



*Three Ties
novel*

THREE

Ties to bind

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
MICHELLE DARE

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CONTENTS

Follow Michelle

Three Ties to Bind

Content Warning

Prologue

1. Perry.
2. Dominic
3. Peyton
4. Dominic
5. Perry.
6. Peyton
7. Dominic
8. Perry.
9. Peyton
10. Dominic
11. Perry.
12. Peyton
13. Perry.
14. Dominic
15. Peyton
16. Perry.
17. Dominic
18. Peyton
19. Perry.
20. Dominic
21. Peyton
22. Perry.
23. Peyton
24. Dominic
25. Perry.
26. Dominic
27. Peyton
28. Dominic
29. Perry.

30. [Dominic](#)

31. [Perry](#)

32. [Peyton](#)

33. [Dominic](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Books by Michelle Dare](#)

[About the Author](#)

FOLLOW MICHELLE DARE

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[Michelle's Pinterest](#)

[Michelle's BookBub](#)



THREE TIES TO BIND

The CEO

Perry Altair is following in his father's footsteps, has been since he was old enough to walk. There was never a question of what he'd do when he grew up. Not when a seat at the prestigious Altair table was presented to him on his graduation day.

The Assistant/Dancer

Dominic Summit lives a double life. By day, he's the executive assistant to a very sexy CEO, who he also happens to have a crush on. By night, he's an exotic dancer with a hidden identity. His two worlds are never meant to collide.

The Best Friend/Bodyguard

Peyton Lynx has been guarding Perry's back since their freshman year in high school. For Peyton, it was love at first sight, one he never voiced. Years later, he's still protecting Perry while loving him from afar.

Three ties to bind. Three hearts on the line.

Three souls who break trying to ease their ache.

With Perry's father gone, it's up to him to keep the company from going under. Decisions have to be made and risks need to be taken, not only in business but in their personal lives too.

Three men find something precious and beautiful together. Something they'll fight with their lives to hold on to.

CONTENT WARNING

Please note that this book contains the following: descriptive violence, depression, PTSD, and attempted off-page suicide. If any of these are triggers for you, please proceed with caution.

PROLOGUE

PEYTON

The first time I saw Perry Altair Jr., I thought two things.

The first, he needed to gain some weight. No lie, his clothes hung on him. He was all awkward limbs that didn't fit his body. Tall and lanky.

There was a circle of boys around him on that warm spring day, some bigger, who were cheering on another boy in front of Perry. The next thing I saw was a fist flying through the air, clocking Perry in the chin. He hit the pavement. Hard.

That was when the second thing occurred to me as I watched blood drip from his busted lip. I would always watch his back. Seeing someone look that defeated as a teenager wasn't acceptable to me. There was no one helping him. No friend for Perry to lean on after.

My brother, Greer, and I stepped in. Our bond formed that afternoon and strengthened every day going forward.

Once we graduated high school, Perry and Greer went to college together while I learned how to fight properly and effectively. Even when Perry was away getting his degree, he was protected, thanks to my brother. They shared an apartment. Perry studied business while Greer studied information technology.

I didn't have a desire to go to college. There was nothing I was overly interested in learning. The thought of wasting my mom's money on college, when I didn't have the drive to go, didn't sit well with me. I didn't regret not going. Everything worked out how it was supposed to.

After four years of Perry in college, I started working for him full time. Guarding him. Making sure he was always watched over. There had been threats on his life when he was younger that were taken seriously. Ones never allowed to come to fruition.

For the past seventeen years, I'd been by his side. My job was to keep Perry safe, but I was still his best friend.

I'd die for Perry. Greer would too. It wouldn't come to that because Perry had a desk job leading his father's company into the future. A legitimate, lawful company. Nothing like the other side of the Altair name, where Perry's uncle thought the cops couldn't touch him. They hadn't yet, but never say never.

Jordan, Perry's uncle, was a concern in the back of my mind. For now. Perry was my priority. My brother too. My mom who, thanks to her sons doing well, lived a comfortable life in a retirement community in Florida.

My circle was small. Tight. Impenetrable.

Except for a tiny crack I didn't expect. One Perry's assistant somehow managed to wedge himself through.

I didn't see him coming with his quick wit and disarming smile.

Then again, I didn't have eyes for anyone but Perry.

What I felt for him, I hid. Kept it locked away.

A secret I didn't voice.

Perry was the only man who could bring me to my knees.

Or so I thought.

Everything was about to change. I could feel it like a vibration beneath my skin. There was no telling if it would lift us up or scatter us in pieces across a swath of wreckage.

It was my job to protect Perry. Loving him was my blessing and my curse.

It had been twenty-five years since fourteen-year-old Perry met fifteen-year-old me. We'd been through a lot during that time. Our friendship was strong.

Neither of us could have predicted what was about to happen. How our worlds would shift, and nothing would be the same. Because we didn't expect Dominic to change things. Hell, Dominic didn't see it coming either.

PERRY

“Dom!” I called from behind my desk. He was out there somewhere, not going far from me.

A head of perfectly styled dark brown hair peered into my office. “Yes, Mr. Altair?”

“Dom,” I growled.

He held up his hands as if that could placate me. “It’s either Mr. Altair, Perry, or Junior. Of the three choices, I choose the former. You’re my boss. We’re at work. I’m going to be professional.”

“There’s no one here but us.”

“Pey’s outside.”

“Pey’s always outside. Do you know what he calls me?”

“Perry. Every time.”

Peyton Lynx was a man who thought a lot but said very little, except to those he trusted. He was one of two people in the world who knew me best. The other was his brother. Peyton and Greer were tight, separated by eleven months in age with Greer being younger. There were obvious differences between the brothers.

Peyton was hard, chiseled steel. He didn’t let anything faze him. He took his job seriously. Greer worked hard too, but when the workday was done, Greer checked out unless something big happened to draw him away from home. Peyton was on twenty-four seven. If for some reason Peyton couldn’t be near me, Greer was.

That was what happened when my uncle's enemies threatened my life many years ago. At the time, I didn't understand what was going on. My dad explained it to me. How bad men wanted me hurt. He also told me he wouldn't let them touch me.

The threat that changed everything was the hit that was taken on my life, which I found out about when I was older. A half a million dollars for my blood spilled and my life ended. It never happened thanks to my uncle's men stepping in and handling it. The hit was withdrawn. My dad was done taking chances and wanted me protected full time.

Enter Peyton and Greer by sheer luck. When I first met them, I had no idea they'd stay by my side. I could never repay them for what they'd done for me, what they'd given up. They changed the course of my life by giving me the best friends I could ever have, and I changed theirs by leading them on career paths they didn't expect.

"Your four o'clock is waiting," Dominic said, bringing me back to the present.

"Right. That's why I called you in here. I don't want to deal with Stefen today. Pull me from the meeting fifteen in. I'm not in the mood for his ass-kissing."

"If you'd give him the funding he asked for, he'd leave you alone."

"I don't have him in R&D to create shit that has nothing to do with the business."

"It kind of does."

I leveled Dominic with a glare. He was one of the few people who could take my fiery temper when I dished it out. He also was aware it wasn't personal. Dominic was the best executive assistant I'd ever had. If I hadn't scared him away yet, chances were I wasn't going to.

My temper was equal parts frustration over whatever was currently bothering me and an outlet for what I was dealing with inside. I didn't like to work out like Peyton did. I didn't smoke. I didn't drink to get drunk and numb myself. I had no

other way to get out what was going on in my head. Sex might have worked, but that was nothing I was going to think about right now.

“We build parts for race cars. High-end parts that far surpass the others on the market. I don’t care what bullshit he wants to put in a sedan.” I was sick of having this argument with Stefen.

The temper I had simmered right below the surface. It was something I shared with my dad. Like him, there were only a handful of people I easily tolerated.

Dominic propped his hip on the corner of my desk. His tailored slacks didn’t have a single piece of lint on them. He dressed better than me, and that was saying something. The complicated planner he always carried was pressed to his chest as steel gray eyes met mine. “You told him to think outside the box. He is.”

“Not about this! The outside of his box is still racing. He needs to focus before I show him the door.”

Dominic’s lips curved down in a frown. “He’s been here forever.”

“And he’s been floating in the clouds the whole time. Dad put him in charge of R&D because he’s smart. I’ll give him that, but he’s not being smart about the right things.”

I grabbed my tablet from the desk, so I’d have something to focus on and didn’t combust in the meeting. “You know what? You’re coming with me.”

He groaned. My executive assistant dropped his head back and fucking groaned. He was the only one who got away with it. In fact, he got away with far more than anyone else who worked here. “If I’m in there you’ll be at least an hour, thinking I’m listening so you don’t have to.” He was right of course. I could zone out if Dominic was paying attention. That way I wouldn’t get up and throttle Stefen when he inevitably drifted off course.

“Pey!” I called.

“Yeah, Perry?” Peyton asked, sticking his head through my open door. He wasn’t like Dominic, in the sense Peyton never took his suit jacket off. Not when he was in the office. Dominic shed his jacket the second he got to his chair. Like the seat was made to hold the piece of fabric and not his ass.

“I need you to drag me out of this meeting fifteen in.”

Peyton’s gaze flicked to Dominic briefly before coming back to me. He nodded and left as fast as he showed up. That was my best friend. Like a whisper on the wind.

A phone chimed, Dominic’s to be precise. He set an alarm so if he had to step away from his desk, I’d hear it and get to my meeting on time. I wanted to grind the piece of metal to a pulp on a daily basis. I didn’t because I paid for it and the plan. Plus, it kept me in contact with the man who basically ran my life.

Dominic swept from the room with the grace of a wildcat to grab his phone. When I didn’t follow him, he returned to my doorway, tapping his foot against the frame twice, knowing it would irritate me enough to get me moving.

Stefen lit up as we entered the conference room. He didn’t mind my assistant coming with me, none of my executive team did. Dominic went to enough meetings so they didn’t bat an eye when he showed up.

“Perry, I’m excited to show you what I have.”

I smiled. Tightly. Because Dominic was right. Stefen was close with my dad and these past few years without him hadn’t been easy on any of us. Especially me. If I separated Stefen from his role, he was a good guy. But that wasn’t what we were meeting about today. No, apparently, that was a tiny accessory for a car that *could* be applied to racing *if* we modified it. Why couldn’t he just focus on what we did provide and not what we could?

The meeting began with Stefen putting a presentation on the screen while he talked about what he’d made. Minutes ticked by of me itching to get out of here before I said things I couldn’t take back.

Slowly so as not to give myself away before I had my prize in hand, I stole Dominic's pencil. The brand he spent way too much of my money on, but I didn't balk at since he pretty much got whatever he wanted as long as he ran things with the precision a large hospital system could appreciate.

He scowled at me as I tightened my fingers around the piece of wood and lead.

Snap!

A shiny loafer kicked mine where no one could see. It was a reflex on Dominic's part. When one of his pencil's broke, a part of his soul died.

His scowl deepened. He stared at the two pieces in my hand just below the table, then tried to pry the corpse from my white-knuckled fingers as he kept his eyes on the screen in front of us.

We didn't have a typical boss/employee relationship. It was better as far as I was concerned.

A knock—a soft one—made my heart sing with joy that this nightmare was finally ending. At least for today.

Peyton's calm voice floated through the room. "Mr. Altair?"

I glanced over my shoulder, silently pleading with him to end my misery and fast.

"You're needed."

My hands met mahogany as I pushed back from the table, tucking my tablet under my arm, and stood. Dominic did the same.

"Sorry to interrupt the presentation, Stef. Be sure to email me what you have. I'll take a look at it."

He smiled. It wasn't as big as it was when I walked in. "Will do."

I felt like shit, but I could only handle so much. By this late in the day, I was done. And it was Monday. I had four

more days of this and that was only if people left me alone over the weekend, which wasn't likely.

The air felt different outside the conference room. Cleaner, like freedom.

"Don't look so happy," Dominic whispered. An inch taller than me, he was easy to hear and didn't have to bend to speak to me.

Why did I surround myself with tall people? It wasn't like I was short. Six foot one, just like my dad was. Everyone seemed bigger though. Peyton and Greer were both taller than me too.

Peyton didn't speak as we went back to my office, where I spent the rest of the day going through the financials my CFO emailed me.

Shit was bleak.

Like where was the nearest bank and who had a ski mask kind of bleak.

I raked my hands through my hair, pulling the ends hard to try and snap some clarity into myself. I could fix it. I would. How? Fuck if I knew.

This was what I'd been dealing with since my dad died. PJS was already on the downward slide, then Dad had a massive stroke and his life ended far too soon.

Now it was me running the show. Sure, I had my uncle. My relationship with him was complicated, and that was putting it nicely. While the company name was Perry, Jordan, & Sons Auto, the reality of it was, Jordan didn't want anything to do with the business. My dad originally wanted his brother to do this with him. Jordan wanted to shift his focus elsewhere. The name remained. A tie between brothers, although Jordan never owned stake in the company, neither did his son.

While everyone on both sides of Dremest knew what Jordan did, no one, not even the cops, had enough evidence to do anything about it. Except me. I had everything I needed. Dad made sure of it. Would I use it against Jordan? No,

because I was afraid of him and rightfully so, given who he was and what he did.

So, Uncle Jordan walked around like the mafia boss he was, while money poured in from the trafficking of guns and drugs he did. I got to sit here with my head a mess, trying to figure out how I was going to keep us from going so deep into the hole we'd never get out.

I couldn't think about Jordan. He wasn't a part of the company when Dad was alive, and he wasn't now. I had to solve this on my own. I couldn't let the company fail. Jordan wouldn't care if it did anyway. He had his own business to run.

I gripped the pencil cup, the one with pencils Dominic insisted on keeping there in case he needed one, and launched it across my office. It hit the bookshelf, pencils raining down. I probably shouldn't have done it, except it felt good. Unfortunately, the cup didn't break. Damn Dominic. He had to buy solid wood. It probably nicked the shelf from the force I threw it and landed softly on the carpet floor.

Peyton beat Dominic to the door. Or Dominic didn't even bother getting up. It wasn't the first time I'd thrown something when I was in here alone.

Without missing a beat, my best friend walked over to pick up the pencils and the cup, then sat it on the small four-person conference table I had in the corner of the room. Near the door. Far away from me.

"I wish you wouldn't do that," I told him. "I can clean up after myself."

"Gave me something to do."

I lifted a brow. "You bored out there? Need me to find a lengthy task for you to take care of?"

"What do you think?"

The clock read six. How long had I been staring at the numbers on my screen?

"Sit," I told Peyton, and called for Dominic to join us and shut the door.

He came in, toeing it closed behind him, his planner in hand.

I went over to the small lineup of hard liquor I kept on hand and poured three glasses of scotch. Peyton declined the offer, which I knew he would. He never drank and drove me, not even a finger's worth. I swallowed his back before I sat at the table with them. I slid a glass to Dominic, who took the second one and poured it into his then sipped it properly, not downing it like a shot. The expensive label should be savored. I was above caring.

"I'm tired," I muttered. "Bone deep, can I change my identity and flee to a secret island, tired."

Peyton leaned forward, strong forearms resting on the table. "Is that a request or are you venting?"

"Got a contingency plan you didn't clue me in on?"

He shrugged. "You know Greer and I like a good plan."

I hummed. His brother was my Chief Security Officer. Only one person held a higher rank with me personally, and that was Peyton. Dominic came in a close third, due to the level of trust I had in him and how much of my life he managed. We didn't spend our free time together like I did with Peyton and Greer.

"You haven't had a vacation since before your dad passed," Dominic said gently. He knew when to push and when not to. When to use his firm voice to get me doing what I should and when to back off.

"I haven't had the time. Where would I go anyway? I have a company to run. I can't just jump ship."

"You have a team of employees for a reason. They can handle things for a week."

I laughed, though it lacked an ounce of humor. "You think a week will cure what ails me?" I shook my head. "A month would only scratch the surface."

Peyton rapped his knuckles on the table to draw my gaze to his. Dark orbs so deep, the solar system could exist in them,

latched on to mine. “We’ll spend the weekend at the fortress. It beats the penthouse.” The fortress was what we called the Lynx house, where the brothers lived. I named it that due to the security and upgrades on it.

I nodded, knowing I needed the slight break from the hectic life I led. I had to formulate a plan for the company though. A way to get our heads above water again. “I’m bringing work with me.”

“I figured you would.”

“Does that mean I’m coming too since I’m part of your work?” Dominic asked. He flicked his gaze down to his planner while he toyed with the paper’s edge. It was clear as day he didn’t want to work, although he wouldn’t say that.

“Do you have a desire to be in the middle of thirty acres with no one but Pey, Greer, and me around?”

“Enticing, but I have plans.”

Maybe I’d find the answer to my financial problem while we were at the fortress. Doubtful, but worth a shot since nothing else had come to me.

DOMINIC

A packed parking lot meant a lot of money in my pocket tonight.

Untouchable was the premier club in West Dremest. Where the wealthiest men spent their off-hours. Well, not all. For example, I'd never seen my boss step into the club. He had a membership. I paid the dues every year. It was more of a power play than anything. That Perry could get in, even if he didn't want to. And people respected him for his membership. He'd also known the club's owner for a long time.

The vetting process was lengthy. One of the strictest I'd ever seen. It was why I knew I was safe when I came here.

While Perry paid me well, Untouchable was where I felt most like me. Where I could let everything go and exist with the thumping bass, the eyes all over my body, and the money padding my bank account. I thrived on it. In secret. No one could know I did this on the side. It would look bad for Perry, and I wouldn't want that for the man who starred in my fantasies.

The building was solid black, three stories, and sat on the western most edge of our beloved city in eastern Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia. Dremest was divided into two sections, east and west. I kept my ass firmly in West Dremest. To go into the other side, that was where Jordan ruled with every bit of the power he commanded. I worked for Perry, but I wasn't foolish enough to think if I crossed Jordan, he wouldn't put me in the ground.

Employees parked around back of Untouchable; inside a gated lot we had a code to enter to get in. Untouchable was nothing if not secure. With my car parked and locked, I slung my duffel over my shoulder and walked to the door. Two guards stood like towering sentinels on either side. One of them nodded at me before punching in a code—different from the gate—and allowing me entrance. No one had the door codes except the guards and the owner, Dexen Dremest. Yes, he was from the family the city was named after. Only the Altairs rivaled his power and wealth.

A deep gray hallway met me inside as I wound through toward my dressing room. I shared it with two other men where we got ready for the night. I was alone for now. They could be on stage or on the floor. Most of the dancers did double duty, switching it up so both areas were covered. Not me. I only danced. On stage or in private. That was one of the deals I made when I came on board. Dexen was happy to oblige after I gave my performance for my interview.

I stripped out of my clothes and sprayed a sheer mist over my skin. It had the slightest hint of silver sparkle to it to give me an ethereal look when I was on stage. In my bag, I dug out my black G-string. The front was nothing more than a piece of fabric to cover my cock and balls. I didn't like see-through material when I danced. Some things were better left to the imagination, though there wasn't a whole lot to wonder about with how this hugged me. What I loved about this particular G-string were the three strings that came from each side of the fabric over my cock, hooking into a ring then meeting at one string at the back, down my ass. It gave me an edgier look. Not bright or flashy. Not see-through mesh. Not lace, though lace was also a favorite.

My black slacks went on next, different from the ones I wore to the office. My two worlds didn't collide on purpose. Black suspenders looped over my shoulders, hooked into place over my bare torso and back. A silver bow tie to play off the mist I put on fitted firmly around my neck. My tie collection was endless, thanks to secondhand stores and the money Dexen gave the dancers for their costumes.

The final touch was a mask. Another condition of my deal. I wouldn't reveal who I was to the members. I needed it to be this way. Would Perry fire me if he found out I danced on the side? Doubtful. I was still a reflection of him as his assistant, and not all his business partners would agree with me doing this. I wouldn't put Perry or his company at risk like that.

I needed to dance in the worst way. Needed to work out my stress, the tension of every workday. It was an addiction the way it fueled me. One I couldn't give up.

Silver swirled in an intricate design over the black mask which covered my nose upward. My face was clean-shaven; my lips had on a glossy pink tint.

I grabbed the product for my hair out of my bag before sitting the mask in place. I didn't like when my hair got into my eyes, so I used my fingers to work the product through it to keep it back while I danced tonight.

With the mask resting on my face and one last glance in the mirror, I was good to go, with fifteen minutes to spare. I did that on purpose. I wasn't someone who liked to rush around and arrive places at the last minute. This gave me time to let the music bleed into me from the dancer who was on prior to me. To find my pulse and make me one with it, so I was ready when my turn came.

Dexen leaned on the wall opposite of my door with one ankle crossed over the other, the picture of relaxation. He was delicious to look at. Regal with a chiseled jaw and straight nose. Copper hair combed back in waves. A dusting of scruff covered his face, but not enough to completely hide the dimples he flashed when he saw me.

"Dom, you look enticing as always," he greeted. Of course, Dexen knew who all his dancers were.

I hooked my thumbs under my suspenders, releasing them so they snapped against my chest. "I have to put on my best if I want to earn the most."

"You always do when you're on the schedule."

The money was a huge perk. I helped support my sister, who lived with me since she couldn't work. I'd give her everything if she'd ask for it.

"Are you sticking with the stage or are you interested in a few private dances tonight?" Dexen asked.

I did an internal check, curious as to how I felt, how energized I was versus how I knew I'd be at the end of the dance on stage. Some nights I didn't want anything extra. Others I could go for hours. "Just one tonight."

He nodded. "I have someone lined up then."

"New?"

"Not a new member, although it's his first private dance." He smiled. There was a little wickedness to it I wasn't certain I wanted to dissect. Dexen was a man who calculated every move. Nothing he did was spur-of-the-moment.

The beat of the song changed as it thumped through the speakers. It was the cue that there was only one left, which meant my turn was coming and I wasn't in the right frame of mind yet.

"Go." He jutted his chin toward the front. "I know how you get."

"Thank you." I grazed my hand along his corded forearm before I left. If I wasn't so wrapped up in Perry, and I didn't work for Dexen, I'd find out what was under those slacks and that button-down real fast.

Sierra was up on stage, moving his body in a way that had men leaning closer. They couldn't touch though. That wasn't how Untouchable worked. It was called that for a reason.

Dexen didn't let any of his members reach their hands out and stuff bills into the dancer's G-strings. If there was a dancer they wanted to tip, there were envelopes on the table along with pens. The member wrote the dancer's name on the outside and put the cash within. When the member was done for the night, they dropped the envelopes into a locked box where Dexen or one of his employees collected them and distributed the tips accordingly.

Closing my eyes, I relaxed my muscles, letting the workweek drift away. It was Thursday. One more day to go before I'd be back here on Saturday. As tempting as it was to want to join Perry at Peyton's fortress, I couldn't give this up. Not when Perry didn't see me as anything other than his assistant. Hell, probably not even if he did.

I'd toyed with the idea of quitting my office job and strictly dancing full time. The thought of leaving Perry left my stomach sour, so I'd pushed it to the back of my mind where it had sat since.

The music slowed until it cut out completely. Sierra took his exit, pressing a kiss to my cheek as he stepped by with a trail of lilac-scented air following him.

Our deejay announced me. I took my spot behind the thick, deep-purple velvet curtain and waited for it to part. The grinding beat was sensual as it melded through the speakers, flowing onto the stage and floor beyond, a river of music to gently engulf anyone in its path.

When the curtains parted, I became the ruler of the sea, moving with a fluidity that had earned me the name Ocean. Dexen said no one danced like I did. Like the rippling of a wave with practiced grace.

It wasn't me out here with the members watching. In my mind, I was alone with the bass, with the rhythm. It was part of my soul as I danced with it. I let it drive me around, shedding my suspenders first with what was the beginning of my tease. My tie left on the second song. My pants left on the third. The rest stayed on through the third, my mask and G-string not leaving my body.

I lived for this. Thrived on it.

The ending was always the hardest for me. Leaving the dance, finding my balance in the world again. I left a part of me on stage. A part I got back every time I was up there.

Dexen waited for me when I exited my performance, his eyes a molten pool of desire. Lines hadn't been crossed between us. They wouldn't. This was a simple reaction to

what I did, how I danced. Having him look at me like that, it made me feel as desirable as I did on stage. I loved the way men watched me.

One of the assistants came over and handed me my discarded clothes before making sure the next dancer was ready.

“How much can I offer you to leave Junior and work for me full time?” I’d heard this question from Dexen countless times before. “You draw in more money than anyone else. You’re our most requested dancer. Let me put you center stage every night.”

I shook my head while temptation ate at me. I could feel this way more often. I could make more money than I ever dreamed of. It would pull me from Perry though, and that wasn’t something I was willing to consider at the moment. Once I started working for him, there was no turning back. The man needed me to help him like I needed to dance.

“My answer remains the same.”

“I figured it would. Do you need a minute or are you ready for the private dance?”

“I’m good. Where am I going?”

“VIP one. I’ll bring him up.”

I smiled and walked behind the stage to the stairs for employees. It led to the upper floors, where each room had a back entrance that was never locked and always guarded. If someone decided to try and get rough with me or do other things they shouldn’t, all I had to do was knock three times with any part of my body on any hard surface and the door would bust in, a guard saving me. The member would also be banned for life. It hadn’t happened to me yet. I hoped it never would.

Inhaling, I took a deep breath, readying myself for a different kind of dance. This one wouldn’t consume me whole but was close.

PEYTON

Dexen and I went way back. He was one of my sparring partners when Perry Sr. footed the bill for me to learn how to protect his son properly. Fresh from high school graduation, I was brought into the fold in Dexen's family gym, where his brother took me under his wing and taught me everything I needed to know.

X was a retired fighter. He and his trainers on staff taught me how to hit, how to move. I learned various techniques, skills, to the point no one could beat me except X, Greer, and Dexen, though not every time. Greer also came and learned when he was on break from college.

After I went to work for Perry full time, Dexen and I didn't talk as much. We still lived in the same city, saw each other briefly when our paths crossed, but we didn't hang out. It also had something to do with the fact that he had multiple businesses he ran, including the one I decided to step foot into tonight.

Untouchable wasn't my typical scene. I couldn't remember the last time I'd been here. Perry had me on edge. He was dealing with something at work he didn't want to talk to me about, and it was causing me to be tenser than I liked. When Perry walked around like a stick of dynamite in search of a match, it frazzled my nerves.

That was why I asked Greer to bring dinner over to Perry's penthouse tonight so I could get the hell out of there and deal with my shit. I wasn't any good to Perry without my head on straight.

Enter Untouchable. Where the sexiest men danced in an environment that boasted secrecy and exclusivity.

Dexen appeared beside me when I was watching the second dancer since I'd been here. He clapped me on the shoulder and slid into an empty chair at the table I was at, smiling. "Pey, it's good to see you."

"Been a while."

"Too long. You doing good?"

I nodded. "Busy."

"It must be boring watching Junior's back all day." That was how the families referred to Perry. Both the Dremests and the Altairs. Always Junior so as not to confuse him with his late father.

"I prefer boring." It meant Perry's life wasn't on the line, and I wasn't concerned about someone taking him down. That didn't mean I didn't worry about him. How could I not with his asshole uncle making more enemies every day?

Perry said they'd never come for him, not again. That his uncle's shit wasn't Perry's and nothing had happened to Perry in years. He was wrong. If someone truly wanted to hurt Jordan Sr., they'd do it through his family first.

Dexen drummed his fingers on the table while his eyes swept the room. He was sharp, letting nothing slip past him. "You came on a good night."

I nodded again. I came because I needed to fix myself and didn't know how else to do it. Watching other men, trying to get Perry off my mind, seemed like a good idea while I drove here. Now I wasn't so sure.

A waiter came by with a glass of clear liquid and ice, putting it in front of me. I frowned and nudged it away. I had already waved them off once.

A chuckle drew my gaze to Dexen. "It's Sprite, relax. I know you don't like to drink. So does everyone who works here. It's in your file." Right. The paperwork I had to fill out to apply for a membership. The one Dexen told me to complete,

shoving a laptop into my hands to do it online. Damn, that was forever ago.

The music changed and a man was revealed from behind the curtain. Dexen didn't get up. Simply sat back and spread his legs wider to get comfortable with his arm propped on the table. I didn't pay him any mind after that. Not when the man on stage worked his body in a way I didn't realize was possible.

I was transfixed. Everything about him was stunning. Slightly defined muscles rippled along his abdomen, smaller in size, but no less appealing. Forearms, biceps, pecs, every movement drew my eyes to another part of his body as he flexed various muscles while he danced.

Holy shit, he was amazing.

My dick thickened. I had to adjust myself as it begged to be set free and taken in hand. This wasn't the type of club where men whipped out their dicks. I wouldn't do it if it was. But fuck me, I was hard.

The last time I was this solid was when I jerked it in the shower this morning, thinking about Perry on his knees for me so I could quiet that fire-wielding mouth of his. How I longed to shut him up in the best way.

I was so wrapped up in the performance, I didn't realize it ended and there was a new dancer entering the stage until I heard Dexen's chuckle. I had to blink a few times to bring myself back to reality.

He stood by my side. Had he left and I didn't notice? That wasn't like me. I saw everything. Then again, I'd never had literal sin so close to me before.

"Come on," he said. "I have a surprise for you."

My brow furrowed. "Why?"

"Just get moving, big guy."

I snorted. *Big guy*. Dexen was the same damn size as me.

We climbed the stairs to the third level of the building, where there was a softly lit hallway of closed doors. Each had

a number on it. Well-spaced apart. Had he decided to move on from dancers to provide other services?

“No,” he said, as if he read my mind. “This is another dance. A private one.” He stopped in front of a door that read *VIP 1* in bold gold. “There are some rules. No kissing, no touching, no nothing. If anything is off-limits for you, you tell him from the start. Otherwise, he’ll do what he does best.”

“What’s that?” I asked, even though I already knew.

“Blow your motherfucking mind.”

“What do I owe you?” This didn’t come free. Everything in Untouchable came with a high price tag. One I could afford to pay, thanks to being the personal bodyguard to Perry and the stake I owned in PJS. Not that I liked to indulge often.

“On the house. Maybe it will coax you into coming around more often. To see me and...” He shrugged. Wily bastard. He was up to something. He jutted his chin toward the door but before he left, he leaned close to whisper, “You’re one of the few I’d allow to break the rules. Now, to wonder if you actually will.” He entered a code on the pad, unlocking the door, then was gone like he’d never been there to begin with.

What the hell did he get me into? Dexen wouldn’t hurt me. He liked to push my boundaries. Something I learned early on in our friendship when he would spar with me to see how far I would go.

I steeled myself and pushed the door open the rest of the way. The vixen from the stage who held me ensnared was sitting on the love seat in the room. The lights were so low, I had to give my eyes time to adjust. I thought I heard a small intake of breath but couldn’t be sure.

The space was big with plenty of room for him to dance. The love seat sat on the wall to my left. Elegant lamps on either end, casting their soft lights on him, the main event. Across from me was another door, presumably the one he came in through. To my right was an armoire with scrollwork along the edges I couldn’t make out the exact detail of due to the light.

“Are you coming in?” the vixen purred. Everything about him screamed man, but the term vixen stuck and wouldn’t leave.

I swallowed down the lump in my throat, hoping it would also untie my tongue. I didn’t speak a lot to most people because I didn’t like most people, but I wanted to say something, anything, to him. Too bad I couldn’t.

Stepping farther inside, the door shut behind me, the lock engaging automatically. Normally, I’d feel trapped, focus on how quickly I could exit if need be. Instead, I was right where I was meant to be. Under the scorching gaze of the man who stood and walked to me with so much sex appeal it bled from him.

He wore the same outfit he did on stage when he first appeared from behind the curtain. His ass flexed beneath the fabric as he walked in a slow circle around me. Jesus, he wasn’t even touching me, and I was trembling. This wasn’t like me. I was steadfast. Assured. Always in charge.

In this room, I was along for the ride.

“Sit,” he purred again.

It took a massive effort, but I got my legs to move until I was able to sit on the couch. My hands balled into fists beside me in an effort to stop my visceral reaction to him from showing.

He went to a panel on the wall and turned on the same music he danced to on stage. My dick throbbed. In the breadth of a night, it was trained to react to that sound.

The vixen started off slow, his moves much more enticing this close, different than they were the last time I saw him. His pants, suspenders, and tie were discarded, leaving him in the G-string and mask. My fingers itched to reach out, to touch him like I knew I couldn’t. My body slid down on the couch, doing what felt right as I settled in for my private show. I was going to have to send Dexen a fucking gift basket for this.

The closer the vixen got, the more I found my willpower crumbling. Dexen told me I could break the rules. Would I was

the question.

Before I knew it, the vixen straddled my lap, his hands on my shoulders. Dexen said no touching, yet here was this gorgeous creature up close with his beautiful body on mine. I almost swallowed my tongue. My eyes latched on to his hard dick, pushing the limits of the thin fabric covering it. I had to press my lips closed to keep from drooling.

What was it about this man? I needed to know why him. Why now when years had passed with no one on my radar outside of a quick fuck and Perry, who had no clue I loved him?

“Touch me,” the vixen said in barely a whisper.

My hips punched up on instinct at hearing his voice this close. The sound teased a memory I was unable to grasp.

“Put your hands on my hips,” he commanded low. “It’s okay. I want you to touch me.” All thought fled.

I followed his order, my fingers wrapping around his firm waist.

This was where I died. Where my heart stopped beating and life left me. Because nothing had ever been as good as this, and I was hardly touching him.

“Fuck.” He shuddered. It ran through his body, vibrating beneath my hands. Was I affecting him? That couldn’t be right. He did this all the time. He was used to this. Maybe not being on their lap. I was certain he danced privately for others. And here I was. No one.

He didn’t stop moving. Didn’t stop gyrating sensually on top of me to the heavy beat of the music. His dick pushed against my stomach. His forehead dropped to mine; his eyes closed. “If you want me to stop—”

“No,” I blurted. Who in their right mind would tell him to stop?

“I...” He thrust against me again. Shuddered once more.

I adjusted him on my lap so the way he moved ground down on my dick just right. It had been a long time since I’d

come in my pants, but I was prepared to do it now and not give a solitary fuck.

Sweet pink lips parted; the scent of vanilla invaded my senses. Gorgeous eyes fluttered. Slender fingers reached down to lift my shirt and bring it over my head, leaving my arms still in it, while my chest and stomach were exposed. He bounced gently on me, rubbing himself until I felt flesh on flesh, the G-string no longer containing him. The head of his dick brushed over the hair on my stomach, grinding against my muscles as they flexed from the contact.

“Please,” I begged. It was raw in my throat, a prayer I needed answered.

He ground down harder, moving his ass. I couldn’t resist the urge and slid my hands to his bare cheeks, digging my fingers into his flesh as I gave a strangled moan and flooded my briefs with a fountain of cum.

He whimpered, “God, you’re... You just... Fuuuccckkk...” He shot in long, thick ropes over my stomach and chest. Some even hit my chin. I held him through it, not wanting to let go. But the moment passed all too soon.

The vixen scrambled off me, stumbling to the floor. I tried to help him up, but he refused with a shake of his head.

He was out the door before I could say a word.

DOMINIC

I shook. My hands, my legs, every part of me was in shock.

Why did I just do that? I knew exactly who Peyton was the second he came into the room. Fucking Dexen knew what he was doing too. He knew Peyton and I worked together.

Dexen didn't force me to climb on Peyton's lap though. He didn't make me push every boundary I had until I came all over Peyton's chest. Once I was that close to him, seeing him in a way I hadn't before, seeing him desire *me*, all bets were off.

Peyton, the man who was always guarded, always in control, was on the couch in the club, desire swimming in his eyes. *For me*. There wasn't a question of how much he wanted me, especially once I sat on his lap and felt the anaconda in his jeans.

The hallways, the stairs, they were a blur as I made my way to my dressing room, not caring who saw me. At least I tucked my cock back in before I hightailed it out of there. Thankfully, there wasn't cum on me. No, I'd covered Peyton with it.

Jesus Christ, what in the ever-loving fuck had I done?

I threw my clothes on faster than I'd ever taken them off and was out the dressing room door, slamming into a hard chest before I realized what happened.

Strong hands gripped my biceps. "Easy," Dexen said. He tipped my head up, searching my face, swiping his finger over my cheek. "What happened?"

Oh my god. Was I crying?

I shoved Dexen's chest. "What did you do to me?" I yelled.

"Not here." He backed me into my room, kicking the door shut behind him. "Did he hurt you?"

"What?" I recoiled. "No! How could you... Peyton wouldn't hurt me. You know that!"

He nodded. "I do. So why are you upset?"

"Because you knew what you were doing. Peyton and I both work for Perry. My worlds shouldn't collide, Dex!" I was talking with my hands, waving them around like a crazy person. I was surprised flights hadn't started to divert to land near me.

"Did he recognize you?"

"No. He wouldn't have done what he did if he knew." I was certain about that, if nothing else.

"I don't want details. That's between you and him."

"Why?" I needed to know why he did this to me, to us.

"Dominic, do you see yourself?" He was using my full name, which meant serious talk. Fanfuckingtastic. "You come here to escape. Every time you dance, you're a different person. You're true to yourself. You have no way to release it any other way. You joke and laugh, you flirt with me, but I see what you try to hide."

I crossed my arms over my chest, hating anyone looking inside me. "You don't know me."

"I do because I've been you. I kept everything buried so deep I never thought it would come out."

"Who did it?"

"One man. He blew apart my world then ran the remnants of my heart over as he left." He rubbed at his chest. "The tire marks are still there, tattooed on my fucking soul."

I groaned. Loudly. Glaring at Dexen, I gave him the finger and brushed past him. I couldn't do this. Not now. Not with him. I didn't need him cracking my chest open and trying to decipher what he'd find inside.

Peyton wasn't even on my radar before this. Sure, I noticed how hot he was. The man was a solid wall of muscle, but I'd have to be completely oblivious to not see how he looked at Perry. He didn't do it all the time, only when he didn't think anyone was looking. I was. Peyton thought he saw everything, but he was wrong. He didn't see me. Not tonight. Not who I really was beneath the mask. If I had it my way, he never would.

Work had never been so awkward. For me. Not them. Perry was clueless. Peyton stared at me, trying to figure out what my issue was.

Him.

He was my issue.

Sitting at his desk across from mine, the only thing separating us was the aisle that led from Perry's office and solid wood, not the kind in my pants because, apparently, I was reliving that shit.

Peyton in his perfect fucking suit with his dark hair buzzed close. His arms strained against his suit jacket when he propped his elbows on his desk. Fingers flexed on the pen he was holding. Fingers that had dug into my ass a moment before I came, dangerously close to calling his name as I released all over him.

"Lunch!" I called out.

"It's ten forty-five," Peyton reminded me.

I didn't reply. Simply dropped my head to my desk and banged it there a few times.

"Dom?"

I jumped so fast at his new proximity, I pushed my chair back where it crashed into the wall behind my desk, bumping me out of it so hard I fell to the floor. Where I promptly buried my face in my hands.

A hot second later, Peyton was kneeling beside me, those fucking hands on my shoulders as he peered deep into my eyes. “Dom, are you okay?” Genuine concern shone through. He cocked his head. Leaned in. Inhaled. Leaned back. His eyes widened. “You... You were...”

“Nope!” I literally crawled to get away from him.

I was such a mess when I got home last night, I drank myself into a stupor and passed out on the couch. I woke up late this morning, which was not like me. I didn’t have time to shower and rushed into work. Either he saw that silver sparkle on my skin, which I thought I wiped off this morning in my haste to get ready. Or he smelled the vanilla on me. The scent I put on when I went to the club.

“What the hell is going on?” Ah, Perry, just the man I wanted to see. Not when I was on my knees. At least not in these circumstances.

My head craned back so I could look at him. “What’s up?” Nothing to see here. Nothing at all.

“Why are you crawling? And why is Pey slumped against the wall?” He paused. His mouth gaped. “Did you take him down? I’ve only seen three men able to do it and they aren’t here.”

I climbed to my feet with grace I didn’t feel. “I didn’t fight Peyton.” I nearly fucked him last night, but we weren’t talking about that.

The man in question still hadn’t moved and his face was a myriad of emotions. Lovely. If he blurted out I came on his chest in the club, I was quitting my job as an executive assistant on the spot.

“Pey?” Perry leaned over my desk to snap his fingers in his best friend’s face. I’d never seen Peyton anything but a hundred percent on when Perry was around. Yet, here he was,

a zombie, reliving our night in his head as the puzzle pieces clicked into place.

It wasn't like I denied it when realization struck him. He knew it was me. What would be the point in trying to prove otherwise?

Peyton shook his head, finally coming around. He stood, slowly, tipped a little when he was upright. He had to grab the edge of my desk to steady himself. I was drawn back to his fingers. Mind reenter gutter.

“What happened out here?” Perry asked. “You two are being weird, and I have too much other shit to figure out to worry about whatever this is.”

“We're fine.” I smiled. “I saw a spider, jumped, and fell off my chair. Pey was making sure I was okay, but it leapt for his face and hissed at him. He fell too. I crawled away in my haste to flee.”

“Hissed?”

“Mmhm.” That was my story, and I was sticking to it. Could spiders hiss? Not a fucking clue.

Perry legit looked at the floor behind my desk for the hissing arachnid. “Is it gone?”

Jesus Christ. I turned to Peyton, silently begging him with my eyes to rescue me from this nightmare.

“It hissed,” he confirmed. His voice hoarse, reminding me of the way he begged me to get him off last night.

Perry eyed us both before turning and heading back for his office. He stopped, his gaze on me. “If you see it again, we'll call maintenance and ask them to do something about it.”

“I think they only fix things, not exterminate.”

“Whatever, someone will know what to do.”

“Yes, Mr. Altair.”

He growled and stomped into his office like I knew he would.

I found my chair and the dent in the wall behind it. A bit of sheetrock was dusted over my suit jacket. I picked it up and brushed the dust off. At least it wasn't ruined, unlike my relationship with Peyton, if I even had one to begin with.

Peyton and I got along. We had to since we both worked closely with Perry. We traveled together. But Peyton loved Perry, so I kept a distance, didn't want to disturb the balance, even if I harbored a secret crush on our boss.

That balance was gone.

Peyton had to figure out what to do with what he knew, while I went back to work, because anything less and I would curl into a ball beneath my desk.

My computer became fascinating as I typed the same sentence over and over for something to do.

I will not hump Peyton again.

I will not hump Peyton again.

There was a pile of work for me to complete, countless emails I had to respond to, and my mind was on last night and the man who sat across from me where he stared down at his desk, lost in thought.

This was my fault. I could have told him last night, but I didn't.

Sure, I blamed Dexen too. He was partly responsible, though not fully.

Could I quit both jobs and move? Maybe Jordan had a position open as a drug runner.

Nah, I wasn't cut out for a life of crime. Plus, I hated him.

My screen came into focus. I had typed that damn sentence for four pages.

Command-A.

Delete.

If Perry or Peyton saw that, I'd have to fake something bigger than a spider attack. It was a good thing my back was to

the wall, and no one could look at my screen.

And it was Friday. Perry and Peyton would head out to the Lynx fortress tonight, away from me and, hopefully, I wouldn't be bothered. If Perry had Peyton to listen to him, he didn't call or text me as much with things I needed to do on Monday.

Perry was a great boss. He didn't expect me to work on weekends, unless we were traveling or something major happened. I would. For him, I'd do almost anything.

Except tell him what happened between Peyton and me. Hard pass.

Perry came out of his office again, looking from Peyton to me. "Are you two okay?"

I quirked an eyebrow. "Are you?"

"What?"

I shrugged.

"I killed him," Peyton muttered.

Perry turned to face him. "You killed who?"

"The spider."

"Oh. That's good. I knew I kept you around for a reason."

Peyton's eyes met mine across the aisle, Perry forgotten. There was a heat to his gaze. One that had me squirming in my chair.

I couldn't do this.

I started typing again.

I will keep my cock in my pants.

I will keep my cock in my pants.

Given the chance for another shot with Peyton, even I didn't believe my cock would remain firmly behind zippered doors.

In addition to my crush on my boss, I lusted after his best friend. Lovely. All the planets were aligning for this

monumental moment. Just what I needed.

PERRY

The fortress. The Lynx brothers' home. It wasn't actually a fortress but between the advanced security, the thick stone exterior, and the panic room, a riot could happen outside, and we'd be fine within.

I had one person to thank for that—my dad.

He paid for Greer to go to college. Paid for Peyton to become one of the toughest motherfuckers around. Paid for the home they lived in. All in the name of keeping me safe. To my dad, there was no person in the world more important than me. It was another reason I carried him in my heart still, and why I felt his loss some days like it just happened.

“Why didn't he put in a bomb shelter?” I asked Peyton on the drive there Friday night. I didn't have to pack clothes to stay with them. I had my own room full of whatever I'd need. It was the same for Peyton and Greer when they stayed with me at the penthouse. We were with each other all the time, more so Peyton and me.

“A bomb shelter?”

“Dad had you two put everything else in there. What happens if someone starts bombing the place?”

“That's a bit excessive.”

“Yet the panic room isn't?”

He shrugged.

There was probably a tunnel they didn't tell me about. I wouldn't put it past them.

It was because of my Uncle Jordan. More than the hit on me. My dad had a complicated relationship with his brother. They loved each other. It was obvious to whoever was in the room with them. The fear remained on my dad's side, while my uncle reveled in it.

Jordan thought if my dad feared him, he could control him. He tried it. Once. My dad practically cut him off at the knees. He went behind Jordan's back to his biggest supplier and stopped all shipments. Jordan never saw it coming. Afterward, he left my dad alone in that respect. They went back to their relationship, but it wasn't quite the same.

Fast forward to a month before my dad's stroke, when he and I were drinking gin in his home office on the penthouse level of the residential building he owned—the penthouse I now resided in. It wasn't a surprise when he told me the company would be mine when he retired. The flash drive he handed me was. He explained the drive contained the names, addresses, phone numbers, and reason for doing business with Jordan. Every bank account Jordan had was listed. I even had the man's blood type.

“A safeguard,” he'd told me. A copy of one he had in a hidden safe his brother didn't know about. The copy I got went into the fortress. I knew better than to keep two copies in the same location. I wanted a safeguard too. Both Peyton and Greer knew about it. They knew what was on it. We didn't have secrets from one another.

“I miss him,” I said as the fortress's property came into view. He did this for me. My dad was a man with a million plans and plans to back those up. I thought it was where Peyton got it from.

“I know you do. I'm sorry he isn't here any longer.”

Reaching over, I squeezed Peyton's shoulder. “I still have you though.”

“You always will. And if not me, Greer.”

Tall, iron gates opened with a press of a button on the inside of Peyton's Tahoe. The house wasn't visible from the

road. There were ten acres to wind through before we got to it. The rest of the land was on the sides and back.

The winter left the ground covered in a blanket of snow with a frozen layer of ice on top. The driveway was cleared. It was also heated. Another plan. In case they needed a fast getaway; the Lynx brothers didn't want something like snow or ice to slow them down.

We crested a hill and there she was. Two stories of white stone with a high-pitched roof which housed an arsenal beneath it. The home was unassuming on purpose. It blended in with the other farmhouses out this way, roughly thirty minutes from West Dremest.

The deep navy-blue door swung open as we drove up to park around back in the six-car detached garage. Greer stood there, relaxed as usual. There were two garage bays attached but those were for emergencies. One housed a fast as hell all-wheel drive Subaru that had been heavily modified. The other bay was empty in case one of these insane fools had to come in hot, which they never had. Again, contingencies upon contingencies.

I got it. My uncle's side of the family was dangerous as hell. None of us wanted to get involved with the mafia boss. We weren't. At least not currently. If Peyton knew what was rattling around my head, he'd lock me in a room without a way to contact the outside world and not let me leave until I had a psych eval.

"Happy weekend," Greer greeted as we came in the back door. He saw everything that went on here. Monitored each camera, ensured the tech was current and secure. I'd suggested he upload the flash drive to one of his servers for safekeeping. He said everything was hackable. No matter how much security was around it, if the right, extremely talented hacker went searching, they'd find it.

Peyton took the bottle of IPA from Greer's hand and tipped it back for a long swallow as he toed off his shoes by the door. I did the same. Greer liked things neat around the house.

Greer's eyebrows climbed to his hairline. "Is this about last night?"

"Not now." Peyton shoved the bottle back at his brother and stomped farther into the house.

"What happened last night?" I asked once he was out of earshot.

He shook his head. "No clue, but he came home late, stumbling through your place. I thought he was drunk, which would be beyond the realm of normalcy. Now, I'm not so sure."

"Odd."

"Yup. Anyway, what's on the agenda for the weekend?"

"I need a break."

Greer laughed. "Don't we all, brother." He gripped my shoulder, giving me a gentle shake. "If you wanted a break, we should have hopped on the Altair jet and hightailed it out of here."

My shoulders slumped. I needed the break. I couldn't take it though. "I have too much going on."

"Want to talk about it?"

"Not yet."

"When you do, you know where I am." With that, Greer walked off with his beer, leaving me the only one standing in the expansive kitchen. I didn't move for a solid five minutes. The money the company needed to climb out of its hole was a weight on my shoulders, keeping my feet rooted.

Millions. That was what it would take to at least get us back to steady ground. Not ahead. Level. I didn't want a loan. I wanted a solution, a way to make money for years to come.

If our patents were licensed properly, we'd have more money funneling in that way. If our R&D team stopped trying to make shit for sedans, we'd be able to produce new products. If my dad hadn't made it so I couldn't move money from one business to another, I could handle this myself.

I reached into the laptop bag slung over my shoulder, found one of the pencils Dominic kept there, and snapped it in half just for something to take my frustration out on. I wouldn't be surprised if he lit up my phone to inform me he knew of the crime I'd committed.

The pencil flew from my fingers as I launched it across the breakfast nook. It clattered against the windows and fell to the ground.

PJS was sinking instead of thriving and it scared the ever-loving shit out of me.

Greer appeared again and leaned against the doorway. "You need to get laid."

Now it was my turn to laugh. "When the hell do I have time to find someone to sleep with?"

"There are services."

"Fuck you, Greer. I'm not hiring a woman to join me in bed."

"You need to do something. You're strung so tight you're about to combust. And Pey's walking around like the Hulk looking for something to smash."

I frowned. "He is not."

"Okay." He rolled his eyes. "If you think I don't know my brother, then I question where you've been all our lives."

"I have a company to run. People who depend on me. I'm not watching Pey every second." That reminded me... "He got scared by a spider earlier today. He was so pale, I thought he saw a ghost."

"Peyton's not afraid of spiders. Don't you remember the summer we had them in the house and he kept killing them, but they kept finding ways inside. He refused to call an exterminator. He went around to every possible crack on the exterior and sealed them."

"He spent a week doing it."

"Yup."

“Then why was he scared today?”

“You’d have to ask him.” Greer took a drink from his bottle, swirling the remainder around the bottom. “Either way, something’s going on with you and him. Hopefully, you both can work your separate shit out this weekend. If not, it’s going to be a long week ahead of you.”

I was the worst friend ever. I noticed Peyton was off today, but I chalked it up to the spider, which in hindsight, was ridiculous. Greer was right. Peyton wasn’t afraid of them. The only thing that scared him was someone he loved getting hurt or worse, killed. Did he know something I didn’t?

I dropped my bag on the counter, and went in search of my best friend. He wasn’t in his bedroom, though his clothes were scattered on the floor, which meant one place.

Descending two flights of stairs, I found him in their basement gym, beating the hell out of a heavy bag. There were no gloves on his hands, and they weren’t taped. Peyton hit the bag like it had personally offended him.

“Hey,” I said when I walked over, noticing the blood on the bag and his split knuckles. How long and how hard was he doing this that he was already bleeding? “Pey.”

He didn’t stop, didn’t pause, just kept pummeling the bag. If I got too close, he might accidentally hit me so I kept my distance until I couldn’t anymore.

Peyton saw me, knew I was there. His eyes flitted to mine then back to the task at hand.

I slowly approached him, gently touching his flank to get him to stop. “Pey, you’re bleeding.”

He grunted in response.

“Stop,” I told him.

He kept going.

“Peyton, enough!”

His fists quit flying; his arms coming to lay heavy at his sides while his chest rose and fell with labored breaths. Sweat

slid down his brow. His bare chest was covered with it too. He only had on a pair of shorts. Blood dripped from his hands onto the mat beneath his feet.

On the shelf on the far wall was a stack of clean white towels. I grabbed one, fully intending on throwing it out once I was done getting the bleeding to stop.

Taking his hand in mine, I blotted the blood from his knuckles, applying pressure to get it to slow, then moved to his other hand. “Why did you do this? You know better than to beat the shit out of the bag without the proper protection.”

He didn’t answer, so I finally lifted my gaze to his. Peyton was looking at me in a way I couldn’t decipher, not sure I wanted to. This was a man I could read like the back of my hand. Who I knew as well as I did myself. Yet, in that moment, I felt a chasm open between us. Something had changed, shifted. What that was, it was anyone’s guess.

“Let’s sit down,” I said gently, leading Peyton over to the bench.

He took a seat, and I crouched in front of him to keep the towel on his hand. One knuckle was worse than the others. He didn’t need stitches, just to take better care of himself.

I should have been paying attention to him. He needed a friend and I’d been too wrapped up in my own shit to realize he was suffering.

“I’m fine,” he said eventually.

“You’re not, but I won’t push you to talk. No more punching tonight though. Promise me.”

He nodded.

We stayed like that for a while. Me not knowing what to say while Peyton kept his eyes on his hands, seemingly miles away from here. He was my best friend, and I couldn’t figure out what was going on or how to help him if he wouldn’t talk to me.

My phone ringing in my pocket was what pulled me away. A reminder I couldn’t keep putting off the problem the

company was in. So, on the way to the kitchen to grab an ice pack for Peyton, I fired off a quick text.

Me: I'd like to meet with you.

PEYTON

An object came at me from the side, knocking into my head before I had time to react. I wasn't awake enough for this. I swung around to find Greer there with a tennis ball in hand, while another one bounced on the floor at my feet.

Reaching down, I picked up the ball and rolled it in my palm, letting the fluorescent green fuzz rub against my skin. Fucking Greer and his tennis balls. He had them stashed all over the house, in his SUV, in his office at work, and even in my desk. It was his thing; his way to alleviate stress. Currently, it was how he was trying to get my attention. It wasn't the first time one of them bounced off my skull.

I let the ball fly in Greer's direction. He knew it was coming and dove out of the way, hiding behind the kitchen island. The ball bounced off a cabinet then hit the counter before dropping to the floor. My back was to the windows in the breakfast nook.

Another ball came sailing my way, quickly followed by four more in rapid succession.

In high school, Greer, Perry, and I had snowball fights every time it snowed. We'd painstakingly each craft a wall of snow to hide behind then packed as many snowballs as we could in five minutes. My mom set a timer. Perry was slower than us, only making about half the number Greer and I did.

At the five-minute mark, it was game on. We pummeled each other until we were out of ammo. Perry though, he didn't throw like my brother and I did. He hoarded his snowballs. He

waited until we were done before he scooped them up and came charging for us, reveling in the fact we were empty-handed. He hit us good. It was when I realized he was a strategist. He had played the game with us enough to where he predicted our moves and went in for the kill when he knew he'd win.

I'd loved Perry before that. But seeing him grow, mature, being who he was destined to be—a powerful man like his dad—I couldn't help but fall deeper. Too bad I didn't have the courage I needed to tell him how I felt, then or now.

Twenty-five years I'd known him. Twenty-five years of wishing he'd one day see me as something else. Perry was straight. If the string of one-night stands he went through in college didn't drill that into my head, nothing would.

That was then. Perry of today hardly did anything for himself. He was too consumed in PJS. A curse for him meant a blessing for me at not having to witness him bring women home. As his bodyguard, I was there when he went out. No matter what, I had his back.

Except today, because my mind kept drifting so far from Perry, I couldn't tell which way was up.

Greer came over to stand in front of me. An inch taller than me, he was a force to be reckoned with. His hair was longer than mine on top, with his sides and back shaved. He had tattoos and his nipples were pierced. I had none of that. "Pey, what is it?"

I had stopped the game we were playing, too lost in thought. "Remember when we used to throw snowballs at each other? The game changed once Perry realized what he had to do to win."

"We had a lot of fun together."

"When did things get so complicated?" I pulled out a chair at the table and dropped into it. Greer followed suit.

"When Perry's dad took control of our futures. It made us grow up fast."

"Do you regret it? Following what he asked of us?"

He shook his head. “Not for one second. I wouldn’t have been able to afford college and wouldn’t want to put that debt on Mom. You wouldn’t have gotten into the gym you did and learned to fight. Same with me.”

“I stopped living for me.”

“You did that the moment you knew Perry existed. Do *you* regret *that*?”

“No.” There wasn’t a shadow of a doubt in my mind. “I regret not doing things for myself though.”

“What’s this really about? You’ve been off since you came home Thursday night.”

“You saw that, did you?” Of course, he did. With the cameras all over Perry’s penthouse, a fly couldn’t rub his evil little legs together without Greer being made aware of it.

“You don’t have to tell me, but it might help if you do.”

I didn’t keep secrets from Greer. He knew how much I loved Perry. Knew I’d dedicate the rest of my life to protecting him. At what cost though? I lived without love from a partner. From a man I so desperately wanted. It hadn’t occurred to me that one day I’d want more, since none of the nameless hookups ever tempted me. Then there was Dominic.

“Where’s Perry?”

“Last time I checked, he was in his office on the phone with Pam.” She was the CFO of PJS. It didn’t surprise me he was speaking with her. Perry ran a tight ship. One of the reasons it was easy for Perry to stay here was because he had a full office space to work in if he needed to.

Greer pulled out his phone, tapped the screen a few times and sat it on the table between us, letting me see the live feed of Perry in his office. We didn’t spy on him; the sound was off. There was a camera in there because of the work conducted to ensure if someone ever got in, we’d know if they were in Perry’s office. Greer was easing my worries that Perry wouldn’t pop up and hear our conversation.

“You’ve been to Untouchable,” I began.

“Is that a trick question?” He grinned. Greer went there at least once a month, if not more, when he could get away and needed to decompress.

“You’ve seen Ocean then.”

“I have. Was that where you were Thursday night? Finally got to dip your toes into the water?” He waggled his eyebrows.

A tennis ball sat on the table. I picked it up and threw it at him without any real force. He dodged it, laughing at my pathetic attempt.

“Anyway,” I continued. “Yes, I went there Thursday night. I’ve been feeling... unsettled. Perry’s stressed about something and it’s bleeding over to me.”

“Perry’s always stressed. That’s not new.”

“It’s different. I can’t put my finger on it, but something has him worked up more than usual. I had to blow off some steam or I was going to be worse than him, growling at everyone.”

“So, you went to Untouchable.”

“I did and ran into Dexen.”

“Makes sense. He knows everyone who comes in and out of those doors.”

“I saw Ocean perform.” Heat immediately engulfed my body, my memory transporting me back to when I first saw him dance. I had to push it away to focus on the conversation with Greer. “Dexen saw the way I was drawn to Ocean and said he had a surprise for me.”

Greer leaned forward. “No way. You got a private dance from Ocean? Shit, what did that run you? Even I won’t pony up the money for him.” I didn’t need to know who my brother spent his money on. Not in this lifetime or the next.

“I didn’t pay. Dex said it was on the house.”

“That bastard. I want a free dance from Ocean.”

It was my turn to lean forward, though I wasn’t kind when I did so. A possessive instinct rose in me so fast I bared my

teeth at my brother.

A tennis ball hit my forehead. He must have had it waiting in hand. “Snap out of it, Pey. Come back to the conversation.”

“I got my dance and then some.”

“We’re not supposed to touch the dancers. I’m surprised you don’t have bruises from the guards. Dex doesn’t fuck around.” Dexen and Greer had... I didn’t want to call it a relationship. They were friends. Had been for as long as we’d known him. There was more to it though. They casually fucked.

“Dex told me he’d be fine if I broke the rules.”

“That’s it. No more Christmas cards for him. He’s cut off.” Greer had always been the more light-hearted of the two of us. He was calm, trying to defuse situations while I stood ready to jump in and do whatever needed to be done.

“Greer, focus.”

“Sorry, but you can’t blame me.”

Here was the part of the story where I betrayed a secret. I wouldn’t tell anyone but my brother. The man was a vault with reinforced steel and fourteen locks. Uncrackable.

“There was a reason. I know Ocean.”

“You know...” His eyes widened. “Is it Perry?”

“Don’t you think if he was dancing on the side we’d fucking know?” I said louder than intended but for someone so smart, my brother wasn’t thinking. We both glanced down at his phone to make sure Perry was still working upstairs.

“Okay, so it’s not Perry.”

I had to resist rolling my eyes. “Stellar observation.” We’d seen Perry with his shirt off countless times. He was not Ocean.

“Who is it then?”

“You’re not going to believe me.”

“Try me.”

“Dominic.” Even saying his name sent fire through my veins. Like the song conditioned my dick to respond, his name had a similar effect.

“What?” he yelled. “You can’t be serious!”

“Why the hell would I make that up?”

“How did you figure it out or did he tell you?”

I shook my head. “We... went further than a dance. His mask stayed on, but he was so close I could smell him. Yesterday in the office, he was acting weird. He fell off his chair and I went to check to make sure he was okay and that scent, that vanilla, I knew it was him. The eyes were the same piercing gray. And he knew. He fucking crawled away from me.”

“He crawled?”

I recounted the story with the spider, which had Greer cracking up. “Perry said you were afraid of a spider, and I didn’t believe him. This just keeps getting better,” he said between laughs. “No wonder you’re fucked up over it. What are you going to do?”

I scrubbed my hand over the top of my head, letting the short hairs rake over my palm. “I have no damn clue.”

He sobered quickly, studying me. “You want Dominic. That’s why you brought up not doing things for yourself. You want to see if there’s something between you two.”

“I don’t need to see. I know. I felt it. This wasn’t a quick get off and leave. This was *more*. He had to feel something too, or else he would have blown the whole thing off like it was no big deal. Instead, he ran. In the room, when it was just us, he wanted me to touch him. He obviously knew it was me.”

“Shit, this is a lot.”

“You fucking think?”

Dropping my head back, I stared at the ceiling, hoping an idea would come to me. A way to fix things for Perry. A way to explore things with Dominic. But that didn’t sit right. I still

loved Perry. I couldn't let him go so easily, even if I'd never have him. What did it mean though?

"You need to talk to Dom," Greer told me as I focused on him again. Hearing what he said solidified it. Greer knew I wouldn't be able to move forward or calm the hell down until this was settled between Dominic and me, whatever it was. "Think about what you want first. You can't go to him and ask for a casual fuck."

"He's a dancer and does private sessions. What if I wasn't the first guy he did that with?"

"I'm not answering that because you already know it's bullshit. That's not Dom. What he did with you was what he wanted. With you."

"I'm not special."

A loud smack against the table jolted me in my seat. Greer was fierce in front of me. "Don't say that shit. You're special. You're a goddamn Lynx. Do you think Perry would trust you if you weren't? That his dad would? Now, knock this shit off and figure out how to handle things with Dom. You won't feel better until you do."

I opened my mouth to respond when my phone vibrated in my pocket. I pulled it out to find a text message.

Dexen: Get your ass over here and fix him.

Me: Huh?

Dexen: Dom. You broke him. I don't know what's going on but he can't dance like this.

Me: You think I can fix him?

Dexen: Yes. Now move your ass before I have someone move it for you.

"Jesus," I muttered. "I have to go to Untouchable."

Greer stood when I did. "What's going on?"

"Apparently I broke Dom and have to fix him."

The grin that lit my brother's face was smug as fuck.
"Yeah, you do."

I shoved him on my way past. Asshole.

DOMINIC

Cold dread poured over me when I reached the stage. I couldn't see it the same way I usually did. The music didn't soothe me, didn't set me free. The lights that would be on me, the eyes of the members grazing my skin like a delicate touch. I didn't want it. Couldn't do it. Everything felt... wrong.

It changed and I hadn't meant for it to.

"Dom," I heard a second before Dexen turned me around, his hands gently taking mine.

I squeezed my eyes shut, willing him to not look too deep, to not see the torture there. He felt it all the same. The full body shaking I couldn't control.

Vaguely, I heard him to tell someone to put another dancer on stage. But it was like he was in another room, a whisper of his command.

The next thing I knew, I was being ushered down the hall to a room I'd only been in a handful of times over the years. My ass met a cushioned leather couch so soft, I lay on my side and curled into a ball.

Dexen crouched in front of me. He pushed my mask off my face and undid my tie. I hadn't realized I was pulling at it until he pried my fingers free. Softly he said, "Tell me what happened."

"I can't dance."

"I know, but why?"

"It's not the same. It's all wrong now."

Something wet rolled down my cheek to my nose. Was I crying again? What was happening to me? I didn't cry like this.

A thought occurred to me that had me clutching the front of Dexen's white button-down. "Please don't fire me. I need the money. I have to take care of my sister."

Instead of trying to get me to release him, he smoothed his hand over mine, coaxing me to let him go. "I'm not going to fire you. Tell me why it's not the same. I can already guess, but I want to hear it."

"He knows," I whispered. "Who else does? Who's in the crowd who knows the real me? Will they tell Perry? What will he think of me? And Pey, does he hate me now? I came on him, Dex. Literally. All over his chest. He figured out it was me at work yesterday. I couldn't tell him the truth. I didn't know what to do." I kept rambling, words tumbling from my mouth on their own accord.

"Hey, hey, it's all right," he soothed. "Did Peyton say anything about it?"

"No, but he was stunned. It was the damn vanilla scent I wear. He put the pieces together. I watched it happen. He's so smart. I should've known better. I should've told him it was me in the room before I climbed onto his lap and tried to ride him into the sunset."

He patted my hand and tucked it back to my side. "I'm going to fix this."

"You are?"

"Yeah, I am." He pulled his phone from his pocket and started typing.

"No!" I lunged, knocking the device from his fingers so it tumbled to the plush dark mocha carpet. "You can't tell Perry."

"I'm not," he replied more calmly than he looked. I was waiting for him to lash out at me. Luckily, he didn't. "I'm telling Pey he has to fix this." At least Peyton was better than Perry.

“How? I’m a wreck. He can’t put me back together.”

Dexen leaned over to get his phone. “You’d be surprised,” he muttered.

My heart, body, and mind warred with each other. Seeing Peyton again outside of work put a level of fear in me I didn’t expect. What if he started yelling at me, calling me an asshole for not revealing who I was? What if he never wanted to speak to me again? That couldn’t happen, not after the way it felt to be held by him. To be the object of his desire like Perry had been for so long.

The seat beside my head dipped. Dexen’s fingers found their way to my hair as I moved closer to rest my head on his thigh. There was nothing sexual about it, just a need for comfort. I was scared about what would happen next but knew Dexen would be there if I needed him. A friend in the storm that raged within me.

He continued to work the product out of my hair, using his fingers to soften it. “I’m sorry,” he said sadly. “If I’d known this would have happened, I wouldn’t have put you two together like I did. I wanted you to feel something more than I do. No one should live with a hole inside them. And Peyton, he needs healing too. Both of you worship the ground Junior walks on. Don’t get me wrong, he’s a good man, but to deserve your attention like that, when it’s not reciprocated, it’s hard to witness.”

His words sank their claws into me. Everything he said was true. I thought I did a better job of hiding myself and how I felt about Perry. Apparently not. Hopefully I did when I was in front of him.

“So, you became a matchmaker?” I asked. “Putting Pey and me in a room to see if the mating took?”

He chuckled. “I thought you two could find something in each other you didn’t find where you were always looking.”

“Don’t start a new business. The result of your venture is shit.” I toyed with my bow tie where it rested on the couch in

front of me. “I’m sorry too. I shouldn’t have reacted the way I did the other night or tonight. It wasn’t professional of me.”

“Professional doesn’t matter when it comes to family.”

Turning to my back, I peered up at him. “You consider me family?”

“I have from the start. Something about you made me bring you into the fold, want to keep you here where I could make sure you were taken care of and safe.”

“I’m a big boy, Dex.”

His eyes raked down my body, reminding me I was bare from the waist up. At least my lower half was covered. I brought my fingers over my nipples in a shitty attempt at modesty. Dexen had seen me in less than this, yet this was more intimate with my head on his lap.

“I’m kidding,” Dexen teased, ruffling my hair.

I flicked his stomach and went back to my side to resume my position.

There was a light knock on the door.

“Enter,” Dexen called.

One of his guards opened the door, revealing a Peyton I hadn’t seen before. Usually, he was in a crisp suit, looking imposing. Before me stood a man with worry in his eyes, in a pair of navy sweatpants and a gray long-sleeved shirt that strained across his chest and arms.

I forgot how to breathe; certain my face was still splotchy from crying.

Until he growled and lunged for Dexen.

He didn’t get very far. Hal gripped his arms, holding Peyton back.

“Hands off, Dex,” Peyton grated out through clenched teeth.

Dexen, being the man he was, kept brushing his fingers through my hair. “Interesting turn of events, don’t you think,

Dom?”

He expected me to speak? Impossible considering Peyton looked so fucking tortured and had jealousy pouring from him in spades. Muscles taut, chest heaving. Only Dexen’s fingers kept me from rolling to the floor and swallowing Peyton’s cock.

A slut, I wasn’t. I only hooked up when my hand stopped being a good substitute. It was more perfunctory than anything. A need to sate so I could get on with my life.

Peyton right now, I was ready to take a number and wait for a taste of his meat.

“Hal will let you go if you promise to behave,” Dexen told him.

“Get your hands off Dom and we have a deal.”

Fingers disappeared from my hair. Peyton was released. He paid Dexen no mind, dropping to his knees in front of me. “Are you okay?” The subtle shake to his voice had me reaching for him. I cupped his cheek and brushed my thumb along his short beard.

I was so wrapped up in Peyton, I didn’t realize Dexen had stood and gone to the door. It was the sound of the latch that had me looking toward it, sweeping the room, noticing we were alone.

Peyton and Dexen had been close, once upon a time. I guess that trust still stood if Dexen left us together in his private space.

“Dom, tell me you’re all right.”

Those tears I had before resurfaced. I tried to choke them back, but it was of no use. They slid from my eyes, down my cheeks and nose, my emotions pouring from me.

“Come here, vixen.” Peyton eased me from the couch into his arms, where he lifted me and brought us back down onto the leather, me straddling his lap, my arms wrapped tightly around him. I tucked my face against his neck and let the tears fall.

A gentle hand rubbed up and down my back. Just because we were like this didn't mean everything was okay. Peyton could still be angry at me.

"Do you hate me for what I did?" I asked.

"What are you talking about? I couldn't hate you."

"I deceived you."

"Did I ask you to reveal your identity when I entered the room? No. Did I tell you to stop when we were together? No. I wanted it as much as you did."

"There was something different about you that night. I hadn't seen you like that before. You weren't the Peyton I was used to. I couldn't stop myself from touching you."

"I wanted you so fucking bad. God, the way you moved on stage, the way you did afterward just for me. You lit a fire in me I haven't been able to extinguish."

His words washed over me, a balm to my soul. Behind it was a slow building heat at their meaning. He still wanted me. Or was it Ocean he desired?

Leaning back, I had to see his face when I asked, so I could verify if it was the truth. "Who do you see when you look at me, Pey? Ocean or Dominic?"

His eyes held mine, fierce with determination. "Before I knew it was you, it was Ocean I wanted. But now that I know the man behind the mask, it's you who's captured my attention." Who knew Peyton Lynx could be so sweet?

I couldn't dismiss the blaring neon sign in the room. "What about Perry?"

"What about him?"

"You love him. That doesn't go away. I can't compete with him. Or is whatever this is between us lust and nothing more?" If I didn't ask, I'd drive myself crazy wondering about it. That was if this went further. "Don't deny it either. Remember, I'm with you two day in and out. I see the way you look at him."

“I don’t have the answers. I truly don’t. I love him, it’s true. Then there’s you. This man I didn’t know I could feel something for, passion I’d never experienced before.”

“Wait.” I held up my hand. “Are you a virgin? Not that it matters if you are. I’m just curious.”

He chuckled. “No. I didn’t feel with others what I do with you though.”

“How do you feel with me?” I purred. Apparently, it was a sound Peyton pulled out of me. I hadn’t made it before the night in the VIP room with him.

“Like I have no control over my dick. Like your sultry voice and that damn music you play make me hard as soon as I hear them.”

I nuzzled his cheek. Was it foolish to tempt fate and go after something, no matter how small, with Peyton when he was in love with another? Absolutely. And I was stupid enough to keep pushing him. “I want him too, you know?”

He froze. Muscles tight. Fingers flexing on my thighs. “Perry?”

“Yeah. There’s this charisma about him. I’ve had a crush on him for a while.”

“I didn’t know. Now what?”

“Now you take a seat in the audience and watch me dance for you.”

Dancing was easier than talking. Dancing didn’t need words when my body spoke loud and clear. Tonight, it wanted Peyton to desire me like he did before. Tonight, I pushed the doubts, fears, and errant thoughts aside, and found my peace again. The place where I thrived. Tonight, Peyton was part of the equation. He helped set me free.

PERRY

Greer had been chewing me out since I told him where I had to go and how I needed him with me.

“The fuck is wrong with you? He’s going to take advantage of you.” He slammed his palm against the steering wheel. “Goddammit, Perry.”

“I know, all right! Do you think if I had a way, any other way, I’d do this? I’ve been trying to find a solution, and nothing came to me. I can’t lose what Dad built.” The thought of it had my heart shattering in my chest.

Greer’s shoulders dropped. “You’re not going to. PJS is going through a rough patch, sure, but you’ll get out of it.”

“How? My R&D sucks. They haven’t created anything worthwhile since Dad was around. I can’t fire Stefen. He knows our business inside and out. I just wish he’d channel it into something I can use. If we don’t get our revenue up, I’m going to have to start laying people off and, fuck, I don’t want to do that.”

The company was where my dad made most of his wealth when he was younger. It wasn’t where it kept coming in from though. He diversified, branched out into real estate purchases, investments into other businesses. He was sharp as hell. PJS was his heart and soul though. I didn’t want to fail him on that end.

Would I be fine if I had to sell the company to someone who could put it back together again? I would because my dad

made sure of it. I owned everything he did. I didn't have to work if I chose not to.

And the company would sell if I put the word out that I would entertain serious buyers. I didn't have a doubt about it. The technology we had alone would be worth a lot, the proprietary way we manufactured.

The thing was, tech was always advancing, always changing. I needed the new tech in the right development with my team. But Stefen was more interested in how to make his minivan fly. Not really, but I wouldn't put it past him.

"What if we expanded the tech?" Greer asked. He had an uncanny way of seeing into my head. "Not for racing, but we could branch out. We could go into consumer auto security. Not only in making the vehicle less likely to get jacked, but also look into ways to create new features that haven't been touched yet. I know you don't want to go into the consumer side, but Stefen might not be wrong. Completely at least. I haven't seen anything good come from him in a while."

I groaned. "I don't want to go into consumer. That's a whole other ball game."

"If we're sinking..."

"Yeah, yeah."

"You're going to have to tell the rest of your ET too."

I groaned. Again. I knew this. My executive team were the people I trusted most. I'd asked Pamela to keep it between us for now, but they did have to be told, especially if I had to make changes to prevent layoffs. Though layoffs might be inevitable.

"Now that it's settled and I gave you a plan, what do you say we turn around and head home?" he asked.

"I can't do that."

"He's going to do something you're not prepared for." Greer wasn't saying things I didn't know.

"Even if we branch into consumer, that's going to take time, money, things we don't have. I need an immediate

solution.”

“Jordan Sr. isn’t the way, Perry. He’s not.”

“Dad trusted him.”

“To an extent. They were brothers. They had a bond that couldn’t be broken. You’re not your dad.”

“I’m desperate,” I whispered. “Pam has been through our numbers. If we stay on course, I’m looking at laying off fifteen percent of the workforce. To start. I need an injection of cash.”

“Take it from one of your other investments.”

I shook my head. “I can’t. One of the stipulations of Dad’s will. PJS is to remain completely separate from the other holdings. I found paperwork. Emails. Handwritten notes. Ideas he had to help the business. It was going down then. He was brainstorming about how he could fix it. I thought I’d seen all his notes but yesterday morning, I was in my office at the penthouse, I found another one wedged in an old planner of his.”

“What did it say?”

“If all else fails, go to Jordan.”

He cut his eyes to me, momentarily taking them off the road. “I can’t believe he’d write that.”

Shrugging, I looked out my window, noticing we were about to cross into East Dremest. “It was his handwriting. I have to fight for the company, Greer. I know this is a dangerous road to travel, but I need to try. To lay off part of the staff...” A lump formed in my throat at the thought. I might walk around with a hair trigger of a temper, but I wanted my employees to know they would get a paycheck. That they could feed their families, keep a roof over their heads.

I still had the flash drive floating around my mind. A bargaining chip I could use but didn’t want to. It was for emergencies and while things with the company were dire, I wasn’t at emergency level yet.

“Pey’s going to chew my ass out for taking you here.”

“Better to beg for forgiveness than ask for permission.”

He snorted. “You haven’t asked for permission for anything in your life.”

“That’s beside the point.”

“Don’t look for me to back you up when we’re home and Pey’s on the warpath.”

“Where did he go, anyway? I didn’t know he left.”

“Beats the shit out of me. As long as he knows I’ve got you, he’ll go do whatever.”

Train tracks didn’t separate West and East Dremest. A creek did. Crossing over that little bridge, my stomach sank. There was no going back. My dad had a note saying to go to Jordan, that was what I was doing. Besides, it was a talk. Nothing more. Yet. I could talk to my uncle.

The two sides of Dremest weren’t that different. At least to the average person. Those who lived here, they knew once they went east, they were in Jordan’s territory. He didn’t flood the streets with drugs and guns. Not here. Jordan kept his town clean and sent his illegal shit elsewhere. The residents appreciated it and turned the other way if they saw something they weren’t supposed to. It was how he bought loyalty.

To the general population, sure, Jordan was a mafia boss, but he was also their safety net. If crimes were committed here, he didn’t tolerate it and handled things swiftly. I’d give him that much. He wasn’t all bad.

We wound through the city until we got to a ten-story building, one of many Jordan owned. From the outside, it appeared to be a high-end residential building. Step one foot in the door, armed guards waited. No one got through to see him without a thorough check.

Greer and I were patted down in a short hallway near the elevator bank. Greer locked his gun in the glove compartment in his SUV before we got out. He had a permit to carry, as did Peyton. Coming into this building armed wouldn’t have been a smart move.

The last time I'd seen my uncle was at my dad's funeral. He was a shell of himself, broken by the loss of a brother he loved dearly. He texted and called me since to make sure I was doing okay. He was sincere, not asking for anything in return. Jordan was still my family, close in proximity, but far away at the same time. My life didn't match his. We were night and day.

A guard escorted us to the tenth floor, where Jordan lived. The elevator door opened and I was figuratively smacked in the face with opulence. In this sense, Jordan was nothing like my dad. Jordan wanted the world to know he was wealthy and powerful. My dad wanted his work to speak for him. His success.

Black marble flooring met my shoes, while my eyes bounced from painting to painting. It had been a long time since I'd been in this space. Jordan was standing at the floor-to-ceiling windows in the living room, looking out over his domain.

His smile for me was warm. The one he gave Greer was not.

Greer didn't so much as get a handshake, not that I expected him to. I received a hug.

It had always been my dad and me. My mom died giving birth, leaving my dad with a baby and not a clue of how to raise him. Jordan and his wife, Ella, helped my dad with whatever he needed. Back then, Jordan was finding his footing in crime, rapidly building a name for himself.

"Junior," he greeted, his hazel eyes crinkling at the corners when he pulled back from the hug. His hair had gone completely silver. He kept it neatly combed back from his face. He had a thick silver beard to match. "How are you?"

"Good. It's been a while. You doing okay?" Small talk with my uncle, just what I wanted.

"Of course. Look around you. I'm living the life. Come, have a seat. What can I get you to drink?"

Greer walked beside me and went to sit.

“Not you,” Jordan snapped. “You can stand over there with Malik where he can keep an eye on you. If you take one wrong move toward me, he’ll break your fucking neck. You’re not my blood. You’re disposable.” This was a stark reminder of who Jordan was. A ruthless killer. Out for his own gain.

“Uncle,” I said gently to pull his attention from Greer. My friend was seething. I didn’t need to see him to know it. I didn’t come here for bloodshed.

“Sorry, Junior.” Jesus, he was Jekyll and Hyde. He handed me a glass, which I sipped to be polite. I needed to keep my wits about me. Jordan sat with me on the couch, his leg on the cushion so he could face me. “What would you like to discuss? I assume this isn’t a social call since you don’t typically cross the border into my side of things, just like I don’t into yours.” He was right. We didn’t. It kept things running smoother this way. We didn’t interfere in each other’s worlds.

I looked around the room, making sure there was no one else here but the four of us. Malik had been by Jordan’s side for as long as I could remember.

“No one else is here. You have my word.”

Nodding, I took a deep breath and said words I didn’t think I ever would to him. “I need help.”

He leaned closer, his eyes sharp. “Who hurt you? I’ll kill them myself.” Right to violence.

“No, it’s not like that. PJS isn’t doing well. I don’t want to lay off employees. Money isn’t coming in like it used to. I’m not sure where else to turn.”

“To family.” He nodded. “It’s what I’m here for. Senior and you never liked what I did. You still don’t agree with it, and I don’t need you to. But I would never turn my back on you as I know you wouldn’t on my son.” A sinking sensation formed in my stomach. By the gleam in Jordan’s eyes, I knew he’d been waiting for this moment. The one where I could do something for him without much choice.

“What do you have in mind?”

“Right to the point. I like that. JJ has been flighty lately. Doing shit I don’t agree with, testing his boundaries.”

“He’s thirty-six.” My cousin was three years younger than me.

“And you’d think he would know what he’s doing with his life.”

“Does he still have the garage?” My dad would tell me how proud he was of JJ for not getting into the business his father was in and instead striking out on his own. Jordan didn’t approve but since JJ didn’t go far, Jordan didn’t put up much of a fight. At least he was still in East Dremest, where Jordan could watch him.

“He fixes cars all day like the people are above him. I hate it. A fucking mechanic. *My* son. He was meant for more.”

“But not with you.”

Jordan lifted the glass to his lips. The amber liquid disappearing quickly. “JJ would rather slit his own throat than work for me.” A muscle ticked in his jaw. “Here’s my proposal. You take JJ, give him a job at your company and not in the fucking mail room. None of that low-level bullshit. And I’ll give you an investment. In his name. Make him part owner.”

“Now wait just a minute,” Greer cut in.

I turned in time to watch Greer step forward. Malik put his hand around Greer’s throat and slammed him against the wall. Greer was not a small guy, but Malik had years of doing this, of fighting dirty by Jordan’s side. Greer maneuvered himself in a way to break the hold, spinning them around where they were in each other’s faces once more.

“Stop!” I yelled.

“Mal.” Jordan waved his hand so Malik would back off. “I told you to stay over there, Greer. You know better.” Jesus, I had to get the fuck out of here.

“How much?” I asked. I owned ninety percent of the company with Greer and Peyton each holding five percent. I

did that so if anything happened to me, they'd still have a source of income if they were out of a job. But it was agreed I wouldn't run business decisions by them for their approval. They didn't need to sign off on what I did.

“Ten percent for five million.”

I sank back, letting the firmness of the couch hold me upright. Five million was a lot. Given the shady shit my uncle did, it was probably a small share. “You wouldn't have anything to do with the company?”

“No.” He shook his head. “JJ wouldn't agree if I did. I need this for him. Do you know how many times people have tried to kill him because they don't think he can handle himself? Out there, lying underneath a car, covered in grease. A fucking Altair! They think he's weak because he doesn't work for me. An easy way to get to me, through my son.” I swallowed, not needing the reminder of how JJ wasn't the only one to ever be targeted.

“What if JJ doesn't agree?”

“He will. Leave it to me.”

“No other conditions? JJ gets a higher-ranking role, not on my executive team. I can't do that. But I could find a place for him in R&D. And only his name is listed as a partial owner. No one else. If he makes out a will, you don't get his share. I want it gifted back to me or whoever my heir is. And he doesn't get business-making decisions. Those remain solely mine.”

“Done. This is more about my reputation, Junior. You see me. You see how I live. He drives through this town in a beat-up Ford pickup when he's not on his bike. It's no wonder he's not taken seriously.”

I could understand what he was saying. To Jordan, status, appearance, power, were everything. Being a mechanic was a hell of a respectable job, but not to my uncle.

“You're not in any meetings,” I said. “After you speak with him, the rest is between JJ and me to work out. Once the contract is signed, the money is transferred.”

“That’s fine with me.”

“I’m going to make this ironclad, Uncle. I don’t want any bullshit.”

“I wouldn’t expect any less from you.”

I nodded. “Then we have a deal, pending JJ and an executed contract. Everything by the book.”

Jordan reached for me, pulling me in for another hug. “Thank you, Junior. I appreciate you helping my son.” It was times like these when I was reminded my uncle was human. That he had a son he cared about, even if he did treat him like a prop in his game.

PEYTON

Facedown, hips grinding, I was having the best dream. Except I woke up before I could come and found myself humping the bed. Whatever. I was finishing. It was Sunday morning. I had all the time in the world.

I snaked my hand beneath me, into my boxer briefs, to wrap around my dick and pull it out. I held it in a firm fist while my hips continued their movement. With thoughts of Dominic dancing on stage last night, the way his body moved still fresh in my mind, I moaned low.

Maybe it wasn't a dream, rather me reliving the show.

At one point while he was dancing, Dominic's lips parted, and I thought I'd come in my briefs. It was a good thing I'd pushed my chair in, so my waist was beneath the table to hide my very noticeable hard dick. Not that anyone would care. I wasn't the only one getting turned on by him.

A growl had worked up my throat last night. I scanned the room to take in the other thirsty as hell fuckers who thought they could get their hands on Dominic. I'd fight every one of them if I had to. That calmed my dick down enough to where I could stand once his set was over and go backstage to find him.

I didn't care that he was sweaty, I pulled him close and hugged the shit out of him. I wanted to kiss him in front of everyone, but I refrained. Instead, we went back to his dressing room, passing Dexen on the way, who winked at us.

It was amazing his ass was still standing and I hadn't knocked him out cold after the way I saw him touching Dominic.

Dominic and I didn't do anything while he wiped down and got dressed. I was too caught up in the way he looked with the bright lights of the room on him. The roundness of his ass, the subtle flexing of his muscles. How had I never noticed him like that before? Well, I knew how. I didn't know he did this on the side. I'd only seen him dressed for the office. I also didn't spend time at Untouchable.

I fucked my fist faster, letting the night in the VIP room wash over me until I came hard, all over my hand and sheets. What was happening to me?

A quick shower cleaned the cum from my skin. That was what I got for getting off the way I did.

The house was quiet when I finally strolled out of my room, late in the morning. Perry was nowhere to be found, but Greer was sitting at the table with his tablet in front of him and a nearly empty cup of black coffee. That shit was gross. I needed cream in mine, sugar to get rid of the bitterness.

"It's about time you got up," he said as I doctored up a cup for myself. There were two empty bowls on the counter with spoons in them. Greer liked to take care of Perry and me in his own way. My box of cereal sat next to Perry's. I poured myself a bowl, added milk, and joined Greer at the table.

He waited until I finished eating before dropping a bomb on me.

"I went out with Perry last night."

"To?" I took a sip of my coffee and put it back on the table. Greer slid it and the bowl away from me, out of arm's reach.

"East Dremest."

My eyes narrowed. Perry never went over there. His ass stayed firmly on the western side. "Why?"

"He wanted to meet with Jordan." Greer didn't need to tack on the senior part. We didn't refer to JJ as Jordan, even

though it was his name.

My hands fisted on the table. It was a good thing he moved that bowl. I was dangerously close to breaking it. “For what purpose?”

“PJS is in trouble financially,” he said calmly. “He wanted help from his uncle.”

“Jesus Christ!” I exploded out of my seat, knocking the chair backward. “And you let him go? You fucking took him? How could you do that? Jordan could have hurt Perry. Fuck, he could have killed you!” It was no secret how Jordan wasn’t a fan of Greer and me. Hadn’t been since Perry Sr. brought us on to work for him and paid for everything. Jordan liked easy access to his family. With Greer and me around, he couldn’t just walk up to Perry. Except now, apparently.

“Easy, Pey. I was there the whole time.”

“Neither of you should have been. And don’t act like it was just about his safety and not yours too. You fucking know better!” Malik always seemed a breath away from killing us when we were within striking distance. He took hatred to a new level. And he was always with Jordan.

He nodded. “I do but Perry wanted to go and, ultimately, we work for him. So, either I took him and watched his back or let him go alone and fuck knows what would have happened.” Worked for him... We did, but we were also his closest friends.

I was about to ask Greer to give me every detail when Perry came into the kitchen, light blond hair sticking up all over, sweatpants slung low on his hips, and shirtless. Sleep still clung to his eyes. He was oblivious to our conversation.

My switch flipped from angry to full of lust. My mouth went dry. My words fled. And I drank in every delicious inch of him.

Perry wasn’t cut with muscles like me or defined with subtle ones like Dominic. Perry was slender, not ripped. He was soft lines without having a belly. His stomach was flat

with a dusting of matching light blond hair in a sinful trail down to his hips, where it disappeared below his waist.

Something smacked me in the back of the head. Fucking Greer.

I didn't need to see the tennis ball roll across the floor to know it was what hit me.

Perry bent down and picked it up, placing it on the counter next to his cereal bowl like it was no big deal. Just another day in the fortress.

"Perry," I snapped, remembering what I'd been pissed about. I kept my eyes on his face and not the way I wanted to rove my hands over his body.

He finished pouring milk over his cereal and turned slowly, probably preparing himself for me to lose my shit on him. He was smart as hell. He'd know Greer told me. Perry put a spoonful of sugary cereal to his lips. How he didn't have diabetes from his shit diet was beyond me.

I stalked over to him, backed him up until his ass hit the counter and milk sloshed over the edge of the bowl, hitting his chest and dripping down his stomach. I followed the trail like a man who hadn't eaten in a month and wanted just a taste. A tiny lick.

Perry's wide eyes blinked up at me. He placed the bowl on the counter then swiped down his front with his bare hand to collect the milk. He wiped it on his thigh.

"You ever do something that fucking stupid again; Malik will be the least of your worries," I tried to seethe but it came out more pissed than full of rage. Damn Perry without his shirt on.

He swallowed. Hard. "I had my reasons."

"Uh huh. I want to hear those, but you're going to wait for Dom unless you want to recite this bullshit twice."

"Dom?"

"Yeah, your executive assistant. The man who controls your daily life. If you're fucking with things, he needs to be

aware, so he isn't caught off guard."

Perry's gaze dropped to my lips. He licked his. I wondered if it was a conscious thought or not, because this close to him, feeling the warmth radiating from him, I wanted to devour him whole.

"Perry," I growled low. If one of us didn't move away, I was going to do something I only thought about in my dreams, and it was going to ruin us.

A throat cleared from behind us. Greer. Thank fuck someone in this room had an ounce of sense.

I wanted Perry. Loved him. But when I was this angry, it wasn't the right time to go down that road, if there ever was one.

Perry slipped past me, picking up his bowl on the way. He went to the table to take a seat beside Greer. The one I was in before.

"Tomorrow," Greer said. "You three meet tomorrow in Perry's office. I sent a quick text to Dom to free the time first thing. Pey, you're too pissed and won't think straight. Perry's not even awake yet and you cornered him."

"You're damn right I'm pissed!" I leaned my knuckles onto the table to loom over Perry. "I swear to fuck, Perry. I will chain you to my fucking side, so you never do something so stupid again."

"Everything worked out," was his reply, mouth chewing away on his cereal.

"Did it?" Greer asked. "Screw this." He lifted his phone again and dialed someone before putting it on speaker.

"Greer?" Dominic's voice floated through the line. My knees nearly buckled. That damn voice.

Greer quirked an eyebrow and nodded for me to sit. I did because the alternative was showing these two the effect Dominic's voice had on me, and I wasn't about to do that.

I needed an antidote for his siren song. Something that didn't turn me to steel when I heard or saw him.

“Morning, Dom,” Perry said. Right. We were here for a reason. Jordan. That was a bucket of ice my balls dipped into.

“Mr. Altair.”

“It’s the goddamn weekend, Dom,” Perry replied with no heat in his voice. Had he been fully awake, there would have been a bit of anger there. For some reason, when Dominic called him Mr. Altair, it pissed Perry off. I thought it had to do with Perry thinking of Dominic as more than an employee, as a friend. Dominic knew every aspect of his life after all. But Dominic was ever the professional when it came to his day job. Except when he was faking a spider attack.

“I know. I’m still in bed.”

I pulled my phone out of my pocket, unable to resist texting him.

Me: Really?

Dom: I didn’t say I was naked.

Me: Are you?

Dom: What do you think?

Greer plucked the phone from my fingers and dropped it onto the table, facedown. I needed to focus on Perry, not Dominic naked in bed.

I hadn’t thought this much with my dick in years. Dominic changed me into a different man. I had to get my head in the game and lock the other version of myself away for when I was alone with him.

“Perry,” Greer prompted.

That got Perry talking. He spilled everything. What he found out from Pamela, the hours on the phone with her yesterday trying to find solutions, the note he found from his dad. It came out in a rush.

At first, I was too stunned to say anything. Until he got to the part where Jordan threatened Greer. Then I was out of my

seat and pacing, fuming at the thought of Malik laying his hand on my brother.

“Goddammit, Perry!” I shouted. I wondered if I was going to break a record for how many times I could yell at him in one day. I’d do it over and over until he got in his head that he shouldn’t have gone to Jordan. Especially without me. “Did you fucking think before going there? About what could have happened to you, to Greer?”

Perry was wide awake now and his temper roared to the surface. He was out of his chair, in my face, in a second flat. “You think I didn’t know? You think I wanted to take Greer there? I can’t slip out of this place undetected, even if I was a fucking ghost. The last thing I wanted was to go to Jordan and ask for help. What would you have me do, Pey? Lay off part of my workforce? Watch my dad’s dream fucking sink?”

“I don’t know!” I roared back. I had no solution. No way to get out of this. I wasn’t the brains of the operation. That was Perry. He ran the company. He had an executive team for a reason, yet he didn’t bring this up to them, outside of Greer. Now he’d have to tell them the new development once the contract with JJ was signed. Shit was going to hit the fan. “I can’t believe you went to him.” I shook my head.

“He said he wouldn’t have anything to do with it. Just JJ.”

“And you believed him?”

“JJ can’t stand his father.”

“When was the last time you talked to him?”

Perry shrugged. “It’s been a while.”

I pointed at him. “I want to be in that meeting where you and JJ hash out the details. Your personal attorney will be there. Greer. Dom.”

“What the hell am I going to do?” Dominic’s voice filtered over the phone. I forgot he was there. “Take notes? I don’t need to be in the meeting.”

“You will,” I ground out. This was a big deal for Perry that could affect us all.

I left the room after that. They could figure out when to have the meeting. I would be in there. I would grip JJ's neck like Malik did Greer's if I had to.

This was a foolish mistake. One I feared we'd all suffer the consequences of.

DOMINIC

Jordan Altair Jr. was nothing like his father. Not in appearance at least.

Grease-streaked jeans, a beat-up leather jacket over a black shirt. Steel-toed work boots that at one point might have been tan. His hair a shade darker than Perry's light blond. JJ's was also longer, down to his chin. He raked his fingers through it, pushing it out of his face. He was clean-shaven, not even stubble on his chin and cheeks.

It was his eyes that got me though. Deep blue and sharp. He might have appeared like he was nothing more than the mechanic East Dremest knew him to be, but he was way more. Growing up with a mafia boss as a father would do that.

Last night, Greer, Peyton, Perry, Renee, who was Perry's attorney, and I sat around the large dining room table at the fortress and poured over the contract Renee put together. I didn't need to be there, but Perry insisted. Said he needed my attention to detail. Nothing was to be missed in the document.

JJ received ten percent of PJS. He was to be the vice president of R&D but reporting directly to Perry. That would piss Stefen off; however, Perry wanted to take full responsibility for JJ, not have it fall to Stefen. JJ didn't have any power over the company's decisions. Basically, he was there in title and partial ownership only. If he wanted to actually do the work, Perry would welcome it.

I'd learned JJ was a damn good mechanic. He could have been doing more than he was in his shop, but he didn't want

to. JJ liked what he had. Jordan didn't give him much of a choice. When his father could literally burn JJ's world to the ground, JJ was backed into a corner.

The addition of JJ as an owner meant the contracts between Perry and Greer and Perry and Peyton were amended. Perry didn't want JJ owning more stake than them. So, both Greer and Peyton got their shares upped to eleven percent each, leaving Perry with the majority share at sixty-eight percent.

The name Perry, Jordan, & Sons Auto was coming back to what Perry Sr. originally wanted. Both brothers, their sons, working together. Except Jordan wasn't involved. It was strictly Perry and JJ now. While Greer and Peyton were partial owners, they didn't have anything to do with Perry and how he ran the business.

It was confusing and had I not been around Perry for the years I had, my head would spin from it.

What it boiled down to was Perry was in charge, end of story. No one could throw him out, remove him as owner and CEO. It was his private company to do with as he wanted.

Now I was escorting JJ through the building to Perry's personal conference room. Peyton was at my back, not wanting me to greet JJ alone. Greer was up in the conference room with Perry. Both brothers were armed, not that I blamed them. JJ entering Altair Plaza was a big deal, and he wasn't a stupid man. His life had been threatened before, thanks to being connected to his father.

The elevator ride to the twelfth floor was like slow death. No one spoke. Peyton and JJ had a stare off in the mirrored interior elevator doors. I stood off to the side, not wanting to be collateral damage when the two of them threw down. If they did, I wasn't sure who'd win. Peyton was trained well, thanks to Dexten's brother. But JJ, he had muscles born from need, from survival.

When the elevator dinged, announcing our arrival at the executive office level, I hightailed it out of there like my ass

was on fire. Fuck those two and their testosterone. Jesus. I needed to stick my head out a window to clear my body of it.

Eyes followed us as we wove to the back where Perry's office was, the conference room around the corner from it. Perry stood looking out the floor-to-ceiling windows while Renee sat at the table, copies of the contract in front of the chairs of those who would need it.

Perry turned as we entered, his hands firmly in his pockets. "JJ," he greeted but didn't move from where he stood.

"Junior." JJ took a seat across from Renee.

It wasn't that I expected them to hug but a handshake maybe. Something. Nope.

The door shut with Peyton leaning against it on the inside. Perry took his seat between Renee and Greer. I sat on the end, far enough away not to be noticed, close enough to take notes if needed. My planner was already on the table. I put a new notepad in the back of it this morning. I preferred paper to technology.

"Did you have a chance to review the contract?" Perry asked.

JJ nodded. "I have."

"Do you have any concerns? Any changes you'd like to make?"

His hard gaze leveled Perry, but my boss didn't flinch. Perry wasn't new. He was used to holding his own. His father made sure of that. Prepared Perry in every possible way so when the day came that he had to take over, he could hit the ground running.

"The change I'd like to make is to have nothing to do with this. I don't want a seat at the fucking Altair table. I like my life the way it is."

"This was the deal your dad made," Perry reminded him.

"Yeah, I get that, and I hate it. I don't want this, Junior. The amount of shit I've seen..." He shook his head. "If I don't do this, he'll make my life a living hell. He said it was to help

the family, to help you. What he meant was how this would look for him. The bastard finds new ways to come for my throat. And this one? I'm going to have to put a tie on mine, like a goddamn noose."

"You're smart, JJ. I wouldn't agree to it if I didn't think you'd help the company." The level of calm Perry was exhibiting floored me. He hadn't even snapped the pencil I left on the table for him, in case he wanted to make changes to the contract.

"You agreed to this because you need the investment. It doesn't have fuck all to do with me. But hey, at least I'll make some money out of it, right? When the company creates new shit. That's the only thing I'm happy about. I'll finally get to take the ideas I've had in my head and have the backing to do something with them."

"You never asked your dad to fund them?"

"With his drug money? Cash he's made from moving guns? Yeah, let me sign up for that." He rolled his eyes. "I don't even want the money he's made legally through his businesses. I'm not him, Junior. Never have been."

"I didn't think you were. I made it clear to him I didn't want his business colliding with mine."

"You're a fool if you think my old man won't find a way to control me from the inside. He's devious, cunning."

"Then we find a way to keep that from happening," Greer cut in.

"I know all about you, Greer Lynx. You and your brother. You think you can help me? I'm not worth the effort. I'd be better off with a bullet in my head, but I can't find it within myself to pull the damn trigger. I don't have a death wish. If I did, I'd let one of my dad's rivals take me out. I just want to be left alone, but as long as I have Altair blood pumping through me, that won't happen. Give me the contract to sign."

Renee slid the finalized papers over without speaking a word. She wasn't naïve to what the other half of the Altair family did, but she was firmly on Perry's side in everything.

JJ scrawled his name where the arrows directed him then pushed it back toward Renee. “I need two weeks to get my shit in order. I didn’t expect to be forced from my shop to turn my life into that of a corporate robot. I need to make sure my customers are taken care of, and the shop runs well without me there.”

Perry nodded. “That’s fine. Take all the time you need.”

Renee got up and left, no doubt heading to her office to finalize things.

JJ waited for her to leave to speak again. “You tell me that and you’ll never see my ass again.”

“We don’t need to be enemies.”

“Don’t we? We’re night and day. You grew up with a father who would have handed you the sun if you asked for it. Mine put a gun to my mother’s temple and blew her brains out in front of me for cheating on him. I was three, Junior.”

I couldn’t breathe at his words. I knew Perry’s aunt was murdered but it was reported as a robbery gone wrong. I never thought... didn’t want to imagine... Poor JJ.

“Don’t,” he pointed at me. He didn’t miss a thing. “I don’t want your pity. None of yours. I’ve had a lifetime of scenes I’ll never forget. Maybe this shit here won’t be too awful after all. Normal even. I could have that, right? A slice of the life you live.” He leaned back and propped his greasy boots on the table, crossing his legs at the ankle as he interlaced his fingers behind his head.

That was the end of the very long rope Perry was holding. He finally lost his temper. It was about damn time.

“Get your motherfucking feet off my goddamn table,” Perry growled. “I get that Jordan is giving me money in exchange for me doing this for you, but I will not tolerate your fucking insolence. This is my company!” He slammed his fist down on the table, the vibration from it reaching me where I rested my arms. “Now remove your boots before I have Peyton break your fucking legs. Jordan isn’t the only one who can make threats.”

JJ grinned. Fucking smiled. His entire face changed as did his attitude. Was the previous one not really him? “There.” He pointed at Perry and sat up, dropping his feet to the floor. “That was what I wanted. I knew it was in there. I just didn’t know how to get it out.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You’re not as even-tempered as you seem.”

“Was that bullshit you were feeding me?”

He shook his head. “Yes and No. Some fact mixed in with an attitude I knew would fire you up. But you, like this, I can get behind that and help you. I won’t work for a spineless asshole, because shit is going to hit the fan eventually. You made a deal with Satan himself. There’s only one way for that to end.”

JJ stood, nodded to us, and left. Peyton followed him out the door, closing it behind him.

“What the hell just happened?” I asked.

Greer leaned back in his chair. “That was JJ testing Perry and finally getting the results he wanted.”

“So, JJ’s not really an asshole?”

“Oh, I’m sure he is, but he’s one who seems to be on our side. We know he hates his father. Hates that life. This is his chance for freedom. Redemption if he wants it. That’s what you have to worry about, brother,” he said to Perry. “JJ is getting something he’s wanted for a long time. A way out from under his father and one not of his own doing. He’s brilliant if you think about it. He’s getting out, slowly, and in a way that was Jordan’s idea. I’d still heed his warning though.”

Perry pushed back from the table and stood. “I’m not sure if I should throw up or celebrate. I need time to digest this shitshow.” He left the room without another word.

Greer got up next, clapping me on the shoulder on his way out.

I stayed where I was for a while, trying to parse together what I’d just witnessed. Whatever happened going forward, it

was going to be interesting, that was for sure.

PERRY

For years I'd had a membership to Untouchable and hadn't stepped foot into the building once. It had nothing to do with Dexen's family and mine in competition for the top spot in West Dremest. We got along well when we spoke. It was about me having no time to go to his club. Also, I was straight.

"How did I let you drag me here?" I asked Peyton as he drove us to the club.

"Today was a lot. You need the break. We all do."

"Why didn't you invite Dom?" Greer was following us in his SUV. He drove separately in case he didn't want to leave when we did. But Dominic left work ahead of us. I didn't see him go. Peyton told me when I emerged from my office after downing a couple shots, wondering what the hell I'd gotten myself into with JJ.

"He was busy."

I nodded. It wasn't my business what Dominic did outside of work. He could have used the break with us though. I wasn't going to Untouchable for the male dancers. I was going because my friends were and I needed more alcohol away from the office, away from home.

Dominic was as tense as I was in the meeting. For a second, I thought he was going to break one of his pencils.

Dominic and Peyton didn't think I paid attention to them like they did me. That I was running a business, which I was, and didn't have the chance to do a quick check of my best friend and my assistant. But I did. And the two of them were

acting strange. Peyton would send heated looks at Dominic. Dominic would turn in the other direction like he couldn't stand to look at him.

“Are you interested in him?” I asked. Peyton and I blurred the line between boss/employee and best friends. At work, he wouldn't say anything against what I needed done or wanted to do. At home, he'd tell me how he felt about things. It was unconventional. Normally, bodyguards made no comments about the business the person they were protecting was in. Peyton and I weren't typical, and it worked for us.

He started coughing like he was choking on something. I reached over and patted his back. Luckily, we were stopped at a traffic light. “Why would you ask me that?”

I shrugged. “You've been looking at him differently.”

“I have not.”

“Sure.”

“I haven't.”

“I wouldn't care if you were.” They both worked for me but not for each other. I didn't see an issue with them dating. Or fucking. Whatever.

Peyton chose not to say anything more and turned into the parking lot of Untouchable. Maybe he'd talk to me about it, maybe he wouldn't.

Greer parked beside us and the three of us went into the club, still dressed in our suits from work. I had my jacket unbuttoned and my tie was in the SUV. The top three buttons of my shirt were undone. It was cold out but I wasn't planning on strolling around the block, so I didn't bother with a heavy coat.

Guards checked our identification before we were allowed inside. The first hallway was dark, the walls painted a deep gray. A man stood off to the side at a coat check. We declined to hand ours over. I'd rather drape mine on the back of my chair when we sat down.

The next door was opened by another guard. That was when the music hit me. It had been nearly silent in the hallway. Now, we walked into an open room. The lights were down low, except the ones pointed toward the stage off to my far left. On my right was the beginning of a long bar that was half full. It was still early. I imagined it would pick up the later the night got.

Dexen casually leaned against the bar, smiling when he saw us. He embraced Peyton first and whispered something into his ear.

He came to me next with his hand outstretched. “Junior, I can’t believe you finally dragged your ass to my club. It’s about time.”

I chuckled. “Mark it on the calendar. I’m not sure when it will happen again.”

“We’ll have to see if we can change that. I have one of my best dancers on the schedule tonight.”

Glancing to the stage, I saw the man up there. He was good-looking, I’d give him that, but he didn’t do anything for me. “I’m straight, or have you forgotten?”

“Are you sure? You hang around Peyton and Greer enough, I’m surprised you haven’t dipped your dick in the water.” His eyes went to Greer as he gave him a slow once-over.

I shook my head and decided to follow Peyton to an open table. There was a reserved sign on it, and it was near the stage. Like right fucking near it.

“You called ahead?” I asked, leaning in to talk to Peyton. The music was loud this close. Not the same volume it would be at a dance club though.

He nodded and shrugged off his jacket, putting it on the back of his chair. I did the same. Greer joined us a moment later.

I sat and sipped the drink I was brought without having to be asked. Peyton on one side of me, Greer on the other. Their eyes were on the stage. I’d always known Peyton and Greer

were gay. They didn't hide it. I didn't care who they found attractive. They protected me from bullying in high school. They could have told me they liked to be bound and whipped and I wouldn't have batted an eye.

That wasn't why I loved my friends. That was how we met. Me getting beat up and them saving me. No one had protected me like that before, except my dad. From then on, we were inseparable.

The two of them needed to decompress as much as I did after the past few days. I would have preferred women on stage. For my friends, I'd go anywhere.

My pile of work was never-ending. After the day I'd had, I was letting myself have this night. I didn't even bother checking my phone since we got into Peyton's Tahoe and left the office.

The music slowed to a stop. The deejay announced the exit of the dancer and we clapped. Some louder than others.

Then, a hush fell over the crowd. They all seemed to know something I didn't.

I leaned toward Greer. "What's going on?"

He didn't take his eyes off the stage when he spoke. "The next dancer is the most requested here. I know you're not into guys, but watch him, Perry. You'll appreciate how he moves. It's mesmerizing."

That I could do. I leaned back in my chair, drink in hand, as the deejay announced the dancer.

Ocean.

The music started slowly, building into a sensuous beat. No one talked on the main floor. It was like they were holding a collective breath, waiting for the moment the curtain opened. I guess what Greer said was right. This man was in demand.

The purple fabric parted, revealing Ocean on the other side. He wore black slacks that sat right at his hips. His body shimmered like gold coins when he stepped forward, the light dancing over his bare chest and arms, hitting him just right. A

solid black tie hung down his front, snug around his throat. This close to the stage, I noticed the mask that adorned his face had small gold hearts on it.

Ocean's eyes didn't meet anyone's. He stared straight ahead as he walked out with the confidence and knowledge that, right now, he owned the room.

As the music continued to build, his movements sped up, not going too fast. The way his muscles flexed as he danced, how his arms and legs, his torso, everything synced up perfectly. The music wasn't orchestrated by a composer. No, it was Ocean who commanded the beat. He was the one dictating when it ebbed and flowed. He knew when to have the notes hit just right.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Peyton lean forward, his eyes riveted to the stage. Elbows on his thighs, I didn't think anything short of gunfire could pull his gaze from Ocean.

I wasn't as enthralled as him, but I understood the draw. Ocean was raw sex appeal, and I found it harder and harder to look away.

Ocean's tie was the first to go. Thrown over his shoulder toward the curtain. It wasn't until the next song started that he undid his pants with practiced fingers, teasing the audience. The pop of the button. The slow slide of the zipper. He eased them off until he was bare, except for the thin strings on his hips holding a pouch over his dick. Ocean's mask was still firmly in place, making me wonder if he ever took it off.

Who was he under there? Why I had the strong desire to find out, I wasn't certain. But I did. I wanted to see his eyes, look at the intensity in them. Would they stay closed as he danced without the mask to conceal him? Or would he keep them open, baring his soul to the room? This wasn't just a dance. This wasn't only a job to him. This was what made him feel good. A person who danced like he did wasn't up there for the money alone. He loved this.

Movement from my left brought my attention back to Peyton. This time I angled my face toward him so I could see

what he was doing, as well as keep Ocean in front of me.

Peyton leaned back, his hand sliding up his thigh, disappearing so I couldn't see anything else due to the table being in the way. His arm moved subtly, a slight lift of his shoulder. Shit, was he touching himself? I lived with the man but had never seen or heard him in the throes of any kind of passion. Nor had I given it much thought.

In this room with the scene in front of me, I wanted to lean closer to Peyton, find out if he was touching himself through his slacks like I thought he was.

My dick lengthened, growing hard. The feeling snapped me back to reality and forced my eyes firmly on the stage.

Was I just lusting after my best friend? What the fuck?

Ocean danced closer to our side of the stage, snagging my attention, pulling me from my thoughts. He dipped down low then rolled his hips upward, pushing his ass out. His *bare* ass so close.

I had to resist palming myself.

What was happening to me? How was I this turned on for a guy?

Instead of giving in to the urge to squeeze my dick, I picked up my glass and swallowed what remained, my eyes staying with Ocean, not daring to look at Peyton again.

The music slowed eventually. Ocean's time in front of me was coming to an end. I wanted to go to the deejay and pay him extra to play more for the man who was slowly working backward toward the curtain.

Everything faded away except for Ocean. I stayed fixated on him until the purple velvet closed, taking the sinful man from me. The urge to find Dexen, to demand he tell me who Ocean was, was so strong. I rocked back in the chair, the glass slipping from my fingers, clattering to the table, luckily staying upright.

Who was I right now?

I honestly didn't care because I felt like a new world had opened up to me, and I wanted to explore it. I hadn't felt like this in... Fuck, had I ever? And my desire was for a man. A *beautiful* man.

“Perry.”

I heard my name, not caring who spoke it. I still hadn't pulled my eyes from the stage.

“Perry.” It was Peyton. I looked over at him, at his flushed cheeks and the light playing in his eyes. “Did you like what you saw?”

The question held the weight of the world within it. I didn't lie to my best friend. I wouldn't start now. But I knew, the second the word was out of my mouth, nothing would be the same. “Yes.”

PEYTON

I gave shit to Perry for walking down a dangerous road when he went to see Jordan. Yet, here I was going down an equally dangerous one with him by my side. This one wouldn't lead to violence. It had the power to upend our lives though. Not only the dynamic between Perry and me, but between Perry and Dominic too.

Bringing Perry here was my idea. Dominic and I both had feelings for him. Dominic had been reluctant to go along with it. He was worried about pressing Perry, and rightfully so. But after the shit we'd been through with Jordan and JJ, we all needed a break. If that meant Perry came to the club, had a few drinks, and focused on something else for a bit, I would consider it a win. If it meant more, well, I'd fucking celebrate.

The thing was, I knew Perry. No, he hadn't shown interest in men before, but he also hadn't shown an interest in anyone for quite some time. Perry lived wrapped up in his own world, where he ran his dad's business and didn't want to let the man he had looked up to down. If Perry didn't do something for himself soon, he was going to snap, and the collateral damage would be vast.

Dominic was already scheduled to dance tonight. He texted Dexen and asked him to reserve one of the VIP rooms for him.

Dominic left it up to me whether to bring Perry back to the room or not. That was why Greer came with us. I was going to the room to meet with Dominic either way. If Perry wasn't

interested in what he saw on stage, I'd leave him with Greer and be on my way. I wouldn't push him.

Perry had been to gay clubs with us before. He saw men dance on stage at them. He didn't care where he was as long as he was surrounded by the people who mattered most to him.

I'd always hoped. Always wondered *what if*.

This was my shot to see if something could happen.

Perry watched Dominic like he was dying of thirst, and fuck, did the sight make me hard. He reacted to a man scantily dressed. Maybe it wasn't every man, but it was definitely Dominic he showed interest in. I wanted to jack off right there. I'd felt his eyes on me, knew he was looking at me when I casually rubbed myself. Normally I wouldn't have done that, but I had to test the waters with Perry.

So, he passed the test. The *I might like dick* test. In truth, I didn't know what I was doing, but I couldn't have stopped if I tried. I wanted Dominic. I loved Perry. Somehow, somehow, I wanted us all together. I was a selfish bastard.

But if it worked... If we could all be something... Shit, didn't I owe it to myself to try and see if he could be interested in us? And there was an us in that sense. I couldn't pry myself from Dominic, even if Perry got on his knees and declared his love for me. Dominic drew me in, held me captive, and I didn't want him to set me free.

Dexen came over before I could stand and lead Perry away. He dropped his hand to Greer's shoulder. When Greer looked up at Dexen with longing in his eyes, I wasn't ready for it.

Was that how it was, and I missed it? Too wrapped up in my head about Perry and now Dominic. My brother was crushing on Dexen Dremest. And by Dexen's calm demeanor and the casual way he stood there; he didn't feel the same.

A Lynx brothers curse. Falling for unavailable men.

Tonight, I was hoping to change my relationship with Perry.

“Having fun?” Dexen asked us.

Perry still watched me, occasionally flicking his gaze to the stage where the next dancer was performing. He didn't hold Perry's interest like Dominic did.

“Always,” Greer said with a too tight smile.

“You okay, Pey?” Dexen asked, not paying attention to Greer, but he kept his hand on his shoulder, gently rubbing the muscle there. I didn't have the bandwidth right now to figure them out, especially when my dick was running the show.

I nodded. “Are we good?”

“All set. Same place.”

I stood and peered down at Perry. “Come with me.”

He followed suit. “Where are we going?” Perry would blindly follow me because he knew I'd never put him in harm's way. I was leading him to what would hopefully become the single hottest encounter of his life.

Once we were in the room, if he wanted to leave, I'd open the door for him. This had to be Perry's decision to move forward. Not mine. Not Dominic's.

We went up the stairs to the VIP rooms. Dexen said same place, which meant room one.

My knuckles rapped on the door. I didn't have the code to let us inside, but Dominic could open the door from within.

“There's something you should know.” I didn't say more to Perry, wasn't going to until Dominic was in front of us.

The door clicked, opened slowly, revealing the man I was hard for since I first saw him dance.

Dominic wore the same outfit he had on stage, including the mask. His pants were back in place as was his tie. We were going to have to talk to Perry before things progressed. There would be no hiding who Ocean really was this time. Not like it was with Dominic and me. We both wanted Perry to enter this with his eyes open.

I stepped up close to Dominic, letting my hand trail softly down his arm. “Okay?”

He nodded, glancing past me to Perry. With the mask in place, I could only see his eyes. This close, there was worry in them. Fear at losing his boss, who he also considered a friend. I understood. There was a lot on the line for me too. Perry was worth the leap.

Walking into the room, lust flooded my system. This was where Dominic and I spent one perfect night. The couch, the low lights, the music playing softly so we could talk tonight. Fuck, I was going to bust a nut before I got to touch him properly.

Perry came in behind me, pausing by the door which Dominic shut. Our business was no one else’s. I got Perry up here, now we’d learn if he’d stay or go.

I went to the couch, sitting near the arm, leaving room for Perry. He still hadn’t moved. “Perry, come sit. We want to talk to you.”

“Talk?” he asked and cleared his throat. His gaze bounced between us. Dominic handed him a bottle of water I didn’t see him holding.

“For now. Sit.” I patted the cushion beside me. “Listen to us. If you want to leave, Greer will take you home. No harm, no foul.”

“And you?” His eyes held mine but strayed to Dominic again. He couldn’t stop looking at him.

“I’m staying here, with or without you.”

I heard Dominic’s intake of breath over the music. He probably thought I’d leave if Perry did. I wouldn’t. Nothing could pry me away from him, not even my years’ long affection for my best friend.

Perry closed the distance, taking a seat by my side, placing his water out of the way on the floor. I had to be the one to speak first. Dominic would come in after.

“This was my idea,” I told Perry. “We needed a night out, away from the office bullshit. You have to relax once in a while. You don’t go out for pleasure. You don’t date. You don’t fuck.”

His lips drew down. “I have too much going on.”

“What if you could still work your ass off, but have more?”

“More?”

I turned, propping my arm up on the back of the couch, so I could fully face him. “I’ve never lied to you. Not once since we’ve met, but I have omitted something.”

His eyes narrowed. In the low light of the room, the normal hazel was muted. “What?”

“I love you, Perry.”

That softened him. His face relaxed, his shoulders lost their tension. “I love you too, Pey.”

“I know, but it’s not the same. I’m *in* love with you. I have been since I first laid eyes on you.”

He sucked in a sharp breath. “Why are you telling me this here?” That was Perry, trying to put the pieces together.

I caught Dominic’s gaze and nodded. He stepped closer with a stool and sat on it in front of us. The gold on his skin still glittered, and the closer he got, his vanilla scent wrapped around me.

“Did you like watching me dance?” Dominic asked while toying with his tie, running the silk between his fingers, drawing Perry’s eyes to him. Damn, I wanted to be that piece of fabric.

Perry nodded in my peripheral. “I did.”

“Do you think I’m sexy?” Dominic purred and propped one leg on the bottom rung on the stool, his other leg remaining on the floor. He ran his palm down his thigh.

“Yes,” Perry whispered, his voice getting rougher.

Dominic stood to come closer. He dropped to his knees in front of us. His chest moved up and down more quickly, his nerves kicking up. “Would you let me touch you, Mr. Altair?” The way Dominic said it wasn’t the same as he did in the office. This was less business and a fuck ton more pleasure.

Perry leaned forward, trying to see the man behind the mask. “Who are you?”

“I’ll let you take my mask off if you answer two more questions.”

Another nod.

“Would you like to touch me?”

“I... I think I would.”

“Would you like to touch Peyton?”

Perry looked to me and back to Dominic before looking at me again, like he was torn between us. “Pey?”

“Answer honestly. I want to know how you feel. If you don’t want what he said, nothing has to happen. Nothing has to change.” It would though, either way. I confessed my feelings for him. They didn’t magically disappear if he turned us down.

Perry’s hand trembled when he lifted it and placed it on my thigh. “The other day, when you were mad at me, you were so close. I... For a moment, I thought about what it would be like to kiss your anger away but quickly dismissed it, not understanding why the thought came to me. Now, I’m seeing you in a new way. Your words, fuck, your goddamn words, Pey. You love me?”

“More than I can express.” I covered his hand with mine, waiting for him to pull back. He didn’t.

Perry kept his hand on me then focused on Dominic again. “Do I get to reveal you now?”

Dominic let out a shaky breath. “You do.”

With one hand gripping my thigh, Perry lifted his other one to pull the edge of Dominic’s mask upward, revealing the beautiful man beneath. Perry didn’t move. He held the mask in

midair while watching his assistant. Though in this room, Dominic wasn't that man. He was Ocean.

Every second that passed by was a drum in my ear. It pounded through my body, or maybe it was my heart beating.

Dominic screwed his eyes shut and started shaking his head. "We shouldn't have done this, Pey. Fuck." His chin dropped to his chest. I was about to reach for him when Perry beat me to it.

He dropped the mask to the floor, released my leg, and brought both hands to Dominic's face. "Dom?" Perry asked gently. "It's really you? You're Ocean?"

He nodded, letting Perry lift his head until their eyes met. So much emotion was there, playing across Dominic's face. "I work here a few nights a week. It gives me the extra money I need."

That got Perry's attention in a different way. "If you need more money, I can help you with that. You don't have to work here." When Perry cared about someone, he'd go to the ends of the earth for them. The average person didn't see that in Perry's day-to-day life, but I had. Dominic had too.

"It's not just about the money. I love to dance. It makes me feel alive. Whole. Like I belong."

"I always thought you were graceful when you moved. When you walk, it's like a damn art form. Now I understand why. You move so fluidly."

Dominic's lips lifted on one side. "Like the water."

"You and Pey?" Perry looked at me, back to Dominic.

"It's new," Dominic answered. "One of our commonalities is how we both want you, Perry."

No lie, Perry squeaked out a "Me?" He. Fucking. Squeaked. That noise wasn't one he made. Ever.

Shuffling closer, Dominic pushed between Perry's spread legs, still on his knees. Perry's hands fell from Dominic's face, dropping to his arms, coasting his palms over Dominic's golden skin.

“You can have me and Peyton.”

“Have you?”

I shifted closer until my leg touched Perry’s and I could reach out to drag the backs of my fingers along Dominic’s cheek. “Both of us,” I said.

“Only if you want,” Dominic added. “Peyton and I, well, I’m not sure where we’re going with whatever this is between us, but what we both know is that having you with us would make it better. Complete.”

“You don’t have to answer now,” I added. “We can have tonight, do whatever you want, and talk about it tomorrow after work. Or you can get up and leave the room. Greer’s still downstairs. He’ll take you home. The choice is yours. No matter which you choose, there will be no hard feelings. We’ll still both be there for you like we’ve always been.”

“I’ve never been with a man,” Perry muttered. “What if I don’t know what to do? What if I’m terrible at it?”

Dominic leaned closer, a millimeter away from Perry. “Who said you have to do all the work? You bust your ass all day. Let us take care of you at night.”

“Jesus. I don’t know what to say. No isn’t an option. You two, fuck, I...” His gaze pinged back and forth again. “How did I go from never considering this to wanting it like my next breath?”

“You want us?” Dominic asked seductively. “We need to know for certain.”

“I do. I’m not sure how or why, but fuck me, I do.”

“Then clock out, Mr. Altair, and let us do the work.”

PERRY

The way Dominic said my name was nothing like he did when we were in the office. This was sultry and full of innuendo. My dick was fucking here for it.

I wasn't the guy who usually thought with his dick. I couldn't in my line of business. But this, them, it was a human resources nightmare, and I couldn't find it within myself to give a shit. Not with the way Dominic was watching me with the gold sheen covering his body. The damn tie was still around his neck. I fisted it, holding him close, not wanting him to leave. I had no clue what I was doing, outside of running on pure instinct.

Peyton edged closer, placing his hand on my thigh. It sent a bolt of lust through me. "Do you want Dom to kiss you, Perry?"

I moaned in response. I'd never kissed a man before but that was about to change.

Dominic erased the distance between us, brushing his lips over mine. He smelled like vanilla. Did he taste like it too?

Screw this teasing shit. I dove in, slamming my mouth to his. Dominic whimpered against my lips, his hands skated up my thighs, one meeting Peyton's. Who made the decision to move their hands, I didn't care. All that mattered was that they were inching toward my dick.

The first touch of them to where I wanted them most, and I cried out into Dominic's mouth. When was the last time I was

touched by a hand that wasn't my own? They rubbed me through my pants. It was bliss and torture.

Dominic bit my lip. That tiny amount of pain connected to my dick, causing it to jump in my pants. His hands came up to my shoulders to ease me against the back of the couch. "Relax. We've got you."

He worked open my slacks. I was suddenly back in high school, hard all the time, hoping a girl would put me out of my misery. No one did. Not only was I the son of a wealthy man with a mob boss for an uncle, but with Peyton and Greer on either side of me, I might as well have been invisible to every girl.

Now, I was the main course. I was the one being watched and taken apart. I was glad I decided to come out with Peyton tonight.

Slender fingers reached in, pulling my dick out. The air was warm, the music low. Our panted breaths combined. I couldn't tell who reached for who first but in the next second, Dominic swallowed my dick down and Peyton gripped the back of my neck so he could devour my mouth.

It was sensory overload. My body started shaking with the pleasure coursing through it.

"How far do you want to go?" Peyton whispered against my lips. "You're in control."

"Could've fooled me." I meant it as a joke, but it came out strained.

Peyton pulled back to look into my eyes. I hated the distance between us and dove forward the best I could with Dominic holding my hips down. I sucked Peyton's bottom lip between mine and gripped his bicep.

Releasing his mouth, I whispered, "I don't want to be in control any longer. Every day I'm in charge. I want to let go, Pey. I need someone else to take over. You can do whatever you want to me. Hell, I'd let you fuck me at this point."

Wait. Who was I and where did those words come from? I went from never thinking about a man this way to offering up

my ass? There should be alarms sounding in my head. Big flashing signs telling me to pull back, retreat. There wasn't. My mind was blissfully empty, except for the two men in the room with me.

"I'm not fucking you tonight, Perry. We will make you feel good though. And before this goes further, Dom and I are both clean. We've been tested recently and haven't been with anyone else. Haven't had the time."

"Don't blame me for your lack of a sex life," I told him.

"Oh, I'm not blaming you, baby. I'm merely stating facts." I shivered at his term of endearment for me. "Now you're going to lift your hips, let Dom drag down your clothes, then sit on my lap facing him."

I nodded, unsure of what we were doing and not caring as long as they touched me.

Dominic released my dick. I instantly missed his wet mouth wrapped around me. He pulled my pants and briefs off, getting them tangled on my shoes. Those went first, along with my socks, then everything else. Peyton was even undoing my shirt and working it off me.

"Up, Dom," Peyton commanded when I was naked.

Dominic stood along with Peyton. They stepped close so Dominic could work off Peyton's clothes while Peyton loosened the tie on Dominic's neck with one hand. The other palmed Dominic's dick. When they finally kissed, it was gentle and full of something I wasn't sure either of them was aware of. Peyton kissed Dominic like he was fragile, sipping at his lips.

I sat transfixed, unable to look away from them. I fisted my dick, started stroking it.

Their clothes were shed, having to break apart so we could all be together again. I would have been fine watching the two of them, but I wasn't going to object to being in the middle.

Peyton took a seat beside me, spreading his legs a little. He reached for my hand, tugging me in his direction. I could have fought him. Could have told him no, that this was going to

change everything between us. These lines we were crossing, we couldn't come back from. Couldn't erase what we were about to do. But in these moments, I couldn't find it in myself to care. I didn't want to go back.

I slid closer to Peyton until he could grip my hips and lift me like I weighed nothing. I always knew Peyton was strong. Seeing him this way, naked, his dick a hard rod pointing at his stomach where his abs contracted, Jesus. Maybe I wasn't ready to let him fuck me because he was big. And thick. Like the rest of him.

Sitting on Peyton's lap with his hot body behind me, his dick pressed to the cleft of my ass, I was burning up. Having Dominic walk over, that scrap of fabric covering his dick gone, it turned into a sauna.

Dominic spread his legs, putting them on either side of Peyton and me. "How do you feel about a little bumping and grinding, Mr. Altair?"

My dick jumped, precum seeping from the tip. "I'm going to spontaneously come if you say that to me at work."

Peyton chuckled behind me. "Now you know why I give him heated stares. You're never going to be the same."

Dominic leaned forward, slotting his dick next to mine. He gave a tentative thrust, causing me to moan. He held up a tube of lube, opened the cap, and drizzled some of it over our dicks. The coolness made me hiss through my teeth.

"Hold out your hand," he told me.

I did and ended up with lube in it.

"I want you to rub your fingers together then reach behind me to finger my hole."

I swallowed thickly. "I've... I've never done that before."

"You're smart and a fast learner." He winked. "Go slow, don't force it. As long as you do that, you won't hurt me. I'll let you know when to add another finger."

I didn't move, simply stared into Dominic's eyes. I was going to stick my finger inside of him. Into what I guessed was

a very tight ass by the looks of how he moved it on stage. Strong muscles, restrained control. He was stunning.

“Get going, baby,” Peyton whispered in my ear. I startled, forgetting he was there for a second. How I could with his dick pressed to my ass was anyone’s guess. “Vixen, give me the lube.”

“Vixen?” I asked.

Peyton hummed as Dominic handed him the tube. “It’s how I referred to him in my head the first night we got off together before I knew it was him. I was so wrapped up in his spell.”

More lube dripped down my ass. “Are you going to—”

“No,” Peyton said, not letting me finish the question. “I just want to rub against you like Dominic is going to.”

Dominic wrapped his hand around us both at the same time, slicking us with lube. It was fucking euphoric. My dick against his. His grip firm around us. It was gone all too soon. Another tease. Then he moved his hips. Grinding them like he said, his body flowing in a wave like it did on stage only, this time, my dick got the full experience.

“That’s it, vixen. Rub against him. Make you both feel good.”

Peyton’s hands went to my hips to push me forward the slightest bit. His hips started moving, rubbing his dick along my cleft. It must not have been enough though because he growled behind me and told Dominic to lie on the couch on his back. Dominic readily did so.

I was lifted and turned so I was over Dominic, my dick slotting back with his.

“Jesus Christ,” he groaned on contact and spread his legs wide. “Finger me, Perry. I need you inside me.”

Since I wasn’t too coordinated with this yet, I had to lean back to drag my finger past his balls and over his hole. Dominic brought his legs up to his chest, opening himself for me. With a trembling finger, I pushed against his hole, slipping

the tip inside him. He contracted, gripping my finger, making me moan.

“Lean forward, baby.” Peyton. Again, I forgot he was back there. God, I was terrible at this three-person thing.

His palm pressed between my shoulder blades, easing me forward while my finger pushed farther into Dominic. Peyton’s dick was back against my ass, his palm on one side, his hand holding it between my cheeks as he started to thrust.

“How does he feel, Pey?” Dominic rasped.

“Hot, slick.” Peyton pressed his chest to my back. “Mine,” he growled in my ear, sending a tremor through me. “Remove your finger, Perry. Slide your dick against his hole, not inside.”

I did as he said. What the fuck had I been missing? Dominic in front of me, my dick rubbing near his hole. Peyton at my back, sliding against my ass. Would we fuck like this one day? Or would this be all we got? No, this couldn’t be it. I wouldn’t let it. Something this good had to happen repeatedly.

“I want him in me, Pey,” Dominic whimpered, his hand wrapped around his dick, jerking it fast. “This isn’t enough.”

“Not tonight, vixen. Perry, move so your dick is next to his again. Grip both of you and start stroking.”

With my dick on Dominic’s, me shuttling my hand over us, and Peyton at my back, pushing us all together on every thrust, I was the first one to let go with a soft cry. My orgasm crashed over me with no warning. I shot hard on Dominic, coating him, coating us.

“Yes, fuck, yes, Perry. Don’t stop,” Dominic pleaded.

He came after a couple more strokes, his back arching off the couch, my name on his lips.

“So hot,” Peyton said. “So goddamn beautiful. Fuck, I’m going to come. Fuck, fuck, fuck!” Hot cum shot over my back and my ass. Peyton kept rubbing against me, his body shaking with his release.

He pulled away first, falling behind me to the couch, narrowly missing my legs. “Get over here, baby.” He reached

for my hips, bringing my back to his chest, sandwiching his cum between us. “I claimed you,” he rumbled in my ear. “How do you feel about that?”

“Utterly debauched,” I panted out, my heart still racing in my chest.

Peyton chuckled. “You still alive, vixen?”

“No,” Dominic said sleepily. “You two killed me.”

“We can’t have that,” I laughed.

The side of my ass was slapped playfully by Peyton. “Come on. Everybody up. Let’s get cleaned off and head home.”

“Home?” Dominic asked.

“Yeah. The fortress. If you think I’m letting you go your way while we go ours after tonight, you’re sorely mistaken. Now let’s get cleaned up and get to bed. Tomorrow’s another day and all our asses need to be at work.”

DOMINIC

There was a part of me that was nervous every time I unlocked the door to my apartment. That I'd come in and find my sister similar to how I did a year and a half ago. Unconscious on the ground with an empty bottle of pills near her. When she tried to end her life, she had come over to visit me, hoping I'd be home. I wasn't. I was dancing at the club. She found a bottle of painkillers I had, but never used, from when I'd hurt my back a while before.

Back then, I danced to earn money for her. To pay her bills. To help my sister. After she came home from the hospital, from an in-patient stay, she moved in with me. But I kept seeing her on the floor. I was so afraid I'd lost her. We moved after that to where we lived now.

Fawn had been depressed since before I moved her away from our parents' home, which was run-down, where they drank and did drugs. I still didn't know how the place stood as long as it did, considering the shape it was in. Fawn was eighteen and had graduated high school several months prior when I dragged her from that hellhole. She was a shell of herself. Dirty clothes and skin, barely a hundred pounds. No one had cared for her, and she didn't care about herself.

Once I got her cleaned and fed, she stayed with me a few months before she was able to stand on her own. She got a job, made enough to rent a small apartment. I hated the area but at eighteen, I couldn't control her. At the time, I thought her depression was mild since she seemed to be much better away from our parents.

I was wrong.

Things got really bad after about a year of her being on her own. Fawn lost her job. She would show up to work late or wouldn't be able to do the job she was hired for. Had her landlord threatening to evict her and her deadbeat boyfriend, who she thankfully wasn't with any longer. She begged me to help her keep her apartment. That it was all she had, her only sense of independence. I knew what it was like growing up how we did. Back when I lived at home, alcohol was the drug of choice for our parents. We were there strictly to serve them. Run to the store. Take my sister to school. They didn't beat us, but the threats were there. Every day. A hand raised in the air. A well-timed slur. It wasn't a secret I was gay.

I got out as soon as I could. I hated leaving Fawn, but my dad liked to focus on me more than her. I figured if I could get a job, make enough to pay for her too, I could save her. And I did. But it was almost too late.

The day after I pulled Fawn out of that shit box was one of the happiest of my life because I got her away from them. To this day, we had no idea if they were dead or alive, nor did either of us care.

Thanks to the money I made at both my jobs, Fawn kept her apartment, and I paid out of pocket to get her help with her depression, due to her lack of insurance. She went to a doctor, got a prescription. Things looked up again. The medication helped her, and she found a new job. A different boyfriend. A year later, she spiraled once more.

Her boyfriend broke up with her. The men she chose didn't help her. They were scum, shitty men who didn't treat her well. She stopped taking her medication. Stopped going to work so the insurance she gained from her employment was gone yet again. I tried, begged, to get her to go see a therapist. She refused, insisted she was fine. She wasn't, and I will always blame myself for her attempt on her life.

She'd come over to talk to me. Fawn had a key to my place like I had one to hers. I tried to get her to move in with me before that. She didn't want to give up what she had. I

knew I shouldn't have kept paying for her tiny place, but she was my sister. We lived in hell for so long. I wanted to be able to do something nice for her. Looking back, I wasn't doing what I should have.

I called 911 that night while I held my sister's limp hand, hoping it wasn't too late. They told me if another half hour would have passed, I might have lost her.

Fawn was twenty-three now. I was four years older than her. I should have known better. Done better. I wondered if the fear of almost losing her would ever dissipate.

"Fawn?" I called when I unlocked and opened the door.

Our apartment was a good size, with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. We lived on the border of East Dremest, but still in West Dremest. The creek that separated the two sides of the city was next to our building. So close that with enough rain or melting snow, it could flood. Thankfully, we were on the second floor and hadn't seen any floods since we moved in. It was also how I was able to afford a bigger place. It was cheaper—given it was prone to flooding—and with me working two jobs, I could cover both of our bills with money to spare.

"Here," she replied from the kitchen.

I dropped my keys in the bowl on the small table near the door and hung my bag on the hook along with my coat. Fawn was at the counter mixing something with her hands. I peered over her shoulder. She was six inches shorter than me. "What are you making?"

"A new meatloaf recipe Josh's mom told me about. I had it at their house over the weekend and wanted you to try it."

"Sounds good."

Seeing Fawn smile made me happy. Her cheeks had a nice pink hue to them, her smile was genuine. And Josh was good for her. Not a piece of shit like the other guys she dated. Josh and Fawn had only been together about six months. I could see they were serious. It made me nervous at first. I knew what happened when Fawn had her heart broken. And that heart of

hers was so fragile. But Josh came along like he'd always been meant for her. Even his parents treated her like part of their family.

He knew about her past struggles, about her attempt to take her life. Fawn was open with him. If she had a day where she wasn't feeling great, she let him know. It was healthy. A good, solid relationship where he supported and helped her as much as he could.

That didn't mean when I came in the door, I didn't worry. I had a feeling I always would where Fawn was concerned.

"How was work with Perry and Peyton?" she asked.

I slipped off my tie. When I first started working at PJS I had exactly two suits. I would alternate them, wash them, even though I wasn't supposed to since I couldn't afford dry cleaning with covering me and Fawn. Now I had seven nice suits. Ones I saved to buy. They looked tailored to me but that was thanks to Fawn. She was skilled with a needle and thread. I wouldn't admit it to her, but I'd bought a couple of my suits a little too big so she could work her magic.

"Good. Awkward," I replied. In truth, I worried how it would play out with the three of us working as closely as we did. If other people who worked there heard, they could raise a lot of concerns about me sleeping with my boss, who also happened to be the owner.

I'd thought about going full time with Dexen for a while but didn't want to leave Perry. The more I thought about it, how much I loved dancing, it made sense, especially with me being intimate with my boss. Me leaving to dance would preserve what Perry had with his company, keep things status quo. Well, Peyton was still there, but I didn't think anything short of death would remove him from his role as Perry's bodyguard. Plus, Peyton didn't work for PJS. He was employed directly by Perry.

It would be hard not being there for Perry like I currently was. However, if it meant I'd be happier, and Perry wouldn't have to worry about issues with us being together, it would be

worth it. Not that we were together. I was simply thinking ahead.

Fawn grinned, peering over her shoulder at me. I had told her this morning I hooked up with both Perry and Peyton last night. It was too early to go into details, and she was my sister. She only got so many to begin with.

“Did Perry hide in his office all day?”

I laughed. “No, but he couldn’t meet our eyes. And he blushed. I couldn’t believe it.” I didn’t ever remember seeing a blush creep up his cheeks.

“Oh my god, you’re ruining that man.” Fawn had met Perry once and she instantly liked him. Perry was his charming self, not the quick to yell man I usually got in the office, though it wasn’t directed at me.

“In the best way.” I winked and left the kitchen. I wanted out of this suit and into my sweats. I didn’t have to dance tonight, and I’d gotten out of work at a decent hour. I needed to spend quality time with my sister.

We sat together and watched TV while dinner cooked in the oven. Fawn wasn’t working. She had applied for Social Security disability and had been denied in the past. After her attempt on her life, her doctor filled out more paperwork and with the documentation from the in-patient facility, we appealed the case and got in front of a judge. We even had a lawyer who didn’t take money from us unless Fawn won. She did, thankfully.

It was a weight off our shoulders. Not in the monetary sense. I’d work three jobs if it meant she was cared for. The stress of finding and keeping a job didn’t weigh on her now. She didn’t have to worry about pleasing her boss, doing everything right so she didn’t get fired. Fawn was finding things she enjoyed doing instead. Focusing on herself, which was important.

Depression was awful. I wouldn’t wish it on anyone. Watching my sister struggle like she had, I felt helpless so many times.

I slung my arm around Fawn's shoulders where we sat on the couch. "I'm glad you're happy."

"Thanks. I'm glad I'm happy too." She poked me in the side to tickle me. "And I'm glad you're finally getting what you want."

I laughed and squirmed away. "And what's that?"

"Someone of your own. Or two someones in this case. I've seen how you look at Perry. I'm glad it's working out."

"I wouldn't go that far, but it's a start."

"You'll figure it out. If I can, you can."

"How's Josh?"

She sighed dreamily. "He's good. I always went for the wrong type of guy before him. I wanted the bad boy, who I thought would be a sweetheart on the inside. Instead, I got assholes through and through. Josh is nothing like them."

"No, he's not."

Josh worked at a local furniture store as a manager. It was steady work and something he did well. He was stable, which was good for Fawn. More than that, he made her laugh. He loved her. It was clear as day every time I saw them together. My sister loved him just as fiercely.

She reached for the remote, turning the TV off. "I wanted to run something past you."

"Okay." I moved so I was facing her.

"Josh asked me to move in with him." She bit her lip, not looking at me. I wasn't her guardian. She didn't need my permission. She wanted it just the same.

"Does he still live with his parents?"

She nodded. "He's been saving to buy a house."

"So, you'd move in there?"

"Yes. He talked about it with them first. They said we could take the basement. It's fully finished and really nice."

"Fawn, look at me."

Steel gray eyes the same color as my own peered over at me. Her auburn hair had fallen forward from her head being down as she focused on her nails, fidgeting like she did on occasion.

“Are you happy?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“In love?”

“Yes.”

“And Josh’s parents know about your past?”

She nodded. “I told them a couple weeks ago. We were talking about a friend of theirs who lost their son to suicide. I struggled hearing it, but then Josh reached over and took my hand in his. I can’t describe it, Dom. He calms me. He lifts the despair inside me. I know I can’t rely on him for that. I have to find it within myself, with the help of therapy and my meds. But his support means a lot.”

“It does.” God, I didn’t want to let her go. I couldn’t force her to stay but letting someone else take part in her care, go with her to appointments... She’d been a big part of my life. I swallowed. “I’m going to miss you.”

“I’m not going far.”

“They live in the suburbs. You might as well be in Jersey.”

She smiled. “Does that mean you’re okay with it?”

“You don’t need my approval.”

“I know.” She took a shaky breath. “I need to do this for me. I didn’t want to jump back into the world on my own. This would be a step though. To try and see how it goes. Josh wants to marry me some day. If we try living together and it doesn’t work...”

“It’s going to work.” I wasn’t sure how I knew, but I did.

“But if it doesn’t...”

“Then you can always stay with me.”

“Even if you live at the fortress or Perry’s penthouse?”

I chuckled. “Just because you’re in love doesn’t mean I am. You’ve already got me moving out. But if I do fall in love, whoever I’m with will know you’re part of the package.”

“Thanks.” She leaned in and hugged me.

Life hadn’t been easy for us. On the outside, it was like I had it all. On the inside, I was scared of losing the only family I loved while trying to venture into something with two men, which was just as frightening. If Fawn could do it, then so could I.

PEYTON

Perry was in one of his moods today. This week hadn't been easy on him. Between announcing JJ's role as a partial owner and a vice president in R&D, Perry's executive team had made their displeasure known. Repeatedly. Even mild-mannered Stefen had been in Perry's office twice. Luckily, the way the Altair Plaza was set up, there was a building of offices, where we were, and there was a bigger building for research and development, quality control, and the list went on. JJ hadn't even started working here yet, and it was already a nightmare.

Perry's door was open. No one else could hear what was going on but Dominic and me. Dominic sat at his desk, back straight, typing away. He was fielding emails and phone calls, letting only some slide through to our boss.

The phone rang.

"Mr. Altair's office," Dominic answered.

I couldn't hear what was said on the other end of the line, but the frown forming on his face was telling.

"I'm sorry you feel that way."

"Yes, I understand."

"No, Mr. Altair can't talk to you right now. He's in a meeting."

"JJ is not his father, and our business is not Jordan's."

Then his demeanor changed. Dominic was done being friendly.

“I don’t care who you *think* you are, I’m not interrupting him when he’s in a meeting with one of his senior staff.”

“Sure. Whatever you need to do.”

He hung up.

“Who was that?” I asked.

“A sales rep. He’s pissed about JJ. Same song and dance we’ve been dealing with all week.”

Stefen emerged from Perry’s office before I could respond to Dominic. He gave us both a small smile before going toward the elevator.

Sixty seconds later...

“Dom! Pey!” Perry called.

We both stood and went into the office, Dominic in front of me. I closed the door behind us. We had enough security downstairs; I didn’t worry about anyone finding their way up here who shouldn’t be.

Perry had his elbows on his desk, head in his hands, his fingers threaded through his hair. “Tell me it’s going to work out,” he muttered. When he lifted his head, his eyes were tortured, full of pain and exhaustion.

Dominic took one of the seats in front of the desk. His voice was calm when he spoke. “You knew it wasn’t going to be easy when you agreed to bring JJ on. You can’t go back and undo it. You have to be steadfast in the value JJ will bring to the business. You run and own this company, not them.”

I sat beside him. “While I don’t agree with what you did, JJ is talented with his hands.” I wouldn’t sugarcoat anything with Perry. “He knows cars.”

“Not race cars.”

I shrugged. “An intake valve is still an intake valve. Sure, it opens earlier in a race car and is open longer, but the functionality is the same.”

“Stop being sensible,” he grumbled.

“You’re looking for a reason to find fault, just like everyone who has been walking through this door. The reality is, unless JJ comes here and tries to kill someone, or royally fucks up, there isn’t any. The contract was ironclad. Jordan has nothing to do with the business. Plus, JJ hates his dad.”

“Why are you suddenly on his side?”

“I’m not. I hate the whole thing, but it’s done. You can either make the best of it and stand behind your decision, or let everyone else get under your skin.”

Perry groaned. “I want to bury my head and pretend everything is perfect.”

“Perfect doesn’t exist,” Dominic stated. “I know from personal experience.”

“Dom,” Perry whispered.

“Sorry.” Dominic sighed. “My sister is moving out and shit feels a bit out of control. Not just with her but...” He waved his hand between the three of us. “I’m unbalanced. Things are changing. It’s not bad, just taking some getting used to.”

I turned in my chair, leaning toward him. “Hey, nothing has to change with us. We can stay as we were.”

“I couldn’t give up what we have unless it’s what either or both of you want.”

“I don’t want to go back.”

We both glanced over at Perry to get a read on him.

“I don’t have the answers.” He leaned into his chair, rocking it slightly. “Not only is this shit with JJ screwing with everything, but we’re an HR issue for the company. How am I supposed to explain it once it gets out?”

“We don’t tell anyone,” I offered.

“Seriously?” Dominic asked incredulously. “That’s your answer? And how long does that last before one of us slips up? If you think it’s easy for me to keep my hands to myself while you’re literally across the aisle from me, you’re not feeling what I am. Not that I’m about to sit on your lap and grind

against you at work, but you get what I mean. We don't even know what we are."

Perry braced his arms on the desk. "I brought you two in here to talk about JJ and now we're on this."

The two of them were pissing me off. "*This?* That's what we're calling it? First," I looked at Dominic. "If you think you're alone in how you feel, then you aren't paying attention to me because I can barely handle seeing you all day while knowing what you taste like and not being able to sate my need for you. Second." I swung my gaze to Perry. "I've known you a long time and you don't jump into anything without thinking it through."

"My dick did a lot of thinking when I was with you two."

I caught Dominic tense in my peripheral.

"Off the clock, Perry," I bit out, letting him know we weren't in work mode right now. "We can't avoid the fact that we're combining work and pleasure. It's a horrible idea, but the line's already been crossed. I can sit at my desk, walk with you to meetings, travel with you wherever, but I will not let you talk to me and Dom like we're just here for your pleasure. Yeah, we fucked around. It was amazing. But I need to know right now if that's all you want from us."

If Perry decided it was just for sex I... well, I didn't know what the fuck I'd do. My heart couldn't handle it. Touching Perry, loving him, only for him to walk away once he got off would tear me to shreds. I knew it would do the same to Dominic. He put on a hell of a front, but my vixen felt deeply.

Perry got up and walked to where his liquor was kept. He didn't drink excessively. Lately it seemed he needed it to take the edge off. Too much was happening in his life.

He downed a quick gulp of amber liquid then faced us. "I've never had a serious relationship. It'd always been work for me. Before that it was college, before that high school. In college, sure, I slept with women, but they didn't mean anything to me, and I didn't to them. I'm thirty-nine. I'm fucking old. Pey, you've been my best friend forever. And

Dom, fuck, I'd be lost without you here. To do what we did again, to make more of it, my head is warning me it's a bad idea. That it will screw with our work life. But my heart... to even think of you two being in my life now without kissing you, touching you..." He shook his head.

"You didn't provide any clarity," I told him.

The night everything went down between us, we all went back to the fortress but to different rooms. I wanted them both in my bed, in my arms. Perry went to his room and closed himself inside. Dominic looked torn and, in the end, I offered him the guest room where he'd slept a few times before when we had late nights working.

The next morning, we slid back into our usual roles. Our encounter was put aside and had been until now. This conversation was overdue.

"I don't know, okay?" Perry yelled. I was surprised he didn't throw the empty glass across the room. "I don't have an answer. I'm dealing with the shit here with JJ. My ET is either scared or ready to walk. Everything is in flux, including us. I can't process it all."

Dominic stood. "I'm going to go back to my desk to type the formal letter, but consider this my two-week notice."

"What?" I asked, standing quickly.

Perry went eerily still. The only sign he was feeling anything was his knuckles going white on the glass.

Dominic looked from Perry to me. "I'm showing my hand. I'm in if you want me as something more than a fling, but I won't be a play toy. Sure, I've had my share of one-night stands, and they were fun. This, what we have, is way more. I can't be partially in. Dexen has been trying to get me to go full time at Untouchable for a while now. With Fawn moving out, I don't need both jobs. Plus, it eliminates tension here. What's happening right now won't go away. We're all strung too tight. Eventually, it will implode."

He focused on Perry. "You have been a great boss. Even when you're yelling and snapping my pencils, I still love

working for you. If you need me to stay on longer than two weeks to train someone, I can.”

“How about you don’t leave, and we call it good?” Perry asked.

“I can’t do that. If we go back to the way things were before the other night, it will hurt too much to be here. If we decide to move forward, I’ll let my heart lead and stay here, not be the man I should be for you both. It’s the right decision. People won’t balk if you and Pey are together. Me, they’ll think I slept my way to the top, and I refuse to be looked at like that.”

“We’ll set them straight,” Perry offered. “Hell, I’ll have a contract drawn up, so they know it won’t affect our work.”

Dominic walked over to Perry. He pried the glass from his hand and sat it on the table. “I know this is new for you and I hate the idea of leaving you hanging here, but at some point, self-preservation kicks in. This is me saving myself from further pain. My sister has been through hell and back and found where her place is in the world. I should do the same. I’m free on stage. It’s where I belong. And this is where you belong, running this company, continuing your dad’s legacy. You’re a good man, Perry Altair. Whatever you decide, I will always count you as my friend.” He shook his head. “I never thought I’d be able to walk away from you, and this really isn’t the same. You know where I live. You know where I dance. You’ll be able to find me if you’re so inclined. I... Thank you for the opportunity you’ve given me. That this company has. I’ll forever be grateful.”

He turned and I caught the sheen to his eyes, the barely restrained tears. Dominic tried to go to the door, but I stepped into his path. My hands went to his cheeks, my thumbs catching his tears when they finally broke free. “Don’t go.”

Dominic reached up to gently hold my wrists. “If you think about it, it makes sense. You and Perry know how to turn the work thing off and be best friends. I don’t think I can keep it separate. I thought maybe I could but then this, today, I know I

can't. For so long, I focused on Fawn and making sure she was okay. It's time I focus on myself and what I want."

I slid my hand down until it was over his heart. "Say it again."

"I want to dance. I want to love and be loved. I want to be free."

Dropping my forehead to his, I closed my eyes and breathed him in. The vanilla he wore wasn't there; a hint of cologne was. "I love watching you dance. Whether Perry wants us or not, I want you." I opened my eyes and gripped the back of his neck. "I'm not letting you go, Dom."

He nodded. "You know where I'll be."

Dominic slipped from my grip and went out the door, closing it behind him.

Out of the three of us, he was being the most levelheaded. I understood why he wouldn't be able to stay here if it didn't work out with Perry. I'd spent most of my life making sure Perry was safe. I couldn't stop now. It would be akin to not being able to breathe if I did.

I also couldn't force Perry's hand. He had a decision to make. One that would impact all of us.

PERRY

The only reason I landed in a chair and not on the floor was thanks to Peyton. “He’s leaving,” I whispered.

Peyton crouched in front of me, his eyes searching mine. He looked ridiculous down there in his perfectly pressed suit. “You’ve seen him dance. He was born to do it.”

“But all those men, their eyes on him...” Why did the thought send anger through me? My fists clenched. I could feel my blood pressure rising.

“It’s not for us to decide. Besides, they can look, but they don’t get to touch.”

“The private rooms, anyone can book him.” Fuck, those rooms. He could do anything in them with anyone.

“No one’s allowed to touch in there.”

“You did. I did.”

“That’s us.” Peyton stood and pulled a chair close, so I was still in front of him.

“Did you know he was going to do this?”

He shook his head. “I’m as shocked as you are. He’s been doing everything for you, everything for Fawn for so long, it’s time for him to do something for himself.”

Why did Peyton have to make so much sense? Dominic did do that. He always put others before himself. Up on that stage, that was for him. I couldn’t deny how it fit, how *he* fit. The thought of him not being here hurt though.

“Did he need to do it today?” I asked. “The sky’s falling, and Dom produced a shield for one.”

“Sometimes we find out who we truly are when we’re at our worst.” He stared pointedly at me.

“Oh, fuck you! Don’t give me that bullshit. I saw the way you reacted when he walked away. It’s tearing you apart as much as it is me.”

“What do you want me to do? Scream, yell, hit shit? I’m at work.”

I leaned forward, getting closer, goading him. “Yeah. I do. At least then I’d know you’re processing. Not this calm facade you’re putting on right now.”

His dark eyes narrowed. Eyes I wondered if I could get lost in and no one would be able to find me. He leaned forward as well, putting our faces mere inches apart. “I’m not going to lose my shit at work. You want to, that’s fine. I can’t. Someone has to keep it together around here.”

“Anything else you’d like to criticize me for? Like I don’t have enough people already doing that. Go back to your desk, Peyton.”

I went to stand but a strong hand gripped the front of my throat, startling a gasp from me. I could still breathe fine. If Peyton wanted to hurt me, he could, yet he wasn’t.

“Do you know how badly I want to put you on your knees to give your mouth something to do beside run incessantly?”

“Do it. I dare you.” I was playing with fire. I shouldn’t have said it to him, but he shouldn’t have made the suggestion. We were at work. This was a bad idea. I certainly had no clue how to suck a dick. Dominic was still outside and wouldn’t let anyone in. At least I hoped he was still there.

My eyes drifted to the door out of instinct, as if thinking about him would conjure him up. What would it be like when he was gone? What the hell was I going to do with a new assistant? I didn’t want anyone else. Just him.

Or was it more than that? More than work? I basically told Peyton to choke me with his dick. Would I even want that without Dominic here, without his hands or mouth on me?

When I focused on Peyton again, his features were softer. His hand around my throat was loose, his thumb rubbing gently over my skin.

“Fix it, Pey,” I whispered brokenly.

“I can’t. We have to let him do what he wants.”

“I need him.”

“How?” Why did he have to ask me that?

I tried to move away but his grip tightened. I wasn’t going anywhere until he wanted me to. “I don’t know.”

“I think you do, but you’re too scared to voice it. That’s fine. You take all the time you want.”

“What if he…”

“Dom’s changing jobs, nothing more. You heard him. We know where he lives and where he dances. I also know where he goes by the location of his phone.”

I rolled my eyes. “Of course, you do.”

“If they work closely with you, I know everything about them.”

“I’m surprised he lets you get away with tracking him.”

“I think he secretly likes that I can, even if I never have. I told him I’d remove it and he said to keep it.”

A knock sounded on the door. Peyton and I pulled apart. He put the chair back to where it was and kept a reasonable distance between us. His gaze dropped to my neck. I wondered if it was red from having his hand there. I shivered at the thought. I kind of liked the idea of Peyton claiming me again. It was like when we were at the club, and he came all over me. He claimed me then too and I wanted it. Fuck, I wanted it so much. Did I also want more than just sex?

“Come in!” I called.

Dominic stuck his head in. “What do you want for lunch? I’m going to run out.”

“Take Greer with you,” Peyton said without turning to look at him.

“Um, no. Perry?”

“Whatever you’re in the mood for, I’ll eat.” It was another way Dominic took care of me that I took advantage of. Another way he was always there for me. What had I given back to him, and I wasn’t referring to money? That only went so far. Dominic needed more.

He nodded. “Pey?”

Peyton dug his phone out of his pocket, tapped a few times, and put it up to his ear. “Are you in a meeting? Good, can you run out with Dom to pick up lunch?” Peyton pulled the phone away for a second. I could hear Greer yelling at him. “Thank you, Greer,” Peyton said over him and hung up. “Greer will meet you at your desk.”

“Dick move,” Dominic stated. “I can take care of myself.”

“I know. Can you humor me?”

Dominic sighed and shut the door.

“Why did you do that?” I asked. “Dom’s gone on so many lunch runs he could own a catering company.”

“I look after who’s mine.”

“And Dominic’s yours?”

“Yup.” He said it so easily, so casually. How did he do that? How was he so certain?

I had two men who both wanted me. My best friend was in love with me. Before this week, I considered myself straight. Now I had not one, but two men who wanted to call me theirs.

I hadn’t belonged to anyone outside of my family. After my dad died, I leaned heavily on Peyton and Greer. They held me up when I couldn’t stand on my own, two solid pillars, never yielding in their support of me.

“I don’t know how to do this,” I said softly. “I don’t know how to be in a relationship, let alone with two people.”

“Do you want one of us and not the other?”

“No, that’s not it. The two of you are so entwined in my head, I couldn’t separate you if I tried.”

“It’s not conventional,” Peyton said. “If you do want this, we’re going to get looks from others. They’re going to talk about us like Dominic said. They won’t understand how you’re suddenly bi and with two men.”

“When was the last time I gave a solitary fuck about what anyone thought of my personal life?”

“You didn’t have one before. We’re offering it to you. It not only will change things here, but at home, wherever you go. You’re not a no one. You’re well-known, especially in Dremest.”

I waved him off. “I don’t care about any of that.” I didn’t, it was the truth. People could say whatever they wanted to about me. Their opinions didn’t matter. My investments, the other things I took over after my dad died, I didn’t worry about that either. It was this business. I felt closer to my dad here and couldn’t bear to let that go. Not that they were asking me to.

The heat was already on me, thanks to this shit with JJ. I didn’t have to make him a vice president. If the position was lower, Jordan would make his displeasure known. Dealing with him was the last thing I wanted right now.

There was this annoying tiny voice in my mind saying Jordan wouldn’t stay in the background for long. That JJ was right and somehow, some way, Jordan would get involved. The thought made me sick. I didn’t want him anywhere near this place.

My office door opened, Greer filling the space with his broad body. “Fuck you. Both of you.” He left, closing the door hard before we could reply.

Greer could have been in the middle of working on a project and he dropped it because Peyton asked him to. He was irritated about it, no doubt, but he still did it.

Peyton eventually drifted back to his desk, and I went to mine. I had emails to respond to, calls to return. Time froze when I saw Dominic's name in my inbox. He didn't put a subject on it. He didn't need to.

I steeled myself and opened the email. It was straight to the point, a formality. I forwarded it to my human resources department and asked them to put a rush on finding me a new assistant, internally preferably so they were already familiar with PJS.

Begging Dominic to stay wasn't an option. The sooner I got a new person in here, the more time he'd have to train them. It was like a knife to my chest thinking about someone else sitting out there, at his desk, doing his job. I wouldn't be able to trust them like I did Dominic.

I must have zoned out because the next thing I knew, he was standing in front of me with a take-out bag in his hand. He placed it on my desk. "Perry?"

"Sorry. Thank you for getting me lunch."

"It's no problem. Listen, about before, I—"

"I don't want to see you go, Dom, but I won't hold you back. No one will be able to do what you do here. You're irreplaceable."

He looked away and swallowed. I watched his throat work as he did so. "It's not easy for me either."

"I know. I'm sorry you're in this position."

That got his eyes back on me. "This position?" He put his hands on my desk and leaned close, keeping his voice low. "This isn't a *position*. What I want with you, with Peyton, that's a desire. A wish. A dream. I won't put everything else on hold to attain it though. And I won't force you into a relationship you don't want."

I opened my mouth then closed it, not sure what to say. I was so confused, so jumbled up inside my head. Him leaving gutted me. Taking the leap to a relationship with him and Peyton, to commit to more than a fling, was daunting. It would mean carving out part of my life to fit them into it. Not in the

way they both were, but as more. I barely had time to take a piss, let alone to form a deep bond with anyone.

When I didn't respond, Dominic turned and left, shutting the door behind him, effectively cutting me off from him, from them.

God, why did it feel like I was being torn in two? Dominic didn't do this because he was pissed and wanted to see me hurt. He was trying to be true to himself and save his heart from pain. Peyton was as steadfast as always. If I didn't want them, he'd still be there for me. Could I watch them be together though? See them hold hands, kiss, spend time with one another when I knew intimately what being with them felt like?

I had to decide. Not today, but soon, before I lost them both.

DOMINIC

It had been a week since I gave Perry my notice. I should have told Dexen I wanted to work for him full time, but I hadn't yet. I gave myself the week to let what I'd done sink in. To wonder if I was making a huge mistake. It felt right when I did it. My reasons were sound. Pulling away from Perry was the hardest part. At least I knew I'd see Peyton when he wasn't working or with Perry. We hadn't discussed what we wanted, but we both knew it was something bigger than friends who fucked.

Work had been weird to say the least. Perry barely made eye contact with me. He was snapping more than normal, his temper hardly contained. It got worse each day. Peyton tried to give me comforting smiles across the aisle. They didn't do anything to soothe the turmoil inside me.

Perry was dealing with a lot with JJ, and I added to it. I could have waited. Could have done things differently. If I did, I might not have made the leap to resign.

I'd put things in motion. Now I had to see it through.

Saturday night had one of the biggest crowds of the week at the club. People were off from work, looking to relax and have a good time. I parked my car and went inside to Dexen's office first. I had to talk to him before I did anything else tonight. It was why I showed up a half hour early.

One of the guards stood outside his office. I asked if I could speak with Dexen. The guard went in and when he came back out, he left the door open so I could enter. The door shut

behind me, sealing me in the room which I knew no one could hear anything outside of.

“Dom, how are you?” Dexen greeted. He wore his standard button-down with the sleeves rolled to his elbows. It was powder blue tonight and he had navy slacks on. He came over to the couch, inviting me to sit with him.

“I’m good. Listen, I did something last week that changes things here and I want to talk to you about it.”

He groaned and dropped his head back. “You’re quitting, aren’t you? I’m never going to find anyone to replace you. I knew Junior would sink his claws in deep after you three were in the VIP room.”

“That’s not it. I mean, we were together but that’s not what I was going to say. I gave Perry my notice. I want to work here full time, whatever nights you want to give me. I’d like to do some early evening shifts too, so every late night of mine isn’t taken.” That got his attention again.

“Are you sure this is what you want?”

I nodded. “It’s why I spent the last week thinking about it before I brought it up to you.” I could have gotten a different job as an executive assistant. It felt wrong though. If I wasn’t going to do that for Perry, I wasn’t doing it for anyone.

Dexen pumped both fists into the air. “Yes! I’d kiss you if I knew Pey and Junior wouldn’t kick my ass.”

“Pey would. I’m not sure about Perry.”

“Trouble in paradise?”

“If by paradise you mean Perry not knowing what he wants and me trying to preserve what I have left of my heart.”

“I’m sure it’s a lot for him. He puts his business above everything else. He won’t change overnight. Plus, he’s straight. Or was. Whatever, he needs time to process.”

I toyed with the zipper on my coat for something to do. “I get it, but I can’t sit there and watch as he decides whether he wants to push me away, sleep with me, or go all in. I won’t be just a fuck for him.”

“What about Pey?”

“He’s been great. I see him at work and last night we had dinner, which was nice but a little awkward. Without Perry, it doesn’t feel the same.”

Dexen gave my hand a squeeze. “You’ll figure it out. In the meantime, I need to redo the schedule. Come on, let’s get it sorted.”

We went to his computer where the dancers were scheduled. The next week was set but the week after he could start working me in more. I was already on the occasional Tuesdays and Thursdays plus every Saturday night. Now I’d take the dinner crowds on Monday and Wednesday. Tuesday and Thursday evenings became permanent. Saturday stayed how it was. This gave me Fridays and Sundays off. Dexen said he could give me more slots if I wanted them.

I’d been good about saving money when I could. I wasn’t hurting financially, not with Fawn living with me and only having one rent to pay each month. When she moved out, I would have to only feed me, and I didn’t eat that much. I also knew the dancers who worked the dinner hours got to eat here for free. It was the same for those who worked the lunches. I didn’t want afternoon hours. They were the slowest. If I was going to do this five days a week, I wanted hours that brought in good money. The only thing that stopped me from doing all five later at night was my desire to see Peyton.

Dexen was flexible and told me if I needed to change it around to let him know. This would be a good trial to see how the hours and pay fit me. I did agree to keep doing private dances in the rooms, only with his VIP members. The VIPs dropped a lot of money in those rooms. Not only for the dance, but the tips were usually hefty. It was a good way for me to get extra on the nights I danced.

I hoped it worked out. I had a good feeling about it. If only the rest of my life would fall into place.

“I’m going to up your budget for costumes,” Dexen said. He took care of the dancers and covered their costs. It was how I was able to afford such elaborate masks. The slacks and

ties weren't too expensive. I wanted to look nice without going crazy. No one was getting on the stage to check my labels. And Fawn loved to tailor the vintage slacks I found in secondhand stores. Some of my best ties came from there too.

Dexen's phone vibrated on the desk. His lip curved up when he saw the message.

"Something good?" I asked. I was being nosy, but Dexen treated me well so I could push a bit.

"Time will tell. You should go get ready. You're on soon."

"Thank you for everything. I really appreciate it."

"You're not only well liked here, but you're professional. You don't treat this place like a hookup app. I need more people like you in here."

Grabbing my bag, I nodded and left his office to get ready. Tonight, my outfit consisted of navy pinstriped slacks with matching suspenders and a white bow tie. The mask was navy as well with swirls of white over it.

My G-string was solid white with thick enough fabric that it wasn't see-through and there was a lace band instead of thin silk.

I sprayed myself with a silver sheen then added some of my vanilla mist. There was a fan on my counter I turned on so I could dry quickly and get my outfit in place.

The door opened and Emerald slid in. He was around six feet, had these gorgeous, sculpted muscles the members drooled over. His dark hair was styled in a coif. His name came from his piercing green eyes. I'd never seen a green so vibrant. He was grinning.

"Good night?" I asked.

"Hell yeah. I just got done with three rooms. Man, they are spending tonight."

I smiled. "That's what I like to hear." I looked down at my mask. Would I still want to wear it when I no longer worked for Perry? I did it now to keep my identity hidden. It was also part of my performance. Members loved trying to guess who I

was. They never did. If Peyton—who I worked with every day—couldn't, I didn't have faith anyone else would either.

“You okay?”

“Yeah, I talked to Dex. I'm going to go full time soon.”

“That's great. I'll have to try and get on the schedule the nights you're on. You always bring the crowd and I benefit from it.” He winked.

I rolled my eyes. “Please. You're beautiful. You don't need me to get your tips flowing.”

Dexen had once floated the idea of the two of us teaming up and dancing together. It would make us a lot of money, but the thought of trying to find my rhythm with another person didn't appeal to me. I knew the moves I needed to make on stage. Knew which ones got the best response. Outside of that, I let the music flow through me and take me for a ride. I didn't do a lot of choreography. Others didn't agree with my method and that was okay. They had to do what was best for them.

I said goodnight to Emerald before leaving the room and going to the stage, my mask firmly in place. If he'd already done the rooms, his night was over. We usually danced first, drummed up enough attention to get private bookings, then went to the rooms to dance.

“Are you doing VIP tonight?” Dexen asked as he came over to stand beside me.

I could already feel the beat of the music seeping into me, loosening me up. Fuck, I loved this. “Two,” I told him. I'd have to get used to doing more than one since I wanted the money that came with it. Perry paid me well, but working here five nights a week would beat that salary.

“I can fill those.” Dexen left as quick as he came.

Closing my eyes, I soaked in the sounds and the smells. I let everything else go but what I was about to do. If I went out there tense, it would be noticeable. The tips would go down. I couldn't let that happen.

I heard the deejay thank Diesel. I made sure to step back to give him room. Diesel was massive. Arms bigger than anything I'd seen in real life. Thighs like tree trunks. At first glance, he looked like he should be one of our guards, not a dancer, but fuck could he move on stage.

He gave me an up nod as he passed by. A man of few words that one was.

The deejay started the slow, steady beat of the music I chose for tonight. If I used the same song every time I was up there, it would get boring. I mixed it up the best I could while staying true to the sounds that moved me.

Taking my place behind the curtain, I dropped my chin to my chest so the lights wouldn't blind me the second the curtain was pulled back. I shook out my arms, shifted my weight from one leg to the next, readying myself for my performance.

My name was said, and the curtain parted. It was only me and the music, like every other time I was up here. I let it pump through me, drive me across the stage. This was my art. This was where I was creative and did what I loved.

The people in the crowd didn't matter. I was here to entertain and in doing so, reclaim a part of myself. This was who I was.

PEYTON

Perry was not a calm guy on a good day. The weekends usually mellowed him a little. He did a bit of work, would relax at night the best he could, and he was more tolerable come Monday morning. This Saturday was anything but relaxing.

Perry stormed around the fortress without a destination in mind. No one in the office wanted to talk to him. They slowed their complaining about JJ when they were met with a pissed-off Perry every time they spoke to him. Stefen was the only one trying to help at this point. He'd gotten over having a new team member in a high rank shoved at him and was creating a plan of how JJ could help, given his experience.

I knew where Perry's anger came from. He'd lost control of things. With JJ he was backed into a corner and thought it was his only way out. Maybe it was. But with Dominic giving his notice, that made normal Perry seem like a kitten compared to the one we got now.

Greer sat at the kitchen table bouncing one of his tennis balls while he read something on his tablet. I was leaning against the island, eating a piece of banana bread. Our dinner consisted of takeout tonight and it wasn't filling enough.

Perry entered the kitchen, stopped in the doorway, then advanced to where Greer was so he could grab the tennis ball from him and throw it across the room. It narrowly missed toppling a vase on the counter.

That was the last straw for me. I was done with him and his attitude.

I stepped up to Perry and put my hand on his throat with enough force so I could back him to the wall. He hit it with a loud *thump*. His eyes narrowed; his cheeks flushed with anger.

Greer's chair softly slid on the tile floor, letting me know he was leaving the room. Good. My brother didn't need to be here for this.

Softening my hold on Perry, but not removing it, I stepped so close our noses brushed. "You're going to stop," I told him. "I've had enough of you treating everyone like shit."

"I haven't—"

"You have." I stroked my thumb over his pulse point. He seemed to calm down the last time I did this in his office. "How are you going to fix it? Because I'm done dealing with you like this."

Perry dropped his head back against the wall. "I feel like I'm being eaten alive from the inside out. My stomach hurts, my head's throbbing, I can hardly eat, but I'm not sick. No fever, no normal shit I'd feel if I had a virus or whatever. I'm just miserable."

"You're stressed and strung too tight. You need a way to release the tension or it's going to get worse." It had everything to do with Dominic leaving. It didn't take a genius to figure that out. Perry needed to come to the conclusion himself. He had to realize what losing Dominic was doing to him and not only in the office, but off-hours too. He had one experience with our gorgeous dancer. If I knew my best friend, he wanted more but didn't know how to admit to it, outside of making it about sex.

"Help me, Pey." He clawed his thin cotton shirt at his neck, bunching the material into his fist. "I feel like I'm suffocating."

"What do you need?" I knew what would blow everything else out of his mind. If he wanted it. There was only one way to find out.

“I don’t know. Something. Anything.”

“Can I touch you, Perry? Make you forget?”

Perry’s eyes widened. His hazel irises going a shade darker as his pulse picked up. “You’d do that?”

I leaned in, running my nose up his cheek. “I’d do anything for you.”

“Yes. Please,” he begged.

My fingers on his neck released their loose grip, as I dragged them down his chest until I hit the elastic waist of his sweatpants. I hooked my thumbs on either side, grabbing his briefs with them, and tugged them down over his slender hips.

I dropped to my knees in front of him, getting up close and personal with his dick, which was already on its way to hard. He was cut and long, slim without being too thin. I easily fit my hand around him so I could jerk him a few times. A bead of precum formed at the tip. It was so tempting, I had to taste it, taste him.

Perry’s bitter, salty flavor burst over my tongue on the first swipe. He cried out, reaching down to put his hand on my head. I’d let him touch me, but if he tried to direct me or hold me in place, he’d find out real fast who was in charge.

Not giving Perry time to adjust to my mouth on him, I took him as far back as I could without choking myself. I relaxed my throat the best I could and swallowed.

He moved like he was about to slide down the wall, his knees giving out, so I hooked an arm around him and held him in place. He wasn’t allowed to move until I drank every last drop of his release.

I sucked him, backing off until he almost slipped from my lips before pushing forward and swallowing him again. He was leaking, leaving a trail over my tongue. His moans got louder, his hand tightened in my hair.

“Pey, fuck, what are you doing to me?”

I didn’t bother answering. I let my actions speak for me and tugged on his sac, causing him to buck into my mouth.

Luckily, I was ready for it. If our one encounter was anything to go by, Perry wasn't a restrained lover. He wanted to do what gave him the most pleasure.

His cock shuttled in and out of my mouth. I quickened my pace, needing him to crash over the edge. I had plans for us if I could get him to admit what he was feeling.

My own cock sat rock-hard in my sweats. I was sure I was coating the inside of my boxer briefs. I released his balls and tugged myself free so I could pleasure myself while I did the same to him.

“Jesus, Pey, are you touching yourself?”

I hummed in response and doubled my efforts on him. My hand jacked my dick faster. I couldn't stop the freight train from barreling through me if I wanted to.

Perry went tense a moment before he shot hard down my throat. My name was on his lips, a breathy cry as he came. He bucked but I held him firm so he could only go so far. Shocks went through him, his body trembling through his orgasm.

My hand was a blur while I sucked the last drops from Perry. I moaned out my release with my mouth still wrapped around him. Cum painted Perry's bare feet, and the tile beneath them.

When we both had the edge taken off, I let him slip from my lips and tucked myself back into my pants. Perry finally slid to the floor, not bothering to pull up his pants, sitting in the puddle of cum I left there.

I couldn't resist and leaned forward to thoroughly kiss him. I owned his fucking mouth. He might not want to accept it, but he was mine. Him and Dominic.

“You're sitting in my cum,” I murmured against his lips, giving him lazy kisses now that the heat between us was simmering down.

“I need a shower, but I don't think I can walk.”

“It's lucky for you I can.” I lifted him in a bridal carry and took him upstairs to my bedroom, where I kicked the door

shut. I didn't stop until we were in the attached bathroom. I stripped us of our clothes and got the water running nice and hot without being scalding.

We traded more kisses while I cleaned us. Perry came back to reality when I shut the water off and wrapped a towel around him.

He leaned against the sink, his eyes on me. "What now?"

"How do you feel?"

"Better."

"Why do you think that is?"

"Because you drained my balls," he chuckled.

I stepped close to him, my body dry but bare, the towel discarded on the floor. I caged him in with my hands on either side of him. "Why else?"

He couldn't look me in the eyes when he said, "I needed it. Needed you."

"Mmhmm. Why have you been so angry? Fighting with everyone?"

"I'm going to miss him, Pey. How do I do my job without him?"

"It's not only about your job though, is it?"

Perry shook his head, water droplets landing on his bare chest and sliding down in a slow trail. "I need him outside of work too. I don't want to let him go."

"I'm proud of you for recognizing that. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know. He's got a week left before he's out the door." Dominic had started training a woman internally to fill in until Perry found someone permanently.

"He doesn't have to be out of your life. You can fix this. Keep him with us. The choice is yours to make. It can't be only about sex though. Dom doesn't want that."

Perry let out a shaky exhale. “I’ll give him everything. Both of you. But what if I fuck things up again? What if I say the wrong thing, do something to piss you two off? Hurting either of you hurts me too. This past week has been torture. Dom’s been there but out of reach, like I couldn’t get through to him like I usually do. He did his job, everything I asked, but he was distant.”

“It’s what he has to do, so he doesn’t get hurt. Do you want a relationship with him? With both of us?”

“You’re a package deal, huh?” He smiled. It was small, but I still loved seeing it.

“Yeah, we are. That means you’re part of that package too. Are you okay with that?”

“I think... I think I am. I can’t stomach things how they are. I want it back to normal.”

I lifted my hands from the counter to cup his cheeks and draw his gaze to mine. “That normal is gone. Dominic is still leaving. He’s going to dance full time. We’re not going to change his mind on it, and I don’t think we should. It makes him happy.”

“You’re right.”

“What do you say we go visit him? It’s Saturday night. I happen to know there’s another hour until he goes on. We have plenty of time.”

“What do I say to him?”

“You talk just like you did with me. Tell him how you feel. Don’t hold back. Dom can’t read you like I can. He doesn’t know how to be with you outside of work. Let him in like you let me.”

“I think you forced your way in.”

I grinned. “I did. It’s where I fucking belong.” I tapped his chest over his heart. “Right here. So does Dom.”

He nodded. “I need to get dressed.”

Not able to resist another taste, I leaned in and licked his lips before diving into his mouth. “Wear something nice for him. No suits though. This is pleasure, not business.”

“Why does it turn me on when you order me around?”

“Because you’re in charge of everyone else, and no one takes care of you. Now you’re going to get me and Dom. We’ll be yours and you’ll be ours. You want it, right? Us?”

“I do.”

“Are you sure? Because Dom won’t survive it if you pull away after this.”

“I’m certain.”

PERRY

“Are you sure you don’t want to stay in here with me?”

Peyton shook his head. “This is all you. You’re the one who needs to talk to him. He should be finishing up in the other room then he’ll be in.”

Peyton had texted Dexen when we knew we were coming to the club. Dominic was always in high demand in the private rooms. Peyton got to Dexen just in time to get us a room.

Here I sat on a couch in the VIP room. Not the same one we were in before. My knee bounced up and down in rapid succession. It was the only outlet I had for the nervous energy coursing through me.

Peyton leaned down and pressed a quick kiss on my lips. “I’ll be downstairs at our table. Come get me or text me when you’re ready to leave.”

“Thanks.”

“You’re going to do fine. Just be honest like I said.”

Sure, easy for him to say. Peyton didn’t seem to have a problem talking about how he felt. He let it out without a second thought. Then again, he’d also kept his feelings for me bottled up for twenty-five years. Fuck, how did I not see it? He was right there, day in and day out, and it never occurred to me.

I’d already beaten myself up over it repeatedly since he confessed how he felt. He always believed I was straight. Hell, I did too. I really didn’t know what I was now except that I

wanted to see where this went with Peyton and Dominic. If people wanted to put a label on it, that was their decision.

I shook everything away and focused on Dominic. I had to make it right. We came early enough to watch him dance. I got rock-hard the moment he stepped onto the stage looking as beautiful as he did. I still wanted to growl and tell everyone else to get the fuck out. That he wasn't theirs to look at.

Peyton kept his hand on my thigh the entire time, not going any farther than drawing circles on it. This was what Dominic wanted and I had to be supportive of it. I didn't have to like other men watching him or him dancing privately for them, but he knew his limits and I trusted him. Hell, I trusted him as much as I did Peyton.

Glancing at the lights on either end of the couch, I decided to flip them off. They weren't the only lights in the room. There were soft glows coming from the can lights in the ceiling, which showcased the floor in front of me. With these two off, I wasn't put in a spotlight. Maybe Dominic wouldn't know it was me right away.

I'd no sooner shut the lights off and leaned back on the couch when the door opened, revealing Dominic in the same outfit he wore on stage tonight. He glanced at me but recognition didn't dawn with the lights out. I sat with my legs wide, one arm on the back of the couch, trying to look as relaxed as possible, when I really wanted to burst from the couch and wrap him in my arms.

"Do you mind if I turn the music up?" he asked, his voice low, sultry. The better job he did in here, the more he made. Even though I wasn't just any customer, I put a hefty tip in the envelope which I'd drop in the box on my way out. Since my name wasn't on the envelope, only his stage one, he wouldn't know it was me. He got the total sum, not how much came from which member.

I needed him to dance for me. To move his body like he did on stage. That way he earned the tip, and I wouldn't feel like I was giving him money to make sure he had enough since

he only had a week left with me. Dominic didn't need my charity, but I wanted to take care of him, nonetheless.

"Please do," I replied, my voice roughened a little, so I didn't tip him off.

Dominic turned the music up and started his dance. It was different than it was on stage. No less erotic. I was getting an altered show. From a business perspective, it was smart. Members didn't want the same thing they saw on stage. They wanted to feel special in here. Like this show was about them.

He moved, dipped, stood, was so fucking flexible. I wanted to see what he looked like doing it completely naked. His suspenders were the first to go then his tie. His pants came off next. That fucking lace beneath... I shivered. I'd never thought about it on a man. It was so damn enticing, so sexy. I wanted to run my fingers along the edge of it. Feel the delicate material where it clung to him.

A few steps closer, I could scent the vanilla on him. It mixed with his sweat. This being his third dance total for the night, he had to have been tired. Who needed the gym when they moved like this daily?

His muscles flexed, abs tightened, his thighs contracted. Goddamn, I was surprised I had a coherent thought left in my head. My dick throbbed in my jeans. Fortunately, they were dark. My dick's current situation wasn't obvious.

How many men got hard in this room with Dominic? Did they jerk off while he danced? Fuck, that sent a fire through me and not the good kind. I didn't want anyone fucking their fist while my man danced for them.

My man.

The thought pulled me up short.

Whatever. I wasn't dissecting it. He was mine and Peyton's. That was the end of it. Now that I'd made my decision, it was solid in my mind.

Dominic kept dancing. The closer he got, the more my fingers itched to touch him. I could hear his panted breaths, tried to lock my eyes with his but he kept them everywhere,

except on me. Was that how he disconnected with the crowd and let the music flow through him? He didn't latch on to any one face?

Finally, I couldn't take it anymore and leaned forward, resting my elbows on my knees, putting myself under the can light so Dominic could see who he was dancing for.

The movement caught his eye, and he looked up, gasping when he saw me. He stumbled back. I thought he was going to fall so I stood, reaching for his elbow to steady him.

"Perry? What are you doing here?" He lifted his mask so I could see his gorgeous face and reached to turn the volume down.

For a moment, I couldn't breathe. I was too wrapped up in this man who had the confidence to tell me what he wanted. To give his notice and pursue a career that made him happy. Who stood in my office and told me he didn't want just sex between us.

"You're so beautiful, Dom," I whispered. "How have I never noticed you like this before?"

"Perry..."

I reached up, placing my hand on the nape of his neck. "I want you. Now. Tomorrow. For the next five years, or forever. I want to be with you and Peyton. Not just for sex. I need more than that. I need to see your smile, your eyes. I need to know you're not going to walk away from me. That you want me just as much."

"I can't stay working for you."

"I know. I've accepted it. Still not happy about it but when I see you dance, I remember this is what you're made to do. Nothing compares to you in your element. I want you in my life, Dom. I'm sorry I fucked up. I doubt it'll be the only time. Hell, I'll probably screw up weekly. Just know, I want you badly."

"Does Peyton know?"

I gave him a crooked smile. “You think he was going to let me come here on my own?”

He teasingly shoved me. “You know what I mean.”

“Peyton knows. He sat with me while you were on stage. I’ve been hard for you since.”

“Yeah?” He stepped closer, the heat of his body seeping into mine. I erased the remaining space until our bodies met. “Did you want to touch yourself while I was dancing?”

“You know I did.”

“What about Peyton? Was he hard too?”

“He was. He got on his knees and blew me before we came here.”

He gasped. I loved that sound. Loved the way he made it. “He did?”

I hummed and pressed my lips to his jaw. “He swallowed my dick, Dom. No one has taken me like he did. I’ve been blown before, but this was... everything. So much better than anything I’ve experienced prior.”

He whimpered. “I wish I could have seen it.”

“Come home with us and you’ll get a private show. This time we’ll include you in it.”

“Will you touch me, Perry? Here, right now?”

“Goddamn, you know I will.”

Touching Dominic the last time we were here was fucking transcendent. Doing it again, having access to his body, I wouldn’t deny him or myself.

I skated my hand down his chest to his side, where I met the band of lace I’d been itching to touch. It was just as I’d hoped. Snug to him, cradling his body perfectly. And that scrap of silk covering his dick, it was so smooth. I reached inside, my fingers brushing his hard dick. I curled them around him, lifting him out of the fabric.

Dominic's hands went to my hips as he thrust against my palm. "Take yourself out too. I want to get off together."

I made quick work of my jeans, pulling my dick into the open air, hard and ready to blow, even though I'd gotten off earlier. I lifted my shirt over my head, leaving it on my arms.

"Wrap your hand around us."

It wasn't easy but I brought us together and started working us over. Dominic slammed his mouth against mine, giving needy whimpers as he did. We kissed, my hand moved, our dicks glided together, thanks to us both leaking.

"God, Perry, keep doing that."

I jerked us fast. I was too close to the edge after watching him. Dominic was just as desperate. His hips moved as quickly as my hand. Within seconds, he cried out against my lips, quiet but I still felt it everywhere. His cum coated my hand, stomach, and dick. I followed him over, pushing against him hard, needing to be closer but not able to get where I desired.

Inside him.

That was what I wanted. To be buried deep in his tight hole. What I wouldn't give to be there now. Would he fit me like a glove? Would he milk every drop from me?

"The three of us," I panted against his lips, not ready to let him go yet. "I want you both. Every day, every night."

"I want that too."

His arms wound around my shoulders, hugging me tight. I let go of our dicks; my hand covered in our cum. This was what mattered. Peyton. Dominic. Me. All of us together.

Nothing had ever felt so right. I couldn't wait to put it to fruition. To have us all together. We were going to be on fire. I was also going to be a jealous asshole. These men were mine and I'd shred anyone who tried to take them from me.

I still had a lot to learn. Being in a serious relationship, being with a man, two of them at that. It wouldn't be easy. I

would struggle at times, adjusting to my new situation but I knew if we could make it work, we'd be so damn happy.

DOMINIC

I was in a nightmare. That was the only way I could describe it. We were standing in front of Perry's office. Me, Perry, and his interim assistant, Carissa. With fake smiles. I hated fake smiles. If I wanted to smile, I would. In this case, I didn't. Because it was the day JJ started his job at PJS. I didn't like this any more than Peyton did. Lucky for me, I would only have to be here for a week to deal with it, then it was up to Carissa to handle the many calls from employees who still weren't happy about the son of a mafia boss working here. It didn't matter that he was family. He was infiltrating their ranks, and they made their displeasure known.

In the past week, four people had turned in their notice. The company wasn't huge, so the rumor mill caught those four and talked about them with fervor.

The elevator dinged; my back stiffened. Peyton had gone down to get JJ, along with Stefen. Even though JJ would report directly to Perry, Stefen still ran the department and wanted to show a unified front from day one.

When the doors opened, my knees nearly buckled. Because holy transformations, JJ was gorgeous in a suit. His blond hair was styled back, away from his face. It was still longer, but not hitting his chin when he turned. His grease-stained jeans and boots, along with his leather jacket, were traded in for shiny loafers and a suit—if I had to guess—Jordan paid a hefty sum for. JJ was a reflection of his father after all. That was why he wanted him to have this job.

I might have whimpered because Perry turned and fucking glared at me. I couldn't help it. JJ was his cousin and Perry wouldn't see the appeal, but come on. Anyone with eyes not related to him would drool when presented with this man.

JJ smirked. Okay, so he heard my whimper too. Lovely. How many more days did I have until I was out the door?

Peyton stepped closer; his eyes boring in to mine. He leaned down to whisper, "Do that again and your ass will be red."

I whimpered. Once more for good measure. This time Perry smirked. Asshole.

It wasn't like Peyton was into spanking. At least not that he'd said, but the thought of it had my dick perking up and now was not the time. Especially with JJ standing before us, studying us like he could figure out what was going on. It wouldn't take much to do so. Not with me behaving like I was.

Oh my god, I needed to get my head out of the gutter.

Welcome to your first day, JJ. Sorry my dick put on a show. The entertainment was a bonus.

Jesus.

"JJ," Perry said, stepping forward and offering his hand. "Welcome to PJS."

"Thanks, Junior. Happy to be here. Or should I not call you that anymore?"

"You're family. If you're fine with me calling you JJ, you can call me Junior."

"Can't change the habit now after so many years." JJ smiled but it looked as forced as mine did. He focused on me. "I heard you're leaving, Dominic. That's too bad."

"It's time. I have something else calling to me." A leather G-string to be precise, along with a matching mask. But whatever. I wasn't saying that.

"You can't go wrong when you pursue your dreams." His smile faltered and I saw the man behind the facade. The one

who didn't want to work here. Who wanted to stay in the business he built, where he got his hands dirty and enjoyed it immensely. Hopefully, he could find his footing here and be happy.

"Come," Perry interrupted.

I jolted, the word meaning something totally different to me than he meant it. I was confused for a second. I was thinking with my dick before and clearly still was.

"Stefen and I have a few things we'd like to discuss," Perry said to JJ. Not to me. And certainly not about my dick.

I abandoned ship after that and parked my ass behind my desk. Peyton chuckled at me from his place behind his, once Perry was in his office.

About an hour later, the door opened. Peyton stood, ready to follow wherever Perry went. Of course, JJ caught the move.

"You don't have to tail my ass all over the building, Peyton. I'm not going to hurt him. I'm not packing. I literally only have the basics on me. I'm not my old man."

"So you've said," Peyton replied. "Excuse me while it takes a bit to sink in."

"Even if I was like him, there's a code. Junior is family. We don't hurt our own, at least for the most part." I didn't need to see his face to feel the pain in his words. Losing his mom like he did, that shaped who JJ was. How could it not have?

"We're going to give JJ the tour," Perry said. "I'll be back." He eyed Peyton, telling him he didn't need to worry. Peyton followed them anyway, as if there were any doubt.

Perry swiped one of my pencils and winked before walking to the elevator. I glared at his back.

That left me and Carissa, who I almost forgot was here. Stellar example I was providing. *Learn from me how to embarrass yourself. I've mastered it.*

Luckily, I didn't have to spend time filling her in on who JJ was and why him working here, as well as owning part of

the business, was a huge deal. She came from legal and had previously provided backup support to the general counsel's assistant. This was a good move for her career-wise if Perry decided to keep her here, which I wasn't sure he would. So far, she could do the job. Being able to tolerate Perry was something else entirely.

"What's with you and the pencils?" she asked, her dark brown hair falling over one shoulder. She had brown eyes and was very nice. She was probably around thirty, if I had to guess. I couldn't remember from her résumé. "Mr. Altair seems to like stealing them from you."

"That's because he knows every time he snaps one in half, a little piece of my soul dies."

Carissa looked at me like I had three heads.

I sighed and went over to Peyton's desk, rummaging around his drawers for what I knew was in there. *Bingo!* I lifted a plastic can of tennis balls. "You see this?" I held it higher. "These are Greer's. He loves bouncing them off the floor, the wall, his brother's or Perry's head. It's his thing." I tucked them back into the drawer and retook my seat. "We all have something we love."

"What's Peyton's?"

I had to bite my tongue before saying Perry. "He guards Mr. Altair. There's really not much else when he's at work. Mr. Altair is his sole focus."

"And you."

I shrugged. She was astute. It was a reminder I was making the right decision by leaving. The rumor mill would be strong if I stayed.

"What about Mr. Altair?" Carissa asked.

"He likes to throw shit."

"What?"

I rolled my eyes. "Come on. You've been with me for a few days last week and today. You know how he gets."

“He has a temper. Everyone in the company knows that. But he throws things at you?”

“No, if he threw something at me, I’d throw it back.” I grinned. Just because Perry and I were now something more, it didn’t mean I changed my ways. I’d throw anything at him he threw my way first, even before whatever our relationship was. “I wouldn’t advise you to throw stuff at him.”

Her eyes went wide. “I would never.”

I laughed. “I’m joking. Listen. This place gets crazy and Mr. Altair’s phone rings a lot. There are tons of emails and all kinds of other tasks to attend to. You’ll have to start going to meetings with him.” She’d already signed the necessary documents to work for him, including an NDA. “We have to have fun when we can.”

“I doubt he’s going to want me permanently.”

I cocked my head, studying her for a moment. “Why do you say that?”

“No one can do what you do. You run this place. No one gets to Mr. Altair without going through you first.”

“It’s not an easy job. The stress level is high. The hours can be crazy. You have to be able to think on your feet. Mr. Altair will expect a lot. That being said, I think you can do it. You’re smart and kind. You just need to discover your own way of handling him.”

“Handling him?” How did I explain this without going off track, which my mind obviously wanted to do today?

“Mr. Altair has a busy schedule. Not only here but with his other ventures as well. As his assistant, I handle all aspects of his work life, not just PJS. Granted, the other things are way easier, but they still come into play. You have to find a way to juggle it all and not let every part touch him. If Mr. Altair has things coming at him from all sides, he’ll melt down. It’s too much. You have to prioritize and hand him tasks to do in order of importance.”

“This is a lot.”

What I didn't tell her was yesterday when Perry, Peyton, and I were lounging around the fortress, I made the declaration that I was going to handle some of his stuff, outside of PJS. Perry said no, we fought, but he made me see his point. I couldn't be half in. And it would pull me from what I loved.

We did compromise. When Perry went on work trips or when he had to travel outside of East Dremest, I would go with him and Peyton. I would take time off work, which I still had to tell Dexen about, though I knew he'd be fine. Perry didn't travel a ton. I'd be damned if I was going to let someone else trail his ass all over the world. His new assistant could come, but I would be there too. As one of his boyfriends.

Once I was out the door here, I wasn't hiding who I was to Peyton and Perry.

Peyton was easy for Perry to address. Since Peyton worked directly for Perry and not PJS, no one here could say shit. Well, they could, but it wouldn't mean much. Perry and Peyton were a package deal. Now I was part of it.

So yeah. I was going to travel with them. Dance full time. And not let anyone else come between me and my men. Apparently, I was as jealous as Peyton and Perry got, though Peyton seemed to take it to another level.

Carissa and I spent the rest of the day fielding calls and emails. She took some and I coached her through them. She was doing great.

If this week went as well as I'd hoped, I was going to recommend Perry hire her. She'd have to learn to deal with him and his moods. Perry would treat her well and wouldn't take his anger out on her unless she started loving my pencils like I did, then he'd snap them on purpose. Perry was hot-headed, but he appreciated those who worked for him and paid them well.

Carissa could joke, I'd seen her do it with me. We just had to get her comfortable to do it in front of Perry. Then he would loosen up and so would she. Win-win for all. And I could dance my ass off, loving every minute of it, knowing she

wasn't going to steal my men because she was happily married. I'd seen the pictures to prove it.

PEYTON

Dominic's last day at the office came up on us fast. It was like I blinked, and two weeks had gone by. The first one sucked, thanks to Perry being a bear. The second was much more tolerable, although as the days wore on, Perry got sadder. He tried not to show it, but I noticed. Dominic did too.

We went through the motions as if it were a typical Friday. Perry had offered Dominic's soon-to-be old job to Carissa, who more than happily accepted. Dominic told her if Perry did anything to upset her just to let me know and I'd take care of it. I would. But Perry was a good guy. He just let shit get under his skin.

JJ came up for a four o'clock meeting with Perry. Since he reported directly to him and not Stefen, he wanted to run something by Perry.

JJ stopped at my desk, his slacks a deep gray. The sleeves were rolled up on his white button-down, showing off his tattooed arms. I understood why Dominic thought he was attractive. He was but he didn't hold a candle to my men. "Will you join us?"

I didn't bother asking why. If JJ wanted me in there, I'd go. I needed to get along with him for Perry's sake and everyone else's. I noticed some of the employees watching how I was in front of JJ. They'd take cues from me since I protected Perry. Over the last week, I'd learned to relax my body and be my normal, not say much to anyone, self.

I shut the door behind us after we walked in. Perry was already at his conference table with his tablet in front of him, flipping through something.

“JJ, I thought we’ve been through this,” he said.

We took our seats.

“We have, but if you want to infuse money into this place, give it a steady revenue stream, you’re going to have to think outside of racing. I know Pey and others already brought it up to you. That’s why I asked him to join us.” I was Pey now? When the hell had I become informal with JJ? And how many people knew I talked to Perry about a consumer arm? Greer knew. Dominic. Most likely Stefen, who I was guessing said something to JJ.

“I can’t just branch off into a consumer division. I don’t have the money.”

“Yeah, I get that. I already gave Stefen a few ideas to funnel things on the racing side. Plus, I have someone I’m bringing on to my team here.” Perry had told JJ he could hire a small staff. It went a long way in making him feel comfortable. All of Stefen’s team were being nice to him from a distance. They feared him and it unsettled JJ. He wasn’t his dad. I got it, they didn’t.

“How do you know him?”

JJ waved Perry off. “That’s not important.”

“JJ,” Perry growled.

“He’s young. Early twenties. Two years ago, I caught him trying to boost one of the cars in my lot and put the fear of the Altair family into him. Since then, he’s been working for me. I’ve been teaching him everything I know. He’s a natural with his hands, has no criminal record, no nothing. He was only trying to steal from me because he’d ended up with a bad crowd, and they said they could help him if he did that for them.”

“How did you get him away from them?”

“I might loathe my father, but I use my name when I need to. These were a group of punks who thought they were badass. I rolled up with Val—”

“Val?”

“Yeah, his name is Valiant, weird I know, but if you call him that, he starts swinging. Something about how his old man used to beat him and that was his name too. Val was scrappy as hell back then. He reminded me of you when you were a teenager, but he was older. He’s filled out now. Still lean but has some muscle on him. Anyway, so Val gets out to confront these punks, knowing I was in the car as backup. He tells them he doesn’t want anything to do with them. They start wailing on him. He tries to fight back but it’s six to one.”

“So, you got out,” I supplied.

“I did. I went over to put the fear of our family name in them and they fucking shook. I told them Val was under my protection and if they fucked with him, they fucked with me.”

“And you already had a reputation for not putting up with shit,” Perry added.

“Right. I didn’t have to bring my old man into it. Since then, Val’s been with me. He crashes in my spare bedroom. He’s basically the brother I never wanted but now wouldn’t give up for anything.”

Perry sighed and rubbed his forehead. “Is there a point to all of this?”

“I’m bringing him on, and I want to start working on consumer parts. Let Stefen have my other ideas for the racing division. We’re PJS Auto not racing. Let me put together a team of people who can do this. We don’t have to pay them a shit ton, but they should be compensated for their worth. Mechanics who don’t need a lab and aren’t afraid to get dirty. I’m not asking you to blow the money you were given. I’m asking to take a small leap with me. Didn’t four people resign this week anyway?” He leaned back, propped his ankle on his knee.

“They did because they didn’t like you being here.”

“Let me have their salaries. I’m sure they were making more than I’ll need.”

“It’s not as easy as shifting budgets from one department to the other. Besides, I was going to replace them.”

“Can you hold off for a bit or were they critical?”

Perry looked at me, his eyes pleading for help.

“I don’t know what you want from me,” I said. “Greer and I have both told you to start a move to consumer. You can still produce racing parts, but you can do this too.”

JJ grinned. I wanted to flip him off but refrained. I wasn’t doing this for him. I still didn’t fully trust he wouldn’t bring hell to our lives. But he had a point. One my brother and I had been trying to make for a while now.

Perry pushed his tablet away forcefully. It would have hit the floor had I not reached out to stop it.

“If you don’t do something, you’re going to end up in the same spot you were in,” JJ said. “Listen, I know I’m not here to run your company. You obviously can do whatever you want. I’ve struggled though. I’ve fought through the trenches to make my own business something. I didn’t do that with my old man’s help. I did it through blood, sweat, and tears. If you want this place to fly, you have to push past what your dad built, and make it your own. Sustainable. Leading the way into future technology. I already have an idea I want to work with Greer on. You have the people, Junior. Let’s put them to work.”

“Pey?” Perry asked. He didn’t need to. Most of the time he didn’t. This was a big move.

I rubbed my short beard. “What if you start slow? Have JJ hire his team but make sure they can be versatile so if the consumer thing doesn’t go far, he can pivot them to racing. Focus on one project. I think it’s smart to do it in tech since it’s always advancing. People want their vehicles to be smart. Not everyone cares what’s under the hood but rather what’s at their fingertips. Greer mentioned something to me about auto security. If it goes well, expand.”

“You’re getting a budget,” Perry told JJ. “You have to work with finance. I don’t want to overextend and end up in a hole again. I also don’t want you to produce shit products. We make quality parts, so don’t cut corners. Just try to find the most cost-efficient way to do so.”

JJ nodded. “I can do that.”

“Fine. But do me a favor and work with Stefen. He’s been itching to go this way. I don’t want his full attention pulled from racing but if you two can work cohesively, the rest of the team will follow suit.”

“I will.” JJ stood and extended his hand. Perry looked at him like he wasn’t sure what to do but finally took it and shook. “Thanks, Junior.”

“Yeah, yeah. Don’t make me regret it. Also, you’re staying for cake.”

“Cake?”

“It’s Dom’s last day and we’re having a little party. Come. Meet more of the staff. Try to smile and not scare them off.” JJ probably knew about the party but didn’t want to attend. He was the new guy people were cautious of.

“Thank you. I will.”

Perry’s idea of a little party turned into a large portion of our office staff. Dominic had worked here long enough and interacted with many. They wanted the opportunity to say goodbye and wish him well.

It was interesting to see the blush creep up Dominic’s neck and face when he saw the crowd who had gathered for him. Carissa helped organize it. There was a full snack buffet with a big cake.

Before Perry let them dig in, he called for the room to be quiet. Dominic stood on one side of him. I was a few steps behind them. Always close but not the center of attention.

“I’ll let you eat in a minute,” Perry told them. “Let me get this out first.”

What he was about to say wasn't a surprise to me since he told me he was going to do it. I knew Dominic wouldn't care. He was no longer an employee if we considered the workday ended at four thirty, which Perry did. Today. For Dominic. So he could say what he wanted. Get ahead of things so we could move forward.

"Dominic has been an asset not only to me but to the PJS family. I would have been lost without him organizing my life. And I do mean my life. With Dom by my side, I felt like I could keep my head above water." Perry put his arm around Dominic's back to rest on his hip as he peered into Dominic's eyes. "You've been amazing. I couldn't have asked for a better assistant and friend. Thank you for all you've done for me and the company. I won't forget it."

"Anything for you," Dominic replied. He had said earlier today he didn't want to say much, that he'd let Perry do the talking at the party.

Perry looked at him with so much affection, I wanted to kiss him. Hell, I wanted to kiss both of them.

Facing his employees again, Perry added, "He won't be disappearing for good though. Dom's a part of my life now in more ways than one. He'll be traveling with me when I go on trips, but not as my assistant, as one of my boyfriends."

The crowd started a low murmur as they talked to one another. Perry didn't do things in small measures. If he was in, he was all in. He also didn't want his employees, who he considered an extended family, to find out about us through the media.

"You're the first people I've told about us. It's a little nerve-wracking." He chuckled. Perry was anxious. They weren't used to this side of him. They saw the man who ran the company. Not the one who had a heart and cared deeply.

JJ walked over to Perry's other side and clasped him on the shoulder. I was stunned. It wasn't like JJ and Perry were close all of the sudden. They'd barely spoken over the years, unless they were brought together at family events. Greer stepped up next, on the other side of JJ.

Well, fuck. Guess I needed to do the same. It wasn't that I didn't want to. I was just leaving it to the two of them. If Perry wanted me there, he would have looked my way.

Then he peered over his shoulder like he could read my thoughts.

I didn't hesitate after that. I stepped up and put my arm behind Dominic so I could touch Perry too.

"It's going to get out eventually," Perry said, a little quieter than before. "I didn't want you to find out through social media or whatever. Dom, Pey, and me, we're together. And before you even start a rumor about it, Dom no longer works for PJS and Pey's a partial owner who works directly for me, paid by me, not PJS. His role isn't traditional. He was my best friend first, who became the man watching my back."

Someone snickered in the crowd. My eyes lasered to their location. It was one of Greer's managers.

"Oy!" Greer shouted. "You have an issue, you come talk to me after this. That goes for the rest of you. Perry didn't have to tell you, but he considers you family, so show some respect. We're an inclusive company. That's not new. Now, if you're done, I'd like some cake." He grinned at Perry.

"Idiot," I heard Perry mutter. "Okay, enough of this. Go eat. Have fun. Say goodbye to Dom. And have a good weekend."

People would talk, gossip, that was what they did. We wouldn't be able to stop them. By doing what Perry did, he got to them first. Some wouldn't agree with his method. That was their perspective. This was Perry's company, a private company with no board. If he wanted to tell them he was in a relationship with two men, that was his right.

There would be hate, we knew it. What mattered was how we dealt with it. There was already an HR policy in place about how to treat employees. If they didn't like Perry being something other than heterosexual, they didn't have to work here, plain and simple.

As I walked through the crowd, leaving Perry and Dominic to talk to others, I tried to get a feel for the employees and how they took Perry's announcement. Some thought it was great and were happy for us. Others didn't care since it didn't directly affect them. There were a few who were obviously not happy but chose to keep their words to themselves. For now, at least. I made a mental note of them. They were easy to pick out by the looks on their faces. I also was sure to meet each of their eyes to let them know I saw them. I was not a man to be fucked with.

By the time I made it back to my men, Greer was laughing at something Dominic said, Perry had the most adorable smile on his face, and JJ was grinning. I couldn't wait for the three of us to be alone tonight. We were heading to the fortress for our own little celebration, while my brother went to the club. We'd have the place to ourselves.

PERRY

We didn't make it to the fortress. It was too far away. My penthouse was much closer.

After Dominic's party wound down and people went home for the weekend, I couldn't get the three of us out of there fast enough. I had to have my hands on Dominic and Peyton. It was this raw need inside me, begging me to claim them as mine in every way. I'd already done it in front of my employees, which was nerve-wracking as fuck. Now I wanted to do it in the most primal sense.

Peyton and Dominic had already been tested. I went first thing Monday to get myself tested as well. I was clean, no surprise there since I couldn't remember the last time I'd had sex. I definitely used a condom though. I didn't take chances with a hookup.

The elevator ride to the penthouse was thick with sexual tension. We were strung tight, dicks straining at the front of our pants, knowing what was coming next.

Last weekend, we went home together, and it was perfect. None of us had penetrative sex yet though. The line hadn't been crossed. I planned to rectify that tonight. I was certain the other two were on the same page. There was only so much fucking around and getting off we could do before the urge to be buried deep took over.

The elevator opened into the penthouse. Peyton stepped out first. Dominic slid by him, a gentle hand to my best friend's chest. I gave Peyton a heated look when I stepped

past. That was as far as I made it. Peyton shoved me against the wall next to the elevator.

I panted in anticipation. The look Peyton gave me as he dropped his suit jacket to the floor, not caring where it lay, had my insides melting. He was pure fire, pure heat, and I wanted him to burn me alive.

His hands braced on either side of my head. His big arms flexed, testing the limits of his dress shirt. Dark eyes met mine and held on, waiting for me to make the next move.

“Any...” I had to clear my throat. Too much was rushing through my body. Lust, anticipation, need, a bit of fear I wouldn’t know what to do and would fuck this up. Although I had to thank free porn online for the videos I watched this week. At least I had some basic knowledge. Doing those things would be different. “Anything you want,” I finally got out.

His eyebrows raised. “Don’t say it unless you mean it.”

“Anything. I trust you.”

“You hear that, Dom?” Peyton asked without taking his eyes off mine.

Dominic came into my line of sight completely naked, except for his tie. It was wrapped around his neck like it was when he still had his shirt on. Navy pinstripes over a cream background, sitting flush against his chest and stomach.

Unable to resist, I reached forward, wrapping my hand around it, letting the silk glide over my skin. Dominic stepped closer, his hard dick bobbing with his movement. “See something you like, Mr. Altair?” he purred. Jesus, why did him saying my name like that do it for me?

“Everything,” I replied then tugged him closer.

My free hand reached out for Peyton’s tie next. I didn’t pull him toward me. Peyton had proven he was the one who wanted to lead. I needed the connection though.

I was friends with Peyton for a long time before I met Dominic. He fit with us in a way I thought was good for work.

Now I knew better. He'd been meant for us.

Peyton had always believed in me. Was there when my dad died, was by my side at the funeral. Through highs and lows, he was there. Dominic believed in me too. He could tell when I struggled with something at work, would talk me through it if he could. And me, well, I was the jackass who didn't notice the two amazing men as more than friends until they were put in front of me like a fucking buffet.

Now I held their ties, kept them anchored to me, bound literally and figuratively.

Dominic licked his lips, drawing my gaze to them. I couldn't resist any longer and pressed my mouth to his.

He tasted like the sweet berries in his cake, the flavor bursting over my tongue. I couldn't get enough, wanted to drink him in. He moaned into my mouth, his hands working my suit jacket off before he started in on the buttons on my shirt.

Peyton nipped along my neck until he got to my ear where he bit down on my lobe, causing me to cry out against Dominic's lips. The little bite of pain went right to my dick. Peyton's hands slid to my hips and started opening my belt, then my slacks. We had to break apart briefly so Dominic could rid me of my shirt and Peyton could get the rest of my clothes off.

Next it was Dominic in front of me, his naked body flush to mine. Peyton stood behind him, trailing kisses along his shoulder as he fully undressed. I couldn't stop watching how attentive he was to Dominic. He kissed down his spine until Peyton's knees hit the floor, all his focus on Dominic's ass. Peyton spread him open and dove in like a man starved. Dominic pitched forward, his hands going to my chest, his forehead against mine.

I wondered what it felt like to have another man's tongue in my ass. If Dominic's reaction was anything to go by, it was fucking amazing. He ground back against Peyton's face, his dick sliding against mine in the process. I took him in my fist, started jerking him while I found his mouth with mine.

Peyton reached around Dominic's hips, his large hand covering mine so we could jerk Dominic together. Here I'd thought what we'd done already was the hottest thing I'd ever experienced. If the way the night was going was any indication, this was going to top it by tenfold.

The whimper Dominic made when Peyton withdrew was so damn hot. I kissed the corner of his lips to his jaw and down his neck. His face was clean-shaven, a stark contrast to Peyton's beard. My lips drifted down his flesh until they got to where his neck met his shoulder. I gave in to my instinct and bit there. Not enough to draw blood but enough to leave a temporary mark. Because Dominic was mine. So was Peyton. And I wanted the world to know who they belonged to.

"We should take this to bed," Peyton said, his voice rough.

I nodded and turned Dominic around slowly to head in that direction. He'd been here before but in his current state, I wasn't sure he could make it on his own. Peyton must have had the same thought because he gripped Dominic behind his thighs and lifted him, so his legs wrapped around Peyton's waist. My hand went to Peyton's lower back while we walked to my room. I had to be touching one of them, needed to ground myself to make sure I knew this wasn't a dream. It was really happening.

My fingertip found the light switch and flipped it on. I wanted to see everything we did in here so I could remember it.

Peyton carefully placed Dominic on the king-sized bed. Everything in my place was neat and tidy, thanks to the cleaning service I paid to come twice a week. The deep gray comforter cradled Dominic while Peyton kissed him and thrust their hips together.

I watched the two of them, uncertain of where I fit. Not in a bad way where jealousy took over. I was simply trying to figure out how I could get in on it.

Peyton reached for me, pulling me down to the bed with them. I lay beside Dominic, Peyton lifting himself to look at both of us.

“Which one of you should I fuck first?” he hummed. “I’m not sure you’re ready to take me yet, Perry. You’ve never had anything in your ass, not even your fingers, have you?”

I shook my head, trying to keep myself from being embarrassed.

“Straddle Dom’s head, Perry. Feed him your dick.” He peered down at Dominic. “As for you, feet on the bed, open for me. I’m going to fuck you while you suck Perry.”

Dominic whimpered, bringing his legs up like Peyton said, feet resting on the bed.

I slid over, my knees coming on either side of Dominic’s head. “Do you want this?” I asked, a slight tremble to my voice. “Do you want me like this?”

He nodded and reached for my dick. “Just don’t push too deep.”

My fingers trailed along his cheek. “I won’t hurt you.”

“I know.”

Behind me, the bed shifted. I didn’t have to look to know Peyton got up. “Don’t move,” he told us.

Dominic and I stared at one another, a million emotions dancing over his face. Something bubbled up into my chest, this feeling of overwhelming adoration for the man beneath me. I couldn’t put words to it, not yet. I was too afraid to.

The bed dipped, Peyton rejoining us. There was the *snick* of a lid opening. “Go on, Perry. Feed yourself to Dom.”

Bracing one hand on the headboard, I used it as leverage to hold myself just right, so I could grip my dick and aim it at Dominic’s waiting pink lips. His mouth was open, eyes on me. My dick slid in so easily, but I held myself back from going too far. His lips closed around me; his hands went to my hips to urge me forward. I’d let him control this, then I could give over to the feel of him wrapped around me. Fuck, it was good and nothing like when Peyton did it.

Dominic was slow and loving. He was like a gentle wave at sea, carefully holding me, keeping me safe. When Peyton

was on me, he was like a fucking tsunami, barreling toward me but instead of running, I braced for impact and let him pull me under.

A moan vibrated around my dick, letting me know Peyton was making Dominic feel good. I peered over my shoulder, wanting to watch what he was doing. He had one of Dominic's legs draped over his arm while his other hand was at Dominic's hole, pumping his fingers in and out.

"You like that, baby?" Peyton asked me. "Like watching me stretch our man?"

I nodded, unable to pull my gaze from where he was fucking him with his hand.

"He's so tight. He's going to take my dick so nice then he's going to take yours."

A moan rumbled up my throat and I moved so I was fully facing the headboard again, holding on for dear life while Dominic sucked my dick like he had all the time in the world. I couldn't come in his mouth, not when the possibility of being inside him was there.

A sharp slap echoed around the room, the sting vibrating through my body. "Don't come in his mouth," Peyton told me. It was a command not a request.

Dominic's fingers dug into my hips as his body moved.

"Relax for me, vixen," Peyton said, a strain to his voice. "That's it. Let me in." He groaned loudly. I looked over my shoulder in time to see him sink into Dominic. Peyton's eyes were closed, his lips parted. Fuck, he was gorgeous. Him burying himself in Dominic had my dick jumping in Dominic's mouth. What a fucking sight.

"So good," Peyton moaned. "You take me like you're meant for me."

"He is," I whispered, my voice not able to go louder. "He was made for both of us."

Peyton's eyes opened and latched on to mine. "He's ours." He punctuated his point by withdrawing and slamming

forward, jostling both me and Dominic. “Both yours and mine. Get out of his mouth, baby, and come down here so you can taste him.”

I told Peyton I was up for anything and that meant anything. I carefully withdrew from Dominic, kissing his swollen lips before sliding down his body until I was level with his dick. Precum leaked from the tip, leaving a sticky trail on his stomach.

One of Peyton’s hands threaded into my hair. “Taste him. Put your lips on him.”

Leaning forward, I dragged my tongue over Dominic, moaning when I got to the head and finally tasted him. He wasn’t bitter. He had a sweetness to him that had me wrapping my mouth fully around him and bringing him to my throat where I gagged. Guess I wasn’t ready for that yet.

Nothing in my life had ever been as good as the three of us together and we weren’t done. I still had to feel the inside of Dominic like Peyton currently was.

PEYTON

The pulse of heat flowing through my body was nothing compared to what engulfed my dick. Being inside Dominic was... Shit, I didn't have the words for it. He was tight and warm and slick. I was so close to coming but wanted to do so with Perry's mouth on mine.

I tugged on his hair. "Get up here."

He gave Dominic's dick a final suck before popping off the end. Dominic whimpered.

"Don't worry," I told him, soothing my hand down his thigh while I continued my steady pace in and out of him. "We're going to take care of you."

Perry got up on his knees and slammed his mouth against mine. It was a mixture of him and Dominic. It overtook my senses, felt so damn right to taste them both like that.

My hips pushed harder, pounding against Dominic. "Fuck," I panted against Perry's lips.

His fingers found my nipple and pinched. Hard. I felt it coming, my orgasm was so close. I pushed faster, needing it, wanting to get there. Perry knew just what to do. He pinched my other nipple at the same time, and I came with a harsh yell.

Perry pulled back, his hands roving over my chest and stomach as I fell forward, hands braced on either side of Dominic while I continued to fuck into him, trying to drain every last bit of me.

Dominic gripped the back of my neck, pulling me down so he could suck my tongue into his mouth. I shivered, loved how he was trying to work his hips so he could come too.

As carefully as I could, I withdrew from him, taking a quick pause in kissing him so I could tell Perry to take my place. Patting around on the bed, I found the lube and threw it in his direction. There was a long pause, one that had me leaving the heaven that was Dominic's mouth so I could focus on Perry.

He was looking down at Dominic's spread legs, his hand reverently coasting up the inside of his thigh.

"Perry," I said to get his attention.

His eyes met mine, tortured hazel ones which were uncertain. "What if I hurt him?"

"You won't." I shifted my position until I was beside Perry. His dick was hard and leaking. "Get closer. Vixen, pull your legs up." Dominic did so, both knees up by his chest, putting his hole nicely on display where my cum leaked out of it. I groaned and reached down to press some of it back inside. "So fucking hot."

Dominic's head was going from side to side at the feel of me in him. I found his prostate after a few tries and rubbed over it, causing a cry to be torn from him.

"Slick up your dick, Perry. Get yourself ready for him." He didn't need to. Between the cum already in Dominic and the lube I'd used, he was fine, but I wanted Perry to get into the habit of making sure he was using lube when fucking Dominic, something Perry didn't need to do when he'd slept with women in the past.

The cap opened and Perry dropped a bit into his hand then fisted himself, coating his dick from base to tip.

"Line yourself up," I coached. I'd tell him to do every move if he needed me to. Perry got closer, his tip an inch from Dominic. "Good, now ease into him. Vixen, let your legs go so Perry can hold onto them. I need room to suck your dick."

Dominic released his legs. They wrapped easily around Perry as he did as I said. Perry pushed inside the man in front of him with patience. His eyes practically rolled back in his head the farther he got, until he was buried deep and had Dominic's legs slung over his arms. I didn't need to give him instruction after that. Perry's body knew exactly what do.

The sound of skin slapping skin was music to my ears. My dick gave a valiant twitch, but I couldn't go again yet. Instead, I leaned forward and took Dominic between my lips. Unable to stay still beneath me, he pumped his hips, either to get deeper into my mouth or with the hope that Perry could find his prostate. I gripped his hips to hold him still so we could do the work, and he could let go.

I had a feeling they'd take turns being the one pleased. Perry needed to release tension the most, but Dominic did too. It couldn't be easy being on stage and in the private rooms, dancing for men who weren't the ones you went home to. At least on stage, he was able to fully get lost in the music. He couldn't do that in the rooms. The members were all vetted, but that didn't mean they were well-behaved when there was someone as sinful as Dominic dancing in front of them. If I heard of any of them touching him, I'd fight Dexen to be the one to hurt them.

"Pey, please," Dominic panted.

Taking him deeper, I swallowed around him. He let go, painting my throat with his release as he called out both of our names. I drank him down, sucking every drop out of him, and kissed up his stomach to take possession of his lips.

Even though I didn't want to release Dominic's sweet mouth, I had to because I wanted my hands on Perry when he came. Sweat beaded on Perry's face; his eyes were pinched closed. He had never looked more beautiful to me.

Grabbing the lube, I quickly slicked a finger and got off the bed to stand behind Perry. His ass flexed as he moved within Dominic. I traced my finger down his cleft, pushing between those muscles until I located his hole.

"Pey, what..."

My finger breached him as I said, “Let go, baby.”

He did, tipping forward, hips bucking wildly until he came. He had lost all sense of focus and fucking released his tension, his thoughts, everything that weighed him down. He let himself be in the moment.

I kept my finger in him, thrusting it in and out, not really searching for his prostate. I wanted him to get used to having something in his ass. That word—*anything*—rattled around in my mind, letting me know how much he gave to Dominic and me. It shouldn't have been surprising considering Perry already trusted us. This took his trust and leveled it up. Giving over his body, hopefully his heart, was a big leap and, tonight, Perry let us have access to his flesh.

Finally collapsing on top of Dominic, both of them were a mess of sweat and cum. The smile that curved my lips felt foreign but, goddamn, I was fucking happy.

They deserved to have a few minutes to get their bearings. I took the opportunity to go into Perry's attached bathroom and start the shower, also making sure he had enough body wash, shampoo, and conditioner. I'd lost track of how many times he'd told me he was borrowing mine because he ran out. I also secretly loved when he did it. My scent was on him then.

Back in the bedroom, Perry and Dominic were on their sides, trading lazy kisses. The sight had my heart skipping a beat. Perry, I was already in love with. I didn't think it was possible, but the feeling grew the more time I spent with him when we were more than friends. And Dominic, well, he had me wrapped around his finger the moment he gave me a private dance. I wanted him then. Now, I had him and he was quickly burrowing into my heart alongside Perry.

I stood at the foot of the bed and pulled on both of their ankles. “Come on. We need a shower. We have to give Dominic a little extra care since we were a bit rough with him.”

He lifted his head to look at me with an adorable pout. “I'm fine.”

“You’re going to feel it tomorrow. Let’s go. You can keep kissing in the shower.”

That got them moving.

They kissed on the way to the bathroom, inside the shower as I cleaned them both off, paying special attention to Dominic. I enjoyed caring for them. Plus, I got to keep my hands on them. That was a definite plus. But when I was done and went to clean myself, they weren’t having it. Dominic was at my back, Perry at my front. They took turns bathing me while the other had his mouth on mine or my skin.

Dominic came up alongside of me once I was clean. He leaned in to kiss me and Perry did the same. There wasn’t a lot of finesse to it, and I was sure it looked sloppy as hell, but kissing them both at the same time was how songs got written.

My hands found their ass cheeks and I squeezed at the same time, pulling them closer. They both gasped, dicks perking back to life. Hell, mine was rising to the occasion too. I guess we didn’t sate our needs. I wondered if we ever would.

We rutted against each other, getting harder while doing so. Dominic got on his knees and took my dick into his mouth. My hand went to Perry’s and started pumping him fast. We kissed. Dominic sucked me, his hand working his own dick.

At least when we came the second time, it was an easy cleanup. The bed a different matter. After we got out of the shower, I pulled the bedding off and threw it in the washer. Perry and Dominic were in the kitchen trying to find something to eat. Since Perry’s idea of a balanced meal was a bowl of ice cream, I nudged him out of the way and pulled out the ingredients for a quick stir fry. They both helped, with Dominic cutting vegetables and Perry informally setting the table. It was amazing what we could accomplish when we weren’t trying to fuck each other into next week.

Our asses had just hit our seats when my phone rang. I grabbed it from the counter and saw my mom was video calling. It was a good thing we put shirts on. She always asked to talk to Perry. There was no way Dominic was going to skate away.

I answered it, propping the phone on my glass in front of me at the table. “Hi, Mom.”

“Peyton, I don’t want to interrupt your dinner.”

“You’re fine. We just sat down to eat. It’s like you’re having dinner with us.” I grinned.

“Well, in that case, let me see Perry. I have to make sure he’s eating more than junk food.”

I grabbed the phone and gave it to Perry.

“Hi, Mrs. Lynx.” He waved with his free hand. I couldn’t remember the last time I’d seen him so relaxed. He should look that way all the time.

“Perry, you look radiant. Are you finally eating some protein?”

Dominic coughed, nearly choking on his food. I couldn’t hold in my laugh. Perry turned four shades of red and ducked his head.

“Never mind,” Mom said. “I don’t want to know. But I did hear someone else. Is Greer with you?”

Perry handed the phone to Dominic. He greeted my mom with a smile. “I’m Dominic. It’s nice to meet you, Mrs. Lynx.”

“Are you the young man who works for Perry?”

“Worked and yes. Today was my last day.”

“Really? What are you going to do now?”

Dominic’s eyes went to me, and I nodded. My mom was one of the most laid-back women on the planet. She had to be since she raised Greer and me on her own from our early teenage years on. My dad passed away when we were still living down south. He worked as an electrical lineman and there was an accident one day. Dad didn’t come home that night. It was why we moved up here. My mom had a sister in Pennsylvania and wanted to be close to family. Now the two of them were together in Florida, living the snow-free life.

“I... ummm...” Poor Dominic.

I took the phone from him. “He’s a dancer, Mom. A damn good one.”

“Like in movies?”

“No, like on stage, nearly naked.”

“I don’t need more details.” She tilted her head, studied me in the way Mom did. “You’re happy, Pey.”

I rolled my eyes. “I’m always happy.”

“No, you’re not,” she said at the same time Perry did. “Sure, you might be content,” Mom added. “But truly happy... I haven’t seen that in a while.”

“Well, since I’m so happy, you should know why. The three of us are in a relationship.”

Mom’s eyes went wide, and a big smile lit her face. “I need to come visit! I’ve never met Dominic in person.”

Perry chuckled. “Anytime you want, Mrs. Lynx.”

“Maybe in May when there’s no snow. You know how much I hate that shit.”

“Whenever, Mom,” I told her.

“How does this work?” she asked. “There are three of you, so will you need to buy a custom bed? Do you need to remodel your house, Pey? What about Greer? Is he going to move out? I’m not sure if he’ll like living there with the three of you. Then again, the house is big enough for twenty.” It wasn’t. It had five bedrooms and five bathrooms.

“Mom, we just started this. We haven’t talked about living together. Ease back a bit.”

“You already live with Perry.”

I nodded. “I do.” Wherever Perry went, I did too.

“Dominic? Where do you live?” she asked loudly.

“I have an apartment across town,” he replied.

“That’s too far from Peyton’s house.”

Scrubbing my hand over the top of my head, I tried not to glare at my mom. She had a big heart, but she could get pushy. “Dom doesn’t need me watching out for him. He can take care of himself.”

“Nonsense. There’s no one better than my boys. You two can protect anyone. What if Dominic gets a stalker? If he’s up there shaking his bare ass all night, someone’s bound to want to take a bite.”

Perry’s shoulders shook as he tried to keep his laugh from being audible. He had his head down, staring at his plate. Poor Dominic looked like a deer in the headlights.

“He doesn’t have a stalker,” I told her. Though the thought was in my head now. What if he did and he didn’t know about it? My gaze went to his out of instinct and concern.

“No.” He pointed at me. “No one is stalking me. Dex would know if some shady fuck was trying to get into the club.”

Perry went still, quickly sobering. “It could be a member thinking they have a lot of money and can get whatever they want.”

“Jesus, do you hear yourselves?” Dominic asked. “No one is stalking me. Can we go back to eating and being blissfully happy?”

Mom’s voice floated through the phone. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to cause a problem. I worry about my boys and that includes you now, Dominic.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Lynx. Rest assured; I don’t have a stalker.”

I hung up with her a few minutes later while my mind spun about Dominic being in danger. I had these nightmare scenarios in my head all the time about Perry, but now Dominic was taking up some of the real estate.

I didn’t realize they had started eating while I hadn’t, until Dominic shimmied between me and the table so he could sit on my lap. “I’m not being stalked, Pey.” His hand went through my hair, rubbing soothingly along my scalp. “If I was,

don't you think I would have told you? You're the best security person I know. Plus, Dex would lose his shit if one of his employees was being targeted like that."

"Yeah, all right." I wrapped my arms around him and held him tight.

There were two men I had to worry about now. Two men who, if they were hurt, my world would end. Perry was used to me always looking out for him. Dominic would have to get used to it too. It wasn't a switch I could flip off.

As I sat there with Dominic on my lap, his temple resting against my forehead, I met Perry's eyes. JJ might have been supportive of us today at the party, but I still thought there was a threat there. Not necessarily from him. His father was a different story.

DOMINIC

There were moments when someone stepped into a room and all conversation stopped. Like a wedding, or a speaker at a convention.

It also happened to Perry because almost everyone in Dremest knew who he was. So, when we walked into the little coffee shop around the corner from Perry's home, where Peyton insisted they had the best coffee, everyone stopped talking like a celebrity just graced them with their presence. I'd seen Perry have this effect before. It was different this morning because Perry had his fingers intertwined with mine, and Peyton stepped up on his other side to sling his arm over Perry's shoulders.

I leaned close to whisper to Perry, "Whose bright idea was this?"

"Yours." He chuckled. "I offered to go pick it up, but you insisted on going out. Our first official outing together."

Fuck, he was right. It sounded good in theory. There were eyes on me now and not the kind when I was on stage with my mask firmly in place. These people were seeing Perry with his two boyfriends. And Perry, being Perry, doing whatever he wanted, he turned to kiss my cheek before doing the same to Peyton.

That brought the phones out to snap our photo.

Peyton stepped forward first and we followed suit, waiting in line to get to the counter so we could order. There were murmurs around us, no doubt talking about how Perry was

seen with two men. It would only take a tiny bit of internet searching to figure out one was his bodyguard and the other his assistant, or ex-assistant, but still.

I didn't want to hide, that wasn't me. I just didn't think stepping into the coffee shop would garner a response like this.

It was our turn to order and a cute guy behind the counter smiled, concentrating on Perry. Peyton and I might as well not have existed for the way this man focused on Perry.

"Mr. Altair, what can I get you? We have a fresh batch of everything bagels." He tilted his head, his blond hair sweeping over his forehead, and he batted his long eyelashes.

"That sounds good, Freddie. Can I have it toasted with extra cream cheese and a large coffee with room for cream and sugar?"

"Of course, you can, *sugar*." Freddie chuckled at his stupid joke then turned away to get Perry's order started.

"Are we not standing here?" I asked my men.

"We are," Peyton replied. "You should be used to this. Perry gets treated like this all over Dremest."

I glared around Perry to see him. "Yeah, but that was before I was holding his hand," I growled and held up our joined hands.

Perry brought his face to mine and pressed a sweet kiss to my lips. "You're cute when you're jealous."

"Fuck you." There was no heat in my words. Not when Perry kissed me in public. Of course, it was while Freddie's back was turned.

Then there was Freddie, facing us again as we straightened, his flirty smile in place. "Here you go. Is there anything else?"

Peyton placed his order, and I did the same. We weren't treated to the rapid service Perry was. Instead, we were told to wait off to the side. I lifted Perry's cup to take a sip when I noticed a phone number on it.

Pulling my hand free of his, I cut in line, back to the front counter and put the cup there, the numbers facing Freddie.

“Sir, you’re going to have to wait your turn,” Freddie chastised.

“*Sir,*” I mocked. “You’re going to have to keep your number to your damn self. Perry has a boyfriend. Two, as a matter of fact.” I picked up the marker on the counter and scribbled out Freddie’s phone number right in front of him. I slapped the marker back down before turning away.

Peyton was grinning and Perry couldn’t contain his laughter.

“How are you okay with that?” I asked Peyton.

“Why would Perry look at him when he has us?” He shrugged like it was answer enough.

Perry knew I needed more. He turned me, so my back was pressed to the counter, caging me in with his arms and kissed me soundly. Longer than the one we shared while Freddie wasn’t looking, but not long enough for my cock to do more than twitch in my jeans. “Is that better?” he asked. He dragged his nose up my cheek to whisper in my ear, “Is there anything else I can do to claim you in front of everyone? I don’t want Freddie, Dom.” Did it suddenly get hot in here? My damn coat wasn’t helping. It certainly wasn’t the cause though.

“I mean, if you’re offering...” I smirked.

A plate clanked loudly on the counter beside me, jolting us apart. There was fucking Freddie but with a scowl this time. I waved my fingers at him. He was lucky I didn’t tell him to go fuck himself.

I’d like to say people stopped watching us after we ordered but that would be a lie because even as we sat there, Perry’s phone started vibrating on the table with social media notifications. He usually gave it to me to post since he hated it, so I scooped his phone up and checked what was going on.

Perry wasn’t super popular, but he had a decent number of followers. I typically posted candid shots of him working or when we would travel. Stuff to let people get a glimpse of who

he was. Last night, I posted one of him lounging on the couch because he looked so sexy. He was fully clothed of course. I wanted to devour him. That post got a lot of attention; however, it was nothing compared to comments he was getting now on other people's posts.

A few people in the coffee shop posted videos of us on their accounts, tagging Perry and the business.

"Well," I said and put the phone back on the table. "I guess we're official."

"Weren't we before?" Perry asked while chewing on his bagel.

"Yes, but now everyone knows."

He shrugged and kept eating. The man could pack away food like a bear getting ready to hibernate, except Perry didn't seem to gain weight. It was probably because he burned it off when he was pacing and yelling about shit.

Peyton leaned back in his chair, surveying the patrons. Even when he looked relaxed, he wasn't fully unless Perry was in the penthouse or the fortress.

We didn't stay much longer. We finished eating and went back to Perry's place. I had a shift at the club tonight. Both Perry and Peyton were coming with me so they could watch my show. I told them I might have private dances after. They said they'd wait.

The rest of the day went quickly. Perry fielded work calls that couldn't wait then holed up in his home office, while Peyton and I had fun getting each other off and making Perry jealous about it. We told him he had to wait until we got home tonight and would have to suffer with his hard cock until then. Maybe he'd let some of those calls go to voicemail next time.

Perry worked hard. Harder than anyone I knew. But he needed breaks or he was going to implode. Peyton said I was good for him since I pulled him away from work, especially when I was at the club. Nothing could draw Perry's eyes off me when he was there, which I loved.

Peyton's black Tahoe pulled into the gated area of the club where the dancers parked. Technically, they weren't supposed to be back here with me but considering how Peyton and Perry both had their lives intermingled with Dexen's, I didn't see it being an issue. The guards at the back door, however, didn't think like I did.

"You can't bring them in this way, Mr. Summit," Hal said to me. The guards tended to rotate positions within the club.

"They're my escorts. Besides, they both know Dex. Can't you call him and ask if they can come in with me?" I stepped closer, trailing my finger down his arm. It was freezing out and he was only in a long-sleeved shirt.

I heard Peyton growl behind me. I wasn't doing anything awful, and I did it in front of them. This was also the guard who held Peyton back the night he came to the club in search of me when I had my head on Dexen's lap while he petted me.

Hal sighed and reached into his pocket for his phone. I grinned knowing I'd won.

"Yes, Mr. Dremest. Thank you, sir." Hal ended the call and opened the door for us to step inside.

Dexen was waiting for us. "Is this what I have to look forward to now that you three are the talk of the city? Celebrities... in my club." He fake gasped. "You know, Dom, everyone is going to realize it's you on stage with these two fools drooling over you in the audience. It's not going to be subtle with the way they'll stare at you."

"I figured, but that's okay. I'm not embarrassed about what I do. I hid my identity because I didn't want my office life to collide with this one. I still want to wear the masks though. They're part of my persona when I dance."

"Whatever you want. Now, you fools, are you getting a private room tonight or just here to show support?"

Peyton crossed his big arms. I loved it when he did that when he wasn't wearing a suit. They flexed and bulged beautifully. "You want to keep calling Perry and me fools, Dex?"

“When was the last time you came by the gym? Xaiden said he hasn’t seen you in a while.” Only family seemed to call X by his full name.

“X appears when he wants. I could show up at the gym twenty times and only see him one of them.”

Dexen nodded. “You’re right. He misses you though, both of you.”

I cut in. Time was ticking. “I need to go get ready.”

“Sure thing, vixen,” Peyton said and gave me a kiss. Perry did the same then I was hightailing it to my dressing room. I hated cutting it too close. I worried I wouldn’t get into the zone I needed to be in.

Emerald was inside touching up his stage makeup. “Hey, Ocean, ready for a good night? The crowd is wild. I love it.” He smiled.

“I am.”

Quickly, I stripped out of my clothes and dug out a hot-pink G-string and gray slacks. I had matching gray suspenders, and a pink tie. The mask was a combination of the two colors. The fabric was gray. The edges were lined with pink.

I dug out my pink glitter spray and went lightly over my body with it. Too much and it would be overpowering. I only wanted a sheen, so the lights would play nicely over my skin.

Emerald was relining his eyes with black. “I heard a rumor about you and Perry Altair. Is that why you stopped working for him?” I knew the questions would come. I liked the guys I worked with, but none of us were overly close.

“One of the reasons,” I said. “Mainly it was because I wanted to dance full time. This is much more fun, and the money is good.”

“Hell, you don’t need the money. Let Daddy take care of you.”

I froze mid spray. “He’s not a Daddy. I can take care of myself.” I had nothing against men who wanted a Daddy/boy relationship, but I didn’t desire that. I also hated the idea of

Perry taking care of me financially. He would if given the chance. I'd never ask though.

"I didn't say you couldn't. It would be nice to have that kind of security though. I heard he was quite the player in college." He chuckled.

There were plenty of articles out there about Perry's life from the time he was young, through college, to taking over PJS. Given how wealthy his dad was, Perry was on the local radar from an early age.

"He was, but he's not anymore," I said. "He's got Pey and me. He doesn't need anyone else."

A knock on the door prevented the conversation from going further, which was fine by me. I was done talking. Emerald wanted gossip and I wasn't giving it to him. He wouldn't be the only one. Other dancers would ask me too.

I put on the rest of my clothes, readying myself for my performance. Not only did I want great tips tonight, but I wanted my men to have to fight not to come in their jeans.

PERRY

The pencil cup flew from my fingers, hitting the bookshelf like it had done countless times before. Those pricey pencils of Dom's fell like arrows to the carpet, a couple landing straight up with their points in the fiber.

I'd just read an email from Greer that said one of his managers gave his notice. It was Thursday and that was the second person we were losing this week. The other was from R&D. Apparently, they were too terrified of JJ and quit. Both Stefen and JJ assured me that nothing happened to warrant the fear. I thought everyone was fine there. Nevertheless, more employees gone.

It was pissing me off to not only lose employees but for this reason. JJ was doing great. Stefen couldn't stop singing his praise. The people in their department, who actually worked with JJ, loved him. Sure, he had a commanding presence, but he was a nice guy if they would bother to look past the preconceived notions they had of him. Granted, I wasn't much better. I worried about shit hitting the fan too but so far, we were good. JJ had proven he was nothing like his dad.

Jordan... I'd received one call so far from him asking how JJ was doing. I didn't bother mentioning how people quit. That would only piss Jordan off, which I didn't need. Instead, I focused on the positive. On the impact JJ was having within the company. These were things he could have asked his son but, apparently, they weren't on friendly speaking terms. They talked when they needed to and that was the end of it.

Carissa poked her head in through my half-opened door. “Everything okay, Mr. Altair?”

“Yes, no. Fuck if I know. Nothing for you to worry about, but thank you for checking on me.”

I had to remember to be nice to her. She wasn't Dominic. I couldn't yell like I normally would and expect her to deal with my shit. Dominic would take it all with an easy grace that I missed like crazy. He was happy dancing. Meanwhile, we hadn't seen him since Monday morning when he went home, and Peyton and I went to work. Tomorrow night, that would change. We'd get him all to ourselves until Monday morning.

God, I wanted to see him. There was a hole inside me without him nearby. This week had been an adjustment. I had no clue I was so attached to Dominic. It wasn't the work. I didn't give a shit about him not being here to organize my life. It was his presence. His energy. His everything.

“Would you like a cup of coffee?” Shit, I forgot she was still there.

I forced a smile. “That would be great, thanks.”

If I asked Dominic to get me coffee, he'd probably brew a cup and drink it himself. In front of me. He'd lick his lips, drawing my gaze to them. Of course, I'd have to taste him after that. Tasting would lead to touching, which would lead to coming, and I shouldn't be thinking about this at work.

I picked up my stapler and launched that next to try and get out of my head. It hit harder than the pencil cup, probably denting the binding of the books it bounced off. The sound brought Peyton to my door.

He leaned against the frame with his hands in his pockets. “What happened?”

“Greer had someone give notice.”

He nodded. “What else?”

Before I could answer, Carissa cleared her throat from behind Peyton so he would move. She was finding her way

and learning how to deal with us. Peyton moved with a quiet apology.

“Here you go.” She sat the cup on my desk.

“Thank you.”

“Is there anything I can help with?”

“Do you know how to put together a campaign to make everyone in the company not fear for their lives now that my cousin works here?”

Her eyes went wide. “I... um...”

“He’s joking,” Peyton said, coming into the room.

“Oh, sorry. I didn’t realize.”

“You’re fine, Carissa,” I told her. “I’m just in a shit mood.”

“Aren’t you usually?” She realized what she said a split second later and slapped her hand over her mouth. “Oh my god. I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to—”

I held up my hand. “Stop. You’re fine.” I smiled, genuinely this time, to let her know everything was okay. “We’re going to have to get used to one another. But what you said is what I need sometimes to snap me out of my mood.”

“Dominic said I’d find my groove.”

“You will. I’m certain of it.” Hearing his name had me on edge when I couldn’t put my eyes on him. Jesus, why was I like this?

“Your next meeting is in a few minutes.”

“Thank you. Can you please shut the door on your way out?”

“Of course.” Carissa walked quietly to the door and pulled it closed behind her.

Peyton sat in front of my desk. “It’s more than Greer losing another employee.” Right to the point as usual.

“I miss Dom.”

“We both do.”

“Yet, you seem fine.” He was the picture of relaxation. Well, as relaxed as one could be in a suit.

“I’m feeling it on the inside.” That was how Peyton was at work. He kept everything bottled up. If we were home, he would be a different person. It still made seeing him be calm aggravating. “You going to pick up the shit you threw?” He nodded toward the pile of office supplies on the floor.

“Oh, you weren’t going to do it for me?” He had before. Today, I could tell it was the last thing he’d be doing.

“Perry,” he growled. The sound used to make me laugh. Now it made me shiver with want. Oh, how things had changed.

I got up and picked up the stapler, which had opened on impact, and put the staples back in it. The pencil cup survived another round of *let’s see if I can break it this time* and only had a small chip in it. The pencils would live to see another day, though one of the points broke. I held it up. “Do you think Dom felt this at his apartment?”

“Probably not. The whole thing didn’t snap.”

There was a knock on my door as I was setting the items back on my desk where they belonged and not on the floor like the bad-tempered asshole I was. It wasn’t like I threw shit in meetings. Just when I was alone.

“Mr. Altair?” Carissa asked, opening the door. “JJ is here for you.”

“Send him in, then you can leave for the day. You shouldn’t have stayed this long.” It was after seven and the sun had set a while ago. I told her she could go home earlier but she insisted she’d stay to get some work done.

“Thank you. I’ll head home.”

I looked at Peyton. “You staying for the meeting?”

“You want me to?”

“I don’t care either way.”

He shrugged, which meant he was staying put.

JJ came inside, declining the offer of a drink. Carissa shut the door. JJ took the seat beside Peyton. Two big men on the other side of my desk. I was still getting used to seeing JJ in a suit.

My cousin gave an update of where he was in his hiring process. Val was coming on board in another week, along with two other people he hired. He said he would have loved to bring more from his shop but that would have left it too short-handed, and he didn't want to do that. JJ could have given his business up when he came to work here. It was a source of pride for him, and I couldn't fault him for it. He also made sure it didn't interfere with his work at PJS, which I appreciated.

"I've scheduled a meeting with Greer to go over my idea." He turned to Peyton. "He seems friendlier than you."

"Everyone's friendlier than me."

JJ grinned. "Not Junior. I've heard how he throws things around his office like he's trying out for the majors."

"I don't do it while people are in here," I countered.

"Does it matter?"

"If they were in here, they could get hit with a pencil then they could get lead poisoning and it would be a whole thing."

"Are you usually this unfocused?"

"No. I miss Dom. People keep resigning. It's unsettling me." I wouldn't usually be so candid with anyone outside of Peyton, Greer, or Dominic, but JJ was my cousin. I had to treat him as such. If he was going to help drive more revenue, I had to extend more than a family courtesy to him. I should spend time getting to know him, trusting him with more than the business.

"Sometimes things get worse before they get better. We'll get it turned around."

"You're an optimist?"

He snorted. "Fuck no, but I'm not going to sit here and tell you how horrible everything is. What would be the point?"

“You really think the consumer side is worth the headache?”

“I do. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t have brought it up. Stefen is like a kid in a candy store. He’s so excited about my ideas and he showed me some of his.”

“You’re going to have to rein him in. Don’t let him abandon the racing side. I still need him working on that.”

He nodded. “Don’t worry. I’m making sure to shift his focus when I see him drifting too far.” Shit, JJ was what I needed all along to get Stefen to pay attention. Keep his damn feet on the ground so he wasn’t constantly dreaming up new ideas and not working to improve the ones we already had.

JJ and I kept talking but I noticed Peyton take his phone out of his pocket and put it to his ear. He suddenly sat up straighter, causing me to focus solely on him.

“I’ll call you back.” He hung up. “Dex said Dom didn’t show up for his shift.”

“Have you heard from Dom?” Dominic was punctual as hell.

“No.” Peyton started tapping away on his phone. He put the phone back to his ear, waited, then brought it down again. “No answer. I’ll see if I can locate him. He’s never missed a shift with Dexen and if he didn’t come in here, he always called.” Peyton was right. Dominic rarely called out and liked to arrive early. He should have been there by now.

“You track your boyfriend?” JJ asked with a laugh. “That’s a bit much.”

“I’ve been able to track him since he started working for Perry,” he growled. “Dom knows and doesn’t give a shit.”

He started using his fingers, zooming in. “I found him.” He rattled off an address. I wasn’t overly familiar with East Dremest, but I knew where the address was.

“That’s my shop,” JJ murmured. “I don’t understand...”

“Why the hell is he at your shop?” Peyton put the phone to his ear again. His eyes blazed fire at my cousin. “What did you

do? Dom has no reason to go into that side of the city.”

“How the fuck would I know?” JJ shot back. “He’s never stepped foot in my shop. Maybe you don’t know your boyfriend as well as you think you do.” Well, that was the wrong thing to say.

Peyton got on his feet; hand balled into a fist. “You need to explain to me why he’s there.”

JJ stood quickly, obviously not liking Peyton towering over him. JJ was a few inches shorter and had a hard edge Peyton didn’t. One that spoke to the rough life he’d had, given who’d raised him. Peyton got in his face, toe to toe.

This wasn’t good. I got on my feet as well and rounded the desk to try and get them to calm down. We needed to figure out why Dominic was there. By the way JJ was acting, I didn’t think he had anything to do with it, but Peyton’s instincts with this kind of thing were much better than mine. It was why he guarded me, watched for things I would miss.

“You don’t want to do this, Pey,” JJ ground out.

“You don’t get to call me that. You don’t know me. Now tell me why the fuck Dominic is there before I snap your neck.”

Peyton needed to take a step back. But he wouldn’t. He was worried about Dominic, and this was his way of showing it. Shit.

DOMINIC

My muscles ached and I was bone-deep tired, but it felt good. It was also a nice warmup for working tonight.

I glanced around my living room. Nothing looked different but it felt that way. Fawn had moved out today. I spent the day with her, Josh, and Josh's parents getting Fawn's stuff into a small moving truck and taking it to Josh's parents' house. Fawn didn't have a ton to move. When she came here from her other place, we sold her living and dining room furniture. All she brought was her bedroom furniture. She needed the money, and I didn't have the space for it.

Fawn and I must have hugged twenty-five times before I finally drove away from her. There were tears in her eyes. Ones that mimicked my own. But there was also this pure joy coming from my sister. It was like she was getting the family she always deserved. I was still her brother, a big part of her life. But Josh and his parents were a family unit. I couldn't provide that. Fawn was going to flourish there and be surrounded with so much love.

As for me, I had two men who each owned half of my heart. I knew what I felt for them. Speaking the words was a lot more difficult. Those words would leave me vulnerable, something I wasn't a fan of. Did I think Peyton loved me? I did. There was no other way to describe how he looked at me. It was the same way I'd seen him look at Perry countless times. Perry though... He wanted to be in a relationship with us, loved it when we had sex, but I didn't know if he loved us yet, at least that way.

I sighed and dropped down onto the couch. I couldn't walk around Fawn's empty bedroom again. That was too sad, and I wanted to be happy. Happy for her, which I was. Happy for me now that everything was falling into place.

But I was lonely here. Fawn had been in this apartment with me and made it feel like home. Now it was a space to eat and sleep. I didn't want to push myself on Perry and Peyton. I loved being with them, sleeping in the same bed, a tangle of limbs. It was perfect. There was no way I was going to ask for more nights with them. I didn't want to come off as needy.

Independence was something I prided myself on. If I ever felt lonely, I found someone to hook up with for the night and I was good. Fawn changed that when she moved in with me. I had another person there when I came home. My sister who loved me unconditionally. I enjoyed seeing her smiling face when I walked through the door. It gave me peace knowing she was doing well, and I wouldn't see her like I once had. Now Josh would take care of her.

I picked my phone up from the coffee table, debating on sending a text to Peyton and Perry. We had a group chat that was filled with more sexual innuendo than actual conversation. I shook my head. They were probably working. I didn't want to bother them.

There was only about a half hour to waste before I had to leave for the club. I decided to take the vacuum out and do another lap around the apartment. I did one earlier when I got home to clean what we tracked in while moving and the dust that got kicked up. At least I'd have another closet to store my club clothes in. They were currently smooshed in the one in my bedroom with my suits and regular clothes.

That was what I did next to waste time. I moved my club clothes, which were now my only work clothes, out of one closet and into the other. My costumes were pretty simple. Some of the other dancers went really elaborate. The more we could take off, the more enticing the dance. Although it wasn't about the stripping down to the G-string for me. It was the dance itself. That was my favorite part. Sure, having everyone's eyes on my body was a perk, a great one that paid

well, but it was the movement for me. I thought it was why I was one of the more popular dancers. I wasn't merely going through the act of performing. I was living it. Breathing it. Pulling the music down into my bones and letting it flow through me.

Tonight, I was going to put on my dark purple slacks with a black bowtie and a solid black mask. The members wouldn't be able to see it from where I'd be on stage, but the mask had tiny black beads embroidered into it, which formed small stars scattered over the mask.

My G-string would be... I went back into my bedroom and rifled through my drawer to find a silver one that would shimmer when the light caught it just right. The strings were made of matching silver lace. I thought of Perry as I held it. The way he ran his fingers along one of my other lace ones when he touched me. I shivered, deciding I'd buy a pair of lace boy shorts in black to wear for him and Peyton. At the club, everyone wanted to see my bare ass since they couldn't see my dick. I stayed in G-strings, as did the other dancers. At home, I could explore different ways to entice my men.

I was putting my clothes into my bag when there was a knock on the door. Fawn wouldn't knock if she forgot something and no one else visited me. Perry and Peyton knew where I lived but they didn't come here often. They hadn't been here since we started a relationship together.

Through the peephole, I saw Emerald on the other side. What was he doing here? He had given me a ride home once when my car was giving me issues, so he knew where I lived.

I unlocked the door and pulled it open. "Hey, Emerald. What's up?" I knew his real name just like he knew mine, but it was a force of habit to use our club names.

He wore a pair of jeans and had his thick winter jacket zipped up. "I was on my way to the club and figured I'd stop by to see if you wanted a ride."

"I'm good, but thanks for the offer." Why would he visit me to ask when my car had been fine? That one time he helped me was over a year ago.

Stepping closer, his eyes narrowed. “I don’t think you understand. You’re going to come with me.”

I took a step back. “Um no, I’m not.”

The flash of black metal caught my eye before the muzzle of a handgun was pointed at my head.

“What the fuck?” I jumped back farther and put my hands up. “Why would you pull a gun on me? I have nothing you could possibly want. Look around. I’m not exactly living in the lap of luxury.” Jesus, what the hell was going on? Emerald had never been anything but nice to me. There was nothing I could think I’d done to him to warrant this kind of behavior.

“Get moving, Ocean.” He motioned with the gun for me to go toward the door.

I went because what choice did I have? I wasn’t a fighter like Peyton. I didn’t know any badass moves. My luck, I’d swing my leg out to kick Emerald and fall flat on my ass. So, it was either get shot in my living room or get in the car and hope someone found me. I could feel my phone vibrating in my pocket, grateful my shirt was long enough to cover it. I couldn’t answer it, not now.

Peyton had me share my phone’s location with him in the app when I started working for Perry so he could locate me. I never minded it. He said he’d only use it in case of emergencies. Perry’s safety was a priority. I knew he didn’t track me or else he’d see how often I was at Untouchable. Then again, I could have been going there as a member, which was laughable since I didn’t have the money for it.

I hoped with everything in me Peyton was going to track me. It didn’t bother me then, and certainly didn’t now. If Peyton wanted to ensure Perry’s safety while he was learning to trust me, I was all for it. Maybe it would help me too, now that I had a gun to my fucking head.

If Peyton found out something was happening to me. That was the key here. How, I had no clue. It wasn’t like there were cameras in my apartment. I didn’t live in a high-tech home like they did. My security consisted of the chain lock on the door.

There was no doorman. No code to enter the front of the building. Now that I thought about it, it was another reason the rent was on the cheap side.

Emerald stayed behind me as we walked out of the building and into the night. Ice crunched beneath my feet where the plow and salt had missed it. It was quiet, only a handful of families living in the small building with me. Emerald opened the passenger side door of his sedan and told me to get in. I could have run. I probably wouldn't have gotten far and would have been shot in the process. I slid into the car and closed the door, hoping I wouldn't die tonight.

On the other side, Emerald got in and started the car, his gun pointing at me while his other hand put the car in drive and left the parking lot. He turned left and headed onto the small bridge over the creek into East Dremest.

This was Jordan's territory, which had me wondering if he was involved in this somehow. He knew I worked for Perry. Used to anyway. Jordan had never threatened me. I didn't even know the man. There was no reason for him to come after me. Did Emerald work for Jordan?

I was so confused. I wanted to ask questions but was afraid I'd get shot if I did, so I kept quiet and watched the streetlights as we passed them. Traffic was stop and go, the last stragglers of rush hour heading home. There were enough traffic lights to slow us down.

We were nearing Jordan's building. I'd lived in Dremest long enough to know where he resided. No one entered his place unless they had a reason. But Emerald kept driving past it, slowly keeping with the flow of traffic like nothing out of the ordinary was going on in this particular vehicle. Hell, for all I knew there were other people driving around holding guns at someone. I didn't put it past Jordan or any of the men who worked for him.

Emerald pulled up in front of a business where the windows were dark, only a lone light on the front of the building to illuminate the sign. The sign that let me know we weren't at Jordan's but at JJ's shop instead.

“Get out,” Emerald said, putting the car in park and shutting it off.

I did as he said. This was the last place I’d run. My luck, I’d find someone way scarier than Emerald, though maybe I could get out of that one.

He put a key in the door’s deadbolt, turning it until the lock disengaged and he could open the door. Inside, he tapped buttons on the security panel to disarm the system. JJ had to have cameras in there, right? Something? Or was he in on whatever this was?

Emerald shut the door and locked it before turning to me with a wide, not friendly in the least grin. “You can scream all you want in here, Ocean. No one will hear you. Nor will they see you. I have a dummy video on a loop. And this place is soundproofed so the neighbors aren’t disturbed by the work on the vehicles.” That answered it about JJ. Guess he wasn’t involved. But then why the fuck were we here?

The gun waved in my face to get me moving until I was sitting on a hard metal chair. Emerald brought my wrists together in front of me and bound them with rope. Then he lowered a giant hook down into one of the garage bays.

“Like it?” he asked. “I installed it just for you. Up you go.”

I stood and stepped closer to him, trying to find a screwdriver or a different tool within reach so I could fight him, but there was nothing. Apparently, the mechanics were neat freaks. Figured.

I should have fought him earlier. Done something, anything. But I didn’t and now I was about to be strung up in a garage that smelled of grease, oil, and stale cigarette smoke.

PEYTON

JJ wasn't Perry's cousin in that moment. He wasn't the man who I'd been starting to actually like. He was the key to why Dominic never showed up at work and why he was in JJ's shop.

"Pey, stop," Perry said, standing near us but smart enough not to try and get between us. "We don't know if JJ had anything to do with this."

"I don't," JJ ground out. He was as pissed as I was but for different reasons. When it came to Perry and Dominic, I would level everything around me to make sure they were safe. JJ was angry because I was in his face, and he obviously didn't like it. Well, fuck him.

"Dom didn't call me," I said, trying to keep my anger at surface level. If I let it boil too high, I wouldn't do us any good. I'd tear everything apart. I had to think with a calm head, at least until I knew what the situation was. "He didn't answer when I called him."

"He didn't call me either," Perry stated. "If something changed and he wasn't going to work tonight, he would have let us know. At least, I think he would have." He would have at least told Dexen.

I gripped my phone, pulling up the contact for one of Dominic's neighbors. He had given me the number once. He said the neighbor was nice and would check in on Fawn if he asked. To give me the number was Dominic's way of letting me check on him too. He knew I liked to have plans in place,

just in case. Ways to reach someone. I'd only had to call this neighbor once when Dominic didn't show up at work last year. He was sick with the flu and could hardly get out of bed. Fawn was recovering from it as well. The neighbor relayed it to me, and I sent soup and a doctor to his apartment to help them both.

The phone rang twice before the neighbor answered. I didn't give him much time to talk before I was asking him to walk next door to check on Dominic.

"That's odd," he said. "The door's open. Dominic, are you in here?" I could hear him walking through the apartment. "I don't see him. Fawn moved out today. Nothing looks amiss here. Maybe he's with his sister?"

"Maybe," was all I said, then thanked him and hung up. We knew he was helping Fawn today and asked if he needed us to assist him, but he declined. We could have taken a few hours off.

Dominic wouldn't leave his door open like that. Not when he lived next to the East Dremest border. Granted, no one had tried to break into his apartment before, but that didn't mean they wouldn't now. None of this felt right.

I didn't bother contacting Fawn. It would only worry her, and I didn't want to do that.

I advanced on JJ, following him as he backed toward the bookshelf. "You don't want to do this," he said. Yeah, I heard him when he said it the first time and I still didn't give a shit. I didn't stop walking until JJ was flat against the same bookshelf Perry liked to throw shit at.

"I want to know why Dominic is in your shop and not at work."

"If you'd let me get my fucking phone out, I could check the security feed," he grated through clenched teeth. This was what I was talking about. I wasn't thinking clearly when I felt this way. My mind went to one single thing, and I couldn't focus on anything else. Right now, it was that Dominic was in East Dremest where he shouldn't be, and I had no clue why.

It wasn't a hole-in-a-wall place other cities were but that was only because of Jordan. He kept the seedy shit hidden. He pretended to care about the citizens. He was the unofficial mayor. If he ran for office, I was sure he'd win because people were scared of him. Luckily, he never tried to do so.

Perry stepped up behind me. Even if I hadn't heard his shoes move across the carpet, I would have known he was there. My body was so in tune with his, I could keep him safe with my eyes closed. Yet, Dominic was out there, and I didn't do anything to stop whatever happened. Guilt ate at me, sank its claws in to the point I felt like I couldn't breathe.

"Pey..." Gentle hands smoothed down my arms. "Let JJ check his phone."

I took two steps back, but that was as far as I was going.

JJ pulled his phone from his pocket and tapped it a few times. His eyes narrowed as he brought it closer. "This isn't right. I was down there last night. I moved that sign. It's not hanging there any longer." He held up his phone to show us. All I saw were garage bays. JJ pointed to the upper right-hand corner. "See that sign?" It was for a brand of oil. "We stopped using it, but I forgot to take it down. Last night, I went into the shop after I left here and removed it. I also straightened up a bit. This isn't live. Someone fucked with my system." The more he said, the angrier he got.

"What did you do?" I growled. Obviously, there was something going on if his feed wasn't live.

"I didn't do shit, asshole. Stop accusing me when I have no more of an idea than you do."

Perry cut in, "I'm calling Jordan." He was already dialing before I could stop him. He put the phone on speaker. I didn't want Jordan involved in any of this but if it meant we could eliminate suspects, I was fine with it. What we needed to do was handle this shit while we were on the road. We had to get to JJ's shop. I was partially to blame. Too bent on getting in JJ's face rather than getting in my SUV.

"Junior, how are you?"

“Hi, Uncle.”

“It’s nice to hear from you. To what do I owe the pleasure?” Jordan was very nice to Perry. Sickeningly nice, which made my stomach turn. JJ was seething the more his dad spoke. His hands balled into fists. If he didn’t pay attention, he was going to crack the screen on his phone.

“Yes, nice to speak to you as well.”

“Did something happen with my son?”

“No, JJ’s fine. I want to ask you something and I need you to be honest.”

“Of course.”

Perry took a deep breath and let it out. “My ex-assistant, Dominic, didn’t show up at work tonight and he’s not answering his phone. Peyton tracked it to JJ’s shop. JJ checked his security feed. It’s an old video, not live. He swears he has nothing to do with it, so I wanted to call you and ask.”

Jordan’s tone changed to the hard man we all knew he could be. “You want to accuse is more accurate. You think I had something to do with Dominic being taken? After the three of you went public with your relationship? Why the fuck would I bother in the life of a man who never came to my side of town? I don’t know him.”

JJ leaned forward like he was about to rip into his dad, but I put my hand on him to hold him back.

Perry’s hand that held the phone shook. He was fine when he had to confront people about work. This wasn’t work. This was Dominic, and Perry was talking to his mafia boss uncle. He didn’t raise his voice to Jordan. Didn’t do anything to make it worse. Perry knew what the consequences could be. “I’m just trying to work out why he’s there. That’s all. If it’s about money, I can pay.”

“I’m going to let this slide only once. If you call accusing me of shit again, you better have the fucking proof to back it up. Neither myself nor my people have anything to do with this.”

“Yes, Uncle. I’m sorry. I wanted to cover my bases.”

“I’m not even in your fucking ballpark, Junior. Maybe you should interrogate my son.” He hung up without another word.

“Jesus,” Perry muttered and pocketed his phone.

“What did you think was going to happen?” JJ asked. “That he would send out a search party and help? Maybe if it was you or me, but no one else. He doesn’t give a shit about anyone but himself. He’d only find us to make himself look better. You know this, yet it’s like you’re surprised when you hear it.”

I released JJ and shoved him. “Easy.” Perry was doing what he thought was best.

“We have to call the cops,” Perry said.

Hard and fast, JJ said, “No. Hell no. We get the cops involved and they’ll be salivating at the mouth to find anything to incriminate me. Do you know how many times I’ve been dragged into a holding cell?”

“Doesn’t your dad have cops on his payroll?” I asked.

“Of course he does, but not the whole precinct. To involve them would pull the old man into this too, and fuck, I don’t want to deal with him more than I have to. We need to go down to my shop ourselves, get into the building, and figure out what the hell is going on.”

“That I’m on board with,” I told him. We should have already been on the road.

The cops would make a big show of things. Fly down there with lights and sirens. I didn’t know what was going on, but the last thing I wanted was to make it worse.

I didn’t wait for JJ to say more. I strode to my desk, opened the drawer, then entered the passcode for the small safe I had. When it opened, I withdrew a handgun. I had two more in my SUV.

Palming the gun in my hand, I let the familiarity of it wash over me. I could shoot like it was an extension of my body. Years of training, of practice, made handling a gun second

nature. I checked the magazine to make sure it was full, clicking it back into place.

Perry walked out of his office; his eyes widened as they settled on the gun. “Pey...”

“You knew I had this. I haven’t had to use it before, but I will now without hesitation.” I rounded my desk to stand in front of him. “I need you to go home with Greer.” I was sure he was still working.

“I’m not going to pace the floor while you’re out there. Fuck that.” There was the Perry I was used to. The fiery one. I didn’t want to take him with us, but Perry knew how to shoot so if I gave him a gun, he could handle it. The thought of him getting hurt made me sick though. He wouldn’t stay home. If I tried to keep him there, he’d find a way out.

Retrieving my phone from my pocket, I dialed Greer.

“Yeah?” he answered.

“Are you still at the office?”

“What do you think?”

“I need you to grab your gun and meet us in the garage.”

“Be there in two minutes.” He hung up.

My brother didn’t need asking twice, just like I wouldn’t if the tables were turned. That was what we did. No questions, no background. I needed him. He was there.

The four of us piled into my SUV, Greer up front with me. He had two guns on him, one he retrieved from his own vehicle, the other he kept locked in his desk like I did. Perry gave Greer a quick rundown of what was going on, while I white-knuckled the steering wheel as my mind ran through terrible scenario after terrible scenario. I couldn’t help it. Sure, Dominic was tall and had some muscle on him, but he wasn’t trained to fight like Greer and I were. He didn’t have to throw fists in his life like JJ did. If nothing was disturbed in his apartment, it made me wonder if whoever he was with was someone he knew.

“Does Dominic know any of your employees?” I asked JJ, interrupting their conversation.

“Not that I know of. The people who work for me are mechanics. They live with grease under their fingernails and a wrench in their hand. I don’t know Dom that well, but not once had anyone mentioned him. My crew knows who I am, knows who Perry is. They keep what we do there separate. At least they used to. Now I’m bringing some of them to PJS.”

Greer turned in his seat. “How tight is your system?”

“I paid a shit ton for it and there’s a company manning it twenty-four seven. But I don’t know tech like you do.”

“Pull up your app and give me your phone.”

JJ did, handing it over to Greer. I couldn’t see what he was doing since I was focused on the road. The only thing I noticed was the light emitting from the screen out of the corner of my eye in the otherwise dark interior of the SUV.

“This is on a loop,” Greer muttered. “It’s well done but not perfect. You can see the slight glitch in the bottom left-hand corner. Whoever got in there has control over your system, which we knew, but they also got in undetected so either they knew the code or are really skilled, which I don’t think they are, considering the fault in this feed.” He handed the phone back.

JJ growled low. “I’m going to kill whoever did this.”

“You’re going to have to get in line,” I bit out.

DOMINIC

Could shoulders dislocate? Mine burned something fierce. That was what happened when my tied wrists were put on a giant hook, and I was hoisted into the air like a slab of beef at a slaughterhouse. Would I be hacked up like the cows were or would I be left here for my arms to eventually go numb and separate from the joints?

I made the mistake of trying to move a few seconds ago which sent searing hot pain through my body, so I hung still now, afraid to move.

Emerald sat below me in a chair, running a metal nail file over his perfectly manicured nails. It kept glinting when the light caught it right. I only knew how nice his nails were because I was jealous when I first saw them. I thought for sure he had a professional take care of his nails. Now I knew he gave himself a mani while torturing people. How lovely.

“I’m going to tell you a story, Ocean. You’re going to listen because you can’t not.” He chuckled like it was funny. If I thought I could get to him, I’d grit my teeth through the burn and swing my body so I could kick him in the face. Too bad he was out of reach. He’d also probably shoot me.

He continued, “Did you know I went to the same college as Perry and Greer? That’s right, I was there with them, knew who they were. How could I not with the kind of money Perry had? He didn’t flash it like some of the rich assholes did, but he drove an Aston Martin to college and parked it next to beat-up pickup trucks and Greer’s luxury SUV. The two of them stood out. Not that I expected any less from an Altair,

especially given that we went to a local college where he was even more well-known. Across the country he probably would have blended slightly better, but near Dremest..." He shook his head. "Perry was a celebrity."

I didn't need to be told that. Perry couldn't go anywhere locally without attention. Hell, even when he traveled around the world people knew who he was. Some feared him because of Jordan, who had made quite a name for himself over the years. I was sure he was on a dozen FBI watch lists, just waiting for mounting evidence to take him down. The others knew Perry because of his dad and the wealth they had.

"In college, I tried to befriend Perry like most people did," Emerald said. "But Perry didn't form friendships with anyone. He had Greer. And Peyton when he came to visit. Perry didn't party, but he did fuck enough women for word to spread that he knew what he was doing. Some women thought they could get him to settle down, but none did. He was hot back then, still is now. I thought I could be the one to make him want dick but no, Perry never saw me. No matter how many times I tried to talk to him, he had his nose buried in his work, focusing on graduating at the top of his class, so he could follow in his dad's footsteps. When he wasn't doing that, he was buried in some bitch. I hated them, you know. Because they got a part of Perry I couldn't."

Jesus, what was I listening to right now? Emerald had a crush on Perry? Still did I thought, or did he just want to fuck him?

"Greer and I were in a lot of the same classes since we were going for the same degree. I tried to befriend him too and while he was nice to me, we didn't grow close. I wasn't sure what it would take to get in their inner circle, but I wanted to be there. I wanted others to look at me with envy because I was part of their group. I'd never had a friend like that. One who would do anything for me, and Perry had two.

"So, I finished my degree, graduated, and applied for a job at PJS. It was entry-level since I was fresh out of college. Did I get hired? No. I kept applying over the years, not making it out of the first-round interviews, not making it to Greer as he

climbed the ladder there. He knew my name. But no one gave a shit about me.” He snorted. “Story of my fucking life.”

Did this asshole want me to feel pity for him because if so, he kidnapped the wrong guy. He could burn a fiery death with that nail file sticking into his heart for all the fucks I gave.

“I should be working at PJS. I should be the one sitting where Greer is. But no, not me. Not when Greer already had an in with the Altairs. I would have settled for a smaller role.” He put the file down and leaned forward. “I’m smart. Smarter than all those fuckers.”

He leaned back, grabbing the file again to work on the other hand. “Anyway, I made peace with it.”

No, no he did not.

“I knew I wouldn’t get to work there, never get Perry like I wanted him, so I applied for a job at Untouchable as a dancer. At least then Perry and Greer would see me. Maybe I could be a part of their world. But Perry didn’t show, and Greer didn’t recognize me. That was what happened when you lost a hundred pounds, worked out, and got a nose job.”

My eyes widened. Was I on some sort of reality show? This shit was unbelievable.

“Which brought me to JJ,” Emerald sneered his name. “I hate him. He wasn’t the Altair I wanted to get close to, but what choice did I have?”

Not turn into a psychopath, but what did I know?

“I went to school during the day to learn about working on cars, danced at night, and eventually got hired here. I work under an alias, not wanting to tip JJ off to my goal of getting closer to Perry. And JJ doesn’t go to the club, neither do any of his employees since they can’t afford it. I was safe there, especially when I loaded on makeup before I danced. No one found out about my other life. Then JJ got hired at PJS. Became a part owner. He even said he was thinking about bringing some of his mechanics to work there. I finally had my in. Finally could get to where I was meant to be. But that asshole never picked me. Well, I had to do something.”

Of course. Being a normal human being and moving on was out of the question.

“Did you know my name isn’t Ian?” he asked but didn’t wait for me to reply. “It’s Alan. What a horrible name. I had to create these aliases to get away from it.”

He could have legally changed his name from Alan, but I didn’t state the obvious out loud.

“Now I have two jobs, four names, more money than I need, but I still don’t have what I want—Perry. And then you three go fucking public with your relationship. Perry Altair Jr. with not one, but two men.” The chair scraped back as Emerald, Alan, whatever the fuck his name was, stood. “Perry who didn’t like men before. Perry who I thought would never see me as more than a potential employee, which I couldn’t even get to be. Now he’s fucking two men!”

Emerald edged closer to me, holding his nail file which I now realized had a sharp point. “He’s fucking you!” His eyes were wild, making me want to squirm to try and get away from him, but I knew it would only hurt worse. “Does he fuck you, Ocean, or do you fuck him? I need you to tell me.”

When I didn’t say anything, he lifted the leg of my jeans, and dragged the point of the nail file over my skin. “Answer me!”

He didn’t give me but a few seconds before he drew his hand back and stabbed my leg with the nail file. I yelled in pain. It was sharp, stinging, then this awful burning as he filed it in and out like he was doing with his nails only moments ago. My eyes squeezed close, wondering if he was hitting fucking bone because it sure as shit felt like it.

“They’re g-going to c-come for me,” I stuttered out. My body trembled from a combination of the pain in my shoulders and the agony in my leg.

“I’m planning on it. JJ will see the loop I fed into his system. Greer will notice it’s not perfect. All done intentionally. But it bought me time to hurt you. To draw blood from you so Perry would give in to whatever I wanted to get

you back. I have big aspirations.” He pulled the file from my leg, the warmth of the blood trickling down my shin. I clenched my teeth, not wanting to give him more proof he was hurting me.

I was surprised he didn’t start spinning around with his arms wide while holding the bloody nail file like he was in a demented version of *The Sound of Music*.

“It’s only a matter of time,” he said. “They’re most likely already on their way.” He pulled the gun from the back of his waistband and waved it in the air. “I’m ready for them. I want them all dead but Perry, then he’ll see what I’ve done to be with him. The lengths I’d gone to just for him.”

This guy needed to be dead. Not committed in a psych ward. Not held in prison waiting to stand trial. Dead. Because I didn’t think there was any other way he’d stop. He’d proven he was a master manipulator. Not only did he fly under the radar at Dexe’s club but also at JJ’s shop. They were two men I wouldn’t want to fuck with, yet Emerald did. He had to have been smart to get his aliases in place for background checks. He had to know how to control computer systems.

“Now, I have something else in store for you.” He went over to the trunk of a car that was sitting in the bay next to the one I was hanging in. Emerald unrolled a piece of fabric and pulled out a needle. Taking it between his fingers, he plunged it into a small brown vial, drawing liquid into the syringe. “This will make you sleepy for a bit. If I accidentally give you too much... oops!” He laughed that crazy laugh and came closer to me.

This time I didn’t care how much it hurt to move. I swung the best I could, kicked out, did what I needed to but, in the end, it wasn’t enough. Emerald went behind me and jammed the needle into the outside of my thigh.

“There,” I heard him say before he came back into view. “In about ten or so minutes you’ll start to feel sleepy. But don’t worry, you won’t remember what’s going to happen, which is probably good because I plan on walking out of here with Perry and killing everyone else. You’ll live... maybe...”

just so you can see the carnage I brought to your life.” He pulled the chair over and sat down again. The needle was back on the car trunk. The gun rested on his lap. And that bloody file raked over his nails like he didn’t notice the gore on it. “We could have made a lot of money if we danced together, but you didn’t want that. You had to command the whole stage. I should shoot you and be done with it, but then I lose my bargaining chip. As long as you’re alive, I can get what I want.”

God, why did I open my fucking door today? Why didn’t I leave for work earlier? Why didn’t I fight Emerald? If I lived through this—if we all did—I wanted Dexen’s brother to train me, to teach me how to kick ass. I sure as fuck never wanted to go through this again. I could also hope once it was over, someone killed Emerald, preferably with his nail file to his jugular.

PERRY

As a teenager, my dad tried to explain to me what it meant to be in the mafia. I'd heard rumors around school, kids talking and whispering about me. Not JJ because Jordan had him schooled at home with a private teacher. He didn't risk his son being out in the public school. God no. I always knew Jordan was protective of JJ but couldn't understand why. Now I knew it had nothing to do with an overprotective parent, but someone who was concerned with their image and how everything JJ did reflected on Jordan.

It was right before high school when my dad explained things to me. What it meant to traffic guns and drugs like Jordan did. He wanted me to understand, so I could grasp it. Did it scare me? Fuck yes. But I also knew Jordan had never been mean to me. Had never tried to hurt us, so I had no reason to fear him per se.

The older I got, the more I picked up at family gatherings. Jordan liked to talk business with Malik. He either didn't think I was listening or didn't care. I heard a lot of the things he said, and I would try to process them.

Then my dad died, and I didn't have the buffer from Jordan any longer. I didn't have the safety net of my dad protecting me because he did. He was the opposite of Jordan. Now I had to deal with my uncle. I had to be the one to talk to him at family gatherings. I was the one who had JJ as a partial owner in my company.

It was in the back of Peyton's Tahoe when these memories entered the forefront of my mind. While I hadn't witnessed the

harsh reality of what Jordan did before, I was getting a taste of it while watching JJ and Greer make sure their guns were loaded as they flexed their hands, getting ready. Peyton already had his loaded.

The three of them made plans while we drove. JJ told them access points and what the best option was to enter his shop undetected. Greer opened the glove compartment and pulled out another gun. I knew it was in there. But he fucking handed it to me. *Me!* I didn't want a gun. Sure, I'd learned how to properly use one. That didn't mean I liked it. I didn't shoot for fun or because I had to. The thought of doing so made my stomach churn.

"You have to take it, Perry," Greer said. "We don't know what we're walking into, and I want you armed. You know how to use it."

I stared at the gun like it was a live grenade waiting to go off.

"Perry." Peyton's voice snapped me out of the trance. "Dom could be in trouble. Do you want to go in there armed with one of his pencils or a gun to go after someone who could potentially be hurting him? You can hit a bull's-eye. You're a bit rusty but you're not a wild card. You'll be able to hit someone if you need to. Plus, we need you to be able to defend yourself." When he said it like that...

I hesitantly took the gun from Greer and gently held on to it. I didn't want to have this, yet the thought of Dominic being in trouble made me grip it tighter.

Peyton pulled the Tahoe up to a curb about a block from JJ's shop as to not give us away.

East Dremest wasn't run-down, dirty streets, drug deals on every corner, and gangs fighting it out. There wasn't garbage on the ground or homeless men and women on the streets. Jordan had shelters for them and programs in place to assist them. That was one of the things about my uncle, he did do good sometimes. He wasn't all bad. Unless someone looked at the heart of it then they'd see he did this for himself, to keep

his turf clean, to have another layer of goodness to hide his evilness under.

JJ's shop was in the low-income end of East Dremest. He could have opened it anywhere, but he chose there. I wondered if it was so those who couldn't afford the pricey repairs of some garages could have access to his. The more I learned about my cousin, the more I saw he was a complex man, who just needed his layers peeled back to get to the very heart of him.

We were about to get out of the SUV when JJ's phone rang. He put it on speaker. Another reason to think JJ truly had nothing to hide and didn't have anything to do with Dominic being down here.

"Yeah?"

"Jay, are you in the shop?" the man on the other end asked.

"No, Val, but I'm about to go in."

"Don't. I'm going to check it out. I was driving by, and the lights in the bays were on so I stopped. We closed up over an hour ago. No one should be in there."

"Val, there may be something happening in there and we can't rush in. We have to be methodical. A life might be on the line."

"Got it. I'll meet you along the lot side." He hung up.

"Son of a bitch. That kid is going to lose his head one day."

"Is he a liability?" Peyton asked.

"No. He just has no sense of self-preservation."

"Let's hope he waits then," Greer said.

The four of us got out of the SUV, closing the doors as quietly as we could so Peyton could lock it. There was still one gun left inside and it didn't belong on the street because it was lifted. Just because the street was clean didn't mean crime was nonexistent.

There were multiple row homes we passed to get to JJ's shop. There was a lot to the left side with a fence around it, green plastic woven through it to give it a sense of privacy, I guess. I had no clue. Either way, it was locked. If we moved it, it would certainly make noise.

JJ peeled back a section of fencing and slipped quietly inside, the rest of us following him. The gun was heavy in my hand, an imposing weight I couldn't wait until I could shed. From there on, JJ moved like a fucking ghost, weaving in and out of the cars he had tucked in the lot.

We found Val standing by the back door. He was in a heavy black sweatshirt with his hood up over his head. I couldn't see much of him, but he wasn't nearly as intimidating as the three other men with us were.

"Someone's talking in there," Val whispered. "But the security must be off, or they would have seen me out here."

"Whoever it is hacked into it," JJ replied.

"If we had more time, I could have worked around it, but we needed to get here," Greer offered. I had no doubt he could have, given how smart he was.

"We go in here and spread out," JJ said, pointing at the door. "There are a few back rooms. One hallway leads to the garage bays. Ready?" We nodded.

As quiet as could be, JJ unlocked the door, not surprised when the alarm didn't chirp a warning. Why would it when someone had already broken into the place?

Peyton got in my face before we went inside. "Stay behind me. Don't go anywhere else. Got it?"

"Yes." He didn't have to tell me twice. I wanted Dominic safe, but I knew I was no fucking hero. I worried I was more of a liability. If I had to shoot, I would. I'd do anything for Dominic and Peyton.

Peyton pulled the slide back on his gun to put a bullet in the chamber. I swallowed thickly at the sight.

One by one, we went up the hallway toward the garage bays, staying hidden behind tall workbenches and machinery. JJ followed behind us. I thought we were being slick, slipping inside like we did. But we weren't.

"I know you're there," a voice called out.

Off to my right, I saw JJ stand up fast, his body tense. "Rob?" Wait, he knew who was in here?

Peyton crept forward before me then stopped short, his chin lifting to look upward. I followed his gaze to find Dominic hanging from a goddamn hook, his head lolled forward, obviously unconscious. Motherfucker. What was that I said about not being a hero? I was going to murder whoever did this to him, then I was going to kill my cousin for allowing this psycho in here.

"All of you, come out. JJ, I see you. Perry, Peyton, and Greer too. I'm no fool. I knew you three would come for Ocean." He was referring to Dominic as his stage name?

Where the hell had Val gotten to? At least this person hadn't realized he was here too.

Peyton stayed in front of me as we emerged into the bays. There was only one car inside, the other three were empty. There was a gun trained on the man I... Fuck, I loved him. What a shitastic time for that revelation.

"What are you doing, Rob?" JJ growled low, his body tight like he was ready to pounce.

"That's not my name. Three of you know what my real name is though. Greer? Care to hazard a guess?"

"I don't know who you are, but you sure as fuck are about to die if you don't let Dominic go."

"Picture me a hundred pounds heavier with red hair and a bigger nose?" He stood from the metal chair he was in. I still had no clue who he was. It was clear by the way he walked in a prowl-like manner that he was a dancer too. That was how he knew who Dominic was.

It wasn't Greer who put it together though, it was me. In that moment, I knew exactly who this man was. It was in his eyes. The way the light shone down on him; I saw the bright green of them. I remembered the first time I saw him; I didn't think the color was natural.

"Alan?" I asked.

He beamed. Smiled big, clapped his hands together, still holding the gun. "Yes! You do remember me!"

"Your name is Alan?" JJ asked.

"Yes, of course. I gave you a fake name and Social Security number, just like I gave Dexen. You're both idiots or I'm just that good." He winked at me. What the fuck? "Did you see me dance at the club, Perry? I put on an extra special show when I knew you were there."

I could tell him the truth and say I saw no one but Dominic when I was there, or I could lie because I was afraid if I didn't, he was going to shoot Dominic. "I did. You were amazing." I put as much emotion into my voice as I could. Mostly it was fear for the man I loved hanging there with blood dripping down his leg.

I started to move forward but Peyton put an arm out, holding me back.

"You always were a pain in the ass, Peyton," Alan spat. "Always near Perry and if you weren't, Greer was. I couldn't get a word in. Perry, I tried so hard to get you to see me. I even worked my ass off after college to try and get into your company, but I never could. You saw me, didn't you? Everything I did was for you." His gun moved in his hand as he talked. I didn't think he realized he was doing it. Jesus fuck, he was batshit.

"Yeah, I saw you. I'm sorry you weren't hired. You have obviously done well for yourself if you're working here and at the club." What the hell just came out of my mouth? Done well for yourself? He was holding a man hostage and waving his gun around like a lunatic. "What do you want, Alan? A job at PJS."

“Not any job.” He smiled. “I want Greer’s. I took the same courses he did. Graduated with him. I deserve to be in his seat, advising you on the security of the company. And then, I want to be in your bed, Perry. I didn’t think you were gay since you never looked at men that way. I could accept it if I still got to be in your life. But I didn’t get anywhere. Then I see you out with two men. One who fucking dances at the same club as me.” Every word got higher and higher pitched. “I knew he worked for you. I bided my time until I could put the rest of my plan into motion, so you’d see me.”

“Alan, I’m not sure I can give you that.”

“Of course you can!” he screamed maniacally. “You’re going to give me everything or I’m going to fucking kill Ocean!” That gun in his hand became steady as he pointed it at Dominic’s head.

I dodged under Peyton’s arm. If Alan wanted me, he could have me. Anything as long as he let Dominic go. Peyton lunged for me, his strong arm wrapping around my waist, twisting me to the side as a gunshot rang out in the space, the sound echoing off the walls.

“No!” I yelled and tried to turn, gripping Peyton’s arm, struggling to get to Dominic.

More shots rang out, some pinging off the metal around the shop. Peyton threw me to the ground, his large body covering mine, causing the hit I took to the cement to be even harder. I tried to push him away, my hands on his arms, but he was immovable.

Something warm and wet pressed against my palm. I pulled it from Peyton, seeing blood coating my hand. “Pey?” I looked up into his dark eyes while he had an iron grip on me.

“I won’t let you get hurt.” His voice cracked slightly, worry for me, the fear he had I’d be injured or worse, right on the surface for me to see. I thought it was the first time I’d seen Peyton scared of something.

“Let me look.” I frantically tried to get out from underneath him, but he wouldn’t let go. “You need help.”

“It’s a graze. I’m fine.”

“Fuck you, you’re not.”

“Clear!” Greer called out from somewhere in the garage.

“Greer!” I yelled. “Pey’s hit!”

That brought Greer running over, gently moving his brother from on top of me, who was reluctant to go. “Perry’s okay. He’s not hurt except maybe his back from you slamming him to the ground, but he’ll be all right.” Hurt? Me.

I tried to move and groaned. My hip throbbed and so did my upper back. Okay, maybe I was bruised but I wasn’t bleeding. It was minor.

“Dom,” Peyton bit out, getting to his feet. He hadn’t lost a ton of blood, but it had soaked through his white dress shirt. He had left his jacket in the Tahoe.

“I’ll go.” I pushed from the cement, feeling every bit of Peyton’s weight where he had thrown me to the floor.

In the middle of the bay where Alan had stood with his gun in the air, he was now pressed face down on the cement with Val standing nearby, his gun aimed at Alan’s head. JJ had straddled Alan’s waist and was using zip ties to pull his hands together.

“I need Dom down. Please,” I begged. We had to help him.

JJ left Alan on the ground once he was secured, who was cursing out everyone in the room but me. I was getting told by Alan how much he loved me and how he wanted to spend his life with me. Here we worried about Dominic having a stalker and it was me. If I had given Alan more time years ago, would he have done this now? Would he have worked for JJ and Dexen? Would he have ended up working for me and tried to press himself into my life? I was too entranced in my studies to have solid friendships in college. Was that a mistake? Could I have prevented this?

JJ carefully lowered Dominic to where I could hold him, his full weight on me. JJ came over to help lay him on the ground and pressed his fingers to the pulse point in his neck.

“He’s alive.” I let out a shaky breath. It was then I realized I didn’t even contemplate him being anything other before this. I didn’t think for one second he was dead. It was unfathomable to me. I wouldn’t get him only for him to be torn away.

JJ reached into his pocket to pull out his phone and tapped a few times before lifting it to his ear. “Doctor,” he told me. “We also have to do something with Rob or Alan, whoever the fuck he is.” JJ broke off to talk on the phone.

Greer and Peyton came out, Peyton immediately dropping to his knees on the other side of Dominic. He looked him over, put his fingers to his pulse like he was reassuring himself Dominic was alive. We both called his name, touched his cheek, but he wouldn’t wake up.

I vaguely heard Greer on the phone, speaking to someone, but I didn’t focus on him. I couldn’t when my heart felt like it was trying to beat out of my chest and go into Dominic’s.

“Pey...” I said brokenly. “He has to be okay. This is all my fault.”

His head snapped up. “No, it’s Alan’s fault. Don’t you dare put this on yourself. Now help me lift Dom. I saw a cot in one of the rooms we passed in the hallway. We need to figure out what’s in his system and check his leg.”

“The doctor is on his way,” JJ said, kneeling by us.

“A doctor who makes house calls this time of night?” Peyton asked.

“He’s a customer I helped one night when his truck broke down. He said he owed me. I’m cashing in my favor. No questions asked. He assured me this will be totally off the books. No hospitals.”

“We should get him to an ER,” I muttered. “This place isn’t sterile.”

JJ pried Dominic’s eyes opened. “If I had to guess, he’s been drugged.”

“Look what I found?” Val said, coming over with a brown vial.

“Come on,” Peyton reminded me. “Let’s get him moved.”

DOMINIC

Why was my mouth so dry? And why did my eyelids feel so heavy? I tried swallowing but it was like a desert in there. Did I crank the heat up too high before I went to bed?

I moved and pain shot through me, over my shoulders, down both arms. My leg throbbed. What the fuck?

Groaning, I tried to move again. Someone gently put their hands on me to keep me still. They were speaking, but I was trying to come out of the fog I was in.

Slowly, voices started to make sense. I heard Perry say my name, whispering quietly that I was going to be okay.

I smacked my lips together and swallowed. “Water,” I croaked out, sounding like I smoked a carton of cigarettes.

A straw touched my lips, and I gulped down the drink. Something tugged on my arm. One Perry pushed back down.

“Dom.” A different voice. Peyton.

“Yeah?” This time I sounded more like myself. I finally blinked my eyes open, the harsh white light in the room making me squint. “Where am I?” I certainly wasn’t in Perry’s bed. That wasn’t a mattress but a damn cloud. What I was on now felt like a sagging piece of burlap, rough against my hands and legs.

Peyton came into focus first, a white bandage wrapped around his upper arm, a dot of red seeping through.

“What the hell is that?” I asked and tried to point but, fuck me, my arm was so sore I could barely lift it.

“Mr. Summit,” a new voice said kindly, one I didn’t recognize. A man with light brown hair and a sprinkling of gray around the temple came into view. His glasses were pushed up his nose. “How are you feeling?”

“Who are you?”

“I’m Corbin Dove, a doctor and friend of JJ’s.”

“JJ?” Everything was so confusing. I didn’t know where I was or why.

“You were kidnapped by gunpoint, strung up, stabbed in the leg, and drugged.” That was a mouthful. Though now that he said it, I vaguely remembered Emerald showing up at my apartment with a gun. A gun he pointed at me and made me get into his car. Holy shit, he was going to kill me.

My heart started jackhammering in my chest as I struggled to sit up, not caring about the pain I was in.

“Dom, stop,” Perry coaxed, his voice held an edge of panic, but he was trying to soothe me. He pushed closer so I could see him again, the doctor taking a step back. “You’re okay. A little banged up, but you’re going to be fine. Corbin has been taking care of you. He cleaned up your leg and bandaged it. He reversed the drug in your system.”

“I was given something?” Shit, why couldn’t I remember?

The doctor came along my other side. “You were drugged with a benzodiazepine. Midazolam to be specific. It’s used to make patients drowsy and to help calm their anxiety before surgery. It will also make them forget what happens during and right after a procedure. It’s why you’re having difficulty remembering. This isn’t the first time you’ve woken up, but I think it’s finally wearing off. JJ had told me you were drugged and with what, so I grabbed what I needed before coming here. You should feel better soon, but the drowsiness could linger for a bit longer. I’m not sure how much of the drug you were given.”

That was a whole lot of information my brain couldn’t seem to process. If a doctor was here and he was smiling like this one, I had to think I was going to be okay.

“Where is he? Emerald?” If they were looking at me and we were taken care of, did that mean someone took out my kidnapper?

“Dexen handled him,” Peyton said. I wanted to ask how, but again, didn’t have the mental capacity. My best guess was because Emerald worked for him, Peyton filled him in. At least Emerald wasn’t here. Dexen didn’t do anything in half measures.

I moved my arm again, the pulling sensation I now saw was an IV.

“I gave you fluids and an antibiotic,” the doctor said. “I can take it out. It’s almost empty. Your arms are going to be sore for a while from how you were hanging with them above your head. Nothing is dislocated and I don’t believe you have any fractures. Just a lot of strain on your muscles. Your leg was flushed out and I gave you a couple stitches. Mr. Altair has my phone number and will contact me if you need anything else. You and Mr. Lynx both need to have your stitches removed next week. I’m also giving you a prescription for an antibiotic to make sure you don’t develop an infection. If you need anything else in the meantime, I’m at your service.” He worked to remove the IV from my arm and put a gauze pad and tape over the spot it was in.

“Peyton?” I turned and saw that bandage over his arm again. My voice rose to new heights when I asked, “What happened to you? Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, vixen.” He smiled, taking the doctor’s spot by my side. “It’s just a graze.”

“You were shot?” Apparently, I could go even higher. I was pretty sure only cats could hear me now.

“Don’t worry about me. You need to get better.”

“So do you.” My eyes found Perry’s, silently pleading with him to make Peyton rest, but Perry couldn’t read my mind and only looked at me with concern.

“Can we go home?” I asked, begged more like. I didn’t care whose home, I just wanted out of here. The scent of oil,

smoke, and grease felt like it was in my pores, and now I had nothing but bad memories of it.

Perry gave me a sweet smile; one I wasn't sure I'd seen on him before. There were lines at the corners of his eyes, along with dark circles beneath them. "Yeah, we can."

A door closed with a slam somewhere nearby, causing me to jump. Dexen filled the doorway to the room I was in a second later. He wore a pair of jeans and a moss green Henley, one of the most casual outfits I'd seen him in. "Dom," he whispered before shouldering Perry out of the way to come over to me. "Are you okay? How do you feel? Did the doctor take care of you? If not, I can find someone else. Whoever and whatever you need."

"Take it down a notch, Dex," I heard from behind him. JJ stood there with his arms crossed, leaning against the doorway Dexen just came through.

Dexen stiffened but ignored him, his eyes still focused on me. "I'm so sorry this happened to you."

"It's not your fault." Then I found Perry, who was focusing on the floor. "It wasn't yours either, Perry. It was none of yours. Emerald had us fooled. Shit, he told me a wild story. I remember that." I don't remember anything after he told me his story though.

"It was true," Dexen confirmed. "But don't worry, I handled him."

"Handled him how?" JJ asked.

Dexen placed a kiss on my forehead before standing and turning to face JJ. "It's nothing you have to worry about. I said I'd take care of him, and I did. I wasn't going to let him live to pull this shit again. If you haven't noticed, we were both oblivious to the wolf in sheep's clothing working for us."

JJ pushed off the doorframe and stalked over, getting in Dexen's face. JJ was shorter by a few inches but broader than Dexen. He was definitely more intimidating, not that I'd want to get on either of their bad sides. "Did you kill him yourself

or hand the task off to one of your guys? How dirty are your hands these days?”

“Why do you care? Last time I checked; you didn’t give a fuck what I did. My hands can get as dirty as I want them to be.” He inched closer, a piece of paper could barely fit between them. I couldn’t pull my gaze away. I shouldn’t be watching but I was injured. That was my excuse, and I was sticking with it.

“Do you miss my hands?” Dexen asked seductively.

JJ barked out a laugh. “Yeah, so much I imagine it’s them on my cock when I’m getting sucked off by someone else.”

Dexen growled, “Watch your mouth.”

“Or what? You going to try telling me what to do again? Try making my decisions for me? How well did that work out for you last time? I don’t take orders from you or anyone else. I’m sure you remember that day, just as well as I do. The one where you fucked things up. Epicly.”

“He had a goddamn knife to your throat, JJ. Blood was dripping down your neck. It was either him or you. I made the right call, and I’d do it again if it meant you lived.”

If fire could have blazed from JJ’s blue eyes, it would have. “You swore to me you’d never do it again.”

“I didn’t have a choice.”

“You did, but like always, Dexen Dremest does whatever the fuck he wants, consequences be damned! It was just another dead body, no big deal.”

“Consequences? Is that what you dying would have been? A consequence? Fuck you. I don’t need this shit.” Dexen turned to me. “Dominic, don’t come back to work until you’re healed. You have full pay and whatever medical care you need covered by me. I’ll call Junior or Pey to check in.” He faced JJ again. “As for you...” He shook his head, his voice sadder when he spoke next. “I hoped we could have put the past behind us, but apparently that was expecting too much.” He started to walk past JJ but stopped. “I always knew you’d look

good in a suit, Jordan.” Dexen left, a door slamming closed just as loud as it did when it opened.

JJ’s face was a thundercloud of emotion, which he quickly locked down and put a mask over. “Corbin, thank you for your help tonight. Consider us even. I won’t bother you again.”

“You can. I don’t mind helping. I’d rather people get good medical care than shitty care and end up with an infection or worse.”

JJ nodded. “I’ll see you out.”

They left and took the tension in the air with them. Well, with JJ. Corbin was the calmest one in the room.

I dropped my head back onto the cot. It was like a murderous soap opera in here.

Perry sat on one side of me, Peyton on the other. “They had to have fucked, right?” Peyton asked.

Perry held up his hand. “I don’t want to know.”

Both men eyed me with concern.

“Can we finally go home?” I mumbled. “I’m tired and this cot smells like I need a shot from just lying on it.”

“It’s clean, Dom,” JJ said, coming back into the room. “Though next time you’re unconscious and bleeding, I’ll just leave you on the cement.”

I lifted my shaky hand to give him the finger.

He chuckled. “Come on. Let’s get you three out of here. I need to go clean the bay.”

“All done,” a guy said from the hall. He gave me a small smile. “Hi, I’m Val.”

“Dom.” I waved pathetically then whimpered because, fuck, my arm.

“All right. That’s enough of this.” Peyton put his uninjured arm under my legs and his other around my back to lift me. I held on to him even though it hurt. He didn’t need to cause

himself more pain, but I wasn't going to complain about being tucked up close to his chest.

We walked outside, the cold air biting into my skin and making my head ache from the bitter chill. I burrowed closer, wanting to absorb Peyton's warmth into myself.

Greer was there with the back door to the SUV opened.

"Where were you?" Peyton asked.

"Someone had to calm Dex down."

"You've got a bit of beard burn on your cheek, brother."

Greer ducked his head. "Shut up. Dex doesn't have a beard and we don't kiss."

"He's got scruff."

"I'm going to need someone to catch me up when I'm more lucid because this is wildly confusing," I said as Peyton was sliding me into the back of the SUV.

"You got it, vixen." He pressed a kiss to my lips and sat on the seat with my legs on his lap. Perry got in on the other side to put my head on his. Greer took the driver's seat and drove us away from the curb.

"Where are we going?" I didn't want to go back to my apartment. It would be lonely there and I didn't want to be by myself.

"Home," Perry said. "We're going home."

PERRY

Taking off from work on Friday wasn't easy. I still had to field calls and do other shit. But I could do it from the fortress, where the three of us stayed since bringing Dominic back with us late Thursday night. Now it was Sunday. My body wasn't as sore, though I did have a big bruise from landing hard on the concrete. It was nothing compared to the wound on Peyton's arm or the one on Dominic's leg. At least the drug was fully out of Dominic's system. He seemed fine in that sense, not drowsy any longer.

Greer cooked us breakfast this morning then promptly left the room after eating. Dominic, Peyton, and I were like live wires full of sexual tension. All we'd done since we got here on Thursday was sleep and cohabit. There were long embraces, lots of gentle kisses, no sex or getting off though. I couldn't speak for the two of them, but my dick was a steel rod in my sweatpants. I couldn't be in the same bed as them for that long and not want to do anything. Peyton kept putting a halt to it every time Dominic or I brought up something as simple as mutual hand jobs. He said we had to heal.

I was walking upstairs, needing to put some space between them and me, so I didn't combust, when I heard Peyton behind me. Dominic walked a lot lighter than him, and Greer had disappeared into the gym downstairs.

A thick arm wrapped around my stomach. "Where are you running off to?" Peyton asked, his nose pressed to my neck. I shivered at the touch, more intimate than we'd been in days.

“I can’t handle it anymore. I need to come or I’m going to snap.” I could have jerked off. The thought wasn’t appealing when I had two men who were in the same situation as I was.

“Do you want us buried in you, baby?”

I groaned. “Yes.” I would have agreed to just about anything.

Peyton lifted me off my feet, carrying me the last two steps to the top before putting me down. He spun me around and slammed his mouth to mine. I melted. It was the only way I could describe it.

Another body heated my back, hands going to my hips as Dominic’s hard dick rutted against the cleft of my ass. “If we don’t get into the bedroom so I can stop my leg from throbbing, I’m going to sit right here on the floor.”

I broke the kiss with Peyton to turn around and put my arm around Dominic. He’d been propping his leg up to help alleviate the ache, not taking anything more than over-the-counter painkillers. He said something about a nail file and his bone and that was all I heard before wanting to throw up. Peyton tended to Dominic’s wound since I was apparently a lightweight in that department. Dominic did the same to Peyton, helping him with his arm.

We slowly made the walk down the hall to Peyton’s bedroom. It was where the three of us slept together. Peyton had a California king-sized bed with a rich forest-green comforter that reminded me of being outside with how lush the color was. There were long, deep-brown drapes over the two windows to block the sun out when they were closed. A dark wood armoire, dresser, and nightstands finished out the space.

I stayed with Dominic until he got on the bed and was able to lay down, his head on one of the many fluffy pillows Peyton had. I went to move away but Dominic grabbed the front of my shirt and pulled me down to him.

“You’re hurt,” I said.

“I’m also horny. If you don’t want to get me off, I’ll do it myself.”

Peyton put a knee on the bed on Dominic’s other side and slid over until he was lying down beside him. “Strip, Perry. I’ll get Dom out of his clothes.”

What was that? We were finally going to fuck around? I took my clothes off so fast I thought I could try out to work at Dexen’s club. Only there was nothing sexy about how I did it. I was a man on a mission with a dick about to rip through my briefs.

Peyton carefully took Dominic’s pants off, there was nothing beneath. Dominic didn’t keep clothes here, so he was wearing some of mine. Peyton’s would be too big and mine were a little snug. The wound on Dominic’s leg had a white bandage over it, reminding me how close we came to losing him. No, not by that wound, but by the gun Alan had pointed at him, and who knew how much of that drug in his system.

“Stop looking at me like that, Perry,” Dominic chastised. “I’m fine. If you’d like to stare, my cock is right here in need of attention.” He held it in his hand, pointing it up.

“Baby, grab the lube,” Peyton said to me.

I did but then I stood by the side of the bed, not sure where to go or what to do. We’d only had sex once and Peyton orchestrated it. I needed him to do it again, so I had some direction.

“Straddle Dom. I want you rutting against him while I open you up.”

My dick twitched. “I’ve never...” Obviously I hadn’t been fucked. My mouth needed to remain shut. I wasn’t scared of the pain, just uncertain.

“I know. We’re going to take care of you.”

On shaky legs, I got onto the bed, straddling Dominic to line our dicks up, then as carefully as I could, pressed the lengths of our bodies together. He wasn’t hurt anywhere but his leg, but I still treated him as though he was fragile. He put

a stop to that by gripping the back of my neck and forcefully pulling me on top of him.

“I want your weight on me, Perry. I need it.” He thrust himself against me, the slickness of his precum gliding along my dick. I shuddered; knew I was leaking too.

Peyton moved behind me, the lube in his hands. I heard the *snick* of the cap before everything became a haze of lust. Dominic pressed his lips to mine, his tongue demanding entrance. Peyton spread one of my cheeks wider and traced a lubed finger to my hole, where he drew small circles over it, causing me to buck my hips against Dominic.

I tried to focus on Dominic, how good he felt beneath me. But I couldn't for long because Peyton started working a finger inside me. He didn't do more than move it slightly, curving it, until I felt what I could only describe as lightning shooting through my body as a jolt of pleasure so strong had me crying out and arching my back.

Dominic chuckled beneath me. “Bingo.”

Peyton stroked that spot a couple more times before I had to yell at him to stop or I was going to come, which I wasn't even close to being ready for. I didn't want this to be over too fast. Though with the way my dick ached, it might have been a foregone conclusion.

“I'm going to give you another one, baby. Try to relax. I need to stretch you. I promise it will be worth it.” If what he already did to me was anything like being fucked, I would enjoy it immensely.

Pressing against my hole, he slowly pushed another finger in. This time it burned. Stretching was an understatement.

Dominic stroked my face, down to my chest. He rubbed his dick against mine then took us both in hand to jerk us. “You're doing so good, Mr. Altair.” Holy fuck, he broke out the sexy voice. I loved when he did that. It got me hot all over.

“That's it,” Peyton crooned from behind me.

The feeling of being stretched intensified, my body full of Peyton's thick fingers. He kept at it, loosening me up until I

relaxed further. Dominic swept his tongue into my mouth, a hint of coffee on it that I greedily sucked. I was so distracted with the way Dominic was working us over, I didn't realize Peyton had started working a third finger in until the burn was intense as fuck and I was so full I couldn't move.

"Breathe," Dominic murmured against my lips. "It won't hurt for long. Pretty soon I'm going to make you feel so good."

The longer Peyton was in me, the slower he went, the easier it was for me to adjust to him. I wouldn't say the pain was gone but it wasn't as sharp as it was before.

Peyton pressed kisses to both of my ass cheeks. His tongue lapped over my flesh, moving to my cleft where he started a trail down. It had me bucking back against him, seeking more. His fingers pumped in and out; his tongue circled my entrance. Jesus, why did that feel so good?

He kept at it until I was a mumbling mess, begging for them to let me come.

"Dom's going to fuck you. I don't want to hurt you."

Releasing Dominic's mouth, I turned to find Peyton sitting back on his heels, his eyes full of so much love it made my heart stutter in my chest. God, how had I missed it all this time? What I felt for him, for them, was so much bigger than friendship. It was this all-consuming need to always be near them. To share their touches and kisses. To feel their steady heartbeats, letting me know they were okay.

I couldn't hold in how I felt any longer. It was too much, about to rip the words from my chest if I didn't do it myself first. "I love you," I whispered. Tears pricked my eyes. "I mean it, Pey. I fucking love you."

His lips parted like he couldn't believe what I'd said to him. He came closer, his mouth hovering in front of mine. "I love you too, baby. I've wished you'd say those words to me one day. Hearing them now is everything."

We kissed. It wasn't the frenzy Dominic and I had. This was Peyton pouring what he felt into me, letting me know

beyond a shadow of a doubt how much he loved me.

Dominic's hand rubbed up and down my thigh, soothing me in a way I didn't know I needed. I gave Peyton one last kiss and turned to meet Dominic's steel gray gaze. His dark brown hair was a mess on the pillow. He'd never looked so beautiful to me.

"I love you too, Dom." I dropped onto my forearms, bracing them on either side of him and leaned down to kiss him, not giving him a chance to reply. I wanted him to share in my flavor on Peyton's lips to mingle Dominic's with ours.

A hand worked between us, making me lift so Peyton could take Dominic's dick in his hand. A moment later, the slick head of him was pressed to my hole. "Ease down, baby. Try not to tense."

Dominic kept kissing me while Peyton guided my hips lower, taking Dominic into me inch by inch. He was hard and hot and, fuck, it felt like he was going to tear me in half but then I was pressed against his groin. All of Dominic was inside of me. I got the urge to move, to work out the stretch. I needed it to feel good. To make *him* feel good. That was what mattered to me. These men. Always them.

My legs moved, my hips going up enough that Dominic didn't leave my body. I slid back down in a slow glide. With every descent, my body loosened more. Pain turned to pleasure. A sensuous feeling that washed over me until it was all I felt.

Behind me, Peyton touched me, rubbed his hands over my back, my ass. He moved down to where Dominic and I were connected. The moan that tore out of him had chills breaking out over my skin.

Beneath me, Dominic's fingers gripped my hips harder. His body was strung tight like a guitar string. "I'm so close."

"I want it, Dom," I whispered against his lips. "Give it to me."

He pumped up into me hard and fast. I wasn't ready for it, but it only lasted for a second before he stilled, gripping me so

hard I knew I'd have fresh bruises. I didn't care. They were given to me for the best reason.

“Perry!” Dominic’s neck strained, tendons appearing as his orgasm hit. “I love you too! Fuck! I love you!”

I peppered kisses along his neck, telling him again how much I cared about him. How much I loved him.

Dominic started giving me shallow thrusts. It wasn't nearly enough. He was softening when my body had finally adjusted to him.

“Pey,” I panted out, sweat coating my skin.

“What do you need?”

“You. In me.”

“Perry, I don't want to—”

“You're not going to. I need to come. Please.” I wasn't above begging.

“Lean forward more onto Dom.” Peyton's fingers were back at my rim, circling me, pushing in. “Fuck, you're so slick. Dom's cum is dripping out of you. Goddamn, that's hot.”

His fingers left and the blunt head of his dick was in their place. He tried to be careful but his grip on my hip was just as hard as Dominic's had been. I didn't worry about him injuring his arm further. He was only holding me with his good one.

He thrust and I could tell he was holding back. Peyton wouldn't want to hurt me. What he didn't understand was the pain I was in right now was from not coming.

“Come on, Pey,” I urged, reaching back to pull him roughly toward me.

“Jesus,” he muttered.

Then it was on. He started pounding me. Grunts and groans reached my ears. This time I wasn't the one doing the work. I held on to Dominic, loving him while Peyton gave me what I needed.

Dominic reached between us, his hand wrapping around my dick. Two pulls and I was done, spilling hot between us, coating both of our stomachs.

“So good,” Peyton panted out. “So goddamn good.” He moaned low, his body hitting me hard and stilling. “Fuucckk.”

We were a pile of bodies after that. Sweat-slicked skin. Panted breaths. Hearts racing, trying to settle down.

When Peyton slid from within me, the burn returned, and I immediately felt empty. I wanted to tell him to get back inside me. That without him or Dominic there, nothing felt right. But I refrained because my ass needed time to recuperate.

We fell to our sides. Cum leaked out of me, coated my front from my release and down my thighs from Peyton’s and Dominic’s. Dominic had my cum covering his stomach and chest. We were a damn mess. The sight made me so happy I grinned.

“I love you both,” I told them. “I was a fool not to see you two for who you really are for so long, but I’m glad you opened my eyes. What we have... it’s everything.”

Peyton kissed my shoulder and propped his chin on it. “Vixen.”

Dominic opened his eyes, focusing on Peyton. “Yeah?”

“I love you.”

The smile that twitched the corners of Dominic’s lips was so damn sweet. “You do?”

“Mmhhmm.”

“Good, because I love you too.”

They kissed over my shoulder then turned to both kiss me. I’d never been happier.

PEYTON

Dominic was coming apart at the seams, ready to go back to work. Dexen insisted he take three weeks off. After the second week, Dominic felt much better, but Dexen wouldn't hear of it. I thought if Dexen had his way, Dominic would get two months off paid. Dexen felt like it was his fault. It wasn't. There was a lot of guilt going around though.

Perry would be fine one moment and the next, whispering to Dominic how sorry he was. He'd play out these scenarios where if he only were nicer to Alan in college, if he would have paid more attention, maybe we could have avoided this.

If I looked back at the events leading up to what happened with Dominic, it wasn't one thing. It was a multitude of them. Perry saw it as a mistake and wondered who else out there could want to do harm to us. I'd always worry about my men, but I couldn't live like that. I would deal with threats as they came. Going back in time to wonder who was slighted or felt like they were wronged, I wouldn't do that.

Even if Perry was friendly with Alan, that didn't mean he'd get hired at PJS. Getting close to JJ didn't get Alan anywhere. He thought it would though. The whole thing was a mess. Luckily, it was one we didn't have to deal with any longer thanks to Dexen. I didn't condone murder but when it came to Dominic and Perry, I wasn't losing sleep over the loss of Alan's life.

Both Dexen and JJ went through their entire list of employees and had background checks run again to make sure there was no one else in either of their businesses who could

be deceiving them. I didn't blame them. It made me feel better that they did since JJ was bringing some of his people to PJS and Dominic worked for Dexen.

Dominic and I were currently on our way to his apartment. Over the weeks, I kept bringing more and more of his clothes and belongings to the fortress in a not-so-subtle attempt to get him to stay with us forever. Or the penthouse. Either would do. Dominic said he had to go back though. Today was the day he did.

It was Monday and Perry needed to be in the office. Greer was with him. He could easily work from my desk. They agreed I had to stay with Dominic today. Perry would have been here too, except there were a few meetings he couldn't put off.

The closer we got to Dominic's apartment, the more tense he became. I had his hand in mine, running my thumb along his soft skin, trying to ease him any way I could. He seemed to be caught up in his head. No matter what I said, I couldn't pull him out of it, so I let him be, silence wrapping around us to the point it became too much, and I put music on.

I pulled up and parked near the front door. Dominic didn't move.

"You don't have to go in there," I told him. "I can go in and get whatever you need."

"No." He shook his head. "I have to do this." His hand shook as he unbuckled his seat belt and reached for the door handle. I got out to round the hood and be there for him when his feet hit the ground.

Dominic clutched my hand tightly while we walked inside and to his apartment. He paused just outside his door, staring at it, a full body tremor going through him. I pulled him to me, wrapping my arms around him.

"It's just like last time," he whispered against my neck. "My other apartment, finding Fawn there. Only this is something that happened to me."

“You don’t have to live here, Dom. We can pack your belongings and you can move into the fortress.” It wasn’t the first time I’d brought it up, but I didn’t push it before. Now, being here, seeing how afraid he was to go inside, I wasn’t sure he could get past it.

Dominic didn’t seem to have any difficulty leaving my house, or the penthouse. He was fine at the club. We had gone to visit Dexen since everything happened. Though I was certain if I tried to bring Dominic to JJ’s shop, he’d react much like he was now, if not worse.

“I don’t want you to ask me to move in with you out of pity,” he muttered.

Leaning back, I placed my palms on his cheeks and lifted his face so I could look into his beautiful eyes. “I don’t pity you, vixen. I love you. I wouldn’t ask you to move in with us if I didn’t truly want you there. I know Perry does as well. You were still sleeping this morning when he left, but you should have seen him. He didn’t want to go to work for fear he wouldn’t see you again until the end of the week. He wants you there, with us. I want you there. Every day, every night. Although I won’t force you. It’s your decision.”

“What if another bad thing happens at your home or Perry’s? This is the second time I’ve had something take place where I lived. Maybe I’m bad luck.”

“Is it bad luck that you got to Fawn in time? That we got to you? No. Those were both awful things for you to deal with, but you got through them. Fawn is doing amazing with Josh, and Perry and I are so in love with you it’s beyond reason.”

Tears pooled in his eyes. “Really?”

“Listen to me when I say I love you, Dominic Summit. Perry loves you. Fuck, even Greer loves you but not in that way or I’d have to kick his ass. You belong with Perry and me.”

He gave me a watery smile. “Can we try going inside to see how I feel?”

“Anything you want.”

I held my arm around his waist while he unlocked the door. We didn't stop touching when we went over the threshold. Everything in the apartment was just how it was the last time I came here to get more of his clothes. The forced air heat kept the air from being stagnant. Dust motes floated in front of the window in the kitchen where the sun was shining in.

Dominic pressed tighter to me; his breath came faster. "I don't want to need anyone, Pey. I've prided myself on my independence. Fought so hard to make something of myself after I left my parents' house. But I can't... I can't stay here. All I see is Emerald pointing a gun at me. I should have fought him. I should have done anything I could to get away."

"You did what you had to, so you'd stay alive. Sometimes fighting back means not fighting at all. You didn't have a gun. You didn't have a weapon of your own. You weren't trained to handle the situation. You did what you had to, Dom. There's nothing wrong with that."

"I'm learning to fight."

"You are."

Greer and I had taken Dominic into our home gym and shown him some moves. Easy ones that didn't harm his still healing body. I'd reached out to X about Dominic potentially going to his gym and learning from him. There was no one better to help Dominic. Plus, X wouldn't hold back like Greer or I would. X was the best teacher. They were scheduled to start working together next month.

"I don't want to take away your independence, Dom." I pressed a kiss to his cheek. "I want to provide you with love and safety. You don't even have to sleep in bed with Perry and me. You can have your own room, your own space. Whatever you need at whatever pace you need to go at."

He peered over at me. "Do you think I could be in the same house as you two and not want to touch you both at all times?"

"I'm just offering."

“This is crazy,” he muttered, more to himself than me. “We haven’t been together long and we’re jumping in with both feet. Then again, we’ve known each other for years. It’s not like we’re strangers.”

“All valid points.”

“Are you sure you want me there with you two permanently?” When he looked at me again, there was so much vulnerability in his eyes. I’d do whatever it took to make him happy and whole. Make him feel safe again.

“We do.”

“Okay,” he said, looking at the living room. “Okay, I’ll move in with you.”

With his decision made, we grabbed what he needed to go to work this week plus other items he wanted. I told him we’d come back over the weekend and pack the rest of his belongings. He said there was a secondhand shop he loved to get clothes from who would take his furniture, find it a new home. We’d get it handled.

When we stepped outside after locking his place up, it was like Dominic could breathe again. He took in a deep lungful of air and closed his eyes, simply inhaling the fresh, crisp air. When he opened them again, he said, “I need to go to therapy. I can’t keep running from my past. Yes, I can leave this place. I don’t think any amount of talking will make me comfortable living here, but at least I can work through what’s happened to me from when I was a child through now.”

“That’s a smart, brave decision. Perry and I will support you in whatever you need.”

“Thank you, Pey.” He wrapped his arms around me and pressed his lips to mine in the sweetest kiss known to man. I cherished every second of it, every second of having him in my life.

Dominic wanted to head right into work after being here. We had to get moving if he was going to be on time. Breaking the kiss was torture, but I knew I’d get another one later. Dominic was on the dinner shift. Perry and Greer were

meeting us at the club tonight. I was planning on staying there through Dominic's entire shift, even if he told me to go home, which he would. Secretly, he'd love me being there. He'd told us before when he knew we were watching, he danced just for us.

The way Dominic's shoulders dropped the farther away from his apartment we were, how the tension and anxiety started fading away, I knew he'd made the right decision to move in with us. I was also a selfish bastard who wanted him with us full time.

Dexen's guard let us both in when we arrived, no need to call inside this time. And there was Dexen, waiting for Dominic with a gentle hug. The man cared about the people who worked for him. But if he hugged Dominic any longer, I was going to rip his arms off. Luckily, Dominic stepped back closer to me until my hand found his hip.

Dexen grinned. "Come on. I have a surprise for you, Dom." He led us down the hall to a room next to his office. "This is your private dressing room. There will always be a guard outside and with you while you're in the club."

"Dex, you don't need to do this," Dominic told him. "There are already guards all over the place. I'm fine." He looked to me for help.

I shrugged. "You're not going to see me complain about this." If Dexen wanted more security on one of the men I loved, hell yes, I'd take it.

"I just want to dance, Dex," Dominic whined, and it was so damn cute I wanted to scoop him into my arms and kiss him again. It was this whine that said he knew he wasn't going to get his way, but he was still going to put up a bit of a fight.

"You'll dance," Dexen replied. "You'll just do it safer now."

"You're not going to let this drop, are you?"

He cocked an eyebrow. "What do you think?"

"Fine," Dominic groaned. "But I don't want to be smothered. I need my space to get ready and into the zone."

“No one will be in your room with you unless you invite them in. Peyton and Junior have the same access to the club you do now. Your guard won’t hover over you. He’ll be there just in case.”

“I hope just in case never happens.”

I leaned over and kissed him. “You and me both, vixen.”

He tried to deepen the kiss, but I smiled, not letting him. “I thought you had to get to work.”

“I do. You don’t have to stay.”

“Uh huh.”

“But you’re going to anyway.”

“Uh huh.”

Dominic rolled his eyes. “Fine. I’ll see you after.”

“Perry too.”

“Yes, him too.”

Dexen had stepped away at some point, leaving Dominic and me alone in the hall with two guards nearby.

I caressed my fingers lightly along the side of Dominic’s neck, eliciting a shiver from him. “I love you, Dom.”

“Love you too, Pey.”

DOMINIC

Dancing on stage was like second nature to me. I didn't get nervous. I didn't second-guess what I was going to do. However, it was like something was stolen from me when Emerald held me against my will and forced me to go with him. I lost the serenity I felt and, dammit, I wanted it back.

Leon, who was my dedicated guard when I was at Dexen's, stood off to the side, not too close. He was a nice guy. I chatted with him a bit before I walked toward the stage. He was married with three teenage kids. He had retired from being a police officer and wanted to keep working. Leon's brother was a dancer here and when he heard they were looking for a new guard, he recommended Leon. I was sure Dexen ran every background check known to man. As much as I didn't want a guard just for me, I felt protected. I needed that, more than I realized.

Now if only I could get my nerves to chill the fuck out so I could get on stage and be the man I always was there.

Nothing was going to happen to me.

Dexen screened every dancer and member again. He was nearby in case I needed him.

My men were sitting in the audience. They wouldn't let me get hurt.

I was going to be fine.

I blew out a breath and shook my arms, trying to focus on Diesel's music as he finished his performance. In with the good air, out with the bad.

The deejay's voice rang out, giving Diesel his exit. The dancer appeared a moment later, coming down the short stairs to where I stood. Reaching up, he put his finger beneath my chin and looked me over. "You good?"

"Yeah." I hated how my voice shook a little.

"I would have killed him if I'd been there."

I couldn't help but chuckle, nerves mixed in. "You would have had to get in line."

He hummed before pulling me in for a quick hug and leaving the stage area. That was probably the most Diesel had ever said to me.

An assistant came over to tell me it was my turn, so I went to where Diesel just was and took my spot behind the velvet curtain. I shook out my arms again, stretched my legs quickly.

I could do this.

The deejay announced me as the next performer. My music started and it was like a switch flipped in me. Everything faded away. There was nothing but me, the solid stage beneath my bare feet, and the deep bass of the song thumping through the speakers.

The curtains parted and I was back where I belonged.

Every step I took, every fluid motion, it was the music pulling me from my mind, forcing me to let go and focus on what I was doing. I readily gave over, not wanting to be in control any longer. Dancing was my vice. Others drank or smoked or gambled. I danced. The only other thing that made me feel this good was being with Peyton and Perry.

The white mask I wore tonight was a comforting weight pressed gently to my face, hiding who I was though everyone knew. It wasn't a secret anymore. I couldn't give up my stage persona though.

My white bow tie was the first to go as I continued my dance. I used every inch of the stage, commanding the attention of those in attendance. I dipped and stood, undulated,

brought my arms up, loving the stretch. Fuck, this felt amazing.

Normally, I didn't show a lot of emotion on stage. The members wanted a fantasy, and we gave them that. They could imagine we were dancing for them so usually my face was neutral. Tonight, I didn't try to keep my smile at bay. I let it overtake me, let the joy I felt being here wash over me, until I was nothing but a dancer. I was Ocean.

The second song brought me more joy than the first. When I stripped off my white slacks, I felt free. There was nothing holding me down. No one trying to keep me back. I danced like it was the premiere time slot at the club instead of the dinner rush. Every beat of the music commanded me to sink in deeper. To ride the wave it offered me.

Sweat dotted my skin by the time I took my exit. Dexen waited for me while I caught my breath. "You were stunning, as always. How do you feel?"

"Good. Really good."

"Your leg doesn't hurt?"

"No, Dad, I'm fine." I resisted rolling my eyes since Dexen obviously cared about me.

"Private dances?"

I shook my head. "Not tonight. I don't want to be with anyone but Pey and Perry."

He grinned. "Your men are waiting for you in your dressing room."

Now it was my turn to grin. "You don't mind us doing... stuff in there?"

"Your room is as soundproof as mine. Live it up." He winked and walked over to talk to the next dancer.

Leon trailed behind me as I carried my discarded clothes to my dressing room. I hoped Perry, Peyton, and I would at least make it home before the fun started, though knowing I not only had a private dressing room but also it was soundproofed, I was more than happy to stay here for a bit longer.

The moment I opened the door to my room, Perry was on me, his mouth pressing to mine as he backed me up, pushing me against the door until it closed. His tongue searched for mine and I became instantly hard.

“You were so fucking hot up there,” he said against my lips. “Goddamn, I couldn’t wait until you were done. I love everything about you but you’re mesmerizing on stage. Jesus, I need to be inside you.”

He didn’t have to say it twice. With my lips still on his, I worked my G-string down then lifted my mask. I was about to turn around and present myself to Perry when more hands and lips entered the scene. Peyton pulled me toward him, so I was plastered to his big body, which was also free of clothing, just how I liked him. He pushed his cock up, slotting it beside mine. Holy fuck did that feel good. He was already slicked with lube making the glide much sweeter.

Perry was behind me after shedding his clothes, sliding a slick finger into my ass, groaning when I tightened around him. “I’m never going to last.”

“Then hurry up,” I told him. It wouldn’t take long for me either, not with the way Peyton’s hands roved over my skin and the powerful movement of his pelvis against mine.

The stretch was minimal by the time Perry got me ready and entered me. We’d had sex twice yesterday. Once with them taking turns in me and the other with us taking turns in Perry. Peyton would let us work a finger into him, but he wasn’t interested in being a bottom. He was a great top though. Always knew what we both needed. There to orchestrate us however he pleased. Perry and I readily did whatever he asked of us.

Perry sliding into me pushed me closer to Peyton. I was sandwiched in between them, which I admitted was my favorite place to be. And just like I had during my dance, I gave myself over. This time to the two men I’d given my heart to. They touched and kissed me and each other. I’d lost track of whose hands were whose as we moved our bodies as one in our desire to get off as fast as we could.

Everything was a blur, just what I needed. My orgasm raced to the surface. I didn't try to hold it back. I let go, shook in their arms, came all over myself and Peyton. Perry wasn't far behind me, pounding into me fast until he released on a long moan. Peyton came next, his cum a welcoming heat that coated me while he gently bit my bottom lip.

"We're covered in body glitter," Perry mumbled against my shoulder.

I chuckled. "Among other things." I could already feel his cock starting to slide from me.

"You have a shower, vixen," Peyton said, another nibble on my lip.

"I do?" I glanced over and sure enough, the door was open to a private bathroom. "Well, fuck me. I really moved up in the world."

"Dex would probably buy you a Maserati if you asked him to."

"I would look good in one."

"Then I'll buy you a car," Perry growled. "Not Dex. Me." I loved it when they got possessive.

I wiggled my ass, his body still pressed to mine. "Did Pey tell you I'm moving in?" I was certain he did, but I wanted to hear how Perry felt. Peyton told me. Hearing the words from Perry's lips were different. They'd confirm he wanted me there as much as Peyton did.

"Made my fucking night," Perry replied. "Until we got you alone back here that is."

"You want me to live with you, Perry?" I turned so I could peer into his eyes.

"Yes. Wherever Pey and I are, I want you there too. Always." He pressed a delicate kiss to the tip of my nose. "We love you, Dom."

"I love you both too."

We kissed in earnest. Peyton waited patiently so he and I could do the same. Then they kissed over my shoulder.

Sometimes I watched them and jerked off while they made love. It was so fucking hot. Like fantasy porn hot. Of course, they never let me not fully participate. Even if I got off before they did, one of them came to me and lapped up my cum, sucking the last remnants from my flesh.

None of us cared if only two of us slept together when the other wasn't around but when it was the three of us, it was like we couldn't help but have all of us participate. This base need to make sure we were taken care of, and no one felt left out.

We eventually made our way to the bathroom. To say the shower was a tight squeeze was an understatement. We tried wedging all three of us in there. No dice. So, we took turns. Perry and me while Peyton watched, working his cock on the other side of the shower door. Perry came hard against the tiled wall while I had my finger buried in his ass and my hand on his cock. He got out of the shower to dry off while Peyton came in. I sucked him for a bit before he fucked me, drawing another orgasm out of us both.

We smiled like lovesick fools when we emerged from the room. Leon grinned, wishing us a good night after he walked us to Peyton's SUV. It wasn't necessary for Leon to do so. He took his job seriously.

That night when we climbed into bed, I felt like everything had finally fallen into place. I wasn't hesitant about living with them. I didn't have the same nerves I did before I went on stage. This was how it was meant to be.

And when the new dawn came and Perry and Peyton headed off to work, I stayed in bed, the sheets smelling like the men I loved. I slept for hours; my body needed the rest after my multiple workouts last night. Tonight, I'd get up on stage again, work the larger crowd.

Before Perry and Peyton, the dance was just for me. It was my place to let go. But now, it was for the three of us. I danced with my heart in my palm and love in my eyes. I shared a part

of myself on stage and in the private rooms, but only two men knew me inside and out.

EPILOGUE

Six Months Later

“Dom!” I called from behind my desk in the fortress. Work didn’t stop because it was Sunday. Both Dominic and Peyton were somewhere in the house. Greer too.

Dominic leaned against the doorframe in a pair of lacy boy shorts and a tank top. It was early October and while it wasn’t cold yet, Dominic was underdressed for the temperature. He did it for Peyton and me because his summer look was the hottest fucking thing we’d ever seen. Sure, we got to watch him at Untouchable. At home where he bent over right in front of us in those skimpy clothes, nothing rivaled it.

“Yes, Mr. Altair?” he purred.

“Dom,” I growled. I needed to work, not for my dick to get so hard it wouldn’t be ignored.

“It’s either Mr. Altair, Perry, or Junior. Of the three choices, I choose the former. You’re my boss. We’re at work. I’m going to be professional.” He said those same words to me before when we were nothing but boss and employee. This time it was so he could rile me up.

He prowled toward me with his natural grace. Long, toned legs looking delectable, his muscles prominent ridges under his snug shirt. Ever since he started training with X, his body was more defined; he got stronger.

“There’s no one here but us,” I said, my mouth dry.

He smirked. “Pey’s outside.”

I lost the rest of what I was supposed to say after that because Dominic dropped to his knees and blew not only my mind but my dick too. He drank down every drop I gave him when I came.

Dominic peered up at me, so fucking sweet and sinful at the same time. He licked a drop of cum from the corner of his mouth. “Feeling better?”

I caressed his cheek, my finger trailing along his smooth skin. “You know that’s not why I called you in here.”

“Yes, but the result is undeniable. We both feel better.” I peered down and saw his hand and the floor had cum on it.

Reaching into my drawer, I pulled out a package of wipes and cleaned him up then kissed the breath out of him. “Back to the matter at hand...”

“My cock can be in your hand, if you’d like.” Damn, that fucking voice.

“Vixen,” Peyton said from the door. “Were you interrupting Perry while he’s trying to work?”

“Of course.” Dominic grinned and stood, adjusting his lace shorts over his dick. The lace was orange like a pumpkin. Dominic said it was to get into the mood for fall. I thought it was to get Peyton and me into the mood for more sex. Either way, I was game.

Peyton came in and sat in the chair on the opposite side of my desk. Dominic walked over to straddle him and kiss him deeply. The sight had my dick trying to rally. When he pulled away, Peyton’s eyes blazed with heat as they met mine.

“I want you to come in my mouth next,” Dominic said as he reached into Peyton’s shorts, leaning to the side so I could see him fist Peyton’s dick.

“Why do you two torture me so?” I groaned. I had shit to do, yet I couldn’t look away.

Dominic worked Peyton fast, his hand shuttling up and down. Both of our names were on Peyton’s lips when he came, Dominic sliding low to catch it on his tongue just in time.

Dominic sat in the other chair when he was done. “What were you saying about work?”

“Why do I think I can get anything done at home?”

Dominic shrugged. “We tell you to take time off and you ignore us. This is what you get for not listening.”

I shook my head, clearing the lust from it. “Do you think Carissa needs help?” I asked, focusing on work again. Both of them knew how busy I’d gotten at PJS. My other investments were running smoothly, steadily. PJS had taken off.

JJ was a fucking genius. Everything he touched turned to gold. The consumer arm of the company was doing far better than we’d hoped. The tech was great, thanks to Greer’s help. JJ and he worked together beautifully. There were multiple purchase orders for our new products and some licensing deals in the contract phase, both on the racing and consumer side.

Carissa was swamped trying to keep up, and I hated that for her. I had help thanks to my executive team and the employees below them, but Carissa didn’t have that.

“You know...” Dominic tapped his chin. “Diesel told me last week that he was looking for work.”

“Diesel as in the dancer?”

“Unless you know other people by that name. Anyway, I asked what he did outside of the club, and he told me he was a virtual assistant. That he stumbled upon it a couple years ago as supplemental income to the club since he had bills to pay. He strictly does it from home, liking that he doesn’t have to leave to go to an office.”

“Can you talk to him for me? See if this is something he’d be interested in?”

“Yup, and if he’s interested, you can interview him.”

“Thank you. I appreciate your help.”

I heard the bouncing of the tennis ball in the hallway before I saw Greer come into view. He looked us over. “It’s a good thing I’d seen Dom shake his ass on stage or this would be highly inappropriate.” He waved his hand toward

Dominic's feet propped up on my desk, his shorts covering his dick, though there was a wet spot where he must have gotten cum on them.

"What's going to be inappropriate is my fist hitting your face if you don't stop looking at him," Peyton stated.

"First of all, you know I'm not interested in him that way. No offense, Dom."

Dominic smiled. "None taken."

"Second of all, it's not my fault he walks around in see-through clothes. I like men, Pey. I like everything about the male body. Of course, I'm going to look when there's a dick in sight. It's natural."

"You need to get laid," I said. "Go find Dex."

He leaned against the wall inside my office and dropped his head back. "He hasn't been interested in a while. He went cold on me. Dex is still his sweet, charming self, but something changed, and I can't figure out what."

"He told you from the start it was nothing more than sex," Peyton reminded him.

"Yeah, I know."

It was plain as day that Greer had developed feelings for Dexen. I hated that they weren't returned. Greer was a great guy and deserved someone to care for him like I knew he would for a lover, a partner.

Peyton stood. "Come on. Let's go beat the shit out of the heavy bag."

Greer's eyes lit up. He needed the outlet for his frustration.

Dominic gave me a quick kiss before leaving, saying he was going to call Diesel and talk to him about possibly working for me. At least it hopefully solved the issue of Carissa being buried with work. She was a sweet woman, who said she didn't mind. She never complained. I gave her a raise last month. She went above and beyond, more than proving how essential she was to my office.

I focused on my laptop again. There were countless emails to answer and a couple of contracts to review.

Hours later, I leaned back in my chair to stretch. My fingers teased something behind me on the bookshelf. Glancing up, I noticed a piece of paper sticking out from between two books.

A couple months ago, we moved more of my belongings here from the penthouse, including my books. We did stay there sometimes but more often than not; we were in the fortress. It felt like home to us.

I gripped the paper and tugged. It was a single white lined page. I opened it and saw my dad's handwriting.

If all else fails, go to Jordan.

I'd forgotten about it. The note I took to heart and went to my uncle. I placed it on the desk. Thinking about it, the note wasn't for me to go to my uncle, was it? My dad didn't call JJ by his nickname. It was always Jordan. He called his brother Senior to piss him off since my uncle hated it. Jordan said it made him sound old, so of course my dad kept using it.

But now... My dad was referring to JJ. I knew it deep down. This sense of surety. He wanted me to go to JJ. To ask for my cousin's help.

Tears built in my eyes; my dad's smiling face fresh in my mind. The loss of him still hurt but it was like a pinch of pain instead of an open wound.

"Thanks, Dad," I whispered. "You always knew what I needed. I hope I made you proud. The company's doing well. JJ's thriving. I fell in love. I wish you could have been here to see it."

I held the note to my chest, letting my tears fall. I'd done it. I'd gotten my dad's business to the point the profits were astounding. We were successful again. But even if I was still struggling, I'd be able to get through it with Dominic and Peyton by my side.

They made everything in my world better.

They made *me* better.

I'd like to think my dad was looking down with the warm smile he always gave me.

Life was more than how much I made or what work needed to get done. My dad tried to teach me that throughout the years, but I was too focused on the company. It took the men I loved to show me there was more out there.

Love.

Acceptance.

Them.

Reaching forward, I closed the lid of my laptop and pushed my chair back. It was time to find the men I loved and remind them just how much they meant to me.

Dexen, JJ, and Greer are up next! They have a lot to figure out about life, love, and each other. Expect friends to lovers, second chance romance, hurt/comfort, and a HEA in [Three Hearts on the Line](#).



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Paranormals of Avynwood

Co-Writes

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as Haven Hadley

The Perfect Man (MF) with Michelle MacQueen

as Lynn Dare

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle Dare is a *USA Today* Bestselling Author. Her stories range from sweet to sinful and from paranormal to contemporary. There aren't enough hours in the day for her to write all the story ideas in her head. When not writing or reading, she's a wife and mom living in eastern Pennsylvania. One day she hopes to be writing from a beach where she will never have to see snow or be cold again.

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