

GRIM DELIGHTS

BOUND

SEAN AZINSALT

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Grim and Sinister Delights #3

SEAN AZINSALT

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WARNING

These books are for adult readers who enjoy stories where the lines between right and wrong are blurred. High heat, twisted and tantalizing, these are not for the faint of heart.

I HAVE LIVED IN A SECLUDED TOWER MADE OF GLASS, HIGH ABOVE THE WORLD FOR MY ENTIRE LIFE.

I am special and cannot live outside the safety of these walls, without getting sick and dying. My life is the same every day until my father brings home a man that is my uncle. Everything changes. Father dies and I am forced into a world of servitude.

I discover that my life has been a lie. Everything I had ever been told was to keep me here, trapped in this prison. My Uncle pimps me out for men to use in whatever way they desire. It isn't until a mysterious stranger breaks into my prison that I learn the truth and discover what it really is to love.

Now I am a killer and I am tracking down the man who spurned me and stole everything from me. How can you kill the man you love? My desires cannot stop my revenge.

A dark MM retelling of the Rapunzel fairy tale!

Grim and Sinister Delights is a dark romance series based on classic fairy tales and stories. You will find standalone tales of gay romance that range in darkness and kinks. If you dare to take the challenge, read them all to find yourself lost in a classic that you think you know. These stories are for adult readers and may contain morally ambiguous themes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to give a special thanks to M.D. Gregory for all her hard work. A huge shout out to my writing sisters, Abigail Kade and Drea Roman who talked through many plot points with me. To the best beta-reader Deb Swietek for always making me better and keeping me on track. And to my readers group- Sweet and Salty- Thank you for always making me laugh!

Bound began as a short story in The Dark Kingdom Anthology. I was excited to expand it.

PART ONE

The Glass Tower

PROLOGUE



I hold his life in my hands, and I struggle to decide which course of action I should take.

I love him.

I hate him.

He gave me freedom, yet took everything away from me when I was unable to take care of myself. This man who I can still taste when I close my eyes at night is as much a monster as I am and deserves to find his final end.

But we are bound in ways I cannot explain. Even though I do not, cannot trust him; I still want him, and in that wanting, he makes me weak. Down that road lies my own demise, and I will not be his victim again, even if my desires are overwhelming.

I tighten the garotte, and his arm slams against the rooftop. Once... Twice... Until it drops down and doesn't move again.

I, like every other human insect that crawls on this planet, am bound to so many things. This man, my contracts, the past...

If he hadn't left me that night, I might never have become a killer.

I would never have killed him.

Everything I've done since then has led me to this moment when I get to decide his fate.

I flip a mental coin, and the past rushes back. I am stuck,
once again, in my glass tower.

CHAPTER ONE



I stare out the wall of windows as I have stared out of them every day for as long as I can remember. I watch the birds as they soar through the open sky in ways I can only dream about. Their freedom as they skyrocket up and down between the buildings is both inspiring and maddening to me. I dream of being them, whirling around the city that is my home because no matter how much I wish it, that is a dream that will never come true.

I glance down at the small people, way below my windows, scurrying about on their way to a life I will never have. I wish I knew where they were going and what they were planning to do. A piece of crumpled paper sails past my glass cage, lofted about by the wind, tossing and turning, blown about on its way to an unknown adventure.

I crack the window and hold my arm out, feeling the strong winds blow against my pale skin. A gust rips through the window, and my long blonde hair flies out behind me, tossing as the breeze blesses me with its frigid blast of air. What I wouldn't give to feel it on my body as it caused goose flesh to ripple across my naked skin. But that was not my destiny.

My reflection in the window makes me giggle. I had grown into a man, but I still felt like a child. The passing of time, here in my glass tower, is of no consequence. I am the same as I was at seven or twelve; no matter what age I became, the passing of time barely affected me. My days would always stay the same.

I was nineteen years old, and all I have ever known were these rooms.

The only person I had ever spoken to was my father.

He used to live here with me, but once I was old enough to take care of myself, he left and visited almost every day. It was safer for me that way. Father taught me so many things. He was a scholar and shared his knowledge with me whenever we were together. Our days were spent reading and pouring over the books that he brought to teach me about a world I could never visit. At night I used the gym he had created when I turned twelve, so my physical health wouldn't deteriorate. An entire room of equipment and weights was installed, just for me, so I could remain healthy in my solitude.

I was unique, and the world was a dangerous place for someone like me.

Whenever I voiced a desire to come down from my glass tower, Father would remind me of why I was confined here. My body couldn't survive around other people. I had no immune system, and even an allergy might push me over the edge. I would get sick and die if I ever left these walls.

My Father loved me. He did his best, and I wanted for nothing. He was a very wealthy man, and I lived in the penthouse of one of the tallest buildings in the city. A city I dreamed about exploring, even though I knew I never would. Never could unless I wanted my first excursion to be my last.

Funnily enough, I was no longer scared of dying. It used to haunt my every day, but now it no longer holds the same terror for me. I want to live, but I know that one day it will be my time. It's the inevitable conclusion we all must face.

My prison was at least beautiful, even if it was lonely.

A small glass room took up space in my hallway that cleaned my father when he came to visit. He said it was an oxygenation room where germs could not survive. Anyone who walked through the front door had to push the small red button inside after they closed the front door. It only took a minute, Father said, of the air rushing around and onto them to

stop the germs from coming into my space. The only person I had ever seen use it was my father. No one else even knew I existed.

The penthouse was a vast place with many rooms, and I longed to share it with someone. I craved a companion to talk to, a stranger to break apart the slow passing of time and give me a moments' respite from my existence. I had no friends, no one my age to talk to, and even though I loved him, Father could never be that for me, no matter how hard he tried.

I understood the conditions that fate had placed on me. I did want to live, even when living felt like a never-ending chore. I realized that my father was as much a slave to my illness as I was. It was just the two of us, always.

Father said I was one of the most handsome men in the world, and I took pride in that, keeping my body in excellent shape, and my long hair, silky and clean. I liked to stand in the mirror and rub my hands against the hard muscles that had formed over the last few years. I often admired myself because I hardly ever wore clothes except when my father visited. What was the point?

It had been more days than I could count since his last visit, and that made me uneasy. This had never happened before, and my solitude felt more crushing than ever. I waited for him every day, sitting by the small glass room so I could throw my arms around him when he finally arrived. But the door never opened. The sinking feeling in my stomach told me it might never open again.

The groceries somehow still slid through the small delivery door every week, and I had no idea what I would do if they ever stopped. My father said they were being delivered by a place he trusted who understood how important it was for them to unlock the small door, scoot the grocery bags through, and quickly lock it again. I would decontaminate them before entering the little glass room to bring them inside. Even a stray germ could be catastrophic for me.

What if Father never showed up again?

The sun rose and set many times, and I had no tears left. I felt nothing. I was going to die here alone, and no one even knew I was alive. My stomach kept rumbling. Why should I eat? Why live a life that was a mirage?

Terrifying thoughts flashed through my head, and I will never know if I would have had the strength to follow through with my sinister desires, because, at that moment, I heard the key in the lock.

I scooted back against the wall.

“Danny?” I heard his voice on the other side of the door before it opened. “Danny, don’t be scared.”

“Father?” My throat was dry, and my voice sounded hoarse. I hadn’t spoken in weeks, and all I could accomplish was a croak.

The door opened, and Father rolled into the small glass room in a chair on wheels. A tall and thick man with a dark beard pushed the chair, my father slumped upon it. He looked pale and wilted, like a flower that had lost its life and was drying out. My father pushed the small red button, and air flowed around them, whipping against their clothes and blowing the tall man’s beard upwards.

I stared at them and couldn’t find the words. I felt the wall against my back and realized I was naked. The man pushing the chair stared at me. I flew to my feet and scurried down the hall and slammed the door to my room. The chair’s wheels on the hardwood floor echoed into my chamber as he rolled into the sitting room. I dressed quickly and ran the brush through my long locks. The person reflected back at me in the mirror was scared and small. I stood up straight and pulled my shoulders back.

“Danny?” Father called, his voice muffled through my heavy door. “It’s okay, son. You can come out. It’s safe. There’s no reason for you to be scared, Danny. I need to explain what’s happening, what will happen. Please come out.” He pleaded, his voice sounding weak and wheezy.

Father was old. He was old when I was born.

I opened the door, its slow creak signaling my arrival, and both men gazed at me as I carefully took my first step into the cavernous room. The tall man made me uneasy. His small eyes narrowed as he ogled me, a slight sneer upon his face as if the mere sight of me made him ill.

“Sit down, Danny.” Father sounded tired. It was taking all of his energy to sit up in the chair. He was pale, and his breathing was ragged. I could see him fading as he tried to take a deep breath.

My feet dragged heavily on the floor. My heart raced, and I felt the air chill around me. My fears were running rampant. Who was this man, and what did he do to my father?

“Danny, I need you to meet my brother... Benjamin Gothel, your... uh... uncle.” Father’s eyes were glazed. Perhaps it was guilt for never telling me that we had other family in the world. I stared at him, trying to keep the accusation from my eyes. Father looked as if he were hurt enough.

“Danny... It’s very nice to meet you. I’m sure you have quite a few questions?” My uncle gestured for me to sit. I wanted to run away or yell at them. The anger rose and stuck in my throat. Fear was in its way. I complied, sitting down slowly, a slave to my duty.

“Many,” I managed to say without screaming. This was life-changing; nothing would ever be the same. I could feel a trickle of sweat on my neck. My nerves were raw and edgy, and all I wanted was to run to the window and throw it open.

I had an uncle? Who else did I have in the world that I had never met? Why did Father never tell me?

“I’m sure, Son,” Father said. Uncle Benjamin sniffed and glared at him. I took a deep breath and readied myself for what I was about to discover. “Danny, I am dying. I can’t sugarcoat this for you because it is happening fast. I have been in the hospital for the last couple of weeks, and I have decided that I will not be going back. Do you understand me?”

I shivered and felt my emotions finally bubbling over the point of no return. Tears rolled down my face, and I gasped for breath. I stood up and walked cautiously to him, falling into him and wrapping my arms around him to hug him close. How many more hugs would I get? There was so much I still wanted him to show me, secrets I wanted him to share. He held me and let me cry until I could cry no more. My emotion was spent for the time being, but I knew it would return soon with a vengeance.

“When?” I managed to say, shuddering with fear as he held me weakly.

“I only have weeks to live, son. I will stay here, and Benjamin will help take care of me until I go. I would like to be close to you, son. Can you handle it?” He caressed my hair, his fingers running through my thick threads as he twirled it in his fingers.

“Yes, Father. I want to be with you,” I whispered. I felt as if the ground was opening up beneath me. My heart raced so fast I could hear it pounding in my head.

“Your Uncle will be taking care of you, Danny. He has agreed to look after you when I am gone.” He looked over his shoulder to his brother, who glanced back at him sharply. There was something odd passing between them. Maybe I was a surprise to him too.

I nodded.

We spent the night talking until Father said he was too tired to stay awake any longer. My uncle was quiet for most of the night, but his eyes followed me around as he sized me up. I didn't know him, but I was glad to have a family member to help take care of me. But there was something off-putting about him. He scared me. Hopefully, with time, we would learn to love each other. We were family, after all.

Father lasted three weeks before he breathed his last breath. I held his hand as he left me forever. Uncle Benjamin shed no tears, his stoic and stern face calm as his brother moved on. I retired to my room and cried myself to sleep. When I woke up, Father and Uncle Benjamin were gone.

I didn't see my new caretaker for another week.
Then everything changed.

CHAPTER TWO



“Uncle Benjamin,” I greeted him as he opened the door and walked into the oxygen room. He stared at me as he pressed the button, his hawk eyes showing me how unenthused he was to be here. I was dressed in my white linen jumper and was actually glad to see him, even though it was apparent he had not warmed up to me over the last month. He brushed past me and went to my father’s bar. He reeked of alcohol. I could feel a chill crawl up my spine.

“You have everything you need, boy?” he asked casually, pouring himself some of Father’s amber liquid and downing it in one gulp.

“Yes, uncle. They delivered to me a couple of days ago.” I walked over and sat on the couch, pulling my feet under me and wrapping my arms around myself. “I miss him, uncle.”

“Kid,” he scoffed, a sneer on his face. “Call me, Ben. I am not your uncle.” He turned back to the bar and poured himself another.

I was confused and didn’t understand what he meant. He was my father’s brother, wasn’t he?

“I’m sorry, unc... I mean, Ben.” I said quietly.

He meandered over and sat down beside me.

“It’s time for some hard truth, kid. You don’t know... But I think everyone deserves to know the truth, don’t you? My brother was not really your father, Danny. He paid for you when you were a baby. Your mother was a cheap whore, and

she sold you to him when you were just a brat.” He smiled at me. He was enjoying this. He was lying to me, trying to hurt me. His cruel smile tortured me.

“That’s not true.” My voice cracked angrily. But the doubt had crept in. “He told me my mother was ill and died shortly after having me. He loved her.”

“He paid her, Danny. And according to Jonathan, she did die shortly after she sold you to him. She overdosed. So that part was true. Jonathan lived his fantasy with you. He was never married and wanted a child. He found you when he paid your mother for sex. She was glad to get rid of you, I’m sure. A whore with a brat is not anyone’s fantasy. But he was ecstatic to become your father. I think you need to know the truth, Danny. I’m not telling you these things to hurt you. I hope you understand that. I hate lies, and my brother was an expert at them. I didn’t even know you existed... But I promised him I would take care of you. You want me to take care of you, don’t you?” He took a sip of his drink and peered at me over the glass. His eyes darted over me, taking me in. I wanted to hide behind my hair, to prevent him from seeing me. He made me feel uneasy for some reason.

“I... I’m sorry, but... I can’t understand this. Why would my father lie to me?” I slowly shook my head, trying to understand what I was being told.

“He loved you, Danny. I have no doubt about that. He left you everything in his will and appointed me to be your guardian since you cannot take care of yourself,” he said snidely. There was no compassion in his voice.

“I do take care of myself,” I muttered. I felt as if there was an electric current running through my emotions, spurring me angrily on.

“Oh, you do, do you?” His laughter was like sandpaper. “You have no clue, boy. You are a prisoner in this place and can never leave, you little brat. My brother may have saved you from a life of poverty and coddled you with his affection, but you will not get that from me,” he said snidely. “I expect things from you, Danny, and if you listen to me, I will make

sure that even though you can't leave this place, you will still have a life. Do you trust me?" he leaned closer to me, and I could feel his breath, hot and heavy as it permeated my space.

"No," I said, glaring back at him. "I do not trust you, Uncle Benjamin."

He threw his head back and roared with laughter before he scooted over beside me and placed his hand on my knee, making me flinch. "Good. Human beings are never worth your trust, boy. But I will take care of you. However, everything comes with a price, Danny. You'll learn that soon, too." He stood up and set the empty glass on the table, and walked towards the door. "Jonathan told me that he thought you were like me. Are you attracted to boys, Danny?"

"I... I don't think about girls. You are the only man I've ever met, besides Father. But I look at the boys in the magazines, I guess." I said carefully, wrapping my head around the fact that Uncle Benjamin was more like me than I had imagined.

"Why have you never cut your hair? It's so long... almost obscene." He stared at me, and I could feel his eyes boring into me in a way I had never felt before. I pulled my hair around my shoulders and let it cover me.

"It... Father tried, once. It... Ummm... it didn't work." I said, hiding behind my blonde locks.

"Hmmm... Okay... That's weird. Doesn't matter, though. We'll get even more with it, I think."

He smiled creepily and nodded at me before walking out the door.

When I heard the door lock, I breathed a sigh of relief. I was alone. I had too many thoughts spinning through my head, and I felt dizzy.

Benjamin was correct. I didn't know who I was. Was I Danny Gothel or someone else? Would I ever discover the truth?

I shivered and went into my room and cried myself back to sleep.

CHAPTER THREE



Over the next couple of weeks, Uncle Benjamin visited more often than I assumed he would. He brought me small gifts from the outside world, and I began to cherish his attention and conversation. He wasn't as venerable or educated as Father, but he was worldly and took an interest in things that I liked. He made me feel important, the way I always supposed everyone in the rest of the world felt. It was nice to imagine the lives of ordinary people, even if I could never experience it.

He told me tales of his exploits and regaled me with stories of Father and himself when they were younger. It made me feel closer to Father and took away a bit of my loss, somehow. I suppose having a bigger picture of him, learning new things about his life made the absence of him feel lighter.

Benjamin never brought up my parentage again. It was as if he no longer found it relevant, but wanted me to know the truth. No matter how nice he was, I stayed wary of him. He wounded me gravely and enjoyed the pain he caused me. It was there in his eyes when he watched me. It took me days to come to the realization that it honestly didn't matter. Father was Father, no matter what. I belonged to him, even if there was another man out there who sired me; he was no father of mine.

"Danny," Benjamin turned to me from the bar. "Have you ever had a drink?"

"No," I answered meekly. I had never crossed my mind before. The amber liquid belonged to Father, not to me, and I

had never touched it.

“I’m going to pour you a glass. You are a man at eighteen, Danny, and a man should savor something as delicious as this bourbon. Have a drink with me.” His smile was hard to say no to. I didn’t really want to, but I did want to please him. He was all I would ever have. “I promise that you are not allergic to it. Jonathan gave me a strict list to go by. It’s safe.” He stated importantly, so I would know. He walked over and handed me one of the heavy glasses. The amber liquid smelled acrid and stung my nose as I sniffed it. Why would anyone drink this?

“You’re supposed to drink it, Danny.” He put his finger under the glass and tipped it towards my lips. I opened my mouth and took a swig. It burned. My throat felt scorched, and I gagged as I swallowed. The liquid made me cough, and I wondered how anyone could drink this corroded concoction.

“Benjamin, that is very gross,” I stuck out my tongue before I tried another small sip. He laughed at me, but before long, the glass was empty. Benjamin laughed as he filled it again for me and poured himself another while he chatted about his day in the world.

This glass went down smoother, and I began to enjoy the taste. My head felt a little fuzzy, and I giggled at unexpected moments. I could feel things slow down, and I had a hard time concentrating on what Benjamin was saying to me. I nodded and smiled, trying to keep my head about me. My grin felt like it might bust my face in half. I giggled.

“You have a nice laugh, Danny. It suits you,” Benjamin took the empty glass out of my hand and set it down on the table as he leaned in closer to me. “Everything about you is so perfect looking.”

I blushed. “Thank you, Benjamin.”

He reached up and placed his hand against my face. I leaned into it, enjoying the touch of another person.

Before I realized what was happening, Benjamin closed the distance between us and placed his lips against mine. My eyes widened so broadly I was afraid they might pop out of

my head. But his lips were soft, and I wasn't sure what I should do. He scooted even closer to me and wrapped his arm around my waist and pulled me into him.

My first kiss...

So warm and wet as his hot breath tickled my face.

I moaned, confused by the feelings coursing through me. I never thought I would have a first kiss or any kiss, but I also never imagined it would be with someone as old as my uncle... Well, not my uncle, but still... My head spun as Benjamin slipped his tongue inside my mouth. I grasped the cushion to steady myself as I tried to rationalize what was happening. Should I pull away and run to my room? I wanted to. I also wanted to stay. He was all I would ever have, wasn't he?

He took my face in his hands and pulled back from me. "That was your first kiss, Danny. Don't you want to know what it's like to experience love? What it feels like for a man to touch you the way you have always wanted? What it feels like to touch a man?" He looked at me seriously, and I didn't want to answer him. Of course, I did. I had many fantasies while I sat and looked out the window. But right now, I was in a state of shock.

"You are my uncle..." I said. My brain was foggy, and my tongue thick. I did want to know so badly it burned my insides at night. I touched myself and pretended it was one of the guys from my magazines. But I never thought it could happen. I wanted to say yes. I felt I should say no.

He reached over and slid his fingers up my leg until his hand found my crotch and massaged my hardening dick through the linen. I pushed my legs out and pressed myself into him, feeling vile and confused as I did it. My body knew what it wanted. "You're very beautiful, Danny. One of the most beautiful men I have ever seen, and remember, I am not your uncle. I never have been. Let me show you what you are missing, Danny." He leaned in and placed his lips against mine again. I opened my mouth to him, knowing that I was unable to resist. "Say yes, Danny, and I will show you the world and

how important you can be in it.” His hand groped and rubbed my shaft. I moaned. It felt so good, so right, even though he was never whom I envisioned when I fantasized about a man making love to me.

“Yes,” I said quietly, lowering my eyes so I wouldn’t have to look at him.

Father would not be proud of me.

He rubbed my cock one more time before letting go and grinning wickedly at me. I could feel the flush burn on my face. He stood up and picked up our glasses before walking over to the bar. “You don’t want me, Danny, and I don’t blame you. Someone as beautiful as you... Well, you deserve to have your virginity taken by someone worthy of you. You are my merchandise, son, and I will not have you spoiled. How do you think we are going to be able to take care of you, Danny?”

“I don’t understand,” I said groggily. My cock ached, and I felt dirty because of it. It had betrayed me. “I thought Father left everything to me? Isn’t that enough to take care of me?”

He turned and looked at me pitifully. “If only it were Danny. But your father worked to pay for this place. Your food and bills, I mean, to live here in a place like this... It is expensive, and I am not made of money, but I do want to take care of you, son. I want to be like a... father to you, I do. But... You will have to help me to do that, or we will be thrown out of this place if we cannot pay the bills. You understand that, don’t you? You would die out there, Danny, and I want you to live a long and happy life here, safe behind these walls. I love you already like you are my own.” He walked back over and handed us another glass of the burning liquid. “Drink, Danny.”

“I don’t understand, Benjamin. What can I do?” I was shaky and unsteady, feeling as if the floor had been pulled out from underneath me. I didn’t want to die. I wanted to live as long as my sickness would allow me. Death was not my friend.

“I can bring you handsome men, son. Men who will want to make you feel good and will worship you as you deserve to

be worshipped will fall over themselves to please you. All you will have to do is love them back for as long as they wish. You get something, and they will too. It will stop them from throwing you out onto the street. This will allow you to live here forever in the safety of the place my brother created for you. That's what you want, isn't it, son?" He reached over and put his arm around me and pulled me into him. His hand stroked my hair, and his other caressed my knee. I laid my head against his shoulder.

He was all I had.

What could I do?

If I wanted to live, I would have to contribute, wouldn't I?

If I didn't, I was signing my own death warrant. There was no other way.

"Yes, Uncle Benjamin..." I whispered as I closed my eyes. "I will do what you want me to. I guess... I will have to trust you. I don't want to die, Benjamin, and you are all I have."

"I am, aren't I?" He nuzzled into my head. "My poor sweet, boy. Uncle Benjamin will take care of you, Danny. I will give you a new life and never let anything happen to you. I promise, son."

I fell asleep on his shoulder, but when I awoke, he was gone.

The next day he came back and brought me a television and a small stack of DVDs. Father had said that television was the death of society and hadn't allowed me to have one. I was excited to maybe get a chance to see a movie, a pleasure always denied me, but that was not Benjamin's intention. He didn't bring it for my pleasure. He brought it for my education.

"Being beautiful isn't enough, Danny. I need you to understand what to expect, what you should do to the men I will bring you. You must study these and learn to do these things to please them, do you understand?" He said as he plugged wires into the television.

"Yes." I could feel my face flush, and I sat down on the couch.

“Don’t sit down, son. Pour us a drink. Trust me, you are going to want it,” Benjamin scoffed as he plugged the Television into the power strip. “Only my brother wouldn’t have a goddamned TV. You have no idea what you’ve been missing. Maybe if you do a good job, I will bring you some rabbit ears so you can watch the local stations.”

I laughed at the idea of rabbit ears being attached to the television. It was absurd. I poured the whiskey into the glasses and added an ice cube into each glass with a clink. Benjamin turned to me and smiled, holding out his hand for the drink.

“Almost there, Danny. Now, go sit down on the couch, son, and relax. Drink your drink while I finish getting this ready.” He turned the TV on, and it whirred to life with a burst of static. I wanted to cover my ears, it was so loud. He opened one of the DVDs and slid it into the small machine. It too whirled to life, and soon, a picture appeared.

“Uncle Benjamin,” I laughed as the screen was filled with a sexy nude man. His cock stood straight out at attention, and I glanced around, feeling utterly uncomfortable at watching this with my uncle in the room.

“You’re going to have to understand what it is to touch another man. To please him and drive him wild.” He sat down on the couch beside me. My whole body tensed being near him while the television came to life with two men kissing each other. “Watch Danny, and if you have any questions, you should ask me, and I will explain it to you.”

The men kissed and fondled each other’s bodies before one of the men took the other’s cock into his mouth. I watched in awe as Uncle Benjamin explained it to me and gave words to what was happening on the small screen. Blowjob, eating ass (which made me giggle), fucking... Condoms, bareback, cumming, and all the different positions that two men could have sex in was explained to me in painful detail.

We watched for hours, and Benjamin kept glancing at me. I could feel my cheeks hot with the flush of my desire and embarrassment. My cock ached, trapped within the confines of my clothes. The pain and throb of my body made me feel more

alive than I had in years. I was nervous about doing what Benjamin wanted, but I was also excited. I had never thought I would even meet a man besides my family, and that felt like a miracle to me. Someone who would touch me and kiss me, make love to me... It was thrilling and scary and made my head spin.

Benjamin explained so much to me that I felt as if I should have been taking notes to study later. He exchanged the shiny discs in the player multiple times.

“This is the last one for today, Danny. This is a different kind of video, and you shouldn’t be scared. It’s a natural part of the way some people have sex. It’s called bondage or S&M. One man has power over another, and I would imagine that you could be in either role, depending on what the trick wants of you, okay?”

I nodded, and he sat back beside me. Hooded men, men in ropes and chains and collars, leather, whips, and paddles enveloped my vision, and a cold shiver rolled over me as I watched it. These videos were unlike the others in every way. Dangerous, scary, and much more exciting. My life had been a masochistic adventure already, and this gave voice and definition to the pain and fear I felt every day. An outlet or extension of my captive day to day existence of being captured and subservient to a life I couldn’t escape. Here was a release to that pain, a replacement of never-ending explosions of the nerves that had felt dead and atrophied by my humdrum existence.

I heard the audible moan that escaped my lips, and Benjamin turned to glance at me. I looked over at him, and he smirked as if he knew what I was feeling. Maybe he had felt this too, at some point in his life.

“Stand up, Danny.” His voice was harsh as he barked his order at me.

I slowly stood, aware of the danger that permeated the room. Benjamin stared me down, and I shifted uncomfortably on my feet. My erection was clearly visible through the thin fabric.

“Get undressed, Danny. I need to see exactly what I am working with. How I will best describe you to the men. Let me see.”

I swallowed the lump in my throat and pushed the fear back where it belonged. Benjamin had given me no reason to be scared. It was logical... So, I slowly peeled my shirt off my body and pushed my pants down around my ankles, tentatively stepping out of them and standing in front of him, naked. The cold air sent chills across my body as it clashed with the heat pouring out of me. I shivered.

“Nice. You have a better body than most of the men in these videos, Danny. Even housebound, you have turned yourself into a beautiful man. Your cock... It’s larger than I assumed. Perhaps, I was thinking, you would be the vessel for these men’s pleasure, now I see that other men would love you too. Men who want to be dominated and abused by someone as beautiful and strong as you.”

He licked his lips as he stared at my crotch, and I wanted to cover myself back up. I knew he wasn’t my real uncle, but he was all that I had.

“When was the last time that you felt pain, Danny?”

The question caught me completely off-guard. My mind spun as I imagined Benjamin treating me the way the men on the video had punished the other man. I didn’t want that.

“I feel pain every day about losing Father.”

“No, not that kind of pain. Physical pain, Danny?”

I felt a darkness creep over me. I tried to answer his question, but I couldn’t remember.

“I... uh... I don’t know. I guess... I... I hurt my shoulder a few months ago, lifting weights. It was painful.”

He laughed, and I felt foolish standing there naked and vulnerable in front of him. He looked at me sometimes with such detest that he always made me feel uncomfortable as if I was just a burden. It made me wonder if my father felt the same way when he was alive.

“That is uncomfortable, for sure. Is that the most pain you have ever felt?”

I could feel my shaft losing its hardness as I thought back. I had never really felt pain, I guess. Not the way Benjamin was asking.

“I guess. I mean, I have stubbed my toe, and that hurt. I burned my hand on the oven once...”

“Yes... That is painful. Did you cry out?”

“I... I’m not really sure. I suppose I did.” I tried to not look him in the eyes, letting my vision dart around the room.

“Some of the men I bring you may want something like this, Danny. It would pay much more, and I would keep a careful eye on the situation. There would be some pain, but it should also be pleasurable. Do you understand?”

I let my thoughts drift to the film we just watched. I wasn’t sure that I could do that, or even if I wanted to do that. But I also knew the situation that we were in. I had to remain healthy, and that meant being able to remain here, where I was safe. That would take money.

“I... I guess I would try... But... the whip... I would not want that.” I swallowed what little pride I had left. The thought of being beaten by a whip was more than I knew I could handle.

“We should do some... type of practice. An experiment to see what... it is... you can and cannot handle.” He stood up and took a step towards me. I had to stop myself from withdrawing backward away from him. “Does that seem like an intelligent course of action, Danny?”

I wanted to say no.

I did not want to be abused, even in the name of science by my uncle.

I also understood that if I was going to do this... Well, perhaps I should know what it was I liked and did not like. What it was I could take or not take. I just wished there was someone else who could experiment with me besides

Benjamin. He may not be my blood, but he was still the only person I had to rely on.

“It... makes sense, Benjamin. What should we do?”

“You will have to learn most of this by the films I bring you. I will bring you some of the... toys and clothes you will need... But this is not my forte. Watch and study, Danny. Copy what they do and practice the best you can. But I can help you with one thing. We need to know your pain tolerance.” He sat back down on the couch. “Come here, son.”

I took a couple steps until I was standing beside him, my cock jutting out in front of his face.

“Bend over my lap, Danny.” His voice was not harsh, but it was not a request. It was a demand.

I laid down across his lap, my cock sliding down between his legs, rubbing against the rough fabric of his pants. He placed his palm against my ass and kneaded it.

“People are going to love this ass...” His hot breath came out in a rush as he grasped my cheek in his hand. “So smooth and perfect, Danny. Fuck... I wish I...” He sighed loudly. “Are you ready?”

“I guess.”

He brought his hand down hard against my ass. It stung, but the sound of the slap was worse than the contact. I didn't hate it, and I wasn't sure how I felt about that.

“I'm going to make each one harder. Tell me if it's too much.... So fucking pink already on this alabaster skin of yours... Damn...”

His hand came down, and the contact burned. Once again, it stung... but it wasn't bad. He hit me again, and this time, I felt my cock respond. It hardened and rose up, hitting Benjamin's leg. He slapped me again and again, each slap harder than the last, and I found myself moaning and grinding myself involuntarily against his leg.

“You like that, do you?” He reached down and felt my shaft from between my legs. He pulled on my balls, and my

vision exploded with white spots. It hurt, but I loved it. His hand hit me harder, and I moaned, stuffing my fingers in my mouth.

“You’re... Fuck, Danny... You are...” He let go of my cock and rubbed my ass gently before slapping it one more time. The sound was like a crack of thunder, and I cried out, whimpering as I felt the blood rush through me, leaving tingles across my skin. “Okay... That’s great... Damn... Was that too much?”

“No. I... I think I liked it.”

“Good. Sit up, Danny. Here...” He scooted over, so I had a little more room beside him on the couch. “Sit beside me. I think we only need to do one more thing today. You need to keep watching and practicing, Danny from all of the movies. But I think you should at least know what it’s like to...”

He stood up and stared down at me, appraising me as his eyes swept across my body... My cock and then slowly up to my face. My ass still tingled, and I could feel the flush spreading across my face.

“Unzip my pants, Danny.”

I stared up at him, my heart racing, scared of what he was asking me, but also excited, and I felt so guilty about it. I depended on him. I needed him.

“I said, unzip my pants.” He grabbed me by my hair and wrapped it around his fingers and pulled, bending my head back harshly before pulling it back towards his crotch. “Do it!”

I slowly reached out and found his zipper with my fingers and gently pulled it down. He was hard. My knuckles brushed over his girth.

“Now unbutton my pants and slide them down.”

I did it. His cock caught on his underwear. As I freed it, I watched it bob up and down in front of me like a viper.

“You need to know what it’s like to touch a man. To let a cock slide into your mouth. Giving a blowjob is important,

Danny. Every man will want you to... take him between those plump, pink lips of yours. Is this uncomfortable for you?"

"Yes, Uncle..."

"I am not your uncle, Danny. I'm just a man who is taking care of the mistake his brother made by bringing you into his life. But I will take care of you... I promise. I have grown to care for you, Danny, as much as my brother did. But there are no lies between us... No fake family connection. I am Benjamin, and you are Danny... Take my cock in your hand."

My hands shook. I grasped it in my palm and felt the heat radiating off of it. It jumped in my hand. I could feel the throb as the blood pumped in and out of it. It was thick and veiny, but not as large as mine. Still, it was scary to hold it in my hand. The first man I ever touched... Benjamin.

"Stroke it..." I let my hand rub up against his shaft, and he licked his lips as he stared down at me. "That's it, just like you stroke your own. We're both men, Danny. What feels good to you also feels good to me. Remember that."

I fisted his cock. The position was different than when I touched myself, but I found a comfortable, steady rhythm. I rubbed my fingers across the head of his cock as I liked to do to myself. A moan escaped his lips.

"Is that good?"

"Yes... It's good. Most men will not want this for long. They want something more." He gripped me by the back of my head. "Open your mouth and hold your tongue out."

I acquiesced and did not refute him. He placed his large mushroom head on the tip of my tongue.

"Lick it."

I swabbed my tongue around him, surprised by the taste of him. His musk was... heady, and I inhaled his scent through my nose as I tasted him.

"I am going to push in. There is so much for you to know, Danny. You want to open your throat to me as much as you

can. Inhale through your nose and think of swallowing me as far as you can into yourself.”

He pushed his cock slowly into my mouth. I felt him slide over my tongue gradually and deliberately until he was near the back of my mouth. When he hit the back of my throat, I choked. And he soothed me, rubbing my head.

“It’s okay. Slowly, Danny. Open to me...”

I reached up and touched the base of his shaft as I had seen the men do in the movies. I had watched how effortlessly they did this, and I tried to emulate them.

I gagged again and pulled off his shaft. His head popped out of my mouth and bounced in front of me.

“Again. Slowly... Take as much of me as you can and then use your mouth... Good... Up and down, Danny, taking more and more... Open up for me, Son.”

It took me many minutes to stop gagging. He was patient and calm as he slid in and out of my mouth. I could taste something bitter on my tongue as he grabbed me by the back of my head again and pushed himself further than he ever had.

“Nice... That’s right... See you’re getting better... Fuck... your mouth is so hot and wet... Those lips, Danny... We are going to make a fortune. Enough to keep you here forever. Fuuuuuck...” He moaned as I felt his pubes push against my lips.

I was proud that I had finally taken all of him. I felt like I had accomplished something important, a lesson in my tutelage that would serve me well for what I had to do to stay here in my safe house. To live. This was not something I hated. It was something I craved, even if I didn’t understand what it was before. This connection between two men... It made me ravenous, even for Benjamin.

I felt him pick his pace up as he slid in and out of me faster and faster until he was smashing his large head against the back of my throat. I tried to open and not gag, and I was relatively successful as he held me in place and pumped his

cock hard into me. My nose smashing against his pelvis with each thrust.

It burned.

I groaned as my cock unleashed all over his legs as he stood in front of me. It was an orgasm that made my vision white out, and I gripped onto his waist as he continued his assault of my mouth. My virgin mouth that he had taken as his. How far was he going to go with this? What else did he plan on showing me?

I felt his cock spasm as he unloaded his cream inside me. I wanted to gag and spit it out. It was salty and bitter and filling me to the point of overflowing.

“Swallow.” He barked as he pushed his cock as deep as he could.

I did.

It made me feel dirty and used. I would have to get used to that. Would all the men want me to do this to them?

He pulled his cock slowly from my mouth and rubbed his head against my lips slowly, appraising me as he tilted my head up to look at him.

“That was very good... for your first time. We will need to do this daily, so you get better. These men, they will expect you to be perfect as they use that mouth, Danny. Did you like the taste?”

“Yes, Benjamin,” I lied.

“Good... You will get used to it. You will get used to all of this. You are going to be a literal god of sex, Danny. That body and face, those lips and ass... Jesus, that cock... Men are going to fall over themselves for a night with you. You will live as you never dreamed, Son. I promise you. Lick the last few drops off, Danny.”

I stuck my tongue out and swatted at his slit, cleaning him. He reached down and pulled his pants back up and stuffed his cock back inside. I was confused. Part of me was happy that it was over, but another part of me wanted more.

“Clean yourself up and put your pants back on, Danny. That’s enough for today. You will have your first client next weekend. You have six days to prepare yourself. Learn how to use the dildo and make yourself ready. Are you excited?”

“Yes, Benjamin.” I was excited and nervous.

“I have a surprise for you. Since it is your virginity for sale, Danny. I think you should pick the man who will take it, don’t you?”

“Yes. Thank you.” It did help to relieve my anxiety.

Uncle Benjamin pulled out his phone and showed me pictures of the many men who wanted to be my first. There were so many it made my head spin. I found the one quickly. His blue eyes were bright and wide as he stared at me on Benjamin’s screen. I chose him, and Benjamin smiled at me.

“Nice choice. He is a Wall Street man, Danny. He can afford you,” he said as he placed his phone back in his pocket. “He will be here Saturday night. Remember to do everything I told you and be in position like I showed you. This is one lucky man, Danny.”

He was easy to choose. He was a tall and muscular man with broad shoulders and a short beard who looked manly and strong. His photo reminded me of an actor I admired in my magazines—someone who played a character called Captain America. I had dreamed often of him.

I played with the toys Benjamin brought me over the next week. The dildo was an experience I would never forget. The pain of it as I slowly slid it inside my hole was excruciating at first. Now I loved it.

I watched countless hours of porn, preparing myself for this handsome man who would do things to me no one had ever done. To say I was excited would be an understatement, and I knew what that made me.

I was no better than the woman who gave me life. I was a whore, just like her.

Maybe she had done it to save her own life, too. Maybe we were the same. Maybe not.

CHAPTER FOUR



Benjamin gave me a list of things I should do to get ready. I was not a fan of the enema, or him showing me how to do it. That was the most awful thing I had ever done, but he said it was necessary. This was now my job, and I had to take it seriously.

I never thought I would have a job. The thrill of it sent tingles up my spine when I thought about how normal it was. I was more like those faceless people I would never know than I thought, thanks to Benjamin. It made me feel proud, like I was a part of a normal everyday human existence, even if I knew that wasn't really true.

Benjamin said being a courtesan was an important job, and even kings and presidents paid them respect.

I stood in front of the mirror and brushed my hair until it hung shiny and full. My wavy blonde hair was so long, it usually trailed behind me. But I had pulled it back until some of it set on top of my head, while the rest fell down to below my waist. I wanted it to be perfect. I needed to be perfect.

I had worked out earlier and pushed my muscles to the point of exhaustion, just the way Benjamin had asked me to. My body was pumped and showed the definition I had worked so hard to achieve. I looked like the men in my magazines. I put the drop of cologne on my wrists the way he asked me to, and my pale skin glowed in the dim light of my room.

I was as ready as I would ever be.

I lay naked on the bed, scared of what was about to happen, but also excited. I never thought I would get to experience lust with another man, but here it was- finally happening.

Tonight, I would know what it was to be touched by someone who loved you.

I heard the door open and the sound of the oxygenated room whirl to life. It wasn't long before the man entered my room as I laid across my bed. His short dark hair gleamed as he entered the room. My blue ceiling light casting shadows around him as he stood there gazing at me.

I was excited and scared about what was about to happen. This man would take something from me that I had thought I would never lose. This man would help me to feel alive.

He didn't say anything as he took his clothes off. He kept his eyes focused on me as he unbuttoned his shirt and let it fall to the floor. His body was thick with muscle. He kicked off his shoes and undid his belt, licking his lips as he unzipped his trousers and let them plummet to the floor, his belt clinking as it landed on the hardwood.

Even in the dim light, I could see his erection. It was larger than mine and much thicker. I gulped, scared I wouldn't be able to handle it. He strutted towards me, his cock bobbing up and down as he approached me. He crawled up on top of me from the foot of the bed, and I quickly found myself between his large muscular arms as he braced himself on either side of my head. He bent down and sniffed my hair.

"A virgin," he chuckled. "Do you know how hard it is to find someone like you in this city, boy?" He bent down and licked my chin before his mouth found mine. He tasted of alcohol, just as Benjamin had when he stole my first kiss. I liked it. The taste of whiskey on his breath was not unpleasant. His tongue forced its way inside my mouth, and he swirled it around. I did the same.

His kiss was electric, much more passionate and needy than the one Uncle Benjamin stole. This one was demanding and dominant. His strength and dominance demanded me to

give up control. I curled my toes as he sucked on my tongue and bit my bottom lip, a soft moan escaping my lips.

“I brought you a present, boy. Do you like presents?” His voice was deep and raspy as if he had yelled too much. I sometimes yelled out the window. No one ever heard me as my voice was carried away by the strong winds.

“Yes,” I groaned as his stiff shaft rubbed against mine. “I do like presents...”

“Good. I have a big one for you. Now... Are you going to be a good boy and do everything I say?” He pushed his pelvis into me, and I reached up and put my hands against his beautiful, firm chest. I grabbed some of his chest hair and gently pulled on it. It was mesmerizing. I had never seen a man like him before, and I felt my cock jump with excitement. His masculinity was overpowering. I could smell it rolling off him. His pheromones driving my desire forward, urging me to let go and give myself over to his power. I was ready.

“Yes. I am here for you. I chose you, out of all the men, to be the one to...” I could feel the blush spread across my face. “to be with me.”

“To steal your virginity, you mean,” he snarled as he bit my lip and pulled. “I am going to show you things you have never seen before, boy.”

He sat up. My cock was pushing between his ass cheeks as he slowly ground himself against it. “Damn... that cock of yours is almost as big as mine. But it’s not your dick I want tonight.” He licked my collar bone up towards my ear and buried his tongue inside. “I brought something for you, boy.” He caught me staring at his large cock and grinned. “Besides that. I want you to touch it. Take it in your hand.”

I did. His cock was wide and thick, and my hand barely reached around it. I let my palm slide up the length. So long... so wide... He was going to hurt. I felt my ass clench at the thought of it inside me.

“Stroke it,” he ordered. “Mmmm... that’s good, boy. Roll the foreskin over the head.”

I pulled the extra skin he had, and it moved over his massive head. I was enthralled by his foreskin, and I pulled it between my fingers. Mine was circumcised. Father and I had studied it in the health class he had taught me. His foreskin was beautiful. It was hot.

I was hot.

I felt the sweat bead upon my brow, and I wiped at it. My nerves were on edge, and I gasped as he scooted down and placed our cock heads together, pulling his skin down over my cock and covering me with his skin. He then pushed himself into me, and I moaned as he stroked us. I grasped onto his massive shoulders as he thrust gently towards me, our cock heads rubbing together as his large hands kept up the friction on our shafts.

He took one of my hands and moved it to his nipple. I grasped it, and he gently squeezed my fingers until I was pinching them. He moved his hand and pinched my nipple too. I bucked my hips up into him, and he laughed, letting go of our cocks. His foreskin slowly peeled itself off of me. I shivered. My nerves raced as I stared at him.

He reached down to the foot of the bed and pulled up two ropes. "I told you I brought you something. I want you to let go, boy, and let me use you the way someone like you should be used by someone like me. Understand?" I nodded, a little afraid but also excited. I was glad Benjamin made me watch all of those movies.

He raised one of my arms above my head and used the rope to bind me. My eyes darted to his, and he shushed me, grinning at me as he gently pulled my other arm over my head and wrapped the rope around that one too, securing me to the slats on my headboard. I pulled. They were tight enough that I was trapped. I was now his to use, and I could do nothing about it.

He placed a finger against my lips. "Shush... this is the way I like to do it, boy. You want to please me, don't you? You want me to please you, too. This will make it better for both of

us. Trust me.” He bent down and nipped at my lips again as his hand slapped me gently on my thigh.

“Open your mouth,” he ordered roughly, as he scooted up and sat near my chest. His large cock rested on my chin. “I can’t believe I get to be the first one to slide between those perfect lips.”

Benjamin must have lied to him. I only nodded.

“Do you want to taste me, boy?”

I nodded.

“Answer me. Call me, sir, when you talk to me. You want to suck this cock, boy?”

“Yes... yes, sir.” I could feel my eyes lust over as I stared at his monster cock. I did want it unlike I had ever wanted anything. I had been watching porn and blowing Benjamin for over a week. I had pleased myself with dildos and anal beads as I learned to use them. I was primed and ready to finally be with a man. It was a burning need by this point, and this alpha man that wanted my subservience was driving me insane. My balls ached, and my cock pulsed with desire.

I opened my mouth and felt his cock glide over my lips and into my mouth. He pushed himself slowly into me. “Make sure you don’t use your teeth, boy. I would hate to punish you. You wouldn’t want me to have to punish you, would you?”

I couldn’t answer, but no, I didn’t. Yes... I did. I could feel him inside my mouth as he pushed himself back farther, his cock hitting the back of my throat, and I gagged. He was so much bigger than Benjamin... His fingers went between my teeth, and he held my mouth open as he pushed himself back and forth over my tongue. “Use your tongue,” he commanded, grasping my hair and pulling my head back, allowing his cock to go further into me. I could feel it hitting my tonsils and pushing down my throat. My eyes watered as I tried hard not to gag as it stretched my throat. It was more than I had ever swallowed, but I opened myself completely to him as he forced more of his cock inside me.

I lay there, letting him use my mouth, trying hard to please him, knowing that if I didn't, my life would change drastically. It could even end, so I needed to please him. I must make him want me more than he had ever wanted anyone. He was the first, but I needed to make sure he was not the last.

I moaned as he thrust into me. It hurt as he bruised my tonsils, but part of me enjoyed it, and I tried to focus on that feeling. Every now and then, I could feel his pubes hit my nose and tickle me with their coarseness. I liked that. I inhaled as much as I could, the musky odor making me want to beg for him to use me harder.

I pulled gently at my bonds, which only made him grip my hair harder. Was it always like this? Did most men want to dominate another during sex? I didn't mind. In fact, I was made to play the subservient part. But I knew inside me was a man who wanted to be the one punishing the other. I had once been pure, but now I had rage buried inside me. The lies of my father, the demands of my uncle... I wanted to cause pain as well as feel it. I longed for it to wash over me.

"Enough," he said as he slid out of my mouth. "I want this virgin hole, boy. Do you want to feel me inside you? Do you want me to fuck you the way you deserve? My little whore slut... I want to fucking destroy this hole... Goddamn..."

My stomach flipped. Part of me wanted to laugh at his dirty talk. It was just like the boys in the movies, and I thought that was funny. I struggled to pull myself up a little. The ropes tightened with my pulling on them, and I could feel them biting into my flesh.

"Answer me, boy." He struck me across my cheek with his hand. I could feel the sting as it traveled across, stunning me.

"Yes," I said, feeling a tear slide down my face. "Yes, sir."

He grinned, and it was lascivious and ominous. I was his prize, and I chose him, but I was not the one with any power here. He had bought me for his use, and that thought raced across my mind. I was nothing more than a body and a pretty face to him. A whore... slut... fuck toy.

He lifted my legs over his shoulder, and I felt the trickle of something wet and cold run down my crack. He inserted one of his thick fingers inside my hole, and I grimaced as he entered me. It burned and felt painful. I let out a hiss as his knuckle passed inside me.

“You are so fucking tight, boy... You’re gonna feel so good when I’m inside you.” He inserted another finger, and I could feel the stretch of what he was doing. I wriggled against his fingers, egging him on, glad I had used the dildo on myself for the last few days. If I hadn’t... I can’t imagine how much this would hurt. I decided to play the victim for him.

“Is it... going to hurt?” I whispered as I bit on my bottom lip, trying to look as innocent as possible.

“Yes. It is going to hurt... bad.” He grinned menacingly before leaning in for another kiss. “But it won’t hurt for too long. Breathe through it, and eventually, you will like it. I promise. My cock is going to make you see the fucking stars, boy.”

I felt his fingers withdraw, as the tip of his cock was pressed against my hole. He pushed, and I threw my head back and howled as his thick meat slowly entered me. Fuck... it hurt as much as I thought it would. He was too fucking big.

“Oh God! Please... It hurts,” I begged as I felt him inch in further. “Stop... God... it feels like you’re...”

“Ripping you in half?” He laughed as he placed his hand around my throat and pushed further inside me. It did feel as if he were ripping me in two as he slid into my guts. Tears flowed from my eyes, down my face, and dripped onto my chest. I didn’t have to pretend... this was agony. He leaned over me, and my knees pressed back to my head. I was folded in half as his lips met mine, his hand still around my throat.

“Shhh... It’s gonna be okay, boy. Just a little more,” he tried to soothe me as he rocked his hips slowly back and forth, sawing into me. After a few moments, some of the pain alleviated, and it was almost bearable. “It’s halfway in... are you ready, boy?”

“No,” I managed, hissing through my teeth.

He raised himself further over me, pushing me until my knees were pressed into the pillow on either side of my head. My ass was straight up into the air as his weight bore down on me. My cock sat just a few inches away from my face, and I felt him force the rest of his girth inside me.

“Aaaaah!” I cried out as he slowly ground his pelvis into me, his large cock spreading me and opening me like I had never been opened before. It felt like he had impaled me, and my vital organs would be fatally wounded. I was trapped beneath him and couldn’t have escaped if I wanted to. But escape was not a choice for me. This was now my life. I threw my head back and tried to find the pleasure of being used by him.

I felt him slide out and then slam back into me. It felt like a jackhammer that was trying to break through to the other side. He thrust himself hard in and out of me and groaned and hissed as he took my virginity. I could feel my eyes roll back in my head with pain as he used me. I felt the pain slowly subside, and pleasure began to roll through my body as he hammered himself into me. He fucked me hard and then slow until I was groaning and grinding into him like the bitch in heat he wanted.

Just like with the dildo, it did get better. I reached up and grabbed the ropes that were cutting into me and used them to lift myself up as much as I could. I had no control and was just a puppet for him, just as I was in the life I was leading. However, I found that this loss was something I enjoyed. I liked being his doll, his boy, his toy, and he played with me until the sweat fell off of his face and onto mine.

His kisses were hungrier than before, and his thrusts became wilder and more erratic as he pummeled into me forcefully. I felt him spasm, and I knew that he had just unleashed his load inside me. He collapsed on top of me, and I felt his hardness wither as his cock slowly withdrew from my hole.

He was heavy, and I couldn't breathe easily under his weight, but there was nothing I could do. So, I laid there until he groaned and rolled off of me. Without a word, he grabbed his stuff and walked out of my room, leaving me tied to the bed frame, his cum dribbling out of my ass.

I heard him and Benjamin speak, their voices muffled before Benjamin came into my room, grinning from ear to ear.

“We're going to be safe, Danny. I think you are a hit.” He untied my bonds, and my hands tingled as the blood rushed back towards them.

Benjamin and I celebrated with a glass of whiskey.

CHAPTER FIVE



That man may have been my first, but he was not my last. At least he was gentle. Some of the other men were cruel in their lovemaking, but most were just sad and lonely.

I allowed myself to serve the men that paid my uncle for a night with me. I became an expert at giving pleasure, but the bliss I received still left me feeling cold and empty. They didn't care for me, they just used me for their own needs, and I had to remember my own when I was with them.

My body had hardened as much as my heart with all the weightlifting I did during the day. Even I thought I was beautiful, at least as beautiful as the men in the magazines I used to care about. Now I cared about nothing but giving and receiving pleasure and pain

Uncle Benjamin brought a man over for me to pleasure every weeknight, and the weekends were mine alone. Mostly, I would sit in my room and read one of Father's books from his study. Sometimes, I would pour myself a glass of bourbon and cry myself to sleep. Other nights I would sit by the window and dream of a different life. Those dreams now felt very far away.

Months passed, and the number of men I had sex with grew.

Uncle said that the men who he brought in were sterile and clean, and I was never to let another man have sex without a condom, ever again. I didn't know, but Benjamin scolded me,

and he made sure I had a steady supply of condoms in my dresser. He was a sad man, too. We deserved each other, it seemed.

Sometimes the men wanted to talk before or after they used me. They would tell me tales of life outside my walls, and I learned more than I ever had before. The world was a scary place, even for those who didn't die just from living in it. Their stories made me long for a different life. But wishing for the impossible would accomplish nothing. I was safe here. This is where I belonged.

I sat by the window and watched the birds soar on the wind. I would never escape this life. My tower was my world.

Uncle Benjamin wanted me to trim my hair, and I refused. I knew that it would do no good to try. The last time father tried to cut my hair, his scissors broke. My hair was soft and supple, but it was also thick and unbreakable. Father couldn't understand how that could be, and I, too, was at a loss. It was what it was, and why should I worry about it. I kept it tied up as tight as I could manage most of the time, or I would trip over it. I only left it undone when I brushed it.

Over the years, some of my hair had fallen out while I brushed it, and I had saved them in a drawer in my room. One night, I had a thought, and I gathered them all together and weaved them into a braid, leaving the last half undone and sewed it onto a piece of fabric that I then glued and tied onto a long stick. A whip. My very first piece of an arsenal I would soon find myself in possession of.

Benjamin saw my desire for some kind of control over my life. I had felt adrift as I continually gave myself over and over to the pleasure of others. I confessed my desire for control, and Benjamin smiled and said he could see what he could do. I was fine with being the vessel for their need on occasion, but I needed some kind of variance. I grew to like being tied up and spanked. I craved verbal abuse when an alpha male wanted to dominate me, but I wanted to see what lay on the other side.

A couple weeks later, Benjamin brought a large tattooed man into our home. Over a month, he trained me during the

day, and I felt strong and powerful whenever I made a man lick my boot. I loved the leather and started wearing my harness around the house most of the day. Feeling it rub against my pale skin made me feel alive.

He taught me how to use my whip. How to make someone feel assaulted and abused without causing real harm. The toys and tools he brought me to explore gave me a sense of power. The subs he brought into my house for me to practice on, to use, to bend them to my every will, taught me things about myself I never knew.

I felt stronger and healthier than I ever had.

Soon, Benjamin installed a sling in my room. Rubber sheets, for when I needed them. A small cross was attached to my wall so I could handcuff or chain people to it.

I was ready, but the clients rarely came for this type of service.

My place in the sexual chain rarely altered. Men continued to fuck me. I kept sucking their cocks and allowing them to get off however they wanted. Once in a blue moon, someone would want me to dominate them, and I did. I had a client who liked to be led around like a dog in his collar and drank my piss out of a bowl. He didn't want anything else, except punishment when he was bad, and he was bad a lot.

“Danny, I have something special for you tonight. I have switched the clients out, and you have three men coming over at once. The fee is quite large, Danny. I couldn't say no to it. We really have to replace the oxygenator soon, and that is outrageous. Are you okay with it?”

“It's Monday?” I asked. Time here in the tower had little meaning to me.

“Yes. I know that means four more nights of... other men, but I can't assume that will be a problem. Are you okay with it? I don't really know how I could cancel now.”

I stared through Benjamin and nodded. What did it matter? One man, two or three... It would all be the same. At least it might alleviate some of my boredom. There had been many

scenes of group sex in the films I watched. Hopefully, it would be something new and exciting. I craved something different.

I lay in my bed and waited for them to arrive. It was later than usual, as these men were coming from a bar where they were part of a bachelor party. Marriage... A happy ending? That was not something in my cards. My life was now just a life of servitude, whether I was giving or receiving pleasure. It was still not for me.

I fell asleep while I was waiting and did not hear them enter. Something tickled my bare thigh, and I awoke abruptly, jumping up, my eyes alert as I scanned the room. Three men stood naked around my bed, wearing masks. My heart beat rapidly as I tried to ascertain the danger if any. Three? These must be my clients. The masks were alarming—black cotton with only their eyes showing through and their lips dark underneath.

“Relax... Sorry for waking you. We... uh... wasn’t sure what we should do.” The shortest and stockiest of them said quietly. He was beefy with dark curly hair across his chest. His cock was already hard and as beefy and stocky as the rest of him. It wasn’t long, but it was wide.

“The masks?” I asked, shaking the sleep out of my head.

“It’s for our own... identities. It’s not that we don’t trust you or your uncle... But we have reasons to keep our identities hidden while here in your penthouse, and it’s easy to install cameras and blackmail. Our families would not like that.” The one at the foot of my bed laughed. He was of average size and very lean, his hard muscles stretching as he breathed. His cock was long and thin.

“I don’t trust anyone.” The man beside me to the right reached down and stroked my smooth chest with his fingers, leaving trails of fire where he touched me. “Especially your... uh... uncle. No offense.”

“None taken. I don’t... I guess there’s a lot I cannot understand about the world, still. But I don’t mind the masks. It’s different.” The words spilled quietly and slowly from my mouth as my cock started to lengthen and harden as I looked at

these three men and finally back to the one touching my chest. His green eyes stared into me as if he could see something I couldn't. His chest and shoulders, his arms were corded with muscle, and he had a peppering of light hair across his chest. He was big. I glanced down at his cock and swallowed my gasp. He was huge. A thick and long cock awakened under my gaze, and he slowly started to harden as he touched me.

“What would you like, gentlemen? My uncle didn't say.” I lay back on the bed and leisurely placed one of my hands behind my head as my cock stood up at attention.

“I want to feel that cock up my ass.” The short one said. “Maybe fuck you too?”

I nodded and glanced over at the thin one as he sheepishly laughed.

“I... uh... I'm good with whatever. I like it rough... but if you're not into that...”

“Rough is okay... I feel like Goldilocks. Are you my three bears?”

“I'll be whatever you want. You are one of the most gorgeous men I have ever seen. That hair... Jesus... It's amazing.”

“Okay, bear number two.” I grinned and glanced over to the gorgeous piece of man flesh to my right. “And you, bear number three?”

“I'm gonna fuck you until you can't walk.” He growled dangerously. “You are everything your uncle said. That's a little fucked up, isn't it? Your uncle as your pimp?”

“We live the life the world has dealt us, don't we?” I hissed, anger starting to flare inside me. “Who are you to judge? You're here too. Paying for my body, aren't you?”

“It's worth every dollar, so far. Tonight is all about you and us. We don't... we won't be touching each other, so it's all about us pleasing you and you pleasing us. Understand?” Sexy bear number three said seriously. Were they brothers? That would definitely be interesting.

“Sure... Whatever you want. You paid for me, after all. Shall we begin?” I sat up, and the sexy man to my right, bear number three, pushed me back down.

“Stay just like that...”

They crawled up onto the bed, and all three of them started licking me, kissing my skin as their hands kneaded and caressed me. Bear number one, the stocky one, raised my arm above my head and held it there as he licked my underarm and pinched my nipple between his fingers. Bear number two started sucking on my toes and licking my feet. I pushed them against his mouth and face as I writhed on the bed.

Bear number three, and I really wished to see his face to see if it matched the rest of him, bent down, and smelled my pubic hair before licking around the base of my cock.

My mind spun with the sensations of three tongues, three mouths, touching me, licking me, sucking me until all I could do grasp the bedsheets in my hand as waves of pleasure coursed over my body. So hot and wet as they serviced me.

I gave myself over to the sensations of their subservience. Bear number two popped my toes out of his mouth and started licking his way slowly up my thigh. I wiggled underneath them as I panted. Their hands, strong and firm, massaged and roughed my skin. My heart raced as I enjoyed their worship of me.

My cock was enveloped in his mouth, and he swallowed me whole, impaling himself on my cock and licking around my head with every slurp. My cock pulsed with desire as his hot breath and tongue, his wet mouth sent ripples of bliss up my spine. I wanted to grab him by his head and fuck his face, but he seemed like the kind of man who wanted control. You could always tell by the way a man held himself.

The stocky man licked my nipples and took them between his teeth, causing me to groan. He still held my arm behind my head, but I used my other to grab him by his mask and held him down on my nipple as he bit and flicked it with his tongue.

I felt two hands underneath my ass and felt myself being lifted up, my cock pushing back to bear number three's throat as it slid down his gullet. Bear number two's tongue licked up my crack as his hands spread my ass cheeks apart. With every flick and swipe of his tongue, every jab into my hole, I groaned and writhed underneath him, pushing my hole against him, his nose burying itself into me.

They were driving me crazy. Most men didn't pay to pleasure me. Most men wanted me to service them. They only wanted their own pleasure and cared little for mine. These three, masks and all, were giving me something in return.

I ground underneath them as their mouths sent waves of carnality through me. Hedonistic fire rushed over me as I gave myself over to them and let myself enjoy the decadence that was being heaped upon me. I reached down and found the muscular one's large cock and stroked it as he continued to blow me. He moaned around my cock as his heat glided in my hand.

The one fucking me with his tongue added a finger, and I pushed myself down upon it. My whimpers spurred him, and he added another finger as he stretched me for what I knew was to come. I wanted it. I needed the big one to do what he promised and fuck me until I could no longer stand it. I hoped he lived up to his promise.

The beefy one, who was actually kind of a bear, joined his friend at my cock, and both of their mouths licked me up and down as I finally couldn't take it any longer.

"Please..." I moaned as I pummeled the mattress with my fists.

They all laughed as they slowly stood up, the thin one the last to leave, his fingers slowly withdrawing from me.

"I need to be in this ass," he said passionately.

"I want you in my ass," the beefy one sighed, his eyes full of lust as he stared at me.

"Stand up."

There was something about the order the hunk gave me. I glanced over at him and felt my smile creep across my face as I stared at him. I would do what he wanted.

I slowly pulled myself off the bed.

“Get on all fours, M.” He ordered his friend, who crawled up on the bed and complied.

I walked around to my bedside table and pulled the condoms and lube off it, tossing them onto the bed.

He was telling the others what to do, and I could see their grins underneath the mask. Damn, they had to be hot under there. He picked up a condom and handed it to me.

“Put this on and fuck him.” He ordered. The tall thin man grabbed a condom and rolled it down over his own dick. So that was how it was going to be. I had never done this before. I had never been with more than one man at a time before.

I poured some lube down his crack and started to insert a finger.

“No... Just fuck me...” Beefy wiggled his ass. I lubed up my cock. And pushed my head against his hole carefully. My cock was quite big, and I didn’t want to hurt him, but he had other ideas.

“Please... just shove it in... I want it to be...”

I complied and pushed myself as far in as his tight hole would allow. I sank halfway into him and pulled out before thrusting back inside him, impaling him on my cock. He threw his head back and roared as I pushed all the way in, my pubes brushing up against his cheeks.

“OH FUCK! Fucking big and thick... Damn... Fuck me hard,” he begged, and I did ruthlessly. The sound of my hips slamming into him echoed throughout the room, and soon as I was laughing as I plunged myself into him over and over with no regard to his pleasure. He seemed to be enjoying it as much as me. I grabbed him by the hips and pummeled into him as violently as I could.

The gorgeous piece of muscle stood up on the bed and stood directly over him, his cock now staring at me. It looked angry. Engorged with so much blood that it was as hard as a rock. The veins pulsed eagerly over his shaft. His chest flexed as he grabbed me by the hair and pushed me onto his cock. He slid passed my lips and over my tongue until he was fucking my face as hard as I was fucking his friend. I moaned around his shaft as it slid down my throat, humming with pleasure.

I felt the third man behind me spreading my ass cheeks apart, trying to get to my greedy hole, and greedy it truly was. I was hotter than I had ever been, and I needed him inside me, even if it was this man standing in front of me that I genuinely wanted. I bent further over as I kept up my attack on his friend's ass.

I slowed down so he could insert himself into me. His thick cock quickly entered me, and he slowly let his length sink all the way into my cavern. I ground myself back onto him, my cock spreading the beefy man's ass as I gyrated.

The sounds of our sex were loud. Moans and grunting filled the room as I tried to understand the best way to do this. I thrust deeper inside the man I was fucking and noticed the cock inside me move inside my ass. So, I was to do the work. A lightbulb went off inside me, and I continued fucking the man, as the man's cock behind me did the same with my ass. I fucked one and fucked myself on the thin man's long pole. It was overwhelming the sensations I was feeling.

I kept my mouth glued to the cock I was pleasuring as he tightened his grip in my hair. The thin man also grabbed hold of my hair using it like reins. The pressure of my hair being pulled drove me wild. I could feel my hair fall out of the tie that I had elaborately used. They gasped as it fell down, falling almost to the floor.

“Holy fuck... Your hair is... Beautiful.”

I couldn't thank him with my mouth around a giant rod. My throat was sure to be sore tomorrow. He was hammering himself into me, using my mouth like he would an ass. I let myself go entirely as I enjoyed the power emanating off him.

His masculinity like a scent I couldn't get enough of. The other two were nice, and I was enjoying myself more than I expected. Still, this man's presence was doing something to me, I couldn't even understand, even if I had no idea what he looked like underneath the mask.

I have no idea how long we used each other, but eventually, my hunky stud pulled his cock slowly from my willing mouth and gently slapped me across the face with it.

"My turn..." he said dangerously, his voice a growl of need.

I felt the thin man's cock slide out of my ass, leaving it cold and hungry. I withdrew from the beefy guy's hole and looked at my sex god for what he wanted. I didn't need to wonder long.

He gently pushed me down on the bed, and I got on all fours. The thin man slid in front of me and offered me his cock. I licked up its long length, and his eyes rolled back in his head. After all the men I have pleased, I knew how good I was giving a man what he wanted. I could be anything he needed. Coy, demanding, loving, or like right now... a whore who knew his place.

I heard the tear of the condom and felt a chill up my spine as I waited for the girthy cock I knew would soon be inside me. I wanted it. I needed to feel him, to know what it was he would do to me. I felt his fingers slide up my greased crack before I felt his large head press into me, and in one push, he ripped me apart, impaling me on his thick cock all the way to the hilt in one hard thrust.

The dim blue light of my bedroom made things harder to see. Most men felt more comfortable this way. For the first time, I wished my lights were bright, so I could experience this mound of gyrating flesh with no filter. I wanted to see each muscle clearly as our orgy progressed to its inevitable end.

The beefy guy laid down underneath me and turned onto his side so he could take my cock in his mouth.

I couldn't think he was fucking me so hard and fast. He was like a beast as he bashed my insides even harder than he did my throat. I thrashed underneath him as he gripped onto my hips and battered me even harder than before, his groans and grunts sounding like a madman as he had his way with me. I don't know how the beefy man kept my cock in his mouth. My hips were pounded into his face as he moaned around my shaft. He kept it firmly in his mouth and let the gravity of what was happening behind me pull me in and out of his waiting throat. He was the type who would like my whip. He needed to be used and abused for his pleasure. I bet he wished he had come here alone.

This was by far the hardest pounding I had ever had, and I welcomed it. A man like this... Someone so sexy and dangerous was a prize, and I hoped whomever one day tamed this stallion would appreciate him for what he was. I had tried to find ways to gain my control over the last few months, and I did enjoy being a dom. But I would gladly give it all up for a lifetime of this.

He didn't make love. He fucked with an animal need. It was like being beaten by his desire, and my sweaty body pushed itself back against his thrust for thrust, needing him, craving him to go as deep as he could. It was intense. I would not soon forget about this night. About him...

The thin man grabbed me by the hair again, and I glanced up at his eyes, which were boring into me as he watched his shaft glide against my lips. He wasn't far from blowing his load. His balls were tight against his body.

All of a sudden, I felt the giant cock withdraw from my ass, and I groaned my displeasure.

He grabbed me by the waist and lifted me off the bed and kissed me, his mouth sweet and tangy from the liquor he had drunk. I knew the whiskey. They must have had drinks with my uncle, maybe before waking me from my dreamless sleep.

"Fuck... You really are something... so hot... I wish I had you to myself all night."

“Me too,” I whispered into his mouth as the harsh fabric rubbed against my cheek.

“Lay down and get it ready,” he barked over my shoulder. I glanced back, and the thin man rolled another condom down over his cock. It was nice... but his was not the cock I needed.

“Ride his cock and lean forward,” he ordered as he pushed me gently to the bed. I crawled up and crouched above the waiting dick and slid down easily onto it. I started slowly riding it and gasped when I felt his big head press against us. I stopped, unsure of what I should do, and he slowly pushed his big cock against his friend's and forced it gently inside my ass. Two cocks at once.

My eyes rolled back inside my head with pleasure and pain. I was more open than I had ever been in my life. I felt my ring stretch to the point of snapping as he continued shoving his monster inside me. His friend didn't move, leaving his cock buried in me as my hot stud slowly fucked me from behind.

He placed his hands on the small of my back, and I arched it for him as he bore down on me with his weight, stuffing more and more of his meaty monster inside me. The beefy guy stood up on the bed in front of me and sat down on his friend's stomach so I could take his cock into my mouth. It was definitely the worst blowjob I ever gave. I couldn't think. The pressure of these two cocks inside me was pushing me over the edge.

Time stopped as the never-ending stretching of my hole burned me to the point of seeing stars. The wide dick in my mouth did nothing to hold back my loud moans, as even breathing felt like I was being ripped in two. My body shuddered as pleasure overcame my senses, and my sweat fell from my face onto the man bent down underneath me. I couldn't move, didn't want to move, I wanted to die right there with this sensation flooding my body, never stopping, an unending fuck that made my lonely world brighter.

The man with the thin cock reached up and grabbed hold of my face as his mouth fell open.

“FUUUUUUCK! I can’t hold back... I’m... fuck....”

I felt the throb of his cock unleash its load while he was in my ass.

“I’m gonna cum too... Oh yeah... shit... ahhhhh...” The beefy man said before popping my cock back into his mouth.

I was close. Beefy, bear number one, sucked a mean dick.

I felt my sex god slowly pull his cock from my gaping hole. I was sure it was gaping more than it ever had before.

“Roll over onto your back.” He said deeply. His friends got up and stood around the bed, waiting for him to tell them what to do.

He walked over to me and ripped the condom off. “Can I cum in your mouth?” he hissed as he kept stroking his cock. His large balls were pulled up close to his shaft. He was close too.

I nodded, and he raised my head and turned it to his big shaft. I let it slide inside my mouth, and he nutted quickly, splashing and painting my throat with his goo. It was thick and creamy, salty, and full of the same masculine pheromones that oozed off of him. I swallowed happily as he kept bursting in me.

“SHIT! I’m... fuck... Your mouth, boy... so fucking hot.” He grinned at me as I slowly released his cock from my mouth. It fell with a slap against his thigh, and I wished he would get it hard again.

“Your turn...” he said as he bent down and placed his hand on my shaft, stroking me and rubbing his thumb over my slit, I bucked my hips up into his tight grip as he teased me. I reached down and grabbed his cock again and stroked it, feeling the last bits of cum leaking from his piss slit.

The beefy guy got between my legs and licked my balls. I was already at the edge, and I wrapped my hand around his meaty monster and hung on as if it were a life raft and afloat upon the sea.

I could feel my orgasm building deep within me. He kept his green eyes locked onto mine as he stroked me faster. Beefy guy's mouth popped one of my balls in his mouth, and he rolled it over his tongue. My eyes rolled back in my head, and I screamed.

“AHHHHHHH!!!! HOLY FUCK!” I think I almost tore his cock off, he winced, and I gently let go of his shaft. I regretted it. Now he could leave.

The beefy guy lifted his head and popped my nut out of his mouth and started licking my cum from off my stomach, groaning as he tasted me. By the time he was done, I was clean, and he smiled up at me—his grin splitting the mask and causing an eerie chill to shoot up my spine.

Who were these guys? Would I ever see them again? Him again?

I knew my place.

“That was as special as we were promised.” Hunky, sexy, body-builder bent down and kissed me again. His tongue winding itself across mine and causing me to moan into his mouth again. He made me come unglued. “Was I right? Did I fuck you so hard you can't walk? If I didn't, I'd have to come back and try again.”

The other two guys chuckled and glanced at each other.

I slowly slid to the edge of the bed and sat up. Fuck... Yeah, I was sore as hell. I wasn't sure my legs would actually hold me up, and as I started to stand, he reached out and gave me his hand for support. I took it. His large calloused hand offering me the strength I needed to raise myself up off the mattress.

My knees buckled, and I reached down and mustered every ounce of strength I still had to steady myself and took a step away from the bed. I turned around and grinned at him.

“Guess I'll be seeing you again,” I said haughtily.

The other two laughed loudly.

“You can count on that.” He took me in his arms and kissed me again.

“Hey Fi... F... we should go.” The thin man reached over and grabbed him by the shoulder. “It was... well... That was awesome. You’re as great as we were told. Thank you.”

The beefy guy grabbed his clothes and started putting them back on. Jeans and a polo... The thin man also grabbed precisely the same outfit and started getting dressed.

“Thanks for bringing us to this, F. I must say it might have been your best idea, ever.”

Hot hunky guy, bear number three, or F, as I know knew him, bent down and smelled my hair.

“God... you smell like spring and sunshine.” He let me go and grabbed the same outfit as the other guys and started to get dressed.

“Thank you. I uh... that was fun.” It was all I could say. If I would have said more, I may have begged him to stay. I could not have a happy ending with him or anyone. Who would want to be locked away in a tower with a male courtesan, a whore who had to fuck to live? No one. Not this man who sent goosebumps over my body with a glance. He could have anyone. He probably did.

They finished putting their shoes on and started walking towards the door. The first two walked out, and my lustful god turned back to me.

“See you soon, Danny. It was a pleasure doing pleasure with you.”

With that, he left, and I was alone in my room, once again. What was this feeling that rushed over me? Regret? Loneliness? Need?

I went into my bathroom and took a long shower.

My night was filled with visions of me in his arms.

CHAPTER SIX



I awoke on that Saturday night when I heard a strange tapping. I had never heard a sound like that before, and I pulled the covers up to my chin. I felt foolish. I was a man and not a child anymore. I had left that stupid boy behind as soon as Father passed away. It was late... Surely Benjamin didn't come to bother me on my weekend. He usually left me completely alone on those days.

I threw the covers back and stood up slowly. The cold air felt nice on my naked body. I was sweaty, so I must have been dreaming of him. He had permeated most of my nighttime visions lately. Maybe that was what I heard, just a phantom sound from my dream?

Maybe the tap wasn't real. Maybe it...

No. There it was again. It was the sound of someone tapping on a glass. Was there someone in my house? It couldn't be Benjamin. He told me that he was taking a trip of some kind and wouldn't be back until late Sunday night.

I tip-toed out of my bedroom, and walked down the hallway, peering into each room carefully as I passed them. They were all dark and empty. There it was again. The sound was coming from my living room. The high stucco ceilings were echoing the sound somehow. I crept along the wall and grabbed a wooden candlestick grasping it tightly to my chest.

There was a man at my window, and he was slowly prying it open. I wasn't scared of the air, but he could be the death of me. He had not been sterilized. He could be carrying a germ

on him that could put me in my grave. I stood frozen, unsure of what to do.

Wait?

How in bloody hell was there a man at my window? I lived at the top of a very high building. Surely, he couldn't fly like the birds I envied. I watched him from the shadows as he shimmied through the window and softly landed on the plush white rug. I watched him untie the rope that had held him in place before he carefully tied it to the arm of a nearby chair.

He was tall and well built. His massive shoulders heaved as he took a deep breath, and I was shocked by his mass. It couldn't matter. He may have been a muscular man. But so was I, even if he was much larger than me. If I had to fight to survive, that was what I would do. He crept around the living room, and I watched him. I caught a glance at his face in the moonlight. He was young, maybe just a few years older than me, and the angles of his face made me blush. He was very handsome, at least in the full moon's glow.

But that didn't matter. He was here in my house uninvited, and if I didn't do something, I might be his victim, even if he never saw me. My condition made strangers perilous, and I couldn't take the chance.

He walked close to my hiding place and removed a picture from the wall and set it aside. He ran his hands against the wooden paneling and scratched his head as he stared at it.

It was now or never. I leaped out from my hiding place and brought the candlestick down hard upon his head without making a sound.

He crumpled onto the floor immediately.

What the fuck was I supposed to do?

I ran to the bathroom and grabbed a rag and a bottle of rubbing alcohol as well as one of the face-masks that my father always had stocked for me in case there was an emergency, and I would have to leave the tower. I ran back to the living room as fast as I could. My heart was racing. I could feel it pounding in my head as I knelt down next to the man I

may have killed. The candlestick was broken in half, and I still had my half clutched within my hand. It would do me no good now, so I threw it onto the floor away from him.

I rolled him over onto his back. He was still breathing. I only knocked him out. I ran back to my bedroom and grabbed some of the ropes I kept in my closet in case someone wanted to use it. These ropes had kept me tied up many a night as men had their way with me, but I had also gotten quite good at tying men up too. I could write a doctorate on the joys of power-play during sex. I shook the thoughts out of my head.

I hurried back to the living room, and thankfully he had not moved. I rolled him over onto his stomach and bound his hands behind his back before doing the same with his legs.

I ran into the kitchen and grabbed a butcher knife. As I knelt back down beside him, I heard him moan. I had to hurry. He could wake at any second. I peered down at him and felt my heart quicken. He was incredibly handsome. No... He was beautiful and manly with a small goatee that he kept closely shorn. He was hot for a burglar. A murderer if I didn't clean him quickly.

I took the sharp knife and carefully cut his shirt off. I did the same with his pants. This was harder and more time consuming than I thought it would be. But, thankfully, he still slumbered. I hit him pretty hard.

Once I pulled the shorn clothes from his body and took off his shoes, I poured the rubbing alcohol onto my hands to clean them from any germs that may have contaminated me. I took the rag and soaked it and carefully wiped his body with it, sterilizing him as best I could.

I grabbed his clothes and threw them down the trash chute. I poured more alcohol onto my hands, cleaning them as best I could. I took the mask off and dropped it onto the floor as I stared at my intruder. His sharp features and shoulder-length brown hair were intoxicating. I wish that we could have met differently. Why couldn't Uncle Benjamin have brought him home to me? I wouldn't have minded making love to him, even if I were only his whore for an hour or two. His cock was

large and thick. His arms, shoulders, and chest corded with muscles. His veins popping out from under his skin. He was a fucking beast. Just like another fairy tale, Father used to read me.

I could feel my dick stiffen at the thought. Now was not the time for fantasy.

I grabbed him by his legs and pulled him through the hallway and into my bedroom. I hauled him slowly up and laid him down onto the bed and took out more rope, which I used to bind his hands and feet to my bedposts. He was secure. I knew because I had been bound this way many times, and I couldn't have escaped if I had wanted to.

I rarely did want to... No... I always wanted to.

I stood over him and watched his eyelids slowly flutter. He was coming to. Now, what was I supposed to do with him?

He opened his eyes.

CHAPTER SEVEN



“Ooooh,” he groaned as he squinted in the darkness. He tried to move his arm and glanced up at the bonds that held him firmly in place. He chuckled. He pulled on it, testing the strength before attempting to move his legs. “You hit me and tied me up? That’s kinky.”

I stayed silent and backed up into the corner. His muscles were beefier and more defined than mine. Who am I kidding? This guy was huge, and I badly wanted to run my hands over his firm chest. I stared at him and shook those thoughts out of my head. I needed to keep my wits about me. Benjamin would know what to do.

What if he was strong enough to break free? I didn’t believe it was possible, but it was better to have some distance, just in case.

“Turn the light on, so I can see you,” he said calmly. Too calmly. I had him tied up, and it didn’t seem to scare him at all. He was too cool. “I can see your outline in the moon’s glow, and I must say it’s quite entrancing. I know you’re there. Let me see you. I have heard the tales of your beauty, Danny, and I would like to see if they’re true.”

I flipped on the lamp that sat to my right. He sighed when he saw me.

“There you are. You are quite beautiful... breathtaking actually, and I’m not saying that because of the concussion you might have given me. It’s true. Your uncle didn’t lie, and

I'm glad I can finally see you in a brighter light." He smiled crookedly. He was a rogue, no doubt about it.

I grunted.

"Well, handsome... You have me tied up, now what are you gonna... do with me?" He chuckled again and then winced. "You really walloped me, gorgeous." He sniffed. "Did you wash me in alcohol?"

"I had to make sure you didn't have any germs," I answered before I could stop myself. I put my hand over my mouth. Why didn't I just drag him into the oxygen room instead of wasting my time cutting his clothes off and bathing him in alcohol? I hadn't been thinking straight, but I needed to screw my head on because I was faced with a major problem.

"Ah... yes, that's right... Your illness." He smirked.

The realization of what he said hit me like a ton of bricks. Like I had hit him with that candlestick. I was proud of that. "How do you know my uncle?" I demanded.

"So, am I germ-free? Is it safe for you to be in here with me?" He grinned at me again. "Your hair is... incredible. So long and full... The curls and body are almost unbelievable. Have you ever had a haircut?"

"No," I said flummoxed. "Stop talking... I can't think."

"Okay... I will just lie over here and say nothing. So, what are you gonna... do with me, Danny, boy, now that you have me all tied up at your mercy?" He raised his eyebrows lecherously, a slow shit-eating grin spreading across his face wickedly.

"I don't know. Wait for my uncle, I guess," I muttered, wishing I had a better plan. "What were you doing in my house?"

"Oh, I was going to rob it," he said wickedly. "And while I was here, I was going to try to get another glimpse of you. You have become quite famous in certain circles, Danny. They talk about your sexual prowess and flexibility. I... well... I shouldn't say any more."

“What do they say?” I asked. I didn’t know how to handle this information. A robber was tied to my bed, and I wanted him in the worst way. I wanted him to crush me between his arms and make me do all sorts of dirty and filthy things. Things I had never let another man do to me. I was shocked at how badly I wanted him.

“You are a legend, Danny. A virtual sex god, if the stories are true. Your uncle charges thousands of dollars for a night with you. Did you know that? He has gotten quite wealthy because of you.” The man stared at me, his bright green eyes teasing me as he tried to mess with my mind.

“My condition is costly. We do this so I can continue living here, in a home that is safe for me,” I said vehemently. I took a step towards him. “I don’t think a robber is in the position to judge anyone, do you?”

“Touche...” He chuckled. “And I don’t judge you.”

“You don’t know what it’s like to be afraid of everything when anything can kill you. You... You could be killing me right now!” I shouted.

“Shhhh...” he said calmly. “It’s all a lie, you know, Danny. The whole thing. You are not sick, and you never have been. Your father and your uncle have lied to you, for different reasons, of course. Your uncle told me the whole story one night when he got a little too drunk. I’ve thought of nothing else since that night. Of course, what I really wanted was to break into the safe hidden behind that wall you walloped me in front of.” He was too calm. I knew what he was doing, sowing seeds of doubt about my uncle... My life... My illness... This was not the best way to do that. I should know whether or not I was ill, shouldn’t I? Not this beautiful buffoon who I tied up.

“You’re a liar,” I hissed.

“Oh, yes!” He laughed loudly. “I am definitely a liar, give the boy a prize! But that doesn’t mean I’m lying about this, does it? You poor fool. You have been using your entire life and haven’t even known it. Trapped here in your glass tower with lies and subterfuge. Made a sex slave to the slime of Wall

Street and anyone with enough money to pay your uncle for your services.”

I ran out of the room and dashed into the living room. I looked at the wall where he had been standing and felt around in the dark. There was nothing there. Just the dark paneling and... A ridge caught my finger.

I stepped back and turned on the light.

“Did you find it yet, Danny, boy?” The handsome stranger called out from my bedroom. “Push it in.”

I walked back to the wall and found the spot again. I pushed and heard a quiet click from under the wood. The paneling had a small hidden door that now slowly opened before me. A black metal safe sat behind it.

“Good boy, Danny! I’m very proud of you. Now, if you untie me, I can...”

“How do I open it,” I cut him off. I heard his deep, loud laugh, and knew he would not give me any more information. “Okay... So, you knew about the safe? What’s inside it? Do you know that?”

“Money, Danny. Your father left you enough money, so you would never have to worry for the rest of your life. You’re rich, and I plan to rob you at my earliest convenience. Your uncle, who’s not really your uncle, at all, has been using it however he wants and then using you to make more. He’s a liar, boy. How long will it be before he decides he has enough and doesn’t need you any longer?” His voice broke me. He knew too much, and if he knew these truths... Did he know more than me? Was he right about my illness? That was impossible, wasn’t it? I had been ill a few times, and Father always said it was the germs from outside that my body couldn’t handle.

Why would he lie to me? It didn’t make sense.

But if the money was inside that safe, I at least knew that Benjamin had never had my best interests at heart. I needed to know more, and there was only one way I knew to get the

information I wanted. I picked up the knife from the floor and clutched it firmly behind my back.

I walked into my bedroom and gasped. The man had a raging hard on that stuck straight up. It was massive. So thick and veiny... and he had a wicked smile on his face. It was so confusing I almost dropped the knife.

“Surprise,” he chuckled. His laugh was infuriating. “Sorry, the sight of your ass walking away... Well, this is your fault, I’m afraid.” His eyes twinkled at me, mischievously.

“I want in that safe,” I growled, trying to sound as dangerous as I could, clutching the knife behind me.

“Well, I want in that ass.” His voice was low and carried a hint of danger. I guess that made sense. He was a robber. “How about we make a deal. If you fuck me and it’s as magical as I have... uh... heard, I will give you the information you want, so you can see what’s inside that safe. If I’m right... you untie me, and we can discuss what will happen next.”

I scoffed. “I’m not untying you. You might hurt me, I’m not stupid.”

“Aren’t you? Damn, you are beautiful, Danny, but I am afraid you might be a little stupid, at least in street smarts, kid. You and all your books... Yeah, your uncle, who’s not your uncle,” he stated loudly. “has told me all about them and how book smart you are. But I have street smarts and common sense from actually living out in the real world, not in this sterile mockery of life, Danny. Besides, I could never hurt you. That is a promise.”

I sat down on the edge of the bed and slid the knife underneath the mattress. My world was upside down, and I didn’t know what to do or who to believe. He wasn’t lying about the safe or knowing my uncle; that much was crystal clear, so why would he lie about the rest? It didn’t make sense. My pulse was racing, and I knew that I had to make a decision. It was now or never. I had to know the truth.

“I won’t hurt you, Danny. You’ve been hurt enough,” he whispered. “I only want to... free you, from all of this. You deserve more.”

I crawled up between his legs and took his thick manhood in my hand and stroked it. He sighed as I rolled my thumb over his crown.

“You’ve made your decision?” he asked as he slowly thrust into my hand.

“Deal. But I’m not untying you,” I whispered before I bent down and took him in my mouth. He tasted like freedom. This man who somehow scaled glass walls and knew more about me than I knew about myself was like the birds I envied my entire life. He must soar too, in his own way.

He thrust up into my mouth, and I grabbed the base of his cock and rolled my tongue around his large mushroom head. I gave him the best blowjob I had ever given anyone. I slowly slid down his shaft and felt him slide down the back of my throat. I bobbed slowly on it, licking it and nipping at it as he writhed underneath me. He was so much like the muscle man I had been lusting after all week. His cock, his chest... his eyes... so fucking sexy.

“Fuuuuck, Danny... Jesus, that’s amazing,” he groaned as he lifted his hips and fucked my mouth. I let him slide in and out, keeping my lips tight and using my tongue as I had never used it before. “Fuck, I wish I could grab you by your hair, right now... Damnit, boy... That’s so fucking good.”

I took my time and used him for my pleasure. Teasing him, torturing him with my mouth, tongue, and teeth as he groaned underneath me, writhing as he plunged as deep as he could. I liked it... No, I loved it. There was something about him that made me want to please him, and it wasn’t just the endgame I was playing with him. It was something more. A danger and a familiarity that made my need to please him unhealthy.

“Danny, if you keep that up... I’m gonna cum. Your mouth is as perfect as I... Uh... As they brag about. Fuck... Danny,” I pulled him out of my mouth. I reached over and grabbed a condom from out of my drawer and laid it between his legs. I

also grabbed the lube and applied some on my finger. I moved around, so my ass was in his face. I spread my cheeks and sat on his face. His tongue reached out and lapped at my hole, exploring my insides as deeply as he could. I felt him flick in and out as he used it to stretch my ring. He pushed and pulled his tongue until I was moaning and pressing into him, smothering him with my ass. I reached back and pulled my cheeks even further apart as I ground my ass into his face, his small goatee rubbing and burning my flesh as he ate me out.

No one... And I mean no one had ever tongue fucked me like this guy. He enjoyed it. His grunts and groans as he ate my ass caused me to start rubbing my cock against his chest. The friction making chills run up my spine. He had a small sprinkling of chest hair, and it tickled as I slid my cock over him.

He spat into my hole and buried his tongue back inside me. I wanted to turn around and plunge my cock into his mouth, but that might put me at a disadvantage. He could bite down, and then where would I be?

I bent back down, keeping my ass pressed into his face, and reached for his meaty cock. It was just as long and thick as my mystery guys. One day I hoped I would see him again, but until that time, I would use him, at least until I decided what it was I needed to do. I couldn't let him rob me.

"Danny..." he gasped as I slid his cock back into my mouth. I put on a show for him. I used every trick in my arsenal as I brought him to the edge of orgasm and stopped. Reaching back and fingering myself in front of him, as he licked at my hole, showing him what he would soon get.

I tore the condom open and rolled it down over his shaft and greased him up slowly, caressing him with my fingers, teasing him before I pulled my ass off his face. I crawled down slowly and got myself into position. Why was I putting on a show for him? Why did I want him to desire me? What the hell was wrong with me?

I straddled him as I stared him in the eyes. Such a bright green that they surprised me. I pulled my hair back and

wrapped it into a quick bun before I bent my knees and slowly impaled myself on his massive waiting cock.

I looked into his eyes as I slowly rode him cowboy. His eyes rolled back in his head as I took all of him inside, his pubes grinding into my ass cheeks as I pulled myself up and back down on his lengthy girth. He felt amazing. He thrust up with his hips, and I stayed in place as he plowed me rapidly and forcefully from below. He knew what he was doing and even tied up; he was making me moan and beg for more.

His eyes reminded me of a hawk's, strong, and powerful as he watched my face while he fucked me. He smiled and roared as he pushed himself hard up into me, hitting my prostate over and over and making me whine with each powerful thrust. So strong and powerful, his musk hit me like a ton of bricks. So manly and sweaty. I wanted to bury my face in his armpit, and I bent down and slowly licked it, enjoying the smell of him.

I pulled myself off him and turned around and lowered myself back down upon him. His thrusts were deeper and stronger from this position, and I put my hands down on his legs and ground myself into him, feeling the burn from his wide hard cock as it stirred my insides. I threw my head back and howled as he rocked himself even further into me.

As I panted, in the throes of my pleasure, I felt his hands.

My mouth fell open, and I knew I was in danger, but I couldn't stop. I didn't want to stop. I was his, right now, and I gave up my power, as I had done so many times before. It was all I wanted to do.

“Relax. You tied those pretty good, Danny, but I'm not an amateur,” he chuckled deeply, his breath on my neck. “I promised I would never hurt you... unless you want me too. Do you want me to, Danny? You want me to fuck you so hard, you...”

“Can't walk?” I said, awestruck. “Yes.”

He pushed me down on all fours, and I watched his hands reach down and untie his legs before he knelt behind me again. He grabbed me by my hair and wound his finger through it,

pulling roughly as if my silky strands were reins, and he rode me in a way I had never been ridden before. It was rough and passionate and full of more heat than I had ever experienced.

The sound of his groin slamming into me echoed in my chamber, and all I could do was pant and cry out with pleasure with each thrust of his cock inside me. Without touching myself, I shot my load all over the bed. I whimpered as he kept abusing me from this position.

But he was not finished. I don't know how long it lasted or how many positions he took me in, but it seemed to last forever. My cock hardened again, and this time his hand slowly brought me to orgasm as he pulled out, ripping his condom off, and shot all over my smooth chest.

He collapsed beside me and took me in his arms and chuckled in my ear.

“I'm happy I decided to rob your house tonight.”

I was too.

CHAPTER EIGHT



We cleaned ourselves in my glass-walled shower. His hands washed me and caressed every inch of my body and face, his lips kept finding mine with the most needful of kisses. My head was a jumbled mess. This man was robbing me, but all I wanted was to be his.

However, I had questions I needed answers to. He was making me so confused; I found it hard to focus on anything more than him and his hard, muscular body. I wanted to feel what his whiskers might feel like on my cock, on my chest, as they burned my chin as he kissed me. I wanted to know what his cum tasted like.

But most importantly, I wanted to know about the lies I may have been told. I needed to know the truth.

We dried off, and I put my long hair in a ponytail before I slid on a pair of pants. He stood there naked, grinning at me.

“Uh... Where are my clothes?” he asked, looking around.

“I... uh... I cut them off of you with a butcher knife.” I shrugged and threw him a pair of my linen pants and a t-shirt that he pulled over his ripped torso. It was tight... Looking at him in that was going to make the rest of this night difficult. It hugged him in all the right places. His muscular chest looked like it might rip the shirt in two if he flexed. God, I hope he flexed.

“A butcher knife,” he groaned and shook his head as he chuckled that maddening laugh, making chills run across my body. It was husky and deep... Damn, this man was sexy. But

he was a thief, and I needed to remember that, even if I did need the information he carried. “Damn, Danny. That’s... kind of hot. I’ve never had my clothes cut off me before. I didn’t know you had that in you.”

“You don’t know me,” I said smugly. “You only know what you have been told. I am more than that.” I glared at him, trying to let him see that I was as dangerous as him.

“You haven’t figured anything out, have you? After that fucking I gave you, I assumed you realized... I told you I would see you again, didn’t I?” He threw his arms up in the air and shrugged as he grinned lopsidedly. His biceps causing me to forget to breathe. I was in a situation. He grabbed me by my arm and pulled me against him.

“Wait? What?” I said quickly, realization dawning finally upon me. “You?”

“Yep... Me. That mask was uncomfortable as shit, but I didn’t want your uncle to have some kind of lucid moment when he saw my face. Just in case he remembered spilling his guts to me. Hi, Danny. I seemed to fail again, didn’t I? You were able to walk this time, too. I guess I will have to try harder next time.”

“You?” I managed to say. I was completely dumbfounded. Stunned doesn’t even begin to cover it. “I don’t understand.”

“I don’t see how you could,” he reached over and took my face in his palm, caressing my cheek with his fingers. “God... You really are one of a kind, Danny. So beautiful and a body to literally kill for, but you have no clue what is happening right in front of you.”

“I thought about you,” I said weakly, feeling like a fool as I confessed my desire to the man getting ready to rob me. I wasn’t sure I cared anymore. I couldn’t take another surprise. I was at the end of my ability to deal.

“As you can see... I thought about you, too. Trust me, I was not leaving tonight without seeing you again. I was just hoping I would be the one waking you up. I’m sorry you had to see all of this. I’m also sorry for the knot you put on my

head.” He chuckled dangerously, reaching up and rubbing his head. “But I’m glad I could tell you the truth. You’ll see, Danny... You’ll see.”

“And if you’re wrong? What then?”

He shrugged. I sighed as he let go of me. “If I keep you there in my arms, I’m going to get hard again, and then I’m going to have to fuck you again... I think it’s a vicious cycle, and we’ll never get to the robbing and truth part. No offense. I wouldn’t mind you staying in my arms after, though.”

I felt chilled without his strong arms around me. Fuck I was totally a victim.

“Okay, Danny boy, shall we see what’s inside the safe? Are you ready to know the truth?” He walked over and took my hand, staring me compassionately in the eyes. “I know that it’s going to shock you. But the truth is the truth, Danny, no matter how many lies were told to cover it up. Your uncle likes to talk too much. If it hadn’t been me, someone else would have come eventually. It’s the way the world works in the circles your uncle, who’s not your uncle, frequents. Be glad it was me, Danny.”

I nodded, and he pulled me gently out of my room and down the hallway to the open living room. The night sky sparkled, and the lights from the other buildings were dimmed. It was late, and the city was sleeping. Only those with dark souls walked the night.

He let go of me and walked over to the window he had crawled through and retrieved a backpack that he must have left there. I didn’t even notice it in my frenzied state. My eyes darted around, looking for anything else I may have missed. The room was as I left it. I walked over and shut the window. It was chilly outside, at least at this height. The rope still tied to the chair kept the window from shutting all the way.

“So, your uncle didn’t tell me the combination, of course. But I am very good at what I do, Danny. If I can’t open it with this, I have another way, but I really don’t want to use it if I don’t have to.” He held up a square box and quickly pulled wires from it and attached it carefully to the keypad on the

safe. He pressed a button, and it whirred to life. Numbers flashed on the small screen, and he held it as he leaned against the wall and glanced over at me. He shot me a smile and raised his arm, flexing his thick bicep and winking at me. “Honestly, we didn’t need to get dressed.” He wagged his eyebrows at me. “I prefer you without clothes on.”

I blushed. Now that we were here, I wasn’t sure what to say. How should I broach the subject of what he knew? I sat down on the chair that faced the wall and pulled my feet underneath me. I wanted to laugh at him. He kept making funny faces as he glanced back and forth from me to his little machine. Every now and then, it beeped, and he would turn his attention back to it. The rest of the time, he stared at me.

“You have questions, Danny?” he said thoughtfully. “I know this has to be a shock to you.”

I sighed. I didn’t even know where to begin. I could feel my fear creeping up my spine, causing me to shiver. Was I ready for what I might discover? No... How could I be?

“I met your uncle at a bar frequented by crooks and thieves in the financial district. Most of them are Wall Street brokers, but there are others like me who hang out there too, looking for an easy mark. He was taking bookings for you and getting a little too drunk for his own good. I was curious. He looked rich and stupid, and he was sloppy, so I saw an opportunity. I always listen to my gut, Danny, and my gut was telling me that he was an easy mark.” The machine beeped, and he glanced over at it and smiled.

“So, I bought him another drink and talked to him. The drunker he got, the more information he spilled, eventually he was telling me things I couldn’t believe. Of course, I was curious about you. I had heard about the beautiful concubine who lived in a penthouse. But eventually, he told me what I had been waiting for. He was rich and was using you to get richer. He was so proud of it. Honestly, I wanted to punch him. What he was doing to you was sick. Your innocence, he said, made you easy to manipulate, and trust me, Danny, he does not have your best interests at heart.” His machine beeped

again, and he turned around and pushed a couple buttons, and the machine whirred to life again.

“I questioned him, pretending to be a Wall Street investor, and he told me about how all of his wealth was liquid. He didn’t use a bank or invest it because the money had been left right under your nose all this time, here in the safe where your father left it. His stupid brother, he called him, who was too altruistic and foolish with his need for a child, had passed away and left him in charge of you. I asked questions about him, and because of that, I heard your story. Do you want to hear it?” The machine made a lower beeping sound, and he turned to look at it. He chuckled again and turned back to me. “Bingo! We are almost there, Danny.”

“Yes. What did he say about me?” I murmured, my voice barely a whisper. I felt cold and alone in a different way than I usually did. I felt as if something was about to shift, and I was terrified of what I would discover. “I don’t want to know... But I have to, don’t I?”

He rested the small metal box on the inset of the safe and carefully came towards me as if he didn’t want to frighten me. He knelt in front of me and took my face in his large hands.

“You poor beautiful fool. I hope that what I tell you frees you and doesn’t make you feel any more imprisoned than you already are.” His eyes were sad, and I knew that it was sadness for me, and not for himself.

“What’s your name?” I whispered, surprised that I hadn’t asked before. It was typical for me to have sex with the men my uncle brought over and never know their name. It was the way it was. Words weren’t exchanged often unless they were the lonely older men who wanted a little more than just my body. “Your friends called you F... Are they a part of this too?”

He grinned slowly. “Finn. I’m glad you know my name, Danny. And no... They are just some guys I know that I used to get in here. I guess it’s nice to officially meet you, even if I have *meated* you a couple times, now.” He chuckled, and I felt it vibrate through my body.

“I guess,” I shrugged. “It’s odd. Isn’t it? You came here to rob me, and instead, you might be giving me the greatest gift I could receive with the most horrible of reasons behind it.”

“It’s a weird world,” he laughed huskily. “I’m glad you knocked me out, I guess. Besides, you gave me something too, and I will never forget it. You have been haunting my dreams, Danny.” He leaned in and kissed my lips. The machine whirred again, and he glanced at it. “Almost there, Danny. I think that what we will find inside that safe will show you how honest I’ve been with you.”

“I hope not,” I bit my lip to stop my emotions from overwhelming me. The idea that my life had been a complete lie was too much to take.

“I’m sorry,” he said simply, standing over me. “Shall I go on?”

I nodded.

“Your father bought you from a poor family here in the city. Your mother and father were struggling and had too many mouths to feed, and you were the baby. Your father changed their life by buying you.”

“Benjamin told me that my mother was a whore. Father bought me off her.”

“That’s’ not what he told me. He had no reason to lie to me, did he? But he did to you. Anyway, your father was scared of what he had done. He had no papers that said you were his, and the thought of losing you became his greatest fear. He was so scared someone would question him and take you away, that he locked you up here and created a story that would stop you from ever leaving this place and finding out the truth. In his desire to please you, he told you lies about your dead mother, whom he told you he loved. He invented a past that did not belong to him or to you, and in doing so, trapped the two of you within the web of his lies.”

“Your uncle was the only other person to know the truth. You caused a giant rift between them for years, according to him. He never really went into the details of that, so I don’t

know exactly what that was, but they didn't talk until your father got sick. He had no one else to turn to, you see. Your father had no friends. He had alienated everyone because of you. He only had you. He locked himself away for fear of losing you, just as he kept you locked up here in the penthouse. Your sickness to the outside was just an excuse. It wasn't real. Your uncle told me that and said how smart he was for turning your father's lie into an opportunity. Your father wanted you to know the truth in the end. He just didn't know how to tell you before he passed away. He was scared you would hate him. Your uncle really hated your father, Danny. That was obvious."

The machine chirped a higher sound, and I heard the click of the lock. Finn stood up and walked over to the safe my father had hidden in the wall. I stood up too.

"Are you okay, Danny? I know that was a lot to take in. I just want you to think about what I said. I have no reason to lie to you about this. Why should I care if you stay locked up here in this place or not? But I felt you should know... Especially after what we have shared. You deserve to know the truth." He sighed and crossed his arms.

"No, I am not okay. My entire life might be a fucking lie. I've been held prisoner by people that I thought loved me and was turned into a prostitute so my uncle could get richer. Or, perhaps you are lying to me. Why? I don't know." I leaned my forehead against the wall and let the cold wood soothe me as best it could. "But I think I believe you, and that belief is torturing me. I have sat at the window my entire existence and yearned for a life I never thought I could have. Now, I'm not sure I'm brave enough to live it."

"Would you like to open the door, Danny?" He gestured to the safe. "It does belong to you. I mean, I was planning on robbing you, but now, I think all I will ask for is the amount you think this information is worth." He stepped out of the way, and I moved in front of the safe. I looked down at the framed picture that had hidden it from view. It had always made me sad. It was a painting of a man sitting on a rock by a

vast ocean, and he looked so lonely. I guess I've always recognized myself in the picture.

I pulled gently on the heavy door, and it opened. I gasped when I saw the stacks of money hidden inside. There were also manilla files filled with papers and photos against the right edge. I pulled them down. Perhaps these papers held an answer for me.

I turned around to look at him and felt a sharp prick against my arm. I looked down and noticed a needle sticking in me.

"Sorry, kid. I really am," I could feel the room start to spin, and I collapsed in his arms. I fought to stay awake. "But I can't walk out of here empty-handed. This won't last long, and when you awake, remember that I could have taken it all. I won't." his lips met mine, and everything went dark.

CHAPTER NINE



My head was fuzzy when my eyes fluttered open. I sat up quickly and felt my heart sink. My stomach clenched as if I had been punched. I was alone. I felt a hot flash run through my body, helping to clear the cotton from my brain. I shook my head hard.

This was what hate felt like.

Finn, my uncle, even my father... Every relationship I ever had was based on lies and control. I had been used for my entire life. I was still a little woozy from Finn's drugs, damn him. Darkness still blanketed the world outside. Morning had yet to break across the sky. How long was I out? My clock said it was five... Time had little meaning to me trapped here inside my endless loop of unaltered days.

He had put me back on my bed instead of leaving me on the cold hardwood. The manilla folders lay beside me on the mattress. I guess I should be grateful for his compassion. He wasn't a total monster.

No... He was. He left me here alone.

The safe! Shit...

I grabbed the files and stood too quickly, almost falling onto the floor. I sat back down and regained my balance, slowly standing from my bed. I was groggy, but I would not succumb again to the effects of Finn's drug. I fought through it and forced my legs to carry me to the living room. I had to see for myself.

The safe's door was still open, and I peered into it. Finn had left almost half of the money for me. I suppose I should be thankful. He could have easily taken it all, but he didn't.

He was still a robber and a liar. How could I have fooled myself, let him fool me? He promised he wouldn't hurt me...

I would have given him whatever he wanted; he should have trusted me the way I had decided to trust him. 'Street smarts,' he had said. I suppose I had learned a valuable lesson. Never trust a thief, no matter how handsome they were.

I was done being a victim. I pulled myself upright and stood tall. I would not be diminished again by others who sought to use me for their gain. I would learn to look out for myself. The world waited, didn't it? I looked down at the files I clasped in my hand. Hopefully, there were answers in them that would open my eyes to the truth of my situation. I needed to know how deep the lies were, and these files were my last hope for closure.

My last hope for a new beginning.

First, I had to do something with the money Finn didn't steal. Benjamin, who was no uncle of mine, would never get his dirty hands on it. I had no bags of my own since I never left the house, but the man I called father had left them in his room. I went into his closet and tried to ignore the memories of him. I found what I was looking for on one of his shelves and pulled it down.

It still smelled like him.

My broken heart didn't know what it wished for. Could I forgive Father for lying to me all these years? I would have to. I still loved him and knew that he had loved me, too, no matter what he did to me. But how could I forgive the terror I carried around with me all these years, thinking I could die if I got a germ. The loneliness and crippling solitude I have lived in.

I had been sick. But I always recovered. I opened the windows and allowed the air to come in. Strange that I had never thought of that. If it were true, Father would have changed the windows to ones that didn't open. Most of them

didn't, but the ones in the living room had a panel on top that opened all the way. I had stuck my arm out of it so often... Finn had shimmied through it.

I sat down on his hardwood floor and let myself grieve for the silly boy that believed the lies too easily. I should have known. Fuck! Finn was telling me the truth, and I never even thought about the things I did on an almost daily basis that would have killed me if my sickness were real. I had kept believing the fears and lies of my childhood and never questioned them. I was a fool.

No, Finn was right. I was stupid.

I wiped my eyes and put aside the child I once was. I would never be him again. I stood up and walked back into the living room and stuffed the bag with the cash. I then carried it into my bedroom, where I packed as many of my clothes as would fit into the case. I locked it and hid it in the back of my closet.

I opened the files, and my father's sins were laid bare. Here were my birth certificate and the names of my parents. Cassandra and Peter Steel... That didn't matter to me. They didn't matter to me, not now, not after everything I knew. I sighed heavily. My real name, printed on this document, glared at me. Morgan Kenneth Steel. That was no longer who I was. I was Danny, but I would never be able to prove it. For me to live- Danny had to die.

I slid on my new identity and found it a curious and uncomfortable fit. Perhaps I would learn to live with it. Maybe this is who I could become if I tried. Morgan was a nice name... a strong name.

There were records from the doctors that Father had paid to come and see me. There was nothing here that spoke of my condition. I flipped through them, making sure I wasn't missing something important. Every record said I was healthy. It had been a lie. My heart had already known.

I sifted through the folders and found the deed to this place and a will that left everything to me. Morgan Kenneth Steel owned this place. Benjamin had received nothing.

Why hadn't Father told me before he died? Shame? Fear of what I would say? I would have been angry, but... He was scared of losing me. This was his way of keeping us together. Instead, Benjamin used those lies to turn me into a whore. Maybe I would still be one. It seemed to be the only thing I was good at.

I stared around the room and knew I would never want to come back here. The memories were now jaded and tinted with the deceptions that had bound me to this place. The mendacity of my life had been a trap.

But no more. I stood up and walked over to the window, opening it and letting the dawn's fresh air into the room.

I was free. I could soar like the birds that I had watched from my own cage, while they dived and darted about unbound and unfettered.

But first, I had to confront Benjamin.

He had to pay for his sins.

CHAPTER TEN



I dressed in black jeans and a tight t-shirt and waited in the living room, deciding how I would handle Benjamin. I had found the safe's paperwork in one of Father's folders, and I changed the password and locked the empty safe once again. Its secrets now belonged to me, and when I left this home, I would take them with me. They were all I would have left of this life; I would never again live. The painting hung in its usual place on the wall. Benjamin would not know I knew of the safe's existence until it was too late.

Hours passed, and I spent my time staring out the window, wondering what it would be like when I finally set foot outside these walls. I daydreamed, I paced... I waited.

He was later than usual, and I grew bored. Watching from windows held no fascination for me anymore. I would not let my gaze linger on the sky until I was finally out beneath it. I walked into my bedroom, and after a short time, I fell asleep.

The front door closing woke me up.

I waited for him. He could come to me. I would not give my power away ever again.

"Danny? Son, are you awake?" he called from the living room. He must have had fun on his trip. He was cheerful.

"Yes," I answered, my voice cold and emotionless.

He walked into my bedroom and leaned against the doorframe, a wide grin plastered across his evil face.

“There you are. I hope you have rested, Danny. You have a huge week ahead of you. I know I yelled at you about using condoms, but you are on PReP, and I found someone willing to pay triple if you let him and his friend ride bareback. What do you say?” he stared at me, expecting me to agree. I always had. You do what you must when you think it’s the only way for you to survive.

Now I knew better.

I put my hands behind my head and leaned back against the headboard. “No. I don’t think so, Benjamin.” I stared into his eyes and made myself keep the contact even if it was revolting to me.

“What do you mean, no, Danny? We need all the money we can get right now. It’s time for your yearly check-up, and doctors are very expensive when they come to you, Danny. I think that we’ll have to do it if we are going to be able to pay all the bills this month and replace the oxygen tanks.” He walked to the foot of my bed.

“I know, Benjamin.” I extended my feet and frowned at him, my voice dripping with hate. “I am done being your captive here. I am leaving and want to never see you again.”

“Leaving?” He laughed his high wheezy laugh. I used to find it comforting. Now it made me sick. “And where will you go, Danny. You will die if you leave this place. Maybe not right away, but with your condition...”

“You mean the condition that I’ve been lied to about my entire life? I know, Benjamin. It’s over. I’m leaving, but I wanted to tell you in person.” I watched his eyes dart around the room like a trapped animal. His face fell. He turned around in a circle at the foot of the bed, trying to rationalize what he was hearing. He spun back around and laughed at me.

“Does that make you feel better, you little gutter whore? My brother may have saved you from a life of living in a hovel, but that’s all you have ever been. Trash! You know nothing, brat. You couldn’t survive out there because you’re too stupid to make it on your own. You’ll come crawling back when you have no money or a place to live. You have no idea

how good you have it here.” He spat at me, venom dripping from his voice.

“So, you admit it, Benjamin? You admit that you and Father told me lies to keep me imprisoned here?” I spat, my voice on the edge of breaking. It took every ounce of restraint I had not to scream at him. My fingernails bit into my skin as I fought to keep control.

“Your father did it out of fear of losing you. I did it because it’s what he wanted. He knew you wouldn’t be able to live in the real world. It’s too cruel and mean for someone as innocent as you, Danny.” His shoulders slumped, and he sighed as he stared at me. The frown fell from his face and was replaced with a blank mask. “I’m sorry, Danny. I didn’t mean those words, I said. I was angry, and it’s been a long day. Let’s go to bed, and we can talk about it in the morning, okay?”

“I will never sleep another night in this house. It belongs to me, doesn’t it? I will sell it when I get a chance.” I sat up slowly, my legs still stretched out.

“You don’t exist, boy. How can you own anything?” He laughed, and that was all it took for me to unleash my truth.

“Morgan Kenneth Steel, owns it and I believe that’s me, isn’t it?” As the words shot hatefully from my mouth, I knew I had overplayed my hand.

He stared at me, and I could feel the fire burning through his gaze. He turned abruptly around and walked out of my room. I heard the painting hit the floor, and his rage echoing through the house as the safe refused to open.

A cold chill ran through my body. I had made a fatal mistake. Benjamin knew everything, and before I could think to get off the bed, Benjamin ran through the door and jumped on top of me. His fists were fast, and I wasn’t prepared for his wrath. He cold-cocked me on the side of my face, and the room spun.

I tried to crawl off the bed, but he grabbed me from behind, and his arm went around my throat. I gasped as I

struggled for air. He was stronger than I had expected, and his anger fueled him. He squeezed tighter, and I struggled underneath him, his thick frame weighing me down. I felt as if I was about to blackout, but I resisted with every ounce of strength I had. If I didn't, I knew that my uncle would make sure I could never leave this place again. I reached down to the foot of the bed and pulled with all my might. Benjamin's grip loosened for just a second, and I remembered what I had hidden between my mattresses the night before.

I grabbed the knife and sliced it at my uncle's arm. He let go and screamed as the blade cut him open. He hit me again in the back of the head, and I fell off the bed. His hands grasped my neck, and he squeezed again, his fingers digging into my windpipe. I couldn't find the knife. I must have dropped it.

I panicked and reached up and grabbed hold of my hair. I don't know what made me think of doing it, but I threw my hair around Benjamin and grasped it from the other side. I managed to reach up and pull it again around his neck, and then I pulled with all my might. My muscles bulged as I yanked hard, the hair forming a noose around his thick neck.

Now he was in as much trouble as me. He let go of me and tried to pry my hair from its grip around his neck. I had him bound, and I heaved again. I could feel his blood trickle onto my face as he grasped and yanked the silky blonde bond I was strangling him with.

He grabbed as much of my hair as he could from the top of my head and yanked, pulling some from my scalp. I screamed, and one of my hands hit the floor from the pain. The hilt of the knife found its way back into my hand. I grabbed it and jabbed at him as hard as I could.

His hands released me, and he gurgled as the blood flowed from his eye. I scurried away on the floor and turned around, my hair, now as red as a rose, dragging loosely behind me.

Uncle Benjamin fell back on the bed and never moved again. The knife stuck out from his eye. I rolled over and puked onto the floor. The sight of his gory body too much for me to bear.

The last thing I remember is screaming as I slid onto the slick floor. This is not how tonight was supposed to go.

I was a killer.

CHAPTER ELEVEN



When I awoke, I saw Benjamin's lifeless body on my bed. I cried until I could cry no more, not really for the man I had thought of as my uncle, but for what I had become. Father wanted to keep me locked away to protect me, and in doing so, he had started a chain of events that led me to this place.

The world could not be any more horrible than this.

I slowly pulled my shattered psyche back together and walked into my bathroom. The ghastly image that stared back at me was shocking. My hair was a matted red mess from Benjamin's blood. I turned on the hot water and stepped into the shower. Rivulets of red ran down my body and swirled down the drain as I maniacally washed my hair. I scrubbed my body as I showered until it was red and angry, purifying myself as best I could. I turned the water off and stepped out of the shower, water dripping all over my floor. I once again looked at myself in the mirror.

Danny Gothel had to be my past. Morgan Steel was the future I had to embrace. But this hair... How could I live in the world as Morgan with Danny's hair? I ran into the kitchen and grabbed the shears out of the knife block, closing my eyes as I passed Benjamin's corpse on my way back to the bathroom.

Father had tried to cut my hair, and it only dulled the scissors. He was flummoxed as to why my hair was unbreakable. It fell out. It could be pulled from my head. But the hair did not break. Why? I would probably never know.

Perhaps, there was an answer out there somewhere with the family that didn't want me. Maybe it was only me that carried this peculiar trait. My father was a learned man, and if he didn't know...

I pulled my long hair into a ponytail and picked up the kitchen shears. I had to try, and when it didn't work? I would have to deal with my failure. I held the shears close to my scalp and quickly pressed the blades together. The snap of the blades surprised me. The hair I cut hung suspended from the braid.

It worked.

Perhaps that was what it was? Maybe, for some unbeknownst reason, I had to be the one to cut my hair. I had never tried. I had watched Father as he tried to trim or cut my hair multiple times and failed.

I tried it again, and the shears cut my hair again. This hair belonged to a child. I had to now be a man. I smiled and madly started cutting my hair as quickly as I could. I was manic, laughing as my hair fell towards the floor in a giant braid. It was only attached by one small sheath of hair on my head.

I felt...

Light.

Cold.

Free.

I slowly cut the last of my locks, and Danny Gothel fell away with the loss of his hair. Morgan Kenneth Steel stood before me.

Shit... It was not good. I looked like a madman with this hair. But my face... It looked older. Harder. Manly.

I picked up the braid carefully as if it were something precious and carried it out in my arms. I walked into the kitchen, where I put my past into a plastic bag. I would have to test my theory. Could someone else break my hair, or was it only me? It was a secret that I knew I needed to find the answer to.

I dressed as I stared at my uncle's corpse. I had no idea what I should do with it, with him, I meant. It felt wrong to leave him here, but what else could I do? No one would find him behind these locked doors. No one ever came here unless they were invited. My uncle's suitors would find no entry and be turned away at the door. This would be his final resting place, but I wouldn't be able to sell it until I found a way to deal with his corpse.

Someone, somewhere out there in the world, would be able to help me. Benjamin had always said cash was king. I had plenty.

Benjamin had canceled the grocery delivery since he moved in. No one would come here.

I grabbed the bag that held my hair and carried it into my closet, opening the suitcase and lying the bag inside. Who knows, one day I might be glad I saved it. Maybe I could find some use for it sometime in the future.

As I zipped the bag, I noticed a small piece of paper wrapped around one of the piles of money. I grabbed it and grinned as I read it. Finn hadn't completely abandoned me, perhaps. An address was written in black ink. Maybe he would be there waiting for me?

I walked out of my bedroom and didn't look back.

I passed through the oxygen room and grasped the front door. I paused. Was I really doing this? I grabbed the door key off of the hook where my father always put it, and I slid it into my pocket.

This was it. All I had to do was open the door and step outside. After a few calming breaths, I pushed the door open and took my first step over the door frame.

I'm not sure how I did it, but I even managed to take my first ride in the elevator. That took a minute to figure out. But there was only one button, so I pushed it—the feeling of descending made me feel weightless as if I were flying. Finally, I had the wings I had always dreamed of and was free to do whatever I wished.

The doors opened, and I stepped out into a large room. A man in a suit smiled at me as I walked past him towards the glass doors where the streaming sunlight beckoned to me.

I opened the door and took my first step into the real world. I inhaled deeply, letting the cool air into my lungs.

It tasted of freedom.

I *was* free. I looked up as the birds circled overhead, their open wings allowing them to soar on the winds. The sun was warm, and the air smelled of possibility.

I giggled as I slung the heavy bag over my shoulder. I may have been young and innocent, but my father had taught me quite a lot. I walked down the street, glad to be one of the little people walking to wherever I chose to go.

PART TWO

The Concrete Jungle

TWO YEARS LATER

CHAPTER TWELVE



He doesn't hear me coming. My footsteps are silent on the concrete, just as I was trained to be. I am silent, like a panther stalking her prey in the jungle. I am as stealthy as a snow leopard right before a kill, and I am as deadly as a viper, hidden in plain sight until I want to be seen.

I trained for two years with the world's best killers, and now they have unleashed me upon the city I once dreamed of. I thought my life in the tower was hard. It was nothing compared to what I have survived in the Himalayas. Concealed from the world as I was taught to be deadly, to kill, or be killed. I somehow rose to the top. I excelled, and my teachers were pleased. My life of solitude and loneliness had prepared me for a life as a predator, and I had my prey in my sight.

He was not a good man.

When I was given the contract by my boss, I read everything I could about him. He thought he was at the top of the food chain, supplying bad drugs to his gang of street rats and sending them out to spread madness and chaos upon the innocent. All he cared about was the cash that lined his pockets. He and Benjamin were two of a kind, and he deserved what was coming to him. I wanted to make it slow and painful, but here was not the place for that.

I followed carefully behind him, tracked him through this concrete jungle of filth and piss, of dreams and despair, all the while tasting the fear that he would soon feel.

He deserved to die.

I hated Times Square. It was too crowded, and I realized quickly that I should have taken him when I had the chance in a less crowded part of town. It would have been easy here too. But then I wouldn't get to play with my food, and I wanted to watch him beg.

People parted for me as I moved through them like they sensed the danger that stalked among them. A beautiful face and body whose strength and fortitude made them almost afraid to stare at me as if I gave off a scent that made them uncomfortable.

He turned off Seventh Avenue and walked through the square until he headed back down Broadway. I kept a good hundred paces behind him as he weaved in and out of the tourists and theatergoers. He picked up his pace when he passed the Winter Garden Theatre and turned right on Fifty-First.

He glanced over his shoulder and saw no one except for a Japanese tourist coming out of an overpriced coffee shop. I slid out from behind the doorway of The Gershwin Theatre, where a crowd of people was inside watching *Wicked*. The show would soon end, and this street would be filled with people standing in line to get an autograph from the show's stars.

I had yet to go to a Broadway show. Selena promised to take me to see one sometime soon. She was a big fan of some kind of jagged pill show and thought I might like it too. She still didn't really understand my life before this. I knew nothing of this world. I had never heard of theatre or Broadway, even if I did own a penthouse twelve blocks uptown. Their lights were hidden by all the other towers, and I never noticed their neon brilliance as I stared out the windows. I wouldn't have understood what I saw, anyway.

My prey ducked into a small doorway between two busy bars. This was his base of operations, and I quickly caught the door and his eye as I slid into the lobby.

"Hey," I nodded, not making eye contact.

He grunted and pulled out his phone as we waited for the elevator.

He shuffled his feet and watched the elevator descend, the numbers counting down the floors on the display above. He was shifty. Not many people came into this old lobby. It was a rent-controlled apartment complex in the middle of Manhattan. Most of the residents inside were old and had been here for decades. It was a quiet place without much activity. Perfect for what he used it for.

It was perfect for me too.

The elevator dinged dully, signaling its arrival. He pulled the metal gate open and turned to me.

“You should wait. I’ll send it back down.” He grimaced, looking at me. I was much larger than him. He was tall and thin, and I was a wall of muscle. He started to pull the gate shut, and I caught it in my hand.

“I said...” he started, and I kicked him in the groin. Before he could even scream in pain, I pushed him against the wall and head-butted him. He slumped to the floor quietly. I pressed the top button and held it down. This elevator was so old it was slow, and that meant someone could see if they happened to be going up. I felt confident that most people only rode this rickety death trap to and from the lobby, so I was prepared but not overly worried. I hated bystander casualties. It was unfair, but a way of life for someone like me.

Time crawled as I waited by the gate, my body coiled ready to spring at a moment’s notice if necessary. Finally, it dinged, and I knew I was at my destination—the roof of the old tenement. I had seen no one come onto the old tar beach of this building for the last two days, and the overhang of the unlit neon sign kept whatever I did on the roof to be unseen from the surrounding buildings.

My teachers had shown me how to remain unseen. How important for what it was I did to remain in the shadow life of the normal world. I had taken my time and scoped out everything. I could have easily taken care of him on the street

without anyone noticing until they were stepping over his body, but where was the fun in that?

My anger and resentment from my old life had given me a need to release the pent-up emotions I kept at bay. I preferred to take my time. Ariadne only gave me the lowest of the lowlifes. I had no desire to kill a person who wasn't evil. Everyone deserved a chance to live, and I would never take the life of an innocent. She had other killers for that. It left a sour taste in my mouth that she took those kinds of jobs. But she took me in when I had no place else to go. I owed her everything.

I dragged drug dealer Donald Lucas out of the elevator and sent it back down to the lobby, closing and locking the metal gate with a padlock I brought, just in case. We would be alone on the roof tonight, and if I needed to make a quick escape? Well, there were other ways down.

I threw him down under the metal scaffolding and climbed up, watching him as he lay there, slowly coming to. His mouth twitched, and his eyelids slowly opened partway. He still didn't move.

I slowly hung off the metal bar, using my legs to clutch the bar as I hung upside down—my one of a kind garotte in my hand. The hair, a symbol of my past, was still unbreakable, and it was the ligature of the weapon I wielded. The handles were carved from a small piece of ebony that fit my palms perfectly. I had carved them myself under the tutelage of a master. My weapon was longer than most. I used it in a variety of ways, not just to strangle. If I brought this weapon out, it was usually the last thing my opponent saw.

He stirred, and I waited above him, my garotte dangling inches from the top of his head. His eyes flew open, and his body tensed as he took in his new surroundings. A panicked huff of air expelled from his lungs as his head darted quickly around the roof.

“Holy fuck...” he said quietly as he noticed no danger in his proximity. All he needed to do was look up, and he would know that wasn't true. He scooted up against the metal bar and

slowly sat up. I raised my weapon, so it didn't touch the top of his head.

“How the fuck did I get up here? Ow...” He reached up and touched the bump on his forehead.

I held back my laugh. I didn't think I hit him that hard.

He jumped to his feet, and I decided this was not the time. I raised my weapon higher and used my abs to pull myself upright to a seating position. He had no idea of the danger right above him—clueless bastard.

He looked around the roof again and breathed a quick sigh of relief. I thought about letting him go to the elevator and finding himself trapped. But that would bring him out into the open for the building across the street to see.

The metal bar underneath me shifted and creaked with my weight. Fuck.

He looked up, and I launched myself from the bar and on top of him. My weight pushed him back to the ground, his head slamming into the tarry concrete as I landed with my knees firmly upon his arms and shoulders.

His eyes winced and then widened as he saw his predicament. He was trapped and struggled wildly underneath me. I threw my head back and whooped as I pressed my weight down upon him. He had no chance.

“What the! Fuck! Who are... Why are you doing this to me!” His shouts were carried away on the wind. We were ten stories up, and no one from the street would hear him. Even if someone from another apartment building with their windows open heard anything, it would only mingle with the noisy din of the city. New York was an assassin's dream.

I reached over and grabbed his face with my large hand, my fingers digging hard into his flesh as he squirmed. He could go nowhere. He bucked his legs underneath me, trying sadly to buck me off him. It was fruitless, and the fear finally took control, and he grew still as he waited like a deer caught in the headlights.

I wanted to let him go and begin the chase again. This was too easy.

“You’re selling bad drugs on the street, and the body count is piling up, you piece of shit. You and your men have been targeting high school kids. That ends today with you.” I said slowly, my deep voice dripping with danger. He could hear it and instantly started sobbing.

“Please... Oh, God... I’m.... I’m, sorry... I didn’t... I’ll stop. I’ll go away, okay? I’ll...”

His eyes jumped up as he felt my ligature slowly loop around his neck. I let go of his face and waited. I tightened just enough for him to struggle against the noose. I waited as his struggles caused the noose to tighten.

Shock and fear painted his face and expression as he began to gasp for air. It wasn’t tight enough to kill him yet. I wanted his last moments to be filled with as much fear as the kids he knowingly sold those tainted drugs to. I needed him to know he was going to die and feel the pain he caused to those innocent children. I wanted him to suffer.

Thoughts of my tower and the naïve existence I once lived rushed through me. Life was simpler when your only thoughts were childlike. I missed it. But I would not allow myself to return. Benjamin’s body had been taken and disposed of the next day, as Ariadne took me under her wing. Finn gave me something, even if he turned me into this cold killer.

I missed Finn. How could one night... well, two nights, turn my world so upside down? How did he slither his way into my heart and burrow there like a virus?

I detested Finn.

Finn disappeared that same night, and Ariadne had tried to...

The drug dealer gasped.

Shit, I had lost myself in these moments from my past and didn’t notice how tight...

“Will you please kill him already. Jesus Christ, Steel, you do like to tease, don’t you?” Selena laughed from the ledge of the roof. I glanced over and rolled my eyes. She was more cat than human.

“Says the woman who likes to leave her initials in the flesh of her kills.” I looked back at his purple face and pulled. My hair cut deep into his flesh, and it was over quickly. Selena had stolen my fun.

She opened her palm, and her metal claws popped out of her device. She was deadly, and she enjoyed killing. Even with how much I liked her, appreciated her, I hoped I would never become her.

“Can we leave now? Ariadne said she needs to talk to us,” she leaped from the ledge and landed softly on the pads of her feet.

“Mother calls, huh? Wonder what she wants?” Knowing Ariadne, it was another job.

“Maybe her scouts have finally gotten a lead on Finn?”

Selena missed him too. They had been friends for quite some time. Finn was not one of Ariadne’s assassins. He was her thief, and she was quite pissed that she knew nothing about me or the job he pulled. When she found Finn, he would have a lot to answer to. She said he was the best, and losing him hurt her business. Ariadne was serious about her cash flow.

When I showed up at her door, I had nowhere to go and no clue about living in the city.

After I left Benjamin’s body in the penthouse, I knew enough to take all of my documents to the bank. I may have been a stupid man, at that time, in the ways of the world, but I did listen when Father talked. I wandered around the city, carrying my bag until I saw the sign for Bank of New York and went inside. It was hard to get an account with only a birth certificate, but the woman who helped me listened as I told her my story, leaving out most of the tale, of course. She seemed genuinely moved by my tale of woe and fudged a document so I could open an account and rent a storage box.

I left the bank with the knowledge she gave me, which was good since I had no idea what an ATM was, and went to the building she told me about to get an identification card. That was the most stressful experience I had ever encountered, and by the end, I was in tears. But I got my card. I was now a real person according to society, and that night I slept in a hotel, thanks to a nice passerby.

I was as stupid as Finn suggested.

The next day, I showed up at the address Finn had left me, and Ariadne, after hearing the full tale, took me in. She explained, in detail to me, about the kind of business she did and asked if I would like the opportunity to join her. I had no other place to go, no one else who cared, and she was compassionate to me, so I said yes.

She warned me that my life for the next two years would be filled with pain and suffering as I learned the ways of the web. I would be taught to fight and kill. To walk unseen in the world, even if I stood in plain sight. To use the gifts I had been naturally given to my advantage, so I would never be a victim, ever again.

My life had been filled with loneliness and sadness, and I was tired of being taken advantage of by everyone I met. I said yes to her, quickly, and before I could think, found myself half a world away, on top of a lonely mountain. I trained in a small temple, learning the ways of Ariadne's web. Of course, that was not what they called it. The monks christened it The Path, and I was not prepared for the difficult transition of their ways. It was a training ground for an elite underground band of shadows, whose sole purpose was to punish the wicked and steal from the rich. They trained soldiers to protect their ways and monastery from enemies who wanted them silenced.

I was flogged and beaten until I learned to embrace the pain and welcome it as a friend. My howls and screams, in the beginning, echoed in their stone halls as I tried to catch my breath through the pain. Eventually, my sobs subsided and then ended altogether as I learned to meditate and embrace suffering as another part of my life. By the end, I cherished it.

It told me that I was alive and in control, even if I did not wield the whip myself.

I also learned to inflict pain and torture. To look for weaknesses in my opponents and take advantage of them. They were thorough and cruel in their training. I became obsessed with every piece of information they gave me, and soon I had excelled above any other students' training with me. Some disappeared and were never seen again.

After my first year, they let me choose the weapon I wanted to wield. I showed them my hair. I had thought of a whip of some kind. One of the small monks, Choden, took it in his hands and felt it, his eyes widening with wonder as he tested it for strength. He was Tibetan and had been raised here since he was a child. He was one of the most dangerous and intelligent of all my masters.

"Magic," he whispered as he took out his knife and tried to cut one silky strand. The knife would not cut through it. I held out my hand and gestured for him to hand me his blade. I knew it was sharper than a razor. I had seen what it could do up close. I needed him to see, hell, I wanted to see if I could still cut it, as I had done that night when I embraced my new identity.

He handed it to me, and I took the strand of hair from him and gently let the blade cut the hair in half. His mouth fell open, confused as to why he could not, yet I could.

"Elmo della salvezza," he whispered in Italian. "The helmet of God. A gift given only to the worthiest warriors. The Nazirite Sampson had the same gift, as did the Greek warrior Herakles and many more throughout the world. Was your mother a witch or an oracle?" he asked, taking the cut hair back in his hand and testing its strength again. He could not break it.

"I do not know my mother or father. I was raised by a man who bought me from them. Are witches real, Master Choden? Isn't Hercules just a myth, like the Greek Gods?"

"Just because we worship a different deity, doesn't mean that the other forms of religion aren't real. Who are the beings

that we call God? A myth, you say... Myth's walk among us, and yes, witches and sorcery are very real. How do you think this place is hidden from the outside world? Yes, it's remote, but it can also not be found or seen. Hmmm... Magic is imbued in every molecule of this hair. It is a worthy weapon. I have an idea for you." He took the hair reverentially, and from that moment on, I was treated differently from all the other trainees. I became a favorite, and they taught me much more than any of the others, and I soaked up every ounce of their knowledge. Master Choden took me under his wing and taught me how to create my weapon, showed me the chants that would imbue it with my energy. I could feel the hum of power as I carved the ivory handles. The hair, each strand individually woven and bound, had an electric current that sent waves of power through my hands as I built a weapon that only I could wield.

When I was done, my garotte was like another limb. Master Choden and I trained with it daily. By the end, I was as dangerous as anyone they had ever trained. He called me his rinboku, meaning I was precious to him.

Leaving the temple and my master was harder than I expected. I would have stayed there and continued my studies until I was one of them. The peace and beauty of the lonely mountain and the temple that sat upon it was something I would never forget, but I could not stay. My place was to be in the world, yielding the vengeance of the path upon the evil and wicked.

Ariadne welcomed me back into her fold with open arms. She had been told about my prowess, and I became another vicious part of her web. Selena and I became quick friends. She was one of the only people I trusted or enjoyed the company of. The rest of them were not worthy of my respect.

Finn was still a ghost, and Ariadne was beginning to worry that he had been killed. I was no longer angry at him or wished my vengeance upon him. I just wanted to stare into those green eyes again. If it hadn't been for him, I would never have become who I was now.

Steel, a killer of wicked men.

“Steel?” Selena grabbed my shoulder and shoved me gently. “Are you even listening to me?”

“Nope.” I jumped up onto the ledge. It would be days before anyone found the drug dealer’s body stashed away in the far corner under the sign. It would be the smell that eventually led someone to his body. It didn’t really matter. No one would miss him or care.

Selena joined me and stood beside me as we stared down into the alley.

“Bet I make this jump easier than you.”

I chuckled. “I’m not making a bet I know I’d lose.”

I swung my garotte, and it caught on the rail a few feet down, and I stepped off the ledge, letting my weapon act like a vine as I swung down onto the fire escape that led to the alley side of the building. Selena leaped and laughed as she flew through the air, before landing on her feet, barely making a sound against the metal.

Show off.

We raced back to Ariadne’s underground lair. That’s what all the people referred to it who called it home. It sat in the basement of a large building her family-owned in the Bowery. A dance club she created occupied the first floor and the other three floors were high-end apartments. It kept us legit, and her cash flow hid the real work she orchestrated.

We strolled into the alley side stairway, which looked like an abandoned or derelict entrance, and punched in the code on the small keypad that intentionally looked like it was from the eighties and no longer worked. It did. There were no beeps, no lights on the pad, but the door unlocked, and we pushed it open.

The entrance hallway was bare and dark, with only a small overhead light that buzzed and flashed with age. We made our way down the long barren entrance and turned right. A heavy metal door with another pad stood before us. I punched in the code and pushed it open.

Ariadne had made our lair opulent and comfortable. There were sometimes twenty or so people living down here, and we each had our own private room. The furnishings were modern and expensive, couches and our own private bar sat in the large entry room that served as our lounge. Most people used it sparingly. Killers and thieves found it hard to trust and socialize, except when the boss demanded it. We were not all of Ariadne's crew. She had people who lived outside her web, people that none of us knew about, except for their hidden existence. Her web was a massive organization, and she wielded her power and influence carefully, keeping her secrets close.

We made our way through the large doors to Ariadne's private office. Her large bodyguard Serge stood at attention as always. He was a brick wall of muscle, and his neck was as large as his bulging biceps. He was a stone-cold killer, and he held onto Ariadne's secrets better than anyone. He couldn't speak. Selena said he didn't have a tongue, but I knew that wasn't true. I had seen him use it for other things.

He nodded at us and opened the door. Ariadne's office burned brightly, the lights glowing and flooding her chamber with UV light. It always reminded me of the tower, and the lie Father had forced me to live by. UV killed germs and viruses. Ariadne liked how it made her skin feel. She lived in the shadows, and this gave her a sense of peace. It made me uncomfortable, and I shifted gently on my feet as I stood there, waiting for the boss to acknowledge our existence.

She sat behind her large mahogany desk in a chair made for the rich and powerful, it was almost a throne, and it made her look like a small child sitting in it. She held up her finger and continued reading her book until she found a place to stop. She laid the book down, reverently on her desk, and slid a bookmark in place, before glancing up at us.

"My prodigal children. I take it the job is done? Mr. Lucas is no more..." she sighed as if every death she orchestrated weighed heavily on her.

I nodded.

“Good.” She stood up and walked around to the front of her desk. “Come and sit while we talk.”

“You found something about Finn?” Selena asked, hopefully. Ariadne shook her head slowly.

“This is not about my lost boy. This is another job that only Steel can do.”

“We keep waiting...”

“And I keep searching. When I know something you should know, I will not keep it from you.”

We sat in the large leather chairs in front of her. The smell of the old leather was an intoxicating smell for me. It reminded me of leather chaps.

“There is a vote in the Senate Friday that will impact the disenfranchised and poor badly. We have to stop it from passing, and you, Steel, will ensure that one of those senators decides to refrain from being at the capitol building that day.” She leaned on her desk and crossed her ankles as she casually talked about a federal crime.

“I’m killing a senator?” This was not the kind of job I was expecting. This was beyond anything I had ever heard of us doing. This was a major play to influence the power dynamics of the country.

Ariadne laughed. “He deserves it. He is a pile of scum, and if it were solely up to me, yes, I would have you flay him alive. It would be the most efficient way of dealing with him, but another piece of shit would just move in and take his place. No, Finn. It is not your skills as an assassin I need for this job.”

I gazed at her as she narrowed her eyebrows, her eyes boring into me. I sat back and laughed.

“You want me to sleep with him. What? Now I’m not just your killer; I’m also your whore?” I smirked, teasing her. Slipping back into the role of the courtesan was not difficult for me. I had a large sexual appetite still, and I was not above using my charms to lure a victim in. My years of training to fight had hardened my body into a living statue. I was more

beautiful now than I ever had been then. The only thing missing was my hair, which refused to grow longer than a few inches. Whatever I did that night had altered something I might never get back.

“I think you will enjoy this job. He is a masochist, and all you have to do is show up at the appointed time and make him suffer. Degrade him in every way you can think of and walk away. The rest will be taken care of.”

I put my hands behind my head and grinned. “Do I get to go shopping for this job?”

“Anything you want. But please, no denim. It’s beneath you, my love.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



I showed up to the arranged meeting ten minutes before to familiarize myself with everything the dungeon had to offer. A large Saint Andrew's Cross stood in the center of the room. It pivoted and moved from a standing position to an upside-down suspension. Tables lined the room with various whips, dildos, and butt plugs. The walls were painted black, and the floors were polished concrete. It smelled of sweat and sex. I inhaled deeply.

I laughed huskily as I adjusted my mask. It was black leather and only covered the upper area of my face. I made sure to wear it as I got close to the building, in case he decided to use his numerous resources to attempt to track me down. He would find nothing. I'm sure he would be too embarrassed and scared to try.

I slipped on my new assless chaps over the leather jock and oiled up my torso, so it glistened and shined. I needed to make this good. He would already be shaken up by my mere presence. I wasn't the dom he would be expecting, but when he looked at me, he wouldn't be able to say no. Guys like him couldn't turn away a chance with someone like me. He needed to be dominated and shamed because he hated himself. His gay shame was obvious by the way he treated the LGBT community. Every vote and piece of legislation he sponsored was a desperate cry of his shame.

I wanted to make him pay.

I had no idea how Ariadne arranged this. She knew so many secrets and kept them close in case she ever needed

them. Senator Andrews' secret was one she had been sitting on, waiting for an opportunity to play her hand. Once it was used, it was burnt and could never be brought back again. It was against the code.

This club was also one of those secrets. It only catered to the highest end clientele, and it looked like a member-only spa from the outside. It was, in fact, the most private of private clubs and did not appear on any records or public documents. Its membership was never written down. This building was an abandoned storage facility and losing its owner money, as far as the IRS was concerned. It was far from it. It was a luscious den of iniquity, filled with every sexual device you could think of. The men who worked here as doms were young college boys who walked away quite well-off after their year of torturing their wealthy clients.

They never knew the identities of the clients they pleased. I understood this well from my time with Benjamin. In these types of arrangements, there were no names. None were needed. It was a physical relationship for however long the client paid for, nothing else. Powerful men liked to have their power taken away. I was ready to watch him beg.

I don't know how Ariadne handled me replacing the man who was supposed to be here, and it was better if I didn't know. She would stop at nothing to accomplish her goals, and I hoped the young man was okay. I hated collateral deaths. They made us as bad as the people we hunted.

It was almost time. I sat in the large throne against the wall and posed with one of my boots up onto the large leather arm, my legs open and ready to be serviced. He would be here soon, and I took a big breath and slowly let it out, using the meditation techniques taught to me. I had to keep my control and force him to let down his guard. There could be no mistake. His identity had to be clear. If not, this was for nothing, and many people would find their life harder in this country.

I had to play my part, and I was ready to humiliate him in the way he deserved. Powerful men like him craved it.

The door opened, and a man in a black suit escorted a smaller man into the room. He was a little heavy, and his feet shuffled on the floor uncomfortably. He wore a black hood on his face. That would have to go. The tall bodyguard, for that was what he was, nodded at me and turned around and left. He was not to see what happened in this room. I wonder if Senator Andrew paid him extra for his silence?

He stood there meekly, waiting for me to say something.

I let him wait.

A minute or two passed, and he cleared his throat, clearly uncomfortable as he glanced around the room. He had yet to turn towards me. The bodyguard had a sense of humor.

I sighed. And he turned his head trying to find me.

“Sir?”

“Did I tell you to speak, piggy!” I bellowed angrily.

“You’re voice... You’re not who I was expecting.” The fear dripped in his tone. He was wary of new people.

“I know. Isn’t that hot? He couldn’t make it today for some reason, so they brought in the best. You scared of me? You fucking should be, you fucking piggy.”

“You’ve been vetted? You know my safe word?”

“I’m here, aren’t I? Are you wasting my time?” I snorted through my nose, making a pig sound loudly. “I think you should be punished...” I sighed heavily. “Or, you can leave.”

I stood up slowly, letting him take in my size, and walked over to him, making sure my boots clapped loudly against the floor. I saw his eyes widen as he stared at my ripped body. I stood up against him, bending down to place my face close to his.

“Do you want to leave, or shall we begin, you disgusting little worm?” I growled dangerously, letting my breath hit him square in the face.

“Sorry, Sir. I am ready... You are even more beautiful than who I was expecting.”

“I don’t fucking care what you want. Are you ready to serve me, piggy?”

“Yes, Sir.” His voice wheezed with excitement.

“Good.” I spun on my heel and went back to the same position on my leather throne. “Undress.”

He slowly pulled off his clothes and folded them neatly until he was standing there in his own leather jock and hood. That had to go. I glanced across the tables and had an idea.

“That mask... it has to go. I can’t treat you like the piece of shit you are in that. Do you have something else?”

He pulled the hood off and stood there in a half-hooded leather mask that covered his head and eyes only. It would do for now. I needed to see how this particular mask stayed on. Where was the zipper, and how quickly could I pull it off him?

“Come here, piggy.”

He scurried over to me and knelt down in front of me. I let my hand fall to my crotch and played with my bulge, making my cock hard underneath the leather. My time spent as a whore would serve me well. This man did nothing for me except create disgust. He hated himself, and because of that, he made people like me pay with the legislation and hate speech, he tirelessly spouted.

“Clean my boots.”

He raised himself up onto his knees and slowly stuck out his tongue and placed it against the leather. He licked my boot from the tip of my toe to the top of the boot. Moaning as he savored the taste of the leather. He lavished my boot with his tongue and mouth until it was wet with his spittle.

“Enough, pig.” I threw a white towel down to him. “Clean your spit off.”

He picked up the towel and wiped my boot. He repeated this same routine with my other foot. By the end, they shined in the dim light. I reached down and grabbed his face in my hand, squeezing his cheeks.

“Open your mouth...” He bent his head back and opened his mouth widely. I let spit trickle from my mouth and fall into his. His groan as he tasted me told me how right I was about him. He wanted to feel like scum. His desire for subservience and humiliation would trump his need for security if I pushed him hard enough.

“Back on your knees, pig.” I stood up and strode over to the table and grabbed a wide leather belt. This would be perfect. I walked behind him and let the leather scrape against his back as I came back in front of him, my cock bulging underneath the leather jock. I wrapped the belt around the back of his neck and pulled him towards my crotch. “Clean it,” I ordered as I pulled the belt tight and smashed his face against my hard leather-clad dick.

He opened his lips and mouthed at my cock with his tongue. I tightened the belt around his neck and applied pressure. I could feel him shudder as his airflow was temporarily blocked. I released him, and he gasped for air as his tongue never stopped its assault against my leather crotch. I took the end of the belt and slapped it gently against his back, and he moaned loudly. I did it again, this time harder, and he yelped quietly as he took a deep breath.

I applied pressure again, this time holding him longer, and when I released him, he inhaled harshly, preparing for my next assault. The relationship between a dom and his sub was one of trust, and I needed him to trust me. To become completely unglued in his servitude of me, his need to please his master in whatever way he could- would hopefully be his undoing.

Senator Andrews was fifty-nine years old, and having a young alpha order him around was what he needed to fulfill the fantasies he denied himself actually living. His wife and four children would not approve, I’m sure. He would do whatever he needed to keep this side of his life, these hidden desires from them and public scrutiny.

“I think it’s time to take this up a notch, don’t you piggy?”

He nodded, grunting his approval. His eyes darting up and down my muscled and oiled chest.

“You like what you see?” I flexed my chest and posed, flexing my biceps until they popped.

“Yes... Sir...” He was practically drooling.

I walked over to the cross and stood there, crossing my arms and flexing for him.

“Get on all fours and crawl over to me, you fucking piece of shit. I want to hear you begging for me to fuck you. Is that what you want?” I grabbed my cock in my hand and used the other to feel its way down my hard chest. “You want this cock, don’t you, Piggy. Answer me!”

He nodded quickly and dropped onto his hands, scooting across the floor like the rat he was, until he knelt back at my feet.

“Stand up and lean against the cross, and I will take you places you have never been.” I dropped my voice to a commanding whisper, and he hurriedly leaned onto the cold leather cross. I strapped his arms gently but firmly to the restraints and knelt in front of him, doing the same to his ankles. Making sure these were even tighter. He grunted in pleasure as the leather restraints bit into his flesh.

I left him there and walked back over to the nearest table where the whips and cat o’ nine tails lay. I picked up a small leather one and tested it against my chaps, the sound echoed through the small room. He whimpered in excitement.

“Have you been bad, piggy? I bet you have been a bad-bad man... I think you deserve to be punished. Would you like me to punish you, filth?” I barked.

“Yes...” he moaned. “Please...”

I walked up to him and pressed my hard body against his. My cock was throbbing beneath the leather jock as I got excited about what I was about to do to this piece of shit. I grinded my crotch against his and felt how hard he was beneath the leather he wore. That jock had to go. His cock needed to be seen. I walked back to my throne and picked up the small pocket knife I always had on me. His eyes widened as I held it up for him to see.

“This jock belongs to me now.” I placed the blade against his flesh and thought about cutting him gently. I decided against it. He was too weak for that. Guys like him didn’t really want to bleed, even if I wanted him to. He took a tentative breath as he felt the cold blade, and then I sliced quickly through the thin leather strap that held it on. I pulled on the leather, and it slid out from underneath him. I held it up before him and pretended to take a sniff. I threw it into the corner of the room.

His cock was not large, nor was it small. It was a normal cock, maybe a little thinner than most. It jutted out from him, standing up at attention. I slapped it harder than I probably should downward, and he gasped loudly as it bounced back in place. I repeated this slap a few times and then took his balls in my fist, pulling down on them and watching him writhe on the cross.

I let go and stepped back, twirling the small whip in my hand. I handled it like a pro. He watched as it twisted in front of him with a flourish before I brought it down on his legs. He threw his head back against the leather rest and grunted as it stung his flesh. I brought it down again, this time on his thighs.

“AAAAHHHH!” he bellowed as I brought it down a third time, harder and on the fleshier upper thigh, close to his cock. I took the leather straps and dangled them onto his chest, sweeping them back and forth across his heavy, hairy body.

“Tell me what you’ve done that you need to be punished for?” I demanded, reaching down and placing my palm against his shaft, caressing it before I slapped it again. His moan was loud, but he didn’t answer. I slapped it again, harder, and he banged his head against the leather rest. “I said, tell me, piggy!”

“I’m cheating on my wife...” he whispered, and I laughed.

“I can’t hear you, scum. Say it louder.”

“I’m cheating on my wife.” His voice was clear that time and I brought down the lashes against his bare chest, once-twice- three times in a row, each time harder than the last. His pale skin reddened under my assault.

“Is that all, piggy. Lots of men cheat. That doesn’t make you special...”

“No, sir.”

“Tell me more then, piggy, and I will give you something salty for your penance. Are you thirsty?” I bent down and tweaked his nipple hard.

“Yes, Sir!” He smacked his lips. “I have kids... They would be so ashamed of me if they knew...”

“Knew what, piggy. That you wanted to drink my piss? Would they be ashamed of you for that?” I brought the lashes back down hard against his chest and then again against his thighs, the sounds sounding like small explosions.

“YES! They would be ashamed that I want to drink your piss, Sir.”

“Good... I think you get to have a treat...”

I undid the lock and lowered the cross down until he was almost at three quarters, flipped upside down with his mouth about at my crotch level. I walked over to him and stood in front of him.

“Clean my ass.” I reached around and pulled the leather strap out of my crack and sat down on his face. His tongue reached out and swatted against my hole. I pushed my ass against him hard, suffocating him with the scent of my hole. His tongue lapped at it in vicious swipes before he burrowed his tongue inside me.

I’ll give him this. He was an amazing ass eater. I swallowed my moans, not wanting to give him the satisfaction of my pleasure as I kept my ass firmly in place on top of his face. His chin brushed against my heavy balls as he attacked my hole, doing his best to please me, so I would continue my slow humiliation of him.

It was time. My cock was rock hard, and I had to pee so bad I was squirming on top of him. I stood up, his tongue still reached out searching for me, and I grabbed hold of his head. He looked at the size of my cock, and I saw his eyes widen with glee. I slowly pushed my cock into his wide mouth.

He opened his throat, and I shoved it all the way in, my balls banging against his nose as I assaulted his mouth and throat. I held nothing back as I fucked him. My cock sliding down his throat, and I'll admit, I was impressed by his lack of a gag reflex. With a cock as big as mine, that took some practice. I quickened my pace, making it harder for him to breathe as I mouth fucked him hard. His tongue sliding up my shaft with every stroke.

I couldn't hold back any longer.

I pulled out and put my finger in his mouth, holding it open, and I let loose with a strong stream of piss into his open mouth. It poured out of his mouth and dribbled down his chin. I aimed my stream up higher, and it arced in a yellow fountain, splashing him on the stomach and chest and running in rivulets down his torso. I took a step back and finished my piss back in his mouth. He gurgled as it filled his hole, and he swallowed my piss, choking from the angle of being upside down and swallowing.

I shook my hard penis and slapped him with it across his face before stuffing it back in his mouth. I slapped him with the whip on his wet chest. Tiny droplets flew up into the air as he groaned around my cock.

“You piece of shit. Suck that dick, pig. That's right... You want me to cum, don't you? Piggy wants to swallow my load, doesn't he? Choke on my spunky jizz, scumbag. You want it? I can't hear you with my cock in your mouth.”

I pulled it out, and he snaked his tongue out, glancing off my head before answering me.

“Yes, Sir. I want your cum, Sir. But... Would you mind fucking me first with that big cock, Sir? I need to be fucked hard and fast until I can't breathe. Please, Sir?”

I laughed and slapped him with my cock again.

“I can stay hard all night, piggy. But what makes you think I want to stick my dick in your old wrinkly ass? Huh? What can you give me if I agree to do that?” I said seriously, letting

my dick swing back and forth in front of his mouth, bouncing gently against his lips with every pass.

“I’ll give you anything, Sir. Anything you want at all. Piggy’s ass wants you to teach me a lesson.”

“Tell me the name of the woman you are cheating on with this big dick, then, Piggy. What’s her name?”

He looked at me, and his eyes darted away. “Eleanor. Her name is Eleanor.” He admitted loudly.

“All right.” I pulled the cross back up and undid the restraints. There was a swing a few feet away, and that would be perfect for the finale I had planned.

I grabbed him by the neck and pulled him over to the swing, and he helped himself up into it, happy that he was going to get what he wanted. I tied his wrists and legs with the cords, and there was no way he could escape. He was bound and trussed on his stomach, his legs splayed wide.

I gave him a gentle push before rolling a condom on my cock and lubing it up. He didn’t deserve any.

I grabbed hold of the swing and placed my cock at his open hole, and pulled the swing back, my cock disappearing slowly inside him. I turned the swing, so his head was facing the wall, and then I unleashed hell upon his ass.

“OH GOD!” he screamed as I started pumping hard into him. I held nothing back as I made him a puddle of flesh while I pummeled his insides. His moans and whimpers were loud and obnoxious. I fucked him furiously, making him forget his name, his wife, and his position in our government. I had seen what I wanted when I was fucking with him earlier, and I moved one of my hands up to his mask and slowly unzipped it while I bashed his insides with my thick nine inches. He didn’t realize the danger until I quickly pulled it off.

“You fucker... Oh yeah... Right there, Senator Andrews... That’s’ right... You like my cock up your ass, Senator?”

“Mildred!” he screamed loudly. “Mildred.”

“Oh, he is not coming, Senator. Your safe word is useless. Your bodyguard is taking a nap outside the door and won’t even remember falling asleep. He will have no idea how it happened and will feel horrible about it. He’s not coming... But I am Senator.”

I ripped the condom off my cock and came all over the top of his bald head, letting it trickle down onto his face. He squirmed but knew he was defeated. He had no idea what was happening, and the horror splashed across his face.

I pulled the small cord on the swing, and it flipped over, leaving him on his back. I pulled him up into an almost standing position and held him towards the camera. My cum sliding down his forehead and into his eyes.

“There’s a camera, right there, and that video has been uploaded, Senator. You are not to go to work on Friday, do you understand? If you do, your family, your career... It will all be over. I wonder how your constituents and the rest of your party would feel about you craving abuse at the hands of a man. Sucking my dick. Drinking my piss. Licking my boots and taking my cock up your ass. I don’t think they would be amused... Do you?”

He whimpered.

“Answer me, piggy!”

“No... No, Sir.” He couldn’t help himself.

“You will not go to work on Friday. If you do, this will be released, and that is just the beginning of what we will do to you and yours. Understand?”

He whimpered and started crying, but nodded.

“Is that a yes, you piece of shit?” I shook the swing, and he started sobbing. “Answer me!”

“Ye... Yes... Sir.”

“If you do what we say, and you don’t vote on Friday, all of this will be destroyed. Our business with you will be over. Understand?”

“Yea... Yes, Sir.”

“You wished I would fuck you again, don’t you, pig?”

He sobbed louder and nodded his head.

“Yes, sir.”

I let go of the swing and pushed it, making it rock him back and forth in the air and spinning in a wide circle. I walked over to the back door and grabbed the coat I had brought with me.

“You should think about why you do what you do, asshole. You disgust me. Your business may be done with my employer if you do what they want. But I will still be watching. Think before you vote next time, or...”

I let the door shut loudly behind me and quickly walked down the long hallway used by the other doms to enter to and from the dungeons. I slipped out the back door and disappeared into the city. I was untraceable.

It would be hours before the Senator was found.

He did exactly as Ariadne wanted, and the legislation failed.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



The next couple of weeks were calm, and Ariadne had no jobs for us. Selena and I trained in the gym and talked as she taught me more about the world. Computers were still something I had a hard time wrapping my head around, and I needed to be proficient in all the different platforms, and I can admit it, I struggled. It did not come naturally to me, and this made Selena cackle with delight.

“Well, at least you are getting better. Seriously watching you use the internet is fucking painful. I still find your story so hard to believe, Steel. Have you ever thought of looking your family up?”

“No. I have no reason to. They mean nothing to me.” I pushed myself back from the small table we were using as a desk and leaned back in my chair. “I’m bored.”

“I am too. But I promised the boss I would hang around in case something came up, and she needed to be reached.” Selena jumped out of her chair and raised her hands above her head, stretching. Like I said, she was a cat.

“I think I’m gonna get out of here for a bit. Did Ariadne say when she might get back? She’s been gone longer than usual. What’s happening, do you know?”

She laughed and pushed her black pixie cut away from her face. “No... Somethings up, though. The last time she was this cagey and cryptic about everything, we almost went down hard. We operated differently back then. Everyone had their

own place, and we used an old warehouse as a base of operations. Ariadne wasn't as secretive as she is now. Somehow the FBI caught one of our operatives and tried to use him to get to us. I don't know how she knew, and you know, she always knows... But he confessed to her somehow without the FBI knowing and watching us. He was supposed to be their ace. She killed him and dismantled the entire organization in a matter of hours."

"How did she do that and then build it back up so quickly?"

"How did you come to us, Steel? It just happens as it does. She personally killed everyone that she felt iffy about that night. If you have ever seen Ariadne in action, it is a sight to behold. She is lethal. The rest she disbursed and helped them disappear until she had reorganized and recreated the web. I was young and didn't really understand a lot of what was happening. It was about that time Finn came to us."

"Do you believe Ariadne when she says she knows nothing about Finn?"

"I don't know. I mean... She usually knows everything, but Finn... Well, he was special from the beginning. If he doesn't want to be found. He won't be." Selena walked over to a chaise lounge and curled up on it. "Finn was a shadow among shadows. He was the best."

"Yeah..." I thought so too. I had been with many men before I met him, and many more after he disappeared, but none had ever captured a part of me like he did. He had taken root in my psyche, my heart, and my soul. He offered me freedom. He gave me the truth. Then he disappeared... Honestly, I didn't know if I wanted to kiss him or kill him if our paths ever crossed again. One thing was true now. I was no longer the naïve young man he had met and taken advantage of. Now I was a predator, and part of me, a very large part, wanted to make him my prey.

"Did he train like we did?" I asked, surprised I had never asked this before. The truth was that Finn kept his secrets

better than most, and his past was not known to Ariadne or her crew. I had shared too much.

Selena laughed. “No. Ariadne caught him trying to steal and found his arrogance and hutzpah charming. She spared his life and offered him a job working for her. He craved adventure, and she promised it, so he stayed. He came with his skills already intact. I remember when I first met him like it was yesterday. He was so good looking and muscular, but yet so limber and light on his feet. We shared that in common. He tried to get Ariadne to let him teach me, instead of me becoming... like I am. She told him my path had already been chosen. I shadowed him a lot.”

“Like you do me?” I raised my eyebrows.

“Someone had to keep an eye on you.” She smirked widely as she stretched on the lounge. “I’m tired. Maybe I’ll take a nap.”

“Did Ariadne ask you to trail me, or was that your choice?”

She laughed again and winked. “I think I’ll keep you guessing, Steel. I like it when you pout. Now go away or curl up beside me. I’m tired and bored and getting grumpy.”

I decided to take a walk. There was so much of the city I had yet to explore for pleasure. I went to my room and slipped on a pair of jogging pants and a t-shirt. I left my garotte locked away but slipped on a small belt of throwing knives, just in case. You never knew what stalked the city. I was living proof of that.

I walked out into the alley and turned right down Prince Street towards SoHo. The sun was starting to descend behind the building, which meant twilight was almost here. It was my favorite time of day when the deviants and wild kids began to come out from their lofts and make the city hum with the sounds of their revelry. I longed to join them but knew I was not one of them and never had been. I was something else. Something less than human but more than normal. I was the danger that people warned about. Laughing freely and letting my guard down in a crowded place was not something I would

be comfortable with any longer. I was hyper-aware of what lurked in the shadows. We knew our own.

I walked for quite some time, heading uptown and through Christopher Street, passing the gay bars and sex clubs that lined the street beside the high-end eateries and wine bars. I walked towards the piers. I had found a love for the ocean, and the Hudson River was not far away from here.

From the glass tower, my penthouse, I could never see the water, and now watching the waves break against the shore, or in this case, the pier was one of the rare things that relaxed me. I now soared like the birds I admired. I was one of them, but the water was still a mysterious thing.

By the time I got to Pier 45, it was starting to get dark, the sun was setting, and the dim sun shone orange on the rippling water. It was an inspiring view, even if I did sit in an industrial park. Most people had gone home, and the pier was quite empty. It was mine alone to enjoy.

I sat there for a while, meditating as the dark night took over the sky, and watched a cruise ship with a bunch of revelers on it, called The Spirit of New York. Loud music blared from the deck and carried over the water mixing with the sounds of the city behind me. I was so peaceful that I almost missed the sound of air parting.

I threw myself down and rolled as the object slashed through the air I had once been occupying.

A knife!

I jumped into a low crouch and scanned the area from where the knife flew from. I noticed a shadow moving within the shadow of an overhang. I sprung from the ground and rushed towards it, keeping as many boxes and poles between me and whatever was lying in wait for me.

That knife was thrown with precision. Someone had it out for me. A contract? Perhaps just a passing by killer who thought I might be easy prey. They took off fast enough, but they hadn't left. Killer's enjoyed the chase, a challenge to prove that they were the best. I was in danger, and I was alone

with only my own small knives as weapons. Luckily I was also a weapon.

I let my instincts take over and flipped up onto a large crate before jumping up onto the roof of the walkway's cover. I sprinted over it and paused. I heard footsteps, faint and almost imperceptible, as they padded around the building that set on the water where people could rent a schooner for an adventure on the river.

I leaped, my foot barely catching the edge of the roof as I quietly but quickly made my way across to the other side. Whoever it was had to go around, and there was no place else to go except down the long tunnel back to the city. I had a clear view from here. It was empty.

I got to the edge and looked down. No one was there.

Damn. Whoever it was- they were good.

I heard the sound of steel scraping, and jumped up into the air, rolling and craning my neck backward to see my would-be assassin. The knife, once again, flew close by me but missed. I saw them crouching on the far edge of the roof. Tricky devil... They let me think I was chasing them, when, in fact, I was still the prey.

That had to change now.

My hand found a pair of small blades from my belt, and I threw them quickly. They sliced through the air towards my target as they leaped backward off the ledge in a reverse swan-dive. I ran to the edge as quickly as I could. Whoever it was, they were not massive. No, they were quick and sleek and light on their feet. As I got to the edge, I watched my quarry dive into the Hudson, disappearing from view.

They had decided that they no longer had the advantage.

That was not just some crazy sociopath who found me sitting alone. I could have easily dispatched someone like that.

No.

This was a trained killer, and they had me in their crosshairs.

I had made a powerful enemy.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN



I made my way back home, looking over my shoulder and hyper-aware of every sound and motion around me. I zig-zagged through the city street, making sure no one was tailing me. My nerves were frayed by the time I made it back to the Bowery and quickly punched in the code.

As I walked into the large common room, Selena was lying on the couch, flipping through TV channels. I noticed Ariadne's bodyguard was back at his position. That meant she had returned. I walked by Selena, who cocked her head at me, studying me. She knew something was amiss. She stood up and followed behind me as I walked up to Serge.

"I need to see Ariadne now."

"She's not seeing anyone tonight." He crossed his arms and looked down his broken nose at me seriously, noticing my edginess.

"I don't care!" I yelled in his face. "I need to see her now."

"Steel. Are we gonna have a problem here?" He gave me a half-smile. I knew I had a chance of bringing him down, but only a chance. He was the spider queen's bodyguard for a reason. He was massive and fast. I had seen him in action when someone got out of hand. It was bound to happen in a den of thieves and killers.

"Yes. I think we are if you don't let me in that door."

"Jesus Christ! Let him in, Serge. I'm getting a headache from listening to all the posing happening out there." Ariadne bellowed from behind her door.

“Your lucky day, kid. Next time.” He opened the door, and I brushed past him. Selena walked behind me, patting Serge on the arm as she passed him. He loved her. Most everyone here did.

“What’s so important that it couldn’t wait until morning?” Ariadne huffed from behind her desk. She shut the laptop and stood up, walking over to us.

“I think we might have a problem.”

She gestured to the seats, and Selena and I both sat down. Ariadne hopped up onto her desk and crossed her legs as she waited.

I told her of my close brush to death and how the assassin decided to get away by diving in the Hudson. She said nothing but studied my face carefully. When I finished, she closed her eyes and sighed loudly.

“Fuck... I was right. How did I not see it earlier? The signs... they have been there, and I second-guessed myself. Fuck.”

“Ariadne? Is it happening again? Are we in danger?” Selena asked suddenly, almost jumping out of her chair.

“Yes. I think we are. You are not the first person who has run across... someone else while out in the field. This though... This was an actual attempt, and you weren’t even in play. They targeted you, Steel. I think we have a mole.” She stood up and walked over to her bar and poured herself a drink. She didn’t offer us one.

“A mole? Do you have any idea who it might be?” I leaned back in the chair and placed my hands against my thighs, letting the teachings of the path flow through me. Oxygen in and out as I focused on my breathing, keeping the rest of me, my mind and reflexes, to laser focus on what was happening around me.

“No. All I know is, it’s not you.”

“Or me!” Selena piped up quickly.

Ariadne chuckled and walked to her, taking her chin in her hands lovingly. “Nor you, my child.”

“The things that have happened... I think they are sins of the Web’s past. Mistakes in my better judgment that have cycled back to bite me in the ass. I thought they were just coincidences. I had been so careful... I suppose I have been too vain. Too secure. Izzie was on a mission last month in Brooklyn, and right before she could pull the job, a gunshot rang out, and everyone scattered. She lost sight of the target and came back to tell me. He was found the next day with his eyes removed. He was hung from the ceiling of the place I made my truce with the Russian mob six years ago.”

“Shit his eyes... that’s cold.” Selena pouted.

“Yes. However, that was what we needed from him. Those pupils unlocked a place that had many secrets I needed. I have no idea who recovered them and could even now be using them against us. He was a Fed and had been doing a study on all of the syndicates in New York. His intel had proved to be too good, and we needed to know how deep he got.” She downed her drink and placed the glass back on the bar, turning back to us. “They were sending me a message. There have been others. Peterson never came back from a job I sent him on. His body was found by the police a week later. His tattoos were not hard to recognize, even if the rest of him was. I had assumed his quarry got the better of him. I may have been wrong.”

“You didn’t think to warn us?” I spat, an electric current of rage running up my spine.

“I thought I may have been imagining things. You may have noticed, I don’t trust many people, Steel. Other syndicates wanted the Fed dead. Peterson was a wild card, and it was only a matter of time before he was either caught or killed. He lived too closely to the edge. But you... You are the most... conscientious and careful person I have in The Web. If they came after you, they know... more than I could have expected. You have to be careful, Steel. I won’t ground you. I need you too badly to do that, and I know you wouldn’t obey,

anyway. But there was a reason they chose you, and I'm afraid they may not stop."

"Are we going to have to destroy the web and begin again?" Selena asked fearfully.

"No... I don't think so, child. Not yet, anyway. I still have a few tricks up my sleeve. I will find out what I can from my associates without tipping my hand. But you two... I hate sending you out, Selena, but no one is a better spy than you. You two will need to trail some of our longer associates without them realizing it and see who they are meeting with, who may be following them. If we can capture them, we will have all of our answers." Ariadne spun on her heels and walked back behind her desk.

"So, we are supposed to go along as normal. Whoever tried to kill me was well trained. If I had been in the field, with my senses focused somewhere else, I might have missed it and been floating in the Hudson."

"It's not the first time there's been a turf war of sorts, Steel. I think that's what is probably happening. Someone flexing their muscles and sending a message, letting me know that there's another player in the game, and they want my business. Well, if they want it, they will have to kill me for it."

"No one can kill you. You're the best." Selena said stubbornly.

Ariadne laughed.

"Was the best... Maybe, many years ago. My time is passing, child." She glanced over at me and back to Selena. "Go to bed. Say nothing to anyone and come back to me before dark tomorrow. I will give you your assignments."

As we walked back to our rooms, Selena turned to me and frowned.

"I think this is the end, Steel. Everything's going to change. I don't think I can take it again."

I had no words of comfort.

That was the closest to death I had ever been. I didn't like feeling her breath on my neck. Whoever was trying to kill me had better be prepared to finish the job next time.

I would be ready.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN



The next evening, Selena and I got our orders from Ariadne. She set off to follow a young thief named Blondie while she went on a mission. I was to follow Rat. He was a small thin man who had been with Ariadne almost longer than anyone. He was older, but damn was he fast. He was also a brutal killer. He could stab you a dozen times with his small blade before you even hit the ground. He was not a good fighter, but he didn't need to be. He killed in a crowd and disappeared before anyone was the wiser. Selena used him whenever there was no need for information, and getting the victim alone was almost impossible. Rat could kill in the light of day. He relished taking life like it was some sort of power play.

Even with all his gifts, to a trained assassin, he would be an easy target. He was also shifty as fuck, so if someone was selling us out, I wouldn't be surprised it was Rat, even if he had been with Ariadne from the beginning. I didn't like him and most certainly didn't trust him.

I stayed on the rooftops, leaping from roof to roof as I trailed him silently. He was in the Village, and most of the buildings here were only a few stories tall. Streetlamps became my best friend whenever he moved from block to block. I almost fell as I leaped from a street pole using my garotte as a swing to get up higher, my foot barely catching the edge of the sill before I scrambled back up.

I almost lost him near Canal Street, when I decided the street would be easier for me to keep an eye on him. A group

of tourists flocked in front of me, excited about their cheap knockoffs, and I had to scramble to find him again, almost a block away as he turned towards the financial district.

That's when I noticed him.

A large man I had seen about fourteen blocks back. That was not a coincidence. Rat was winding his way to where he wanted to be, as we always did. He knew where his quarry should be and at what time he should get there. Rat was covering his tracks, making sure the NYPD couldn't trace him easily, sticking to streets with little to no video surveillance.

I changed my position and started following the man who had tracked Rat. Sure enough, he stayed on course, even when Rat took other streets. I had to be careful. He was good. I should have noticed him earlier. Rat should have too if he were worried. Ariadne didn't want to tell anyone, not knowing who she could trust.

I understood, but it made trying to find the mole incredibly difficult for two people. How many of our people would we have to follow? How long would it take? How many would die?

I was scared of the answers. The entire time I followed Rat, I felt like I was betraying him. But that couldn't matter, could it? My life was on the line.

He turned the corner and was out of my sight for less than a minute. When I got there, he was gone. There were no storefronts. That meant...

I glanced up. Was he up there? Did he know I was down here?

I slid into a closed doorway. The business had its metal safety gate pulled down and locked. I glanced up onto the rooftop and couldn't see anything. It was now or never. If he wasn't up there, it was still the best chance I had at finding him again. I had to take the opportunity. I darted back against the sidewalk and whirled my garotte at its most extended length up onto the metal sign and quickly walked up the wall. I balanced on the top of the letter A and jumped up, my fingers

catching the ledge, and I quickly pulled myself over onto the rooftop.

No one was here.

I quickly stood up and glanced around, catching a shadow stealthily move a few rooftops down. I rocketed after him, throwing caution to the wind as I jumped across the alleyway and landed on the roof next door. My feet didn't even pause. I dashed towards the fleeting figure, all thoughts of stealth unneeded. He already knew I was here and was trying to avoid a confrontation. I couldn't allow that.

I needed to catch him. Finding out who he was working for, and who the mole was in The Web had to happen, so things could go back to normal, whatever that was.

He was fast, but I appeared to be faster. I saw him run behind a large concrete box, and as soon as I made it to the same roof, I catapulted up on top of it, staying low. I didn't see him. I glanced around and saw no trace of him. He couldn't have disappeared. Maybe he jumped down. It would be safer for him in the long run, more of an opportunity to blend in.

A flash of shadow on the next roof caught my eye. I stood and raced towards him again. Jumping off the small concrete structure onto the ledge and then flailing across open air as I dove for the next roof. I glanced up and saw him pause. Maybe he had decided he couldn't lose me and he had finally had enough. Good. I was itching for a fight.

I saw him pull back his coat, and before I could decide to charge him, he pulled out a gun. I dove, tucking, and rolling behind an air conditioner unit. The bullets, silent as he discharged them at the place I was. Of course, he had a damn good aim. That shouldn't surprise me. Russian mafia? Maybe, Yakuza? They liked guns. Most of us in the game had our own weapon of choice, and they were rarely guns. Those guys were a dime a dozen. Guns, even silent ones, were almost always noticed. Those were not the kinds of jobs we did.

A couple more bullets sailed over my head as I glanced up, trying to get a bead on him. I seemed to have brought a knife

and unbreakable hair to a shootout. Those odds were not on my side at this distance.

I took a large breath and calmed myself. I counted to five, and no more bullets had been fired. I had to find a way to get around him and surprise him. I noticed a large sign on the far edge of the building. There was enough cover if I rolled over there. Hopefully, if I could get up higher, I would have a chance of surprising him if he didn't see me.

It was the other side of the building, and he thought I was over here. It was worth a shot.

I rolled over behind another unit. No bullets. I rolled again and stood up into a crouch behind the metal scaffolding. All was silent. Shit. I quickly scaled the scaffolding keeping myself as small as possible. Once I made it to the top, I stayed low.

Nothing. No bullets and no person. Shit. Well, it was now or never.

I balanced on a small catwalk to get some height as I ran. This next jump would be more demanding as the roof was taller. I threw myself forward with everything I had, and my foot barely caught the edge of the roof.

I heard a noise from behind me, on the roof I had just left. Had he somehow circled behind me?

I paused, trying to make up my mind. Which choice was the smartest? Was I being led into a trap?

I glanced over my shoulder to find no sign of him. That could mean anything.

I looked back towards the roof I had just left and sprinted towards it, jumping onto the lower roof, easily.

I crouched as I let my senses take over. I heard nothing—no footsteps, even in the distance. The roof looked clear, even in the darkness, with only the night sky offering any light up here. Shit... This was a trap.

I scooted over to below the catwalk I had earlier jumped from and placed my back against the stone wall.

Nothing.

Maybe I was being paranoid and made the wrong decision? If so... he got away.

I stepped out from around the wall and quickly brought my hand up to cover my gasp.

There on the front side of the wall in dripping red paint was my name- 'DANNY STOP.'

I had told no one that name. Not even Selena knew it.

I quickly made a rash decision and hoped I wouldn't regret it, but if there was a chance. I had to know.

I left the Village quickly behind, grabbing a taxi and heading to a place I swore to never return.

My prison.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



I may have read that message all wrong, but someone was trying to tell me something, and the only person I can think of is Finn. The taxi sped uptown, and it didn't take long for me to find myself back in front of the tower. I paid the man and stepped out onto the sidewalk.

How many hours did I stare out my window and look down below, wishing that I could walk among these people? So far, I must say, people have been a colossal disappointment. They are just as greedy and deceitful as Father and Benjamin were. As Finn was.

Finn... The man I can't get out of my head. The thief who stole my heart and quite a lot of my money. What he gave me in return was worth more, wasn't it? I had my freedom and was no longer a victim. I was strong and powerful, and that meant something. Still, he had helped turn me into this killer.

I was still alone. Very little had changed for me in that regard.

My freedom? I stopped and looked up at my glass tower. I may have escaped it, but in reality, I had just substituted my tower for another kind of prison. The Web had me bound to it as much as Father bound me to the penthouse.

That was Finn's doing. He could have sent me anywhere, and he chose to lead me to a life of servitude. I was still a whore.

Anger flashed through me like an electrical current, setting my nerves on fire as I walked up the stairs to the large glass

doors and opened them. I still carried my key with me always. My bank made sure the fees were always paid on the property because I never knew if or when I might need to hide here. It made my stomach lurch, even thinking about it.

But here I was, in the place I had hoped I would never return to.

What would I find inside? Ghosts of myself still sitting by the window wishing to see the world? Or something else? Something dangerous?

Shit... I'm so fucking stupid. This could be a trap. Am I being led here on purpose by someone with nefarious reasons? Is this how I die, in the one place I had always assumed I would?

No.

No one could know about this place. I had hidden my past, and no one could know about it. No one even knew my real name, much less the name I left behind- the person I left behind.

I opened the doors and nodded to the attendant. He stared at me, but when I put my key in the elevator, he stopped looking and went about his business. The doors dinged open, and I inserted my key again and pressed the penthouse button. The elevator doors closed and sped upwards, making me feel like I was soaring.

The elevator was quick. Too quick. The doors opened, and I stepped out into the hallway that still felt foreign to me. I crept carefully towards the door, thankful for the carpet, and stood outside the door, looking for any signs of entry or sounds coming from the other side.

I shook my head. I wouldn't be able to hear anything. The oxygenation room would block any sound from ever coming to me, even if someone was inside. There was only one way to know.

I pulled out my knife and held it firmly in my hand as I inserted the key and turned. It was stubborn, and I had to apply

more pressure due to the unused state of the lock. It clicked. Shit...

I opened the door slowly, keeping myself behind it as much as possible, and peered into the dark penthouse. The glass walls of the oxygen room were covered in dust, making it almost impossible to see. I stepped inside, crouching low, and slowly shut the door behind me.

The creak of the shutting door almost made me jump out of my skin. I shut it quickly. If anyone was here, they now knew I was too.

It was quiet. Darkness blanketed everything. The blinds were closed, and I snuck through the glass room and stood in front of the kitchen as I peered into the cavernous living room. Nothing looked disturbed, but that meant nothing. I looked down and noticed the hardwood was blanketed with dust. My footprints leaving a trail on the ground. Only my footprints had disturbed the dusty floor. I was alone.

I walked into the living room and glanced around. Nothing had been changed. I slowly walked into the hallway and checked Father's bedroom and the bathroom, my footsteps silent upon the floor. I found nothing amiss and slowly opened my bedroom door.

Memories swirled through my head as it silently opened. All of the years I spent here. All of the men I pleased as my life changed drastically. Benjamin's blood soaking my hair as I became a killer. Coming back here with the men who disposed of the body and the evidence. That was the last time I stood in this room as I watched them drain and mutilate his corpse.

In my peripheral vision, I saw the shadows shift, and my defenses flew up. I felt the blow to my head and saw the blackness descend upon me. I had not been quick enough. I was a fool.

oooo

A PINPRICK OF LIGHT MADE ME SQUINT AS IT ASSAULTED MY senses. I tried to roll over...

Shit. The shadow... My head... I was tied to my bedposts. I tested the bonds to find them tight and secure. I would not easily get out. I was a dead man.

I opened my eyes fully, looking around the room, shadows still clinging to the far side, only to find my bedside lamp on, but no one in the room with me. I struggled with the bonds that held my arms and only tightened them as I tried to dislodge myself. I ceased my struggles and waited for my captor. Hopefully, I would find the truth before they dispatched me.

“It’s about time. I really didn’t hit you that hard. Not as hard as you hit me, anyway.” The chuckle came from over to my right in the far corner. I must still be groggy because I should have seen him there.

Finn.

I bit my lip, not knowing what emotion was shooting through me like a drug, filling me with rage and passion.

He stood up and sauntered to the bed. Dammit. The way he stalked towards me in the shadows, so fucking hot and manly. His silhouette against the night sky was as massive as ever. I wanted him to rip his clothes off and jump on top of me.

I cleared my throat.

He came into the light. Fuck. Just as handsome as ever. He looked exactly the same, and I felt my pulse speed up, beating its staccato rhythm in my wrist against the ropes.

He smirked.

“Why is that whenever we get together, one of us always seems to get tied to the bed. You really have a kinky streak, Danny.”

“Fuck you, Finn. You left that night. Left me here. My unc... Benjamin tried to kill me, and in the end, I killed him instead. Why did you give that address?”

“I was planning on seeing you there, but things took a... Let’s just say that it would not have been in my best interest to go back. I found something out that night that changed

everything. I did try to come back here, but it was empty. Except for your... his body. I did find that.”

“Why should I believe anything you have to say?” I wanted to believe him, but one thing I had learned in my time with The Web is never trust a thief.

“You probably shouldn’t. But I am telling you the truth. I’ve thought a lot about you, but... I’ll be honest, it scared me to try to track you down. You are not the same boy I first met. You know you’re not safe, right? You should come with me, Danny.” He sat down on the mattress beside me and placed his hand on my thigh. “I do miss the hair, but I see you put it to good use. A garotte, huh? That’s a pretty intense weapon. But you are made of steel, huh? I Like the new name, Danny.”

“Danny is dead.” I sulked. “You made sure of that.”

“Now... Danny or Steel or Morgan or sexy... whatever you want to call yourself, you are still the same guy I haven’t been able to get out of my head. That night... Well, those two nights... They did something to me.” His hand slid up my thigh and cupped my cock in his hand. It was already hard. He chuckled, which only made my anger grow.

“Fuck you, Finn.” I spat.

“If only we had time or I trusted you not to try to kill me, and I don’t think we are quite there yet. That, Danny, leaves me in a quandary. What do I do with you? I guess I could keep you tied up here as my sex slave, but eventually, someone will come looking. They always do, Danny.” He sighed heavily as he slowly massaged my cock through my pants.

I moaned, my libido getting the best of me before I bit my lip and tried to focus.

Finn smiled. “I guess the feeling is somewhat mutual, huh?”

He moved his hand and stood up.

“Are you the mole, Finn? Is it your new crew who is trying to take down The Web?” Realization dawned on me.

He walked over to the window and stared out. “If I wanted to take you down, you would already be dead. You would have been if you kept chasing that guy tonight. No, Danny, I have nothing to do with the current state of affairs in Ariadne’s organization. I believe that is all her own doing. I know...” He ran his hands through his hair and turned back to me.

“I know that when we met, that night... When I went back to The Web, after depositing my money safely, of course, I found a group of hired hands to take care of me. I had found out some info that Ariadne didn’t want me to know. It happens in the line of work, and suddenly I was a liability for her plans to succeed. She wants more, Danny. More control, more power, more say in what happens in the world, and to her credit, she always thinks about the small guy. She considers herself a necessary evil, so she can alter the world into her own vision, and the people she has in her pocket, Danny... The politicians, power brokers, actors, and musicians... She has more say in world politics than you would imagine, but she doesn’t want you to know that. She keeps her secrets to herself, and when she doesn’t need you anymore, she disposes of you.”

He walked quickly back over and reached out, stroking my face with his fingers.

“Who do you think put the hit out on you, boy? Ariadne is not your friend. You’ve done something that... That she wants to be kept quiet. It’s her pattern, Danny. I’ve seen it before and turned a blind eye until I barely escaped with my life. I won’t see her take yours. The world is a better place with you in it.”

“I don’t think Ariadne is the one behind it, Finn. I think you’re wrong.” I leaned my face into his hand, my body betraying me and craving his touch.

“Are you really willing to take that chance? Come with me, Danny. Please?”

“With you? You say you came back, Finn, but you left me here, scared and alone and rationalizing things that... that a person shouldn’t have to. All of the lies I had been told, my world crashing down around me and you... You drugged me

and stole from me. I would have given you anything you wanted.” I admitted shamefully.

“I know. I’m... sorry, Danny. The way I... I don’t trust easily and... I’m sorry. I did come back, but I know it was too late. I wish I could have... I wished I had stayed to protect you, so you wouldn’t have had to become a killer. I know what that can do to you. What it did to you. You are lethal. The name Steel is spoken about in whispers among thieves and killers here in the city. They all fear you, and I wish you were still able to be that naïve and innocent boy I met. But you’re not.”

“Thanks to you.”

“Yeah... Thanks to me. So are you going to come with me?” he pleaded. I admit it. His sincerity made me pause.

“No. I have to see this through. Maybe they will kill me, maybe not. But I quit being a victim, Finn. I will not go back.”

He reached down and sat on the bed again. He popped the button on my jeans and undid my zipper.

“Are you sure?” He pursed his lips and smiled wickedly at me as he pulled my jeans slowly down, freeing my hard cock from its bindings.

“So, you’re going to rape me?” I said dryly, rolling my eyes.

“Rape? Danny? From the look of this erection... Well, you can tell me to stop. If you want...”

He reached down and took my cock in his hands and started stroking me. It was hot and fast as his hand slid up and down my shaft. His thumb slipping over my head, droplets of precum slicking me as he kept up the friction.

“Oh...” I moaned as he moved between my legs. His hand never leaving my shaft. “I’m still pissed at you.”

“I’m sure.” He laughed huskily, his smirk widening as he stared into my eyes. “How many people have disappeared from The Web, Danny, since you’ve been there? Can you count?”

“Seriously? You’re talking about... While you... Fuck... you’re good at this.” I moaned, knowing that the damage was already done. I could trust no one, including the man driving me wild right now.

He bent over and placed his lips against my large helmet and licked at my tip, pressing his tongue into my slit and causing me to arch my back with pleasure.

“How ‘bout now?” He managed, his tongue swiping back and forth. He sounded so stupid, I giggled.

“Oh! You think this shit is funny, do you?” He jumped on top of me, his knees on either side of my torso as his hands started tickling me. I writhed, giggles escaping loudly as I tried to catch my breath.

“Stop... HA! Oh, my God! Stop! Hahahahaha!” I screamed as his fingers kept up their assault.

He slowly stopped, holding his fingers up and jabbing me a couple times in the rib, causing me to erupt all over again. I was breathing hard as he slid back down and took my girth in his mouth, burying my cock in his mouth all the way to the hilt. His nose rubbing up against my pubes as he inhaled.

He pulled back slowly and descended on my cock again, slurping it as he slowly made love to my dick. His tongue never stopping its attack on my glans and shaft as he impaled himself over and over on my cock.

I was so turned on, it wasn’t going to take me long to cum. I was desperate to bust in his mouth.

He pulled me out and stroked my cock. “Are you still mad? Will you forgive me?” He took my head in his mouth and licked around it, causing my moans to escape loudly.

“Yes. But I’m considering it.”

He took his mouth off my cock and roared with laughter. “Well, I guess I’ll have to accept that. I have never forgotten you, Danny. You are always in my thoughts, and I wish... I wish you would run away with me. But I know you won’t. If you need me. I will be there, but there are some places I can’t... I won’t go.”

He stood up and walked over to the window and opened it.

“Are you? Are you really leaving me like this? What? Tied to the bed with a hard-on?” I spat, my anger coming back. I couldn’t get out of these ropes.

“Yeah,” he winked. “Okay fine.” He walked back over with one of my knives in his hand, holding it aloft dangerously. “Trust no one, beautiful. I’ll see you soon.” He slammed it into the headboard above my head, making me flinch. “You’re resourceful and will get to that sooner than I would like. But, I’m going to make my escape now. See you later, Danny.”

He slid through the window and shut it behind him. He was as conscientious as ever. Before I knew what was happening, he waved and fell out of view. Maybe he would die.

Okay, I didn’t mean that.

Fuck...

Finn.

I had some major decisions to make. But first, I had to either get rid of these binds.

Then my hard-on.

Bastard.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



It took me a lot longer than Finn assumed to reach the knife and cut through my bonds. I almost dropped the damn thing, and then where would I have been. Maybe he meant for it to be hard. Maybe he knew how long it would take.

Asshole.

A fucking hot asshole. But still an asshole.

I was in a whirlwind of emotions. As I lay there struggling to wrap my hands around the knife, I thought about the what-ifs of us.

What if he would have made it back in time?

What if he had found me before I went to Ariadne?

What if I had never become a killer?

Would I be happy? Would we be happy?

More importantly, was he lying to me now?

I had no reason to not trust Ariadne. Of course, she had secrets. It was part of the world in which we lived, wasn't it? If she wanted me dead, couldn't she have killed me many times over?

Yes. She could have easily dispatched me herself.

Selena... My shadow was almost always with me. She and Ariadne were too close, and Selena had adopted me as a big brother. Ariadne would never hurt her relationship with her

adopted daughter. There was too much love there. Maybe Finn was right. It would be safer for her to use an outside agency.

Was I set up by her tonight? Was I the one being tracked and not Rat?

Fuck, the questions wouldn't end. My head spun with the myriad possibilities that I faced, and trying to rationalize them while tied to a bed wasn't helping.

My fingers finally found the hilt, and I struggled to pull it out of the frame. Finn had lodged it in there firmly. He did everything firm- hard. I remembered how he smashed my hole when we had sex. How his thick cock felt as it pushed forcefully into me.

I still had a hard-on.

Fucking asshole.

I managed to finally free the knife and carefully, with all the dexterity I was taught, kept it within my grip as I slowly cut the bonds that held me. Releasing the rest of myself was child's play.

I stood up and let the blood rush back into my limbs. He had tied me securely, which was a smart plan on his part. But now I was faced with a decision.

Do I tell Ariadne or Selena about what transpired here tonight? I looked out the window and stroked myself to completion, thoughts of Finn's face and body, his cock, in my mind, as my cum splashed thickly on the glass surface. There was no reason to clean it up. I didn't live here any longer, and this place was probably burned as a safe house for me.

Finn. The men Ariadne had sent with me to dispose of Benjamin's body. Did someone track me here tonight? That would be unlikely, but if Finn was right and Ariadne had hired someone, she would have had to hire the best to deal with me. She knew that.

Had Ariadne shown me that I couldn't trust her? Of course, I couldn't trust her, not entirely. She was a thief and a murderer of many men, and that fact alone meant she could be

duplicitous. It was in the nature and makeup of who we were and what we did. Trust no one.

On the other hand...

She had sent me to be trained by the best. That cost her quite a bit of money, and I had not been long on her list of assassins. I was worth something to her. Actually, I was worth more than almost everyone else to her, and the way she treated me, inviting me into her sanctum to talk... It was like I was special to her. Why would she do that if she were just looking for an opportunity to kill me?

She wouldn't. She would keep me at a distance. I think. She would definitely keep me away from Selena. She did last night. She sent us on two different tails.

Fuck!

So what?

I can't trust Ariadne, and by proxy shouldn't trust Selena, at least not as much as I usually do. Finn has proven to be untrustworthy as well, and he may have been telling me the truth. Maybe he did feel guilty about drugging me and leaving? Maybe he did have a change of heart and came back for me? Perhaps it was all another gift for him. I had no way of knowing any of these things. All I could do was look out for myself, and that meant going along with the status quo, for now. Keeping my head in the game and my eyes wide open, questioning everything and everyone as if my life depended on it.

It did.

I had just started living. I would not give that up. I would do anything to keep breathing, no matter how dark and horrible it was. Killing Benjamin was the beginning of how far I would go.

I needed to keep Finn to myself. If he was telling the truth and would be watching out for me, I needed him in my corner. Ariadne didn't need to know about that. For now. As much as I didn't trust him, in this matter, he had no reason to want me dead. If he had, he had his opportunity.

I turned off the light and grabbed my weapons, concealing them before locking the door behind me and heading back to The Web.

Hopefully, I would find some answers there.

CHAPTER NINETEEN



The knowledge of Finn weighed heavily on me as I went about my day to day business with the web. Keeping silent was something I had become very good at, but keeping it from Selena felt wrong. Still, I did what I must. Selena had Ariadne's ear, and she would never believe her savior was not someone to trust.

Ariadne was not happy to hear what had happened to me. She was also not happy that he escaped.

"If he got away from you, he has to be well trained. I think this situation has escalated. Selena ran into no problems on her mission. I wonder why they targeted Rat? Or you?" She looked at me over her folded hands as she rested her weary head upon them, massaging her temples.

"I wondered the same thing. Was Rat the target, or was I? As good as he was, he used a gun. Doesn't that mean mafia?" Watching her unravel made me have even more doubts about her.

"Fuck. I wish I knew who and why!" She banged her fist on the mahogany desk. "A gun? That doesn't mean as much as you would think. Not everyone holds to the old ways, Steel. The Path is not the only place to be trained, you know."

"The old ways are best. We are the best." I repeated my old master's saying.

Ariadne grinned sadly. "Even the best can still die."

"Blood is blood, Ariadne. Eventually, death comes for all of us." I shrugged. "I plan on delaying his visit for as long as I

can.”

“Good. Can you still do the job tonight, or do you feel compromised? What do you feel, Steel? Was it you he was after or Rat?” She stood up and walked back around her desk, sitting close to me. “If it was you, then you can’t go into the field until this, whatever it is, is over.”

“It’s only what I feel...” I shook my head, trying to find the words. “Possibly? Probably me. A shooter had many opportunities to take out Rat on his journey. He wouldn’t have had a clear shot at me on the rooftops. Not until he ascended too.”

“I’ll give the job to someone else.”

“No!” I stood up, feeling foolish for my outburst. She glared at me, surprised. “Look at it this way, Ariadne. If I stay here, the chances of us finding the truth becomes impossible. If I’m out there, they will be too. This time *I* will be ready for *them*. If I know, they’re there. Their trap becomes my trap.”

“A gun, Steel. A sharpshooter doesn’t have to be anywhere near you.”

“I won’t give them that chance. I usually stick to the rooftops. This time, I won’t. I change my modus operandi, and they have to change theirs too. They’ll have to get up close, and that’s where I would have the advantage.”

She turned around and placed her hands against her desk and sighed heavily.

“You’re right. Maybe I have been doing this too long and lost sight of... It’s heavy, Steel- Leadership. It suffocates you, and every decision is about life and death. Perhaps it’s time for me too... I’ve thought about it, you know.”

“Retirement? You would hate it.” I chuckled, letting the information I was taking in reorganize what I believed. Ariadne was either playing me, knowing what I would say, or she really was ready to keep me safe. I would have to meditate on this later.

“Right again, Steel. Be careful and check in with me as soon as you come back.”

I started to leave, and she reached out and grabbed my arm.

“Be aware of everything, even our own people. Trust no one, Steel.”

I nodded and went to prepare for my assignment.

Billy Hopkins was a snake who dealt in child pornography, and he deserved what was about to happen to him. He should suffer, but that wasn't in the cards tonight. This had to be a clean and quick kill. His sister had paid us a pretty penny after finding out what he did to her daughter.

He had become quite wealthy, providing videos and one of a kind encounters to the wealthy pedophiles of New York. He had no children of his own, and his sister was the sole benefactor of his will. After what she found, she deserved it.

Tonight, I wore a new piece to my armament, a bulletproof vest. It wouldn't protect me from all bullets, and it only covered my torso, which would not typically be the target for a clean kill. But it was the best I could do. I looped my garotte in its holster and pulled on a jacket that hid all of my weapons from view. My knife belt was reloaded, and my short sword was strapped to my back. I was as ready as I could be.

I set off into the night and waited for Billy to appear. He took the train in from Long Island, and I waited for him at Penn Station. I thought about taking him there, among the commuters. It would probably be safer for me, but that place was covered in cameras, and there would be no way to steer completely clear of them.

His sister had gifted him with tickets to a Broadway show tonight, and she said he would walk. He loved the city and was one of those people who enjoyed being out in the midst of the madness. That gave me eight blocks to do the job and try to lure out my would-be killer. This time I would not fail.

Somewhere between Penn and forty-first street, I would know. Taking him down on the busy sidewalk would be a cakewalk. Sniffing out my own attacker would be more challenging. But instead of worrying about following him, I

would need to keep my eyes in the back of my head. I had to find my own tracker.

I leaned against a railing in the station and pretended to drink a cup of coffee. A few cops sauntered by, and I nodded at them. They smiled and went on their way. I glanced around every so often and couldn't find anyone else who stood out to me. So far, my killer hadn't shown himself.

I saw my quarry step up from the long stairwell that led to the Long Island Railroad train, and I threw my cup in the garbage and followed him, about ten feet behind. He kept glancing up at the lights and buildings as he walked as if he were a tourist. That made me hate him even more.

He walked up Seventh Avenue, and after a few blocks, the sidewalks became even more crowded. By the time I got to Thirty-Sixth Street, I was only a few steps behind him. I pulled out my knife and sped up, hiding it carefully in the palm of my hand. Here on this busy street, I couldn't miss my opportunity. My blade had to go in cleanly.

Fuck, it was way too crowded. I kept glancing around and saw no one that didn't look like a tourist or a New Yorker on their way someplace. Everyone looked like they belonged, no one stood out to me, and that made this very dangerous. My senses were on edge, someone was here, and they were out to get me. Now, where were they?

The small alley I had been planning on was ten feet away, and I caught up to him in a few strides and edged him towards the far-left side of the sidewalk with my bulky frame. He did exactly as I expected and scooted over, as did I.

One quick bump of my body against his, and he was in the alley with me, my knife poking from his jugular. I shoved him further back, his eyes wide with shock as he reached up to feel the hilt of the small knife in his neck. He hit the ground without a sound.

I turned and glanced over my shoulder as a small projectile whistled through the air, missing my head by less than an inch. A man in a trenchcoat stood at the entry to the alley, a

blowgun in his hand, and then disappeared quickly, knowing he had missed his chance.

I tensed and sprung towards the opening when a loud sound exploded behind me, catching me off guard. I turned and spun against the brick wall. Finn was standing on top of the closest garbage can.

“Come on.” He held out his hand to me, and rage washed over me. I stepped over the dead body of Billy Hopkins and pulled out my garotte. Finn held up his hands. “Dan... Steel. That was an assassin from The Arm. He won’t stop until you are dead, and his weapon means he doesn’t even have to get close. He’s probably already lying in wait for you. You know this. Come on!”

Fuck. The Arm was the only other group of killers in New York that were as well trained as I was. Those bastards were the real deal, and I had been lucky. A half an inch and that dart would have brought me down. All it would have taken was a scratch. That dart was poison. That was the only way to ensure a kill with one.

Finn was right. If he knew that. He had to have more information, so I ran over and jumped on top of the dumpster with him.

He smiled and scaled the fire, escape to the building quickly. I followed close behind. When we ascended to the top of the building, I grabbed his shoulder and turned him around, my garotte at the ready as it slid around his neck. His eyes narrowed as I tightened the noose. He didn’t struggle.

I added pressure and pulled him down into a sitting position and leaned him against my thighs as I held him tightly.

“How did you know that was The Arm?” I hissed into his ear, feeling all the pent-up frustration and anger I had at him explode inside me. I had waited for this, dreamed of it. Finn, who turned me into this cold-blooded killer, who robbed me, broke my heart, and taught me to never trust again, was finally in my power.

“I was in this business for years, kid. That was Cicero, and I’m surprised he missed. Must have been a quick breeze in that alley. By all accounts, you should be dead. Damn, that’s tight.” He wheezed. I increased the pressure, feeling his throat constrict as he took a breath.

“I paid a friend a visit. He owed me a favor, and he found out the missing piece, Danny. The order to kill you came from The Web. Why they hired outside, I don’t know, kid...” I pulled him back against me. All it would take is one or two more turns, and he would succumb.

“What else... How did you know I was going to be here?” I said slowly, the anger seething out of me.

“I told you I was watching...”

“Not good enough.”

“I’ve been following you ever since you left the fucking lair. I couldn’t rest worrying about you, kid. I saw him tracking you a couple blocks back. I was hoping I could get to you first, but... I couldn’t get to you fast enough from up here. Maybe I’m out of practice. Cicero’s one of the worst, Danny. If The Arm is after you, they won’t stop until you’re dead. Someone inside has to be paying them a pretty penny to do it. It has to be Ariadne. It’s the only logi... logic... logical choice. If you’re... gon... gonna kill me... get it over with, Danny.”

I kept him locked tight and turned the garotte just enough. Seconds pass, and his arm slams against the rooftop. Once... Twice... Until it drops down and doesn’t move again.

He has passed out, from me constricting his airflow, and I let the garotte loosen.

I can’t kill him. Damn him, the reason I am so fucking angry at him is that I love him, and I know how ridiculous that sounds. In the span of two nights, I had given him my heart, and I’ve never gotten it back.

When I dream, it is of him.

When I think of a life besides the one I’m living, he is in it.

It's his maddening laugh I want to hear when I'm feeling low.

How can I ever trust him again?

I slip my garotte away again and slap his face. His eyes fly open, and as he sees me, he grins slowly.

"Knew you couldn't kill me."

"Don't push it." I stand and offer my hand, which he takes.

"I think we better go back to your place, Danny." Finn places his hand against my chest. "Please?"

I look off in the distance and nod.

"I have to tell Ariadne about the kill. She'll expect me to call."

"Or she'll expect them to call. You sure that's the right move?" he asks seriously, his hand sliding across my pecs gently.

"Yeah. I'll do it from a payphone on the way. It will give me some more info, maybe. You really think it's Ariadne?"

"Yeah. I'm sorry, Danny. I know what she can... How she can feel like this all-knowing mother type. But she's as dangerous as they come. According to my source, you killed one of their guys-A drug dealer who sold tainted goods, whenever they needed a body count. When they contacted The Web, you were given up, for a price, of course. If they don't kill you, eventually Ariadne will have to deliver your body to them to make peace between the groups. Of course, everything he was told could be another cover-up. This life, Danny... It's toxic. The lies and blood. We need to get you out." He placed his hand behind my neck and pulled my forehead against his slowly. "Please, Danny. Come with me. Let's leave all this behind."

"Race you back to the tower."

All I could think about was kissing him.

CHAPTER TWENTY



We backtracked many times to see if anyone was trailing us. If Cicero or his associates had tried, we lost them. I made my phone call to Ariadne, who insisted I come home right away. I told her I was safe and laying low. She didn't ask me where and that surprised me. If she wanted me dead, she would ask out of fake compassion and worry. All she said was she understood and to stay safe.

I couldn't believe it was Ariadne. She was the one who wanted that drug dealer dead for what he did to the kids he sold to. She wouldn't backtrack on that. I knew her enough to believe that. However, I also knew her enough to believe that she would do anything to protect The Web.

For the second time, I found myself riding the elevator to the penthouse and opening the door.

"Stay here." Finn held his hand against my shoulder and entered carefully into the room. After a few minutes of silently searching, he came back and took me by the hand, pulling me quickly inside. He locked the door and then walked around, checking the windows. "Well, you never locked them." He smirked.

After a few minutes of checking every entrance, he came back to me. He caught me staring at the painting that covered the safe. All those years of living here, and I never thought about looking behind the pictures. So much I didn't think about while I sat here dreaming.

Finn walked over and poured himself a bourbon, drinking it quickly down and growling as he tasted the liquor.

“Strange being here without one of us being tied up, isn’t it? You sure you’re not going to try to kill me again?” He chuckled, huskily, making my toes curl. Strange how that sound brought me comfort and yet also drove me crazy.

“Jury is still out.”

He walked over slowly and reached out to me. I took his hand, and he carefully pulled me into him. His strong arms wrapped around me.

“You’re almost as big as me now. It’s hot. The man I have dreamed about and longed for is no longer a sweet innocent. He’s my equal.” His breath was hot on my face, and he placed his lips against my neck and started kissing it hungrily. I bent back my neck and offered myself to him. I wanted it, no needed it as severely as he seemed to. I was desperate to touch him again.

“Finn... Fuck. I... Can we just get naked fast, please?”

He chuckled again, and my cock hardened. I started disarming and pulling off my clothes. We were safe here, for now, at least, and I couldn’t disrobe fast enough. Finn quickly pulled his clothes off and waited for me as I removed my boots to pull my pants off.

“Dammit!” I laughed as I struggled. Finn pushed me back on the floor and pulled my boots off, tossing them onto the floor with a loud thump. He grabbed my pants and pulled them off me. My cock bouncing as it became free from the fabric.

“There it is... Damn that body, Danny. So thick and muscular, now. You’ve beefed up. Are you still as flexible?” he teased.

“Try me...” I winked, and that was all it took. He pounced on top of me, his mouth opening and sucking my tongue into his. We kissed as our hands roamed over each other’s bodies. His fingers massaging and kneading my chest, my thighs, my ass as I moaned into him.

He pushed up with his hands and thrust his hips downward, our cocks rubbing against each other before he slowly left trails of fiery kisses down my torso until his mouth hovered over my thick cock. He bent down and enveloped it within his wet mouth, slowly sliding forward inch by inch until it was buried in his throat.

My hands found his hair and gripped it as he slid up and down on my girth, swiping his tongue over my glans and around my helmet before swallowing it again. I squirmed as he pulled on my heavy balls with his other hand, groaned with pure pleasure as his nose buried itself in my pubes, his breath heavy as he slurped hungrily.

I thrust upwards into his mouth, and his moans of surprise spurred me on as I slowly fucked his mouth, his lips clamping down and letting me have my way with him. This was paradise. I looked down at this beautiful and strong man who I had often dreamed of and couldn't believe that this was where we were. He wanted me to run away with him, and at this moment, I would do whatever he asked. I needed him like the oxygen I breathed.

Needed him...

Wanted him...

"Please, Finn... Fuck... I want you... please, now, Finn..." I panted, my hole yearning to be filled by his giant cock. He was the only one I thought about after... Wanted after... Finn had ruled a part of my world ever since the moment I first met him with that stupid mask on. From the moment I saw his face standing in my living room, tied to my bed, thrusting into me from behind, slamming into me from on top, giving me my freedom, stealing from me, my money, and my heart, I had been his.

He didn't need any more encouragement. He popped my cock out of his mouth and licked it quickly, before rolling me over and grabbing me by my hips, pulling me up towards him until I was on my knees with my ass ready for him.

He slapped my ass hard, and I caught my breath, a small whimper of pleasure, escaping from my lips. He used his

hands to slowly spread my cheeks apart and ran his thumb roughly over my waiting hole. I pushed back into him, needing him now.

He had other plans.

He spit into my crack, and his saliva slid slowly down into my hole. His tongue licked at it desperately as he swiped his rough tongue up and down my hole ferociously. His chin scruff burning me as he buried his face between my cheeks and went to work on my hole.

His tongue probed forward, pushing between my ring and writhing inside me passionately. Over and over, he attacked my hole with his hot, wet tongue. Fucking my ass with it, pulling it as he moved it up and down inside me, opening me up for the hammering I knew he was going to soon give me. He attacked my ass as if he too hadn't been able to get me out of his head or his heart. His need was apparent as he ate my ass. His tongue, his lips, hot and wet as he had his way with me.

I pushed myself back against his face and wiggled it as he tasted me. My moans were loud and filled the room with my pleasure.

“Need you...” I begged, my pants making it hard for me to breathe deeply. He was making me come undone, and only one thing could ease my savage urges. I needed Finn to brutalize me in his own primitive way. I wanted to feel every inch of him as he took me forcefully.

“I don't...”

“It doesn't matter. I'm on...”

“Me too...”

“Then fuck me, Finn. Hard.”

I felt him spit again on my wet hole, and the head of his very thick and very hard rod pressed against my ring and slowly started filling me with his girth. I didn't want it slow. I had a need, and it had to be filled now. I pressed backward and slid myself down his rigid shaft until his pubes brushed against

my cheeks. From the sounds Finn was making, I was driving him wild.

“This ass, baby... Damn. Still as tight... As fucking hot as ever.”

He grabbed onto my hips and held nothing back. He knew what I desired, and he roughly shoved himself, splitting my insides harshly with his cock. I threw my head back and screamed in pleasure as he fucked me unrestrained from the lube, the condom, the carefulness. His cock battered my insides, my ass cheeks reddening and bruising as he viciously used me the way I craved.

“Oh, fuuuuuck, Finn. Yeah... That’s... oh shit... baby, please...”

My words, my groans, and whimpers spurred him onward as he quickened his pace and hammered me into the cold wooden floor. I pushed against him with every thrust, like a choreographed dance that only we knew until I felt his hands squeeze my hips harder as he let loose inside me. His cum gushing out of him and into me, binding us in a way we had never been intertwined before. His thick and hot seed spilling out of my hole as he slowed down his assault on my hole.

He lay down on top of me, flattening me to the ground as his lips found my neck and buried them against me. Kissing and licking me. His love nips just as violent and fierce as his fucking as he left his cock inside me, still hard but slowly withering.

I tried to catch my breath.

“I love you, Danny. Do you know that? Please come away with me, and let’s leave all of this behind us. We’re rich and don’t need this... this life anymore. I just want to live on a secluded beach with you and never wear clothes, never take my cock out of you, Danny.”

He painted a pretty picture with his words. I wanted to say yes, to grab what few things I cared about and hide away from the world with him.

But first, I needed to find out the truth. I couldn't, wouldn't look over my shoulder for the rest of my life, wondering if someone was hiding there to kill me. Kill Finn. I could never let that happen now that I had found him again.

"I am yours, Finn. I've loved you... Since the moment I... That night. Both nights. It's only ever been you, you asshole."

"I wish I had..."

"I know. But, Finn. I have to finish this. Do you understand? Then I will leave with you, I promise."

He pulled his softening cock out of me. I could feel the trickle of cum spilling out of my ass. I clenched my hole as tight as I could, preventing its escape.

"I knew you were going to say that. You have no sense of self-preservation." He chuckled, making me crazy all over again. His breath on my neck was starting to make me harden again.

A click on the window caught our attention. A black shape, one I recognized, scurried upwards towards the roof.

"Selena..." I whispered.

"Well, kid. The jig is officially up."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE



We threw our clothes on, and I followed Finn to a stairway. We ran up it quickly, taking two steps at a time. The door was locked. Finn pulled out his tools, and I brought out my key. It fit, and though the lock was unused, it did click open.

Finn took me in his arms and placed a quick kiss on my lips before letting me go and carefully opening the door. He went first, protecting me as always. I imagined he was quite powerful in a fight, but I would guarantee I was more lethal. Besides, Selena was not someone I had to guard myself against.

We walked up the few stairs that led to the roof. It was a large empty space, and I glanced around, hoping she was still here.

She was.

Her back was to us, and she didn't glimpse over her shoulder as we approached. That was how much we trusted each other. Besides Finn, she was the only other person I cared about.

She knew we were here.

She knew we would come.

"Selena?" I whispered, my words carrying to her over the wind.

"You are alive? That would have been nice to know." Her voice seethed with anger and hurt.

“Hey, kid. I know. I’m sorry.” Finn breathed heavily, his guilt weighing on him. He knew how much Selena had cared for him.

“I imagined horrible things, Finn. You were the only one I... I’m glad you’re not dead, I guess, but sorry is not gonna cut it.”

“I wouldn’t think so, Selena. You’ve gotten taller.” He walked over and stood behind her, placing his hand on her shoulder. She slowly shrugged it off.

“I’m not a teenager anymore. I’m almost the same age as Steel, you know?” she said between clenched teeth.

“I know.”

“So, are you gonna tell me why, Finn?” She slowly stood up and turned around to glare at him.

“It’s complicated, kid. Your uh... Ariadne and I had a disagreement, and I had to leave.”

Her shoulders slumped, and she looked up to him. Finn towered over her, as did I, but that didn’t make Selena any less dangerous. She was better trained than I was, and in close quarters there was no one more deadly than her. She could gut you with her claws before you even knew it had happened. Selena was trained in a form of martial arts that even I didn’t know. Ariadne had trained her, herself.

“Ariadne... What happened?” She crossed her arms and stuck out her lip, pouting as she listened.

“She... Well, I found out some things while I was on a job that I wasn’t supposed to see. Ariadne was willing to let go of my skills to keep her secrets. You know how she is. I’ve been hiding out ever since, waiting.”

“For Steel?”

I walked over and stood between them.

“Yes. For Steel. I wanted to tell you, but I wasn’t really given a chance, Selena. After that, it didn’t seem smart to try to contact you or him when he returned.”

She looked between the two of us and rushed forward, making me tense suddenly, before she threw her arms around Finn. I felt my shoulders relax.

“I’ve missed you.” She turned to me, and before I knew it, walloped me with a cross hook, knocking me to the ground. Selena knew how to throw a punch. “That’s for keeping this a secret.”

I looked up at her and rubbed my jaw. She offered me her hand, and I took it.

“I just found out yesterday.” I shrugged as I stood up.

“You still should have told me, Steel.”

“I know... I didn’t know... I was processing.” I managed, looking between them. Finn chuckled.

“I think he means he wasn’t sure if he wanted to kiss me or kill me, kid. It was dicey there for a bit.”

“Looks like you worked it out. I left as soon as I... I mean...” She blushed, which made Finn roar with laughter.

“Cats that get nosy see many things, Selena.” He teased.

“So, why now? What made you come out of hiding. Steel has been back for a while. Why not then?” she asked, taking a couple steps backward and staring at us. She was positioning herself. Something made her feel uncomfortable.

“Ariadne, Selena. She’s... She put a hit out on Steel.”

“Impossible!” Selena said vehemently. “She wouldn’t do that.”

“Wouldn’t she?” Finn looked seriously at her.

“Selena... She didn’t tell us the truth about Finn, did she?” I offered quietly using my words carefully. She looked over to me, her eyes wide as she took the weight of my meaning in. “I don’t know what’s happening, but I have almost died twice in two days, Selena. Someone has hired The Arm to kill me?”

“The Arm?” she looked aghast. “They’re horrible. Who would do that?”

“You know who, kid. Ariadne uses people and then spits them out whenever she needs to, and you know that. I found out the hard way.” Finn said quickly, making Selena’s face harden. “What I discovered, Selena, was not what I expected. Ariadne has her hands in most of the governments across the globe, all the ones that matter anyway. The amount of people who answer to her, that do her bidding makes her one of the most powerful people in the world. I know... Ariadne does a lot of good. I know that. But she has gotten twisted, and I think her power and need for secrecy has unleashed chaos and suffering to countless thousands all in the name of achieving her goals.”

“That’s a lie. You’re a fucking traitor is what you are. Ariadne only wants to help those in need. You know this, Steel!” Her face sharpened with fury as she bit her bottom lip.

“I don’t know, Selena. Wherever Ariadne sent me, there’s been an assassin lying in wait, knowing exactly where I would be and who I was tracking. How could that be if it weren’t... Ariadne.” I finally admitted it, and it made me feel disgusting. Ariadne had taken me in when I had nowhere to go and taught me to never be a victim again. I looked over at Finn, and he could see the emotion playing across my face. He reached over and took my hand.

“It wasn’t her. I know it. You two... look at you! How fast you turn on the only person who ever cared for either one of you.” She jumped up onto the ledge. “You deserve each other.”

Without looking back at us, she jumped from the twenty-story tower, and somewhere below caught the rope waiting for her that she had tethered. Selena always landed on her feet.

“That could have gone better.” Finn huffed. “I hated seeing her like that. The hate burning in her eyes towards me. She was always like my little sister.”

“I think if we don’t confront Ariadne now. This will only get worse.” I pulled out my cell phone and called her. She agreed to meet me now. Luckily for us, she was not in The

Web's lair. She was in her happy place. That meant we might get to her before Selena.

If that didn't happen, we were both dead.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO



Thirty minutes later, Finn and I walked out into Ariadne's rooftop garden. I had never been here before, but she had often called it the one place she felt at peace. Here she could let go and meditate, commune with nature and relax away from the prying eyes of The Web.

I saw her sitting in the middle of a small rock garden. Birds fluttered through the trees, their magical songs filling our ears with joy. It would be a beautiful place to die if that was what fate chose for me. I planned on going down fighting.

I asked Finn to hang back. He was not happy with my request. Honestly, I wasn't either. Now that we had found each other again, the thought of distance between us was agonizing. It took everything he had to let go of my hand and let me walk into this garden alone. But it was the best choice. From the looks of it, there was only one way in, and Finn would guard my back, I knew that. If Ariadne decided to dispatch me herself, there was no hope for either of us.

"Steel? What happened? Come..." She gestured. "Come sit with me. You are the first person to visit my happy place, Steel. I... your voice... I knew something major had happened, and I no longer believe the lair to be a safe place."

Her words were meant to soothe me, calm me to the point of dropping my guard with her. The one thing keeping me alive was that she didn't know I knew that she was duplicitous.

“Did you know it was The Arm, Ariadne?” Her eyes widened in shock as she stared at me. To be in her position meant you had to be the greatest of actors.

“No.” Her shoulders slumped as if she were beaten. “That changes everything, Steel. You must leave the city tonight. There’s no way to keep you safe from them here.”

“Supposedly, the drug dealer selling tainted drugs was one of their guys, and they want my blood for his. Does this ring a bell?” I said slowly, my body tense as I waited for her to spring.

“That’s not true. Who told you that? He was a loner and didn’t work for any of the organizations. Not that it would have mattered to me. He deserved his death for all the suffering he caused. But he was not a part of The Arm. This, I know.” She slowly stood up and stretched her arms above her head.

“This was what one of my contacts found out from someone inside. You’re telling me that is not true?” Something felt completely wrong about this conversation. She was completely at peace. I raised no hackles from her in any way. Maybe she didn’t know. Maybe Finn was wrong? But then none of this made any sense.

“None of this adds up, Steel. The Arm wouldn’t care about the loss of a piece of filth like him, even if he did work for them. No, there is something darker at work here, and I feel like it should be right in front of us. If they are targeting you... Those bastards of all people, it is because someone wants you dead. The only people who know about you are those here in The Web. Have you made any enemies I don’t know about?”

She looked at me with so much compassion I was flummoxed.

“It could only be you, Ariadne.” Finn’s voice wafted over the light breeze and caught her by complete surprise. The look on her face hardened but then relaxed as she saw Finn walk towards us.

“The prodigal son returns. I am not unhappy to see you, Finn. I take it you are the contact?” she asked, her lips pressing into a grimace as she stared at him. “You have no reason to fear me, Finn. Our beef is at an end, and I overreacted. I have regretted that many times and looked for you to bring you back. Selena and Steel have worried over you, as have I. Finn... Steel, I promise it is not me.”

“That makes no sense, Ariadne. Someone inside The Arm said they got the order from The Web, and the last thing I knew, the only person who gave orders, was you.” Finn puffed up his chest. I was so tense my body ached.

“That is true, but that order I would never give. I had chosen Steel to take my place when I retired. He has a moral compass that The Web needs. The morality I used to have before I got blinded by ambition. Steel is the future of my organization. Why would I choose to get rid of my only logical replacement? I want to retire before I am so jaded I can no longer enjoy what little is left of my life.” Ariadne said so honestly, I believed her. She walked cautiously over to me and took my shoulders in her hands. “I would never intentionally hurt you, child.”

“If it wasn’t you. Who could it be? You would do anything to save The Web from ruin, even kill your own. You have become as bad as the people you hunt.” Finn’s voice rose fiercely. Ariadne turned slowly to him.

“I wronged you, Finn. I have wronged many people, so you shouldn’t feel special.” Her musical laugh racked her body, and she coughed into her hand. “I am older than most would expect. I am also sicker than anyone needed to know. I don’t have enough time left to fix the wrongs I caused or to put right the suffering of the innocents that stood in my way. I have done horrible things all in the cause of trying to solve the injustices of the world. I became blind to the fact that I was just as bad as those I punished.” She walked over to one of the flowering vines and took the delicate bloom in her hands.

“When you are righteous and zealous in your goals, you cannot see the truth, even when it is standing right in front of you. I have come to that understanding too late. But Steel has

always had it. Even as a killer, he has an innocence that never leads him astray. I admire that. The Web... The world needs him.”

“If it wasn’t you, then who else could it have been. Who else knew where Steel would be the last two nights?”

“Selena?” I answered and looked over at Ariadne, whose face fell as the realization dawned on her.

“It couldn’t be.” Ariadne looked older than I had ever seen as she shook her head slowly.

“It was.”

A sword blade flew out of Ariadne’s chest, her eyes widening in surprise as she stared down at the protruding metal.

“Selena? You?”

The blade disappeared as Selena withdrew it. The damage had been done, and Ariadne fell to her knees, blood spreading upon her white dress.

Finn and I quickly glanced at each other and took our stances as we prepared for a fight with one of the deadliest assassins in the world. Selena may have been small, but she was a one of a kind fighter, proficient in every weapon, and the claws she wore were sharper than her sword. She was the big cat in the jungle, and as deadly as Finn and I were, there was little hope that both of us could survive a fight with her.

“Do you like Ariadne’s rooftop deck?” Selena asked as she positioned the sword against her shoulder, preparing for her strike. “It will be the last thing you see.”

“Selena? Why?” Finn asked, horror upon his face as he stared at the young girl he had always loved.

“She chose Steel over me. I was supposed to lead The Web when she retired. It was what I was groomed for, the reason she raised me as her own, so she could pass it down to someone younger. But then he came. I didn’t see it at first. I loved you as a brother, Steel. Someone who could finally take the place of Finn for me. But then she started loving you, too

—more than me. I was too reckless, too quick to anger, and seek revenge. You were perfect. You were the person she had started out as, and I was the person she had become. You took her from me and then took my position.”

“You hired The Arm?” I asked, completely dumbfounded. This was a fucking horror show, and Ariadne lay on the floor bleeding out, probably already dead.

“Duh. I couldn’t kill you myself, could I? That wouldn’t make Ariadne happy, so I made you the fly in Ariadne’s web and sent the killers to find you. I was highly disappointed in their failure. I know now that was all Finn’s fault. Figures. You were always too quick to save the fucking damsel in distress, Finn. Now I will have to dispose of both of you. Sorry, boys, but it has become incredibly personal.”

She lunged forward, and Finn moved to the side while I tried to draw her attack towards me by flipping backward. I didn’t know this place, but I had a sneaky feeling Selena knew it well. She had been the only person Ariadne had trusted, and while she was a little girl, I was sure she had brought her here many times. This was home to her. Finn and I were blind on this rooftop. All we knew was the little we had seen.

She came for me, swinging her sword, and I continued to dodge. Her swift and small frame made it harder to keep up with. She was lightning quick, and my larger body had to work double to stay out in front of her blade.

I spun around and drew my small sword from its holster and caught the side of her blade on my own. That gave me a quick second to charge her, but she was quicker than me. Somersaulting backward and catching my chin with her foot. I barely regained my balance before she was on me again.

I saw Finn pick up a potted plant and hurl it through the air at her. She barely saw it and ducked as it flew over her head. She turned to Finn, and I pulled out my knives and sent one hurtling through the air at her. She spun, and the blade landed in a wooden post behind her.

She threw her head back and laughed as she ran towards me, her blade at the ready as she prepared to remove my head

from my body. I spun and ducked down on one foot, sweeping her leg with my other, catching her off guard, and she flew backward, using her hand to catch herself and cartwheeled back to a standing position.

She looked at me and then over at Finn before spinning in place and throwing her sword at Finn. He dove for cover, and the sword caught his pants, ripping the leg and barely missing his flesh. He stood back up, and Selena snarled at me.

Finn and I circled her, and she lowered her hands and unleashed her claws, the metal making a *thk* sound as they descended out of the guard she used. Three-inch claws, so sharp they never dulled when she ripped metal with them, were now our adversary. If they caught us, we were dead.

She came towards me, and Finn came to her. I blocked her first swing and caught her with my elbow. She bent backward and caught Finn with her foot, knocking the wind out of him as he swung backward out of arm's length when she swiped her claws at him.

She slowly spun as she tried to keep both of us in her vision. I rushed towards her, and she caught my blade on the side of her arm, blocking me and then counter-attacking with a swing of her own. I went concave and felt the air of her claws as they caught the fabric of my shirt while the other claw split the metal of my sword in two. She spun around and blocked a punch from Finn before blocking a kick from me.

I held up my broken sword. She blew on her claws, showing off.

So far, we were keeping her on the defensive, but we couldn't keep this up for long. Eventually, one of those claws would connect with our flesh, and everything would change. She grinned as she went back into her fighting stance. She was playing with us, toying with us, knowing the inevitable outcome before she had even begun. As good as we were, we were no match for her. She knew it.

I threw down my broken short sword and pulled out my garotte. Even her claws couldn't damage this weapon. It was made from magic, and for some reason, that magic was

connected to me. I spun it around, and she paused, knowing that my weapon was indestructible and had a greater reach than her own.

The wicked grin she flashed meant she was excited by the challenge.

“There it is... Do you love him, Steel?” Her eyes narrowed at me as she glared. Before I could answer, Finn charged her, and I wanted to shout for him to stop, but I wasn’t fast enough. She spun and grabbed him by his large outstretched arm, using his own momentum, she fell on her back, her legs catching him on his hips as she shoved him over her head, throwing him through the air. I watched as his arms and legs flailed, his loud scream of surprise as he plummeted over the side and off the roof.

“Oops...” She stood back up, and I let out a bellow of rage. I spun my garotte over my head, letting it out to its longest length.

Selena crouched down low, a snarl on her face as she braced herself for my attack. I spun it like a nunchaku, the small blades popping out of the handles as I used my hair to spin them fast. I let an end loose, and it flew towards her like lightning. She flipped backward repeatedly as I attacked her one end after the other, the blades missing her by centimeters. She stopped flipping when she found herself backed into one of the large stone walls. She ran up it and flipped towards me, thinking she finally caught me by surprise. I spun, and my hair wrapped around her leg, catching her, knocking her out of the air and throwing her onto the stone with a loud thump. I spun again and sent one of my ivory handles tipped with a sharp blade, into her shoulder.

As I pulled my weapon back, shortening it, she reached over and felt the blood with her fingers. Her scream rang through the night and chilled my bones. First blood was mine. But I was afraid the first kill was hers. I had only revenge keeping me going at this point. If Finn was dead, I had no reason left to live in this hell.

“You stabbed me...” she hissed as she covered the wound with her hand. Her arrogance had made her sloppy, and my rage had strengthened me.

She ran towards me, her claws held at the ready, and I slung my weapon at her, my hair skimming over the ground as she jumped. I pulled backward, and my garotte flew upwards, catching her foot and intertwining it within my thick strands. I pulled and flung her hard against the wall, her head landing with a loud thwack against the stone. I pulled my garotte back tightly and prepared to strike the final blow. She was dazed and not in shape to move, this moment was finally over, and my revenge would be...

“Danny!”

I caught my weapon and turned.

“Danny!”

I ran to the edge of the roof and peered down. Finn was hanging onto a small pole about fifteen feet below the edge. His legs dangled beneath him as he gripped the pole fiercely.

“Finn! Hang on!” I screamed, the wind whipping him as he held on tightly. “I’ll find something to lower.”

I stood up and glanced over at Selena, who still lay sprawled on the stone floor, not moving. I could find nothing that would reach him. The only things here in Ariadne’s garden were natural. Plants and stones decorated everything, and there was nothing long enough to save him.

I peered over the edge again.

“Danny, lower down your hair.”

Of course. It was perhaps long enough at its longest length. I let it out and lowered it down towards him. The gusts were strong, and it shifted, but the heavy ivory handle kept it from blowing away. It was so close. I caught the edge of the roof in my string hands and lowered myself below the edge. I could no longer see from this angle, but I felt him pull on it from below.

It took every ounce of strength I had to hold on to the edge of the roof as Finn's heavy muscular weight bore down on me. He climbed my hair as I held tightly to the side, my fingers aching and burning as he slowly made his way up. I felt him grasp onto my leg as he held tightly to my body. I pulled with my arm as hard as I could and raised us up enough for my other hand to grip onto the side. I pulled, and as Finn climbed higher, his hands met mine on the roof's harsh stone edge.

He climbed up, and as I raised myself over the edge, I heard Finn scream, covering his face with his hands, blood flowing through his fingers. A bloody knife lay beside him, and Selena stood a few feet away.

I quickly raised my garotte and swung it around my head as she charged. It wrapped around her neck, and I jerked it as hard as I could, sending her flailing over the edge, my weapon still wrapped around her throat. I heard the crack of her neck as my weapon extended to its fullest and suddenly stopped. She was dead, dangling over the edge of the building, her neck broken.

I hauled her up and deposited her body on the ground. Her eyes bulged in fear, the last look of a young woman I trusted—another soul who betrayed me.

I threw my garotte down and rushed to Finn, who had taken off his shirt and was using it to staunch the flow of blood.

“Finn! What happened? Where did it hit you?”

He pulled his hands away for me to see. The knife had punctured his eye.

I wrapped his arm around my shoulder and helped him down from the rooftop and out of the building. His weight was heavy as it bore down on me. He was about to pass out, either from pain or loss of blood, which was not good.

We made our way down to the street, and I hailed a taxi. There was no time for me to call an ambulance, and we weren't far from the nearest hospital. I felt bad about leaving Ariadne's body on the roof. There would be time for that later.

All I could think about was saving Finn's life.
I couldn't lose him again.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE



How do you start over when everything has fallen apart, again?

I was scared. Starting over, for the second time, left me feeling cold and alone as I sifted through my past. Memories of Father or Benjamin were in every piece of furniture, of each scrap of clothing that I encountered.

I packed what little I wanted and had the concierge in the building call for a company to come and haul away the rest. They would donate to a charity of my choice. I let the concierge decide. None of it mattered to me.

The one thing I chose to do myself was to dismantle the oxygenation room. I took a sledgehammer to it, and with every swing of the heave mallet, I felt the walls of my past crumble as the broken glass fell to the ground. My rage unleashed upon it, and by the end, there was nothing left but kaleidoscope glass as the sun's rays reflected upon the crystal-covered floor.

Cleaning it up sucked. But no one else could throw away the lies and mendacity of my youth, except for me. My fingers bled as I hauled it away in large bags, letting the debris tinkle down the bin as it fell into the garbage shoot. That chapter of my life was gone, along with the fear of dying by a microscopic germ. There were more dangerous things in the world. I knew that now.

I accepted a cash offer for the penthouse. Once again, the building took pity on me and gave me the name of a realtor they liked doing business with. They sold my place in two

days for fourteen million dollars. I accepted it and was ready to move on. I handed the keys to the realtor and walked away, never looking back.

I stayed in the lair most days, as I slowly dismantled Ariadne's organization. Serge had taken the news of his mistresses' death hard but agreed that we should keep her demise from people until we could destroy the secrets she hid. I don't think Serge will ever recover from the loss of Ariadne. He prepared to leave the country and go back home to Serbia to stay with his aging parents. But first, he helped me take care of Ariadne's Web.

Unraveling it and finding all of the myriad interests that The Web had invested in was time-consuming work. It was also intimidating, the power and sway she held within the world's largest powers. Ariadne was a shadow that helped pull the strings of many people, most of them terribly powerful. She controlled warlords and governors, Kings and presidents with the blackmail and knowledge she possessed.

There were many secrets, and eventually, they were all too overwhelming to think about. What I read as I sifted through them sent shivers down my spine. The Web was wide and powerful. I will never know if all of her secrets were obliterated. The paper files were easy to destroy, but the ones on her private servers were harder. It was beyond me, but luckily there was someone Serge trusted to do the right thing. He didn't want anyone using Ariadne's hard work to serve their own self-interests, and the vultures were circling.

These files could cause war and devastation to countless countries if they ever fell into the wrong hands. The lies and shame of the people and governments she had used for leverage in her battle with oppression could never see the light of day. Entire governments would be overthrown if the people knew the truth.

Eventually, we were ready to tell the rest of The Web. They knew something was up as we had stopped taking jobs. We mourned the loss of our leader together. I never told the truth about Selena. That was my own secret, and not even Serge knew how she really died. Most people swore they were

leaving the life, except for a few. They jumped ship quickly as news of Ariadne's death spread. I divided up what was left between her staff and sent each of them on their way.

How strange for someone's work, the very reason for their existence, to disappear so quickly and easily. Undoing her organization was not hard, which showed the cracks that Ariadne had failed to see. With her death, The Web was no more.

Eventually, it was only me left in the lair.

After the money was wired into my bank account from the sale of my property, I bought a one-way ticket out of New York City- out of The United States of America.

I woke up the next day and poured gasoline throughout The Web's lair. There could be nothing left. Lighting the match was easy. I watched the building ignite before I walked down the street and hailed a taxi.

"Dude! Do you see that building on fire! Jesus!" The cab driver gaped at the blaze, and I shrugged.

"Fucking derelicts in this part of town, man. LaGuardia, please."

I had gotten used to being alone again. The last month had been mainly one of a solitary existence, and it had given me time to think. I no longer wanted this life, I wasn't sure I ever did, but I appreciated the tools it had given me to survive—the strength to overcome my pain and the perseverance to move on. The only thing from that life I brought with me was my garotte. The rest I left behind.

I boarded my plane after waiting for a short time. My bags stowed in the underbelly of the plane as I sat in my seat. I ran my fingers through my short hair and was surprised to find that it had grown. It seemed to be longer than it was before, which was strange.

My hair hadn't grown since the day I cut it.

Something had shifted.

I could feel it.

A new start.

A new me.

The plane carried me to what felt like the end of the world. I got off and then took a train through the jungle to a small inlet where I caught a boat. Two hours later, I arrived. A small island that waited for me with no one else on it.

A man waited on the beach.

Well, no one except for him.

Finn's black eyepatch only made him sexier to me. I couldn't wait for this boat to come to shore so I could feel his strong arms around me again.

I was so close to losing him that night, I didn't like to think about it. Selena's blade should have killed him. He was lucky.

I was lucky.

But here we were safe.

Here, we were the owners of our own island, our new life. I glanced up at the beautiful house that sat at the top of a large hill. Palm trees and the call of tropical birds cut through the island's breeze.

Finn waded out into the water in a pair of small shorts, and I jumped out and wrapped my arms around him.

"Welcome home."

His mouth found mine, and I knew I was safe.

I was home.

I would never leave his side again.

The End.

THE GRIM AND SINISTER DELIGHTS SERIES

mybook.to/GrimSinDelights

Naked Ambition by Lisa Henry

With A Twist by Kate Sherwood

Bound by Sean Azinsalt

True Mate's Kiss by Rorie Kage

The Elves and the Bondage Daddy by JP Sayle

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The Devil Told You by Alexis Jane

Crimson Painted Snow by Brea Alepou

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A Merman's Tail by M.D. Gregory

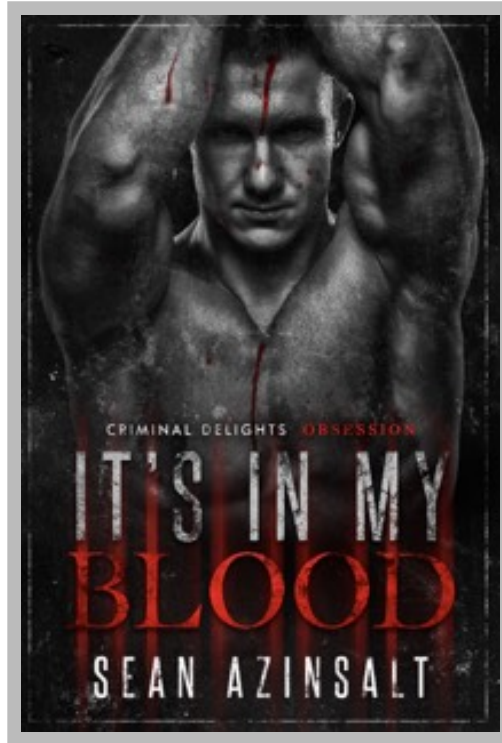
The Black Sea by Dora Esquivel

OTHER BOOKS BY SEAN AZINSALT

It's In My Blood

Criminal Delights- Obsession

mybook.to/InMyBlood



It's In My Blood

Death eventually comes for us all. But what if there's a way for older people to regain their youth? To stay a step ahead of the grim reaper?

Turning 40 was the last straw for me. It's practically 60 in gay years and I wasn't ready for dentures yet, so I came to Youthology — a program that injects clients with blood transfusions from young, fit and healthy donors.

I chose Nick.

Handsome. Masculine. And more importantly, young.

I thought I hit the lottery, until my life started to change for the worst. Not even the top medical experts can explain what happened to me. From the moment Nick's blood flooded into my veins, I stopped being me, and I became something new; something dangerous and deadly.

I became my donor.

His obsessions are mine now. His darkest desires, his dreams, his needs, and nightmares are all a part of me, and I don't want to let them go.

I embrace them and the beautiful boy who haunts both of our dreams.

My blood pact was sealed the moment I entered Youthology.

I never thought I'd become a killer.

This book is part of CRIMINAL DELIGHTS. Each novel can be read as a standalone and contains a dark M/M romance.

Warning: These books are for adult readers who enjoy stories where lines between right and wrong get blurry. High heat, twisted and tantalizing, these are not for the fainthearted.

DARK EROS

Darkly Mine Season 1

mybook.to/DarkEros



Dark Eros

Death... Possession.. Resurrection.

These are the three words that keep me sane.

When my husband Damon passed away, I thought I would never get over it. Much less find another Dom who would love me the way he did.

Protect me- care for me- control me. Damon was one of a kind.

After a year of mourning and almost ending my own life, I make contact with Damon on the Ouija Board I found in my attic.

He shows me things, terrible things and tells me that we can be together again, if I can be strong enough to do what must be done.

I have killed. I have tortured. I have become a monster.

But will it be enough?

This book is part of DARKLY MINE- SEASON 1. Each novel can be read as a standalone and contains a dark M/M romance.

Warning: These books are for adult readers who enjoy stories where lines between right and wrong get blurry. High heat, twisted and tantalizing, these are not for the fainthearted.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean lives in Studio city with his husband and their fur babies, Bette Davis and Izzie Gillespie. His novels include: It's in My Blood and Dark Eros, as well as the short story Bound found in The Dark Kingdom Anthology. He also writes Sweet Hallmark-(ish) romance under the name Shane K Morton. When not writing, Sean can usually be found at a film festival or performing cabaret in a dark dive bar.

Join Sean and Shane's Facebook Group- [Sweet And Salty](#).

Follow him on Bookbub- <https://www.bookbub.com/profile/sean-azinsalt>