didn’t hate him. He was family, closer than the brother I once had, and we looked out for one another. Besides, each one of us was broke in our own way with fucked up backgrounds, and without our pack, we’d most likely be dead already.

Shadow opened the door ever so slightly and peered outside. The booming sound of someone calling thirty million had me stunned. Our Alpha shut the door and glanced back, his face pale.

“She’s on the stage. That son of a bitch is selling her now.”

Viper pushed forward, his face red with rage, gun in hand. Shadow shoved him back.

“Calm the hell down. The back row is empty. We slip in and sit there, biding our time until the auction is over. There are too many guards near the stage for us to go charging in there. I won’t risk Trinity getting hurt or being taken from us.”

Viper cracked his neck, grimacing. “Fine, just get out there already.”

Shadow returned to his post.

My nerves were on the verge of bursting.

Just as an excited sound of claps came from the room, Shadow waved for us, and we slipped into the auction room on silent steps.

SHADOW

Heads low, we slipped into the back row without a single disturbance or anyone even glancing our way. Guards were too busy watching Arman, the mafia boss himself, running the auction, which showed how much of a control freak the bastard was.

My attention funneled in on Trinity, my sweet Omega, being held on stage by a dead-man-walking guard. Tears glistened in her eyes, and her harried, wild gaze kept sweeping the three Alphas in a bidding war to claim her. She shook, looking petrified.

Rage bled through me, every inch of me stiff, and I kept thinking of how I’d take out every damn asshole in this room to get to her. We had some explosives with us, but they were out of the question if it meant she’d get hurt, so we’d have to wait to see how it all played out. Whatever idiot thought he’d be lucky enough to finally win Trinity would have just paid a fortune for their own death.

My stomach dipped, watching the agony, knowing the asshole Arman had forced her to wear that transparent dress, showing everyone what belonged to us.

Inhaling a ragged breath, I glanced over to Viper, who was near to breaking and kept shifting in his seat, while Aspen, who sat next to me, kept nudging him to keep his shit together. The old fart in front of the us, wearing a high-collared coat, kept glancing back at Viper, whose bouncing knees was

bumping his seat. I reached over, jabbing fingers into his ribs to get his attention, then gave him the death stare.

“Be fucking cool,” I hissed.

Viper glared at me, darkness burning across his vision. I got it. We were all struggling at seeing Trinity up there, but Viper was losing control, which with him marking her had him being drawn to her to the point of agony.

Glancing back up, the bidding war had now fallen between two Alphas, and I was on the edge of my seat, planning in my head how we'd take down the winner as soon as they left the place. It would be easier to collect Trinity in transit, so as much as it killed me, we waited and watched.

My breath was cut short at movement from Viper. I glanced over and found him with a death glare aimed at the old fart who'd twisted around to stare at him. Then he twisted back around.

“Fuck,” I hissed at Viper, who stared at me unaffected.

“You asshole,” Aspen growled lowly. “If you destroy our chance to get Trinity, I'm going to rip your fucking head off.”

By some miracle, the pair settled down. Returning my attention to my beauty up on the stage, her gaze clashed with mine.

She saw me... saw us.

Heart thundering in my ears, I fought the urge to jump over the assholes in front of me and run to her, sweep her into my arms, and carry her away. I would do it in a heartbeat if I wouldn't be mowed down by gunfire from the guards in the process.

Giving her a smile, I let her know we'd found her and that we weren't letting her go. My gaze dipped to her trembling mouth, attempting to smile. I sat there feeling like a useless bag of shit while the guard held her tight, touching her. It burned me like flames scorching my insides to see the way he manhandled her, to hear Arman closing a deal with an old fucker with two sons by his side. I swore to God, I'd tear the guy's arms off as soon as I got a chance.

“And sold to Nikolai Ivanov. Trinity is officially yours for the exceptional price of thirty-eight million dollars.”

Trinity burst out crying on the stage, and Viper shot up, only to be brought back down by Aspen with a punch to his side.

My brain was short-circuiting, every inch of me taut at watching her agony and her fear that she might end up with the fucker who won her.

The old man stood, nodding and cupping both hands together, shaking them in the air in some glorious celebration, while his two sons, I assumed, whistled and fist-pumped each other. All while a terrified Trinity was sobbing, shaking, and completely shocked.

Fury reverberated through me. I was feeling light-headed from sitting back and doing nothing, but it wasn't time. Not yet...

I was going to have fun slicing every one of their throats.

Nikolai was making his way along the row to go collect his prize, Viper slipping forward in his seat like he would burst out after him and kill the old bastard.

“Not yet,” I growled in Viper's direction. “Don't fucking ruin our chance.”

Seven



TRINITY

Twisting my fingers over one another, I shook like a leaf in the wind.

The old man with his cruel twins bought me for thirty-eight million dollars. They owned me, and my father would do nothing to stop them as long as he collected his money. He was smiling, ridiculously proud of himself, while I wanted to die.

Frantically, my teary gaze swept from the man climbing up on stage to Shadow, Aspen, and Viper, staring at me from the back row in the shadows. I was desperate for them to take me away from this all now.

They didn't make a move... not yet. They'd take me from these monsters, from my father. They had to because I wouldn't go with the old man. I wouldn't...

Lowering my gaze from Shadow's, I tried not to draw attention to them, but instead lifted my attention to Nikolai, who hobbled towards me, took my jawline, and planted a wet kiss on my lips.

Panic came at me, along with a disgusting darkness that smothered me from the inside out. I shoved my hands against his chest, but the asshole was stronger than he looked and didn't budge. Close to throwing up in his mouth, he finally released me.

“Good, you're a fighter, Omega. We will have fun. And we're going to enjoy you, making sure we get every dollar of our thirty-eight million out of you.”

Blinking, tears built up once more at how gross I felt inside, but my feelings didn't matter—they never did for an Omega. My whole life, I'd been an object, something to benefit others, and I'd had enough of being walked over.

Of course, I wasn't an idiot and knew how to pick my battles. The world revolved around power and money, and my father was the king of it.

Nikolai's wrinkly hand grasped mine firmly, a sign of ownership, of dominance over me.

"I will call you Lucy after my late wife."

Bile hit the back of my throat as my gaze slipped to Shadow, who looked fucking pissed. Viper and Aspen were bickering, and up on stage, I couldn't hear them. When I noticed Nikolai's attention follow my line-of-sight straight to my Alphas, I turned to him, placing my palm on his scrawny chest and drawing his attention.

"I-I would like that."

A flare of weakness rippled through me, and I cringed at how pathetic I sounded. More than anything, I mentally pleaded for Shadow to just steal me away from these monsters. I wasn't sure how much longer I could do this without completely falling apart.

"Good girl," my father said, his hand on my back, and I flinched at his touch.

At that same moment, an explosive sound resonated through the room so loudly, I assumed a bomb had detonated.

I screamed, shaking insanely as I ripped myself away from my father and Nikolai. The guards had all thrown themselves toward my father to shield him and Nikolai while I was left alone. I took the chance to escape.

Rushing down the steps from the stage, I pressed myself into the scattering of people who were running in every direction like scurrying rats. I was doing my best to reach my Alphas, but I couldn't see anything since I was in the thick of the panic.

At the same moment, I noticed a river of uniformed police charging into the function room, guns raised and yelling for everyone to get on their knees, sending everyone into a frantic bustle.

I yelled at the roughness of them kicking and shoving everyone to get them down on the floor. Panic came at me in undulating waves, crashing into me faster. Someone bumped into me, shoving me aside with such brutality, I fell over onto all fours, while someone else ran into and tripped over me, hitting me in the ribs in the process.

I cried out as pain sliced through my side, but I pushed myself back up. Wobbling on my heels, I saw Viper coming for me, tossing people aside, with Shadow and Aspen at his sides.

Tears welled in my eyes, and I cried out to them, waving my hand, so they saw me, when someone else knocked into me just as an officer grabbed him. The man bellowed, fighting the officers. Shoving away from them, I crashed into a strong, broad chest. Hard arms snapped around me, and I glanced up at Shadow's smile.

“We've got you, and you're not going anywhere.”

Pressing myself up on my toes, I stole a kiss, my heart fluttering and my emotions a complete mess. Viper and Aspen were suddenly there, surrounding me. I literally cried at seeing them and fell into their arms.

“This way,” Shadow ordered.

We moved rapidly away from the main doors toward the rear of the room. Viper and Aspen shoved anyone in our way aside while Shadow held onto me with a death grip.

My mind was a jumble of emotions. I had missed the Alphas so deeply, I wanted to laugh out loud that they came for me.

Someone ran at Viper, side-tackling him, both of them crashing into the chairs.

I froze, distraught to see one of the twins slamming into Viper's face with something on his knuckles, every punch

splitting open Viper's face. I screamed as Aspen jumped to his rescue, only to be attacked by the second twin.

"This way," Shadow growled, practically lifting me off my feet as we scrambled past the chaos toward a side door I had only just noticed. "I've got to get you out of here. Viper and Aspen will keep them distracted."

Feet from the door, an electric shock suddenly jolted my body. Shadow and I were both shaking from the electric shock, falling forward, the floor rushing up to our faces. We hit the carpet, Shadow rolling away from me, and instantly the excruciating pain faded.

I groaned as every inch of me stung. Glancing over to Shadow, he was still writhing on the floor, frothing at the mouth. Sticking out from his back were two thin wires—high voltage wires connected to the taser held by one of the cops.

"Stop it, you're hurting him." I scrambled over to Shadow when someone snatched me up around my middle with ease.

"That's not going to happen, Omega," a deep guttural voice boomed in my ear.

I swung toward another officer who was giant and slightly terrifying.

"Release me. I had nothing to do with tonight's auction. I'm the victim."

His eyes softened for a moment as if he would understand. "I know," he acknowledged. "We've been tracking down the illegal auction of Omegas for months, and we're going to get you out of here and to safety. Don't be scared."

His words startled me, as they weren't what I expected. It was rare to meet anyone who wanted to help out of a good place, but I believed this man, except it wasn't him I needed to rescue me.

"I'm not scared, please." I glanced down at Shadow, then back at the cop. "He's my Alpha. I need to be with him."

Shadow finally stopped shuddering but groaned in pain, laying on his side in a fetal position.

The policeman wasn't listening to me and swung away from Shadow just as my Alpha glanced up at me. Our gazes clashed, his hand reaching out for me, and I cried out for him, thrashing against the officer who held me tighter. Heartache bled through his eyes while fury drummed through me.

My breaths rushed out of me, and my heart was about to burst out of my chest.

Viper and Aspen were still in a fight with multiple of my father's guards, but it all blurred as the officer carrying me moved with haste. I screamed for them, but with the commotion out of control, they didn't even look my way. Only Shadow stared at me, struggling to get to his feet.

We were outside the hotel on the sidewalk moments before he pushed me into the backseat of his car. I tumbled inside as he banged the door shut. Scrambling back around, I pulled at the door to open it, but it was locked.

"Let me out!" I banged on the window as the officer raced back into the X Hotel.

Swinging my attention to the driving officer, a lanky man with thick mousy colored hair, he glanced over his shoulder at me.

"Buckle up. I'm going to take you somewhere safe. Don't worry, Omega, no one will hurt you again."

"Stop saying that." Tears welled in my eyes. "If you want me safe, then you wouldn't separate me from my Alphas, who are back in the hotel."

His lips pursed, he started to pull the car away from the curb and into the traffic. "Once we get you back, we'll find out who you belong to, though it's best you continue your Omega education and not rush to be with an Alpha. I've seen too many awful things happen to Omegas."

I blinked at him, leaning forward, dread humming in my mind. My hands pressed against the transparent, plastic wall between the front and the back sections of the car.

"Where are you taking me?"

“Back home,” he announced, sounding rather proud of himself. “To the Bakewell Institute for Girls.”

Gasping, I fell back into my seat, curling my legs up to my chest and hugging them. A chill spread through me, my mind tripping over his words—he was taking me back to Bakewell. I couldn’t stop the tears as I slipped down darkened corridors in my mind, thinking about the punishment coming my way.

“You can’t take me back there,” I finally pleaded. “They’ll hurt me and send me back to my father, who just sold me.” I blurted out everything, all coming out in one breath.

“We’ll work it out once we reach the Institute. Now, rest. It’s a bit of a drive.”

“You don’t understand. They hurt me at the Institute. I have the scars to prove it. Please.”

He glanced at me with intensity. “Can you prove that the scars were caused by someone at the Institute?”

I blinked at him and hated that it would come down to my word against Bakewell’s. No one would believe me...an Omega.

I’d jumped out of the pan and landed in the fire. No way in hell would Bakewell confirm any of my complaints. She’d lie and make me appear like I was crazy. Dragging my teeth across my lower lip, I bit down until it hurt, anything to feel something other than the agonizing terror shattering my insides.

Shutting my eyes, I kept picturing my Alphas coming for me, the savage expressions to get me out safely. The passion, the admiration, the fear in their gazes, and while I felt the ache within me that I was so close to returning to them, I was left with just an emptiness drowning in dread.

Watching the city as we flew past it, I had a horrible sense of being led to my death, and I hated this damned world.

Finally, we pulled to a stop in front of the monstrous brick building that had to be more than a hundred years old. A few windows were bright with light, but most were switched off since it was way past bedtime for the girls.

Being back was cruel. I'd vowed never to return. I curled in on myself from the truth that I'd come back to his nightmare.

"Let's go." The cop climbed out of the car and opened my door. "Don't make me carry you out."

I swallowed. My reluctant moves were not my own but automation, the place I slipped into whenever Bakewell sent me down to isolation. If I was numb, I couldn't feel anything.

My heartbeat echoed in my head, and a dozen questions raced across my head. What would Bakewell do to me? How long would it take my father to retrieve me, then hand me over to Nikolai and his cruel sons? Had Shadow, Viper, and Aspen escaped the police? Would they know where I was and come get me?

Blinking into the night, I emerged from the car, staring at the brown front doors. The balmy breeze carried a whisper that covered me in goosebumps. As I raised my head to the enormous building that resembled more an asylum than a school, fear pressed down on me, smothering me.

This wasn't real.

This couldn't be real.

None of it.

How the fuck did I end up back here?

The cop grabbed my arm, and we moved to the front door when it opened. From within the darkened foyer, Bakewell emerged as though she'd been expecting us.

She was no longer dressed up but wore her usual brown woolen skirt that fell to her shins and a cardigan, face clean of makeup. She must have left the auction early to escape Father's wrath. With the hardness in her eyes when she stared at me, I knew she'd hurt me like never before.

I recoiled and bumped into the officer.

"It's okay," he said. "Ms. Bakewell is not going to hurt you, are you?"

“Of course not.” Her eyes widened with her fake shock, her hand pressed to her chest in a vulnerable gesture. “Our Institute prides itself on treating Omegas with the utmost respect and preparing them for the world.”

“Good,” the cop said. “Then you wouldn’t mind if I come in and you show me where she will spend the night, then answer some questions.”

“Of course.” Bakewell’s eyes lit up. “I’d welcome the chance to show you.”

We followed her through the dimly lit foyer, which only had a small table in the middle with plastic flowers and a set of elaborate wooden stairs that led up to the next floors.

When I glanced over at the officer, he gave me a gentle smile. At least he’d actually listened to me, even if he was going to leave me here. I’d take a bit of pressure from the cops on Bakewell, even if it lasted only long enough for me to find a way out of here.

We made our way through the security check-in on the next floor, where the guards in the small room, akin to a prison, buzzed us in. The woman in the glass booth wasn’t familiar to me.

“We take the utmost care to ensure no one can just walk into the Institute and take our Omegas. Their safety is our priority. Bakewell Institute for Girls isn’t a punishment. Cheer up, Trinity.” She reached over to touch my shoulder.

I flinched away from her touch. Part of me was tempted to ask her to show the cop the dungeons in the basement, but Bakewell would skin me alive once I was left alone with her. So, I kept my mouth shut as the chilling voice in my head whispered, *She won’t hurt you while you belong to your father. And he’ll be back for you very soon.*

My stomach squeezed harder as we traveled down the barren hallway, passing the other girls’ dormitories. All their doors were locked, and the small prison-like windows to peer inside were shut, too.

It hurt to come back here. My eyes pricked with tears, and I was convinced I'd die if I didn't see my Alphas again.

Sickness rose through me. Then we paused in front of a door where the door sat open, the inside lit only by the sunlight pouring into the dark room. Staring into it, I was suffocating on the inside. I clenched my fists and stepped back, only to have the cop catch my arm.

“All dormitories are automatically locked at nine each night, the lights out, so I'd suggest you get to sleep, Trinity, and we'll sort out everything else in the morning,” Bakewell said with a sugary voice.

I glanced up at the cop, praying he'd see reason and take me out of there.

“Off you go. A good sleep will help you. I will return tomorrow to check up on you.”

With a nudge, I stumbled into the darkness, and the door shut behind me with finality. The four walls seemed to close in around me. I sat on the single white, metal frame bed, feeling as though I'd dreamt everything. There I was again, in my prison with a bed, a table and chair, a closet, and a small shower and toilet room.

Terror wrapped around me. I fell onto my side, curled up, sobbing in my hands.

It didn't matter how I looked at the situation.

I was so fucked.

Eight



TRINITY

“T rinity.”

I cracked open my eyes to the sunlight pouring into the room when a female voice called me again.

“Trinity, girl, are you awake?”

Pushing up in bed, I groaned, my throat feeling like sandpaper, and I glanced down at my body to find myself in the transparent dress from last night’s auction. The sight brought everything from last night back like a terrible nightmare. The chill of the night clung to my flesh. I was up on my feet instantly, my head slightly dizzy. It took several seconds before I was moving over to the window to find no police car outside, no sign of my father or anyone.

“Hello, I can hear you walking around in there.” The familiar voice came from behind my door, and I rushed over to open it, except it was locked.

“Charity, is that you?” I asked, kneeling in front of the door.

“Yes, and Adella’s here, too. Trinity, O.M.G., what are you doing back here? We were worried like hell when you vanished from the Glass Slipper Ball, then we started to hear from the guards that you’d been found by your father. That’s awesome, I guess.”

“I’ve missed you both so much.” I half choked on my laugh because I missed Adella’s non-stop chatter. Pressing my forehead to the cold door, I smiled to myself to hear their voices. “I have so much to tell you.”

When one of us was in trouble and locked in a closet, the three of us, including Frannie, would sit with her just like this all day and keep her company, keeping their spirits up. I loved my friends and wouldn't have survived without them.

“Spill then,” Charity said. “Bakewell is holding you in your room. She said something about keeping you safe because the police will be paying you a visit and that you've gone into heat. Is that true?”

“Get comfortable.” I settled on my rear and crossed my legs in front of me. “I have a lot to tell you.” I told them everything from the moment I saw my hair changing to pink at the Glass Slipper Ball, being found by Shadow and his pack, all the way to last night's auction. When I finished, I was in dire need of water, but I couldn't move, eager to hear what my friends had to say.

“Fuck, Trinity,” Charity said. “You found three Alphas and had sex with them.”

I rolled my eyes.

“Geez, good one, Charity,” Adella whispered. “That's what you take out of that conversation? Not that her father is the mob boss and that he owns our institute? Or that she was sold for thirty-eight million dollars to some creepster and his sons? Or that she's lost everything and is back here?”

“Well, when you put it like that,” I muttered, then sighed.

“Trinity, shit, I didn't mean to say the last part, but wow, just fucking wow. So, what happens now?”

“Isn't it obvious,” Charity stated. “We gotta help her escape before her father comes back for her. Maybe her three white knights will come to her rescue. Speaking of which,” Charity added. “Do they have any friends?”

“Are you okay, Charity?” Adella chided.

The two broke into a small argument, and I just sat there, shaking, well aware that if I did nothing, my father would be coming back for me. I kept rubbing my arms, feeling dirty in this dress.

“Listen, I’m going to have a quick shower, but don’t go anywhere. I want to hear about everything that happened after I left the ball.”

As I got to my feet, Adella asked, “Have you heard anything about Frannie?”

Iciness gripped me, and I couldn’t move my legs. I let the door take my weight as I remembered the conversation with Shadow about Frannie when her body had been found. My heart lunged at the memory, all the torment and terror within me curling into my chest.

“The police found her...her body.” My voice came out raspy, and fresh tears rimmed my puffy eyes.

The girls didn’t say anything, but I heard their sniffles.

“What happened to her?” Charity finally broke the silence.

My heart was pounding, and I was drowning in the loss of a close friend. I angrily wiped at my tears, furious at how Omegas were treated. Under the heavy strain of grief, I murmured, “She was found in a dumpster. The news said they didn’t know who did it, but I think it had to be whomever Bakewell sold her to. What’s the bet they get off scot-free too? They all protect one another.” Anger burned my words. Squeezing my fists until the palms hurt, I opened up my hands to see the red, crescent shapes in my flesh from my fingernails.

The girls were crying now, and I wished I could hug them, but with my tears came a deep anger that had been building up within me for too long. All my life, I’d had to play all the games in this dark and unforgiving world. Just for once, I’d like things to go in my favor and the bad guys to pay for what they did.

For a long time, I told myself that karma would deliver her payback, but now I wasn’t so sure. I’d been waiting for too long, and still, the assholes got away with everything. They lied, stole, and walked over anyone as long as it kept them in power and their wallets fat.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you face to face,” I said softly. Something inside me broke, and my tears started falling hard

and fast.

“I know,” Charity choked on her words.

“Trinity,” Adella whispered, sniffing. “We need to find a way to get you out of here. Bakewell is pissed. I’ve never seen her so mad, and once the police stop sniffing around, I don’t want her to hurt you.”

Emptiness flooded me. I’d gotten to the stage where I wasn’t sure I could become more desperate, more terrified. Despair lived in my chest permanently.

“Okay, you two, move along,” a male’s voice boomed on the other side of the door—one of the guards.

“Speak later, Trinity,” Adella said hastily.

“Bye,” Charity added, and they shuffled out of there.

I stumbled into the bathroom and climbed into a cold shower, letting the water feel like ice on my skin. Falling to my knees, I heaved for breath and hugged myself just as the first trickles of fire licked my insides.

I jerked my head up, my eyes wide as the familiar sensation pulsed through me like wildfire, relentlessly gnawing at my insides, and I suffocated on my tears.

If shit wasn’t bad enough... my heat was coming back.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

C lick.

My dormitory door unlocked. Which shouldn’t be odd, except for the fact that it was midnight, and not even a mouse squeaked.

I scrambled out of bed, my heart thundering, fear licking up my spine as I half expected the asshole, Jack, to slip into my room for his random torture sessions. Then I remembered that Viper had killed the fucker, and I couldn’t be more relieved that someone was dead.

Except the door had still been unlocked. Truth was, I hadn't slept most of the night from dread of Bakewell coming to punish me. If there was one saving grace, it was that my heat came and went in soft waves as my body weaned off the suppressants my father had given me.

Shuffling sounds and whispers spilled out from the hallway, and I couldn't make out the words, but they were feminine, and several of them were speaking. Hurrying to the door, I pried it open to peer outside and spied half a dozen girls stumbling out of their dormitories, into the dark hallway, appearing confused.

I pulled open my door and joined them, quick feet carrying me to Charity and Adella. They saw me coming, and I threw myself into their arms. We all embraced, and I choked on a hiccupped breath.

"I missed your faces so damn much," I murmured.

"Trinity, it's been miserable without you," Adella muttered. "And your hair is pink! It suits you so much. I love it."

"Missed you terribly, babe." Charity pulled back and studied me all over. "Don't leave us again. And you have panda eyes."

I'd missed her random commentary. I laughed as I wiped at the makeup I hadn't fully washed off in the shower.

"This is what I miss," I said.

"How can you even see her makeup in the dark?" Adella stated, studying me and wiping something off from the corner of my eye.

"There's moonlight coming in from outside." I checked the long hallway as more girls emerged from their rooms, sleepy-eyed and confused. "What's going on? We've had blackouts before, and the backup generators kick in."

"Notice how there's no light coming from the guard's station," Charity pointed down the hall.

That had me moving in that direction, with my friends on my heels. An explosion of movement came from behind us, with at least a dozen girls following us. Their chatter was all about the blackout and why there were no guards.

Around the corner, the guard's room was empty. Charity moved toward the connecting door that closed our wing from the rest of the building and kept us prisoner. She pushed on the handle, and the door swung open.

Adella gasped and grabbed hold of my arm while my mind ran rampant. This was the opportunity I'd been searching for. Anticipation swirled in my gut.

I stepped forward just as Charity twisted in our direction.

"This is our chance to get out of this hellhole!" she said cheerily.

The majority of girls shoved forward for escape. With Adella still holding onto my arm in our hasty rush, I glanced at the guard station, mostly a room encased by a Perspex panel with a speaker in the wall to talk to the guard.

Crossing through the doorway with everyone else, I stared back at the guard's station and noticed the guard's legs sticking out of the open-doored room, with blood pooling around them.

Dread curdled in my gut.

That was when I knew this wasn't an accidental blackout.

I prayed that it was my pack coming for me, not my father.

A loud whistle blew, and I flinched as the bopping light of torches danced across our faces.

"What do you think you're all doing?" Bakewell screeched, and goosebumps raced up my arms. She stood in our path along with four guards who gripped batons, blocking us from reaching the set of stairs that would lead us to the front doors.

Cold hit me, but I didn't back away, even if the other girls did.

“Trinity, they’ll hurt you.” Adella squeezed my arm, pulling me to retreat.

I’d run my whole life, and it had never done me any good. I still got trampled, abused, sold, and kidnapped. Despite losing my breath and trembling ridiculously, I stumbled forward out of Adella’s grip. She and Charity came to stand by my side regardless, and the other girls lingered nearby. It was an awkward standoff where we all fell silent for those few moments, each side as stunned as the other.

A torchlight suddenly flashed across my face.

I squinted from being blinded.

“I should have known you’d be at the bottom of this,” Bakewell snapped. With the light lowered from my face, she stepped closer, her mouth twitching. “Why do you think you’re any more special than anyone else? Because your hair changed to pink, and you became an Omega? Hate to break it to you, princess, but that only makes you a slave to society, nothing else.”

“I didn’t cause the blackout,” I corrected her. “But you’re not going to stand in our way any longer. We are all going to walk out of this institute tonight.”

Sneering at me, she moved fast, snatching my hair and tugging me sideways. My footing caught on an uneven wooden floorboard, and I teetered on my feet before I fell over. My scalp was on fire from where she fisted my hair, pulling hard. I winced at her aggression.

“I’ll tell you what’s going to happen. You are going to isolation for the foreseeable future, and the rest of these ungrateful betas are going to learn what suffering really means. After everything I’ve done for you, this is how you reward me?”

Getting back on my feet, fury rose through me, and I shoved a hand into Bakewell’s chest, dislodging her from my hair. My friends were close behind me, but I never took my eyes off the monster in the room.

“Take her,” she growled, flicking her hand at her guards impatiently. “And get the other girls back into their rooms, by any means necessary. Tonight, we’re not playing nice.”

I raised my head and met her glare.

“Fuck you. There has never been a moment you were nice to us. Not when you knowingly used to let Jack torture and rape us in isolation or when the other guards beat us up for wanting extra food because we were hungry.”

“That never happened under my watch.” She couldn’t even look me in the eye when she said that.

I was shaking with fury, every muscle stiff.

The guards stepped forward regardless, and I stepped between them and the girls.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you. If you know who I am, then you’d back the fuck down. My father is Arman Shchavlev, the head of the most feared mafia family in Liberty.” I exaggerated, seeing the Matteis ruled as well, but I didn’t care at that moment. “You lay one hand on me, and my father will slice your balls off. If I tell him you hurt me, he’ll gun you down himself, and trust me, he doesn’t give anyone a second chance. I’ve seen it firsthand. He will roast you alive.”

The guards paused, terror sliding over their expressions.

“I gave you an order,” Bakewell yelled, her face turning red. “Do your fucking job and get those bitches back to their rooms.”

They pushed forward, snatching some of the girls, and dread curled inside me as I wondered if I was making a terrible mistake and they’d call my bluff.

“Did I mention that it’s not just your lives you’re risking? Once my father finishes with you, he’ll go after your family members and skin them alive. So, back the hell down and leave the building. Drop your weapons and run, or you won’t see the end of tomorrow.” I slightly scared myself at how easily I threw out threats. And it wasn’t that I wanted to use my father to defend myself...it made me sick each time I did, but everyone was terrified of him. They knew that if you got

on his wrong side, you died. So, I'd leverage what I had to escape.

"Miss?" one of the guards asked, glancing over at Bakewell, who was shaking furiously.

"Do I have to do it all myself?" She marched over and snatched Adella by the hair and wrenched her away so hard, she fell over and screamed in pain.

I didn't think, and the next thing I knew, I threw myself at them, shoving Bakewell off my friend. Stumbling on her feet, she crashed into the wall, her eyes wild with fury.

"Assault. You all saw that. Grab her, or you no longer have a job, and no one will ever hire you again!" she hollered at the guards.

"Don't you dare," I spat at the guards. "You will die painfully when I tell my father what you did to me. Coming back from the dead is a lot harder than not finding a job. Leave now, and the mafia boss will never hear your names."

Bakewell was shouting at them, her face shaking as she barked orders. Behind us, the rest of the girls remained deadly silent, watching it unfold.

Something finally went my way when the four guards dropped their batons and scrambled down the stairs and out the front doors.

Bakewell was still screaming at them when I approached her, shoulders squared, a grin on my face.

"You have no power over me," I said calmly, even if my pulse was a drum under my skin. *Thump. Thump.*

In a sudden burst of energy, she jolted around and came at me. Instinct took over because my fist was flying toward her, clipping her hard in the nose. Pain screamed up my arm, and I whined from how much punching someone hurt, but it was worth seeing Bakewell stumble backward. She clutched her bloody nose, those dark eyes filled with panic. She had to know her time was up.

The foyer seemed to darken, if that was possible in the blackout, but I also knew that I couldn't let Bakewell go. She'd return and hurt other girls. Without thinking it through, I jerked my head to the girls behind me, some of them already picking up the guard's batons. They readied to fight, so I did the right thing.

I faced my friends, the girls who'd suffered as much as me, and said, "You want revenge for all the pain Bakewell brought you, to stop her from doing it again, now's your chance."

There was no pause, the girls all bellowed their war cries, rushing toward Bakewell, including my two friends, both screaming, "For Frannie!"

Good. Fucking excellent.

It turned into a bloodbath in seconds as they tore into Bakewell, her screams going unheard, just the thump of the punches and hits the girls delivered. I watched, smiling, and for a moment, I scared myself into believing that ordering someone's demise came too easy. Maybe I wasn't too much different from my monster father.

I should have felt some pity, but I was numb to it. She hit the ground, her body bleeding and broken, not a breath left in her. It was kind of terrifying to think we just killed her.

The creak of someone stepping up behind me sounded.

I whipped around, half expecting another girl coming late to the show.

Instead, my heart lunged at the sight.

Viper emerged from the shadows of the guard's room, strolling casually, hands deep in the pockets of his jeans, along with Aspen and Shadow.

"Look at our little Omega. She's cunning as fuck."

Squealing, I ran to them, throwing myself into their arms, my eyes teary that they were all here for me. They embraced me, their kisses all over me, and I couldn't believe I was so happy to see these three who I was trying to escape from not that long ago. Now I was teary to be back with them. Their

scents swirled around me, embracing me, reminding me of where I belonged. Viper with my most favorite smell of pumpkin pie. Shadow's scent always reminded me of night blooming jasmine, a smell that created a hungry ache in the pit of my stomach for him. And those muscadine grapes, fruity, sweet, Aspen teased me with, left me craving him.

“Little Omega, you have no idea how much we've been searching for you. I missed you so much,” Aspen purred in my ear, kissing me.

Shadow embraced me, holding me tight against his hard chest. “I'm never letting you out of my sight again.”

But when Viper cupped my face, twisting me to kiss me, I melted. My toes curled on the cold floor, and I couldn't pinpoint what it was, but being back with him ignited something inside me that made me clutch into his shirt desperately. I cried just at the thought of being apart from him again.

He moaned against my mouth, kissing me like an obsessed man. It was almost painful if I didn't get closer to him. And those initial threads of my heat started to make a reappearance.

At that moment when I finally felt a sense of peace in my life, the ring of police car sirens wailed through the night. My veins turned to ice, and I was determined not to get caught again.

Pulling back from my Alphas, I murmured, “We need to get out of here... now!”

Nine



TRINITY

“Fuck, the cops are coming,” Viper growled, taking me by the arm and swinging me toward the stairs while all around us, the girls were scurrying to escape. They rushed downstairs, making a beeline for the door.

My head was swimming, and I had no idea where the other girls were going, but I remembered many talking about places they could go to if they even got out of the Institute.

Aspen and Shadow were ushering us forward when I glanced back to see Charity and Adella standing there, staring at me. My heart cracked at seeing the fear in their eyes that I’d leave them behind. They were my best friends, and I’d never forget them.

“Hurry up, you two, we gotta get out of here.” I waved for them to follow, and their eyes beamed.

“Thought you forgot about us,” Charity murmured, pouting.

“As if I would.”

Breathlessly, we all rushed downstairs.

Panic curled in my chest that we’d come this far and wouldn’t get away, but I couldn’t think like that. My Alphas came for me, and we’d get out of here.

I appreciated more than anything that none of them complained about my friends joining us when we reached the slick, black Aston Martin SUV. It was going to be a squeeze

for us all, but it would be a luxury compared to being a prisoner in the Institute.

“Hurry, get in,” Aspen called out to us. Hitting the button on his key, the locks clicked open, and he dove into the driver’s seat. Shadow opened the back for me, and Viper jumped in, taking me with him. He had me on his lap, our bodies melting together, and the more we touched, the more I longed for him, just as I had in my dreams. Something awoke inside me for him that was different from the other Alphas. Something I’d have to ask him about when we weren’t running for our lives.

Charity and Adella were scrambling into the backseat from the other side.

I noticed Shadow giving Viper a deadpan look from the open door, and I would have laughed out loud at their jealousy if I wasn’t terrified of being caught.

“Please, can we hurry up,” I urged, the hairs on my arms rising as I kept glancing around, half expecting the cops to come flying down the main road any second now.

Viper’s arm coiled around my stomach like a seatbelt while my friends were frantically tugging on theirs, well aware we were in for a wild ride.

With Shadow in the car, we were skidding away from the Institute in seconds. I noticed that most of the other girls who escaped were rushing in different directions and really hoped they found somewhere safe.

We took the turn out of the driveway a bit too sharply, the rear tires skidding. All of us swerved in the back, Adella crying out as she frantically grasped for the door. Charity was cheering, loving the ride. Then we raced away, my heart in my chest as I threw a glance over my shoulder.

“Fuck man, where’d you learn to drive,” Viper howled, holding onto me tightly.

Aspen was chuckling, taking way too much enjoyment out of annoying Viper.

I glanced behind us, and in the distance, red and blue lights pulsed in the dark.

“Faster.”

Shadow was staring back, too, as were all of us. Those few tense moments faded when the bouncing lights swung toward the Institute.

“How did you find us?” I asked nervously as I kept peering over my shoulder. “I’m guessing you were responsible for the power outage?”

“Yep. Power and the backup generators in the basement,” Aspen said. “And fuck me, why does an Omega Institute have prison cells? That fucking bitch deserved a harsher death.”

Viper’s grasp around my middle tightened slightly, and I leaned against him as he propped his chin against my shoulder. “She and Jack will never hurt you again, sweetheart,” he whispered in my ear.

Melting against him, I was so tight with emotions, I wanted to cry at his words, knowing full well that he’d been responsible for killing Jack, the guard who managed the isolation cells at the Institute—the monster who abused us girls. I absolutely adored Viper for killing him, which was a strange thing to think. Then again, hadn’t I just sent Bakewell to her death?

I regretted nothing. They were vile people who had hurt so many of us Omegas.

“You have no idea,” Charity said, drawing my attention to her. “Bakewell was a psychopath. By the way, I’m Charity,” she teased, cutting me a smart-ass look.

“And I’m Adella.”

I cringed. “Oh, crap. I failed at the one thing that should have been easy. Guys, these are my two amazing best friends. And in the car, we have the three Alphas who kidnapped me from the Glass Slipper Ball, saving me once my heat came roaring out.” I grinned at my friends with a lopsided smile. “So, I’m sitting on top of Viper, who loves midnight walks and can be grizzly.”

He chuckled. "Fair description."

"Driving is Aspen, my big teddy bear who has no fear. He took me up in an air balloon, and you know how terrified I am of heights."

"Wait, you did what?" Adella blurted. "You almost peed your pants that time you went up the tree in the yard to collect the Frisbee."

"That's interesting," Aspen said. "I take that as a challenge."

"No, you don't. I'm serious, Aspen."

He just laughed at me.

I reached over and touched Shadow. "And that leaves us with the pack Alpha, Shadow, the man I was terrified of at first but who melted my heart. Oh, and he loves to chase things."

"Why do I get the impression there's a lot more behind your description that we're not privy to?" Charity asked, amused. "Awesome to meet all three of your boyfriends. I won't lie. I'm completely jealous. You became an Omega and found your Alphas in one night. Lucky we went to the Glass Slipper Ball!" Giggling, she waggled her eyebrows at me.

I smirked, knowing she was truly happy for me.

"She said we're your boyfriends. It's official now," Aspen teased, raising an eyebrow, which reflected in the mirror.

"Well..." My cheeks were heating up. Our time together had been a whirlwind, then I vanished, yet I had sex with all three.

"She said she's got the hots for you three, so I assumed you were all an item," Charity smirked.

I narrowed my gaze at her for throwing me under the spotlight. Things between the guys and me were still... uncertain. I adored them, and we'd shared a lot in our time together, but was I being too presumptuous to assume it'd be anything more?

“Trinity is mine forever,” Viper said vehemently, his body embracing mine, and each time I shifted, the ridge against my ass grew harder. “In every possible way,” he whispered in my ear, taking me by surprise and making me blush. His words were a beautiful surprise. “But we have a lot to talk about,” he said, and that last part worried me.

“Trinity is definitely ours,” Shadow added, twisting to look back at us, then at me, those piercing blue eyes doing things to me, adding to the heat I felt simmering beneath my skin.

“She knows we’re never letting her go.” Aspen nodded, staring at me through the rear-view mirror and grinning.

Okay, so I was the only one who hadn’t connected the dots that this was something serious. Of course, I wanted it, but I learned a long time ago never to assume anything when so many people had let me down.

“You guys are going to make me cry,” I teased, feeling truly adored that someone wanted me and wasn’t trying to get rid of me.

It was funny because it took being kidnapped by my father and almost losing everything to realize how much these three Alphas had grown on me. There was still so much I had to discover about them, to learn about them, and as Viper said, we had things to talk about. But none of that would change our connection. At least, I hoped it wouldn’t.

“So, what’s the plan? Are we going to your compound?” I asked, leaning forward to reach Shadow, who twisted around toward us. All the while, Viper was rubbing his hand over my back, the massage divine and slightly arousing.

“We can’t go back there,” Shadow said, looking over his shoulder at me, his eyes filled with heartfelt emotion and with something fearful. “I have another place for us. Our home was compromised after you were kidnapped from us. And after overhearing your conversation with Bakewell, there’s no way we can go back there.”

I swallowed hard, thinking back to me threatening the guards with my father... and now my Alphas know the truth,

too. Talk about complicated, considering Shadow's grandfather was the mob boss of the other mafia family in town—the Matteis family.

“Is that true?” he asked. “Is Arman Shchavlev your father?”

Everyone in the car fell silent, and I felt everyone's eyes on me. The three Alphas were intense, their breaths sharp and shallow, all thinking the same thing. It wasn't just that they'd stolen someone from the mafia leader but his daughter. It made me sick to my stomach to even acknowledge it.

Reluctantly, I nodded. Clenching my teeth, I curled back into Viper's arms.

“He's a fucking monster. I watched him shoot a man in the face who just came to talk to him. Sure, the guy was wielding a gun, but still. It was horrible.”

Viper kissed my neck tenderly while my friends both reached over to hold my hand.

“Thanks.” I offered them a lopsided grin. “I never want to go back to him.”

“Your father's a psychopath,” Charity added.

Everyone in the car was still staring at me, leaving me feeling slightly intimidated.

“I didn't ask to be his daughter,” I grumbled, my arms covered in shivers. “I didn't know until he told me. The fucker even killed my mother. I hate him so much. Apparently, he put me into the Institute to hold me until I became an Omega so he could sell me. The fucking asshole doesn't give a shit about me.” My words were running into one another, tears pricking my eyes. Until I told the Alphas, I hadn't realized how much it had affected me. For so long, I dreamed of finding my parents, then I got the biggest monster in the city as my father.

“It's okay, no one is blaming you.” Viper hugged me tighter, smothering me in his love. “We can't pick our parents as much as we can't pick who we fall in love with.” A whisper of his kisses on my neck helped me breathe easier.

“I’m sorry you went through that,” Shadow said, reaching over from the front of the car, his hand on my knee. “I’m going to fucking kill him for what he put you through.”

“I wish I could hold you right now,” Aspen croaked, the ache in his voice making me feel adored.

“Don’t feel bad,” Adella said, squeezing my hand. “I think most parents are dicks, and we’re all better off without them.”

“Hell, yes to that,” Aspen roared.

Feeling the heat of Viper’s breath against my ear, I found my smile. “I’ve missed you so much,” he murmured.

I turned to face him, curious about how touchy-feely he was being, how loving. When I first arrived at the compound, he’d made it crystal clear he wanted me gone. The strangest part was that being with him calmed me in a way I couldn’t understand. It felt as though I couldn’t bear it if he let go of me.

“Me, too,” I replied softly, wishing it could be just us two in the car. His erection, hard beneath my ass, had my own desires flaring. The flicker of flames from my heat surged through me.

“So, speaking of family,” Charity began. “Is it too much trouble if you drop Adella and me with my grandmother south of the city?”

I stiffened and twisted around to face my friends.

“You’re not coming with us? It’s dangerous, and the cops are going to be searching for us everywhere.” I was choking on my breath. I wanted to keep my friends safe and hated being away from them.

“I’m sorry, Trinity, but I miss my grandma.” Charity licked her dry lips and exhaled loudly. “She’s all alone, living off the grid. No one ever goes to her farm, and she has underground bunkers. Adella and I are going to lay low there. Plus, you don’t want us two to be your fifth and sixth wheel, trust me.” She laughed nervously, and I saw the glistening in her eyes, the fear as well.

She had to know as much as the rest of us that my father would send his army to find me. How could I hate my friends for wanting to be as far as possible from the disaster waiting to happen?

“Of course.” I leaned over and hugged both Charity and Adella. “You gotta promise me you’ll keep safe and won’t let anyone see you until the drama from the Institute escape dies down. My father owns the place, and he’ll want all the Omegas back, so you gotta lie low, okay?” My voice croaked, and I hugged them tighter, both of them squeezing me into them. Viper held onto my hips, ensuring I didn’t fall over and into my friends from all the swerving and fast driving Aspen was doing.

“We gotta keep in touch. When this blows over, we have to catch up for a proper farewell to Frannie,” Adella said, her voice shaking.

“Absolutely.” Drawing back, I saw tears in her eyes, but she quickly wiped them away. I adored my friends, the only family I’d known for so long. It hurt that Frannie couldn’t be with us.

Charity was sniffing. “For Frannie, we’re all going to survive this.”

I hugged them once more, not wanting to raise the issue if they both end up becoming Omegas. If they are alone on a farm, they wouldn’t have Alphas sniffing them out, though they would need to find an Alpha to help put them out of their misery.

“Okay, where am I taking you?” Aspen asked sharply.

I drew back into Viper’s arms as Charity gave Aspen the address. Shadow told Aspen which road to take to avoid the main streets and the heart of the city. For the rest of the trip, we chatted and listened to music on the radio, but I was struggling with my emotions. Terrified for my friends, for us, unsure what was going to happen next, and the whole time, tamping down the rising heat I felt curling under my skin.

I just had to hold on a bit longer.

We'd been driving for a couple of hours, mostly through the woods, when Charity called out.

"There, where you see the white post box, swing right down that track."

Alert, I scanned the area and realized how completely isolated we were from society, surrounded by pine trees. We drove a long distance before we finally reached an old ranch-like home. It was huge, complete with water tanks, fruit trees everywhere, and even a clothesline at the side of the home.

We finally stopped in the front yard. The location was picturesque in a rustic way. When the lights on the front yard flicked on, an older woman in a blue nightgown, carrying a shotgun in her hand, stepped out of her home.

"Nana!" Charity screeched, pushing out of the car and running to her grandma.

My heart expanded in my chest, seeing them hug and hearing her grandma breakdown in tears.

Adella climbed out, and I did the same, trying my best not to squish Viper. He slapped my ass lightly on the way out, which had me grinning at his cheekiness. I curved around the car and met my friends and Charity's grandma. She was a short, stocky woman with her silver hair pulled into a messy bun.

"Nana, these are my friends, Trinity and Adella. I have so much to tell you, but Adella and I need to stay with you."

"Of course." She embraced her granddaughter, patting her hair. "You have no idea how much I missed you and wanted to find a way to get you out of that institute."

"And what about you, dear?" she studied me expectantly, staring at my pink hair, knowing full well I'd already become an Omega.

"I wish I could join you, but I have my three Alphas with me, and we're kind of on the run." I tried to laugh, but it came out wonky.

“It’s okay, dear,” she said in the softest voice, the sincerity in her eyes reassuring that everything was going to be alright. “Thank you for taking care of my granddaughter. Now, you better tell those Alphas to treat you like a queen, or they don’t deserve you.”

Emotions rushed through me, her face blurry behind my tears. I wished so much at that moment that I had gotten to know my mother. In my mind, I pictured her just like Charity’s grandma, loving and supportive.

I hugged her, and my friends hugged me back. When I finally pulled back, I wiped my eyes.

“Thank you. I really needed to hear that.”

She rubbed my arm. “You better get going. Your Alphas are looking anxious.”

All three men were watching us with worried expressions.

“Here, take this,” Charity said, pushing a piece of paper into my hand. “It’s my phone number, so we can keep in touch. Don’t be shy to call so we can make sure you’re okay. And girl, you’re so lucky. Those three Alphas are smokin’ hot. I would be so lucky to have one of them.”

“I want someone to stare at me the way they were looking at you,” Adella added with a grin.

I pushed the paper into the pocket of my slacks and hugged them again.

“I’m going to miss you both like crazy. But you’re safe here, and that makes me feel so much better.” Adella was crying, and Charity kept wiping her eyes as I stepped back, ready to leave. My chest hurt with how much I wanted to stay with them, to laugh, to enjoy their company when we weren’t all scared out of our minds. “Stay safe, and I’ll see you both very soon, okay?”

They were waving as I rushed back to the car, knowing we had to keep going and hide somewhere low.

Hopping into the car, I looked out of the window, watching my friends as we drove away. The voice in my head kept

telling me that I'd see them again. I shook as they vanished into the dark, and Viper was there, shuffling closer to me, taking me into his arms.

“It's going to be alright. You'll see, beautiful Omega.”

I wished I could believe him, desperately wanted to, but each time I thought back to my father, remembering his fury, I knew he'd never give up until he found me

Ten



VIPER

It broke me to see Trinity in agony.

There were so many things we needed to discuss, yet with both of us in the back of the car, all I wanted was to soothe her, hold her close, and cover her with kisses. A far cry from my assholeness toward her back at the compound on her arrival, but even great men like me sometimes fucked up. I let the fear of losing my first Omega, Lillian, in a traffic accident close me off from Trinity.

Her death left me destroyed, and it took me years not to lock myself away from everyone. The kind of darkness I fought was irreparable. Then Trinity entered my life, and I fucking fought the attraction I felt for her, the raw, animalistic hunger that called us together.

So, biting and marking her as mine was the least I could do, and I didn't regret a thing. Even if Shadow and Aspen were jealous as fuck.

My breaths raced, my body aching for her. She felt it as well as she grasped my arm. Holding her, the faint scent of her Omega perfume and orange blossoms teased my nostrils. I could sense the sharp pain of her emotions, the ache that thrummed through her heart, the fear prickling her skin.

When an Alpha and Omega truly bonded by a bite and knotting, there was nothing hidden between the two. Being apart from her, losing her, would be pure torture for an Alpha.

Pulling back from the window, Trinity curled up in my arms, her body so small compared to mine, so fragile. All I

could picture was how I'd grab her father by the throat, drive him against the wall, and strangle the life out of that son of a bitch for hurting her, for making her life shit for his own gains.

"You're going to see your friends again," I whispered, sliding a finger under her chin and lifting her head to face me. "Most importantly, you're back with us, and I'm never letting you out of my sight again."

A flare of panic filled her sparkling blue eyes as they lifted to mine. Was she worried about being caught again?

"Trinity—"

My words vanished as her lips brushed mine. Suddenly, her hands were fisting my shirt, and we were kissing madly. When a gorgeous girl you adored kissed you, then you made her feel like she was flying to the moon and back, you made her toes curl.

"I've been dreaming about you," she whispered, then kissed me once more as if she couldn't get enough.

Fuck me, but I would never get my fill of this beauty.

"And what did you dream about?" I asked teasingly between licking her delicious mouth, shifting my hands around her waist, my fingers hooking into the elastic of her slacks.

"Every night, I'd dream of you fucking me in a different position. It felt like I'd die if you ever left my side." She whimpered, her scent suddenly stronger, her mouth back on mine.

I understood exactly what was going on—my sweetheart's heat was flaring, and I was going to help her with it. While being apart drove me insane, she was being tortured by her body during her dreams. The fever drove her heat cycle, her moaning and rubbing her breasts against me. When her grip slipped down my body and gripped my cock tightly over my jeans, I completely lost my mind.

"Seriously, Viper," Aspen groaned from the driver's seat. "If you pull your dick out, I'm going to crash this car. Don't think about fucking her while I'm driving," Aspen growled, half twisting in the driver's seat, shoving a hand into my back.

I laughed at him. “Cool your fucking jets. You need to keep driving to get us out of here, and someone needs to help Trinity, whose heat cycle’s decided to play.”

Trinity had her mouth on my neck, my balls so tight, I was going to cum any second if I didn’t slow down.

“Fuck you!” Aspen howled. “Shadow, seriously, you’re going to stand for this?”

Shadow was half twisted in his seat, staring at our Omega slipping her hand down my pants. “Let’s see where this goes,” he murmured.

“Please, you have no idea how much it’s starting to hurt again.” Trinity met my gaze. Her eyes were hazed over with arousal, too far gone to pull back. When her fingers curled around my huge erection, I hissed.

“Fuck, sweetheart,” I grunted, begrudgingly removing her hand from my cock. “You’re going to ruin me.” Her scent curled into my senses, and all I could think about was being buried deep inside her warm pussy.

Heat curled over her cheeks. “Viper, please,” she purred, a sound I adored hearing from her.

“She’s too far gone. She wants you, Viper,” Shadow demanded.

I didn’t need his approval. I never wanted a woman as much as I did Trinity. The small moans she made, the way she clung to me, I was surprised I still wore clothes, but that wouldn’t last. Curling my fingers back around the waist of her slacks, I wrenched them down her legs so fast, she yelped, bouncing on the seat, her bare ass now on the leather. With it came the most intoxicating scent of her heat, her delicious sex.

The car suddenly swerved all over the road. “Fuck you, Viper,” Aspen snarled.

“Keep your eyes on the road, big guy,” I taunted. My gaze moved to the apex between her legs, the thin strip of pink hair, her lips glistening from her excitement.

Shadow and Aspen were arguing, but I'd completely zoned them out of my head, my focus only on my scorching hot Omega. Despite the tightness of space in the backseat, I reclined against one of the back doors.

Trinity was grinning, her greedy fingers already tugging at the buttons on my jeans, and with my help, we tugged them down to my thighs. My cock jerked upward, thick and hard, the tip all juiced up with how horny I was.

"Climb on, sweetheart," I purred, my own body reacting to my Omega.

With a grin, she straddled over me, one bent leg snuggled between me and the seat, the other dangling off the edge. The eagerness and boldness in her actions were mesmerizing, sparking the fire of desire to a level that made me completely desperate for her.

"I love when you make those sounds. It makes me hornier," she announced with fire in her eyes. "And I can't get enough of your pumpkin pie scent. It's driving me wild."

"Fuck, can't you just finger her?" Aspen howled, the car swerving all over the place. "And hold off from fucking her? I swear, if you get one drop of your cum on my leather seats, I'll force you to lick it up."

"Listen here," I growled. "You find a place that has a bed for Trinity, and I'll stop. Until then, I'm fucking her brains out. So, you better hit the gas if you want this to stop."

"I'm going to murder you," Aspen snapped. The car was suddenly flying down the road, and Trinity and I were thrown backward. "This is so unfair. It's torture."

"Aspen," Trinity said. "I'm sorry. I can't control my heat right now."

He twisted around to look at her, the torn agony in his eyes only for Trinity.

"I know, and I'm not pissed at you. You being gone so long was driving me crazy, and I desperately want to be the one fucking you." His jaw clenched. "It's okay, little Omega. Don't worry about me."

Focusing back to the road before we smashed into a tree, Aspen held onto the steering wheel with force, his knuckles white. Poor fucker, his balls would turn blue by the time I was finished with our Omega.

I grabbed hold of Trinity to keep her steady from the constant swerving the car took.

“Now where were we?” I asked. Shadow had been watching us the whole time, and I couldn’t read his expression. But like I said, fuck them... my Omega needed me.

Hands on my chest, she lowered her drenching pussy over my cock, her body trembling against me.

“That’s it, gorgeous. Swallow my cock with your tight little pussy,” I hissed as she lowered herself. Her cries were beautiful as she pushed lower over my shaft. The sloshing sound of how drenched she was had me grinning.

Aspen was growling under his breath, then the next thing I knew, he flipped on the radio and blasted the music so I couldn’t hear myself, but I didn’t care. Not when I had my girl’s pussy wrapped around my cock, her tight walls squeezing me.

“Oh, sweet heaven,” I cried out, bucking my hips to meet her every slap, my hands on that sweet ass, guiding her to go faster. Her breaths were heavy, her blue eyes on me. Pink hair draped over my chest, soft to the touch.

“I needed this so badly,” she cried, leaning forward, our lips crashing together. We kissed like wild animals, fucking like them, too, the pressure in my balls burning to explode inside her.

It was only when something big knocked into my leg that I broke from Trinity’s kiss, half expecting Aspen to be punching me like the jealous asshole he was. Except, it was Shadow, who had somehow managed an acrobatic miracle of climbing into the back seat, hunched over and crowded in behind Trinity.

“There was no way I could keep watching,” he said, his hands over her ass.

By Trinity’s widening eyes and her arching chest, I knew Shadow ran his fingers over her rear entrance, fingering her. One arm kept on the back of the seats to hold himself up, he had one bent leg behind Trinity, the other over the seat and my leg. We were a tangled mess of limbs, but we made it work.

“Are you ready for two cocks?” he whispered in her ear, leaning against her. She twisted to look at our Alpha over her shoulder with a grin.

“Please, God yes, please,” she whined.

“You heard our girl,” I murmured. As long as I had her in my arms, I’d accepted a long time ago that Alphas shared Omegas. Shadow and Aspen were my family, even if some days they drove me nuts. “She needs us both.”

“I think my heart’s about to give out,” she teased with a smirk. Shadow pushed his cock into her ass, and her body stiffened against me. Her moans were delectable.

Shadow hissed, his eyes rolling back. “Your ass is so tight, so fucking tight.” She roared over the thumping music. Gripping her hips, he worked his way in while I kissed my darling as she came unraveled between us. Breaths rushing, she moaned, her pussy gripping my cock. The temptation to just burst inside her was savagely tempting, but I held back, grinding my teeth until Shadow found his position.

He breathed easily, giving me a nod that he was good to go.

“How does it feel to have two huge cocks inside you?” I teased, holding her stare.

“Like I’m going to explode from how much I’m being stretched. Fuck, it feels amazing.”

There was an awkwardness until we found our rhythm. I was proud of our Omega’s confidence in us, the confidence she had in herself. Her demanding sex was exhilarating, and if I could, I’d be permanently between her legs.

Heart racing out of control, we both rutted like beasts, the three of us moving in time. Our girl's moaning got louder. She scratched at my chest, which I loved. Tucking my hand under her top, I groped her swaying breast, loving how soft they were.

Shadow grunted, slamming into her, his eyes fluttering upward as he leaned over so he didn't hit his head on the ceiling, but he floated in heaven.

My gaze danced over Trinity's beautiful face, the faint sheen of perspiration, the way her mouth parted with each moan. I met her gaze, and her lips curled into a smile. She was having the time of her life, and fuck me, I knew I'd completely lost myself to her.

"I'll worship you for the rest of your life. I absolutely adore you and I... I think I'm falling in love," I muttered, unsure if she even heard with the music blaring, but I didn't need her to have heard me. The reality of it hit me hard. I actually admitted to loving her, an Omega, when I convinced myself that after Lillian, I could never love anyone else, that my heart was too shattered.

Trinity arched against me, and it was in that moment that we completely ruined her. Her body shuddered, her pussy constricting my cock, and I felt the initial engorging of my cock from my knot. Her songs of climax were beautiful as her body shook. I groaned at how hard she squeezed me, triggering my own arousal.

Shadow instantly drew out of her, crashing against the other door, howling as he grabbed something off the floor to collect his cum as he roared with his orgasm, forcing back the knotting. Smart guy. Knotting in her ass could be quite uncomfortable for her, considering our current lack of space.

Grasping her hips, I tried to push her off me, but she thrust back down onto my cock.

"No," she insisted. "I need your knot. I want to feel it growing inside me, stretching me, filling me. I'll die in pain if you don't. Please," she whispered.

And my pleasure was too much. A man could only take so much when an Omega demanded to be knotted and with cock buried inside her down to my balls, I was losing this battle.

She was burning hot and drenched...my home. Her wriggling over me set me over the edge as I burst inside of her, cum shooting out, flooding her, my cock engorging, stretching her inner walls.

Our panting breaths, the perspiration, the groans... were exquisite. I shut my eyes, riding the wave, while holding onto my girl, my cock locking itself inside her tight core. I kept pumping into her, the stream seeming endless.

She finally collapsed onto my chest, breathing heavily. When I opened my eyes, she had hers shut. Stroking the hair out of her face, I kissed her forehead.

“You were amazing.”

She made a humming sound, and with her breathing growing shallow, I knew she'd crash any moment. Fucking an Omega in heat completely exhausted her, left her spent.

Glancing at Shadow, his expression was pure bliss. He tapped Aspen, then seconds later, the music finally turned down. Aspen was red-faced and furious, but I had to give him credit. He hadn't crashed the car. If it had been me, I would have long crashed it into a tree and still climbed over to rut Trinity.

“Where are we now? How much longer until we get there?” I asked. Trinity's breathing was heavy and slow, her closed eyelids fluttering like she'd fallen right into a dream.

“We have a while to go yet,” Shadow explained, looking out the window. Movement of his hand wiping his cock had me noticing he'd used my jeans to wipe his cum.

“You mother fucker,” I snarled, trying to keep my voice low. “Did you just cover my jeans with your jizz?”

“First thing I grabbed.”

“Here, hand them over. I'll get that fixed for you,” Aspen said.

Shadow handed him the bunched-up jeans.

“No, don’t give them to him.” I reached out for them, but Aspen was too fast, snatching them, then opening the window and tossing them into the woods.

“Asshole,” I grunted.

Aspen just gave me a death stare, as though that was the beginning of his punishment coming for me.

Bring it on.

“No one knows we’re going to the cabin,” Shadow stated, almost as though he was talking to himself. He did that often when he contemplated his next move.

“Yeah, so?”

“So, no phones, internet, or anything that can let anyone track us down. We keep our phones switched off and without any internet connection at the cabin, it should make it more difficult for anyone to find us.”

“And then?” Aspen asked in a croaky voice.

“We wait for a few weeks for things to blow over.” Shadow was dragging on his shirt and doing up his pants.

I eyed him intensely, seeing I’d lost my pants at his hands, not that he noticed.

“Her father won’t stop looking for her.” Tenderly stroking her back, I wanted to wrap her up and hide her from the world.

“I know, and I haven’t quite worked out yet how we’re going to handle him.” Shadow fell silent, gone into one of his moods where he brainstormed how the fuck we were going to get out of our situation. He moved back into the front seat, stepping on my leg and kicking me in the process.

I grunted but held onto my girl, who was fast asleep, lost to the world. I absolutely adored her.

“Whatever happens,” I whispered to her. “We’ll find a way to keep you safe. I swear on my life.”

Losing Trinity again wasn’t an option I’d entertain.

Eleven



TRINITY

Evidently, I'd passed out for the rest of the trip because I woke up as we pulled up in front of a cabin in the middle of mountains, God knows where.

The morning sun was climbing over the horizon, and the place was spectacular—lush trees brimming with leaves and flowers, mountains in every direction, the smell was crisp and heavenly. Absolutely gorgeous. This was the kind of place one could easily get lost in and never see civilization again, so I understood why Shadow kept such a remote place—to escape.

Yawning, I realized someone had put my pants back on while I slept, which I more than appreciated. Wanting to get out to explore, I climbed out of the car and found myself in front of what I could only describe as a treehouse on the ground. Five small wooden homes were stacked at odd angles, joined by wood stairs, each with floor-to-ceiling windows. The building looked like it was one with the woods.

My mouth dropped open.

“Does Tarzan live here?” I said jokingly, stretching my back and eager to go inside. I turned to Shadow when he stepped up next to me, glancing up at his incredible home.

“My father had it built. This is where I grew up.”

“Wow. That's blowing my mind. When you said, “a cabin,” I was thinking of a cozy little wooden shack, not something that would appear in the top ten most beautiful cabins magazine.”

He chuckled just as Aspen stepped up alongside me and slipped his arm around my waist.

“This place is spectacular. I’ve been trying to convince Shadow for years that we should just move out here.”

“With the exception that we’d have to catch our own food or take hours to reach the closest store,” Daniel said, coming down the front steps. Thick bushes with white flowers flanked the steps, giving the impression that he’d stepped out of the jungle. He greeted me with a smile. “It’s so good to see you’re back with us,” he cooed, which was a far cry from the last time we’d been together, and he decided to keep his distance from me. Jealous that I had feelings for Shadow had made him an asshole toward me.

“How about I give you a quick tour?” he asked, looking at me, then up at Shadow.

“Great idea,” our Alpha answered, placing a kiss on my cheek, as did Aspen, then they headed into the house.

I guessed that meant I was left with Daniel.

Viper marched from the car and into the house, wearing only a shirt, his junk out for all to see.

“Should I ask?” Daniel murmured.

“Fuck no,” Viper snarled and rushed into the cabin, his cute ass wiggling as he ran.

I still felt slightly sore from the amazing sex in the car.

Daniel was watching me. “Listen, Trinity, I have so much to make up for to you, so I’m going to start with an apology.”

I peered into those deep mocha eyes, his high cheekbones, and the guy-next-door face. He was adorable, and I could see why Shadow was smitten with him. They two shared something I’d walked into when I was brought into their compound, so I understood his jealousy, but that didn’t mean I liked it.

“You were a jerk to me,” I stated the obvious.

His gaze lowered. “I’m sorry. I’m not making an excuses, but I love Shadow, and we’ve been a couple for so long, I freaked out when I saw the way he stared at you. Then I walked in on you giving him a blowjob, and I lost my shit.”

“I could have used your help, you know. Or you could have just talked to me instead of pulling that shit and humiliating me in my room when you found me playing with myself.” I blushed the moment the words left my mouth, but there was no hiding the truth of what had happened.

“Fuck, I’m sorry, Trinity. I’ve felt like shit ever since.” He heaved heavily. “I’m not saying this so you can forgive me. I have to earn your trust again, but I’m hoping you can give me a chance.” He gave me a wonky grin.

After what I’d been through with my father, I didn’t want any tension or regret between us and the pack. That meant making up with Daniel and letting him do what it took to make it up to me.

“Then you better start with showing me around the place.” Grinning, I looped my arm around his.

His beaming eyes smiled at the corners, and he was practically bouncing on his toes. We were on our way. I couldn’t deny that Daniel’s energy soothed my tension. His presence always calmed my heat, had me breathing easier, and the best was his scent. Another reason to make up with him.

“You still smell like chocolate,” I mused, cutting a look at him. He had his shoulders slumped forward like a man who carried the world’s problems on his back.

“I like that you’re the only one who can smell that one me. It makes me feel special.”

There was something almost sorrowful with the way he said that, and it occurred to me that as the Beta of the pack, it had to be hard for him. He might be Shadow’s lover, but he would never be equal to the other two Alphas.

I leaned against him and inhaled his delicious chocolate scent as we climbed the steps. The first bungalow we entered was a huge living space with a massive fireplace, couches

facing it, and at the far end was a large kitchen with a standalone island surrounded by stools. Not too different to their kitchen back home. Decorative art pieces of the forest hung on the walls, and the vaulted ceilings gave the impression of a grand place. With cushions running along the lofty windows, I fell in love with the place.

“Okay, I could spend years here and never leave.” The energy was cozy and welcoming.

“Wait until you see the rest,” Daniel teased, stuffing his hands into the pockets of his cargo pants. His deep brown hair sat messily around his face, and I liked the look on him. “Come, this way.” He led me to a wooden balcony and moved toward another set of steps. Daniel stared at me as he grabbed hold of the handle of the next small home. “I know you’re going to love this.”

Excited, I hurried inside and gasped out loud, my mouth dropping open. It was a library and study all rolled up into one. Wall-to-wall shelves were filled with books, and one wall was completely made of glass, overlooking rolling mountains, a curtain of fog grazing their crescents. Two tables were set up with chairs, then there were more cushions and vases of fresh pink wildflowers.

“I put these up, thinking you’d enjoy this room in the evening.” Suddenly, a flurry of fairy lights blinked across the bookshelves, making the whole place resemble a fairy house.

“This is perfect. I just need a bed, and I’ve found my room.” I laughed, though I was being serious.

“That’s new,” Shadow piped in, walking into the room. He set a laptop down on one of the tables, then headed into a smaller kitchen at the back. I noticed there was also a door that led to a bathroom. “I like it.”

“Figured Trinity would enjoy it.” Daniel made his way across the room to Shadow.

I almost wanted to cry at how beautiful this cabin was, how I could live here the rest of the days and be the happiest girl ever.

With Shadow settling down in front of his laptop with a coffee, I followed Daniel outside to a wooden balcony with tables and chairs. From this location, the woodland spread outward like a great ocean. I couldn't even see the road, which was a good thing. It meant they couldn't spot us easily.

"It's great for bird spotting from here," Daniel said, leaning bent arms across the railing, staring out into the wilderness.

"I never took you for being a bird watcher," I teased, joining him.

"Good to know I can still surprise you. It's not often we come here, so I try to enjoy the outdoors as much as I can when we do."

"Why not come here all the time? I would," I said eagerly, leaning on a bent arm on the railing, studying Daniel who kept scanning the woodland.

"There are a lot of difficult memories for Shadow in this cabin. He lost his parents when he was eighteen, then he lived here alone for a while until his grandma moved in to care for him. A bit later, he and I moved into our own place in the city, but the place remains his. And well, every time he comes back here, he goes into a strange mood where he shuts everyone out. I think this place brings back bad memories for him."

"What happened to his parents?"

Daniel licked his lips. "I think it's best you find out from him." He pushed away from the railing, taking my hand in his, and the rush of his serenity settled my worry. "Let me show the rest of the cabin."

Just as we turned, Thelma was coming down the steps, her eyes wide at seeing me, and my heart seemed to swell in her company. I really liked Shadow's grandmother.

"Girl, it's so good to have you back with us. Come here," she called to me with a wave.

I rushed over and hugged her. She rubbed my back, and there was something comforting in how warm she felt and

how she smelled. A simple hug made the world feel like a safer place.

“Trinity,” she murmured in my ear. “I was so worried for you. You belong with this pack, you know that? And as strong as they are, they need you, too. This place is hard for my grandson, so be gentle with him, okay?”

“Yes, of course.”

My eyes flew to Shadow just as he emerged from the study room, coming up to me as his grandmother was pushing hair out of her face. He snuck an arm around my waist possessively.

“I hope you’re not filling her head with anything scary about this place,” he said.

“Like the time we found two mountain lions fighting here on his balcony,” Daniel explained casually, coaxing a grin from Thelma.

“Or the time Shane found a snake in his boot after leaving them outside,” Thelma mused. It made me smile to hear her call Shadow by his real name.

“Are you serious?” I glanced around, not wanting to encounter those creatures.

“Don’t worry, my gorgeous Omega,” Shadow whispered in my ear, breathing heavily. “I’ll keep you safe.” A soft kiss on the tender part of my neck just below my ear sent a shiver of delight through my body. Maybe it was the wrong thing to do, seeing heat curled through me in response.

Drawing in a deep inhale, I tried to tamper the rising flame, at least, tried to contain it. I wasn’t ready to feel the ache again and completely lose myself.

Thelma and Daniel exchanged a knowing look, a small nod, then Thelma headed down the steps to the main living bungalow. I guessed they were working together to help keep Shadow from going into a complete meltdown at being back here.

“As much as I’d like to take over the tour,” Shadow admitted. “I have some work to finish, and around you, I can’t control myself.” He gave me a kiss on the lips, the kind that had me curling my toes. I missed him the moment he broke away and leaned in to kiss Daniel. It was a strange feeling to share your lover, but then it also allowed me to understand how the three Alphas were feeling by sharing me. Talk about a complicated relationship... but it felt just right to me.

Moments later, Daniel and I were headed up the next set of steps from the balcony.

“I love how protective you and Thelma are over Shadow. It’s beautiful.”

“I spent a lot of years living here when his parents were alive. My mother was their maid, and I stayed since she had no one to leave me with. His father wasn’t the kindest person to his son... or anyone. He was a fucking psychopath, so when he escaped the Matteis family mafia, there was a lot of stress and pressure on the family.”

I let out a long exhale. “Poor family.”

“Between us,” Daniel whispered, glancing over his shoulder. “I suspect Shadow’s father has always been an asshole, even before he broke away from his family.” He shrugged, then led me through a set of glass doors into what looked like a reading room that curled upstairs to a hallway and more steps.

“So, these are the bedrooms,” he stated. “To the left,”—he pointed to a small hallway to one doorway—“is Thelma’s room. Then up here...” he continued, and I followed him up curved stairs to a longer corridor. There were three bedrooms and another set of steps at the end of the hall.

“Oh, which one is mine?”

“Upstairs.”

At the final door, I paused.

“So, are you seriously okay with me and Shadow? I mean, I admit, it’s hard to see you and him kissing since I want him all for myself, but I also love to see the joy you bring each

other. It's hard to explain being both somewhat jealous and happy about it at the same time."

"Exactly that." He grinned, nodding. "I'm not going to lie, it's hard, but he's absolutely smitten with you, so how could I deny him that? And, you girl, are just adorable and part of our family. So, yeah, I'm okay with it, and I'm going to keep being fine with it."

Taking me in his arms, his chocolate scent was so overwhelming, a flare of calm chased away the earlier spark of heat Shadow brought out in me. It made me realize how crucial Daniel was in our pack, how much he helped balance me and the Alphas.

"Thank you for having me. I would love to be part of your family."

With a grin, he pushed open the door to a room that was the bedroom from my dreams.

I might have choked up at its beauty. We must have been on the roof of the main bungalow because the room was shaped like an oversized tent. The bed sat directly in front of us, taking up most of the floor space, and the two walls on either side were made completely of glass, giving the impression the bed was situated in the canopy of trees.

The wall behind the bed was covered in filled bookshelves, with a bird-shaped lamp on the side, while the bed was low to the floor, covered in a steel-colored duvet and pillows, matching the color of the wood paneling in the room. Three small lights dangled from overhead, while a dusty green rug hugged the rest of the floor space.

"Are you sure this is my room?" I toed off my shoes and loved the lush fiber of the rug between my toes. Quickly climbing onto bed, I rolled onto my back and stared outside. "It's like I'm sleeping outside. It's beautiful."

Daniel climbed onto the bed and laid next to me, his arms folded behind his head. "Wait until it's night and you can stare up at the stars. You are going to be in love with this room."

Tranquillity filled me as I moved to place my head on Daniel's folded arm, both of us staring up into the cloudy sky.

"I haven't had a chance to build your nest yet. We've been in a rush to come out here, bring supplies, and clean up with Thelma since we hadn't visited the place in years."

"It's okay, I love it just as it is. Something about this cabin feels safe."

"This used to be Shadow's room, and no one stayed in it... until now."

"And he's okay with it?" I worried it would bring back bad memories for him.

Daniel nodded. "He's the one who suggested you take the loft room."

Sidling closer to Daniel, I soaked up the ease his body brought me. The heat I experienced hadn't completely gone away, it still buzzed under my skin, but it lay unsettled around Daniel for now. His energy wasn't a permanent solution, but it helped me between the heat cycle ebbs and flows.

"I missed this," I murmured, curling up against him, staring out the side window at the trees swaying in the breeze, the leaves swishing left and right.

"Me too." He stroked my hair, and my eyelids were promising to close.

"Is there any more of the cabin to see?" I asked, feeling my body soften into the bed, my eyes growing heavier.

"In the backyard, we have a deck where we used to hold barbecues in the summers. If you sit there long enough, you'll see deer from the woods walking past, bunnies too, and the occasional mountain lion. For me, I like it out there. It's peaceful and reminds me of my mom, along with when I fell in love with Shadow."

"Yeah, when was that?"

"We were in the woods behind the cabin one day, collecting wood for the fire, when a deer startled me. I literally fell into Shadow's arms as I tried to run, and we both tumbled

to the ground. It was one of those perfect movie moments, you know. Him on top of me, both of us looking into each other's eyes, then he kissed me. He made the first move, which meant everything." Daniel smiled to himself. "I will never forget that moment."

"That sounds incredible." The hum of his voice was soothing.

I thought of my first time with Shadow, of him coming to my room in his compound. I was going through my first heat and sat on his lap, begging for his help. I blushed, thinking about that moment. When he pinned me against the wall and brought me to my first orgasm, leaving me completely ruined, I couldn't get enough of him.

I listened to Daniel talk about growing up here while his mother worked and how he grew closer to Shadow. It was slightly heartbreaking that his mother worked so hard, especially hearing that Shadow's parents didn't treat his mother the nicest.

After a long pause of silence, I murmured, "I'd love to have a shower."

Daniel climbed out of bed, crossed the room, and opened up another door that led to my own bathroom. "You should have everything you need in there."

Sitting up, I stretched my arms into the air, figuring a shower would help wake me up. Plus, after the sex marathon in the car, I needed to have a wash.

"Thanks."

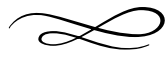
"When you're ready, pop down into the kitchen. We're going to prepare a meal."

I shut the door behind him and moved into the bathroom, which was simple and crisp white. It had a toilet, sink, and oversized shower—the kind that could easily fit four people. It had two sides with shower heads, but I only switched on one.

The hot water spraying on my shoulders was heaven. I moaned at how incredible it felt. Letting all the crap I'd gone

through run down my back, I sensed someone standing in the doorway of my bathroom, just watching me.

Twelve



TRINITY

“Daniel?” I asked, blinking through the steamy shower.

“I should hope not,” Aspen answered from the doorway. “You, my gorgeous little Omega belong to Alphas like me. Never a Beta.” He strolled into the bathroom, kicking the door shut behind him, his gaze locked on me naked in the shower.

A thrill jolted up my spine, seeing the fire in his eyes.

There was something predatory about him, something dark and savage. Aspen had always been kind and sweet to me, but I knew beneath that lay a terrifying Alpha. His sheer size alone would scare most, and tonight, he stared at me like I was his meal.

“You have something on your mind,” I teased, running the soap over my body, purposefully being seductive. Sometimes, all it took was a look from an Alpha to ignite the fiery heat that lived inside me. Every single nerve ending in my body was ready to snap as I imagined all the filthy things he could do to me—all the things I craved—leaving me smiling.

“I’m sorry, but I really have no more patience.” He stood outside the shower glass door undressing. “I almost died in the car watching and listening to Viper and Shadow claiming you. The smells were torture, and I’m about to go insane if I don’t sink my cock into you. So, I’m here with a purpose.”

My breath catching in my throat, the soap slipped from my hand. He had me so excited and nervous. He toed off his boots and shucked off the socks next, before he dropped his

jeans. Of course, he was commando underneath, but dear God, his cock... it was so hard, so thick. I didn't even resist the urge to clench my thighs together.

With one flick of his hands, his shirt was off and thrown somewhere behind him. He pried open the door, and a rush of cool air rushed over me. Stepping aside as he moved under the hot spray, I quickly picked up the soap and placed it back on the holder in the wall.

His dazzling blue eyes darkened as they roamed over my nakedness while water trickled down his Adonis body. He combed a hand through his messy blond hair under the shower, water sloshing down the most spectacular chest. I couldn't blame him when I was eye-fucking him just as hard, my gaze locking on powerful biceps, pecs, eight-pack abs, and thighs thick as trunks. Then there was his eager cock that had my name all over it.

He stepped out of the spray of water and approached me on the other side of the wide shower. Next to him, I was absolutely tiny. I bit down on my lower lip, my breaths speeding up. Reaching over, he placed a finger under my chin, lifting my head to stare into that beautiful face. How could a man be so absolutely stunning, it left me speechless? How did I get so lucky?

“Little Omega, it's been too long since I took you as mine. I'm going to apologize now if I'm too rough with you, but I don't know how much I can hold myself back once I start.”

“I-It's okay,” was all I managed in a choked voice, then I cleared my throat as he laughed at me.

“You're fucking gorgeous. Now, come here.”

Taking my hand, he drew me against him and pressed his back to the wall. Parting his legs, he steadied himself as he bent his legs a bit to make it easier for me to reach him. Just coming up against this man made of muscles, his cock craving me, his eyes devouring me, a gush of slick rushed down my legs. I was ridiculously aroused by him, my nipples tightening, and every inch of me aching for him.

Our bodies came together as I stepped between his parted legs. His skin was on fire, his body hard, his impossibly huge cock cradled against my stomach. I moaned at how incredible he felt, the fire from his body embracing me.

He cupped the sides of my face and kissed me savagely, the kind of kiss that made me numb to every other emotion. Claiming every inch of my mouth, his tongue explored and tasted me as though he was memorizing me for a later time.

The burn in my core erupted, flaring to life between my legs, and the inferno between our bodies wrapped around us. Mewling, I rubbed myself on his body, his cock twitching against me. My pussy throbbed, and all he'd done was kiss me.

His masculine scent, mingled with his fruity sweet Alpha smell, was addictive. His hands traveled down my back, sending delicious shivers over my body. It felt incredible. He dragged his lips across my neck up to my ear.

"I need to taste your perfect little cunt. Your scent is killing me," he growled,

He grabbed hold of my hips, and I was off my feet in seconds. He turned us around, so the wall was against my back. He'd also moved us closer to the shower, which slightly sprayed me, keeping me warm. I loved how he always did the smallest, most considerate things.

"Tell me how much you want this." Kneeling in front of me, his hands on my breasts, his mouth captured a nipple. He sucked and pulled on it, and I unleashed a long moan, my attempt to speak coming out as mumbles.

"Did you say something?" His assault moved to the other nipple, his hunger more ravenous, rougher than he normally was, but I couldn't get enough. My insides clenched, and slick dripped down the inside of my legs. With it came the knowing ache of my heat, coming at me in waves.

"Use your beautiful words, Trinity," he growled against my flesh, glancing up at me with a look of utter desire, which completely undid me.

He sat back on his heels and slid his hand between my legs, spreading them. His gaze shifted from my eyes to where my fire blazed. Using his fingers, he pried open my lower lips, and a heavy rumble rolled through his chest.

“Just beautiful.” He buried his nose in my pussy and took a deep breath.

“Aspen,” I gasped. My cheeks flushed as I pushed against his head.

“I can’t get enough of your scent.”

My whole body trembled. I loved the way he worshipped me, studying my slick lips, pulling them wider apart. Then his tongue flicked out, grazing my clit.

“Fuck...” I was shuddering, my back flush to the wall. “Please, Aspen, more.”

“That’s it, say it,” he breathed against my flesh. “Look how wet you are. I want to push everything into you... my tongue, fingers, cock.”

“Lick me, Aspen... please lick my pussy. Make it stop hurting... make me scream.”

His grin was pure sin. Pushing my legs wider, he wriggled closer, then lifted one of my legs and gently placed it over his shoulder, giving himself more space.

“That’s a good girl.” Leaning in, he dragged the flat of his tongue up my pussy and spread apart my wet lips, doing it over and over.

“Oh my fucking God,” I cried out, my chest arching outward. His tongue felt so incredible.

I trembled while he went feral on me, savagely licking and sucking, his fierce hunger matched by his two thick fingers sliding into me. Moaning, I swayed, my knees close to giving out. As if sensing me quivering, he glanced up.

“Hold on to me, tug on my hair if you need to, but hold on, gorgeous.” With the wall behind me and Aspen taking my weight, he shuffled closer and tucked his hand behind the back of my other leg.

My hands snapped down, using his head to hold my balance as he lifted my other leg over a shoulder, placing himself face deep in my pussy.

“Are you sure about this?”

“Back against the wall... I have you,” he said huskily, then dove back in, his eyes on me and smiling as though he floated in heaven.

My pulse was a train in my veins, driving me to madness, thrumming under my skin. He took his time, savoring every lick, taking all of me into his mouth, his tongue going wild. When his focus turned to torturing my clit, I cried out, my hips swaying, and clenched handfuls of his wet hair.

I adored the slurping sounds he made. He was eating me, flicking and occasionally plunging into my hole. With each movement, I trembled harsher, my back curving with the building climax. Warmth spread over me, coming faster as his tongue played with my clit.

I lost it. My screams echoed off the walls as my body convulsed. I held onto him as I shook. The animal that Aspen was had his mouth latched around my pussy, his tongue lapping up every drop.

Wanting more, needing more, I lowered my gaze to him and watched as he took everything I offered. It was sexy as fuck. This huge man was completely obsessed with my pussy and wasn't letting go. Hard breaths rushed from my lungs, my core fluttering against his mouth.

“Fuck,” I croaked, my voice raw from my screams. The longer he kept licking me, the more moans spilled from my lips. “Aspen... it tickles.” I writhed against him, fully aware that my body craved something more, something only Aspen could give me at that moment—his huge cock.

Finally releasing me, he pulled his head back and glanced at me with half his face glistening from my cum. Licking his lips, he simply said, “Hello, beautiful.”

“God, you look so good with my pussy juices all over your face. I want to see you like that more often.”

He broke into a laugh as he slowly lowered one of my legs off his shoulder, then the other. My legs were too weak to hold me up, so he held me against him as he climbed to his feet.

“I love when you say those things, little Omega. You have no idea what they do to me. Now, let’s get you cleaned up. I’m not even close to being finished with you.” He carried me under the spray of water, the heat so comforting and rewarding.

“That was so good. I’ve decided I love having my pussy licked. It’s one of my favorite things in the world.”

“Then, lucky for you, I can’t get enough of being between your legs.” Towering over me, he kissed me, and I tasted myself on his mouth, the sweet perfume scent heady. “Now, open them up for me.” With one hand wrapped around my back to hold me against his side and not fall over, the other collected water into his curled palm, then splashed it lightly against my pussy.

I yelped at how good it felt, but when his fingers followed, running the length of my slit, slipping between my folds, doing it over and over, washing me, my pelvis rocked for his touch.

“Keep doing that, and you’re going to be in trouble,” I said, my fingers digging into his arm.

“This gorgeous little cunt is mine.” He paused with his hand covering my pussy. “I will fuck it, eat it, wash it, and remind you every day that it belongs to me.”

“You make me blush when you say those things.” My body buzzed with a delicious ache as slick gushed onto his hand.

His grin was devious, and I could tell he enjoyed seeing me that way and having my body respond to him. After seductively cleaning me, he gave himself a quick washdown. Shutting off the water, he grabbed a towel and started wiping me down. When he dried my hair, scrubbing roughly, I batted him away, doing it myself.

He tsked. “I don’t think so.” He snatched the towel back. “Do that again, and I’ll put you over my knee.”

“Is that a promise?”

“Fuck, Trinity. I absolutely adore every inch of you, but when you say that, I’m going to do it.” He looked into my eyes as he ran the towel down my arms and over my breasts, taking his time to ensure every inch was dry. My entire body was drawn to him, leaning into his touches. Until now, my heat hadn’t gone berserk, but the longer he gently stroked me, leaving a trail of kisses everywhere he dried, the more I was starting to lose the battle of not losing control over the lingering pain.

He turned me around to wipe my back, and I heard his sharp intake of breath.

“Little Omega, your back. Who did this to you?” There was sorrow in his voice.

I cringed, hating that he had to see the healed whip marks on my back.

“One of the guards at the Institute used to torture the girls and got off hurting us.” I twisted my head to find Aspen livid, his chest rising and falling quickly, his shoulders bunching up.

“Name?” he growled.

“My gorgeous Alpha,”—I reached over, placing a hand on his chest—“the man’s already dead. Viper killed him when he found out what he did to me?”

He shook his head. “Wait, when did this happen?”

“Just before I was kidnapped by my father from your mansion. I never got a chance to tell everyone after that. Viper chopped him up into parts and threw him away with the trash.”

“Good. Fuck.” He collected me into his arms, hugging me tightly as though it pained him to just think of someone harming me. “If anyone ever hurts you again, you tell me, and I’ll fix them up. Okay, my pretty girl?”

Nodding, my thoughts turned to his affection, his possessiveness, which I adored.

“Now, are you going to finish drying me, or is this only a half-assed job?” I joked, trying to bring the fun back into our time together. Jack was dead and didn’t deserve any more of my thoughts. He had been a fucking monster and deserved what he got.

“Of course,” he purred in my ear, then wiped me down.

Taking the tip of my nipple between his teeth to tease me as he wiped my back, slick poured out of me. The unbearable pressure pushed down inside of me and rocked into me so fast, I felt my body give out.

Aspen caught me as I cried out from the deep, sharp pain at my pelvis, at my body dying for an Alpha to knot in me.

His eyes widened. “Oh, little Omega, you just perfumed for me, didn’t you?”

ASPEN

She clung to me, her eyes hazed over from the heat that decided to make a showing out of the blue. I guessed with her heat suppressed by her father, when it came back, it would do so with a vengeance. And my girl had her mouth on mine, hands on my shoulders, fingers digging into flesh, kissing me with a passion I could relate to.

“I’m going to take good care of you,” I reassured her and lifted her into my arms. Carrying her into the bedroom, I couldn’t take my eyes off my beauty. How did I find someone as gorgeous as her? Her purring sounds were driving me crazy, and my cock was barely able to hold on. I got to her bed and laid her on her back on the bed. “Show me your sweet, quivering pussy.”

Writhing on her back on the mattress, she bent and pulled her legs up before she spread them for me. I swallowed the thickness in my throat as arousal pummeled into me.

“Fuck, I can’t get enough of seeing your perfect little cunt. Pull it open for me and show me what’s mine. Let me see how wet you are.”

Goddamn, I was barely keeping it together. My baby's pink cunt had my cock twitching and my balls tight as hell. Quickly drying off with the towel, I ran it through my hair, never taking my eyes off this beauty spread out before me.

"Look at those lips all swollen and the slick dripping from your hole." When her pussy clenched in response to my words, I completely lost it. I tossed the towel aside and swooped an arm under her waist, dragging her onto her feet. "I can't wait any longer. I want to fuck you from behind. I want it so hard, I ruin you for anyone else."

She was practically crying, almost tripping over herself. I twisted her to face away from me. When my gaze slid over the wounds on her back, rage thundered in my heart. Even with Viper eliminating the asshole responsible, it fucking pissed me off that men dared to hurt something as delicate and beautiful as an Omega... as *my* Omega.

Leaning forward, I left a trail of kisses along her back, covering every one of her scars with my lips, wanting her to know that I adored her even more now I knew she had these marks. They made her stronger. I was going to protect her from the whole fucking world if that was what she needed.

"Aspen, please..." Moaning against me, she wriggled in my arms. "I can't hold on much longer."

"Then bend over for me," I whispered in her ear.

She put her round ass in the air and her glistening pussy on show. Grasping my cock, I rubbed the tip across her slick, coaxing moans out of her. I lowered the tip into her, her walls sucking down on me greedily, her body starting to shudder.

"Is this what you want?" I drove into her, spreading her pussy walls, spearing her down to the hilt.

Her begging was delicious, her hips bucking against me, desperate as fuck for me. Grabbing her ass in my hands, I spread her. I loved to watch my cock fucking her, to see her little ass puckering, desperate for some of the action.

I thrust into her, her pussy squeezing around me, and I growled, an inferno sinking through me. Her cries flooded the

room as I plunged into her harder, the slapping sounds rivaling her gorgeous moans.

Sparks, explosions filled the air between us, leaving nothing but the two of us drowning in desire, our scents, and our carnal pleasure.

“More, please. This is everything.”

Her cries drove me faster. I’d give her what she wanted. Anything. I looped an arm around her stomach, never pulling out.

“I want you on your hands and knees, babe.”

She was jelly in my arms and did exactly as I asked, her body humming at my touch. I floated on air. I still couldn’t believe this beautiful creature was mine.

Down on the bed with her beneath me, she was more comfortable. Then I began to rut her like a fucking beast. She begged, and I’d give her the world if she asked for it. My heart gave a thunderous thump, then another as I held her close to me, claiming her as mine. My breaths caught somewhere in my lungs each time I felt her wriggling. I was floating in her presence...no, not floating—goddamn falling for her.

Taking her faster, she collapsed onto her stomach, breathing racing. “Don’t stop... please don’t.”

Her cute ass was sticking up, her legs spread, and I lay on top of her, fucking her madly, my lips on the back of her neck, licking, tasting her. My body took over, the primal connection between us overwhelming, overpowering. My hips pushed back and forth, her pussy hungrily sucking me back in. The bed shook beneath us, the mattress bouncing.

“How are you doing, my little Omega?” I purred, something that only happened with Trinity. She brought out something different in me, something so intense, I forgot who I was.

Her cries sped up, and I absolutely loved holding her as I fucked her, her body vibrating where we were connected. Sweat dripped down my back, but I continued to fuck her,

knowing she was close. I felt the tightness of her pussy walls, so I kept pushing into her, deeper, harder.

All of a sudden, she hollered, coming completely undone. Her body stiffened, then she shook and cried out.

My heart was racing when the sharp burst of my climax tore through me. With one final thrust, I came, spilling into her sweet cunt, filling her with my seed. Together we came, over and over, as a growl bled past my throat.

My orgasm crashed through me so hard, it almost hurt. My cock had been hanging on for so long, and finally, he grew engorged inside of her. My size pressed against her walls, locking inside her, and there was nowhere else I'd rather be but buried deep in my Omega.

She gasped, catching her breath and glancing over at me with a smile.

“Can we do that again after I rest a bit? You’re amazing.”

I laughed, and she wriggled against me.

“When you laugh, your cock rubs against my insides, and I crave more.”

“Don’t tempt me.” Rolling onto my side, taking her with me, I embraced her so she was comfortable and cradled against me. With our bodies pressed close, I could feel the racing of her heart.

“No one has made me orgasm so hard,” I murmured. Kissing the side of her neck, I breathed in the orange blossom scent that lingered around her.

“I like that,” she whispered, twisting her head to look at me, her lips pulled into a cheeky grin. “I want to be the best you’ve ever had and the only girl you’ll ever want.”

“Fuck, I love you being possessive.” A shiver of arousal shot straight to my cock. “Don’t ever stop.”

Thirteen



ASPEN

“Fight!” my father bellowed, his voice streaming across the open land in the middle of nowhere. Unless you counted the trees in the distance, we were out of sight from the nearest road and where we spent every Sunday.

Two dozen assholes surrounded us, chanting... fight, fight, fight.

While others went to church, my father worshipped punts and filled his pockets with greenbacks.

“I don’t want to do this,” I groaned. Lowering my fists to my sides, I glanced at my father and at the edge of the makeshift arena, marked out by stones. His dark hair, with patches of gray, fluttered in the breeze. His baggy pants were held up by a rope belt, and his shirt sleeves were rolled up to his elbows. We didn’t come from a rich family but from the lowest class of Alphas in the city of Liberty. No one paid attention to us, which was why the authorities left us alone once we left the city—exactly what my father counted on.

I stepped toward my dad, pleading with him with my expression alone.

His face morphed, his eyes narrowing on me like a sniper’s bullet, anger brewing behind his expression. He’d make me pay tonight for embarrassing him, but I couldn’t do it. Not this. I wouldn’t fight my opponent. Give me anyone else in the ring, fuck, give me a dozen, and I’d break them all.

I dragged in a breath, feeling as though the air shredded my lungs. I glanced at him behind me, fists raised, one leg in

front of the other, just like I'd taught him.

Just like I'd show him to defend himself should anyone bully him.

I loved my younger brother, but I sure as fuck wasn't going to fight him because the loser in these battles never walked away. They had to be carried out, barely clinging to life. Those were the rules of the fight.

My skin crawled, and my head was screaming to just run out of there, but then my father would make someone else kick my brother's ass.

"Not him. Give me someone else," I grunted. "I'll fight however many men you want me to at once, and I'll really put on a show. You know I can do it." My father knew I was good at my word. I was a big fucker, had been since I was born. My mom required stitches after giving birth to me, or so my father kept telling me. I'd always been the boy who was taller and broader than anyone my age. Scarier and stronger, too, which was how Father got me into the business of fighting. He used to enter me into other fight clubs when I was just fourteen, but now that I turned eighteen, he ran his own gigs, making good cash off of me. I was his champion.

My father wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, side-glancing at the protesting punters, then stepped toward me and snatched me by the throat.

"Listen here, you little bastard," my father hissed, spittle flying across my face. "You want a roof over your head, food in your stomach, then you get in there and fight Liam. Otherwise, you're both out. You hear me?" he sneered, then shoved me away.

"Match is back on," he hollered, sending the crowd into a frenzied roar. A bunch of drunk assholes, the lot of them. "Goliath versus Firebolt."

Bile hit the back of my throat as I coiled around, only to find Liam standing in front of me, his fist flying for my face. He clipped me hard in the nose, the sharp sting zapping up my face, spearing outward like a cobweb of pain.

I groaned, anger flaring over me that he'd hit me when he saw I didn't want to fight him.

"What the fuck!" I cried out.

"Stop being a pussy. Fight me." He smacked his palms to his chest and snarled, bouncing on his toes. "I can take you, you know."

"No, you can't." I frowned, rubbing my bloody nose, the taste of blood on the back of my throat. "That's my point."

"Fight already! What the fuck is this?" someone shouted from the sidelines.

That was all the motivation my stupid brother needed. He was two years younger than me and hot-headed, just like my father. He threw himself at me, punches flying, catching me on the side of the head, in my gut, my chest. Fury rose through me, and I shoved him back.

"Stop."

But he didn't listen, not with the screaming audience, with my father shouting louder to fight, egging him on.

I ducked his punches, and while the idiot wasn't anywhere near my size, he was bony enough to make his strikes hurt. I'd done too fucking good a job of teaching him to serve his punches. When he caught me under the chin, I bit my tongue.

I growled, and my reflexes kicked in. My fist flew out fast and hard, striking him right in the solar plexus, knocking the wind out of him and sending him reeling backward.

"Enough," I yelled. "I'm not fighting you."

His face scrunched up, his heel catching on a tuft of grass, he teetered backward. Arms pin-wheeling, he tripped and fell backward hard. The painful whack of the back of his head hitting a rock sounded.

It came all so fast. His eyes raised to me like he knew something was wrong, then they drifted into the back of his head, and blood poured out across the rock.

Terror iced me over.

“Liam!” I yelled, throwing myself at him, dread swallowing me with the awful feeling that I’d just killed my brother.

I woke with a startled gasp, disorientated.

Trinity’s body shifted against me—warm, comforting, safe—bringing me back to reality. My knotted cock must have eased and slipped out of her while I crashed with her in my arms.

“How are you feeling? Are you sore?” I asked, nuzzling the side of her neck as she turned in bed to face me. The soft breasts pressed against my chest were a temptation at the forefront of my mind, and I coiled a leg over hers, keeping her locked against me.

“Incredible.” She blinked, and her crystal-blue eyes found me. “The heat’s calmed down, and there’s only a bit of soreness, but I like that it reminds me of you. What about you?” Tracing her fingers across my collarbone, her touch was feather soft and soothing. “You must have been having a wicked dream. You were thrashing about. Did you know you talk in your sleep?”

I stiffened as this was news to me. “What did I say?”

Tucking her head against my bicep, she glanced up at me through her long lashes.

“Something about fighting, then you were shuddering. I tried to wake you but was worried there for a moment that you’d go all Ninja on me in your sleep.”

Her words hit home as my dream remained at the front of my mind. The agony, the heartache, the guilt...

“Hey, whatever you dreamed, it’s not going to hurt you.” Soft fingers traced my jawline, and I planted a smile on my face for her, although I felt like broken glass on the inside.

“The damage was done long ago. My dreams are just there to remind me of my fucked-up background.”

“We’ve all got those. I feel like we’ve all come together because we’re broken.” She grinned lopsided.

Leaning forward, I brushed the pink hair out of her eyes. “For a long time, darkness claimed me, but things are different now, and it’s just a dream.” I pressed my forehead to hers. “Are you hungry? I make a wicked grilled cheese sandwich.”

“Don’t change the topic.” Her brow furrowed. “What were you dreaming about? You seemed really worked up and upset? Did someone hurt you?”

My father’s voice echoed in my head, images of Liam slamming back into the rock because of me. Because I fucking punched him. Hard breaths came as Trinity stroked my shoulder.

“I’m a really good listener. If someone hurt you, I want to know so I can add them to my kill list.”

I blinked, staring down at this gorgeous, pink-haired girl. “You have a kill list?”

“I do now. My father’s there. Bakewell was there, but she’s scratched out. And I’m going to add on there who made you so upset, you have nightmares.”

With a curl of my lips, I laughed softly. Only she could make me laugh when it came to the shitshow of my past.

“The problem was that no one hurt me, little Omega. The problem was that I harmed someone, and ever since, I’ve been drowning on the memories. The past is a shadow that follows me everywhere, and I can’t shake it off. I can never change the past, and that’s what haunts me.” I sucked in a deep breath, realizing my voice was rising, my pulse racing like it always did when I thought about my brother.

Trinity didn’t say anything, not pushing me to keep talking. Instead, she laid a hand on my chest and just kept me company.

“I killed him,” I finally blurted, needing to get it out of my head. Closing my eyes, I was back in the field, furious at my brother for pushing me. Mad at my father who thought it would be entertaining to match me up against Liam. He wasn’t

a fucking fighter. I'd told my father I'd earn him all the money he wanted, but to let Liam study and get the fuck out of our crappy lives.

My breath hitched all the way down to my lungs.

"I killed my brother." The words felt like barbed in my throat, and I was gutted to voice them, the emotions as raw as the day it happened.

"I tried so hard to tell him I wouldn't fight him, but he kept pushing and pushing. As did my fucking father, who put him in the fight club against me. Liam kept hitting me." Swallowing the knot in my throat, the rest of the words flowed because there was no stopping them. "Then I hit him once to shove him off me, but he tripped and hit his head on a rock. I tried to help him, but I later learned he died instantly from the strike. In a heartbeat, I'd killed him."

Heaviness suffocated me. I pushed myself up from the bed, sitting on the edge, elbows on my thighs, head low between my legs. I was going to be sick.

"I shouldn't have said anything," I murmured. "Fuck." I felt like shit, and darkness stretched within me.

The mattress dipped behind me. She pressed herself against my back, arms embracing me, her lips on my neck.

I shook, fighting the panic that bloomed in my heart from what I'd done—for taking away Liam's life. All I had to do was hold the fuck back, but I couldn't because I was weak. Savage hatred tore through me, but Trinity's soft kisses on my neck kept distracted me.

"I probably don't need to tell you this, but I will say it, anyway. You didn't kill your brother. It was an accident. He chose to keep pushing you, and anyone would try to protect themselves."

My stomach clenched, muscles quivered.

"I know, babe, but it doesn't change a thing. If I held my punches, he wouldn't have fallen or hit his head. There's no one to blame but me." Heaving for breath, I stood up abruptly,

Trinity slipping off me. “I’m sorry I ruined our day by talking about this. I ruin everything, I know I do.”

“Aspen, that’s not true. You saved me.”

But all I could feel was the twisting of my heart, the fact that I took my brother’s life. The hatred that flared inside me struck like a match. Flashes of his eyes. Blood. My father blaming me in the end. Of course, it was my fault. My hands curled into fists, and I couldn’t breathe.

“I have to go.”

Trinity took my wrist in her grasp, drawing me back.

“You know it’s okay to be furious, to cry, to scream. Emotions are fucking assholes that torture us, but what your father did to you was pathetic. He’s the one who did this to you and your brother.”

Grief and guilt were torture, going around in my head like a merry-go-round. The voice in my head kept telling me it was my fault. I struck him and sent him to fall over. I was pathetic to think otherwise.

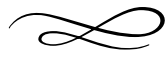
“Listen, Trinity.” My voice came out croaky, and I lifted my gaze to her. “I’m okay, I promise. Sometimes my head just gets in a weird funk.” I pushed a smile on my lips, one that hurt to wear when I didn’t deserve happiness. “I’m going to let you rest, now.” I pulled from her grasp and went to collect my clothes from the bathroom.

“Aspen, don’t go.” She pleaded, kneeling on the bed, her gorgeous naked body my weakness.

Did I deserve someone as perfect as her? Or would I lose my shit and someday hurt her too?

Without a word, I turned and walked out of there, needing air because inside the house, I was choking for breath.

Fourteen



SHADOW

“Where’s Aspen?” I asked Viper, who reclined on the couch, legs propped up on the low table, glancing outside the massive study window. The weather was getting worse, clouds darkening, trees thrashing wildly.

“He was upstairs, fucking Trinity, then I watched him march into the woods. He had that sullen look on his face, so I’d guess he couldn’t get it up for our girl, and now he’s sulking.”

I rolled my eyes at his childish remark. “Well, when you two finish your constant competition, we need to talk about the next steps. We both know this place is a temporary hideout. We’ll be found soon enough, so we need a backup plan.”

Viper dropped his legs to the floor with a thump, then leaned forward, arms draped over his knees. “How about we leave the country?”

“Arman will never stop until he’s found his daughter. You know how the bastard works.”

“Then we only have one solution.” Standing, he ran a hand through his dark hair, red shining through when he moved in the light. “We hunt down the fucker and take him out. How much better would the city be without that prick?”

“Until his second-in-command takes his role.”

“Who gives a fuck, Shadow? It won’t be our problem. As long as we get rid of the main son of a bitch, we’re scott-free.” Viper paced the room, his agitation crawling over my skin.

“If it was that easy, he’d already be dead by now.” I wanted to burn down the whole fucking city of Liberty to destroy our enemies, to destroy her father’s home, his facilities, his pack of followers in the most savage fucking way. Better yet, have him watch me do it, then slit his throat.

Something moved behind Viper’s narrowing eyes.

“I can’t lose her,” he finally admitted. “I can’t live through *that* again.”

“Maybe you should have thought about that before you marked her.” I regretted my words instantly when his stare meeting mine, the glare deepening.

“That has fuck all to do with my past. Don’t be a jealous asshole. If you want, go and mark her already, or are you too scared?”

I bristled at his insult. Sure, marking her had crossed my mind, but I’d do it after I spoke to her about it. Her life had been one big lie, so I refused to keep secrets from her. The fact that Viper had already had me grinding my teeth.

“Have you spoken to her and told her what you did? That she will crave you for every moment of her life and that you gave her no choice?”

He shrugged, smug as always. It rarely irritated me, but his biting her infuriated me because, as always, he went against my command.

“I regret nothing. I wanted her, so I took her as mine. I don’t see her complaining.” The tight curl of his lip told me I’d annoyed him, too. Good.

“Get the hell out there and get Aspen,” I barked, having had enough of looking at his face. “I want to discuss our plans as a team. We need to work out how to protect our Omega without losing our heads, so we can destroy her heartless monster of a father. We do this as a team. No lone wolves, understand?”

Viper’s deadpan was wasted on me. I caught the flicker of torture behind his gaze, then it was gone. With a growl under

his breath, he marched out of the room, the whip of wind blowing inside the study before he slammed the door.

I huffed loudly. Viper, always a wild card, did things his way. He wasn't a team player, but whether he liked it or not, this mission was something we'd do as a pack. Not him taking off to kill random people. One wrong move with Arman and we were all fucked.

Daniel entered the room, strolling toward me, his smile exactly what I needed.

"Everything good?" he asked lowly, a hand on my chest, his calmness soothing me.

I stared at my beautiful Beta, at the tenderness behind his eyes and knew he was what I craved—hard, rough, and screaming.

VIPER

My heart was thudding. Fuck Shadow. I'd speak with Trinity once she was settled in. It wasn't like I'd had time, but I wasn't a fool. The bite wasn't a mistake, but something I felt deep down in my soul. Something I hadn't experienced since I lost Lillian in the car accident.

Trinity would understand... The connection between us was unbelievable, the heavy boom in my chest escalating every time I thought of her. I couldn't remember the last time I felt so excited over someone who was constantly on my mind, who had me ready to fight every damn last person if it brought her happiness.

I found myself outside her bedroom instead of the forest, needing to check on her. Aspen wouldn't hurt her. The big oaf was smitten over my girl. Still, I knocked on the door.

No response. On the third knock, I pushed open the door to calm the impossible panic in my mind. My gaze swept the room, landing on the bed where she lay beneath the blanket, her breaths heavy, telling me she was fast asleep. Her gorgeous smell of slick and blossom oranges filled the air.

Wandering toward the bed, I paused by the window, staring at her sleep. Pink hair draped around her pillow like a halo. She was curled up on her side and was absolutely adorable. Would she notice if I stripped and slipped in there with her? From her bare shoulder, I guessed she wore nothing underneath, which had my cock twitching.

The longer I stayed there, thinking how beautiful she was, I concluded that I wouldn't rush to tell her about the bite mark. I wanted her to admit to accepting the emotions she felt for me, for it to feel as natural as possible. Last thing I needed was for her to think her love for me was forced—far from it. A mark enhanced what already existed threefold, but it could be terrifying to lose control of emotions. To want somebody so badly that you couldn't take another breath if she rejected you. It scared me that she'd push me away, so I'd give her a bit more time.

There was something special about our little Omega.

We'd come together in a whirlwind, and despite trying my best to keep her at an arm's distance, destiny had other intentions.

I didn't know how long I stood there, tracing my gaze over every inch of her, imprinting it on my mind, when I peered out the window and spotted Aspen.

The idiot was in the woods just behind the cabin punching a tree. I shook my head. What the fuck happened to him now? Last time he pulled this emo bullshit, he'd been dumped by a girl just before she blossomed into an Omega. And instead of coming to him, she'd been dating four men, and one of them was the lucky dude, not Aspen.

Groaning, I swung on my heels and marched out of the room and down into the backyard that spilled into the woods. If it was up to me, I'd let him get out his frustrations, but I didn't want Shadow on my back.

“The only reason I'm out here is because of Trinity,” I grunted, sauntering toward him, twigs and dead foliage snapping under my boots.

Raising his head, Aspen's gaze clashed with mine, his fists raised, bleeding and bruised. "Fuck off. I don't need your shit."

"I'd gladly piss off, but when Trinity wakes up and looks down from her window, she'll see you harming that poor tree. She strikes me as a tree-loving person." I grinned, gaining myself a glare. I moved to another tree at a safe distance from Aspen's swinging fists and leaned against it, hands deep in the pockets of my pants.

"What do you want, Viper?" He turned toward me. "Tell me how perfect your life is now that you've marked Trinity?"

"Goddamn, you, too, with the jealous crap."

He raised a thick eyebrow.

"Shadow's going on about it, too. Pretty sure he's taking out his sexually frustrated anger on Daniel right now."

"Like I said, what the fuck do you want?"

I huffed, tipping my head back to Trinity's room, but not seeing her. A gush of warmth came over me. I normally left the guys to their usual devices, but since my Omega adored them, she'd be affected by their moods. So, if Aspen was pissy and angry, that would impact my sweetheart, and I couldn't have that.

"Shadow wants us both in the study to discuss our plans, but as I said, he's in there, most likely fucking Daniel's brains out. And seriously, I don't want to walk in on that. Did it once, and it scared me for life."

Aspen cut me a glare.

"Hey, I'm not knocking it, but I'm not a crossing swords kind of guy, so I don't need to see it. Now, if he was fucking Trinity, I'd buy front-row seats." I ran a hand through my hair.

Aspen seemed to have given up slamming into the tree and was tending to his injuries across his knuckles.

"Anyway," I started. "While we're wasting time, you might as well tell me what the hell's wrong with you?"

He didn't respond, not even looking at me.

"Seriously, this counselor thing ain't too hard. I think I'd be rather good at it."

"Really? Is that what you think?" Aspen barked out a fake laugh. "You're shit at it."

"Tell us how you really feel," I grunted and pushed off the tree.

"Fuck off, man. How many times do I have to say it?" He headed toward the backyard.

"How about I guess what's going on, and you tell me when I'm warm?"

He shrugged, which wasn't a no, so that was progress.

"You're upset over me marking Trinity first," I began, meeting his heavy gaze. Somehow, I didn't think that was it. "Okay, then. You're still mad about the car incident when you were driving?"

That time he stared at me as though he were going to murder me, but no, that wasn't why he'd be out here hitting trees. He'd be throwing those punches at me instead.

"Hmm." I rubbed my chin. "You're worried about Trinity's life and can't stand it another second?"

No response that time. He just pushed open the back sliding doors and stepped inside, me behind him.

"Okay, so this is most likely it, then. You went to her bedroom to get it on, and with all your built-up anger, you couldn't get your cock hard enough for her."

"Oh my fucking hell, do you even hear yourself rambling on?" He swung back around, hand shoved against my chest, slamming me up against the wall.

"I fucked up, okay? I told her about killing my brother because I was an idiot. Now, she knows what a fucking loser I am, and on top of that, I couldn't even talk to her about it when she tried to help me. Are you happy now?" He had a last

shove, then wrenched his hand back, breathing heavily, his gaze dropping.

“Hey, listen,” I said, something twisting in my gut. I patted his shoulder, which he shrugged off. “We’ve all got hellish pasts, including our Omega. What makes you think she’s going to judge you for yours?”

“You’re not hearing me. I killed my brother, who did nothing wrong, because I couldn’t control my anger. Maybe you should be worried about her being hurt around me, too.” The big asshole marched down the corridor toward the kitchen, mumbling something under his breath.

I ought to let him go, but the pain in his voice rang in my ears. We might not always get along, but Aspen, Shadow, and even Daniel were still my family. The only one I had left, so despite pushing Aspen, I didn’t want him to break down. Not when it would devastate Trinity to have him pull away from her.

Chasing up after him, I caught him in the kitchen. “You want to know what I think?”

Aspen went to the fridge and pulled out a bottle of soda, ignoring me.

“I trust you with my life and have for years. I pride myself on being a good judge of character, and you, my friend, are not lacking control. You’re just holding onto the past and blaming yourself for something that wasn’t your fault.”

He turned toward me, licking his teeth as he set the bottle of pop on the kitchen counter with a thud. “And when I lose my nerve, when my reflexes kick in, what if she’s in my way and she gets hurt?”

“Then it’s a fucking accident. Something we all do. Stop holding on to the past, man. Look at me. I held on and almost lost my chance at accepting Trinity as my Omega. I was damned determined to block myself from her because I’d already lost an Omega, and you’re about to do the same.”

He blinked at me. “You never cared about my stuff before, so why are you bothering now?”

“As I said, I’m doing this for Trinity. I don’t want to see her upset. So, tell me, how can I help you find closure for your past? Visit your brother’s grave so you can give your final apology to him?”

“You really like her, don’t you?” he asked, his expression serious.

I licked my lips, nerves running down my spine as I came clean.

“I’m falling in love with her. It hit me so fast, it makes me dizzy, but I’m losing my head, and I can’t bear to be apart from her.” It was rewarding to get that off my chest, even if anxiety still clawed at my chest that Shadow was right that Trinity would be furious at me for marking her unknowingly.

Heaving for breath, Aspen wasn’t swearing at me, so I guessed that was a win.

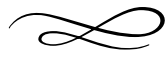
“We’ve both have it bad for her,” he murmured. “I can’t bear to lose her, and that scares the shit out of me. You’re going all psycho-possessive over her. Great pair we make. Fuck, I’ve become a mess lately, and I’m so tired of talking about all this emotional crap. Let’s go see if Shadow’s finished with Daniel and talk about something else.” I strolled alongside him through the house. “Told ya, I’d be a good counselor. Got you to open up.”

Aspen rolled his eyes at me, and I broke into laughter as we emerged onto the balcony and heard Daniel’s cries of pleasure from inside the study.

Aspen and I exchanged glances, and both of us chuckled.

“Let’s go get a drink,” Aspen suggested. “It may take a while.”

Fifteen



VIPER

I found myself inside Trinity's room, watching her sleep again.

After an hour of listening to Shadow scheduling us to do rounds across the property, then him sending Daniel into the city for any updates, since most didn't know Daniel even existed, I was exhausted. We were going on high security. I couldn't agree more, especially the part where one of us had to be aware of Trinity's whereabouts at all times.

So, I took the first shift, unable to get her off my mind. Her scent suffocated me, and when she rolled onto her back, the blanket slipping down to her waist, revealing those delicious breasts, my cock punched hard in my pants.

Her peacefulness was a drug to me, calming my erratic heart. Sitting back and doing nothing was slowly destroying me. She was moaning, rolling about, her breaths rushing. It was hard to focus on anything but her body and how desperately I longed to pull the blanket off her body so I could watch all of her.

When she let out a distressed sound, my heart thundered. I stepped closer to the bed out of instinct, our bond drawing me to comfort her. Peeling my shirt up and over my head, the hairs on my arms lifted with anticipation, and my balls pulled up into me, tightening. Practically salivating at the sight, I tossed the shirt aside just as my sweetheart opened her eyes, a gasp in her throat.

“V-Viper? Why are you in my room?” she blinked a few times, then pushed herself up on her elbows. She peered down to see her breasts were on full display. When she met my gaze, she grinned evilly, not bothering to cover up. That was my girl.

“Did you have a nightmare and want some comforting?” I asked, noticing the heavier scent of her perfume in the room. “Or would you like me to leave?”

She lifted her attention from my chest, biting down on her lower lip.

“Actually, I was dreaming about you fucking me.”

Her words sent a jolt of desire down to my cock.

“Babe, you’re going to destroy me.”

I lowered my hands to my belt, my dick needing to breathe. The way she watched me unbuckle it, biting harder into the flesh of her lower lip between her teeth... fuck me, but her hunger was going to have me cumming before I even touched her. Unzipping my pants and pulling them open, my heavy cock flopped out.

She drew in a harsh inhale, a small groan in her throat, and her body swayed forward of its own accord.

“Tell me, sweetheart, would you like me to leave?”

Her gaze dragged from my dick back up to my face, and she sucked in a raspy breath. A heavier burst of her perfume flooded the room as her chest rose and fell with anticipation.

I tilted my head to the side, eager to drag this beauty into my arms. Stepping out of my shoes, I dropped my pants and stepped out of them. Returning to the bed, she’d fallen onto her back and was rubbing her breasts.

“Just so you know, I don’t forgive you just yet, but...” She licked her lips once more. “But after that dream, the ache is burning through me.”

“Go on,” I pressed, slightly alarmed that she found out about me claiming her without telling her what it entailed, that she’d think this hunger for me and the dreams weren’t real

emotions. I couldn't bear to lose her. "Forgive me about what?"

She breathed heavily, and my cock twitched at the sight of her breasts jiggling from her fast inhales.

"That you rejected me when I first arrived at the compound when I needed you the most. When the pain was too much to handle, and you never came to me." She ran a thumb over a tight nipple, torturing me. "I just want you to know that you're not completely forgiven."

There was only so much a man could take in front of a naked goddess, especially one who smelled like heaven and I'd been craving. Taking a step forward, I got to my knees beside her bed, lowering myself onto my heels. I wasn't above begging when it came to Trinity. What had blossomed between us, what had me by the balls, was unbearable. I'd do anything for my Omega.

"I was an idiot and scared out of my brain that I'd be hurt. You see, I was smitten by you the moment we found you at the Glass Slipper Ball, but after Lillian died, I vowed I'd never love again. I'm sorry. Can you forgive me for being a jerk? I'll grovel. Whatever you need for me to show you that I fucked up." Lowering my head, I breathed heavily. The weight of her feeling anything but ultimate bliss from me wasn't good enough.

Soft fingers slid across my jaw, lifting my head to face her, and I couldn't deny that there was something riveting about her having power over me.

"Whatever you need, I'll do it," I said, part of me toying with the idea of telling her about the mark, getting it all out in the open, so there were no secrets between us. Let her hate me for a moment, then I'd bring the world to her feet to prove my worth. But when she threw her blanket off her body, where she lay on her side, that perfect hourglass figure, the pink strip of hair between her legs, her pebbled nipples—they all called to me.

"I heard what you said to me in the car when you were screwing me." One of her perfect eyebrows rose. There was a

slight twitch of her lips as though she was fighting the smile pulling at the edges, and I knew what she was referring to.

“And I meant every word.” Leaning forward, I inhaled her scent, my cock hardening. “I fucking love you so much, I can’t sleep when I’m not with you. I want to scream it for the world to know. Your smell lives in my head, and my fingers twitch with the need to touch you. My heart hurts when we’re apart. Being away from you is torture.”

“Well then, lover boy,”—her lips parted into a sweet smile—“show me how much you can love me.”

My heart clenching, I got to my feet and reached over to bring her closer to me. She inched toward me, her spine curving as her mouth wrapped over my cock hungrily.

Hissing, I unleashed the starved desire within me with an explosive grunt.

Her head bobbed, working me deeper and making a satisfied mewl. I had no idea where she learned to give head, but with my cock sliding to the back of her throat, I wasn’t sure how much longer I’d last. She stared up at me as my huge cock slipped past those ruby lips, her tongue running the length of my shaft, the sensation close to buckling my hips.

“Fuck, you’re killing me.”

Her eyes never left me, even when they watered from how deep she took me.

“Careful, or I’m going to expect this all the time. You have no idea how sexy you look with my cock deep in your mouth.”

Her eyes smiled, and she bobbed faster, sucking me. I hissed louder, grabbing hold of the back of her head, needing this as if my life depended on it. But just as quickly as she got me to the point of bursting, she pulled back, releasing my glistening dick and smiling.

“I was enjoying that,” I groaned, the strain heavy on my cock.

“I know. I could tell.” With a sinful grin, she fell back onto the bed. “But I think that’s enough.”

I narrowed my eyes at her. She was playing games, punishing me, and she was going to be my undoing. “Whatever you want, I’ll do it.”

“Then make it up to me because my heat is making me crazy.” A raspy moan grazed her throat, the scent of her sex flaring over me.

“Sweet Omega, you have no idea how well-trained you’ve got me, and I don’t give a fuck. As long as you stop being upset with me.”

“Then take me,” she moaned, her chest arching outward, her breasts sticking out toward me, her hips already rocking. Her heat cycle was returning faster, building up to when she would finally break her heat, when she’d be wilder for sex, demanding it every hour of the day and night.

“I’m going to fuck you hard, knot in you, and make you scream until you lose your voice, begging me for more. There’s no one else in this world who can make me feel like you do.” When I lowered my fingers between us, down to her drenched, swollen lips, she trembled in my arms, and her legs spread with need. “The emotions you bring out in me, the arousal, are unforgivable, and there is only one way to repay them.”

I pressed two thick fingers into her pussy so fast, she cried out.

TRINITY

His lips crashed down on mine as his fingers pumped inside me. I thought I’d held onto a thread of control, but I’d been kidding myself. Heat surged through my body, every inch of me shaking as I kissed my ridiculously delicious Alpha.

I’d lost the ability to think straight as lust plunged through me, stealing my breath.

The need for sex built inside me, a painful pressure that left me swaying against him, my hands clutching his round shoulders. I held my face close to his, letting him kiss me, and

gave back as much as he offered. My hands moved over his hard, broad chest, the skin on fire.

He broke our kiss as he drew his fingers out of me, the action making a drenching sound. My slick was already slipping down my inner thighs from how far I'd been driven to insanity with need. The touch of desire came so fast, it made a hopeless mess, but with Viper in my room, everything was about to change.

“Don't stop, please,” I pleaded, the deep ache in my gut continuing from the emptiness inside me. “Each time the heat returns, it's more intense and hurts so much worse.”

“You're getting closer, sweetheart.” Leaning over me, he took a nipple in his mouth while his left hand ran up the seam between my spread legs.

I loved when he replaced the sucking with long strokes of his tongue while watching me like a starved wolf. Tracing my hand down his back, as far as I could reach, I felt how his muscles knotted up beneath his skin. His scent—pumpkin pie—poured from him and invaded my senses.

“I want to hear you beg for my cock. I want you to absolutely lose it, screaming for my dick. Then I'll rut you, sweetheart.”

When he looked at me as if I was the only person who would ever truly matter to him, it took my breath away. I reached for him again, needing to kiss the man who held me in awe. I wasn't anyone special, but his eyes said differently.

Our mouths crashed together, and he tasted me, tangling his tongue with mine like a man who worshipped me.

“You're about to crawl out of your skin, aren't you?” he murmured. “Take me with you when you lose your grasp on this earth.”

Clutching him, my hips moved frantically, surging up as he pressed down between my thighs. There was no pause as he pushed his cock into me, spreading me. Groaning, I threw my head back at the titillating sensation that was pain and arousal rolled up together.

He fucked me, starting slow and building until we were perfectly in sync. Even our breaths matched. Our eyes locked as he thrust in and out until I was slipping over the edge into an abyss of carnal pleasure. I screamed as my body burst with the world's fastest orgasm, and I savored every moment of it.

He gave one final surge, a powerful thrust that shook my entire body as my walls closed around his swelling knot. His cock pulsed inside me, sending me back into another tailspin of pleasure, desire rising through me once more. He stared at me, growing inside me, our bodies joined, shaking, grinding.

"This is everything," I whispered with a moan.

"Tonight, I promise you at least four orgasms if you don't fall asleep on me." His devious grin challenged me. Viper was a competitive Alpha who never did a job half-heartedly.

"I'll hold you to that, Alpha. Because I want you on your back next, and then it's my turn to show you how much *I love you.*"

His eyes widened with shock. I didn't know what came over me, but having him adore me, pleasuring me, made me feel loved. I couldn't deny that whatever was going on between us had changed me.

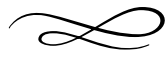
"Did I hear you right? Because you've just made me the happiest man in the world."

"Yes, you did." I laughed, feeling myself getting teary at the emotions burning through me. "I love you, and I can't even explain the depth of longing I feel for you. It's unlike anything I've experienced before. There's just something about you that's changed me. And it's much more overwhelming than what Shadow and Aspen do to me. I adore them to bits, but with you, it's like you're my oxygen. I need you to survive." I gasped for air, unsure I was even explaining myself properly, but I knew he was the man of my future.

Something almost painful crossed Viper's face, but it was gone just as fast. He was kissing me all over my face, his cock plunging into me.

“I’m never going to forget this moment. No matter what happens, you are mine in my heart.”

Sixteen



TRINITY

Stumbling down the hall, I made my way to the guys' rooms. I found myself alone in my bed when I woke up.

Viper was gone, and I couldn't see a sign of anyone outside. I'd woken with a dreadful ache in my gut that had me crying for the men. I couldn't even explain it, but I barely had enough energy to leave my room, let alone search the whole property. With night falling outside, I hoped to find them in their rooms, so I pushed open the first door. The bed was made, and clothes were folded on the table.

No Alpha.

Gravitating to the bed, I grabbed the pillow, pulled it to my face, and inhaled deeply. Sweet jasmine smells flooded my nose—Shadow. This was his room, and the longer I drew in his scent, the easier the pain became.

I'd never felt this bad—compulsive to be with them that very second.

Then I made my way to one of his dirty t-shirts lying on the dressing table and held it to my nose. My toes curled up from the masculine, sexy scent that had me squeezing my thighs together. How could someone smell so divine? With his clothes in hand, I threw the plain, white duvet back, letting his scent wash over me. I wrapped myself in his scent when I climbed on his bed, his clothes still in my hand.

Only Shadow could smell that good. Tucking the clothes around me under the blanket, I took deep, lungful breaths of Shadow's scent.

Jasmine.

Masculine perspiration.

His sex.

Drawing everything close around me into a cocoon, I buried my nose in the pillow and closed my eyes. Whimpering, I curled up through the sharp pain across my pelvis. By some miracle, I managed to fall asleep but woke up when Shadow slipped into the bed next to me, the lights off.

“Shh, stay still, Trinity. Go back to sleep,” he whispered, his arm pulling me to his body.

I whimpered, only half awake, but the fiery touch of his skin against my fingertips was too tempting. His chest was smooth, broad, and so hot. He was on fire, which only spiked my fever that came with the rush of slick between my legs. My lips moved, kissing his skin, moving up his neck, until he groaned.

“You need to rest. Your fever is really high, but I’ll help you get back to sleep. I’m so sorry, little Omega, that I haven’t made you a nest yet. Forgive me. Tomorrow, I will create you a new nest, okay?” he cooed with such gentleness, it nearly brought me to tears.

I nodded, unsure if he saw, but even speaking hurt.

His hand moved down my naked body. I hadn’t even paid attention that I had come to his room completely naked. Now, his hand moved between my thighs, and I brought my mouth up to his. He didn’t kiss me. We just held together like that, breathing the other’s breath in. I tried to see his eyes in the darkness, but the moonlight wasn’t enough, so as the sweet sensations of bliss flowed through me, I closed my eyes and let myself concentrate on what Shadow made me feel.

His fingers stroked me, teased me, and filled me before gliding back to my clit. I could smell my arousal blending with his scent, and my head swam, my fingers clutching at him to hold on, not to fall, but it didn’t matter. Shadow had me, and he wanted me to fall, wanted me to let go, and I gave in. I shook in his arms, a shuddering pleasure making me quake as

I gasped against his still lips. He kissed me then, stifling a groan of need that he couldn't stop.

His fingers continued to dance across me, and my body hummed in a continuous flow that started all over again when his tongue came out to dance with mine. I couldn't protest. I let him have what he wanted from me until the press of his finger against my clit was too much. Squirming, I pulled my hips away from him.

"Either rut me or let go, Shadow. The intensity is too much," I murmured when he drew his hand away.

"Sorry, little one. It's hard not to get carried away when I want to fuck you so hard, but I know that when the pain is so deep, you need something softer."

"It's okay." I snuggled beneath his chin, my left arm over his waist.

His hand came up to rub my back. I stiffened, then relaxed against him, my eyelids growing heavier.

"Rest, my gorgeous girl. I'll be right here."

As if his words had a power of their own, I drifted off...

Days passed.

Maybe longer. It was hard to tell. I'd been in and out of hazed states, in pain, horny as hell, and my three Alphas had been there every second, just as they promised. They took turns lying by my side, fucking me. Sometimes, when I was crying from the ache, Daniel joined us to cuddle, soothing me.

I blinked my eyes open to a bright morning, and for a change, I almost felt normal.

The heat cycles had no pattern to them, except they were becoming more intense, more frequent. It wasn't long now, they kept telling me. I was scared to go into full-blown heat—days upon days of begging for my Alphas cock to knot in me—but I couldn't wait for it to finish.

Pushing my legs out from under the blanket, I shoved to my wobbly feet, bathing in the sunlight as it poured in from the windows. My room had been transformed into a beautiful explosion of blankets, pillows, and fluffy throw blankets. It resembled a queen's bed with so much lush cushioning. True to this word, Shadow had built my nest with everything he could find in the cabin, complete with an array of chocolates and candy just for me. He promised once he was no longer in hiding, he'd make it fit for royalty, which had me blushing.

My smile grew. I finally felt normal enough to leave my bed, so I made my way to the shower to freshen up.

Once outside the bedroom bungalow, the sky was impossibly blue, not a cloud, not a breeze. Birds chirped, and everything just felt perfect.

With how I'd been feeling lately, no one gave me updates about my father searching for me, but considering we remained in the cabin, I took that as a good sign. Maybe my father had given up and just left me the hell alone.

Miracles had been known to happen.

Making my way down the stairs, I popped my head into the study, half expecting to find the guys in there, but it was empty. Next, I traipsed to the main living building, walking into the kitchen to the delicious smell of roasting coffee.

"I would kill for a cup of coffee right now," I murmured, shutting the door behind me.

"You're in luck." Thelma was pouring herself a cup. "Come take a seat." She wore her greying hair in a white scarf pushed off her face. Her baggy dress fell to her knees and was pulled in at her waist with a thin belt. Her sweet raspberry scent floated in the air because she was also an Omega.

I moved across the room and hopped up on the stool at the kitchen counter, watching Shadow's grandma serve me a cup of coffee.

"Cream?" she asked. "Sugar?"

"Just a bit of cream." By the time I had the cup in my hands, I was salivating. The creamy, nutty taste slid down my

throat, and I moaned. “I didn’t realize how much I missed coffee until I didn’t drink it for days.”

“How are you feeling? You had a very deep episode that lasted two weeks.”

I almost choked on my coffee. “Two weeks?” I assumed it was days. “It was a blur, in all honesty.”

“The heat cycles usually are, but it means you are very close to the climax of your heat.” She sipped from her cup. “I really don’t miss mine. They were hard on my body, and I was always exhausted, not to mention sore.” She grinned.

“Yes, exactly how I feel.” I slouched in my seat, enjoying my coffee. “So, where are the guys?”

“Hunting for a boar. They’re planning a big feast tonight for Shane’s birthday.”

My eyes almost bulged out. “Oh, I didn’t know it was his birthday. I don’t have anything for him.”

“It’s okay. The important thing is that we’re all here and safe. That’s all any of us need.”

Her words resonated in my mind. The Alphas had been relentlessly caring for me, so I had to do something for Shadow. Then it came to me.

“Cake. I’ll make him a cake. We used to have cooking classes at the Institute, and I mastered a chocolate cake that was divine.”

“That would be perfect,” Thelma replied with a huge grin. “The pantry is filled, so help yourself. It’ll be nice to put my feet up today and not be the one to cook for a change.” She sat on the stool, enjoying her coffee, looking relaxed.

Up on my feet, I went into the pantry and grabbed everything I needed—flour, sugar, oil, and was surprised I found cocoa as well as vanilla essence. Next, I grabbed three eggs and butter from the fridge.

“When did you have time to stock the pantry?” I murmured as I began searching the cupboards for bowls, measuring cups, and a whisk.

“Daniel has been our contact with the outside world, and I had him do a big shop for us. The cake pan is under the sink.”

“Hopefully, the guys won’t be too long hunting.” I was excited about preparing a cake for Shadow, feeling like I could give him something back. And who didn’t love cake? “Does Shadow have a favorite dish?”

“Pasta... anything with pasta. He used to eat bowls of it growing up. After he moved in with me, I realized I had to keep my kitchen well stocked because the boy could eat. When Daniel came over, then Aspen and Viper visited, the boys were always starving. Pasta filled them up.” She laughed to herself, her gaze miles away, lost in her past.

“What exactly happened to Shadow’s parents? I mean, Shane. Hope you don’t mind me asking, but it seems like a sensitive topic with him.”

“It’s okay. Shane had terrible nightmares for years afterward. I think he still does, but he doesn’t open up to me anymore. Watching his parents get gunned down in front of his eyes at a restaurant was traumatizing.” She paused, taking in a deep breath.

“Oh, shit.” I stiffened, my stomach dropping to my feet, the wooden spoon slipping from my grasp and into the bowl of flour. “I’m sorry. You don’t have to talk about it. It must be hard for you to have lost your son that way.”

“It was a long time ago, but sometimes when I close my eyes, I can still see him standing in front of me with his grumpy expression. Unfortunately, the war between the Matteis and Shchavlev families has always been brutal, and it was a terrible case of unfortunate luck that night. Some of the Shchavlev enforces heard the grandson of the Matteis mafia boss was at the restaurant. They took revenge against my boy in retaliation against their enemy.”

Listening to her story, my throat thickened, picturing Shadow seeing his parents killed in cold murder. “That breaks my heart for you and Shane.” My pulse rang in my ears as it sped up—those under my father’s command were responsible.

My family killed Shadow's parents. I wanted to be sick. I was surprised Shadow and Thelma didn't hate me.

Taking a long drink of her coffee, Thelma exhaled loudly, lifting her gaze from the mug in her hands. "Sometimes, fate is a bitch."

"I wish I could say I have any sway with my father to end the bloodshed between the two families."

"Trinity, as far as I'm concerned, you are not a Shchavlev, just as Shane and I aren't Matteis. We aren't cold-hearted monsters, we aren't killers, and we didn't grow up in their family."

I had no words that could take the pain of what my father had done, and Thelma was right. I didn't feel like a Shchavlev at all.

Thelma kept me company, and we chatted while I baked the cake, remembering the trick was to not overbeat the mixture, so it still had some of the air in it. I even whipped up a chocolate frosting just as the timer on the oven went off.

"It's done." I jumped off my stool and rushed into the kitchen, grabbed the heat mittens, and took the cake out. The smell was heavenly, and it had raised perfectly, with only a small crack across the top.

"This will be my best cake yet."

"Coming into your heat suits you," Thelma said, studying me from across the counter. "You are beaming, and the boys are absolutely smitten with you."

"They've grown on me," I responded sarcastically. Who was I kidding? I was so head over heels for them, I was long gone. Thinking that they were mine, my heartbeat fluttered as hard as the butterflies in my stomach.

"Daniel told me Viper finally made the first move, which is way overdue, if you ask me. All three should have done it already."

I blinked up at her, not quite catching on to what she was referring to. I'd already had sex with all three, so...

“What do you mean by the first move?”

I removed the cake from the cake pan and flipped it over onto a wire rack to cool down.

“That he marked you. It’s the ultimate bonding when an Alpha bites his Omega and generates an unbreakable connection between the two. It enhances what you’re already feeling and makes it tenfold, locking you together for life. Almost like a marriage.” She was grinning. “I’m so glad you accepted it. Now, I just need to convince Shane to do the same with you.”

My heart was thundering so fast, I wasn’t sure it was healthy. I kept thinking of the dreams I’d been having about Viper, the obsessive longing I’d felt for him, him constantly on my mind... more so than Shadow and Aspen. Then I remembered back in the mansion when he climbed into my nest, and we had the most incredible sex, then he bit me. My hand went to the curve of the neck, the mark long healed, but the spot felt sensitive under my touch.

In that perfect moment, when we had both soared with climax, he sank his teeth into my neck. I remembered panicking slightly at the harshness of his bite, which broke the skin. He licked the blood, but it had been hard for me to concentrate since he was knotting in me.

At the time, I had been afraid he’d split me in half with how large he was growing inside me, but my walls opened up, accepting him, then closed around the thick knot, clamping down as he spilled his Alpha seed into me. How could a girl concentrate on anything right then?

Had he done it at that moment to distract me, or had it purely being in the moment?

“You’ve gone pale. Are you going to be sick?” Thelma asked.

“I-I didn’t know that’s what Viper had done.” I held onto the kitchen counter. “I just thought it was his thing. Wh-What does it mean for me?” I hadn’t heard much about Alphas

bonding with Omegas through bites and just assumed the connection of the heat was all that kept us together.

“Wait ‘til I see that boy.” Thelma frowned. “An Alpha has to ask for permission first because once he’s bitten you, you will be connected for life. You will crave him until you take your last breath. It ensures the ultimate union, but there must be trust and discussion about such a big decision.”

My breaths turned shallow, my insides blazing with a sense of betrayal, of having something taken from me, I wasn’t even aware of.

“Talk to him,” Thelma explained. “Viper loves so deeply, sometimes he doesn’t think about consequences, but I know he means well.”

“Yeah, but I should have had a say, as you said.” Maybe I was overreacting. I radiated under his attention and had been ecstatic ever since he declared his love for me, but I’d had people my whole life controlling me, making decisions for me.

He’d bonded with us without me knowing. My cheeks heated with annoyance.

After that, it was hard for me to focus. When Thelma finally excused herself to rest in her room, I collapsed on the sofa overlooking the forest. Running the tips of my fingers across the tenderness across my neck, the longer I thought about Viper making that decision on my behalf, the angrier I grew.

At the same time, I didn’t want to lose what I had with him. I was being hypocritical, but that didn’t mean I wasn’t going to confront him. I would have a say in my future going forward, and no one was going to take that from me.

Never again.

I stared into the woods, trying not to feel too overwhelmed. After a long while, I returned to the kitchen and iced the cake. Searching for a large cake tray had me back in the pantry, then in the kitchen. Coming up short, I started searching the display cabinets in the room. When I opened one door, a flutter of papers tumbled into my arms. I scrambled

madly to push them back inside until something familiar on one of the papers caught my attention.

Bronze Cobras.

It was written on each of the invoices stacked in my hands, just like I'd seen back in Shadow's compound near a delivery of boxes. Like then, these papers were for purchasing and selling mega hormones and suppressants.

Unease curled in my chest. I never got a chance to ask Shadow what all of this meant but couldn't ignore that the Bronze Cobras had to be the business the three Alphas ran. They never told me how they made their fortune.

Flopping down on the couch, I flicked through the bundle of invoices, trying to understand what I was looking at. They were dealing in drugs for Omegas and Betas, the very things sold on the black market or force-fed to them.

When my attention caught on the words Bakewell Institute for Girls, I thought I would vomit all over the invoices. They sold drugs to Bakewell, that bitch, the same ones she used to make Betas appear as Omegas, so she could sell them to Alphas.

The papers fluttered to the floor as my hands shook. I was going to be sick. Apparently, they'd been keeping lots of secrets from me. They knew I came from Bakewell, but no one mentioned they sold her these fucking drugs.

On my feet, I paced as tears burned my eyes. The walls seemed to be closing in around me. They'd never told me the truth, never offered the information. They just let me think they were angels. I continued this angry dance in my head, thinking of how I'd bought the pills for my friends and me to enter the Glass Slipper Ball, how they cost us all our savings, how I never in a million years would have guessed the men who saved me were selling them.

In truth, how different were they from the mafia families they proclaimed to hate?

Quickly shoving the invoices back in the cabinet, I shut it and headed to the kitchen, deciding I'd just put the cake on a

dinner plate, having lost my appetite for celebration.

The guys had to come clean. For us to work, I needed the truth about everything.

The front door opened just as I lifted the cake on the plate. Shadow came in first, followed by Aspen, Viper, and Daniel. They were frantic and panicked, their gazes wild.

Their terror leached over onto me, and I was shaking.

“We need to go,” Shadow demanded urgently. “We’ve been compromised. Your father has found us.”

He found me!

I shook so hard, a cry choked in my throat, and the plate slipped from my grasp.

As easily as the beautiful chocolate cake fell and splattered into hundreds of pieces, so did my heart.

Seventeen



TRINITY

Shadow's words swam through my thoughts.
Your father has found us.

My body shook, reduced to a complete mess, and tears pooled in my eyes from the fear for my life...our lives.

He'd be furious, and I'd seen him angry. He'll shoot my men on the spot while I'll be tossed to the fucking sadistic twins. They'd torture me, break me, destroy me.

A whimper slipped from my lips as Shadow rushed over to me.

"Don't move. I've got you."

He stepped over the destroyed cake, the smashed plate—the chaos I'd created. The tears started to fall for everything I was about to lose, for the anger, for constantly fearing for my life. Shadow tenderly collected me into his arms, cradling me against his chest.

"It's going to be okay," he reassured me with a tightness in his voice.

"No, it's not," I muttered. There were no promises, and he was just as scared as me. "I'm sorry, I just... I made the cake for you... for your birthday," I whispered, my voice cracking, unsure why I said that.

"Trinity." My name on his lips shook, and hearing his terror frightened me down to my bones. "I'm so sorry I won't get a chance to try it, but we're going to find a safe place, and you can make me another one. Okay?"

I blinked up at the gorgeous Alpha. His radiant silvery eyes were so clear, I could almost peer deep into his soul. I clung to him, questions in the back of my mind about the invoices, the Bronze Cobras, and about Viper's marking me. Yet, in the face of death, so much of it seemed inconsequential.

"I don't want you to die." The words rushed out on a heavy breath.

"Babe, I'm not going anywhere. I give you my word." He quickly kissed me softly on the lips.

Then we were moving. He rushed me across the room, setting me down to my feet near the door just as Thelma joined us, fright flaring across her tight facial features.

"I'm ready to leave," she said, her breath racing, clutching a bag to her stomach.

Daniel was at our side, pale as milk, while Viper and Aspen stood like guards, chests rising and falling fast, bodies stiff.

"War's coming to our doorsteps," Shadow stated. "And it's not a fight we're going to win. My contacts told me Arman, the fuckhead, discovered our whereabouts by looking into the council papers of my property ownership."

"Son of a bitch! He's going to make it his personal mission to come after you, after all of us," Viper stated the obvious, then swallowed loudly while Aspen clenched his jaw. "We're going to fucking bury him."

"We'll get our chance since he's not going to give up, but not today," Shadow added. "We're going to be outnumbered."

"I'm sorry," I murmured, trying my best to hold it together and be as brave as the rest of them. "If it wasn't for me, you wouldn't have my lunatic father after you. Maybe there's a solution... I stay behind... it's me he wants."

The room suddenly thickened with explosive tension, with grunts and filthy glares at me as if I said the worst possible thing in the world.

“Don’t even say it,” Viper snarled, taking my hand and dragging me into his embrace. “This isn’t on you. That bastard was using you, and if you weren’t with us, he’d have sold you to some old ass and his dick sons. You didn’t cause this, sweetheart.”

He stroked my back, kissing the top of my head, pressing me against his chest. His pumpkin pie scent was my weakness, and if I closed my eyes, I could almost sink my teeth into it and taste it—it was that strong, that delicious.

I couldn’t stop quivering, my desire rising at our close proximity, and understood why I reacted to him, as if I would bear his children now if he asked. That was how deeply I adored him... loved him. But I was shaking with fear, with anger at him at the same time, and I begrudgingly pushed myself out of his arms. He furrowed, staring at me, puzzled.

“Okay, we need to leave,” Shadow stated, his voice rushed. “Daniel, you and Grandma take your car and head into the city. No one is looking for you both, so go into hiding at my grandma’s old apartment in the city. Stay low until you hear from me.”

“It’s still under my maiden name,” she added, her voice strained. “No one will search for us there.”

I hated seeing her so scared, though she held her chin high as though it wasn’t her first time facing the possibility of death.

“Shadow,” Daniel started, taking his hand and turning to face him. “I can’t leave you. I’ll go insane worrying about you. Please don’t make me leave.” His voice grew raspy, as though he was about to burst out crying.

Shadow frowned, the pain in his posture hard to watch. He cupped Daniel’s face, leaning into him, and it was difficult not to feel jealous at seeing the admiration he poured into Daniel, the affection he held for him.

“I couldn’t bear if you or Grandma got hurt, so I need you to be brave for me. Can you do that? This is temporary, and I won’t drag you two into danger with the rest of us.”

I was impressed by how well Shadow held his composure, staying strong for the rest of us—which was why he held the position of leader of his pack. Aspen and Viper were the enforcers at his side.

Daniel threw himself at Shadow, hugging and kissing him, lasting for only a few moments before Shadow had to pull away. He then embraced his grandma, who left with a devastated Daniel moments later.

Aspen was at my side, sliding an arm around my back, Viper staring at me the whole time, his expression darkening. I couldn't deny that being away from Viper had my chest tightening. I was mad at him but didn't want to argue about it when we were about to face the devil.

“We'll take your car, Aspen. We have to assume this place will be compromised, and we have no time to pack. Let's go.”

The urgency in his voice added to the tension suffocating me. Aspen lifted me into his arms, and before I knew it, we were in the car, me in the backseat with Shadow, Aspen hitting the gas pedal, and Viper grunting under his breath. He kept glancing over his shoulder, mumbling, “I should sit in the back with her.” With everyone in panic mode, no one was paying him attention.

Falling apart, emotions battling inside of me, I returned my attention to the most amazing cabin I'd ever seen. Was my father going to burn it down? My breath caught in my lungs. I wanted to hurt my father, wanted to cry at the unfairness of bad luck always following me. If it wasn't for me, Shadow would continue with his blissful life, not be the target of the devil.

Curling up against the door, my stomach hurt. This was all my fault.

When Viper stared back at me again, something moved behind those deep eyes. He knew something was up between us, but this wasn't the place to talk about it. I turned my gaze away from him, keeping my distance, and said nothing while dread burned through me.

We moved so fast, the woods we passed became a blur.

“What’s the plan?” Aspen asked. “Where the hell are we going to go if Arman has every one of his men searching for us? They’re like cockroaches... everywhere. So, where the fuck can we hide?”

Like the others, I looked at Shadow. He wore a stern face, not once meeting my gaze.

“There’s only one place the Shchavlev won’t find us, where they won’t come looking,” he stated, his jaw clenching, a nerve twitching at the side of his neck. “With the Matteis.”

I was startled at his response.

“You’re joking, right?” Aspen blurted. “Your great-grandfather wants you dead, so how are you going to be safe with him?”

My breaths were racing at this stage, or the risk Shadow’s idea posed to him.

“Because we’re not going to him. I know someone who might remember me from long ago, and I’m hoping he’s willing to help me once more. It’s our last hope.” His hands were fists by his side, his jaw tight, and he shook slightly.

I suspected he wasn’t trembling from fear but from uncontrollable rage. He was about to lose everything and now had to grovel to his family, who wanted him dead. The sting of terror pierced my chest as if someone had grabbed my heart in the palm of their hand and squeezed.

“Where do we find him?” Viper barked, his lips peeled back, baring teeth.

“The Bull and Wolf bar on the Matteis side of the city, where all the Matteis enforcers hang out to drink.” Shadow didn’t say another word, no one did. Instead, he reached over to me and pulled me into his arms, embracing me.

I wasn’t sure if he was comforting me or himself, but it didn’t matter. Despite the world crumbling around us, we were in the fight for our lives, and all that mattered was surviving with my Alphas.

Everything else I'd sort out once we made it out alive.

Eighteen



SHADOW

“Are you sure this is the joint?” Aspen asked, leaning forward and staring out toward the empty laneway drenched in shadows from the falling night. The old buildings had no storefronts or windows, just plastered-up walls. Just how the place was intended—hidden from the general public and enemies.

I’d found the place a few years ago while doing a reconnaissance mission on what the Matteis family was selling when it came to suppressants. It was a viable business, and everyone had a finger in the pie. The difference came down to the quality and who you bought the pills from. Every provider was locked in on a supplier with large monetary benefits to them. I’d heard my great-grandfather had found a new supplier, which had me curious.

So, while my mission was a bust, coming up empty-handed, I did uncover their favorite drinking hole.

“I can’t see a door,” Viper added. “I’m coming with you.”

“No,” I barked, my voice sharp. I stretched my arm out to Viper, squeezing his shoulder. “Appreciate it, but alone, I can slip in unnoticed. Plus, if anyone recognizes me, I won’t be shot on the spot since I’m one of them. My great-grandfather would have demanded the honors. With the two of us, we’d be noticed.”

His icy resolve wasn’t thawing. He’d been especially quiet on the drive, constantly staring back at Trinity. Had something happened between them, or was he just anxious?

“You don’t come out in fifteen,” Aspen added. “We’re coming in after you.”

I winced because they’d do it. “Give me thirty, just in case.”

“Twenty,” Viper growled.

“Fine. I don’t intend to stay long.”

My adorable Omega remained attached to my side, her body soft and warm, her smile keeping me from losing my shit during the drive. Right then, she studied me with glistening eyes.

Running my fingers across her cheek and catching a loose tear, I leaned down, our lips grazing. She was so vulnerable, and I could feel the burn of fear that she’d get hurt under my watch.

“Please be careful,” she whispered against my lips.

“I give you my word.” Reluctantly, I pulled back from her, my gut hardening at the ache in her features, at how tightly she held onto my arm, not letting me go. “But I’ll need my arm,” I teased, stealing one last kiss before I pushed open the door and slipped out.

Blowing her a kiss, I shut the door, knowing we had no other options. Aspen had the window open, a flare in his jaw.

“The first sign of being spotted, get the fuck out. I’ll be just across the road.”

I gave him a nod, then made my way up the alleyway. Head low, hands tucked into my pockets, I moved on fast feet. Pausing in front of a section of the wall with black symbols across the top, I banged on the metal panels. Seconds later, one of them pushed open like a door, and an explosion of music and voices came from inside, along with a dimly lit entry room, where a beef of a man glared at me. He was covered in tattoos from neck to God knows where, but I didn’t care.

“Name?”

“Here to meet up with Rusty,” I answered, holding my voice stoic.

The idiot just shook his head. “That’s not what I asked.” Creases across his brow deepened, his hard lips thinning.

Grinding my teeth, I held his gaze, knowing I’d have to tell them who I was, which meant if he didn’t apprehend me on the spot, my time inside the club was limited. The weight of my gun at my back and the blades in my boots gave me a level of security I clung to.

“Is Rusty inside?” I persisted, lowering my arms from my pockets and pretending to scratch my lower back. My fingers itched, ready to go all cowboy showdown on him.

“Name! I ain’t asking again, mother fucker!”

My rage and nerves climbed through me and had me brushing the gun with my fingers. I had no choice but to spill.

“Shane Matteis.”

Silence.

Narrowing eyes inhaled me. He instantly knew who I was. Didn’t everyone in the Matteis mafia organization? The great-grandson who’d followed in his father’s footsteps and walked away from his family. The idiot who had been promised he was going to die if he ever stepped foot in any territory run by his great-grandfather.

My fingers curled around the hilt, ready to end this bastard if it meant getting into the club.

The muscles in his neck flared, then he swallowed hard before stepping aside. “Rusty’s at the bar.”

I held his gaze for a long pause, waiting for his ambush, but he yawned.

“Are you coming the fuck in, or you gonna be a pussy and run away like your father and granddad did?”

Heat moved up my spine, but his insult didn’t bother me. I missed my mother horribly, but my father was an asshole, and I barely knew my grandfather, so it wasn’t any skin off my nose.

Taking a deep breath, I stepped inside, releasing the gun but holding my hand close.

“As I said, head down the stairs. He’s at the bar, last I checked.” The guy pulled the door shut with a bang, returning to a stool near the entrance.

Without anyone jumping me or jamming a blade into my back, I figured I was on borrowed time and would need to do this fast. Not for a moment did I think the guard wouldn’t notify my grandfather.

The heavy stench of cigarette smoke stung my nostrils as I skipped down the steps, ready to do this fast, then get out. A rock song played on the speakers, and when I emerged, I was in a dimly lit, smoky haze filling the enormous room, with tables, chairs, and couches scattered everywhere. A stage with two girls in thongs swung around on a pole. They were okay but didn’t come close to holding a candle to my Trinity.

Everyone was drinking. Others gambled, and one guy had a girl kneeling under the table, giving him head. Another had a girl up against the wall, rutting her, but by her cries, she wasn’t complaining. A few of the men glanced my way, and I made no attempt to hide my face from them. In their state, how many would recognize me, let alone be certain who I was?

Moving toward the bar, I spotted Rusty, still as big as a gorilla, hair shorter, and knocking back a bottle of beer in one go. Taking a seat next to him, I caught the bartender’s attention.

“He’ll have another and same for me,” I stated. I inhaled the sharp scent of beer, then cut Rusty a glance. “Remember me?”

He growled under his breath, eyeing me sharply. It was also when I noticed he wore a phone earpiece. “Told you all those years ago to never return.” He still had that thick, raspy voice I remembered.

“You saved me when my parents were killed.”

Rusty studied me, looking much older since I last saw him ten years earlier, sporting a new scar down the side of his neck

that looked like it had once been deep.

Our beers arrived, and I paid the guy to leave us in peace.

“Why are you back?”

I took a long swig of the chilled beer, cooling down the heat burning me up. I was on fire, my nerves on edge, and I kept glancing over my shoulder, expecting the worst. So far, no one was rushing to chop my head off, though I didn't miss the few eyes roaming over me, the few people staring and talking to me.

So, I had no time to waste.

“I need your help once more.” Lowering my voice, I continued, “I need a place to lie low from the Shchavlev for a short time. They're combing the city for me.”

Rusty watched me, his lips tugging into a grin. “You've finally fucked them over, too?”

Cracking my neck, I groaned. “Keep your asshole comments to yourself. Can you help, or am I wasting my time?”

He finished his beer, then slammed the bottle to the bar. “Looks like it's your lucky day.”

“Yeah, how's that?”

He flagged down the bartender, ordered himself another beer, then came back to me. “Go and see your great-grandfather at the mansion. He's been looking for you.”

Irrked, I stiffened. “Fuck that. I didn't come here to end up dead. You're just wasting my time.”

As I moved to get up, he blocked me by grabbing my shoulder and squeezing it.

“Not to kill you. Let's just say he's had a change of heart recently. So, get the fuck over there real quick. And take your three companions with you. He'll be expecting you at his mansion.”

He turned away from me, and I took that as my cue to leave the club. I shoved off the stool and marched out of the

club. Not one person stood in my way, and now I knew why.

My great-grandfather had made sure of it.

Which begged the question?

What the fuck did he want from me?

Nineteen



TRINITY

“This feels fucking wrong,” Viper snarled from the back seat of the car next to me. Shadow, sitting in the front to get us past the front gates of the Matteis mob mansion, got us in without a hitch to see the big man himself.

In all honesty, I was terrified of how our meeting would end up.

I stared out the window, my knees bouncing, and I was glued watching the expansive acres of land, a magnificent landscape that came with a maze on my side of the paved driveway. Despite it being night, lights lit up everything.

My father’s home had a clinical, marble, grandeur vibe, but this place was something else completely. The luxurious mansion could easily pass for Buckingham Palace. It had two floors but extended outward on either side, the corners round like towers, high arched windows, and an expansive staircase leading up to the grand double front doors.

How many bedrooms did this place have, anyway? Fifty?

These monsters—who fed on people’s fear, sold drugs, killed people, and dealt in Omega trafficking—lived luxurious lives. I could never imagine what life in a palace would be like. Would I want to if given the chance? I wanted to say yes but held back my enthusiasm if it came at the cost of me hurting innocents. And my thoughts swung to my Alphas and their Bronze Cobras business... Were they any different?

My head hurt thinking about it.

We circled past the stone fountain and parked at the front of the mansion, where we were greeted by four armed men and an older man in an immaculate black suit, who came to Shadow's door and opened it.

"Welcome, Mr. Matteis," he said, bowing his head and sweeping his hand out for Shadow to emerge.

"Guess that's us, too," Viper murmured under his breath.

Meanwhile, I was having heart palpitations with déjà vu moments of being at my father's mansion. All the guards were armed to their teeth with huge guns, and what about the guards we didn't see?

Climbing out of the car into the cool night air, I moved closer to Aspen. Viper stood behind me, both of them guarding me. Shadow was talking to the butler-looking guy before we got waved to follow them inside. At the door, each of us was stopped and patted down by the guards, my Alphas giving up their guns and knives.

Viper grunted under his breath.

"I promise you will have it back upon your departure," the butler insisted. His silvery hair was combed off his face, and his deep blue eyes carried something kind in them. I couldn't work out if they were deceitful or pretty to look at—like the Venus flytrap—but get too close, and you'd end up with your head ripped off.

"It's okay." Shadow motioned for Viper and Aspen to give up their weapons.

"Exactly what we want, to be unarmed in our enemy's home," Aspen muttered, but Shadow was too busy in conversation with the butler to hear the guys grumbling.

Attempting to listen in on Shadow proved hard when all I caught was every few words, which ended up making no sense. I forced myself not to panic and hoped Shadow wasn't making a huge mistake in trusting his contact, who'd insisted we go to his family's place. Truthfully, we were cornered between two rivaling packs, and maybe it was better to choose

one side over ending up dead. Shadow was hedging his bets on his family.

It didn't change how I felt.

A shiver snaked up my spine as we entered the elaborate mansion, greeted by a room complete with a cloakroom. Guards were scattered everywhere. Two stone pillars defined the entry space and hanging between them was a crystal chandelier. A grand staircase led upstairs to a sweeping balcony that overlooked the foyer. Vases with flowers were everywhere, along with a carved statue of a wolf in a fighting pose.

His hand on my back, Viper leaned in. "Hey, is everything okay... with us?"

My body clenched as I fought the burning desire to lean into him and steal a kiss. He made my legs wobble when we touched, his pumpkin pie scent warming and delicious. One slip and my body would win this battle. I glanced at him through my eyelashes, trying really hard to focus on the problem at hand.

"If you're upset with me, I want to know," he continued.

"Viper, let's not talk about this now."

"Sweetheart, please." His grasp tightened. "I'm going insane in my mind with you pulling away from me."

"You really want to have that conversation here, now?" Aspen glared at him. "Get your fucking head straight, man. We're in the lion's den." Aspen collected my arm and drew me alongside him.

"We need to remain vigilant right now," he whispered in my ear. "I can't have anything happen to you."

I was torn on the inside, breaking apart for Viper from our bond but still furious at him and wanting to bombard him with a dozen questions, but Aspen was right.

Keep our heads straight, or we lose them.

Still, I leaned back, glancing at Viper, who watched me, his gaze darkening, his posture hardening.

“This way,” the butler called to us, distracting me, which was a good idea. Every inch of me felt tight, and the heady scent of my Alphas wasn’t helping, not when the faint ache of my heat and the dark pain of my fear swallowed me.

We moved up the stairs, along wide hallways, until the butler knocked on a door, then pushed it open. A couple of guards stood behind us, watching us closely. It was hard not to feel like we were prisoners.

The room opening up before us was glorious and enormous. There were long windows adorned with thick, black drapes, several chandeliers, and one half of the room was made up of a row of bookshelves, cram-packed with thick, spined books. To the left of them were leather lounges, and at the rear of the room, a deep cherry-red desk sat against the wall. Gold gleamed from the clasps on its corners.

My mind raced as two men emerged from behind one of the bookshelves. One man was young, his hair cut especially short, and he had gray eyes just like Shadow’s. He wore black tailored pants with a black satin shirt and was good-looking with a perfectly carved face, thick lashes, and lush lips. He definitely carried the handsome gene that ran through the Matteis family.

The older man’s faint silver hair was parted over his temple, and he wore a pin-striped navy suit, the jacket unbuttoned. He grasped a walking stick as he hobbled closer. Liver spots covered his brow and the back of his hands, gold glinting from his rings and thick golden chain.

Sucking in a hard breath, I stared at him—Shadow’s great-grandfather. From the deep wrinkles and how difficult he moved, he might very well be pushing a hundred.

“Shane,” the old man croaked, sticking a hand out and calling to Shadow, who kissed him on both cheeks, then hugged. “We have so much to catch up on. Let me introduce you to your cousin, Axel,” he explained, pointing at the handsome man by his side with the cropped hair. “He has been loyal and by my side since he joined my services at the age of sixteen.”

Axel never cracked a smile, just stared right through us.

Shadow shook his cousin's hand. "We'll have to catch up later, and you can catch me up on who's who in the family." I could see the stiffness in his shoulders, the reservation in everything he did, yet he held his composure and played the game well.

"Sure."

Axel was grating on my nerves, and I hated the way he glared at Shadow,

I swung my attention to the two guards who remained by the door, hands on their guns, ready, their presence leaving me jittery and nervous.

"And who is this lovely Omega in your clutches?" the mafia boss asked, snatching my attention as he hobbled over to me, his gaze tracing the length of my body.

"This is Trinity, my Omega," Shadow announced with assertion, his eyes clashing with mine, a slight curl of his mouth at the corners. "Aspen and Viper are my seconds in command."

The man didn't seem to hear him. Moving closer to me, he ran a finger down my cheek and drew in a deep lungful of air. A shiver raced down my spine, and I loathed the way strangers did that, as if they had a right to inhale my scent. I took a step back from him.

"Brave girl," he said with a raspy voice. "You were made for beautiful things in this world... gold, dresses dripping in jewels... to be worshipped."

Trembling, I hated the way he leered at me. Viper had his arm wrapped around my waist, dragging me possessively against his side.

The man who could kill us with a single command glanced up at Viper, grinning.

"I understand." He turned away from us. "Come, take a seat. We have much to discuss."

Shadow chose a single-seater while his great-grandfather stood by the window, never taking a seat. Axel also stood, legs apart, hands at his back, his eyes lingering over me a bit too long. I didn't miss the flare of his nostrils as he sniffed the air.

I wished I could curl into a ball. I should have remained in the car, but Shadow insisted we were all invited, and for us not to all show up would be an insult. So there we were, sitting on the edge of our seats, having not a damn clue what to expect.

On the bright side, if they were going to kill us, they would have done so already, so they wanted something else from us.

Pressed between my two huge Alphas was warming, comforting, given the situation. I forced myself to tamp down the flood of emotions twisting inside me—from fear to my heat lingering and Viper's possessive hold over me to the unrelenting staring from Axel.

"I appreciate you agreeing to see me." Gold glinted from Shadow's great-grandfather's rings as he stood by Shadow, placing a strong hand on his shoulder. "It warms my soul. I pushed your father and your grandfather away from me. It gives me hope that you are different from them. That you can finally come into serving your family well." Despite his frail appearance, there was darkness about the man. His eyes were empty, as if he'd witnessed so much ugliness in his life, he had lost part of his soul.

Shadow glanced at us, his face stoic, but his eyes revealed his apprehension. He stood.

"And what's that?"

Nerves jumped under my skin. Harsh breaths expelled from Aspen and Viper, their attention locked on their Alpha, their bodies tense.

The mafia boss dragged in a raspy breath. "I've led my life with an iron fist, spilled a lot of blood, ruined families, but I'm not going to run this empire forever. Recently, I've had heart complications that are growing worse. It's time I settled my affairs."

I blinked at the powerful men in the room, my heart pounding as I was certain I knew where this conversation was going. Axel's posture seemed to change, his chest rising and falling quickly, his jaw clenching as he watched the two men.

Aspen shifted against me, and I noticed him exchanging a dark look with Viper. They had to be thinking the same thing that Shadow was about to gain a position in the Matteis family business.

"There's no rush to make decisions," Axel finally spoke, stepping forward. He then swung his gaze to the guards by the door for a sliver of a moment, long enough to make me worried.

I wasn't the only one who didn't trust him. Viper slid forward in his seat, a blade sliding down from the inside sleeve of his jacket, discreetly held in his hand. He hadn't given up all his weapons. I wanted to breathe easier, but it felt as though I'd swallowed razor wire.

Sensing the unease, Shadow stepped away from Axel, his back to the window with a perfect vantage view of the room, especially the armed security by the door.

"Shut the fuck up, Axel. This is long overdue. I lost my son and grandson, and if there's one thing I can do to make up for that, it's finally bringing my great-grandson into the family."

Axel cracked his neck, his lips taut and tugged downward in a disgruntled look. What was wrong with him?

I swallowed harder as the old man twisted back to Shadow.

"Son, I'm not going to be around for long. I haven't regretted much, but lately, guilt has been weighing me down." He broke into an explosive coughing fit. "You have yourself an Omega, I see, and your two men in command would kill for you. So, you're ready for true responsibility."

"Don, I implore you to think wisely about your decision and don't rush this," Axel grunted.

The boss, or the Don as Axel called him, glared at him, which sent him back a few steps, but Axel turned his death

stare on Shadow.

The hairs on my arms rose. I couldn't work out if these two liked or hated each other.

Both my men edged forward in their seats, and my heart was thundering in my chest. Panic clawed through me at the savage thickness in the room, at the invisible tension, at the fear that Axel would attack Shadow.

“Shane Matteis, I'm gifting you the Matteis empire,” Don stated loudly, his chest puffed out, a grin spreading his lips. “It's the least I can do to make it up to my son and my grandson. Hopefully, they will forgive me.” He was smiling ridiculously while Shadow's face paled.

My mouth dropped open, and my pulse was on fire. I saw it coming, yet it was as though ice was sliding down my spine. But like anything good that happened in my life, it was short-lived before it came crashing down.

Axel suddenly lunged toward Shadow, something silver glinting in his grasp.

A scream leapt from my throat.

Aspen and Viper threw themselves toward them.

Chaos unleashed. Shots boomed.

I cried out, ducking and covering my head.

It all happened too fast.

“Shadow, watch out,” I bellowed, bending low and trying to reach him. Aspen and Viper had Shadow shoved away from the commotion.

Axel slammed into the back of Don.

The old man's eyes flew wide, a terrifying groan in his throat, his chest jutting out. Blood slipped out from the corners of his mouth. I stared into the face of a man who knew he was about to meet his maker, and instead of fear, there was a small smile on his face, as if he'd been waiting for this moment.

“Don, you fucking old fool,” Axel growled just as the boss's legs gave out. He crumbled to the floor, falling flat on

his stomach.

What the fuck was going on?

A dagger stuck out from the middle of his back, and the man was bleeding out.

“The fucking Matteis empire is mine!” Axel roared.

I gave a startled cry when Axel wiped his hands down his pants before waving at the guards. “Wrap him up fast.”

They were in on it with Axel this whole time. Of course they were, and my stomach clenched.

Swinging my attention to my men, I spotted Aspen and Viper bending over Shadow, who was on the floor. My heart became ice. I didn't remember moving, but I flew toward them, only to find Shadow had been shot, and blood was pouring down his chest.

My world spun and I wanted to scream.

Aspen was shouting something at me, but I couldn't hear him. I fell to my knees and shoved my hands over the wound to stop the bleeding.

Viper turned savage, throwing himself at Axel, with Aspen darting after them.

Tears poured down my cheeks as I leaned forward, staring at my Alpha, who had his eyes half-closed and was groaning.

“Trinity,” he rasped, then winced from the pain, his face growing paler. “Run. G-Get out of here.” He was shuddering, his body going into shock.

I couldn't move... couldn't breathe.

“Not without you.” Sobbing, I pressed down on his wound as blood slipped out between my fingers. “So, you better not die. Don't you fucking dare die on me.”

All I could think about was how I always lost all those I loved.

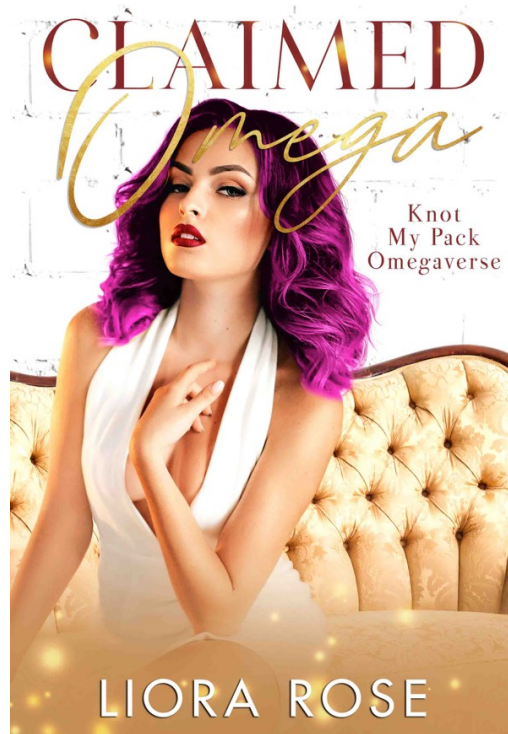
Just this one fucking time... please don't take it all away from me.

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About Liora Rose

Liora has always been an avid reader who loves all things reverse harem and omegaverse. She decided to give writing a try and Hidden Omega is the result of her passion.

She lives in Australia with her husband, and when she isn't writing, she's either playing video games or has her nose stuck in a book.

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