



PART 1

Knottless

A SWEET ROMANCE NOVEL

VIOLET FOX

Knotless (Part One)

LOVE ME KNOT

VIOLET FOX

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Afterword

About Author

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Foreword

Knotless is a contemporary omegaverse that takes place in an alternate universe. The main character, Renée, is pretty broken and self-deprecating. I implore you to give her a chance to evolve throughout the story. Some people are born with bounds of confidence, and others are not, and that's okay. The world would be a boring place if we were all the same...

This series will be a duology, so two books in total.

While every effort has been made to remove errors and typos, some still appear. Please kindly let me know via klrymerauthor@outlook.com, and I can have them fixed. I am British, so some British spellings may have been missed, too.

And lastly, you will be assured to know that no animals are harmed in this story. The dog has a HEA. Other trigger warnings may apply, but this is on the sweeter side, but still be wary...

Thank you for reading.

Foreword

Knotless is a contemporary omegaverse that takes place in an alternate universe. The main character, Renée, is pretty broken and self deprecating, so I implore you to give her a chance to evolve throughout the story. Some people are born with bounds of confidence, and others are not, and that's okay. The world would be a boring place if we were all the same...

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Thank you for reading.

This story is dedicated to anyone who has ever had their heart broken,
anyone who doesn't think that they are enough. Because you are.

A special shout out to my amazing beta readers, my fantastic PA Y
Rosado Ortiz, Sarah Klinger for being an awesome host over at RHA/
Jillian West, Marie Mackay, and Vera Valentine who helped me wit
blurb, and lastly...

To my Dad. Who held my hand my whole life. We will see each o
again one day ♥♥

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CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Renée

They say the wrong one will find you at peace and leave you in
But the right one will find you in pieces and lead you to peace.

Well, I'm still waiting for the right one, whoever they may be. They exist. Not everyone gets to be so lucky. Well, unless you're my sister, Chloé.

She dazzles before me in a sparkling white gown, looking as if she stepped out of the pages of a fairy tale book. Ever since the day she was born, people have adored her. My parents adored her. No, my entire family adored her. And now the whole world adores her...

It's her *debut*, and she's going to outshine every other Omega Debutante Ball. She's graduating from the esteemed Omega Blossoms Academy, and the whole family has come to see her on her day. All my female relatives fuss around her as they help her prepare, I can do is stand and watch in the corner like a shadow.

Always the forgotten sister. The one who is constantly outshined by her younger sibling. It's a dynamic no one ever speaks of. Even in movies.

books, it's always the older sibling who is the star of the family. She's two years my junior, and she has already accomplished so much more than I have.

That's because I never awakened. My Omega never manifested, and I have no choice but to sit back and watch as my sister gets the limelight.

She's a perfect straight-A student. And don't forget about her beautiful angel blonde locks and her sapphire eyes. Then there's me, who's not smart enough to even be considered dishwater blonde (or dishwater dull, to be precise).

Also, my eyes aren't quite so blue. They lean more toward the green end of the spectrum. Maybe gunmetal. I don't know, and I don't care. There's no name for my eyes. Putting a name to it because no one has ever cared enough to give them a second glance. Everyone's eyes are on my sister. She will be the one that's the star of our family on the map.

My little brother We don't come from old money, so we need to make a name for ourselves among the upper class. My father got rich within my lifetime, and I don't think he's just enough to remember the early days. The days when he struggled to put his name on the table.

My father adored Now he's one of the most famous tycoons in the world, with his empire spanning the globe. Everyone knows the name Vincent Laurent.

My sister at the Chloé is too young to remember the days when our family still struggled. This is the only world she has ever known. And honestly? I'm glad for her big brother. I wouldn't have it any other way. Despite the fact that I've been super protective of her for her entire life, I still love her.

I'm happy to be the older protective sister. She's going to need all the love I can give her when she can get once she leaves us for a pack. The idea of all those horny boys lusty over my baby sister makes my fists clench, and I'm a natural protector.

I don't believe in violence. But I would gladly punch any man in the face who dares so much as hurt my sister.

Chloé squeals when Aunt Rose removes her hands from her eyes, and she sees her reflection in the mirror. She spins, and the diamonds of her necklace light up the whole room. They reflect off the walls, and she truly is a very lucky something I will never be.

Chloé bounds toward me, throwing her arms around my shoulders and squeezes me too tightly, but I let her have her moment. It's her debut ball. That's how much I love her.

"Oh my God, Ney Ney. Isn't this amazing? I look just like a princess!" Ney Ney is her pet name for me. The name on my birth certificate is actually Renée, but I don't mind. It's what she has called me ever since. Even before she could talk, she called me *Ney Ney*.

My name is the only thing I like about myself. It means *reborn*. There is hope for me just yet.

Chloé, on the other hand, means to bloom. Our parents couldn't pick a more fitting name for her.

She may be a twenty-one-year-old woman now, but she still acts as if she's six-years-old. Chloé is too sweet and innocent. The Alphas of this world would eat her alive.

That is why it is my duty to keep her safe.

"Yeah, you do. You're going to wow them all, Chlo."

She tightens her hug, squeezing the air from my lungs. I was never a hugger. Even as a kid, I wasn't touchy feely. I am not a fan of the Alphas' displays of affection.

Chloé lets go of my shoulders, holding me at arm's length. She has a flicker inside her beautiful blue eyes, and I hate it when she looks at

ne nose that.

She hates that I don't get to experience the same level of happiness letting does, all because my Omega never came to bear.

er dress "I'm sure you will have your debut one day too, Ney Ney."

ision. Her words, though sincere, spear me like a lance. I'm lucky enough myself a beta. I'm twenty-four-years of age. Most Omegas manifest rs. She their teen years.

it, after I sense the eyes of all my aunts in the room. Several give me the sympathetic look as Chloé, but others regard me with disdain. Name! s!" Rose. She's always preferred Chloé over me, and she practically ignore is my whole life.

ole life. It's just a shame our mother couldn't be here celebrating with us. S six years ago, and I had no choice but to become the family matriarch Maybe eighteen.

I miss her, and if only she were here to see Chloé's debut. I hope 't have wherever she is, she's proud of us.

Dad has been distant ever since she left. He hasn't even bothered to if she's tonight. He's constantly working, traveling all over the world. 'rld will Laurent is a very important man, after all. Too busy to come to his yo daughter's debut.

I'm sure he'll at least remember to video call.

Chloé closes her eyes, and a tear drips down her cheek. She's going r much her makeup.

of open "Hey, don't cry," I whisper, rubbing up and down her bare arm.

I wipe off a little of her body shimmer, and I hear Aunt Rose grum! s sadness the background. It took her hours to get Chloé's shimmer just right.

me like Aunt Lily rushes to my side, handing me a handkerchief. She was

the kindest of my aunts. She even helps as I dab at Chloé's sweet cheeks.

Chloé really is beautiful. Inside and outside.

She is going to make some pack really happy one day. I just have to hope they won't break her heart. Not like the asshole who broke mine four years ago.

I made a vow to myself that day. I promised that I would never let anyone hurt me ever again. No one can penetrate this concrete heart of mine. I'm indestructible. Like titanium.

Chloé has never had her heart broken by a boy. She has never even had a boyfriend. Just a string of admirers.

"I wish Mom were here..."

Her words catch me off guard, and just like that, my armor cracks.

How just a few simple words can crack through titanium. Now my armor starts to fall.

Aunt Poppy and Daisy offer their reassurances, telling us both that Mom would have been proud of us. Only Aunt Rose keeps her distance. Vincent even checks her watch, making sure we're still on schedule.

Mom was one of five sisters, and she, too, had a flower name. Violet. The reason I grow them in my apartment now. To honor her memory.

They're beautiful and always make me smile, even during the darkest times.

Music booms on the stage, and it looks like it's time. The show is starting.

Each debutante will walk down the runway to a crowd of admirers and debut her Omega.

It's also a good opportunity for packs of Alphas to find an Omega to choose.

Every pack needs an Omega. They're the matriarchs of the family,

et littleborn mothers and homemakers. That is why I have to be on my extr
tonight.

No doubt Chloé will be the crowd’s favorite. Despite the fact that sh
ensureeven keep a darn plant alive, she is not quite ready to take on the burc
ir yearspack. She’s still young, still fragile. I don’t care if she is twenty-c
practically grown. I won’t let her go.

anyone “Well, it’s time,” Aunt Lily announces, clasping Chloé’s hands. T
ie now.women squeal in excitement, jumping up and down.

Yep. Time for me to keep an eye out for any vultures.

n had a

image-placeholder

. Funny

vn tears

hat ourI hold up my phone so Dad can watch Chloé walk down the runway
ce. Sheare many *oohs* and *ahs* as she spins in her sparkly white dress, c
flashing at every corner. She’s absolutely in her element as she thrives
let. It’sattention.

Meanwhile, I abhor it. I’m a typical wallflower as I prepare to keep
st days.sidelines. But this is Chloé’s night. She deserves to show off and have
starting.fun.

as she I can hear her peeling laughter from all the way up on the no
section. She twirls and twirls, and if she isn’t careful, she’s going to
of theirthe stage and land on some poor Alpha’s lap.

natural

a guard “So like her mother...” Dad sighs, watching Chloé’s debut from 1
across the world.

ie can’t He’s in GMT. So five hours ahead.

len of a “If only I didn’t have to be in London this weekend.”

me and I smile tightly. I know he truly regrets leaving us for that rainy little
across the Atlantic, but I won’t pretend that I am a little upset.

he two For once, could he not be the famous hotel tycoon Vincent Laur
least for just one weekend. Heaven knows we need him. I feel like I
see him anymore.

“Yes, she is,” I sigh right along with him.

Dad’s right. Chloé couldn’t be more like our mother right no
inherited her looks and her bubbly disposition.

“I see the paparazzi have their claws out ready...” I don’t fail to h
Alpha in him as he growls on the other side of the phone.

Mother was an Omega, and Dad is an Alpha. So it came as qu
There surprise when I never awakened. Even all my aunts are Omegas. Exp
cameras Aunt Rose, who is beta. Ironically enough.

off the I have a theory. The only reason why Aunt Rose hates me is be
remind her of her. The disappointing daughter of the family.

p to the There’s another reason why Chloé’s a fan favorite tonight. Her D
a little super, super rich. Everyone is eager to see the sweet little hotel heires
her Omega. It’s also the night she will be unveiling her new fragrance
sebleed accents of her Omega’s perfume. Lemon cake frosting.

trip off Chloé stops to blow a kiss at the crowd, and I roll my eyes
umpteenth time when I see she has glitter in her palm. She’s all ab
sparkles and the glitter.

“Make sure she doesn’t do anything too worrying, Renée.”

Halfway Honestly, Chloé has always been well-behaved. She has never done much to tarnish our family image. There was that one time when the paparazzi snapped her stumbling out of a nightclub, but that's the only worrying thing she has ever done. Chloé is squeaky clean. The press is island-hard to soil her sweet image.

She truly is sheltered. A sparkling princess who has no clue how the world really works. That's why I have to protect her.

Hardly My aunts cheer in the crowd below as Chloé gives one last spin. I've got allocated a seat by the stage. It truly is as if the world forgets about me.

Sometimes the press is surprised that Vincent Laurent has two daughters. She "Well, it's getting late, Renée. I best go to bed. I have an 8 am meeting tomorrow."

Despite how annoyed I am that he couldn't be here this weekend, I smile. Then I get up from my seat so I can meet my sister backstage. "Good night, Dad."

Quite the "Good night, sweetheart. Love—"

Perfect for His voice cuts off as my phone goes flying from my hand. Its screen cracks on the floor, and I look up at the one responsible. "Hey, watch your phone. You're... where you're..."

The blood rushes through my head when I meet a pair of vivid blue eyes framed by inky black curls. My tongue swells in size when I get an eyeful of the Alpha in front of me, and I suddenly forget how to talk.

It has He wears a dark navy suit, perfectly cut to fit his lean, muscled frame. Who knew men could be so pretty?

For the He's not just pretty. He smells good, too. It's a scent that my brain can't even place at that moment. It's there at the back of my mind, but though I can't name it. It's a dark, musky scent with a hint of something spicy and woodsy. My head swirls as I try to get my bearings.

one too My father's tinny voice can be heard over the speaker of my
men the "Renée, are you there? Hello?"

ie only The Alpha grips my arms to steady me, and I lean closer without th
tries sobreathing in his warm, spicy cedar.

Spice and cedar. That's what he smells like.

e world I'm sure I will figure out what spice later...

"Are you all right, love?"

I never His accent. So British. My panties dampen as I imagine the way m
: me. would sound on his carved lips.

nters. "Y-yes... I'm fine..."

ing." He chuckles, bending to pick up my phone. "It looks like I brok
I smile.phone. I'm awfully sorry."

d night, The Alpha places it back in my hand. My dad is still trying to rea
"Renée, don't make me call the police..."

I place the phone to my ear. "I'm good, Dad, gotta go. Have a good
i crackssleep."

where I swipe the screen to hang up, meeting the handsome stranger's eye:

I can't even describe that kind of blue. Dusk blue? His irises do resen
ie eyes,sky just after the sun sets.

yeful of "That's okay. I can always buy a new one," I say.

The Alpha slips his hand into his back pocket, writing me a che
frame.eyes pop. "No, that's quite all right. I'm..."

"But I insist. What is your name, love?"

in can't I swear Tweety birds float around my head as I try to remember my
ghts fail "It's... Renée. Renée."

lsy, and Why did I say my name twice?

The handsome stranger chuckles again, and the sound makes m

phone flutter in ways it never has before. I have never had this reaction to a
never even felt this way about my traitorous ex.

inking, “Well, this check should at least cover the bill for a new screen.”

My heart pounds as he passes me the check. My head spins when I
signature. Alexander Fontaine.

I know who he is...

Not by face. I think I would remember such a beautiful, chiseled fac
y namethe CEO of Fountain Magazine. One of the biggest fashion magazine
world.

Alexander smiles when he sees the look of disbelief in my eyes.

ce your “You’re...” I begin to say.

The Alpha nods his head. “The exact one. It’s a pleasure to me
ach me. Renée.”

“You... you too, Alexander.”

night’s His mouth quirks at the corners, and I lose myself in those heaven
again. “Just Alex.”

s again. Just Alex. My head is still spinning, and I can’t believe this. I am tal
ible theone of the most powerful men in the city.

Alex inclines his head toward the stage. “So, I take it you’re not d
your Omega?”

ck. My What? My *Omega*?

Surely, he can tell that I’m beta, right? Can he not smell my bland,
scent? I’m not even sure if paper has a smell. Unless it’s that ne
/ name.smell...

But the smell of a new book could hardly compare to an Omega’s:
Omegas either smell sweet, spicy, or fruity.

y heart His pupils blossom when he breathes in my boring scent, and a lum

man. In my throat. His spicy paprika strengthens when his nose gets its fill and then a low sound thrums in his chest.

I pant for breath. What the hell is happening right now? Why can I spy the him growling?

Wait, no, that's not a growl. That's a purr. It's so low that you can feel it, and his purr seems to rattle deep in my bones.

Again, his scent swirls around me, and I close my eyes, feeling like I'm in the prancing deer atop the clouds. It's as if this Alpha has awakened something inside me, and that's when a dampness forms in my panties.

Wait. Is that slick? It can't be.

No, it's just my arousal. That's normal.

I just never met a guy who could make me so wet with a look alone like the one I dated several years ago.

"Well, I best go, Renée. Maybe we will run into each other again, only lips sometime."

Finally, he leaves the nosebleed section, heading up the stairs toward the green exit sign. It's only when he vanishes that I remember my sister.

Chloé! She will be expecting me backstage.

She even got allocated her own room because she's so, so special, and she will be waiting on her own. Unless Aunt Rose and the others get to her first.

Now I think I finally understand why Alexander was here. He was just a lookout for an Omega, and my beautiful little sister just happened to be book-prancing around the stage at the moment he arrived.

I bite the inside of my cheek. I thought it was too good to be true. I bet his scent probably just interested in her. I bet there were traces of her lemon scent on my clothes.

No wonder his pupils dilated when he sniffed me.

of me, Alphas love Omegas, after all. Just as they're biologically in
Figures.

I hear Well, back to reality.

an only

like a
nothing

e. Even

again

ard the

so she

first.

on the

l to be

He was

frosting

Alphas love Omegas, after all. Just as they're biologically inclined.
Figures.

Well, back to reality.

CHAPTER TWO

CHAPTER TWO

Alexander

I can't get Renée out of my mind as I search backstage for my little sister. The amount of Alphas lingering around makes me sick, and there's another thing coming if they think they can take Judith home tonight.

Judith had her debut along with all the other Omegas, and she trembled like a baby deer when she walked down the runway. It was her job to refrain from shaking. My sister does not like to be in the limelight, but our parents insisted.

It's not every day a young woman gets to debut her Omega. In fact, only a few young women get to become an Omega. Just like the beautiful little girl that I bumped into just now.

I had mistaken her for an Omega at first. I could have sworn she smelled like lemon cake frosting for a moment. But when I leaned closer to get a better sniff, I realized I had been very, very wrong.

They were just traces of an Omega's scent. One that had no effect whatsoever. Just like most Omegas I encounter.

Renée had smelled much better than lemon cake frosting... I couldn't put a name to her fragrance. It was just there, buried under the scent of

begging to come out.

It was as if her scent was beckoning me...

I've heard of scent matches. Even my own parents were scent se and in the end, they fell madly in love and had three children. I'm th at thirty-five. Then Henry was born after me at age thirty-three.

Judith came sometime after Henry.

She's only twenty-one. Which is why I am very protective of her almost fourteen when she was born.

Even though I came backstage to find my sister, I kind of hope to r Renée again. I had never seen such an intelligent pair of gray eyes. Sc sister. depth, but also pain.

Someone broke her heart once, and I would give anything to take h away...

Focus now, Alex. You can't have feelings like this about a woman y ard forin passing. It's ludicrous.

So why can't I get her mysterious scent off my mind?

I'm met by a potent cloud of various Omega scents when I walk t , not allthe throngs, searching for the shiny black head of my baby sister.

Could it have killed the organizers to use some scent cancellers i

It's stifling. I'm pretty sure some scents strengthen when several Ome elled ofme, and it's just a shame I am not interested in finding an Omega toni deeperever.

There are plenty of other Alphas on the prowl, and it makes m : on medetermined to get to Judith.

I finally spot her, sitting alone at her station all despondent. She i't evenaround with pure disdain, and it breaks my heart to see.

She's never been able to make friends. None of the other Omegas :

know that she exists. I'm aware some of them made life hard for Blossoms.

nsitive, Our parents couldn't come tonight since they were busy on the West
e oldestso it was up to me to be her chaperone. She even modeled a dress fr
own collection. I'm a man with a taste for a fashion. What can I say?

But all eyes were on Chloé Laurent. The talk of the town. She's the
: I wasOmega right now, and no one can seem to stop talking about her.

"Hey, Sprout," I say as I reach her side.

run into She rolls her eyes. "Don't call me sprout."

o full of I ruffle her head and she gripes, grabbing her comb to fix the fl
Henry wanted to come too, but we both decided that it was best he
ier painhome and watched the ball on TV.

Our brother is a famous actor. Or *was*... He hasn't acted in anythir
*you met*while. Not since the whole blowout with Vivienne.

We didn't want the press focusing on Henry rather than Judith. It's
night. It should all be about her.

hrough "You did wonderful tonight."

Judith rolls her dusky blue eyes again. We all have the same dusk
n here?"Please, I was a disaster. I could barely walk straight. I doubt any Alpl
gas spysaw me."

ight. Or A growl starts in my chest. Judith tosses me a look. "Oh, relax, b
going to have to become some Alpha's Omega one day. That's just the
e moreis."

Not if I have anything to do about it. No man will have my sister. I
e gazesof the reasons I have never been interested in seeking an Omega of my

That Omega could be someone's baby sister...

seem to But she's all grown up now. Hardly a child. It only seems like ye

her at when she was into unicorns and all things horse related. I even got her for her sixth birthday.

t Coast, A quiet settles between us. Sounds continue around us, and Omega from my can be a loud bunch. They won't stop squealing. Several did who recognized me.

hottest I bet they won't ignore my sister once they realize who she's rel. Not that Judith ever cared about being popular. She would rather spend days listening to heavy metal than pop. I could tell it was painful for her to slip into that pretty white dress.

ly ways. Judith prefers black. She also hates smiling, and I bet it hurt when she stayed to show her teeth.

When did my sister become Wednesday Addams? She would balk at riding for a horse or a pony now. Unless it was a *black* pony that was leading a carriage...

her big I sigh. "Do you want to become some Alpha's Omega?"

Judith glances across the room. Her eyes find the photographer taking several snapshots of a group of Omegas. I think they're the same group of blue-tormented her.

ha even The photographer is an Alpha, and my stomach turns when he licks his lips in hunger.

ro. I'm Judith shrugs. "What else is there for an Omega to do? I'm never going to be president or ruler of my own country..."

I smirk. "Pray tell, little sis... do you *want* to become president?"

It's one Judith scrubs away her makeup with a wet wipe. It's not the usual white she often wears. "I don't know. I could be. But alas, I'm expected to be a homemaker and a baby making machine until the day I die..."

sterday She says the last part a little too loudly, and two Omegas glance over

a pony They move to another part of the room, and I have to hand it to my sister. She really knows how to make friends.

is really “You don’t have to be any of those things. Your designation and they determine your life. You do.”

Judith lifts the wipe she just used to clean her face, grimacing in disgust. “It’s like it’s *alive*... creepy...”

and her She’s referring to the perfect imitation of her face on the wipe. The resemblance to her eyes and lips, and I have to agree. It is pretty creepy.

She smirks at me. “I think I found my mask for next Halloween.”
she had I roll my eyes. “Judith. Don’t change the subject. I just want you to do that whatever you decide, I’m there for you.”

if I got My sister looks at me now, and there’s no missing the shine in her eyes. She didn’t even want to go to Blossoms. She wanted to go to an Ivy League college where she could learn art, but our parents insisted that she get Omega training that she needed in order to thrive.

taking “Thanks, Alex. It means a lot.”
up who Judith wants to travel the world, but it’s not safe for an Omega. She was targeted just because of her designation. She could always use her lipscancellers, but they’re hardly fool proof.

Most Omegas live sheltered lives.
going to I could pay someone to look after her, but then she would never be independent. That bodyguard would have to follow her around twenty-four hours a day.

il black I rise. “Come on. I’ll unzip the dress. Then you go and change to be something else.”

“Finally. No offence, bro. But white isn’t my color...”
ur way. I smile. “I know.”

ter. She Judith stands, and I zip down the dress half way. Then she grabs her
dress and heads for the changing rooms, and that's where I meet the eye
doesn't prowling Alpha.

Seriously. Who let him in here?

disgust. *Not today, my friend.*

He gets the message and backs away from my sister. She may be going
where she's still attractive.

And that is why it is my duty to protect her.

to know

her eyes.

ordinary

that all the

will be

the scent

never be

forty-four

go into

Judith stands, and I zip down the dress half way. Then she grabs her black dress and heads for the changing rooms, and that's where I meet the eyes of a prowling Alpha.

Seriously. Who let him in here?

Not today, my friend.

He gets the message and backs away from my sister. She may be gloomy, but she's still attractive.

And that is why it is my duty to protect her.

CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER THREE

Renée

“Do I have to?”

“Of course! It’s the unveiling of my new fragrance called Omega, and I need you there for moral support, Ney Ney.”

I grit my teeth as my sister enters her gargantuan closet semi-naked and hands me a dress. I hope she doesn’t pick anything too revealing and too sexy. I’m more of a jeans, T-shirt, and sneakers kind of gal.

And I don’t do heels. Period. I’m worse than Bambi on ice.

Someone knocks at the door, and Chloé shouts from the closet. “Tell me Marc! Let him in.”

I raise my eyebrows. “Are you sure? You’re in your underwear.”

Chloé pops her head back out the closet. “Oh, Ney Ney. You’re so precious. You do know that Mark is gay, right?”

I roll my eyes. Why does she have to say that like I was born yesterday? Marc has been a family friend for years. I went to his bonding ceremony, but just don’t think he should see her half naked. I don’t think anyone should.

My sister does not look appropriate. But she’s just so comfortable in her own skin. Who wouldn’t be with a body like hers?

“Are you sure? That underwear is a little revealing.”

Chloé is wearing a thong and a tiny bra that barely contains her big breasts. No cellulite to be found and I bite the inside of my cheek when I spy her bare stomach with the stud piercing.

My belly is a little rounder, and my breasts aren't so big. Also, she catches the sun quite like she does. Instead, I burn like a lobster. The only reason I'm being fair-skinned.

Chloé giggles. “Trust me. He has seen me far worse than this...”

Dare I ask?

“Fine.”

I get up from Chloé's four-poster canopy bed to let Marc inside. The first thing I find when I open the door. “He has a warm smile when I open the door. “Hey, Ney...”

to find “Hi Marc.”

sparkly. He gives me the famous Marc once over. “Still as stylish as ever, I speak through clenched teeth. “Yeah. You too, *Marc...*”

Marc means well. He's like the brother I never had. It's just his way of showing me he loves me by criticizing my clothes. We've been doing this for years. Ever since he developed a skill for fashion.

I think he was ten.

ally are He tends to spend most of his days with his bonded pack of four Alphas (lucky guy). There's no missing their crescent-shaped bite marks around his neck, and I won't deny the jealousy that bubbles inside me. nony! I I will never have a bite mark.

ild. Marc went to Blossoms with Chloé. He graduated two years ago, and he's been enjoying the perks of Omega life ever since. He's a natural homebody and I think he and his pack are even thinking about adopting children.

Marc would make a great dad. He's always been protective of me. Chloé and I love him. I truly do. I just wish he would leave me and my her flatskinny jeans alone.

They're not even ripped on purpose. They're just well-worn. Well- I don't get attached to my jeans.

Chloé still lives at home with Dad, while I have an apartment in the moved out at eighteen. I've always been pretty independent, and so was able to, I got my own place. I even got the chance to go to college study a subject that I love. Not that I make much money from my art ; I'm slowly getting there.

At the moment, I draw pet portraits for clients, and they're gaining popularity, Ney popularity online.

Chloé isn't so independent. Like most Omegas, she lives a sheltered life. It's quite common for Omegas to live with their parents until they are twenty-five. Sometimes even longer."

Chloé has completed all of her Omega training now. She graduated from Blossoms, just like Mom did twenty-five years ago, so she's free now to do what she pleases. But it's a dangerous world out there for a sweet little Omega. And the thought terrifies me to the core.

It's worse if you're the famous daughter of a hotel tycoon. Chloé was a hunky prime suspect for predators for sure. It's a good thing she has bodyguards. Dad's personal hire.

I never got bodyguards. I never needed them.

When Dad is away, I tend to stay at the family mansion with Chloé and she gets lonely and needs the attention. We're so opposite. I sometimes wonder if I was adopted, but I have Dad's eyes.

Marc pulls me in for a hug, and how could I forget that he was a hug

me and It must be an Omega thing.

ripped His caramel orchard scent tickles the back of my throat, and he smells so good. Marc is actually Chloé's personal shopper/stylist loved. I cleaner. Every 'It' girl needs one after all, and you couldn't find better than Marc Wong.

e city. I His mother, Jade, was best friends with our mom at Blossoms. So th on as I of us pretty much grew up together.

age and Chloé appears from the closet, and to my relief, Marc's eyes stay yet, but face. "Thank goodness you're here, Marc. You have to help me find for Ney Ney. She insists on going to the club in her jeans!"

g some "No, I don't. I didn't even plan on going!"

Marc moves like a man on a mission, tying his pink hair up into red life. "Well, we can't have that now. Those jeans need to be condemned."

ome of "Hey!" I snap.

They don't hear me. They just search through Chloé's many d ed from garments, and why am I being ambushed?

w to do They talk amongst themselves about me. All good stuff, but my je Omega. still crying. "She's hour-glass," Marc states. "So, we need somethi accentuates her wonderful curves."

ill be a Wonderful?

guards. I take back what I said. I love Marc and all his scathing remarks.

Marc works in fashion, so he knows his stuff. Still. Hour-glass? honestly never given it much thought.

oé. She I always wear baggy shirts these days. I am too ashamed to show onder if body after what he... No. No thinking about him now. This is Chlo night. I don't want to ruin it.

gger? Chloé's blue eyes widen. "Ooh, good idea. Why didn't I think of tha

Marc grabs her chin, scrunching up her adorable face. “Well, that always you have me, Lo Lo.”

t/closet Lo Lo is his own personal creation.

anyone He continues his search through Chloé’s dresses, and they’re wasting time. Nothing in that closet will fit me. Chloé is a size two. I am a size

three It takes Marc some time to find something that will even remotely set
let alone fit me. Most of Chloé’s dresses are too sparkly and pink
on her tastes.

a dress We really are like a meme. I’m the dark, depressing sister while she’s
bright and sweet one.

“Found the dress!” Marc shouts from the back of the closet.

a bun. Chloé rushes to his side, and a loud gasp spills from her lips. “I
forgot about that dress! Ney Ney, it will look perfect on you.”

I cringe. I doubt anything in that closet will look good on me. At the
designer I will just stick out like a sore thumb.

“Well, are you going to come in and have a look?” she says.

ans are I roll my head on my shoulders, damning whatever deity may be
ng that silent prayers. Then I step into the closet. It could be a room in its own

Nugget, Chloe’s French bulldog, wags his stumpy tail when I pass
He’s been sleeping in his basket and has only just woken. He likes
because I always feed him treats when Chloé isn’t looking.

I have Finally, I arrive at the end of the closet. Marc holds out the dress
perusal, and I shake my head. That dress had belonged to Mom. No
off my Chloé forgot about its existence. It’s been in her closet for six years.

é’s big There’s only one person it ever looked good on, and she is no longer
us.

it?” “No. I can’t.”

It's why Marc and Chloé blink in confusion. "But why?" Chloé asks.

"It's too tight." That's a lie. I just don't want to wear Mom's dress. It wouldn't feel right.

When they say it belongs to her...

It belonged.

But Marc exhales. "That's kind of the point, Ney Ney."

For my sake, I try to think of a way out of this. Honestly, the dress is perfect. Mom has great fashion sense, and the body to go with it.

It's the thought that I will just feel as if I'm on display. I hate people looking at me.

"No. It will make me look..."

Chloé places her hand to my lips, stopping me before the dreaded word totally leaves my mouth. I am not the F word. Not one bit. I'm hour-glass, as she has described me.

At the end of the day, it's just that past experiences have made me ashamed of my hips.

"You're nothing at all like your skinny sister..."

I push the memory away and try to get out of going tonight. "But I have to get up early. I'm working at the shelter again."

Right. Chloé huffs. "Well, you're taking the day off, okay? I'm sure the boss will understand."

It pisses me off. "But who will look after the puppies when I'm gone?"

Both Chloé and Marc have no idea how to respond to that.

For my sake, finally, Marc speaks up, even going so far as to use my proper name. "Renée, you have nothing to be ashamed of. This dress will look gorgeous on you. That booty of yours could have its own zip code. It would be a crime to let it go. Just keep it hidden behind baggy clothes."

He's right. I go to the gym regularly and I even do lunges. So I'm toned right now. But I will never be a twiglet like Chloé. I have hips.

while she has a gap between her thighs.

dress. It So many girls would kill to have a body like hers.

“He’s right, Ney Ney. You have a beautiful figure.”

I smile, knowing that she genuinely means it. They give me puppy eyes and I finally relent. “All right. If it means so much to the both of y

They yell all of a sudden, making me jump. Even Nugget startled me when he had a basket, barking at us to stop. Then they grab my hand, spinning me around and it’s like we’re playing a game of Ring Around the Rosies.

We used to play it all the time as kids.

They rush me out of the closet, taking turns doing my hair and makeup. I don’t even protest when Marc contours my nose, lips, and cheeks. I don’t complain when Chloé back combs my hair and gives me a gigantic blow

Chloé plays some classic R&B while we get ready, pouring glasses of champagne. She spills it on her lush carpet, and it looks like someone is getting tipsy.

I hope there aren’t paparazzi at the club tonight. Who am I kidding? Of course there will be.

Her publicist has posted about the unveiling of her fragrance/Orbit over social media. Anybody who is anybody is going to be there...

Have I finally become one of the cool kids?

“All done! You ready to see, Ney Ney?”

It’s been a while since I dressed up for a night on the town. I don’t know how the kids are dressing these days. Am I even old enough yet to do things like that?

“Yes, I’m ready.”

Chloé squeals, “Spin her around, Marc.”

Marc grabs my shoulders gently, spinning me on the spot, and that’s

I meet the stranger in the mirror. I hardly even look like myself. I damn. They are miracle workers.

Marc certainly knows how to work a makeup brush, and Chloé happy dogwonders with my hair. It doesn't look so dishwater dull anymore. you..." Her blow-drying skills have brought out the natural light of my hair s in his only I could have blow-dried hair every day. I almost look as blonde around, does.

Chloé clasps her hands, a hopeful expression in her eyes. "Well, like it?"

makeup. I A genuine smile crosses my face. "I love it. I feel like a movie star." I don't Her grin widens. "Trust me. You look even better than a movie star at your booty!"

esses of I do as she says, turning before the mirror. Marc is right. This b neone's mine could have its own zip code. The navy blue silk brings out the shape of my ass. I have one of those bubble butts, which I always per ng? Ofhated.

But tonight I'm loving it. I suppose curves and a big butt are hot rig uega all It's an off the shoulder dress, contrasting beautifully with my whi And the blue brings out the gunmetal of my gray eyes.

Marc has given me a smoky cat-eyed look. I glance at the On question. He shrugs. "It's a gift of mine. You have the perfect e i't even makeup, Ney Ney. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise."

t to say Chloé agrees right along with him. "He's right. Your eyes are beauti

Well, at least I love the dress. I just wonder what shoes they have Chloé grabs a pair of peep toe heels, and I step into them, hoping th actually walk in them.

's when Marc passes me a silver, sequined clutch to go with the dress, and

But hotas if we're set. He wears a trendy waistcoat, and he even has a match
too.

as done Chloé wears a sequined, backless dress with a halter neck, and I
eyes when I see that it's baby pink. It's her signature color. Even h
; and iffragrance comes in a pink spritz bottle with a love heart charm to matc
e as she When you spray it, little sparkles shimmer on your skin.

Just Be You will be flying off the shelves for sure. Every girl will
do yousmell like the hottest Omega in town right now.

"I just gave Dan a call. He should be here any moment." Dan
' personal bodyguard, and we're going to need him tonight if it's going
r. Lookbusy as we expect.

Chloé drops to her knees beside Nugget's basket. The bulldog v
ooty ofover and licks her face.

natural Marc gripes. "Lo! Your makeup!"

sonally "Oh, it's fine," she coos, picking up her chunky pooch.

He purrs in her arms, closing his eyes in satisfaction, though h
ht now.sounds more like a growl than an actual cat's purr.

te skin. Chloé adopted him from the shelter, and it baffles me how someon
splash all their money on a pedigree only to give it up later. I try not to
mega inPeople have many personal reasons why they can't look after their p
yes forNugget is a part of the family now. He keeps Chloé company when
away.

iful." Her phone rings in her clutch. She places Nugget back on the
for me.heading out the door.

at I can "Well, let's go. Dan's just outside."

I suck in a breath, mentally preparing myself. I can do this. I can be
it looks No one will laugh at me.

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roll my
ier new
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want to

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o judge.
ets, but
Dad is

ground,

brave.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER FOUR

Renée

The private car pulls up along the curb, and the paparazzi converge immediately. Or Chloé more specifically.

Marc and I may as well be chopped liver.

My sister has to yank me out of the backseat of the car as we head onto the red carpet, and her publicist really went all out. Lights flash, blind eyes, and I can't tell tit from tat. It's like a wall of blinking stars, and I wonder how earth does she do this all the time?

I just want to retreat into my shell like a turtle and never leave again.

At least I have Marc for support. The Omega senses my anxiety, wraps his arm onto my arm, and I whisper him a thank you.

“No problem, Ney Ney.”

Now the two of us stand to one side while Chloé takes the limelight.

“Chloé, tell us about your new fragrance!”

“Have any packs caught your eye yet!”

“Do the pose!”

Chloé does her famous pose. She glances over her right shoulder with a demure expression, and the paparazzi eat it up. She looks even more a

in her sequined, backless dress. Her blonde hair falls to her butt in an elegant waterfall of gold, and she's absolutely enchanting.

My sister blows kisses, doing more poses, and there goes the little eyed monster inside me.

I hate the limelight, yet a part of me can't help but be jealous of my sister. She is just so natural in front of the camera while I just feel uncomfortable. I also happen to struggle keeping my eyes open in even the brightest light and I'm as stiff as a robot.

Chloé drags me and Marc closer for a picture, and I let the extroverted Marc take over. Marc does his thing, looking absolutely fierce, while Chloé continues to smile on us and look sweet. She even does a so-called 'ugly' face where she sticks her tongue out to the side, letting the world see how playful she is beneath all the makeup and glamor.

and down Please. That girl couldn't look ugly if she actually tried.

ling my We make it to the entrance of the club, and just when I thought I could get a moment of howona break from all the ruckus outside. The music is too loud, and I have to be covering my ears. At least they have a number of scent diffusers, so I don't have to have to smell the cacophony of scents on the air.

holding I just remembered why I avoid nightclubs. But it is impressive. There are girls doing aerial displays high in the air, and there's a man juggling fire.

Also, people are dressed in cosplay. I just passed a woman dressed as a creepy clown.

It's like we have entered a different world. The ceiling is draped in white, resembling the inside of a circus tent.

"Why does it look like a circus in here?"

ler, her Chloé looks at me. "What?"

alluring I raise my voice. "I said, why does it look like a circus in here?"

like an She places her ear by my mouth. Then her eyes light up. “I know! It right?”

green- I peer around. It’s more like a cross between a circus and a haunted

A man dressed as a serial killer clown spooks me from behind. Well, my babyto. Instead of screaming, I deadpan him.

st look I’d be useless in a horror movie.

ry shot, The killer clown ignores me and proceeds to scare a group of gi they all scream. One hides behind her friends, and it looks like someor rts takeclown phobia.

inues to A woman dressed as a sexy clown passes the three of us, carrying a tongueJaeger bombs. Chloé stops her, giving a tumbler to me and Marc each.

he glitz Ah, not a Jaeger bomb shot. They go straight to my head.

“Ready?” Chloé says, pressing the glass to her lips. Marc looks eager as she does. That’s when they both look at me.

ould get I sigh, pressing my glass to my own lips. “When in Rome...”

cringe, We down our shots, and the drink goes straight to my head. My I don’tburns, and then I get a weird taste of cough syrup.

Several shots later, and the three of us are dancing on the floor here arerequests her favorite song, and now she grinds up close to Marc. The ames. like a pair of sluts.

ed as a A photographer catches them, and they pose like the divas they are a perfect impression of a duck each. I think the photographer just man red andcapture my earlobe behind Marc’s shoulder.

If he had gotten my face, then I’m sure I would have looked as lifel zombie.

That’s just me. The life of the party.

I have to keep an eye on Chloé and ensure that she doesn’t do anyth

's cool, worrying. We can't tarnish our father's brand.

“Let's get one for my page!”

l house. Chloé holds her phone out, flipping it to selfie mode, and then she
he tries the three of us. I caught a tiny shot before she posted it online, a
camera's light just made my face shine like a ghost.

Chloé and Marc looked like supermodels.

rls, and The night's starting to wear on me, and I'm getting blisters on m
ie has a Chloé has yet to go on stage, but she's already so wasted. It looks as
and I are going to have to drag her up.

tray of “We need to get her water, now.”

Marc nods. “On it.”

Thank God he's here. He's like our pink-haired guardian
just as Meanwhile, I have to push every perverted Alpha away who has his
my sister.

She dances with a guy who looks old enough to be her father, and
mouth her away, scowling at him. As usual, none of them are interested in m
all want a piece of the Omega. She's definitely the best-looking in th
. Chloé right now.

ey look “She's not interested,” I tell another Alpha.

He holds his hands up, stepping away. I roll my eyes. Alphas. 7
, doing worse than horny dogs.

aged to Chloé can hardly stand up straight, and it looks like I am going to
babysit her for the rest of the night. What else is new?

ess as a I pull her toward the VIP area, and she falls onto a plush pink
curling up like an adorable kitten. Maybe we should just take her home

She's such a lightweight. It's barely eleven 11 PM.

ing too “Chloé, wake up. You have to go up on stage at midnight to announ

new fragrance.”

She mumbles something like “five more minutes” and this is hopeful she snaps dying for a pee, but I’m too afraid to leave her. Dan has been hanging around the sidelines, keeping an eye on her from a distance, but I can’t see the bodyguard right now.

Marc appears at last, helping Chloé drink her water. I take that as my feet to leave. I’m peeing in my panties.

if Marc “Okay, I’m just heading to the bathroom. Keep an eye on her for me, Marc.”

He salutes, and I rush through the nightclub in search of a toilet. There’s a huge line at the entrance when I finally find one, and this sucks. Now, I have no choice but to cross my legs and hope for the best.

eyes on This is why I hate nightclubs. The floor is getting sticky. And someone vomit? Gross.

and I pull It’s a co-ed bathroom, so it’s available to everyone at the club tonight. Even the creepy clowns.

the room “Come on,” I mutter, jumping on the spot.

I catch the attention of a man in front of me. He angles his head, giving a smile on his dimpled face. “You really got to go too, huh?”

They’re My face deadpans per usual as he asks the most damn obvious. “I’m just sightseeing.”

have to His eyebrows rise. Then he chuckles, turning his body around so he can look at me. My heart pounds when I get an eyeful of him.

booth, *Well, hello, handsome.*

2. He’s beta like me. So that means he never awakened as an Alpha or Omega. He may lack a distinctive scent, but he still smells good. Like your soap and peppermint.

He has long ash blond hair, which he has tied back into a ponytail. I'm around pair of light brown eyes. I could gaze into those soft brown eyes aroundnight.

The burly beta cocks his head, narrowing his eyes. "You look familiar. Have I seen you before?"

It's not surprising. I know I describe myself as a wallflower, but I am a public figure. My father owns a billionaire dollar hotel franchise. I can't please, that obscure. No matter how hard I try. I just choose to stay out of the limelight.

I dip my head, hoping he doesn't have any preconceived ideas about me. I have. It's another reason why it's hard to find a guy. Most are just looking for a step in the door, hoping that by courting me, they can rub shoulders with a rich and famous.

I don't have one famous friend. In fact, I hardly have friends. I got a lot of attention tonight. immensely at school.

Chloé and Marc are all I have.

"I'm Renée," I say. "Renée Laurent."

I see the moment my name registers. His eyebrows disappear into his hairline, and then he opens his mouth. "Oh."

The girl in front of him overhears us, and then she calls out my name. "Laurent? As in *Vincent* Laurent?"

"Oh my God! She's Chloe's sister!"

"I love her!"

"Let her get to the front of the line. She's practically *royalty*."

No, I am not. My father is a pretty big deal, but he is not a king. I am a self-made billionaire.

I wave my hands. "No, it's fine. I'm good with waiting."

l, and a But they keep on insisting. They drag me closer, and I have no cl
eyes alljust hope the handsome beta doesn't think I am using my famous nam
ahead in life.

Have I I can't complain. I know not everyone has it easy. When you're f
doors open for you. Even bathroom doors.

n still a I hold my hand out to my new *friend* of sorts. "Hey, you still nee
can't bepotty, right?"

of the The beta glances at my hand. Then he shrugs, letting me lead hin
the line. Finally, we're ushered inside, and that was a whirlwind. M
out me.beta pal is still chuckling.

ig for a I whack him with my hand. "Stop laughing."

with the He peers down at me, and he's so tall. "It must be great being the d
of Vincent Laurent."

bullied I narrow my eyes. Then I huff, marching toward a tap. "Yeah,
didn't ask to be."

He sighs, leaning against the sink beside me. "Hey, I get it. It's the
why I don't like telling anyone my name either."

nto his I glance up, drying my hands with some paper towels. I never use tl
dryer because of germs.

r name. "Why's that?"

The beta meets my eyes, studying me carefully. Then he peers
down the bathroom. We're alone. So it's fine.

"Because I just happen to be a Fontaine..."

My eyes swell twice their size. It's a name I know well. Especially
He's abumped into another Fontaine earlier today.

Alexander's paprika scent still lingers at the back of my throat
haven't been able to get him off my mind since.

choice. I “Oh.”

me to get Dimples appear on his cheeks, and I realize I have just mimicked perfectly from earlier.

Famous, I shake my head. “Sorry, it’s... just quite the name...”

“Ditto,” he replies.

and to go The sounds of the club echo through the empty bathroom, and why deserted in here?

and down Please don’t tell me they have deliberately prevented others from coming my new just because I’m in here now. That’s ridiculous. I’m not that important

I love my dad, but it’s not like he cured cancer or anything. Celebrities really not that special.

daughter I know I am hard on myself for not looking exactly like my sister, good to live in a world where I meet famous faces on quite a regular basis

well, I They are nowhere as beautiful as they are in magazines. It’s all make women feel bad about themselves. Same with social media.

the reason I don’t even know why I was worried about our selfie before. Chloé just work her magic on the app and make me look like a supermodel.

she hand agree with the practice. Also, I don’t want to inadvertently catch potential future partners.

Imagine how disappointed they will be when I turn up instead of up and beautiful model they saw on the app.

He holds out his hand. “My name’s Jake.”

I take his hand, blushing slightly. “Nice to meet you, Jake.”

since I Another awkward silence. The distant beat from the DJ’s speakers vibrates beneath my feet, and I find it quite soothing after being out in the club

, and I hours. My ears are ringing, and it’s like someone stuffed my head with cotton.

Jake points his thumb at a stall. "So, didn't you have to pee?"

Oh, of course. The urge to relieve my bladder has turned into du
now. I disappear into a stall, hoping he doesn't hear me pee, and for t
time I realize how drunk I am.

I can't read the poster at the back of the door. My head is spinning.

I flush when I'm finished, returning to a sink to wash my hands. Jak
by a sink on my left, a warm smile on his face.

I guess this is when we part.

He puts his hands in his suit's pockets. "So, returning back to the clu

I think for a moment. I have no choice. I have to keep an eye on Chl
"Yes," I reply.

He shrugs. "Can I buy you a drink or anything?"

My heart pounds. Wow. When was the last time a guy asked to bu
a lie to drink? When was the last time I even caught the attention of a guy?

They're all interested in Chloé. The pretty Laurent sister. Or the *On*
loé will other words...

Who cares about her invisible beta sister? Well, another beta, for sta
But when given the choice, most betas would go for an Omega
fellow beta. Yet Jake is offering to buy me a drink.

Unless this is some cruel prank.

No, he is not pranking me. I *am* an attractive girl. I have to rememb

It's just hard to remember when I am constantly being compared to Ch

Besides, something in his eyes tells me that he genuinely likes me. '

to him feels so natural. It's like we have known each other for years.

He offers me his hand. "Well, shall we, milady?"

My heart hiccups. He called me his lady...

The moment he takes my hand, the memories return. We even n

club, and he had seemed so kind back then, too.

ill need No, Jake isn't like my ex. I have to at least give him a chance. Still
the firstbe on my guard.

I will not be made a fool of yet again.

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Talking

ret at a

club, and he had seemed so kind back then, too.

No, Jake isn't like my ex. I have to at least give him a chance. Still. I best be on my guard.

I will not be made a fool of yet again.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHAPTER FIVE

Jake

I could listen to Renée speak all night.

She is not at all like other girls. Most are too fixated on them never living in the moment. It's everywhere I go. Every date lately has huge disappointment, and I have even started swiping left on all my apps.

Yet this girl has me enraptured. She's beautiful yet doesn't know it makes my heart ache. When I spy her sister on the dancefloor with friend Marc, I think I understand.

It's not fair.

While Chloé is lovely, she's not the girl for me. I've dated far too many like Chloé's lately, but it would be nice to have a decent conversation woman for once.

"So, aliens... Real or not?"

I almost choke on my drink. "What?"

Renée snorts, whacking me again in that playful fashion of hers. She was in the bathroom earlier, and the tingles that ran up my spine were something else.

I want her spanking me all over.

I purse my lips in playful thought, and I'm glad that we have our own nook away from the rest of the club. It's not as loud over here goodness.

"Possibly. While I believe that a majority of alien sightings are hoaxes, I believe there is life elsewhere. I mean, just look around. Who's to say you can only find life like this on Earth?"

Maybe I shouldn't tell her that I write science fiction on the side. As a writer of such a genre, of course I think about aliens. I dream up whole worlds on a daily basis. Sometimes I forget what planet I'm living on.

Renée cocks her head to the side, and I peer into those intelligent, deep-set eyes. There is a lot of depth behind those eyes, and I bet she thinks she's been a deep topic like this all the time.

"I haven't met a girl like her in a while. Good looks are great and what I really need is a woman with brains. One who can actually think for herself, and it's not just about looks. Don't forget about a sense of humor and kindness. "So, you think there's another you and me out there right now, having a conversation like this in another equally disgusting nightclub?"

I shrug. "Maybe. But I bet that version of Renée has three eyes instead of two. Also, *tentacles...*"

Renée blinks in bewilderment. Then she laughs, and I could listen to her laughing all day. The action makes her nose wrinkle and her eyes sparkle.

She sucks on her straw, and I focus on her lips.

The blood rushes through my head when she sucks on her drink like I did it and I never thought I would be envious of a straw.

No. I can't let my mind wander. Renée is the type of girl that needs to be courted, wine and dined and treated like a princess first.

“So, what about ghosts?”

My guffaw is almost louder than the speakers when she asks her question. “Again. Who’s to say we don’t live on in some other format to believe there’s more after this life...”

Renée pauses, gazing down at her drink. She twirls her straw. “I do say that you’re right.”

The beat continues through the club as I watch her for some time. As I’m thinking about someone who has passed? Shit. I didn’t mean to upset the new best we talk about something else.

She glances back up, and another winning smile takes over her face. “What about *alien* ghosts?”

I palm my face. This woman. When I got ready this evening, I didn’t expect I would end up talking about aliens and ghosts.

I finish my drink, holding out my hand. “Come on. Let’s dance.”

Her big, gray eyes expand. Then she chews her lip. Again, and it reminds me that it exists.

Damn, she is gorgeous. I can’t wait to see what her curvy body feels like grinding up close to me. I pull her up to her feet, and now her head is level with my chin, even in heels. Then I lead her to the dance floor.

Fuck. Renée dances like there’s no one else in the room. Everyone else is fixated on how they look, whether they’re dancing right.

They dance for the benefit of others. Not for themselves. But she completely lets go.

It’s probably due in part to the alcohol in her system, but she just spins and doesn’t care who sees. She’s one of the most beautiful creatures I’ve ever seen.

I have to see her again after tonight.

The most I was expecting from tonight was a casual hook-up, but I never next have been glad to have just gone home alone. I much prefer a lonely life to I like myself than a hollow date.

There just comes a time in a man's life when he is through with the hopefucks. I'm twenty-nine years old now. Maybe those days are finally mine.

Is she I will leave the casual fuck ups to guys like Dylan. He works at my office. It's and he's the biggest douche that I have ever met.

Renée's long blonde hair sways around her as she works those. "What making every other girl dull in comparison. Her face is slick with giving off a faded scent of something I can't quite place.

I think It's sweet but citrusy, buried just beneath the surface.

I have to make her *mine*. I see that she has no bite mark on her neck has yet to be claimed. It makes me angry that no man has ever staked my dick on this beauty, but that's alright. Their loss is my gain.

I press her back to my chest, letting her grind that beautiful ass against my cock. The more she rubs, the harder I become, and I'm not going to be able to keep it in my pants any longer.

She spins around and our lips brush. My hand reaches up to her neck, teasing its fingers through her thick hair. My eyes fall on her rose-colored lips.

Renée I'm going to enjoy kissing those...

The whole club disappears the moment I have my first taste of Renée's lips and how have I lived twenty-nine years without experiencing a kiss like this? I know I This is the stuff poets write about.

As much as I would love to hear her screaming my name, I can't help but feel sorry for myself on her. There is sadness inside those big gray eyes. Someone, I

I wouldtime, has hurt this precious thing, and I just want to find the fucker and
bed tohim in the balls. Repeatedly.

Renée deserves the world, and I'm going to give it to her.

causal She sucks on my tongue, making the most delicious sounds, and al
behindcan feel how hard her nipples are. She rubs them against my chest, a
tempted to sweep her up, call a cab, and book a hotel.

r office, Screw this club.

“Let's leave this place...” she whispers, peering up at me through a
e hips,hooded eyes. The gray has turned into silvery slits, and I'm glad to see
sweat,on the same page.

“All right.”

Renée sighs, blowing the hair from my face. “I just have to find m
ck. Shefirst.”

a claim I smile. “No problem. I'll come with you.”

She twines her fingers with mine, and now we make our way thro
inst myheaving crowd. There, we find the blonde Omega and Renée tenses w
able tospies the crowd of Alphas.

They surround her like vultures. Luckily she's dancing with he
r head,bodyguard, and the big brute just stands there, looking like a wax c
coloredfrom a museum as she swings his arms.

Marc dances beside her, pushing away his own string of admir
points at the ring of bite marks around his neck, hoping they take the h
ée, and Alphas. I live with three of them, but sometimes they just can't ke
is? their pants.

Renée pushes her way to her sister. “Chloé, I'm leaving.”

't push Chloé turns to meet her sister. Then her blue eyes pop when they g
at somefill of me. “Sure!”

nd kick Well, at least I have her sister's blessings. Somewhat.

Chloé and Marc wave us off as we leave the club, and I gulp mouthfuls of fresh air once we step out onto the street.

ready I There's still a line of people waiting to get in. Some have even opened umbrellas and I'm dancing outside in the rain.

Time to hail a cab.

One pulls up, and luckily we managed to close the doors before a pair of angry women tried to get in with us. She curses on the sidewalk as the cab pulls away. Renée laughs.

"Looks like we pissed her off."

"Don't worry about her. We won't see her again."

My sister Renée looks at me, biting that delectable lip. Without warning she straddles my hips, kissing me on the soft spot of my neck, and my body freezes.

ugh the Damn. This girl really likes to seize her moment. Well, I can't complain when she If she wants to let it go and just be free, well, I'll give it to her.

I'll show her the best goddamn night of her life.

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CHAPTER SIX

CHAPTER SIX

Renée

I have no idea what I'm doing. I never have one-night stands. I have been that kind of girl, and I should have packed a spare pair of pants. These ones are soaking wet.

Still, I can't help myself. It just felt right. Even when I got up and straddled his hips, I wasn't scared. For once, I want to live in the moment, and I'm going to seize my chance.

I'm done with being the mouse girl. Besides, I felt a soul connection with Jake. He listened to me all night talking about aliens for crying out loud. Most guys would have bailed. I am not like other girls after all.

My pussy throbs as I grind it against his hard cock, and I'm tempted to do it right here in the cab. I hope the driver won't mind.

I am so not myself. I entered that club as a mouse and came out as a lioness. Jake runs his hands down my body, cupping them around the globe of my ass, and I groan when he pushes me to his chest. My pussy bumps his chest, and I rake my hands through his long hair, yanking that band free.

Damn. This guy has prettier hair than I do.

I tend to shy away from pretty guys, but I can't help myself with

He's my own personal Ken doll, and I'm going to enjoy dressing him taking his clothes off. Either way works just fine.

Jake slips his hand beneath my panties, and I shudder when his finger touches my sensitive lips. "Fuck... You're so wet..."

I answer him with another kiss, biting his lower lip. He slides inside, rubbing circles around my throbbing clit. The poor thing has been craving attention these last few years, and a vibrator just isn't cutting it.

Jake can't take his eyes off me the whole time he fucks me with his fingers. My body wounds tight like a spring, lights blinking in the corners of my eyes.

He's not going to stop until he makes me come. Well, it looks as if he never about to get his wish.

"Not just yet..." he whispers darkly.

Jake stops circling my clit, and a cold rush chases away the heat. My head feels raddled, feel empty.

And I'm... I open my eyes. His pupils have blown out, and I can no longer see his eyes.

His hair is brown. A small smirk plays across his lips. What's he doing? Is he going to make me come or what?

"You come when I say. Got it?"

I raise a brow. Oh, so he likes to be the one in control? All right, I'll have to do work with that.

He continues torturing my clit, hot tingles streaking up and down my body. I gasp as he works me back to my peak. The precipice is just in sight. I can't help but think of how he makes me feel. I can't make it if he just... stops.

"Not yet. What did I tell you, princess? You come when I say..."

Princess?

Jake's fingers tease me again and again, and I can't take it anymore. I'm about to combust from the sheer pressure. It's been a few years since I've had Jake.

up. Or had his finger in me.

My body shivers as my pussy clenches around his finger, and I'm sure he finds it. He leans forward, pressing his nose to my neck. A soft growl escapes and he almost sounds like an Alpha.

Nonsense. He's beta, but he definitely has all the traits of an Alpha. It appears he never awakened. Just like me.

"Now, release..."

Jake pinches my clitoris, and I finally reach my peak. I'm flying high above the clouds as he takes me to heights that no one ever has before. A searing heat like honey trickles down my body, spreading heat across my skin, and I collapse against him, catching my breath.

I'm already spent, and I don't think I have any more orgasms in me. That was the first one I had in a while.

Still, I'm prepared to try...

Jake places his finger into his mouth, watching me with a sly smirk. I taste good.

Then he presses me to his chest, rubbing his hand around my back, soothing me into a sense of calm.

I don't even feel afraid when I'm with him. He's a stranger, yet I can trust him. I barely register the rest of the cab ride to the hotel as I lean against his arms, and I look forward to seeing what the night brings.

It's not over just yet.

I'm

a man

image-placeholder

o close.

es him,

na right

It turns out I was wrong. I did have more orgasms in me.

gh over We could barely keep our hands off each other as he paid at the
nsation reception. Then he scooped me up in his arms, running me towards a l
d then I elevators. We even did it in the elevator, and I watched my reflect
whole time in the mirrors when I wrapped my legs around him.

I looked hot. Like *pornstar* hot and I had no idea that I could pull that off.

I looked good enough to fuck. I'm pretty sure we steamed the mirrors in the elevator, and I can't say I'm sorry.

We did it everywhere in the hotel room, and my favorite was across the minibar. Especially when he grabbed that cube of ice and...

I awake to the smell of coffee, and I open my eyes, gazing round the room. Last night hadn't been a dream, right? It was all real?

doze in It had to be. Jake was even better than the men I fantasized about with my vibrator.

“Good morning, princess...”

His warm, velvet voice makes my heart rate spike, and then I glance to the left. He's silhouetted against the window, but there's no missing his raven blond hair.

There's no denying the moment the mattress of the king-sized bed is pressed against his perfect, toned ass either, nor the smell of coffee.

His grin brings out the dimples of his face as he holds up the fancy mug. "That's the coffee the bartender made you some complimentary coffee."

Well, that sounds nice. I shift myself up on the bed, reaching out for the steaming cup of coffee.

The coffee reaches parts of my soul like no other cup of coffee I've had before, and I wonder why it tastes so different. Could it be due to the gorgeous beta who made it for me?

I hope so.

Jake watches me as I sip my morning coffee, and it was just what I needed after last night. My head is pounding. I think I drank a little too much.

That's when he passes me a fresh glass of water and aspirin, and it's a godsend. Truly.

Did God send him my way? He already looks like an angel, so I wouldn't be surprised.

"Thank you, Jake," I whisper, relaxing back onto the mattress where the effects of the drugs are taking over. Now my headache numbs to a dull ache.

Hangover headaches are the worst.

I sense his beautiful brown gaze on me as I lay back and relax, shutting my eyes. It still seems so surreal. I honestly thought I would be waking up in my own bed when I went out last night.

I just hope Marc and Dan got Chloé home safe. She was in a worse state than I was, and her speech was slurred when she got up on stage.

Still. The night had been a success. Chloé's fragrance sold like hot candy at the club.

d shifts Everyone wants to smell like the current 'It' girl.

"Feel better," Jake asks.

mug. "I I nod. "A little. Can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

to grab I open my eyes again, meeting his soft brown pair. "Why were you club last night? I doubt it was to get a free sample of my sister's perfume." "I never has fragrance."

to the He chuckles, and the deep, velvety tone makes my pussy flutter. "As if I would be honored to smell like that sweet, bubbly Omega, I was talking business."

needed Business?

n in the He sighs. "I'm a writer for Manifest. You've probably heard of it."

Ice spreads through my veins. Manifest? That has to be one of the most popular of the ascathing celebrity gossip magazines out there on the market right now. The writers are not kind.

ouldn't They're brutal.

He holds up a hand. "I can assure you that last night was real, Ryan. I feel genuinely attracted to you. Honestly. I don't even know why I work for that magazine. I hate it. Just a bunch of bastards..."

I relax a little at his comforting words. I know I can trust him. I see the pain in his eyes. The man hates his job.

p in my "So, why work for them?"

He shrugs. "I don't know. I guess I always wanted to be a writer of this kind. I suppose I wanted to put my four years of journalism school to use. But..."

akes at I blink. "But what?"

Jake huffs in frustration. "No one told me it would be so hard. We

did, but I didn't really listen. The world of celebrity gossip can be so... It's not even real journalism, but that's my opinion, I guess. My boss would highly disagree."

I wonder what pieces he has written.

u at the Again, he smiles. "Don't worry. I'm one of the more diplomatic w... 's newnever show a celebrity in a bad light."

Well, that's comforting. Manifest has said some shitty things about s muchin the past.

ere for I don't care what anyone says. That man worked hard for what he l... one saw him in the early days when he struggled to feed his two daughters.

Chloé has been their latest victim in our family, but what they... ie mostwasn't enough to taint her image. Maybe the writers are losing their to... w, and Manifest has never written about me. It's as I said. The world forge... exist.

It's better that way. I still remember the morning I had to hold Chlo... enée. Iarms because some nasty journalist from another magazine called her... ork for A comment like that would go over my head, but Chloé is far too se...

I think one of her old assistants badmouthed her, saying how she... it in histwirly straw in all her drinks.

We all like our drinks a certain way.

"Hey, if it helps, I'll ensure they only write good things about y... of someyour family from now on. In fact, it's one of the reasons I started work... o goodthe magazine. I stop them from writing about my pack. I'm a Fontair... all."

Of course. His own family is pretty famous too. Or his *pack*. They... ll, theybiological brothers. That much I know of. Alexander and Jake couldr...

hollow any more different.

Grace Though I know Alex and Henry are related, and I get giddy when about Henry Fontaine.

I've had a crush on him since I was a teen.

riters. I Jake smirks, leaning closer so he can plant a kiss on my forehead. now that you're up... Care to mess around?"

my dad He wiggles his brows. I snort. Well, how can I say no to that face?

I grab his cheeks, running my fingers over his stubble. I still remember how it felt between my thighs, and my vagina betrays me when it thumps against my younga second heartbeat.

"Sure..." I whisper, making my voice extra breathy.

I wrote Fuck. I probably have coffee breath now, but he doesn't seem to mind much. In fact, he kisses me as if he's sucking the very air from my lungs, and I can't keep up.

I just hope that what he says is true. That I can trust him.

é in my Jake pushes me back onto the bed, kissing up and down my neck. He acts like a diva. He licks at the swell of my breasts, slipping his mouth around a taut nipple. He's sensitive. I spark when his teeth graze the flesh, and I buck my hips, loving the way he likes to devour me.

Jake sucks, then nips, then sucks again, twirling his tongue around the tip of point of my nipple. He massages my other breast with his hand, squeezing it as tight as he runs the nipple between his thumb and forefinger, and then he's kissing me again, making me dizzy.

ie, after The cliff is just in sight.

He removes his mouth from my breast with a pop, continuing to kiss my neck. He's not done with my body. His stubble scratches my thighs when he stops between my legs, and I shudder when he slips his tongue inside.

He eats me out, the pressure reaching boiling point. There's a ring I think my ears as the blood whooshes through my head. He adds two fingers, pushing them in and out slowly. Every nerve ending is on fire as he licks and swirls that tongue, pressing his face in deeper.

"Well, Jake slips in a third finger, hooking them all the way inside. That orgasm hits me like a fifty-foot wave.

I arch my back, and he laps up every last drop of my release. That number that mouth...

It's like Jake truly is heaven sent.

The beta reaches parts of me that no other man has before. He twirls his tongue, nipping at my clit with his teeth. I come yet again, clenching my thighs in his cheeks.

I try to I lock him between my legs, too afraid to let him go. I need this.

My fingers grasp the bedsheets beside me as I see stars, my body trembling as he continues to suck on that sensitive nub. Another orgasm stops shakes my body from head to toe, and I can barely keep my eyes open. Lights out.

When I'm done, I melt into a puddle, and I want to stay this way for ever.

The sheets feel damp beneath my skin. His scent completely envelops me, reminding me of what he just did.

Once the embers of my orgasm finally burn out, he raises his head, and I feel his arousal from his lips. Then he reaches across and plucks up an ice cube from the champagne bucket just beside us.

My heart pounds when he holds it between his thumb and forefinger. "Remember this?"

I bite my lip.

He chuckles. "I didn't know you liked it so cold, princess."

ging in Cold and hot. It's the juxtaposition of the two at the same time that fingers, get enough of.

swirls Jake presses the ice cube against my pussy, and I throw my head back when it numbs my clit. *Yes, yes, yes!*

he first He aligns his hips with mine next, burying himself to the hilt as he fucks my brains out. He doesn't remove the cube from my clit the whole time, his tongue, fire and ice spreading over my skin.

It doesn't take me long to come again. I wrap my legs around his waist, screaming when the stars blind me. Jake angles my hips, reaching my clit, and I come again and again until the room blurs to white.

around My walls clench around him. I squeeze him tight, and this is my first orgasm. There's no missing the look of pure bliss taking over Jake's face. I almost feel like an Omega.

spine He is locked between my legs, almost like a knot. He may not be an Omega, but I'm no Omega either.

for this Maybe I don't always have to be so knotless. I can still find pleasure and happiness in this world, even if I am just a beta.

ever. I just wish I didn't have to leave. I have to be at the animal shelter by 10:00. But for the moment, I will forget about my life outside this hotel room and just completely let go.

wiping

ice cube

finger.

Cold and hot. It's the juxtaposition of the two at the same time that I can't get enough of.

Jake presses the ice cube against my pussy, and I throw my head back when it numbs my clit. *Yes, yes, yes!*

He aligns his hips with mine next, burying himself to the hilt as he starts to fuck my brains out. He doesn't remove the cube from my clit the whole time, fire and ice spreading over my skin.

It doesn't take me long to come again. I wrap my legs around his waist, screaming when the stars blind me. Jake angles my hips, reaching my G-spot, and I come again and again until the room blurs to white.

My walls clench around him. I squeeze him tight, and this is my favorite part. There's no missing the look of pure bliss taking over Jake's face, and I almost feel like an Omega.

He is locked between my legs, almost like a knot. He may not be an Alpha, but I'm no Omega either.

Maybe I don't always have to be so knotless. I can still find pleasure and happiness in this world, even if I am just a beta.

I just wish I didn't have to leave. I have to be at the animal shelter by noon.

But for the moment, I will forget about my life outside this hotel room and just completely let go.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHAPTER SEVEN

Renée

A chorus of barks echoes off the walls as I make my way down the rows of kennels. They have her placed in a quiet area just in the back. Sasha. My girl.

She came to the shelter several months ago, a terrified little thing who would shake in the corner with her tail between her legs, and I made it my duty to make her feel at home. I don't care what anyone says. Everyone deserves a chance. The poor pooch had her heart broken.

We don't know her full story, but the look in her sad brown eyes has it all. Someone who she thought loved her had thrown her away. As a result, she has become withdrawn.

But that's all right. I am willing to teach her what love is again.

I reach her kennel, and the dog bounces up and down the moment she sees me. "Hey, Sasha!"

Her tail won't stop wagging, and when I push my way inside her kennel she jumps up, giving me sweet doggie kisses. I can't stop laughing. It's hard to believe she is the same dog that arrived here three months ago.

I have no doubt in my mind that she will make someone a lovely

companion one day.

She just hasn't been lucky so far.

The sign outside her kennel describes her as a shepherd mix, though a little smaller than the average German Shepherd. She has the characteristic black spot and the dark muzzle, and a beautiful coat of black and tan.

Sasha is a beautiful dog, and the shelter guessed that she is around three years of age after they had the vet check her out. She still has her whelp ahead of her, and I am certain that she will find a happy family.

I lean against the wall of her kennel, letting her place her head on my shoulder as I spend some quality time with her. She's not the first dog I have had to help rehabilitate. I have seen many former broken-hearted canines find their way home.

It just takes a little patience. The shelter normally calls me in for a few types of cases, and I think it stems from my own personal experience. I know what it's like to be cast aside, too. While I may not have had as rough a time as sweet Sasha, my heart was still torn from my chest and beat on over with a mallet.

I'm surprised Sasha even found it in her heart to love again. We found her just outside the gates of the shelter, tied to a tree.

Some people deserve to be hung by their toenails.

She had been there all night by the time the shelter's manager pulled the shelter car. The damage had already been done, and poor Sasha had lost her spirit.

But look at her now, snuggled up close to me, and she gives me the strength I need. Dogs aren't quite like humans. They don't hold grudges.

Me, however... I still can't let go.

It's just hard to forget.

I stroke Sasha's ears, closing my eyes. I bond like this with her every afternoon. Just after I've mucked out the other kennels and given them their breakfasts.

Voices echo down the hall, and I peer out the bars of the kennel, spying manager Michelle.

It looks like we have a visitor. Someone is looking to adopt.

Hopefully, Sasha may catch their eye today. Honestly, I don't care if a dog they decide to take home. Heaven knows that all the dogs need my lap home in this place.

I rise to my feet, saying my goodbyes to Sasha as I go to help Michelle with these dogs on a regular basis, so I know all of their personalities by now.

Michelle is usually busy in the office with her husband, Tony, and their daughter Milly works on their social media page.

"So, what kind of dog did you have in mind?" I hear Michelle ask me as I lock Sasha's kennel.

I make a silent vow to the dog that I will return later, going to find her. Michelle. I stop in my tracks when I see the visitor. A mountain of a man stands by her side, looking so out of place in the narrow aisle between kennels.

Michelle is only four foot eleven, so it doesn't help that she's so short. The Alpha has to be at least six foot six. If not bigger...

"It's hard to say. I guess I will know the right dog when I see them," he replies.

That is one impressively deep voice. It resonates inside me, making me feel a sense of calm that I haven't felt in a long while, and I'm pretty sure my toes curl. In a good kind of way.

er most “Have you ever adopted before?” Michelle trills yet again, her voice dogsmerry and singsong.

I roll my eyes. She is such a flirt. Also, she is married, and has an eight-year-old daughter. I guess it’s a reaction most women would have to such a perfect specimen.

The mountain of a man is beautiful. Albeit a little intimidating, but what beautiful... His biceps are like small tree trunks.

I’m pretty sure I have seen him somewhere before.

He chuckles, and the sound reverberates deep in his chest. “No. This is the first time.”

A yappy terrier bounces up and down at his door, eager for attention.

Alpha kneels to his level, putting on a soft baby voice for the dog’s sake.

Something stirs inside me when I watch that large Alpha talking to the small dog, and let’s just say that I am definitely smitten. Whoever has captured the heart is a lucky lady... or man.

Michelle spots me ogling him, fanning her face mockingly. It looks like she’s about to swoon. My mind immediately goes to Jake. He paid for an Alpha cab ride here, as I arrived a little later than usual.

Michelle didn’t mind. In fact, she was thrilled when I told her that I had spent the night with a guy.

“It’s about time!” she had said.

She has been like a second mother to me these past few years, and she’s been eager for me to meet a guy so she can come to my wedding. Jake

exchanged numbers, and he promised he would call. I just hope he’s sticking to his word.

If not. Then who knows when I will trust again?

He was more than a one-night stand.

voice all The Alpha gives every dog a chance as he stops by their kennel to introduce himself. We have over forty dogs at the shelter at the moment, including fifteen-mostly older dogs past the age of eight.

around Most visitors overlook the senior dogs, and every child wants a puppy. The Alpha's eyes fall on Sasha, and my heart flutters. It's happening, yet maybe my girl will finally get her home.

“Can I see that one?”

Michelle glances at me. I nod. I think Sasha is ready now. Besides, it's only going to look at her. There's no harm in it.

We take the Alpha to her kennel, and Sasha places her paws upon the door, wagging her tail. Just two months ago, she wouldn't go anywhere near that door. She acted as if everything was going to hurt her, yet not anyone could blame her. She passed all her behavioral tests, and the trainer gave her a perfect score. Sasha is definitely fit for adoption.

The Alpha kneels down, giving Sasha some sweet baby talk, and it looks like he's only tough on the outside. The guy is a big softie for dogs.

for my Well, that makes him good in my books.

“Hey, there, girl...”

I spent He presents his fingers to her, and she licks them through the bars. She even places her leg through the door, putting her paw in his large hand, and his fingers swallow it up.

and has The Alpha rubs her paw affectionately with his thumb, and the two share a tender moment.

ays true “I think I found the one...” he announces next.

My eyes pop. “Really?”

“Yes. She's a beauty indeed. She reminds me of the dog I had given up.”

nels to Tears sting my eyes, and that's when I meet Michelle's gaze. She
moment, reaching across to squeeze my shoulder. It looks as if I only we
managed to find another dog a home.

py. What can I say? I guess it just takes some time and patience. An
pening, forget love too. That's all any dog needs.

The Alpha leans closer to the door of the kennel, letting her lick h
and they're already inseparable.

es, he's I guess Michelle can finally start filing Sasha's adoption papers.

on the
re near
more.
t score.

image-placeholder

appears

Michelle heads back to the office to start the process. It normally take
steps, but hopefully, Sasha can go to her new home in the next few day
rs. She My head is still spinning, and I hold back tears again. I always get
nd, and up when I see them leaving with their new families.

We always ensure the families are probably vetted first. That way,
share a ensure that the dog doesn't end up back with us again.

I lead the Alpha to the exit as I tell him Sasha's story. He balls his
anger when I tell him that she was dumped just outside the gates
pouring rain.

growing "Bastards..." he mutters with a growl, and I freeze at the sound.

smiles, I have no idea what is going through his mind right now as he looks at the distance, probably wishing he could punch the assholes who hurt Sasha's heart. Then he sighs, placing his sunglasses over his aqua blue eyes. "Well, one man's loss is another man's gain."

Finally, he peers my way, and for the first time, he truly notices me. His face, before, but his attention was mostly on the dogs. Who can blame them? They're cute.

"Thank you for taking care of her. You're a miracle worker, Renée." My words sound so heavenly on his lips, and I bow my head, blushing bright red.

"Well, what can I say? She was worth every moment. I'm just going to miss her when she's gone."

That is normally the hardest part. It's a bittersweet moment for sure, but it seemed to touch a deep part of my soul. I suppose I just felt a connection to her.

We had both been badly hurt, yet look at us now. It just fascinates me. Sasha still has so much love in her heart after everything she went through. While I'm still getting there. Bit by bit, I will learn to trust again.

He holds out his large hand, and my heart skips a beat when he sees mine. Damn. That is one big hand. It's even bigger than my face.

"The name's Ezra Fontaine."

My brain short circuits when he gives me his full name.

Fontaine? It can't be...

Is he from the same pack as Jake and Alex?

I finally recall where I have seen Ezra. He's a model. Often featured on billboards throughout the city. As a matter of fact, his face graced one

is on billboard across my apartment for several weeks, and I used to talk to
brokehead.

ie eyes. *“I bet you never get bad hair days,” or “Nice jeans.”*

I can't believe it's the exact same model. It's been a few years, but
He did sad when they replaced his image with a washing machine. I thought
e him? billboard is advertising a casino at the moment.

Ezra currently features in a commercial for a men's cologne, and is
of the big brands too. It appears he is making a name for himself.

I only just had sex with his pack's beta last night. I probably still smell
him, and I hope Ezra doesn't catch Jake's scent on me. I've showered
going to would it have been enough to get his scent off my skin?

If Ezra does scent his beta on me, then he doesn't mention it. Instead
Sasha offers me a handsome smile, showing me a set of even white teeth.

My pussy reacts, and I look away, blushing bright red. He's just
beautiful, and his scent...

Lemon and honey.

He's like a giant, sexy cough drop.

“It's good to meet you, Ezra.”

I don't tell him about the billboard. That would be embarrassing.

His grin stretches, creating sexy folds on his cheeks. His smile makes
eyes crinkle at the edges, and it just so happens that my panties grow
little bit wetter.

If I were an Omega, would I be perfuming right now? Would I be done
with slick?

Would he be reacting to my arousal by purring deeply? It's hard to see

They say that only Omegas can hear an Alpha's deep, affectionate purr

I try to see the telltale signs. Does his chest vibrate slightly? Maybe I

it in myChloé and Marc about their acute Omega senses the next time I see the
Ezra lifts my hand to his lips, and his beard tickles when he p
delicate kiss to my knuckles. My breath hitches as his kiss lingers, and
it I wasI could see his eyes.

ink the Maybe I should take his sunglasses off.

No.

it's one *Keep your hands to yourself, Renée.*

“Well, goodbye, Renée,” he whispers, rubbing his thumb in circl
ell likemy knuckles, and it mirrors what he did with sweet Sasha before.
ed, butAlpha just as taken with me as he is with the dog?

Finally, he lets go, and I miss the warmth of his hand. Now I watc
ead, hethe doorway of the shelter as he heads toward his sports car, w
merrily the whole way.

ust too He pulls out of the parking lot, offering me a short wave as he dri
down the highway. His kiss still lingers on my knuckles, and my hear
stop pounding.

What is it about Pack Fontaine that makes me so weak in the knees?

“Well, well...”

I startle, peering behind me to find Michelle waggling her eyebrow
ikes hisdaughter Milly is right beside her, giggling at my shame.

ow that Caught in the act.

“What? He only kissed my hand.”

lripping Michelle snorts. “I bet he did.”

And what is that supposed to mean?

ay. “That’s *two* men now,” the woman croons.

purr, so Milly gasps. “Wait.... are you serious?”

can ask The eighteen-year-old looks at me to confirm what her mother say:

m. throw my arms up, following them into the office. Unfortunately, Tor
laces ain on the teasing, and I have no choice but to listen to their silly tau
l I wishwork at the computer, updating Sasha's profile.

I guess I can put 'reserved' next to her picture at last.

I have never felt happier.

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throw my arms up, following them into the office. Unfortunately, Tony joins in on the teasing, and I have no choice but to listen to their silly taunts as I work at the computer, updating Sasha's profile.

I guess I can put 'reserved' next to her picture at last.

I have never felt happier.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHAPTER EIGHT

Ezra

I pull up through the gates, parking the car in the garage. Then I'm tossing my keys in the air as I head toward the house. I can't wait to tell the guys the good news.

They were happy when I told them I wanted to adopt a dog. I finally feel like if I am in a good place financially to look after one, and so I went to the animal shelter that I found online.

Honestly, I would have taken every single dog home if I could have only have room for one at the moment

Although I live in a mansion, I share it with my pack. I have to be respectful to them, and not bring home every dog that I find on the street.

I hate that Sasha had been abandoned, but at the same time I'm glad I gave her up because now she gets to be my dog. I will take her for walks on the beach every day and let her cuddle up on my lap while we watch movies.

She is going to be spoiled rotten. I have a photoshoot later, but the first thing I am going to do when I finish is head to the supermarket. She's going to need plenty of food and toys, after all. She's even going to have her own bedroom at the mansion.

The pack won't mind. They understand my need to love something with fur.

I had dogs throughout my childhood, and Sasha looked exactly like that dog. That dog saw me through the worst of times. She helped me through my parents' divorce, and she helped me when I got bullied at school.

I need another dog to help me through adult life.

Sasha is not Molly. She will never replace the dog I had as a kid, but I'm willing to give her just as much love. Heaven knows the dog deserves it.

Then there's Renée. Could there be a kinder woman?

I couldn't help but notice how physically attractive she was, and I almost whistled, but I sense she felt a little awkward around me. But her pretty face was not something I wanted to tell her about.

It was her beautiful soul.

I feel as if that girl has all the time in the world for broken and abused animals. The first let's just say that Sasha wasn't the only girl I wanted to take home with me.

"I'm home!" I shout cheerfully as I walk into the house.

There are no answers at first. Maybe they're still out. Alex will be at the office, but I think Henry is at the gym.

It's supposed to be Jake normally works during the day too, but I'm surprised when I see him come into the front foyer, a glass of water in his hands. "Hey, Ezra. Back already? They thought you'd be at the shelter for hours."

He talks on as I run my hands through my hair. "Yeah, I don't know how I even managed to resist playing with all those dogs."

The first he stops by the foot of the stairs. "So, you pick out a dog?"

Sasha is I grin. "That I did. A beauty too."

How do I get her He smiles. "Well, I'm glad. That's going to be one hell of a lucky dog for you."
"And I can't wait for you all to meet her... So, why are you home?"

ing with Jake pauses on his way up the stairs, a sly smirk growing on his

“Grace gave me the day off. I was working late last night at that nightclub.”

Molly. I lean against the wall, wiggling my brows. “Well, meet anyone special

ugh my His smirk widens. “How did you know?”

I chuckle. “I’m an Alpha, Jake. I have a strong sense of smell, a strong reek of sex.”

but I’m I get another sniff and I stop short at the familiar scent. No, it couldn’t be her.
it. He laughs. “I thought I washed it all off.”

“Well, what was she like?”

got the Jake meets my eyes. “Perfect. I think she may be the one, you know?”

what I My eyebrows rise up into my hairline. “Wow. All that from a one-on-one
stand?”

He shrugs, heading up the stairs. “Well, who’s to say you can’t meet a girl
als, and one at a nightclub? Besides, she was different. Most of the other girls
n me. were too fixated on themselves.”

I roll my eyes. I know the feeling. They’re like that all over the world,
e, and it makes it hard to meet a decent girl who just wants to get to know you.
last date constantly took selfies with me and posted them all over her profile
ie stepslikes.

eady? I Her caption: “I’m on a date with the billboard guy!”

She got tens of thousands of likes.

managed That’s what I’m known as in the industry. The billboard guy. I had
somewhere. Now I’m featuring in magazines for men’s underwear.
commercials too for all the big brands.

I keep telling myself I will find the right one. But for now, I will
og.” adopting a dog. Sasha will be the only girl in my life for the time being.

Yet I can’t stop thinking about Renée. We will be meeting again.

is face. return to the shelter to sign Sasha's adoption papers. Maybe I should
club." out? That's if she would even want to go out with me.

cial?" I may be featured in men's magazines now, but inside I am still the
insecure kid. The one who didn't even get a date to the dance.

nd you Thirteen was a hard age.

I started dieting and exercising just before I went to high school. I
I't be... want to go through four more years of torment. That was around the
got my Alpha, and then I just sprouted up. Things started looking up
from there.

." They made me captain of the football team, and I even dated the
ie-nightcheerleader. I was young and I only wanted to date the hottest girl at
just for social approval.

meet the But I couldn't care less about looks now. A woman has to be mo
ls therephysically attractive. She has to be *real*.

Maybe Renée could be exactly what I'm looking for. It's hard to t
city. Itjust one encounter, but she's a dog lover, and she works at a shelte
ou. Myalready puts her up in my books.

age for Most girls would be grossed out at the thought of picking up dog po

"I know what you mean. Most girls I date only care about me beca
a model."

I know how it sounds. I'm a model, and people want to date me a
to startmy pictures because they think I'm beautiful... Boo hoo.

I'm in But Jake doesn't judge. It can be hard to find anyone who is genu
day and age, and I'm glad he has found the one.

opt for "Well, don't stop trying. Maybe you will find your own Renée o
}, too."

when I Jake disappears up the stairs. I look back at the spot where he va

ask her Did he just say Renée? I'm probably hearing things. Besides, what chances it would be the exact same Renée, anyway?

ie same Well, time to hit the gym.

I like to work out before every photoshoot.

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Did he just say Renée? I'm probably hearing things. Besides, what are the chances it would be the exact same Renée, anyway?

Well, time to hit the gym.

I like to work out before every photoshoot.

CHAPTER NINE

CHAPTER NINE

Renée

I meet up for brunch with Chloé and Marc at our usual place. The r
I arrive at the café, my sister jumps up from the table, throwing h
around me. “Ney Ney! I feel like I haven’t seen you in ages!”

In actuality, it’s only been several days. When I’m not at the ap
drawing pet portraits, I’m at the shelter picking up dog poop.

Chloé and I haven’t spoken since I left her at the club, and I’m glad
she is still in one piece. Dan and Marc most likely got her home, but
about her. She’s becoming quite the party animal.

Her fragrance made a lot of money in the end, and I even passed
girls on the street who smelled of her sweet lemon frosting.

It’s only a mere imitation of Chloé’s scent. It would never compa
the real thing.

Her fragrance has mostly been popular with beta women. But I’ve
that even Omegas are muting their natural perfumes with scent block
so they can smell like her.

Why would they do that? I’d do anything for my own Omega scent.

At the most, I smell like a new book. Well, maybe a book with

pages, but I want an Omega scent. It's just not fair.

My anxiety has been through the roof. Jake still hasn't called me, it's been three days. That's normal, right? I haven't dated in a long time so I wouldn't know what was normal anymore. I am so out of touch.

Chloé has the waitress serve us our usual coffees. Then she leans her elbows on the table with Marc, watching me with a smirk.

“So, spill...” she says. “How was he?”

My cheeks blush, and they make an asinine “*oooh*” sound.

“She's blushing. How adorable,” Marc remarks.

Chloé gushes, reaching across the table to squeeze my shoulder. “Congratulations, Ney. I'm so happy for you. Especially after what—”

I cover her mouth, shaking my head. She rolls her eyes, removing her hand from her mouth so I don't smudge her lipstick.

“All right. Since *He who must not be named* broke your heart four months ago.”

Marc drums his fingers on the table. “What's the story there and don't worry, I forgot, but congrats, anyway, Ney Ney, for forgetting about him and moving on. He was an ass. He didn't deserve you.”

Chloé gasps. “How could you forget? He left her because he was with someone else.”

Marc's eyes widen. Then he looks at me apologetically. “I'm so sorry.”

I genuinely smile. For the first time, I don't care about what he did or what I've heard. Maybe it's all right for us to start saying his name again. *He who must not be named* just sounds so much better, though.

It makes him sound like a villain. Which he was.

“It's fine, Marc. Don't worry about it. Honestly, I thought I was getting over him once I met Jake. But Jake hasn't called back.”

Marc raises an eyebrow. "So? It's only been three days, sweetie."
and it's "So, you think I'm being paranoid?"
ie, so I Marc laughs, leaning back in his seat. "Of course you are, but that
we love about you, Ney Ney."

ans her "That I'm paranoid?"

"Yes," he replies.

Well, that's comforting to know.

"Besides, he would be a fool not to call you back. Any guy who
see your worth isn't worth it in my books, sis. You're better off."

Oh, Ney Chloé's right, but after the way *He who must not be named* treated me
felt worthless. I'm not the most touchy feely person in the world
y hand although I love the idea of being an Omega, I'm far too independent.

On one hand, I love my independence, but I also want to be cherished
my years loved and to be called a good girl. I've watched some Alpha and
porn, and the way the Omegas melt at that praise... I want that too.
gain? I Alphas don't want independent betas. They want tiny Omegas who
moving to be carried everywhere and doted on. The same with betas. As I learn
hard way.

e liked It was one of his reasons for leaving me.

Our drinks arrive. I ordered a cappuccino as Chloé ordered a veggie
ry." Marc got an Americano.

l to me. "So, anything else happened in your life since we saw you last?"
t not be asks me, sipping her drink. She gets froth on her lips, and she looks
picturesque. We should get a snapshot and put it on her page.

I sigh. "Yeah. Sasha got adopted. Well, she's on reserve now, but she
finally has shown interest.

Chloé and Marc give a collective "aw." If there's one thing that C

love, then that's cute animal stories.

Marc smiles. "I'm so glad it had a happy ending..."

's what Chloé places her hand on her heart. "Me too. You must be so proud of Ney."

"I am. She's only been at the shelter for a few months, yet she's come so far."

Marc sips his Americano. "Only because you took the time to go and doesn't trust. See, this is just proof of how perfect you are. You volunteer at a shelter in your free time. I would do it too, but I hate the idea of seeing all those animals, I've seen without homes. It would be too much for me."

ld, and "Same," Chloé agrees. "I would cry just looking at their faces. I'd love to adopt them all!"

ned and Marc continues. "If this Jack..."

Omega "Jake..." I correct him."

"If this *Jake* doesn't call you back, then it's his loss. You did not do anything wrong."

ned the Unconsciously, I glance at my phone, sighing in wistful bliss. Still, I feel like I've done something wrong. Damn. Did I say something stupid? Maybe he was only using me so he could write an interesting article for Manifest.

in latte. I can see the headline of that piece already. "Renée Laurent: the ugly truth about her. How bad is she in bed?"

' Chloé I just hope they remember to put the special character on my name. I don't want it to look like I'm just a name when people leave it out.

I didn't tell Chloé what magazine he works for. She would tell me to call someone his number instantly, but I feel as if I can trust Jake. Well, at least I can trust him in this way.

Omegas Did I make a huge mistake?

Marc waves his hand in front of my face, and I must have zoned out.
“Renée, stop. He will—”

The three of us jump the moment my phone buzzes, and I glance at the screen, seeing his name.

Shit. He’s calling me. Actually *calling* me...

I pick up on the third ring. “Hello?”

“Hey, princess. It’s so good to hear your voice again.”

My heart pounds as I don’t register his words. I go to reply, but then the dogs across the table. Tweedledee and Tweedledum prop their elbows up, watching me with dreamy Omega eyes.

I scowl, getting up so I can speak to Jake in private. I find a quiet spot at the back of the café. There’s only one woman present, typing on a laptop. She must be writing her next screen play.

There are a lot of writers at this end of town.

“You called.”

He chuckles. “I said I would, remember? I haven’t been able to get a text. My pack are sick of hearing me talk about you.”

I bite my lip, watching my expression in the glass of the window. I don’t want to be so goofy; I have to stop doing that immediately.

“Yeah, me too. Just ask my sister and our friend Marc.”

Is it possible to hear a smile? It’s been three days, but I can still hear it. I hate it this perfect grin.

“How would you like to go on a date tonight? I was thinking a movie and then a walk along the beach?”

“I would love to!”

Okay, maybe I sounded a little too ecstatic there.

Tone it down a notch, Ney Ney...

ed out. Why does my inner voice sound like Chloé?

“Then it’s a date. I will pick you up at seven. I look forward to see
: down,again. Princess.”

“Me too... I mean... I'm looking forward to seeing you.... not me!”

He laughs again. “Okay, gotta go. Don’t forget seven pm.”

How could I?

He hangs up, and I watch the wall in front of me for a while. Then
1 I lookcatching the attention of the screenwriter. She smiles at me. I blush, l
0 again,back to the main area to re-join Chloé and Marc.

I take my seat, taking a sip of my cappuccino nonchalantly. Both C
zone atstudy me carefully.

op. She Marc’s the first to speak. “Well? Care to share? You’re kind of lea
hanging.”

I meet his eager brown eyes. “Oh. He’s taking me out on a date at se
Chloé and Marc blink at me in surprise.

you off “Are you serious, Ney Ney?” she whispers.

My gray eyes find her blue pair. “One hundred percent.”

look so She and Marc exchange glances. They both make noises next, catch
attention of several people.

Chloé can’t stop squealing. “See? What did I tell you? Of course he
nvisioncall you back!”

Marc nudges my foot beneath the table. “Silly willy.”

eal and I roll my eyes. “You *would* say willy...”

Marc shrugs, holding up his hand. “Guilty. But I’m not the only o
willy on their mind lately. So, details. Was he big or was he small?”

Chloé whacks his shoulder for me. She’s too innocent to ask such
questions, but that doesn’t mean she doesn’t get curious.

“Well? What one was he?” she asks.

I snort. “I’m not telling you that...”

Marc smiles. “All right. You can tell us another time. We just focus on finding you something to wear now.”

Chloé gasps. “I know...”

“Nothing that sparkles,” I reprimand.

I jump, She huffs, folding her arms. “You’re no fun.”

Marc grabs his phone, typing a message to his Alphas. “I just need the pack that I won’t be home tonight. Tonight’s too important to miss Omegascan knot me another night.”

An old lady looks across at him as he says “knot” out loud. I hving uslaugh.

It humbles me how he’s giving up on spending time with his pack even.” me. I go to protest, but he reaches across, pressing his finger to my lip fine, Renée. I want to see you happy. *We both* do.”

Chloé beams, and her eyes won’t stop leaking. “Yes. It’s more than I deserve. Mom would be so happy...”

Does she have to mention Mom now? I’m sure she would be, but this to be a happy occasion. Still, I can’t help but wonder if this wouldmother’s work?

Was she the one who sent me Jake?

Only time will tell.

I just hope I can finally learn to get over *He who must not be named* with were both pretty young, but that’s still no excuse for what he did.

I’ve never told Chloé this, but the person he liked was her. I h crude boyfriend had a thing for my then seventeen-year-old sister. He compared me to her on a daily basis.

Until he finally had enough, realizing that I would never be my
Chloé will never find out the real reason why he dumped me.

have to He dated me because he wanted the chance of getting closer to her.
The last thing I want is for her to blame herself.

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Until he finally had enough, realizing that I would never be my sister.
Chloé will never find out the real reason why he dumped me.

He dated me because he wanted the chance of getting closer to her.

The last thing I want is for her to blame herself.

CHAPTER TEN

CHAPTER TEN

Renée

Jake arrived at seven pm precisely, just like he promised.

I turn to look at my personal stylists in the hallway of my apartment. Once again, Marc chose my dress. Chloé did my hair and makeup, and she looks like a million dollars.

Marc opted for an elegant red gown with a silk wrap, and Chloé curled my hair into sweet waves. I'm a mixture of sexy and sweet, and honestly, it's a miracle that I agreed to the color red to begin with.

It's too bold of a color for me. Even my lips pop, and they're a vibrant cherry red.

Jake steps out of his Mercedes, his eyes popping when he gets his first look at me. "Wow..."

Marc said to trust him on the red dress. A man loves a woman in a red dress. It gets their blood pumping. The beta's nose flares, and if he were an Alpha, he would be purring right now.

"Good luck, Ney Ney," Chloé whispers from the door of my apartment, and now she and Marc resemble my parents as they wave me off.

Jake offers me his elbow, and we link arms as he leads me down the

I don't actually live far from the pier. It was the reason why I chose this apartment. I wanted to be by the sea. I just love how the air smells near the ocean.

Jake laughs. "They seem nice. You're lucky to have them."

I smile. "They are. Chloé may be my annoying little sister, but she's also like a best friend. And Marc has known us both since we were kids. He's even used to dress me up back then, too."

"So, I have them to thank for the lovely dress you're wearing tonight. You look beautiful, Renée."

He stops to plant a kiss on my forehead, and my heart flutters. I gasp, and I look up the street to see Tweedledee and Tweedledum walking out of the apartment from the doorway.

I grab Jake and pull him along. I love them both, but I would rather have them on display for them. We need privacy.

We arrive at the seafront several blocks later, and already the music is pumping. There are many fancy bars and restaurants here, and it's one of my favorite places to go when I need to unwind.

Lights crisscross the street, joining each streetlamp, and it's like entering a whole new world. Jake bypasses all the bars and heads straight for the restaurant. There's an adorable restaurant just at the end, and it always gets booked weeks in advance.

I hope that's where he is taking us on our date.

"So, you like seafood, right?"

I blink, smiling. "Love it."

He grins, and there's that adorable smile I love, the one that has been ingrained on my mind since the first night we met.

We walk along the pier, and I try to avoid stepping on the gaps

lose my wooden slats in my heels. I'm surprised I can walk this far in them.

near the There are other couples present, and I wonder how we must

outsiders. Would people believe we were just on our first date? That'

Jake takes my hand, and my chest loops like we're on a roller coast.

e's still "So, has anything interesting happened since we last saw each other

s. They I try to think. That's when an older couple passes us on the pier

woman has a long-haired teacup Chihuahua in a fancy tartan coat, a

it? You mind goes to Sasha.

Does he know yet? I doubt Ezra would have told him about meet

hear back at the shelter. The beautiful male model has probably already fo

atching about me.

I've also met Alexander, too, and I wonder when it would be bes

not be Jake. Would it be appropriate if I told him that I found both of h

brothers incredibly attractive? *Two Alphas?*

ight is Would he be annoyed or jealous?

e of my I am not an Omega, but I always craved the attention of Alphas. I

wanted to know what it was like to be knotted. To be doted on like a p

tering a Alphas treat Omegas like princesses, after all.

he pier. But my body is not built for an Alpha's knot. It never will be.

ked out I doubt Alexander and Ezra would want me, anyway. However, I re

way Alex purred around me, and Ezra had kissed my knuckles...

"Yeah. The dog I had been working with for the last few months
found a home."

Jake stops to stare at me. His brows rise. "You work with dogs? I

as been know."

I shrug, brushing away a stray strand. It's getting windier the fur

in the walk along the pier, and I'm so grateful for the silk wrap.

Thank you, Marc, for your stylish insight.

look to I doubt it will be enough to keep the ocean breeze at bay, as when Goosebumps are already popping up on my skin.

"I do. On a voluntary basis. I believe every dog deserves a second chance at love. They're often abandoned by their owners. Sometimes just out of the shelter, like Sasha."

and my Silence passes between us as Jake takes in my words. A dog barks from a distance, and we look across the sandy beach to see a young guy playing Frisbee with his spaniel.

I don't know how anyone can hurt them intentionally. The same with cats even though they can be assholes at the best of times. The shelter is full of cattery too, and I have been scratched and bitten by tiny kittens more than I can count.

They're just scared, though, and need to get used to human contact. In any way, they're more likely to be adopted. Which they always are. Even a cat always loves a kitten. The same with puppies.

rincess. "Bastards..." he growls.

I sigh. "Yes. I try not to judge. You don't know someone's circumstances."

"Still, that's no excuse to dump an animal on the street. The shelter is right there. They could have waited until someone arrived in the morning and brought her in."

finally Very true. Michelle tried to capture the person on CCTV, but they were wearing a hoodie. They also parked their car right up the street. I didn't couldn't read their license plate.

Sasha was one of the lucky ones. At least someone was bound to find her. We often find cats and dogs dumped on the highway where they could be run over.

Jake glances back at me, squeezing my hand. “Well, it’s a good job though. You have to take care of them.”

I blush, peering down at my shoes. I have managed to rehome several during my time at the shelter. It’s like I understand where they come from. I got metaphorically dumped on the street too. Just because *He who is not named* was disappointed that I wasn’t more like my sister. He seems in theme to be a carbon copy. Even though we couldn’t be any more different. We barely look alike as it is.

Even if I had awakened as an Omega, Chloé and I would still look like two different cats.

Jake chuckles lightly and I glance up. “What’s so funny?”

His soft brown eyes settle on me. “One of my pack brothers just adopted a dog. Maybe it’s the same dog...”

I laugh along with him nervously, hoping he doesn’t figure it out. No one knows why I feel the need to withhold the information. It just seems like a betrayal.

Jake still doesn’t know about Alexander at the night of the ball. I understand. I check in the end to get my phone screen fixed.

We make it to the restaurant at the end of the pier. Jake introduces me to the maître d', and she proceeds to lead us to our designated table.

I stare at him, impressed, once we're seated right by the window overlooking the beautiful sea. He shrugs, holding up his business card. “What can I say? Working at Manifest has its perks.”

I smile. “What did you tell them?”

“That I would write a glowing piece about their restaurant, so long as they easily gave me and my date the best table in the house.”

I laugh, and I can hardly believe what I’m hearing. It must be nice to

they all for such a high end magazine.

I pick up the menu, glancing through the choices. All seafood and
al dogs “You know, you could always tell them you’re a Fontaine...”

om. Jake grabs a menu for himself. “And you could always tell them y
to must Laurent.”

wanted Point taken, but I won’t. I hate abusing my name like that. It w
it. enough at the club when everyone pushed me to the front of the line
toilet.

be very My bladder is not more important than anyone else’s. I was happy to

That reminds me. I haven’t called Dad since the night of the ball
imagine he saw the pictures online, and then the pictures later at the c
opted at the opening ceremony of Chloé’s fragrance. Chloé could barely g
words out for her speech, and I know it was filmed multiple times.

I don’t You can even see me and Marc in several shots, trying to keep her
s like a feet. I guess what Dad found online wasn’t too worrying, or he wou
called me and complained about how I let him down.

used his We can’t have Chloé tarnishing the Laurent name, after all.

Apparently, she is my responsibility. It’s a burden I’ve had my whole
himself and at times I still feel like she is three years old. Instead of trying to e
now, though, she is getting wasted at nightclubs.

Window, Honestly, it’s one of the reasons why I don’t go around showing
name. I could. So easily. Any designer dress could be mine, but I don
to give our family business a bad name.

I’m old enough to remember when Dad could barely feed us,
as they remember how hard he had worked to create this lifestyle for us. I sti
the very first hotel he bought. Then everything else followed suit.

working Now he has hotels in every city in the world.

Chloé isn't too bad, and at times, I don't mind being her babysitter. She's always been ridiculously innocent. It's one of her selling points for her job, so I know she wouldn't do anything too damaging regarding her own career. I have to have faith in her. Although her behavior is worrying me lately.

"So, ready to order?" Jake asks.

I nod, peering down at the menu. I ended up getting scallops and swordfish for the night with spicy avocado dip, while Jake got swordfish and calamari. It was one of the best meals I'd ever tasted, and I was completely stuffed by the time the night ended.

We were even gifted with the sight of a porpoise just half a mile offshore, and in the fading twilight, it looked so majestic.

Jake won't stop staring at me as I gaze at the beautiful sea. The sun is setting over the horizon, turning the sky and the sea into a watercolor painting of red, orange, and pink.

"What?" I ask curiously next.

He shakes his head. "Nothing. You're just so beautiful. The setting sun almost makes you look as if you're on fire, princess."

My cheeks flush, and I focus my attention on the horizon again. The sun is just disappearing where the sky meets the sea. Any moment, I will see a green flash.

"Are you waiting for something?"

I point at the setting sun. "The green flash. When the sun vanishes over the horizon, there's a green flash. I want to see it."

He hikes up a brow, turning in his seat to watch the famous green flash with me. The sky turns darker and darker, and soon it becomes a purple bruise.

Finally, it vanishes, and there's the green flash. I pump my fist. "Wh

r. She's Jake guffaws, throwing his head back. "I have to say. That was r brand,impressive."

career. I give a shrug. "You have to appreciate the natural wonders of the w

tely. He smiles, then asks a passing waiter for the check. He pays for th

leaving a generous tip, then leads us back out of the restaurant. I shiv

lobsterwe step out onto the pier. "So cold. As much as I love the green flash

is somethe sun would come back."

ime the Jake puts his arm around me, enveloping me in his warmth, and

steals a kiss from my lips. He massages his tongue with mine, sucking

into thejust ever so slightly. He even nips my bottom lip, and I swear a

sounds in his chest.

1 is just "Let's go back to my place..."

tercolor My heart thumps. He senses my trepidation, running his smooth h

and down my back. I relax in his embrace. "It's all right, princess. I

going to harm you."

ing sun I know he won't, but it's just been some time since a guy brought n

to his place. I don't know whether I should tell him now that I have

e sun ismet two of his pack brothers.

see the Would be hate me for withholding that information?

He doesn't remove his arm from my shoulder as we walk back dc

pier, heading to my apartment where he parked his car. I spy Marc and

over thewatching us from the window as we get into his Mercedes, and they o

a good luck wave as he pulls away.

n flash I believe they were settling down to watch Chloé's favorite movie

ourplishnight. Legally Blonde.

Yet they found me and Jake way more entertaining to watch. I don't

100!" whether to be flattered.

s pretty Well, time to meet Pack Fontaine.

world.”

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Well, time to meet Pack Fontaine.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Henry

“**H**ey, heads up. Jake just called. He’s bringing over his new laptop later. So be on your best behavior, brother.”

I groan, rolling my head back on the couch at Alex’s pre-warning. “This means I have to switch the TV off?”

Alex throws me a pointed look. “Yes. I’ve already warned Ezra. What he is…”

I grumble, using the remote to switch off the TV. My show was getting to the good part.

My older brother shakes his head. “It’s just for one night, little brother. Honestly, you’re spending too much time around that TV lately. You get out more.”

I rise from the couch, stretching my arms above my head. “That’s why I have a gym, bro. Still in shape. See?” I lift my shirt, letting him see my perfectly cut abs.

He sighs. “You need fresh air. You’re wasting away. When was the last time you had an audition?”

This again? I’m an actor, so auditions are a large part of my life. I

taking some time off.

I had a regular part in a soap opera for years, but after the whole thing with Vivienne, I had to take a step back from the spotlight. You know, worse than coming back to your apartment late one night to find your girlfriend in bed with another man?

Well, the whole damn world finding out about it.

We were the 'It' couple. The country's favorite. The media loved our story. We met on the set of *Alphas, Betas and Omegas*. A well-known soap opera across the country. We were love interests on screen, and then in real life.

It's hard to be that physical on screen with someone and not develop some chemistry in real life. We were seventeen when we met. "Doeskids. Also, our agents kind of pushed us to date.

It was good for publicity. How I'd love to go back in time and punch that fucking agent in the face. But it was mostly my fault. I thought I was in love or at least I was in love with the idea of being in love.

Vivienne was one of the hottest actresses at the time and still is. She moved over to the West Coast in the end for a fresh start, and now, she's in blockbuster movies.

She's starring as the main protagonist in an upcoming superhero movie from a well-known franchise, but I refuse to watch it once it's released. It's going to be a little hard to avoid, though, when you see posters for my goddamn movie on every bus, billboard and online advertisement.

It's much harder to forget a toxic ex when they are *everywhere*. It's even harder when they are more successful than you are, while you haven't even called in months.

Sooner or later, my agent will drop me. So I have to make my

comeback very soon.

debacle It's been nearly two years since the whole blowout with Vivienne. I don't want to be the one who forgets my name, and I will soon become irrelevant. It almost seems fair that she gets to have all this success while I'm in the gutter.

Karma really does work in mysterious ways...

Alex smiles, trying to make me feel better. I bet he knows exactly how my mind has gone. Constantly stuck in the past with no way out. It's a damn soap opera to live.

later in "Hey, it's fine. I can always get you a position at the office."

I cringe. "Office work really isn't for me, bro. But thanks, anyway."

at least Alex folds his arms, and the warm smile fades. "Then you get back to work. Still start booking auditions again. Call the director of Alphas, Betas and C-

Tell them you would like to come back."

hunch my I groan, running my hand through my thick black hair. "I'll think about it." My older brother watches me for some time. Then he sighs, heading

door. "They should be arriving at any moment. Please look happy for them."

he flew I rise, joining his side at the door. Alex wears a navy suit, as always. I've never seen him out of one. He's so professional. Then there's me in my hoodie and T-shirt. I'm not even wearing shoes either.

movie I have a right to look relaxed in my own home. Besides, it could be a little more comfortable. I could be wearing PJs (I haven't gotten to that stage yet).

for the I may be a bit lost at the moment, but I still get up at 4 am to work out at the gym. I still meditate.

's even Also, I visit my shrink.

't had a Voices echo outside and Alex stands straighter. I do the same, trying to mimic him as best as I can. Where the hell is Ezra when we need him?

7 grand probably out buying doggy supplies for his new bitch.

That guy loves dogs more than he likes people. Who can blame him?
People don't break your heart.

I can't wait until he brings his new dog home. It may just be what I
get on the straight and narrow again. Besides, I may be an asshole right
but I still love dogs. Alex and I had a great dog when we were children
where Benji.

He's over the rainbow bridge now.

Jake opens the front door with his house key and I hear a female
saying, "You have a beautiful home. I love the water fountain."

My knot swells. Damn, Jake's date sure does have a sexy voice
up and feminine and husky at the same time, and if she looks as good as she
does, then this evening may not turn out to be so bad after all.

Finally, he opens the door, and he smiles when he spies us. "Ah, thank
you for the introduction." Alex, Henry, I would like to introduce you to Renée."

He places his arm around his date's shoulder, and she finally comes
out of her shell. I don't look away from her soulful gray eyes, and something stirs
in my chest.

This girl has been hurt. Call it intuition, but it's not hard to see it
behind her eyes. She's trying to hide it, but it couldn't be any more
obvious. Well, at least to me.

Someone hurt her in the past, and I ball my fists, wishing I could hurt
them out and down so I can pummel them to the ground.

A strange reaction to have over someone you've just met, but I can't
but be drawn to her. She smells of fresh linen and something else. Sorry,
I can't quite place. There's also bitterness to her scent, too. It's faded
and? He's since she's obviously happy in Jake's presence, but it's there, regardless.

One day, maybe I can take that bitterness away...

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CHAPTER TWELVE

CHAPTER TWELVE

Renée

Oh, my. I can't believe I am meeting Jake's pack.

Well, I've already met two of them, but this is the first time meeting Henry Fontaine. I've had a crush on him since I was a kid, and even better looking in person.

He is just like Alex. Except his hair is cropped on the sides. His hair is briny too, kind of like the ocean, but way better...

Well, there's one thing I can scratch off my list. What does Henry Fontaine smell like?

He seems to have faded from the limelight these past several years thanks to that bitch Vivienne Fox, who broke his heart. The press was all over it and it's no surprise he shut himself out. It's another reason why I prefer to give Chloé the spotlight.

It was bad enough when *He who must not be named* dumped me, but to have the whole world knowing about it too? No thank you. It's embarrassing to be rejected. It makes you feel worthless and pathetic.

I can't even imagine what Henry went through.

Alex steps forward to offer me his hand, and his paprika tickles the

my throat. It's mouth-watering.

"Well, this is a surprise..."

Jake watches Alex curiously. "What's a surprise?"

The Alpha glances at the beta. "Renée and I have already crossed paths at Judith's debut. Her sister was there too."

My heart pounds and I hide my face, hoping Jake doesn't get mad. I have already told him that I've met Alex, but the timing didn't feel right.

We were having too much of a good time. Besides, how can I tell him I find his pack brothers attractive?

Jake smiles, raising an eyebrow at me. "Really? That's news to me."

I peer at him through the gaps of my fingers. "Sorry, but I met Alex at Chloé's debut. He was there that night, too. He broke my phone."

And he's Alex laughs. "I did, but I gave you the check to reimburse the damage."

"You did. And thank you."

The scent is It all grows quiet, and I just wish that I could melt into the ground.

so embarrassing. Jake squeezes the arm around my shoulder. "It's not a big deal, Renée. You don't have to worry about a thing."

"You're not mad?"

ars. No "Of course not."

s cruel, "Oh, then I should probably tell you that it was Ezra who adopted Sam."

refer to He blinks. Then he throws his head back and laughs. "No kidding!"

least that means you get to see her all the time now."

, but to My heart thuds. He's right. I never thought of that. That just means this thing with me more permanent, and my cheeks flush. This is on my second date, yet I am meeting his pack already.

Alex leads us into the living room. "Come on, let's have some wine and get to know each other."

Is this really happening? Am I about to drink wine with Pack Fontaine?
Just as we settle down, I think about what Alex said. He mentioned her name. Judith.

Should I ask?

“Why were you there at the night of the ball? If that’s okay of me to ask, should I ask you?” Alex looks up from pouring Henry a glass. He smiles, displaying a set of teeth. “Our baby sister, Judith, was there to showcase her Omega. As her older brother, I had to ensure she was safe.”

My heart lifts with hope. Thank goodness. I had thought he was trying to scout the Omegas, which was why I felt protective of Chloé. Also, I’m a little jealous. He had reacted to her scent on me, but I try not to think about that now and just enjoy the moment.

“It’s a strange mixture of feelings to have. I am jealous of Chloé, but I’m highly protective of her. It gets tiring at times.

“I’m the exact same with Chloé. She’s pretty well known, so I try to ensure the vipers stayed away.”

Alex quirks a brow. “Vipers? What an apt description. There were a number of vipers in that audience that night. I had to chase them away from Judith.”

Henry laughs at that comment, and I wonder what’s so funny about him going after his younger sister. “Trust me, they would have regretted it.

“I think Judith is your typical Omega who melts at the sight of a blonde. I think they’ve got another thing coming.”

Alex agrees. “I know. It would be like trying to court Wednesday Addams.”

Wednesday Addams?

Now I can’t help but picture Judith as a spooky pigtailed little girl.

ne? Henry looks at me. “She doesn’t know we call her that behind her back. I don’t want to mention it. I don’t tell her if you ever meet her.”

I nod. “Promise.”

It’s good to hear that Judith can protect herself. Chloé is not independent or scary, and I worry about her. It disgusts me the way the perfect Alphas stalk the Omegas at those events. The Omegas are there to protect themselves, not to be preyed upon like pieces of meat on the open savanna.

Chloé didn’t seem to mind, though. She thrives off the attention.

“Which girl was Judith?”

Henry answers. “The gloomy one. I doubt anyone would have noticed her. Not all that much anyway with the likes of Chloé Laurent around... Sorry, she’s your sister, Renée...”

I smile. “It’s fine. I guess that’s something Judith and I have in common. I’m often overshadowed by Chloé’s light, too.”

Another pause and I can’t help but notice how each male looks sad. Shoot. Did I say the wrong thing?

Henry breaks the silence with a light chuckle. “Same here. I’m often overshadowed by a sibling, too. Try to guess which one.”

Alex tosses him a pointed look as he proceeds to pour my wine. I notice all three men look at me in pleasant surprise.

“What’s the big deal? It’s just a giggle.”

“At least he’s your older sibling, though,” I continue. “It just seems taken for granted that the older sibling *always* outshines the younger one. However, when it’s your younger sibling...”

Another awkward pause and I need to stop. I’m making everyone uncomfortable. Why am I even saying all this? I guess I just feel so comfortable around the pack.

ack. So Jake places his arm around me, offering me comfort. Henry laughs.
“Fair enough. You have me beat there.”

Alex speaks up at last. “If it’s any consolation, little brother, I have
not sobeen compared to you. You’re a heartthrob after all. Every teen girl has
y someposter in her bedroom. I can’t compete with that.”

o enjoy My cheeks burn. *I was that teen girl, but I don’t care to mention it.*

inna. Henry scoffs. “You own your own fashion company. It’s clear v
winner is here. Besides, *I was a heartthrob...*”

The three of us watch him in silence. He just sounds so despondent.
ced herto say something to make him feel better, but I hold my tongue.

I know Trust me, he is still a heartthrob. He has many fans out there. Th
themselves *Team Henry* and have vowed to boycott Vivienne wh
mmon.name and all her movies.

She’s a cheater, and she broke his heart. She doesn’t deserve succes
for me.her fans are toxic, always defending her actions by saying Henry wasn
for her.

n often What is wrong with people? Cheating is cheating. That doesn’t exc
actions.

giggle, Just before I open my mouth, the door opens, and Ezra steps inside.
billboard boyfriend...

He stops at the threshold of the living room, smiling broadly when h
is to beme. He’s carrying a bag of dog toys. One rubber chicken falls onto th
er one.as he points his finger at me.

“Hey, it’s you... shelter girl!”

ne sad. Shelter girl? That’s a strange moniker.

nd this Still, my heart melts at the sight of all those dog toys. I can see tha
is going to be spoiled rotten here.

s again. It's everything she deserves.

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ie floor

t Sasha

It's everything she deserves.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Renée

I'm unaware of how much time passes, but I must have had three glasses of wine by the night's end. It turns out that I love Jake's parents. Already, I feel like a part of the family, and I wonder if this is normal. The time last week, I didn't even know Jake. Yet here I am, laughing about his stories with his entire pack.

Ezra is really looking forward to picking up Sasha after work tomorrow. Finally, he can sign the papers and take her home. He even gives me a tour of the house and shows me her bedroom. It's three times the size of the one she had at the shelter.

Tears escape my eyes when I spy the mountain of dog toys in the corner of the room. It's a doggy haven in here.

Sasha will even have her own bed.

Jake glances up at the male model, raising an eyebrow. "Really, Ezra, you not think it's a bit much?"

He shrugs, scratching his head. "What can I say? I love dogs."

"I think it's perfect," I blurt.

Both men look at me now. Jake seems to change his mind once he s

approval, congratulating the Alpha with a pat on the back. “Cool room

Ezra smiles smugly, peering at me. His eyes soften, and my heart sl when I spy the appreciation in his gaze. I was the girl who rehabilita dog he is about to bring home. So, of course, he is going to see n savior.

I’m a friend to all animals.

Shit. What time is it? It must have been hours since I got here. It’s j midnight when I glance at a clock. I should really think about going hc

Jake seems to read my thoughts, twining his fingers with mine. “H all right. You can stay with me if you like.”

ree full “It’s just...” I peer at Ezra’s retreating back as he heads down the ck. have to be up early. I’m volunteering at the shelter again.”

al. This I also want to be there when Ezra signs Sasha’s adoption pa out dogshouldn’t have had several glasses of wine, and I’m sure going to pay the morning.

orrow. Jake smiles. “No problem. Hey, Ezra, can you take Renée to the tour ofwhen you collect Sasha?”

kennel “Sure thing!” Ezra yells up the stairs.

Wow. I never thought of that option. We’re both going to the same orner ofso it makes sense, but I don’t want to overstep a line. I’m dating Ja Ezra. I hope he doesn’t mind that I’ll be in a car with his pack brother.

I don’t get any competitive vibes from any of them, but I can imagi ra? Doall respect each other’s boundaries. Especially with what happene Henry and Vivienne.

Still. I won’t deny the attraction I feel for the whole pack. I’ve had on Henry since I was a kid, and Ezra was the billboard guy. I talked sees my

, bro.” picture for several months like a crazy person. Also, his dog loving a
udders makes him fifty times sexier, and Alex is a perfect gentleman.

ited the It’s strange, but I feel like I have known them my whole life. Ma
ne as aware a pack in another life...

I’ve heard that Omegas can find scent matches. But could it be poss
betas too? I’ve already pin-pointed all of their individual scents, a
ust past definitely scent-sensitive to each of them.

me. Well, I hope I am. I’m not an Omega, so my senses aren’t as heig
ley, it’s But I still feel her there, just beneath the surface. My Omega.

But it’s not possible to awaken at the age of twenty-four, so I don’t
hall. “I hopes up. Betas don’t get the fairy tale ending.

“Sure. I’ll be happy to stay.”

pers. I When was the last time I stayed over at a boy’s house? And on a
for it innight, no doubtless? Dad will be furious. Well, when he gets bac
London in two more days.

shelter He will want to arrange a dinner with me and Chloé as soon as he’s
Jake grins, showing me his perfect white teeth. Then he leads me
bedroom. He has a very conservative style. Hardly any valuables or fu
e place, but there’s no denying he’s a writer.

ike, not There’s a desk in the corner of the room with motivation poster
famous authors. A Mark Twain one catches my eye.

ne they I approach the desk, spying what looks like a manuscript. Jake catc
ed with staring, turning sheepish, “Uh, it’s a working process...”

I glance up. “What is it?”

a crush He shrugs. “My novel. It’s stupid. Believe it or not, but writing
d to his celebrities gets tiresome at times.”

I smile. “What genre?”

ura just Again, he blushes bright red. “Science fiction.”

My eyes widen. “Like spaceships and aliens?”

ybe we He sighs. “I suppose. I get bored with real life sometimes. It’s
dream up other worlds.”

ible for I place a hand over my heart. “I’ve never heard anything so sweet.”

nd I’m Jake rolls his eyes, stepping closer. He seizes my lips, dragging me
to the bed. He helps me out of my dress as I take off his jacket.

htened. Once we’re undressed, we lay side by side. He places his hand ins
panties, dipping his finger between my wet folds until he finds my clit
get my into his hand, chasing my release, but I would be happy to just fall as
his arms like this.

It’s wonderful to be this close and intimate with a man again. I didn
school I would ever let a guy touch me ever again after what I went through.

k from But I never had an intimacy like this. This feels real, like the kind I’
about in books or seen in movies. I always considered that kind of lo
back. fiction. At least for girls like me.

e to his I am not one of the lucky girls who finds that special kind of con
miture, Well, until now.

Soon I picture all four members of Pack Fontaine around me. E
rs from down at my front, sucking on my breast. Alex massages my toes,
each one tenderly.

shes me Henry crawls toward me, devouring my lips with a passionate kiss.

I would make him forget all about that bitch Vivienne. No matter he
and perfect her ass looks in the latest trailer for her movie. Sh
g about superhero.

Jake rubs circles around my clitoris. Then he squeezes hard, mak
come in his hand. When I fall down from my high, he leans closer, l

his nose into my hair.

I drift off sometime later, and for once, everything feels right w
cool to world.

Maybe I can finally forget *You-Know-Who*.

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rection.

zra lies

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ing me

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his nose into my hair.

I drift off sometime later, and for once, everything feels right with the world.

Maybe I can finally forget *You-Know-Who*.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Renée

I'm a complete ball of nerves the next day when Ezra drives us both to the shelter. Mostly, I'm excited for the pivotal moment when I finally see one of my dogs adopted.

I've only been working with Sasha for a few months, but I already feel like I've known her a lifetime. Kind of like how I feel about Pack Fontaine.

I sit in the passenger seat with the window all the way down because I don't think I would be able to cope with being in a confined space with the gorgeous Alpha.

He still smells of honey and lemon, and I just want to lean across and touch his shirt.

Keep it together, Renée. You are dating Jake. Don't push any boundaries.

Ezra taps his fingers against the steering wheel, bobbing along to the music on the radio. I chew my lip, trying to think of something to say. "Thank you for this, by the way."

Surprised, he peers my way. "You're the one thanking *me*?"

"Well, yeah. Out of all the dogs at the shelter, you picked my girl. I know all the dogs don't deserve a home, but you gave her a chance. She's been waiting for you."

badly in the past. It's more than she deserves."

"I agree. If I ever find the one who dumped her, then I will personally make sure to pay them. No one hurts my girl and gets away with it."

How precious. Sasha is already his girl...

What I would give to be his girl, too.

It appears Ezra is very protective of those he loves, and that is why I maintain my distance. He will not want to betray Jake.

"How would you make them pay?" I muse.

Ezra thinks it through, pursing his lips, and he looks so handsome when he pulls that face. "Well, I would wring their necks. Also, I'd thank them. I snort. "Thank them?"

He regards me from the corner of his eye. "Because then I would never have had the chance of meeting her."

My heart pounds, and why do I get the feeling that question is directed at me, too? He doesn't know about *You-Know-Who*. Neither does Jake, because I matter.

Do I just have the look of a broken girl? I bet I look no different from

Sasha was when she first arrived at the shelter. Granted, I'm not shaking and sniffing my tail between my legs, but I am still traumatized by what he did to me.

It sounds so superficial. All he did was tell me that he didn't love me because I was a *laries*. That he preferred my sister, but words can be very powerful things. He took away my confidence, listing all of my flaws. It was the reason I couldn't connect with you several years.

I actually didn't think no man would ever love me because I wasn't

Who am I kidding? Of course Jake's pack wouldn't want me. They're not that Alphas. They are biologically programmed to be attracted to Omega. I've been hurt

they only seemed interested in me because they sensed traces of (ally seelemon frosting on my clothes.

Maybe that's the only reason why most guys seem interested in me Jake.

How long would it be before he started to see my flaws? All the on y I willhe saw?

We arrive at the shelter, and I have to blink when he pulls up in the lot. Already here? How lost in my own thoughts was I?

When he "Well, the day is finally here. Time to take my new girl home."

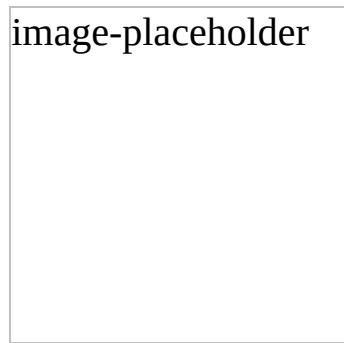
" Despite my oppressive thoughts, I smile. At least Sasha will have a ending.

I't have That I can make peace with.

I know Ezra will never hurt her. He just has that look in his blue eye ected atalways tell when someone genuinely loves animals.

for that Michelle appears at the door with her daughter Milly, and how forget? They're going to have a lot of questions indeed.

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Chloé. **Ezra.**

hey are I sign Sasha's adoption certificate at the reception desk, wrapping h s. I bet securely around my hand. She places her paws up on the desk, allow

Chloé's owner of the shelter to stroke her as I sign my name.

I can't believe this. I am about to be a new dog parent.

Even Sasha whimpers happily as the staff says their goodbyes, and even has a few parting words. It's not like she won't get to see her again, but she still cries.

I have never met a sweeter woman. She works at a shelter for *free*. I know she's a billionaire, yet here she is, helping abandoned dogs.

Jake really found a good one.

She's a keeper. I can see it in her eyes. So much depth, compassion, and happy intelligence.

Also, sadness.

What I would like to do to the one who put that sadness in her soul is to wring her neck. I can see it in her eyes. Whatever happened to her, it was *way* before we met. I wasn't even born yet. Not even a few months back.

But I still want to wring the neck of that asshole.

It was a man who did that to her, and what a total loser. Who in their right mind would throw a girl like Renée away?

In fact, I have half a mind to pull Jake aside and tell him to never bring her here. Because if he does... I may have to wring his neck, too.

I'm an Alpha, so I guess it's in my nature to nurture and protect. I know that Renée isn't an Omega, but I still feel so protective of her. I mean, that's the reason why I am taking home my new furry companion today.

Without her patience and kindness, I don't think Sasha would be here where she is today. It's hard to believe she was dumped in the rain.

Such a happy dog.

It's a shame no one has extended that same level of kindness to her. Poor sweet thing. How I badly want to show her what love is again. Even

is just platonic.

I don't care how this girl stays in my life. All I know is that I never want Renée to be apart from it ever again.

yet she She's a rare gem. Most girls of her social standing wouldn't even be able to volunteer at a shelter, and if they did... They would do it for the public.

Her dad "Are you being adopted? Yes you are, yes you are!" Michelle is leaning over the reception desk to pet sweet Sasha.

The dog barks, saying her final goodbyes.

on, and These people provided her a home. They're a small, family run shelter that love every dog they bring in. The teenage daughter has tears in her eyes, then she runs out back into the office to have a private moment. The helpful gray keeps it together, but I can tell he is crying silent tears.

even in It must be like losing a family member.

Renée gives Sasha cuddles, and tears run down her own face. I guess she's just proud of her girl.

Right I know I call Sasha my girl, but she will always be Renée's first. She understands the dog on a more personal level.

Finally, I sign my signature on the dotted line, and it looks like I'm finally coming home. I could cry myself. But like a typical Alpha, I know the inside.

Who am I kidding? I can't even watch sad dog movies without breaking down. But at least this one will have a happy ending.

Renée and the family watch as I walk Sasha across the parking lot toward the car.

Sasha stops for a moment to look back, and it seems she just wants a moment to reminisce. This place was a home for her for a while. So even if it

have been scared when she first arrived here, but it was still a place where I could feel safe and loved.

“Bye bye, Sasha!” the family calls.

The dog barks and I lean down, rubbing behind her ears. “You ready, Sasha?”

She licks my face, and I guess that’s a yes. I open the passenger door, winding down the window so she can watch the family as I drive away to her new home.

I just hope she likes her room.

When the shelter is finally out of view, Sasha settles on the front seat, peering up at me. Her intelligent brown eyes say it all.

Thank you.

I lean across, taking her paw. “I’m gonna take good care of you, I promise.”

Sasha narrows her eyes, opening her mouth with a soft pant. I smile and I can hardly believe it.

I have a new dog.

Sasha’s

eyes

are

wide

open

and

have been scared when she first arrived here, but it was still a place where she could feel safe and loved.

“Bye bye, Sasha!” the family calls.

The dog barks and I lean down, rubbing behind her ears. “You ready to go, Sasha?”

She licks my face, and I guess that’s a yes. I open the passenger door for her, winding down the window so she can watch the family as I drive her away to her new home.

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I have a new dog.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Renée

I just finish giving Mittens some water when my phone rings. The ID says it's Dad. I slide the button. "Hello?"

"Renée, there you are. I just called to inform you that I'm back in London. I would like you and Chloé to come around for dinner for a bit. I'll be up."

A catch up? How long has it been? One month?

I guess a lot has happened since he left. Chloé's debut, Jake, and his adoption...

I balance the phone between my ear and shoulder as I pet Mittens. "What day?"

My father clears his throat. "I was hoping maybe tonight."

Tonight? I was hoping to go around to the Fontaine House tonight to see how Sasha is settling in, but I suppose that can wait another time. It's late and I can't say no.

"All right. I'll let Chloé know."

"Thank you. Also, thank you for keeping an eye on her. I'm getting a bit worried about her lately."

Yeah, me too.

Chloé hasn't done anything too disconcerting yet, but she is being quite the party girl. Funny. She was a squeaky clean teenager. We both

Maybe it's just all those sheltered teen years finally catching up with me. I always wondered when my inner teen would rebel. She hasn't yet.

"You're welcome, Dad. It's been an honor."

It hasn't been an honor. Being Chloé's babysitter is Hell on Earth. I would do it again and again because she is my sister.

"Be at the house for seven. See you later, sweetheart."

He hangs up and I smile. I'm so glad he's back. I've missed him more than you callerknow Chloé has too. He may be away a lot, but he's always been my father.

Back from work Mittens rubs her head over my hand as I scratch behind her ears. It's a catchworking in the cattery today. Michelle decided to stay in the kennels with the dogs on my behalf. I was just too sad to see Sasha's empty kennel.

That's a good thing, but I was so used to seeing her face even when she was with Sasha's. Besides, I like the cattery. It's a hell of a lot quieter, and I don't have to wear ear protectors.

"Sure, there are a few meows here and there as the cats are waiting for the door to open and I think about ringing Chloé. She will be thrilled to know that he's home. She was upset when he couldn't make it to her debut.

Chloé picks up on the second ring. "Ney Ney..."

That's odd. She doesn't sound as enthusiastic as she normally is. Chloé's always so chipper, even at ten in the morning. She sounds like she's still asleep.

"Hey, Chlo. Just to let you know that Dad is back. He just called me and invited us over for dinner tonight."

She takes a moment to respond. “What... *tonight?*”
coming I pull a confused face, even though she can’t see. “Yeah... is
were. problem?”

h her. I Chloé falls silent. That’s when I hear the voice.

“Chloé... come back to bed...”

That’s certainly not Marc’s voice and my blood boils. “Chloé, who
1. But Iis that?”

Again, my little sister doesn’t reply. I grit my teeth. “Chloé?”

I don’t know why I am so angry. She’s twenty-one years of age. S
n and Iadult and she can do as she pleases, but she has just always been s
a goodbehaved.

Well, until recently.

ar. I’m She always said she would save herself for her future pack. It loc
with thethat vow went out the window.

Chloé sighs. “Look, it’s just Paddy, okay? I met him a few nights a
ry day.bar. Marc even likes him, so we’re good!”

to wear Paddy?

I bite my lip. “Alpha?”

ir food, “No. Beta. We... we didn’t do much. Just messed around a little...”

Dad is I’m not even so sure why she is explaining herself to me. It’s her l
she can do as she wants. She’s just always been so virtuous up until no

Still. I do think she should save herself. I wish I did. I hate that l
y does.*must not be named* was the first to touch me. Just three more years to
ce she’sI will finally have a body that he has no longer touched.

They say it takes seven full years for the human body to regene
and hecells. New hair, new skin, new everything.

“It’s fine, Chloé. The decision is yours, after all. I can’t tell you

do.”

that a She’s quiet, and I can almost hear her tears on the phone.

“Just don’t live with any regrets.”

Chloé takes several deep breaths. Then she says, “All right. Tell Dad to be there. Can we keep Paddy a secret for now?”

the hell “Okay.”

Dad will not like the idea of his youngest child finally having a boyfriend. She’s still a kid in his eyes. She still acts like one.

he’s an I just hope Paddy doesn’t turn out to be like *You-Know-Who*. The last thing I want to see is my sister getting her heart broken.

image-placeholder

looks like

ago at a

I arrive at the family mansion around 6: 30 PM.

Percy, Dad’s butler, lets me through the door when I knock.

“Hello, Ms. Renée.”

life and I have nothing but a wide smile for the old butler. He has worked for the family for years. He’s like a second father to me, and he takes care of the house while Dad is away on his business trips.

go, and “Percy,” I reply, pecking his cheek when I step inside.

He takes my coat from my shoulders. “Will Ms. Chloé be joining us soon?”

I turn to look at the butler. “Is she not here yet?”

what to

Strange. Chloé is always good at timekeeping, especially where concerned. She can't get enough of our old man. She's Daddy's little after all, and I know she was always his favorite deep down.

d I will But he loves us both equally.

I'm the one he can always depend on. That's why he asks me to l eye on her, so she doesn't do anything to damage the family brand or l yfriend. Vincent Laurent has come too far just to have his dim-witted daugh his hard work.

st thing "Ah, Renée. There you are..."

I turn to find my dad in the doorway that adjoins the foyer and the room, and I rush forward, letting him wrap me up in his arms. His bu scent travels up my nose, and his scent always made me feel safe. good to see him again.

We have so much catching up to do.

Maybe he can take Chloé and I to the fun fair like he did when w little, but that's wishful thinking. Besides, it wouldn't be the same Mom.

"You look elegant tonight, sweetheart," he compliments me, lead into the dining room.

for my I gaze down at my velvet plum dress. I always loved this little r
: of the I've also decided to be a bit bolder these days in my fashion c
Normally, I would wear baggy shirts and pants, even for dinner w
father.

ing us Mostly, I'm dressing this way for myself. My ex used to get ma
didn't dress feminine enough. Really, he was just mad that I wouldn
like my seventeen-year-old sister at that time, the one who he had
crush on.

Dad is It sounds so wrong when I look back. She was almost eighteen, but
est girl, preferred a minor over me. The asshole.

Dad pulls out a chair for me and then proceeds to pour me wine
looking pretty dapper himself in a fancy suit. Dad never has a hair
keep an place. Always well-dressed.

myself. Well, unless he was taking us to the funfair. He could be a dad o
ter ruin days, regardless of what the press thought. Honestly, it was good
family brand.

Laurent hotels are family hotels, after all.
dining “So, where is your sister?” he asks, his tone clipped, and that’s
urgundy good sign.

It’s so Chloé could never do wrong in Dad’s eyes growing up, being the
child and all, but even he’s not that blinded by his love for her to s
she’s changing lately.

we were It’s ever since she started working on her public image. The swe
with out hotel heiress who everyone adores...

I play with my butter knife. It may not be a good time to tell Dad t
ing me has a boyfriend. Also, I promised Chloé that I wouldn’t mention anything

She may be an adult, but she’s just never had a boyfriend before.
number. think he will be able to stomach the idea of her “getting it on”.

choices. I don’t think I can.

with my “Sorry I’m late!”

Chloé bursts into the room, taking the seat next to me, and I inhale
d that I smells of cigarette smoke. It’s wafting off her hot pink fur coat.

’t dress Percy moves to her side to take off her coat, and she thanks him s
a huge “Thank you, Percy...”

He bows and then goes to hang up her cigarette-smelling coat next to

he still Don't tell me she has been smoking? It looks as if Chloé's re-
teenage years truly are catching up after all.

e. He's What next? A tattoo? Dear lord, I bet she got a Chinese charac-
out of means noodle soup.

Luckily, Dad can't smell her across the table. When he gets up to p-
n those wine, I take the bottle and do it for him. Chloé can barely get her glas-
for the lips. She's not herself, and I think she's already a little drunk.

Maybe giving her wine was a bad idea.

"Are you okay?" I ask.

never a Chloé glances up, smiling brightly. "I'm fine! I'm so glad you'r
Daddy. It's not been the same without you."

golden Dad smiles, holding up his drink in a toast.

see that We do the same.

"To family Laurent. May we remain forever prosperous."

et little Prosperous in more ways than one, I want to add, but I hold my
letting my dad do the honors.

hat she The servers bring out the food, and we eat in silence. Hopefully, w-
ing. get a moment alone, I'm going to ask Chloé what's going on. Why
I don't act weird? Who is this Paddy guy she is dating?

Apparently, he got Marc's stamp of approval, so I'm satisfied, but
sister can't help but be cautious.

"So," Dad says. "How are things?"

le. She "Oh, they're going great. My new perfume has been flying
shelves."

weetly. Dad genuinely looks proud. "I'm proud of you, Chloé. It seems you
good eye for business, like your old man..."

o mine. She blushes, returning to her drink.

pressed He glances at me. “And you, Renée?”

I peer up from my own wine. “One of the dogs I work with finally adopted.”

Dad raises his brow in pleasant surprise. “That so? Again, you never make me proud. The *both* of you. You’re doing such wonderful things to your lives. If only your mother could have lived to see...”

His voice drifts off and now he gives a melancholy sigh. I guess it’s being back home for him. This house has been empty since she passed.

Silence trickles across the room, and I can tell that Dad has something to say. I prompt him. “Is everything okay?”

He meets my gaze. “I’ll be going away again to Paris in a few days...”

My heart drops. “But... you only just got back?”

It looks as if my dream of him taking us to the funfair is slipping away, and further away.

“I know, but it’s business, as usual, sweetheart.”

It’s not. I know he can’t stand to be in this house without Mom. But it’s his care to share. The man is still grieving. He lost his wife. But we need to get on with it here.

Chloé doesn’t speak. She just gazes down at the table with her eyes fixed on the floor. She’s normally so chipper and bright, but she really does seem so sad tonight.

She’s twiddling her thumbs.

That’s when I spy the hickey on her neck. Oh, shit.

Luckily, she has covered it up with one of her designer scarves. I reach across and fix her scarf just as Dad gets up.

“Well, it’s getting late. I’m still a bit jet legged. I had Beth set up y

room for you, Renée, if you're prepared to stay. The three of us casually got breakfast together, too."

Beth is the housekeeper.

I guess I could stay. Knowing Chloé, she will want me to sleep in her room with her like we're kids again.

Dad kisses us both good night and then heads up to bed. Meanwhile Mom and I help the staff to clear the table. We always liked to help out, even when we were kids.

Mom and Dad taught us well, after all.

more

image-placeholder

further

I don't find Chloé's bedroom at the end of the hall, pushing my way inside. Typical Omega, she has stacks upon stacks of pillows.

Normally, I'm a one pillow kind of girl. Two if I'm feeling particularly wild. But lately I have started to see the appeal in multiple pillows, almost as if I am exhibiting nesting instincts.

Chloé moves aside several pillows for me so I can take my place on the bed beside her. She relaxes immediately when I place my arm around her and it won't be long before she drifts off.

Sometimes she asks me to sing to her or to rub her hair so she can fall asleep faster. Mom used to do the same thing when we were little. She's our old

in having us both to sleep, and they are some of my fondest memories.

I spy her picture on Chloé's bedside cabinet, and it hurts not having it around anymore. It hurts that Dad has been so distant ever since she left her bed. "Do you want me to sing to you?"

Chloé wiggles in my arms, making herself more comfortable. "No, Ney Ney, Chloé tonight."

I don't see her face. She already had her pink eye mask on when I asked. "Well, how about I stroke your hair?"

She sighs, melting into her pillows. "That would be nice."

I start stroking her blonde hair. I can tell by the sound of her breathing she's still awake, so I decide to ask her a question.

"Chloé?"

"Hmmm," she mumbles sleepily.

I don't know where to begin. There is so much I want to say, but I don't want to keep her up all night either. So, I decide to keep it simple.

"You would tell me if something was wrong, right?"

Like a She yawns. "S-sure..."

It looks as if the land of sleep has already claimed so much of her. I particularly still hedge her a little further.

It's She may be a little more truthful if she is half asleep.

"Well, I just want you to know that you can talk to me at any time. I will always be your big sis. You know that, right?"

And her, A half-smile crosses her lips. Then she reaches her hand around, squeezing my arm. "Love you too, Ney Ney."

I can fall I give my own smile. "You too, Chloé."

I would I continue to stroke her hair, leaving it at that. There's not much more I can do. Hopefully, she gets my message. If anything happens to her, I'll be there.

depend on me.

ing her Soon the sound of her snoring fills the room, but all that escapes her
ft. are little puffs of breath. I dread to know what I sound like when I sleep.
I'm a drooler.

No. Not Eventually, I fall asleep with my hand nestled in Chloé's hair, and
moment I can pretend we are kids again, hiding from a storm.

arrived. But alas, we will have to wake up again and go our separate ways.

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But alas, we will have to wake up again and go our separate ways.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Henry

Fuck. I must be losing my touch. Another failed audition. What is wrong with me? This sucks. Everything sucks lately.

I pull up to the gates of the house, parking the car in the garage. I couldn't roll back any further when I spy all of Alex's sports cars line the lot and what a show off.

Okay, I shouldn't be harsh. He's been my rock since the whole shenanigan with Vivienne, but I wish he didn't have to show off because of his successful sibling.

His net worth is way more than mine, after all.

I'm in a foul mood today, and I can't wait to throw back on the couch and do some gaming.

I find the pack in the living room when I arrive. Sasha, Ezra's neighbor, sits on his lap as he rubs between her ears. Over and over, he asks the dog, "who's a good girl," and she doesn't stop wagging her tail.

The reason why that dog is here is because of Renée. She rehabilitated her and my heart melts when I see the sweet canine wagging her tail, get the rubs she deserves and more.

The three of them are watching the wide screen TV. I don't think they have realized I have arrived.

I had been so focused on watching the large Alpha petting his new pup that I failed to see who popped up on TV. My fists clench the moment I see her radiant smile and her sparkling eyes as the reporter asks her question. Vivienne.

I forgot it was the premiere for her new movie today. Super badass whatever it's called again. Starring the two-timing whore.

She doesn't deserve that role. She doesn't deserve all the accolades and cheers from the crowd. It's as if the world has forgotten about what she did the hell. Or they just don't care.

That woman broke my heart.

Worst of all, she looks super-hot, and I feel an old flame of desire lit up inside me again when I get a look at her in that sheer floor-length gown that splits down the middle, showing off her creamy skin, and shit...

I am still attracted to her in some way. Never mind that she's a cheating whore who deserves to burn in the flames of hell, she is still incredibly hot. She has the best trainers to get her in shape for her new role. She will be wearing a spandex bodysuit, so her ass needs to look super great.

Alex glances up, and it looks as if he has finally noticed me. The other two had been riveted on the TV. Vivienne's new movie is highly anticipated. After all, she's the new dog.

"Jake... turn that thing off."

The beta glances up. Then he follows my brother's gaze, and he looks shocked. He's swallowed lead the moment he spots me. "Shit. I'm so sorry, Henry." He switches the TV off and then a quiet settles over the room. My brother breaks the awkwardness by jumping off the couch and padding toward me.

any of pet behind her ear, trying to calm my breaths. The dog has a calming effect but it still isn't enough.

oup that Here I am, coming back from a failed audition, while my toxic, trashy neighbor is living the American Dream.

ons. It's just not fair.

Why should she get to be so successful while I'm stuck here in my room, wallowing in self-pity? I'm so pathetic.

The whole world is laughing at me. I don't bother reading the comments on the online, but I know what they say. They're all laughing along with Victoria. She did it and screw this. I need space.

"How did the audition go?" Alex asks, his voice firm.

I meet his eyes, which are so like mine. I don't bother telling him. I burn the room like a broody teenage brat and lock myself in my bathroom. I turn on the tap, breathing in, then out.

It may be the best cause of action right now. I am too livid. I don't bother with saying something I will regret. I did as my brother asked; I called my brother. I have been asking him to get me an audition. There will be others, of course, but I don't want to deal with a has-been teen heartthrob anymore.

My glory days are over.

three of I never even wanted to be an onscreen actor, anyway. I loved being on stage as a kid. That was how I got my start in the biz and I miss it. I don't want to sing.

Not very manly of me, but I still think that little singing boy is inside me somewhere.

ry." Maybe I should look into theater work again.

. Sasha I switch off the tap and lock myself in my room. Then I pick up my guitar and pluck the strings, letting the notes fill the room.

effect, *It won't always be like this... everything happens for a reason.*

I'm not sure how much time passes, but when I open my eyes again it's a hazy, golden-dusk. It looks as if I lost myself in a sea of tranquility. It's just me and the strings of my guitar.

I stop playing, leaning the guitar back against the wall. Then I run my fingers through my hair.

Just keeping going. The next audition may just be the lucky break I need...

Voices echo through the house, and I stop running my fingers through my hair. One belongs to Jake and the other a woman.

Renée.

Her soft laughter peals through the house and something lights up inside me. For the first time in hours, I smile. In fact, that may be my first smile in weeks.

There's just something about that woman that cheers me up. I feel a connection, would understand me on a personal level. She's been hurt, too. It's not easy to see in those gunmetal eyes. They harbor so much pain and kindness.

I can sometimes understand why bad things happen to me. I am not always much of a good person. I was pretty selfish in my youth and foolish. Renée deserves all the kindness in the world and more. Good things love to happen to her every day.

Jake doesn't know how lucky he is to have found her. If she were on my side, I would never let her go. I would give her my life and soul. Just like I was prepared to give to Vivienne once, but she ripped out my heart and crushed it into pieces.

The room has grown dark. It appears I had been strumming on my guitar for two hours.

Time to get back up and go downstairs. I think I heard Ezra say
ain, it's ordering Chinese food, and I could do with some Chinese food right now
and the *Just keep going. The next audition and then the next.*

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Time to get back up and go downstairs. I think I heard Ezra say he was ordering Chinese food, and I could do with some Chinese food right now.

Just keep going. The next audition and then the next.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Renée

“**H**ey, Sasha!”

The dog shoots toward me the moment I step into the room, almost knocking me off my feet. I bet she never thought she'd see me here.

She's whimpering, her ears drawn back in affection, and I think of a hundred ways of saying thank you. I got her to this stage, after all.

Ezra comes forward, scooping Sasha up in his arms as he cradles her like a baby. It's a show of his pure strength. Sasha isn't exactly a small dog, but she may as well be a Pomeranian in the Alpha's arms.

Jake puts his arm around me, and I wipe golden brown dog hair from my clothes.

“How's she settling in?” I ask.

Ezra beams with pride. “Terrific. You wouldn't think she'd been here for more than a week. She's already a part of the pack. Ask the others.”

Jake laughs. “It's true. She's got us all wrapped around her little tail. When I'm in the kitchen, I give her treats.”

“Guilty,” Alex confesses. “She fetches the paper. It's the least she deserves.”

Ezra sighs in frustration. “Well, you both shouldn’t. I have a steak made especially for her. All organically sourced meat.”

My smile reaches my ears. He’s even going out of his way to buy ethically sourced meat.

Henry steps into the room. “Good to see you again, Renée.”

My heart flutters as my childhood crush tells me he’s glad to see me. Can I not be giddy?

“So, when are we ordering food?” he asks, throwing himself down on the couch as he searches for a movie.

We’re having movie night after all. Maybe I should invite Jake to watch a movie with my family. That’s if he doesn’t mind Legally Blonde in the room. Clueless.

again. Chloé always picks what we watch.

It’s her. It’s just too bad Dad is out of town. At the most, it would just be

Chloé, and maybe Marc. Perhaps Percy, the butler, too.

or like a “Soon.” Alex replies, grabbing a chair as he places it in front of me. I’m yet shebrother. He sits on it backwards. “First, I just want to know how you’re holding up.”

off my The room goes quiet and I wonder what happened?

Jake leans closer to me. “Failed audition.”

My heart sinks for poor Henry. That’s got to suck. I just wish there were less something I could do for him, but I don’t know anyone in the industry. My brother owns his own fashion brand, but Jake told me that Henry doesn’t get the special favors.

He wants to succeed on his own merit. Not because of his brother’s nepotism, and I have to admire him for that. Henry’s a talented actor and I’m sure someone will give him a chance.

Henry pinches between his eyes. “It’s fine, Alex. It was just a regular soap opera again. Nothing special.”

Alex raises a brow. “But I thought you loved working on soap operas.”

Henry gives a small eye roll. It appears he doesn’t like soap operas. What does he like?

“Let’s just order food. I’m starving,” Henry dismisses.

Alex narrows his eyes, studying his brother a little longer. Then he says, “All right. We can discuss it another time. But for now, let’s order food.”

Jake gets a menu up on his phone, ordering a bit of everything, and they go to be stuffed by the night’s end. So long as I get my orange chicken, I’m satisfied.

Henry passes me the remote. “Guest of honor gets to choose the movie.” I blink. “Me?”

Jake chuckles, pulling me in for a kiss. “Of course. We love having you around, Renée.”

Damn. Now I feel so special. I can’t remember the last time I got to choose the movie. Not that I don’t love Elle or Cher, but Chloé’s choices are tiresome.

I go through the movie selection, finding a teen flick from the late 1980s. Unfortunately, it’s one that stars Vivienne Fox. I remember this one well. She played the mean girl. It’s a role that suits her well. Never mind, she was the heroine or the main female lead. She was just trying her hand at modeling. She was only known for Alphas, Betas, and Omegas.

“No. Not that one,” Jake whispers.

A shame. I was really in the mood for a trashy high school movie, and I’m an equally trashy actress.

“No, put it on, Renée,” Henry pipes up.

le in a We look at him in shock.

Ezra stops playing with Sasha on the floor, looking at Henry, bewildered. “He has his whole fist inside Sasha’s mouth. She chews on his knuckles. So playfully, and that’s got to hurt.”

Alex is the first to speak. “Are you sure, Henry?”

Henry surprises us all with a smile. He still hasn’t looked away from his gaze. “I’m positive. She’s the villain in this movie, so it’s fine. Put it on.” I laugh. “I always hated her character. Such a bitch.”

Henry grabs a cushion, settling back to watch the movie. “Yeah, we often say art imitates life...”

I guess that settles it. We’re watching Vivienne at her first failed audition on the big screen. I press play.

The opening credits start with a catchy rock song, and we zoom in on a young protagonist waking up in her bed. It’s all good until she realizes she’s late for her first day at her new school.

She trips out of bed, falling on the floor. Then she throws on some old, getting unfashionable clothes. She rushes to brush her teeth and even neglects to comb her hair.

The main protagonist may be a nerd, but she’s still pretty. The director convinces us that she is ugly, though, because she wears glasses and has a ponytail.

So ridiculous and... shallow.

It’s not always that black and white. Kids are mean to each other no matter how they dress. Even Chloé was bullied in high school for a few years.

We went to one of the most prestigious private schools in the city. I didn’t give a shit about me or Chloé. We were small fish compared to

of rich snobs.

ildered. I always wondered what it would have been like to have gone to a
nuckleshigh school like you see in the movies. What was it like wearing yo
clothes? We had to wear uniforms at our school.

The heroine in the movie opts for a baggy shirt, and I'm starting t
om me.pattern. She dresses like me.

She arrives at her school, getting pushed around by her fellow tee
They don't even realize she exists and don't I know the feeling.
ll, they The poor thing is going to struggle fitting in at that place. She even
some mean girls, and they laugh at her jeans. They're not the main s
attemptmean girls in the movie. There's a hierarchy.

You know you're a sad case when even the level one meanies l
i on theyour pitiful attempts at dressing yourself. Poor little heroine. I'm s
s she iswill find her tribe, eventually.

Unfortunately, she bumps into the queen of the high school, and
1 somebehold... it's Vivienne. I forgot what her name was in this movie.
lects to "Boo!" Ezra hollers at the screen, and Jake and I join him. Ezi
throws popcorn, and Henry tells us to stop. He watches his ex-girlfrie
moviebored disdain, and it must be weird seeing someone he used to fu
ses andmovie.

"Oh... I'm so sorry..." the dorky heroine says onscreen.

Vivienne smirks, cocking her head to one side. Her minions stand o
her, noside of her, giving the poor heroine the once over. She's in serious ne
: a fewmakeover. Her eyebrows are big and bushy.

Vivienne continues to look smug with her perfectly plucked eyebrow
he kidswho can blame her? She's a high school sophomore, but she looks
that seafive.

That's a good thing when you're only sixteen. All the clubs you can be in, like cheerleader, homecoming queen, and more. I think Vivienne was just turning twenty when this movie came out. She's actually a year older than Henry.

"Do I know you?" she asks the main protagonist. I can't see a smile on her face. My toes curl at the sound of sweet poison in her voice. Vivienne does a good job of being a convincing villain. Way more convincing than a superhero. That's for the record. The dorky heroine bows her head, fixing her wonky glasses which have been taped in the middle. Classic.

If I recall, her family were broke while Vivienne's were super rich. I don't know why she and her posse wear designer purses. They even wear tiny skirts. No high schooler should have any business wearing that.

The heroine speaks up again. "No. I just moved here." Vivienne's fake smile stretches. "Really? That's so interesting..." No, it's not. You're just a bitch. Just admit you don't like her! Henry's traitorous ex gasps next when she gets a second look at the heroine. "Oh, my God! You're actually really pretty!"

I roll my eyes. So fake. I forgot how lame this movie was. It was just a waste of time. I went to another more successful movie at that time.

"Yeah. She could totally be one of us," one of the minions says. I snort. You got to love the minions.

Vivienne gives that toxic smile again. "Agreed. Come along, now. You're either a protégé. You're one of us now..."

The poor heroine has no choice but to go along with the plot. The meanies try to recruit her into their mean little world.

Ezra groans in displeasure. "Ah, how much more of this movie is left? Twenty-offense, Renée. Not judging your tastes.."

Henry chuckles. "About a hundred and ninety minutes. Vivienne

ould getmake me watch it all the time. I know every line.”

ie came I bet she did. She seems like a narcissist.

Ezra huffs. “Well, it sucks. Again, no offense, Renée.”

I hold my hand up in peace, drinking my beer. “None taken, but es playhelp it. I just love teen trash movies. A guilty pleasure. We can tur r sure. when the food arrives.”

ch have “No, it can stay on. I forgot how shit Vivienne’s acting actually was It was her first major role, and she had been so proud at the time. I dor . That’sknow how she managed to make it.”

irts that *Probably slept with a producer or two, I bet...* I want to say.

Henry shrugs. “Well, we’ve all got to start off somewhere, right?”

The doorbell rings, and he gets up. “That’s our food. Pause the n don’t want to miss a single scene.”

Ezra grabs the remote, and he pauses the movie at just the right n at theVivienne mid-blink, stretching her lips. I burst out laughing. Jake c with me until Henry arrives with the food, and it smells so freaking go st a rip- We set it out on the table, and I help myself to some orange chicken This is the life. Watching teen trash movies while eating Chinese food. I almost feel like a part of the pack.

Maybe I can be one day. I am certainly developing feelings for mc ay newone member of pack Fontaine, and that can’t be a good sign. Still. Wl with them, I’m at peace. For once, I can forget that I am Renée Laur as theforgotten sister...

The beta girl who got her heart crushed because she would never eft? Noher Omega sister.

Maybe I can soon forget about *You-Know-Who* entirely, and learn used tolife to the fullest again.

But for now, baby steps.

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But for now, baby steps.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Renée

I've known Jake and the pack for several weeks now, and already starting to notice the change. Whenever I kiss Jake, a faint hint seeps from my skin. Even when I hadn't eaten anything remotely citrusy today.

Could it be my perfume? That's not possible. I'm twenty-four.

I can still remember the day when Chloé's Omega awakened like yesterday. Mom was still alive as we were all eating dinner. I think seventeen, going onto eighteen. So that would have made Chloé four fifteen.

One moment we were eating desert. Then in the next moment, we could smell lemon cupcakes.

Lo-and-behold. The lemon cupcakes turned out to be my baby sis's favorite. That very essence that can now be found in every bottle of her new fragrance: Just Be You.

Ironic name choice. Anyone who wears that perfume will hardly smell like themselves. They will just smell like Chloé.

I bet every high school girl in the country smells like her now. I bet

beta girls who never got their Omega are dousing themselves in her scent for that stroke of luck.

Maybe they will finally attract an Alpha.

Chloé is the hottest Omega in the country right now. Every girl wants her, and every guy wants her... The Alphas especially.

It makes me sick with worry and jealousy. It's a strange juxtaposition of feelings to have.

Almost every guy on the street stares at her. It was that way before she was very famous, but it's gotten even worse now. They make me think of *Know-Who*, and I want to punch them all in the face.

Sometimes Chloé isn't even aware of the hold she has over men, and she's so innocent. She thinks every guy just wants to be her friend. I had to employ extra bodyguards as a result.

Now Chloé has three bodyguards wherever we go, and they are all Alphas. I don't know what kind of training they've had, but they are immune to her sweet Omega charms.

They don't react to her at all. The other day, I saw her hugging a teen or them, and he had a straight face the whole time.

The three of them walk down the street behind us as Chloé and I head to the mall for shopping. It's something we do nearly every week, but today I had to be there. It appeared she had almost forgotten about our tradition.

It's fine. I know she's going through a lot right now with her fragrance career exploding. Plus, she seems to be getting pretty close with the Paddy guy. She still won't give me any details.

People stop and whisper as she passes by, and it's like I'm not present. I'm used to it, but I do get a little envious of all the attention she receives.

ent just It's making it harder to do simple things such as shopping.

Chloé wears a pair of designer sunglasses as she carries Nugget arms, and the dog has become a part of her look. When she gets to the store, she offloads him to a bodyguard.

I warned her not to use the dog as a fashion accessory because everyone will want a French Bulldog just to be like her. We got him from the shelter. So we don't want more dogs ending up in the shelter as a result. Chloé is far too influential, and I don't think she really has any idea. "So, anywhere you would like to shop?" I ask.

She doesn't hear me as she's too busy waving at some fangirls. I try and speak a little louder. "Earth to Chloé. Do you have any place in mind?" Finally, my sister gives me her attention. "Oh. I guess I hadn't thought about where we could go. The usual, I suppose."

So, all the designer stores. Got it.

I've never been into designers. I tend to shop at old thrift stores when I'm on my own, but whatever makes her happy. Sometimes we shop with Dad but he tends to police us on what we can and cannot wear.

"That's not suitable for your body shape..."

"Apricot isn't your color..."

Okay, it's mostly me who gets all the above, but it can get annoying for the guy. He's like a brother to me, but sometimes I just want to shop without worrying about whether apricot matches my hair color or not.

Chloé has the figure for every type of dress. If she were taller, she could be a supermodel. Most Omegas don't grow beyond five foot four.

"Maybe we can get manicures and pedicures later? You love those." I personally hate them, but anything that makes my little sis happy has been pretty upset ever since Dad had to go back to Europe. I have been

I had kind of hoped he would take us to the funfair. Wishful thinking in her considering we're both grown women, but you're never too old to be tired of with your dad.

"Mm hmm," she hums, and once again she disappears into her own little world.

What is with my little sister lately? Normally, she would squeal at the prospect of getting her nails done.

"Chloe, are you okay?"

She doesn't get a chance to answer as a couple of tween girls approach again, on the street. "Can we have your autograph?"

Chloé obliges, happy to accommodate her young fans, and she even thought for a selfie with them. The bodyguards uphold their duty, stopping from getting too close to her after that.

Good. She should be free to go shopping without being ogled and when I'm every five seconds. And I wish the people filming her on their phones to stop. Marc, just stop.

She is a person. Not a circus freak. Regardless, Chloé takes it all in stride. She even blows kisses at their phones, and the crowd soaks it up.

No one sees me at all. I guess it was what I wanted. I adore my privacy. I love and I hate to be the center of attention, but it would still be nice to be a hero... It would be cool to be some little girl's hero...

No one wants to be the frumpy, boring beta sister. They want to be the bright, sunny extroverted Omega with the charming smile.

Things have improved since I started dating Jake. And the rest of the world seems genuinely interested in me, too. They don't even ask about my sister. She's... I tend to hate telling people who I am related to. It's hard to make a name for myself, too. No friends at all.

inking, We finally make it to the shopping mall, and Chloé never gave
ave funanswer. It looks as if we aren't getting our nails done. Good. I want to
textiles store instead.

vn little My bed needs more pillows. It's looking bare lately.

l at the

image-placeholder

ach her

n poses

anyone

Surprise, surprise, Chloé gets free stuff. Even though we have the mor
stopped shopping assistants give her freebies. I got some freebies too becaus
; would lucky enough to be with her. If I was alone, they wouldn't have even
twice at me.

l in her In the end, we had to hire a personal shopper, and now he holds al
). bags. Well, mostly Chloé's. I still haul most of mine around.

ate life Maybe I should start throwing my name around a little. I'm a
noticed. sister too, after all. Why shouldn't I get freebies?

It just goes against my principles. Also, what would I even be famo
be the I have no talents whatsoever. The best I can go is doggy portraits.

I can't dance or sing and I can't even juggle. Chloé can't sing much
his pack, but she can do a perfect split. She's good with fashion and makeup
sister. has a huge social media following, but that's pretty much the extent
ny new skillset.

me her I think I heard her say that she is considering breaking into acting
go to a can already feel my toes curling. I really hope she doesn't. Chloé is
things, but an actress she is not. I still remember her disaster of a play.

She played the angel, stealing the entire show for sure, yet she was out of
the place. But I shouldn't be too harsh. She was only five.

I think I heard her publicist over the phone saying she should launch a
clothing line soon, and I hope she doesn't ask me to put in a word to A
owns one of the biggest fashion brands in the world. Chloé will war
big after all, teaming up with the best.

We finally get a chance to sit down and have a coffee break. The p
shopper has taken our bags back to the mansion.

hey, the Now we can just talk and be sisters.

e I was The café we found in the mall was pretty empty, so we didn't have
looked up with ogling fans. And I don't have to feel jealous and protective at
same time.

l of our "So, no pedicure then?" I ask when the waitress places our cups down.

Laurent The waitress is respectful and offers us our privacy. She doesn't even
at Chloé; she's a professional and does her job.

Chloé glances up from her drink. "Pedicure?"

ous for? I roll my eyes. "I asked you on the way here. Do you fancy going for a
pedicure?"

neither, Her mouth drops in shock. She knows I hate people touching my feet
and she highly ticklish after all. Now she palms her face, muttering, "Oh,
of her sorry. I didn't hear you."

Too busy pleasing the masses...

I decide to keep the thought to myself.

3, and I She checks her watch. “I guess we still have time. Though I have
s manyhair and makeup in an hour.”

Nativity “Hair and makeup for what?”

Chloé beams. “Oh, I’m going to be on TV! I’m doing an interview.”

all over She mentions the famous TV show and host, and my jaw hits the
“No way... How?”

start a She shrugs, sipping her coffee a little too smugly. “I have my ways..
lex. He Wow. It seems my little sister is becoming quite the household name
it to go result, I am seeing less and less of her. I’m happy for her. She always
to be super famous with legions of adoring fans.

ersonal While I’m just happy to volunteer at the shelter. Michelle has off
pay me many times, but I refuse. I would rather she paid someone
actually needed the job.

2 to put Marc rushes up behind us, scaring poor Chloé. Then he takes the
ll at theseat beside me. “So, what did I miss?”

“Just a day of shopping,” I reply.

vn. He rolls his eyes. “Ugh, please don’t tell me you bought anything
en stareapricot, Ney Ney.”

“No, I didn’t. When have I ever bought anything apricot?”

Marc smirks, tapping me on the nose. “Just making sure. Aprico
ig for ain’t your color...”

He chuckles and I sigh, taking an angry sip of my coffee.

2et. I’m Marc glances at Chloe next. “Cool shades, Lo Lo.”

I’m so “She’s been wearing them all day...” I answer in her stead.

He nudges her with his elbow. “Well, take them off. We want to see
pretty blue eyes.”

Chloé tenses. “I... would rather not...”

to be at Marc purses his lips, narrowing his eyes. “It’s Patrick, isn’t it? He’s keeping you up late at night. I’m not surprised. I’ve heard a lot about horny beta...”

Patrick? Does he mean Paddy?
I place my coffee down, demanding an answer now. “Who is Patrick?”
Marc blinks at me, stupefied. Then he proceeds to talk about me as if I’m not even present. “Wow. You haven’t told your sister who you’re dating. As a beta, should I know who Patrick is?”

I look to Chloé for answers. She still wears those sunglasses. “Patrick, Chloé?”

My sister meets my eyes. Well, I think she does. I still can’t see behind her shades. She sighs. “Patrick Fritz.”

Yeah. The name isn’t ringing any bells.
“Who is that?”

Chloé and Marc become as silent as a pair of ghosts. Then Marc glances at me. “Oh, Ney Ney. I knew you were out of touch, but this just takes things to a whole new level. He’s one of the biggest rock stars on the planet.”

Rock star? Okay, I know what one of those are, but why didn’t you care to tell me earlier? And why is she hiding her eyes?
“Chloé, why didn’t you tell me you were dating a rock star?”

She throws her arms up. “Look, it’s no big deal. It’s not like it’s exclusive or anything. We’re just dating. That is all.”

Marc leans closer to me. “He’s been *around*, if you know what I mean. What? Ew.

Chloé whacks Marc. “It’s not like that. We’ve just kissed... beyond kissing things...”

Oh, dear God. I can’t even finish my coffee.

's been Marc narrows his eyes. Then he takes off Chloé's scarf to inspect her neck. "What are you doing? Give it back!"

To my relief, Chloé's neck is clean. Although she is sporting a few hickeys or two, she hasn't let Patrick mark her yet.

Thank goodness. That is not a decision you want to make lightly. It's a serious thing. It connects you to that other person, making you feel like they feel.

Marc can often sense the emotions of his Alphas, ever from far away like some psychic connection.

"How dare you?" Chloé's whispers, staring at Marc in disbelief.

Her bodyguards watch the whole exchange from a separate table. It's obvious they don't deem me or Marc a threat, they still do the job of watching her for any signs of distress.

"You had no right, Marc."

Marc sighs. "I'm sorry, Lo Lo. I just had to make sure. Please promise you won't do anything stupid like letting Patrick mark you."

She scoffs. "Are you kidding me? You gave him your stamp of approval."

Marc looks at her incredulously. "No, I didn't. I said if you sleep with me then get yourself checked out. There's a difference."

Chloé's face pales as it appears she is remembering the exact conversation that went down. How much had she had to drink that night, exactly?

"If only I had been there too, but I can't be her babysitter all the time."

Finally, Chloé grabs her purse, storming out of the café. Her bodyguards get up behind her. One of them carries Nugget. "I've had enough of this interrogation. I'm going home."

She makes her grand exit, and the last we hear of her are her design

er neck. clicking down the sidewalk. Now it's just me and Marc.

ne that He waggles his eyebrows at me, forgetting all about Chloé. "So, an

How are things going with Jake?"

a nasty I can't stop staring at the spot where Chloé vanished. Something is

her and I need to find out. The first thing I am going to do when I get l

A bondresearch this Patrick Fritz. I need to know what kind of person my s

el whatgetting involved with.

I throw Marc a pointed look, sipping my coffee. He takes the hint, d

ray. It'shis own at last.

What the hell are we going to do with Chloé?

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clicking down the sidewalk. Now it's just me and Marc.

He waggles his eyebrows at me, forgetting all about Chloé. "So, any goss? How are things going with Jake?"

I can't stop staring at the spot where Chloé vanished. Something is up with her and I need to find out. The first thing I am going to do when I get home is research this Patrick Fritz. I need to know what kind of person my sister is getting involved with.

I throw Marc a pointed look, sipping my coffee. He takes the hint, drinking his own at last.

What the hell are we going to do with Chloé?

CHAPTER NINETEEN

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Jake

The office is abuzz with chatter when I turn up to Manifest Head one dreary, rainy morning. I'm in good spirits as I just spent the afternoon with the lovely Renée and I can't help it anymore.

I am falling head over heels for her. It just tears me apart that she can't see how amazing and beautiful she is. She constantly compares herself to her sister, and that's when I decide to stop her self-destructive attitude with a kiss.

It mustn't be easy being the sister of an Omega like Chloe Lauren who won't stand for her self-deprecation. I have to remind her every day how special she is.

How many hotel heiresses spend their free time volunteering at shelters? How many decide to live a private life and keep out of the limelight?

It's not that I judge girls like Chloé. She's obviously someone who likes being the center of attention, but I just wish there were more girls like her too.

And I wish the rest of the world would see her worth.

I get the unsettling feeling that all eyes are on me the moment I enter the office. There are whispers, and I think I hear someone say “Laurent.”

That’s odd. I get that Chloé is the hottest news in town right now, but would people whisper the name Laurent when they look at me?

Shit. I guess it was only a matter of time. Renée couldn’t have dodged media’s radar for too long. Chloé is becoming extremely high profile. That means her family won’t be spared all the scrutiny either.

It makes my blood boil. I just hope Renée will be okay. She’s so shy. She hates being the center of attention. I saw it the night I met her. She looked away when people pushed her to the front of the line for the toilet.

quarters She’s too modest. But that’s what I love about her.

the night Oh, crap. Did I say love? Well, it was only a matter of time. I knew the moment I looked into her big gray eyes that she was someone I couldn’t live without. So sincere.

friend to her I arrive at my desk. One day, I may get an office of my own. But for now, I will stay with the rest of the mortals.

There’s a reason why I don’t have my own office yet. I refuse to let anything scandalous about people I have never met. Celebrities and politicians don’t know from Adam.

The only famous people I know are my brothers; I even go out of my way to ensure no one writes anything insulting about them. So far, my efforts have worked. When Vivienne broke Henry’s heart, I made sure Vivienne was painted in the bad light.

who loves I mean, she was the one who cheated on him. She’s a devil and deserves any shit that comes her way.

I tend to edit my colleagues’ articles rather than writing my own. Maybe one day I can escape Manifest all together and start

enter the novels for a living.

Something of actual substance. But all anyone seems to care about is why days are celebrities.

Dylan pops his head over his computer when I take my seat. He sits at the desk opposite from mine, and he's one face I could do without looking at today. Or any day.

He's slimy and would do anything to get in Grace's good graces. Sly as a fox and editor-in-chief and oversees all of Manifest's publications.

I hated it. I think he's even gunning for Managing Editor. The position just opened up and good luck to him.

"So, what's it like dating a Laurent, Jake?"

I grit my teeth, grabbing my stress ball that lives on my desk.

So, the office was talking about Renée. I hate this place. Full of gossip and gossipy shits. How did I even manage to survive for so long?

A few heads turn my way when Dylan asks me the question. It's a small office space with hardly any privacy. As an introvert, I despise it. I could

write feel like a fish in a fishbowl. Someone is always looking over your shoulder. Too much 'collaboration' and not enough room for self-reflection.

Sometimes I take an extended lunch break and work in the toilets to get some alone time.

Don't get me wrong. I love people, and I love bouncing ideas off my teammates. But when your team is a bunch of gossipy shits who act like they're in high school, I'd rather work alone.

Dylan chuckles. "I hear they're calling her the *miserable* sister. Or the *maiden*. I mean, have you *seen* that resting bitch face?"

"Dylan..." Kate warns across from us. She's another writer on our team and I like her. She's probably the only friend I have at Manifest. She

only one I can trust.

at these I squeeze harder on my stress ball, imagining it was Dylan's little sized head. I've been sharing a desk with him for two months, and it's at the surprise I haven't punched his face.

king at I've heard him watching porn on his breaks. He had the volume very high; I could even hear it over his headphones.

he's the He's the office jester, yet he thinks he's the shit around here. He writes he's still in college as he has that frat boy mind set. He even calls me opened Jay...

It's fucking Jake.

Dylan shrugs. "Hey, I'm a curious guy. I'm sure she's pretty sweet life... sweet beneath the sheets..."

f nasty, I've had enough. I stand, challenging Dylan as I stare him down. beta male like me, so it won't be much of a fight.

shared Dylan's still a pretty good-looking guy, but he's far too creepy and instantly Most of the girls at the office stay away from him. Kate is one of those sulder... He flirts with her and not in the good kind of way.

lection. Such a prick.

just for Dylan holds up his hands. "Hey, I was just joking, Jay. You know me" "No, I really don't. And it's Jake."

a team. His smirk grows as he eyes me up and down, seeing if I'm worth the still in Sometimes, I really wish I did awaken as an Alpha. Then slimy guy Dylan would back the fuck off.

the ice I'm no threat to anybody, but if he makes one more comment about I will punch his lights out.

r team, "Cease this dick measuring at once and get back to work. Now! he's the you."

We jump at the sound of Grace's sharp tone, and now everyone retreats to their desks.

Grace is an Alpha female. So we would be wise to do as she says.

harsh woman and rules with an iron fist. Today, she wears a designer toopiece suit that accentuates her natural hour-glass shape. She is hot, and everyone knows it.

Even her hair looks immaculate today, tied up in a severe bun that emphasizes the sharp bones of her face. Her ice-blue eyes find me. "Jake. I want to speak with you in my office. Come along."

My fellow writers squirm. Even Dylan tucks his dick between his legs in the sight of Grace.

I sigh, placing my stress ball back at my desk. One day, I will get out of here. He's afraid of this dreary place full of backstabbers. Honestly, I think I would rather go to Grace than to most of my colleagues in the office.

She doesn't stab you in the back. She stabs you in the front while looking at you like you're a slimy snake. She's a straight talker and doesn't take shit from anyone.

It's a terrifying yet admirable quality.

"We reach her office at the end of the floor. She has a perfect view of the city outside her window and she even has a plush couch in the corner. This woman has it all. She earned her place here. Most editors-in-chief like to have to be tough to get this far in life. I bet this woman crossed many people just to get where she is today.

Renée, "Please, take a seat, Jake."

I take the seat in front of her glass desk, keeping my calm. I live with all of Alphas, but there's just something about Grace that I find intimidating. She used to date Alex once upon a time. Even he said she was scary.

turns to that's saying something. Alex is one of the most commanding Alphas ever met. It's just his natural aura.

She's a While he's a nice guy, he commands any room he enters. All eyes turn to him immediately, and I hear he rules his own fashion magazine with a firm hand and sheiron fist.

However, he's far more gracious than Grace. And I have seen the way she brings looks at Renée. I've seen how all three of my pack brothers have longed to have her. I don't blame them, and honestly, I would be honored to share her with them.

Grace takes her throne behind her desk, and now we sit in painful silence. She taps her manicured fingers against the glass surface, assessing me away carefully.

I feel like a schoolboy being summoned by his headmistress.

"Do you know why I have called you into my office today, Jake?"

Damn. What do I say? I'm surprised her assistant didn't come and see me instead, but he appears to be sick today. Sick with fear, I bet.

"No, Your... Grace..."

Shit. I was about to say Your Grace. I think I read far too much material of the fantasy lately. It's why I call Renée princess and Dylan jester.

My head is in another world most days and I need to crash back to Earth. *You live in contemporary times, Jake. A world where dragons don't exist and where you are not a knight...*

Grace didn't seem to notice my mishap. I suppose giving her a title like queen wouldn't have been too bad. Unless she took it as sarcasm. Still, at least it beats ma'am. I almost called her that once, and I thank my guardian angel for stopping me on time.

I think Grace turned fifty this year, but I don't want to ma

; I have assumptions. She's had quite a bit of plastic surgery. It's hard to tell if she is.

is go to Alex is in his mid-thirties and I know there was quite the age gap between him and Grace when they dated. Grace loves a younger man, after all.

She often calls Alex her little protégée. She thinks she made Alex very successful today.

looked at That couldn't be farther from the truth.

er with "So you're dating Renée Laurent."

My stomach tightens. I can't lie to her. That would not bode well for me. Silence. Renée.

ing me "I am."

It's only a small, subtle action, but Grace smiles. Or maybe it's more of a smirk. It's hard to tell, though, as she has had far too much Botox. It's literally poison in her cheeks.

ummon "And yet you work for Manifest. A magazine that specializes in culture, lifestyle and gossip."

I don't like where this is leading.

edieval "I would like you to take advantage of your position with Renée to get some information about Chloé. Her sister is the hottest Omega in town right now and every magazine wants to write about her."

it exist Yeah. I bet they do. And all awful stuff too.

The best I can do is subtly refuse. I can offer to edit the piece so it doesn't paint Renée or Chloé or their father in a bad light.

Grace leans back in her chair, giving me that viper's smirk again. "Thank you. Do you have a deal?"

Is it smart to make deals with the devil? I don't think so. How do I make any of this? And how do I ensure that the bastard who does end up writing

How old does Chloé doesn't end up writing anything too defamatory?

Chloé is a sweet girl beneath all the sparkles and glamor. Neither of them deserves it.

They say it's the price of fame. Bad press is good press, but Renéé what heaven ask to be in the public eye. Her father owns his own chain of hotels and her sister is becoming one of the hottest influencers in the world.

I wish people would leave Renéé alone. She spends her days working at a dog shelter for free, for crying out loud.

For me or "I will see what I can do, Grace."

That's the best I can do. Meet her in the middle. Though she will eventually leave me, eventually. I'm soft and she knows it. It's the reason why I am more of a sharer of a desk with the likes of Dylan.

There's I've seen some of my colleagues rise up the ranks. All people like I bet he will be getting his own office too one day, and assigning me to write celebritywrite.

I wouldn't be surprised if Grace made him Managing Editor. People like Dylan deserve it.

Just to get "That will be all, Jake."

Am right That's my cue to leave. Thank the gods. It's stifling in this office, the fact that it's air-conditioned.

I return to my desk. All eyes are on me once again. Kate offers a sympathetic smile. She's similar to me. She went to journalism school and also wants to write pieces that matter and make a difference.

'Do we That's why she gets the health and lifestyle articles. She tries to cheer up readers up by giving good advice, but Grace has the final say in the end.

Get out Dylan sniggers like a hyena. "Did she give you a stern spanking?"

Get about "Shut up, Dylan," I snap.

I swear, one day I am going to grab my stapler and staple that bit of his tongue. He's still tittering and several people roll their eyes at him.

Kate gives him a look that could burn the world to ash.

He didn't "Hey, it's okay. If you don't want to write about your girlfriend and sister, then I can do it for you."

"Over my dead body."

Looking at a Dylan sneers. "Well, that's a shame. Because you and I will be writing a piece together. Grace called me in earlier to tell me."

What? Hell will freeze over before I write a piece about Renée and a suspect with Dylan.

I am still "A shame you couldn't get with the hot sister, though. It would have made our job so much easier..."

Dylan. I Kate is on her feet before I am, and thank the gods she was there to stop me from stapling Dylan's tongue.

"Jake, calm down. You know he isn't worth it."

People like The blood still rushes through my head as I glare at that smug piece of shit that is Dylan. He's wheeled himself away on his chair in a bid to get away from me. Everyone else looks at him like he's an idiot.

Despite Some look amused by his antics.

I think they have placed bets on who would win in a fight. I would have bet on me.

Well. She Dylan pulls faces at me like we're back in kindergarten and he never grows the fuck up. Or maybe I do.

I can't help it. How dare he insult Renée like that.

Okay, all he said was that she wasn't the hot sister, but his comment was still a insult. I know how Renée views herself, and to hear her insecurities

astard's from Dylan's shitty mouth just makes me want to push him out window.

No one would miss him. Well, expect maybe for his mom. and her Fuck Dylan and you know what? Fuck Grace for making me write with him. I think she is trying to test my loyalty to her or whatever. I'm not even enough I've been here for five years, and yet I still haven't been promoting the think Dylan has been here for two.

I calm my breaths as Kate comforts me. "Sit down, Jake. He's a proud asshole. Chloe we all know it. But he's not worth losing your job for."

My job? The one that I hate? I'm not so sure about that. When I started here five years ago, I had dreams about becoming a writer. I thought a celebrity gossip magazine would be a big stepping stone into the world of publishing.

But rejection letter after rejection letter has only proved me wrong. as if I will never get out of this place.

Of shit Alex has offered me a job at his magazine, but could I really write about fashion? I'm clueless in that department. Also, I would have to deal with asshats in his office who will say that I only got the job because of nepotism. I know how offices work.

Upon Kate's instructions, I take my seat, grabbing my stress ball. I hold onto my life line at that moment. Dylan's still chuckling and spinning in his seat. A few people tell him to stop.

He's pushing way too many buttons. *It's okay, Jake. You can work with that asshole. Just make sure your shit got to the piece a thorough edit before it's published.*

Coming "May the best writer win..." Dylan calls out to me childishly. Oh, I plan to.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

CHAPTER TWENTY

Renée

My phone buzzes on my bedside cabinet, and I roll onto my side, grasping my fingers for the device. Who on earth is calling me? It's still night-time outside.

My fingers finally make contact and when I pick up the phone to check the screen, my eyes pop out of my sockets.

Chloé? Ringing me at 5 am? Something isn't right. She normally gets up at 9 am.

I slide the button with my thumb, clearing my throat. "Chloé?"

She sniffs down the phone and a hole burns into my gut when I realize she's crying.

"Chloé? What's wrong?"

My sister can barely get two words together. But then she finally manages to say, "Oh, Renée... it's awful..."

Renée? Okay, now I am very worried. She hardly ever calls me Renée, always *Ney Ney*.

I swing my legs over the bed, yanking off my sheets. I'm still wearing my nightie. It has unicorns dancing on rainbows, and what can I say?

mystical horses. It's the only girlie aspect about me.

“Chloé, why are you calling me at 5 am crying? Please... just calm and tell me what is wrong.”

She makes a strangled sound next like a dying cat, and I'm already around for my shoes. If this Patrick Fritz has hurt her in any way, the storm over to his house and kick his ass.

I have never been the confrontational type. The most confrontation had was when I yelled at a group of teenage boys for kicking a pigeon on the street. I have never deliberately gone and picked fights with anyone. I saw the point in mindless violence.

My side, But when it comes to the ones I love...

How now? I took the liberty of reading up on Patrick the moment I got home after shopping and brunch. He's pretty notorious. He's been arrested for drunk driving, and has been known to possess drugs in the past.

He's clean now, though. Well, according to some sources on the web, he doesn't want some low-life like that touching my baby sister. I don't care about his net worth is (300 million). He is scum, and he does not deserve Chloé.

She could do so much better. I honestly always thought she would realize her as the type of Omega to settle down with a banker or something nice, clean pack who would dote on her and treat her like a princess.

I never expected she would date some selfish prick of a rock star. I can't imagine the time for drinking and driving. Asshole. I bet he thought he was above the law, like some celebrities.

Chloé. It's “Chloé, speak to me... Has Patrick done anything to you?”

She finds her voice at last when I mention her current beau. “No! I'm not in my of the sort.”

I love “Then what? Why are you calling me at 5 am crying?”

She falls silent, and I can almost picture her biting her lower lip...frustration. She has done that since she was five years old.

“Chloé!”

feeling She sighs down the phone, creating static on my speakers. “I didn’t know how to tell you this... but... Manifest... they wrote an article about a horrible one... None of it is true!”

What I have Ice trickles through my veins when she mentions the publication on the Manifest? That’s where Jake works.

I never “That’s not all. They mention you too... and...”

She hiccoughs, trailing off, and I practically demand her to speak. “Chloé.”

After our Finally, she drops a huge bomb on me. One that makes my whole body shatter and implode. “Jake wrote it. I’m so sorry, Ney Ney. It seems like I’m using you all along, after all. I’m...”

Oh. I do I barely hear my sister’s words now as the blood rushes through my veins. A cold, hollow sensation forms inside my chest as her voice fades into the distance.

Oh. I saw No. That can’t be true...

Oh. Or a Jake wouldn’t write anything awful about me or Chloé. He doesn’t like writing about celebrities. He wants to be a science fiction author.

He got “Send me the article.”

Over the “All... all right.”

My sister does as I ask and I can scarcely believe what I’m reading when I open her text. There is Jake’s name. It turns out he’s not the sole writer. Nothingco-wrote it with Dylan Cummings.

The article starts with Chloé, and how she has already started falling in grace. Apparently, she was caught having sex in Patrick’s car. There a

lip paparazzi shots of her in the back seat of his Porsche.

There's stuff about me too. They call me the "ugly" and the "boring" and tears burn at the back of my eyes. No. I don't believe it. There is no way I know Jake would write that about me.

me. A To see all of my worst anxieties and fears being spewed by some journalist just hits me like a punch to the gut.

ication. I knew it. I *am* ugly.

No. I'm not ugly. I am just unfortunate enough to have a very beautiful sister. A beautiful sister who is three years *younger* than me. A fact that I know the article likes to make a point of.

At least they remembered to put the special characters on our names. *Imagine being outshone by a sibling who is younger than you. Poor little sister...*

She outshines me in every way imaginable. It's been that way since I was a baby, and it's just not fair. I want to be seen too. I want to be noticed and stopped by people on the street.

But that's just not who I am. I am the quiet, reserved sister. The *ice maiden*. Worst of all, I'm the *ice maiden*.

There are shots of me and Chloé, and every one captures my resting face. The article goes on to say how I am just a beta. That the only reason why my parents decided to have a second daughter was because I turned out to be such a disappointment.

Chloé was the Omega daughter every couple dreams of. I was the number one. He shouldn't have been born.

No. That's stupid. I have every right to live as much as any Omega. Why should I care about my designation?

This is stupid and pathetic. Whoever wrote this article is a real loser.

Whether that loser be Dylan or Jake, I don't care anymore. Fuck sisterboth. I'm going to get to the bottom of this.

no way Time to visit a certain *beta*.

e nasty

beautiful

that the

image-placeholder

The cab pulls up outside the Fontaine House as I pay the driver a generous or ugly tip.

I am a kind, good person. I am not boring or icy. I have a lot to give the world.

adored His eyes widen when he sees the amount I gave him. "Are you miss?"

boring I smile through the pain. "Take it. Treat someone you love."

I think the driver almost cries. His eyes well up, becoming rigid bitchbloodshot, and it looks like I just made someone's morning. You have no reason idea what people are going through.

ned out I have a lot to live for. I am beautiful in the only ways that matter.

may not have gotten the cute button nose like Chloé or the pouty lips mistake, all-around American girl look, yet I am still beautiful.

The driver looks me in the eye. "He doesn't deserve you. Whoever stole your heart is a total loser."

There's no missing my own bloodshot eyes. I have been crying since I moved into my apartment.

Thank them “Thank you,” I whisper.

He gives me a sweet, fatherly smile, and then he watches as I step into the car. Then he drives off and waves as he disappears down the road.

I stare up at that mansion of lies once he’s out of sight, balling my fists. I didn’t deserve any of that stuff that was written about me, and I am going to find out why he betrayed me.

Why would Jake write that? Did he really use me just so he could write something awful about me in *Manifest*? Is that how he hopes to get the top job? Is that how he plans to get the notice of an agent so he can get his ass out there?

enerous Well, I am about to find out.

What he wrote could really affect our family business. Dad is going to be furious with Chloé. *Manifest* are trying to destroy her good girl image. She needs to be careful and dump this rock star.

u sure, I angrily press the buzzer on the gate just outside the house. It’s only past 6 am.

I don’t care. I demand answers.

ed and The gates open, and I storm across the courtyard, marching up to the gate. It opens upon my arrival, and lo-and-behold, it’s Jake.

He rubs his eyes, wearing his tartan PJs with the gray baggy top. “Sure, I know what you’re doing here so early—?”

, or the Jake doesn’t get to finish his sentence as I push him into the house, at the top of my lungs. I will wake the whole pack at this point, but I don’t care.

This asshole betrayed me.

ce I left “How could you?”

He looks at me, horrified. “W-what?”

I swing my fist toward his perfect jaw, and he catches my arm with his hand. He looks at me with a mix of anger and concern. "Renée, keep it together. What the hell is wrong?"

I wiggle my arm free of his grip, showing him the article on my phone. He reads it quickly, his expression growing more serious. "That's not your work," he says, handing the phone back to me. "I grab the device and I watch as his eyes scan the writing. The look of disappointment on his face reassures me. He didn't mean to write any of that. I knew I was wrong, but I still had to make sure."

I write "That fucking prick!"

I wipe the tears away. "So, you didn't write any of that stuff about my novel?" "Of course not. This wasn't even the piece I finalized. They published the wrong one! I'm going to kill Dylan. I don't care if I lose my job, he is a

So it was Dylan who wrote that then. Well, whoever he is, he must be a very sad, lonely person.

I hope he gets what's coming to him and more.

"Shit." Jake looks back up at me, and his sad brown eyes say it all. "Renée, I'm so sorry. I never... f-fuck..."

He drags me in for a hug, and the waterworks explode from my eyes. He rubs circles on my back, reassuring me that none of what was written is true.

His oversized gray shirt grows wet with my tears, and I think I even kiss him at some point, but I am just so relieved. Sure, there must be some nasty article out there about me that's most likely being read by millions of people, but I still have my man.

I don't He didn't betray me.

"Renée, none of that stuff is true."

I splutter, making the most unattractive sounds. Jake squeezes me tighter.

"Renée, you are beautiful and way hotter than your sister. You're smart and kind and so unique. That's all any man wants."

th ease. “It’s just... people have compared us our whole lives, and then w
got her Omega... it just... put the nail in the coffin...”

one. He Jake doesn’t remove his arms from me. He keeps me close to hi
f angerletting me soak his PJ shirt with my snot and tears. He even rocks me.

it deep “Dylan is an asshole. No one likes him at the office. All the wome
him. Several have even put a sexual harassment claim against him
scum. Don’t listen to anything he says. Also... you don’t need to
ie?” Omega for me to love you. You’re perfect the way you are.”

hed the Wait. *Love* me?

dead!” I look up into his soft brown eyes. Jake has nothing but a smile for r
ist be a “You... love me?”

He leans down and kisses my nose. “I do. I’ve known for a while.
from the moment we met at the club that you could be someone I co
ll. “Oh,hard for.”

My heart thumps as blood flushes through my veins. When was
yes. He time a guy told me that he loved me? I don’t think one ever has.

en was I have never been anyone’s first choice. My ex-boyfriend dump
because I wasn’t like Chloé, and most men who dated me after him w
ven rubusing me to get closer to her.

ay be a I don’t know how to take the news.

ons, but “It’s okay. You don’t have to say it to me yet or at all. It’s uncondit
love you and expect nothing in return, Renée... just...”

“I love you too.”

He stops talking. Then his eyes widen when he blurts out the word:
ghter. do?”

è sweet I nod. “Yes. Positive. I never thought I could feel this way about any
It’s true. I never thought I would. I never loved my ex. I mean, I th

men sheloved him at one point, but whatever feelings I had for that joker ha
gone now.

s chest, They could never compare to what I feel for Jake.

Thank God Dylan wrote that nasty stuff about me in the end, a
n avoidBecause I don't think I ever would have found the courage to tell Jak
. He isfeel.

o be an I don't think I ever would have realized how I felt about him.

Jake grabs my chin, pulling me in for the most epic kiss of my lif
kiss that actually means something. Sure, it's silky and smooth, and
ne. me feel as if I am flying through the clouds, yet it's real.

One I thought I would never get to experience.

I knew Jake scoops me up in his arms, taking me to his bedroom where
uld fallshow me how he truly feels about me. He places me down on his b
starts unzipping my pants. I help him a little by slipping each leg ou
the lastjeans.

Once he sets me free, he tosses them to one side, stealing a kiss fr
ped melips again.

ere just "Just so you know... I am going to quit. As of today, I will no lo
working at Manifest. No one talks shit like that about my girl. Dylan
Managing Editor all he wants. I don't care..."

ional. I I reach up, running my fingers through his silky blond hair. "Yo
have to do that for me."

"No. I do. This was the final straw."

s. "You This is bad. I can't have Jake quitting because I decided to have a
tantrum. I am not that selfish. Screw my fragile ego. I want him to suc
yone." "But what about your dreams of becoming a writer?"

ought I He shrugs. "I'll find a way. Besides, what kind of writer would I b

ve long who writes nasty shit about people I haven't met? No thank you."

"Technically, you *have* met me and Chloé..."

"Exactly. And that is why I have to leave. You're no ice maiden, Renée. After all. Tears drip from my eyes as the insult still stings. That one was the best. How I do to be honest. To be accused of not being warm and approachable. I can't be ugly. It's a childish insult, but ice maiden really hurt.

Only because it's partly true. I am not sweet and bubbly. I don't smile. It's all in my photographs. Yet I must be something special because Jake is willing to make his job just for me.

I never thought I was the kind of girl who was worth quitting anything.

"Now... it's time to prove Dylan wrong. Trust me, Renée. You are far from boring..."

A smile crosses my cheeks. I even bite my lip. "I'm listening."

Jake smirks. Without warning, he yanks my shirt up, tucking it over my head. Now all I can see is white cotton. My bra is exposed. I wish I had a sexier one. This one has a tear and I am pretty sure that the wire is poking out in the right cup.

Yet Jake still looks as if he has stumbled upon an impressive feat. He licks his lips, a rumble sounding in his chest. "For one, you have a nice tits. Chloé and all those other girls can eat their hearts out."

Well, he's not wrong. I did get the tits *and* the ass. I always hated my big butt growing up, but apparently, men love big butts.

Jake runs his hands down my curves until he reaches my hips, squeezing them tight. "And this ass. It should be illegal to have an ass this fucking good." My body shudders when he circles his fingers around my thighs. I can't see him properly. My gaze is hidden by my shirt.

Jake leans down to my chest, slipping his tongue between my

Lights spark and I arch my back, pressing my breasts toward his hot m

This bra clips at the front, so he manages to get it off with his teeth
née...” my... who knew he was so good with those teeth...

o worst, And that prehensile tongue...

an take My breasts pop free and now he takes my right breast in his hand, o
on my left nipple. His teeth pierce the flesh, and a sensation like
mile inripples down my body, pooling between my thighs.

to quit Holy shit.

Jake nips and sucks, swirling his tongue around the pebbled tip
ng for. breast, and the pleasure thrums through my body. He kisses a path b
ar from the valley of my breasts, stopping at my belly button. I always ha
belly.

It’s flat, but still pretty round. Chloé was the one who got th
ver my surfboard stomach.

id worn Yet Jake kisses my belly like it’s the most beautiful thing he h
poking seen. He dips his tongue into my belly button, swirling it around and

The pleasure hums inside my veins, building me up to my peak.

ast. He When he’s done with my belly button, he kisses his way down
mazing thighs, and my body shakes in anticipation.

He kisses my pussy and his lips feel so warm on my panties. I
aving already damp with my arousal, and who needs to produce slick

Omega when you have a delicious beta like Jake between your legs?

ueezing He sighs next, and his breath tickles the sensitive lips of my se
fine...” good would his breath feel with the panties off?

. I still As if hearing my thoughts, he slips them off and exposes me at last.

feels cool on my skin, but I savor the sensation, wishing the air was
breasts. breath instead.

outh. A lime scent clouds the room and I remove the shirt from my face and oh better smell.

That's strange. Where is it coming from?

I forget about the strange aroma now as my brain short-circuits in a sucking moment I spy Jake. He gazes at my pussy like he has found some forbidden honeyfruit.

His pupils blow out, taking over his eyes, and now they're completely black with lust. Jake looks at me, wiggling his brows. "So, you ready to prove Dylan wrong?"

My chest heaves as I can hardly think straight. I just want his mouth on my pussy.

"Yes," I pant.

"Well, here I go..."

His face disappears between my legs and then stars explode in my eyes as ever moment he places a tender kiss on my lips.

"Not boring..." He kisses once. "And not an ice maiden..." He kisses

A shudder works its way down my spine, stopping at the point where my lips meet me. I'm going to enjoy this.

"And most of all... far from ugly..."

Finally, Jake vanishes between my thighs. My orgasm crashes through me like anybody the moment he slips his tongue inside. He runs circles around my clitoris and even bites the small, sensitive nub, making me release another. How again.

Jake swallows every last drop of my cum, eating me out like I'm the best The air meal he has ever tasted. He hums in deep pleasure, disappearing further into his hole's nose-deep, sliding a finger inside.

He rubs my G-spot.

to get a I sing my pleasure yet again, tossing my head side to side as I grip
of his bedsheets. “Yes, yes!”

The rest of the pack will hear, but I don’t care. Maybe one day th
its theheed my siren call and join us.

rbidden A girl can dream.

Jake dips a second finger inside, delving all the way in. He curl
pletelybeneath me, and the stars turn into a supernova. My spine arches as my
for mebody shivers. I clench around his mouth and his fingers, almost suff
him, and I hope he can breathe.

on my I’m not letting him go again. I thought I had lost him, but I only w
got him back.

Jake is mine. I belong to him and his whole pack.

He turns me onto my belly, sucking my pussy from behind, and I
yes theonce more. When he’s done, he lays down behind me, tugging me clos
forms a perfect S-shape.

s again. He kisses the back of my neck as I close my eyes, savoring every m
ere his “You’re the pretty sister. Always...”

I smile, falling asleep in his arms as I catch up on some must needec
The pretty sister. I can almost believe it when he says it.

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I sing my pleasure yet again, tossing my head side to side as I grip fistfuls of his bedsheets. “Yes, yes!”

The rest of the pack will hear, but I don’t care. Maybe one day they will heed my siren call and join us.

A girl can dream.

Jake dips a second finger inside, delving all the way in. He curls them beneath me, and the stars turn into a supernova. My spine arches as my whole body shivers. I clench around his mouth and his fingers, almost suffocating him, and I hope he can breathe.

I’m not letting him go again. I thought I had lost him, but I only went and got him back.

Jake is mine. I belong to him and his whole pack.

He turns me onto my belly, sucking my pussy from behind, and I shatter once more. When he’s done, he lays down behind me, tugging me close as he forms a perfect S-shape.

He kisses the back of my neck as I close my eyes, savoring every moment.

“You’re the pretty sister. Always...”

I smile, falling asleep in his arms as I catch up on some must needed rest.

The pretty sister. I can almost believe it when he says it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Alexander

I'm just finishing eating my bowl of granola when Jake enters the room smelling exactly of Renée. My Alpha breaches the surface when I catch a whiff of her sweet zesty scent, and I try to keep it together.

Focus, Alexander. You need to remain sharp for when you arrive at the office today.

I swallow back a growl with my granola, meeting my pack brother. He seems in good spirits, and I have a feeling it has to do with the fact that he had sex with one of the most beautiful women I have ever laid eyes on.

“Someone’s in a good mood.”

Jake approaches a fruit bowl, tossing an apple into the air before he takes a bite. “That because I just quit my job.”

The spoon of granola stops halfway to my lips at Jake's announcement. “Did you just quit your job?”

His smug smile only confirms his truth, and I place the spoon down. “Why?”

He grabs a jug of orange juice from the fridge and swills it back. “I am sick to death of working at that nest of vipers. They took it too far.”

time. Look.”

The beta hands me his phone, pushing it across the kitchen island. *A* vibrates in my chest when I read the piece of shit of an article that *M* published about Renée and her sister.

This just reeks of Grace. Ever since I broke up with her, she has been salty. But she was always a sharp, vindictive woman. Always putting down to make herself feel better.

I bet she was aware of Renée’s connection to the pack. Grace probably thinks that I am just as interested in Renée as much as Jake is, and that’s why she got jealous.

In the kitchen, I just hate that my pack brother had to get mixed up in it all. I guess I can’t catch why he reeks of Renée now. I bet the makeup sex was fantastic indeed.

“She arrived here in tears this morning, and it was just the final straw.” *at the* Again, my throat trembles when the words flash through my mind. I bet she was ugly as hell. Who in their right mind would think that Renée was ugly? *’s eyes.* when standing next to her sister.

It’s not that Chloé isn’t attractive. Any man with eyes could see that. *fact that* Omega was a looker. But any man with a real set of eyes would see that Renée was the true beauty.

Girls like Chloé are not my type. I’m sure she is sweet, but there are a dozen. They try so hard to be liked, and it hurts to watch.

Chloé’s career is skyrocketing right now, and she has become the most popular Omega in town. No, the country, and probably the world soon. I saw her come down on the night of her debut.

Even poor Judith didn’t stand a chance of ever getting noticed with her because of the perky Omega around. Not that my baby sister seemed to care, but she was so far from this assured her that she looked beautiful.

That's what a good brother does.

A growl I pass Jake his phone back. "You did the right thing. I've told you for a while now that you have a job at my office if you ever need one. You're family. You're family all."

an extra Jake isn't my biological brother, but I still treat him like one all the time. The same applies to Ezra too.

He rolls his eyes playfully. "No. Because then I would have to deal with the jerks at your office accusing me of only getting the job because of nepotism."

He's right. There are jerks at my office. That's just the world of fashion that's known what they all say about me behind my back. I don't care though. I worked my ass off to get to where I am today, and Fountain Fashion is a thriving enterprise as a result.

and. The Jake chuckles. "Besides... fashion? What would I even write about? Fashion? Even I shrug. "The same old. They would probably like you over at the creative lifestyle department. You have that connection to writing about the stars that the... "Well, I'm done writing about real people. From now on, I want to see that up new people and new worlds."

A smile crosses my face. "You're finally going to write novels?"

a dime "You bet your ass I am. I'm sick of the real world. Give me fantasy escapism any day."

hottest A laugh leaves my lips just as Henry enters the kitchen. His hair is ruffled as he's still half asleep. That's when his nose twitches as he

Renée's scent on Jake.

with that "Damn... you smell amazing..."

that I still Jake gives a smug smile. "Renée dropped by earlier this morning. I'll make it up to her..."

Henry grabs a box of eggs, and it looks like he's going to have fri
or years for breakfast. He removes a skillet from the cupboard, turning the dia
y, after stove. "What happened?"

Jake fills him in, and a similar growl snaps from my little brother's
e same. "They what? That fucker. I swear, Jake. If you don't kill that Dylan
then I will do it for you."

al with Jake smirks. "Maybe we can all gang up on him together."

ause of "That's enough, you two. Dylan may be an asshole, but he's still a
He is not worth going to prison for."

shion. I Henry balls his fists as he tries to calm his Alpha down, and I feel th
ough. I way. I've met million of Dylans at my own office and they don't la
on is along.

Sooner or later, that piece of shit will end up in the gutter. H
" Grace's little puppet in the end, doing her evil bidding.

celebrity Dylan is not the one to blame. She is. That woman can be pure po
rs." times.

o make Henry completely ignores his eggs as he stares at Jake with shim
eyes. "Did you tell her that none of what they said was true?"

I snort. "More like he showed her, baby brother. Why do you tl
asy and smells so good?"

Jake looks as smug as a fox as he sits on the stool beside me, biti
ir is all another apple.

catches Henry whistles, returning to his eggs. "Hot damn. It's what she de
though. That's a woman who deserves to be told she's beautiful eve

That she's special. There's not even any competition with her sister. R
[had to better looking."

Again, a sentiment we share. Our beta found a rare diamond indeed

ed eggs I could show Renée how wrong Grace was about her, too. She is not
l on the and she is far from what you would call an ice maiden.

Renée is one of the sweetest people I have met. She's kind, compass
throat, and loves dogs. That makes her the most beautiful woman in the world
n prick, eyes.

Chloé, and others like her, can go and eat their hearts out.

The back door opens, and Ezra steps inside with Sasha. It looks
citizen, just finished taking her for a walk. The dog patters up to Jake, and I
can smell Renée on him, too. You can't help but be gravitated by her s
ie same Jake rubs behind Sasha's ears. "You know who's come to visit,
ist very you, girl?"

The dog barks, pricking her ears up in excitement, and if that doesn't
e's just your heart.

Renée is like a cartoon princess. She just has a way with animals...
ison at Ezra grabs an organic meat treat from a box, tossing it at Sasha. T
catches it in her mouth with a single jump, her reward for being a ge
umering on their walk.

"Why aren't you at work?" Ezra asks Jake.

nink he Jake tells him everything. Unlike me and Henry, he can barely k
Alpha in check. His low growl rumbles through the room, crea
ng into atmosphere. Sasha whimpers, approaching his seat with her ears
back. She places her head on his lap, trying to calm him down, and h
eserves, in him is so pure.

ry day. "Tell me where this Dylan lives..."

Renée is Jake sighs. "No, Ezra. He's not worth it. Trust me."

Ezra closes his eyes, taking several deep breaths. Sasha keeps her l
. I wish his lap the whole time. When he strokes her head, he relaxes, open

boring, eyelids again. “She knows none of that is true, right?”

“Don’t worry,” Henry replies from over the skillet. “Jake made sionate, that.”

d in my Ezra inhales and a different kind of growl thrums inside his chest. Pure arousal.

“I thought you were just trying out some new cologne, brother.”

as if he Again, Ezra calls Jake his brother. We all refer to each other as brother sometimes.

cent. “We all need to do something to make her feel better,” Ezra continues. Haven’t Jake looks up from his juice. “That has me thinking. She told me she’s just upset because her dad had to go back to Europe. She actually wouldn’t warmhe would take her to the fun fair like he did when she was little.”

Ezra clicks his fingers. “Well, that’s what we will do. Let’s take Renée to the funfair.”

The dog “I’m game for a trip to the fair. No doubt we could all do with a good girlfriend,” Henry chimes in, turning off the stove once his eggs are finished.

“Then it’s a date,” Jake smiles brightly, peering at the door from over his shoulder.

keep his I think he’s expecting Renée to enter the room. His sense of hearing is as sharp as mine, Henry’s, or Ezra’s, so he wouldn’t know that the woman pricked still fast asleep.

er trust I can almost sense her snoozing on his bed.

“There’s something I’ve wanted to say to all of you. About Renée and how you all look at her, and well... you have my blessing.”

All three Alphas in the room stop. None of us speak for some time. I read and drops this huge bombshell. He’s right. I am developing feelings for my beautiful beta, but I didn’t want to overstep a line. She was dating Jake

Also... I didn't want to overwhelm her.

She seemed terrified of dating my beta as it was. As if she was afraid of putting herself out there.

Did someone break her heart in the past?

I'm the first to speak up. "Well, I guess that all depends on her."

Ezra and Henry agree with me. Jake shrugs. "Even so. You still have other attributes. If you want tips, she loves the sea and the sunset."

The sea? I guess I can work with that.

"Don't forget dogs too," Ezra pipes up.

"And teen trash movies," Henry laughs.

Speaking of teen trash movies, I have to head to the office. The issue I have to resolve. The magazine wants to do a cover shoot for Vivienne Fox in order to promote her new superhero movie.

The theme will be "Powerful women."

It wasn't my idea. At first I refused, but then I was convinced by my brother in the end that it would be good publicity for the magazine. Vivienne Fox is one of the hottest actresses right now. Henry doesn't read my magazine, but he will still see it as an act of betrayal when he does eventually find out.

I see it as an opportunity to grill her. I want to know why she did what she did.

Fair enough. Let's show the world the real Vivienne Fox.

A powerful woman, indeed.

"I have to get to the office. So I'm afraid I may have to decline a date with you, fellers."

The three of them look sorry for me, as I don't get to spend my date with the lovely Renée. Instead, I have to look at Vivienne's traitorous face.

"Bye bye, brother," Henry shouts as I head for the door. "We'll miss you."

I laugh, calling for a company car on my way out. Just as I step out, I'm afraid to hear a creak on the stairs. Renée has just come down the steps, still halfway when she sees me. She's wearing Jake's oversized gray shorts, showing off those sexy legs.

Fuck. I just want to rush up those stairs and show her how beautiful I am. That woman deserves all the kisses and more.

It's not hard to see she spent the night crying. Her eyes are bloodshot. I swear I will get Grace back for what she did. She hurt the woman about.

But for now, I will take my anger out on Vivienne.

There's an We have a score to settle after all.

Vivienne

image-placeholder

my team

is one

but he

That she The elevator pings when I arrive on the floor. Manifest is actually on the 10th floor, and I know it pisses Grace off to see me.

I am several stories higher than her. But that doesn't give her an excuse to talk trash about the girl I care about.

At the I am greeted by fake smiles and countless ass kissers when I walk through the bright white office floors of Fountain Fashion. It's like being in a recording studio constantly. The white lights, floors and walls bring out your

as you."

outside, if features. That way, my self-obsessed employees can stare at their reflection all day while they're supposed to be doing work.

My shirt, It's mostly women who work here, but there's a fair share of men on my employment, too.

And she is. "Good afternoon, Mr. Fontaine."

"Is that a new suit?"

But, and I I pay my thanks to each one of them, heading straight to my office. I care actually don't have to turn up until noon. The perks of being the boss.

It is now 11:45.

My assistant, Britney, rises to her feet the moment I arrive. "Mr. Fontaine, Ms. Fox is waiting for you in your office."

There's no missing the trepidation in her voice. Vivienne is an international celebrity now, and Britney has only been working here for a few months. She's also pretty shy, but she has nothing to worry about.

Vivienne isn't anything special. Not really.

"For how long?" I ask, peering into the glass windows of my office. I can just see the back of Vivienne's long brown hair.

Her entourage stands outside the office. There's also a pair of several looking bodyguards who look as if they could crush my skull. No one to end. Britney looked so nervous.

Because to Vivienne's face is plastered on every bus, billboard and bus stop sign right now to promote her new movie. Super tits or whatever it's called.

through Britney sighs. "Half an hour. She's... not happy..."

fashion I smirk. "Good."

our best Britney doesn't reply to that comment as I head toward my office with the woman who broke my little brother's heart.

Revenge will be so sweet.

lections Vivienne scowls over her shoulder the moment I enter, and the
missing her ire. No one makes Vivienne Fox wait after all. Well, apa
1 underthe older brother of the man with whom she betrayed.

Her scowl soon turns into a perfect Hollywood smile, and now she
her feet, extending her manicured hand. “Alex. It’s been a while...”

I raise a brow at her hand, stepping around my desk to take my ov
office. I “It’s Alexander.”

Only my nearest and dearest get to call me Alex. Vivienne lo
privilege the day she ‘accidentally’ landed on another man’s dick.
ontaine. She wipes her hand down her dress, sitting back on the chair again.
passes between us.

A-List The actress purses her lips, peering around the office. “So... where
nonths.start?”

I lean back, narrowing my eyes. Vivienne looks visibly uncomfortal
I can tell that she doesn’t want to be here. But her publicist probably t
e. I canthat it would be good for promotion.

Fountain Fashion is one of the hottest fashion magazines out there. I
f burly a shame she cheated on the CEO’s little brother...

wonder Not that I’m bitter or anything.

“Can you do ten o’clock next Tuesday?”

in town Vivienne tosses her hair over her shoulder. “Deal.”

. That’s it. There’s not much to discuss. My team will sort out the de
the cover shoot. That’s why I hired them. I bet they will make Vivien
like a powerful woman for sure.

to meet I just hope Henry won’t get mad at me.

Still. I will tell her what I think. I promised I would keep this profe
but who am I kidding?

re's no I love my brother, and this bitch broke his heart. I hate that she is
rt from all this fame while he struggles to even get an audition these days.

Why do awful people get all the luck in the world?

riser to No. Not luck. People like Vivienne aren't afraid of who they have
in order to get to the top. They would gladly kick the people they can
vn seat down the mountain, so long as they remain on top.

Selfish to the core.

ost that It will all backfire on Vivienne one day. And I will bask in the fla
her desolation when it finally happens.

Silence "Are there no more questions?" she asks.

I tap my chin, narrowing my eyes. "Why did you do it?"

do we Vivienne blinks. "Excuse me?"

I shrug. "Does the name Henry Fontaine not ring a bell?"

le, and The actress presses her lips into a tight line, and I guess I won't be
ould her my answer. Then she rises to her feet, storming out of the office
meeting is over."

It's just I knew it. Not a shred of guilt. I almost want to turn down her offer,
cover shoot will bring in the sales. And then those sales will go on to f
employees. They may be assholes, but they still deserve to eat.

"I look forward to the photo shoot, Vivienne."

The woman leaves with her entire entourage, rushing across the brig
etails off floor in a huff. People dodge her like she's a charging rhino.

ne look Poor little Britney looks at me flabbergasted outside my office, and
can do is shrug again. It may not be the exact closure I needed, but I
to make the woman pay in some way.

ssional, I've never seen a woman move so fast in heels. She was just eage
out of here.

getting I turn in my leather seat, gazing out the window. I have an imp
view of the city, but all I can think about is the day trip I am missing
with Renée.

to hurt You know what? It's been some time since I went to the fun fair
e about Maybe I deserve a day off.

It's settled. I am going to the funfair.

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I turn in my leather seat, gazing out the window. I have an impeccable view of the city, but all I can think about is the day trip I am missing out on with Renée.

You know what? It's been some time since I went to the fun fair myself. Maybe I deserve a day off.

It's settled. I am going to the funfair.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Henry

Being out with Renée almost makes me forget about the shit she has become my life. I barely get recognized at the funfair, but it's okay. I suppose the majority of the other fairgoers are a little too young to remember a 00s heartthrob.

Renée appears to be in her element as she points at everything we see. She even got me on a rollercoaster, as my stomach is still reeling. My life is like a rollercoaster right now, but I will stay far away from the real ones.

I'm not a huge fan of fast-moving locomotives.

"What ride do you want to go on next?" Renée asks.

I meet her bright gray eyes. She holds a stick of cotton candy in her hand and she has to be one of the cutest looking women I have ever seen.

She has pink fluff in her hair.

"Nothing fast or too high."

She pulls out her tongue. "You're boring."

"And you're reckless. Seriously, how can you find those things fun?"

I point at the rollercoaster we just got off. The rest of the park is somewhere behind us. We're taking turns going on rides with Renée.

Jake's words repeat in my mind. If we want to pursue Renée, then I ask for his blessings. I just don't think I am quite ready to date again after what Vivienne did to me.

I'm too afraid of getting my heart broken again, but I know Renée will never break my heart. Not intentionally. She has the same pain in her heart as I do, and I think she's the same. Someone burned her hard, too.

How I would like to find the fucker who hurt her and wring his neck. I probably like that jerk Jake works with, or used to work with, considering he quit his job.

It was a long time coming. Manifest is a disgusting magazine that has now been shut down. They used to write some awful stuff about me and Vivienne. It was when we were still dating.

That was before Jake started working for them.

Alex's ex-girlfriend, Grace, is just as vindictive as Vivienne is, and she is my little puppet.

Renée shrugs, eating more of her cotton candy. "What's wrong with life on the edge?"

I raise a brow, studying her carefully. She hardly seems like the type who lives life on the edge. Today she wears a simple T-shirt and jeans. For her hand, she is still one of the best dressed at the funfair.

Too many girls try too hard to impress.

I laugh, shaking my head. "And they call you the boring sister..."

The mood sours when I remind her of that disgusting article.

I stop. "Hey, sorry... I didn't mean to bring that back up. You know it's true, right?"

Renée gazes down at her fluffy pink snack, lost in thought. I step forward, taking her cheek in my hand. "Hey, come now. If it's any consolation,

he gave it. I often get compared to Alex too. I mean... just look at the guy..."

er what Renée smiles, glancing back up. "And look at you."

I raise another brow. Was that supposed to be a compliment? I guess I would take it as a good thing. Still, I will never be able to compete with my eyes as brother, and that's fine by me. I'm quite happy being the has-been teen heartthrob.

k. He's At least I had some success in life. Some people never get to reach their ringed dreams.

Renée peers around the fair, gasping when she spies a house of mirrors. She needs to "Let's go over there!"

ivienne I follow the direction of her pointing finger, rolling my eyes. Do you want to see a distorted version of myself? I already have low self-esteem, so whatever makes her happy.

l Dylan Renée drags me away by the hand, and I think I spot the flash of a camera in the corner of my eye. I bite the inside of my cheek. They just can't live with me, can they?

I can see the headlines already: **Henry Fontaine. Former teen heartthrob finds new love at the funfair.**

s, but to I just hope they don't find out that my date is Renée. The sister of the hottest Omega in town. I don't see what all the fuss is about. Cute, but she's just a little too cute. And what is with all the pink?

Hopefully, the cameraman gets bored with us and leaves. I just wait alone with Renée.

it's not We make it to the house of mirrors, and once there, we meet our distorted reflections. Renée can't stop laughing at herself, and it's so good to see her closer, smile.

... I get "Look how big my head looks!"

I look in the mirror too, sighing when I meet a large-headed version of myself. Renée snorts yet again.

“Wow, you really do find this place funny, don’t you?”

“It’s not just that,” she replies. “If someone had told me at age fifteen I’d have told them they were crazy.”

Her peeling laughter fills the mirrored room as I fold my arms, back against the wall. “How big of a fan girl were you?”

She blushes, and my heart skips when I spy the delightful shade on her cheeks.

“Does having a huge poster on my ceiling count?”

On her *ceiling*? Oh, lord.

“I... used to wonder what it would be like to kiss you. Silly, I know. Considering you were dating *what’s her name* back then.”

What’s her name? That’s one way to refer to Vivienne. They even had some plushies of her new character in some game booths, and I had **heart**-wanted to win one.

Hell knows why. I just thought the plushies looked funny.

I have no idea what’s going through my mind as I step closer to Chloé. Call it instinct, but I guess a part of me just wants to fulfil her fantasy.

Even I had teenage fantasies as a kid.

“Well, you don’t have to imagine anymore...”

Renée watches me curiously for a few moments, and I don’t think she quite grasped what is going on yet. I’m not even sure if what I’m about to do is wise. What happened to remaining guarded?

Renée isn’t like Vivienne. She’s different. Besides, it’s just one kiss

sion of I take her cheek in my hand, and Renée’s eyes pop. Her mouth part
all I can do is watch her lips. They look as if they will feel soft against
own mouth, and what am I waiting for?

en that I I’m pretty sure that the paparazzi followed us in here, so I best l
y, thenbefore they get any snapshots.

I steal a kiss from her, and her candy taste fills my mouth instantly
leaninggrowl sounds in my chest as I resist the urge to throw her up against the
Fuck. I never knew kissing could feel this good. It never felt this wonderful
of herVivienne.

It’s like a spell has been cast upon me, and it’s hard to keep my A
bay. It’s been some years since he got some.

Hold back, boy. You don’t want to mess this up...

I know. He growls in protest, settling back in his cage at my warning. I don’t
to scare Renée. So, the last thing I want to do is get possessive.

en have Renée freezes, dropping the candy floss stick to the floor. I kick it
kind ofpurring to let her know that she’s safe. I don’t want to stop. I even
about using my tongue to search her pretty little mouth, but that may be
too far.

Renée. It was just supposed to be a kiss between friends. But I know I was
teenagemore than friends with this girl later down the line. I just hope she feels
same way, too.

Finally, I break up the kiss, laughing when I see Renée’s expression
guess that’s one thing you can scratch off your list.”

she has Renée blinks. “My list?”

ut to do “You finally got to kiss Henry Fontaine. Was it everything you dreamed
would be?”

. She’s still in a state of shock, and did I overstep a line? She won’t be

arts and of what Jake told us earlier over breakfast. Honestly, I will only pursue if she wants me to. If I have her consent.

Finally, Renée crashes back to earth, and now her cheeks match the color of the candy treat she dropped on the floor. “Y-yeah... totally...”

Silence trickles between us both, and I hope I haven’t blown my cover. I smile at her.

I sigh. “Maybe it’s time we headed back to the others. They’re probably wondering where we are.”

“Yeah... of course.” Renée glances at her candy floss, and a sad expression attacks over her face. “Aw.”

I look at the discarded candy treat and snort. “We can always get a new one. Come on.”

She follows me out of the house of mirrors. When we return to the courtyard, I’m surprised to find Alex has joined us. He looks so out of place in his corporate business suit. Did he get out of work?

I catch a familiar smell on his clothes, and I have to double take. It couldn’t be, right?

Renée gasps in delight when she sees him. “Alex, what are you doing here?”

He smiles, meeting my eyes. “I decided to join in on the fun.”

I fold my arms, knowing he has something to tell me. Why do I feel this way? “Bad feeling it won’t be great news?”

“Well, that’s amazing. It wouldn’t be the same without you,” he replies.

Alex still won’t stop looking at me. “You’re too kind, Renée.”

The sounds of the fair carry on in the background. People scream as a roller coaster close by. Jake is the first to speak. “Well, what do you think?”

“What do you want to do next, Renée?”

She thinks for a moment. Then her eyes widen when she spots her favorite color destination. “The bumper cars!”

I think I will pass on that one. I am not a fan of whiplash.
“I just happen to love bumper cars.”

“Well, let’s go!” she peeps.
The three of them head off for the bumper cars. Ezra and Renée run and they resemble a pair of excited kids.

I meet my older brother’s gaze. “So... why do you smell like my ex?”

Alex studies me a while. Then he exhales, closing his eyes. “She called you at the office earlier. We’re doing a cover shoot to promote her new movie.”

Well, that’s nice. But I can’t be mad at him for that. He’s just doing what he can for others, his job, and a big name like Vivienne will attract a lot of readers. It still stings a little, though. But at least he is being honest and upfront with me.

I shrug. “Hey, if it helps with sales...”
“No. It’s a shame he can’t write anything awful about her.”

He wants to, but they can’t say anything defamatory. Vivienne could sue.
“I told her how I felt about what she did to you. Well, subtly. She didn’t know before I could get any further.”

He doesn’t have to explain. I know he has my back. Alex can’t stay with a woman any more than I can, and it must be hard having to do the cover for her.

But he has to do what’s best for his company. He didn’t get to where he is today by always doing the right thing.

“How was she?”
Alex rolls his eyes. “Same old Vivienne.”

“So... a complete diva. I knew the fame would get to her head.”
I want to be happy for Vivienne, but she hurt me. She doesn’t deserve it.

accolades.

er next “You’ll get the last laugh one day, little brother. I know it. I see big
for you.”

Two little kids run past us next, and they look about nine and seven
same age difference between me and Alex. The older brother st
younger brother running into what looks like some spilled popcorn, a
t ahead, so protective.

Alex was the same way with me. He still is.

” Finally, I meet his eyes. “It looks like my time in the spotlight has c
ame to pass. But that’s fine by me. Vivienne can have all the fame. That
e.” mean she’s happy.”

ing his It doesn’t. For all I know, Vivienne could be miserable.

hurts a My eyes trail toward Renée. She crashes her bumper car into Ezra,
big Alpha jerks. That’s whiplash for sure. And a lawsuit.

Sasha barks at them from the gate, and I’m surprised they let us
I know dog into the fun fair. Several families have their furry family membe
ie. them, too.

She left Alex gives me a knowing smile when he sees where my eyes hav

Then he places his hand on my shoulder, leading me over to the bump
and the “Your time will come, Henry. I’m positive. Just don’t give up.”

r shoot. I hope he’s right. But so long as I am happy, then who cares whet
re he is successful or not? I may never have fame or high accolades ever again

I can find some ounce of happiness in this world, then I know I will be

rve any

accolades.

“You’ll get the last laugh one day, little brother. I know it. I see big things for you.”

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Finally, I meet his eyes. “It looks like my time in the spotlight has come to pass. But that’s fine by me. Vivienne can have all the fame. That doesn’t mean she’s happy.”

It doesn’t. For all I know, Vivienne could be miserable.

My eyes trail toward Renée. She crashes her bumper car into Ezra, and the big Alpha jerks. That’s whiplash for sure. And a lawsuit.

Sasha barks at them from the gate, and I’m surprised they let us bring a dog into the fun fair. Several families have their furry family members with them, too.

Alex gives me a knowing smile when he sees where my eyes have gone. Then he places his hand on my shoulder, leading me over to the bumper cars.

“Your time will come, Henry. I’m positive. Just don’t give up.”

I hope he’s right. But so long as I am happy, then who cares whether I’m successful or not? I may never have fame or high accolades ever again, but if I can find some ounce of happiness in this world, then I know I will be fine.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Renée

Bumper cars sure are fun, but damn, my neck hurts. I don't think you're actually supposed to bump on bumper cars. It was still fun. It's a shame I couldn't be with my dad and my sisters. They will still take Pack Fontaine.

They're all really starting to grow on me and I think I may even be..

No. Too soon. It's not wise to go throwing around the L word. I don't even know Alex, Henry, or Ezra. But I already feel so connected to all of them.

They've restored my faith in the opposite sex, that's for sure. I didn't think I would trust any man ever again after how I got burned. *He who must destroy* left scorch marks on my soul, but maybe with time those scorch marks can heal.

Maybe I can actually convince myself that I am worth loving. Nothing that was written about me in Manifest was even remotely true. I am far from boring, and I am not an ice maiden.

Also, I am *far* from ugly...

I will never look like Chloé, but then she will never look like me.

both unique and two very different people. And that's okay.

Ezra helps me out of the car, and what a gentleman. The male supermodel sure has a way with the ladies. I've seen how other women look at him and they glare at me with green-eyed envy.

After all, he *is* the billboard guy. His very handsome face graced the billboards for a few years before he started doing commercials. If only those jealous girls knew that we weren't actually dating, but something today makes me feel like I am on a date with the whole pack.

I mean, I kissed Henry Fontaine. I'm sure fifteen-year-old me would be beside herself screaming right now if she could see herself in the future. I don't know how it happened. One moment, we were talking and laughing, but our reflections in the mirrors, and then the next, he was stepping up closer, but I was stealing a kiss from my lips.

I think he meant it to be platonic, but it had been far from platonic. Sure fireworks went off and all that other cliché nonsense that happens when hardly two people kiss.

Henry sure knows how to kiss, which isn't surprising for a former heartthrob. The guy has been kissing on camera ever since he was barely old enough to drive.

He's had a lot of practice.

I had only ever kissed one guy. No, *two* guys, if counting Jake.

Those kisses I shared with my ex could never compare to the one that I had with Henry.

I just hope he wasn't comparing me to Vivienne.

"Watch your step, milady," Ezra says, helping me out of the car and onto the slippery floor. I always forget how unsafe the floors of the cars are.

“Thank you.”

Ezra doesn't remove his fingers from my hand. His thumb moves
and brushes my knuckles, and my heart hiccups.

“You're welcome,” he replies, his light blue eyes smoldering.

I can't look away from his eyes, and I have no idea what is happen-
ing. Only alone has ever looked at me with such intensity. Not even *You- Know- W*

g about I jump next as a little girl climbs into the bumper car behind me.

It looks like we need to get off the ride. More people are getting on for t
ould be session.

uture. I All children, but who cares? We had fun.

gling at Ezra escorts me across the smooth, slippery floor, and the bump
ose and switch back on the moment we reach the steps. We join the others (

Sasha is happy to see us both as she wags her tail, jumping up for strok
ic. I'm “So, which ride do you want to go on next?” Jake asks me.

is when I peer around the fair. There's the Ferris Wheel.

My thoughts are snapped away next by a loud commotion, and I
ier teenbunch of young girls screaming. They get their phones out and start sr
rely old photos of someone I can't see. The crowd has bunched up, and I have
what they are all so fixated on.

Curiosity killed the cat, they say. I can't help but wander over there
But all what all the fuss is about. That's when I hear the names, “Chloé, Patric
at I just I should have known...

I suppose it's good she's here. We need to talk about Manifest. We
find a way to rectify what they wrote about her. Manifest is known fo
s I step a notorious gossip magazine, but they have still ruined several careers.
bumper Some people actually believe what they write.

Manifest doesn't care whose feathers they ruffle. They will do anyth

a profit. Well, not if I can help it.

is across I still have yet to hear from Dad, and I have no doubt in my mind will be furious. And once again, I will be the one to blame. I'm supposed to be the responsible one, but I can't be responsible for my sister's acting. No the rest of her life.

Who... She's an adult. But she's also a bit of an idiot. She's far too trusting, and either recent choice of a boyfriend has me very concerned.

the next Finally, I push through the crowd. I spy her bodyguard doing a swell keeping the crowd at bay. He pushes back a group of tween girls v beside themselves at seeing their idol. That's when his gaze fixes on me. The large Alpha lets me through, and it's a good thing that I am outside. recognized now. I once had to prove that I was Chloé's sister at a party. It was at a super exclusive bar uptown, and she was the hostess.

It was pathetic. What did they want? A DNA test?

Chloé wears a bright faux fur pink coat with a skimpy leather bra under a skirt beneath, and my eyes pop. That is a lot of skin for a sweet little O. Yet nobody bats an eyelid. Not even the mother of the little girl who had to sign her daughter's backpack. The tabloids are going to eat her up in that outfit.

I finally get my first glimpse of Patrick Fritz in the flesh. He's so much better looking on camera. In real life, he's scrawny. Gaunt cheeks, thin frame, greasy black hair, and he's covered head to toe in tattoos. A man who looks as if he hasn't slept in years.

Patrick doesn't even wear a coat. He just wears a denim vest and how is he not cold? He's smoking a cigarette, and has he not seen the "No Smoking Sign."?

This is a family fun fair.

“Chloé!” I try to shout over the sound of screaming fangirls.

My rather dumb blonde sister lifts her head once she hears my name. She looks around. Then her eyes land on me. A wide smile flashes across her face. “Ney Ney! It’s so good to see you!”

She’s certainly in better spirits. You wouldn’t think this was the same girl who called me at 5 am this morning weeping over the phone.

Chloé is like a whole new person.

She’s still wearing those oversized sunglasses as she rushes over to give me a hug, and I just want to rip them off her face. What is she hiding?

“Just hold on,” she tells me just as I’m about to speak, and then she starts taking a selfie with a group of thirteen-year-olds. They’re all so excited, thanking her nonstop as they tell her how they love her and how much they want to be just like her when they grow up.

I roll my eyes. If she keeps up this current behavior, then she won’t be a good role model for anyone much longer.

Something fishy is going on.

Chloé finally gives me her undivided attention, completely ignoring her adoring fans now. “Ney Ney, what are you doing here?”

That’s when I remember Pack Fontaine. I totally ditched them so I can talk with my sister. I look back at the bumper cars. They’re all waiting for me. Ezra even gives me a little wave, and warmth flows through my veins.

They’re prepared to wait while I speak with my wayward little sister. She’s not so wayward yet. She still has time to be redeemed.

Chloé drags Patrick closer as he lights up another cigarette. He chokes on the smoke when he inhales, and it must have gone down the wrong hole.

No wonder her coat smelled of an ashtray the other day. I bet
voice,smokes all day. So long as he isn't encouraging her to smoke, th
ross hersatisfied.

But passive smoking still kills...

me girl "Patrick, I want you to meet my sister Renée!"

The disheveled rock star blows out a stream of smoke from his
looking me up and down with approval. My skin crawls.

to give Ew, no. I don't think so.

Seriously. I am not even dressed provocatively. I am wearing two-y
e posesripped jeans and a stained T-shirt.

ecstatic, I think it's time I bought some new clothes.

ch they "Nice..." he remarks with a lewd smile, and I look at him in disgust.

Chloé snorts, whacking his shoulder playfully. "Paddy, that's my sis
n't be a He shrugs, dragging her in closer for a hug. He plants a wet kiss
cheek.

I almost gag.

ing her "Well, there's always room in my bed for you both..."

My cheeks flame up. "Excuse me?"

I could Chloé laughs at his despicable behavior, and what is with her? H
atchingshe just stand there and laugh while he talks about us that way?

trickles Some boyfriend.

"Everything all right?" Jake asks as he steps up beside me.

r. Well, The crowd has dispersed a little now. A few people linger, he
getting pictures of Chloé on their phones. Should I tell Jake that Pa
almostbeing really inappropriate?

ew wrong The beta puts his arm around me, and Patrick backs off. He's a b
Jake, but he still senses the threat. It feels great to have a guy fighting

Patrickcorner.

When I'm The hangers-on finally clear off as Chloé's bodyguard chases them giving us the privacy we need at last. The rest of the pack joins us guess I should introduce them to Chloé. I cringe at her outfit.

Seriously, is that a bra or a top? It's hard to tell. That faux fur pi mouth, hardly hides her underwear.

I just hope none of the pack's eyes linger on her lack of clothes. I a dating one of them at the moment, but if their eyes don't trail toward l year-old then I know they are keepers.

Chloé may look a little provocative today, but she's still beautiful was no missing the look of awe on some of those teenaged boys before

"Chloé, this is Jake's pack."

ster..." She has technically already met Jake before, but she hasn't met the on her Pack Fontaine.

Chloé has nothing but a smile for each of them. "It's so good to m all!"

She goes to shake each of their hands. Her eyes look as if they're a pop out of her skull when she meets Alex. "Oh my God... you're Alex ow can Fontaine. I love your magazine!"

Alex chuckles. "Why, thank you."

"No, seriously," Chloé continues. "I would love to be featured in F Magazine one day. It's been a dream of mine since I was little. We cou 0wever, cover shoot!"

Patrick is I almost die of embarrassment.

Tone it down a notch, Chlo...

eta like Alex actually considers her forward approach, and he's so gracefi for my world doesn't deserve him. "We could make something happen, I gues

Chloé's jaw hits the floor as he pulls out his business card. "Just get away, PA a call, and we can arrange something."

She glances at me in total shock. She has loved Alex's magazine since she was twelve. It's where she got all her style tips and beauty advice over the years.

Chloé meets Henry next, and she squeals in delight. "I've been a fan of yours since I was a kid! Renée and I used to watch you all the time on TV."

Henry smiles, taking her hand. "Thank you, Chloé."

There "Also, I am totally team Henry. My fans and I hate Vivienne!"

Oh, please just shut up now, Chloé.

Fortunately, Henry sees the funny side to her comment, and it's so funny that he rests his head on his hand, smiling. "I'm glad to hear it."

Chloé says hello to Jake and Ezra, and she goes on to tell the latter that she loved his latest cologne commercial. Ezra is an up-and-coming model who's creating quite the name for himself. He may be getting pretty famous about now, but he has a good heart.

He adopted a former stray.

Chloé has an actual smile for Jake, and I'm quite surprised. She wasn't aware yet that he wasn't the one who wrote that article for Manifest, but she's mountainlike she has already forgotten about the whole thing.

What a way to move on. I would be proud, but something is off. She's a little more talkative than usual.

Chloé bends down to pet Sasha now. The dog loves the attention, and she strokes behind her ears. Patrick steps closer to look at the dog. He had remained quiet throughout the whole exchange with Chloé. "I'm not a pack, which I found pretty strange. Even when Henry said he liked his."

give my album, the rock star shrugged, continuing to puff on that cigarette.

What the hell is his problem?

nce she However, it appears he's a dog lover as he bends down to pet
ver the alongside Chloé.

Sasha bares her teeth at him and snarls. Patrick falls onto his ba
uge fanshuffling away. "Woah, that dog is crazy!"

ime on The dog displays her upper canines, showing Patrick her vicious tee
the whites of her eyes are showing. My hackles rise on end. She's
whole different dog around him.

Luckily, Ezra manages to snap Sasha out of it. I have no idea wh
aggression came from. She passed all of her behavioral tests at the
good toShe is also one of the sweetest, most loving dogs that I have ever met.

Yet it was like a switch went off when Patrick went to pet her, and
that she confirms my suspicions.

odel, so Patrick is trouble.

famous I always trust a dog's instincts after all.

"C-come on... l-let's go, Patrick," Chloé mutters, pulling him aw
glances back at me. "We'll talk later?"

on't be I smile. "Of course. I look forward to it."

but it's They leave with Chloé's bodyguards, and I'm just glad that it
escalate any further. I have no choice but to watch as my baby siste
e's wayaway with her rock star boyfriend, and I wish I could drag her back

Patrick to fuck off.

letting But I can't. It's her life. Her choice.

. The pack stands and watches with me as Chloé and Patrick head
and the the big rollercoaster. They push in front of the line.

is latest "Are you okay?" Jake asks, rubbing his hand over my arm.

My skin pimples beneath his soft touch.

I sigh, shutting my eyes. “No. I don’t trust him.”

t Sasha All five of us fall silent, and I know they sensed that something
with Patrick, too. But they don’t care to comment on it. They probal
ckside, that it isn’t their place.

After all, Chloé is *my* sister. I have to be the one to guide her when
ath, and goes astray.

s like a Mom’s not around anymore, and Dad is always on some business t
all that ditzy blonde has these days.

ere her How can she not see that Patrick is bad for her? Is it because he’s f
shelter. I know for a fact that she doesn’t find him attractive.

I know Chloé’s type. She’s always loved a perfect Ken doll. S
it only boyband posters all over her bedroom walls when she was a kid. But n
is dating some washed-up rock star who looks as if he sells drugs for a

At least Sasha appears to be in good spirits again, wagging her
people passing by. A little girl points at her, telling her mommy to loo
ay. She cute doggy.

Still. Her behavior was quite startling before. No dog just char
personality like that. Well, unless it’s hurt or feels threatened.

: didn’t It can only mean one thing.

r walks Patrick Fritz is bad news.

and tell

toward

My skin pimples beneath his soft touch.

I sigh, shutting my eyes. “No. I don’t trust him.”

All five of us fall silent, and I know they sensed that something was off with Patrick, too. But they don’t care to comment on it. They probably feel that it isn’t their place.

After all, Chloé is *my* sister. I have to be the one to guide her when her life goes astray.

Mom’s not around anymore, and Dad is always on some business trip. I’m all that ditzy blonde has these days.

How can she not see that Patrick is bad for her? Is it because he’s famous? I know for a fact that she doesn’t find him attractive.

I know Chloé’s type. She’s always loved a perfect Ken doll. She had boyband posters all over her bedroom walls when she was a kid. But now she is dating some washed-up rock star who looks as if he sells drugs for a living.

At least Sasha appears to be in good spirits again, wagging her tail at people passing by. A little girl points at her, telling her mommy to look at the cute doggy.

Still. Her behavior was quite startling before. No dog just changes its personality like that. Well, unless it’s hurt or feels threatened.

It can only mean one thing.

Patrick Fritz is bad news.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Renée

The barista at the coffee shop actually gets my name right for once. He even remembered to put the special character on the e.

I have been called Ren and even Randall in the past, even when I gave them the correct name. What has changed?

“We hope you enjoy your coffee, Ms. Renée.”

The girl smiles at me widely, showing me too much of her teeth. Her eyes flash, and she almost looks possessed. I take the coffee from her, not wanting to get away from her immediately. She’s creeping me out.

That’s when I have the uncanny notion that people are staring at me all around. Several women at the back of the coffee shop won’t stop gawking at me. But once they notice my gaze, they peer away, speaking in hushed tones.

They weren’t the only ones leering at me, and do I have toilet paper stuck on the back of my shoe again? Or did someone stick a “kick me sign” on my back?

I glance back at the barista. She shows me the sclera of her eyes again. What is with her? What is with everyone?

“Thank you,” I reply, leaving the creepy coffee shop at last.

As I head out the door, I hear the girls muttering excitedly behind the counter. “That was her, wasn’t it? Chloé Laurent’s sister.”

I almost crush the coffee cup in my hand. Well, at least I can find some validation that I am famous. Now I am known publicly as Chloé Laurent’s oldest sister, which sucks.

I preferred it when I was anonymous. Because then I was free to live my life without the incessant gawking of strangers.

It’s not much better out on the street, either. Several people whisper as they pass by, and someone even asks for my autograph. I pretend I don’t care.

What did I expect? Everyone knows my name now, ever since Manifest posted that stupid article. Now the whole world knows me as the boring sister... I know I’m boring...

Manifest’s article was shared thousands of times online. There are also several variations of the piece in several other magazines, too. So now I can’t walk down the street without seeing my resting bitch face.

On the other hand, it’s me and Chloé from the night of the grand opening of her new fragrance, “Just Be You.”

I’m going to get a reputation for being the rude sister who never stops complaining at the street for her fans and or honors their requests for autographs, and I’m living up to the ice queen stereotype.

I never wanted fame anyway, but I was kidding myself if I thought I could escape the media forever. My sister is getting way too famous. Chloé was already pretty well-known in the business and hospitality industry, and she’s never made the front page of every newspaper.

Honestly, are there not more important things to report in the world now? My sister and I are just your typical pair of twenty somethings.

and the People need to get a life if they find us interesting.

“Hey, Renée, can I have a selfie?!”

ally say “Sorry, I have to be somewhere.”

r sister, I do too. I am supposed to be at the shelter by twelve. It’s only 9 and I decided to go for a walk in the city park first. But it looks like I won’t be able to live myget to enjoy walking in the park anymore without being noticed.

Who in their right mind would dream of a life like this? Fame is overrated as I will even go as far as to say that it is absolutely vile.

I’t hear Even if you were an extrovert who loved the attention, this is just not for me. Now I understand why celebrities wear baseball caps and sunglasses whenever they go out in public. I understand why some of them lash out at fans. What makes it worse is that I’m not even wearing makeup. No concealer to hide my dark circles. I’m pretty sure I heard cameras clicking around me even just now.

It passes as I start running up the street to get away from the ruckus. It’s mostly the younger ones who stop me. At least I’m still a nobody to all these new folks out there.

Unfortunately, in my bid to get away from the masses, I bump into a pedestrian at a street corner, getting my coffee all over his clean white shirt. I really “Oh, I’m so sorry! I should look...”

My voice dies in my throat as a ghost from my past stares straight at me. He hasn’t changed one bit. The only difference is that he has grown out his dad hair a little.

“Renée...” he whispers, his skin turning five shades lighter when he recognizes me.

I have no idea what to say. I have fantasized about a scenario like this for the last four years. Every imaginary argument that I had with myself

shower is all forgotten about now. My brain has frozen. I can't even th

This has to be another dream. I have had dreams like this on a num
occasions. I mean, come on. Somebody just asked for my autograph,
n, but Ibarista actually spelled my name right.

It's all in my head. I will wake up at any moment.

Except everything seems so real. The warm coffee in my hand, a
errated sound and smell of traffic on the street.

No. This is really happening. I suppose it was only a matter of time
just toobumped into *He who must not be named again*.

Finally, I gather my thoughts, and his name slips out with ease. "Aa
ut. There's a name I thought I would never say again.

A tight smile forms over his face. "It's good to see you again, Renée

An awkward pause stretches between us. I stand with my arms
over my chest, and my body language says it all. I am shutting him

ly just have to protect this heart of mine, after all. So my arms will serve as a

Aaron sighs, running his hand through his hair. "Well, this is awkward

Yeah, tell me about it.

He chews his lip, thinking of something to say. What else is there to

"Look, Renée... I know I'm the last person you want to see right now

I'm kind of glad we bumped into each other..."

I keep my gaze on the pavement. There are globs of chewing
own his everywhere, and people really are gross.

He points at my half a cup of coffee. Most of it ended up on his
hen he can't say I am sorry.

"Can I buy you another coffee?"

I glance down at the cup. There's my name on the cardboard. Should
f in the up his offer? It may give me the closure I need.

ink. “What do you say?”

number of I heave a sigh, looking at him from the corner of my eye. “Just and the coffee.”

Aaron gives me that boyish smile, and a phantom flutter returns to my chest. I remembered how much I used to love that grin.

and the “Well, shall we go?”

He extends his arm toward a quiet street. I would rather not go back to the last coffee shop. The last thing I need is an audience while I reunite with the douchebag of an ex.

ron.” I know of a quiet café we can stop at. So I lead the way without looking back and Aaron follows behind me.

.” This will be interesting, and I look forward to seeing what he has to say. Maybe I will finally get that apology.

1 out. I

cage.

ard.”

say?

ow, but

image-placeholder

We sit in a quiet corner of the café, and no one pays me any attention.

ig gum I peer at Aaron briefly. It looks like he won't ever get that stain out of his shirt now. Well, that's what he gets for dumping me because he really liked my sister... Asshole.

Too bad Chloé is dating Patrick what's his name now.

Not that Aaron ever would have stood a chance, anyway. The only reason I take he never pursued her back then was because she was still in high school.

gross pig.

Just one Aaron looks uncomfortable as he casts his gaze around, noticing the who won't stop staring at me. Oh, didn't he know? I'm famous to my apparently.

In fact, something in my gut tells me that is exactly why he is he walked that street nearly every day these past four years, and he happened to turn up after I featured in Manifest?

with my Sounds like someone just wants to get in on the fame...

I wonder how his music career is going.

a word, All that time that I supported him, too. Yet he had been pining sister all along.

say. I sigh. "Just cut to the chase, Aaron. Why have you brought me here

He glances at me, reaching up to rub between his eyes. "Look... how you feel about me..."

I snort. "Feel about you? You dumped me because you realized I never be like my little sister. You remember her, right? Beautiful blonde?"

The whole café falls silent. Aaron still doesn't remove his hand from his face, and it pleases me to see how much this is destroying him.

Good. "I know, I know... I messed up. I never should have done that to you. I'm sorry."

ized he "You're damn right you shouldn't have. You dumped me because you did a thing for my seventeen-year-old sister!"

reason That last one may be a little unfair. Aaron was nineteen going on twenty the time. So, he wasn't much older than Chloé was. But she was still a

ol. The I know for a fact the whole room falls silent at that last remark. It's exactly subtle.

Aaron looks at me, aghast. “Keep it down...”

No. I don't think I will. I may be acting like a little brat, but this guy is now my heart. He made me feel so worthless. He made me question why I like Jake would ever be interested in me in the first place. All just because I've met this asshole who used me just to get to Chloé.

I'm kind of glad we bumped into each other. Now I don't have to talk with myself in the shower anymore. There are so many things I want to tell him, but we have an audience. I'm already pretty high profile.

He exhales, speaking in hushed tones. “Look... I was hoping I would meet you. I was livid when I saw that article that they wrote about you, and then all my old feelings came rushing back. I don't like Chloé anymore.”

“I've grown up these past four years. In fact, I've dated my fair share of guys. I know all just dumb blondes who can't take a selfie for five minutes...”

I smirk. “Finally realized the grass isn't greener on the other side?”

He sighs. “Something like that.”

Well, isn't that sweet?

“You're the only girl I ever cared about. You're real, Renée. And you never try to impress anyone, and that's what I admire about you.”

I shut my eyes, breathing deeply. I always told myself he would regret leaving me. I'm glad he ever let me go. Only just to make myself feel better. It looks like he's right.

Still. It doesn't make me feel better. It just makes me feel worse.

“I never should have broken things up with you. I was a fool, and I'm sorry, Renée.”

I gaze into his sad green eyes. He seems so genuine, but let's be real. I'm not. We were never in love. We were just two kids who happened to be

That's all. That's what twenty-year-olds do. They date for the sake of being single because they don't want to be single.

Especially this day and age with social media. We all want that "in a relationship" status on our pages.

Yet I long stopped caring about that shit. I learned that it's better to be single than in a loveless relationship. We had no chemistry. Our sex was boring.

He hardly made me come. The only time he did was when I was drunk and ran up at my Henry Fontaine poster, ironically enough. A guy I kissed just a few days ago.

Now there's a man who makes my panties wet.

It's not that Aaron isn't attractive. He is. He has that goofy, boyish charm about him, which has vanished slightly now that I look at him properly.

In fact, I think he has even gone a little gray. And at just twenty-two. Karma, hey.

Aaron reaches across to grab my hand. But I jerk it away, tucking it beneath my arms as I cross them over my chest again.

He hangs his head. "I suppose it would be foolish of me to ask for a second regret the chance?"

Very foolish.

"Yes. I'm dating someone now."

"How serious is it?"

What? Is he kidding me?

I meet his eyes. "That's none of your business. I'm sorry, Aaron, but I'm here four years too late. I'm a different person now from the one you were dating. It doesn't feel like it at times, but after meeting you today, I can gladly say that I have finally moved on."

ce of it I have. For a while, it was like I was stuck in a continuous loop. For
time. I still remember when I found out he was dating someone new.

t “In a I had found out through a mutual friend. I saw his profile, and there
mistaking the little blonde piece hanging on his arm. She was al
r to be perfect replica of my sister. Well, more like a cheap knockoff.

ex was That had been one of the worst weekends of my life. It was o
months after we broke up. There I was, listening to Sinead O’ Cor
looking repeat while he was dating someone new.

ust two “It’s pretty serious,” I tell him after some careful consideration. “W
new guy.”

Something flashes through his eyes, and do I spy resentment?

charm “It’s Henry Fontaine, isn’t it? I saw the picture of you two kissing...’

’. What? Someone actually snapped that? Damn, those paparazzi are
y-three.sneakier by the day. It looks like I’m going to have to shower w
curtains closed from now on. As any smart person should.

king it “No, it’s not Henry. It’s his beta, actually. One of his pack brothe
that it’s any of your business.”

another Aaron crosses his own arms now, and there’s that weird glint in
again. How someone can go from heartfelt to downright bitter the
anyone’s guess.

He shrugs. “So, you’re dating the whole pack?”

That’s it. I’m leaving. I shouldn’t have to stand for this. I get up fr
seat. “Goodbye, Aaron, and thank you for the coffee.”

t you're He doesn’t look at me now, and I can’t help but be smug. Now it’s r
dating.to reject him.

dly say *Doesn’t feel so great, does it?*

I hope I am not being too harsh. He was only nineteen when he c

ozen in me. Who knows what they want at that age? That's why I worry about
my sister. She's still pretty young.

was no She is not making smart decisions lately, and I am dreading Dad's
most acall. It won't be long until he finds the article from Manifest.

He's probably just been so busy in Paris, which is why he hasn't
nly sixtyet.

mor on "You're making a big mistake, Renée."

I look back at the guy who dumped me four years ago. "No. I'm not
with this is just me getting closure. Thank you, Aaron, for helping me realize
how much of an idiot I had been. You're not worth crying over anymore..."

*And you're not worth listening to Sinead O'Connor on repeat,
" Because trust me, Aaron boy, everything compares to you. About
getting everything...*

with my Now, when I think about it, I actually remember being a little
when he dumped me. I guess I knew all along we were never meant to
be. Not I knew deep down that I had been dating a selfish piece of shit who
thought of himself. I should have dumped him before I even gave
him the chance to dump me over text.

next is Yeah, text. The fucker had been too chicken to dump me in person.

"So long, Aaron. And have a good life."

Again, there's that creepy flash in his eyes, and I'm sick of the
from my him. What did I see in this guy?

Finally, I leave the café, and I wait until I am out of sight before
my turn into tears. Holy fuck. It's like a dam just burst all of a sudden. All
my feelings just came crashing back.

All those feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and uncertainty
plunged with my tears, and it's like I'm releasing all the negative energy.

out my My dark days are over. No more feelings to hold me back. Now my
clear.

s phone I don't think I will be fit enough to work at the shelter today. At le
mentally. I send a quick text to Michelle to tell her I won't be able to r
seen it and then I head in the direction of the Fontaine house.

I can't be alone right now. I may have gotten the closure I neede
still feel drained.

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My dark days are over. No more feelings to hold me back. Now my road is clear.

I don't think I will be fit enough to work at the shelter today. At least not mentally. I send a quick text to Michelle to tell her I won't be able to make it, and then I head in the direction of the Fontaine house.

I can't be alone right now. I may have gotten the closure I needed, but I still feel drained.

I just want to be with my guys.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Ezra

I've just finished attaching Sasha's lead to her collar when a knock at the door. The dog pricks her ears up and wags her tail.

"Who is it, girl?"

She glances up at me with those intelligent brown eyes. Then she moves toward the door, scratching at the wood. A small whimper sounds from the chest.

I don't have to ask her again. Now that I'm closer to the door, I catch her lime zest as my Alpha rises to the surface. He loves that scent.

It's pure Renée. Nothing more, nothing less.

I peer down at the dog, waggling my eyebrows. "Well, shall we let her in?" Sasha gives a whimper that ends on a bark, and I guess that means I should open the door and my heart somersaults when I spy the woman of my dreams on the other side.

Renée is all I think about lately, and sooner or later, I am going to get Jake up on his word and pursue her for myself. I just have to find my chance first.

Girls like Renée don't come around often. So I have to take this one

slow.

Her beautiful gray eyes are red and swollen, and my instincts go into overdrive. Someone has hurt her...

“Renée? Are you alright? Has someone upset you?”

She doesn't speak. The tears pour from her eyes, and the next thing I know she has her arms around me, burying her face into my shirt.

Something bad has happened.

Sasha whimpers beside her, jumping up onto her hindquarters to lick away tears from her cheeks. All I can do is shush her, rocking her gently back and forth as she weeps her heart out.

A voice at the back of my mind tells me that she came here looking for Jake, but when she splutters against my chest, getting it wet with her tears, I have a feeling that she is just as happy to see me, too.

Well, whatever I can do to help.

“It's all right. Don't cry. Hey... Sasha and I were just about to go for a walk. Want to join us?”

She steps back, peering up at me with tear-filled eyes. In the light of the hall, the tears make her eyes appear bright cerulean blue. Renée is a crier, and it just makes me want her even more.

But I am still prepared to find the fucker who put those tears in her eyes. I pretty eyes and hang them by their ankles.

It's what they deserve for making my girl cry.

A small smile takes over her face. “Sounds like fun,” she whispers.

It certainly will be fun now that she'll be joining us. I can see Sasha opening too as she jumps up and down in excitement, wagging her tail.

Well, time to head out. I know the perfect place to take her.

ice and

go into

image-placeholder

I know

I let Sasha off her lead as Renée and I walk barefoot on the sand, the s
lick the waves just on our right. It seems the ocean truly was a good call in the
ack and Renée loses herself in the moment, letting the sea breeze caress her

she closes her eyes. She just finished telling me about her morning.
ing for The breeze wafts her scent my way, but I try to keep it together
tears, I sake. I don't want to intrude on her moment. Seagulls cry above as the
kiss the sand, and it's so calming.

“I love how the waves fizz...”
jo for a I raise a brow. “Fizz?”

“When they roll over the sand, making it wet. It makes a *fizzing* sou
t of the Now that she mentions it, I can hear that sound too. How observant
a pretty I chuckle. “Jake wasn't wrong when he said you love the sea.”

Renée opens her eyes, and a bright blush takes over her cheeks w
ner big, hears what I said. I realize my mistake and mentally curse. Now s
think that we've all been talking about her.

We have, but we've only said good things. All of us are taken w
and I hope one day she will become a part of the pack.

agrees In her own time, of course. I would never rush her.

I hate to sound selfish, but a part of me is glad that Jake wasn't free
Because then I wouldn't get to spend any alone time with sweet Renée

Jake had to go to Manifest HQ to collect his things. They are term his contract today, and he has to go through all the proper channels. my full support. I don't know why anyone would want to work for t magazine after what they wrote about Renée.

I hope that jackass Dylan gets what's coming to him one day. Th with her douchebag ex-boyfriend, Aaron, too. From what she has told oothing sounds like a complete moron.

end. Apparently, he was the one who cemented her insecurities. He's the face as why she doesn't believe she's good enough or as pretty as her little sis I swear if I ever run into him myself...

for her All this happened before I met Renée, so it's probably not my p e waves judge. But I know her now, and I see the way she retreats at times wh she's with us.

She doesn't retreat so much as she did in the beginning. She has a come a long way since the day I first met her at the dog pound.

nd..." Any man who leaves his woman isn't really a man, in my opinion. of her. man would make a girl like Renée feel special every day, telling h goddamn beautiful she is.

hen she "Water just has a way of calming me. It's been a long day, and it's he will one in the afternoon."

I laugh. "I bet it has. How did it feel when you got to be the one t ith her, Aaron this time?"

Renée casts her gaze over the horizon, and she has never looke regal. The sea serves as her backdrop, bringing out the blue of her de e today. eyes, and she almost resembles a siren.

"I don't know. I guess I kind of knew deep down that he would re decision, even though I am too hard on myself."

inating “You know your worth, that’s why. You know that you deserve more.
He has what he did to you.”

hat vile “I guess you’re right.”

“I know I’m right. There’s no guessing here, Renée. Only a complete samewould throw you away. You’re not only beautiful, but compassionate
me, hemean, just look at that dog...”

We glance up the beach. Sasha runs toward the waves, living her life
reasonfullest. I just hope she keeps an eye out for jellyfish.

ster and I never saw how bad the dog was when she arrived at the pound,
nerve of some people. If it’s not jackass boyfriends dumping their girlfriends
place toover text, then it’s sub-humans who abandon their dogs on the street.

enever But at least there are some good people in the world. They’re much
find, but they’re there, hidden amongst the muck. Renée is one of
actuallypeople.

She smiles, blushing ten times harder now, and I can’t believe she
. A realEven though the world has been cruel to her, she still manages to
er howhumble and kind.

I am going to make her mine...

hardly Without thinking, I take her hand. “If it’s any conciliation... if you
been my girl, I never would have thrown you away.”

o reject Her cheeks turn pinker.

“I’m serious. Any man who doesn’t see your worth is a fool.”

d more I place my hand over her warm cheek, and the world seems to stop
ep graywaves freeze, and even the seagulls stop flying in the sky.

Now it’s just me and Renée.

gret his I look at her small, pouty mouth. I have dreamed of kissing those
lips ever since I first laid eyes on her. Time to make my move.

ore than Carefully, I bend my head forward, showing her how much she means to me as I place a tender kiss to her lips.

She's hesitant at first. But then she slowly melts into the kiss, wrapping her arms around my neck, and a purr sounds in my chest. My Alpha comes to life. He soothes the sweet female, letting her know that she is safe with me and now she rises up on her toes, reaching my height.

Well, not quite. I am rather tall. Renée, however, is pretty small. I scoop her up so easily in my arms.

Another time...

She drops back to her feet and giggles. Her sweet lime taste lingers in my mouth.

"What's so funny?" I ask.

Renée opens her eyes. "I just kissed the guy on the billboard across the street. They put you back on there, you know. Now you're advertising real men's cologne."

I blink for a moment as I try to get my bearings. I'm still a bit distracted by her sweet lime.

Then I guffaw, almost matching the seagulls in the sky. God, this woman had She really is perfect.

"Well, I'm glad that I get to keep an eye on you in some way. May I hope that Aaron will get the message and back off."

She smirks, turning back up the beach. "I'll make sure I remember to tell you. They curtains open the next time I undress."

Wait... what?

Sasha distracts me next when she rushes up beside me. She scratches my leg. I roll my eyes, pulling out the tennis ball from my pocket.

I pass it to Renée. "Care to do the honors?"

eans to She grins, snatching the ball from my hand as she throws it up the
Sasha zooms after the bright yellow ball, and we laugh in unison.
ing her Renée looks up at me appreciatively, and it appears she's in mucl
omes tospirits. I'm the reason for that smile, and I can't help but be a little smu
th him, Anything to make her happy again.

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She grins, snatching the ball from my hand as she throws it up the beach. Sasha zooms after the bright yellow ball, and we laugh in unison.

Renée looks up at me appreciatively, and it appears she's in much better spirits. I'm the reason for that smile, and I can't help but be a little smug now.

Anything to make her happy again.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Jake

I exit the elevator with an extra spring in my step.

I just got back from HR. My termination from Manifest has become official. From today, I will no longer work for Grace or her legion of sycophants.

Best of all, I will no longer have to look at the likes of Dylan. I am a man now who can write whatever his heart desires. Money was never an issue for me. I have my inheritance. But I just wanted that leg up in the industry.

I honestly believed that Manifest would help me gain a career as a writer. But the only noteworthy thing I have written over the years was a column on what celebrities wore what dress to whatever event...

It gets tedious after a while.

I'm just heading to my desk to collect my things. To my surprise, there is a bottle of champagne when I arrive with a card. The card says, "Sorry about leaving..."

Well, I'm not sorry.

A few people actually signed the card and I'm touched. I didn't r

had that many friends at this place.

“Hey, Jake. How you holding up?”

It’s Kate who speaks to me. I look over at her. “Never better. Why?”

Kate blinks at me in surprise. “Really? I thought you’d be up since Grace fired you.”

“Fired? I quit?”

Kate rises to her feet, joining my side. “Well, that’s not what’s around...”

I roll my eyes. This just serves as a reminder of why I want to get away from here. Gossip spreads worse than forest fire in this office.

“Trust me when I say this, Kate, but I handed in my notice. That and finally Renée was the last straw.”

or loyal Kate smiles. “I figured. You know what? I’m happy for you. Maybe one day I can follow in your footsteps...”

n a free She has to say the last part quietly. This office is full of backstabbers and brown nosers. If anyone so much as heard what she said, they would run in the straight to Grace to get in her good graces.

It tends to work. Most of the time. Depending on Grace’s mood. As a writer. It just warms my heart that Kate feels comfortable enough to tell me what darkest secrets. No doubt a lot of people wish to leave this place, but they would rather keep that information to themselves.

Kate glances at my desk, a furrow etched between her dark eyes. “Where’s a where are your chocolates?”

you’re My chocolates?

She looks around the office, searching for the culprit. That’s when she lands on Dylan. The ass is stuffing his face with what I assume are chocolates, and he really is the gift that keeps on giving...

Kate snaps at him. “Those weren’t your chocolates. Dylan.”

Dylan holds his hands up, wiping the chocolate from his mouth. “\n” me.”

et after She storms over to his desk, her black curly hair bouncing behi
“Just who do you think you are?”

Dylan snorts. “Relax, Katie girl. They’re just chocolates...”

s going She bares her teeth. “They weren’t bought for you. And it’s Kate!”

He rolls his eyes. “Relax. We all know you’re just cranky because
the hellfinally hitting thirty next week.”

Kate scoffs, folding her arms. “Are you serious? Besides, you’re tw
ticle onolder than I am, jackass!”

Dylan shrugs. “Yeah, well, men never get old. Didn’t you kno
/be oneKatie?”

Kate seethes, unscrewing her earrings. Just as I go to stop her from
ers andan all-out war with Dylan, something catches my eye. Grace lurks
ould goshadows, watching the whole altercation between the two.

It’s one of her skills.

She normally has her little birdies, or her flying monkeys to help
me heron the office, but sometimes she will observe her employees for hersel
ut they It appears I’m not the only one who has spied her. People put thei
down, pretending to do work. Dylan and Kate are the only ones who
“Hey...sensed her yet, too lost in their stupid argument.

I will at least stop Kate from incriminating herself.

Dylan, however... he can go and rot in Hell.

ier gaze He says some rather unsavory things next, and he’s just digging hi
are mygrave.

“You sexist pig. I’ll kick your ass.”

My grip tightens on Kate's arm. Threatening him won't do her any good and I worry Grace may take offense. However, she only has eyes for Dylan. I don't think she likes what he is saying.

I think Dylan is forgetting that he kisses the very ass of a woman.

Dylan laughs, and he looks like a cartoon devil. "Maybe you should consider Botox. You're starting to get wrinkles, Katie girl."

Kate closes her eyes, taking deep breaths. Several people seem to be in the room, but I don't know who. I'm sure you're interested in what Dylan is saying now, and I'll be surprised if anyone complains to HR after this.

Two years ago "Wrinkles?" Grace finally steps out from the shadows.

Dylan's face blanches, and I'm so glad that I came in to collect my things today. I wouldn't want to miss this for the world.

"G-Grace... I... didn't see you there..." Dylan stammers, shoving my starting half-eaten chocolates in his trash can.

Grace folds her arms, settling her poison eyes on him. "What was it that you were saying, Dylan?"

Kate and I hold our breaths. It appears the whole office holds its breath with us.

Dylan shrinks behind his desk. "I... I can't remember..."

Grace steps forward again. "I think it sounded something like *bag*..." Dylan's face is the color of beetroot.

Grace continues. "Come on, you're a writer. You should be able to come up with this one. What rhymes with *bag*?"

Dylan bites his lip. Then he sighs, saying loud and clear. "Hag. I saw myself as a Grace..."

Grace's eyes flash in anger. We all know how sensitive she is about her own age.

favors, Dylan stutters. “Look... I was just kidding. K-Katie and I are friends. I joke all the time.”

“Well... Kate doesn’t find your comments very amusing. And neither do I.”

There’s no way Dylan can talk his way out of this. It looks as if his *Manifest* are over.

“You’re fired. Pack your things and get the hell out of my office.”

Dylan actually has the gall to look shocked.

“Now!” Grace shouts.

Dylan jumps from his seat, fumbling with his desk. I can’t help but smirk as I watch that asshole getting what he deserves. Grace may be strict but sometimes she pulls through.

He fills up a box with his things. He takes his calendar with all the photos of dressed women, then his dead plant that he failed to water every day. That’s what you tosses in a few stationery supplies.

Once he’s finished, he hangs his head, looking like a man on death row. Finally, he makes his grand exit, heading toward the elevator. Kate takes the stapler from his box when he passes her. “This actually never belonged to you...”

I roll my eyes. Typical. The stapler even has her name on it.

The moment the elevator doors shut behind him, the office erupts in cheers. The bastard is finally gone.

Well, at least it had a happy ending. That’s payback for what he said to me, *Renée*.

Grace orders everyone to be quiet. Then she looks at me. “A shame to see you go, Jake. You will be missed.”

It’s hard to tell if she actually means that. “Thank you, Grace,” I reply.

ids. We “If you need my letter of recommendation, then you know who to call.
Her personal assistant, of course.

ther do “Thank you again, Grace.”

She smiles just ever so slightly. Once we’re done, she heads back
days at shiny white office, leaving me spellbound.

Kate turns to me once she’s out of earshot. “Good luck out there,
won’t be the same here without you.”

I shrug, whispering just low enough for her to hear. “You never
Maybe you will be joining me one day too. I have faith in you, Kate.”
out feel Her grin widens. Then she reaches up, giving me a hug. She’s probably
a bitch, only person at Manifest I will keep in touch with, and I really do hope
gets away from here someday.

ie half- She’s a talented writer, and I expect nothing but good things from
Then her future.

Kate waves me off as I step into the elevator where Dylan just vanished
a few moments ago. Once the doors close behind me, I breathe a sigh, and
she takes my eyes.

inged to Here’s to the rest of my life.

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“If you need my letter of recommendation, then you know who to call.”

Her personal assistant, of course.

“Thank you again, Grace.”

She smiles just ever so slightly. Once we’re done, she heads back to her shiny white office, leaving me spellbound.

Kate turns to me once she’s out of earshot. “Good luck out there, Jake. It won’t be the same here without you.”

I shrug, whispering just low enough for her to hear. “You never know. Maybe you will be joining me one day too. I have faith in you, Kate.”

Her grin widens. Then she reaches up, giving me a hug. She’s probably the only person at Manifest I will keep in touch with, and I really do hope she gets away from here someday.

She’s a talented writer, and I expect nothing but good things from her in future.

Kate waves me off as I step into the elevator where Dylan just vanished a few moments ago. Once the doors close behind me, I breathe a sigh, shutting my eyes.

Here’s to the rest of my life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Renée

I was a fool to think that Dad would go easy on me over Chloé's bel
It looks like he found the article by Manifest. I talk with hi
video phone as I walk through the woods. It looks as if my old joggin
is off limits now on account of all the paparazzi who want to take my p

I don't get anywhere near as much attention as Chloé does, but i
enough for me to consider an alternative route. I just hope I don't
getting murdered.

Stupid media. It's their fault Dad is berating me on the phone over
If they just left either of us alone, then we wouldn't even be havi
conversation right now.

"I am disappointed in the both of you. But most of all, I am disappo
you, Renée. You're the oldest. You should be keeping an eye on yo
sister."

I bite the inside of my cheek. No, actually, I shouldn't be keeping
on her. She isn't *three* anymore. This isn't like the time I once fou
sticking pennies up her nose.

Chloé is a woman. We both are.

I'm getting sick of being her lifelong babysitter. If she wants to parties and get drunk with her rock star boyfriend, then who am I to stop It's her life.

Who am I kidding? I know I won't be able to stay away for too long is something awfully suspicious about Patrick. Sasha growled at him, is one of the most loving dogs I have ever met.

If a dog senses danger, they bare their teeth.

"It's going to take a miracle to clean up the mess you've both made is not good for Laurent Hotels."

Seriously? Did he miss the part where the media said mean thing navior. both of his daughters? Is he not angry about that?

m over Dad's wrong. It appears that all of this "bad press" has actually ig routewonders for his hotel franchise. I hear more and more people are f icture. over to his hotels as we speak.

t's still Dad is an old-fashioned business guy, though. He won't see it that v end upwon't care if more and more young people go to his hotels and talk on social media.

Chloé. That's the impact Chloé has on the young crowd. ng this Dad sighs, pinching between his eyes. He looks tired, and has he any sleep at all?

inted in "Look... I know what they said wasn't kind. I am in talks with ur littlelawyers of suing that magazine for defamation. The two of yo aggravate me at times, but you're still my daughters, and I won't have an eyesaying awful things about you."

nd her Tears prick the back of my eyes. It looks like he will fight for us aft haven't had much of a chance to talk to Chloé since the whole debacle Manifest. All she does is spend time with Patrick now.

o go to I have seen the videos they upload online, and they make my toes curl. Do you know how much she cringes? It's so much cringe. They hurt to watch.

The only person I have spoken to outside of the pack is Marc. We're all worried about her, and I think it's time we gave her an intervention. I don't want to see her and she Chloé is venturing too far down the rabbit hole.

“Thanks, Dad.”

He stops for a moment, watching me carefully through the video player. This assesses my reaction. I guess he read the parts where Manifest called me an ugly sister. Dad has never been the touchy feely type, and ever since Mom died, he has been even more distant.

In fact, he appears clueless about what to say.

“You look well, Renée.”

I suppose that's all I will get for reassurance. It's fine. Jake told me that the boss fired Dylan in the end, so at least there's a silver lining there.

A tight smile forms over his face. “I take it you're happy then?”

I have to give him some credit. He is asking about my mental state instead of just telling me that I am beautiful and that what Manifest said about me was wrong.

How I feel on the inside is far more important than how I look on the outside.

I snort. “So I guess you saw the stories...”

That picture of me kissing Henry has been shared all over the internet. Team Henry is cheering him on, happy that their favorite actor is moving on. Whereas Team Vivienne is calling him a traitor.

How dare he move on after Vivienne.

As I said, Team Vivienne is toxic. They want to talk about loyalty and how the so-called idol is a cheater.

curl. So It just means that my profile has risen even higher. Everyone knows the mystery girl who kissed Henry is me now. I've had old classmates both messaging me on social media, congratulating me for dating Henry Fontaine. They even want to catch up.

I declined, of course.

Some of those girls were cruel to me, but now they want to get in my good graces? No, thank you.

It seems karma is working her magic, and I can't help but feel some of the same feeling I got when I rejected Aaron.

If only they all knew the truth.

Henry and I are not in fact dating. The only one I am technically dating is Jake, but that doesn't mean that I'm not interested. I'm interested in them. Even Alex.

Alex was the first member I met from Pack Fontaine since I saw him last night at Chloé's debut, yet I haven't kissed him. I'm not even sure I'm rather interested in me.

"I did, Renée. Honestly, I'm happy for you. He seems... nice."

I jump over an exposed tree root on the hiking trail. "You don't even know who he is, do you?"

Dad stammers. "Am I supposed to?"

"He's Henry Fontaine. Only one of the biggest heart throbs on television had his poster on my ceiling!"

Dad still doesn't look any wiser. I laugh out loud, scaring away the birds. He's so out of touch.

"Well, regardless, I'm happy for you. He's very handsome, and you know they deserve the best, dear. I wish I could say the same for Chloé's new interest..."

ws that There's no missing the disdain in his voice. Dad hasn't even had the
ssmatesof meeting Patrick yet, so I try to refrain from telling him that he look
ontaine.in person.

The camera really does add ten pounds.

Dad must have had his team research Patrick, so of course he's w
nto myman would want their daughter dating a guy like Patrick Fritz. He ma
sold millions of copies of his most recent album, but he's still scum.
ug. It's I always thought that Chloé would have been the one to date Ker
turns out she has a thing for scrawny rocker types. Meanwhile, I'm
who is dating Ken.

ating is It takes me back to when we were kids and we would argue about w
n all ofour Barbies got to be the one to date our sole Ken doll. We even br
legs in the process.

him the Poor Ken.

if he is Funny how fate works.

I don't bother telling Dad that Henry and I are not actually dating.
moment, I am only dating Jake.

n know Since Jake doesn't have a huge profile yet, news won't have sprea
yet because I know things are going to happen for Jake. He is a t
writer, and I know he will have a bestseller for sure.

vision. I Even Ezra's modeling career is taking off, and I have high hopes
too.

a bird. The only member of Pack Fontaine Dad will be aware of is Ale
quite the bigshot after all, owing his own fashion magazine. I'm su
ou onlyDad didn't even make the connection with Henry's name.

ow love "Well, I have to go, Renée. It's getting late."

That's right. He's in Paris. He's basically talking to me from the fut

e honor Dad gives me a pleading look over the phone. I pause mid-step. “Is it worse?”

“Please look out for your sister. I do not trust this Patrick creature dating.”

ary. No I love his choice of words. Creature. I guess that’s something we may have in common. I don’t trust that creature myself, but I don’t bother telling Dad

I don’t tell him either that the rescue dog that I helped rehabilitate, but I’ll show its teeth at him. That would send warning bells for sure.

the one “Well, have a pleasant afternoon, Renée. Good call on going to the hospital for a break from the media. Just be careful.”

which of I smile. “I will. Good night, Dad.”

oke his “Love you.”

“Love you too.”

Dad exits the video chat, and now it’s just me and the woods. I take a moment to just be. That’s what nature walks are all about, after all.

. At the I throw my head back on my shoulders, gazing up at the cracks of light behind the tree canopy. It’s so peaceful here. I truly am the only soul in the world. I say Well, apart from the bird flitting through the branches above.

talented I close my eyes, focusing on the wind. The leaves rattle, almost sound like crashing waves. I breathe it all in. It smells like a storm is brewing. The atmosphere has that dampness about it.

I always loved the smell of rain. Most people can’t smell it, but I can. It’s like mud and moss.

urprised I continue my hike through the woods, wondering if I should head back. I parked the car two miles away at the beginning of the trail. My car is the only one at the lot, and it doesn’t look as if any nosy paps followed me here... You’d have to be very dedicated to follow me out here.

What is That's when I hear the click of a camera, stopping in my tracks. I
fists. I am not alone after all. The nerve of some people.

she is Wait until I get my hands on them...

It hits me out of nowhere. A tight pinching deep in my gut, and I
have inover, forgetting all about the camera now.

ad. What the hell? Period cramps? No, I have never had them this
e baredbefore.

Then what's happening?

woods Oh, fuck. Here comes another...

I drop to my knees, lying on my side. Another cramp turns me ins
and it's definitely not period cramps anymore. So I grip a tight hold
mossy bark of a tree, appreciating how wet and damp it feels at that mo

I'm hot all over as I breathe through my nose, trying not to pass o
take athe sheer pain of having my insides wrung dry like a wet cloth. Sweat
my face as a strange scent surrounds me like a potent cloud.

blue sky Lime cake frosting?

around. Wait. Could that be my perfume? Nonsense. I'm a beta. I don't perf
have scent spikes.

ounding I just smell like any other old person.

ng. The The more I sweat, the stronger the smell becomes, and all I want t
dig a hole and bury myself in the dirt. Another cramp seizes my insid
do. It'sthis time it twists me around like a pretzel.

I groan, sounding like an animal dying alone in the woods, and if
back. Icareful, I will attract some buzzards.

was the Heavy breaths escape my mouth as I bury my face in the mud.
ie. water. Cold, frigid water.

This fever is unbearable, and I may as well be on fire.

ball my My hand feels the earth. It's damp, which means I must be close to source. Slowly, I crawl my way through the undergrowth, listening to the trickle of water.

double *Please let there be water...*

I scare away tiny forest creatures in my bid to find water, and I offer a silent apology. *I'm so sorry.*

Twigs and rocks scrape my skin, but I'm determined to find this source. It's so close now, I can smell it. It's like my senses have heightened. Even the chirping of birds is deafening now.

side out, Look for plants that grow along the river bank. That's another telltale sign of the water.

oment. A raven squawks in a tree, almost scaring me to death, but I go on. The pain and heat are too much. There's sweat dripping in my eyes as I rely on my other senses.

Finally, I hear the trickle of water, crying out for joy.

Sweet, sweet water...

sume or I drag my way toward the riverbank. It's a shallow stream. Not too deep, but it should be enough. It should be okay to dip in until the pain subsides.

I still have no idea what is happening to me. The answer is there, but it's back of my head, but in my delirium, I can't conjure the words. The pain is like cake frosting won't leave me alone. It clings to my skin.

Finally, I reach the bank, rolling down into the stream. I land on my back. I'm not in the water. My face goes under several times, but I manage to keep my head above water.

I need The cold water soothes my burning flesh. The cramps don't budge, but at least I've cooled down. I gaze up at the sky through the cracks of branches. It's no longer blue.

a water It's turning a deep gray.

for the I guess that storm I sensed earlier has arrived. Maybe it's not a go
to be lying in a stream during a thunderstorm.

Another wringing pain and I don't care anymore. Drowning has
give a better than this, whatever this is.

My vision whitens next as it all gets too much, and then a vague
s waterechoes in the back of my mind.
htened. Is this what dying feels like?

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It's turning a deep gray.

I guess that storm I sensed earlier has arrived. Maybe it's not a good idea to be lying in a stream during a thunderstorm.

Another wringing pain and I don't care anymore. Drowning has to be better than this, whatever this is.

My vision whitens next as it all gets too much, and then a vague thought echoes in the back of my mind.

Is this what dying feels like?

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Alexander

It's getting late at the office when I receive the call from Jake. I answer the second ring. "What is it?"

"Alex. You haven't heard from Renée, have you?"

Anxiety spikes in my veins, turning my scent bitter. "No. Why? Not okay?"

"We don't know. She was meant to have come over for dinner, but she hasn't arrived. It's been an hour."

An hour? While the news may not startle most, Renée has always been punctual.

"Have you called the animal shelter where she works?"

"I have and they said she hasn't been in today. Shit."

I take several deep breaths, calming my nerves. "It will be okay, but is there anyone else you can contact?"

"I tried her friend Marc, but he hasn't even talked to her today. Of course, Chloé's a little preoccupied right now."

Well, he's not wrong.

Chloé's agent called me to do a cover shoot with the magazine. Her

may be a little too *bold* for my usual audience, but I'm sure we can do something.

I would rather Chloé Laurent than Vivienne Fox on the cover of the magazine any day. Vivienne's shoot has come and gone. Her team arranged to do her makeup and clothes, but they didn't bother sticking around once it was finished.

A shame. I had sandwich platters made for her entire entourage. All of them had vegetarian and gluten-free friendly options.

So ungrateful.

I won't deny the appeal of putting Chloé Laurent on the front cover. It would draw in a crowd for sure. We don't get much teen readers these days.

They obviously don't have debit cards in order to subscribe to the magazine, but it couldn't hurt to branch out to a younger crowd. I'm not sure I'm thirty-five now, so I have no idea what the kids are into these days. Some of my employees are more knowledgeable in that department than I am. Britney, my PA, is twenty-two. She's in the same age range as Renée. Chloé, so I'm sure she will have some good input.

This isn't really the time to be thinking about Chloé's cover issue, is it? We have to find Renée.

This isn't like her. I may not know her all that well yet, but I still feel suspicious that she hasn't turned up for dinner.

I'm aware that her ex has come back to town. I ball my fists, hoping and praying for his sake that he has nothing to do with Renée's disappearance. And of course, the jackass.

"I can't call her father either because one, he's Vincent Laurent, and two, he's in France."

I've met Vincent briefly. I stayed at one of his hotels when we were

arrange a fashion shoot in Milan, and he happened to just pass by in the lobby.

He's a nice man. About mid to late fifties. Pretty distant, though my look like he had somewhere to be. Kind of like my own dad. I arrived to "I should be leaving in a few moments. Keep calling her and make sure the news doesn't spread that she's missing."

Renée is gaining a high profile, and I know she is hating every minute of it. That girl has never dreamed of fame like her father or sister has since she was pretty humble.

She spends her days working for free at an animal shelter, and could be a more perfect woman?

days. "All right. Speak soon."

to our Jake hangs up. I start packing my briefcase. It's going to be a long drive home, nearly after all.

some of Let's just hope we find her on time.

Renée and

though.

I find it



image-placeholder

ing and The guys are waiting for me the moment I arrive at the house, and all I can see is a car. I know something is up.

Shit. Has something bad happened to Renée? I tried to not let my imagination get the better of me while I was driving home. All I could do was find Renée and ensuring she was safe.

he was doing

Fuck. If anything happens to that girl, I don't know what I will do. It's painfully obvious that I have developed feelings for her. I don't think any other woman could make me as worried as this.

Make sure It feels as if there are needles digging in my sides, making me come over. We have to find her.

moment. "So, any updates since you called?" I ask Jake.

the she's I don't bother taking my coat off because I know I'm going to need it.

The beta sighs, pinching between his eyes as if to stave off a headache. Then he shows me the photograph on his phone. "Someone snapped a picture of Renée and posted it online. It looks like she's hiking in some area somewhere."

g night "Let me see."

He passes me his phone, and I swallow back a growl when I see the username on the page. Sosexyyoucoulddie.

Is it possible to want to kick and kiss someone at the same time? At least now we know where to search for her now, but it's at the expense of her privacy.

I recognize the trail. It's just a few miles south of the city. It looks like Renée wanted to go off the grid in order to get some privacy.

I can imagine she is being heckled in the city park now by people who recognize her. But it looks as if she can't even go for a walk on a remote area anymore without some loser stalking her.

ready I The picture has already garnered a couple of thousands of likes. Sosexyyoucoulddie uploaded the picture just an hour ago, so at least let my recent.

ld think I look up at Jake. "I know where she is. I used to hike on that trail years back."

Henry growls, heading toward the garage. "Well, what are we waiting for?"

do. It'sLet's go find her. She must have gotten lost trying to escape that stalk
ink anyfucker. Wait till I get my hands on them..."

I grab his shoulder, and he turns. His pupils have narrowed, and
cold allgive him the space he needs, showing him that I am not a threat, but v
to keep focused.

"Brother... if it weren't for that stalker, then we wouldn't even h
it. slightest clue where to look for her."

adache. He wriggles his shoulder free of my grip. I don't take it personal.
this ofhe is just anxious and desperate to find Renée. I am too, but I try to
woodsfocused for us both.

"Yeah, well, I still want to kill them."

Fair enough. But all I care about now is finding Renée and bring
spy thehome.

Home. She already feels like family, which is a strange notion t
At leastabout a woman I hardly know.

vacy. The only alone time we have had was when we bumped into each o
ks as ifJudith's debut ball. Back when I broke her phone. She had looked so i
at the time, but even then I knew that I was deeply attracted to her.

le who "I'll bring Sasha," Ezra announces, grabbing her leash as he g
ote trailwhistle. "The dog can help us track her scent."

We will probably be okay with just three Alphas in those woods,
likes.more noses, the better. Besides, nothing beats a canine's sense of smell
ast it's Once Ezra fastens Sasha's leash, we get in the car and then drive
the trail. That's when an ominous black cloud forms in the sky. Shit.

I a few *Hold on, Renée. We're coming for you.*

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CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Henry

Alex pulls up in the parking lot and my heart leaps when I spy her car. It seems my brother's hunch was right. Renée is out here.

The sooner we find her, the better. The storm is worse up here. It's t with rain, and I just hope we're not too late.

When all this is over and we finally find her, I will hunt Sosexyyoucoulddie and beat him to a pulp.

It's their fault why she is lost out here in the first place. If they stalked her, then she wouldn't have felt a need to bolt.

The moment Alex parks, I open the door, rushing toward Renée's peer inside the window, hoping she may have come back to hide backseat.

To my horror, she's not inside the car. That means she's still out t the pouring rain. Fuck.

Alex presses a heavy hand on my shoulder, turning me to face "Brother, relax. We are going to find her."

I grit my teeth, wiping my wet hair from my eyes. I'm not even wearing a coat. I have no means of protection from the elements, but all I care a

finding Renée.

Please be safe...

Sasha is raring to go, and it looks as if she has picked up on Renée's. I could kiss my pack brother for bringing that dog into our lives. It turns out she was a real blessing in the end.

She will be the one to lead us to Renée.

An Alpha's sense of smell may be strong, but it could never compare to that of a canine's.

Sasha barks and Ezra unfastens her leash. We follow her down the trail. It's dark, but I don't focus on that. We are going to find our mate together. *Mate.*

It appears my Alpha has recognized Renée as his mate, and I swear that once everything is over and she is safe in my arms again, then I am going to make her *mine.*

Maybe one day she will let me give her my mark.

I barely even think about Vivienne these days, and it seems I try to move on. It was about time. That woman won't have a hold on me anymore. I refuse to be haunted by her memory.

She can no longer hurt me now.

The three of us walk side by side as Sasha sniffs at the wet, muddy ground. I just hope the rain didn't wash away Renée's scent. I think I can catch wisps of it here and there. It's her usual scent, but a little stronger.

Kind of like cake frosting. It's mouth-watering.

Sasha lifts her head from the ground and barks, and we follow her into the unknown. Okay, these woods aren't exactly wild. There's clearly a path marked for hikers, but it's dark and wet.

Only an idiot would willingly venture into these woods during a

Renée probably felt like she had no choice. Her life has become hectic since Jake's colleague wrote that shitty piece about her, and as a result, her scent has become famous.

It turns out To make matters worse, she was caught kissing me at the funfair, and only I had just let her be.

But I couldn't help myself. Renée has the type of lips that just beg to be kissed.

My feet are wet and covered in mud, but I trudge on. My shirt is dripping with rain, but I don't stop. Renée needs us to save her. I will save her. She saved me.

Sasha is barely visible in the distance, and my heart dips with dread when I worry we have lost her. It looks as if we may have to rely on our instincts after all. We can't let Sasha do all the work.

I start to sniff. The air is too wet and thick with rain, but I will find her. I know Alex and Ezra are doing the same. I catch her scent again, and my Alpha rises to the surface.

There is something different about Renée now. Not that she didn't smell fantastic before, but wow... She smells like a goddam treat.

My mouth waters again, and then my Alpha starts to get agitated. What the hell is she?

A faint bark up ahead, and I rush forward, getting whacked in the back by wet branches.

"Henry!" Alex shouts, yet I ignore him. I have a good feeling this time, not just the way Sasha barked, but I have a hunch that we are getting very close. Renée is close by. There are traces of her scent on the wet ground.

It appears she was in pain. Her lime frosting has a hint of metallic flavor. I am more determined than ever to find her.

tic ever Sasha's eyes reflect off Jake's flashlight as she waits for us up ahead, shemy heart thumps louder. We found her.

I skid to a stop by the dog, dropping down to my knees in the mud, and ifher. "Where is she, girl?"

Sasha points her nose down a river bank and I don't even think. g to bedown the side of the bank, skidding down a mudslide. I almost fall i river myself, but I see her.

soaked Renée lies just beneath the surface. She pops her head out of the her likegasping for air before she submerges again.

I have no idea what she is doing, but I don't care. I stumble into th ead as Ilifting her up in my arms. Her skin is hot to the touch, even after being Alphafrigid water for God knows how many hours.

Also, her smell is strong. It hits the back of my nose, making m Renée.short circuit. I freeze, carrying her wet dripping body in my arms. She and myin pain, absolutely delirious, but I don't let her go.

In fact, my grip tightens around her as I hold her closer to my chest 't smellto protect her from the world. No one will harm her ever again. Anyo tries will have to deal with me, her Alpha.

There is "Henry!"

It's my brother. He skids down the river bank, stopping at the ed he facedesigner shoes get wet and muddy, but he only has eyes for me and Re

"Henry... bring her here. We need to get her warm and dry, now."

me. It's I don't move. It's as if my feet are planted in the riverbed.

warmer. Sasha joins me in the river, jumping up to lick her face. Jake ar arrive, shouting my name along with my brother. I'm too lost in my O ear, and My Omega. Holy shit.

Renée is an Omega. She must be so pleased.

ad, and Not that she wasn't perfect before. Beta, Omega, or Alpha, Ren always be perfect...

l before And she's all mine.

Finally, Jake steps into the river, trying to take her from me. I rush showing him my teeth. He backs off.

into the I know he said he was willing to share her, and I may be taking it but I will apologize later. My Alpha has taken the reins.

water, I wonder if Jake realizes she's no longer beta anymore. I wonder if others have sensed her Omega. I guess it was always there, hidden beneath the surface. I always caught glimpses of it from time to time.

in that Alex steps into the river, placing an arm around me. He inhales, br in Renée's scent, and a deep rumble confirms that he has scented her C y brain Unlike me, Alex manages to keep his Alpha in check as he leads me groans the river and toward the bank. "Steady now. You got her, Henry. She i

What the hell is he doing?

t, eager His words placate my Alpha though, and it appears his tactics are w ne who My Alpha likes words of praise. Especially when it comes to his Omega

Ezra steps forward, and her scent hits him like a freight train. H blow out, and then he growls.

ge. His My Alpha tenses. He doesn't deem Ezra a threat. He sees him as Pa née. he is still anxious. Ezra has a much better hold of his Alpha, much lik and it appears we're safe.

"Fuck... is she..." he mutters.

id Ezra Alex leads the way. "There is no time. We have to get her out of the mega. clothes."

I volunteer.

"Wait, what is happening?" Jake huffs, keeping up with our spe

Renée will Alpha is still the one in control, but he hears everything they say.

Alex turns his way. "It's all right, Jake. We will explain when we get to the car."

I snap, I feel for the guy. He won't be able to scent her new Omega like I can, but he is sure to find out very soon.

too far, My Alpha wouldn't let him near her before, and he can be such an asshole at times.

or if the *Jake is pack, bro. You didn't have to snap your teeth at him.*

then just *Mine...*

... Fuck you.

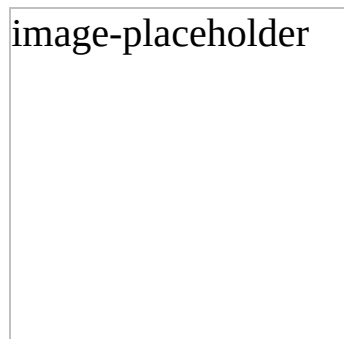
breathing Jake stops in his tracks, and I spy the moment it dawns on him. "What the fuck is that Omega. she...?"

he gets out of "Yes. We have no time to explain. Let's just get her back to the house as safe as possible." out of those clothes."

Alex rushes ahead to start the car, and good thinking. No harm working with me. Come to my Omega again.

and I will never let her go.

his eyes



back, yet

see Alex,

those wet **Jake**

Henry finally manages to lock his Alpha back in his cage, and he passes Renée to me.

ed. My

Fuck. If only I had been there for her. She must have been so frightened to the point I swear I will never let her go again.

What the hell had she been doing in that river in the middle of a storm? Had her pain been that bad? Her skin is like fire, despite her dripping with blood. I start rolling up her shirt.

She opens her eyes, smiling up at me. Even in her delirium, she recognizes me.

“Jake...”

“Hey, princess.”

She smiles, pressing her face to my chest, and my heart thumps frantically. I may not be equipped to give her what she needs right now, but I will be there for her.

“Jake... it hurts...”

“I know. We will get you home soon, okay?”

One of the guys will have to knot her. I hate that I can't take her away, but she seems to have relaxed in my arms. She snuggles up, closing her eyes.

I whisper in her ear. “Am I okay to take off your clothes? They're warm.” Renée peers up, a smirk curving her lips. “Be my guest...”

I snort. It looks like her sense of humor is still intact. Her biological needs have changed, but she is still my same old Renée.

So I start pulling off her shirt. Henry takes off her sneakers, socks, then her leggings. I feel for poor Alex at the wheel. I bet Renée smells better naked. Even Ezra is trying to keep it together.

Sasha licks the water from Renée's face.

Renée has gone into heat, and I wonder if the dog can sense it. I wonder if she even understands.

htened, Can the dog sense her pain?

They say they are quite empathetic to their owner's emotions.
storm?relaxes again, reaching out to pet the dog. "Ah, my sweet Sasha..."
clothes. Sasha whimpers, licking her face once more.

"It's okay. You found me. You found me... such a good girl, Sasha..
he still The dog wags her tail at the praise, resting her head on Renée's st
We still have a way to go.

I just hope the comfort will be enough until we can get her home.
needs a knot and I know one of the guys will be ready to take her pain
faster. I But I will be there, waiting for the moment when she needs me again
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Can the dog sense her pain?

They say they are quite empathetic to their owner's emotions. Renée relaxes again, reaching out to pet the dog. "Ah, my sweet Sasha..."

Sasha whimpers, licking her face once more.

"It's okay. You found me. You found me... such a good girl, Sasha..."

The dog wags her tail at the praise, resting her head on Renée's stomach. We still have a way to go.

I just hope the comfort will be enough until we can get her home. Renée needs a knot and I know one of the guys will be ready to take her pain away.

But I will be there, waiting for the moment when she needs me again.

CHAPTER THIRTY

CHAPTER THIRTY

Renée

I barely recall being carried out of the car and into the pouring rain. The only thing I remember is Jake's strong arms, and his fresh peppermint and cedarwood scent.

He has never smelled so good to me right now, and all I want to do is lie in his addictive scent. The pain has subsided, and I finally have a moment of clarity.

I have gone into heat.

I don't know how or why, but it appears I got my lifelong wish. My Omega has shown her face at last and she couldn't have come at a more opportune time.

And I went big too. All the silk and velvet I could find and more.

I don't get time to dwell on the sudden appearance of my Omega. As a sharp cramp twists me around like a corkscrew, I whimper in Jake's arms.

I should have seen the signs. The occasional scent spikes and the nesting behavior. I have been obsessed with all things soft lately. On my last shopping spree with Chloé, I splashed out on blankets.

And I went big too. All the silk and velvet I could find and more.

I don't get time to dwell on the sudden appearance of my Omega. A cramp twists me around like a corkscrew, I whimper in Jake's arms.

He shushes me, carrying me down the hallway. "It's okay, prince got you. We got you..."

That's when I catch the scent of my bergamot and vanilla candles, a my head.

We're in my apartment. I could have sworn that the guys were taken back to the mansion. I suppose I have everything I want here.

All my home comforts and more.

"Here we are..." Jake leads me to my bedroom, and a gasp leaves my mouth. All I see is my bed. "Wow..."

I peer around the room in my half delirious state. Whoops. I must have gone a little overboard after all with the cushions, and it's any wonder I'm gasping at the signs.

When you're told your whole life that you will never amount to much that you will never be as pretty as your younger sister, you tend to overcompensate.

I just put it down to my desire to be an Omega. I mean, who wouldn't want to be an Omega? Everyone adores them and they get spoiled rotten.

Also, they're irresistible.

No, not they. *We*. We are irresistible. I am an Omega now, and the realization hasn't hit me yet.

Shit. I. Am. An. Omega. I haven't had any schooling! I never even had a subtle debut.

Jake calms my anxiety by placing me down on the bed, and I sink into the mattress. Then he grabs my soft velvet blankets, draping them over my naked body.

Another They completely undressed me in the car, and I didn't care in the sl
I even said "Be my guest."

ess. We Why am I so blasé about nudity all of a sudden? I was always the s
The wallflower. I was the conservative sister who always wore baggy c
nd I liftIt was bad enough wearing that figure-hugging dress the night Chloé c
her fragrance Just Be You...

ing me Carefully, I sniff my wrist, and I smell good enough to eat. I sm
citrus and cake frosting, just like my sister. Except my scent is a little z
Jake places my damask velvet pillows behind my back, and I shut m
ie whenbasking in the attention. This was what I always wanted. Honestly, I h
even when I wasn't an Omega, but it just feels ten times better now.

ly have It's like satisfying an itch. A deep-rooted nerve. The pain is still th
I neverit has dulled. The blankets and pillows have helped, but I know what
need. A knot.

ch, and Fear spikes in my veins. Will I even be able to take a knot?

tend to Jake presses a kiss to my temple, and it's like he can sense my fear.
be okay. You know we won't hurt you."

it want I open my eyes, peering into his brown pair. "How did you know
afraid?"

He shrugs. "Just a hunch."

ie news I smile, reaching up to untie his ponytail. His blond locks fall loose
his face, and there he is, my angel...

n had a Voices ring out in the hall that I recognize as Alex and Henry. It
like they're having a heated argument. Jake nestles back on the pillo
into theme, but I lift my head, wanting to know what they're arguing about.

ly flush "Is there something wrong?"

Jake sighs. "Nothing you need to worry about, princess. They'

ightest.settling some differences.”

Differences? Did something happen when I was still delirious? I was
by one.in a freezing stream when they found me, and how could I have been
clothes.foolish?

debuted I could have drowned.

Still. I hope they settle things soon. I can't stop thinking about e
hell like their knots, and I roll my eyes.

restier. *You whore...*

my eyes, My Omega smirks at me. I guess this is how it's going to be from now

and this Finally, the door opens, and the two Alphas step inside the room. My

thumps louder when I get my fill of them. I can't believe I have Alpha
ere, but bedroom. And I can't believe that one of them is Henry Fontaine.

I really Best of all, he isn't wearing a shirt, and my mouth drools when I
eyeful of those washboard abs. I want to cover him with chocolate sauce
lick it off.

“It will Crap. Will he notice the poster I have of him on my ceiling? The one
those very same abs?

√ I was No, not the same abs. The ones in front of my eyes are way
Nineteen-year-old Henry could only dream of thirty-three-year-old I
abs.

around Both Alphas tense when they spot me under the blankets, and
flinches as if he caught a bad smell. I hope it's not me.

sounds Jake assures me. “Trust me... it's the opposite of what you think...”

√s with How did he know I was thinking that? Intuition? Maybe he's just
reading my body language.

Alex steps forward. “Renée... you gave us all quite the fright.”

're just I hide under the sheets, covering my red cheeks. “I'm sorry. I don't

what came over me.”

as lying “Well, we do. It appears you got your Omega when you were out
seen sowoods.”

My Omega. It still sounds so weird to me. I have dreamed of being
Omega since I was a kid, and I have to pinch myself to see if this is
either of happening.

Yep. It’s happening.

Henry keeps his distance as Alex steps closer. His paprika scent tickles
down on the back of my nose, going straight to my palate, and my mouth water
ly heartsmells even better now that I’m an Omega, and I can’t believe I have
missed in my missing out on this.

It’s like seeing the world through new eyes.

I get an “How are you feeling? Are you in any pain?”

Grace and Another cramp pinches my gut, and I squeak, nodding my head. The
seems to stir Alex. He’s at my side in seconds, a soft purr rumbling
near my chest.

I can not only hear it but feel it too. It seems to stir deep in my
better. soothing my poor little Omega who has been hiding for far too long.
Henry’s wraps his arms around me as Alex takes his jacket off. His hair is
shiny wet, and it looks as if he got soaked in the rain.

Henry It appears they all did, and maybe that’s why Henry isn’t wearing a
jacket.

Where did Ezra go? Has he taken Sasha somewhere? I don’t want
to see you seeing me like this. It was bad enough in the car.

good at Her kisses helped, and her soft fur as I buried my fingers into her
coat. My Omega likes dogs, it seems, and all things cute and fluffy. I
was going to be able to cope when I get back to the shelter.

I don’t know “It’s okay, love. We will take good care of you. We will make you

heat special...”

My slick drips between my legs when he refers to me as *love*, and that British accent again. He tends to hide it most of the time. Henry being an American; I guess he had to in order to get parts on American TV shows really Alex still has a hint of his old dialect.

I’m aware they both grew up in London. They immigrated to the States before their little sister, Judith, was born.

Alex’s purr deepens as he strokes a tender finger down my arm, asks for my permission. “May I have the honor of giving you your first knot, lord?” Such a gentleman, and there’s a damp spot on my sheets now. I smile next, and the goose bumps pop along my skin at his static touch.

“Yes, Alpha...”

Alex smirks when I call him that, and his dusk blue eyes spark with a sound. His Alpha knows exactly what I want, but he doesn’t just want to take me in his arms...

He wants to get my permission first.

I don’t care what he has to do. So long as he is willing to be rough. Naked down the line.

A growl sounds in the corner of the room, and my heart trembles.

He hovers in the shadows, his eyes squeezed tight shut as he tries to concentrate. Sweat drips down his neck and chest, and my slick pools between my legs.

Alex peers over his shoulder. “It may be best you leave, brother.”

Wait, what?

Jake whispers in my ear. “Henry lost a little bit of control when he saw I’m not you in the stream. Got a little possessive.”

Possessive? Why? I thought they were pack.

Alex is the one to read my mind this time, which makes no sense. I

they know where my thoughts have gone? We are not bonded... yet. We don't have that telepathic connection that Marc has with his bonded pack. It sounds like sometimes when an Alpha has gone through some trauma, René's behavior can become... erratic..."

Trauma?

US just He must be talking about Vivienne Fox. He found her in his bed with another man, and I don't want to think about what went down after that. I see him now looking almost murderous.

ive?" Alex continues. "He has never had an Omega before, so his Alpha instincts were dormant until now. Mine were too, but Henry's Alpha especially finding the sudden arrival of your Omega *extremely* difficult, Renée."

Jake leans closer. "Basically, he is horny and exhibiting testosterone-driven behavior."

it from Henry snaps his teeth. "I can fucking hear you both, you know I'm not deaf!"

Damn. I didn't mean to make things so difficult for him.

gh later *Now look what you have done...*

My Omega couldn't care less when I scold her, though. She just wanted to knot. Henry knot.

entrate. "I'm sorry..." I say.

legs. Alex raises a brow at me. "It's nothing you have done, Renée. Please apologize."

No. It's not my fault. Vivienne is the one to blame. She is the reason I found this. I guess that was what he and Alex were arguing about. There's no place to knot me right now.

He won't be able to control himself.

How do *Nothing wrong with that.*

'e don't There goes my Omega, getting a little *crazy* again...

Finally, Henry opens his eyes, and the look of longing he gives me, their my heart. Before I can tell him to stay, he rushes out of the room, himself in my bathroom down the hall.

I really wanted him to stay. But whatever makes things easier for him and with strokes my hair. "It's okay, princess. He will still be with you..."

at when What? He just saw him leave, right?

Jake points up at my ceiling. Nineteen-year-old Henry gazes down instinctively through a pair of hooded eyes, and I hide my embarrassment under the ally is Jake guffaws. "What? You didn't think we would notice a giant Henry staring down at us?"

territorial In my defense, I've had that poster since I was fifteen. But I still r up when I moved out and got my own place, hanging it up on n v... I'm ceiling.

The shame.

Alex sighs. "Well, I can't say I'm too excited about having my y brother looking down on me while I knot a beautiful woman, but w ants her makes you happy, love..."

Beautiful woman? Surely, he can't really mean that? He works in f He must have met hundreds of super models with legs for days. Comp se don't them, I'm average. A six at best.

Wow. A six. Maybe I am too hard on myself.

1 Henry Alex unbuttons his shirt, tossing it to one side, and I feast on his ury is inchest. The blood rushes through my head, and I roll over onto m instinctively, presenting to him.

Alex stops me, facing me around again. "No. I prefer to look a wc the eyes when I make love to her for the first time. We will save that for

love...”

breaks He winks at me, and I lick my lips, hoping he lives up to that promise. Alpha unzips, stepping out of his pants, and now his dick springs bouncing up against his stomach.

m. Jake He’s huge. But what else did I expect from the CEO of Fashion Magazine?

I become light-headed once again, as all I can think about is wrapping my mouth around his thick cock and licking his cum. He already has a pre-cum dripping from his slit, and I pant for breath.

teenage “Holy shit... you’re burning up, princess...”

I’m so glad Jake stayed by my side for this. He helps to ground me, reminding me of the girl who I was before. I’m still that same girl from my own nightclub who talked about aliens and ghosts.

Does he remember that conversation too?

He reaches across with a cloth, dabbing the sweat that beads along my forehead. Then he grabs a glass of water, dripping it down my throat.

whatever “It’s okay. You got this, Renée. You know Alex. You can trust him.

Actually, out of all the members of Pack Fontaine, I have spent the least amount of time with the Fashion CEO. We haven’t even kissed and I’m ashamed.

I wrap my hand around the back of Alex’s head, bringing him close until our lips touch. Our breath mingles as a kiss hovers between us, and now I can smell paprika. There’s still the same hint of cedar too, and I can’t wait until he fills me with his knot.

Marc is the only Omega I know who has been knotted by an Alpha, and he says it’s the most fantastic feeling in the world. His words.

or later, I want to know what that feels like too.

I want to feel fanfuckingtastic.

se. The Jake positions himself behind me, and he's much more comfortable. I sink into the softness of the plush velvet pillows. Slowly, he peels away my blanket, revealing my naked skin. Alex's pupils bloom when they get their first view of my mountain breasts.

Jake runs his hand down my chest, stopping at my right breast. He begins massaging my nipple until it pebbles between his fingers. My eyes slide shut as a mini orgasm seizes me.

It's nothing too intense yet. I get a little flash of light in my peripheral vision, but his touch brings about a honeyed pleasure that drips down my body.

From the "Your heart is pounding, princess..."

Jake's not wrong. It feels like the thing is about to escape my ribcage.

"Let me hear... I love the sound of a woman's heartbeat... especially when I'm about to please her..." Alex places his head to my chest and mumbles against his ear. A satisfied purr rumbles in his throat. "Perfect."

A small groan escapes me. Alex looks up, a smirk curving his lips. "The least for my knot, are we, love?"

What a I nod rapidly, pushing my breasts toward him. He takes one edge into his mouth, massaging my nipple with his tongue. Another mini orgasm comes until I hold, but this one is a little stronger than the last.

Now all I "Very well. I look forward to giving you what you want."

I can't wait Alex kisses a tortuous path down my body. The blood whooshes to my head when he reaches the juncture of my thighs, and I stop a moment and savoring the sensations.

The feel of Alex's hot breath against my lips, making my body shudder in anticipation. Jake's soft peppermint scent wrapping around me

making me feel safe and secure.

le than The Alpha kisses me softly, slipping his deft tongue inside, and I c
lankets, coming into his mouth. He is barely even inside me, yet I'm already
l of mysure come a lot now, and it must be an Omega thing.

How do they cope? Maybe I will ask Marc and Chloé when I se
ast. Henext.

am shut “Perfect. Nice and wet for me...” Alex purrs, brushing his cheek
my inner thigh.

ripheral His stubble prickles the sensitive skin, and I gasp, closing my eyes.
own myyet again and this is just getting ridiculous. It used to take a lot of b
before I could even come half as much as this.

Alex's purr vibrates against me, stimulating the same kind of effec
e. think I am ready. I will take his knot.

y when “I'm ready, Alpha.”

y heart Alex lifts his head, and his lips are shiny with my slick. “Is that so?”

’ I nod, practically panting now. The air in the room thins. My
“Eagertunnels, focusing only on Alex. “Y-yes...”

I'm burning up again, as that deep itch just won't go away. Alex's
rly intocurves into a sexy grin, and I could look at those chiseled lips a
m takesespecially when they are wet with my slick.

“As you wish...” he whispers.

He crawls closer until we're nose to nose, lips to lips. I can taste my
hroughhis mouth, and I am so ready for this. I've been waiting my whole ac
ionent, for this. Maybe longer.

Alex drags me down the mattress until I'm laid flat on my back. Ja
idder into my side, brushing a soft hand up and down my stomach.

tightly, Alex's arresting blue eyes have completely enraptured me, and I can

away. They're the color of the sky. Just after the sun sets over the horizon, I cry out, His knot brushes my sex, and I gasp when his heat burns me wet. A branding tool. Carefully, he edges inside, letting me get used to his recoil out of instinct, but to my surprise, I stretch to accommodate his weight and I can't believe this is happening...

An Alpha is about to knot me.

Against Alex delves in deeper until he is buried to the hilt, and he doesn't pull away from my eyes.

I come *I like to look a woman in the eyes when I make love to her for the first time...*

The Alpha drags back out ever so slightly. Then, without warning, he thrusts, making me see stars immediately. The stars are small at first, but he builds me up to my peak. But then they expand, growing brighter the more he gets us there.

He's chasing his own release too.

Alex rolls his hips, thrusting faster and faster, the sound of slapping echoing through the room. I'm close, and it won't be long until I'm screaming around his cock.

Jake helps me get there quicker by massaging my right nipple between his fingers and kissing my neck.

It comes out of nowhere. I arch my spine. My walls clench around him, squeezing him tight. The Alpha's movements stutter as he reaches his ultimate life peak. He slams his eyes shut, grinding his teeth as he grunts in deep pleasure. His body is covered in sweat, slipping against my own slick skin. The momentum of his thrusts still pushes us forward.

His cum fills me, and then his knot begins to swell. He locks himself between my legs, and nothing could separate us now. Not even I.

zon. earthquake.

like a I stretch around his knot and this can't be happening. I have a knot
size. Ime...

length, Believe me, I have tried in the past. With a silicone knot and I could
get it past my entrance.

I know it with a certainty now. I am most definitely an Omega. The
it's not looking denying the feeling of fullness as Alex reaches parts of my soul that
knot could ever reach.

he first Who knew sex could be this... intimate? What would happen if this
an emergency? Would we have to evacuate the building still attached
ing, he hips?

it as he Would he have to carry me out?

a closer Alex expands further, and my vision whitens when he stretches
that little more. He seems to be in as much bliss as I am, and I wonder
is his first time knotting someone, too.

ing skin After all, I have him trapped. It must be strange to be locked between
shatter woman's legs like this.

Alex purrs, and I shut my eyes. It could be a while before he looks
green his and frees himself. So I may as well get some shut eye.

I'm in for the long haul, after all. An Omega's heat can last up to
d Alex, days. Five if she is lucky.

his own Jake leans closer, whispering into my ear. "Well done, princess...
primal you could do it."

body as I smile as I drift off into dreamland.

Marc was right. This does feel fanfuckingtastic.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Ezra

Renée's new scent catches me off guard the moment I enter her apartment.

I've just dropped Sasha off at a friend's house. I know Renée wants Sasha around for her first heat, so I took it upon myself to find a temporary sitter.

I still can't believe she is an Omega. Is it possible for a woman in her twenties to manifest for the first time? Our designations normally occur when we are in our mid-teens, so it doesn't make a lot of sense.

Then again, I don't claim to know a thing about biology. I'm a medical student, not a doctor.

I may not be able to tell Renée what is going on with her biology now, but I can still give her what she needs.

Henry looks as if someone shit in his soup when I step into the apartment. He holds the door aside, shutting it behind me.

He looks rough. I have never seen him like this, and I have known him for years. He completely lost it in the woods. It was almost as if he didn't want any of us near her.

We should cut him some slack. He has been through a lot these last years; he's probably just afraid of losing Renée.

It mustn't be easy coming home after a long flight to find your wife in bed with another man.

We're a pack. So we're all in this together. We all agreed that if we were to pursue Renée, then we would do it as a pack.

But sometimes our Alphas don't always agree. I know my own Alpha would love to storm into her bedroom where her scent is strongest and claim her, but we have to do this carefully.

Renée is very vulnerable right now. We cannot let our Alphas take control over her. "How are you holding up?"

Henry tenses, keeping his arms crossed over his chest. When he glances at me, there are circles under his eyes.

"Not great. I had to lock myself in the bathroom while Alex..."

He cuts off, biting his fist. My eyes rake him up and down. Was it ever his idea for him to let me into the apartment? Do I have to fight him back in the bathroom? Or will he be a good boy and stay put?

I'm sure he will get his turn to knot her, but he's not himself right now. He's sporting a serious hard-on. Also, he is missing a shirt, and almost looks feral.

I reach forward, placing my hand tentatively on his shoulder. He flinches. It appears he doesn't deem me a threat right now. I just hope he can keep it up.

I would hate for him to miss out on this. Something beautiful is happening in this apartment, and he doesn't even get to be a part of it.

"What are you going to do now?"

Henry peers up again. The shadows under his eyes are getting worse.

several still handsome, though. Lucky bastard.

“Hide in the bathroom again. I may even chain myself to the sink.”

I chuckle. “You don’t have to go that far...”

He sighs. “I’m not so sure. Every time I get a whiff of her, he... I wanted myself slipping...”

Damn. It is getting bad if he just referred to his Alpha in the third person. I shrug, following him to the bathroom. I think about barricading the door with him just in case he loses control. I’ve seen some Alphas when they get out of control. It’s like watching a nature documentary.

Henry steps into the bathroom. It’s covered in Renée’s scent. It’s much older scent, from when she still identified as beta, but it’s still strong. It mustn’t be easy being around her things.

Maybe it’s best I take him back to the house. I could have left Sascha here rather than taking her to a friend, but it’s done now. Alex probably wouldn’t have the heart to send him away. He still wanted to give him a chance. Besides, Renée would want him here.

“Anything you need?” I ask.

Henry peers back at me through the gap in the door. He closes his eyes and heaves. “Just... place something in front of the door once I shut it. Before... her, and I almost... fuck...”

He squeezes his eyes, running his hand through his messy hair. I can’t want it to have to come to that, but if he thinks that’s what’s best. All right.

I’m sure Renée has some pretty heavy furniture lying around.

Henry finally shuts the door. The lock clicks into place. Renée probably has anything large or heavy enough to keep him at bay, but it would be a last resort.

In the end, I haul the table in the living room and place it in front of the door.

door. Then I leave Henry be and find my way to Renée.

My goddess is waiting for me...

I can't wait to worship her body.

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ostly an

ong. It **Renée**

My bedroom door opens, and I lift my head hopefully. Has Henry
ha with decided to join us?

y didn't It's not Henry, but I'm still happy to see the Alpha that has joi
room. "Ezra!"

The male model steps back, raising a brow when he sees me. Alex
knotted inside me. How long has it been now? Fifteen minutes? '
is eyes. minutes? Half an hour?

I heard Time loses all meaning when you have a knot inside you.

"Am I interrupting something?"

I didn't Alex chuckles, peering over his shoulder at the Alpha. "Not at all."

ight. It shocks me that I don't feel the slightest bit of embarrassment. Ezz
much just walked in on me having sex. I should be mortified.

doesn't Caught in the act.

just be Yet this just feels so natural. Alex is locked inside me deep, and it c
sometime before he pulls loose.

t of the

Ezra unties his shoes, then steps toward the bed. Jake moves aside to have a queen-sized bed, so it may be a little small to fit us all on, but I can we can come to some compromise.

Ezra sits at the foot of the bed, keeping his distance. It will be the first time he will be seeing me naked, and my heart pounds in excitement.

It will be so much better than his giant billboard gazing through the window at me from across the street.

True to my word, I remembered to shower with my door open so the billboard could look at me. I just hope nobody else saw me too. Judging from the lack of my shower pics online, I would have to say that I am fine.

“Hey, shelter girl...”

Finally I snort. “Shelter girl? Is that your nickname for me now?”

Ezra shrugs. “That’s what you will always be to me. The sweet, sheltered girl who spends her free time working with orphaned dogs.”

“And cats too,” I point out.

It is still Ezra mock shivers. “Yeah, never been much of a fan of cats...”

Twenty I gasp. “Okay, you just got like... two percent less hot. How can you not like cats?!”

“I guess I was always more of a dog person.”

That is ridiculous. You can like both. Besides, cats are on a whole different level to dogs. They make you work for their affection.

a pretty “I suppose they have some appeal. They do remind me of you, and you are good enough for me.”

I laugh. “I remind you of a cat?”

could be Ezra purrs and my body melts. “Because you’re just as soft and cute as a guy has to work *extra* hard to earn your affection.”

Okay, I suppose that is true. Not the soft and cute part, but the part

. I only he mentioned having to work harder to gain my trust. I was broken
'm sure met this pack. But lately, I feel my shattered pieces slowly forming
together.

First time Maybe one day I can be completely whole again. The damage has
been done, and it's going to take some time before I can truly move
on. I don't forget about Aaron.

After all, the fear is there. I fear that these guys will grow bored with
me and then abandon me so they can search for their next thrill. I may
be going by Omega now, but would that be enough to make any of them stay for the
haul?

I hope so.

Jake once again kisses my temple, running his hand down my torso.
"Humble okay, princess. We've got you."

"How did you know I was even worried?"

The beta smiles lazily, lost in my scent. "Because you get a worry
line between your eyebrows."

you not He smooths out the worry line with his finger, and that makes sense.
I wasn't being psychic all along; he was just reading my facial expressions.

Someone did tell me once that I had very expressive eyes, and now
I should consider being an actress. I would make a much better one than
that wooden Vivienne any day.

And that's Jake may not be able to sense my thoughts, but that doesn't mean
I still don't want that kind of connection with him one day. I would
love to have that connection with them all.

Also, Even Henry, when he is done wallowing in the bathroom. I hope I
realizes that I wholly trust him. I know he would never do anything
to hurt me.

when I “It looks like I’m finished,” Alex says above me, and then his knot
ing backup.

A strange emptiness lingers when he pulls himself free, and my
already weeps her heart out.

on and “She’s all yours, Ezra,” Alex backs off from the bed, letting the mo
his place.

with me, Maybe one day we can all get a bigger bed that can fit all five of us.

er be an Ezra rips his shirt off to my delight. He smiles when he sp
he long expression, glancing up at the ceiling briefly. He freezes. “Shoul
worried about that very large poster of Henry?”

My cheeks heat up in embarrassment. I’m okay when they watch m
o. “It’s knotted, but when it comes to my teenage crush, I become as sh
schoolgirl.

Alex chuckles, taking Ezra’s old place at the foot of the bed. “App
rily line our Omega had the biggest crush on my brother when she was a teenag

Ezra raises a brow. “A teenager? Or *now*? That’s a pretty big po
se. Jake your brother... I feel like he is judging us...”

ons. I cover my face, looking like the monkey emoji. “Sorry... I just f
maybe I hard to let go of. He got me through some tough years.”

han the “I bet he did.” Ezra narrows his eyes at the poster. “Damn, he’s re
that whole Zoolander thing going on, hasn’t he? Maybe I should try it
n that I next shoot.”

love to Ezra makes me belly laugh when he does a terrible impression of ni
year-old Henry’s pout, and these guys are going to be the death of me.

re soon “Nailed it,” I say.

to hurt Ezra winks at me. “Glad you like it, kitten.”

“Kitten?”

loosens He moves closer, rubbing his nose with mine. “That’s my new nickname for you. Much better than shelter girl, don’t you think?”

Omega My brows disappear into my hairline. “But I thought you were more of a dog person?”

del take Ezra shrugs. “I will make an exception when it comes to you...”

I wrap my arms around his neck, pushing his blond hair away. “How about you, shelter girl Sasha?”

ies my “Safe. I dropped her off at a friend’s. She has three dogs herself, so I should be good company.”

Good. Because there is no way I would want her around through all of this. I would hate for her to see me in this state. It was bad enough in the car. The dog saved my life, so I owe it to her. When I get better, I will buy her some treats to show her how much she means to me.

Ezra searches my eyes, deep in thought. “How do you want to do this?” I bite my lip and think. While Alex knotted me from the front, I guess I could knot me from behind. I want to be knotted all kinds of ways. Tuesday.

The day my heat should be due to finish.

I lean up, pushing him back onto his ass. His brow quirks, but he soon gets the gist when I show him my back, nestling myself on his lap. He’s not for my hard. All he has to do is take his underwear off.

Ezra brushes my hair aside, kissing the back of my neck as I find myself on his lap. He slips his underwear free, then presses his head to my neck.

He uses my slick as lube to soak his length, then starts to edge inside. My nerves come to life when he enters me from this angle, and I can feel the release coming.

It’s there, just in sight. Ezra just has to ride me there first. Or I ride him.

cknamemore specifically.

Slowly, he starts to roll his hips. His movements are smooth and large of a first as he thrusts in and out, finding new nerves to tease inside me.

I reach my arms behind me, curling them around his head. Ezra pushes the sound thrums against my spinal column, making me arch my back. As he reaches his hand down to my breasts, rubbing a nipple between his fingers.

Lights flicker at the edge of my vision. Sweat drips down my spine as she rushes through my veins, making my head spin.

So close... I can almost smell it.

of this. I match Ezra's thrusts, using my legs to roll back and forth. The first orgasm hits me like a firework. It explodes inside me, beautiful bright but lighting up my brain.

Another orgasm chases the heels of the last, this one bigger and brighter?" Ezra shifts my hips, finding the perfect angle. He hits my sweet spot. Another firework goes off inside me.

by next It shoots toward the sky, sparkling colors falling down like rain. The fire burns down my scalp, burning up inside me like liquid fire, and I forget to breathe.

on gets Ezra tightens his grip, and then he jerks his hips, finding his own release. His knot swells, locking him in place inside me, and I come down from a high.

My place My bangs are dripping wet with sweat, covering my eyes so I can't see. Everything is a perfect blur.

le. New Shapes appear before my eyes. Alex and Jake.

another Jake reaches his finger between my legs, finding my clit. He massages it with his ring finger, peppering kisses along my collarbone, licking at the side of his neck.

Ezra kisses a pattern down the back of my neck, stopping between my shoulder blades. Alex takes my other side, cupping his fingers around my right breast. He drags and pinches the nipple between his fingers, pleases, and a tender kiss on my pulse.

Between the three of them touching, kissing, and knotting me, I release again.

My perfume clouds around me, filling the room with lime cake fragrance and I could get used to this sort of attention.

Jake places his finger into my mouth, and I suck on the digit, the first myself on his skin. I groan softly. The Alphas purr. Ezra at my back and a color to my right, and I shut my eyes, dozing off into pure bliss yet again.

This is the life.

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Ezra kisses a pattern down the back of my neck, stopping between my shoulder blades. Alex takes my other side, cupping his fingers around my right breast. He drags and pinches the nipple between his fingers, placing a tender kiss on my pulse.

Between the three of them touching, kissing, and knotting me, I release yet again.

My perfume clouds around me, filling the room with lime cake frosting, and I could get used to this sort of attention.

Jake places his finger into my mouth, and I suck on the digit, tasting myself on his skin. I groan softly. The Alphas purr. Ezra at my back and Alex to my right, and I shut my eyes, dozing off into pure bliss yet again.

This is the life.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Renée

“**H**ungry? I will order us food.”

I lift my head from the pillow, peering around the room. My stomach wobbles in hope. “F-food?”

That word resonates deep inside me, making me hopeful and sad at the same time. Sad for the lack of food, and hopeful for the promise of food to come.

I’m famished and it appears my Omega just wants to eat. She needs to build up her strength.

We’re not done just yet.

Jake stops by the door, peering back at me with a sexy smirk. His hair is gloriously mussed, thrown back into a careless man-bun.

Alex and Ezra sleep on my left and right, and the three of us are eating an awesome Alpha sandwich with an Omega filling. We all dozed off at some point, so I have no idea what time it is.

The clock on my bedside cabinet says 2 am. Sheesh. Do I really want to wake up that late? Or early?

Jake follows my gaze, and a snort escapes him. “It’s fine, Renée. Y

live a little. I was feeling peckish, so I decided to go out and get us something to eat. Your choice.”

Well then, if that’s the case...

“Pizza.”

Jake raises a brow. “Pizza, huh?”

I lick my lips. “For sure. Pizza is *life*, after all.”

His grin widens. “It sure is...”

A moment of silence passes between us. Ezra snores on my left, twitching beneath the sheets, and it looks as if he’s dreaming of running

Alex doesn’t snore at all. He barely makes a peep as he sleeps beside me. He resembles an angel; a beautiful, dark-haired angel. It’s

My lipshame I can’t see those dusk blue eyes.

Jake approaches the foot of the bed, beckoning me toward him. I look at the guys on my left and right. Alex has his hand placed on my stomach, food to carefully slip out of his hold, crawling toward my beta.

My beta.

needs to Jake was the first man to notice me back when I was still invisible. I haven’t even hit me yet that I am finally an Omega. I haven’t had adjust.

hair is No pre-heat or prior warning signs after all. My Omega really is a bit

The only hint that she was coming was the occasional smell of Jake’s hair freshener. Okay, my perfume is more like lime cake frosting.

at some At least I no longer smell like paper. I have an Omega’s scent now. It will be different from now on.

it to eat Maybe I should start my own fragrance. I will call it, “Just Be Me...”

Now that would be taking it too far.

you can Jake presses me flush to his chest when I reach him, running his

nothing down my curves. They stop at the globes of my ass. He pinches me making me squeak, then steals a kiss from my lips.

His erection pokes me in the stomach, and sure enough, my slice down my thighs.

“I may not be an Alpha, but I can still make you moan, princess. Just like the night we met.”

I close my eyes, basking in his warmth and closeness. How can I miss his foot that night?

g. That was the night I learned to live on the wild side. Back then, a one soundly stand was crazy to me. But I’ve just had an orgy with three guys in less than eight hours.

Are all Omegas like this? Sex crazy?

peer at It seems that good girl is long gone. The shy beta who was too busy with her job, but I in her younger sister’s shadow. Shit. How will Chloé take the news that I got my Omega? How will Dad?

How will my aunts?

. It still Will everyone stop treating me like I’m a spare part now that I have my Omega? Only time will tell.

I just wish Mom had lived to see me get my Omega. She always teased me about it. she loved me regardless, but this is something a girl should share with her mother.

I just hope I don’t have to enroll at Blossoms next September. It’s mandatory for every Omega to do her Omega training at an academy, but I don’t want to be the only twenty-five-year-old Omega in a room full of eighteen-year-olds.

They would call me a *mature* student. I’m too young to be mature... s hands Jake leans closer, rubbing his nose with mine. “Now that we

e tight, moment alone... care to let me show you how much I can make you mo

I raise my brow. "You do know those sleeping Alphas will wake drips moment they sense my arousal."

"Not if we go somewhere private."

ust like I chew my lip as I think for somewhere we can do it in private apartment isn't too small. We could do it in a closet. I do know that I forget bathroom is off limits. That's the last place Henry went.

My heart sinks when I think of Henry. I would love nothing more than a re-nightteen crush to join me for my first heat.

the last His poster isn't the same...

"If you're worried about Henry, I heard him leave around midnight."

My heart dips even lower. It looks as if he bailed after all.

er hiding "Hey," Jake lifts my chin, gazing into my eyes. "I'm sure he will be at I got I'm not so sure. He looked pretty torn before. His Alpha lost control he found me in the woods. I'm just glad that it didn't get too serious.

Well, at least Jake and I will have the bathroom to ourselves.

ave my I return Jake's kiss, pulling on his bottom lip with my teeth. "Let's the shower. Then we can order pizza."

told me Jake's grin reaches his eyes. Then he scoops me up in his arms and with herme to the bathroom. We were both already undressed, so it didn't much time to get in the shower.

It's not He pushes my back flush against the tiles, turning the dial. Water s but I do from the spout above, pouring down on us. It gets in my eyes, so now ed with see my handsome beta.

Water drips from my bangs and down my cheeks as I wrap my arms legs around him, keeping him close. My heart won't stop pounding.

have a It will be just like the first night we met when we did it in the hotel s

can?" Jake pushes my wet bangs away from my eyes, and there he is. My
ake thebeta. He saw me when no one else did.

"It looks like we have a bathroom all to ourselves again," I whisper.

His eyebrows crumple in confusion.

ite. My "Back at the club. When we met in line for the toilets. We had a ba
hat theall to ourselves then too."

Jake smirks. "Bathroom? I don't recall there being any actual b
han mythose stinky toilets."

I push his shoulder. "You know what I mean..."

His smile turns up at the corners. "I remember. You were just as b
" as you are now."

I run my hand down his chest, wiping away water droplets. Steam
back." around us, as it's getting pretty hot.

pl when "Even though I was just a beta?"

Jake leans closer, placing a kiss on my pulse. "Beta or Omega, y
gorgeous..."

do it in I throw my head back on the tiles as he licks the water from my
tasting my skin. A satisfied sound escapes him. "You taste so fucking i

carries Jake peppers more kisses down my throat. He continues his cours
take usmy belly, stopping at the apex of my thighs. A groan escapes my throa

he slips his tongue inside.

plutters He drapes my leg over his right shoulder, holding me up against t
I can'twall. His face disappears further, and I moan a second time.

Jake's tongue finds my clit. He grazes the sensitive flesh with hi
ms andand between the steaming water and my oncoming release, I'm a
mess.

shower. It's getting hotter in this shower...

perfect He slips his finger inside, hooking it just ever so slightly. He hits the spot, and lights dazzle my eyes.

Another finger enters me, and now he presses his face in deeper. He pokes the hood of my sex as he eats me out, and the pressure builds up through me. The lights shatter me, so I wrap my legs around his head to stop from falling. My thighs clench around his face, locking him between my thighs and I hope to God that he doesn't suffocate.

What a way to die.

Jake has me. He grips my hips to stop me from falling, then delivers a beautiful orgasm from me. It's more of a chain of orgasms, each one bigger than the last as I flutter around him.

He swallows my slick, lapping it up into his mouth.

My chest heaves as he swallows, licking and nibbling at my throbbing. His fingers go in that little bit deeper, hooking all the way inside. He is a lovely bundle of nerves, making me come again and again.

My screams shatter the walls of the bathroom.

Before I fall back down from my high, he rises to his feet, meeting me with a "fine..." face. My scent is all over his mouth as he kisses me passionately, working his fingers through my wet hair.

I remove the band from his own hair, letting his waves fall loose down his back. He's like my very own Rapunzel.

Jake enters me, and I rise up against the wet tiles, tightening my legs around his waist. He rolls his hips, and I match his thrusts. He fucks me with his teeth, with a wanton abandon, showing me exactly how he plans on making me scream. He may not have a knot, but he will still take me to heights that I could only dream of.

The pressure builds up again. My body coils like a spring, ready to

he right as his thrusts become faster, harder. Just before the burning pressure p
pauses.

his nose “Stop.”

inside. My body stops at his command, and it’s like that, is it? It’s odd that
myself this power over me. Usually, only Alphas can give commands. He did
my legs, in the cab when we were going to our hotel.

Jake may be beta, but he definitely has some underlying Alpha tra
body is so in tune with his, so it’s no surprise that it wants to heed hi
rags an command.

han the “You only release when I tell you to, princess...”

I close my eyes as he keeps me hanging over the edge. The blood
through my skull, making my ears ring.

ing clit. My legs tremble around his waist.

finds a Jake casts his gaze over my face. He wipes the sweat beneath m
pulling at my bottom lip. My orgasm has been put on hold, and whe
going to tell me to release?

ing my It seems he just wants to admire the aesthetics of my face.

rapping “Such pretty little lips. Almost heart-shaped...”

He brushes the curve of my upper lip, drawing out my defined (
own his bow, and if he doesn’t give me the greenlight soon, then I am g
implode.

ny legs Meanwhile, his other hand brushes down my curve, stopping at i
ne with Jake shuts his eyes, leaning closer to place a tender kiss on my lips. T
scream. whispers, just low enough for me to hear. “Release, princess...”

an only The dam explodes, and I shatter around his cock, locking him i
between my legs. I clench him tight, and he grunts in deep pleasure,
release his own release.

ops, he He jerks his hips as I milk his cock, drawing out every last drop. W
both come down from our high, we open our eyes, gazing into each
souls.

t he has It's almost as if we can read each other's thoughts again.

it back It warms my heart to see that we're on the same page about pizza to
It looks like he wants to go old school.

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He jerks his hips as I milk his cock, drawing out every last drop. When we both come down from our high, we open our eyes, gazing into each other's souls.

It's almost as if we can read each other's thoughts again.

It warms my heart to see that we're on the same page about pizza toppings.

It looks like he wants to go old school.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Renée

The guys feed me slices of delicious pepperoni pizza while I lean on my plush velvet pillows, enjoying life to the fullest.

It feels so good to be doted on and hand fed like a helpless baby. Before I was an independent woman who could feed herself. I still am, but for now I am going to lie back and let three gorgeous men treat me like a goddess.

They didn't just order pizza. They ordered seasoned fries too and chocolate fudge cake.

Ezra fastened a blindfold to my eyes, telling me that I would enjoy the food a lot better if I didn't know what I was getting.

Trust me. My Omega knows exactly what they are feeding me because I'm pretty ravenous after all.

My senses are so much sharper now that I've awakened, and it's going to take some getting used to.

"Here comes the airplane!" Ezra announces, flying a spoon of chocolate fudge cake toward my mouth. I hum in satisfaction when the deliciousness touches my tongue, and I chew very slowly, savoring every last bite.

The Alphas purr in response. It's a constant hum in the room as it v

through the mattress, traveling up my spine. I can feel the sensation my bones.

My Omega can't get enough of the sound.

Alex lies on my right, peppering kisses up and down my arm. Jak up on the box of seasoned fries now that Ezra finally feeds me desert.

I'm stuffed, but somehow I always have room for more. Another perk?

It's day four of my heat, and I am already on my second pizza. I just it doesn't go to my hips.

"Whoops. Missed a bit."

an back Before Ezra can scoop up the piece of chocolate fudge cake from bottom lip, I reach my tongue down, licking it away. Each one of them before, I the moment with their eyes, and you can almost hear a pin dropping once I mile away.

s. None of them breathes a sound. It looks as if I stirred something chocolate inside them all.

The door creaks behind them, and everyone turns to look at the new joy the His ocean brine scent fills the room as I lift my blind.

It's Henry.

. She's "Hey," he mutters, peering down at the ground. It's almost as if ashamed to be in the same room with me. I see that nervous tick has gone joining to Has he finally got a hold of that Alpha of his?

Alex stiffens, rising up on the bed in nothing but a pair of pants to chocolate his modesty. "Brother... how are you feeling?"

us cake Henry blows a sigh through gritted teeth. "Just dandy..."

His voice trails off when he glances up at the ceiling. I follow his gaze vibrates immediately regret it. Oh, fuck.

deep in All the shadows leave his face the moment he smiles, stifling a laugh. I see I was already accounted for..."

My cheeks burn up as the guys laugh at my shame, and all I want to do is cover my face with my bedsheets. "Oh, hahaha. I was fifteen when I got this poster. Give me a break."

Omega "That doesn't change the fact that you have his poster up on your wall now, princess," Jake whispers.

Just hope "Hey, leave her be. I was already aware of the poster, anyway. So don't worry, good, Renée. At least one version of me could be there for you..."

Henry's sad voice fills the space, and I want to reach my arms out to him. He's had a pretty tough few days trying to keep his Alpha at bay.

1 tracks Alex steps closer to Henry, placing a hand on his shoulder. "A little help from me, finally... you know..."

Henry closes his eyes. When he opens them again, they land on me. "I know, but that's the most part. I just hope you will all have me."

I throw the sheets aside, walking across my bedroom buck-naked. "Of course, Henry. It doesn't change anything. I was kind of hoping you would come and join us eventually. This is the last day of my heat. It would be the same without you."

if he is Damn. Have we really been cooped up in my apartment for four days? What have I missed out there?

I hope none of the family called.

to cover Henry freezes the moment his eyes get their fill of me, and it actually gives me a moment to realize what is wrong. Of course. This is his first time seeing me naked. I probably should have seen this through.

to make and Will his Alpha go rogue?

Holy crap. I am standing naked before my teen crush. Honestly,

ugh. “I point, I don’t care if he does ravage me. No doubt it was what I dreamed of.

to do is Alex and Ezra are on their feet as they assess Henry’s reaction. Let me get that hope they don’t have to intervene.

Somehow, I know Henry won’t hurt me. I never did believe he would be ceiling the last few days; it was just his own self-doubt getting the better of him.

If it helps, he can just have me to himself for now. The others can’t stay if it’s all leave the room.

I step closer to Henry, wrapping my arms around his neck. He closes his eyes when I whisper in his ear. “It’s okay, Henry. Come to the bed with me, you...”

are you He’s breathing through his nostrils, and it’s a tense moment. The others don’t seem to know what to do, but I got this. I start pulling him toward me. “Forbidden, leading him the way. The back of my knees finds the mattress, and I lie down, dragging him with me.

ed. “Of Now it’s just me and Henry.

I would It’s kind of surreal to have his poster and the real Henry Fontaine in the room. I wouldn’t bedown at me at the same time. But I would take the real Henry any day.

I run my hands over the shaved part of his head. Henry’s eyes are closed as a deep purr resonates in his chest, and I concentrate on the sound.

“It’s okay, Henry. It’s just you and me. No one else.”

At the sound of my voice, he opens his eyes, and they burn like liquid fire. It’s the same smoldering gaze on the poster behind his head, except it’s seeing hotter.

Because this gaze is only for me...

“Renée...”

at this I smile up at the Alpha. “Hey.”

always His gaze falls to my lips, and before I even have a chance to take a breath, he kisses me. His tongue teases at the seam of my lips, so I can't resist inviting him inside. He sucks my tongue, taking my breath away.

How many times did I dream of this as a kid? It's even better than I'd overimagined.

Henry's purrs deepens, vibrating against my own chest, and I can't believe an event like this is happening. I am an Omega, and Henry Fontaine is about to know only a teenage girl could fast forward to the future and see herself now. I fiddle with his belt buckle, throwing the thing to one side as I hear the zipper rustle. I trust him out of his jeans. Henry sits back, ripping off his distressed T-shirt and covering his head.

I see the real-life version of the muscles on my poster up close. Carefully, I rake my hand from his firm pecs to his solid eight-pack. A soft groan escapes me when I feel how rigid they are.

It's like he is cut from stone.

He still has on his underwear, but there's no missing the bulge beneath the black fabric. The more I rake my fingers down his chest, the higher the bulge grows.

My fingers move toward the perfectly cut V of his hips as I slip a hand beneath the waistband of his underwear, tugging them down his legs.

Henry helps me get them off, and soon I feast my eyes on his hard fire package.

Fuck. It's Henry Fontaine's dick.

Vivienne must have been out of her mind the day she decided to come with this dick...

Well, her loss is my gain.

Henry extends, and my eyes fall on the bead of pre-cum. I reach

ny nextgrabbing him at the base as I gently guide him toward me. His inflame
I open,kisses my entrance, and then a shiver courses down my spine.

Henry appears frozen in time. It's as if he is deliberating whether
than Imy brains out or not. Wrapping my arm around the back of his neck
again, I pull him toward me, kissing his lips ever so gently.

believe “It’s okay, Henry. I trust you...”

t me. If He doesn’t look away from my eyes, and it’s so strange to have him
close. It’s a face I know all too well. One I have seen on my TV screen
elp himinside the pages of a magazine.

ver his Yet here he is, right in front of me, sharing my air. His salty ocean
even stronger up close, and it’s like we’re alone at the beach.

e now. Henry settles in place above me, keeping his gaze on me the whole
s, and aThen when I give him the greenlight, he thrusts. My nerve endings burn
fire when he pushes his way inside me, burying himself balls deep until
meet at the hilt.

neath the I stretch around his shaft, closing my eyes as I wait for the moment
e bulgeknobs me. First, he needs to come. I wrap my legs around his waist
him a better angle, digging my heels into his ass. I am going to enjoy this.

. thumb His poster watches us from behind his head, and I narrow my eyes.
What are you looking at?

s entire Henry laughs. “Why are you smirking?”

Shit. He doesn’t have to know that I was talking to his poster in my
I’ll just act dumb. “I’m not smirking...”

heat on Henry purrs, leaning down to smell my neck. “You smell amazing,
you’re lying, Ney Ney...”

“Ugh. You need to find a new nickname for me. That one is
across,taken.”

ed head He chuckles, and I roll my eyes, hoping the name doesn't stick.
want to think of my sister when I am fucking my teenage crush.

to fuck "Well, how about I only use the one Ney for now?"

ck once "Deal."

Henry smiles, pulling back out. Then he slams back inside m
making me see stars. Shit. I was not prepared for that.

im this He slams into me even harder the second time, and I try to match h
eens orbut he's too fast. Henry fucks me like there's no tomorrow as his h
don't stop.

brine is Sweat drips down his face as he grabs onto the metal frame of n
gritting his teeth.

le time. He grunts, and I watch that animal taking over. It's like he is pos
rn likeand it's one of the most intriguing things I have ever seen.

until we The others watch us around the room, but I only have eyes for my
He's beautiful...

nent he The stars explode this time as I slam my eyes shut, reaching m
to giveHenry doesn't let up, making me come again and again. My vision wh
his. he continues to rut me like it's his very last fuck, and where the Hell
es at it.been my whole life?

Where have they all been?

This is amazing; I never want this moment to end. I can't even rer
y head.my own name...

I have some kind of out-of-body experience. A woman screams, and
g whento think for a moment about who it could be.

Geez. Henry is unstoppable.

already My hands find his back, and I feel those glorious muscles beneat
rides me over the hills. I can no longer feel my toes.

I don't Henry's hips jerk, and then his warm cum fills me as he finally r His knot swells, locking him in place, and he won't be coming out c for a good while.

He's wedged in deep.

e hard, My body is completely boneless as he lifts us into a sitting p stroking his hand up and down my spine. His soft purr soothes my s is pace, resist the urge to cry. I already have tears running from my eyes fr ips just brutal fucking, but I have never felt so at peace.

This pack found me in pieces, but they were the ones to bring me to ny bed, I have found my family. My place in the world.

The bed sinks beneath us, and I peer up at Jake through half-closed c asessed, "Hey, princess..."

Henry still has his arms wrapped around me, refusing to let me go. Henry. his knot wasn't deep inside me, no one would be able to pry me free.

The bed shifts on my other side, and I meet Ezra's bright blue eyes y peak. you holding up, kitten?"

itens as I can't speak. I'm still trying to catch my breath. Henry's own chest . has he beneath me, and I don't think either of us will be able to talk for some

Alex places himself behind me, and now all five of us sit on my sized bed. I didn't think it would even be possible, but we fit so easily member have plenty of more room in me.

The cramps have subsided as I enter the last wave of my heat. I h l I have idea how this works. This was my first heat. I guess the cramps jus their merry way once it's all over, and then I wake up feeling invigora renewed.

h as he Somehow, the guys know that I need a bit more time. It's like th sense my heat and discomfort. It's like a never-ending itch that I ju

releases. quite reach. They have all helped big time, but it wasn't until Henry of there that I started to feel some sense of relief.

“Here, let us help...” Ezra breathes.

I jump when he reaches his hand down to my slick. I turn around, with my back to him, and he lubricates himself. My heart pounds.

Could as I Is he going to do what I think he's going to do? Two knots at the same time. Is this my lucky day?

No, my lucky year...

Oh peace. Ezra uses his finger to lubricate my backside, and I shiver with pleasure. He stretches me. “This may sting a little at first...” he whispers.

My eyes. I finally catch my breath. “Just... just do what you have to do...”

He slips his finger in further, and my mouth opens with an Oh. Even if I'm going to feel good.

“Ready, kitten?”

Yes. “How do I lick my lips, nodding my head.”

Ezra grunts in response, pressing the head of his cock at my backside. He heaves and edges inside, stretching the tight ring of muscles. It's a little painful at first. It's not that I have no experience with anal; I just haven't had one before.

Yes. I still Henry comes to, gazing into my eyes while his pack brother fucks me behind, and this is going to be fun.

I have no Ezra thrusts next, pushing me toward Henry. Henry has finally worked it out. He realizes what's happening. He tenses, and I reach up, patting his chest and “It's okay, Henry. It's just Ezra. Your pack brother. He is not going to take me away from you...”

They can Ezra chuckles. “Even if I wanted to, I couldn't. He has his knot inside me. It can't deep. That thing isn't coming out for a while, kitten...”

joined How does he know that? Can he feel Henry's knot? Only a thin membrane of skin separates the two Alphas, and it's no surprise.

Alex watches Henry. "Are you okay, brother?"

atching He nods, shutting his eyes. "Y-yes... I'm fine. It will just take some time used to..."

the same Henry looks at Ezra behind my shoulder. "Do that again."

Ezra doesn't need to be asked twice. He just purrs, thrusting me behind once again. I slide along Henry's length, and he gasps, muttering when he curses.

I bet he never realized a threesome could feel this good. He is sharing with another man, and he seems pretty on board with it.

This is Henry rolls me back toward Ezra, and the two play a game of back and forth. It's as if they're trying to outdo each other, and I thank whatever god for making Alphas so damn competitive.

Sex is like a sport to them.

side. He Jake reaches between me and Henry, massaging my clit with his first finger. "How does it feel, princess? To be fucked by two men?"

so big "F-fanfuckingtastic."

They all laugh at my response.

one from Jake leans closer to my ear, nibbling my lobe. "I bet it does. Can you do it for me? When I give you the order, I want you to scream all our names together."

spoken as I nod, sweat dripping down my face and into my eyes as Henry kisses my cheek. "fuck me. "You bet."

to steal Alex grabs my head, turning it slowly until I meet his dusk blue eyes. "I can sense when you're not fully satiated, Renée. Don't be afraid to tell me if you need more..."

My heart thumps at his suggestion.

membrane He unzips his pants, freeing his knot. I don't just get *two* knots, but *three*. This is all happening so fast, but it's not like I have another hole for Alex grips my chin, running the pad of his thumb over my bottom getting slips it between my teeth, and I finally get with the page. He is going my mouth.

When I spy that pre-cum dripping from his slit, I don't even think I can just open up wide.

Alex spreads his cum up and down his long shaft, keeping his sex eyes on me. Then he pries my mouth open further, slipping inside me gently.

His head hovers over my tongue, his spicy taste filling my mouth in the back and drool drips down the sides of my chin as my mind spins.

Alex pushes in further, letting me adjust to his size. Soon he reaches the back of my throat, and my gag reflex has gone. Talk about deep. Another Omega perk? I was missing out on so much.

I breathe through my nose as he thrusts. His slow liquid movement is like Heaven, and I have to have more.

I squeeze his knot, and he loses all control. His palms grip the sides of my face as he ruts like an animal. I move my mouth up and down his shaft, licking the underside of his dick.

Alex grunts, grinding his teeth as he thrusts faster and faster. My movement stutters, and then he jerks his hips. His abs clench before me, and then his hot release fills my mouth.

I savor every last drop, and that's when his knot swells. He fits inside my mouth so perfectly as I continue to breathe through my nose, massaging his dick with my tongue.

Ezra groans behind me, and then his hips shudder as he finds his

three... He stretches the tight ring of muscles, and then a whole new world opens up inside me.

I close my eyes, and it's the peak of all peaks. The one to end the knotcourse of my heat.

It's the final wave. My orgasms chase away the cramps and the pain that just never goes away. I am being knotted in three different places

is no way my Omega can feel empty and unfilled after this.

Happy? We finally got what we wanted.

Jake pinches my clit, and it appears I was wrong. I will never be satisfied until all four of my guys are pleasuring me. I don't know what will happen after this.

For now, I just want to live in the moment and be with my pack. It's just the five of us right now and no one else. We are safe from the world, away in my apartment.

But sooner or later, the magic will end, and I will have to go back to my real world.

Yet, for now, I will keep my Omega to myself.

of my
length,

er. His
y eyes,

side my
ing his

release.

He stretches the tight ring of muscles, and then a whole new world of pleasure opens up inside me.

I close my eyes, and it's the peak of all peaks. The one to end the dreaded curse of my heat.

It's the final wave. My orgasms chase away the cramps and the painful itch that just never goes away. I am being knotted in three different places. There is no way my Omega can feel empty and unfilled after this.

Happy? We finally got what we wanted.

Jake pinches my clit, and it appears I was wrong. I will never be fully satisfied until all four of my guys are pleasuring me. I don't know what will happen after this.

For now, I just want to live in the moment and be with my pack. It's just the five of us right now and no one else. We are safe from the world, hidden away in my apartment.

But sooner or later, the magic will end, and I will have to go back into the real world.

Yet, for now, I will keep my Omega to myself.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Renée

Jake accompanied me to the doctor's office a few days after my heat. It feels so strange to be out of the house and in the real world once again. The heat feels like a dream in comparison, and I dread the moment to tell my family.

I'm sure they will be relieved, but I also dread the rest of the world finding out about my new designation too. For now, I want to keep this information to myself. So I have hardly left the apartment. I told Michelle at the office that I am too sick to come in and volunteer, and I hardly go anywhere now.

Jake has pretty much moved into my apartment with me. We have discussed how we are all going to move forward in the future. All I know is that we will always have a place in Pack Fontaine. As each of them has assured me.

"Yes. There is definitely a change in your hormone levels, Ms. LaFontaine," the doctor says, peering down at my results behind her desk.

Jake squeezes my hand, offering me a reassuring wink. I breathe a sigh of relief. Well, I didn't really need a doctor to measure my hormone levels to tell me that I am an Omega, but I wanted to make extra sure.

Now I have medical proof. I am no longer a beta.

This is all too much. It's as if I have acquired a whole new identity her inside me, my new Omega. Always hovering beneath the surface only makes herself known when she is aroused, hungry, or when I'm in

Which is pretty much all the time, apart from my heat. That only happens several times a year, thank goodness. Still, I know my next heat will be better than the last. This time, my pack and I will be prepared.

I still can't believe I have a pack. A few months ago, I would have been shocked that I even had a boyfriend.

The doctor hands me some brochures from across the desk, and I blink, wide-eyed, and eyes when I see the contents.

again. "Is it normal, doctor, to get your Omega so... you know... *late*?" I ask.

I have She sighs, leaning back in her chair. "It's not as common as you think."

But it's not completely unheard of either..."

finding I bend forward in my seat, riveted by her words. "Well, do you know the information the cause was?"

shelter She smiles, her eyes flitting over to Jake briefly. "Well, it could be a number of things. But usually the most common cause of delayed awakening is scent sensitivity."

haven't Sense sensitivity?

is that I The doctor continues. "Sense sensitivity usually occurs when you've been exposed to an individual or group with whom you are scent sensitive," My heart pounds when I think I finally get the meaning of her words.

"Basically, you have found your scent matches, Ms. Laurent."

sigh of Scent matches?

feels just I gaze out the window behind her desk, watching the groundskeeper scooping up leaves in the yard with a rake. Her words echo through my

Could Pack Fontaine be my scent matches? I had heard of occurrences happening before, but I thought it only happened to a few individuals.

Not to invisible people like me...

I don't know how to take the news. Quickly, I peer at Jake. He crinkles at the corners as he gazes at me with such love and pride, and it then when I look at him.

Jake is my soul mate. I could feel it the moment we met at the club. I felt the attraction to each member of his pack, too, and I have never felt so elated and terrified at the same time. I am afraid that if I close my eyes and wake up and all of this will have turned out to be some messed up dream.

I did not awaken, and I did not find my scent sensitive matches anywhere. I'm still that same boring old Renée. The shy beta who lives in the shadow of her shining Omega sister.

"Congratulations, Ms. Laurent."

I can hardly hear the doctor over the sound of my own heartbeat. She is talking about a programme I can join for newly awakened Omegas, and I just decline for the time being.

I am not quite ready to go public with my Omega yet. At the moment, it is mine and mine only. And maybe Jake's, Alex's, Ezra's, and Henry's. "Here are some brochures for you to read at your own leisure. It's an exciting time, after all, when a young woman gets her Omega."

I glance down at the brochures and roll my eyes. They are all written for teen girls, and this is so humiliating. The title: "You and your Omega..."

There's a cartoon of a happy-looking Omega surrounded by blank tubes of ice cream. The marketing may be geared to a slightly younger

if suchcrowd, but there's some good stuff in the brochure, like how to cop
v luckyyour Omega is sad or hungry. There's also a list of specific pads y
wear in your underwear for when you get your 'slick.'

The good doctor even hands me over some pads, and they are thic
is eyesoften will I need them? This is going to be fun...

I know She passes me some bottles of desensitizer after I told her that I wa
keep my Omega private. The doctor was very understanding. I
) . I alsodoused myself in desensitizer before I left the house. I also wore a b
' felt socap and sunglasses to avoid being recognized.

s, I will We leave the doctor's office, heading toward the lobby. Jake doesn'
im. the whole time we walk to his car in the lot. Even after we have buc
fter all.and hit the road, he doesn't say a word.

idow of He taps his fingers on the steering wheel when we stop at a red ligh
scent sensitive, hey..."

I sigh, meeting his soft brown gaze. "Did you have any inkling eithe
he tells "Not the slightest. I mean, I knew from the moment I looked at yo
politelywas instantly attracted to you, but I never would have guessed we c
scent sensitive. Do betas normally find their scent matches?"

ent, she That's a good point. When we met, we were still betas. Well, I w
; too. beta. It may have to do with the fact that my Omega was just b
It's anbeneath the surface, waiting to make her glorious debut.

I would have preferred to awaken somewhere more convenient
clearlysuppose that's another silver lining. Imagine if I had been surroun
our newpeople. In fact, the only reason why I took that detour through the wo
because I heard someone following me.

ets and Sosexyyoucoulddie was determined indeed to get my snapshot. St
roungerof these days, the world is bound to find out.

e when My life is seriously about to change. For now, I just want to hang c
ou canold me for a little while longer. I know I bemoaned my life before, bu
its perks.

k. How People left me alone. I was free to go wherever I want and do as I
without any consequences. Now I can't even buy milk at the grocer
nted towithout being hounded.

already "Well, it doesn't matter. Honestly, it makes no difference to me. Y
aseballmine, Renée. Always."

I smile, placing my hand over his on the handbrake. "And you ar
't speakJake."

kled up We share a tender moment. It warms my heart that things haven't c
between us. We are still the same pair of betas from that night w
t. "So...wanted to use the toilet.

The light goes green and Jake drives off. That's when I spy a sign
r?" cemetery.

u that I How could I forget? It's not far from the doctor's office...

ould be "Do you think we could do a detour? There's someone I want to see
Jake looks at me curiously. "Sure. Where to?"

vas still My eyes fall on the sign for the cemetery again as I slowly breathe
ubblingbeen a while.

; but I
ided by
ods was

ill, one

image-placeholder

into the
it it had

Jake waits in the car while I search for her headstone. It's one of the I
pleased It's of an angel spreading her wings, and it doesn't take me long to find
y store I read the name on the stone. "Violet Laurent."

"Hey, Mom. It's been a while."

You are Silence answers me back. I don't come here nearly as often as I
The last few years have been tough. In fact, the last time I was here was
e mine, Aaron broke up with me. I asked for her to give me a sign.

A robin appeared on her headstone that day, and I just knew it was I
hanged I sit cross-legged before her, closing my eyes as I listen to the so
ho just the cemetery. Corvids squawk and the wind blows, rattling the leaves
trees. Not a soul to be found. I truly am alone here.

for the "I wanted you to be the first to find out, Mom. But... I got my Omega

I say the last part quietly. I may be alone, but you never know who
be watching me right now. There are some creeps out there, after all.

." "You must be so proud."

I gaze down at the headstone, wishing she was actually here. If
in. It's could tell her in person, but I have a feeling she is listening, regard

butterfly lands on a nearby headstone, and that's when the dam explod

The insect flutters its wings, and I swear it is looking right at me. W
eye patterns on its wings more specifically. I must be going crazy, bu
feels so nice to have a sign from her.

"Please, Mom... please guide me on where to go next. Everyt
changing so fast. Chloé is changing, and I don't know what to do..."

The butterfly takes off, landing on my mother's grave next. Then it
its wings so I can see its eyes. I smile. Everything is going to be all rig

I have faith.

Jake will be waiting for me in the car. But I send him a quick text to let him know that I just need a little more time.

It's good to spend time with loved ones after all.

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I have faith.

Jake will be waiting for me in the car. But I send him a quick text to let him know that I just need a little more time.

It's good to spend time with loved ones after all.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Renée

I texted Chloé and Marc to meet at our usual place for coffee. They are only two friends I have in the world outside of the pack, and I think this time I told someone.

Mom got to be the first to find out. And now it is Chloé's and Marc's

I would have organized to have dinner again with Dad, but he is in Paris. I will have to wait until he is home to tell him the big news. I just hope Chloé shows her face. I hope that she also has the sense to wear a disguise.

I'm wearing my baseball cap and sunglasses, sipping carefully at my coffee. I got a to-go cup, and once again, the barista wrote my name as *Ren*.

Yay. I am invisible again.

It sucks that I have to hide myself, but it's a necessary evil. I should have invited them to the apartment, but it still smells of sex. I need to be outside in fresh air. Well, as fresh as the air can get in a room that smells like coffee.

Marc is the first to arrive, giving me a big hug when he joins me at the table. He won't be able to pick up on my scent as I have sprayed myself

desensitizer. But sooner or later, they are going to know that something is different about me.

They have known me my whole life.

“So,” Marc begins, tucking a strand of pink hair behind his ear. “Fame treating ya? I keep telling everyone that I’m friends with Laurent.”

I kick him under the table. But the Omega laughs, shaking his head. “Enjoy it while it lasts, Ney Ney. Do you know how many people would trade to just be famous for nothing?”

I roll my eyes. “Gee, thanks.”

He sighs, taking my hand. “Look, I’m not saying you’re a total asshole, but you are the ink it ishack...”

I raise my brow.

“... You have *many* admirable qualities, but...”

He trails off, gazing up at someone by the counter getting a coffee. I still hope his gaze. I spy a young woman dressed in black. Her backpack is shaped like a coffin, and her platform black boots go all the way to her knees.

I expect Marc to scoff at her alternative fashion style, but he has only words of praise. “I love her bag...”

Her bag? The one shaped like a coffin? Well, that’s a surprise, especially with someone with bright pink hair. I glance at the young woman again, and I will admit, her goth girl look is beautiful and very mysterious, and I will admit, her goth girl look is groundchic.

“I’m going to ask her where she got that bag when she passes us, and she’ll announce it.”

I throw him a pointed look. “There is no way you would wear that backpack.”

thing is Marc shrugs. "I might... for Halloween..."

"Judy!" the barista shouts out and the young woman rolls her eyes.

"It's Judith!"

How is The barista smirks. "Oh, sorry, Morticia. I guess you will just l
Renéespeak louder next time."

The barista slams the young woman's to-go cup onto the counter, ar
s head.an attitude. But I bet she has to deal with shitty customers all day long
uld *kill*hope she doesn't meet a Karen one day who demands to speak w
manager...

Judith mutters under her breath, "Actually, I'm more like her da
lentlessWednesday. But nice try anyway." She turns away from the counter, l
for the door. Just as she grabs the handle, she glances over at me and
"What?"

I look away, pretending that I wasn't staring. Marc, however, wa
[followlove your bag! Goth chic is so in *vogue* right now."

ed like Judith hikes a brow, peering at his bright pink hair. "Oh. That so?"

"Absolutely! Alternative fashion is trending right now. They wou
nothingyour bag at my office."

Judith smiles, staring down at her platform boots. She must be
peciallypeople laughing at her style. Marc may be an asshole at times, but h
in. Shegenuine. He would never berate someone for their personal fashion cho
is very Well, except for me, when I'm wearing *apricot* or something, but
relaxes a little when she realizes he isn't being funny with her.

"Thanks," she replies, looking at his hair again. "I love your unico
hair."

ear that Silence passes between the three of us, and it looks like we've run
things to say.

Judith sighs. “Well, it’s been fun talking, but I have to go. I burn to when I’m out in the sun for too long.”

I snort at her comment, and she looks at me with a grin. That’s w have tonarrows her eyes, cocking her head. “I know you...” she whispers.

My eyes widen. Oh, shit. Maybe this disguise wasn’t so fool-proof. id what Judith continues. “Don’t worry. Your secret is safe with me. I’m g; I just Alex and Henry’s sister?”

with her My jaw hangs loose when she finally introduces herself. I thou, looked familiar, even though I have technically never met her befo ughter, showcased her Omega the same night as Chloé, though she looked reading different back then.

I Marc. For one, she was wearing white.

Marc gasps. “No way... You’re Alex Fontaine’s sister? Please, take aves. “I’m Marc, by the way. Marc Wong.”

He offers her Chloé’s seat, and I guess my sister will just have to spare from another table.

ld love Judith glances down at her skull-faced watch. Then she shrugs, tak proffered seat. “I suppose I can chat for five minutes. It’s great to final used to you in person. Don’t take this the wrong way, but if I *had* to pick a l e’s still sister for my brother, then... I’m glad it’s you...”

oices. Wow. She pulls no punches.

t Judith I smile tightly. “I suppose you know Chloé, then?”

Judith snorts. “We’ve crossed paths before. We weren’t exactly rn pink same crowd back at college.”

Of course. Judith would have done her Omega training at Blossor 1 out of Chloé.

“You studied at Blossoms? Me too!” Marc gushes. “We’re the

a crisp friends already...”

Judith chuckles, pushing him away a little. “Baby steps, Marc hen she steps...”

Judith considers me carefully, removing my sunglasses to peer i eyes. “Yes... I see it now. It looks like you *are* the one for my brothe Judith.him right, won’t you? You know his story, after all. The whole *world* c

She’s referring to Vivienne Fox. I bet she despises that bitch eve ght shethan I do. A bus passes the café next, and there’s Vivienne’s re. She promoting her new movie.

a little Judith looks as if she wants to set the bus on fire with her eyes. I ju she gives the driver and all the passengers a chance to get off first b bursts into flames.

a seat. Marc sharpens his eyes on my right side, and I bet he’s gaug reaction. After all, I haven’t actually declared that I am dating Henry grab a just the media making assumptions based on our kiss.

I spot a hot pink blur outside the café next, rolling my eyes when I ing theit’s Chloé. I told her to be conspicuous, and that coat is *not* conspicuo ly meet Also, she has her bodyguards and her French bulldog, Nugget.

Laurent She’s wearing a short brown wig with sunglasses, and at least sh some effort. But someone is bound to recognize her sooner or later. T bound to recognize me.

Judith saw right through my disguise.

in the All three of us watch Chloé now as she stops to apply her makeup, at her reflection in the window. Judith gets out of her seat. “Well, I sh ns withgoing.”

I get the inkling she doesn’t like my sister all that much. Chloé is a best of pretty sweet. I know she would never judge Judith for her fashion

either, but I can't imagine what it must have been like to have gone to
Baby with her for four years.

Judith must have felt invisible at that college with my sister around
my don't I know the feeling...

Treat Chloé and Judith bump into each other at the door, and they look
does..." meme. One is bright pink, and the other is as black as night.

My sister points her finger at her, and did anyone ever tell her it was
posterto point? "Hey, I know you..."

"No, you don't," Judith replies, trying to get around the body
st hope They're so big, they block the door.

"Judy! We took classes together at Blossoms! How are you?"

Judith bares her teeth with an unnatural grin, her eyes landing on me
ing my good. Nice to see you too. Gotta go."

Alex and Henry's sister vanishes at last, and I bet I will be seeing
her in future.

I like her. I feel as if we will get along well.

"Aw, such a sweet girl," Chloé croons, passing Nugget to one
bodyguards.

They find their own table at the back of the café, blending right in
hey are Chloé telling one of them to order Nugget a Puppy Cappuccino, and
of them rolls their eyes or grits their teeth.

Now that's what I call dedication to your job.

Chloé takes her seat at last, grabbing a menu. "So, what did I miss?"

Marc peers at me. "Nothing much. Nice wig, by the way..."

Chloé giggles, adjusting it slightly. "Thank you! I knew I had one
actually around somewhere. So, you ready to order?"

"Now that you're here, yeah," Marc replies.

college Chloé calls the waitress over, ordering drinks for the three of us. When the waitress leaves, my sister glances at me, a smile on her face. “So, what do you want to talk to us about?”

My heart thumps and instinctively, I peer around. No one seems to recognize who we are, and that’s a good sign. I hate to do this out in public, but the apartment is being cleaned and Dad’s mansion is cold and awkward when he’s away.

I hate going there.

I go to speak, but Chloé cuts me off. “Is this about you becoming... you know...?”

Me becoming what? Does she know? There’s no way...

“Yes... How did you know?”

Chloé leans back in the chair. “Well, *everyone* knows. You’re famous. A lot of Ney Ney. I know it’s not for the best of reasons, but I’m happy for you. The whole world can finally see you the way I do. It’s what you deserve.

I have no idea what to say to that. I thought she was talking about something else, but I suppose this will do just fine. It’s good to see that as her blessing. Here I was, worried that she would think I was trying to take her crown.

Shit. Is it wise to tell her that I got my Omega? Once the world knows I’m an Omega, that’s it. A complete game changer. I will be the new talk of the town.

I will steal Chloé’s crown for sure...

“We could even merge our brands together. The Laurent girls take the world by storm!”

It’s Marc’s turn to kick her legs beneath the table, and I thank him for the distraction. “Ney Ney wanted to meet in private for a reason. Stop blurting out words.”

hen there!”

What did Chloé giggle, putting a hand to her lips. “Oops, sorry. Habit.”

Marc peers at me again, narrowing his eyes. “That’s not what you
ems toto talk about, though, was it?”

public, I sigh, gazing down into my coffee cup. The name *Ren* still mocks
emptythe side. Chloé already ordered me another drink, and thank goodness
foresight.

We are going to be here for a while.

well.... How do I tell my sister and my oldest friend that I am finally an
like they are?

I start to mouth the words, and they both lean closer. Chloé holds
out. “What?”

us now, Oh, for the love of all that’s holy. Do I have to blurt it out?

u. Now “I’m an Omega...” I say in a register that only dogs would hear.

e.” They still have no idea what I am trying to say. I could text it, but th
; aboutwould have the information on their phones. I trust Marc, but Chloé?
t I havemuch.

ake her Especially lately. I’m surprised she left Patrick long enough to even
for coffee. It’s like they’re glued at the hips these days. She even sn
ows I’mhim, and how had I not noticed that smell before?

κ of the It’s like an ashtray and deep-fat fryer oil combined, and it makes n
to gag. Patrick even smells awful.

Sometimes, I curse these sharp Omega senses.

ing the That’s it. I will communicate via scent. I doused a fair share of dese
earlier, but if they lean in close enough, they may just get a hint
silently.Omega.

Who you “Smell my neck...” I say.

Marc and Chloé look at me, a little disgusted.

“Ew, why?” Marc asks.

wanted I roll my eyes. “Just do it. It will explain everything. You just I
promise to keep your excitement to yourselves. No squealing.” I
; me onChloé.

for her She turns as pink as her coat. “I don’t squeal.”

Yeah, and pigs don’t fly.

Marc sniffs me first. I thought it best because I know he will be
Omegakeep his composure. Also, he will keep Chloé in control the mom
loses it.

her ear Because we know she will.

It takes Marc a few tries, but when my scent finally registers, he fal
on his chair, looking at me in shock. “Renée...”

Chloé can barely contain her excitement. “What is it? The susp
en they*kill*ing me...”

Not so I guess it’s finally her turn. I offer her my neck. Chloé presses her
my neck, and she’s not at all subtle like Marc. It takes her a few sni
join us the moment she finally smells my Omega, she freezes, looking at me
nells of speechless.

She doesn’t speak for a while. Her face drains of blood as she dro
ie wanton her chair.

Marc and I watch her tense.

“Chloé...” he whispers, readying himself for the moment she explod
nsitizer It happens in slow motion. Chloé’s slack mouth curves at the c
of my rising and rising until finally, she screams. An ear-splitting scream.

Her bodyguards jump into action as the whole café’ freezes. Mea
Chloé doesn’t stop. She flaps her arms, saying something unintelligit

it's best we bail.

Operation 'tell Chloé I'm an Omega' was an epic failure.

have to Now the whole world is bound to know what I am.

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it's best we bail.

Operation 'tell Chloé I'm an Omega' was an epic failure.

Now the whole world is bound to know what I am.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Renée

Marc and I managed to keep Chloé under control. In the end, we drag her out of the café.

She screamed all the way to my apartment. Even in the car. Marc slap his hand over her mouth to shut her up, but it only muffled the sound.

I know she is happy for me, but she needs to put a sock in it. I want this information private.

I'm an Omega. Just like her now. It's a big deal. We get it. But she has to shut up.

The cleaning ladies were just on their way out when we arrived at my apartment, and the knowing looks they all gave me made my cheeks flush.

They know what I got up to with the pack. Even the head cleaner had jigged her eyebrows at me when she passed me through the door.

At least the smell of sex has gone from the apartment. There may be traces of it in my bedroom, but at least the scent has diluted.

Chloé has finally stopped screaming. But she still doesn't shut up. She speaks so fast, I can hardly keep up. "This is amazing, Ney Ney. I don't know what this could do for our brand?"

Marc passes me a cup of tea. We are all gathered in my tiny kitchen, the only room where the pack and I didn't do it.

"Our brand?" I ask, sipping my tea.

Chloé gets down on her knees before me, and oh my God. Is she going to propose? She clasps my hands. "Just think about it. Two sisters, two Omegas. Just imagine all the merchandise we could sell. Candles, perfume, jewelery, books..."

I remove my hand from hers. "I think you are forgetting that I am not as business-minded as you are, Chloé."

Chloé ignores me, jumping back to her feet again. She lists more things we had to do with our band. "We could even have our own reality TV show..."

I look at Marc in shock. He's just finished adding sweetener to his coffee. He lifts the cup, hiding his laugh. "Hell, I'd watch that show... In *Hell*."

I narrow my eyes at him. It wouldn't be that bad. Who am I kidding? A reality TV show would be a train wreck, but Chloé doesn't see it quite that way.

I think she is forgetting that I do not like the limelight. All she sees is the potential to grow her brand by going into partnership with her sister. I suppose I should feel honored that she doesn't deem me a threat.

I mean, why would she? She is still the hotter sister by far.

"There are already talks for me and Patrick to start our own show. I don't see why they wouldn't do one for me and you too, Ney Ney."

I put my cup down. "You and Patrick are going to have your own show?"

Chloé squeals. "Yes! It will be so exciting. It's our videos online that do it. A producer saw all the likes and shares we were getting and decided to get in touch. We should do our own videos too, Ney Ney!"

en. It's I shake my head. "No. You know I don't do social media."

"But you have to. How else will you reach your followers?"

What followers? I don't even have a brand! I didn't even ask to be t
y sisterthe spotlight.

Laurent I kind of see Marc's point. It almost seems unfair that I already ha
Clothes,platform while real, genuine people with *real* talent are trying to g
names out there. I mean, I'm not a complete talentless hack. I wen
ot quiteschool. I do doggy portraits...

Though I haven't done any for a while. I started one for Ezra aro
ings wetime he adopted Sasha. I should get that finished for him sometir
v!" currently hiding under a sheet in my studio/closet.

own tea. Maybe I can gift it to him for his birthday.

.."
"Just think about it, Renée. It may get Dad off our backs for once. I
ig? Ourpart of growing up..."

e same She thinks growing a brand makes her grown up in the eyes of s
like our dad. I suppose she is career driven.

s is the "You could even get the whole pack on-board. Think of what this c
sister. I for Jake's author brand."

It was people just like Jake I was thinking about before. He's no ta
hack.

w, so I I laugh. "I doubt the same kind of people who buy your perfume
also buy Jake's science fiction novel, Chlo."

wn TV She sighs. "It doesn't matter. His name is out there. It's all about n
in the end."

at made Or in other words, *money*...

ng and "At least think about it, okay?" she says.

I peer into her sparkling blue eyes. She's practically pleading with r

how am I going to tell her gently that I don't want to go into partnersh
her?

hrust in I don't care about fame or fortune. I just want real friends who like
me.

ave this I can't believe I was ever jealous of Chloé's fame. I hate not being
et theirdo something as simple as walking down the street anymore. Now, I
t to artwear one of those stupid disguises with the glasses and the mustache.

Silence drifts through the room. Meanwhile, Chloé waits for my ar
und themeet her gaze. "All right."

ne. It's Chloé grins and I know she only has the best of intentions. To outs:
must look as if I do nothing all day. I suppose I need to do somethii
my time, so I don't get branded as the *lazy* Laurent daughter. I have
t's all afund. So having a job or a career is optional for the likes of someone li

I know what matters to me the most in this world. I love animals
omeonewant to help them as much as I can. Could *philanthropy* be a part
brand?

ould do Chloé's phone buzzes, and she peers down at the screen. "It's Patric
She puts him on louder speaker. "Hey, Paddy..."

lentless "You get my cigarettes yet?"

I clench my hands around my cup at the sound of Patrick's dis
: wouldtone. He sounds as if he just slipped out of bed. Seriously, what does
in that guy?

umbers "Oh, no. I'm so sorry. Something came up. I'll get them on the wa
Don't worry. See you soon, babe."

"You too... Oh, don't forget to pick me up a milkshake."

He hangs up, and she looks over at me and Marc. "Well, I have
ne, andKeep me updated, would you?"

up with I smile. "I promise. Remember what I told you."

"Right. Don't tell Patrick or *anyone*..."

me for "That's right. I don't want this information leaking out anywhere."

So far, the only people in the world who know that I'm an Omega are Marc, Chloé, the pack, and Mom. There's the doctor too, but I have to whole patient confidentiality to protect me there.

Chloé leaves the apartment. Her driver is waiting outside, so she says goodnight. I'm good for a ride home. Now it's just me and Marc.

He leans his head on his hand, smiling at me dreamily. I drink and he considers, it "What is it, Marc?"

ng with "Nothing... I can't be happy for my friend? So... when are you going to trust the pack *bite* you?"

ke me. I spit out my drink. It goes all over him. But he laughs it off, like a friend.

of our "Bite me?"

"Yes. That's what packs do, after all. They *bond* with their Omega.. k." I hadn't even thought of that. In fact, before my heat, they weren't even a pack. It was just me and Jake.

Marc starts talking off his vest. "Well, when you're ready, you know where to come to. Trust me. Ney Ney. You won't regret it. I feel close to them every day. I don't even need a phone to talk with them."

I wipe the tea from my mouth. "So it's true? You *do* have telepathic powers with your pack?"

Marc chuckles, folding his vest nicely over the back of the spare chair. "Not exactly. But I can sort of sense them, you know. I know I'm not debating whether I will want Thai or Chinese tonight."

He places a finger on what I assume is Billy's bite mark, sending a

back to the Alpha. Marc smiles at me again. "He got the message. And Thai."

That's amazing. Maybe one day I could bond with the pack, too.

ega are "Did you see how *jel* she was?"

ave the Jel?

Marc sighs. "As in *envious*. Jealous."

ould be Oh.

"Who was jealous?"

my tea. Marc throws his arms up. "Chloé, for goodness' sake. Did you h
asshole over the phone? She wants what you have, Ney Ney. What v
g to lethave. Chloé wants a pack."

I guess I never really thought about it. I suppose the possibility t
a goodsister could ever be jealous of me just didn't cross my mind.

"At least she's stopped wearing the sunglasses. I wonder what s
hiding..." he ponders.

." My heart pounds as all the possible scenarios run through my he
ven mythat's when I clench my fists.

"Easy, easy," Marc comforts, placing a hand on my wrist. "S
ow whobodyguards. There isn't much he could do to her."

ne guys Are we so sure of that? Chloé isn't exactly the sharpest tool in th
Would she even know when she is in trouble?

epathic When do we get involved?

"I just wish I hadn't given him my stamp of approval that night at th
e chair.mean, he's a rockstar. I guess I was just star struck."

Billy is I look at Marc, grabbing his hand now. "It's not your fault. I'm s
will come to her senses soon."

thought March heaves a sigh, grabbing his cup of tea. "I hope so. Or one

and it was going to have to intervene.”

He’s right. I don’t care if Chloé is an adult. She’s my sister and what’s best for her, too. She deserves a man who treats her right.

I hope she pours that milkshake over Patrick’s greasy head when he returns to him.

Marc smirks at me, and I shuffle back in my chair. “I don’t like your look...”

“Now that you’re an Omega, you can finally pull off apricot, Neve. Wear that. Omegas look good in *anything*. Trust me.”

I jump out of the chair, backing away. Marc follows me.

“Oh, no. You are not making me your personal doll!”

“Too late! From now on, you are only allowed to wear apricot, and for the love of God, throw out those jeans!”

I gaze down at my jeans. Maybe he’s right. They’re stained and the holes where my thighs chafed together. What can I say? Big hips have a tendency to do that.

Marc leads me to my bedroom to help me throw out some old clothes. He has it looks like I have no choice.

He’s going to make me look like a real Omega now. I’ll have to shed.

at the bar. I

sure she

of us is

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

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Renée

The notifications wouldn't stop when I woke up the next day, and I felt a knot in my gut that something was wrong. I had been texting Chloé all night.

She had been careful about saying the O word, but she had a few suggestions. She suggested I could start my own fragrance, which I had declined. But there was one thing I kind of agreed with.

My Omega debut.

I may not be a fan of the glitz and the glamor, but God I would love to have a day that was all about me. I want to wear a pretty white dress in front of an adoring crowd.

I want to feel like a princess.

So I told her I would think about it.

In fact, that was the last thought I remember having before I drifted to sleep. Me in a pretty white gown, surrounded by my pack. I even saw some of them wearing their bite marks with pride.

But now my phone won't stop buzzing. It even rang a few times, but I ignored it.

Dare I look at the notifications?

When the phone rings again, I see that it's Jake, and I answer a
"Hey."

"Renée, thank goodness you're all right."

Why wouldn't I be? Something is definitely wrong. I hear Ezra and
in the background.

"We've all been worried about you."

"Why? Has something happened?"

Jake falls deathly silent on the other end of the phone, and my heart
in my ears. What is going on?

I knew "Fuck... have you not seen the news?"

late last "N-no..."

He sighs. "Information got leaked. Everyone knows you're an (
list ofprincess. I'm so sorry. I promise, none of us said a thing!"

politely I drop the phone, the blood rushing through my head as his words r

The room spins, and I sit at the foot of my bed, burying my face betw
arms and legs.

to just No wonder my phone wouldn't stop. It must be my emails. I have
s too insocial pages too, but I hardly post in those. But I guess that's where a
of the notifications are coming from.

This is just fucking fantastic. I haven't even had a chance to tell L
and I hate that this is how he will find out. It's not fair. I wanted to wai
d off to I at least wanted some normality before I told the world that I fin
myselfmy Omega. I'm twenty-four. A late bloomer. So I will be treated as
show. A medical marvel.

which I There are only three other people besides the pack who know that
Omega. Marc, Chloé, and my mom.

Since one of them is no longer with us, I can only assume it was either Marc or Chloé. My doctor wouldn't have leaked anything. Why risk my career over something as trivial as this?

I just can't believe that my best friend and my little sister would betray me. I can't get through to Chloé as she's MIA. Go figure. But Marc answers the first ring. "It wasn't me, I swear!"

I believe him. The fact that he answered so quickly gives me confidence in him. I can hear his own pack confirming that it wasn't him too.

Billy shouts in the background. "It wasn't Marc, Renée!"

His whole pack vouches for him, and I guess that only leaves one option. The person who betrayed me was my very own sister.

Hot tears pour from my eyes as my world turns into a blur of lights. "I'm so sorry, Renée..." Marc cries along with me, and I guess he feels as betrayed.

The three of us have always been so close. We're the three musketeers. I've been my Alvin and the Chipmunks.

"She won't answer her phone."

Marc huffs. "Same here. I've been texting her all morning! When I finally get a number hands on her..."

There's no missing the threat in Marc's tone. I try to tell him to hold on, but he's livid. I have never heard him sound so angry. He almost shouts at me. I'm an Alpha.

"It's okay, Marc. There's no point in crying about it. Everyone knows I'm a freak that I'm an Omega."

"Yeah, but not like this..."

He's right. I wanted it to be just right.

Marc tells me he is going to come over. I tell him it's fine though, and

either the pack will visit me instead. I don't even have to ring the guys. Just risk her hang up on Marc, my buzzer goes off.

I peer out the window. Ezra waves at me, Sasha in his arms. They even bought Sasha to comfort me... I let them in, and Henry swallows me up in his arms the moment he enters my apartment. I guess he knows first-hand what it's like to be uninvolved in the media.

I bet his own phone was inundated with notifications when news came that Vivienne cheated on him. "I'm so sorry," he breathes, pressing his nose to my neck. My back when he breathes in my scent. "Fuck... I forgot how good you smell..."

I squeeze back tears, wrapping my arms around his neck. "It's okay, everything's just fine."

"Do you know who it was who leaked the info? Who else did you see besides us, kitten?" Ezra stands at Henry's side, rubbing my arm. Henry whimpers, jumping up to lick my cheek.

"Marc and Chloé, but it wasn't Marc. I have his word." Henry hugs me tighter when the information sinks in. "So... it was your sister..."

"Possibly. I have to give her the benefit of the doubt first. I mean, she did it on purpose. She is clumsy after all."

Jake smiles reassuringly. "Yeah. I'm sure it was just a mistake. She was never struck me as the malicious type."

"I just wish she would answer her phone. She has been ignoring me since this morning."

"That's strange. I may not know her much, but she never struck me as that type of person to be without her phone for any extended length of time."

ust as I Jake's right. Chloé is practically glued to that phone. It's her life.

Dread settles in my stomach, and I pull myself free from Henry's moving toward the door. I know where she spent the night, and that Patrick's.

e enters "Take me to Patrick Fritz's. I know the address. I need to get an der thefrom her first."

The guys don't waste any time. I throw on some leggings and a leakedthen rush out of the apartment. It's a miserable, drizzly kind of dry. Th of fine rain that really makes you wet.

tingles By the time we pull up to Patrick's million dollar terrace house, ' anxious mess. Not many people know about this terrace house. Patrick ay. I'm on the down low. A place for him to crash.

It still cost over a million, though.

you tell I rush up the front stoop, banging on the door. "Chloé, it's me! Ope . Sasha just want to talk."

No one answers, and my insides turn cold. What if something happed would explain why she is MIA.

as your I bang and bang again, and by this time my hair is soaked right thr may as well be drowning. I just wish someone would answer the door.

I doubt "Chloé, please! I'm not mad. I just want to talk. I realize it was a mi

The door opens at last, and I breathe a sigh. "Thank God. I..."

e never It's not Chloé or Patrick who stares back at me. It's some guy I hav seen before. He has a blue mohawk, looking me up and down as i me allsomething rotten that the cat dragged in.

I guess he must be someone in Patrick's band. He certainly has the l

e as the "Who are you?" he grumbles.

!" "Chloé? Is she here?"

It takes him a moment, but then he visibly shudders when he hears her name. “Oh, *her*. God, I just wish Paddy would hurry up and dump the girl who was at She’s too fucking squeaky. It makes my ears bleed!”

I grind my teeth. “That’s my little sister, you punk.”

He snorts. “Punk? Did the hair give it away?”

I glare at his mohawk.

He sighs, folding his arms over his black logo T-shirt. “Look. I don’t know what typewhere she is. Patrick is missing too. I think I heard them bailing at around 3 am.”

I’m an idiot at 3 am?

Chloé and I had texted until about 1 am. So, it was two hours after she spoke to me.

“Do you know where they went?”

The guy shrugs. “I don’t know what Patrick gets up to these days. Honestly, he needs to get his shit together for our tour next month. He’s the lead vocalist. We need him.”

I don’t like the sound of this. Where could Patrick have taken my sister? It’s 13 am?

It doesn’t look like I am going to get any more answers. “It’s okay. I’ll take the stake!” you for your time.”

A sorry expression forms over the guy’s face. Then he sighs, holding out his hand. “Give me your hand. I will give you my number so you can call me if I was touch. I have a little brother who goes AWOL all the time. So I understand.”

Wow. He actually seems like a nice person. I wish I could say the same about my brother. His lead vocalist.

“Thank you... um...?”

“Drax. I’m the drummer.”

ears the He grins down at me, and I return his smile.

at one. “Well, thank you, Drax. I will keep in touch.”

He salutes, then shuts the door as I disappear down the steps and toward the car. The guys don’t speak when I shut the door behind me.

The rain continues to pour. It batters the roof of the car.

“Well?” Jake asks from behind the steering wheel.

’t know I exhale. “No luck.”

round 3 “Do you know where else she could be?”

It’s Henry who speaks this time. I try to wrack my brains. Chloé has friends, but they’re not the kind of friends she could turn to in a moment of desperation.

Marc and I are all she has, really.

She truly is alone.

se days. “No.”

le’s our Another quiet spell settles over the car. Only Sasha’s panting fills the air as she rests on my lap, and I just wish I knew how to get hold of Chloé

sister at *Where are you, Chloé?*

My phone buzzes and we all jump at the sudden sound. Sasha pries the phone open. Thankfurs and woofs. It’s just another text. I have received thousands of notifications in the last three hours. All well-wishers on social media, but nothing catching my eye.

keep in It’s from an unknown caller.

tand.” **I have your sister.**

ame for My hand shakes as I grip the device with sweaty fingers. Something happened to Chloé.

“What is it?” Jake asks.

Three dots appear as the unknown person is typing another text.

The fucker. If he hurts my sister...

**If you want to know where she is, then you will hand over five
id backdollars to this address.**

He types out the address, and I close my eyes, fighting back a
appears my worst fears have come to light, and it looks like I failed
her safe.

Chloé is in danger.

And I have to find her.

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ing has

The fucker. If he hurts my sister...

If you want to know where she is, then you will hand over five million dollars to this address.

He types out the address, and I close my eyes, fighting back a sob. It appears my worst fears have come to light, and it looks like I failed to keep her safe.

Chloé is in danger.

And I have to find her.

Afterword

Thank you so much for reading my book! Please leave a review as it
mean a lot ♥

image-placeholder



In the meantime, I will be putting Knotless Part 2 up on preorder very
I'm not finished with Renée and her pack yet, and I look forward
continuing their journey. They have been a real comfort to write the
few weeks, so I look forward to giving them their HEA.

Check out a sneak peek of book 2. Please excuse the typos ♥♥

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Come and join my reader Group Violet's Foxy Readers for updates c
books or sign-up to my mailing list!

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About Author

Violet Fox is a UK-based author who hails from the Welsh Mountains.

When she's not fighting dragons with swords, she's writing about men who possess feral, animal-like qualities. Expect all of her fictional characters to become major simps for their ladies by the end of each book/ series.

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