

WSJ AND USAT BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
AMELIA HUTCHINS



# The Fixer

Paranormal Syndicate Series

# THE FIXER

SUPERNATURAL SYNDICATE



AMELIA HUTCHINS



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# WARNING

**Warning:** This book is **dark**. It's **sexy**, hot, and **intense**. The author is human, as you are. Is the book perfect? It's as perfect as I could make it. Are there mistakes? Probably, then again, even **New York Times top published** books have minimal mistakes because, like me, they have **human editors**. There are words in this book that are not in the standard dictionary because they were created to set the stage for a paranormal-urban fantasy world. Words in this novel are common in paranormal books and give better descriptions to the action in the story than other words found in standard dictionaries. They are intentional and not mistakes.

**About the hero:** chances are you may **not** fall instantly in **love** with him, that's because **I don't write men you instantly love**; you grow to love them. I don't believe in **instant love**. I write flawed, raw, caveman-like **assholes** that eventually let you see their redeeming qualities. They are **aggressive assholes**, one step above a caveman when we meet them. You may **not** even like him by the time you finish this book, but I promise you will **love** him by the end of this **series**.



**About the heroine:** There is a chance you might think she's a bit naïve or weak, but then again, who starts out as a badass? Badass women are a product of growth, and I am going to put her through **hell**, and you get to watch **her** come up **swinging** every time I knock her on her ass. That's just how I do things. How she reacts to the set of circumstances she is put through may not be how you as the reader, or I, as the author would react to that same situation. Everyone reacts differently to circumstances and how she responds to her challenges, is how I see her as a character and as a person.

**I don't write love stories:** I write fast-paced, knock you on your ass, *make you sit on the edge of your seat wondering what is going to happen next* in the books. If you're looking for cookie-cutter romance, this isn't for you. If you can't handle the ride, ***unbuckle your seatbelt and get out of the roller-coaster car now.*** **If not, you've been warned.** If nothing outlined above bothers you, carry on and **enjoy the ride!**

**FYI,** this is not a romance novel. They're going to **kick** the shit out of each other, and **if** they end up together, well, that's **their** choice. If you are going into this blind, and you complain about abuse between two creatures that are **NOT** human, well, that's on you. I have done my job and given **warning.**

# BOOKS BY AMELIA HUTCHINS

## **LEGACY OF THE NINE REALMS**

Flames of Chaos

Ashes of Chaos

Ruins of Chaos

Crown of Chaos

**Coming Soon**

Queen of Chaos 2023

King of Chaos

Reign of Chaos

## **THE FAE CHRONICLES**

Fighting Destiny

Taunting Destiny

Escaping Destiny

Seducing Destiny

Unraveling Destiny

Embracing Destiny

Crowning Destiny

**Finished Series**

**THE ELITE GUARDS**

A Demon's Dark Embrace

Claiming the Dragon King

The Winter Court

A Demon's Plaything

A Touch of Fae coming soon

Wickedly Fae coming soon

**A GUARDIAN'S DIARY**

Darkest Before Dawn

Death before Dawn

Midnight Rising -TBA

**MONSTERS SERIES**

Playing with Monsters

Sleeping with Monsters

Becoming his Monster

Revealing the Monster

**Finished Series**

## **WICKED KNIGHTS**

Oh, Holy Knight

If She's Wicked

If He's Wicked TBA

## **MIDNIGHT COVEN BOOKS**

Forever Immortal

Immortal Hexes

Midnight Coven

**Finished Series**

## **BULLETPROOF DAMSEL SERIES**

Bulletproof Damsel

**Coming Soon**

Silverproof Damsel

Fireproof Damsel

Alpha's Claim **Standalone**

**Within the Darkness**

Moon-Kissed

Night-Kissed TBA

## **THE DARKEST FAE**

King of the Shadow Fae

**Coming Soon**

King of the Night Fae

Queen of the Stars

## **Fate Series**

Whispers of Fate (Intro to Kahleena's book)

*If you're following the Fae Chronicles, Elite Guards, and Monsters series, the reading order is as follows.*

Fighting Destiny

Taunting Destiny

Escaping Destiny

Seducing Destiny

A Demon's Dark Embrace

Playing with Monsters

Unraveling Destiny

Sleeping with Monsters

Claiming the Dragon King

Oh, Holy Knight

Becoming his Monster

A Demon's Plaything

The Winter Court

If She's Wicked

Embracing Destiny

Crowning Destiny

Revealing the Monster

Whispers of Fate

# CHAPTER ONE

SCROLLING THROUGH THE ENDLESS bids on my phone, I tipped the mimosa, swallowing the bitterness I felt. A waiter approached to refill the glass but hesitated as a soft groan left my lips. The growing list of people seeking to hire me was all the same. Insanely rich, spoiled prats, wanting me to fix their self-made issues. Of course, it was something I was used to, since I was the one who fixed the lives and careers of the elite. I'm also the one the rich and powerful come to when their worlds crumble. That was where I came in. I took their messes and cleaned them up. I fixed the problems and eradicated any trace of the dirt connected to their names.

“May I refill your glass, ma'am?” the waiter asked in a subdued tone.

“Please,” I answered and returned my focus to the endless list of employment offers awaiting my answer. “Thank you, Max.”

“Anything else I can get you, Chevelle?” he inquired, slowly lifting his head as a commotion rippled through the room.

I turned as a group of armed men descended on the prestige restaurant. Grabbing my drink, I sipped it slowly, as if nothing were amiss. Shifting focus, I noted the high-capacity weapons and the finely tailored suits the men wore. Someone had perfectly tailored them to each man's build. Handcrafted hessian wool with two buttons gave away the designer. Dior and their love for men's strong, powerful physiques being wrapped in their elegant suits always caught my undivided attention. Mostly, it held my heart, which was attached to my vagina, but that was neither here nor there.

"Out, everyone," the largest, most abrasive-looking fellow ordered. When I stood to leave, his dark stare landed on me, pinning me in place. "Not you, Miss Reed. Sit down."

I fixed him with a withering stare as I pondered my choices. Obviously, he knew who I was, which also meant he knew what I could do to him and his employer. Few people knew where I ate or frequented during the days when I wasn't fixing the lives of those who enjoyed mucking shit up. So, that this man knew where I'd be at this hour spoke of his Intel, or connections.

Once the club cleared of the whining wives of the stupidly rich, the men began sweeping for bugs and hidden cameras throughout the club's interior. The lights dimmed, and the sound of footsteps moving over wooden flooring behind me sent a shiver racing through me, inching down my spine.

"I didn't take you for the type of woman who drank mimosas, Miss Reed." The voice was smooth like whiskey,



with a hint of smoke in the undertone.

“And what, pray tell, did you imagine I drank in my leisure time?” I returned softly, pushing the loose strands of two-toned champagne-blonde and auburn hair away from my face. Tucking them behind my ear, I peered down at the expensive Italian boots I could see from the corner of my eye.

“Whiskey or something much stronger, of course.” The man chuckled wickedly. “Considering the hardened, frosty façade you present to your adversaries, I’d expect nothing else.”

Licking my lips as the taste of raspberries danced over my taste buds, I racked my mind for where I’d heard his voice before. It was familiar, but I couldn’t place it or put a name to the voice currently speaking. Reaching for the glass in front of me, I took a long pull of the fragrant drink before setting it down, and fighting to calm the anxiousness creeping through my mind. Whoever he was, he wasn’t merely paying me a social call.

“You’ve heard of me then?” I asked, my breath quickening as fingers slid over the exposed skin of my shoulder. Turning toward his touch, I squinted at perfectly manicured fingernails, and my eyebrows threaded together, leaving a frown line between them that would have given my mother fits had she been here to see it.

“Indeed,” he concurred in a dark tone that seemed to vibrate through every nerve ending within my body. “I hope you don’t mind my interrupting your private time, Miss Reed?” he mocked.

It was then that Raithe Dravyn finally stepped into view. My heart stopped beating and my palms grew sweaty. The man was a monster, one who cared very little about harming or ruining anyone who stood between him and what he desired. Raithe, as those nearest to him called him, was a ruthless bastard.

“Raithe Dravyn,” I stated in a deadened tone. “I actually do mind you invading my personal space. There’s a proper way for you to approach me. This isn’t it,” I voiced as I slowly rose from the chair, only to be roughly pushed back down into my seat.

“I insist you stay and have a drink with me,” he stated firmly.

He moved to sit across from me. The riveting azure-blue of his stare held me transfixed, unable to look away from the golden specks floating in their churning depths. He offered me a smug curl of his lips before nodding to one of his men, who rushed forward to pour him a glass of whiskey. Long, narrow fingers pushed through obsidian silk, removing the strands of hair from his forehead.

“I want to discuss a job with you,” he disclosed in a soft, silken tone.

“Bold of you to assume I’m for hire at the moment, Mr. Dravyn.” Leaning forward, I set my elbows on the table and laced my fingers before resting my chin on my knuckles. “I’m a very busy woman. There’s a high demand for my skills at the moment, and I’m more likely to consider those who don’t

disturb my brunch or ruin my appetite in order to gain my attention than those who do so.”

“You’re not currently hired out on a job. As for your skills being in high demand, I issued a warning before I entered this club. Anyone who seeks to hire you is dead. In fact, if you look, you’ll find those who were attempting to hire you have reconsidered.” Slowly batting my eyelashes, I felt my heart cease beating.

Snorting, I nibbled my lower lip between my teeth before releasing it slowly as his predatory stare dropped to my mouth.

“I have several inquiries for my services at the moment,” I disclosed as I lifted my phone and glanced at the seven hundred and twenty-two new emails. My heart began thundering in my chest as I ran my thumb over the screen, unlocking it. Opening my encrypted email server, I scowled as I scanned the updated subject lines, all of which read as some variation of position filled, cancelled, or rescinded.

“As I was saying,” he stated in a chiding tone, which forced my regard toward him.

“You arrogant bastard,” I hissed between my clenched teeth.

“Do you think I’m superior to you in some manner? I don’t assume you are inferior by any means. Women assume men are arrogant pricks when they’re bolder than they are. I’ve followed your work for some time and was surprised by how efficiently you took down your adversaries. You and I are rather tenacious, savage, and merciless toward those who oppose us. You’re positively stunning, and you’re even more

so when you're enraged." His mouth tugged into a disarming smile as I growled and rubbed the bridge of my nose.

"You're insane if you think flattery will get you anywhere with me." I was, of course, lying. His compliment had an array of emotions churning in the pit of my stomach. No one ever offered me compliments. I was the one they called at their darkest hour to prevent their empires from crumbling to rubble. I hadn't had a date since college, which was something my mother often reminded me of.

"It wasn't flattery. It was an observation. Would you like to discuss the job you're taking on, or would you prefer to be blindsided when the announcement's made in the morning?" he countered aloofly. Reaching over me, he seized a slice of bacon from my abandoned plate.

"Actually, I'm still waiting for you to apologize, Raithe." I shifted back and placed my hands in my lap, glaring at his crisp white dress shirt, which revealed hints of ink beneath the ironed collar. He'd rolled his sleeves up, exposing the ink decorating his forearms.

Dark brows shot up on his forehead as his alluring eyes lowered to the deep V-line of my dress. The thin, intricate gold chain body jewelry I'd worn while forgoing a bra, jangled, and had those expressive eyes darkening before they returned to my face.

"I already did so for interrupting your lunch, and I don't apologize often, if at all. So, what else is it you think I should apologize for?" The way he challenged me with his eyes alone

had my thighs clenching and squeezing together. How was he unnerving me so easily? No one ever made me uncomfortable, and yet, the way he unbalanced me with his presence left me stumbling for words.

“You ... you ...” I paused and inhaled a deep, reassuring gulp of air. “Stop looking at me like that, Raithe.”

“Looking at you like what?” he asked before his lips curved into a smile, revealing dimples. “I like my name on your tongue, Chevelle.” His tone was pure, undiluted lust that slithered over my nipples before wrapping around my throat.

“Like I’m candy and you have a flipping sweet tooth you’re hankering to satisfy.” Had that come out of my mouth? This man was quicksand, and I wasn’t stupid enough to step into it without a rope. “Look, there are others who can do this job. Find one of them and leave me the hell alone.”

“I don’t want them. I want you,” he stated, his smile still in place. “You graduated from high school at thirteen years old. Not even your peers’ guidance or parents’ wishes stopped you from graduating from college by seventeen with a Master’s in Juridical Science. Despite that, that wasn’t enough. You went back and took psychology because you needed to know how to read people. Your first official job was for your uncle, who was a crooked bastard, but you single-handedly saved your family name before destroying him a few weeks later. The next job was for a fortune five hundred, and you made the little prat into a billionaire. Since then, you’ve picked your jobs with calculated risk and only chose ones that challenged

your mind. You need the rush that comes with it, and you get wet when you've done the impossible. I need you on my side to do the impossible." Steepling his hands in front of his sinfully full, kissable lips, he waited for me to ask what the job was.

If I said I wasn't the least bit curious, I'd be lying, but men like Raithe Dravyn didn't need fixers like me. He had the world eating out of the palm of his hand. People tripped over themselves to please him or receive pleasure from him. He was a notorious bachelor who had supermodels lining up, waiting with bated breath to be asked to go to an event with him. I'd been envious of those women at a time or three. At least I remembered what kind of monster lurked under the expensive suit he wore.

When I didn't take the bait he'd dangled before me, he exhaled and leaned forward, clasping his hands before resting his chin on them.

"Five million dollars if you can pull this off," he offered.

"It's a tempting amount of money, but you already know I don't take jobs for the money. You're dangling incentives before me like chum thrown to a shiver of starving sharks. The issue is that you're a monster. You don't just have blood on your hands. No, you're *soaked* in the blood of your enemies, and you've spilled enough of it to fill the all lakes in Michigan twice over. There's not enough salt in this world to protect it from the hell you're seeking to unleash on it, is there? No. Because you get off on fear, and causing others to tremble in

your presence. Your cock gets hard as steel when men who are goliaths in their field drop to their knees and beg for mercy at your feet.” Leaning forward to mimic his pose, I smiled wolfishly. “It seems neither you nor I will get what we want this day.”

“If I am such a monster as you claim, you shouldn’t speak to me with a look of triumph burning in those pretty blue eyes. Monsters take what they want, don’t they?” he queried as he rose and stepped toward me as my heart thundered in my ribcage.

“What are you—” He pulled out my chair, pulled me to my feet, and turned me around until our chests touched. Smiling wickedly, he ran his fingertips over the exposed flesh between my breasts, toying with the chain. A dark chuckle escaped his lips as he released it and then seized me, tossing me over his shoulder. “What are you doing? Put me down this instant! Oh!” I exclaimed as his hand landed on my backside hard enough to sting. “You’re insane! I demand you release me immediately!”

“I’m a monster, remember? Miss Reed, I take what I want, and in case I wasn’t clear, you are what I require. You and I? We’re going to do big things together. I’m going to be the next president of the United States of America, and you’re going to be the one who gets me there.” A shiver raced up ... or maybe down my spine. It was hard to discern which it was as the blood pounded in my eardrums. “Call ahead and have them ready the jet for takeoff. I want to be away from here with my feisty captive before anyone notices she’s missing. Can’t have

kidnapping charges if I'm to become the next leader of the free world and the most powerful creature in it," he rumbled huskily, running his palm over the curve of my ass.

"You won't get away with this," I seethed between clenched teeth. *Had he just said creature?*

"Who is going to stop me, Chevelle?"

"This is going to be disastrous," I muttered.

"That's very optimistic. Put my pretty new plaything to sleep, Samir. I don't want her freaking out when I stash her in my duffle bag to avoid the competitions watch dogs seeing her boarding the jet. I intend to enjoy their shock when she appears beside me as I announce my bid for the White House." The largest male who'd entered the club came closer, smirking as he whispered in a strange language.

My eyelids grew heavy before the world spun around me. My hands twisted in the crisp, white shirt Raithe wore as I fought against the darkness threatening to swallow me whole. It was useless to fight it, and with a gasp of shock escaping my lips, I gave in to the velvety black wings as they drifted around my mind before pulling me into oblivion.



# CHAPTER TWO

THE SENSATION OF SLIPPING provoked me to jerk upright. Forcing past the heaviness of slumber, I blinked around the darkened room. Shoving myself up, I tuned in to the noises, glowering. Had I gotten drunk and ended up in another one-night stand? The last thing I could recall was a pair of dazzling, mind-consuming azure-blue eyes with golden flecks, so maybe I had.

Driving the remnants of sleep from my mind, I pushed my hair out of my face as I slid from the bed.

My bare feet settled on the lavish carpet and sank in, which caused my eyes to narrow suspiciously. In the corner, a wide, dark duffle bag sat unzipped, but before I could look too closely at it, I had to brace my hand on the wall to keep from stumbling as my head swam with dizziness. The laughter from the other side of the door sparked fury to simmer in my abdomen because, in that moment, I also remembered exactly what had happened. I hurled the door open and glared murderously at the presumptuous, cocky bastard who'd dragged me aboard his private jet.

“You motherfucker!” I snarled, already making a beeline to the prick to erase the egotistical expression from his sensual, generous lips.

My eruption caused the entire compartment to go mute. Several pairs of eyes settled on my bedraggled appearance, which made me acutely aware that the bodice of my dress was gaping open. No man had ever dared manhandle me in such a way as he’d done. It left me confused, incensed, and if I were being honest, a little turned on.

I didn’t react to men like I had Raithe Dravyn. Normally, their confidence and authority struck a nerve, and I ended up loathing them. Raithe’s presence as a whole left me weak in the knees and churning with murderous rage. Balling my hands into fist, I breathed slowly to calm the raging inferno of fear, anger, and angst churning through my emotions.

“You dolt! What the hell were you thinking?” I enunciated slowly in a frigid tone. I pointed one cherry-red jeweled fingernail at him and jabbed it at his remarkably firm chest. “Did you wake up and think, hmm, I crave to be the president, and my first order of business should be snatching a bitch up without her permission? I guarantee you this, asshole, I could ruin you with one call. One call and all your exalted ambitions would collapse into nothing more than a pipe dream! Who the hell do you think you are?” My chest rose and fell with each outraged breath that left my trembling lips. Those bedroom eyes of his dipped to my heaving breasts, then slowly climbed back up to fix a frosty, determined visage trained on me.

Crossing my arms over my breasts, I refused to flinch or back down.

“I think you’re in a slightly precarious position, and I’d tread carefully, Miss Reed,” he purred.

“Let me off this plane, now!”

“You’re welcome to get off any moment you choose or in any way you elect to do so,” he offered. One step forward and he’d devoured the distance between us and towered over me. I’d forgotten just how much bigger than me he actually was. Swallowing past the knot of fear ripping its way up my esophagus, I tilted my head, fighting for words to form. “However,” Raithe whispered as his finger traced the contour of my exposed globe, “I’d like to be present when you do so.”

Dumbfounded, I felt my jaw slowly dropping at the audacity of the prick. His finger danced over the hardened tip of my nipple, and a breathy whimper left my lungs. Casually, he adjusted the strap of my top, concealing my half-uncovered breast from the others.

“You’re deranged,” I whispered through quivering lips, ignoring the unfamiliar sensation building in my abdomen. Had he just produced *butterflies* in my belly? Of course, my freaking body would react at the worst imaginable moment to some sociopath who’d actually abducted me. “As if I’d let you watch me get off,” I fumed out in a sharp, clipped note. It hadn’t been what I’d meant to convey, either.

I’d never been at a loss for words in my entire life. I was always calm, gathered, and in control of everything. It was

what I did, and I did it easily. This man had overwhelmed my thoughts, baffled my mind, and rendered me nothing more than a faltering, stumbling idiot. I didn't like it. I didn't like it at all.

“You will release me at the next airport, sir.”

“Hmm, I like that honorific on your tongue,” he murmured before he fingered the long, curled tresses pooling over my shoulder. Rubbing them between his fingers, he assessed the silkiness before lowering his nose to the glimmering strands.

Inhaling deeply to quiet my increasing hysteria, my lashes drifted against my cheeks. The bewitching essence of bergamot, combined with sage, was fed my increasing need to smell the egotistical prick back like a bitch in heat. My thighs clamped tightly together, and his dark, devilish chuckle had me staring up into eyes that vowed to fulfill my filthiest fantasy.

“Pomegranates and lemons?” he inquired with a wolfish smile tipping up the corners of his generous mouth. “You smell good enough to devour, little lamb.” A flash of crimson crowded his eyes, but the moment I squinted, it vanished. I sought to step back but realized a moment too late that he'd been inching me toward the bedroom. My knees struck the end of the bed and I fell backward onto the mattress. Raithe descended over me, pinning me beneath his broad, powerful frame.

“A couple of things, darling,” he rumbled, dropping his nose to rub it over the curve of my jawline. “First and

foremost, you'll help me win the presidency. I am not fucking asking you. I'm telling you. Second, you'll either work for me or remain chained in a dark cell until I've gained the majority of votes from the state primaries and caucuses. Once they've confirmed my nomination and they've announced it at the national convention, you are free to withdraw if I decide you're no longer needed to win the popular vote. Third, you're the best of the best in the business, and I *expect your best* during the time you're employed by me. You eat, sleep, and dream of nothing but me. You linger beside me while we crush anyone standing between me and the presidency." As I ran my tongue over my lips, his focus fell to my mouth, which caused a pulse to throb between my thighs.

Cutting his mouth to the heartbeat hammering at the base of my throat, he grinned before proceeding. "Fourth, you're playing my game now. You'll be whatever I need you to be, and you'll do so with that pretty smile of yours planted firmly on those pouty, fuckable lips. Fifth, if you step out of line or attempt to tarnish or ruin my chance in this race, I vow to you, there'll be disastrous repercussions. During this time, you'll keep my council, confidence, and secrets. Solely mine. If I discover you're entertaining or betraying me in any manner or fashion, I'll end you without prejudice or hesitancy. However, I won't let you know the nothingness of death until I've executed everybody you cherish or have ever loved in front of you, Miss Reed. Sixth and final rule, you are not to fuck anybody else. If you've got an ache that needs satisfied, you

can appeal to me to ease it or handle it yourself. Once you're free of my employment, you can return to your life."

"You honestly think people will not realize you're forcing me to work for you?" I responded. "You're exactly the type of client I've refused to help during my career, Mr. Dravyn. People will be suspicious, and those who know me will question it no matter what you or I claim. As for chaining me in your basement? Do you really believe no one will question my absence?"

"I've dispatched letters to your parents, informing them of a high-profile case you've taken on at the last minute. They think you've gone into seclusion to prepare for the daunting task ahead. The rehab center in which you hid your brother has been paid, and I made a lofty donation in his name to ensure he's taken care of and watched after in your absence. Your sister's monthly allocated allowance for her education, books, food, and other fundamental essentials was transferred to the offshore account you arranged for her future. Her offspring, who she gave up for adoption, was likewise taken care of before your hasty departure. I've also paid the retirement home you stashed your grandparents in for the next year. I have your entire team standing by for your orders, and once you issue them, I'll give the word for my men to retrieve them for you. I know where each person you cherish is at this very moment, Chevelle Kinsley Reed. Don't make me your enemy. I actually love being the villain, but you won't like me if you determine that role for me."

"You bastard," I whispered as tears pricked my eyes.

“I assure you I am many things, but I know my parents were wed when I was born. Those who aren’t on my side are usually against me. I won’t chance my competition hiring you. Nor will I chance your pride forcing you to theirs in order to take me down. As I said, I’ve studied you enough to know how your brilliant mind works. If I released you, you’d find out which candidate was running and ensure they had all the filthy,” he whispered as he bent his head down, licking the thunderous pulse at the soft column of my throat, “Sordid things I’ve done as ammunition to wield against me.” Teeth scraped over the vulnerable vein feeding blood supply to my brain as fiery breath fanned my chilled flesh. “You’re the finest at what you do. If you weren’t, I’d be having this discussion with someone else. My dick wouldn’t be painfully hard, and I sure as fuck wouldn’t be fantasizing about all the filthy shit I crave to do to those red, heavenly lips of yours.” Lifting from the bed, he smirked at me. “It would’ve been exceptionally easier if you’d been born with the balls you combat against your competitors with, darling.” Reaching into his slacks, he adjusted his cock. My eyes bulged at the outline of the lengthy, thick member. Redirecting my gaze, I recited his comments in my mind.

This bastard had the forethought to take care of my family. That meant his wandering into The Wing’s elite Washington D.C. women’s club was an accident. It was a well-constructed plan he’d implemented without a single mishap arising. It informed me of several things about the prick. Rising to settle before him, I slapped the pompous expression from his lips

before he could guess my intentions. Calmly, he rolled his head back with a frightening intensity churning in his darkening stare.

“That was foolish.” Without warning, his hand was cradling my throat before I was jerked forward. His head tipped forward until his nose touched mine. He shoved my body against the wall and pressed tight against me. Crying out as my skull bounced off the hard, unforgiving surface, I closed my eyes against the agony starting in my temples. His fist threaded through my strands, wrenching my head until my scalp burned and tingled with pain. The burning forced my eyes open, meeting his penetrating stare. “Ask me for mercy,” he instructed, searching my face as I gasped.

“You’re not the type of guy who has any mercy to extend, Dravyn.” My eyes watered with the severity of which he gripped my hair, and my insides twisted with need. Was I turned on by this? I surmise I was because the throbbing between my legs was growing undeniable. The arousal flooding my pussy was hard to ignore, even though everything rational left inside me was telling me to. Refusing to look away as my racing mind told me to do, I studied how his eyes darkened and grew hooded as I remained submissive beneath his unwavering control of my hair.

“No, I am not.” His long, powerful nose dropped before his nostrils flared. He didn’t hide that he was inhaling my scent deeply into his lungs. The side of his mouth quirked up, revealing one of two dimples he’d been gifted. Cruel bastards were the gods who gave an asshole like Dravyn such



masculine beauty. His jaw clenched as his mouth lowered, wandering over the racing pulse above my collarbone. “Pomegranates and lemons mix lovely with the perfume of your essence, Elle.”

“My name is Chevelle,” I grated out through clenched teeth.

“I never considered the two essences an aphrodisiac, but when infused with your particular bouquet of womanly scents, I’ve determined it is incredibly inviting and enthralling.” His mouth lingered over the pulse before trailing to my displayed collarbone. Searing pain erupted as he bit into the delicate flesh, cutting through the skin. Shock sank in as I felt something warm and wet dripping down my throat. The fucker had bitten me? A hiss of air deflated my lungs before his tongue slid over my flesh, inciting arousal to pool at my pinnacle. “There is a change of clothes for you in the duffle bag I brought aboard for you. Change and then meet me in the cabin. If you’re not out in five minutes, I’ll consider it a summons to join you here. I won’t go easy on your tender, lithe body, either.” He surrendered his grip on my hair as he whirled away from me, snickering darkly as I drifted down the wall before holding my palm to the slight cut, he’d made in my skin. “Your five minutes start now. Don’t keep me waiting, darling.”

Raithe strode from the room, leaving me staring at the door he’d vanished through. This entire nightmare was the definition of madness. Slowly moving off the floor, I snatched the bag and pulled out a pair of obsidian-colored suede, thigh-high booted heels, a pair of pleather leggings, and a strappy

lace rucked camisole top. Digging out the other items, I discovered a sleeveless, lace-up top for added coverage, which I was thankful for since the thin camisole wouldn't have hidden the way my nipples seemed to always get hard when I was around him.

Undressing quickly, I pulled out the delicate black panties and slid them on hurriedly. It took me two minutes to redress and then lace the booted heels. My hair was beyond fixing with my fingers, even though I tried. My heart-shaped face was flushed with a red blush, and my button nose looked pathetic between my wide, powder blue eyes. In short, my appearance was akin to someone preparing for a walk of shame after a tryst. Only, I didn't have the tantalizing ache, and I sure as shit hadn't gotten my rocks off before looking this disheveled.

He'd known my size as well, which was just one more tally in the column of proof that my abduction had been premeditated. Half the shoes in my wardrobe were a size larger than I actually wore, but since I wore a size seven, along with most of the female populace in the States, I ordered a size larger instead of waiting for them to come in. A lady needed the perfect shoes if she expected to slay monsters, and I never took chances with my attire. Glowering, I reached for the door, turning the knob as I silenced the warring emotions and mentally prepared for the shitshow about to unravel.

In the cabin, men worked on their minicomputers or cell phones without bothering to glance my way as I passed them. I moved toward Raithe, slowly, counting each man I passed as I

tried to discern his position. The noise of my heels clicking over the floor of the jet rang through the space before I wavered before him, offering him a blank stare. Crossing my arms over my bosom, I ignored the low whistled of the men around me as Dravyn took in his choice of clothing.

“I told you she’d pull off the outfit,” Raithe hummed to the woman seated beside him. Hazel eyes crowded with golden flecks peered up, and then preceded gradually down my frame.

“She’s exquisite. However, I fail to recognize what her beauty has to do with her proficiencies or how she can pull off this wildly ludicrous plan of yours, Rai.” Returning her focus to her phone, she dismissed me outright.

“Elle Reed is going to hand us the keys to the kingdom,” Raithe purred, his mouth tipping into a devilish smile. “The White House, and then the world will follow behind it.”

“We’re ready to open the doors when you are, Mr. Dravyn,” a stewardess reported, and I glanced at her with wide eyes. I’d to have misheard her, right? We were in the air, which was apparent from the slight turbulence I felt. Opening the doors in midflight wasn’t something you did unless you were intending to ... jump.

“She’s about to become hysterical, Rai,” the female declared, still not pulling her focus from the screen. “I presume you have a way to deal with it?”

“Indeed, I do.” Raithe laughed, his jeweled stare flickering with conspiracy. “Sit, Miss Reed.”

Plunking down stiffly in the armchair across from his, I planted my trembling hands in my lap, hiding them as panic flowed through my mind. Raithe tilted his head toward the stewardess, who promptly strode forward and poured a glass of brandy. Then she withdrew a small glass vial from her pocket and added golden droplets of the tonic into the glass, uncaring that I was watching her drug my drink. Once she'd finished, I didn't move to pick up. Everything inside me screamed hysterically at the idea of being drugged unconscious before being tossed from a plane.

“You're going to want to drink that. Trust me. You're not psychologically geared for what happens next.”

“I don't trust you, Dravyn.” At his intense expression, I moved my scrutiny to the glass. Studying the shimmering liquid, I reached for it. I wasn't stupid. I knew that one way or another, he'd end up forcing me to consume it. Inhaling the scent of the brandy, I furrowed my brows at the vitriolic edge I detected. Tipping the glass, I swallowed the contents.

“Smart girl,” the woman chortled. “You shouldn't trust him. You're a pawn in a game you've no business being included in. Pity, nevertheless. I wouldn't mind more women to even the numbers between us out.”

“Elle is on our team, Theo. At least for the foreseeable future,” he purred in a dark, raspy tone which slid over my skin like honey. “If it changes, or she betrays me, we'll all have time to play with her however we wish to. Who knows, maybe she'll enjoy being my pretty pet and stay on after she's

finished what I've hired her to do. Then you'd finally have more women around. Wouldn't that be nice?"

"Indeed, it would, but the thought of playing with her also intrigues me, love. She's exquisite."

"She is, isn't she? I was expecting an ice maiden, and instead discovered a fiery, beautiful woman who doesn't easily release her control or power. Women rarely tell me no or refuse me when I show interest in them, but she is, and it isn't sitting well with me."

"She's already aroused by your dominance. I saw it when she stormed in here for the first time. Of course, she'll fight it, but like the others who came before her, she'll fall for the monster of the story. After all, monsters are better lovers than men. They'll destroy you in the most pleasant of ways."

"Indeed, we do," he agreed, sliding his feverish stare down my body.

My shoulders slouched as my body became weighed down. Blinking lazily, I moaned a dismayed cry as their grinning faces blurred before me. Panic rolled through the pit of my abdomen, and a chill crept down my spine. Blue eyes scintillating with golden flecks thinned as they examined my face as I fought to remain coherent. Surrendering the struggle, my body settled deeper into the seat before hands began touching me, sliding something over my legs, waist, and arms.

"Make certain it's on adequately. I'd prefer not to lose her before she secures my throne. That girl is going to make me a king, gentlemen." The music of dark, mischievous amusement

was the last sound I heard before steely fingers of darkness  
snatched me down into nothingness.

# CHAPTER THREE

SOMETHING WAS WHIPPING MY face, and my hand moved, shielding me from the abuse. Releasing a soft, whimpered moan, I pried my heavy eyelids open. The moment they were, I squeezed them closed once more. My hand was being assaulted by my hair, but that wasn't what had my lips parting and an earth-shattering scream ripping from my throat.

I was hurtling toward the ground. Wind forced my mouth open wider, and my hands abandoned my face, flapping as if my arms would spring feathers and keep me from colliding with the earth. Something jerked me backward and turned me around mid-air. My wide, horrified eyes took in the composed and relaxed expression of the psychopath who'd thrown me out of a perfectly good jet.

His gloved hands wiped at the corner of my mouth. The smile burning in his radiant stare enraged me. As I opened my mouth to call him everything but clean, I was violently jerked upward as he pulled a chord. A bloodcurdling scream tore free as I floated toward a large, green area below. Panic surged

through me as hands grabbed me, pulling me up as he landed, taking the initial brunt of the landing.

Raithe had caught me, preventing my legs from breaking on contact with the earth, but the chute jerked my body away from him as I crashed so damn hard that whatever air was left in my lungs was kicked free and pain surged through me. Pushing my body up from the ground, I gulped air in greedily. I was going to fucking murder the prat and eat his entrails! Then I was scrambling to unhook the metal clips and struggling to my feet. A sharp slice of pain lanced my side, knees, and palms, which barely registered as anger surged through my veins, removing all rational thought.

Laughing started a few yards from me, which ripped my focus to the asshole who had forced me to sky dive without my consent. Shaking from the adrenaline and rage churning through me, I started forward, only to be yanked back by the chute, which was still attached by several safety clips. Once I'd released each one, I whirled around and aimed my red, unseeing, anger-filled stare at Raithe.

The sound of my heels stomping across the clumps of broken, overgrown pavement should have warned him of what was coming. His head turned, and he scanned my injuries. The moment I reached him, his luscious lips curved into a sardonic smirk. Without warning, I kicked his balls as hard as I could manage to while teetering on the heels. Air burst from his lips as he went down hard.



“You threw me out of a perfectly good fucking plane, dick!” I snapped in a quivering voice. Pain and fear combined into a dangerous red haze of rage. One man stepped between us when I began forward. “You want some? Let’s go, motherfucker!” I threw a quick, sharp right hook before following it with a left and another right punch to his face. He grabbed his nose, which I’d attempted to relocate to the back of his skull. Another of Raithe’s men stepped up, and I spun, kicking hard as I introduced his face to my boot and then dropped low to swipe my leg out from under him, sending him to the ground with the other three.

“I think I love her,” Theo stated with a dark chuckle.

Yet another male tried to fuck around and was about to learn the hard lesson of how it worked. If you didn’t fuck around, you didn’t find out the hard way why you shouldn’t. He threw a fast right hook that I barely dodged, following it with a left jab and another right hook. My hand shot forward, doing exactly as my instructor had taught me during the years, they had bullied me for being a child in an adult world. My knuckles connected with his cheek a second before my other fist shot forward, cracking his nose. A hand on the back of my neck caused my lips to part as a soft yelp escaped through them. I was yanked backward and tossed like a bag of potatoes across the greenery.

A pain-filled moan burst free as stars filled my vision, slowly diminishing to reveal the cloudless day. Staring sightlessly at the intense blue skies above, I counted down the moments I had left in this lifetime. Whispering a prayer, I

waited for the pain Dravyn would deliver before he snuffed out my light and left me in eternal darkness. I wasn't stupid enough to assume I'd be welcomed into Heaven, not after the scum I'd helped get out of trouble.

A shadow blotted out the light, which caused my eyes to tighten, and close. Tears pricked and burned the backs of my eyes. I was prepared for death, but I hadn't been for his massive body to straddle mine. Flight reared through my mind, and I bucked against his heavy weight, screaming in fear and frustration at everything happening. My knees rose, and I used a defensive move to get out from beneath him, twisting until he leaned forward, growling in a menacing tone.

"You're really pissing me off, Elle. I warned you not to piss me off, didn't I?" he asked with his hand collaring my throat while the other fought to grab my arms.

I finally unseated him before rolling away several times, pushing to my feet, and bolting toward the tree line. My entire body ached, but adrenaline kept me moving as blood pounded deafeningly in my eardrums, drowning out all sound. Entering the trees, I slammed into something solid and unmoving. Dancing backward to avoid toppling to the ground, I stared in horror at Raithe, who closed the space between us effortlessly. Threading my fingers together, I moved to push him away with the strength of both arms combined, but he slid his fingers through mine and pinned them above my head against a tree. His other hand pressed against my throat, and I whimpered.

“Great. I’m going to die turned on and covered in filth! Just fucking brilliant, Chevelle! The coroner will state your panties were wet, but you appeared to be strangled to death, you fucking freak!” I babbled, as his eyes narrowed to angry slits. His nostrils flared, and a tic was pounding hard enough in his cheek to be visible. “How do we get out of this?” I asked myself as my mind began churning scenarios.

How was I going to escape him murdering me? His entire frame was trembling with anger, and while his hand wasn’t cutting off air to my lungs, it was closing around it, promising to end me violently. Leaning forward, I placed my lips against his, and when I pulled back, I whimpered at the dangerous tempest churning in his visage.

Raithe’s lips slammed against mine in a punishing kiss, and his mouth swallowed my soft gasp of surprise. The man demanded entrance, forcing my lips apart with his tongue before he devoured my soul one taste at a time. His body pressed mine into the tree, uncaring of the bark tearing at the lace of my shirt. His palm slid up, cradling my jaw, to tip my head and offer him better access to my mouth. Tension built in my abdomen, and the kiss became feverish. He took my air by force and offered me his in return. Something sharp inside of his mouth cut my tongue before he caressed and trailed his tongue over the wound. The hand holding mine prisoner released and lowered to my ass, lifting me until I wrapped my legs around his waist and pushed my fingers through his onyx-colored hair.

“I changed my mind. I don’t love her anymore.” Theo snorted with derision.

Raithe tore his mouth away from mine, blinking with confusion as I chased his lips, needing more. My fingers released the strands of his shockingly soft hair, and I slid down his frame. I didn’t miss the fact his cock was very erect and would destroy me in the most delicious of ways if we hadn’t stopped. Heat singed my cheeks, and I fought to regain the composure of my senses.

“If you ever touch me or my men again, Miss Reed,” he seethed through clenched teeth. “I’ll show you what I can do when provoked. You may be the best at what you do, but you’re not the only one who can do what I need.” He held up a small, black device. “I need only press the button, and they’ll murder your loved ones within seconds. Tell me you understand what I am saying, darling.”

Tears rolled down my cheeks at his cold, calculated statement. Nodding, I wrapped my bloodied hands around my middle and focused on the ground. His finger hooked beneath my chin, lifting it until it forced me to give him my full, undivided attention.

“Use your words, Elle.”

“I understand,” I whirred through trembling lips. That sinfully azure-blue stare sparkled as it cut to my quivering lips and then lowered to the blood covering my side, hands, and knees.

One of his men came to stand beside us, staring at me with clear hatred. “Are you sure she’s mortal? She fights like a fucking banshee.”

“Enough, Zade,” Raithe hissed. My ears pricked up at his mention of mortal. Tension built between the men, and I furrowed my brow before turning back to Raithe, a fresh wave of confusion and uncertainty sinking deeply into the pit of my stomach.

“We don’t say the *M* word with one around, idiot,” Theo muttered before her gaze shifted and lowered to my bloodied hands. “Blood,” she warned.

“Grab the kit. My lamb was hurt in the jump, it seems.” Raithe grabbed my hand, turning it over to expose the deep gashes. “The rest of you check the area.” Turning his hard, penetrating stare on me once more, he continued. “I didn’t intend for you to be harmed. You should have been easily able to land on your feet.”

“I had seconds from waking until I hit the ground,” I stated icily. His thumb pressed into the cut, causing me to growl. Raithe didn’t relent until I was shaking and sweat was beading on my brow. Closing my eyelids, I moaned as my teeth sank into my lip, adding to the pain he was delivering. Call me a masochist, but I enjoyed a little pain now and then. That was something I’d known, unlike my reaction to being manhandled. That had shocked me and left me more confused than anything else that had happened in the last twenty-four hours.

“The plan was to knock you out and get you to the ground safely. If you’d remained unconscious, I could’ve easily caught you. Instead, you were kicking, screaming, and fighting me when I attempted to catch you,” he growled in a clipped, sharp tone. He cut his focus to my hand and smiled at the pool of blood he’d created. “Vial,” he ordered, and as I watched, Theo handed him a strange vacutainer-type tube, which he then used to collect my blood.

Once he’d finished with it, he called for the transport to be brought around and, after a few minutes, guided me into a stretched SUV with a plush interior. Raithe pushed a button, and the partition closed off the driver’s view of us. The reverberations of several other car doors closing was muffled as Raithe held my battered hands.

“I can tend to my wounds myself, Raithe.” I struggled to pull my hand away from his, only to stop because it was futile.

“You could, but I caused the injury. I’d be a horrible host if I forced you to tend to your own wounds, wouldn’t I?”

“It isn’t hosting if you kidnapped me,” I muttered as the feel of his lips against mine replayed inside my mind, which caused everything womanly inside me to fire up. “I didn’t mean to kiss you. I panicked.”

“Do you often kiss your kidnappers when you fear for your life?” he inquired without glancing up from my scraped palms.

“No, but I was angry and afraid.”

“You should’ve been. If I didn’t need you to ensure me the presidency, I’d have had you on my knees, working my cock with that sharp tongue of yours.”

“Why should I be?”

“Because you’ll be fucked so hard you’ll worship no one else. You’ll be my disciple and worship me on your knees as your savior, Elle. Your cunt will become my temple, and I’ll fill it every day for the rest of your life. I won’t stop until the only thing you know is my name and the feel of me ruining every part of your beautiful, lithe body.” He pressed an alcohol-soaked pad to the wound on my hand, and I hissed against the sting.

“That’s a punishment?” I asked in a curious tone. I’d never been so turned on in my entire life. His mouth was filthy, and deliciously so. He’d manhandled me, grabbed me without hesitation, and I was hardcore into that shit.

“Careful, Elle,” he warned. “I may start to think you’re flirting with me. You’re too smart to mix sex with business, and so am I,” he stated with a feverish look churning in his eyes. Once he’d tended to my palms, my knees, and bloodied knuckles, he sat back, smirking. “Where did you learn to fight like that? It isn’t included in the records I obtained on you.”

“I fixed situations with my classmates’ in high school. It paid enough to begin self-defense classes. In college, I’d fix situations between students, and I also ran an online campus dating site. I began taking other classes and learning what I

could to defend myself from those I went up against since most were from powerful, influential families.”

“What made you think you needed to be protected?” he countered with a hint of violence in his tone.

“I was eleven in high school. Too young to be there and too intelligent to be around those my age,” I disclosed. “I was brilliant with words, numbers, and critical thinking. Now, understanding I was too young to be at a senior party? That was rather tricky for the child I was. I went to one with Lars, the kid they had partnered me with in science. I thought he wanted me around, but he intended to hurt me.” Swallowing past the lump in my throat, I took in the heavily wooded countryside before continuing. “So, he did. When I went to the police with my parents, his parents hired a fixer. They were insanely rich, and the man who fixed it for them twisted my words until not even I was sure what happened. If I hadn’t still felt his hands on me or his friends’ hands as they held me down, I would have actually believed what he’d told me.”

“That’s why you became a fixer?” he queried.

“No.” I chuckled. “Five years later, my roommate in college was held down and brutally raped by three guys and two girls. One of them was the son of the fixer Lar’s parents hired, so I took her case. I ended his reign of shielding the rich from the atrocities they committed when I exposed his vile, pampered prince for the veritable monster he was. I merely proved the apple hadn’t fallen far from the proverbial tree. Before they convicted him of multiple counts of rape, I hacked his



computer. On the hard drive, hidden in the files, were images of his father with his clients' underage daughters. Hidden deeper were videos of him raping them and hurting them for his sick, sadistic pleasure. When I went to the authorities with copied images, it was apparent he had paid them off. I was threatened and warned against running my mouth with filthy lies about an esteemed member of the community. So, I did the only thing I could do, I interrupted the broadcast feed of a national channel and played the videos for the world to see. He lost everything and was eventually sentenced to life in prison. I went to his trial and looked him in the eyes, smiling as he realized I'd orchestrated his downfall. A mere child had made his entire empire crumble to ruins. The thrill of taking him down and offering his victims some semblance of justice was exhilarating. After the trial and all throughout the rest of college, I chased the high. I'd pick and choose who I helped. Mainly, I took down the rich."

"And you've become what he was?" The tone of his voice as he'd said it made my stomach sink.

"You can think ill of me if you want. I'm not a saint by any means, but I am also not a monster. There's a compass I follow, and when it moves too far south, I invoke the right to terminate working the contract. There's a balance to what I do, and it weighs evenly upon my soul."

"I'm aware you've easily won governors and senators their elections. Presidency is a stretch for both of us, but I believe you are the key to winning the White House."

“And I think you’re insane,” I shot back with a sigh. “You’re talking about becoming the President of the United States of America.”

“I’m not talking about it, Elle. Come, we’ll discuss it within the house,” he instructed, already opening the door, revealing a large, medieval palace. “Welcome to my family’s home. It’s been in our bloodline for centuries.”

# CHAPTER FOUR

THE SPRAWLING PALACE SPREAD out farther than I could see and had high, spiraling columns of multi-colored glass. It was so stunning that my mouth hadn't closed since I'd stepped out of the stretched SUV. The coat of arms for the Dravyn line, which consisted of twin dragons and crisscrossed swords, sat on the huge, wooden door we walked toward. Blood-red poppy flowers embellished the shield seated on the crown of a skull. It was as if I'd passed through some time warp when I'd left the airplane.

Before we reached the doors, they opened and men in suits held them for us. Stepping inside, I gaped openly at the thousands of chandeliers sparkling above us and the enormous staircase in front of us. Huge gargoyles sat on the banisters, posed as if inspecting all who entered the palace. Several balconies were visible from where I stood, which spoke of how massive the palace really was.

“Come, Elle. I will show you to your room so you can freshen up and change into something clean. Had I known you'd be going through so many clothes, I'd have ordered

more for your stay at my residence.” Turning, I accepted his arm, which he’d offered me.

The hallways were lined with paintings of battles and various scenes, and eventually, he paused at a set of double doors, smiling devilishly.

“I hope you don’t mind staying in the queen’s apartment?”

My eyebrows shot toward my hairline, but I smoothed my features out quickly. “Should I? I feel as if there’s a pitfall here, I’m not catching, Raithe.”

Without answering, he threw the doors of the room open. My jaw hit the floor at the opulence and unreal details of the entire room. Within was a room of lush, intricate beauty. The walls were painted royal-blue, which was bold and yet oddly soothing with the ivory furniture. The middle of the room had a window, allowing sunlight into the room. It sparkled off the crystal chandelier, causing thousands of tiny prisms to dance around the plush, ivory settee, and seats below. A large glass door led to the balcony, offering a vast, ethereal view of the palace gardens below.

“Holy shit,” I whispered in amazement.

“The bones are old, but I’ve had it decorated in modern luxury. You’ve not even seen the sleeping chambers yet, Elle. Come,” he instructed. When I glanced sheepishly toward the door he showed, he smiled with darkening eyes. “I won’t bite, at least not yet.”

“That’s reassuring,” I muttered, slowly trailing after him.

Inside the room, I stopped dead in my tracks. Glittering rose-gold paint bathed the walls in a feminine hue that I wouldn't have chosen for myself. As a rule, I hated pink. But in this room, I loved it. The largest bed I'd seen in my entire life sat in the middle of the space. Strolling over to it, I ran my fingers along the soft, ivory-colored blanket covering the mattress. The oversized, rose-gold wood behind the head had erotic images intricately carved into the painted wood. Naked men and women were coupling or had their hands positioned over improper places. Below the carvings was a button tuft headboard of the same ivory shade as the pillows and bedding. I glanced at Raithe, who was watching my reaction with a look that disarmed me.

"It's incredible," I admitted, peering down at the settee at the end of the bed.

"The bathroom is through here, along with the wardrobe." He gestured toward two of the three closed doors in the room.

"And where does the other door lead?" I asked.

His eyes darkened, and his teeth played with his lip before he released it and leaned against the wall. "To the king's chamber, of course," he stated. "You'll discover the bathroom is a shared space. I'm sure you and I can work out a schedule. One downfall of buildings as old as this one is that you have limited remodeling options that doesn't require taking away from the original beauty of the architecture."

"Found the pitfall," I admitted with the memory of his mouth against mine replaying through my mind. Admittedly, I

could see his hesitation of destroying the natural beauty and history of this place.

“Scared of your own filthy desires coming out to play, darling?”

“Pretty much,” I agreed without pussyfooting around it with lies. “Do I have time to shower and fix my hair? I work best when I’m put together.”

“You mean when you’re wearing armor?” His face softened as mine hardened.

“I’ve spent my entire career in a man’s world, where women are treated like property or trophies. They can’t own me, Raithe Dravyn. All the money, fame, and power cannot buy them a night in my bed. Men don’t like when they’re told no or rejected. It pisses them off, which in return makes them reckless when in my presence. Being reckless when there’s a shark scenting for blood in the water is lethal to their livelihoods and way of life. Plus, I enjoy looking pretty and wearing designer clothing. Everything I own, I got by clawing my way to the top. I think I’ve earned the right to be a petty bitch who likes nice things.” Crossing my arms over my chest, I dug my feet in, refusing to back down.

“I took the liberty of ordering your entire bathroom and closet of cosmetics, toiletries, clothing, and shoes in similar fashion from your favorite designers. If being pretty makes you feel safe and powerful, I won’t say anything offensive about the matter. We all have armor we wear to protect ourselves. You shouldn’t be defensive over yours. If I missed

anything, which I doubt I did, you only need to ask for it, and I'll secure it."

"My phone?" I countered.

His lips tipped up, revealing his dimples. "Once I know I can trust you and your people are here, you will have it. Until then, shower and dress for brunch. We'll discuss our arrangement over it and then go over the terms and limits of your employment and access to my home." After opening the door, he slipped behind it, pulling it closed before I could discern how elegant it was.

Entering the bathroom, my breath caught and stuck in my throat. A huge porcelain tub sat on the edge of a large, open balcony. Beyond it, a mountainside with waterfalls filled the awe-inspiring view. A shower with wall jets sat across from it and had one side entirely open to the elements. Glancing at the connecting door, I worried my lip before stripping down. Bending over, I turned on the water, smiling as I felt his heated stare on my ass.

I should have taken more care when yanking my leggings off because, as I did, they pulled off the bandages. Fresh blood drip down my pale, bruised skin, but re-bandaging it would be pointless right before a bath. So, I sighed and pulled the top over my head and then paused. I had nothing to change into or a place to discard my soiled clothing. I tugged a towel from the rack next to the shower and wrapped it around my body before moving toward the large door in the bathroom and opening it.

My brows shot up as my mouth dropped, staring at a naked Raithe. He had tattoos. Actually, he had a lot of them. They started at the bottom of his throat and led down his hard, sinewy chest to his V-line. My mouth went dry, and I fumbled for words. When my gaze dropped to the sheer magnitude of Raithe's cock, a soft whimper of sound jolted me from my stupor and heat singed my cheeks.

"That's a ... nice, thick cock." The blush singed my face at what had escaped my lips. "I mean please ... fuck ... me. No, no, that's not right. My god, I didn't mean like fuck me, okay?" His darkening stare slowly slid down my frame as my mouth continued to word vomit. "I didn't mean you have a nice dick. Honestly, it's a *very* nice cock. If we're comparing them, I mean?" I blinked slowly as what I'd just stated sunk in to my head. "I don't have one. A cock, I mean. I have a pussy!"

"I'm pleased you approve of my cock, Elle," he murmured thickly.

Aiming my focus at the ceiling, I berated myself for not having a brain around this man. What was it about him that made my brain, hormones, and over-active libido work against me? It was like they'd teamed up with him and left me floundering about like a dolt. I wasn't this girl. I took down kingpins for breakfast. I'd unseated five congressmen and two senators.

Heat radiated against my bare flesh, forcing my eyes to lower. Raithe's gaze was focused on the ceiling, as mine had



been. His husky whisper sent a pulse straight to my center, which caused my entire body to radiate raw, wanton need.

“If they missed a spot of paint, I’ll have to fire them after we have whipped them, of course,” he murmured before cutting his gaze to mine. “Did you need something?”

“My sanity. I think it’s gone missing. I don’t know where the wardrobe is,” I admitted, gripping the towel with white knuckles.

“Get in the bath, little lamb. Use the bath salts to ease the pain of your injuries. There’s also bubble bath, which I purchased for you. Use it, and I’ll bring you a change of clothes while you bathe. Don’t worry. I won’t blatantly stare at your pussy as you did with my dick. I am, after all, a gentleman.”

“A gentleman wouldn’t have kidnapped me, threatened me, or tossed me out of a plane.”

“Semantics. The men of this era are pussies. They’ve neglected the women and forgotten how much they love being manhandled and forced to admit their depraved, filthy desires. Inside every woman is a filthy slut who wants to be fucked hard and roughly until the troubles and stress of her day vanish and solace is found in the arms of her lover. It’s why you read until midnight and fall into bed exhausted. Isn’t it? You’ve never found a man who can make that brilliant mind of yours shut off long enough for you to know what solace even is.”

“You know nothing about me,” I stated defensively. So what if he’d pegged me in the ass? I wasn’t admitting it to him,

ever. He braced his hand on the door jamb as he leaned closer.

“I know more about you than you know about yourself, Elle. You can lie to yourself if it eases your cognizance, but don’t lie to me. Own who you are. It isn’t your fault the men you’ve fucked weren’t worth a damn. Get in the bath, woman. They’ll think I’m up here amending your lack of fucking if we take too long.”

Turning away from him, I strode to the bathtub and peered at the welcoming steam rising. I felt the weight of his stare boring into my spine as I dropped the towel and stepped into the water. Tit for tat. I wasn’t one to leave any debt unpaid. I’d seen his goods, so he could see mine. He could look all he wanted, but that was where my generosity ended.

“Heels or flats?” he called from the doorway.

“Black heels, and something red to wear, preferably.”

“Short, long? Or would you prefer slacks?”

“Above the knee, with a slit,” I answered, leaning back against the pillow to peer out the opened wall of the bathroom. “Not too much of a slit, though.”

“Now those are beautiful,” he growled. Turning my head, I smirked as he slid his heated, dark gaze over the curve of my chest.

“I’m glad you approve of my tits, Raithe. I grew them myself.” Dismissing him, I closed my eyes and focused on the sounds of nature that filled the room. The scent of fresh air and peonies soothed the chaos of my thoughts, but the insanity of

considering this job played in the back of my mind. “You can stop staring now. I’ll need something to dress in for brunch, unless you want me walking around naked?”

“No one else gets to see you like this, impish brat. Not unless I say otherwise. You’re mine until we’ve concluded our business arrangements.” The sound of his hand releasing the doorjamb told me he’d headed to the wardrobe. From the sound of it, it was in his bedroom, which was a problem I’d worry about later.

# CHAPTER FIVE

RAITHE'S HAND PINNED MINE above my head, and his lips were hovering a hairbreadth from mine, teasingly. Whimpering, I rocked my hips, begging him to sink his thick, monstrous cock deep into my core and hurt me. His broad chest lowered against mine, and as he pushed against my opening, water splashed my face. My eyes opened to angry, narrow slits, and I turned to glower at Raithe, who looked amused.

“That wasn't nice,” I muttered, sitting up and crossing my arms on the edge of the tub and resting my chin on them.

“It isn't safe to sleep in bathwater,” he murmured as he rose, dragging his cock against my cheek. It was erect, and my eyes rounded in shock. Raithe's cock wasn't like the others I'd had before. This one deserved to be worshipped and praised for delicious ache it would create between a woman's thighs. “Were you dreaming of me?” Apparently, he didn't care about lounging around naked, or being seen in his birthday suit.

Making a strangled noise of disbelief, I lied through my teeth. “Like I'd fantasize about you, Raithe,” his name rolled

off my tongue like lust-soaked silk as I protested.

“I didn’t ask if it was a fantasy, little lamb. I asked if you were dreaming of me.” He snorted as he stepped into the shower and the spray shot against the sinewy hard lines of his body. “You were moaning my name. I wasn’t sure if I was fucking you or strangling you. Now I know which was being played out in that filthy, erotic mind of yours.” Feverish heat burned my chest before flowing up to my ears.

“You didn’t think you should wait to shower until I’ve vacated the bathroom?” I asked in a churlish tone.

“I did, and I also knocked on both doors. When you failed to answer either, I feared you’d either drown or attempted to escape from the balcony. Either would have allowed me time to shower, in any case,” he stated in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Indeed,” I murmured while admiring the hard, powerful muscles of his back. The tattoo on his back was intricate with a delicate beauty of otherworldliness. The woman was perched on a throne with her hand stretched toward an unseen lover. Around her feet lay skulls that had varying levels of damage. The entire back piece, minus the woman, was done in blank ink. Crimson curls lay over one small, pert breast while the other was visible. The skirt she wore was slit up both thighs, revealing plenty of leg, and one of her feet was balanced on a skull while the other was thrown over the arm of the throne chair she ruled from. Emerald-green eyes bore into mine, and in their depths, there was vitriol and warning. “Who is she?” I asked before I could stop myself.

Tensing at my question, he turned cold, unfeeling eyes on me as his lip curled with disdain. “If I wanted you to know, I’d have told you. Finish up. We’re late because you’ve taken longer than you should’ve to bathe.”

Okay, so whoever she was, she was a tender topic. I snatched the towel from the perch beside the tub and wrapped it around my body, concealing my nakedness from his heavy, penetrating scowl. I climbed from the tub.

“She’s none of your concern. Understand?”

“Completely.”

He’d hung my clothing on a hook, and I fingered the smooth, elegant material. On the marbled counter lay nylons with a garter belt, panties, bra, and a pair of Saint Laurent Jodie platform high heels. Feeling the lavish Italian leather, I grinned at their elegant simplicity.

Making hasty work of my mane, I braided it in multiple braids before piling it atop the crown of my head. Pushing pins in, I secured it in place but left a few strands loose to frame my heart-shaped face. Brushing my teeth, I ignored the steam rolling from the enclosed shower and spit the water into the sink before rinsing with mouthwash.

Patting moisturizer on my face, I frowned at the dark bags beneath my eyes and then reached for the strict regimen he somehow knew I used. I added dabs of products beneath my thick, black lashes and then to some other problem spots before I washed my hands.

Leaving the bra, garter belt, and accessories behind, I left the bathroom. The dress he'd hung up, wasn't red. It was a mini corset slip dress. It was satin with a feminine cut featuring a cowl neckline, and a corsetry cinching in the waistline. Dropping the towel, I slipped on the thin, delicate lace panties and pulled the dress up my narrow hips. Quickly zipping it up, I walked to the settee at the end of the bed and finished the look off with the heels.

Finally, I turned to the full-length mirror and smiled wickedly. My shield surged, gently sheathing me with a thick layer of confidence and another of fierce, powerful feminineness. Slowly exhaling a breath, I headed into the bathroom and found it vacant. Giving myself a quick, abrasive shake, I headed for the mirror.

It took only a few moments to apply enough makeup to hide the dark circles and spots. Leaning closer to the mirror, I lengthened my lashes with serum before trading it for mascara. Forcing, myself to blinking several times, I repeated the process with the other lashes. Pushing the tubes back into the designated spot, I withdrew the rose-gold lip stain and lathered a thin layer on. I took in the clean, delicate look I'd pulled off with satisfaction.

Slowly flicking my gaze to the doorway, I greedily feasted on how Raithe looked in a pair of faded jeans and nothing else. My gaze paused hesitantly on his bare feet, before I turned away and withdrew the gloss, adding a layer of cherry sheen for a darker hue. When I started from the room, his low whistle gave me pause.

“I can see why you feel as if it is armor. You’d bring a mortal man to his knees for a chance to worship you, Elle.” The huskiness of his words caused tightening in my abdomen. His bare feet padded over the expensive marbled flooring, pausing behind me. “How many men have you let see you without it on?”

“Two,” I answered through trembling lips. “My father and brother.” Not waiting to see what his reply would be, I left the bathroom with a wicked grin curving my lips. “We’re late. Don’t keep me waiting, darling. I’m famished.” Then I yanked the door closed without a backward glance.

I didn’t linger in the bedroom. Moving into the small kitchenette in the sitting room, I opened the fridge and scanned the selection before settling on a bottle of VOSS water. He’d stocked my favorites, even the sweets I preferred when my monthly visited. He’d had me stalked long enough to figure out my likes and dislikes, which burned since I’d failed to notice a tail.

The connecting door opened, causing me to lower the bottle from my lips. He was dressed in a crisp, white dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up to reveal his heavily tattooed forearms and a pair of Neiman Marcus relaxed, medium washed jeans. Handmade black combat boots adorned his feet, sleek, and yet simple. His dark hair was still damp from his shower, but the earthy spice of bergamot, masculinity, and something else preceded him and filled the air of the apartment.



“I’ll escort you down to the dining room now,” he instructed. “I’ve taken the liberty of having my men retrieve your team. They’ll be landing in the next hour if they beat the incoming storm front pushing in on the island. I hope you don’t mind? Time isn’t something we have to waste, and I have a feeling you’d run the clock down if allowed to.”

“You seem to take a lot of liberties where I am concerned, Mr. Dravyn,” I countered, folding my arms over my chest, still holding the bottle with a death grip.

“Not as many as I’d like to,” he returned with a note in his voice that played with my pussy harder than any finger had before.

“How long have you been stalking me?” I asked, ignoring the effect his statement had on me. “Don’t lie to me, either. We’re going to be very close if you expect me to do this job correctly. By the time I leave, I will know all of your dark corners. There won’t be any part of you I’ve not dissected and investigated. I’ll know your deepest desires, darkest fantasies, and all your dirty laundry will be washed clean.”

His eyes sparkled with intensity as I called him out on his shit. I was thinking he liked my blunt, to-the-point personality. Then there was also the fact of his need to dominate, control, and test me. In the jet, he’d been turned on by my submission, but he’d enjoyed the defiance just as much. “You think you will, but you’ll only be told what is absolutely imperative to obtain a spot in the campaign for presidency. Trust me, Elle, you don’t want to know how much blood I’ve spilled or how

many maidens have been plundered and pillaged.” Closing the gap between us, he paused before me. His long, narrow finger played with the thin strap of my dress before he said, “If you really knew me, you’d lose your tight grasp on reality and run screaming into the night, gorgeous girl.”

“I’m not afraid of monsters,” I hissed through clenched teeth. “I’ve been around them since birth. You’d be surprised what I can handle.”

“Yeah? My line is filled with corrupt, animalistic monsters that feed and prey on humanity,” he murmured, abandoning the strap to trace a line of fire over my racing pulse. “You should be terrified of the monster beneath the civilized façade I wear. Come, we’re wasting precious time. My team is below, waiting to meet you.” His hand dropped as he turned on his heel, heading toward the door. “Now, Miss Reed. I despise being late.”

Frowning at the clipped arrogance in his tone, I followed him to the dining hall. The moment I entered it, men rose from their seated, relaxed positions and bowed their heads to Raithe. Raithe tipped his dark head, but he didn’t speak until he was at the head of the table. An attendant moved out of the shadows, pulling out the chair beside him before turning toward me. I hadn’t known the man was there, and he’d moved so rapidly I’d barely caught the fluid motion.

“My lady,” he whirred with a softly whispered brogue.

“Thank you,” I replied, sitting in the chair and lifting as he scooted it in further.

“Serve the meal, Alberto,” Raithe ordered in a gentle tone, filled with fondness for the attendant.

“We’ve prepared Arabian buttered eggs on Turkish bread,” Albert stated. “Poached rhubarb with labne, and a wild mushroom bruschetta for the main course.” Then trays were set on the table and the lids were lifted. When so many attendants had come into the room was a mystery. “Is it to the lady’s expectations?”

“Very much so,” I acknowledged. “It looks amazing. Thank you.”

“May I get you a mimosa or champagne?” he inquired.

“Orange juice would be amazing, but hold the champagne. I’m not a big drinker, I’m afraid.” I kept tight reins on my drinking when I was on a job or around a client.

In my experience, once you allowed anything to influence your mind, everything would begin snowballing downhill. Men held control and dominance in most industries. If a woman wanted to garner influence, she needed her wits to slay those who thought us weak, delicate, subordinate beings. Drinking wasn’t my forte. One drink and I’d be walking on my lips. Not to mention, the brandy from the plane before they’d tossed me out was still swirling in my belly. Raithe hadn’t given me a choice to drink it, really. The food laid before me made my mouth water, forcing my focus back to it.

The tantalizing scent of rhubarb and heavy cream tickled my nose, filling my mind with memories of my grandmother. They’d smothered it in spices, strawberries, and poached it to

perfection. After lathering the labne with the cream, I picked up the small, silver ladle and drizzled the fruit over the frothy, fluffy layer I'd put on.

Raithe watched me with something worrisome churning in his storm-colored depths, but when he caught me looking, he smiled.

“Eat, Elle,” he muttered, sitting deeper into his chair. One attendant placed a bottle of water before him, which he opened and downed before offering his plate to the man waiting behind him. “I had a snack while you slumbered in your bath,” he explained. Laughter sounded around the table. It caused my focus to move to the others, furrowing my brow. I tried to figure out what they'd found funny about his statement.

“Is there something I missed?” I asked pointedly. When no one answered, I snorted and turned back to attack the food, only to discover I'd lost my appetite. Still, I took a small bite of the labne, and my brows rose toward my hairline at the explosion of flavors hitting my taste buds. After another bite, I pushed the tray away and folded my hands in my lap, chewing my lip.

“Is something wrong with the food?” Raithe asked, sitting forward, resting his elbows on the table before placing his chin on his knuckles.

“No, but I find my appetite is nonexistent after the ordeal of the past twenty-four hours. There's just something unsettling about being kidnapped and forced to comply that saps a girl's fervor for sustenance.”

“We’ll take drinks in the common room, Albert,” Raithe announced.

They pulled my chair out before I’d even begun rising from the seat. Thanking the attendant, I reached for the glass of orange juice, only for it to tip over, cracking against another dish of food. Grabbing the glass, a shard sliced through my fingertip, causing blood to drip from it. All eyes slid to my blood dripping from my open palm. The man’s eyes mirrored the scarlet color of the droplets hitting the table, and dark, eerie lines began spreading from his eyes and out through his pale face. The surrounding air thickened with tension, and I leaned back as the man lunged toward me. Raithe caught the collar of his suit and threw him toward the wall, shielding me from seeing what was happening beyond the wall of his large, muscular body.

“Clear the room, gentlemen. Now,” Raithe hissed before he rounded to face me, wrapping a napkin around my hand. Turning at the sound of approaching footsteps, he snorted. “Just a minor mishap, Ransom,” he explained. “Please escort Miss Reed to the common room. Do not let her out of your sight until I join you.”

“Chevelle Reed, I presume?” inquired a deeply rich, accented voice.

“Keep your hands to yourself, Ransom. Best behavior, brother.” With the words out, Raithe stepped back and strode out of the room.

“Only if the lady wishes me to, brother,” the male stated, but I was too busy staring at the perfect duplicate of Raithe to tell him that would never happen.

“Identical twins?” I asked.

“Our faces are the only thing alike, dove,” he replied before offering me his elbow. I didn’t place my hand around it, but I smiled at the gentlemanly gesture. My eyes lowered to Raithe’s cock, and a blush spread over my chest as he smirked, fully aware of what I’d just been considering. “I didn’t take you for a prickly pear, Chevelle. With a name like you were given, I figured you’d purr and be a smooth ride.”

“I promise you there’s nothing smooth about me, Ransom. Lead the way,” I murmured, not failing to notice the glint of cunning and intrigue simmering in his façade. Unlike Raithe, Ransom had tattoos up his throat and framing his face. He wore a button-up shirt with the first three buttons undone. His jeans were designer, but they were ripped with a silver chain dangling from the belt loop, and a cross attached to the end, upside down.

# CHAPTER SIX

THE COMMON ROOM WAS a geek's wet dream. Huge, state-of-the-art digital monitors sat in a large command-center-style room. There were lounge chairs before each monitor and beside them were trays with keyboards. In the center of the circle was a large, hologram projector, which I'd been trying to land since before they hit the store shelves. In the corner was a sound system that put mine to shame. My lips parted on a whistle as I spun in a circle.

"Chevelle Reed in the flesh," a tall, dark, and handsome man stated from where he watched me taking in the room. "I can't believe he pulled it off and you're actually here."

"I did, and she is. Chevelle, this is Atlas. He's the reason you're here," Raithe explained as he entered the room. Atlas winced when my stare landed on him and narrowed with accusation.

"I could have gone with someone else, but you're *the* fixer. Something like this would happen someday, and you had to be aware it was coming eventually." Atlas stated, pushing his fingers through his mane of dark blond hair.

“I’m technically the second best,” I corrected with ice chilling my tone. “Carson Abraham is considered the fixer of Washington D.C., while I’m merely an underdog.”

“Is that true?” Raithe asked, but he’d directed his question at Atlas.

“Tell him why that is, Chevelle.”

“Yes, tell me why I kidnapped the second-best fixer instead of the best,” Raithe demanded.

“Because I refuse to fix cases that involve human trafficking, sex charges, or murder of underage victims,” I replied without looking at either man. “Is that a hologram projector?”

“It is,” Atlas stated with enthusiasm. “You want to see how it works? It’s the best thing since Eve ate the apple,” he stated.

“Apple?” I asked, curiously.

“Garden of Eden? Fucking? You know,” he stated matter-of-factly. “It’s 3D and one of the few prototypes they sold. It came with a very hefty price tag, but it’s worth every cent I made Raithe pay for the thing.”

“And it projects an actual hologram?” I grinned as he nodded. “Damn. How clear is the image?”

“Lifelike. You can touch it, spin it, and even dissect layers to see other portions of images missed by the main imagery.”

“You two can nerd out later. Right now, Miss Reed needs to be told the rules,” Raithe stated. “Have a seat.”



Strolling toward the chair closest to me, I sat, crossing my leg over the other before sinking back into a plush, crimson chair. Raithe sat across from me, and only then did the others claim their own spots.

“In less than two weeks, I’ll be announcing my intentions to run for President of the United States of America. We’ll be hitting the campaign trail together, Elle. You’ll be my campaign manager. But you’ll also be expected to take out my competition while we’re on the trail. I want you to ruin the other two candidates with your lofty connections. You can, and will destroy anyone who seeks to take the presidency. It shouldn’t be too difficult for you considering your little black book of filth you’ve created on the men and women of Washington D.C... . Correct?”

“It would depend on if there is anything for me to find. Not all of Washington D.C. is filthy animals. In fact, there are a lot of good people there with pristine records. If you expect me to dig up dirt with the limited time we have before they begin to campaign, I’ll need to begin immediately. I’d need access to my phone and my laptop, but there are a few other things I’d require,” I stated while holding his gaze.

“Such as?”

“People normally begin this shit way before now, Raithe. You’ve basically dropped this in my lap weeks before you intend to announce your bid for the presidency. The competition isn’t going to just come out and announce their running. At least not those who are serious about running for

the presidency,” I muttered with pain beginning between my eyes. Rubbing my forehead where the ache was the worst, I considered everything I’d need which was overwhelming with the limited time he’d allowed me to smear the competitors.

“You’ve not had anyone else beginning your campaign, which leaves me spiraling in a nose dive to play catch up and getting ahead of the others who’ve started already. You should’ve already had someone picked, and working as a campaign manager. There’s too much shit that should’ve been collected before now.” Pausing, I chewed my lip. “Most of these assholes will play coy and state they’re not running so they can get a feel of voters’ opinions before doling out the cash to run. That’s where it gets tricky because, if they wait too long to announce it while earning donations, it’s illegal. Which side are you leaning?”

“Independent,” he replied, forcing my eyes to round as my eyebrows pushed up on my forehead.

“No independent candidate has ever won the presidency,” I warned.

“Yet,” he corrected with a dark glint in his stare. “For the last fifty years, this world has been a tailspin, and it’s only getting worse. Someone has to step in and pull the country out of it. America is the giant of most markets. When we sink, everyone else rises around us. I won’t let that happen.” He’d spoken with conviction, but it would be impossible.

“You’re asking for the impossible,” I whispered. My mind was already running every scenario, watching each one crash

as swiftly as the one before it. “We would need to find people willing and able to financially back your bid and donate for your campaign. We’d also need to find senators, and other influential people to endorse you for the campaign trail.”

“It isn’t impossible, Elle,” he purred with a dangerous glint glimmering in his stare. “You have the influence needed to gain backers, as well as your little black book of blackmail you keep hidden for rainy days.” Standing, I began pacing in front of him. He was freaking nuts! “I’m fully aware of how powerful you truly are, and how you win so easily. You’ve kept tabs on the elite, and your little filthy ledger of their crimes has yet to be used against them. To win, you’ll need to finally bring it out and use it.”

“I didn’t keep ledgers to use against them for you. Those ledgers are to use in the event I overstep, or make powerful enemies. It’s my get out of jail free card, Mr. Dravyn. It’s not intended for blackmailing political adversaries.”

“It wasn’t, but I’m certain you’ll be using it against those who seek to ruin my reputation. It will come in handy considering the shit you’ve collected on those in powerful positions, which includes the current sitting president himself,” Raithe stated with a smile curving his deliciously full lips. “When you and I are finished winning, you’ll have the most powerful and influential man to get you out of any issues you find yourself in.” His eyes dared me to argue, which infuriated me more than the smug, arrogance simmering in his persona.

“I have a question,” Atlas said softly, causing Ransom to snort in his direction. Turning toward him, I waited. “How do you choose who to hire? Because I’ve watched you enter a room and stand in the shadows completely unnoticed. You’re reading the room, but I don’t know how you can do it. It’s as if you’re waiting for something, and the moment you find it, you head directly for it. So, how do you know which one to choose?”

I considered how much to tell him before saying, “Reading a room is the easiest part of my job. I’m looking for key players who aren’t afraid to make powerful enemies. Most of the people assume that, to win, you need the most powerful and richest man or woman in the room on your side. That’s a false narrative. The person with everyone around them seeking approval is the mark and usually a lost cause. Chances are his funds are locked up in offshore accounts, yachts, and properties. That type of man is normally one poor decision away from being bankrupt. You can’t count on him because of it. He’s only in it for himself and doesn’t care about anyone else. There’s also the fact that you can’t tell him anything because he believes that, since he’s rich, he knows everything already. Those around him aren’t worth bothering with, either. They crave to be him or are trying to fuck him for a chance at a golden ticket baby shake they can cash in on. They are vultures, seeking a chance to better their own lives. There’s no one in that crowd who can add or bring anything worthwhile to the table. When I read a room, I’m looking for a few things on the faces of those who aren’t crowded around the richest

man. Bitterness, because it's a sickness I don't want around me. Curiosity because of their openness to learn is welcomed. Annoyance is another one. If someone is annoyed, they likely have the balls to snuff off the richest man in the room, and I love people with balls who aren't afraid to piss people off." Grinning at holding his attention captive, I tucked a strand of hair behind my ear.

"So, that's it? You just pick the people who look annoyed or curious?" Atlas actually looks a bit confused, so I take pity on him.

"No. I actually look for the second richest man in the room. He'll be the one watching the mark but isn't interested in worshipping at his feet for acknowledgement. He wants to be him, so I promise him that and then he and I collect the others of his mindset. We become the richest *group* within the room, and it's our call what we do from there. By the time I'm ready to leave that room, I'm the most powerful one in it. I hold money, power, and best of all, I hold the influential like-minded men with similar goals."

"That's smart," Atlas stated, leaning forward and smiling. "Is it true that you're a walking lie detector? Or that you house the ability to read minds?"

"Wouldn't that be neat?" I asked, concealing my shock.

"That isn't an answer," Raithe rasped with a warning in his tone.

"Is it true you're an immoral demon from the bowels of hell who seduces maidens? Or that you've been alive longer than

the land you claim to want to help has been named? Is it true that, once you seduce a maiden, she becomes yours for eternity?" I rattled on, somehow concealing the gasp of surprise as he rose, closing the space between us swiftly.

Our breath mingled as he trailed his nose down my cheek. "I guess you'll figure those questions out once I have you screaming my name to the rafters."

"You just made me your campaign manager, Mr. Dravyn," I whispered with a heavy tongue. "That means we're not fucking."

"We'll see about that," he purred as his finger trailed down my cheek. "I've never been one for rules, but I enjoy breaking them."

"I'm a professional," I said, uncertain why my voice was quivering. "Give me the same respect you would your men. In fact, treat me like I'm just another one of the guys."

His lips jerked up to reveal his dimples, but the dangerous look burning in his eyes was terrifying. Dropping his hand, he stepped back and lowered his head with a predatory visage sending my innards into a frenzy of confused emotions.

"What do you need from me to get started?"

"I want my shit back. I'll need the book, my phone, and also my computer so I can access my clients, files, and I need all of my team here," I answered, fighting the rapid beat of my racing heart.

He withdrew his phone from his pocket, ran his thumb over it, and slid it away again. Stepping toward me once more, he gave me a withering look before speaking in a cold, merciless tone, causing the hair on my nape to rise.

“Your team is not to be told why you’re really doing this job. One whisper about what I hold over your head, and I push the kill switch. You don’t want to be an orphan, do you?” Shaking my head once, I felt my heart-rate spike as anger shot through my center. “Good girl.” The dark, smoky scent of bergamot mixing with whiskey crowded my space, easing my fear. “The less your team knows about how I secured your employment, the better.”

“If you expect them to follow me blindly, you’re not as smart as I assumed you were. I built my team from people who are the best at their craft. I’ve earned their loyalty, but I don’t force them to follow me. If they wish to be on this assignment, so be it,” I purred breathily.

“See that they fall in line, or they’ll end up chained in the dungeon until we’ve concluded our business. I am not someone who makes idle threats, Miss Reed. I am the monster you’ve been warned about and so much more.”

Swallowing hard past the thickness in my throat, I nodded. “I’ll do my best to achieve what you’ve asked of me. The moment I have, you will release me.”

“I said I’d release you once you’ve done what I require of you. I am a man of my word, after all.” Licking my lips, I watched the sinister fever igniting in his turbulent gaze. “I will

taste you before you leave here, though. One way or another, I will know how you feel beneath me, whimpering in pleasure. Before I free you, I shall know all of your darkest, filthiest secrets.”

“And if I don’t have any?” I whispered with a shiver rushing straight to my center before heat blossomed in my belly.

“Everyone has filthy desires they keep locked away, Elle. I intend to find yours and free them. I want to cut you open and expose every naughty, wicked fantasy you’ve ever. I’m willing to bet my entire fortune that you’d be a dirty, gloriously wanton whore for the right man. I intend to be that man. At least for a little while,” he purred huskily. His words drifted over me like silk against my flesh, soothing and yet dangerously coaxing my inner goddess to the surface. No man had ever beckoned her forth, and yet Raithe had that slut lifting her head, and whimpering to be subdued. My abdomen flooded with warmth, even as I felt him chipping away at the walls I kept her locked behind. “And I know you crave to be dominated, but you’ve found no one brave or powerful enough to manhandle your soft, gorgeous body. You terrify men with your power and it prevents any of them from throwing you down and fucking you like the filthy, wanton slut you really are. Tell me I’m wrong.”

“You’re wrong,” I lied through my teeth.

“Liar,” he whirred as his hand moved, and a finger touched the bottom of my chin, forcing it up until our eyes locked.



“Being a dirty girl isn’t something to be ashamed of. Everyone has fantasies they’re too afraid to whisper out loud. Desire makes us burn within. I can see your flame flickering already, desiring to burn out of control until you’re whimpering and coming undone beneath me. I’m going to light that flame, and enjoy it burning against me.” I was screwed. Raithe either had the ability to gaze into my soul, or he was guessing at my darkest, erotic fantasies churning through my mind. Either way, he had my inner goddess mewling and writhing like a bitch in heat. For the first time in my life, I wanted to let the needy bitch out to play and bow in submission. It was dangerous, but it also wasn’t happening. Raithe Dravyn wasn’t a man you trifled with, or submitted to, ever.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PRESSURE IN THE air warned of an incoming storm barreling toward the island. A distant clap of thunder echoed in the distance. There was a rush of wonder at the vivacious hues of red, orange, and mauve painting the skies. To the north, darker clouds were hovering as they waited to unleash a massive storm front.

Standing on the beautifully carved and chiseled staircase, I took in the palace gardens. Lush, vibrant greenery, flowers, and colorful shrubs filled acres of landscape. A large mausoleum sat in the center, with a statue of a woman posed on either side of it. Curiosity over who Raithe would deem important enough to be the center of such a magnificent garden plagued my mind.

“It would seem we’re about to be burdened with a storm, brother,” Ransom said from his spot beside me.

“It’s supposed to be a spectacular one,” Raithe agreed.

A shiver rushed through my body, which hadn’t gone unnoticed by the men. I’d loved storms at one time. It had been something I shared with my mother. We’d dance in the

rain and scream to the heavens to release whatever had been bothering us into the raging music of the storm's orchestra. But that had all changed when my friends had held me down and let the boy I'd been crushing on rape me. Now, the only thing I felt during storms was pain and betrayal.

"Not a fan of storms, I'm assuming?" Ransom asked softly.

"I was, but not anymore," I muttered, praying he dropped the subject.

"It should pass quickly enough," Raithe returned and began moving down the stairs without waiting for us. Staring at his back, I descended the staircase carefully. "If you need help during it, you need only ask me, Elle," he whispered so softly I wasn't certain I'd heard him correctly.

Fountains of men and women in erotic poses lined both sides of the pathway as we began toward the maze. My attention snapped toward one statue, and I tried to figure out what I was seeing. Water trickled from the woman's eyes as the male positioned behind her held her hips. My eyebrows shot up as I realized there was more than one man in the pose. Beneath her, a man had buried his lips in the soft column of her throat, holding her still with the stone tresses of her shimmering hair. Pausing as the men passed, I tilted my head from side to side and frowned. Either the artist had gifted the man lipstick or he was tearing her flesh open. It explained the tears.

"It's called *The Feast of the First Maiden*," Ransom murmured in my ear, sending his heated breath drifting over

my sensitive flesh. “Two brothers condemned to fall in love with the maiden, only to destroy her with their vivacious hunger.”

“I guess if you look at it from her perspective, there’re worse ways to go than sandwiched between two men.” The moment the words had slipped free, I wanted to yank them back and swallow them. Raithe’s hypnotic eyes slid to my pink cheeks, and the corner of his full mouth curved into a disarming smile.

“Indeed. If you’re willing to play the maiden, we could feast on your mouthwatering flesh, Chevelle.”

“That’s enough, Ransom. Do try to remember you’re in polite company in Miss Reed’s presence.”

Raithe offered me a slight nod before his focus shifted, and he came to a stop in front of the mausoleum I’d seen moments before.

I blinked at the large skeletal statues atop it. The chiseled details were immaculate, and on the skeletons wore actual cloaks, blood-red of color. Beneath the outcropped roof was another statue, but this one was of a beautiful woman. The artist had painted her gown a deep emerald, but her breasts were exposed as if she’d ripped the gown away from her flesh. Copper strands of thick ringlets hung down her shoulders and back. Red vines of flora had grown over the statue, creating a creepy backdrop. Rose petals speckled the ground around the doorway, which all flew into the air as a feminine hiss met my

ears. My hackles rose as it slithered over my skin, caressing it like a lover's touch.

“*Fată frumoasă,*” a feminine voice hissed, causing my eyes to round as I tried to discern which direction it came from.

“It would seem your beauty has awakened the beast,” Ransom stated thickly, his eyes sliding toward the mausoleum with amusement. “*Ai ales să-ipermiti Mineisă o vadă pe Elle, de ce? Mina va căutasă o seducăŞisă o distrugăacum.* That is reckless and not warranted, even for you, Raithe.”

“Leave it alone, brother.” The threat hovering in Raithe's tone was sharp.

“What the hell was that?” I asked as the hair on my nape rose.

“Nothing to worry your lovely head over,” Raithe stated and then tossed a warning glance toward his brother, who snorted. “We should head toward the helipad. Your team should be here momentarily.”

Fighting against the shudder of uneasiness rushing through me, I moved forward. Raithe had a love for fountains and female statues, apparently. The deeper into the garden we went, the more visible they became. One of Aphrodite in a flowery dress with flowers climbing the skirt and adorning her hair marked one passageway. In front of yet another entrance into the garden was Flora, the Goddess of Springtime, with flowering ribbons and naked breasts. Beyond them, Artemis, Hera, Diana, and several more were in various stages of

undress, beckoning those who'd dared enter the garden through their passageway.

As we moved toward the exit, a grand staircase came into view. My lips parted at the sheer brilliance and beauty of the scene. They had carved layers of stairs into the rocky mountainside. Water flowed in a steady stream down the stairs, stalling at the arch, which had the Greek Muses seated on it. Each one's face lifted to the sky for warmth. The detailed artwork of the crystal wall between the garden and the staircase was intricately woven, depicting a battle scene from an age long since passed.

“Impressive, isn't it?” Raithe asked, thrusting my focus back toward him. He'd directed the question at me, which had my eyes dropping to the generous curve of his lips as he smiled. He hadn't glanced at the falls or where I'd been gaping openly at the natural beauty he'd woven into the design. Most men wanted to destroy the natural wonder, but Raithe had incorporated it into the design. “I once saw a similar design at Corby Castle in England. It was a sight to behold, and yet flawed. The falls fed a pool, but the water was contaminated and unsafe to swim in. Mine is clean since the water runs into the ocean, and as the tide comes in, it refills the reservoir we built to fill the waterfalls.”

“It's breathtakingly beautiful,” I admitted as the sound of helicopter blades shifted our attention as it came into view over the mountain top.

My heart thundered as a knot formed in my throat. He'd brought my team here, and in doing so, he'd placed their futures in peril. If I didn't comply, he'd murder them along with everyone I loved. Raithe Dravyn wasn't someone to trifle with. I'd heard tales about him from the dark, sinister circles he ran with. Most of them were horrifying whispers of how those who opposed Raithe and his syndicate either reconsidered or disappeared without a trace.

He'd taken me from a well-known lady's club in broad daylight. Raithe had walked in as if he owned the place, and no one stopped him. I had no knowledge of what occurred after he'd abducted me, and I doubted anyone would have called the police once Raithe's name was mentioned.

The helicopter rocked as it began its descent toward the helipad. My heart lodged in my throat as fear and apprehension for my team's well-being warred with rage and the sharp sting of claws digging deeper into my flesh. Since the day my view of the world shifted, I'd always held control over my fate. Until now.

"Don't hurt them, Raithe," I breathed through the thickness in my throat. "They're my family."

Turning his head, before angling it down, he frowned at the fear churning in my eyes. "Don't make me hurt them, little lamb."

A shiver of dread trickled down my spine, but the sound of a male's pain-filled yelp jerked my focus toward the helicopter, where the door had opened. Penelope was attacking

one soldier. She was on his back, holding on like a spider-monkey. He had three angry nail marks raked down his right cheek, and she'd wrapped her hands around his throat. A loud, angry feminine snarl came from inside the helicopter as a man rushed out, but Rory's arms were tightly bound around his waist.

"But I love you, Bob!" Rory snickered.

"My fucking name is Carl! Get off of me, female!" the man roared, fighting to escape her hold.

"I thought you loved me, too, Cletus!" Rory continued. My eyebrows pushed up on my forehead as the man battling to prevent further injury to his face shouted to Raithe for help.

"Mr. Dravyn, a little help. Please?" he croaked and then shrieked as Penelope's nails caught flesh once more. "Stop stabbing me, girl!"

Crossing my arms over my chest, I tilted my head as the man finally removed Penelope from his back. Holding her at arm's length, he shook his head and swore in a foreign language I wasn't fluent in. The plop of feet hitting the ground had me refocusing toward Anastasia, Einri, Colt, and Felix, who'd just exited the helicopter with two armed men. The cruel look burning in their depths and frowns pulling their mouths down in angry lines told me they'd intended to thwart their guards the moment they exited. Ana's loud, shocked squeal of my name stopped the other girl's struggles.

"Chevelle?" Ana shouted as her emerald-green eyes slid between me and Raithe and then settled back on Raithe. Not



that I blamed her for it. He was an entire candy store of sweets to take in.

“What the hell, Pat? How’s our relationship supposed to work out if you can’t even tell me the truth? I guess this is where it ends for us, lover boy,” Rory stated dramatically as she released the guard and sauntered toward me.

“Why didn’t you just start out with the fact you were bringing us to Chevelle? Idiot,” Penelope grumbled, also making her way toward me. “These assholes kidnapped and threw us in a helicopter! They wouldn’t tell us anything, and for hours,” she snapped, tossing her black, glossy curls over her shoulder, “they made us think we were being spirited away to be killed!”

“Interesting,” I stated without emotion. “We have a job.”

“Wait,” Penelope said with her hand going up in the air. One by one, her finger followed her mental calculations. “Since when do you take a job without asking us first?”

“Right now,” I answered with a slight tremor of unease. I’d always called a meeting and laid out the case, seeking their input before agreeing to take a contract. It gave them a chance to put forth their questions or worries but it also helped us outline points we needed to address if we accepted. “This is my unicorn case.” A unicorn case was one that the others couldn’t argue with logic or valid points of concern. We were each allowed one, and I’d never used the unicorn card until today. Knowing that, they all turned to stare at Raithe with curiosity.

“Why use it now? Who is he? Are you sleeping with him?” Penelope asked in rapid-fire questions. Her eyes narrowed on Raithe and slowly slid back to me with something worrisome in their purplish-blue depths. “He’s not even your type.”

Anastasia whistled before speaking. “You’re blind, Penny. That man is every woman’s type,” she whispered with a purring sound added on to the end of her words. “If you’re not fucking him, I will be. I’m a naughty, naughty girl, Daddy. Punish me.” Fanning her face, she didn’t hide her simmering hunger and or blatant invitation.

“Why all the secrecy here, Chevy?” Felix sought. Forcing heavily tatted fingers through his dark, sandy blond mane, he then crisscrossed his densely tattooed arms over his equally tattooed chest, which was concealed beneath his crisp, white dress shirt. “We don’t have secrets from each other, remember? You told us that,” he pointed out with the skin around his eyes tightening, glaring with skepticism.

Felix was a frogman, ex-Navy Seal operator. He was experienced in operations, weapons, and had a ton of other useful tools in his belt. Felix had been homeless when I’d found him—or, rather, when he’d found me, and I’d never regretted inviting him to the team.

I’d been following a serial rapist as he’d strolled through a college campus, searching for drunken college girls to prey on. While doing surveillance, I’d been oblivious to the man trailing me and would’ve ended up in a dangerous position if Felix hadn’t intervened and taken the man down. Afterward,

I'd taken him out to breakfast and heard how he'd ended up homeless after his fourth deployment to the sandbox. His entire team had been wiped out, and he'd lost the will to go back to civilian life after the war. I'd hired him and let him sleep in the building I'd rented for the control center of my business.

"Because this isn't like our other cases," I admitted as I slowly stuck a stubborn strand of hair behind my ear.

"Is he a bad guy, Chevy?" Einri inquired delicately.

"If we can get inside before the storm unleashes hell on us, I will explain who he is and why we're here." I was tapping the toe of the strappy heels when the first raindrop fell. "I'm sure Raithe will concur that this discussion is best had inside his palace."

"Hold up," Penelope urged with her finger in the air for silence. "*Raithe*," she mumbled before pointing at the fellow who'd called for help earlier. "Who is likewise Mr. Dravyn? Raithe Dravyn? *The* Raithe Dravyn?"

"Yes, he's Raithe Dravyn. He's our client, and my unicorn card," I affirmed. The moment the last word left my lips, a deafening clap of thunder rumbled overhead and a torrential monsoon unleashed on the islet. Opening my lips to say more, violet light lit the evening and struck a tree not five feet from where we stood.

"We're leaving, now," Raithe voiced against my ear, firing warmth over my chilled flesh. My nipples hardened against the bodice of the dress, and before I could object, Raithe

entangled his fingers with mine and hauled me toward the luscious garden and the palace. “Glad to know my influence isn’t diminishing.”

“It’s not a good influence,” I blurted before I could think better of it. The deluge of rain wasn’t letting up, which ended up with Raithe snapping out orders to the surrounding men. One moment, I was being led through the verdant archway of the garden, and the next, I was being jerked into an alcove. Raithe slapped a switch, and a curtain of leafy vines with bright violet flowers hanging from it slid down and concealed us from view. “What the hell?” I questioned as the others ran past where we were secluded from sight.

Raithe tugged my frame into the strong, powerful wall of his body and smirked wickedly. “You look good with mascara running down your face. You’d look even better if those perfect, pouty lips were wrapped around my cock while it trailed over your blush-stained cheeks.” The air quit my lungs in a weak whimper as his hand curved around my throat, compelling me to step back until chilled metal bit against my spine. The thumb he’d pressed against my thundering pulse lazily caressed the vein delivering oxygen to my brain. “You’re frightened of me?”

“You’re pretty intense, Raithe.” His gaze dropped to where I licked my lips and then followed the trail my tongue took. Before I could think better of it, I pushed up on my tiptoes and claimed his mouth hungrily.

My lips fused against his, and that was where my kiss ended and his began. Raithe's tongue pushed past my lips and went to war against mine, fighting me for dominance. Fingers threaded through my hair, freeing the updo as pins sprinkled the drudgery at our feet. Wrenching my head back, he severed the kiss and ravished my throat with his feverish mouth.

A whimper evaded my lips as Raithe's other hand drifted down my spine to cradle my ass, lifting me against him without surrendering his hold on my hair. Pain and pleasure quarreled and battled to be received as he rubbed his massive erection against my drenched center. Something sharp pricked my throat, and my lashes fluttered closed as my legs folded around his waistline.

The palm on my ass shifted, and a single finger drove through the chaos between my thighs. A sexy moan resonated against my skin as lightning crashed down beside us. Agony scorched against my throat as bliss unfolded in my essence where he'd sunk his finger into my pussy. I cried out, gasping and shuddering as a wet slurping sound reached my ears.

"Raithe," I hummed as he forced another finger into my body.

His devilish amusement tickled against my throat before making my abdomen flutter with the promise of release. A third finger advanced into my center, stretching me painfully full. I whined and then wiggled against the ache he'd produced. I burned with how full he filled my pussy. Raithe's tongue glided over my throat as something warm and wet

streamed down it. He chased it, licking my flesh, while I chased the orgasm his fingers promised.

“You two need a hand, brother? She smells divine.” Ransom’s hard, smoky tone urged my eyelids to open, and embarrassment at my wanton conduct singed down my chest. “Don’t quit on my account. I’m appreciating the show.”

I grappled to get down, but Raithe’s grip increased. “Settle down,” he requested in a layered tone. “You’re safe with me, Elle.” His fingers lazily pulled out, simply to drive in rougher than before. He fucked my cunt until it ached and burned as he spread my sore, ignored pussy. “Good girl,” he purred in a smoldering tone as I rocked slowly against his large palm I was balanced on. “Get the fuck away from us, prick. Go find the maid to screw.”

“Her companions are worried you’ve spirited her away and are demanding to know where she is. How does she taste?” Ransom inquired. His palms drifted around my midriff, cupping my heavy breasts as he wrenched me back against his frame. “You smell good enough to devour, Chevelle,” he proclaimed wickedly as his tongue snaked out, caressing the aching flesh at the base of my throat.

“Inform them she’s freshening up and will be with them shortly,” Raithe instructed with a darkening stare, regarding me as Ransom revealed my naked breasts to his smoldering gaze. “Keep your fangs out of her, prick. If you imbibe from her blood, neither of us will be able to erase this from her memories.”

Raithe's fingers pulled out, and his gaze lowered to the arousal painting them. As I followed with wide, dismayed eyes, he shoved his fingers into his mouth, sucking them clean before glaring as he slipped them back through the mayhem he'd produced. His thumb glided over my clit, which pulled a sexy whine from my trembling lips. Ransom's thumbs tweaked my nipples at the same moment Raithe's fingers penetrated my satiny flesh.

"Good girl," Raithe resounded while crimson-colored eyes lifted, locking with mine.

My mind wailed at the wrongness of them, at the sharper, more defined lines of his face. His lips parted to expose ivory fangs sliding from his gums. His thumb encircled my clit in simple, lazy circles as my brain fought through the pleasure haze, he kept me captive in.

A vicious shiver ran through my body as he leaned closer, grasping my bottom lip between his teeth before trailing his fevered mouth to my nipple, sucking it deep into his mouth. Raithe's tongue made a circle around the areola, taunting and playing with the hardened tip before he bit it gently. He moaned against the sensitive nub as his fingers plunged into my pussy rougher, faster, and without mercy.

Fear clashed with the desire dominating my mind. Neurons misfired as my abdomen tightened, and a white ball of tension unwound and flowed through my frame. The pricking of his fangs into my breast produced a low whimper of agony that started deep in my lungs as his chest vibrated with something

akin to a growl of possession. His dark head lifted to reveal blood trickling from his lips. A scarlet-colored stare sealed with mine as his fingers slowed, pounding into my clasping channel.

“She’s about to come all over your hand,” Ransom purred.

“When she comes, she’ll be in control of her mind and I will be sunk to the hilt in this tight, drenched cunt. It sure as fuck won’t be with you stroking her or in the same chamber as she screams out my name, asshole.” Raithe gathered me in his arms and placed me on my feet, but he didn’t surrender me. “Leave us so she’s not conscience of your presence when I erase the memories of what I did to her.”

“What the hell are you?” I hissed through clattering teeth.

“I’m the devil you’ll soon be riding while you shatter around my cock, pleading for mercy as I destroy your lovely pink flesh.” He jerked me flush against his solid frame, urging me to feel his heavy, thick erection. “Be a good girl for me and stare into my eyes.”

“Fuck that,” I whispered, struggling to move away from his strong, muscular form. “You’re a monster!”

“I’m much worse than that, darling. You think you’re helping me secure the presidency, but you’re going to hand me the keys to the entire world. You’ll have a front seat to the collapse of the depraved establishments of the free world,” he promised, leaning closer to murmur against my ear.



“I won’t help you take over this world or hurt anyone in it, Raithe.”

“You will, and you won’t even realize it until it’s too late to alter what’s coming. Speaking of coming,” he purred in a harsh, guttural tone. “You taste exquisite, little lamb. I can’t wait to feel you quivering against my lips as your delicious cunt releases against them. I wager you screw like a possessed demon and demand I fuck your eager, narrow slit harder. As I stretched it for my cock, I felt your pussy grasping on to my fingers, coveting more. Tell me you don’t want me to fuck you. Lie to us both with your red, pouty lips. Tell me you didn’t crave for me to free my cock and sink it into your warm, ravenous haven.”

“You’re insane,” I screamed through the tears stiffening the walls of my throat. “I don’t crave you, monster.”

“Liar,” he growled with amusement. Whirling me around without warning, Raithe kicked my feet apart. His fingers drove into my pussy, and I arched into the exquisite burn of agony they offered while my walls quivered with want. “This pussy is remarkably wet and clasping around my fingers like an insatiable bitch needing to be fed dick. Tell me, Elle, is your pussy a greedy slut?” He tore out to his fingertips and plunged them back in aching slow before spreading them wide to drive my channel to spread for his cock. “I asked you a question, pretty pet. Is this cunt an insatiable whore who craves to be fed inches from me?”

His fingers reversed once more before driving in deeper as his alternative palm landed on my ass cheek in a punishing slap. Arousal drenched my pussy around his fingers as heat burned the punished cheek. I'd never been this turned on or terrified in my entire life. It landed again as his other hand continued fucking into my cunt with a fast, angry thrust. My whimper of agony tore free, and I started using his fingers without requiring his assistance. The orgasm I hunted was right there, right on the verge of unraveling. He was silently watching me impale myself on his three fingers. Sobbing noises tore from my lips as pain crashed with lust and pleasure into a potent, overwhelming drug I rushed after like a junkie. But Raithe wasn't inclined to let me come or reach the high I trailed after.

"Impish slut," he hissed in a hoarse tone. "You come when I grant you permission to do so. Be a good girl and turn around and look into my eyes. Now," he ordered. When I declined to comply, he chuckled and withdrew his fingers from my pussy, turning me around by the hair. Jerking my skull back until pain radiated from every follicle. "Open your mouth and stick out your tongue."

Without thought, my lips separated and my tongue pushed out. His three fingers he'd screwed with me shoved into my mouth, driving down my throat painfully, which caused me to choke and close my lips around them. Swallowing in a bid to gain a breath, my eyes teared up as arousal rushed down my thighs. Eyes the color of freshly spilt blood stared into my soul, examining my lips as I continuously swallowed to

prevent saliva from dripping from the corners of my lips. The noise Raithe freed was tormented and ravenous with the hunger of a beast wanting to feast.

“Doesn’t your cunt taste exquisite, Elle?” Withdrawing his fingers, he snickered at the drool that accompanied them out of my lips. “Good girl,” he praised. Surrendering my hair, he freed his cock and seized my hand, driving my palm around his shaft. It was as hard as steel, yet soft, velvet flesh that pulsated with need.

“Look what you did to my cock,” he stated in a honey-filled tone. “You made me hard at the thought of burying myself in your lovely, tight cunt. You want my cock stretching your narrow walls, don’t you? You wish for a devil to part those swollen lips and thrust into your cunt until I’m embedded up to my balls in your warmth. Don’t you?” he demanded as his grip stayed on mine, making me stroke his impressive length.

My fingers didn’t touch around the thickness of his cock. A good nine inches pulsed and trembled beneath my palm as he used it to get off. His grunt dragged my eyes from the silvery, jets of come shooting from the tip of his cock to his hooded stare. Freeing my hand, he lifted his thumb to wipe his come over my lips, holding my stare as my tongue drifted out to sample his savory essence.

Keeping my stare captive, he spoke in that curious tone he’d held me calm with. “You won’t recall anything that came to pass after we walked away from your colleagues. After we got inside, you ran to your chamber alone to shower. Then you

lingered for me to change and use the shower so you didn't end up lost in the maze of passageways and corridors on your way down." His palm rose and squeezed against my jaw, urging my mouth open. Two fingers, which were covered in his essence, forced their way passed my lips. "Taste what you did to me, good girl."

The noise emerging from my throat was sexy as his come struck my taste buds. An arrogant grin stretched over his lips, and my gaze latched on to the twin incisors. Raithe leaned closer to flick his tongue against mine, and then the tang of copper ignited in my nostrils before it coated my tongue. My lashes fluttered closed as the world went mute. The moment he freed my jaw, I pushed against his broad, sensuous lips and sucked his tongue deep into my mouth.

Raithe's blood was addictive and mesmerizing. Licking my tongue against the length of his, I felt my thighs clamping tightly together with the need to plead for him to shove me down and fuck me raw. There was nothing else I needed or craved in the moment. He was the sole thing that existed.

He pulled back, staring into the depths of my soul before the breeze carried a feminine murmur on the current. Her words were cruel and resentful, which seemed to sharpen his features as they turned, fixing on me.

"She's off-limits to you," he purred tenderly, his eyes staying locked with mine. A precariously sharp, cruel edge simmered in their azure intensities. "Don't trouble your lovely head, mate. One taste of her, and I'll be satisfied. You know I

can't settle for anyone else when I'm stuck mated to your treacherous soul, Valentina."

"Who the hell is Valentina?" I inquired softly.

"None of your business, mortal," he growled, which shot a shiver of unease down my spine. "When I snap my fingers, the only thing you'll remember is what I told you to," he snarled. Bringing his fingers up to my face, he snapped them together as lightning struck behind him, causing my hair to float in the air.

"Mortal?" I whispered as his stare slid down to my gaping, ripped bodice.

Stepping forward, he yanked it up and grinned cruelly. "Run to your room and shower, Elle. You're chilled, and I need to find something to sate my appetite before I join you."

# CHAPTER EIGHT

STANDING IN THE MEDIA room with my team, I waited for them to settle down to explain the job. They hadn't shut up since I'd entered the room. My brain itched and struggled with something I couldn't quite grasp, but I struggled to recall how I'd ended up in my room. I couldn't remember anything past the first raindrops I'd felt.

Pursing my lips, I leaned back against the wall, wincing at the pain between my thighs. It was similar to the last time I'd gotten drunk and had taken home a one-night stand. He'd left before I'd woken up, but I'd been deliciously sore for days and there had been no memory of him, or how he'd achieved leaving me swollen and aching for more.

"If you're finished bickering, I could answer those questions," I stated when there was a lull in their arguing.

"They took our phones, computers, and brought us to an island in the middle of nowhere. Why are you not panicking? I've never even seen you without your phone, Chevy," Penelope hissed in a low growl as if the men observing us couldn't hear every word.

“Because I brought you here, Penny,” I pointed out.

“That’s another thing we’re having a hard time believing,” Einri said. His moss-colored stare bore into mine with carnal knowledge. Crossing his arms over his broad chest, he leaned against the table in front of where I stood. “You don’t like men like Raithe Dravyn. He’s an elitist, who uses his name and influence as clout. He’s the type of prick we take down. I know you, Chevy. I know you inside and out, and he’s not who you’d use your unicorn card on. So, what is he using as leverage to tie your hands?”

Swallowing past the lump in my throat, I chewed my bottom lip before releasing it. Slowly, I pushed off the wall and walked toward Einri, the man I’d fallen in love with while working together. I’d been just out of college, and he’d been an Army Ranger with the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment, one of the best operators they’d had until an IED took out the caravan he’d been in, leaving him with mild traumatic brain injury, which had ended his military career. He was the second hire to the firm and had been irreplaceable since. He could infiltrate a mansion and plant bugs in minutes without being detected, and that was only one of a hundred different skills he brought to the table.

Standing before him, I fixed the buttons of his shirt as he remained stoic. His hands covered mine, squeezing as he forced my attention to his soft, vibrant green eyes. The dark silken tresses of his hair were pulled back, which I preferred on him. Licking my lips, I began to speak, but he jerked me into the warmth of his body.

“Tell me you aren’t here willingly, and I’ll get us out of here, sweet girl. Say the words,” he murmured against my ear, kissing the tender flesh beneath it. My lashes swept against my cheek, and I fought the need to do just as he’d stated.

“I’d release her, now,” Raithe’s cold, chilling tone caused me to tense in fear. “I’m not asking, asshole.” Raithe’s hands slid to my waist, yanking me away from Einri’s hold. My blood began throbbing with a need to feel his touch everywhere all at once.

“She doesn’t need you to protect her, Dravyn,” Einri snapped in a low, possessive manner. “You’re not fucking her, which means you don’t get to claim her, either. She’s a big girl, and if she didn’t want me touching her, she’d tell me.”

“Who said I wasn’t fucking her?” Raithe asked with an edge to his question. His hand glided up my stomach to my throat, settling around it in a silent threat. The grip caused the ache between my thighs to grow more insistent. Arousal rushed to my folds, and embarrassment fluttered through me.

“Are you fucking him? Is that why you brought us here? To help your lover?” Einri demanded harshly.

“No. And stop with the caveman bullshit, right now, gentlemen,” I snapped, shoving off Raithe’s hold on my throat while offering Einri a withering stare. “I’m not fucking anyone. The last dick I got was four months ago, and I was too drunk to even remember his damn name. So, back the fuck off and tone down the male posturing. Both of you,” I hissed when neither backed down.



“You think you can get a girl like Chevelle Reed to bow at your feet, bastard? I guarantee you that you can’t,” Einri taunted. “She’s a queen and above you. Chevy is everything a girl should be and more.”

“That’s your first mistake, boy. She’s a woman, not a girl. And I guarantee you, if I craved her, she’d be on her knees awaiting pleasure at my convenience. A pup like you wouldn’t recognize what to do with a woman like her. You couldn’t take control from her, let alone subdue the demons of her mind.” Raithe’s eyes tightened to furious fissures as Einri snickered in his face.

“I’ve had her, Raithe. I’ve had her in every way a man can have a woman,” he sneered outright, throwing our affair in Raithe’s face.

Raithe’s head turned, and his eyes drifted over the mottled shade of my face before he grunted and mockery bled from his pores.

“And yet, you weren’t man enough to hold her?” Raithe provoked, his glare calmly flowing down the midnight-blue dress I wore, faltering on the plunging bodice as his eyes darkened. “I’m presuming she’s too much woman for you to maintain dominance over, pup. Don’t worry, when I’m finished with her, she won’t even recall how you felt between her silky thighs.”

A cumulative gasp whirred around the room before Raithe’s men strode closer. My team stepped back, unsure of what to do as the tension flared higher and built between the two guys.

Raithe's frame was fuller than Einri's, and he towered over him with restrained challenge seething in his countenance.

"You motherfucker," Einri barked as he leaped, but Raithe was quicker. He seized Einri, whirled him around, and pinned him to the wall with one fist. The other hand produced a gun, which he aimed right at Einri's forehead. "Do it, bastard. End me," Einri spat between clenched teeth.

"Stop this, now!" I exclaimed, dismayed by how the entire scene escalated so swiftly. "Please?" I whispered, setting a trembling palm on Raithe's chest. "Raithe, stop."

"Yeah, Raithe. Stop," Einri prodded with a deranged expression.

"Shut up, Einri," I whirred with fear coiling around my throat. "Raithe, he's my family. Don't do this," I stammered through trembling lips. Raithe tore the gun from Einri's skull and pushed it into the holster at his waistline.

Swinging toward me, he cupped the back of my collar, jerking me against his mouth to claim me in a hard, possessive kiss. His lips were ruthless, destroying all the determination I had to resist his touch. Raithe set my soul on fire and threatened to leave me in a mass of melted lust. His tongue seized mine, fighting for sovereignty as he subdued my senses, sensibility, and rational thoughts. Controlling the kiss, he cradled my skull with one palm, slipping the other around my back to run his hand against the naked skin left displayed. An animalistic growl escaped his lungs as he backed off, looking down at me with a possessive expression of ownership.

My palm crashed against his cheek loudly. Instead of being incensed as I should've been, I launched myself against his body, claiming his mouth like a demanding bitch in heat. Raithe chuckled wickedly against my mouth and grabbed my ass with one hand, squeezing it with approval. My fingers thrust through his hair, fisting it to hold him against my mouth as he ravaged me once more. A needy whimper vibrated deep in my chest and gradually worked its way to my lips, only to be swallowed by his brutal mouth.

Raithe's lips fired a lick of electricity through my veins, kindling something within me I'd never tasted before. The moment he retreated from the earth-shattering kiss, my air quit my lungs in small, needy pants. His liquor-scented breath whispered over my lips while shooting an intense pulse to start resonating between my thighs.

Raithe surrendered a hiss of air, a sound that was half pain, half pleasure. His pupils were blown and fixated entirely on me. The raw power of my attraction to this prick left me confused and stumbling as to why it was so hard to reject the magnetic pull I had to him. I'd never surrendered composure or kissed a client. I'd lusted after many of them before, but I was a professional. Then the moment Raithe's lips hit mine, I gave up all equanimity and dignity.

“Wow.” Penelope sighed with awe.

Ana hummed her agreement before she declared. “Damn. I think I got wet from that kiss.”

“Chevy,” Rory groaned as she put a reassuring palm on my shoulder.

Neglecting them all, I declined to turn away from the look simmering in Raithe’s azure-blue stare. It assured me of anguish, pleasure, and release without a sound whispered. Rough, wild need swept between us with a carnal thirst, throbbing tangible in the air, jerking us together by an invisible string. His touch awakened a spark of desire, aching to be soothed by him, and only him alone. It blotted out all reason and self-preservation I’d counted on to survive. Under that was a savage longing and animalistic hunger to have this bastard. He was all man—violent, powerful, pure virility that would unleash against my smooth, feminine flesh. I coveted what he was offering, and screw the repercussions.

Raithe’s lips twisted into a knowing, smug grin as he noticed me yielding to the war within my mind. Turning his dark head, he bowed it marginally before focusing on Einri. “That’s how you treat a woman and make her covet being beneath you, pup.” Then he planted his fingers beneath my chin, urging my eyes toward where Einri stood, scowling murderously at us. “You see her pretty blue eyes? Notice how dilated her pupils are when she peers at me? Her full, pretty, pouty lips parting as they crave to be filled, don’t they, Elle? Her spine is curved, which forces those full, sumptuous breasts to draw more attention. Right now, between her satin thighs, that lovely manicured pussy’s wet for me. It craves to be filled and screwed fast and hard. A woman who carries as much influence as Elle does need it ripped away so she doesn’t have

to think. She spends her days and nights in absolute domination of everything and everyone around her. Elle requires a true man who can restrain her thoughts and cause her body to sing with gratification. That isn't you. It's me, and I plan to claim her directly," Raithe spoke firmly with confidence as his grip released me, and I blinked as his comments registered.

"How about no? How about we get to business and you two stop swinging and measuring dicks?" I growled with Raithe's comments reiterating in my skull. "This debate about what I require is *over*. I don't need either of you acting like blockheads while thumping against your chests to prove who has the bigger dick. I demand you both behave and sit the fuck down." I snatched my control back, spinning on my heel and strolling over to the bar with refreshments spread out on it. Seizing the scotch, I poured two fingers before tilting it back and hissing at the burn. "My pussy is off-limits to both of you. Understand? I am not screwing either of you. Now, the assignment. Raithe Dravyn aspires to be the President of the United States."

The entire team went silent. I'd figured they'd do so, which was why I'd hacked the bandage off quickly. Glancing at each one of them, I felt my heart sinking at the horrified looks on their faces.

"You're joking, right?" Penelope asked with a smile on her lips. "Seriously, girl. I thought you were actually serious for a moment."

“She *is* serious,” Rory stated with a troubled look on her delicate features, as she glanced to each of the team members before shaking her head. “You’ve brought us a lot of crazy shit before, but this? This isn’t possible. He’s Raithe Dravyn, Chevy. You are the one who forbid us from ever going against him. You told us we steer clear of him and refuse any case pertaining to or might possibly involve him. Those were your rules. Now, you want us to do what exactly? Make him the next President of the United States? Turn the villain and mob boss of the syndicate of psychopaths, into the most powerful man in the world?” she clarified carefully as if I were slow in the head department. At my nod, she laughed condescendingly. “Are you insane? You want to make him the most powerful man in the world, Chevelle.”

“I do,” I agreed without showing the dread I felt as she spelled out what I intended to do for Raithe. There wasn’t a question if I would change my mind. He held the people I loved on a leash, and with one stroke of his finger, they’d be gone forever.

“We’re going to need a moment to vote,” she stated softly, her eyes watering as I nodded.

“Let’s vote then,” I conceded.

“Not with you, Chevy. You’re biased,” she muttered while fidgeting with the folds of her shirt.

“Oh,” I said with panic humming through me. “Just like Jessie James, huh? Going rogue?” I inquired with my heart in my throat, pounding a million beats per second. Her eyes

narrowed as her head tipped, but she concealed the shock. The entire group understood the code word for forced employment. “Best get on with it, Rory. Big Brother doesn’t wait for no one.”

My heartbeat was dangerously approaching stroke-level as I took in their faces. They’d caught the code words I’d put in place for the offices being bugged, along with the one for being coerced to take on a client by threat or force. Not a single face held panic or fear, and for that, I was thankful. Swallowing the growing panic, I watched them ask Raithe for a place to secure the vote. After he’d pointed out a soundproofed room, I leaned against a table as they strolled in and then turned, staring at me as they closed the door.

“They seem rather vexed at your decision of cases,” Raithe expressed as he perched on the table beside me. I took in the labyrinthine of ink dressing his forearms and tried not to scream at him that it wasn’t my choice to be here at all. It was colored ink, with both Scandinavian and Romanian scrawl, which was worked in around runes and black ravens. I’d never craved to taste ink before, but I needed to track the ink on his wide, muscular chest all the way down to his tapered V-line, and lower to his large, thick cock.

Grunting at the picture of myself on my knees, gagging on his monumental dick screwing my face, I pushed my focus back toward the group presently arguing in the soundproof room. The pulse of need he’d created with solely a kiss was unreal and perplexing. I’d never been so bold or outlandishly foolish. *Never*. I was guarded by barricades and armor. I was a

fucking warrior in the ring of Spartan men who got off on hurting the weak. Yet, the moment Raithe's eyes held mine, I was stripped of the armor and yanked out from behind the walls I'd spent most of my life building.

“You brought them here by force and have forced my hands behind my back. This isn't a case we'd take on, and they're not stupid. They know something is wrong. If you weren't holding my family at gunpoint, I would be walking out of here with them.”

He snickered coldly as he shoved the table and settled in front of me. His frame hindered the view of the door, forcing my awareness to his face. Leaning forward, he caged me in with his thick arms, and the tempting spice of raw masculinity, aged bourbon, and bergamot from his aftershave struck my senses like a battering ram.

His tone was a purr of whiskey-soaked sex as he spoke in a tone fortified with carnality. “You and that kid? It's over, Elle. I don't care what you shared with him in the past. Leave it in the past, or I'll have to punish you.” My abdomen tightened even as my nipples pebbled to achy, solid tips. “He's posturing, but I won't continue to participate in his pointless game. I'll end him, and you'll be bent over, stretched around my cock when I do so. Afterward, I'll make sure to fuck you on his corpse as your pussy gushes all over my dick.”

“You're sick,” I whirred through trembling lips while resisting the tears swimming in my vision. “Keep your hands off me, Raithe. I don't know what it is you're doing to me, but



I don't like it at all. I don't like you. Men like you think you're gods, but you're not. I take bastards like you down before brunch, and I do it very well."

He laughed devilishly as he lowered his mouth to the contour of my throat. An uncontrolled shiver flittered through me as his tongue snaked out, trailing over the thundering vein supplying blood to my brain. My breathing hitched as something sharp scraped over my skin. My pussy swelled as it clenched at the emptiness, seeking to have something more to grasp around. A sensual flush advanced over my chest, throat, and face as every tendon in my body strained with wanton need.

"Lie to yourself if it allows you to sleep better at night, Elle. But if you truly didn't want this thing between us, your pupils wouldn't be fully dilated. Your exquisite ass wouldn't be arched enough to curve this spine," he purred like honeyed bourbon as his fingertips slid over the arch, circling the twin divots at the base of my spine. "These gorgeous, full breasts wouldn't be beseeching me to suck, tease, or bite their solid, strawberry-hued tips." His other palm cupped one breast, and his thumb rubbed the nipple, moving in a circular motion. "Your cunt wouldn't be engorged or wet. It's both. Isn't it?" Raithe's fingertips danced over the flesh of the insides of my thighs. "I can easily find out if it is." Lips wandered against my ear, teasing the sensitive flesh beneath my ear with feverish breath. His palms settled on my thighs, driving them apart as he growled, which shot arousal to my pussy. "It's sopping wet for me. Isn't it, darling? Tell me the truth or I'll make your

pussy ache without letting it orgasm until you've fucking earned it." His comments were a violent, guttural threat that grated over my aching, sensitive skin.

"Yes," I allowed in a breath of sound that came out more sex than anything else. A single finger pressed past the delicate thong covering my sex and swept through the glistening, slippery turmoil his filthy mouth produced. "Raithe. Oh my God. Fuck."

"Are you a filthy slut or a good girl, Miss Reed?" he hummed against my throat. "Answer the question. It's necessary to recognize which you are because it will decide how I'll be fucking this narrow,"— he forced a single finger to his knuckle into my cunt— "messy cunt of yours." I moaned as a rumble resonated from his parted lips. "He sure as shit did little to stretch this tight haven of yours. Your pussy is ravenous to be filled and abused until it aches and you plead for mercy." As another finger pushed deep into my center, I whimpered a gasp of air from the exquisite stretch he created. "Did he even muffle the beast within your soul that shouts to be dominated every moment of every fucking day? I see it in those magnificent, brilliant eyes the moment you start to surrender your hold on the tightly reigned control you need to manage to remain upright every day, Elle. I'm man enough to take it from you and defend you until I give it back to you. You're drained from maintaining your shields, and wearing your armor to cover your fractured soul from those who'd use it against you. Aren't you?" A third finger produced an

intense, needy moan to slip through my trembling lips.  
“Answer me.”

“I’m your filthy slut, Raithe,” I blurted through the heaviness of lust coating my words. Why I’d responded to *that* question of all the ones asked, I wasn’t certain, but he looked pleased.

His touch had silenced the monster within that screamed I was weak, wanton, and never good enough to be loved. It silenced the world around me, leaving only my carnal hunger and need to be subdued, whispering promises of a mental and emotional reprieve from always carrying the weight of guilt, self-loathing, and blame.

“Good girl,” he proclaimed as his fingers pushed deeper into the ignored, neglected pussy he pillaged. “They’ve determined whether or not they’ll support you, darling. I’m of a mind to continue fingering your wet cunt until you moan my name as you come all over my fingers like an indecent, wanton whore. What do you think about that? I bet your little boy toy would understand the difference between an adolescent playing with you and a man. Think he’d admit he wasn’t man enough to get this poor, needy pussy of yours, off?”

“Stop,” I hissed through chattering teeth as he kept me balanced on the edge of release. “Raithe, stop.” He withdrew, but he drew his hand up, showing me how my arousal coating the three fingers he’d fucked me with glistened in the light.

My core clenched as he shoved each finger between his full, kissable lips and sucked them clean.

“You taste heavenly,” he rasped with a raw, gravelly timbre.

Rory cleared her throat as she approached where we stood. Raithe’s dark head tilted, continuing to lick my arousal from his fingers as he held Einri’s gaze. Pushing my thighs together to quell the aching throb of my clit, I blushed to my roots.

“We’ve made a decision,” Rory announced with an edge to her soft, English accent. “You’ve never questioned a case when we’ve asked you to take it, Chevy.” The others echoed her agreement, nodding as I scanned their faces. “I’ve have remained beside you through pretty much anything. You know that,” she whispered with tears swimming in her eyes.

My heart wrenched with fear as my stomach dropped to my feet. Nausea churned through my belly and pushed up my throat while I mentally prepared for her to reject this job.

“I’m not about to change that now, and neither is anyone else. We’re in,” she stated firmly.

Lifting my head, I peered into the eyes of the one friend I’d managed to keep since childhood. Rory was my ride-or-die, and is the one who’d protected my scrawny ass throughout high school. I’d lied to her once before, and it had ended in me lying on a filthy floor with blood covering my tiny, battered, broken body. Rory had sat beside me as I’d bawled and raged internally, and when I’d peeled myself off that floor, it had been her who held me up and patched my shattered, no-longer-innocent soul back together.

She was also the madam for escorts who worked the financial district in the greater D.C. area, and catered to the elites. It helped fund clients we wouldn't have otherwise been able to take on for free and bought the toys we used to take down the bad guys. Politicians and elite assholes loved to call ahead to procure so-called "dates" for their time away from their wives. We used that against them as blackmail and to sway votes to whatever we needed. No one enjoyed making the 5'clock news with video footage of their sordid, naughty desires being played out for the world to see. Of course, I was her silent partner with no paper trail to lead back to me or the firm. Her girls weren't opposed to a good time and a little espionage in the process. The pay was good and we took care of our girls. Most had come from either shitty lives, or been highly trained by other countries to murder powerful men in their beds. We'd bought their contracts from their handlers in order to offer them power over their own lives. Once they'd been freed, we merely offered them a job employing their unique skill-set. Sex wasn't what we sold, but they could if they chose to do so, which most had. Girls enjoyed sex as much as any man did, but it also didn't hurt to have dirt on those who preyed on the weaker sex, either.

"Thank you," I whispered past the swelling in my throat.

"I'm not the leaving kind," she muttered, using the same words she'd said when she refused to leave me after the assault.

"The loyal ones never are." I moved to her and pulled her into a hug. "One day, we're going to be best friends."

“Someday, maybe, Chevy? You already are my best friend, asshole.” Pulling away, she smirked as unshed tears shimmered in her eyes. “When do we start, boss?”

“In the morning, once we’re all rested. I’d like the normal round-table talk. We need to know what may be coming and what they’ll use against Raithe Dravyn’s campaign. I don’t want to end up blindsided. Not on this one. We’re late to the game, so let’s not be the last on the field.” I stated firmly, while glancing from one team member to the next, all wearing their game faces. “This will be the same as any other contract. Each of you will have a job to do and focus on. I know this is new territory, but together we’re unstoppable. Felix, find the rabbit hole which leads to the candidate both sides favor, and then go down it until you figure out every exit and entrance. Get us a map for what we’ll need to lead the assault. Einri do what you do and get me a list of surveillance equipment you’ll need, and once we know our targets, you’ll plant them. Colt, you’re Green-Eyed Devil lead on this one. You’ll be my eyes, ears, and muscle to get shit done. Rory, get your girls working over potential candidates. I want them out pushing on the Capital District hard. Ana, hack the networks and see if you can find chatter. Maybe it will give us a place to begin. Penelope, ask your contacts who they think is a good bet for the presidency. Make it seem like we’re preparing our biannual political bets for Las Vegas, and our benefactors are wealthy, influential men who could owe them a favor should windfall land in their laps. No names. I don’t want even a hint of who we’re working for leaving fingertips, lips, or your

asshole. Understand?” At their nods, I turned and eyed Raithe. “I need to know everything about you. If you’ve been in a fender bender, I need to know. If you’ve ever fucked a married woman or man? I need to know before they bring it to the campaign trail. If you’ve done something as simple as sneezing on a civilian or diplomat—”

“You need to know,” he stated smoothly. “I’m not a good man, Elle. I do very bad things, but I also do them very well. I’ll have refreshments sent to our chambers, and we can pour over them with whiskey,” he offered with a devilish smirk tugging on his full lips.

“That won’t be necessary. You can write them down and slip them through the locked door,” I retorted icily.

“Chevy,” Einri interrupted, which forced me to twirl toward him. Raising my brow in silent question, he sucked his lip between his teeth before releasing it. “After this job, I’m out. I quit. You don’t get to keep me after this shit.”

“Keep you?” I countered carefully.

“I lost my marriage because of you. You ruined everything, and now you pull this shit?”

“*I* ruined your marriage? A marriage I didn’t even know you were in when you fucked me? You ruined your marriage and brought me into it without warning me you were merely separated. You don’t get to put that blame on me, asshole. You also cheated on me, remember? Had I known you were married, there wouldn’t have been an ‘us’ to begin with.” At his lifted brows, I snorted. “Of course, I know about her, Einri.

I'm damn good at my job. My only mistake was thinking you were a man of worth and assuming you were honorable. You weren't. Not to any of the three women you brought into your messy life. I'm the only one who was willing to overlook your faults and let you remain in my life. Grow the fuck up and take some responsibility for your actions. This isn't the sandbox where shit happens and gets left behind when you go home. This is the real world, and I'm not the bitch to blame when you can't keep your 'little devil' in your pants. The rules are simple in this firm. Be honest, take accountability when you fuck up, and don't come at me when shit gets hard. Here's some honesty if you'd like it, though. Becky was the best thing to ever happen to you. She was faithful through every deployment and kept the home front handled so you didn't have anything but your mission to worry about. I apologized for what you drew me into and the pain I unknowingly caused her. She deserved better from you, but you seem to have left your balls back in the sandbox. She's still in love with you," I admitted with ice chilling my words. "Lord knows why, but she is. You at least owe her an apology and an explanation for what you did to her. Once we're back in the States, I'll cut you your final check and you can consider your resignation accepted. Good night, everyone."



# CHAPTER NINE

A LOUD CRASH JERKED me from dreamless slumber, forcing my exhausted, sleep-deprived body from the softest bed I'd ever slept in. I grabbed the sheer, obsidian robe from beside the nightstand and tied the lace belt around my waist. The too thin nightgown, if you could even call the sheer fabric that, ended just below my rounded cheeks.

Another loud, rumble of thunder echoed through the castle, forcing me toward the balcony doors. I tried to recall if I'd locked them before slipping into bed, but gave up as I stepped onto the veranda, peering at the storm outside with wondrous amazement as violet bolts of lightning forked through the velvety shadows of night.

Wispy, white tendrils of silk seemed to dance through the gardens. The fabric was strikingly contrasted against the dark, obscure night, and as I squinted to make out what exactly it was, I could make out what appeared to be a child following the tendrils through the maze. Another thunderous clang tore through the skies above, causing her scream to follow behind it. Her small, pitiful sobs met my ears, yanking at my

heartstrings. Scanning the area around her for any sign of someone to assist her or bring her in from the storm, I exhaled a shuddered breath spinning on my heel, exiting the balcony.

It took moments to rush through the dimly lit hallways and exit the palace into the gardens. Rain pelted the robe, forcing it to stick against my flesh as I entered the maze. Wet strands of my hair clung to my cheeks, and I brushed them back as I scanned the area for the child.

“Hello? Can you hear me?” I shouted while listening for her cries to follow them to her aide. “I’m here, if you call out, I could find you easier.” Water sloshed beneath my toes as I trudged deeper into the gardens, uncertain which pathway to take.

Pausing at a passageway leading in opposite directions, I faltered. The surrounding storm intensified, blocking out any sound of the child I sought. Going to the left, I caught sight of the thin, delicate fabric I’d seen from above. Bending down once I’d reached it, I picked it up and started running through the maze with the fabric tightly gripped in my hand. At the next split in the maze, I hesitated.

Lightning split across the sky, casting the heavens in an eerie violet color and exposing a third path. Inching forward, I pushed through the vines blocking my way through the passageway. Wincing as thorns bit into my flesh, I rubbed the wounded flesh of my legs, arms, and abdomen as I glanced down at the torn robe. The hidden passageway was dense, and

riddled with vines from rose bushes, which tore the gown and caught the strands of my hair in their thorny grasp.

Once I was on the other side, music exploded around me filling the space with a hauntingly beautiful tune of Karliene's "We're the Devils." Glancing around at the crowd of statues filling the circular sunken garden, my lips parted in wonder. Several layers moved down into a large, stone altar. It appeared as if the statues themselves were the audience, or voyeurs of whatever transpired on the whitewashed, stone altar.

I felt a pull drawing me toward the altar, as if every fiber of my being were drawn to the beast it had been built to honor. The moment I reached the lowest platform of the sunken garden, flames burst from torches on each, rounded level encircling the altar. As if it were a theater built around the stage. A cracking sound jerked my regard to the statues, and as I watched in silent horror, the plaster on each statue began to fracture, falling to the ground around them. Fear etched through me, and a gasp of shock escaped my parted lips.

The music of laughter filled the air, lulling my fears as creatures hidden by the thick plaster were revealed themselves to be terrifying beasts. They began shedding their clothing to reveal monstrous, naked bodies. A bubble of feminine laughter caused goose bumps to spread over my entire frame as it sounded musically against my ear.

Turning, I came face to face with a beautiful woman. Green eyes of the finest emerald shimmered with the reflection of the

torch light in their depths. The woman was naked with her ample breasts bare to reveal their hard, pink tips. Her hair was black with soft blue undertones, which were beautiful in the moons light.

“Don’t be frightened,” she murmured with a smile curving her generous lips into a mischievous smile. “You’re beautiful,” the woman whispered. She stepped closer to me as her hand lifted to caress my cheek. “I see why Raithe has forbidden anyone else from touching you, Chevelle Reed. Such a selfish prick when he wishes to play with the maidens before allowing others to taste their pleasure.” She grabbed my hand and pulled me closer to her lithe, beautifully curved frame.

“I should get back to the palace,” I whimpered as her grip on me turned hard and painful. “You’re hurting me.”

“Careful with her, Valentina,” Raithe’s deep timbre murmured into the space around us, echoing through the stormy night. “She’s fragile, and I’d hate to break her before I’ve felt her shattering around my cock.”

“Mortals always are so weak and delicate,” another female’s whisper agreed. Turning toward the unfamiliar voice, I shivered as a woman with white-blonde hair and blood-red eyes watched me from her perch on the altar. “The king won’t be pleased if we break his newest conquest before he’s finished slaking his eternal hunger. I can see why he’s possessive of her. She’s lovely.”

The sounds of the surrounding creatures became grotesque as they petted and stroke each other. They were fucking one

another, even though they trained their sinister focus on me. Raithe's hands slid to my waist, jerking my back against his chest, pulling me into the heat of his body. His luscious lips skimmed over my throat just below my ear, his feverish breath a startling contrast to the chilled air.

I struggled against his hold, but his wicked laughter gave me hesitation. "If you fight me, I'll only enjoy it more, Chevelle. I promise to make you feel good if you behave for us." His feverish mouth lowered to where the column of my throat met my shoulder. Licking the sensitive spot, he growled before he bit into the flesh, sending agony blistering through me. My nails dug into his arms as a startled, pain-filled cry exploded from my lungs. The wet slurping noise he made had fear chasing the pain through my abdomen as more hands began stroking and caressing my body. Raithe pulled back from my throat, revealing blood trickling from his lips. Forcing me to move back, I cried out as my ass touched the cold altar. I felt trapped, like prey they intended to devour and wholly consume.

A dark, sinister chuckle left his lips as he stepped back, watching as the women got closer, kissing my shoulder and cheek. As he lifted his shirt over his head, I studied the sinewy lines of his body while noting the difference between the tattoos. I had been wrong. It wasn't Raithe. His brother had allowed me to assume it was him, but why he had done so wasn't clear.

"She smells delicious," Valentina murmured huskily as she lifted my arm, kissing my wrist. The other woman knelt

between my thighs as Ransom stepped back, smiling as he took in the tears slowly rolling from my eyes and trickling down my cheeks. Valentina bit into my wrist, sending agony rushing through the spot as her companion began caressing my pussy through the thin layer protecting it. The combination had a whimpering moan exiting past my trembling lips.

“That’s fucking hot, ladies. I can smell her cunt flowering for you.” Ransom closed the distance between us, his palm caressing my cheek with reassurance as a sob split from my lips. “You’re wet for us already, Chevelle. Aren’t you, sweetheart?” When I declined to answer his question, his features sharpened to angry lines. Lowering his mouth against mine, he nipped at my full, quivering lip before his palm flattened against my abdomen, sliding down the silk nightgown to slip beneath my panties.

Embarrassment painted my face, throat, and chest red as he slid a single finger through the arousal they’d created in my center. Fear was churning through me, but there was also a dark, sinister lust growing thicker as he coaxed my body to yield for him.

“Such a messy girl for us, Chevelle,” he cooed as he thrust a finger into my aching center. “It would quite displease my brother to know how readily your cunt weeps to be played with by us.” Another finger entered my pussy, which clamped down around the intruding fingers stretching it achingly full. “Fucking hell, you’re so tight and wet for me. Your body’s pleading to be fucked. I’m going to enjoy destroying this

sweet cunt. It's going to be mine and only crave me by the time I finish with you."

"Ours, Ransom," Valentina corrected while she pulled away from my wrist, smiling with blood dripping from one side of her mouth. "You promised me she'd be ours to play with."

"So I did, my love." He pulled his fingers free before holding the slick, arousal-covered digits up for her to lick clean. "How does she taste?"

"Delicious," she murmured before turning toward me, claiming my lips in a hungry, desperate kiss. Something nicked my tongue, which had blood pooling in my mouth and sliding down my throat. Her tongue dueled with mine as another sting of teeth pierced my inner thigh.

It was erotic and heady to have so many hands touching and stroking my body at once. My gaze lingered on the creatures, which had human forms now, fucking in groups as the entire scene became one, large orgy of sinful lust. All eyes however, remained on us as the robe I wore was removed and dropped to the ground at my bare feet. Ransom exposed the round globes of my breasts much to the amusement of the crowd feasting on the sight of debauchery we painted.

Fingers pushed the panties I wore aside as more parted the folds of my pussy, spreading me apart. Lips drifted over the delicate tissue, and tongues began flicking and sliding through the chaotic mess they'd formed in my heated center.

I'd never been as exposed or bared for others as I was now. Ransom's feverish mouth lowered to my hard tip and his

tongue began running around the rose-colored, pebbled peak. Valentina licked her way to the other, suckling against it as her fingers held me open for the woman between my thighs, who was fingering my opening and thrashing her tongue against my clit while they worked it into a frenzy of need.

Ransom lifted his head and then growled as he gripped my waist with biting fingers, hoisting me onto the icy, wet altar. His hands slipped between my thighs and spread them apart as one woman lowered to her knees, freeing his thick, hard cock from the restraints of the jeans he wore.

Valentina caressed me as she watched the woman worshipping Ransom, lapping at him skillfully with her long, inhuman tongue. Moaning filled the night as lightning bolts split across the sky, followed by the thunderous clap of loud thunder. The scent of sweat, arousal, and sex hung thickly in the surrounding air, forcing a white ball of lust to build in my abdomen.

I was dreaming. I had to be because, if not, I was amid an orgy and willingly being the sacrifice to these inhuman, beautiful creatures. Somewhere between Ransom's touch, and kiss I'd fallen down a rabbit hole of debauchery and debased myself with raw, wanton hunger thrumming through my veins.

Ransom leaned closer to me, smiling devilishly as he pounded his hard length down the woman's throat. Her wet gurgling whimpers had me jealous of the abuse he was inflicting. Group sex or voyeurism had never turned me on, but this was different. It was as if I'd stepped outside my



comfort zone and had become someone else entirely. I'd shed the flesh I'd been born with and was becoming someone else without inhibition or fear of repercussion. He lifted his thumb to his lips, slicing through the flesh of it before sliding it against my quivering lips. My tongue slid past my lips, forcing the tang of his blood to combust against my taste buds. Sucking his finger, I pulled on the delicious spice of his essence as my eyes grew heavy with lust.

“Such a ravenous slut for us,” Valentina whispered as she leaned over, flicking my nipple with her tongue as she lifted the thin, short nightgown up my belly. “So willing to be scarified for our lustful appetite, lovely girl,” she purred. Her nail sliced into the flesh of my abdomen, causing blood to well and slowly drip down my side. Ransom's hungry mouth lowered to it, cleaning it with his kiss as my head rolled to the side to meet azure eyes.

Piercing pain against my breast forced a soft cry of pain to leave my lips around the thumb still driving into it as if it were his dick instead of his thumb. The heat of Ransom's mouth lowering to my pussy had incoherent sounds forming in my lungs as wet, guttural slurping continued all around me.

My focus was on the dangerously still form watching us from the crowd of creatures fucking wildly around him. Raithe's eyes were locked with mine, and his anger was tangible in the air. Ransom's wicked laughter between my thighs told me he was fully aware of his brother watching him and the women who pleased us. Valentina's head lifted from my breast and a hiss left her lips.

“Raithe,” she whispered in a silky, wishful tone. “She’s ready for you, my love.”

“You were told she was off-limits,” Raithe’s tone was sharp and angry as it tore through the air of the sunken garden louder than a clap of thunder. “You forget yourselves. I’m your king, and my word is law, unless Ransom wishes to challenge me for my throne?” Raithe asked in a darkening tone as I cried out in ecstasy from Ransom’s devilish kiss between my thighs. “Release her, now.”

“Oh, come on, Raithe. We’re merely having a little fun with your newest plaything. You never did like sharing your toys with me,” Ransom chided before his lips wrapped around my clit, sucking the tight bud deeply into his heated mouth. “Mmm, she’s so sweet. Come taste her cunt, asshole. She’s delightfully wicked and has yet to whisper one complaint or fear for what we are doing to her lusciously lithe body. Isn’t that right, Chevelle? You like us feasting on your pretty cunt and tits, don’t you?” When I failed to answer him, he reached forward, gripping my jaw painfully hard as he jerked me upright by it. I cried out in pain as he laughed soundlessly. “I was just about to stretch her pussy out to accommodate your cock. Valentina was going to ensure she remained compliant so I could fill it with my come. Alice will lick it from her tight, heated pussy, which is always a crowd pleaser.”

“Valentina isn’t supposed to be out of her tomb with others present on the island, Ransom. Unless you wish her me to finish her punishment for the crimes against me and our bloodline, I suggest she should return to it immediately. Alice,

report to your brother and inform him you've displeased your king and will join your other sister in confinement until I decide otherwise. You, get your fucking hands off of her, *now*. I forbid you from touching her. You've removed her free will by drawing her to this section of the garden. You continue to straddle the line while disregarding our laws." Raithe's chest was bare, which exposed the sinfully erotic lines of his powerful physique. Sauntering toward the altar, his gaze slowly roved over my exposed body, pausing at each bite they'd made in my flesh with hunger burning in it.

"I'm sick and tired of hiding what we are from mortals. They're beneath us. They've destroyed our world, and you've driven us into the shadows, and for what? So they can think they're the top of the food chain? I am fucking starving, Raithe. You want to control the world, but you refuse to simply take it by force. You are the most powerful creature in the syndicate, yet you refuse to allow our kind or those like us to reveal our existence. Why the fuck should we hide what we are from those weaker than us?" Ransom demanded angrily, his demeanor changing to reveal lethal violence beneath his carefully crafted façade. "Look at her!" he snarled while grasping a handful of my hair painfully. His other hand gripped my throat, crushing my airway as he rag-dolled my body violently.

"Let her go now, brother. Before you do something, which cannot be undone," Raithe warned through clenched teeth. His entire body vibrated with the barely restrained hostility

humming through it, clouding the air with a dangerous warning.

“I don’t think so, Raithe. You see, she’s willingly accepted and tasted my blood. Your sweet Elle is beneath my thrall. If you wish me to free her from it, you’ll release Valentina from her punishment.”

“No, I won’t. Valentina is a parasite who betrayed our blood bond which warranted her death the moment she had done so. That treacherous bitch hasn’t ever cared about anything but herself. She’s never loved either of us, brother. The faithless whore merely wanted the power and wealth which would come from being our mate. Do you honestly think she’s planning to stick with you once I’ve freed her? Even if she agrees to fully mate with you, she’ll merely do the same as she did me. She’ll sever your mating bond until it’s merely a painful string holding you to her, the same as she did to me. If you survive the madness, it leaves you spinning in, which is doubtful since I almost didn’t live through it, she’ll pluck it every so often so you remember who owns a piece of your soul. Is that what you want?” he asked so softly it would’ve sounded tender if not for the underlying venom and barbs laced in his tone.

“Valentina is our mate, brother. Yet, you entombed her without care or thought of what it did to me! She hated your stoical, unfeeling ass from the moment you claimed her as your queen. You’ve never wanted a mate, but you claimed the one female I loved for yourself. You’ve always taken everything from me.”

“And what is it you think I took from you?” Raithe asked with his gaze drifting to mine before sliding down my frame with naked hunger simmering in his dark, chilling gaze.

“You stole my throne by being ripped from our mother’s womb before me. It wasn’t enough to steal my title, no. After you’d stolen my birthright, you still craved more. The day I brought Valentina home and declared she was my mate, you intervened and stated she was also your mate. You stole her from me, and then treated her like she was nothing more than a shiny jewel in your treasure trove. Neglected, forgotten, and overlooked. You didn’t deserve the bonding link, or her.”

“You think I had a choice of which of us was removed from our mother’s womb first? Had we been birthed naturally, you’d be king, and I’d be the thorn in your side. It’s true that I never wanted a mate let alone a fucking bonded one, brother. You more than anyone else knew my aversion to being mated to merely one woman. Yet you flaunted her in my face day after day until my inner beast refused to ignore the call of her blood. Unlike you, I knew she merely wanted power, and because of our unique bond, she was able to mate with both of us. Valentina never intended to fully bond with either of us. Her intention was merely to end our reign over our race so her true love could ascend our throne and become king. Ivan’s the only man she’s ever loved. I murdered him in front of her, Ransom. Her only wish now is revenge against me for murdering him. She’s a snake that you don’t see hiding in the tall grass until it’s poised to strike you.” Raithe had inched forward during his tightly clipped rebuke. His features were

sharper as they peered above my head, regarding his brother with a calmness I didn't share.

"Kill yourself, Chevelle," Ransom whispered against my ear before shoving me toward his brother. My brows shot up toward my hairline as my mind replayed his command in layered tones, echoing through my skull. Turning toward Ransom, my hand lifted to accept the knife he held.

"Do not do this, Ransom. Elle is not guilty of any crime against you." The moment my fingers closed around the blade, I lifted it toward my throat, only for Raithe to grip my wrist, preventing me from opening the artery with the deadly steel. "Free her of your influence," he hissed in a tone that promised retribution if his brother didn't follow the command.

"I gave you my terms, *my king*. You want her freed from the command? Release Valentina, now. You can have this human you're so fucking possessive over. However, she's currently suffering the crux of tasting more than merely a droplet of our blood. Are you willing to fuck her in order to keep her from going insane, Raithe? Does your cock even work anymore after you've neglected to satisfy your needs while controlling everything from the shadows of your kingdom? I bet she'd rather you look away so I can soothe her pretty cunt of the ache we created in her feverish flesh."

"I'll free Valentina the moment you release Elle. You've my word as your king. But know this, Ransom, once it's done, you'll leave this island and never return," Raithe growled as his hold on my wrist turned painful. He squeezed until the

knife was forced from my fingers and clattered onto the ground. One hand slipped around my waist, which shot heat to every nerve ending as his strength reassured me, I was safe. “When that viperous bitch turns your mind against you, I won’t be there to protect you, little brother. I won’t be there to save as you as I’ve done since our parents were murdered.” There was a catch in Raithe’s tone at the mention of their parents, which caused it to reflect in Ransom’s features.

“I don’t need you to save me anymore, Raithe,” he growled harshly.

“Free Elle of your thrall.” Raithe’s tone was deadened as he thrust me toward his brother, who caught me easily. My eyes slid to the knife, wanting and longing to do as Ransom had demanded I do.

Turning me in his arms, Ransom rested his chin on my shoulder, murmuring in my ear. “I want you to fuck my brother like the filthy little slut he craves you to be, Chevelle. You’re my parting gift to him. You’ll be a ravenous, dirty whore as you suck his prick and take it in that tight, soaking wet cunt you so willingly allowed me to taste. You want him to treat you like a good slut, right?” At my nod, he laughed coldly as he reached up, ripping the gown from my shoulders to fully expose my shivering body. Raithe’s eyes didn’t leave his brother’s face to see what he’d revealed. A bloodied wrist was pushed against my lips, which caused my stomach to twist with nausea at the coppery tang of it near my nose. “Drink, you stupid bitch,” he ordered, which had my lips parting, and

my tongue sliding over the gash he'd made in his wrist. "Free Valentina, now."

"I free you of your tomb, Valentina Romanoff. You and Ransom Dravyn are to leave this island and never return," Raithe grated out as a tic began hammering in his cheek.

"You are free of my will, Chevelle Reed. But you'll uphold my desire to give my brother my parting gift," Ransom stated against my ear, cutting my collarbone deeply before pushing me forward and vanishing, which caused the wind to rush around me. My hair whipped against my face as powerful arms cradled me and an angry growl ripped from Raithe's lungs.

"You were told to remain in your chamber, Elle." My hand slid into the waistband of the sweatpants he wore to find his thick, hardening cock. "Fucking hell, this wasn't how I wanted you, little lamb. I craved your willing submission, not this."

"Fuck me, Raithe," I whispered through the chattering of my teeth. It wasn't merely a need. It was an all-consuming desire to suck him off and allow him to debase me until the whispered command in my head ceased screaming. "Fuck me like a filthy slut and make me feel good. My pussy aches for you. I'm so wet for you," I rasped through swollen lips, painted with his brother's blood. One minute we were standing in the garden filled with sinister statues gawking at us and the next my back struck the wall of the shower.

"I don't intend to taste anything but you when I claim your sweet cunt, Miss Reed. I'd prefer not to taste my brother's



blood on those pouty, fuckable lips of yours when I kiss or abuse them. Now, be a good slut and wash him and his heathen whores' scents off your lithe, lovely body. When you've finished, I'll be waiting for you in my chambers," he instructed before stepping out of the large glass shower and strolling from the room, slamming the door shut behind him with such a force it threatened to shatter into splinters. The entire shower shook with the intensity of his anger, but the need to do as he'd bid won control of my mind in the end.

# CHAPTER TEN

I'D WASHED EVERY DROPLET of blood, saliva, and arousal from my flesh before exiting the shower. It was a must to rid my body of any other taint for Raithe. Sauntering into the bedroom, I paused at the dark room, shivering as Ransom's words echoed through my skull. The need to please Raithe overrode the fear, trying to creep up through my mind. Icy claws pierced my mind, which forced me forward. Blindly, I walked through the large chamber drawn toward the scent of masculinity, lust, and the promise of release Raithe's essence shot through my senses.

Light filled the room as candlelight ignited, bathing the room in a soft glow. Turning toward it, I spotted Raithe seated in a large leather chair, reclining in the plush seat with a dark, worrisome air around his presence. My stomach tightened with the need to please him, as if he was the only thing in my world which mattered.

"Remove the towel, and lay on the bed, Elle," he ordered in a firm, sharp tone. My fingers released the white-knuckle grip I'd held on the towel, which exposed my lithe frame to his

heated stare. Spinning on my heel, I sauntered toward a sprawling four-poster bed of onyx and crimson silk. Bending over as I presented him with a perfect picture of my ass in the air, I crawled onto his bed, spinning around to ensure my back was on the mattress, as he'd wished. "Spread your feet apart and then drop your knees to the side." I obeyed him as my mind pierced with the compulsive need to do as he bid. "I want you to touch yourself, slowly." His voice held command and authority in his darkly uttered syllable.

My palms slid upward, cupping my breasts as I pinched my nipples hard enough to hurt. The moan which broke from my parted lips was needy, and burdened with a lustful plea. Tweaking them, I pulled and twisted until the pain met pleasure. Heat from his hooded gaze scorched my cunt, which I knew he watched for arousal. One hand abandoned my breast to push further down my belly, sliding through the sleek wetness between my thighs. Two fingers pushed into my throbbing pussy as a whimper of pleasure broke from my parted lips.

"Did you like them playing with you, little lamb?" he questioned, which caused my fingers to slow even as I rocked against the fullness of them. "Answer me."

"I did," I admitted through tears pricking my eyes.

"You enjoyed being fucked by them?" he continued in a sharp, clipped tone.

"I enjoyed having my inhibitions removed. They took away the fear of consequences, or guilt from enjoying being filthy

while others watched us. I liked being watched by those creatures. For the first time in my life, I felt sexy and sensual.”

“Did Ransom fuck you?” There was something cold and lethal in the way he asked.

“Only with his fingers and mouth,” I replied honestly. “I thought he was you. I wanted you to touch me,” I continued as a third finger entered my aching slit. My spine lifted off the bed, and arched from the pleasure rushing through my center, churning and growing in intensity mirroring the storm outside. “I need you to fuck my mouth, Raithe.” I didn’t need him to. It was stronger than just need. It was an overwhelming craving to feel him driving his dick down my throat like a filthy, dick starved bitch. I was ravenously craving the pain he’d surely deliver as he forced his thick, enormous cock into the narrow channel.

“I know you do. The thing is, I’m not ready for you to suck my cock, Miss Reed. I’d rather taste this mess you’re creating of your lovely, swollen cunt.” His hands spread my thighs open farther until I yelped as pain burned from him stretching them too far apart. The feverish heat of his breath wafted along my inner thigh from trailing his mouth over the bruised flesh. “When they tasted your blood, did they hurt you?” he questioned before kissing a tender spot on my inner thigh where Ransom had bitten.

“Yes,” I replied with unshed tears thickening my words as they swelled in my throat. I had liked the pain of their teeth sinking into my flesh. Had I been in full control of my mind, I

might have protested more, but I hadn't. I'd enjoyed the painful tear of flesh as they'd marked my flesh with the sharp, elongated fangs.

"But you liked it," he stated raspily as his tongue snaked out, slowly trailing over the bruises they'd left. Two fingers pushed into my pussy and spread apart within my cunt. "I watched you being a filthy girl, Elle. Your arousal was dripping from this pretty, pink cunt while they worshipped your gorgeous body. I hate them for knowing how you taste. I've fantasized over this luscious cunt dripping against my mouth, soaking my lips as I tasted your pleasure," Raithe growled with irritation entering his tone. His feverish breath glided against my naked flesh, sending need rushing through me. I couldn't ignore the rush of pleasure churning throughout my mind at the idea of him doing as he'd said.

"I need you to fuck me," I implored huskily while trying to ride the fingers leisurely stretching my insides apart for his large, impressive cock to be able to fit within me. "I want you to make me your dirty whore, Raithe."

Raithe pushed off the bed without warning. Grabbing my arm painfully, he wrenched me upright from the mattress before yanking me forward, off of it. Shoving me to my knees, he glowered down at me with a dangerous look roiling in his angry mien. The intoxicating fragrance of fury, lust, and arousal clouded the bedroom as he threaded his fingers through my hair, jerking my head back hard enough it singed my scalp with fire from being pulled.

“Open your pretty mouth and stick your tongue out, slut,” he commanded in a gravelly tone which scraped over my flesh.

My brain itched with the panic which should've set in. Instead, only Ransom's words were there, constantly bouncing off each brain cell. Pushing my tongue past my lips, I moaned as arousal built at my opening. My pussy was wet at the notion of sucking his cock off and having the control over his pleasure. I wanted him at my mercy.

“Good girl,” he praised as he used his other hand to free his sizeable, heavy cock from the confinement of his sweatpants. “Use your nose to breathe. Don't swallow until I grant you permission to do so.” Tears entered my eyes and slowly trailed down my cheeks. His demeanor flashed a hint of regret before he concealed it quickly. “Look at what you've done to me, Miss Reed.” His cock brushed against my cheek before he ran the thick, rounded tip over my lips, painting them with his precome. It was softer than Arabian silk, and yet still hard as the finest American steel. “Taste what you've made me do.” He pushed the thick, rounded tip over the flat part of my tongue slowly, wiping his precome over it like he was cleaning his prick with mouth. The salty tang of his arousal created a soft, low whimper of need as Ransom's demand grew louder in my mind.

The way he watched me was predatory. In the darkening blue stare was something dangerous, which was simmering just beneath the surface of his calm façade. His hand gripping my hair tightened as the lines of his face sharpened, then his cyan-colored eyes turned violet before crimson swallowed the

lovely shade up. Without warning, Raithe invaded my throat aggressively as he held me in place.

His cock stretched my jaw until it fucking burned with the agonizing pain from stretching. The immediate instinct to swallow arose, but his warning warred with Ransom's command. I would be a good slut and do as Raithe wanted. Drool pooled in my mouth, and then slowly dripped from the corner of my lips, and then slid down my chin as he slowly fed me inch after agonizing inch of his prick.

“You're so beautiful with my dick fucking your tight throat. I bet it aches with how far those pretty red lips are being forced apart.” It etched tension lines in his face as he took in the sight of me on my knees, taking his cock like a good slut. “Swallow so I can get deeper in your inviting, fuckable throat, slut.” I swallowed around him, whimpering as he thrust forward, slamming deeper than my throat could handle. It screamed and singed with fiery pain from the delicious stretch. “I watched your lovely blue eyes growing heavy as you watched Alice taking Ransom's dick so ravenously. You wanted to be her, and feel her agony. The idea of being used like a whore turned you on and you wanted your throat fucked. Didn't you?” he asked, uncaring that my mouth was preoccupied with his cock. Licking the tender edge of his prick, I watched his eyes closing with the pleasure he felt before he withdrew without warning. “Answer me, or you'll be left to suffer what happens to mortals when they're unable to complete an order while under compulsion, Miss Reed.” Wiping away the drool, I nodded in reply. His palm touched

my throat as he forced me to my feet by it alone. Raithe hissed in warning when I merely moaned at his manhandling and punishment. Narrowing his eyes on the way I responded to his rough hold, he chuckled softly. “You like it rough, don’t you?”

Tears singed my eyes at the reply. I was too horrified to utter a response to his question. No one had ever treated me like he currently was, in or outside of the bedroom. Only men who’d gently touched, or caressed my body as if I was made of glass. I’d craved a man to take control from me. I wanted to be manhandled and tossed around until every inch of my body ached with delicious pain. The thing was, I’d never had the balls to admit or voice what I liked done to me to another soul.

“Answer me,” he rumbled roughly between tightly gritted teeth.

“I don’t know,” I whimpered through trembling lips. “No one’s ever touched me with anything other than tenderness.”

“You mean they weren’t man enough to dominate you,” he uttered as he shoved me against the wall with brute force. “They couldn’t strip your tightly reined control from you, and they sure as shit couldn’t make you hand it over freely. But you’re a slutty little bitch who craves to be stripped of it, and tossed around until you’re bruised and covered in come. Tell me I’m wrong. You may not know what it feels like, but you sure as shit want to. Do you want to know what it’s like to be manhandled and fucked like a filthy slut?”

Each rough touch, or violent jarring of my body merely made my pussy wetter for him. I’d never been so turned on, or



drenched in my entire life. Tears trickled down my cheeks as he pegged me so easily it started an actual ache in my chest. I wanted to know what it was like. How many times had I imagined being forced to yield to a man? How many times had I craved to feel a man's hand around my throat as he drove his cock into my body while whispering filthy shit into my ear? Raithe silently studied my face while he awaited my reply, but he wasn't enjoying being forced to wait for my internal battle to play out in my head. His hand around my throat tightened, and he made an annoyed sound from deep in his ribcage. Raithe scrutinized me with a look of exasperation.

“I don't enjoy waiting for you to answer me when I ask you a simple question, Miss Reed. It's not the holy fucking grail. Do you want me to manhandle you while I fuck your tight, pretty soft body?”

“I intimidate most men, Raithe,” I snapped icily as his eyes thinned with the tone, I used to answer him. “And if you're fucking my throat, you can call me Elle, or Chevelle. If my lips are wrapped around your massive fucking dick, we're beyond last names.” His brows shot up at my bitterly sharp scolding. Yanking me toward him by only his hold on my throat, he bared his teeth. My eyes blinked at the lengthy, sinister looking fangs protruding from his gums.

“When you choose to fuck me, I'll use your given name, *Miss Reed*. Until then, you are whatever the fuck I choose to call you. Understand?” It took everything in me not to come from the way he'd forced me forward, or the coldness laced in his reply. I'd never put too much thought into being controlled,

since giving any control to another person was dangerous. But the way Raithe touched me, and did so without hesitation, was freaking hot.

“Yes,” I replied after a moment. *Fucking hell, I was really into this shit. Who knew that it only took being kidnapped, brought to a hidden island, forced into a midnight orgy of debauchery, and fed on by vampires to figure out you were a freaky bitch?*

“Good whore,” he cooed sarcastically. “Get on your knees and ask me to fuck your warm throat.” Lowering to my knees, I tipped my head back before licking my bruised, sore lips.

“Fuck my throat like a filthy whore, Raithe,” I parroted Ransom’s order.

Raithe grabbed two fistfuls of my hair and pressed his cock against my lips. “Open your fucking mouth and don’t swallow until you’ve taken every inch of my dick into your greedy throat.” He didn’t force his way in this time. Instead, he merely placed his thickly rounded tip on my tongue and waited expectantly. Ransom’s words were deafening as Raithe smiled wolfishly. “Let’s see what how well you can suck cock, little lamb.” I licked the tip until saliva was coating his length, and then I slammed every inch of him down my throat until my nose pressed against his abdomen. His loudly grunted gasp was the only sound in the room past the groan of agony I released around the enormous cock now buried to the hilt in my throat.

Pain seared my jaw as it screamed with misery. The mammoth prick suppressed the moan in my throat, preventing air, or sound from escaping past its lengthy, thick girth. My palms pressed against his thighs as I forced my tongue past my lips, tasting the coppery tang of blood as I licked the tight, rounded sack of his balls. His shuddered breath, and lust heavy stare was worth the agony.

“Good girl,” he praised as he released my hair and ran his thumbs over my cheeks. “Breathe through your nose, pretty slut.” Unleashing his restraint, Raithe began pounding in and out of my throat with no fucks given about the bruises he’d leave. It was strangely erotic, and hot as shit to know I was making him lose control. The pleasure covering his face was because of me. I was causing his power to slip away, which was giving me more of control over him! It was an exchange of power, as if I’d released mine but held a different sort of power to make this creature lose control of his need to be calm and collected. “Swallow,” he demanded with strain sharpening his guttural demand.

I swallowed around him as he fucked my face harder, without worry or fear that he was hurting me. Raithe didn’t apologize because he assumed something might offend or hurt me. He used me like a whore, and fuck if it wasn’t the hottest thing I’d ever had done to me in my entire life. My fingers slid to my clit, and barely brushed it before I was moaning around him, and coming undone violently. Stars burst into my vision, blinding me of sight. Arousal dripped from my cunt as he grew rougher and fucked my mouth harder yet. The

whimpering moans escaping my throat were smothered by each thrust, and then he stiffened, filling my throat. “Swallow every drop of my come,” he hissed through gritted teeth in a hoarse, sharp demand.

It took effort not to gag or throw up as he emptied his tight balls down my throat. The moment I’d accomplished it, he grabbed my arm, spun me around, and forced my face against the wall. His fingers pushed through the sloppiness of my sex before the three forced their way inside my slit. I cried out loudly from being sensitive from the release I’d given myself. The wet sound of his fingers filling my tight, clenching channel had me whimpering as I barely resisted fighting his touch.

“I didn’t grant you permission to come, Miss Reed.”

“I didn’t ask,” I replied through the swelling of my throat.

“No, you didn’t. Did you?” he countered before a fourth finger forced its way deep inside my pussy. I yelled in shock as he used them to fuck me, spreading me apart from within. “Bad girls get punished.” His fingers withdrew before he spun me around and lifted me. Raithe walked me to the bed as if I weighed nothing. The moment he reached it, he bent me over it and his palm landed against the tender flesh of my ass cheek. I howled in pain as it landed several times in quick, angry slaps until the skin burned and screamed in blistering pain. Struggling to escape his harsh punishment, I thrashed against the bed until he pinned me down with his heavy weight, kissing my back as his palm rubbed over the abused cheek. “I

won't ever allow you to be a brat without punishing you for it, gorgeous girl.”

“You motherfucker,” I whimpered out through swollen, quivering lips. Blinking slowly, I frowned as the fog cleared my mind. “What the fuck are you doing?” I asked in a shallow, panic filled voice.

“And so, the compulsions left your mind,” he mumbled irritably. Raithe stepped back, spinning me around as he pulled a bloodied thumb from between his lips, and forced it into mine. The tang of spice and blood exploded against my tongue as his other hand cradled my throat. “You’ll allow me to offer you pleasure, Miss Reed. After you just sucked my cock like a good slut, I’m inclined to return the favor.” His words echoed in my mind as tears swam in my vision. “If you truly don’t want this, Elle, tell me to stop and I’ll leave you untouched.”

“I am losing my mind, Raithe,” I uttered through trembling lips as tears broke free to slowly trail down my pink cheeks.

“No, you’re not. You’re merely in over your lovely head, I fear.” Searching my face expectantly his eyes closed with regret before he slowly stepped back, allowing me enough room to escape him. “Your bed is waiting for you.”

Before I’d realized my intention, I grabbed his hand and shook my head in a silent plea. “I ache,” I admitted as I drew his hand between my thighs. “Here, Raithe.”

“Gods,” he growled as he picked me up, forcing me to wrap my legs around his waist as he climbed onto the bed and ran his fingertips up my back. His fingers threaded into my hair as

he yanked my mouth against his, claiming it in an angry, demanding kiss. The moment his tongue met and slid against mine, I fought him for control of the kiss. I lost, miserably. Raithe was kissing like a man starved for touch and connection. He left me breathless with need as he pulled his lips from mine and began slowly making his way down my body.

The feverish heat of his mouth warned me as his teeth nipped and teased my nipple. Raithe's tongue flicked over the hard tip as he bit down just hard enough to make a mark in my flesh. A sultry moan of pleasure built in my throat to escape past the swelling of it. Repeating it with the other, Raithe worshipped my breasts rapaciously. Moving lower, he bit softly into the skin of my sides, sending both pleasure and pain fighting for dominance over my mind.

"Fuck yes," I whispered wantonly. The man was avidly consuming my soul and I no longer care if he ruined it so long as he ended his feast on my pussy.

Raithe's long, talented tongue slid slowly between my thighs, which forced a loud cry from my lips of both relief, and pain from being overly sensitive. The man was brilliant at torture and had a promising career in it if his political campaign crashed and burned. Pushing my thighs apart, the man ravished my pussy like it was his favorite meal. Fingers pushed in until the ache was too much to bear, but his tongue lavished everything around them without mercy.

“Raithe! I need to come!” I cried out as the orgasm threatened to send me churning on an endless sea of pleasurable release. “Fuck yes!” I screamed as he increased his pace until the orgasm unraveled, only for blinding pain and pleasure to collide as something sharp pushed into the flesh beside my clit. “Fuck!” I shrieked as the orgasm burst through me like a wrecking ball. I’d never felt pleasure like it before. Nothing in my life had ever made me feel like he was right now. The sheer force of the orgasm caused my entire body to erupt in an out-of-body experience as he continued fucking me with his fingers. My mind demanded I escape from his devilish mouth, but he merely held my thighs with his forearms, trapping me there for him to feast on my drenched flesh. “Oh, shit. Shit, shit, shit, fucking hell!” I bellowed as he latched his lips around my clit, and flicked it wickedly as my fingers twisted, and pulled on his hair to escape his endless torture.

Wet slurping filled my ears as I thrashed on the bed, uncertain I’d survive the orgasm ripping through me. He held me prisoner in it, captive to his endless pleasure he forced me to feel. His dark husky laughter caused my lashes to part as he slowly climbed over me, pushing up to peer down at me as I felt him nudging my legs apart.

“I was right. You’re fucking delicious, Miss Reed.” He slowly pushed a few inches into my pussy, which had my muscles tightening to expel him as they burned from his large, intruding cock. “You’ll take it all for me, slut. Eyes on me and don’t look away. Understand? I want to watch you as your

greedy cunt eats every inch as I claim you.” He thrust once, which fully seated his generously lengthy, substantial cock in my pussy. I screamed while rocking, fighting to escape the agonizing pain he created entering my pussy. The burning from being stretched too far was excruciating, but deliciously so. My walls clamped down hard around the invading member, milking it as it sought to force him out to relieve the painful pressure from being conquered.

“Fucking hell,” I hummed as I adjusted to being split in two from within. “That thing needs a serious reduction.” I was pretty certain he’d skimmed my cervix with his prick. It burned and screamed as he held perfectly still within my core, allowing me a moment to adjust to his considerable size. “You either need to move, or get the fuck out of my pussy, Raithe.”

“You’re not in control,” he stated firmly, slowly withdrawing a few inches to take in the sight of his cock murdering my pussy. “I am, and you’ll feel every inch of me taking you.” He slowly pushed back in as I whimpered as the pain became pleasure. “Besides, the best part about tonight is, only I’ll remember how you feel clenching down on my dick while I fuck you within an inch of your life,” he hissed before he lost control, and began slamming home in my cunt until I was whimpering, moaning, and meeting every thrust of his narrow hips for what he offered.

It felt like hours of him riding my body until he flipped me over and forced me to stare at my pale, sweat covered appearance in his mirror. Raithe’s eyes were the color of the blood slowly dripping from the bite marks he’d made on my



breasts, stomach, and inner thighs. He'd fucked me for hours, forcing me to come more times than I had in my entire life. As I watched, he slowly leaned his lips against my throat, and sank his fangs into my flesh at the same moment he penetrated my slit. I erupted on a violent orgasm, which had my entire body shuddering violently as he fucked and fed from me. Pulling his lips away from the mark he'd made at the base of my throat, he chuckled as I fucked myself on his cock.

“I didn't expect you to surpass the fantasy version of you I created in my head,” he uttered as he nuzzled my neck. “Few ever live up to the versions I dream of, but you did. I'm afraid once will not be enough for me, Miss Reed. It's not you, it's me. I'm a ravenous bastard who isn't done playing with you,” he whirred against my flesh. “Unfortunately, I'm not ready for you to know what I am yet. I don't think you could handle being a part of my world yet. The next time I tell you to remain inside, you'll do so. I won't chance anyone getting their hands on you again. Not even if I enjoyed watching your mind fight against your desire to be fucked by all three of them at once.” His hand lifted, and I watched as he bit into his wrist, holding it up to my lips. “Drink, gorgeous girl.”

Lowering my mouth, I sucked on his wrist as I viewed my reflection in the mirror. We looked like crazed monsters who'd fucked, fed, and bled all over one another. My hair was a mess of tangles, with sweat coating my skin. I was pale from the blood he'd consumed during endless hours spent fucking mindlessly. He'd left no inch of me untouched by him, and it

had been the roughest, best sex of my entire life. And now I was drinking blood. Because why not?

“What are you?” I asked as he pulled his arm from my bloodied lips.

“That’s a longer conversation than we’ve time for tonight. I’m not sure your fragile mind can handle it, either. Thank you for tonight, pretty slut. Not many women have drained my balls with their lips, or made me lose control. You did, and for that, I thank you. It doesn’t change the fact of you being unprepared for what it would mean to enter my world. Once you’re a part of it, it’s forever. When I count to three, you’ll remember nothing past leaving the castle and getting lost in the gardens. A gardener discovered you outside and escorted you back inside. You’ll take a bath with healing salts to soothe the ache and chill of being outside in the storm. Then you’ll retire to your bed and wake up refreshed.”

“Are you going to kill me?” I inquired hesitantly. A shiver rushed through me as his eyes narrowed to angry slants. The lines in his face tightened as he peered at my pale, terrified reflection.

“Not tonight, Miss Reed. One, two ...”

“Wait!” I rushed out the words as I spun, staring at him as he kissed my shoulder blade. “Raithe.”

“Three.”

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE MOMENT I STEPPED outside my room, I was met with my entire team, waiting for me. Smiling with a confidence I didn't feel, I sucked in my bottom lip before clasping my hands in front of me. Tilting my head as I leaned against the doorframe, I ignored the burning pain in my throat and other places. I felt like I'd gotten entirely too drunk and had a romp with a faceless man instead of tripping through the garden, only to end up lost like some little lamb.

“You're going to need to work on those game faces, guys,” I muttered before straightening my shoulders as I leaned forward. “We're damn good at what we do. The connections we have are strong, and if they back out, we'll use the shit we have them to change their minds. This does not differ from any other client.”

“Except the fact of you wanting to make Raithe Dravyn the next President of the United States, Chevy,” Rory pointed out in a hesitant tone. “You're certain you want us to win this?”

“I'm very certain,” I announced. “He's a client. We treat him as if he is any other client we've taken on. Act like your

lives depend on him winning,” I confirmed with a warning, lowering my tone. Stepping further into the hallway, I nodded. Straightening my spine and peered at each face I knew as well as my own. “Let’s show this asshole who we are, and why we’re the best, ladies and gentlemen.”

It took moments to enter the media room with my crew. Atlas, Raithe, and several other men were already within the room, waiting. Raithe’s heavy stare lingered on me a moment too long to be polite before he finally turned back to the phone he’d been staring at. On the table in front of a bevy of monitors sat a table. Without missing a beat, I walked to it and retrieved my phone.

“Get to it, ladies and gentlemen. We’re limited on time,” I uttered. Staring at the screens, I watched as the boys got started with Rory, firing everything up. Penelope slid in beside me, her lips pursed as she waited for the screens to turn on.

“You look like sex on pretty platform heels, girl,” she pointed out with a smile on her cherry-red lips.

“Thank you,” I acknowledged with a knowing grin. Crossing my arms over my breasts, I turned and took in her knife pleated skirt. Her shirt was a Queen Anne styled crimson blouse with ruffles down the middle. It was sexy enough to turn an eye, but still business enough to demand respect. “You look sexy enough to get these pricks hard and leave their boys blue, Penny.” She chuckled at my compliment. “Gentlemen, let’s fire up the engines.”

Colt's amber stare met mine briefly before it slid to the master computer. "Ready, Chevy?" he uttered with his finger on the button. At my nod, he pushed it and documents began moving rapidly over the screen.

The perk of being me was, I'd been blessed with a photographic memory. Mix the ability to scan a photo, document, or newspaper clipping with it, and I could keep my own records inside my head. It was why I'd been able to get through school so easily at such a young age. I'd memorized each assignment, and then scanned the books until I knew each one by heart. There were also the other abilities I had, which made me one of a kind with reading people. I was basically a human lie detector test in heels.

It took over an hour of the team throwing documents in front of me before something caught my eye. Lowering my head, I rubbed my temples before scowling. "Go back five pages, Colt," I directed, crossing my arms over my chest as I waited for him to do so. "There," I pointed out in a scratchy tone.

"Why do you sound like you sucked a dick last night?" Rory asked bluntly, which resulted in Raithe spitting out whatever he'd been in the midst of drinking. My regard moved to him before slipping back to Rory.

"I've been spending my downtime deep throating bananas for in the event they ever start up a shlong sucking contest," I offered with a straight face. "I hear there's big money if you can deep throat enough cocks." Turning back to the document

on the screen as everyone went silent at my explanation, I pointed at a list of names. “I want you to find me dirt on those assholes, Einri. If they so much as laundered a cent, slept with a mistress, or spent time in a cathouse, I want to know about it yesterday. What do we have on Fire Core International, Ana?” Crossing my arms over my chest, I leaned back against the table, waiting.

“It’s a shell company. Money laundering, small arm dealers, and prostitution seem to be their moneymakers. It makes little sense for them to be within the likely candidates we’re checking for the upcoming elections. Does it?” she asked as she chewed her lip.

“No, it doesn’t.” I turned the possibilities over inside my head and smirked as it became clear. “Unless they intend to use the money they’ve made from their illegal dealings for the campaign trail? It wouldn’t be unheard of for criminals to sway the outcome of an election. Dig deeper into their company and find out who has ties to it. Someone here owns the company, and we’re going to need to know who that is. What do you got for me, Rory?”

“Vince Cameron was mentioned last year as a potential candidate for the republican party’s nomination,” she offered.

“Vince Cameron was killed in a carjacking four months ago and left a widow nine months pregnant behind.” Running it through my mind, I turned and peered at Colt. “You said Ross Anderson was also killed in a robbery five months ago?” I waited for his nod of confirmation. It was one thing I loved

about Colt. He was a man of little words, but he was a bloody genius and the best Ranger to come out of the Army. Colt could give Einri an ass whooping any day of the week, but he was reserved and only used force or violence when the need called for it. “That’s both sides hopeful’s who’d been careless enough to mention their intentions for the presidency. Both were young and brought something new to the table. They would have had a damn close race if they’d gone head-to-head. Instead, they’re dead? What are the actual chances of that happening?”

“I’d calculated it for you, but the chances are one point up from zilch. According to their charts, both were in the prime of their lives who’d been in the military. Cameron was married two years ago, and from the articles and reports, he was fit and had been honorably discharged to run for president. Anderson was likewise discharged, and considered a tremendous catch because of his family’s money and political affiliations. For both of them to die months apart? Zilch, Chevy.” Her delicate face tightened with strain as her brain worked out the details I’d already gathered.

“Someone targeted and took them out,” I mused out loud, wincing as one suspect came to mind. “It’s a pity. I’d have enjoyed betting on that race,” I uttered softly, while fighting to control my inner turmoil at the idea of Raithe murdering whomever I offered him as candidates. “Return to scanning the files, Colt.” Hiding the trembling of my hands, I worried my foot, which was a habit I’d picked from my mother. Several

hours later, I caught sight of a familiar name, and the smile which spread across my face was beaming. “I have an idea.”

“Oh shit, there goes our job security,” Rory whispered.

“I heard that,” I said with a false, withering look aimed at her. She offered me an innocent look before chuckling. “I’m thinking Volkov would know who to put his money on. He runs the gambling dens of Vegas. He’s also a huge ass pervert.”

“I was wrong. It’s our dignity about to go down the drain,” she groaned.

“Elias Volkov isn’t willing to share his knowledge. Not even with you,” Einri stated in an irritable tone as he openly glared at me. “Unless, of course, you intend to suck his cock and were merely practicing on the bananas with him in mind.”

“Don’t be jealous of the bananas, Einri. They’re much larger and more satisfying than yours ever was,” I retorted with warning heavy in my tone. “Jealousy is a sickness, and it isn’t a good look on you.” Turning my focus to the others, I smiled. “Pajama party it is, ladies. Meet back here in twenty minutes. Let’s take Elias to church, shall we?” I smirked at the idea of what we were about to do, which Raithe and his ever-growing posse would be blindsided by.

Placing our phones in the basket he’d put out, I offered him a look of annoyance before sauntering off to my chamber. Once there, I stripped out of the thin baby blue dress I’d chosen this morning, and entered the master closet where Raithe had purchased more clothing than I’d ever owned in



my entire life. Picking out a few things, along with an evening gown, I returned to my room to dress quickly.

A moment of uneasiness hit me the moment I peered at my reflection in the full body length mirror. I did my hair in a waterfall braid, which left enough out to play with it during the video call we'd be doing soon. The lace of the lingerie was intricate, with rose-gold flowers embroidered into the lace. Thigh-high stockings attached to a matching garter that hugged the curve of my hips. Beneath it were half-cheek panties, since there was no way, I was walking out of here in anything less. The pushup bra was fitted perfectly to enhance my cleavage without the girls spilling out in a mishap, chaotic mess. I'd changed heels into something sexier. Platform ankle strapped heels added to the curve of my thighs, while adding an extra dash of sex appeal. Turning my head, I peered at the bruise at the base of my neck before leaning closer. A light-colored bruise surrounded two small red bumps. Glancing down at the globes of my boob, I found another set of the strange markings. Swinging my head to eye the bed, I made a mental note to tell Raithe about his insect infestation. Slipping on a robe and snatching the dress from the hanger, I returned to the media room.

The look on Raithe's face as I strode into the room was priceless. I'd chosen the matching robe to the lingerie, which failed to conceal what I hid beneath. Pausing as the clicking of heels echoed down the hallway, I smirked, knowing my outfit would pale to the others.

Penelope entered with boy-cut panties, and only her hair to hide her ample breasts. Her dark, onyx-colored ringlets were thick enough to cover her naked breasts fully. Her eyes flashed with mirth as men leaned forward, peering at her lack of clothing. Rory entered with her strawberry hair up in a messy bun. Her crimson bralette was sheer, with only a small embroidered design to conceal her nipples. The garter she'd chosen was thin to enhance the ample curve of her full hips. Beneath it was a bikini style panty, with bows holding the sliver of material together and up. Behind her was Ana, who was wearing a necklace which held up a thin covering of silver material to conceal her double D's, which bounced perfectly with every step she took. The skirt she wore, if it could even be considered one, which was split up each thigh to allow movement. Under it, she'd chosen to wear a jeweled thong, which made me cringe internally.

“What the hell sort of pajama party is this, and why wasn't I invited?” Atlas asked with both his brows pushed into his hairline. “And just like that, I'm hard.”

“Hard is good,” Ana purred in a sultry tone before winking at him.

“Focus,” I interrupted. “We'll need all of you out of the camera's line of sight. You'll need to be silent throughout the entire call. If you can't be silent, leave,” I ordered while directing my gaze at Einri, who was feasting on the sight of my glittering body. Twirling toward the monitor, I moved to retrieve my phone before tilting my head as feet shuffled over the floor. Dialing Elias Volkov, I turned toward the table to

shuffle through the papers on it, pretending to be oblivious to the video call as it came up on the screen.

“Hello ...” Elias’s thick Russian accent filled the room, forcing me to spin around. “Chevelle Reed?”

“Oh, damn. Hey, Elias!” I stated, before yanking the lace robe tightly over my chest. “Ana, I said, wait until we’re dressed.”

“My bad, Chevy. I thought you said while we’re getting dressed,” she muttered before sliding in beside me. “Hey, Elias,” she flirted with her come hither tone. “It’s been a while. You never call us anymore.” The pout in her tone was believable.

“My mistake, ladies,” he groaned. Pushing his knuckles into his mouth as Rory came into view, he made an animalistic noise before swearing in Russian. “Big party tonight?” Elias asked with a slight pout in his tone.

“It’s always a party when we’re together,” Penelope announced as she entered the camera’s frame. “We don’t even have to go out to have one, Elias.” She leaned over, tracing her fingertips over my cleavage. “I mean, do we not look like fun?”

“You look like a lot of fun, Penelope,” he whimpered as Rory fixed the chains of glittering gems on Ana’s breasts. “You didn’t call me either, Chevelle. I thought you and I had something special.”

“Oh?” I asked, hearing the truth of his claim in his tone. Turning to face the almost seven-foot-tall Russian who’d helped me ruin his competition in a case, I smirked.

Elias wasn’t merely handsome. He was ruggedly masculine, with ink covering him from waistline to his chin. The man had no right to look so tempting when he was basically the devil in reincarnation. D’yavol was what he went by, which was fitting considering the prick could snap his fingers to take out anyone he wanted gone. Vibrant greenish blue eyes stared down at the parted robe with blatant lust glowing in their sea churning depths.

“D’yavol doesn’t do relationships,” I murmured with an impish grin curling my lips, which were lathered in a glossy sheen of crimson. “You are too much of a playboy for me, sir.” I drag out the title, knowing damn well he’d hear the purr of my husky tone through the call. “A girl like me? I need to know I’m the only pussy you taste when we’re together.”

“If you want monogamy, I’d give it to you, Chevelle,” he promised, which was total bullshit.

“And if I said yes to your offer, what happens then?” I countered, silently waiting for his reply.

“I’d give you the universe.”

“I don’t want the universe, Elias. I want forever, but forever is an awfully long time.” It wasn’t a lie. I craved to find one person I could unleash my inner desires on who wasn’t afraid of the darker, painful scars I carried. Elias was a contender, but he also was a slut. Not that I had much room to talk. I enjoyed

fucking strangers I never had to see again. “I’d want a vow of fidelity, and your name written on cunt.”

“I’d be the only man to ever touch it again, darling.”

“Is that so?” I asked teasingly, flirting with him without faking it one iota. The man had women falling at his feet. He’d promise me the moon, but he’d take it back once he’d tasted the sin on my soul. It was just who he was. “I’m waiting, lover boy.”

“There’s nothing boyish about me, Chevy,” he returned huskily. “One-night with you and I’ll give you anything you want in return.”

“Tempting, but I don’t sell my soul to any devil. I sure as hell don’t sell my cunt to one, either,” I growled with venom buried in my retort. “I’m worth more than one-night, or some lousy debt owed, Elias.”

“I know you are,” he murmured thickly. “Дьяволу нужна его Ева, любовь моя,” he continued softly, but there was truth and longing thickly embedded in his tone. “You are my first choice, Chevelle. My papa is after me for grandbabies, and you’d be a fierce, lethal mother for my children.” Smiling at his offer to be the mother of his children, I fought the blush slowly creeping up my throat. His expressive turquoise eyes shimmered as he watched me stick a finger in a lock of hair and slowly twirl it. I knew his every weakness, because I’d studied him for weeks before making a move to approach him with a business arrangement he couldn’t refuse. “You’d be lovely with my child swelling in your womb, моя любовь.”

“I would be fat and miserable, but the result is worth it if the devil remains faithful,” I continued. “But that isn’t why I called you, Elias.”

“It never is, Chevelle. Neither is it by chance you appear in so little. You’re the female version of me, which I am fully aware of. So, what is it you really need from me?” he questioned, pushing his heavily tattooed fingers through his thick, ebony silken strands of hair. “Always business with you, no?”

“Not always,” I returned softly, with regret simmering in my chest. “But regretfully, this time it is. I want to know who you are placing on the roster for the upcoming presidency. You know who is running. I’m not betting, if that’s what you think,” I hurried out as his features tightened with suspicion. “You have my word that it isn’t to use against you, or bet the house with, D’yavol. I’m merely preparing for the campaign trail, and I’d like to know who I am up against.”

“I can’t help you.” He was lying, of course. Turning around, I leaned over the table to retrieve a letter his nemesis had written before I’d sent him to prison for life. My gaze settled on Raithe’s across the room, which caused my lips to part at the murderous visage. “Besides, I merely take bets for the election when it’s been announced who is running.”

“Don’t lie to me, Elias. I could end up the mother of your unborn children one day.” My entire body was strung up tight at the way Raithe’s rage simmered over me. I could taste it in the air hovering between us. He didn’t like me flirting with

Elias, but then the devil wasn't just any man. I actually would fuck him if given the chance. "I've heard Jeffrey Gordon is the democratic nomination, but he's hesitant."

"Jeffrey Gordon isn't president material. He spends his time buried in underage cunts, and blowing thousands up his nose by the hour," Elias snorted before chuckling. "He also owes me millions for his shit odds he enjoys casting his bets on." *Fact.* There hadn't been a single lie in his statement.

"Mikel Hamilton was their second pick, wasn't he?" Grabbing a stack of files, I slid them aside ensuring Elias seen the label which held red letters over the manila envelope.

"That asshole isn't worth their time," he laughed outright. "He'd never throw his hat in for the presidency." I paused as my eyes narrowed at his reply. He'd lied, but why?

"I don't know. I actually think he'd be their top choice." Lowering my head, I arched my ass as I retrieved another file.

"He isn't someone they'd nominate," he lied through his teeth. A smile curved my lips at discovering one choice so easily. "Fucking hell, Chevy. You keep bending over with that pretty ass and I'm going to make a mess like some untried youth at the detention center who just discovered his prick could throw up." *Fact.* That reply made my eyes sparkle with silent laughter his bluntness.

"I told you I was working, D'yavol. I'm a very busy girl these days. That doesn't leave the democrats with many choices, however. My money would be on Howard Graham, anyway." Tossing a file aside, I slid the robe off over my

shoulders as the girls began dressing into their shimmering evening gowns around me. “Spencer Sinclair would be a better option for the republicans, honestly.”

His dark, sinister laughter had my hackles rising at the foreboding sound. “Howard is dead, darling. He’s currently hanging around Alaska, feeding the wildlife. He’d be a shit choice for them now. As for Spencer, he’s not an awful choice, no. They’d never choose him. He’s reckless. The GOP would need to muzzle and leash him in order to control his temper.”

“And that’s something they’d be unwilling to do,” I sighed heavily.

“Not necessarily, Chevelle. People are simple to control when you hold the ones they love most out of their reach. Men like Spencer would fall on their own sword to keep their family protected from men seeking to hurt them if he stepped out of line.” Truth. My stare lifted to Raithe’s, and a vise gripped my heart, twisting it. “He’s too good to be president. Spencer is a man who’d break his binds and bring the entire country down with him.”

“Then Seth Ramsay’s their choice?”

“No,” he whispered with an edge in his reply which caught my attention. He was lying, which meant I had both candidates and all I’d had to do was tarnish my dignity a bit.

Reaching for the evening gown, I slipped it on before turning to peer at Elias. His eyes glittered as much as the rose-gold dress I’d selected to dress in for the pretend party we’d be



leaving for. Smiling at the way he looked at me as if I was worth something, I stepped closer to the camera.

“It’s been a pleasure, D’yavol. Unfortunately, I’m late to a party. Pity you won’t be there to pin me against the wall, and fuck me like I’m your world. I hope to see you soon?” I asked with genuine interests.

“It is my hope as well, love. But I fear I won’t be available for a few weeks. Someone who thought to take my crown murdered my sister. I intend to hunt him down and cut him into a thousand pieces before I send him home to the motherland. His family will follow him until his name is only a ghost story.” Fact. A shiver shot down my spine as I chewed my lip.

“I am so sorry for your loss, Elias. Catch him, and make him regret ever crossing the devil,” I replied with sorrow pinching my features. It was another reason I wouldn’t ever actually consider becoming his wife. In his world, they were always collateral damage. “Надеюсь, твоя сестра обретет покой, Волков,” I offered with conviction, meaning it.

“Me too, precious girl. Enjoy the party, but not too much. I don’t like the idea of my future wife tasting too much pleasure before she lies beneath me.” He smirked before ending the call without another word.

Turning toward the others, I smiled with victory shining in my eyes. “We know our targets. Now the actual work begins,” I announced. “Mikel Hamilton’s the democrat nomination and Seth Ramsay’s the republicans. I want you to find every speck

of dirt you can on them. I want to know the smallest detail, even if you don't think it's worth looking at twice. We leave no stone unturned while we scour for anything on them." Crossing my arms over my chest to hide the nervousness I felt from the stare Raithe was still directing at me. "Let's go people."

"A moment, Miss Reed?" Raithe asked in a tone belaying none of the animosity I felt rolling off of him. Nodding nervously, I followed behind him until we were in the hallway alone. The moment he spun around, he pushed against the wall with his hand cradling my throat threateningly. "You'll not do anything like that again."

"You don't own me, Mr. Dravyn!" I snapped vehemently. "I am merely your employee now, and if you threaten me, my team, or those I love ... I'll bring down the wrath of hell on your entirely too handsome head. I am not a pet you can own, or play with when it suites you. I am a woman who will use what the gods gave me in any fucking manner I deem fit. You and men like you think women are weak, feeble beings but the truth is, we're not. We are stronger, smarter, and more evil than a man could ever become when pissed the fuck off. You'll treat me with respect, and you won't criticize me for using my assets when the need arises for *your* benefit." My chest heaved as anger radiated through me. His shimmering stare lowered to my lips briefly before lifting back to lock with mine.

"I own you, Elle. Keep this in mind the next time you think to allow anyone to see your lithe body in such a manner. I will

cut their fucking eyes out of their skull so you'll be the last thing they ever see. You aren't fucking around with some little boy who doesn't know how to handle you. I know how to keep you in line. Don't make me your villain because I'm fucking good at it." His hold on my throat tightened until the air reached my lungs no more. "Be careful how you speak to me in the future. I'll consider it foreplay and fuck those lovely lips of yours."

"I don't intend to fuck you, Raithe."

"Keep telling yourself that, little lamb. Right now, your pupils are blown, and your back is arched inviting me to bend you over and fuck you into submission. That's lust churning through your system. The anger churning through your mind is only fueling it into a dangerous combination of chaotic desire. I'm not immune to the scent of your needy pussy. Right now, it's currently begging me to stretch it until it fucking aches from being fucked open until it knows who it longs to be abused by. If I were to slip my hand between your lovely, curved thighs, I'd find it soaking wet and welcoming me to use it like the filthy little bitch you really are." I sucked in air as he released his hold on my throat and stepped back as the others rounded the corner.

"You think you're untouchable?"

"I know I am," he shot back with a look of pure challenge simmering in his gaze. "I'd be careful threatening me, Miss Reed. The last woman who thought to try my patients ended up locked in a tomb of her own design. You wouldn't get that

lucky. I've no mercy for those who think to threaten, challenge, or turn against me. I've allowed no one to go unpunished for any of them, and you'll not be the exception. Keep in mind the next time you think to throw signals to your team about our arrangement. If you do it again, I'll end them and chain you up like a pretty pet. I won't warn you again. I'd get some sleep. You're looking pale today, little lamb."

My heartbeat was thundering against my ribcage as I seethed with the need to slap the smug look of masculine amusement from his aristocratic, too handsome face. Raithe turned on his heel before I could do what I wanted to, and left me standing in the middle of his palace, both turned on and terrified.

"Chevelle?" Rory asked as she rounded the corner, staring at my shaken appearance. "Is everything alright? Did he hurt you?"

"I'm fine, Rory. Everything is fine," I lied fighting the tears swimming in my vision. "We have to win the presidency and then get as far away from Raithe Dravyn as possible."

If we didn't escape him, we'd be casualties like all the others who'd displeased him. I would figure out how to get myself and my team out of this alive, even if it was the last thing I ever did. I'd sacrifice myself to save them if it's what it took to get them out of this still breathing. I wasn't a martyr, but I also wasn't willing to lose them to the monster that held the keys to our cages. There was no question of if he was the monster they'd whispered about in the shadows of polite

company. Raithe Dravyn was the epitome of evil and we were all at his mercy.

THE END FOR NOW

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amelia Hutchins is a *WSJ* and *USA Today Bestselling* author of the *Monsters*, *The Fae Chronicles*, and *Nine Realm* series. She is an admitted coffee addict who drinks magical potions of caffeine and turns them into magical worlds. She writes alpha-hole males and the alpha women who knock them on their arses, hard. Amelia doesn't write romance. She writes fast-paced books that go hard against traditional standards. Sometimes a story isn't about the romance; it's about rising to a challenge, breaking through them like wrecking balls, and shaking up entire worlds to discover who they really are. If you'd like to check out more of her work, or just hang out in an amazing tribe of people who enjoy rough men, and sharp women, join her at Author Amelia Hutchins Group on Facebook.

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