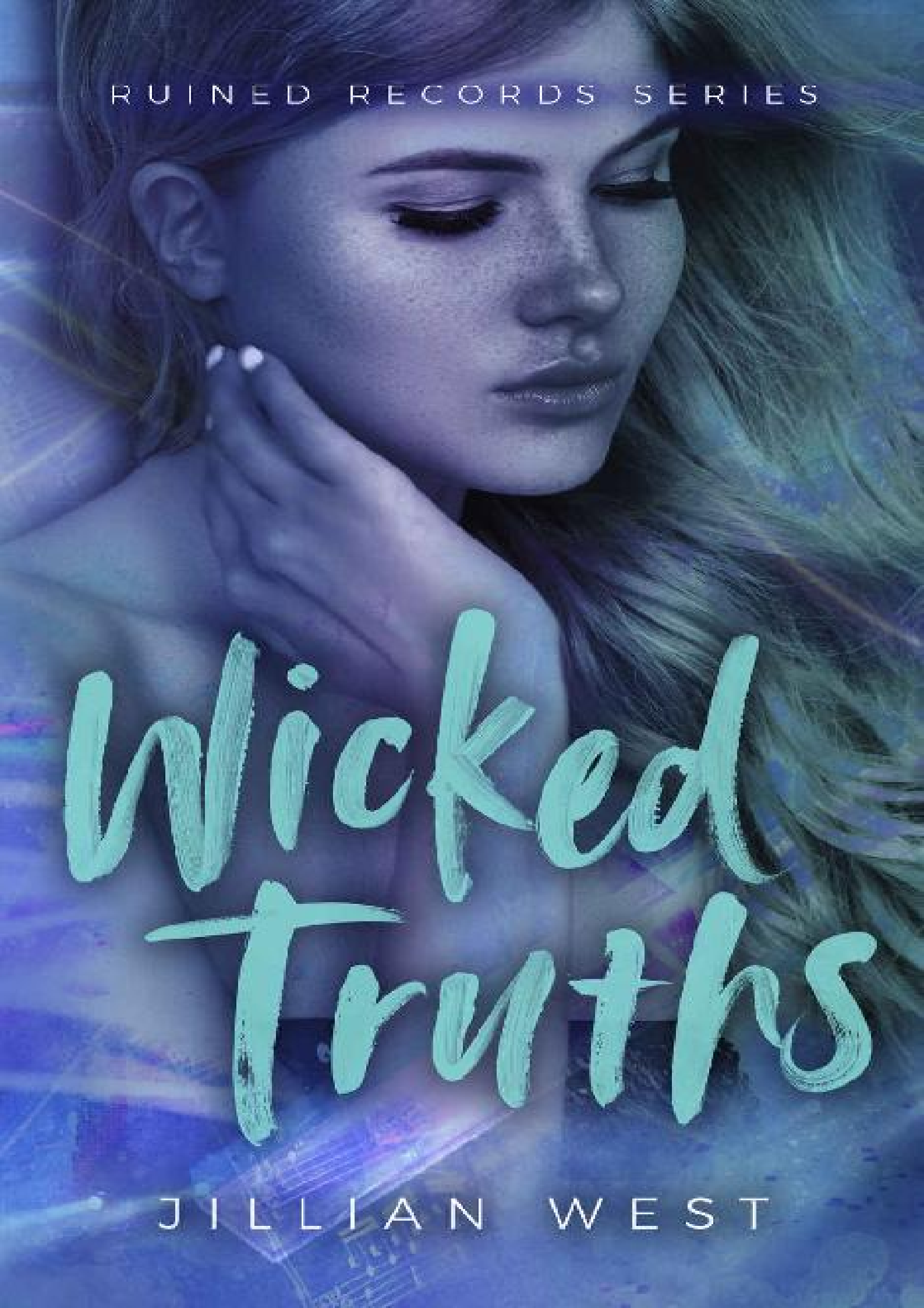
RUINED RECORDS SERIES
Wicked Truths
JILLIAN WEST

Wicked Truths

Ruined Records Series

Jillian West

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Thank you!!
Also by Jillian West

World Information

This book is set in an alternate universe.

You will recognize many things as familiar, but there may be a few you don't. If you recognize the terms alpha, beta, omega then you're probably good.

If not, welcome to the omegaverse!

Here's a small bit to get you started if you're unfamiliar with how things work.

Omegaverse is an alternate universe where similar to wolves or animal biology there is a hierarchy. Alphas are at the top. They're generally bigger, more aggressive, or dominant and they have a few extra features like a knot (think wolves but no shifting.) Betas are the regular humans. Omegas are the opposite side of the spectrum from alphas. They tend to be less aggressive, smaller, and they mate with alphas (and sometimes betas too, but omegas need the alpha to help them through their heat). Alphas and omegas have scents which attract compatible mates. Omegas calm an alphas more aggressive nature.

In my contemporary omegaverse books the world is very close to ours with just a few biological drives that are different & some extra features like alphas have knots & purr to comfort omegas, omegas and alphas have pheromones that attract compatible mates, and omegas have a heat cycle where they're super fertile. During this time it sends compatible alphas into rut. (Lots of practicing making babies.)

A few hundred years ago the birth rates for alphas and omegas were nearly equal. Nowadays there are nearly eight alphas born to each omega. As a result alpha packs have become the norm. Omegas are the center of the pack and as mentioned earlier calm an alphas more aggressive nature. Betas (the normal humans) do join packs sometimes, but their biological drives don't demand it like alphas and omegas.

These alphas growl and snarl, but you'll find no abuse from these men. There are no shifters in this book.

This is a reverse harem romance meaning our heroine will not choose between her love interests. She gets to keep them all.

I hope this helps clarify. You can always reach out to me via social media or email & I'm happy to explain further.

Now on to the good stuff…

Author's Note

Wicked Truths is Oakley's complete romance, but a lot of history played out in the background of Madness and No Omega Needed. It is recapped in this book for those who need a refresher/if you haven't read those. I highly recommend reading the Ruined Records Series in order. You'll see a lot of the characters from those books make appearances in Wicked Truths.

>>>>>Spoilers After This Point<<<<<

There is discussion of a secondary character who was an alcoholic and died of complications from their alcoholism before this story begins. Mentions of a secondary character drinking and driving before the story. Also the repercussions of those actions. Brief mentions of a character who lost a parent prior to the story starting, implied self-harm not shown on page, and parental emotional and physical abuse.

Mental health is important! I always want my readers to know what to expect. If you have any questions or need something clarified please reach out through email or social media.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have!!

If I've missed any things that should be listed please reach out to me on social media or email me and I'm happy to correct it.

This one is dedicated to anyone who had a rough go of it during childhood. You're not destined to fall into the same patterns as those who came before you.

You define your future.

Prologue

Oakley

"That about does it," Sullivan grunts, tossing the heavy black duffel bag down. It scrapes against the floor as it lands next to the rest of our suitcases. "Damn, I feel like we're moving out of a house, not a hotel room."

I laugh. "I'm beat. I can't believe how much extra crap we've accumulated."

We've been in this hotel for almost a month, and the room was kind of a disaster before we started packing, but I'm pretty sure that's normal with two people sharing such a small space.

Sullivan Hayes and I have been best friends for more than half of our lives. We met in the third grade because Graves and Hayes were next to each other in alphabetical order.

It's been a whole lot of years since then, but we're finally on the verge of signing a contract with a major record label, and the owner is moving us into one of the apartments he has for artists.

It's exciting but also nerve wracking. Being a musician is so deeply intertwined with who I am that it's a little surreal to think this life goal is finally within reach.

Sullivan tosses himself down at my side. His long, floppy blondish-brown hair falls over his forehead as he rolls to face me. He's only in a tank top and basketball shorts, and he's sweaty from the deep clean we just gave the room. His black and gray tattoos twine down both arms, peeking out from

under his T-shirt. Between the tatts and the gauges in his ears, he looks the part of a rock star.

"Are you nervous?" he asks, studying me carefully.

I shrug, breathing through my mouth to avoid the reaction that comes every time I breathe in his scent. "I'm excited, but yeah, nervous too."

I do lead guitar and sing. Sullivan plays drums, but we still need a bassist and a rhythm guitarist. Those are the main slots we need to fill, so there's a lot up in the air at the moment.

Jamen Jacobs owns Ruined Records. He's taking a big chance on us by trying to build our band from scratch. It's a huge honor, but it does put a massive amount of pressure on us to be successful and prove we're worth the risk.

"I'm still not sure how all this is going to go," Sullivan says, shaking his head.

I frown, trying to figure out how to ramp up his excitement.

I get what he's saying, but things didn't work out with the last band Jamen tried to match us with.

Matted Whine is a huge name in the alternative rock genre. They've got two frontmen, which isn't unheard of, but it is their gimmick. Adding me to the mix was kind of a raging disaster.

I honestly thought Jamen would tell us to pack it in.

Sullivan and I would've had to head back to Texas with our tails between our legs. Although, I think it would bother me significantly more than it would him. Neither of our families are supportive, and I'm afraid this is my dream not his. He picked up the drums in middle school to back me during our small talent show, and he's had my back ever since.

The hard part is the longer we push toward the goal of getting a contract, the more I get the feeling he's only in this to support me. It makes me feel incredibly guilty, but I made it clear I didn't want to pressure him into anything.

He didn't want me to leave Texas without him, so here we are.

"I can't believe he's sticking us with Marcus." Sullivan rolls his eyes. "He's an antagonistic dick." He's so close and his cedar and citrus scent is so strong, it's difficult to stay focused.

"He is," I agree, trying to keep myself on track.

Marcus Gaffney is a hell of a bass player, but he's also kind of an asshole. He's had a rough go of it lately since his relation to the iconic band Madness came to light. It's tough because we do get some say in who will end up in our band, but making too many waves would be an excellent way for the label to say enough is enough and finally wash their hands of us.

"You aren't afraid he's going to cause problems and tank your career?" Sulli brushes a strand of hair behind my ear. My breath catches as his deep blue eyes study me. He gets so close sometimes I'm sure he feels the same attraction to me that I feel toward him, but it worries me he sees our future as *my career* and not *our career*. I'm a little anxious, but if I don't stay positive then I'm pretty sure all of this will fall apart before it ever starts to come together.

"He's related to some of the most famous rock stars in history." I shrug. "If we stay united then we're always fifty percent of the vote in the band." I grin. Sullivan and I have been a team for years. He's always had my back just like I have his. "I don't think Jamen would sign him if he thought it would be bad for his business."

"That's true," he acknowledges, kicking off his shoes. "Whatever, there's no point in worrying about things that haven't even happened. Want to watch the show about how aliens genetically modified our DNA?"

"You know I love the guy with the crazy hair." I chuckle, nodding my agreement. "His excitement about every single thing they discuss is contagious."

He turns until his head rests on the pillows and grabs his phone from his pocket. We always watch on the tiny screen. I'm sure there's a way to get the show on the hotel TV, but I never miss an opportunity to snuggle up to Sulli.

I like to think he's into me too, and that's why he never pushes the issue to watch on the actual TV.

I climb up, tossing my head on his outstretched arm.

Sullivan chuckles, nodding to the menu next to the hotel phone. "Chicken nachos?"

My heart races. For a whole lot of years, we were nothing but friends. Recently it's been a lot harder to convince my system I'm not wildly attracted to my best friend.

I nod my head, smiling back.

"Of course, but you have to order." I roll over to grab the menu and when I turn back, Sullivan's face is only inches from mine. My lungs stop working as I remind myself it would be highly inappropriate to tackle him to the mattress.

"I knew that was coming." He smirks, pinching my cheek. "Anything for you, Oaks."

My silly heart races at the way his eyes sparkle. It's extremely hard not to do something that could jeopardize our friendship. My impulses want to roll over on top of him and kiss the hell out of him.

I settle for shoving the menu at his chest and breathing through my mouth to settle my raging hormones. Life is complicated enough without adding those thoughts to the mix.

The next morning is busy as we finally move into the penthouse provided by the label. Hawkins leans back against the wall of the over-full elevator, but my massive security guy doesn't look pleased with this turn of events.

The penthouse is fully furnished, but we have to bring up all of our belongings and the instruments I couldn't live

without.

“Are you sure you’re ready for all this?” Hawk asks, scratching at his scruffy blond beard. He’s so tall I have to crane my neck up to look at him. It’s hard not to let his question get under my skin. He knows making it in the music industry is my end-game goal.

I don’t think he’s purposely trying to cause an argument, but I’m getting frustrated. Everyone in my life has asked me some variation of the same question.

It makes me feel like they don’t believe I can succeed. It’s frustrating because if I was truly a beta then I’d probably have more faith in myself.

I’m trying to stay positive and do everything in my power to make it easier to be successful.

Being an omega complicates everything.

I take suppressants daily and use scent-blocking soaps during every shower, but eventually it’ll come out to the public.

I’m staring down a ticking time bomb that will eventually countdown to zero.

“Oakley?” Hawk’s head tilts as he studies me with pale blue eyes. I don’t know if it’s due to his job as a personal security specialist, but he’s always so damn in tune with my moods. It’s almost intimidating how easily he can read me at times.

It’s hard not to wish it went both ways.

I plaster on a fake smile. “I’m super excited. I don’t know why everyone keeps acting like it’s a huge deal. I mean, it is.” We got lucky as hell catching Jamen’s attention. He’s a rock god turned label exec, but the benefit of that is he knows all aspects of the industry, and he treats his people well. “This is a good thing. It’s a step in the right direction anyway.”

Hawk’s jaw tightens, but he nods. “Except now you’re stuck with Marcus the asshole.”

I grimace, leaning back into the cool metal wall as we continue our journey up. He's not wrong, but Marcus is a stellar bassist, and we need one. It puts us one step closer to completing our band.

Wicked Truths still needs a rhythm guitarist, but then we'll be set. Sullivan and I have been playing together seriously since high school. It's taken a lot of years, but we've learned how to seamlessly blend to make music. It's a little insane Marcus was able to effortlessly mesh with us during the audition.

It would be silly to deny him entry into the band just because his personality is kind of questionable. Or that's my take on things.

Neither Hawk nor Sullivan are pleased that Marcus will be on tour with us. I can only hope whoever the label finds to take the rhythm guitarist spot will be good at balancing all our personalities.

Marcus is an alpha, which is problematic because of my designation, but he's also a majorly talented musician. My head falls back, rolling against the wall. I have no idea how I'm supposed to live in such close quarters and keep my secret, but it's not like I have a ton of choices.

Omegas have a heat cycle that comes every three months. It's the time when female omegas are the most fertile, and it sends compatible alphas into rut. The suppressants used to do a much better job of hiding the symptoms, but the longer I take them the less effective they seem to be. Every time I start a new packet, I have breakthrough heat symptoms, and it's concerning because touring means being on the road for months at a time in a very small environment.

We'll be in a new city every day or couple of days depending on the schedule. Asking for heat leave padded into a jam-packed tour seems like a great way to lose the contract that's finally dangling within reach. I've put too much of myself on the line to make this a reality.

I can't back down now.

I’m not willing to risk the label backing out at the last minute if they find out I’m an omega. Once I’m signed, it would be illegal for them to punish me for my designation, but the truth is, omegas are often passed over for jobs.

“You know you can change your mind at any time, right?” Hawk asks, leaning close. My breath catches as he runs the backs of his fingers over my cheek. “I know you have dreams and goals, but if those ever aren’t serving you in the way you hoped…” He sighs, shaking his head. “Just remember, no one holds you to as high of a standard as you hold yourself.”

“Thank you,” I say sincerely. “I’ll keep that in mind, but I think it’s going to be great.” I smile at Hawk as we finally reach our floor.

He nods, taking a step back.

Fake it until you make it, right?

Chapter One

A Month Later
Oakley

The penthouse is huge. We've been here for a while, and I still haven't adjusted to it yet. Roaming the halls and not running into anyone is kind of intimidating.

Who would want to live like this?

I grew up on a cattle farm. Our house always had someone coming in and out. That's just how it's always been. I haven't been home in almost a year, but I know from past experience it's still the same. The ranch hands are still going in twice a day for meals. The foreman will be popping in at random times to tell my father about a fence that's down, which herd is sick, or what momma is calving.

My eyes dance over the contents of the refrigerator. You can tell I live with a bunch of bachelors. There's nothing worth considering. The few take-out containers are days old, then we have soda, a few bottles of beer, and condiments.

I shut the door and meander down to the other side of the penthouse. There are two distinct halves. In the middle there's the kitchen, the laundry room, and a giant living room. The hallway on the left has a couple of large bedrooms and the one on the right has smaller guest rooms, a gym, and a music room —the fancy space with instruments lining the walls is on the far end, away from everything else. I'm guessing it's to help keep sound from bleeding over into the bedrooms, but it's also got some killer insulation.

I peek my head through the gym door on the way by. Sullivan is on the treadmill. His back is to me as he watches

the TV hanging in the corner. The tight white T-shirt is stretched to capacity over his back. It's stuck to him with sweat, and it's clear he's been putting in work recently.

The drums are a decent workout in and of themselves, but since we've been in the penthouse, Sullivan has been hitting the gym with Hawk.

I glance around, expecting to see Hawkins somewhere, but my giant security guy is nowhere to be found. It's weird because before we moved in here, he was around all the time, but the last few weeks, if he's not on shift then he's missing.

My gaze migrates back to Sulli. His forearms, deltoids, and triceps have always been ripped from the daily practices, but his lats and traps are a lot more defined now that he's bulking up.

It takes way too long to realize I'm *still* creeping on my best friend like a total weirdo. I wish I knew how to go back to the way things were before I started to see him in a different light.

The faint sound of someone in the music room catches my attention.

I focus on that instead of the mess my relationship has become with Sullivan. I push off the doorway to the gym and aim for the sound. The double doors are closed, but I barely push open one side.

My jaw falls.

Marcus is rocking the hell out of "I'd Rather See Your Star Explode" by Slaves. The track plays in the background, but he's not playing bass. He's absolutely slaying lead guitar *and* singing the fuck out of the song.

I had no idea he played guitar, but I guess it makes sense.

A lot of guitarists move to bass when there's a need for the position, but not many of them stick because they can't tell an eighth note from a quarter. That, or they dislike fading into the background.

Marcus bounces around, rocking out. He hits the high notes like he should've been a frontman for *years*.

Why is he considered backup vocals?

Marcus never should have been backing up Reba Sparks in their last band. I've heard her sing. She's okay, or she was before that cluster of a situation with Marcus's sister.

Goosebumps erupt on my arms. The level of emotion he's able to bring across is *unreal*. I'm pretty sure Jamen needs to get him his own backup band and put him at center stage. He could be a solo artist with no problem.

I'm still blinking in total shock when the song changes. It's a totally different beat and speed, but Marcus slides into the song like he belongs there. It takes me a full verse to realize it's "Into the Dark" by Point North.

I've heard the song before. There are two different tones during the verses, but Marcus manages both with the type of skill musicians spend their entire *lives* honing.

"Whatcha doing?" Sullivan asks against the shell of my ear.

I jump, letting out a squeak.

My hands fly to my chest as I glare at him over my shoulder. He knows I hate it when he does that shit.

"Can you believe that?" I nod to Marcus.

"He's all right," Sulli mutters, swiping sweaty hair away from his face.

I scoff. "There's no reason he should be doing backup vocals. He's insanely talented."

Sullivan stares at me, blinking his big blue eyes. His scent fills the air around us as he studies my face. I'm not sure what he smells like to the rest of the world, but Sullivan smells like sex on a stick to me. It doesn't matter that he's not an alpha. I crave him with a level of desperation that's embarrassing. His sweaty manly scent is stronger than normal because of his workout.

I'm wearing a thin tank top and cotton sleep shorts, but if I'm not careful, the scent of my perfume will remind him of my ridiculous crush. I clench my knees together, awkwardly wrapping an arm around my chest to hide my hard nipples.

Things have been uncomfortable between us since a couple weeks ago.

I got drunk and tried to kiss him. Okay, so I wasn't actually wasted. I had two drinks, one of which I didn't finish, but it's a convenient excuse.

Since then, I've pretended I was too sloshed to remember how he immediately shut me down. It was one of the most mortifying experiences *of my life*. It's not like I can escape him.

I'm not going to give up fifteen years of friendship just because my pride took a blow. Okay, so it would actually be a million times easier to handle if it were only my ego that took the hit.

My heart physically hurts when I think about it. So I don't. I shove that shit down deep and lock it away.

I won't let my wounded pride, or a slightly broken heart, convince me to do something stupid, like end fifteen years of friendship. It's already led me to make other questionable choices.

"I need a shower." Sullivan draws me out of my thoughts as he turns and saunters off, while I'm still standing dumbfounded over how easily he manages to walk away from me.

We used to be a team.

I really miss it. I miss *him*.

Marcus is singing the hell out of the last verse of the song. My eyes rake over his slender form. He looks like the ideal rock star with his tattoos, piercings, and long hair. If bad decisions have a vibe, Marcus fits it to perfection. Between Sullivan and all Marcus's wasted talent, nothing in life seems to make any sense.

The song ends.

I jump back in some ridiculous attempt to pretend I wasn't creeping on his private jam session.

"Did you enjoy the show, princess?" Marcus asks, turning to face me fully. "You do realize the entire wall I was facing is one big mirror, right? You were kind of hard to miss with your mouth hanging open."

My cheeks burn, but I shrug like it's no big deal I was watching him in awe. "Why aren't you fronting your own band?"

Marcus scoffs, pulling off my Gibson before carefully placing it in its stand. He turns to face me as I wander closer.

I should be bitching him out for touching my guitar, but I'm still completely freaking baffled.

"You've got an insane amount of talent. Why bass?" It's bothering me, and I don't know why. It's not my business, not really. Watching him play it's clear he has the skill to do lead or even rhythm if he wanted to. Bass is an important part of any band, but it doesn't give the player the ability to do the complex and intricate patterns that the guitar does. Bass players are usually dependable and laid back.

"There was already someone on lead." He shrugs, swiping long hair away from his face. "After a shitload of failed auditions, I picked it up to see if I could keep time. Spoiler alert: I did."

"That's crazy," I say, shaking my head. "Why aren't you famous already?"

"I'm plenty famous," he says, scoffing. "Angel made sure of that."

I cringe. Angel Rae Sinclair is the famous frontwoman for Madness. She's an icon in the music industry and she also gave Marcus up for adoption when he was born. Any conversation that includes her feels like dangerous territory.

"Aren't you sorry you brought up my mommy issues?" Marcus prowls closer as his dark eyes narrow. I instinctively

take a step back and then another. My back bumps the nearby wall as he continues until he's only a foot away. "I can think of several ways you can apologize." He flashes a cutting smile. "Most of them involve you on your knees."

"You're very good at deflecting…"

"Not all of us have fat bank accounts to buy us auditions with top labels," he muses as his palms hit the wall above my head. God, he's really close, and he also smells delicious, but it's the look on his handsome face that does my head in. "Some of us started from the bottom with no connections and no hand up. It's a cold, hard world out there, princess."

I genuinely do feel bad for him. His entire family is musical, but he didn't have access to those connections because he was put up for adoption.

My arms cross in front of me, but Marcus doesn't touch me. He stays back just enough that there's no physical contact. I kind of wish he would sink his body against mine. It's so much easier when we don't talk.

"Nothing to say?" he taunts.

"I didn't mean it like that." I stare at the floor. My bare toes wiggle as I fight the urge to run. "I don't want to fight with you."

No matter what I say, he's going to twist it. He always does.

Marcus tilts my face up to his with his thumb and forefinger on my chin. "Then what did you mean? Already trying to get rid of me? It's a pretty solid theme with…" He laughs and it's a cold, bitter sound. "Everyone in my life now that I think about it."

My eyes squeeze shut as a twinge of pain hits me right in the heart. I know it's not my own discomfort. It's concerning as hell that I can feel the echo of his hurt so strongly.

Omegas are sensitive to the emotions of others. Something in our biological makeup allows us to sense the feelings and moods of those around us, but it's never this intense. It means

we're compatible on a biological level. Which is dangerous considering the mess I've gotten myself into with him.

"I just mean you could be the next Damian Sinclair or Johnny Kincaid," I whisper, trying to look away, but he's still holding my chin. "Especially now that you have the connections." My stomach drops when I realize what I just said. Comparing him to the guy he thought was his father and the other dick who hurt his sister… I cannot believe I said that. "I didn't say that right either." I uncross my arms. My hands land on his sweaty chest as I focus on breathing through my mouth. Marcus's scent instantly affects me on a biological level. Playing guitar is a workout. He's sweaty from bouncing around while he played. "I'm sorry. Just ignore me."

I always seem to put my foot in my mouth where he's concerned. His arms still frame my head, but he watches me intently.

"You know what it's like to have a connection to music." His dark eyes seem to stare straight through me. "But without it, you'd still have Daddy's money and fifty other things you could do with your life. I don't *need* to be the center of attention."

The way he says it makes it clear it's a jab at me. That pisses me off. The condescending expression on his face doesn't help anything.

He might be right about me wanting to be a star, but he's got more money than I do from what I heard listening to the guys in Matted Whine talk. Marcus was living with them and their girlfriend Love McKinley here in the penthouse before we moved in.

Marcus and I are like oil and water. He loves pushing my buttons. Sometimes he can get away with it because I dislike confrontation, but he's wearing on my last damn nerve.

"Didn't you inherit half of Damian Sinclair's empire?" I ask.

He doesn't reply, so I give his chest a shove. Marcus isn't huge like Hawk, but he's got eight or nine inches in height on

me, and he doesn't budge.

It's all kind of confusing, but I heard he inherited a bunch of money from Damian.

Supposedly, Damian split his empire, giving half to Marcus and the rest to his half-sister, Lyric Sinclair.

"I gave the majority of that back to Lyric's charity," Marcus says, raising an eyebrow like he's interested to see what I come up with next.

"I didn't come in here to start shit with you," I say, gasping when I notice the top of my tank top is gaping.

Marcus smirks. His eyes are glued to my tits. Shit, my nipples are extremely hard and… I finally catch up with reality and slap my arm over my breasts.

The two black stainless steel balls that frame his lower lip catch my attention as he grins. He never smiles, but damn those snake-bite piercings he got a few months ago are really freaking hot.

"Where's your boyfriend?" Marcus murmurs the question against my cheek.

I have no idea when he got so close, but my system vibrates with want for his delicious, beachy, salty scent.

"S-Shower," I stutter and blanch when I realize what he asked. "You know it's not like that."

"But you wish it was," he taunts, looking practically gleeful.

My crush on Sullivan is no longer under wraps. The night I made a move, Marcus was there to witness the entire thing.

My gaze falls to the floor. That entire experience is one I'd like to wipe from my memory.

I've had really bad luck with men lately. My cheeks burn. I kind of wish the floor would open up and swallow me whole.

"One day you'll get tired of chasing guys who just aren't that into you," Marcus says with a cruel chuckle. "Want to play with me?" He purrs the words, so close I can feel the heat

vibrating off him. His head tilts down toward me as he spins his tongue piercing like he doesn't have a care in the world, but my body has a violent reaction. A shiver slides down my spine as I try to hold myself back from pouncing. "It's up to you." He shrugs. "I thought it might be better than sitting in your room all alone, but—"

"Yeah." I shudder out a heavy breath. "Let's play." He gives me a playful look, raising his eyebrows as he bites his lower lip. "Let's play *music*," I clarify, giving his chest a shove.

Chapter Two

Oakley

The next few days nothing really happens. We're still waiting for Jamen to find us a rhythm guitarist, but the longer it takes, the more my hope seems to dwindle.

"Where's your phone?" Sullivan asks, tossing himself down on the couch next to me.

"No clue." I shrug, dropping the pen on the notebook. "Why?"

"Jamen called me since he couldn't get in touch with you or Hawkins."

"Oh shit. What's up?" I put the notebook down on the coffee table. That's bad. I'm pretty sure we're always supposed to be reachable by the label when they need us.

"There's a show tonight Jamen asked us to cover." Sulli crosses his arms over his chest. His body language is clear. He's completely closed off to me. "Apparently there was a weather delay and the band he scheduled won't be there by the time the performance starts."

My heart pangs, but I do my best to shut down my embarrassment.

The last time we had a late-night show in a club, I majorly misread things and somehow destroyed our friendship with one ill-fated kiss.

I shake my head and get back on track. "What are we doing about rhythm?"

“Jamen has someone scheduled to fill-in,” Sulli says, tossing his feet up on the coffee table. “Are you sure you’re good to perform on such short notice?”

I’m not sure what his deal is. I thought he wanted this musical career as much as I did, or maybe I let myself believe it because I wanted it to be true so badly. He’s been so negative lately that it’s starting to get under my skin. Add on the tension between us since that night and saying I’m miserable doesn’t cover how I feel.

“How far is it from the penthouse? And what time is the show?” I push myself up and off the couch cushions.

Sullivan mutters his reply. I cross my arms over my chest and have to bite my cheek to keep from saying something to him about his crappy attitude. It doesn’t matter. He used to talk to me and listen to what I had to say. He seemed to care about how I felt.

Obsessing about our problems is getting me nowhere.

“Thanks,” I mutter, spinning around and aiming for my bedroom. I need to warm up my voice and get ready if we have a show in just a few hours.

Hawk is coming out of his room as I head down the hallway. He does a double take when he spots me. “What’s up?”

My full-time security has more than a foot in height on me when he’s barefoot. When he’s in boots like he is now, I have to crane my neck even higher to make eye contact.

He’s dressed like he’s going out, which isn’t unusual, but…

Sullivan said Jamen tried to reach him. It’s unusual for him to be anything less than fully on top of his job. The scent of his cologne fills my nostrils, and I don’t let myself focus on where he’s going. Honestly, I probably don’t want to know.

“I’m getting ready for a last-minute show.” I sidestep to head around him.

“Shit.” He swipes his hand over his face. “It’s supposed to be my night off, and I’ve got stuff I have to take care of.”

Everyone deserves a night off, but a hollow pit forms in my gut at the thought he might be going out on a date. The last time he was off for a few days I got into this giant mess with Sullivan.

“So do it,” I say as my face burns. “That’s what B Team is for. They’re completely capable of keeping an eye on me. Have a good night.”

I don’t look back.

Every single guy in my life has been really freaking weird since getting to this penthouse, and I’m officially tired of it.

I wonder if Sullivan told him about what happened between us. God, that would be absolutely mortifying.

The small club is packed to capacity. They aren’t here to see us, but they sure do rock out to the covers we perform.

It’s always hot on stage, but this place is sweltering. The lights beat down directly on me since I’m at center stage.

My dress is glued to my body with sweat, and every time I bend down to place my fingers on the strings, more rolls into my eyes.

It’s fine. One more song and our set will be over, I can play with burning eyes.

We had to borrow the other band’s rhythm guitarist, but it seems to be going pretty well, at least so far.

My stomach flutters with nerves. It hasn’t been a perfect performance, but I doubt these people are sober enough to notice the flaws.

I smile at the people I can see, who happen to be the ones close to the stage, and jump back into my role, hyping the

crowd as best as I can when they're really here for another artist.

Sullivan starts our countdown. I strum my Gibson to give the audience something to focus on.

Sullivan kicks ass on the drums. He sets the stage for timing and rhythm, which is hard without a permanent rhythm guitarist. Once we find someone, they'll be able to mesh with Sulli to give us a solid base for our songs.

Marcus comes in on bass.

He's one hell of a bass player, and it's clear music is in his blood. He keeps us in time as I belt out the lyrics and give them the best guitar performance I can. The energy in the audience is palpable, and I smile like crazy as we ride out the middle of the song.

Marcus stands to my left, and I can't help but take him in as his forearms flex. He definitely looks the part of a rock star. Long, dark wavy hair falls around his face as he stares down at the strings. His black cuffs and leather bracelets slide around as he moves.

I've been playing guitar for eight years, but my hands are small, and they tend to ache at the worst times.

I close my eyes and play through the pain. I love this song. It's an oldie, but it's a good one. It's all about loss and soldiering on. It's also one of the best to show off my vocal range.

The crowd gets quiet as I belt out the chorus. My hands play the chords from memory, and as the song winds down, the audience goes wild.

I'm sweaty and sticky, but a wide smile crosses my face as we finish out the last few chords. Being an omega in the music industry isn't easy, but the feeling I get when I'm on stage is like nothing else I've ever experienced.

I'm willing to fight my impulses to ensure I get to live out my dreams.

The moment we step off the stage, we're swarmed by fans. Most of them are drunk, and a good majority of them are women. Three chicks in tiny outfits huddle around Marcus. I grimace, stepping to the side and shaking out my hands.

A couple more women come over to talk to Sullivan, but he frowns when he spots me rubbing my thumbs. He gives the women a plastic smile and comes over to me, nodding at my hands. "Are they bothering you again?"

"Yeah, my thumbs especially." Damn, tiny hands. It's a curse. I'd be way better off if I could grip my guitar the same way a man can.

"Let me." He grabs my hand and immediately starts stretching my wrist and fingers the way the physical therapist showed me months ago. His huge palm cradles mine while he digs his thumbs into the pad of mine. An embarrassing groan escapes as he hits one of the knots or trigger points that have been giving me the most trouble. "Damn, Oaks. Your tendons are tight."

I swallow thickly, glancing away from his big blue eyes. My gaze travels to Marcus, and I fight the urge to scoff. He's signing something for the brunette with giant boobs, but he gives me a look that's pure fire.

Sullivan trades hands and begins to work on my left as I stare directly at Marcus.

"You might want to ice them when we get home," Sullivan says.

I give a nod, but I'm far more interested in what Marcus is going to do to me when we make it back to the penthouse. He quirks an eyebrow, and my knees actually go a little weak as I recall exactly how intense he can be.

Then again, he's got women all over him, and it's clear they would definitely let him take them home. He knows Sullivan isn't into me like that, but it still sends an unnatural

thrill through my system knowing how jealous he gets when it comes to Sulli.

I roll my eyes, shrugging to cover how much I hate seeing other women trying to hit on him. Being an omega is complicated. He might not be my alpha, but my impulses kind of want to claw out the eyes of any woman who flutters her lashes in his direction.

Yeah, we definitely don't have the healthiest of relationships, but it's still the most real connection I've ever had, and I have Sullivan turning me down to thank for it.

Chapter Three

Three Weeks Ago
Oakley

My gut churns as I spin away from Sullivan. I just made a fool of myself in the middle of this night club. And an even bigger embarrassment of myself in front of my best friend.

I stagger away on too high heels.

I don't know what I was thinking. I'm such an idiot. Yearning for Sullivan is one thing, but I majorly misread his feelings.

The look on his face.

The way he shook his head and gently pushed me away as I tried to kiss him. The moment plays on a loop in my mind.

My face burns as tears threaten to fall.

I need to find my backup security guy and get out of here.

Hawk has taken more personal days off recently than in the entire year he's been my full-time security. The guys on duty aren't nearly as vigilant, which is actually why I did the stupid thing and made a pass at Sullivan.

I never would have done it if Hawk was around because that type of thing is best done without an audience. It's the type of thing I shouldn't have done under any circumstances.

My feelings regarding Hawk are complicated at best. There used to be a time when I would have gone to him and asked for a hug. He really does give the best whole-body hugs and they're so damn comforting. Or they were before he started acting like I'm a client and nothing more.

I wish I could blame it on being an omega, but apparently, I'm just the needy woman who makes something out of nothing.

I'm so tired of being lonely.

My hand flies to my chest to rub away the throbbing ache as I scan for my security team. There are two guys here with us, and I can't find either. I'm the primary client, at least one of them is supposed to have eyes on me at all times.

"What's the matter, princess?" Marcus's hands land on my hips from behind as he pulls me back into his chest. "Finally made your move, and he shot you down?"

"Screw off." I push his hands away, scanning the club.

I need to get out of here right now.

"I'd say that has more to do with him than it does with you," Marcus says against my ear. "Are you gonna run back to the penthouse and cry yourself to sleep?"

"No," I say, but he might be right. My eyes ache with the tears that I won't let fall until I'm somewhere private. The urge to curl up in the fetal position and bawl my eyes out is strong.

"Yeah, that wasn't convincing at all." Marcus chuckles. It's a wicked sound that says he's reveling in my misery. "Go on, run off like the sad princess you are. It seems like your style."

"Fuck you," I snap, spinning to face him. "You're so miserable it makes you practically gleeful to see other people suffering. I think that says more about you than it does me."

"Hardly," he snorts. "Come dance with me. If you run off, he'll know exactly how much you care. Don't give him that satisfaction."

I frown up at him. He's hot as hell in that tortured rock star, bad-boy sort of way. He's got his own damage, and it shows in how he treats everyone around him.

"Aren't you tired of always pining after a guy who knows you want him?" Marcus asks, raising an eyebrow. "No man is that oblivious, meaning he's just not into you like that. Who the

fuck knows why he keeps you in limbo, but it does seem like he's dead set on it."

My heart sinks because I know he's right. I've heard other people's comments that Sullivan likes me. I've seen him scare off guys that tried to hit on me. Why would he do all of that if he didn't want me for himself?

I'm so confused.

My head shakes, and I have no idea what happens now.

What if he decides to go back to Texas and leave the industry completely?

What if he stays but things are never the same between us?

"Let's have some fun," Marcus growls. He's so tall he has to bend down quite a bit to get close to my ear. "If you're really that desperate to get fucked tonight then I'm happy to oblige."

An embarrassing gasp escapes my lips as my hands land on his chest. He's surprisingly muscular considering I've never seen him work out once in the weeks we've been living together in Jamen's penthouse.

Marcus turns me around and wraps an arm around my lower back. I try to look over my shoulder toward where I saw Sulli last, but Marcus tilts my face back to the stairs.

"Nah, you don't need to focus on what he's doing," he says.

My heart drops into my stomach.

No, I guess I don't.

Instead, I let Marcus guide me to the second floor VIP section.

"Can we get a drink?" I ask.

The bar isn't as packed on this level.

"One," Marcus growls, his grip on my hip tightening. "You're not getting sad-wasted on my watch."

“Thank you,” I whisper as my eyes slide shut. I’m really freaking grateful not to be alone right now. I don’t think I could handle it.

We have a couple fruity drinks that I don’t know the name for, but they’re sweet. Marcus is surprisingly good company as he makes jokes trying to cheer me up. We finish the cocktail we’re sharing and head out onto the dance floor.

Music and alcohol vibrate through my system as Marcus grinds his body against mine, song after song. I try to focus on anything other than how hot he looks staring down at me like he wants to devour me whole.

He’s an asshole.

I know this.

He uses sarcasm and aggression to hide his own pain, and I hate that. My eyes have a mind of their own as they keep migrating back to his. He’s grown in some stubble lately, and it makes him downright sexy. Those snake bite piercings of his catch in the light as he smirks.

He’s completely opposite from any guy I’ve ever been attracted to. Normally I go for clean-cut guys like cowboys or even the trust-fund kids that hung around the same places I did back home.

Despite all that, Marcus’s hands feel incredible as they slide over the thin material of my dress. My nipples ache with the same feeling that echoes in my very empty core.

Marcus’s slender build feels strong as I lean into him. His forearm rests in the indent of my hip as he teases my ass with that hand. The other holds my neck in a firm grip as his thumb dances over my jaw. My entire body feels overly sensitive as my thighs clench.

“You must really want to get fucked tonight. You keep grinding on my cock, looking at me like that, and you’ll get your wish.” His warm breath fans over my neck as his lips tease my sweaty skin.

I gasp, clutching onto him even more tightly.

“I-I…” I don’t know what to say because I do want that. I just don’t know how to ask for it.

“I fucking knew it,” he growls against the side of my head. “Sorry to tell you this, but your suppressants suck. You’re full-blown perfuming for me.”

I whine against his T-shirt as his hold clamps down even tighter.

“Right,” he says, shaking his head. His dark eyes take my breath away, or maybe it’s the look on his face as he stares down at me. “You can’t be up in here smelling like that. Fuck. We’re in the middle of a club filled with alphas. Come on, I’ve got you.” He lifts me, wrapping me around his front, and stomps off somewhere. I don’t know where because I bury my face in his shoulder.

Marcus talks to someone and eventually pulls out his wallet. He does something and the chain rattles as he shoves it away in his back pocket. I briefly peek over my shoulder and see one of the bartenders leading us…somewhere.

“Don’t take forever,” the guy says, unlocking a door and nodding. “And don’t leave it a mess.”

“Got it,” Marcus growls, stomping inside. He bumps the door closed with his hip before locking it. My legs tighten around his ass as he slams me against the wall.

My pulse pounds as I squirm against his front. I have no idea what happens next, but I’m super freaking excited to find out. He slides his palm up my neck before tilting my chin up to face him.

“Why exactly would a beta be perfuming?” He brushes his lips over mine.

“You know I’m not,” I whisper. He’s been suspicious and making comments for a while. I’m pretty sure Hawk figured it out when I released soothing pheromones when Love went into labor at one of the shows I did with Matted Whine. And I don’t know for sure, but since Marcus was living with Love and the guys when they found out, I think they either told him or he

overheard them talking. I don't care how he knows. I just want him inside me. "Do I have to beg, Marcus?"

"Nah. I'm going to take care of you," he growls before shoving his tongue into my mouth. His hand on my ass flexes as he grinds his cock against my panties.

The friction from his jeans feels amazing. I sob that, and my face heats, burning with embarrassment.

Marcus snarls, sounding every bit the alpha he is.

"I've never fucked an omega," he says in between frantic kisses.

My hands work on his belt.

I feel majorly accomplished when I finally get it open. He bumps my face to the side, licking down my neck. I'm so wet it's embarrassing.

"I need you inside me," I beg as quietly as I can. The fog is creeping in and that's a very bad sign.

Unbonded alpha and unclaimed omega combined with alcohol?

Apparently I don't make good choices when my feelings are hurt.

I let out a sob when he pulls me off the wall and walks us somewhere. His tongue piercing feels strange as he kisses me.

My ass hits a cool counter and I wobble, clutching Marcus to stay upright. The material of my dress pools around my hips as he pulls me to the edge. I move my hands to grip the surface as he hits his knees in front of me. He very efficiently pulls my calves to rest on his shoulders and fucks my world up as he licks my clit over my panties.

I tremble, focusing on keeping myself from falling despite the awkward angle.

"Fucking hell, dirty girl," he growls against my thigh. "You're soaked."

My face flames.

He's right.

My hand leaves the edge of the counter, and I bury my fingers in his long hair. His tanned skin is covered in tattoos. They stand out in stark contrast as I stare down at him, biting my lip to keep from begging. He's just incredibly freaking hot, and he wants me as much as I want him.

Or that's what it feels like.

I've never really felt like anyone is desperately attracted to me.

It feels incredible.

"Hey, Oakley, want me to lick your slick little pussy?" he asks, smirking.

"Yes, please," I beg, trying to force him closer with a handful of his hair.

"Mmm, gladly." He leaves my panties on but pulls them to the side. The look of hunger on his face takes my breath away.

No man has ever looked at me the way he is.

Marcus stares directly into my eyes as he swipes his tongue over my dripping slit. He's got one arm around my lower back, helping me to stay upright. He uses that arm to tilt me back a little as he tongues my drenched sex.

My legs tremble as they tighten around his shoulders. He licks and sucks like I'm the best thing he's ever tasted. The way he manages to totally destroy me with that bemused look on his face should piss me off, but somehow, it only makes everything more intense. He's not subtle or gentle as he buries his entire face in my pussy.

I moan as he laps at my hole before moving up to tease my clit. He flicks his piercing against it and it's too much.

My nipples ache as my pussy tightens around nothing. Marcus growls, dipping his tongue inside my hole. I have to slap my free hand over my mouth to keep reasonably quiet as I lose complete control. My hand in his hair tightens as he growls. It's an indescribable sound that makes me ache to hear

more of it, but it's the way it vibrates against my skin that has me convulsing.

It takes several long seconds of shivering through the aftershocks before I realize that I need to screw up his world like he just did mine.

"Enough," I moan as his tongue continues to swirl around my clit. My thighs shake wildly, and it's hard to keep myself on the countertop. He lets go of my panties, and they slide back into place over my very wet sex. His thumb teases down my core, and the feeling isn't as intense as when he was putting constant pressure on my clit, but it still makes me ravenous.

Marcus grins, it's the most playful look I've ever seen on his face. He pulls my legs down as he stands before me, wrapping them around his hips. His hand slides up my back as he pulls me flush with his front. "What should we do now?"

I attack his mouth. He chuckles a low, throaty sound as we make out. I'm a little obsessed with the way he holds me to him. My hand slides his zipper down, maneuvers inside his boxers, and then I'm palming his cock.

I moan as my thumb slides over the sticky head.

"That's an invitation if I've ever heard one," he growls, pulling my bottom lip with his teeth. "I still think I'm going to need verbal consent in this case."

My eyes widen as I realize he's got piercings lining the bottom of his extremely thick shaft.

"Please," I beg. It's a little disturbing how badly I want him.

"Please, what?" he growls, bumping my head to the side as he licks down my neck.

"Fuck me. Please, Marcus?"

"Goddamn, I do love hearing you desperate for me." He smiles against my cheek. He pulls me closer to the edge and tilts my ass until I'm barely hanging off the counter.

I lose my hold on his cock and grip his lower back for support. He rips the side of my panties before doing the other

in quick succession. The first side hurts a bit as it digs into my skin, but as he pulls them away, that thought leaves my mind completely.

I don't know what I'm doing. I don't even like Marcus, but I'm also really tired of waiting.

My eyes slide shut as my chest aches. At first, I waited for a guy I actually liked. Then I held out for Sulli for so long it became embarrassing somewhere along the way.

I'm twenty-three years old. It's pathetic when I think of how long I've been ready for this.

Marcus teases my clit with the head of his cock before sliding down and back up. The feeling makes me physically tremble. I whine as my head falls to the side.

I'm leaking slick, and he spits a string of curses under his breath. "...eyes on me," he commands.

My eyes fly to his as my chest rises and falls in rapid movements. His eyes are glazed like the fog caught him too.

Marcus thrusts.

The stretch is extreme.

I go stiff as a board.

At first, I'm frozen in shock.

Then, I'm afraid to move.

If I do, it could make the aching pain worse.

Well, fuck.

That hurt considerably more than I thought it would. My nails dig into his neck and lower back. I stretch away from him trying to find some relief, but he holds me in place.

"What the fuck, Oakley?" he hisses, looking a little deranged as he glares at me. "No fucking way..."

I bite my lip to hold back the sob.

Dammit, I'm pretty sure he just permanently screwed up my vagina. It doesn't feel great, that's for sure.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper, shame lining my tone.

I cringe.

I’m a total asshole.

“You’re okay,” he murmurs, nuzzling his cheek to mine. “You really should’ve told me.”

“Why? So you could pity me too?”

“Fuck no.” His stupid hand is extremely tender as he brushes hair back from my face. “Tell me what to do.”

“I don’t know,” I whisper as my face burns worse than it ever has. “I’m not the one with any experience…”

“Right,” he says, tilting my head back with a handful of my hair. “Want me to stop?”

I shake my head even though I’m not convinced.

“You’re probably going to hate me for this. Definitely not as much as I’m going to end up hating myself, but still…” He lifts me and manages to walk us across the room to a chair with his tip still buried inside me.

I think he actually ends up wedged even deeper as he puts himself down with me kneeling over him. He pulls his shirt up as he stretches back, and I get a nice view of his tattooed lower stomach. He doesn’t remove it completely, but at least it’s enough that it won’t end up covered in my slick.

“If you change your mind, then speak up.” He gives me a stern look. “I’m fucking serious.”

I nod my agreement, whispering, “I want you.”

He wraps a hand around my head, bringing my mouth to his and works my clit with the other. It doesn’t take long for the pain to begin to subside.

“Wow, that actually feels really good,” I moan.

“Don’t take more than you can handle,” he says in a gentle tone that makes me want to punch him. “Tell me if it’s too much.”

He’s not supposed to be nice to me right now.

I kind of feel like I trapped him into taking my virginity. Also, he's never sweet, and I can't handle it.

I'm already feeling extremely vulnerable.

"I'm good, so good." I shove my tongue into his mouth for a change. He growls as the back of his fingers brush over my tight nipple.

I eventually get a little braver, rising and falling on my knees.

"Fuck, dirty girl. You're almost too tight." He plants a hand on my back, pulling my chest to his mouth before yanking down the front of my dress and tonguing my nipple. It sends my desire skyrocketing. My pussy clenches around him as I desperately try to take more of his length on each descent of my hips. It's all so intense. My hand wraps behind his head like I'm afraid he'll stop. He truly has a magical tongue. "That's it, keep working my cock just like that."

He keeps a hand between us, teasing my clit as he helps me learn the rhythm to rise and fall.

"Marcus…"

"Fucking hell," he growls, flicking my nipple with his tongue in quick movements that make me beg. "It's so hard not to toss you down and rut the fuck out of you." It takes a few tries before I realize I can grind over him. It keeps his cock deep inside me, and those piercings of his, which initially hurt like hell, suddenly feel amazing. "I've never felt anything like your tight, wet heat trying to milk my cock."

"You… I-I…" The rest turns into a moan.

"Shh, we've got to keep it down," he murmurs, moving to kiss me.

I freeze, whimpering against his cheek. I'm about to come hard. His thumb works over my clit with the perfect amount of pressure. I shatter, trembling against his chest as I try to keep myself quiet.

"Good goddamn, princess. What the hell are you trying to do to me?" His cock grows so hard inside me that it starts to

hurt again. "Fuck, I'm going to bust." He holds me to him as he fucks up into me, and it makes my orgasm go on for what feels like forever. I wrap my forearm around the back of his head and slam my mouth to his. The growl he releases as his cock jumps inside me makes me leak slick as my body milks his cock. His knot sits just outside my opening, but he never tried to force it inside.

"Fuck," he growls, pulling back with his chest heaving. "That was wild."

I nod as he palms the back of my head. It's such an intimate moment, at least for me, that I have to try not to freak the fuck out.

He doesn't even like me.

And I mostly don't like him.

"I've got you," he says, kissing my temple. "But fucking hell, Oakley. You've got no idea how badly I want to spank your ass right now. You really should've warned me. You needed way more prep—"

"Could you bitch at me later?" I ask. "I mean, you're literally still inside me."

"Yeah, I am. And we didn't use a condom."

My face burns either from the exertion or from the mortification that the fog got me to the point I didn't even consider the repercussions.

"I have an implant," I whisper, pulling his hand so he can feel the tiny rod under the skin in my upper arm.

"I feel like your sex-ed teacher failed you if that's the only thing you're worried about," he says, giving me a serious look. "I've never fucked without a condom. Not before now anyway. I got tested after…" He grimaces. "After my last relationship. I haven't been with anyone since, but my urge to spank your ass for not asking ahead of time is strong." He frowns. "You're too damn naive for your own good. In the future, you don't take anyone's word for that, especially in the moment." He's still running his hand over the back of my head and looking at me like he's waiting for me to agree.

“I’m not—” I don’t get to finish because he’s kissing me again as his cock jumps inside me. It’s difficult to process how incredible it feels. My biology at least is fully on board for a repeat performance.

“Be careful when you climb off,” he says, staring straight into my eyes. “It’s probably going to hurt a little.”

I pull my dress up and carefully climb off his still-hard cock. Embarrassment burns through my system when I realize I did, in fact, bleed on him.

I didn’t think that would happen.

I glance away, but Marcus shrugs.

“Sex is messy.” He nods toward my pussy. “Come on, let’s get back to the penthouse and we can take a shower together.” He frowns. “Maybe a bath. Hell if I know. I’ve never taken anyone’s virginity.” He smirks. “Not that I’m complaining. I just want to make that really clear. I like that I officially own your pussy.”

I snort a very unattractive sound, but I don’t fight it when he wraps his arm around me, guiding me out of the club. I do not complain a bit when we share a strangely sweet bath. I also don’t let myself think too much of it when we fall asleep spooning in my bed as he purrs against my back.

Chapter Four

Oakley

The ride home from the last-minute show is tense. Marcus has this palpable energy about him that says he's about to take his bad attitude out on my body in the best way possible. There legitimately has to be something wrong with my brain because I'm so here for it. I don't even have words to describe how much I want him to use me.

We make it into the penthouse and Sullivan heads off toward his room.

I aim for the fridge and just as I'm about to pull it open, Sulli calls out, "Don't forget to ice your hands."

"I will," I assure him before grabbing out a water.

"Did you forget about me, princess?" Marcus murmurs, suddenly very close to my back as I close the fridge.

My head shakes as I spin around to face him. He grabs the bottle, cracks it, and takes a chug before holding it to my lips. God, he's such a pain in the ass sometimes, but he's also attentive and kind of tender considering. I take a long swig, and he manages to pull the bottle away without any dribbling on me.

"You know, it kind of creeps me out that you call me the same nickname you used to call your sister."

Marcus barks a laugh. "Don't like being called out for what you are?" He stretches around me, dropping the water on the counter. "I assure you, *princess*." His hands land on my hips. "The name gained a whole new meaning with you." He

pushes his mouth to mine as he slams me back against the cool metal of the refrigerator door.

He wraps his forearm under my ass, sliding his pierced tongue around mine as he grabs the water and aims us toward my bedroom. He kicks the door closed without locking it and tosses me down on the edge of my bed before dropping the bottle of water on my dresser.

He prowls back, looking every bit the alpha predator that he is, as my chest heaves in response. He yanks his black T-shirt off over his head, and I hungrily lick my lips, taking in all of his tattoos.

"You know, you really shouldn't play games with me." He smirks, loosening his belt before popping the button on his jeans.

I push up on my forearms, glaring. "Me? You were the one chatting up groupies."

Marcus digs in his back pocket, tossing a couple of scraps of paper at me. "You know how it goes. If I don't take them then I get a reputation as an asshole. The label wants us to be attainable." He laughs. "I'm making sure to hand them off to you. Just in case you want to track them down and make it clear who I belong to." He hits his knees next to the edge of the bed and yanks on my ankles. "Fuck, I forgot you were in these hooker heels. No wonder I didn't have to bend in half to kiss you."

I laugh, shaking my head. "All right, well, I guess you better remind me why I like you." I freeze, blinking repeatedly. "Sometimes."

Marcus snorts, yanking my heeled feet up to rest on his ass as he prowls over me. "I hate seeing Sullivan touch you. You should be thanking me for taking that energy out on your tight little body rather than finding that fucker, so we can have a heart-to-heart about him not touching what's *mine*."

I shiver, clutching his bare shoulders as his weight presses me deliciously into the mattress. I know Sullivan doesn't want me, and Marcus does too. But somehow, the growly, dominant

caveman *you're mine* vibe he exudes makes me feel so damn wanted that I don't know how to fight the smile crossing my face. He grinds his hard cock into my aching core, dry fucking me into the mattress, and I can't wait to see what comes next.

It's hard to admit it, but I'm growing more addicted to these moments.

Jamen Jacobs calls early the next morning. I'm still naked with Marcus curled around my back when I answer. I'm half delirious for the conversation, but unless I'm dreaming, Jamen found us some possible rhythm guitarists, and we need to be at the record label within two hours to listen to their auditions.

"No," Marcus grunts, yanking me back into his half-hard cock.

"Sorry." I chuckle, rolling to face him. "Jamen has candidates for our final band member. We've got to get to Ruined."

"Aww, fuck," Marcus grumbles, palming my ass. "Do we have time for a quickie?"

"I'm going to go with no, considering it's thirty minutes away and we both have to shower," I tell him, brushing my fingers over his cheek.

Marcus grins a lazy, barely awake kind of smile. "We'll shower together."

My silly heart races at that look, and even though I know it's dangerous territory, I still nod my agreement. "All right, I just need to text Hawk and Sullivan, so they can start getting ready too."

"Sounds good to me." Marcus shoves my shoulder until it hits the bed and prowls down my body. I'm probably still filled with his cum from last night or early this morning, but he buries his face in my pussy while I'm attempting to formulate a coherent text.

Marcus and I take way too long in the shower. He's got a towel wrapped low around his hips, but other than his wrist bands and bracelets, he's completely nude. It's always strange to me that he never takes them off.

"Did you hear me, pretty girl? Or were you too busy eye-fucking me?" Marcus runs a hand down his abs, over his towel, until he's cupping his cock.

My cheeks heat as my eyes pop up to meet his. Shit, I guess it's preferable for him to think that.

"Okay, so should I go out and make sure no one is around?" I grip the top of my towel as I slide past him.

"I think that might be just as obvious as them seeing me." Marcus slaps my ass, and his face appears over my shoulder.

"Maybe I can form a distraction? Like I'll drop my towel if someone is in the kitchen and you can sneak by," I ramble because having his salty scent so close always seems to scramble my brain a little.

"Fuck no. That's not happening," he growls, pulling me back into his chest. "Don't worry, I've got plenty of experience sneaking out the next morning. Never in the same house, but…" I can feel my face contort into a grimace, and he snorts. "Uh-oh, are the claws about to come out?" He quirks an eyebrow. "I don't much like the idea of either of them seeing you naked, so I get it."

I frown but nod my understanding.

"I don't want to hear about that stuff," I grumble because yes, I'm still stuck on hating to think about him with anyone else.

"That's the most adorable little pouty face I've seen in ages." He squeezes my cheeks and pulls my mouth to his. It's a quick tease of a kiss, and it's slightly uncomfortable due to the angle, but I still ache to melt into him.

He nuzzles his cheek to mine from behind. “Get ready, and I’ll do my best to make it to my room without detection.”

“Are you sure I shouldn’t—”

He slaps my towel-covered backside again. “I don’t think either of us need the complications that come when your half-cocked protectors figure out you let me fuck you—and I’m not exaggerating when I say—quite fucking regularly.” Marcus chuckles, sliding me to the side.

My heart pangs slightly, and I can’t decide if it’s his emotion or mine. Marcus pulls open the door, heading out as I’m still trying to formulate the words to tell him that I’m not ashamed of him.

I quickly toss my hair up into a ponytail that I know will dry a mess of curls, but my mind is still stuck on Marcus.

I’m pretty sure he needs to hear the words at some point soon, but right this second, I have to get dressed and to Ruined Records so that we can finally complete Wicked Truths.

“Are you excited?” Hawk asks as we head toward the Ruined Records building.

I shrug, glancing at him over my shoulder as we walk. He grins a wide, friendly smile, and I stumble a step. He quickens his pace until he gets out in front of me. He always opens doors like the perfect gentleman.

“Y-Yeah, I mean it’ll definitely be exciting if it works out.” I shake my head. You’d think I’d have found some chill in the last year that he’s been my security, but that’s just not how I roll apparently.

Come to think of it, I’ve gotten weirder over time.

It wasn’t hard to be around him in the beginning.

When I first told my father I wanted to make it in the music industry, his only request was that I have full-time personal security. I didn’t put up too much of a fight because

of what happened to my mom when I was younger, but it has been an adjustment getting used to having someone follow me all the time. It's still better than being kidnapped because of my maternal grandparents' exorbitant wealth, so I've adapted.

Things were simpler before the suppressants started sucking at their job. I'm pretty sure forcing my body to release soothing pheromones when Love was in labor screwed something up with my system. Ever since that show, I've been a million times more sensitive to alpha scents, and it seems like I'm going through waves of heat at random times.

Being an omega is a real pain in the ass.

I have hopes and dreams outside of living pack life.

I speed up to keep pace with him, and his sandalwood scent seems to overpower everything else around us. I've always been able to recognize that Hawk is hot. He's one of those massive guys that make other alphas seem small in comparison.

My eyes stay glued to his wide shoulders as he leads the way. Being around him got harder when I realized I'm wildly attracted to his scent. Freaking useless suppressants.

"I've said it before, but you know you can change your mind at any time, right?" Hawk stops just before the door and turns to face me. I crane my neck up so that I can look him in the eyes. He seems to take up all the space around us as he leans close. "You just…" He frowns, shaking his head. "You don't seem happy lately."

I blink up at him, trying to figure out how to say what I need to say. He's not wrong, but both Hawk and Sullivan are the majority of my misery.

Music has always been my outlet. It's my expression and the way I process my emotions. I fell into it even deeper when my mom died. At this point, I don't know what I'd do if I wasn't performing.

"You know you can talk to me, right, little one?" he asks, brushing his fingers over my cheek.

My eyes squeeze shut as I focus on breathing through my mouth. His scent is thick in the air, and it makes it hard to breathe through my nose.

When my eyes pop open, he's staring down at me with his brow wrinkled. Those light blue eyes of his are squinting as he studies my face. It's hard not to turn into his touch. Then again, he's more than ten years older than I am. He's here to do a job and not to listen to my problems.

"I'm good," I say, smiling. "Hopefully there are some female candidates so I'm not surrounded by testosterone."

Hawk's short blond hair glints in the sunlight as he gives a clipped nod. He's so hard to read and it's getting worse. I don't know what happened, but he pulled back hardcore right around when I tried to kiss Sulli. I know they work out together. Maybe Sullivan mentioned it or asked for advice and Hawk is upset because he liked me. I have no clue, and I feel like I'm driving myself insane trying to figure it out.

Hawk steps back, and I don't have to see it to know the others have caught up. He's only affectionate and tender when we're alone lately. My other suspicion is that he knows about me and Marcus, but at the same time, I'm fairly sure he hates Marcus enough that he would have mentioned it by now if he was aware.

I shake off that thought and nod to the door. I'm probably misreading the situation. I'm fairly sure I should focus on the guy who likes me enough to at least have sex with me.

"Ready, princess?" Marcus tosses an arm around my shoulder.

"Yeah, let's do this," I say as Sullivan finally comes up on my other side. We make our way into the building, but I can't help but feel like I've gotten myself into a real mess. At this point, I don't even know if it matters. Neither Sullivan nor Hawk likes Marcus, and it's kind of a powder keg waiting to explode, but at the same time, they don't want me.

I shouldn't feel especially bad for finally doing something to make me happy.

The morning is busy as we make our way through the plethora of auditions. Some of them are decent. A few are not great. It's getting tedious listening to the same songs over and over on repeat.

"All right," Jamen says. "Let's break for lunch. There are three more scheduled after two p.m."

We all give our agreement.

"Are you hungry?" Sullivan asks, appearing at my side. He shoves his tattooed hands in the front pockets of his jeans. His blondish-brown hair falls in his eyes as he leans closer.

I take a step back. He looks physically uncomfortable any time he's in my orbit lately, and it really hurts.

"I'm good," I tell him.

He leans closer, making his tart, citrus cedar scent flood my nostrils. "You sure? You haven't eaten all morning, and it seems like we're going to be stuck here for a while before we get another chance."

"Bring me back a coke or something?" I ask, taking another step back.

Sullivan frowns. His blue eyes study my face carefully before he finally gives a nod.

"Yeah, I got you." He spins around, heading off.

I don't let myself focus too much on the weird ache that fills my stomach as he walks away. I don't know how to fix this divide between us. I'm miserable without the closeness we used to have. I've clearly learned from my mistakes. All I want is our friendship back, but it's a shit show.

If all goes well with these auditions, we'll start touring. Only as a mid-show act, but it'll give Jamen the chance to gauge interest and see if it's worth signing us to a full-blown contract. We'll be the ones right before the big ticket show of Trigger Finger with several smaller bands before us.

I try not to obsess about the fact there will be groupies everywhere. An awful shiver runs through my entire body thinking about having to see Sulli with someone else or, even worse, him bringing them on the bus to hook-up.

Jamen and the audio guys head to leave the room, and I finally pull my guitar off, setting it in the stand.

Marcus smirks, pushing his sleeves up and giving me a look. That one is dangerous as hell to both of us. My eyes fly around the room, but I quickly notice we're alone. He grins, swiping a hand up the front of his shirt and flashing me his abs. He's such a dick. Or maybe he's not. It's so hard to tell, but he always seems to know just how to distract me when I need it the most.

Chapter Five

Oakley

"Shut up and face the wall," Marcus growls. He already has his belt open, and he's wiggling down the zipper on his tight-ass jeans. "You're perfuming again, princess. This is going to be a problem. People are going to start to notice."

"Yeah," I grumble, pulling up the hem of my dress until it's around my hips. "Fuck me and it'll settle down."

"Talk back and I'll be forced to shove you down on your knees and come all over your face after you're done worshiping me with that frisky tongue." I can hear the smile in his voice. He loves tormenting me. I think he gets off on knowing I need this, meaning I need *him*.

"Are you going to get on with it?" I ask, peeking at him over my shoulder. His black wavy hair used to be nearly to his shoulders, but he cut it recently. The top of his head still has long dark wavy hair, but the back and side are shaved close. His snake bite piercings glint in the low light.

"I can't knot you here," he muses, running his hands over the globes of my ass. "We've gotta be quick unless you want your boyfriend to come looking."

"Screw off," I snap, glaring at him over my shoulder.

"We both know he's why you let me fuck you like you're my dirty little secret." He smirks, biting his lip. He's grown out his stubble, and it definitely qualifies as a short beard. It's hot as hell on him. "You know I don't even like you, but you still let me ram my cock up your deliciously snug little cunt."

He's such an asshole, but his hands are tender as he slides my panties down and helps me out of them.

"Better keep it down, dirty girl. Otherwise, I'll have to shove these in your mouth. We almost got busted last time we were in here all because you were begging too damn loud," he taunts, shoving my panties in his back pocket. "Fucking hell, you do smell slick."

"I am," I grind out through clenched teeth. "So, if you could get on with this then I'd really freaking appreciate it. We have an audition to get back to."

His right hand pulls my head back as his left lands on my ass a few times. My cheeks heat, and I have to bite my lip to keep from pleading for him.

I know he'll give me what I need. He always does. He just likes tormenting me first.

"Beg for me," he murmurs, licking my cheek as he bounces his free hand on my sore ass.

"No." I shake my head.

"Unless you're begging, my cock isn't getting hard. Not for *you.*" He laughs against my throat as he bites painfully. I always forget what an asshole he is during the light of day. He says the words, but we both know it's a lie. His dick is stiff and huge against my ass.

"Please?" I whisper.

"Please, what?" he taunts, wrapping his hand around my hip to tease my clit.

"Fuck me, please," I beg as the fog creeps in. The suppressants aren't working at all. I feel like an omega going into heat.

It's actually a little scary how much I need him.

"That's right, princess. You want to get drilled into the wall by the asshole you don't even like." He finally pulls my chin up with the hand that still smells like my pussy. He shoves his tongue into my mouth and swirls it around mine.

Marcus commands the kiss like he owns me. His right hand finally leaves my hair to tilt my hips back. He slams his cock inside me with one vicious thrust that makes me whine. I still haven't had the chance to play with his piercings up close and personal, but damn do they hit every pleasurable spot inside me.

This is the first time we've had sex where he hasn't gone down on me, but he never pushes for me to return the favor. The idea of it doesn't offend me in the least, but he's a very generous lover. At least so far, I have zero complaints.

"Fuck, baby," he snarls into my mouth. "There's no goddamn way you should still feel this tight around my cock after all the times I've used you."

"Asshole," I grumble, pulling away from the kiss.

"Did I hurt your feelings?" He chuckles, pulling out and slamming back inside me in violent thrusts. "I'd much rather destroy your cunt."

I bury my face in my forearm because I want that, too. Even though I dislike him ninety-nine percent of the time, the same cannot be said for his perfect cock.

"God," he growls. "You like it when I use you, don't you? Tell me, Oaks. You want me to fuck you full of me and make sure you don't come? You'll have to walk back in there with my cum dripping all over your panties and try to pretend you didn't let me bend you over in the supply closet."

"Fuck you," I snap, sliding my hand down to tease my own clit. My tits bounce in my bra as he snaps his hips into mine.

"I am, because you're mine," he taunts. "My dirty little fuck doll to do with as I see fit."

My hand slides around the wall as I try to hold myself up on my forearm. I don't even know how we got here. I never seem to, but we end up in some version of this supply-closet rendezvous at least a couple times a week lately. Not to mention the few random times I've climbed into his bed in the middle of the night or the other way around. His cock swells

even larger, bumping into the bottom of my pussy and all thought seems to bleed away.

“You’re so slick, you’re dripping all over my jeans,” he groans against the side of my head. He eventually pulls my hand away from my clit and stretches it up toward the ceiling. Then he wraps his tattooed forearm around my hip and teases it for me.

“Harder,” I sob.

“You know you’re playing with fire,” Marcus says, biting my neck like he’s a legitimate wild animal. “One of these days someone’s going to smell me all over you or vice versa. What do you plan to do then, princess?”

My eyes squeeze shut because I have no clue. Being an omega is frustrating at times, but I need his pheromones nearly as much as his cock.

Omegas need alpha cum; it’s a whole world of weird that I don’t like to get into, but as Marcus fucks me like he owns me, I don’t mind. His knot teases my opening, but I know he won’t push it inside. That would get us caught, and as much as he enjoys tormenting me with that possibility, he doesn’t want it either.

“Fuck me. You better get there quick, or you’re going to be really pissed when you have to walk back in there, all turned on and dripping in my cum.” His muscles coil tight as he pulls me off the wall and into his chest. “Come for me, dirty girl.”

His shaft swells to almost painful proportions.

I let out a little whimper as he pinches my clit and holds me up with his right arm around my middle. His hand lands on my sternum. I writhe against him as I explode.

“Hell yeah, clamp down just like that. Wring my cock,” he growls. He ratchets up my desire as he teases my clit and slides his fingers up and down my labia. He’s very good at driving me insane with need.

“Please, I need your knot,” I whisper, and my eyes clamp firmly closed. My head shakes. We can’t do that right now, and I know that. This is why being an omega is so difficult.

“Goddamn, Oakley,” Marcus snarls as his cock jumps inside me. His teeth rake over the top of my shoulder as he fills me with jerky, grinding thrusts. “I’ll knot you later. I want to slam it inside you so bad. Say to hell with everyone and everything else and rut you into oblivion.”

I want that too.

I also know as soon as he pulls out of me, we go right back to being on the other person’s last nerve.

My impulses make it nearly impossible not to crave his approval.

It’s insane.

I don’t even like him.

His personality is severely lacking, and we both know it. He bends down so he can give me one final open-mouth kiss. Our tongues tangle in the air, and I try not to relish the feeling of being held.

That’s life as an omega. It’s a constant battle between my wants and my instincts.

“Let’s go see if we can’t find ourselves a guitarist,” he says, grinning against my cheek. “I really hope they can smell me all over you.” He smirks. “That way they’ll know who your pussy belongs to.”

I frown over my shoulder at him. But the weirdo nuzzles his cheek to mine and my stupid heart races at the contact. Dammit, I should know better, but it makes me grin like a total goofball.

“He’s killing it,” I murmur to Sulli. We’ve been through a handful of auditions, but the one now is absolutely rocking the hell out of the old Madness song.

“He’s all right,” Sullivan says, close to my ear. His warm breath fans over my neck as he speaks.

I cross my legs, leaning into the other arm of the chair I'm sitting in to put some space between us.

I don't know what his problem is because Liam is shredding the song. He's got crazy talent. He's also capable of playing rhythm or lead guitar, which is huge.

Marcus comes over, tossing himself into the chair on my right side. He leans forward, resting his tattooed forearms on his thighs, and he smirks as his eyes cut to the side.

I'm still covered in his salty scent, and he knows it.

"He's exactly what we're looking for," he says, playing with his tongue piercing. "Are we all getting a vote or does the princess get the final choice?"

"Fuck you," I whisper-hiss.

Marcus smirks at Sullivan over my shoulder. "Any-fucking-time you'd like."

"He's so damn disrespectful," Sullivan says from my left side. "I don't know why you even put up with him."

My eyes are still glued to Marcus. He raises a black-painted nail and flips Sulli off. His eyebrow raises like he's just waiting for the chance to out our arrangement. It's a freaking minefield of my own making.

Liam finishes his part. His eyes fly to us. Jamen leaves the cluster of guys he's been standing with and extends a hand to Liam.

"You did me proud." Jamen laughs. "You played it almost better than I did."

"No, sir," Liam says, looking damn shell-shocked. "I do hope I did it justice, though."

"Definitely," I agree, coming to stand on his other side. "And you're available to get started immediately? No other contracts you have to honor out?"

"I've never performed professionally before." Liam readjusts his guitar before swiping long brown hair back from his eyes. "I've done some recording work, but fill-in only."

His accent is thick. I can't tell exactly if it's Irish or English, but it has to be one of those two.

Jamen smirks, crossing his arms over his chest. "What do you think?"

Sulli and Marcus come up, framing me on either side. My head swivels from side to side. Sulli looks interested in what I have to say. Marcus is picking at the cuff on his right wrist.

"I think we'd be lucky to have you, if you're interested?" I give Liam a smile.

"Fuck yes," he whoops, fist pumping the air.

"I'll have legal get the contracts started." Jamen pats him on the back. "Congratulations. I thought you'd be a good fit for them."

"Welcome to Wicked Truths," Marcus says, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Thanks, man." Liam smiles a wide smile that Marcus absolutely doesn't return.

"At least pretend not to be an asshole?" I bump my shoulder against Marcus's.

"Anything for you, princess." Marcus pinches my cheek in his hand that very much still smells like my pussy.

Ohmigod, I'm going to murder him.

After our storage closet rendezvous, he was supposed to do his best not to smell like me. Step one seems like washing his damn hands when we both visited the bathroom.

Jamen calls for Liam. Our new rhythm guitarist gives us a wide smile and a nod before heading over to talk to Jamen.

I need something to focus on outside of the awkward as hell situation I find myself in every time I'm alone with Sulli and Marcus.

"Right, does anyone know where Hawk is?" I glance around.

"Not a clue," Sullivan mutters.

“No,” Marcus says.

Okay, they both seem super weird. I back away, tossing a thumb toward the door. “I’m going to grab a sandwich.”

I’m pretty sure neither of them care because they don’t say a word.

They simply continue to glare at each other.

I aim for the door without a backward glance.

Chapter Six

Liam

The drummer and the bassist square off. The pretty lead singer, Oakley, scoffs at something and heads out.

"Are we good?" I ask Jamen. "Do you need me for anything?" My accent rolls through my words, causing them to run together a bit. It's a right mess of Irish and English at times from growing up in both countries.

"We're good," he says, clapping me on the back. "We'll get you moved into the penthouse and set up someone for song creation."

I rock on my toes.

I did all that in my last band back before it all fell apart, but I'm not trying to come off as the cocky asshole who thinks he can do it all.

I give him a grateful smile and hold out a hand for him to shake, but my eyes track the curvy chick as she heads out the door.

I need to talk to that woman and get some idea of what I'm walking into.

"Thank you." We shake, and I direct my thumb toward the door. "I know you warned me, but I think I'm going to see for myself what the lass has to say."

Jamen smirks. "Your assistant can get the information. Go on."

I give Randall a nod and aim to follow Oakley. I have to book it to catch up. The elevator doors are almost closed, but I

jam my finger against the button and the doors pop open.

"Hey." I flash her a wicked smile. "Where are you headed?"

"I needed some air," she mutters, crossing lithe arms over her chest.

"Gotcha." I laugh, the sound echoing around the small space.

She was a lot friendlier in the room full of people. I wonder if this is the true Oakley Graves. Maybe that's why Marcus calls her *princess*. Most lead singers do tend to enjoy being the center of attention, and I've known a few with attitude problems.

I should know.

I did lead in the last band I was in.

Back before Lyric and Ryder showed up to scrape me out of the bottom of a bottle.

Yeah, I'm not going there. No fucking thank you.

"Which one of them are you fucking?" I lean against the wall of the elevator, giving her a shitty grin.

I need a distraction, and other people's drama sounds like a decent option to focus on.

Oakley frowns. Her eyebrows pull together as she glares at me.

I chuckle, shrugging unapologetically. "It's pretty clear they hate each other. I figure I deserve to know what I'm walking into."

"Do you smoke?" she asks, eyeing me head to toe.

"Weed?" Now I'm the one frowning.

Yeah, I mean doesn't everyone from time to time?

"Cigarettes." She swipes a hand through the air, aiming it at herself. "I need a freaking cigarette."

The elevator hits the parking garage level, and Oakley saunters out without waiting for my reply. She doesn't aim for

the cars, instead, she takes the sidewalk that leads toward the front of the building.

“Hey,” I murmur, grabbing her wrist. “Why didn’t you exit through the lobby if you were going to go that direction anyway?”

“Force of habit, I guess. We always leave through the garage. Are you coming?” she asks, but again she doesn’t wait for me. As she turns to head off somewhere, her curvy backside sways.

“Smoking is exceptionally bad—”

“For my health. Yeah, I know.” She continues walking without looking back.

“I was going to say for your voice and musical career, but yeah, that too.” I chuckle, jogging to keep up.

The curvy little woman stomps off at a rapid pace.

My eyes zero in on the bruises on the back of her arm and thighs just above her knees. If I didn’t recognize those as sex related marks, I’d be right fucking pissed. My dads weren’t great to my mum, but those bruises she’s sporting are a different sort entirely.

“Is it both of them?”

“What?” She spins to face me. Her strawberry blonde hair glints in the sunlight as it bounces.

Oakley Graves is a beautiful woman. Her nose and cheeks have a smattering of freckles that seem to match her perfectly. Her plush, pink lips are turned down slightly in a frown as she looks at me expectantly. Those huge blue-green eyes narrow at me the longer I take to answer.

I grin because it’s kinda sexy when she’s pissed off.

She still doesn’t say anything.

“You’re fucking both of them, right? That’s why they hate each other. Love triangle at its finest.” I barely hold back the smile at the murderous look she shoots my way.

“I’m not with either of them,” she says in a weirdly prim tone. “Sullivan is a friend and Marcus is my bandmate.”

“Do they know you’re banging the other or is this, like, insider information?” I toss an arm around her back and lead her toward wherever we were originally headed.

“They do not because that is not the case,” she snaps, slapping away my hand.

“Well, this should be interesting,” I mutter under my breath.

She’s absolutely fucking one of them.

I’m pretty sure it’s not the farm boy with enough tattoos to rival my own count. I don’t have the first clue whose room is next to mine, but I’ve heard her begging moans a few times over the last week.

I’m bored. The entire goal is to get enough traction with the local community and songs created that we can put on steady shows. We’ve practiced our asses off, and things are finally beginning to come together.

I push open my door and head out. This entire place is like nothing I’m used to.

Being in the States is taking some getting used to as a whole. I’m accustomed to England. I’m Irish, but my mum took a job and moved us to England when I was a teenager. Once she finally got some self-respect and decided enough was enough with my dads.

Sullivan is in the gym when I walk by. I work out here or there, but honestly, I prefer workouts of another kind. Sound spills out of the music room as I aim for it. The speakers are blaring with some dark, old-school heavy metal.

I’m surprised to see Oakley on the couch with a notebook. Marcus usually sticks close to her side, but he’s not around. I

shut the door and saunter across the room, tossing myself down on the other side of the sofa.

"Whatcha doing?" I ask, kicking my feet up on the coffee table.

She glances over, giving me a look that says she couldn't understand a word of that. Or possibly she wants me to fuck off back the way I came. Her hand wraps around the remote for the stereo system and she significantly lowers the volume.

I repeat my question.

"Trying to write us a few songs," she says, shrugging. "I'm no Lyric Sinclair, but I usually write my own lyrics anyway, so if someone can help compose the music then…"

"Oh, sweetheart." I chuckle. "That just so happens to be a huge part of my skill set."

Oakley blinks big blue eyes, tilting her head as she studies me. Goddamn, she's really fucking pretty with her lips pursed and her hair fanning around her face.

"Yeah? Let's do it." She smiles brightly, and it takes everything in me to keep from offering to do her.

Look at that.

I'm evolving.

I snort at the thought.

I'm not opposed to making it a good old-fashioned gang bang on the road. That's the shite my dirty little heart lives for.

Oakley scoots over close enough that we can study her notebook together, and I remind myself this is the big leagues. It's how I will ensure my mother never needs to work another day in her life. I get my shit together and focus to the best of my ability.

We write and practice the next several hours away. Lead and rhythm can do a lot together, but we can't rock a full ensemble

without Sullivan and Marcus.

I'm showing Oakley how I think she should play the chords when Marcus walks in. My arms are wrapped around her from behind, and I'm supporting the neck with my other hand on the body of her Gibson. Basically, I'm all up on her tight little body.

"Hey," she says, tilting her head and smiling at Marcus.

She doesn't jump away or act like we got caught doing something we shouldn't have been. Not that we were, but I was almost positive he's the one she's banging. I'm going to need to do some covert checking on whose room is where.

Marcus growls, prowling closer. "Practicing without me?"

I smirk at him over her shoulder.

Oakley loves tank tops that gape at the top, and she never wears a bra around the penthouse.

I've got a spectacular view of the tops of her tits. I make sure he understands I'm fully checking her out. She smells delicious. My nose gets close to her throat, and I can't help but breathe her in. It's faint, but her scent is seriously sweet.

I frown, biting my lip. She's definitely on the sweeter end of the spectrum to be a beta. She smells a little like lavender and camomile, but with a sugary tone I can't quite pick out.

Oakley shivers as my warm breath fans over her neck, and suddenly that's all my system can focus on.

"I was writing and Liam joined me." She nods to the table with the notebook. "Want to give it a look and see if we noted your parts correctly?"

"Sure," he says, giving me a look that indicates I should back the fuck off *his* woman.

I smile even wider because he might be used to being the biggest instigator in the group, but he's going to have to share that title now.

"Thanks." Oakley finally shrugs out of my grip as she takes a step away. "I think I get what you mean."

“I bet it’s hard with those tiny hands of yours,” I muse, swiping a hand through the long hair on the top of my head.

“Don’t even.” Oakley points a short finger at Marcus.

“I didn’t say a word.” He chuckles, raising his palms in her direction.

Oh yeah, those two are definitely bumping uglies. He never smiles unless it’s in Oakley’s direction. The poor fucker is totally gone for her.

I laugh, sauntering over to pick up my Fender.

I wonder how Sullivan feels about that. The drummer absolutely has it bad for her too. Not that I don’t see the appeal, but touring means a smorgasbord of willing bodies always at the ready.

The memory that my friends are dead cuts through that thought with frightening clarity.

I frown at the ground.

If I wasn’t such a manwhore, they might still be alive.

Nah, *fuck* that.

I’m not going back there to those bullshit thoughts. They had better options. They could’ve waited or called a fucking cab.

“This isn’t bad,” Marcus says. His eyes meet mine and he gives me a nod. “Let’s give it a shot.”

“Should we get Sullivan?” Oakley asks.

“Already here.” He’s leaning against the open doorway, glancing between the three of us. “Next time there’s a band meeting, don’t leave me out.” He’s good and pissed off. This entire touring thing is a pressure cooker waiting to explode.

I feel like a cartoon villain when I realize I’m actually rubbing my hands together.

Fuck yeah, bring on the chaos.

It’s so much easier to focus on other people’s pain than it is to remember my own.

Chapter Seven

Oakley

The morning after our late-night jam session, we've got an appointment with Jamen at Ruined Records.

Lyric Sinclair, Marcus's half sister, is basically a musical genius. And, apparently, she's how we ended up with Liam.

She and her husband Ryder saw Liam perform in London last year when he was still with Try Hard Hero.

I've never heard of them, but I'm guessing they hadn't made it big.

Somehow, she got the idea to hook us up.

I don't know all the specifics.

I'm just happy we lucked out. He can play multiple instruments, and that comes in handy if we want to switch out on different songs.

We're currently in one of the music rooms at Ruined listening to Ryder and Lyric belt out an original duet they created. It makes me feel highly inadequate when I listen to her sing. It's even wilder that she wants nothing to do with being a star.

The song comes to an end, and I'm not the only one staring with my mouth hanging open.

"I still do not understand why the two of you didn't record your own shit," Marcus says, shaking his head.

Lyric spins around from where she's been seated at the piano. "Because being on stage is pretty much my worst nightmare." She laughs. "We wrote this for you guys…" She glances between us. "What do you think?"

"I think there's no way I can sing that song." I shake my head. "I'm not at that level of vocal training."

"You are." Jamen nods, leaning against the edge of the piano. He looks between Liam and Marcus. "Although I'm flexible on which one of the two of you wants to give it a go with her."

"I'm going to respectfully bow out," Liam says, shoving his hands in his pockets. "I can play the piano, but there's no way my accent will mesh with Oakley's on a ballad duet."

"You sing?" Lyric eyes Marcus carefully. "I haven't heard you sing. Only in the background with the rest of your old band." She frowns. "Let's hear the two of you try it."

"Here you are." Ryder hands each of us a piece of paper with the lyrics.

"I'll play this time then Liam can take over," Lyric says without looking back at us. "I feel kind of icky that I didn't know you can sing. We need a sibling bonding exercise."

"That's not going to happen." Marcus chuckles. "And I have no interest in fronting a band, just in case there's any doubt or misinformation circling about that." He shoots me a look like he wants me to know that's directed at me.

I shrug. "I'm not trying to get rid of you, but you are talented. Let's give it a shot."

"Do it," Liam chants.

"We are," Marcus says, rolling his eyes.

Ryder handles guitar again, even though I'm not sure it's his normal instrument.

"I'm not warmed up," Marcus says close to my ear. He shrugs like it's no big deal. He's so close that I almost miss my mark, and his scent hits me like a ton of bricks.

My voice is ridiculously shaky the entire first verse, and I sound like I'm the one who hasn't sung all morning. Marcus moves so close to my back that I swear he's reading the lyrics off my sheet not his. A few seconds later, his hand lands on my hip, giving me a reassuring squeeze, and fuck if it doesn't help settle my shot nerves.

"You're very talented." Lyric carefully watches Marcus as the song comes to an end for the third time. She blinks, tilting her head, and I can't help but wonder what's running through her mind.

"I'm still convinced Liam could do the vocals," Marcus grumbles. "I'm a musician not a singer."

Jamen nods at me, guiding me a few feet away while Sullivan, Liam, and Marcus talk to Lyric and Ryder.

"You did well," Jamen says. "Do you feel confident you can pour the emotion necessary to land the song on a regular basis?"

I frown.

That sounds kind of like an insult at first, but then I really start to think it over. There are benefits to having a song like "Carry On" on your roster, but there are downsides too.

When taking requests from the audience after a long performance, is that a song I think I'd be able to do justice?

Do I want to have a ballad with Marcus of all people? He stands with his arms crossed, rolling his eyes at something Liam says.

"I do think I'll be able to pull it off," I say, pulling my shoulders back. My eyes are still on Marcus and the others, and I speak before I have the chance to think it through. "Have you noticed since he cut his hair…" I sigh, shaking my head. "He reminds me of a younger Johnny Kincaid. I honestly think he could be at center stage."

Jamen frowns, turning around to face the others. “He definitely could carry a show, *if he wanted to,* but it’s different being a supporting member of a band. Solo acts burn out faster, they don’t have the benefit of having an off day. Being a member of a team you can show up hungover and play your part. When you’re fronting, you’re on all the time.” He pats my back. “Think it over. Discuss it with Marcus. They’ve got a couple other songs for you from my understanding.”

“Thank you,” I say, giving him a smile. The industry is different from how I thought it would be, but it’s also very much the same as I imagined.

My eyes fly back to Marcus, and my mind just won’t let go. I’m shocked I never noticed it before. Lyric looks exactly like their mother, Angel Rae. I guess I understand how Marcus assumed Damian was his father because he really doesn’t look a thing like Angel, and Damian did have dark hair and features.

It’s so strange it actually sends a shiver down my spine. He reminds me of Johnny Kincaid when he plays, especially now that his hair doesn’t fall in his face as he plays.

That’s ridiculous. Johnny joined Madness after Damian died. I push all that nonsense out of my mind and aim for everyone to continue practicing.

It’s several hours later when we finally finish for the day. Lyric and Ryder left a while ago, but the four of us stuck around to run through the songs they offered up.

From what I’ve seen, you don’t turn down a Lyric Sinclair original song. She writes music that makes people famous overnight, and it always matches their style.

Marcus continues to grumble that he doesn’t need to be at center stage. Liam refuses to even try singing “Carry On,” and I can’t tell if it’s because he truly doesn’t think we’ll harmonize or if he’s giving Marcus an olive branch.

I can't imagine how shitty it was for Marcus growing up. To know that he's related to musical superstars, but having nothing to do with them, it had to be tough. He's every bit as talented as his family, but no one knows that. I really think it would do him good to have at least one song where he's able to shine.

Marcus and Sullivan stand a few feet away. They're close to each other, but not saying a word or interacting. They tend to ignore each other unless they're saying shitty things or trying to pick a fight.

I head their way. It's only early afternoon, but I'm completely beat. It's been hours of singing and practicing.

"Where's Hawk?" I ask, glancing around because he's nowhere to be seen *again*.

I'm starting to get a little bitter. Even when he is around, he's different. The entire situation leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

"Probably talking to his wife," Sullivan mutters under his breath.

"What?" I whisper, taking a step back.

Marcus goes rigid, glaring at Sullivan.

My eyes bounce between them, but neither speaks.

They're still busy squaring off with each other. My mind races as my heart seems to stall in my chest. My hands fist at my sides as I look between them again. Neither of them even glances in my direction.

I skirt around them, walking out without another word.

Hawk is in the hallway talking on his phone too low for me to hear what's being said.

He has a *wife?*

How didn't I know that?

He works full-time and he lives with us.

Oh yeah, and there's the fact that he and I have gotten close over the last year, and he never said a damn word!

I told him all about my mom, and how losing her changed everything.

I opened up to him.

I climb on the elevator and blow out a breath of pure relief when the doors close.

I don't think I really know any of them.

Not my best friend.

Not my personal security, who I thought I could talk to.

Even Marcus. He's the only one who's real with me, and that's disturbing on a whole different level.

Chapter Eight

Marcus

Oakley walks out with a look of pure devastation on her face, and my fury reaches dangerous proportions.

"What the fuck is your problem?" I snarl in Sullivan's face. He slams his palms into my pecs. I take a single step back and continue to glare at the idiot. "And people think I'm an asshole?" I snort derisively. "You take the fucking cake with all your *bullshit* mind games. What the hell is your endgame, Sullivan? Why don't you see yourself right the *fuck* on out if you don't want to be here?"

"Fuck you," he says, narrowing his eyes at me.

"Thanks, but I'll continue to fuck *her*." I wink, spinning to go find Oakley.

Fuck, she might not be pleased about me outing that, but that asshole deserves to stew in his own misery.

Sullivan grabs my shoulder, turning me back until I'm facing him.

"Yeah, I know you two are hooking up. And I fucking *hate* it," he hisses. "You talk to everyone like they're shit on your shoe. Come to find out Hawk has a long-lost wife none of us knew about. Oakley deserves better than *either of you.*"

"Right," I scoff, flipping him off with both hands. "You really want to go toe-to-toe with who's a bigger bastard? Let's talk about *you* leading her on for years."

Sullivan takes a step back.

I shake my head, jabbing a finger at his chest. “Keep playing games. You’re going to push her away completely. Trust me when I say *no one* is going to feel sorry for you.”

I slam my shoulder into his on the way by.

I jog down the hallway until I hit the elevators.

One is several floors below us.

I hit the button for the other.

I already know where she’s headed.

The doors open and I step inside, hitting the button for the parking garage.

Motherfucker, my fists clench as I fight the urge to go back and lay that asshole out. I don’t give a fuck if he thinks I’m worthy of Oakley or not. Spoiler alert—I’m not—Hawk might not be either, but that doesn’t give Sullivan the right to continually play games with her feelings. The only thing that holds me back from going upstairs and starting shit is that I know Oakley needs someone right now.

The trip down doesn’t take long and then I’m climbing out and searching for the pouty little omega. She’s leaning against the concrete wall next to the sidewalk that leads to the convenience store we grab snacks from sometimes.

“That was a dramatic exit if I’ve ever seen one,” I murmur, coming up by her side.

She chews at her lower lip.

My thumb catches the puffy thing, and I carefully pull it free. My other hand slides up her neck. Her blue eyes meet mine.

Oakley is a dichotomy. She’s bubbly and outgoing, but once you get to know her, it becomes clear how desperate she is to be accepted.

That piece of shit she calls a friend definitely hasn’t helped matters.

She’s fucking beautiful in that girl-next-door kind of way. She’s also a human being with feelings and emotions, and

Sullivan acts like it's fine to string her along, always keeping her on the back burner.

I've been someone's backup plan.

It doesn't feel great.

Oakley is tender and especially transparent. I don't get how anyone could stand to purposely fuck with her emotions.

"Hawk's married?"

"That's what I heard." I shrug. I'm not going to lie when it's clear she's practically begging someone to just be real with her. "Then again, it came from Sullivan. You know I don't put much stock in anything he has to say."

"Why would he lie?" She looks up at me from under her lashes.

That's the problem. I'm not sure he is, but it's also clear they aren't together. That big fucker has had it bad for the five-and-a-half-foot omega since I came onto the scene. It's also why I chose to keep the information to myself the first time I overheard Sullivan and Hawk talking.

"We've all got a past." I quirk an eyebrow. She lets me fuck her quite regularly, and I'm not sure how Hawkins would feel about that. "He might have a wife, but they aren't together."

The last thing I want to do is defend him. We mutually dislike each other.

I think he's uptight.

He thinks I'm a punk.

I'm a dick, but I draw the line at kicking someone when they're down. Especially the chick who used to be so happy that it grated on my nerves like nails on a chalkboard.

Until the two guys in her life started fucking off with her feelings.

She's been withdrawn lately.

I don't like it.

I need her to be cheery and overly optimistic, so I can continually rain on her positivity parade.

We have a dynamic that I'm not ready to lose.

"I need a cigarette," Oakley says, shaking her head. "Are you coming?" She shrugs out of my hold and aims for the sidewalk down to the store.

"Oh, dirty girl." I swat her ass. "I *always* come with you."

She literally buys a pack to smoke one or two and then tosses them or gives them away. It's weird as hell, but also kind of cute. I think she's trying to quit, and she's been mostly successful since I only see her smoke once or twice a week, if that.

I catch up with her and sling my arm around her shoulder. She gives minimal resistance, enough to allow herself to believe she doesn't like me. I make sure she's pulled in close to my side as we meander toward the front entrance of Ruined.

"Thanks for coming after me." Her head rests on my chest as she clutches my waist. "It feels like you're the only one who's real with me anymore." She stretches up on her tiptoes and kisses the edge of my mouth.

It's stupid.

There are people heading in and out of the building. We aren't behind closed doors, but I still turn her and shove her up against the wall.

The silly smile that crosses her face makes me want to eat her alive.

She's so short that I have to bend practically in half to shove my tongue in her mouth.

I've got a real addiction to the way she desperately kisses me back.

I might not be who she's in love with or even the guy she likes, but she wants me. I'm pretty sure that's one step up from any other woman in my past. I dry fuck her into the wall while she smiles against my lips. Her hands dig into my sides, and

my brain runs through options for the quickest place I can take her to get inside her immediately.

“Hey, Marcus.” The voice cuts through my desire and finally registers in my head. “Are you going to take Angel up on her offer for a one-on-one interview?”

“She’s said she’d like to have you on her show. Is that something you’re considering?” another paparazzi asks.

The clicking cameras are so loud I can actually hear them. I’ve been in the music industry on and off for years. No one gave a shit who I was until Angel Rae Sinclair outed the fact that she’s my birth mother. And no, if she’s claiming she wants an interview with me, this is the first I’ve heard of it.

“Who’s that?”

“Finally moving on from Reba Sparks?”

Fuck, even hearing Reba’s name makes me want to crawl out of my own skin.

The questions continue as another asks, “Are the two of you still in contact?”

Is he fucking kidding?

After what she tried to pull with Lyric?

I did everything I could to try to get Reba some help, but she never wanted me. She wanted Ryder, and she was willing to do anything necessary to make that a reality. She’s obviously where she needs to be.

“Hey, sweetheart. What’s your name?” the one closest to us asks.

A low growl rattles out of my chest.

“Come on.” Oakley wraps her arm around my lower back. She snuggles in close. It’s a clusterfuck in the making, but I still appreciate that she’s not pulling away and trying to save face.

I think I was about to take a swing at that guy for getting too close to my omega, but somehow Oakley manages to settle my inner caveman.

“Don’t you want answers, Marcus?” one of them calls out as we aim for the front door of Ruined Records. “Angel’s offering a tell-all face-to-face interview.”

“Angel doesn’t know how to tell the truth,” I mutter under my breath.

It’s tempting, but ultimately, I want nothing to do with that woman. She’s never once made an effort to see me, explain why she gave me up, or even just try to build a relationship.

I’d have to be stupid to trust anything that comes out of that woman’s mouth. If I was ten years younger, I would have jumped at the chance, but I’ve learned a lot over the years.

Ultimately, answers don’t provide any peace.

Not really.

The day I opened Damian’s letter I realized that.

Sure, I got information I thought I wanted, but it didn’t quell any of the anger, and I ended up with even more questions.

We finally make it inside. The building security ensures the paparazzi stay outside.

I blow out a heavy breath as we step into the elevator. Oakley moves to press the button, but I stick close to the wall, crossing my arms over my chest.

I know what’s coming.

“Are you okay?” She comes close but moves slowly like she’s approaching a dangerous animal.

It sets off my impulses, and I move before I can stop myself.

“They got pictures of us kissing,” I murmur, shoving her back against the wall. “What do you plan to do now, princess?”

Her blondish-red hair glints in the light as her head shakes.

The weird sinking feeling that hits me in the gut is unexpected.

She's going to blow me off. To tell me that we need to keep distance between us until this blows over.

I take a step back, but Oakley grabs my shirt, pulling me back. I comply, and she twines her hands behind my head. I snort, seeing her standing on her tiptoes, and my body automatically bends to make it possible for her to reach my neck.

"I'm not worried about the pictures," she says, plastering her front to mine. "Are you okay? I know Angel is a tough subject for you."

I frown down at her. My hands land on her hips. Oakley is slender for an omega, but when she's naked, those delicate curves make themselves known. I really need something to distract myself.

"Marcus?" She tilts her head up toward me. "Are you angry? I know you only came out to check on me."

"I'm good."

"We can ignore it." She shrugs. "Or we can warn Jamen. I'm not sure what the other options are."

The slow smile that spreads across my face feels weird like my facial muscles are rebelling against the pattern.

"What do we tell him?" I rake my teeth over her neck. "That you let me knock the bottom out of your delicious little cunt to distract you from the guy you really want?"

"Please don't be a dick right now," she whispers, clutching my shoulders. "I'm trying to communicate with you."

I pull back, biting my lip as her eyes meet mine. She's so fucking sincere sometimes that it's hard to keep my walls up.

Then again, I have *really* bad taste in women.

It figures that I'd be into another chick who wants someone else. It happened with my high school girlfriend, then Reba, and now Oakley.

"You've got more to lose than I do if this shit comes out. How will your precious Sullivan handle the news?" I shrug,

watching her carefully.

Her eyes squeeze shut. She blows out a puff of warm breath that fans over my neck and shoulder. Shit, she's probably going to find out that I told him about us. Oh well, he already knew.

"I hate it when you're an antagonistic asshole, but I don't think you meant that to be as hurtful as it was," she says as her eyes pop open. "I'm willing to give this a shot if you are. I'm tired of looking like a fool, but more than that…" Her gaze falls to the floor as the elevator comes to a stop.

My hand leaves her hip to tilt her face to mine. "Go on."

"I like the way I feel when we're together. We're really different, but I think you push me to be stronger, and…" Now it's her turn to shrug. "I think maybe I help soften some of your sharp edges."

"Yeah," I agree, stepping back as the elevator opens.

Oakley wraps her soft hand in mine, pulling me out into the hallway.

I don't know what the fuck to do with myself, but I know from experience that women never really want me. I still can't make myself release her hand, though.

Chapter Nine

Oakley

"Let me guess," Jamen says, stretching back in his chair and flashing us a wicked grin. "You can't go on tour because I'm going to be a grandpa?"

"Is your kid around here somewhere?" Marcus scoffs, swiveling his head from side to side.

"Smart ass," Jamen snorts.

"There's probably something we should warn you about." I finally get myself together. The fact Marcus and Jamen always have this bizarre tension sends my impulses into overdrive. Two alphas arguing or bickering makes me feel like I have to defuse the tension *right now.* Otherwise, I might climb out of my skin.

"Are you finally getting around to asking for heat leave in your contract?" Jamen's eyebrows rise as he studies me.

"You knew?" Marcus sputters.

"I'm an alpha. I have a nose and a fully functional sense of smell. It doesn't help that the two of you are indiscreet as *fuck* with your fucking." Jamen chuckles. "I'm ready and willing to pad your schedule with breaks every three months."

My mind races. Lyric knows that I'm an omega, but she promised not to say a word. So did Love and her guys. I wonder if they ratted me out or if I really am that bad at keeping my secret.

"I'm on suppressants," I finally manage to choke out.

“Those things are awful for your health,” Jamen says, frowning. “That’s just one human being talking to another. Not me speaking as your boss. Your boss advises you to do whatever your eclectic little heart desires.”

“Right.” Marcus stretches out a hand, squeezing my thigh. “Should we get to the actual point of our visit?”

I give him a nod and he explains what happened downstairs.

Jamen sighs. “I’m sorry.” He stares straight at Marcus. “I swore I’d do my best to keep her off your back, but I can’t control the media.”

“Yeah,” Marcus agrees, shrugging.

Jamen goes on to essentially repeat the same options I did. We can ignore it, comment on it, or leave them guessing.

“It’s up to you,” Marcus says, releasing my leg to stretch back in his chair. He says the words, but I’m not sure they’re true. I’m pretty sure every woman in his life has used him to get what they want and then abandoned him. That or just flat out ditched him.

My heart twinges painfully at the thought.

My eyes cut to Marcus.

He’s been nothing but good to me.

Yeah, he occasionally talks shit and drives me crazy, but his words are often at odds with his actions. He’s complicated and multilayered.

I feel like if I don’t take a stand to protect whatever is building between us then it’ll really hurt him.

Shit, am I projecting my own emotions onto him? I guess I could be assuming things because I want him to care about me the way I do with him.

“Marcus and I are together.” My chin rises as I look at Jamen. “I don’t think that’s a problem, but if it is then let us know before we sign the final contract.”

I reach over and intertwine my fingers with Marcus's. His tattooed thumb brushes against my inner wrist. A nervous smile crosses my face because I took the lead and ran without being one hundred percent certain he was okay with it.

Marcus smirks, stretching languidly, but he never lets go of my hand. "Is it an issue?"

Jamen sighs, grumbling under his breath. "I don't control your personal lives. Keep the bullshit to a minimum, and it better not interfere with your ability to put on a show. That's all I've got to say about that. Now get the hell out of my office."

Marcus chuckles. He stands, pulling me up too. He bends down, nuzzling his cheek to mine and guides me toward the door.

"Congratulations," Jamen says. "I'm happy for you, but seriously, keep it professional. No drama because of your relationship."

"Didn't you, Angel, and Damian once get busted for having a threesome on stage during a power outage?" Marcus asks, snorting a derisive laugh.

"Smart ass. It was a different time back then. Do as I say, not as I did. I'm serious. Everyone has camera phones nowadays. None of us want to have to deal with that."

Marcus laughs, guiding me out with his hands on my hips. Once we hit the hallway, he spins me around, caging me into the wall.

"Are you sure you know what you're doing, princess?" He's so close that his lips brush over mine.

My hands land on his hips as I shrug. I have no clue, but I'm also growing addicted to the way he looks at me like he wants to consume me whole.

It might not be healthy.

Hell, in all honesty, it's probably not, but I don't care. No man has ever made me feel the way Marcus does. It's a really

nice change of pace being with someone where the interest is mutual.

Marcus might not be the kind of guy I thought I'd end up with, but it's not like I proposed.

I've never even dated seriously before.

I'm ready to have some fun and live my life for me. "I'm willing to take the risk if you are."

Marcus grins, shaking his head. "You're just full of surprises."

The look on his face when he's happy takes my breath away.

"Let me buy you dinner?" I suggest. The last thing I want to do is head back to the penthouse right now.

Marcus snorts, grinning against my cheek. "Not a fucking chance, but I will buy you dinner."

"Ohmigod, don't tell me you're that old-fashioned." I smile, staring up into his dark eyes.

"Keep trying me, and your ass might never recover," he murmurs, slamming his mouth to mine.

I whimper against his lips and let him kiss the hell out of me with little concern for who might see us. I completely block out the fact that my stomach somersaults with butterflies as he wraps my hand in his.

I have no idea what the future holds, but I can't wait to find out.

Chapter Ten

Hawk

My day is a disaster.

Now that I think about it, most days lately have been.

Anxiety pulses through my system as I shove through the front door to the penthouse. I hate being away from Oakley. My system demands I keep her safe, and the last few weeks, I've been away more than I'd like.

I feel like a PSA for *do not under any circumstances get married to your high school sweetheart*. That one decision has dictated a whole lot of years of my life. I learned my lessons the hard way.

My savior complex bit me in the ass *hard* with that debacle. Even all these years later, I'm still paying for my mistakes.

I was young, naive, and extremely self-righteous.

I didn't listen to anyone's advice.

Growing up in a lower middle-class family, I knew I'd have to find a career and provide for myself, the same as my brothers did. My girlfriend wanted out of small-town Kentucky just as badly as I did. She knew how to play on my impulses to love and protect her. I wasn't leaving her behind no matter what anyone had to say about it.

We got married as soon as she turned eighteen. I probably should have picked up on the clues when she made it clear she'd never be interested in a permanent claiming bite. I

assumed she was apprehensive about it considering she's not an omega.

The fact she left me before our second anniversary while I was in the middle of a deployment doesn't bother me anymore. For years that shit ate away at me, but I've let it go.

I've spent more than a few thousand dollars tracking her ass down over the last few years. She never bothered filing for a divorce or even giving me a fucking forwarding address so I could serve her with papers. She did send me a lovely Dear John letter letting me know life as a military wife wasn't for her.

Unfortunately, I waited and waited for the paperwork to come to dissolve our ramshackle marriage, but it never did. I spent time about ten years ago doing my best to track her down, but then I deployed again, and life got in the way.

Sure, I thought about it from time to time, but I also knew there wasn't much I could do. I wasn't making mad cash to the point I could spend all my disposable income on searching for her, especially not after my dad got sick.

I helped out my family because my brothers both had kids to support.

Fuck.

I'm mentally justifying shit when I need to find Oakley and sit down to have a serious conversation with her. She's pulled away the last few weeks, and it's driving me fucking insane.

It didn't feel right to let anything develop between us.

Not past friendship anyway.

I needed to get my life together before we took any further steps. I'm finally fucking free and clear, but I'm real damn nervous I let it ride for too long.

I've been unnaturally drawn to Oakley since her father hired me. My dad is an alpha and my mom's a beta. It's unusual for an alpha to end up with anyone who isn't an omega, but I couldn't give a fuck less about any of that.

My ex is a beta, and yeah, it definitely made me question if I was falling into some type of old pattern, but there's just something about Oakley that made it impossible to keep my distance.

I caught on that Oakley is really an omega during the clusterfuck show when Love went into labor during a goddamn riot.

It blew my mind to realize her designation, but it also made a lot of things make more sense. She's still using the scent blockers and suppressants, but ever since that day, it's like I can always smell her.

It's hard to believe I hadn't picked up on the signs before.

I search the entire apartment before ending up at Oakley's door. I knock lightly, but it pushes open. I don't hesitate to head inside.

She's not here.

B Team didn't inform me that she was out.

I'm furious as I pull out my phone, angry texting everyone currently on duty.

I stumble a few steps toward the end of her bed and take a seat on the edge. The entire room is filled with Oakley's sweet scent, but it's the picture that pops up on my screen that takes my breath away.

She's sitting in a fancy restaurant. She and Marcus are on one side of the table with their chairs pulled close together. The dead man walking has his arm wrapped around her shoulder, and he's staring down at her with the same smirk he always wears.

Bastien sends me a link to a paparazzi site.

I scroll through those pictures too; they're all of Oakley and Marcus.

Every single image makes it clear I'm going to have to kill him.

He's all over her and she seems into it.

That motherfucking bastard.

I'm supposed to be protecting her. He's the last kind of guy she'll ever be safe with. I've royally failed at my job, but more than that, I've let her down on a personal level if Marcus fucking Gaffney was able to slide in while I was busy getting my life in order.

I spend the next few hours in the gym, burning off as much of my rage as humanly possible.

It doesn't help.

I've never been hit with alpha fog, but that's what this is.

My brain is on a constant loop…

Images of strangling the life out of Marcus, pummeling his face with my fist until he's unrecognizable, even burying him alive in a deep grave somewhere in the swamp all cross my mind.

I force myself out of the gym because, at this point, I think it's possible the extra testosterone and energy boost from my workout is making shit worse.

I shower and dress, but I don't know what to do next. I need to confront him. He's one of those people who use other people up and spit them out.

I won't let him do that with Oakley.

They're about to go on tour, you giant block head, I remind myself.

She's likely going to need a new bass player.

No, it's not like I can keep him away from her permanently. I mean, unless he's dead. Then again, I'll have to be careful about it so I don't end up in jail. If I'm locked up, she'll be even more vulnerable without me around.

It's nearly midnight when I make my way to his door and knock. There's no answer, so I do it again louder this time.

I'm headed back to my room when I spot Marcus coming out of Oakley's bedroom. He's in a pair of low-slung sweatpants and he's barefoot. He takes off toward the kitchen as I watch from the living room.

I probably look like a murderer, leaning into the shadows to make sure he doesn't see me.

He jogs into the kitchen and grabs a take-out container from the fridge along with a couple bottles of water. He's digging in the silverware drawer as I approach.

"Holy shit," he growls, dropping the food container on the counter. "You're too big to be that silent."

I quirk an eyebrow. My pulse pounds in my ears so hard it's difficult to focus. My inner caveman craves his fear. He should be afraid. I'm a little fucking concerned how little it would take for me to snap.

"What is this?" Marcus asks, setting down the water too. "Are you here to tell me to stay away from Oakley *or else*?"

"You're a piece of shit," I growl, stepping forward and glaring at him over the kitchen island.

He nods. "I have been in the past. Is that all you needed to get off your chest?"

My jaw is so tight I think I could chip a tooth. I cross my arms over my chest to keep from lunging at him. "Is she a game to you? A conquest?"

"You and Sullivan," he chuckles, "I've met some self-righteous motherfuckers in my life, but the two of you take the cake."

"You don't know shit," I growl, sliding around the island.

"Really? I know you're here giving me the third degree when the two of you have played games to the point her confidence is shot." He flips me off with a black painted fingernail. "Maybe take a look in the mirror and ask yourself if you're projecting."

I growl, stepping forward.

Marcus doesn't back down. If anything, he stands to his full height for once and squares his shoulders. "Your buddy outed the fact you have a wife."

My mind races.

Jesus fucking Christ.

I'm going to end up in jail before all of this is over.

Motherfucking Sullivan.

I thought he cared about her and wanted more than friendship, but he's been even more closed off than I have recently.

Now this? He and I are going to have a serious talk.

"Had," I clarify. "I had a wife. The divorce was finalized three days ago."

"I figured it was something like that." He curls a hand toward his chest. "I defended you. I told her it's pretty clear the two of you aren't together."

My head tilts as I study him. "Why?"

"It certainly wasn't because I like you," he growls. "You're both going to fuck around and push her away so completely that she wants nothing to do with you. Don't say I didn't warn you because we both know I did. Multiple times."

He shakes his head, spins around, grabs all the stuff off the counter, and heads off toward mine and Oakley's rooms. His is on the other side of the penthouse, and I don't like the fact he's going to be in there with her.

My head falls as I stare at my feet. I'm furious, but I'm self-aware enough to realize I got myself into this situation, and now I've got to get out of it.

I've never been afraid of hard work.

I'm not a shady person.

I've had multiple opportunities to tell her the truth. My stomach aches with regret and maybe a twinge of embarrassment.

It’s not something I like talking about, and telling that story to the woman I’m more attracted to than anyone I’ve ever been into? Well, I chickened the fuck out, so now I have to deal with the repercussions of my actions.

I barely sleep. Not that I require much. I can function with a couple of hours and survive without much trouble.

I’m finishing up fried eggs for bacon sandwiches when Oakley stumbles into the kitchen. She’s rumpled and sleepy.

I grab the mayo and a knife to keep from doing something ridiculous like shutting off the burner, picking her up, and carrying her to my bed for sleepy cuddles.

“Hey.” I clear my throat. “I made breakfast.” I grimace, shaking my head at the ceiling. It’s not like she can’t see and smell that for herself. How did I get myself into this mess?

“It smells good.” The tight smile that crosses her face makes my gut drop.

“I made your favorite.” God, that sounds cringy even to my own ears.

“Thanks, but I only came to grab a bottle of water.” She swipes hair out of her face and heads for the refrigerator.

“Can I talk to you for a second?” I ask as she grabs out two bottles and closes the door.

“Are you trying to burn the entire building down?” Liam saunters into the kitchen in a pair of sweatpants.

I want to snarl at him to get the fuck out, especially since Oakley is a little too interested in studying his physique.

I turn around to handle the stove, and when I glance back, she’s gone. “Motherfucker.”

“I’d love some if you’re offering,” Liam says, nodding to the burned-to-hell eggs.

“What part of that indicated I give a fuck if you’re hungry?” I scoff.

“Don’t be cranky with me because Marky is laying the pipe to the woman you’re lusting after.” He pushes himself up to sit on the counter. “I’m starting to get a very distinct picture. It’s no wonder she went for him. He’s the only one who’s upfront with her about anything. People value the truth.” I growl, scraping the eggs out of the pan and tossing them on a plate. “Right, so can I get a sandwich?”

I turn around, giving him a look that should indicate I wish he’d drop dead where he sits. “You can starve for all I care.”

“Don’t be shitty with me because I spoke the truth. You should try it sometime. I can guarantee it’ll get you farther than hiding things. That *always* comes off as shady. Always.”

“Yeah, I fucking got it,” I growl.

“Good,” he says, his head bobbing up and down. “I’ll take one without mayo.”

I scoff, but the fucker is right. It also wouldn’t hurt to have an ally on the tour bus since we’re leaving within days, so I make the asshole a sandwich, shoving it on the counter next to him.

“Thank you.” He smirks, grabbing the plate.

I’m not gaining any traction at fitting in around here by being a dick, so I make Oakley and Marcus breakfast sandwiches and toss them labeled into the microwave.

Did Marcus get a burned egg?

Absolutely, but he’ll live.

Chapter Eleven

Oakley

The next few days are pure insanity.

We have to see a doctor and have full checkups before we can sign the final contract. It's not a huge multi-album deal, but my lawyers assured me it's a fair intro contract.

The night before we have the final signing, my dad spends the better part of an hour on the phone trying to talk me out of it.

I think it's possible I get some of my stubbornness from him because, even though I love him, everything he says seems to go in one ear and out the other.

I'm far too excited to make my dreams a reality to let any of his partially valid points rain on my parade.

We pack up all our belongings from the penthouse and tour personnel come to transport it to the buses the night before we leave.

I wake up alone the next morning, which is unusual because Marcus has been finding his way into my bed more and more often. It's strange to admit, but I do think I would've been less anxious if we had spent the morning together.

By the time we make it to the bus meet up location, my nerves are officially shot.

The tour bus is extravagant, but I'm not complaining. I'm in freaking awe that we get something like this to ourselves.

It's all one level with the driver's hub to the right when you enter, and an all-in-one living room and kitchen to the left. Past that in the same direction is the bathroom and four bunks with two on each side. They're nearly the size of a twin bed and they have curtains for privacy.

"Looks like you lucked out by getting your own room, pretty girl." Marcus tosses an arm around my shoulder, guiding me back toward the sliding door. "Let's have a look, shall we?"

Sullivan and Liam are with the roadies getting their equipment situated. I was a little paranoid handing off my guitar, but I think it's just first-tour nerves.

Marcus grabs the door panel with a tattooed finger and slides it open. It's not huge, but the bus has finite space, and it's more than enough room for me.

There's a small walkway around the bed on the three sides, and as I step inside, I get a better view of the wall to the left and right of the door. It has floor-to-ceiling cabinets for a closet.

Marcus's hands grip my hips, lifting and tossing me onto the bed. He smirks, prowling over me as I stare up at him from my back. "You got the princess bedroom." He brushes his lips over mine. "Are you going to invite me to share your bed?"

I laugh as he grinds against me. "Maybe, if you try really hard not to be an asshole."

He snorts. "I'm not sure I can make those kinds of promises, but I won't be a dick to you. Does that count?"

"Yeah." I push my mouth to his, licking over the seam of his lips. He lets me in, and his piercing swirls around my tongue as he growls into the kiss, grinding over me like he does when he's inside me. That piercing always takes a little getting used to when we're kissing, but I'm quite fond of it when he flicks it over my clit. My hand brushes down the back of his head as he smiles against my mouth.

"Do you think Liam knows?" He runs his teeth down my neck, keeping his voice low. I frown, unsure if he means that

we're together or if he's talking about my designation. "Sorry, I meant that you're an omega."

"Probably not," I groan. "But he might if you keep that up, I'll be perfuming in no time."

"Yeah, your suppressants kind of suck," Marcus agrees. "I've been meaning to ask why you even still take them."

My breath catches as my impulses hum in delight at the thought of riding out a heat with my alpha. I've never had an actual heat before. I've been taking suppressants since I was seventeen and the first one tried to start. My mouth opens, but no words come out.

Marcus teases his hand over the top of my head as he brushes his thumb over my lower lip. "It's all right. I wasn't trying to pressure you into anything. It was just a question."

"Uh-hm." Sullivan's voice makes me jolt. He's standing in the small doorway with his hands shoved into the front pockets of his jeans.

My heart races.

The press ran with our pictures, and the Ruined Records rep made a statement that we are together.

Sullivan hasn't said a word to me about it, but it's clear he knows.

Marcus smirks, brushing his lips over mine one final time before rolling to the side and looking at Sullivan. "What's up?"

"The tour coordinator wants to have a word with all of us before we head out." Sulli spins around, leaving without another word.

"Shall we do it?" Marcus squeezes my hip, wiggling his eyebrows.

I snort a laugh. I'm really enjoying this new playful side of him that only I get to see. "Let's go."

The first few weeks of shows are pure chaos as we learn how to perform together. No amount of practice can compare to the feeling of being live on stage with an audience bringing their own energy into the mix.

Our days are spent mostly sleeping until ridiculous hours, and our afternoons are full of sound checks and getting the feel for each stage.

It's become quite evident how lucky I am to have Marcus and Liam always at the ready. It's convenient having them to distract the female fans. They know exactly how to play to the audience, and it takes a lot of pressure off me as lead.

Despite all of that, my anxiety hasn't lessened, and the larger venues are starting to send me into a panic more than ever before.

Mourning Glory is playing their set. As soon as they're done, we'll be called to the stage. My Converse shoes slap against the greenroom carpet as I try to get my nerves under control.

Being an omega is a pain in the ass. My entire body is filled with frantic energy. The venue took my breath away when I saw it. It's impossible to see all the seats from the stage, but all those people will be focused on us.

Why did I think I could do this? It's not even a huge arena like some of the shows Lyric put on with Ruin. There are just over four thousand seats out there. During the Damian Sinclair memorial show they were playing to thirty-thousand people. The show in Vegas was more than that.

I'm a total fraud. A fake. There's no way four thousand people will be satisfied listening to me sing.

"Hey," Hawk says, coming into the room. He closes the door behind him.

I spin around, but my hands are actually shaking.

There's a real possibility I will vomit before I make it on stage tonight.

I'm not sure if it's normal to be this anxious for each performance.

I'm going to go with no, considering the guys never seem to experience these pre-show shakes, definitely not to this degree.

"You're looking a little rough." Hawk comes closer until he's just a foot away. "They've still got two songs left before they'll call for you. Are you doing all right?"

My head shakes as my eyes dart around desperately trying to find something else to focus on or somewhere I can hide. Ohmigod, my impulses are ridiculous. My eyes meet Hawk's, and I admit, "I'm not. I'm having major stage fright tonight."

"It is a big venue," he agrees, nodding.

"I don't know if I can do this," I whisper.

Where is Marcus?

I need my pre-show fuck to keep me busy and help fight these never-ending panic attacks. It's helped the last few shows, and I need him right now.

I don't even think it's the sex, it might be the way he keeps my mind preoccupied, so I don't obsess about accidentally making a fool of myself in front of thousands of people.

How the hell did Angel Rae do this? She's one of the few female singers to front a rock band. She got up there every night with Damian, Jamen, and Donovan and put on a show like she was on their level. Maybe she was, and I'm just the one swinging out of my depth.

Marcus rocks every show like he's meant to be on stage. Of course he does, he's rock royalty.

Liam carries us with no problem because he's been a frontman before.

Sullivan actually has it the easiest of all of us because he's on the drums and he doesn't sing.

I'm the one dragging them down.

Hawk stands, carefully studying me.

A whine escapes my lips. It's a sound distinctive to omegas, but Hawk likely figured it out when Love gave birth. If not then, I can't imagine he's missed it after being trapped with me on the bus.

Not that we've talked about it.

We don't talk about anything anymore.

My head shakes involuntarily as my eyes ache. I don't have the first clue how to fix this mess I've gotten into.

I'm going to let everyone down.

Jamen took a chance on signing me. Omegas don't tend to have long or prolific careers. I'm going to owe a lot of money when I have to break this contract.

"All right," Hawk says in his deep, growly tone. He takes the last step toward me, and I unceremoniously chuck myself at him. My skirt is tight as hell, but it rides up around my thighs as he lifts me.

I burrow into his throat because that's where his scent will be the strongest.

He walks us over to the leather couch and takes a seat, pulling me to rest over his lap. I haven't been this close to Hawk since Love gave birth. I think it had negative consequences when I forced my system to release soothing pheromones. The suppressants haven't worked right since then. Not to mention, right after the paramedics took her and the adrenaline wore off, my system crashed hard.

There's something so familiar about Hawk's musky sandalwood scent and the way he runs his hand over the back of my head. It's hard to remember I'm furious with him. Okay, so I'm actually more hurt than anything, but still. There's no reason I should want him cuddling me, but for whatever reason, he soothes my nerves.

The audience isn't really here for me, or even Wicked Truths. I know that when my system isn't freaking out, but

right now, it's hard to focus on Trigger Finger or any of the opening acts being part of the show. It feels like the weight of the entire concert is sitting on my chest.

"I can't go out there and perform. No one should pay money to see me on stage. Imposter syndrome hit hardcore," I say more to myself than to him.

"You've got amazing talent." Hawk teases his hand over my back while the other cradles my head. "The guys got caught up with one of the backstage reporters, but Marcus asked me to check in on you. I'm starting to think he really is serious about you."

I sigh. There was a time not too long ago when that would have meant a lot coming from him. Now it sounds kind of like a backhanded compliment, or maybe I'm overly sensitive because I'm having a literal freaking panic attack.

I huff against Hawk's throat. He's always got something between a stubble and a short beard. It scratches against my cheek as I breathe in hits of his pheromones. We might not be anything but employer and employee, but we are compatible.

My system craves his scent, but reality catches up pretty quickly.

My hands meet his strong chest as I push myself up.

"Ohmigod, I forgot you have a wife," I hiss, trying my damndest to climb out of his lap. "And I have a boyfriend."

"Jesus Christ," Hawk growls, swatting my ass. "I swear to God, I'm going to fuck Sullivan up for that one of these days."

"For ratting you out?" I snap, slapping his hand away from my shoulder.

"For making it seem like something it's not," he snarls, smacking my ass again. "And Marcus told me you'd likely be upset and need a cuddle."

I push against his pecs, trying to wiggle over into the next seat.

"Stop fucking fighting me," Hawk says. "You're about to set off my impulses and then I'll have trapped your ass to the

couch before either of us can stop it."

"What?" I squint up at him, trying to figure out why I'm setting off his instincts so hard.

"I did have a wife. We got married right out of high school. My family, friends, superior officers—you name it. They all tried to warn me. I was too stubborn to see she was using me to get out of our small town. She left me while I was deployed, and that was *years* ago, Oakley."

I frown, studying his face for any hint of dishonesty. "Why didn't you tell me that?"

My hands rest against his T-shirt, but they bounce as he shrugs a giant shoulder.

"It's not exactly at the top of the list of shit I enjoy talking about. It's embarrassing. I spent the final weeks right before we left finishing up all the legal shit to dissolve the marriage. It took longer than I hoped because I had no fucking idea how to find her initially. The whole process took months. I barely got everything finalized right before we left."

"Oh, wow. That's actually a really shitty story."

"Yeah. It was a clusterfuck, but I needed to handle that because it felt wrong leaving it hanging."

"And rather than just telling me the details, which sound way less terrible now that you've explained them, you thought, why not just leave me to wonder what I'd done wrong? Because that's totally fair, right?" I scoff, shaking my head.

I'm done with his and Sullivan's bullshit. It took Marcus actually treating me decently to realize it wasn't me or anything I did. It's them.

"I handled the situation poorly because it's one of my biggest failures." Hawk sighs. "I'm truly remorseful that I kept it from you. I regret the distance that I caused more than you know."

"Okay." I glance away from his intense stare, swallowing thickly.

"But you still can't forgive me?"

“Seriously?” I blink in complete shock. “I found out this information three seconds ago. I appreciate you explaining…” I don’t even know what to say. I’m not sure I have a right to be upset. I thought we were growing closer, maybe drifting into friend territory from employer and employee, but even then, I don’t think he owed me all the details of his life. “But I don’t know.”

“That’s understandable. I fucked up. I’m not afraid of putting in the work to earn back your trust.”

“I’m with Marcus.”

“You’re also an omega.”

I go rigid at his words. I don’t know why. He’d have to have been majorly ignoring the signs to have missed it, but it still feels like that layer of protection has been ripped away. I just whined in front of him. I can’t be shocked he’s no longer ignoring the elephant in the room.

“I know your suppressants haven’t worked right since that day with Love.” He sighs. “I’m totally out of line right now, but I’m just saying I’m here for you too.”

“You…” I don’t know how to finish that sentence. He doesn’t like Marcus. I didn’t think he was even truly interested in me.

“Oakley,” Liam says, shoving his head in the door. He does a double take when he spots me on Hawk’s lap. “Come on, they’re grilling Marcus pretty hard. I think he could use you.”

I carefully detangle myself from Hawk and aim for the door.

“Thanks for the talk,” I say, waving awkwardly as I literally run from the conversation we were having.

Hawk shoves himself off the couch and follows us. Liam looks like sex personified as he walks backward down the hall, wiggling his eyebrows at me. He’s wearing combat boots and a tank top with the sides ripped all the way down to his dark jeans.

“Did I interrupt something just now?” He finally stops a few feet ahead of me.

“I’m anxious. The venue is huge,” I admit, glancing away from his prying stare.

“I get it.” His booted feet approach and my eyes fly up. He tosses an arm around my shoulder. His sweaty scent hits me like a ton of bricks. “It gets me too, but once we’re out there, you’ll get slapped with that adrenaline high. There’s nothing like it.”

My eyes fly up to his, and I nod. He’s right. There’s really not.

“I’m going to slide in and distract them. You don’t have time for a pre-show fuck unless he’s truly a minute man, but see if you can calm him down. They got under his skin.”

I search his face, looking for some indication he’s being a smart ass or that he’s about to make a joke. Liam is difficult to get a read on at the best of times.

“Come on. I’ve already been gone for at least three minutes. That means he might have already snapped by now.” Liam guides me around the corner and pats my ass. “Save him.”

“Thank you,” I whisper. It’s really a smooth transition as I take the final few steps, wrapping my hand in Marcus’s. He startles, but his face softens when he sees it’s me. “Sorry, we’re about to go on. I’ve got to borrow him.”

Liam pops up and immediately redirects their attention as I pull Marcus back down the hallway I came from. I ignore Hawk and shove Marcus into the women’s room. To be fair, it’s dead. There are a lot more men on this tour than women.

I spin Marcus around once we’re inside and shove him against the wall. Okay, so I wouldn’t have a hope of forcing him if he fought me, but he doesn’t. He shoots me a bemused look, spinning his tongue ring between his lips.

I release his hand to grip his waist, stretching up on my toes to kiss him. He complies, bending down until our tongues

meet. I'm obsessed with the way he wraps his arm around me, or maybe it's the way his hand digs into my hip as he lifts me.

The kiss is intense, but everything with Marcus is. He always feels like he could consume me whole. The scary thing is, I don't think I'd try to stop him. The next thing I know, my back hits the wall as Marcus smirks into the kiss.

"Did you mistakenly think you're in control, princess? Because I can assure you that's not the case." He grinds against my core as I clutch his shoulders. He nips at my lips, making my feet dig into his ass.

I'm pretty sure Marcus is more than I can handle, but I'm along for the ride, wherever it takes me.

"You better not be fucking," Liam says, opening the door a few inches. "They called us thirty seconds ago."

"Ready?" Marcus grins against my cheek.

"Let's do it."

Chapter Twelve

Liam

There's nothing in the world like the high you get from being on stage. It's an unmatched adrenaline rush that can't be beaten. Not by drugs, nor sex, or fast cars. There's nothing like listening to thousands of fans chant your name or hearing them belt out the lyrics to *your* songs.

Okay, fine.

Our songs.

This is why I suck at being a good bandmate, but I am trying.

Oakley had the wobbles when we took the stage. Her voice was equally shaky for the first song, but she hit her stride.

Marcus, despite his faults, is a goddamn talented musician. He also knows exactly how to play to the crowd, which is convenient. My old band had raw talent, but none of them had the stage presence to make it like we are now.

I stare at my feet, shaking away those thoughts. If I could trade my life here on this stage to give them theirs back, I would, no questions asked and no second thoughts. Unfortunately, that's not how the universe works.

I jolt, realizing I'm supposed to be introing Marcus and Oakley's duet. The stagehands have the piano in place, and I pass off my guitar to the guy closest to me.

"Have we got a treat for you." I make my way up to the front of the stage. "This is an original written by Lyric Sinclair. I'm sure you know her as *The Daughter of Rock*."

The screams from the crowd are so loud my mixers buzz for a few seconds. I'm going to need to bring that up after the show because it's annoying as hell.

"Ready?" I ask Oakley and Marcus, who are now at center stage waiting to sing.

"What do you think?" Marcus asks the crowd.

The fans go wild as Sullivan counts us down. My fingers find their placement on the cool keys. I'm thankful for one of my fathers pressuring me into lessons when I was barely school-aged. Never thought I'd be grateful for that, but people do dig a guy who can play piano. Not more so than guitar, I'm guessing that's gotten me laid significantly more than the instrument I'm currently seated at, but whatever.

Marcus acts as lead on this song. We've never performed it live, but they've got a chemistry that lends itself well to a ballad duet. If the press hadn't broken the story, then I'm fairly sure the fans could tell they're boinking just from their energy during this song.

Not that it's a bad thing.

It's clear the audience is here for it.

Poor Sullivan hates it, which I kind of dig. Then again, I firmly believe he needs to shit or get off the pot. I've heard enough chatter to get that he used to be close with Oakley.

We play out the song, and it's time to say our goodbye to the audience. They had good energy, which is always a plus. A slow smile spreads across my face.

This is my dream made reality.

I'm not new to the scene, but shows in America are nothing like what I experienced back home. Our tour manager stocks backstage with a smorgasbord of attractive bodies, but we've got more responsibilities than ever before.

The press descends every damn time we try to catch our breath, even if it's just a couple of carefully selected print interviews. Mostly, I feel bad for Oakley. She's supposed to be the star of the show, but it's clear they all want access to Marcus.

I shrug, ignoring the chaos, and chug the bottle of water I'm offered.

"You should really make sure you crack those if you're going to drink it," Sullivan says from behind me.

I spin to face him and shrug. "I heard the roadie pop the lid as he handed it to me."

His head shakes. "That's not the kind of thing you want to risk."

"You're right," I concede. "I'll be more vigilant in the future."

His blue eyes narrow as I study him. Perhaps I've been a bit too sarcastic lately if he can't tell when I'm being sincere. He swipes a tattooed hand over his face. "Come on, we've got to do the meet and greet."

I sigh but follow him off toward whatever meeting room we'll be in tonight. I suppose I need to put more effort into building friendships with my bandmates.

While I'm down for being the center of attention, I'm starting to wonder if I'm getting too old for this shit. I roll my eyes at the two chicks on either side of Marcus. Oakley looks like the top of her pretty little head might explode at any moment. She's going to have to toughen up. It's all part of the game.

Marcus does his best to rearrange the grabby hands and even gently shove the chick off who is busy trying to literally climb into his lap. The label should probably reconsider plying the backstage areas with liquor because those ladies are lit. Unluckily for them, Marky is taken.

Sullivan stands off to the side, signing a few things for the dude-bro collective. They probably came because of the college chicks currently about to be removed.

Marcus catches one of the security guys' eyes and makes the sign. The women grumble and complain as they're guided out. The tour manager takes a seat next to Marcus, probably telling him he's got to learn how to chill the fuck out and be felt up by random women.

Damn, maybe I am jaded.

I'm not even thirty, but I am getting closer to it. I swipe a hand over my face. I'm far too introspective for the middle of our launch tour. It's hard not to wonder what my mates would think of all this. They'd have been blown away at the level of wealth and grandeur, but I don't think they'd have loved it long term.

I glance around and realize most everyone has cleared out.

What I don't see?

Oakley.

That sets my instincts buzzing for whatever reason. I push myself off the couch and my shoulders pull back when I spot our petite lead singer.

She's talking to some guy I don't recognize, but her arms are crossed over her chest *and* she's leaning away from him. He's got practically a foot in height on her and at least a hundred pounds.

Who the fuck knows why he's not picking up that she's uncomfortable, but I'm stomping across the room before I can stop myself.

"What's up?" I slide up to Oakley's side, tossing an arm around her shoulder. She leans into my sweaty armpit, and that tells me this fucker was making her uncomfortable. Normally, she'd make some bullshit comment about me stinking and push me off.

"I just needed the restroom." Oakley blinks up at me, but whatever she's trying to convey, I miss.

“What a coincidence, me too.” I hold out a hand to fist bump the rando. He bumps and swaggers off without glancing back.

I growl, leading Oakley down the small hallway that spills into a waiting room. There are chairs lining the wall, but I find a free area and shove Oakley up against the flat paneling. “Do you see the problem?”

Her head tilts as she frowns up at me. “You’re a pushy asshole?” Her tone makes it sound like a question.

“Nah. I’m a skinny fuck, but I’m still a man and an alpha. Chicks are pretty much always going to be at a physical disadvantage.”

Oakley bristles at my words, crossing her arms in the space between us. “There are people everywhere. Don’t be dramatic.”

My head tilts from side to side, scanning the empty hallway. It sure as fuck doesn’t look like there are many options to come to her rescue.

“I don’t want to be that asshole with a cock who lectures a woman about the dangers of getting caught alone with some random dick you don’t know.” My eyebrows rise. “But I will be if I have to.” Oakley blinks, tilting her head. She opens her mouth to speak, but I wrap my hand over it. “You’re now a public figure. Hell, you’ll be a sex symbol before you know it. It comes with the territory. You have no idea what some guys will do to get what they want.”

She yanks my hand away with a huff. “I only needed to use the restroom.”

“You had to take a piss? Cool, like I said, me too. Every time you need to pee, I do also. I’ve got a small bladder, so find me whenever you need a bathroom buddy.”

“Yeah right, I’m supposed to interrupt whenever you’re laying on the charm to some unsuspecting groupie?” She shoves at my shoulder.

I wrap an arm around her lower back, guiding her toward the bathroom.

“If it’s important, then yes. You’ve got three guys who are supposed to be looking out for you. We’re your band. Let us back you up.” I don’t let myself think too hard about the fact that I haven’t tried to land a single groupie since I met Oakley. Hell, thinking about how long it’s been since I’ve gotten laid is a little depressing, but that ties back into how my mates died. We hit the bathroom doors, and I glance between them. “If by some miracle you beat me out, I want you to wait here for me, all right?”

“Yeah, okay.” She tosses off my arm and pushes the door to the women’s room.

I shake my head and aim for the men’s room. I’ve never been so obsessed with the safety of my bandmates before, but I already fucked that up so royally there’s no coming back from it.

I won’t let the same happen now. I take a piss, wash my hands, and still beat Oaks back into the hallway. Once she comes out, we head back to the guys. She doesn’t say a word, so I don’t press the issue.

We make it back to the rest of the band, and Marcus gives me a nod as he stretches out an arm for our lead singer.

“Those women were all over you,” she grumbles just barely loud enough that I pick it up.

“Aww, I like it when you get all catty and territorial.” Marcus laughs, leading her out. “You better watch out. It’s turning me the fuck on. I’m going to be taking every ounce of my interest out on that slick little kitty tonight.”

My head falls back as I curse the universe. I wouldn’t mind a little action from time to time, but I’m also not about to cause strife with the bandmates I can’t get away from.

Marcus and Oakley are locked down. Sullivan never hooks up with anyone. If I’m the asshole bringing groupies on the bus left and right, I can only imagine it’ll play out similarly to how it did with my old band.

Fuck that.

That thought alone is enough to turn my stomach.

Sullivan shoves his hands in his pockets, following the lovebirds out without another word. I watch and eventually head down the hallway behind him.

I'd really like some more information on that situation. From what I've heard, those two grew up together. The way he watches her makes it clear he wants her, and I've picked up on the same vibe from Oakley. It makes no fucking sense to me, but life is way more subdued on this tour than I ever would have guessed.

I've got plenty of time to parcel out what went down between them.

I do love to stir the pot. It's a great way to keep my own demons at bay.

Oakley does her best to stay as quiet as possible, while Marcus makes it his mission to make her scream.

I'm an equal opportunity human fucker.

I like all the bodies because it's more about the soul for me.

I can't even lie.

I usually don't know people well enough to give a fuck about their soul. I'm just equal opportunity when it comes to pleasure.

Hawk retreats to his bunk to lament his life choices as soon as the bus starts moving. We'll be in a new city by the time we wake up.

Since there's a partition between us and the driver, we can watch TV legally while the bus is in motion.

I swivel my chair to watch the horror movie Sullivan picked out. I snort, wondering if he chose it in hopes it would drown out Oakley's begging moans. If so, it's kind of working.

We watch in companionable silence and eventually finish off the better part of a twelve pack of disgusting American ale. I normally don't drink, in fact, I've often no taste for it these days. However, it's a bonding rite, so here we are.

Sullivan grunts, dropping his empty bottle on the end table next to the couch.

My head tilts, listening for Marcus and Oakley. Either the movie is blocking most of it, or they finally settled down.

"You've got to give him an A for effort. She was clearly enjoying herself." My eyes flick to the clock on the wall. "And for stamina too." I snort at the sour look on Sullivan's face.

He raises a hand, flipping me off, and it makes me practically giddy. It's easy as fuck to get under his skin. It keeps life interesting between our shows.

The door opens, and Oakley pads out in bare feet. My nose twitches despite our distance. She always smells exceptionally sweet. She's wearing a big ass T-shirt and not much else if I had to guess. She jolts when she spots us staring her down, but she continues over to the fridge. She clicks it open, bending to grab a couple water bottles.

I swivel until I get a nice view of Marcus's shirt riding up the back of her creamy thighs. Speaking of creamy. I can't help but wonder if she's full of his cum. On one hand, that's a disaster waiting to happen, on the other, I wouldn't mind fucking her full of my cum too.

The refrigerator door closes and Oakley spins around. She gives an awkward little wave that kind of makes me want to eat her alive. I'd definitely settle for licking her sweet cunt. I don't give a fuck if she tastes like another alpha. It would bother me zero percent.

"Have a good night," she mumbles, spinning around and aiming for the back bedroom.

Sullivan sighs like a grumpy old man as the door closes.

I quirk an eyebrow. "What's the problem? Having regrets you fucked off for too long and someone else swooped in?"

“Please fuck off,” he says, but he doesn’t deny my statement. “It’s complicated, and it’s none of your business.”

Well, he’s got me there, but I also have to live with the ramifications of whatever goes down because of their relationship or lack thereof.

“Then uncomplicate it,” I suggest. “Or I guess move on and then both of you can stay miserable forever.”

“It’s not that simple,” he grunts, swiping a tattooed hand over his face.

“Isn’t it? It seems to me you’re making shit more difficult than it needs to be.”

“Maybe, I don’t know,” he mutters. “I’ve had feelings for Oakley for as long as I can remember, but that doesn’t make everything else fall into place.”

I frown, trying to make sense of his rambling. Maybe I’m drunker than I thought because if I had real feelings for a chick who looks like that, and also loves music as much as I do, then I would have wifed the fuck out of her by now. But that’s just me.

I nod. “Ahh, I get it. You’re one of those altruistic assholes who lives for the suffering. You’ll never be good enough for her, so instead you’ll make the both of you miserable while you pine in silence.”

“That’s not it,” he snaps, but I’m not buying what he’s selling. Not even a little bit. At this point I wouldn’t put a down payment on the bullshit he’s peddling. “It’s not,” he repeats more firmly.

“Okay.” I shrug. “I guess that’s between you and God. You’ll continue to mope around until Marcus either fucks up and she needs a shoulder to cry on, or they realize they’re in it for the long haul and she moves on from your indecisive ass.”

“I’m not indecisive. She’s everything. God, that sounds pathetic when I say it out loud, but we’ve been friends for fifteen years! If I were going to be with anyone it would be her, but I don’t even know if that’s possible.”

Fuck, maybe I am drunker than I thought.

“Because she doesn’t have a dick?” If he’s gay then I guess that makes sense. Bodies have never given me an ounce of pause, but everyone’s sexuality is their own. I’m not about to scoff just because it seems trivial to me.

“Because I didn’t think I was interested in sex for the majority of my life!” He covers his face with both hands as his head shakes. “At all. No interest. Even as a teenager. I could cuddle up and watch movies, smell her scent, feel her hand run over my stomach, and I never got hard.”

“You’re asexual,” I say, suddenly understanding why he put distance between them. If he thought she might pursue a sexual relationship, that was probably outside of what he felt comfortable with.

“Apparently I’m fucking not,” he snaps. “I’ve always known she’s beautiful and that she smells nice, but the last year or so, everything is *different*.”

“Okay, so you’re demisexual, or maybe graysexual.”

“That’s not even a thing,” he huffs.

“I can assure you that both are. Demisexual means you need an emotional connection and time to feel sexual attraction. Graysexual means you may go through periods without feeling attraction or desiring sexual contact. Or you may feel sexual attraction but have no interest in acting on it.” Sullivan glares so I continue, “Either of those are okay too. All you need to do is communicate. And I don’t mean with everyone, but there’s also a line where I think you’ve got to be real with someone who you know has feelings for you. It’s your sexuality, so yeah, you shouldn’t feel obligated to share it with anyone you don’t feel comfortable with. But if you know she’s in love with you, then rather than making her question herself…” I shrug. “I don’t know. I think you could have saved the both of you a whole lot of hurt by just talking it out, especially since you two were so close.”

Sullivan sighs.

“I mean unless you didn’t feel emotionally safe or something. Is that the case?” I tilt my head, trying to get a read on him and where his head is at.

“I don’t think it’s worth the risk of losing her completely. What do I say? I might be able to fuck you for a while, but considering I’ve never felt sexual desire before, I can’t guarantee it’ll be a forever thing?” He glares like he’s trying to melt the skin from my bones.

“Nah, I probably wouldn’t put it like that, but I’m fairly sure there’s a whole lot of gray area you’re refusing to acknowledge. If you said that to me it would likely hurt my feelings, and I don’t even really like you.” I shrug unapologetically.

“She’s an o—” Sullivan grimaces. “She’s a woman, who I’m pretty sure is going to expect regular sex, and I don’t know if I can handle that.”

“Fair enough,” I acknowledge. “Then perhaps work on rebuilding your friendship. She’s clearly with Marcus.”

“I don’t think I could handle it if she didn’t look at me the same way anymore,” he says like he didn’t hear a bloody word I just said.

“Not to be a dick because I’m truly trying to be compassionate to your situation, but mate, I think you fucking off with her feelings is going to have that effect way faster than if you were just real.” My hand flies to rub my forehead. I’m too drunk for this shit. “I’m going to have a headache in the morning.”

Sullivan scoffs.

“Not because of this conversation. It’s American ale. It tastes like piss. Listen, it’s probably not even my place to get in the middle of your shit. Handle it however you want.” I push myself out of the chair. “I counseled you like one of my friends.” I sigh, shaking my head and heading off. “Or how I would have if they weren’t all dead,” I mutter under my breath. There’s not much I would have let get in the way of our friendship, but it’s irrelevant. I stagger to my tiny ass bunk

and face plant on the shitty thin mattress. “Fuck, I really hate thinking about that shite.” I punch my pillow.

It doesn’t matter.

Talking about it, not talking about it, none of it will bring them back.

I fall asleep with an ache in my chest that just won’t quit.

Chapter Thirteen

Oakley

What I never expected when getting intimately involved with Marcus? That while he's a dick ninety-eight percent of the time, once it's time to sleep, he's like a giant tattooed cuddle monster. I've never slept in bed with a guy besides Sullivan, and that was never super affectionate. I mean, sometimes I'd wake up snuggled close to his chest, or with his arm thrown over my hip, but Marcus takes snuggling to an entirely different level.

I'm kind of obsessed with how tightly he holds me to him while we sleep. If I roll over to face the edge while I'm unconscious, then I'll wake up with him wrapped around my backside. Otherwise, I usually wake up with my head on his chest and his hand plastered to my ass to keep me in place.

I'm pretty sure if I'm not careful, I'm going to get my heart broken. I don't want to admit that I'm already halfway there. It's the weird butterflies I get in my stomach anytime I manage to coax a smile out of him, or possibly the indulgent way he never seems to say no when it's something important to me. Yeah, I think I'm probably screwed.

Marcus's hand caresses from my hip up and under his T-shirt as he runs his fingers over my stomach. His skin is rough and scratchy against mine as he moves to cup my breast. His thumb flicks over my hard nipple as he grinds against my ass.

"Good morning, princess," he growls.

"It's about to be." I slide a hand down to tease my clit.

“You smell so fucking sweet first thing in the morning. It makes me hate the suppressants once they kick in and mute your scent.” He scrapes his teeth over my shoulder as I bite my lip to keep from whining. My impulses are a little too fond of the idea of ditching the suppressants. “I love that you’re still dripping in my cum. Such a compliant little fuck doll.”

Okay, so I’ll be embarrassed later by the moan that escapes, but as he wiggles his cock down, perfectly lining up with my hole, all thought flees my mind.

“Please?” I beg, trying to keep my voice down.

“Goddamn, you know how much I love hearing you beg for me.” His hand that’s holding his head up moves to tilt my face to his. He slams his mouth to mine as I try to complain about morning breath. He slams inside me a second later, holding me in place with the hand that’s splayed over my stomach and ribs. “You’re lucky I’m as desperate for you as you are to have me inside you. I’ll have to make you plead for me next time.” He growls, kissing my cheek and pulling back. “Fuck, I should have taken the shirt off. I love watching your tits bounce as I plow into you from behind.”

I nod, my head rolling back against his chest. This is why he’s so damn dangerous. He makes me feel like no one else ever has and it’s addictive. Even though he talks shit, it still *feels* like his words are true, and he needs me as much as I need him.

I’m quite fond of the way his warm body wraps around mine. I love the intensity of the moment as his thick length rakes my walls while he thrusts in and out. Spooning sex with Marcus is actually one of my favorite positions. Fine, I’m an omega. I love all positions that involve an alpha, but I know I’m fucked because I’ve got serious feelings for the one currently working me over.

My fingers brush my clit, and I slide a couple down to tease over his slightly swollen knot.

“Fuck, dirty girl, you must want me to fill that tight little pussy up. The way you’re rippling around me. Damn, you’re so fucking snug.” He rakes his teeth over the top of my

shoulder. It's on top of the material, but I wish I could feel his teeth on my bare skin. I sob something to that effect, and he growls low. "You've got to cover your mouth. This tiny room is feeling a little bit too much like a nest and it's sending my impulses into overdrive."

I untangle my free hand from the pillow and spend the next few minutes begging into my palm. He bucks his knot inside me, and I gasp, "Ohmigod, yes!"

It's heaven, that's what it is. Pure fucking bliss in knot form. Everything gets super hazy as I squeeze around his swelling appendage.

"One of these days I won't be able to hold back, and you'll truly be stuck with me." His words are low and growly like he's physically in pain trying to hold himself back. It only makes the urge to beg for his bite stronger. My head shakes against his chest because I need him to know I think I would be okay with that, but he wraps his hand over my mouth as his forearm cradles the top of my head. "Tease your clit, beautiful. I'm not going to last with you tightening around my knot like that."

I frown into his hand. I think he forgets that he's an alpha. He might come, but it won't stop him from fucking me into oblivion over and over again. I've held myself back from asking him if he's knotted anyone before me, but suddenly I'm very sure I need to know because I don't think he has. He mentioned he'd never been with an omega the first night we fucked, but that doesn't mean he had never knotted anyone.

I mean, he's definitely knotted me so many times I've lost count, but it kind of feels like maybe he isn't used to that? Or maybe I'm delusional because I want that to be the case. It's hard to tell.

Marcus thrusts as much as he can with his knot locked inside me. His cock swells so thick it gets super intense. I whine into his grip, working my clit just right, and my pleasure builds beautifully.

I thrust my ass back, grinding to meet him, and his warm breath fans over my neck and shoulder.

“Fuck me,” he growls, going rigid behind me. “That’s my good girl. Work me off.” I do the best I can while coming all over his cock. I try to stay as quiet as possible, but it doesn’t feel like it works. Marcus is loud as hell, growling out his release as his shaft jumps inside me. “Such a perfect little omega, grinding on your alpha’s knot. Keep milking out every drop.”

I tremble against him as he finally releases my mouth. He tilts my face to his, nuzzling his cheek to mine from behind.

“Holy fuck,” I whisper as my chest heaves. I can only partially see his face, but the pupil I can see is huge.

Marcus simply nods. “Yeah.”

They warn women not to confuse sex with emotion, but dammit. I’m pretty sure I’m already screwed. Marcus yanks me back into him, sliding his hand up to run his fingers over my sternum under the shirt.

I don’t know how to fight the warm fuzzy feeling that fills my chest. The major problem is that I don’t want to.

Sometimes we shower at the venue. Other times the label sets us up with a hotel room where we spend most of the day between practices. Today is one of those days where we’ve got a hotel room. We’re doing another show in the same venue tomorrow night, so we even get the luxury of sleeping in a real bed for two nights. It always seems like such a waste to dirty up a room when we won’t come back to it after the show, so it’s a nice change.

I walk out of the bathroom, drying my hair with one of the plush hotel towels. Marcus is lying across the bed in the room we opted to share. He’s messing around on his phone.

Good God, those jeans hug his tight ass in a way that has me biting my lip.

I toss the towel on the counter and climb on top of him. I lie my head on his shoulder and kind of hug him from behind.

Which is weird. I know it's strange even as I'm doing it, but damn, I just need there to not be any space between us.

Marcus tosses his phone down and squeezes my hand wrapped over his shoulder. "Feeling a little neglected?"

"I'm okay." My wet hair shakes against his shirt, but he chuckles. He manages to roll over under me until I'm kneeling and then lying against his chest. He runs a hand down my back. I'm in a dress, but his warmth seems to radiate through the material.

"It's all right," he murmurs, marking the top of my head with his scent. It sends a shiver through my entire body. "You can soak up my pheromones any time you need them." He kisses the top of my head, and my cheeks feel warm. "Yours soothe me too."

I light up like a freaking goober. I hope he's not a good actor. I honestly don't know if my heart could handle another blow if he's just playing games with me.

There's a loud knock on the door to our room. Technically all five of us are staying in one big suite, but there are only four bedrooms, so two of the guys were originally going to have to double up. That made no sense considering Marcus and I spend six out of seven nights together. Honestly, probably more like seven out of seven recently. They never warn you how lonely it gets on the road.

I'm seriously dreading the first time Sullivan brings a hook up on the bus. Liam is funny and flirtatious, but I could probably cope with seeing him with a groupie. Sulli is an entirely different story. Although I am slowly coming to terms with our new reality.

"Hey, man." Liam steps into the room. I guess we didn't lock the bedroom door. "Can we get your feedback on something?"

"Should I come too?" I roll to the side so that Marcus can sit up.

"Nah, this is for one of the other bands." Liam nods, awkwardly fidgeting with his hands.

I raise an eyebrow.

Marcus grunts, turning to give me a quick kiss that has me grinning, and then he follows Liam out. I guess maybe I do have lead singer syndrome, where I think the world revolves around me, because it seems strange for them to leave me out.

I fall back against the pillows with a huff.

There's another quick knock on the door, and it opens before I can acknowledge whoever it is. I roll over onto my stomach and my eyes widen as I catch sight of Hawk. His blond hair is thick, falling over his forehead, and the short stubble he normally wears has grown into what might actually qualify as a beard. He's wearing a tight black T-shirt with dark jeans and boots. It's pretty much his uniform, but holy crap does he fill it out nicely. There's a box tucked into the crook of his arm.

I'm apparently the most cliché omega on the planet. I push up, studying the silver and black box that he moves to hold in his hands.

"What's that?"

"Can I have a seat?" The door closes behind him with a quiet click as he watches me.

I nod. "Go ahead."

He sits on the end of the bed and holds out the box. "Take it."

I frown but grab the small container. "I hate to tell you this, but my birthday isn't until May."

He snorts, shaking his head. "Don't even joke about me forgetting your birthday."

My silly heart races. For my last birthday he gave me a signed copy of one of my favorite musicians' biographies. At the time I thought it might be him showing interest. My head shakes, trying to will away the myriad of emotions I'm hit with. I'm still not convinced I have any right to be mad at him.

People are allowed to pull back from any relationship that isn't serving them. My therapist told me that in one of our

sessions. I was going to counseling twice a week when I first lost my mom.

"Are you going to open it?" Hawk asks. I don't know why my hands shake as I pull the lid off, but they sure as hell do. I grip the gray fabric, giving it a tug up into the air. I'm not sure what it is, but the material is soft and stretchy and it looks a little like a sleeping bag. "It's a comfort thingy, like a sensory compression sleeper thing. Whenever you're stressed out you can climb inside it and it's supposed to give you a safe and secure feeling like you're being held."

"It's really soft. Thank you." My eyes fly up to meet his. Gosh, his blue eyes are expressive. He looks nervous and a little hopeful. My stomach flutters in response.

"There's something else." He reaches into the bottom of the box, pulling out a large cream-colored envelope that I missed. "It's my paperwork. I mean, I filed for divorce a while ago, but there were all sorts of steps I had to take because she was MIA. It's all documented in the file. It shows the progress I was making. We had the final hearing, and she didn't show up to contest it, so it's done—"

"Thank you for telling me?"

"This changes nothing, does it?" Hawk frowns, shaking his head.

"Wait, is this a courting gift?" I ask, patting the sleeping bag thing in my lap.

"It's just…" He shrugs a giant infuriating shoulder. "I want you to know I'm always thinking about you; that I spend hours trying to figure out how to make your life easier. If Marcus isn't around for whatever reason, and you need it, then at least I know you have it."

Dammit. That was as clear as mud. My impulses instantly feel like I should burst into tears because I think I wanted to hear him say that he wants to court me.

"God, that was bad," Marcus says from the doorway. I jolt, but he smirks. "He's afraid you're going to break his heart. So, rather than saying what he wanted to say, he said what he

thought you wanted to hear." He shrugs. "Or maybe he hedged his words." He makes eye contact with Hawk. "Here's the thing. She's actually quite easy to get along with if you communicate, but she's not a fucking mind reader."

Damn, why does that make my heart race?

That's all I want.

Open communication and not having to wonder where I stand with someone.

Marcus always seems to get me on some soul-deep level I've never experienced before. I think it's because he's been hurt in the same ways and yearns for the same things.

Hawk sighs, shaking his head.

"And if it was a courting gift, you'd be fine with that?" I tilt my head, studying Marcus. I want him to be truthful. As surprising as it is to realize, I am genuinely happy with him. He hasn't given me a single courting gift, but we are together. We're not just fake dating for the press, and I don't want to hurt him or negatively impact what we have building between us.

As I'm having the thought Marcus swaggers over, tossing himself down on the bed at my side. "I guess I've been slacking, huh? I need to give you more than mind blowing orgasms to declare my intentions. Is that what that look means?"

My jaw falls open.

"I-I didn't say any of that." I pat his arm. He's had really shitty luck with women, and I don't want to be another statistic for him. "I'm happy. You make me happy."

"I'm pretty fucking pleased with how things have been going too." He tilts his forehead to rest against mine. He nuzzles his nose to mine, and my freaking heart tries to pound out of my chest. "Omegas are meant for packs. Suppressants aren't a long-term solution. It's ultimately your choice, but the more research I do about them, the more convinced I am that you'd be happier without them."

I bite my lip, shaking my head. “Taking the heat leave Jamen offered to pad into our schedule could tank our career.”

“A career won’t mean shit if you screw with your health trying to make it in the industry.” Marcus raises his eyebrows.

“I hate it when you say things that make me respect you,” Hawk grunts, staring at Marcus.

My eyes widen.

Marcus uses my distraction to give me a quick kiss. “Omegas aren’t built for monogamy. That’s all I’m saying. I’d prefer we discuss each person before adding any additional partners into our relationship. Especially since we’re fluid bonded, because it affects me too. But I don’t control you, so you don’t need my permission. If you do want my blessing with Hawk, then you’ve got it.” He pecks a final kiss on my lips and rolls off the bed. He swaggers for the door while I’m still processing what he said.

Hawk blinks repeatedly at Marcus’s retreating form. “Right, I don’t want to push.” He tosses a thumb toward the door. “So just know that I’m here if you need me, or hell, if by some miracle you want me.” He shoves off the bed and heads to leave the room.

He grabs the handle.

“Hey, Hawk?”

“Yeah?” He turns back slightly.

“Thank you for the gift.”

He nods, leaving without another word.

My head falls back to rest on the bed as I wonder what the hell I’ve gotten myself into.

Chapter Fourteen

Oakley

Marcus and Liam head out to help Mourning Glory with something. I'm not exactly sure, but I think their bassist pulled a muscle or maybe tweaked a tendon, which sucks for them.

Hawk saturated my portable snuggle thing in his sandalwood scent. Once Marcus is gone, I realize we don't have practice for another two hours. My nerves are starting to get the better of me again. I shimmy my way into the stretchy thing, and it does have a very compressing effect. It means a lot that he put thought into ways to help with my anxiety.

It takes about fifteen minutes of scrolling on my phone before I start to feel a little better. The bus is cramped, and there's zero privacy, but my room smells like Marcus, and having my alpha's scent so heavy in the air usually helps calm my system. It appears Hawk's scent has the same effect.

I stretch down, releasing the sleeping bag foot flap. I'm going to look utterly ridiculous if I run into anyone, but also, I really don't care because the thing is working. It takes some work, but I manage to get off the bed to go search for a room service menu.

I make it out to the living room area of the suite and spot the maroon menu next to the phone on the end table.

Jackpot.

I slide around the chair, jolting when I catch sight of Sullivan lying across the couch with his arms crossed. It's hard having things so strained between us. I miss my best friend,

but I'm also tired of pining after someone who never wanted me the way I wanted him.

"Hey." He sits up when he spots me, and a smile I haven't seen in ages breaks out over his face. It's so familiar that I smile back. Fuck, he's gorgeous when he's happy, but it's not the outside that drew me to him. It's the fact that we could talk about anything for hours and I'd never get bored. Or how he'd listen to me ramble about making it in the music industry, and rather than try to discourage me, he used to have my back. "What the hell is that?" He nods at me, pulling his feet off the couch.

"It's comfortable is what it is." I grab the menu and take the end seat next to the hotel phone. It's not the easiest because of the material, but I manage. Although I do imagine I look a little like a kangaroo hopping around the room.

Sullivan's spread legs are right next to mine. It's so awkward, and I don't even understand how we got here. I wish I did. Then maybe I could fix it. I straight up destroyed years of friendship for nothing. It felt worth it at the time. As he stared down at me with his big blue eyes dilated, I was sure he felt the same.

I'm such an idiot.

Then again, if I hadn't made a move that night, then I may not have ended up with Marcus.

It's incredibly confusing.

I open the menu and start browsing to distract myself.

Sullivan stretches a hand down, wrapping it under my feet and pulling my legs up to rest next to him on the couch.

I peek over the top, blinking in shock or possibly confusion. Sulli laughs and my stupid heart pounds. Maybe he misses me too? I'd really like it if we could forget what happened and just go back to being friends.

"Are you going to share, or do I have to guess what they've got?" He nods to the menu. The top halves of our bodies are facing opposite directions, but I shimmy to the side

a bit to give him the chance to check it out. His arm brushes mine, and my heart tries to pound right out of my damn chest.

Sullivan's cedar and citrus scent floods my nose, and it's hard to focus.

Those stupid suppressants are totally failing. Marcus is right. I don't know why I still take them.

They're kind of a safety net or a shield. Being an omega makes me feel weirdly vulnerable. It feels like when I admit my designation then I'm admitting I can't survive without alphas.

"Are you eating light since we'll be on stage tonight?" He bumps his arm against my legs. "Or is there a chance I can talk you into splitting a plate of chicken nachos with me?"

My mind races.

What is going on? Did he and Hawk sit down and decide they were going to be the most frustrating human beings on the planet?

I was going to get a Cobb salad or something similar for the protein, but the appeal of sharing anything with Sullivan is too strong. "Yeah, we can share. Just no jalapeños."

"God, neither of us need a repeat of that debacle." He chuckles, swiping a tattooed hand over his face. "Can you imagine that kind of heartburn on stage? We better ask what level of heat is in the pico."

He just said more words to me at one time than he has since that night. My eyes fly to his as I try to get myself together. If he's offering an olive branch, then I'm taking it.

"Yeah, and ask for extra sour cream," I say, shoving the menu at his chest. He knows me well enough that I always get nervous and mess up the order. Sulli used to call in our food all the time.

My heart beats funny when he shoves himself off the couch, stepping over to the phone without argument.

I'm seriously wondering if I slipped into an alternate universe or something. This is absolutely wild.

Sullivan orders food and gets a bunch of extra stuff, including the salad I was going to order. It's crazy that he adds it on without me having to ask. Or maybe he's just getting a ton of food because he knows we won't get another chance to eat until after the show tonight.

Once he's done, he tosses himself down on the couch at my side rather than taking one of the other seats. "Want to watch the show about aliens and ancient civilizations?" He yanks his phone out of his pocket.

"Yeah, okay, but I haven't seen any of the new episodes."

"Me neither. I bet it's still saved on the last one we watched."

Well, damn. That definitely makes my stomach feel all fluttery and chaotic. "Let's do it."

"Here, so we can both see it." He tosses a throw pillow on his chest. I blink for so long that he continues, "I don't know how we can both watch my phone if we don't face the same direction."

He's right. I struggle against the tight hold of the compression material and snuggle into the hole between him and the back cushion of the couch.

Sullivan's scent hits my nostrils, and it becomes clear this was a really bad idea. He's so familiar it makes me ache to wallow around his chest to catch deeper hits of his scent. Instead, I cross my arms over my chest and miss everything in the episode as I obsess about what this means.

When the food comes, Sullivan shoves himself off the couch to answer the door to the suite. The waiter, or whatever you call the guy who delivers the food, sets up the tray next to the couch and leaves the rest on the table. This place is so fancy it actually has a nook with four chairs to eat next to the patio. Once everything is set up, Sullivan tips the guy, which is nice because I'm damn hungry, and trying to climb off the couch again in the snuggle contraption feels impossible.

I rip it off, tossing it in the chair next to us while Sulli chuckles.

“What? There’s no way I could eat properly with that thing pushing on my guts.” I shrug.

“I’ve missed you, Oaks.” Sulli pulls the top off the nachos.

“Me too.” I swallow thickly as we settle in to eat.

Marcus and Liam return not long after we finish stuffing our faces. I immediately move to sit up, but Marcus swipes a hand to indicate I should stay where I am.

“Guess who is filling in for Mourning Glory?” Liam quirks an eyebrow, pulling off multiple lids to see what’s left.

“You?” I make eye contact with Marcus.

“Yup.” He grabs a plate at random and one of the sodas resting in the ice bin. “Tyler is fucked. He’s going to see the doctor tonight, but I’ve got to fill in for him, meaning I’ve got to grab some lunch and get my ass out there to practice with them.”

“They’re not allowed to steal you from us,” I huff, frowning because that sounded awful even to my own ears.

“Never going to happen, princess.” Marcus winks, sitting in the club chair across from us. “Jamen is already working on finding them a replacement, but it’s either I perform with them, or we do a double set.”

“We may be the bigger name on the tour, but they’ve got their own fans specifically coming to catch them. It’ll only be a few shows until Jamen can contract a fill-in.” Liam tosses himself down in the other club chair.

I nod, but honestly more time on stage is my nightmare come to life. I’m already struggling to complete our set. We may be the bigger name for the opening acts, but Trigger Finger is the star of the show.

My eyes fly to Marcus’s, and he gives me a serious look. “We can do a double set if you need me to be with you before the show.” He shoves a quesadilla into his mouth and shrugs.

My heart races because that was exactly what I needed to hear him say, but I'm not actually selfish enough to tank Mourning Glory's intro tour.

"He really is sickeningly sweet with you," Liam says around his cheeseburger. "If you're taking applications for your before-the-show fuck, then I absolutely volunteer my body as tribute." He winks.

I snort.

Sullivan scoffs.

Marcus growls.

And Hawk bounces into the room from wherever he's been. Damn, my system likes having the four of them in one place a little too much for it to be healthy. Sullivan pats my hip, handing me my soda, and my damn impulses shiver in response.

My instincts want to lock them away with me in a nest and not let even one of them escape. It's so bizarre that I snuggle back into the couch cushions, trying to determine what in the world changed recently.

I pace my way across the green room and back again, shaking out my hands as I go. We managed a short practice since Marcus was only available for thirty minutes, and it didn't feel like nearly enough time. We ran through our duet, but honestly, the others aren't concerned, and I probably wouldn't be either if my system wasn't so out of whack all of a sudden. However, it's a universal fact that each venue has its own acoustics. That probably means I'm not overreacting. I'm just thinking logically, right? Or maybe I'm on the verge of a panic attack. It really could go either way at this point.

Sullivan tilts his head, watching me predatorily, and it makes it very difficult not to bolt in the opposite direction. My system is in full freak-out mode as I swivel, taking the turn back to pace in the opposite direction.

“Oakley,” he says.

“I’m fine,” I lie. It’s pretty clear, even to my own ears, once I realize how shaky my tone came out. I’ve been royally screwing up everything lately. My first few songs always betray my nerves. The guys are doing their best to cover for me, but that’s also not their job.

You’re only as strong as your weakest link, and at this point, I’m that link.

Chapter Fifteen

Sullivan

"Oakley." I stomp across the greenroom to her side. I hate this shit. I can see she's suffering, but I don't have the first clue how to fix it. There was a time she would have come to me if she was hurting. That time has long passed. Unfortunately, I don't know how to repair that either, even though I want to more than anything.

"I said I'm fine," she snaps, pacing back the other direction.

"Bullshit," I deadpan.

"Jesus, Sullivan, please climb off your high horse," she mutters under her breath.

"Hey," I make a grab for her wrist, but she shakes out of my hold, "I'm trying to check on you."

"After shutting me out for the last few months?" She rolls her eyes. "I think I'm good on that, but thanks."

I'm so shocked that I take a step back. It's not like her at all. I frown so hard I can feel my own forehead wrinkle. "Damn, I guess Marcus is rubbing off on you after all."

"Why? Because I'm tired of being walked all over, and I'm finally standing up for myself?" She studies me carefully. "I was embarrassed after what happened, but I still made an effort because keeping our friendship was more important than my pride."

My stomach drops. I really have fucked this up; hopefully not beyond repair.

“Please, come sit down and talk to me,” I plead. “I care about you more than I can explain.”

“Okay, Sullivan,” she huffs, but she doesn’t make a move toward me or even the couch. My chest gets tighter than it has been.

“We had lunch together earlier.” I sigh. “I figured you weren’t as angry with me as I originally thought.”

“Men,” she grunts. “Hurt is not the same emotion as anger. I was hurt that you shut me out rather than talking to me. I am angry that you can’t seem to tell the difference between the two.”

I stomp over to her side, and I’m as surprised as she is when I scoop her up. She doesn’t fight me, which seems like a decent sign, or maybe I’m reaching for any glimmer of hope at this point.

“I’ve fucked up a lot lately,” I admit, taking a seat on the hard-as-hell fake plastic couch. Oakley scrambles up on her knees, tilting her head to look at me. I bear hug her like I used to when we were teenagers and wrap my hand around her head just under her ponytail, bringing her face to rest in the crook of my neck. “I’ve been trying to figure out some stuff that’s my own shit, but what I didn’t mean to do was to damage our friendship.”

“Yeah, that’s the last thing I wanted either.” Her warm breath puffs through my T-shirt and against my skin as she runs her hand over my shoulder. “I’ve really missed you, Sulli.”

“Me too,” I grunt, holding her closer. My heart races as she exhales against my skin.

Neither of our families were especially hands-on growing up.

Oakley has always been my partner. She dated on and off in high school, but nothing that got too serious. I wasn’t prepared to have to share her.

Before she presented as an omega, I was sure we’d get married one day. Some of that was the naivety that came with

youth, but until it became clear she's an omega, I still had hope that I could make her happy. I never wanted to be touched by anyone, except for her. I thought that meant we had a chance. I do crave affection, more so recently than ever before, but the thought never turned me off when thinking about Oakley.

I have all sorts of complex feelings when it comes to her that I've never had to face. I'm starting to think Liam is right. I might be the only one who can define my sexuality, or lack thereof, but I'm also the one who's been setting limitations on myself.

"How have you been?" I run my thumb over her cheek as my fingers brush over her neck. Oakley likes to be held tightly, even before she presented. The signs she'd be an omega were all there. "Are you happy with Marcus?"

Her breath catches, but she nods. "I really am. I know he can be difficult, but he's had a hard life."

"I get it," I concede. "It helps that I do think he really cares about you. He's been different lately, and he obviously has no problem staying faithful."

"Yeah, but it's only been a few months. Who knows what'll happen if we make it big." She shrugs, but it's clear she's already emotionally invested.

I'm sure that after the bullshit with me and Hawk, it didn't take much for him to slide right in while she was vulnerable. My teeth grind together as my jaw gets tight. It's complicated hating him when I'm realistic enough to know I'm pissed at myself.

"That's my own insecurity talking. Marcus has been nothing but good to me. Honestly, I have zero complaints."

If I wasn't such a jealous asshole, that would be good to hear, but as it is, my heart fucking sinks. Not that I want him to treat her like shit, but fuck, I'm pretty sure he realizes what a catch Oakley is. She's smart, driven, compassionate, and financially stable even if this music career doesn't pan out.

“Please don’t shut me out again, Sullivan,” she whispers, pushing against my hold to look up at me.

“I won’t,” I assure her, staring into her big blue eyes. My nostrils flare, breathing in her lavender scent. It’s less acrid than when we sat down. I can only hope that means I’ve helped her calm down. That’s obviously one step above Marcus. I was able to soothe her with my presence, not my cock. Okay, so I’m not sure that’s a win, but it could be.

“I’m serious, Sullivan.” She tilts her head, watching me carefully. “I will legitimately have to hurt you.”

She’s so freaking pretty that all the air seems to evaporate from my lungs. My gaze darts to her puffy lips, but she’s got a boyfriend. A boyfriend who hates me, and the feeling is mostly mutual.

I settle for giving her lower back a squeeze.

The door flies open, and Liam pops inside. He’s holding a water bottle, taking a long chug, but he chokes and coughs when he spots us.

Oakley turns, checking out the commotion, but cuddles back into my chest when she spots Liam. He wiggles his eyebrows and does a ridiculous thrusting with the water bottle that makes me snort.

“It’s that time. By the way, Marcus killed it, considering he had never played those songs before today. I grabbed some videos on my phone in case you want to see them, but we’ve got to get out there.” Liam bounces on the toes of his boots, waving a hand.

“Be right there.” I give him a look that indicates he should fuck off. I nuzzle my cheek to Oakley’s and murmur, “Let’s go rock the house down.”

I sweat through my shirt during the first ten minutes on stage. We play through our songs, and the last one is Marcus and Oakley’s duet.

They slay “Carry On.” The level of emotion and the way they hit every note sends the crowd to their feet. It makes it clear they’re in sync. No two musicians land that type of performance without years of practice or some soul-deep connection that I’m jealous of.

The song comes to an end.

Liam and Marcus call to the crowd as I stand up, heading up to toss my sticks. Oakley spots me and comes over, wrapping her arm around my lower back as we give a bow and head off the stage.

She smiles, her hand digging into my side. “The vibe was on point tonight.”

“The crowd loved it,” I agree as the fans backstage descend.

Oakley spins around, answering the questions from a couple of women. Hawk stands, stoically watching everything. Marcus talks to one of the tour managers, but Liam smiles, laughing at something one of the reporters says. They’re easy enough to pick out because of their press badges and the notebooks they scribble in.

I’m not sure what it is in Liam’s posture that signals his discomfort, but a second later, he goes rigid before plastering on a fake smile. I glance at Oakley, but she’s still fine. She’s signing stuff for the women with a black marker.

It’s always loud backstage, but as I take the few steps separating me from Liam, I catch the end of the reporter’s question. “I’m sure it’s taken some adjusting, especially considering the circumstances. How does it feel playing with a new band after you spent so many years with Try Hard Hero?”

Liam fidgets, continuing to smile. It’s pretty clear he’s uncomfortable.

“I’ve got to interrupt. The tour manager needs us.” I toss an arm around Liam’s shoulders, leading him away before the reporter can object. Once we’re halfway down the hall that leads to our greenroom, I bump my arm against his. “Are you good?”

“Never better,” he lies quite unconvincingly.

“Don’t let it get to you. Whatever the circumstances were that led you to us, we’re lucky to have you.”

Liam scoffs, turning and pushing through the door to the greenroom without a backward glance.

I frown after him for several seconds and remind myself to look up Try Hard Hero once I get back to my phone. I glance between the greenroom and Oakley. My need to keep her safe has only grown now that we’re on tour, but she’s also got Marcus and Hawk at her side.

I follow Liam. He seemed distraught, and it doesn’t seem right to leave him alone if something is bothering him.

The last thing I expect to find is him leaning his back against the wall across from the door when I walk in. His hands cover his face as his head bangs against the sheet rock.

My head tilts as I approach. Whatever went down with his last band was more serious than I suspected. I’m only a few feet away when his eyes pop open and the plastic smile comes back in full force.

“I need a fucking drink,” he says, shoving off the wall. He walks right past me and swaggers out the door.

I’m pretty sure that’s not a good sign. By the time I get my shit together, making it out into the hall, he’s gone. I exhale heavily.

What was that about?

Chapter Sixteen

Oakley

Liam is missing from our meet and greet after the show. They're required by our contract, but we cover for him like any bandmates should. My hackles are up, and I don't understand why.

Hawk sees us back to the hotel, swearing there's someone from A Team with eyes on Liam.

Sullivan isn't cold or distant, but he is weirdly pensive. He aims for his room.

Hawk leaves after letting us know he's going to touch base with the security team again. I get the feeling they're both concerned too. We haven't been together all that long, but it's worrisome when someone starts acting completely out of character.

Marcus and I shower, but I'm still buzzing with energy and nerves. It feels weirdly like Liam abandoned us, and I have no idea why.

"Want to watch the movie on the couch in the living room so that you'll know when he gets in?" Marcus asks, yanking up his sweatpants.

My teeth dig into my lower lip, but I nod. "What if he's not okay?"

"What if he's out hooking up, and we cramp his style?" Marcus laughs. "I actually don't hate that idea. Let me grab the blanket." He yanks the comforter off of our bed and slaps my ass with his free hand.

We make our way out, and Marcus starts a movie I haven't heard of. My focus is split between the storyline and trying to figure out why Liam randomly disappeared.

Some particularly porn-like music plays as Marcus wraps himself even more tightly around my back. His half-hard cock digs into my bottom as he moves my hair to the side. His lips brush over the thin material of my spaghetti strap tank top and then he's sliding a hand into the waistband of my sleep shorts and panties.

"I'm not sure why I let you bother with these," he growls, splaying his hand over my pelvis.

"Me either." I wiggle against his cock as the Viking on the screen catches the maiden by wrapping an arm around her middle. She kicks and screams, but it's all in good fun. Eventually, the man captures her mouth for a filthy kiss before putting her back on her feet and sending her off with a slap on the ass.

"I wouldn't mind hunting you someday," Marcus growls, grinding against my ass. "Chase you down and mount your tiny little cunt like the dirty cock tease you are."

I nod, my head rolling against his chest as I stretch a hand back, sliding it down his stomach and into the waistband of his sweats. He's not fully hard, but his cock is always extremely thick. My fingers tease down his piercings as he brushes his thumb over my clit.

I turn to look up at him, but he redirects my face toward the screen. "Nah, watch the show. Maybe I should've put on something really filthy." His palm brushes my clit as he slides his middle finger down, teasing my hole. "Aww, fuck. You're already so fucking wet." He completely contradicts his earlier statement about watching the TV by tilting his head down until he can capture my mouth. It's awkward because of the angle, but he swirls his finger in and out of my core as I jerk him off as well as I can considering the position. My thumb teases over his sticky tip as my fingertips glide down his piercings. "I don't think you know how badly I ache to toss you down and rut into you like a fucking beast."

I smile. “Feel free.”

“You’re so much trouble.” He chuckles.

“I’ve got to keep things interesting.” I pull my hand free, bringing it around to lick his pre-cum from my thumb. Marcus groans, watching my tongue dart over my skin. “You’ve never let me suck you off. I just want you to know I’m not opposed to the idea.”

“Me either. It just so happens, I’m always desperate to slip inside you.” He sounds amused. “Let’s see if I can make you come all over my hand so I can replace it with my dick.”

I nod my agreement, grinding back against his length. The arm wrapped around my head comes down so he can tease my nipple, and he works another finger inside me using the hand in my panties. Two of his thick digits feel great, so that means three would be life-changing, right?

“Marcus,” I gasp as my body begins to clench around his hand. “I want your knot.”

“You’ll have me soon. Come for me, princess.” His warm breath fans over my throat as he bites without breaking the skin. I thrash as he teases the front wall of my pussy just right. My pleasure coils tight as he growls. The sound always ramps up my physical reaction. Alpha and omega biology is weird, but I love how my body responds to his pheromones in the air. My pussy locks down on thick fingers as they drag in and out. “There we go,” he coos against my jaw. “That’s the spot that makes you scream. Fuck my hand.”

I do, nodding wildly as his palm brushes my clit. My hips grind over his shaft, which has maneuvered its way right between my ass cheeks.

I come violently, pulling a hand up to cover my mouth.

We both jolt when the door pops open, but Marcus slides another thick finger inside me when he spots Liam staggering around.

The security guy gives us a nod before gently shoving a very wasted-looking Liam the rest of the way inside and

closing the door. I bite into my palm to try to hold back the moan, but it escapes around my skin.

"Come all over me," Marcus growls against my ear. He nips at my neck, and my whole body tingles with zips of pleasure. "Goddamn, I love it when you get loud."

"Well, fuck. I imagine the blanket is hiding a whole lot of things I'd enjoy watching." Liam tosses himself down in the club chair right next to us and twists to face us. "Do away with the cover. I deserve a good show." He swipes a hand over his face. "It's been a right shitty night. I also have zero tolerance for ale anymore, in case anyone cares."

Marcus still grinds his fingers in and out of me as I struggle to catch my breath. I can feel the curve of his smile against my neck. "Sucks to be you, my night is looking up." He pulls his hand free of my sex, bringing his fingers to his mouth. He groans, and my cheeks heat.

"Mine too." Liam stares straight at me. "Have pity on me. I need something to jerk off too. It's been so long…" He frowns, crossing his arms over his chest. "So long that I actually refuse to admit it aloud."

Marcus snorts, pulling me up and tossing the blanket away. He helps me maneuver until I'm kneeling over his very hard erection. "You stay the fuck over there. I mean it. What do you think, princess? Want to climb on my cock?" His hands cup my ass as his pinkies tease over my very wet core.

"Okay." I bury my face in his neck, sucking in deep hits of his beachy scent.

"Nah, it's a yes or no question. We've got a room right over there." Marcus slides his hands up my sides, removing my sleep tank and tossing it aside.

"Yeah," I agree, staring into Marcus's dark eyes. I can smell the alcohol on Liam from here. I'm kind of doubting he'll remember this tomorrow anyway.

Marcus slams his mouth to mine while pulling me up enough to help me out of my panties and the silk sleep shorts.

“Sweet mother of God, you’ve got a nice ass,” Liam says from behind me.

I laugh at how thick his accent runs together. “Thanks.”

Marcus lowers his sweats and kicks them off as his cock bounces against my ass. He wraps a hand around my head, pulling my ear close to his mouth. “No taking my knot. I’m not sure he’s figured it out yet.”

I nod, moaning as he licks from my neck, down my sternum, to my right nipple. One hand rests on his shoulder, but I slide the other between us to work his length.

“Christ, I’m a little worried for your pussy. No wonder you’re such a smug motherfucker.” Liam chuckles, moving around behind me, but I can’t see him to know what he’s doing.

Marcus’s huge hand splays on my back as he pulls my other tit to his mouth. Noises from the couple on the television fill the air, and it sounds like they’re greatly enjoying themselves.

I slide the crown of Marcus’s cock through my slick lower lips and sink down. It’s mind-blowingly intense every damn time. My teeth dig into my lip to keep from whining and begging for his bite.

“He got you nice and wet, didn’t he, sweetness?” Liam asks.

“I sure fucking did,” Marcus agrees, helping me rise and fall by using his grip on my hips. His warm skin brushes mine, but it’s the unreal feeling of being stretched to capacity that has my nipples aching.

“I’d have such a better view if you were to face me,” Liam says petulantly.

“Shut the fuck up or get out,” Marcus growls.

“I believe I’d be significantly more jovial if it was my *bare* cock you were sinking down on, but he’s just a grumpy fucker all the time, isn’t he?” Liam snorts.

Marcus's veins bulge on his neck. I get the distinct feeling he's about to carry me to our bedroom and it's kind of a thrill knowing Liam is watching. I shove my mouth to my alpha's as slick drips out of me all over the several inches of his length that I haven't yet managed to take.

My nose twitches as I pull back, heaving in deep gulps of air.

"You like putting on a show. Don't you, dirty girl?" Marcus smirks.

I whimper in response, and Marcus lifts me. At first, I think he's about to leave the room, but he pulls me off his cock, tossing me down on my hands and knees. He faces me toward Liam's chair, and I moan when I catch sight of Liam. He's got his jeans undone and his hand in his boxer briefs.

Liam shrugs, staring at my tits as I hold myself up doggy style. "He said I couldn't participate, not that I couldn't enjoy watching."

I don't know when he lost his shirt, but his abs ripple as he thrusts up into his fist. I kind of hate that I can't see everything, but even in the dim light I can spot the wet spot, which I'm guessing is pre-cum. My mouth waters, but Marcus thrusts back inside me so fiercely my arms wobble.

"Oh fuck," I hiss as the intense discomfort fades into mind-blowing bliss.

"Jesus fucking Christ," Marcus groans, working himself deeper on each stroke. "It always throws me off when you ripple around me like that." He wraps an arm under my breasts and pulls me up until I'm kneeling with my back against his chest. "Tease your clit for me."

My hand falls to my sex, and I do as he asked. My face feels hot, but the scents of the two aroused alphas send my instincts into overdrive. My fingers spread my lower lips as Liam stares straight at where Marcus disappears inside me.

"I'd be more than happy to lick her clit for you," Liam growls. It's unusual to hear him sound so alpha.

I nearly beg out a plea for exactly that.

“Stay sober next time, and maybe I’ll toss you an olive branch,” Marcus groans, thrusting directly into my g-spot. His hand clamps down on my hip as the one around my middle pinches my nipple.

My pussy leaks slick to the point I’d be concerned if Liam wasn’t so distracted.

“I’m definitely not past the point of being able to consent,” Liam says with a huff.

My fingers tease Marcus’s knot as he fucks up into me. My tits bounce as heat pulses through my entire body. My free arm wraps around Marcus’s to keep myself up as my pussy begins to contract.

“That’s right, dirty girl. Come all over me so I can fill your sweet little cunt to the brim.” The command in Marcus’s tone is clear to my system. Pleasure courses through every nerve ending in my body as everything gets fuzzy. Their pheromones only heighten my desire to the point I don’t know what spills from my mouth as the orgasm rips through me. I jolt against Marcus’s hold, but his tightly controlled strength keeps me plastered to his chest as I shake. “That’s my good girl,” Marcus groans against my cheek. “I’m going to be dripping out of you all night long.”

“Fuck,” Liam growls. “That’s insanely fucking hot.”

Marcus curses as he holds me so tightly I’ll likely have bruises. I’m addicted to the way his hand splays over my stomach as his cock swells.

It’s nearly impossible not to beg for his bite.

I don’t know if Marcus is just that good at reading me, but he growls, “Kiss me, princess.”

My head snaps to the side. I tilt so that our mouths can meet, and as both of their scents fill the air, I beg into his mouth. I can only hope it’s muffled.

“Fucking hell,” Liam moans. “I’m a really big fan of your tits too. Did I already say that? Oh well, it’s still true.”

Marcus fucks me through his comedown and kisses my cheek tenderly. “Let’s get to bed now that you know Liam is safe.”

“Yeah,” I agree, shuddering out a breath.

Marcus pulls out of me, twisting me around and lifting me with ease. He carries me to the bedroom and tosses me down on the mattress. I blink at his back as he strides out, coming back a minute later with the comforter. He tosses it down, and I start to spread it out over the bed. He’s gone for a couple of minutes, so I assume he’s getting Liam to bed safely.

I have enough time to run to the attached bathroom and clean up. I’m just climbing back into bed when the door to our room opens again.

My jaw falls when Marcus guides Liam into our room. Liam is in a pair of fresh boxer briefs. I’ve seen him practically nude before on the bus and during wardrobe changes, but I’m still greedy for every inch of his tattooed flesh.

“You’re on that side. I’m by the door.” Marcus gives him a shove. It’s bizarre because Marcus is still fully naked.

Liam doesn’t complain. He climbs in on the side and rolls to face the middle. “Thank you,” he grunts, before his eyes close.

“I figured we should keep an eye on him.” Marcus climbs into bed. I’m facing Liam’s side, but Marcus scoots his pelvis to my ass and a low purr starts in his chest.

Wrapped up between the two alpha scents, I don’t stand a chance. I fall asleep before I even have time to consider how that little show might change things.

There are two very hard cocks jabbing into me when I wake up. I’m snuggled tight between Marcus and Liam. Liam is wrapped as firmly around my front as Marcus is to my rear end.

I need to find out what happened yesterday with Liam and see if I can do anything to help him feel better. He's very good at hiding his pain, just like Marcus. They remind me more of each other than I'm sure either would like to admit.

The room is spacious, but it feels a little too nest-like with both their scents so strong in the air. The suppressants are failing fast, and it's terrifying to think what will happen when they cease to work at all.

It takes a considerable amount of effort to convince myself to climb out of the bed. The looks on Liam's face as he watched me and Marcus last night file through my brain, and my thighs clench. I'm deliciously sore from Marcus pounding into me, but I know my scent is most potent in the morning.

There's no way I can stay here.

Liam won't be drunk or distracted when he wakes up. He's sleeping with his face buried in my shoulder and the warmth of his skin is comforting to my impulses.

I still carefully remove myself from between the two of them. My hand flies to cover my mouth when the two alphas cuddle up closer to each other in their sleep. Liam has made it clear he's bi, but I'm not sure Marcus is open to men. Not that it would bother me if he was. The thought makes my nipples tighten, and I toss myself toward the bathroom to take my suppressants.

I shower and head out to determine what time it is. There's a pile of mine and Marcus's clothes right outside the door, and my face feels hot as I spot Sullivan and Hawk at the small nook.

"Is Liam in there?" Hawk nods to the room I just came out of.

I give an awkward nod rather than speaking.

"Good, I was worried he snuck out while he was wasted," Hawk grunts, nodding to the table. "We got you bacon and

pancakes."

"Thanks." I head over, taking the seat next to Sullivan, who grabs a plate, pulling it to rest in front of me. "Do you know what happened last night to upset Liam?"

Sullivan shrugs. "The reporter started asking about his last band and he shut down."

I frown as Hawk slides a glass of orange juice in front of me. "Yeah, he seemed really off when he came in," I admit.

Hawk gently bumps my foot under the table as he nods toward the door to my room.

Liam staggers out looking terribly hungover. "Don't everyone go quiet when I enter the room, or I'll be forced to think you were talking about me."

"Come soak up some carbs," Sullivan says, shoving a bite of eggs into his mouth.

"Don't mind if I do." Liam chuckles, scratching his bare chest. He saunters over with a boyish smile on his face. I lick my lips, watching all those lines of lithe muscle move and flex. He's definitely on the slender side, but he's got incredible definition.

He slides into the seat at Hawk's side. I wait for him to say something about last night, or for Hawk and Sullivan to ask why he slept with me and Marcus, but Liam brings up the venue and how nice it is to be in the same city for a few days.

Marcus swaggers out a few minutes later, but there are only four chairs.

Sullivan is nearly done. He wipes his mouth and moves to stand, but Marcus shakes his head, scooping me up and bringing me to sit in his lap. I wiggle back against his chest and try not to focus too much on how much I love having the five of us in one place.

If I were an alpha I would definitely be purring. I glance around as they talk among themselves and my stomach flip-flops with butterflies. I really like it when they get along.

Chapter Seventeen

Marcus

The day passes with more practice sessions than I can count.

I have another busy-as-fuck show. I'm still filling in for Tyler from Mourning Glory and doing our normal set immediately after theirs.

It's fine. I'm more than capable of doing two thirty-minute shows back-to-back. The entire goal of making it is to be the headliner of our own tour, and the main act usually performs for ninety minutes.

I'm looking at it as good practice for our future.

After our set, we barely get the chance to change out of our stage attire before the venue staff pops in, letting us know it's time for our meet and greet.

"I think Sullivan is in the bathroom," Hawk says. "I'll wait for him and walk him down to you guys."

"Thank you," Oakley singsongs, coming up to my side. She bumps her hip against my thigh. "Ready?"

I chuckle. "Yeah, let's do it."

"I can think of several things I'd rather be doing." Liam laughs, tossing an arm around Oakley's lower back. "But I suppose I'll settle for helping you claw the harpies off Marcus."

I snort, shaking my head. It's weird as fuck. Women have never thrown themselves at me. Fortunately, I got lucky

locking Oakley down before the tour ever started because I've never been about casual hook ups.

Maybe it was the borderline religious abuse I endured growing up, but I've always gravitated toward relationships. And not just because they literally beat it into me that I'd be an upstanding member of society. I don't think packs are anti-religion. My adopted parents and their church staunchly disagree. I guess I'm just not interested in faceless bodies.

Not that I don't resent the hell out of Wayne and Susan for the bullshit they put me through in an attempt to ensure I didn't end up like Damian. He was their pride and joy and simultaneously their biggest failure. With enough prayer, church, and strict discipline, they were convinced they could do better the second time around.

Shockingly enough, despite not sharing DNA with Damian, I still gravitated toward the same shit he did. Maybe I can thank Angel for her contribution to my physical make up.

Realizing that they always knew Angel was my mother, it makes a lot more sense why it felt like they loved and hated me in equal measure. The only thing they hated more than losing Damian to the industry was Angel.

It's also strange recognizing I grew up with Lyric's biological grandparents. Other than a quick five-minute meeting at Damian's funeral, I don't think she's spent any time with them. If she's interested in a possible relationship, I can assure her that she's not missing much.

The cuffs on my wrists slide around, covering the multitude of scars. Oakley has seen them, or I assume she has, but she hasn't pushed for an explanation, and I wholeheartedly appreciate that. I was never suicidal, but a couple are particularly gruesome from when my rage was a little too intense.

I snort, holding Oakley even more tightly. It's better to have taken it out on myself than to have snapped and beat my adopted father to death, which was a real possibility on a few occasions.

We follow the two venue guys that have been our coordinators the last two nights.

“Now remember, if you need to pee or assistance removing some poor woman’s hands for touching your man, then call me.” Liam grins. “We don’t need that kind of press right now.”

“You’re ridiculous,” Oakley says, tickling Liam’s side.

“Only for you, sweetness,” he murmurs, slapping her ass.

I roll my eyes, but it’s good to see him back to his normal self. I don’t revel in the misery of others, despite what people might think, and it was a little disturbing seeing him so jacked up.

I’ve been there, but I still don’t have the first clue what set him off, which truthfully makes me feel like a shitty bandmate. We haven’t been together long enough to truly consider him a friend, but it’s getting there.

I guess.

The first indication something is majorly wrong is when the venue guys lead us into a completely different room from last night. Normally they stagger the backstage experiences so the fans get a short time with each of the bands, even the openers. They miss out on some of Trigger Finger’s performance, so the number of fans is usually pretty low unless they specifically came to see us.

Liam heads in first and does a double take. He stops dead in his tracks, and it sets my hackles right up.

My grip tightens on Oakley’s hip, but she slides around Liam and gasps. I let her pull me along, but she immediately steps back into my shoes like it’s time to retreat.

My jaw literally falls open when I spot Angel Rae with Johnny fucking Kincaid at her side. They sit in two club chairs, and there’s a couch across from them. My biological

mother and her shitty longtime on-and-off-again boyfriend can kiss my ass.

Oakley literally moves her entire body in front of me like she can shield me with her tiny form. I'd find it adorable if I wasn't about to snap. She leans back into my chest and wraps her hand in mine.

Angel has been pushing non-stop for this little family meeting, but Jamen has done his best to help insulate me.

I want nothing to do with that woman. I won't be her ticket back into the spotlight, even if I have to remove myself from the limelight to ensure it.

I've told Jamen as much. He and Lyric have made it clear that the only approach that works with a snake like Angel is full-on avoidance. Once she realizes I won't play into her hand, she'll slither away to bother the next poor rodent.

Jamen assured me that she wouldn't be allowed to get anywhere near us on this tour.

I believed him, which is the only fucking reason I'm here. Blood pumps through my system as my fight-or-flight impulse kicks in. I cannot fucking believe she brought Johnny Kincaid with her. It's likely because he's the only relatively famous person that can stand to be in her vicinity.

"What the fuck is this?" I growl, squeezing Oakley's hand for dear life. My eyes dart around, taking in the camera crew that I bet belongs to Angel's reality show.

Don't they require a release or something?

Does she really think I'd sign one?

"I wanted an opportunity to sit down and talk to you," Angel says. Even her voice grates on my nerves. She plasters on a fake look of contrition for the cameras, but it's pretty clear she doesn't give a shit about anyone except herself.

Johnny smirks, stretching back in his chair like he doesn't have a care in the world.

If it wasn't for the cameras, I'd slam my fist into that motherfucker's face. He took over lead guitar in Madness

when Damian died. It's disturbing that even knowing what he tried to do to her *kid,* Angel still sticks around him.

"Why the fuck is he here?" I carefully pull Oakley toward the door. I really don't want to be in that piece of shit's vicinity, but I can't stand the thought of him even looking at my omega.

"It's a right family reunion," Liam says, cackling. "California style." He's a dick, but I do appreciate the fact he steps back, grips my shoulder, and gives it a squeeze. "I always thought reality shows were scripted for the tele, but goddamn, color me shocked. Walk in to do some press for *our* band and we're suddenly faced with two rock and roll greats?" Liam bumps his shoulder against mine. "Or has-beens, depending on how you look at it."

"Why would you bring that piece of shit with you if you wanted me to listen to a word you have to say?" I growl, still glaring at Angel.

"You haven't figured it out?" Angel asks, blinking wide eyes. It makes her heavy lashes flutter awkwardly. "He's your biological father. I mean… Your girlfriend figured it out, didn't you?"

Oakley goes stiff, glancing at me over her shoulder. "I made a comment to Jamen that I thought you could pass for a young Johnny Kincaid, but I never…" Her head shakes. "I didn't realize there was a chance in *hell* that it was true."

I run my thumb over her inner wrist to let her know I believe her. There's very little in the world Angel could say that I'd take her word on. Most of it would have to revolve around her admitting she's a vile human being.

"So, you fucked Johnny back in the day before you sunk your claws into Damian and Jamen?" I ask, smirking. "I'm shocked."

"Marcus, sit down. There's a lot that we should explain." Angel tilts her head, purposely avoiding looking at the cameras she's got stacked all throughout the room.

“Yeah, I’m good. If there are no fans we’re supposed to be meeting, then we’re done here.” I blow out a heavy breath, and Oakley holds on like she’s afraid I might run from *her*.

“I was meant to be a solo act.” Johnny shrugs, stretching back. “Damian, Jamen, and Donovan were a much better fit since they weren’t famous yet. I mean, they had local traction, but they hadn’t hit it big yet.”

“How intriguing,” Liam snorts. “But I get the feeling he really doesn’t give a fuck.”

He’s right.

I really don’t, or I tell myself that.

I’m not that lonely kid who desperately wanted to be loved. Not anymore. I can recognize how screwed up I could have ended up if I was raised by Angel.

My eyes meet hers, and I speak before I can stop myself. “Why not just have an abortion? Were you going to play it off like I was their kid?”

It’s always been the one thing I couldn’t figure out.

Why not just end the pregnancy?

Angel doesn’t feel like the type to suffer for the greater good.

I’m not even judging; it was her choice. I’ve just never been able to wrap my head around it.

“A talented eighteen-year-old girl ends up at an audition with a well-known up-and-coming band of twenty-something guys.” Johnny shrugs. “Those alphas never stood a chance. She probably could have passed you off. I don’t think Damian would have pushed too hard. He was a little too trusting for that. But then he wouldn’t have allowed you to be given up for adoption. I’m guessing she realized that pretty quickly.”

Angel glares at Johnny.

He shrugs, grinning widely. “What? I’m just saying. You’ve always been capable of looking out for yourself. It’s a huge turn on.”

I don’t say anything.

There’s nothing else I need to hear.

Liam wraps an arm around my shoulder and flips off the cameras as we head out. Oakley snuggles close to my chest.

I don’t know what to think or say or do for that fucking matter.

My mind races. It seems like a very real possibility that Angel planned to set up Jamen or Damian to think I was theirs when Johnny abandoned her to be a solo act.

Liam leads the way and Oakley pulls me along back to our dressing room.

“Don’t let them get to ya, mate,” Liam says once we’re back in the greenroom we started in.

“Yeah,” I agree, but my mind is a fucking mess.

“Are you okay?” Oakley worries her lip between her bottom teeth. “Honest to God, I didn’t know. I mean, how would I even know?”

“What’s up?” Sullivan asks, finally appearing from wherever the fuck he was. Hawk is strangely nowhere in sight.

Liam mutters something to him that I can’t hear.

“It’s okay.” My jaw slides from side to side.

If I’m being real, I’ve got the strong urge to self-destruct, or fuck something up. I don’t even know why. Nothing should surprise me with that woman.

Oakley pushes against my chest with her palms until I look down at her. “I didn’t know.”

“I believe you,” I assure her, pulling her tight to my front with a hand on her ass.

Fuck, I don’t even know what to do with myself.

I’m just getting to a place where my sister and I can stand each other. Ever since I found out my adopted parents purposely kept shit from me, I haven’t talked to them since. They could have told me everything when I asked *repeatedly*.

They chose not to, so I chose to cut them off completely.

Lyric is basically the only family I've got, and come to find out, the asshole who assaulted her when she was a teenager is my biological father.

What the fuck.

If it's possible to believe anything that comes from Angel Rae and Johnny.

Jesus fucking Christ.

My head shakes involuntarily as my hands fist at my sides.

Oakley pushes me down on the couch and climbs into my lap. She nuzzles her face to mine, getting very close to my ear.

"Please don't shut me out. I care about you too much. I think it would break me." Her voice is so small it makes me ache to slam my fist into Hawk or Sullivan's face. They've played around enough with her emotions.

My urge to lash out is strong, but as Oakley pulls my mouth to hers, I ignore it to the best of my ability.

I'm not a teenager anymore. In fact, I'm closer to thirty than I am twenty-five. But fuck does the ache pounding in my chest make it hard not to do something stupid.

Oakley starts releasing soothing pheromones.

It does my head in.

My hand slides up the back of her short, flirty little skirt.

"I'm on edge, princess," I growl, palming the back of her head with my free hand. "We've got an audience, so unless you're about to let me take some of my frustration out on your tight little body, I wouldn't start something you can't finish."

"They know where the door is located." Oakley runs her nails over my T-shirt. "They can see themselves out if they're uncomfortable."

Liam smirks, tossing himself down on one of the chairs in front of the mirrors. He swivels until he's facing us.

“They do know how to put on an excellent performance.” His accent makes his words roll together. “Oh look, there’s a free chair.” He kicks the bottom of the stool next to him and nods at Sullivan.

Oakley isn’t concerned with them. She’s working on my jeans with an adorable look of concentration on her pretty face.

She smiles wide when she gets my zipper down. “Are you finally going to let me show you what I can do with my naughty tongue?”

“Fuck yes,” I growl as she wraps her hand around my cock.

Her wide blue eyes blink up at me, and it makes me want to fuck her entire world up. She’s so innocent and dirty all at the same time.

She’s probably too good for me, but I don’t give a fuck.

I’m holding on tight with both hands.

I’ve never had someone want me the way she wants me. Her lips brush against mine in a light tease of a kiss before she’s biting my lower lip and pulling.

They say omegas are intuitive to the moods and emotions of those around them.

It’s kind of wild that she’s picking up on my need for pain.

I don’t care if I get to inflict it or if it’s done to me, but I need it right now more than I’d like to admit.

“So other than the few times I’ve barely gotten a lick before you’ve pulled me off.” Oakley says it loud enough for Sulli and Liam to hear every word as she kisses down my neck. “I’ve never done this, so you know, feel free to give me some direction if I suck.”

The dirty little omega pulls down the front of her tank top and stretches it enough that her bare tits pop out. I lick my lips. She sinks to her knees between my spread legs.

“I’m more than happy to give you direction.” I grin, staring into her eyes as she flicks the tip of her tongue over my crown.

“The view is pretty goddamn spectacular from back here,” Liam muses, running his palm over his cock. He’s still dressed, so I don’t push the issue. He kept his distance last night, but I imagine that’s because he was drunk.

I flip him off with the hand wrapped in Oakley’s hair.

She leans forward.

I’m sure it does give him an excellent view of her doggy style. I’ve never been good at sharing. I think it’s a product of growing up as an only child. But I really fucking dig the fact that both him and Sullivan have to watch, and they don’t get to touch.

Oakley licks stripes up and down my shaft, but she’s tentative with my piercings.

I growl, fighting the urge to thrust up into her mouth.

“You can tease them if you’re gentle.” I swirl my tongue ring around between my lips to show her what I mean.

She tenderly licks around each of the four rows of ladder piercings.

It makes my tip dribble pre-cum.

I fully intended to get another rung on my ladder, but then Oakley started climbing on my cock regularly and with the healing time… No fucking thank you.

My hand wraps around hers, and I show her exactly how firmly she can jerk me. Her cheeks are red as she stares up into my eyes. Her nipples are hard as hell and her chest heaves.

I’m pretty fucking sure I’m done for. I’m not lashing out at the world, not picking a fight, or trying to hurt myself. Despite the bomb Johnny and Angel dropped.

Oakley gives me a nervous smile, and all I want is to toss her down and claim her so fully she never tries to get away. My impulses would never stand for it.

One of her hands works the head of my dick while the other carefully wraps around my knot.

“That’s fucking wild,” Sullivan mutters, staring at me and Oakley with a look I can’t decipher. “My cock hurts for you. Why the fuck would you ever pierce your dick?”

“I’d say she’s quite enjoying herself.” Liam swipes hair back from his face. “You are, aren’t you, sweetness?”

“Mm-hmm,” she moans around my shaft.

I stretch a hand down to tease her nipple as her tits bounce against my jean-covered thighs.

Oakley whines.

“Shit.” I go rigid.

Sullivan sighs.

Liam frowns. His eyes bounce between me and Sullivan.

That sound is specific to omegas, and unless Liam figured it out along the way, I don’t think he knew that particular fact. She uses the scent blocking soap every time she showers.

“You’ve got to be kidding me! How the bloody hell did I miss that?” he mutters, leaning forward. He glances between me and Sullivan. “She’s an omega? And the both of you knew?”

“Goddamn,” I groan as she finally gives my crown a solid suck. “Just like that. Tease the underside with your tongue as you work me over.”

“It’s no wonder I can see the wet spot from here,” Liam says with his eyes glued to Oakley’s pussy. “You know, I think you should let me fingerfuck you while you suck off Marcus.”

Oakley chokes as I bump the back of her throat.

“Shh, you’re all right,” I murmur, running my fingers over her cheek. “Only take as much as you can. There’s no rush. Just jerk the rest with your free hand.” She’s doing a fucking spectacular job. I want her to enjoy it because I’d like to repeat this in the future.

“Are you both just ignoring me then?” Liam grumbles. “Imagine how hot it’ll be to see her come around my fingers while she’s learning to suck your cock.”

Oakley shivers in response.

“Do you want that, princess?” I ask.

Oakley’s eyes meet mine, and she shrugs.

“You think you’re overstimulated now?” I scoff, looking at Liam. “Fingers only. Your dick doesn’t get near her without her explicit consent.” I frown. “And I want your lab results.”

“You’re not her keep—” Liam starts but cuts off when Oakley whines *again.*

Liam and I let out wicked growls in response.

Sullivan is still staring with wide eyes. I don’t feel an ounce of pity for that clueless fucker. He had ample amount of time to make her his. Not to mention how much he screwed up her self-confidence.

My eyes meet Liam’s. “Agree or stay the fuck over there.”

“You’re not the boss of me.” He laughs, pushing himself out of his chair. He hits his knees behind Oakley and pulls her off my length with a handful of her hair.

I roll my eyes.

“Are you good with this, sweetness?” He pinches her nipple.

God, I really love her tits. They’re not huge, and they’re not small either. They’re just perfect for her frame.

“Yeah,” she says in a shaky tone. “As long as it’s okay with you.” She looks at me. My heart tries to race out of my chest. I don’t think any chick I’ve been with has ever given a single fuck how I feel about anything. “Don’t agree just because you think it’ll make me happy. You can fuck me after this.” Her forehead wrinkles as she tilts her head, studying my face. “Or I can just climb on—”

“I wanna hear you scream around me.” I wrap my hand over hers, showing her how much pressure I like as her thumb

brushes my piercings.

Sullivan's jaw falls.

I smirk. I like surprising people.

I focus back on Oakley, palming her other tit. "Unfortunately, I can't be in two places at once. We'll use Liam as our human sex toy for the moment."

"Dick," he mutters, but he grins against the side of Oakley's head. "Suck off your alpha." He shoves her head back down toward my cock, and once she's bent over, he slaps her ass. "You're going to want to swallow when he hits the back of your throat." He winks, making eye contact with me. "You're welcome."

Oakley moans like a very well-paid porn star. I can't see everything he's doing, but I think he teases his other hand over her pussy on top of the panties.

"Fuck, these are soaked," he groans. "I guess it makes sense. Omegas produce slick. Never felt what it feels like for myself, though."

I laugh. I don't know if it's all omegas or just our sweet bundle of omega, but she's fucked my world up on more than one occasion.

Chapter Eighteen

Oakley

My eyes meet Marcus's as I try to focus on anything except for the fact Sullivan is in the room with us. My feelings are complicated. I don't want to purposely hurt Sulli, and I'm not with Marcus to torture him.

I still love Sullivan, but I have feelings for Marcus too. The fact he needs to be distracted is far more important than worrying about what anyone might think.

It's complicated, but I know Marcus needs me right now. It's nearly impossible to stay focused on anything except the sensation of Liam yanking my panties to the side and teasing his fingers through my very slick core.

"Fuck me," Liam snarls. "This is so much better than just watching."

Marcus snorts. My tongue swirls around the swollen crown of his cock. He tastes delicious. My mouth waters as my tongue flicks over the dripping slit. I'd like to think I'm doing okay. It's not like I've got any practice. Marcus has sufficiently spoiled the hell out of me.

"Oh, *wow*," I choke around Marcus as Liam works what I think are two fingers inside me. His other arm is wrapped around my hip, and he teases my clit with that hand while his wrist pushes into my lower stomach.

"It's like the scent of your cunt is all my brain can process," Liam growls against my ear as he frames my back. "Do you have any idea how badly I want to spear you on my cock?"

“Keep fucking dreaming,” Marcus retorts. “Just like that, princess.” His head falls back as his abs flex. I tighten my grip on his knot as his balls seem to get firmer. “I’m about to bust.”

It sounds a lot like a warning. Maybe it is? I’m not sure because it’s a warning I don’t heed. My cheeks hollow as I tease my tongue over his piercings.

Liam does something truly magical with his fingers, raking the front wall of my sex, and I moan around Marcus.

“You’re going to come all over my hand, now!” Liam barks.

My body complies like an alpha can actually bark an omega into an orgasm, which I’m pretty sure is impossible, but I go with it.

“Fuck, Oaks. I’m going to flood your mouth,” Marcus growls. “Can I take over?”

I nod and try to say, “Yes.”

Who knows if it’s even coherent, but Marcus wraps his hand in my hair and starts to fuck deeper.

“Mind your teeth and relax your throat while you coat me in your slick,” Liam says, his warm breath fanning over my neck. “Goddamn, how do you manage to fuck her without embarrassing yourself?”

“It’s not easy, but it is enjoyable as *fuck*,” Marcus grunts.

Pleasure jolts through my system with staggering force.

“Seriously, your sweet little cunt is strangling my fingers,” Liam taunts.

Marcus growls, sounding truly animalistic as his shaft swells almost painfully large. I’m barely able to keep myself upright as my nails dig into his thighs. “Eyes on mine while I come down your throat!” he barks.

My eyes have been squeezed shut, but they pop open at his command. His grip in my hair is so tight it’s difficult to even meet his gaze, but I manage it. The small amount of pain in my scalp only manages to rachet my desire higher.

Marcus's free hand lands on my cheek, tenderly brushing his tattooed fingers over my skin.

Liam continues to tease my clit, working his thick digits in and out of my sex. "Goddamn, you've drenched me in your pussy. I can't wait to jerk off using your slick as lube." He grinds against my ass, and he definitely got his dick out at some point.

Marcus growls as his cock jumps.

I don't have words to describe the look of carnal hunger on his face. He shoves me deeper, and I choke as his cum floods my mouth. I keep my eyes on him and do everything I can to make sure he enjoys it. He never fails to pamper me with pleasure, and I ache to do the same.

I slide my hand from his thigh to wrap around his knot as I try to relax my throat. He spills in my mouth for so long, and I'm so focused on him that it's like I have tunnel vision. Like he and I are the only two people in the world, which doesn't even make sense because Liam is definitely still fingering me.

"Goddamn, dirty girl." Marcus stares down at me as his chest heaves. His muscles are tight and corded, and all I want to do is make sure he knows how much I care about him.

Sex probably isn't the best way to show emotion, but he was so upset. I mean, who wouldn't be? I just need him to not shut me out. Angel has always been a sensitive subject for him, but the bomb Johnny Kincaid dropped was a lot.

"What?" Marcus asks, smirking. His snake bite piercings glint in the light as his eyes sparkle.

It's not an actual thought. I'm pretty sure it's instinct, but I crawl right into his lap. My panties are still on and pulled to the side like the first night before he destroyed them.

Liam grumbles a bit, but I ignore him for the moment.

I wrap a hand around Marcus's neck and use the other to pull my panties all the way to the side before sinking down on his still very hard shaft.

"Christ, that looks utterly obscene," Liam says.

“It feels unreal too,” Marcus murmurs. He grips my hips, lifting and dropping me on his swollen length.

“If you were a good team player then you’d spin her around so I can suck on her tits or clit,” Liam says, his warm breath fanning over my shoulder. He’s close. Apparently, he’s not afraid to make sure he’s included.

“I’ve never been good at sharing.” Marcus shoves his mouth to mine. I bounce on my knees, but me on top always takes some time to get the hang of. I’m not sure what all alpha cock looks like, but if I had gotten a real chance to examine Marcus’s dick before we had sex the first time then I would have sworn there was no physical way possible that it could fit.

My tongue dances with Marcus’s. He’s so skilled it sends a pang to my chest when I think about how he learned all of his little tricks. My nails dig into his neck as I rise and fall, taking more of him on each descent.

“Would you like to know what it feels like to have Liam sucking on your clit while I knock the bottom out for you, dirty girl?” Marcus taunts between frantic kisses.

My nipples ache, and my pussy throbs in response to his teasing. I would like to, but I’m not sure that’s fair.

Liam is hot.

I like him as a human being, but I don’t know if that would be using him.

Marcus is probably right about me being too naive for my own good. People have meaningless sex all the time. I think it’s complicated by the fact I have genuine feelings for the alpha whose cock is trying to rearrange my insides.

“Marcus,” I sob as my pussy begins to contract in waves. With him raking my inner walls, it’s not going to take long for me to explode.

“Make sure you keep my cock inside you as you spin to face Liam,” Marcus instructs.

“I don’t—” My words cut off when Liam grips my hips and barely lifts me.

“I do love a challenge,” Liam says in a humor-lined tone. “That’s it, darling. Clench your pussy over his crown as you lift this knee for me.”

My head falls back, an embarrassing moan escaping my lips as Marcus latches onto my nipple. He bites, and just when it’s hitting the edge of painful, he switches to playful, teasing licks.

Marcus grunts, releasing me as Liam helps me turn to face him fully.

“You failed,” Marcus says as his shaft slips from me completely. The wet slap of it hitting his lower stomach makes my cheeks burn with embarrassment. I have no idea why, but it’s mortifying that I’m this wet.

Liam’s face breaks into a wide smile. “Hello, beautiful.” He slides his hands down my sides as Marcus lifts me enough that they’re able to get my panties off and toss them aside.

I’m pushed up on my knees, probably looking like a hot mess. My tank top is still on and stretched down under my tits, and my skirt is pulled up around my hips. Liam’s grip on my waist tightens, and he brings the fingers of his other hand to swipe them down the seam of my sex.

“My mouth is actually watering to taste you,” Liam says, quirking an eyebrow. He always does that when he’s challenging me. Maybe he thinks I’m going to back out?

Marcus wraps a tattooed forearm around my middle, yanking me back to rest against his chest. He guides his cock to my opening and thrusts up using his feet as leverage.

Liam watches, looking like sex personified. Now that I’m not so close to his front I can see his cock. It’s thick and heavy, pointing toward his belly button. That sexy V that men have between their pelvis and hips? Yeah, he’s got one of those, and it’s lined with tattoos just like the rest of him.

Liam’s hand flexes on my hip, and when he catches me watching, he wraps the other around his shaft. I’m pretty sure

he's not circumcised, which feels like a different kind of challenge from piercings, but as he thrusts into his fist, I'm pretty sure I could learn. Hell, I want to figure out how to manage that.

Both their scents are heavy in the air and Marcus's taste is still on my tongue.

"She's definitely enjoying the show," Marcus growls. "Aren't you, princess? Or do you like the way I'm ramming every inch of my cock up your tight little hole?" He scrapes his teeth over my neck.

"B-Both," I whine. "Bite, please, Marcus. Bite me!"

"Not yet," Marcus snarls. "Bounce on your knees. I want to see my cock slamming against your belly from the inside out."

"Jesus Christ," Liam hisses. "I don't bloody understand how you can handle hearing her beg like that and not give in."

Marcus slides his hand to where my stomach meets my pelvis and pushes. "Now, Oakley."

My head rolls around his chest as my eyes fall shut. I'm pretty sure the combination of their pheromones is making me high. Someone pinches my clit, and I feel useless. All I can seem to do is feel.

"I'm going to lick your pussy," Liam says.

My arm falls to wrap around Marcus's when Liam licks over my soaked core. My nipples pulse as my sex tightens over Marcus's length. His piercings slide and glide as I mostly grind on him. I'm supposed to be taking care of him and helping him feel better, but my entire body jolts with pleasure.

"Shh," Marcus says, sliding his free hand up my throat. He wraps his forearm around my torso, between my tits so he can choke me gently. He's still holding me with his other arm around my middle. I feel safe and confined, which is the ideal position for an omega.

Liam slides two fingers down from my clit to my hole as he sucks, and I'm not prepared in the least for him to

maneuver a finger inside me next to Marcus's cock.

"Holy fuck," Marcus snarls. "Careful, she's about to combust."

"I am," I sob, wiggling into Marcus's chest. "Keep doing that!" It's not unexpected when the next orgasm hits, but it's difficult to comprehend how powerful it is. I lose all sense of direction and reality. I fall back, possibly to lessen the pressure of Liam's tongue teasing my over sensitive clit or the stretch as he adds another finger.

"I've got you," Marcus assures me. He yanks me back into him, working up into me from the bottom. "Such a good little omega. I'm going to sink my teeth in real goddamn soon. Jesus, *fuck*. I don't think your perfume has ever been this thick."

"Bite me," I demand, patting Marcus's arm so he knows I mean him. "Now, I need you to bite me."

"I am going to make you mine. You'll be walking around with my teeth print on your neck, or hell, maybe your fantastic tits, very soon." He chuckles. "Are you ready for my cum, dirty girl?"

"Yes," I sob.

Marcus gives my throat a final squeeze before moving to hold both hips. He raises me before yanking me down hard. His shaft swells, and with Liam's fingers also inside me, it becomes painful. Luckily, being an omega helps to immediately convert that discomfort into pleasure.

"That's right, milk my cock. I love it when you work me *just* like that." Marcus holds me to him, which is good because it's difficult to stay upright.

Liam's still got his fingers inside me, but he wraps his other hand in my hair, pulling my mouth to his. The kiss is playful and dirty, or maybe I'm barely coherent. It's impossible to tell.

Liam releases his hold on my hair and growls. "Yeah, I'm going to bust." His fingers are still inside me, but the skin of his other hand brushes my clit as he works himself off.

Marcus's cock jumps and even my skin feels far too over sensitive. His hand cups my stomach as he shakes, growling through his orgasm.

Liam groans, and his scent floods the air.

My chest heaves as I take several ragged breaths, trying to get air to saturate my lungs properly. Liam leans over, flicking his tongue over my nipple, and I squeak.

"I'm too sensitive for all that," I whisper, trembling against Marcus's hold.

"Oh, sweetness." Liam grins dangerously. "You're an omega. This is just round one."

Marcus chuckles as my heart tries to race right out of my chest. Liam stares straight into my eyes and leans forward for another quick kiss.

"If you're done." Hawk's voice breaks the intimacy of the moment. "Jamen has been trying to reach you. It's an utter shit show out there after the bullshit Angel and Johnny pulled."

"Fuck," Marcus mutters.

My chest feels tight, and it's like I can feel it when he remembers everything that happened with Angel and Johnny.

God, I hate them so much on his behalf. They say omegas are fiercely protective of their chosen alphas.

It's clearly true.

I've never wanted anyone dead in my entire life, but I don't think the world would miss those two one single bit.

Chapter Nineteen

Hawk

Oakley's lavender scent has flooded my nose so fully that it's all I can process. One of these days I'm going to fucking snap, toss her up against a wall, and fuck her until my name spills from her lips.

I swipe a hand over my face as we head down the back hallway.

I'm so motherfucking close to losing my shit, it's not even funny. At first, I could rationalize myself out of the alpha fog, but that ship has long since sailed.

I need to make progress with her, or I'm going to have to step back from this job. I'm a menace. I'm supposed to keep her safe, but who the hell is going to protect her from me?

Jesus Christ, that's a sobering thought.

"Where are we heading?" Marcus asks. Oakley is tucked under his arm as Sullivan and Liam follow us out.

"There's a car waiting to take us back to the hotel," I grunt, my eyes flying to the other three members of A Team. They're guys I trust, but it's a madhouse, and the venue security is practically useless at this point. There's no other reason Angel Rae and Johnny made it inside to ambush Marcus.

Jamen is pissed.

Rightfully so, someone was obviously bought off.

On one hand, I'm sure it'll boost ticket sales and catapult Wicked Truths to a more recognizable name. On the other, it makes protecting them considerably more difficult.

“I want you to stay between two of us at all times.” I pat Oakley’s hip so she understands I’m talking to her. Her big blue eyes blink owlishly. Her cheeks are stained red, either from the exertion of what they put her through, or possibly she’s embarrassed that Sullivan and I couldn’t seem to tear our eyes away.

“Yeah. We take no chances with you,” Marcus says to Oakley. “The big guy is acting more like he’s got a stick up his ass than normal. It’s not a good sign.”

“Maybe Oakley should stay between me and Hawk?” Sullivan suggests. “Marcus is their target.”

Marcus frowns, but eventually nods. “That’s true.” I’m not the only one surprised by the admission. I turn to the side, watching as he brushes his fingers over her cheek before giving her a soft kiss. “Go on. Stay between the broody fuckers.”

“It’s easier for our skinny asses to duck and weave.” Liam laughs, tossing an arm around Marcus’s shoulder. “I’ve got your back, mate.”

I scoff.

I’ll just bet he does after what I witnessed. It’s difficult not to be bitter, especially when I’m forced to accept that she’s growing closer to both of them.

“All right, are we ready?” I shake myself out of my thoughts and prepare to do my damn job.

“Yeah,” Oakley agrees.

The others offer some form of agreement, and I nod at the guys on the team.

Two of them funnel out first to secure a path, and the noise that slams into us is unreal.

Oakley jumps at my side, and I wrap my arm around her shoulder to pull her into me.

Sullivan steps up on the other side, catching my eye. He’s a big guy for a beta, and he’s got a stockier build than either Liam or Marcus.

“Let’s go,” I growl, catching the signal for us to move forward.

It’s pure chaos.

Both sides of the small path to the limo are lined with ropes to deter anyone from getting too close, but they’re ineffective as fans and paparazzi alike push against the barrier.

The press shouts questions as fans scream, begging for autographs. Oakley’s fear floods my nostrils, and it makes me practically rabid. I growl, shoving a photographer back across the line with my forearm.

Oakley wraps her arm around my lower back while mine is still over her shoulders. I use my free forearm as a battering ram, continuing to shove back anyone who gets too close.

The car’s back door swings open as two guys from our team frame either side to keep everyone back.

“Get her in first,” Marcus says from behind us.

I was already planning on it.

We make it to the door, and Oakley moves to climb in. The back of her skirt flies up around her thighs, so I frame her back, literally climbing in right on top of her. She takes the seat on the far wall and scoots to the end. Despite the fact I should be helping my team secure the guys, I ignore my responsibilities. Scooping her off the seat, I bring her to sit in my lap as Liam waves, calling out to the fans before ducking inside the limo.

“That was fucking insane.” Liam laughs, tossing himself back into one of the seats as the car slowly moves forward.

“Yeah.” Marcus nods, looking pensive. “And something tells me it’s only going to get worse from here.” His eyes fly to mine, but he doesn’t say a word about me snuggling the fuck out of his girlfriend.

Oakley doesn’t fight my hold either, so whatever. I’ll consider that a momentary win.

We make it into the hotel suite, and everyone goes their separate ways to shower. I'm stretched out across the couch, watching my phone and trying to decompress. We've got two guys on the door to the room, but my nerves are shot.

I'm not sure why I'm so on edge, but I'm practically feral, and I've got no clue how to settle enough that I can actually sleep tonight.

I'd normally hit the gym, but I've already been today, and my system doesn't like the idea of being that far away from Oakley.

I'm running through all the ways I fucked everything up when the door to Marcus and Oakley's room opens. I'm not expecting Oakley to pad out in her socks and a long T-shirt. It hits nearly to her knees, but the way it falls around her curves nearly has me groaning.

I expect her to make a break for the mini-fridge or to grab something and head back to their room.

She comes over, standing in front of me, and my heart races.

"Is everything okay?" I toss my phone down on the cushion beside me.

"You tell me." She rubs her eyes as her foot dances around the carpet. "I'm pretty sure I've been sensing your discomfort." She shrugs. "I don't know, but the ache in my chest led me here."

My head shakes.

Fuck, I forgot how empathetic omegas can be.

Then again, Oakley and I have always been in tune.

The scent of her stress sends my instincts into overdrive.

Every. Damn. Time.

“I’m good, little one. Just on edge. I feel like I’m to blame for Angel and Johnny slipping through the cracks.” My watch slides around as I swipe a palm over my face. “I dropped the ball.”

“Do you always take responsibility for other people’s actions?” She climbs onto my lap and lies flat on top of me. She’s so damn short that her head rests on my chest while the ends of her feet barely reach halfway down my calves. She nuzzles her nose around as she breathes in my scent. “You didn’t set up that ambush. We all know you would have warned Marcus if you had any idea it was coming. Don’t judge yourself to impossible standards.”

“Yeah.” I nod, letting her know I heard her.

It’s difficult though.

I’ve been distracted lately.

My priority has always and will always be her. Not only because she’s my primary client.

Small fingers brush over my collarbone. It’s covered by my T-shirt, but Oakley follows the curve of the bone. Her tender touch has a ragged purr starting in my chest. The need to soothe her is nearly uncontrollable.

“That’s very relaxing.” Her warm breath fans over my chest as she breathes steadily. My head falls back against the arm of the couch. She’s so damn dangerous, and everything could be different right now if I had handled myself better. I tell her that in barely more than a whisper. Talking about everything from growing up, to my life in the military, to what a huge wake-up call it was when my ex walked out while I was deployed.

It’s not unheard of, but I never thought it would happen to me. The hurt long ago gave way to embarrassment that I was too stubborn to see what everyone had been saying all along.

The door opens and Marcus shuffles out in a pair of pajama pants and nothing else.

He rocks on his toes, sighing when he spots us. “I don’t know who you were talking to, but she’s drooling.”

My head tilts down, and I frown when I determine he's right. She's knocked out cold. I have no clue how much of my life story she caught.

I chuckle. "I bored her to sleep."

"Nah, she was beat before she ever came out here to check on you." He glances back to the bedroom. "I can't sleep without her. Do you mind?"

I really fucking do, but it's also not my place to say that. Instead, I carefully climb off the couch, cradle her to my chest, and follow Marcus into their room.

"You can put her in the middle." He climbs onto the side next to the door. "And make sure you stay on your half." I blink repeatedly, but he grabs a pillow, tossing it to the side closest to me. "Go on, before I change my mind."

My mind races, but I kneel on the edge, placing Oakley in the middle before climbing onto the bed behind her. She immediately rolls to face Marcus. He scoots down and she roots around his chest, letting out a contented sigh.

I have no idea what I'm doing, but I also don't force myself to climb out of the bed. The room smells strongly of Oakley's lavender scent, and that's all I need to finally relax enough to drift off to sleep.

"Yo." Marcus's voice wakes me out of a dead sleep.

My eyes pop open, and I'm instantly on alert. The room is filled with the scent of Oakley's perfume. She's glued to my chest, and she's hot. Like considerably warmer than a human being should ever be.

My fingers brush down her sweat-soaked back.

"She's burning my hand through the material," I say in barely more than a whisper.

My eyes fly up to Marcus's and he nods.

“Yeah, that’s why I woke you. I just got off the phone with Jamen. She needs to see a doctor, and there’s more bullshit abound with Angel. She decided to out who she claims is my biological father.” His jaw is tight, but he blows out a breath, pulling his shoulders back. “That doesn’t matter. We need to get packed and be ready to leave as soon as possible.”

“There’s no way she’s doing a show tomorrow night if she’s in heat,” I growl as Oakley whimpers in her sleep. Today was supposed to be a no-show, travel day.

“I told Jamen as much. He’s already on the warpath. He’s pulling both opening acts from the tour. He’s giving us a two-week hiatus because of the shit that went down with Angel. As a consequence, Mourning Glory is fucked because I won’t be able to cover.” He grimaces but shrugs. “It is what it is. He’s also getting Oakley in with a specialist at one of those omega sanctuary places. Fuck.” His head shakes. “We’re going to have to move her. She was whining in her sleep. It’s what woke me up.”

“Can’t they just send a doctor here?” I suggest.

“It didn’t sound like it. Jamen is calling again. Keep an eye on her for me?” He doesn’t wait for a response, simply turns around and strides out of the room.

“I don’t feel so good,” Oakley groans against my shoulder. “Oh no, I think I’m going to be sick.” I grunt, scooping her up and aiming for the attached bathroom. “Just set me down on the edge of the tub.” I comply, but my impulses don’t want to let her out of my sight. “You can go.” She wobbles a little bit, and I take a step forward. “You should go. I’m definitely going to vomit.”

“I should stay.”

“Hawk, get out.” She leans close to the toilet bowl and my fists clench. Being a pushy son of a bitch won’t get me very far if she ends up completely kicking me out.

I nod, stomp out of the room, and aim for the kitchenette to grab her a bottle of water.

Marcus talks on the phone in the corner of the living room, but I ignore him in favor of what I came for.

I grab what I need and make it back into their room, pacing the floor similarly to a caged lion.

My head falls back as it shakes.

I don't do well when I feel helpless, and that feeling seems to be clawing at my chest from the inside out.

Oakley chokes and gags. A minute or so later, the sounds of vomiting fill the air.

I'm striding into the bathroom before I can stop myself. I drop the water bottle on the counter, flick on the sink to give her some background noise, and wrap her hair up in one hand.

My other palm runs over her back, trying to give her comfort. She's physically burning my skin through the material.

It's not a good sign.

Oakley finally settles. She doesn't fight me as I smash the handle to flush and help her over to the sink.

"Try not to brush just yet. It's not great for the enamel of your teeth." I run my hand down her back and turn to grab a washcloth.

"You should go. I'm pretty sure I caught the flu." Her eyes meet mine in the mirror, and they're beet red. I suck in a sharp breath. I know some of the redness on her face is from vomiting, but her pale skin is blotchy, and she has broken blood vessels on her cheeks and near her eyes.

"Where are your pills?" Marcus asks from just outside the doorway.

Oakley groans, making a grab for her makeup bag at the back of the counter. My hand falls to her hip and stomach as I flip the lid and grab the packet of suppressants.

I turn, shoving them at Marcus's outstretched hand.

"Thanks, the doctor needs the brand." He heads off, continuing to answer questions. "I don't know, there's like,

sixteen or seventeen pills left." He closes the door to their room, but I can hear his voice as he heads off. "Do you need me to count them?"

"I don't want to get you sick," Oakley mutters, but she leans against my chest. Her hands shake against the countertop and my damn heart sinks. I can't stand seeing her so miserable.

"I don't think this is a bug. The suppressants have been failing for a while. Do you feel like you're done being sick?"

"My stomach is still really upset, but my mouth tastes gross." Her head rolls around until our eyes meet in the mirror. "I think I should brush my teeth."

"Have a bit of the water and rinse for me first." I grab the bottle with my free hand and crack the lid. I have to let go of her to screw off the cap, but she leans into me so I know she won't fall over.

"I'm pretty sure this is above and beyond what's in your job description," she mutters, taking a swig and rinsing her mouth in the sink.

I chuckle. I think most people would be surprised at what gets thrown at personal security specialists. We either adapt or find new jobs because rich, high-profile clients know they can get away with being demanding.

I grab her toothbrush and dab a small bead of toothpaste on it. It's clearly hers because it's orange with a pink and purple cover. I hand it off and she gets to work.

"I'm not in here taking care of you because of my job." I squeeze her hip. "I'm here because you're important to me. Seeing you sick, it's practically impossible to let you out of my sight." My head shakes, and I barely hold myself back from rambling a bunch of shit she's definitely not ready to hear.

She rinses while I grab her toothbrush to clean it off and put it away. I pull the towel off the rack, tenderly wiping her face as she leans against my chest.

Yeah, I really don't see her ever getting rid of me. It's clear she needs someone to take care of her, and I'm goddamn desperate to volunteer for the job.

"Do you want to lie back down for a few?" I offer, running my hand over her stomach. My forearm rests in the indent of her hip, but I avoid putting any pressure on her when she's feeling weak and disgusting.

"Um, yeah, I think so." Her eyes close. "Hawk, I feel so bad. Worse than I have in… maybe ever. Do you think I should go to the hospital?"

"Marcus is setting everything up."

"To go to the ER?"

"No, I think it's one of the omega clinics, but if they think it's necessary, we'll get you to a hospital before you know it," I assure her.

"Okay. Yeah, I think I should lie down. My head is spinning." She sounds weak. I don't hesitate to scoop her up and carry her back to bed. I lie with her on me and do everything in my power to force myself to purr. "That's still very relaxing." She runs her fingers over my vibrating chest.

And I say a prayer that she feels better immediately.

Chapter Twenty

Oakley

"Sullivan and Hawk are going to go with you and leave immediately." Marcus brushes his lips over my forehead as we stand in the living room of the suite. "Liam and I will wait about an hour and leave separately."

"No." My head shakes. "I'd rather stay with you."

"Angel spent half of last night informing every news outlet and talk show she could find of who she claims my father is. According to Jamen, it's a nightmare out there. If I leave with you, they'll swarm." Marcus pulls me close to his chest. "The doctors want to see you now, and this hotel doesn't have a way for us to sneak out. It's not LA or Miami." I frown, but I do get what he's saying. It's just difficult because my system doesn't want to be away from him at all. Tears spring to my eyes, and I bury my face in his shirt to hide it. "The doctor wants you there as soon as possible, princess." He kisses the side of my head, holding me tightly to his chest. "I can't delay your ability to get there safely. The normal thermometer wouldn't even register your temperature."

"I know." I sniffle, clutching him like he's my lifeline. "I'm sorry, I'm being ridiculous."

"Nah." Marcus brushes his lips over my cheek. "Don't apologize. It's hard for me to be away from you too." He moves close to my ear and whispers, "I care about you a whole fucking lot, Oakley." He almost never calls me by my real name. It sends a shiver down my spine.

“Me too,” I agree as he wraps his wrist around my head, cradling me like he doesn’t want to let me go despite his arguments on why I need to leave.

“Okay,” Liam says jovially from behind me. “That’s just a little too sweet for this early in the morning. I’m likely to be the next one to vomit if you keep up those antics.”

I snort.

Marcus kisses my forehead. “They’ll take good care of you.”

“We will,” Sullivan agrees from behind me.

“We’ve got A Team ready to accompany the two of you.” Hawk strides back into the suite. “And we’ve got three men in the hallways ready to move with us.”

“I’ll meet you at The Exchange.” Marcus squeezes my ass and gives me a final quick kiss. “It won’t be long. I promise.”

“Okay,” I agree. I’m not expecting Hawk to scoop me up bridal style, but he does exactly that. He nods at Sullivan, who grabs the couple duffle bags that are coming with us, and we head out to determine what is wrong with my system.

The Omega Exchange is one of the privately run omega sanctuaries. It’s an alternative to the government-run Omega Protection Authority. I’ve never been in or had to deal with either option.

I saw my family doctor until I presented. Then she referred me to an omega specialist back in Texas, and because I was under the care of a private physician, I never had to be seen or register with the OPA.

I’m not sure what I’m expecting, but as we pull up to what looks like a full resort, my jaw drops. It’s fancy as hell, and the mountains in the background make for a beautiful image. Unfortunately, I’m too miserable to do much more than note how extravagant it is.

The show we did last night was about an hour away from the Colorado location of The Exchange, but I'm grateful they're getting me in. Something is seriously out of whack with my system. We drive through a huge iron gate that opens slowly.

The driver pulls close to the front of the resort, or hotel, or whatever the hell it is. Sullivan climbs out and Hawk helps me scoot over.

Sulli lifts me with no trouble, cradling me in his arms as he takes off toward the entrance. "You're going to feel better soon," he murmurs, nuzzling his cheek against the top of my head.

It's so unexpected that I hold him even tighter. I really fucking missed him. It's so bad that even the small gesture brings tears to my eyes. Maybe I'm overly emotional because I feel terrible. It's hard to tell.

Hawk follows close behind us as the other members of A Team grab our bags and fall in line quickly. They're super efficient and good at their jobs, but they rotate shifts so often that I barely get the chance to learn their names before it's a whole new team.

We make it close to the front of the building and we're greeted by a woman with long dark hair and curves for days. A tall, thin man in a suit stands at her side, and they smile at each other as we approach.

"I'm Grayson. This is my wife, Charlie. We own the resort and The Exchange," the man says, gesturing us closer. He has dark hair and a bit of stubble with an air about him that screams wealthy.

"It's so nice to meet you. I wish it were under better circumstances." The woman comes closer. She's beautiful and clearly somewhere around six or more months pregnant. "You're Oakley, right?"

I nod against Sullivan's shirt. "I am, thanks for getting me in so quickly."

“Of course,” Grayson says. “We’ve worked with Stone Security previously. Griffin Stone personally gave us a call to ensure we’d find you a space, but truthfully, it’s what we’re here for.”

Griffin Stone is part of Marcus’s sister’s pack. He’s Lyric’s alpha. I knew his company provides security for the tour, but I’m still surprised Lyric or Jamen had Griffin call on our behalf.

“I’ll take you two to medical,” Charlie says in her soft tone. She looks at Grayson. “Will you show the others to the rooms so they can drop their bags?”

Grayson looks like he might protest, but he gives a nod. “Of course.” He leans close, running a hand over her swollen stomach as his lips brush her cheek. He looks at Hawk. “I’ll show you and the others to the main suite and the adjacent rooms for your security personnel.”

“I need to stay with Oakley,” Hawk growls, taking a step closer.

“It will take some time to process her intake and get her settled. You’d be separated either way. We generally try not to overwhelm the nurse practitioner with too many extra bodies.” Grayson smiles softly, winking at me. “Jess will take good care of you.” He looks at Hawk and the other security guys. “Follow me this way, and we’ll grab your keycards.” His commanding tone doesn’t leave much room for argument.

Hawk spins around, brushing his lips over my forehead as he squeezes my hand. “I’ll be with you as soon as I can.”

I nod, trying to force a smile, but my stomach churns. I feel awful, and I just want to see a doctor.

“Let’s get you to the medical office.” Charlie pushes dark hair out of her face and heads off down the corridor. “I remember how sick I was when I got here.” She smiles over her shoulder. “I don’t know what I would have done without my guys. I was so weak that I couldn’t even look after my own daughter properly.”

I grimace. That does sound horrible. I can't imagine having to take care of a kid while being sick. I don't know how parents manage it.

I cuddle closer to Sullivan's chest and pray the doctor can figure out what the heck is wrong with me.

Jess is the nurse practitioner for The Exchange. She's young and vibrant and wears an easy smile. She immediately kicks Sullivan out, telling him to wait in the small waiting room we passed coming in. He grumbles but gives me a quick hug before heading out.

"I'm kind of surprised he listened." Jess laughs. "Usually, the betas put up the biggest fight because they swear they won't be a problem."

I shrug, cuddling my face deeper into the thin pillow. "I'm freezing. Do you have extra blankets?"

She grimaces. "Yeah, how about I get you a sheet instead?" She pats my calf with her gloved hand. "You're really warm. That's one of the things I'm going to check, but before we do that, I need a urine sample. By the way, do you happen to have your meds with you?"

My fingers point toward the door, which conveniently pops open. Sullivan's tattooed hand slides inside, and he holds out a plastic bag with my meds in it.

Jess laughs again. "Apparently I dismissed him too quickly. All right, do you need some help getting to the restroom?"

"Um, I think I can make it." I push myself up, but I'm squinting so hard that I can barely see anything.

Jess clicks a light on the wall and only a few of the ceiling tiles stay lit, so it's with a much dimmer glow. "Does this help?"

"Yeah, thank you."

The door opens again as I'm sliding my legs off the side of the hospital bed.

"Wait for me," Hawk growls, stomping across the room.

"*I* was waiting for that to happen," Jess says in her cheerful, melodic tone. "The cups are on the shelf on the wall. I need the one with the blue lid." She turns to head out, and I blink in confusion.

I guess she thinks we're together. I have no idea.

Hawk scoops me up and hisses when his forearm meets my thighs. "I swear to fuck you're actually burning my skin."

"Sorry."

"God, don't apologize. Let's get you into the bathroom." He opens the door, carrying me inside. "It's convenient that you're in a dress. I'm surprised she didn't put you in a gown. Do you need some help getting your panties down?"

Ohmigod, just kill me now.

I would have given pretty much anything to hear that from him under different circumstances.

My head shakes. "No, lean me against the wall. I'll be fine."

"I don't think so." Hawk transfers me to one large forearm and slides a hand up my thigh, giving my underwear a tug. My face flames, either from the fever or the situation, but he's very professional and doesn't cross any lines as he repeats the process on the other side. He yanks my underwear off over my sandals and shoves them in his jeans pocket before settling me on the toilet. He bunches my dress around my middle. It's difficult to understand why I'm not melting into a pile of embarrassment that could be easily flushed down said toilet.

It's mortifying.

I am mortified.

Hawk's fingers brush over my cheek, and despite the uncomfortable situation, I still nuzzle my face into his wrist. "I thrive when I can look after the people I care about. Don't take

that away from me." He looks so sincere that I simply nod. I'm not doing good at the moment, meaning now isn't the time to be stubborn and independent.

It also feels kind of nice that he wants to take care of me. "Okay, but you're leaving the room while I pee."

He scoffs, grabbing a cup off the shelf on the wall and cracking the lid. He grabs a paper towel, places it on the sink, and puts the lid on it. He turns the water on low and hands me the cup before turning to face the wall.

"Um, you can go now," I say, trying to keep myself from wobbling.

Hawk grunts. "Pee in the cup, or I'll come over there and hold it for you."

I blink repeatedly, but something in the tight lines of tension in his shoulders, or maybe his tone, tells me he's not joking.

I definitely slipped into an alternate reality, or maybe this is a fever dream.

After I use the restroom, Hawk helps me wash my hands and totes me back to the hospital bed.

Jess comes in and sends him out.

She asks me a million different questions while drawing my blood and giving me an IV. She also does swabs to test for a bunch of things like the flu and strep throat. It appears she can do everything because she's a one woman bundle of energy and efficiency.

"All right, I'm going to start the IV anti-nausea medication. You should get some relief soon. I'm going to check and see if you're positive for any of the illnesses going around, and we'll go from there." She pulls off her gloves, giving me a wide smile. "Try to get some rest."

I nod, curling tighter into the fetal position. My entire body hurts to the point I briefly wonder if maybe I did catch the flu or something. “Thank you.”

“I’m going to tell them to leave you be, unless you’d prefer I send them in?” Jess asks.

“I don’t mind.” I shrug because I really don’t know if I want to be alone, but having anyone around also feels weird because of how sick I am.

“Well, I’ll tell them it’s their call.” She pats the bed and heads out.

Hawk and Sullivan do come back after Jess leaves. Hawk paces the floor bare, but Sulli climbs into the hospital bed at my side. He curls around my back, running his fingers through my hair. It’s incredibly relaxing despite Hawk’s shoes echoing against the floor.

“He’s only in the bed with you because I have doubts it could hold my big ass up,” Hawk grumbles.

I laugh, but my eyes feel heavy, and it’s easier to breathe through the nausea when they’re closed. I suck in soothing hits of Sullivan’s cedar and citrus scent, focusing on the feeling of peace that comes as he teases his fingers through my hair.

Chapter Twenty-One

Marcus

"We'll be there in less than ten minutes." Liam stretches back in the town car next to me. "You need to chill. Your stress won't do anything to help the situation."

I shoot him a look that indicates he should drop dead, raising a middle finger just in case he's not getting the full picture. "Please, shut the fuck up. You can tell my nerves are shot."

"Yeah, but I've got good news." Liam yanks his phone out of his pocket, clicking around and shoving it at me.

I blink at the screen, grabbing it from his outstretched hand. "Good for you. Your dick isn't as diseased as I expected." I toss the phone into his lap.

"Oomph," he grunts. "Not cool, mate." He runs his hand over his zipper. "Phones these days are heavy enough to damage your cock."

"Be happy it didn't land on your balls," I retort, stretching back against the leather seat.

"You said you wanted my lab results. It's straight from the tour doctor." He shrugs. "Here's your friendly heads up that if Oakley is in heat and willing to let me into her nest, I *fully* intend to meet her needs."

My head falls back as it shakes. Yeah, sharing is hot in the moment, but I also really fucking dig that my dick is the only cock she's ever taken. It's also unrealistic as fuck to expect it to stay that way. I went into this fuck buddy, friends with

benefits relationship knowing she's an omega. Or I did after the first night we were together. I've had her to myself for going on two months, and I don't think two years would be nearly long enough.

I sigh. I don't hate Liam. Her suppressants are failing, and it has gotten more noticeable over time. It's nearly impossible for one alpha to meet the needs of an omega in heat. I grew up with two beta parents.

Who knows how Damian Sinclair ended up an alpha coming from those two, but I never gave it much thought until the truth came out that he wasn't even my biological father. Wayne and Susan never hid the fact that I wasn't their kid, but I did think they were my biological grandparents for most of my life.

"Are we going to have problems?" Liam slides his foot over, kicking me with his shoe.

I scoff. "I don't control Oakley."

"Nah, but you're in love with her," Liam says casually.

My eyes dart toward his side of the car, but he's staring out the window, watching the scenery. I don't open my mouth to deny it. That's how incredibly fucked I am. I'm not excellent at sharing, but I've dated betas exclusively in the past.

An omega is a completely different situation.

I know I caught serious feelings for the tender bundle of omega, but I'm also fucking terrified. Me giving a shit about a chick is pretty much the kiss of death to any relationship.

Hell, my own mother chucked me at her husband's family and didn't want a single fucking thing to do with me until I became her ticket back into the limelight.

"I'm pretty fucking sure she's in love with you too," Liam says, drawing me out of my thoughts. "I'm not trying to interfere with that. I'm just saying, I don't like the idea of her filling her heat with a bunch of faceless alpha dicks. You know they'll only be there to shove their knot inside her."

There's a certain comfort in that because afterward she'd be leaving with me while they stayed at the omega sanctuary. Then again, I get what Liam is saying.

It's ultimately not my call.

I can have opinions and feelings on the matter all goddamn day, but it's not my decision to make. I know her well enough to realize she'll be a hell of a lot more comfortable with Hawk and Liam than she would with random assholes.

That opens up the possibility of their relationship continuing following the heat, if that's even what's going on.

"Well, shite." Liam laughs. "It's disturbing when you get self-reflective." I snort, shaking my head. "I believe you should speak to Sullivan. He's also in love with her, but it's not my story to tell."

I growl unable to hold back the response. Sullivan is worse than even Hawk in my opinion, but I'm not an especially forgiving person when someone fucks me over, let alone when they screw over my omega.

"Sullivan had his chance." I cross my arms over my chest as we pull up to a huge black metal gate.

"We've talked about it extensively and he didn't hurt Oakley intentionally." Liam turns to face me. "The two of you fighting and continuing to hate each other will only put additional strain on Oakley."

"Are you my fucking therapist now?" I snap.

"No, but it sure seems we could all use one, doesn't it?" He grins. Well, I'm not going to dispute that. I sure could have used someone to talk to when I was a teenager. I definitely wouldn't have so many fucking scars—and not just metaphorical ones. "Listen, I know Angel is a clusterfuck of misery, or I'm guessing she is based on your mood, but don't let it send you into self-destruct mode. Trust me when I say I know all about that impulse, but it will get you nowhere pleasant."

I sigh, swiping long hair back from my forehead. Who knows why I'm wired this way, but anytime my emotions get

too big, I straight up lash out. Most of the time, I settle for tossing shitty comments at people and hiding behind a wall of relative sarcasm, but fuck, Angel gets under my skin.

It makes no sense.

I tell myself I don't give a fuck, but yeah, it's hard to bottle up those feelings. The same ones I had wondering why my supposed father chose fame over me, but again, Damian wasn't the villain.

"I'm serious. If you're about to fuck Oakley over then tell me now. We can turn this car right back around and take you back to the city," Liam growls, slapping the seat between us.

"Fuck you," I scoff as the car comes to a halt. I'm not about to ruin the only good thing I've got going for myself. I'm in a place where music isn't even worth the trouble because all it's doing is giving Angel an excuse to stick around.

The door locks disengage, and I pop out without another word. No one has an ounce of faith in me except for Oakley. She's the last goddamn person I would lash out against. The fact she's sick and needs me has me jogging for the doors with little concern for Liam or our shit.

If one more person tries to delay me getting to Oakley, I'm going to take a swing. My nerves are shot. I passed feral about three minutes ago.

I stomp into the medical office, and Sullivan hits his feet.

"You can't go in there—" he starts.

I flip him off as my eyes fly to Hawk's.

"Second door on the right," he grunts, leaning against the wall just next to the hallway.

"Thanks," I mutter, jogging to the room he mentioned. I don't knock. I crack the door, and a female doctor spins around, jabbing a finger in my direction.

“I already told the two of you.” She does a double take when she spots me.

I don’t give a shit. I shut the door behind me and aim for my omega. Oakley looks miserable, but a soft smile crosses her face when she sees me.

“I missed you,” she says in a shaky tone.

I climb on the bed, and she scoots over onto my chest.

I give the doctor as contrite a smile as I can force. “You can get back to whatever you were discussing.”

“Alphas, they always think the rules don’t apply to them,” she says, shaking her head. “It’s up to you.” She looks at Oakley, who clutches my chest even tighter like she’s afraid the doctor might forcibly pry me out of her grip.

“I want him to stay,” Oakley says.

“Fair enough. I’m Jess, the nurse practitioner. We’re just getting into the lab results, at least the ones I can run on site.” She flops open a file folder. “You’re not pregnant.” My eyes fly to Oakley’s. I didn’t know that was even a possibility. I mean, I guess it’s always a possibility when you’re having sex, but she has an implant. “You don’t have the flu or strep throat or any of the other things currently going around that I can check for in office.”

“Okay,” Oakley says weakly. “Do you know what is wrong with me?”

“I can take an educated guess, but until I receive your labs, I won’t be able to confirm it.” Jess frowns.

“Please, give us your opinion,” I say, clearing my throat.

Oakley runs her fingers over my heart, and I try not to panic. She needs me to be strong right now. Strong and calm to give her strength. It would be so like the universe to give me my first taste of something good and then rip it away right as I’m learning to nurture it. I hold her tighter in return and say a silent prayer to several gods I don’t actually believe in.

“I believe you’re having a severe reaction to the suppressants,” Jess says, taking a seat on the rolling chair and

moving to the end of the bed. “I’m honestly concerned that any doctor prescribed them for…” She looks at the file. “Close to five years without any mandatory breaks. I’m going to be frank. It’s highly frowned upon for us to prescribe suppressants for that long without off periods between, and that’s under the most drastic of circumstances.”

“Jesus Christ,” I growl as my head falls back to look at the ceiling. Now isn’t the time to say I told you so, but I did *a lot* of research when we started hooking up, and all of it said the same thing.

“We discussed your history, and there was nothing that pointed to you having extenuating circumstances. Is there anything you didn’t mention?” Jess asks, staring at Oakley.

“No,” Oakley reluctantly admits.

“Then I think it’s safe to say it’s a healthy response. Your system is set up to experience regular heats. So much of an omega’s health is tied to your heat cycle…” She continues explaining why healthy omegas should avoid suppressants. She doesn’t talk down to Oakley, but she does make it clear that she can negatively impact her long-term health if she continues using them. “I’m fairly sure that’s why you’re so sick. The suppressants have less medication in each dose as you lead up to the end of a pack. Your system is officially letting you know it won’t handle skipping another heat.”

“Damn,” I whisper.

“Would you like me to send someone in to consult about matching with a pack?” Jess glances between us. “We also have heat only services if you’re not interested in being matched.”

I growl, trying to force myself not to clutch Oakley too tightly. Fat fucking chance of that happening. I was delusional earlier when discussing that possibility with Liam. There’s no way I’ll be able to accept someone we don’t know touching her. “Liam and Hawk are obviously ready to help out.”

“The two in the waiting room?” Jess laughs. “Yeah, I got that impression also.”

“No, Liam came with Marcus,” Oakley says, but her eyes are closed. “Do you know how long until the heat will hit?”

“You’re the fourth patient I’ve seen with similar symptoms over the last year and a half. Once your nausea settles down, we’ll get you moved into your suite. Your fever was borderline concerning when you first got here. We’ll monitor that overnight. By tomorrow or the next day at the latest, I hope you’ll be on the mend, and they’ll be able to keep track of your temperature from your suite. If it spikes, then I’m here.”

“So, I’ll be okay?” Oakley asks.

“Barring any major disasters,” Jess says, nodding. “Truthfully, you’re young and healthy. I’m not too concerned, but your system is detoxing from the suppressants. You may not feel great for the next few days.”

“And once that passes, she’ll go into heat?” I run my hand over Oakley’s back, and a ragged purr starts in my chest as I do my best to soothe her.

“She may begin to experience erratic waves of heat even while she’s sick.” Jess gives me a pointed look. “What you’re doing right now should help. Soak up alpha pheromones directly from the source. It should help to relax your system. Suppressants have only been around thirty or forty years, and they’ve been in widespread use for less than that. We still don’t understand all the ins and outs, but we do know alpha and omega biology is built to suit each other.” She glances at me. “I’m guessing you’ll be staying?”

“That’s up to the princess,” I say, even though leaving is the last thing I want to do. “Can I stay with you?”

“Please do,” she groans.

“Yeah, it looks like I’ll be staying.” I don’t even try to hide the smirk that crosses my face.

Jess just smiles. “Don’t be surprised when the nurse pops in every hour to take your vitals. Press the call button if you need someone, and one of us will be in right away.”

“Thank you,” I tell her sincerely. This place is preferable to a hospital at this point. If Oakley needs one then we’ll head

there, but this is a much better option considering the shit show going on in the real world. We're behind an iron gate of safety. Here's hoping no one leaks our location. That would be a shitty way to repay this place for getting Oakley in at the last minute.

It is, in fact, a long fucking night. Oakley isn't violently sick, but she does have frequent bouts of gagging. She sweats through both our clothes early the next morning. I text all three of the guys. They came down to see her last night before Jess and the owner forced them to the suite. It's early as hell, so I'm expecting Hawk to be the one to reply.

Sullivan comes in with a change of clothes for Oakley a little less than ten minutes after I send the text.

"I'll stay with her." Sullivan tosses the clothes on the end of the bed and shoves his hands in his pockets. "I know you haven't left. Go take a shower and get some breakfast. I promise I won't leave her side."

"It's okay," Oakley says, patting my chest. "I know I sweated all over you, and you deserve a shower."

"Fine, but I'm helping her change." I nod to the door. Sullivan agrees and leaves the room. I help Oakley out of the sweaty dress she's been in since yesterday and into the pajamas he brought. I don't know where the new sheets are, so I'm not sure how much it helps, but Oakley grabs my arm as I'm tucking her back under the thin blanket. "I won't be gone long."

"I don't know what I did to deserve you, but thank you for being here for me," she says as her eyes squeeze shut. "It means more than I have words to explain."

My fucking heart tries to pound out of my chest as I brush my lips over her forehead. "Always, princess. You need me, then I'm there."

“The crazy thing is, I believe you,” she says, kissing my cheek before snuggling back into the pillow. “I love that it smells like you.”

I bite my lip to keep from busting out some shit I don’t think she’s ready to hear. Instead, I kiss her again and head out. I’m going to sink my teeth into that little omega so deeply she has no chance of getting away. Then I’m going to work my ass off to be the person she seems to think I am.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Sullivan

"Is this normal?" I ask the nurse as Oakley trembles against my chest.

"It's not ideal, but the fever reducers aren't working well enough. If her temperature reaches 108 then she's going to need to head down the mountain to the hospital." The nurse continues messing with Oakley's IV machine. "The IV fluids can make some patients cold. Her temperature is also hovering pretty high. I'll put it this way, I'm not surprised she's able to feel the difference between her body temp and the temperature of the fluids."

"That makes sense," Oakley says, clutching onto my middle. Her teeth aren't chattering, but fuck, I feel completely goddamn helpless as her hand shakes against my chest. "I really don't want to go to the hospital. I'm honestly feeling a lot better than I did yesterday or even last night."

"Good," the nurse says, shoving a pin in the pocket of his scrubs. "Hopefully that means you're on the upward trend." He makes eye contact with me. "If she gets noticeably hotter then hit the call button. If she needs the restroom, wheel the IV cart with her."

"Got it," I say, swallowing thickly.

Fuck me, this is terrifying.

I don't know how Marcus, of all people, managed to keep his cool.

Knowing she's sick and hurting makes me feel like I could crawl out of my own skin. It's a miserable feeling being

unable to fix the problem.

The nurse heads out while Oakley is still trembling.

Isn't this something they should be monitoring?

It feels like it should be.

"You're freaking out over there, aren't you?" Oakley pats my chest. "Seriously, Sulli. I'm fine. Well, not fine, but I'm okay. I promise not to die on your watch."

"Jesus Christ," I hiss, my hold on her hip tightening. "Don't even joke about that shit."

"Sorry," she mutters. "I was trying to lighten the mood."

"Are you nervous for your first true heat?" I ask and grimace. Where did that question come from? She's sick as hell. She probably hasn't had time to even consider it.

"I probably would have been before Marcus, but no, not really. More than anything I'm embarrassed that I'm holding everything up because I refused to listen to anyone about how bad the suppressants could be."

"We wouldn't be touring right now anyway. Don't beat yourself up."

"I forgot about Angel." Her head shakes. "I hate that woman so much on Marcus's behalf."

"Yeah, she's basically a guide for how not to be a parent. It's no wonder Lyric left when she was a teenager."

"No kidding," she agrees.

"Things seem like they're getting pretty serious between you two."

"Me and Marcus?" she asks to clarify.

"Well, I don't mean you and Lyric." I chuckle, running my hand down her back.

"I think he just really needed someone to believe in him. Or maybe that's not even it. Just someone to see through that facade he puts on to protect himself." Her head shakes against my chest. "I don't know how to explain it. I know he can be

downright problematic at times, but he never pushes with me. Not anymore."

I can't even dispute that because I've noticed the same thing. He's a dick to everyone, including Oakley at times. But his attitude with her is more playful banter than straight up asshole, which used to be the entirety of his personality.

"I do think he's come a long way since you two got together." It's hard as fuck for me to admit, but I do because it's the truth. "I've said it before, but I'll say it again. I'm sorry for the bullshit I caused between us."

"I wish you would have just told me you aren't interested in me like that," Oakley whispers, her eyes squeezing shut. "It didn't have to turn into this huge divide between us. You gave me some seriously mixed signals. Or I guess maybe I saw what I wanted to."

"No." I shake my head vehemently. "Not at all. I was interested. I am attracted to you, but it's complicated."

Oakley nods. "Because you don't want to risk ruining our friendship."

"Partially, but mostly I'm afraid I can't be what you need." A heavy sigh escapes, blowing around her hair.

"Sullivan Lucas Hayes," she snaps. "We used to communicate. Like actually really talk about our lives and what was important to us. I don't know why you stopped, but you mean the world to me. Just talk to me dammit."

"Shit," I say, staring at the wall. My mind races as I try to figure out how I can deflect without making things worse. Then what Liam said rolls through my mind, followed quickly by Marcus. If I'm not careful I will lose the most important person in my life. "You're an omega. I'm a beta. I'm never going to be able to meet your needs." Oakley opens her mouth, but I gently slap my palm over it, shaking my head. If I don't get it all out there now, then there's a good possibility that I never will. "And that's only one thing. I know my designation doesn't make me any less valuable than alphas or omegas, but

I've always known you'd need a pack. I won't be able to knot you or soothe your system with my pheromones."

Oakley rips my hand down. "Life decisions shouldn't be made based on what you can't do for the other person. What about what you *can* do? You've always been my rock. The person I can talk to about anything. We've tackled problems together for as long as I've known you."

"We have," I agree.

"Then what went wrong?" She tilts her head, blinking up at me from behind reddish blonde lashes.

She's so fucking beautiful, and objectively, I've always known that, but the level of desperate attraction I feel for her came on slowly. It grew from subtly not being able to shake my feelings to being downright confused that I'm suddenly interested in sex. I hadn't considered acting on those impulses before because they were so fleeting. For years I thought something was wrong with me, and just when I was coming to terms with thinking I'm asexual, everything changed.

I open my mouth and all of that flies out.

My face feels like it's on fire.

"But even knowing that I'm sexually attracted to you doesn't give me confidence that I'll always crave sex and intimacy like I have been the last year or so. It came on slowly. What if it goes away?" I bring my free hand up to cover my face. I'm kind of wishing I could spontaneously combust just to get out of this conversation.

"Huh, okay. I get what you mean. I wish I could've helped you feel comfortable talking about it before now. I'm here for you, in all ways. Whatever you need from me. I'm kind of hoping we can figure out how to keep things real between us from now on," she says, brushing her fingers over my pec.

"I think it's that I didn't want to start something I couldn't finish and then risk ruining things even worse because of it." I groan. "Fuck, I don't even know if that makes sense."

"It does," Marcus says, closing the door behind him. "I thought you were gay, but I couldn't figure out why you didn't

just come out and tell her that, or at very least stop acting like you wanted her." He takes a seat on the end of the bed. "That sounded more dickish than I meant."

Oakley jabs a finger at him. "You don't need to add your two cents to this conversation, especially if you're going to be unkind."

"Point taken." Marcus slides a hand up, running it over Oakley's leg. He looks at me. "Why act like her boyfriend though? I saw you scare away more than a few guys before I swooped in. Can you see why that sent mixed messages?"

"It's confusing, okay?" I snap, pulling Oakley closer. I'm not sure why it feels like she might try to escape, but it sure as fuck does, and I don't like it. "I can admit I didn't handle my feelings in the best way."

"If you're not comfortable with Marcus being around for this, then just say that please." She glances from me to him. "And don't think that means I'm trying to cut you out of anything. You're stuck with me even if you are a jerk."

"I love you too, princess," he murmurs, crawling up and kissing her senseless while she lies directly on my shoulder. My heart tries to pound out of my chest. I didn't know they were at that level. My gut churns thinking I've lost all hope for us having any relationship in the future. "I'm glad you finally got your shit together." Marcus pats me on the cheek. "If you need to leave for any reason then call me before you do."

I nod as Oakley trembles against my side. Marcus climbs over the small bar at the end of the bed and heads out without another word.

He's just about to the door when Oakley calls out, "I do love you too." The quiver in her voice leads me to believe she's not used to saying it. Once the door closes, Oakley pushes up on her forearm to look at me. "I care about you too. I'm a little confused about where we stand. You know I'm in a relationship now. Do we focus on rebuilding our friendship? Marcus said he was open to adding other partners, and with my heat coming up, it's a very real possibility. But I don't want to pressure you or make you feel uncomfortable."

I sigh as my head shakes. “Jesus Christ, can you stop walking on eggshells? Talk to me like you always have. That’s the worst part. I didn’t want it to even be a thing. I’m an adult. It’s just that I’ve never acted on those impulses.”

“But you want to?” she asks. “With me?”

My hand tightens on her hip. “I do, but I’m more attracted to your personality or the way you make me feel than I am to you physically. Or at least at times, oh fuck. I’m absolutely fucking this up.”

Oakley laughs. It’s a light, airy sound that I haven’t heard directed at me in too fucking long. “I feel like maybe we’re overthinking this. Sexuality is flexible. How sexual you are or how much interest you have in sex or physical affection can be too. All I care about is the level of open honesty between us. I’ve missed you so much.”

“Me too,” I assure her. “Liam tried to tell me something similar—at least to the first part.”

“Would you prefer to stay in a different room during my heat? I don’t want you to get caught up in pheromones or feel obligated to participate.” She leans up, careful of her IV, and nuzzles her cheek to mine.

“No, I want to be with you,” I assure her. “Your pheromones have never influenced me to the point where I can’t think through my choices.”

“Okay, good. Do you enjoy cuddling?”

“I do, with you anyway,” I admit. “There have been times when I wanted to try more than that.”

“Me too.” She nods against my cheek. “But only if you’re not just saying that to make me happy.”

“I’m not.” I run my fingers through her hair, tilting her face up to mine. “There just may be times where I need a break from physical touch for a while, but I’m not even sure about that.”

“I get it,” she says, licking her lips. “We can figure it out as we go along.”

My fucking god, I'm out of my depth here. Her eyes are so damn blue as she looks down at me that I slide my hand into her hair, pulling her mouth to mine. She groans into the kiss as I lick the seam of her lips. Her entire body is hot to the touch, but somehow, she ends up lying right on top of me.

I like that she isn't afraid to guide the kiss. Her hips grind over mine, making me groan into her mouth. My cock seems as desperate to jam its way through my zipper as I am for the wiggly little omega. I've missed her so much, but it's the relief that takes my breath away. This could have gone so much differently. She's got options, and it's hard to fathom she might be willing to accept what I have to offer, even when I don't know what that is at this point.

There's a light knock on the door, and Oakley pulls back, gasping for breath as she slides to lie at my side. She keeps her leg thrown over my pelvis, hopefully it'll give me some added protection from whatever medical staff is about to walk through that door. They don't need to see my raging erection.

The night nurse pops his head in, and I can only pray our scents aren't saturating the room.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Oakley

I can't seem to shake the giddy feeling in my chest.

The nurse ruins an absolutely perfect moment. Once he leaves, Sullivan and I talk a little more, but there are no additional sensual kisses. My knees clench as I recall how plush and soft his lips felt against mine. The way he held me tight to his chest made everything even more mind-blowingly special.

We're stuck in the medical room for several more hours until Jess gets in for the day.

Hawk comes in, and Sullivan reluctantly gives me a kiss on the forehead before heading out. It's wild to see them trading shifts like we're an actual pack.

Jess takes my vitals a final time and agrees I'm good to go.

"Cuddle with your alphas, nest, and relax. Let nature take its course. I'm here if you need me," she says, pulling off her gloves. "If you start vomiting again, experience a severe headache, or your fever gets back up to 105 with no symptoms of the heat starting then you'll need to come back down so we can monitor you."

"But if she's perfuming and begging with that kind of temperature then that's fine?" Hawk asks, clearing his throat.

"I'll send you up with a pamphlet of information. But yes, omegas can relatively safely spike temperatures of up to 110 during a heat, but we don't like it to stay there for long. The longer the omega goes without being knotted the higher the fever will get. Anything above 110, that doesn't come down

immediately, is an emergency and should be treated as such." She smiles, gesturing at me. "Omegas are extremely resilient when it comes to fevers. It was the fever combined with the nausea and other symptoms that concerned me. If she had been in heat when you brought her in, then that level of temperature would have been acceptable."

"Got it," Hawk grunts, scratching his jaw.

Sometimes I question whether or not I was even meant to be an omega. My face feels hot just from *listening* to them discuss me being knotted.

"It was hard as hell being away from you last night." Hawk carries me out of the elevator and toward where our suite must be. "It's equally as difficult scenting Marcus and Sullivan all over you."

"Just to be clear, you're legally divorced, right?" I ask, grimacing.

Well, way to come right out and just say it. I'm not comfortable with him participating in my heat if he's not. I get that they aren't together and haven't been for many years, but it's still not something I'm okay with.

"I am." Hawk nods. "The final divorce decree is in that packet of papers I gave you. I know shit kind of hit the fan right after. I don't blame you for not having the chance to look through it."

"Oh, well, that's good. Did you want to stick around for my heat in that case?" I bury my face in his shoulder, breathing in deep hits of his sandalwood scent.

"Fuck yes," Hawk growls.

"Am I going to get an invite too?" Liam asks. I jolt when I spot him standing just outside a door near the end of the hall. He leans close as Hawk passes him, walking us into the suite. "I'm more than happy to knock the bottom out for you, sweetness."

“Yeah, I was going to invite you too.” I give him a timid smile.

“Are you sure you want to let that idiot into your nest?” Hawk asks, carrying me over to the couch.

“Be nice.” I’m still a little surprised, but it’s one of the things Marcus brought up last night when he stayed with me in the clinic. He’s very vigilant and assured me he had seen recent medical records for Liam and Hawk.

We had a lengthy conversation about if I was really comfortable with them being involved in my heat. It’s so strange to me to talk about any of this stuff.

Despite what he said when Jess initially brought it up, he offered to ride out my heat with volunteer alphas if that’s what I wanted. He made it clear he supports whatever decision I make.

It was hard to talk about, but he did his best to set me at ease, and I was honest with him that I’d much rather be knotted by someone I know and trust.

I glance around, but Sullivan and Marcus are missing. We should all be present for this conversation.

I open my mouth to ask where they are, but Liam pipes in like he can read my mind. “I think they’re having a heart-to-heart or possibly a come-to-Jesus moment.” He laughs, tossing himself down on the club chair next to the sofa. “The nest is all nesty and waiting for you to set up, or ya know, get extra busy.” He wiggles his eyebrows, and he looks so cute and goofy that I snort. “I’m glad you’re feeling better. You looked like you felt like shit.”

“I did,” I agree. Hawk has me lying over his strong form. My hand twinges with pain from the IV site when I push up to look around the room. “You’re serious? They aren’t here?”

“They wanted to get on the same page prior to your heat starting.” Hawk gives me a reassuring smile, running his hand over the back of my head.

“Okay, so I need to go to wherever they are.” I nod, trying to climb off his lap. “Probably, right now.”

“No,” Hawk growls, pulling me back down. “You’re still running a fever and recovering.” He’s not wrong about that, but my panic ratchets higher. I need Sullivan and Marcus to be on good terms with each other. Not just for the sake of Wicked Truths either. My chest actually gets tight as I realize how little I care about being famous if it comes at the cost of losing one of them. It would be a no brainer. “Jess said to clean up and then set up or snuggle in the nest.”

I open my mouth to protest that I’ll do all of that as soon as I know Marcus and Sullivan aren’t having it out somewhere here at the resort, but Hawk swats my ass.

“Hey,” I grumble, swiping at his hand.

“Don’t try me,” Hawk growls. “They’re fine.”

“Yeah, but how am I supposed to know that? They always antagonize each other.” I blink at him, pleading with him to understand, but the look on his face says he isn’t budging. My eyes fly to Liam’s as he pushes himself out of the chair.

“I’ll go referee your boyfriends *if* you make it up to me later.” Liam laughs, coming close and brushing his fingers over my cheek. “I am glad you’re doing better.”

“Thank you,” I say sincerely.

“Don’t get all sentimental. I really think you’re overreacting. I’m just going to keep you content.” Liam smirks, and it has a visceral effect on my system. My nipples tighten, poking out through the thin material of my pajama top. His eyes immediately zero in on my tits and he laughs, looking at Hawk. “You’re welcome.” He winks, swaggering out in those tight jeans that hug his ass a little too nicely.

“All right, let’s do this.” Hawk sits up and wraps my legs around his strong frame.

“D-Do what?” I ask.

“Oh, little one.” He grins. “I’m going to take care of you like any good alpha should.” His words send a damn shiver down my spine.

“I feel like you’re just trying to distract me from Marcus and Sullivan,” I grumble, rubbing my face in his shoulder to find where his scent is strongest.

“Nah, sweet girl, when I’m distracting you, you’ll most definitely know.” Hawk laughs, heading down the hallway, and my silly heart nearly leaps from my chest.

The main bedroom is huge. It has a bed that I think is larger than a normal king. The walls are pale gray, and the bed has four posters with actual ties that can be let down. Hawk drops me on the edge of the mattress and aims for the bathroom.

I can hear him opening and closing cabinets and then the water turns on. I’m not positive, but it doesn’t sound like the shower. My head tilts, and it becomes pretty clear he’s running me a bath.

Hawk comes back without his shirt on, and I end up licking my lips like a total creeper. His chest is covered with a small amount of blond hair. He’s thick in that way that huge guys are. His chest is well-defined as are the muscles in his shoulders and arms, but he doesn’t have a wall of abs like Liam or Marcus.

His belt is undone, but still hanging through the loops of his open jeans. I fan my face with my hand until Hawk’s low chuckle fills the air.

Ohmigod, I think my fever just spiked.

That’s not okay.

I am not okay.

Clearly this is what a wave of heat feels like. Today is only the second day that I haven’t had the suppressants, but holy hell, my body responds in a way I’m not one hundred percent ready for.

“Are you going to let me take care of you, little one?” Hawk’s gruff voice sends a shiver down my spine. My head

nods before I can even think it through. He hits his knees between my thighs as his warm, calloused hands tease my skin. My palm flies to cover my face as I catch a whiff of my perfume. It radiates around me so clearly there's zero possible way his senses can miss the invitation. "Fucking hell, sweetheart. There's nothing in the world that smells as good to me as you do." His hands slide up my thighs and over my hips, but he stalls at the bottom of the pajama tank top Sullivan brought for me to change into earlier. "Can I take this off?"

"Yeah," I agree, but my voice sounds weird and sultry.

Hawk moves to pull off my shirt, but he does it in the way that has his skin sliding across mine. His thumbs flick the underside of my breasts as he yanks my top up and off, tossing it behind me. His light blue eyes stare into mine as my nipples pebble in the cool air.

"How about these?" he asks, biting his thick lower lip. Jesus Christ, was his wife an idiot? She must have been. I've never seen this particular look on his face before, but now that I have, it's burned into my retinas. I'll never be able to forget how he looks waiting with anticipation and maybe a little need. "Oakley?" His head tilts as his fingers brush over my bare stomach, and I curve toward him.

"Yeah? Wait, isn't the water still running?"

"Oh, shit." He chuckles, standing to his full height as he pulls me up like I weigh nothing. I might be on the slender side for an omega, but I'm still a solid one hundred and fifty pounds, or maybe a hundred and sixty considering all the junk food I've consumed during this tour. His warm breath fans over my chest as he works down my shorts and panties. My hands land on his stomach and he grins. "I guess it's only fair, huh?"

"Yeah." I nod wildly as my fingers slide into the waistband of his boxer briefs. Hawk helps me get everything down and kicks his jeans the rest of the way off. My eyes stay on his. I'm so out of my depth with anything to do with physical intimacy. I do feel confident when it comes to Marcus, but there's a level of familiarity with us that built over time.

Hawk moves so fast, one second, I'm staring up at him, and the next, he's cradling me like a bride and walking us into the spacious bathroom. It's incredible and fits the decor of the resort perfectly. The floor is cream tile with light gray paint on the walls. There's a separate shower, which looks large enough to safely house an entire pack. It has a huge bench that I bet has seen its fair share of action.

Hawk places me back on my feet.

I try unsuccessfully to keep my gaze off his tight ass in the mirror as he leans over to shut off the water. My eyes bug when I catch sight of the massive tattoo covering his entire back.

I spin around to get a better look.

There's a lion's head at the top, and its mane covers his shoulders and the tops of his arms. I guess I never noticed it because he's always wearing a shirt when I see him. There's a dragon that goes in a semi-circle at the bottom of the lion and a phoenix rising from a smoky fire going down the right side of his back. Pieces circle around toward his front, and the same is true for the wolf on the left side.

I'm drawn toward him. My fingers brush down the flames the phoenix is being reborn from. "Holy shit."

Hawk spins around, and his cock bumps my soft lower stomach. "Want to test the water to make sure it's a decent temperature for you?" I nod, but I'm still a little transfixed by how thick his cock feels against my skin. That might be a problem. He's got over a foot in height on me. No, that's ridiculous. Alpha and omega biology are designed to fit. "Come on, little one. I need to get you clean, so we can focus on the nest." He spins us around until I'm facing the tub and wraps his hand in mine, gently tugging me toward the water.

Oh holy shit, his shaft feels even more massive against my ass.

"It's good." I run my fingers through the warm water. It's not scalding, which is good because I need to keep my fever down. It's like my brain has tunnel vision on alpha cock

because being knotted will likely help soothe my system more than a bath. I shake my head, desperately trying to keep from embarrassing myself.

"All right, let me climb in first." He steps around me and into the water. The height immediately rises several inches as he leans back against the edge. I'm still bent over like a total goof. "Come on, sweet girl." He holds out an arm. Without thinking, I scramble right into the tub, and Hawk chuckles as I end up in his lap. "Hmm, I was going to have you lie back against my chest while I wash your hair, but this isn't a bad view either." The tub is super fancy to match the style of the bathroom. There's a handheld sprayer hanging from a hook on the side, and Hawk's cock bounces around my backside as he stretches to grab it. His other hand slides up my back. A breathtaking smile crosses his face. "Go ahead and lean back for me, little one." He pushes just above my ass, and my pussy slides around his pelvis. "Fuck me."

I nod because getting dirty sounds so much more exciting than getting clean.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Hawk

My impulses are a fucking disaster. I've always been a caregiver, but it's pretty damn clear Oakley has other needs that have to be met. It takes everything in me to ignore the way her cunt grinds over the base of my shaft as I rinse her hair. My grip on her back slides up to support her neck, and when her hair is saturated, I pull her up.

My thumb flicks over the button to shut off the wand, and I set it down before grabbing the shampoo.

Oakley's hands tremble against my chest as I soap her hair. The water and shampoo help to dilute her scent, which is a good thing.

I'm so close to snapping it's not even funny.

Her heat is coming on quickly, and my body is convinced we know exactly how to take care of her.

It's probably a bad idea for any of us to be alone with her until we discuss the sample contract that was left in the room. Oakley isn't a client of The Exchange, so legally she doesn't have to have a contract, but I get the feeling they wanted a signed copy just to be safe.

I shake those thoughts away, grabbing the wand and rinsing her hair before repeating the process with the conditioner.

She's absolutely beautiful with her wet hair falling around her face and her big blue eyes spurring me on. She plasters herself to my front, leaning up on her knees. I pull her up with my hand on the back of her neck, and bend to meet her. Her

ass cheeks perfectly cup my cock as she grinds over my pelvis and the base of my shaft.

Her tongue dances around mine, and a low growl escapes my chest.

“Hawk, I ache,” she whimpers in between frantic kisses.

I haven’t even had the chance to soap her body up yet. She spent the last day sweating and sick, but I’m also physically incapable of denying her anything.

“What do you need, sweetheart? You need to come?” I nip at her lips as her hard nipples rake against my chest.

“Yeah,” she nods wildly, “that would probably help.”

My hand tightens on her neck, pulling her mouth back to mine as I slide my free hand between us. She moans into my mouth, and it’s a goddamn miracle I don’t sink my teeth into her right here and now.

She pulls back, heaving breaths as I slip my middle finger between her lower lips. The pad of my thumb bumps her clit as I sink barely inside her.

“Jesus fucking Christ,” I groan as she nods against my head. The warm water laps at my skin as she grinds my finger deeper inside her. There’s no way to explain the way she ripples around me like she’s desperate for a knot. My cock throbs, bouncing against her ass and aching to bury itself inside her. “Goddamn, little one. I’m pretty sure you’re going to ruin me.”

She’s no longer stretching to meet my mouth, and she sobs against my shoulder as I work in and out. My free hand moves from her neck into her wet hair as I wrap my fingers close to her skull.

“More, please. You’re not going to hurt me, and even if you do, I promise I’ll like it,” she begs against my throat. Her naughty little tongue flicks out, teasing my skin.

“Another finger?” I taunt, working my pointer and ring fingers down her lower lips.

“Yes,” she gasps. “And more pressure on my clit.”

I've got an unhealthy addiction to the way she isn't afraid to chase what she wants.

I add another thick finger, and it gets tougher to pull them in and out. The water mutes some of it, but her natural slickness is impossible to miss. She's so close, and feeling her tits bounce against my skin as she grinds has the fog slipping in.

I try to shake away the haze that comes with rut, but her begging moans get so much louder as her cunt convulses that it's nearly impossible to stay clear.

My hand in her hair tightens, pulling her head back so that I can watch her face.

That does it.

Her shivers turn to full-blown trembles as she sobs, "Ohmigod, alpha."

The naughty little vixen tosses her face forward, biting my chest as she comes all over my hand. Her nails dig into my shoulder as she gyrates her hips just like she would if I was inside her, and my control snaps. I yank her to me, keeping my fingers inside her while she spasms, and carefully climb out of the tub.

I head to grab a towel and have to release her hair to wrap the fabric around her. She's still shaking against my chest, and I hate that I have to put her down on the counter to dry her off. I wrap a small towel around her hair, and she wobbles as I quickly dry her back and arms before using the same towel on myself.

I'm picking her back up before I can blink.

I march us into the room, and Oakley rips the towel off her head, tossing it away. "I need you."

"You'll have me," I assure her, putting myself down on the bed. My legs hang off, but they do on all mattresses. "Ride my face." I pull her up my chest. "Hands on the headboard and ride my tongue."

“No, I want you to have sex with me,” she says, trying to scramble back down.

A low, feral snarl escapes as I pull her back with little concern to how delicate she is.

“Now isn’t the time to set off my impulses,” I bark.

Christ, I sound like an asshole, and I know that, but my instincts are firmly in control. Her hands hit the headboard, or maybe the wall. I can’t tell as her creamy pussy lands over my tongue.

My cock jumps against my stomach. I feel kind of shady that I’ve done everything in my power to keep her from getting a look at it. I need to be sure she’s good and ready before I try to slide inside her.

Oakley moans long and loud as I lap at her clit. My hands tighten on her ass, showing her exactly how I want her to fuck my face. Her lavender scent floods my nose, and the fog creeps in with staggering force. I’m pretty fucking sure I’m a danger to both of us with how rabid I feel.

She trembles as her legs shake, and she rides my tongue like she isn’t afraid to take what she wants. I take back over when she freezes, moaning and shaking even more violently.

“Well, this is surely an intriguing find,” Liam says from somewhere. Oakley squeaks, but I don’t release her. I continue lapping up every drop of her taste that I can force onto my tongue. “I have serious doubts you’ll ever recover from that monster cock.”

He climbs on the bed.

I can’t see him, but I can feel it as he pushes down the mattress. My hand lifts from Oakley’s hip to flip him off.

“Wait, where are Marcus and Sullivan?” she asks, twisting to face him. It moves her from sitting on my face to her pussy hovering over my chest.

“They’re in the living room. A lovely Irish gentleman, who I believe co-owns the resort, helped me get them in safely. They’ll likely sober up within an hour or two. As a bonus, they

were laughing and stumbling around looking for snacks the last I saw of them." He kisses over her neck. "Don't be too cross with them. Marcus had a hell of a day yesterday thanks to Angel."

"No, I'm not upset," she says, but Liam pushes his mouth to hers. The skinny fucker's knees dig into my waist as he makes out with my omega. My cock is still rock hard and dripping pre-cum all over my stomach.

"Good, now I'm fairly sure you should be nesting, but it very well may qualify as cruel to leave the big guy hanging. Did he make you come hard, sweetness?" He tilts her head back with a handful of wet hair.

"Mm-hmm." Her tits heave as she sucks in deep breaths.

"Are you going to return the favor?" He smirks, catching my gaze and winking.

"You don't have to—" I cut off when Oakley whines.

"Scoot right down," he suggests, pulling her backward with a hand in her hair and the other on her hip. She ends up kneeling directly over my pelvis. Her slick lower lips perfectly frame my cock.

"Holy shit, Hawk," she moans, grinding over my length without me even being inside her.

"Do you think you prepped her enough for all that?" Liam asks, but his tone is more serious than ever before, even as his hand slides up her stomach to cup her tit.

My head shakes. I'm sure I haven't. "No."

"You want to make him come?" He nips at her neck.

"I already said yes. Are all alphas so dramatic?" Oakley huffs.

"You actually didn't." Liam chuckles. "How about a little old-school style… You know, I don't think we can even call it dry fucking because you're incredibly slick." He releases her hair, climbing behind her until he's kneeling over my thighs. I barely hold back the urge to growl. He's not fucking her while she's on top of me. Which doesn't even make much sense

considering he's clothed, but my brain is functioning at baser level only. "Is your pussy fully framing his cock?"

"Yeah." Oakley stares straight into my eyes, but hers are hooded and glassy.

Liam's hands land on her hips, pushing her down. Fuck, it's not quite like slipping inside her, but she's so wet and warm that as he helps her grind, my cock jumps, dribbling pre-cum all over my stomach.

"That's hot, isn't it?" Liam growls, raking his teeth over her shoulder.

I'm still frozen, trying to hold myself back from tossing her down and fucking into her like the animal I am. My knot throbs as her hole grinds over it, but the pressure only lasts for a second before she's sliding toward the tip.

Liam has a hand wrapping around her hip, teasing her clit, and he looks at me like he's indicating I should get my shit together.

Oakley moves her hand from my chest down to tease over my crown, and a wicked snarl escapes my chest. She runs her thumb through my pre-cum and brings it to her pretty pink tongue.

"Fucking Christ." My hands are on her waist, but they're huge in comparison to her compact frame. I'm able to tease my thumbs over her nipples as her tits bounce.

"Knot," Oakley sobs as her head rolls around Liam's chest. "I need your knot. Or both of you? Please, now." She continues rambling out pleas for both of us to fuck her, and my control is already paper-thin.

"All right," Liam says, slapping a hand over her mouth. "I'm not even as far gone as the big guy is, and I'm aching to sink my teeth into you. Let's just keep you from asking for anything you'll regret when you sober up." He pinches her clit and Oakley gushes all over my knot and the underside of my shaft as she curves toward me. Her sobs escape around Liam's grip, but it's the pressure and the way her tight little hole

clenches on my knot that does me in. I'm not even inside her, but her body is desperate for a knot.

Oakley collapses on my chest, and I rip Liam's hand away so that I can shove my tongue in her mouth while she comes. The kiss is ravenous as she begs and claws at my shoulders. My balls get tight and my dick swells, Oakley shimmies forward and impales herself on the crown of my cock on the way back.

She screams into the kiss as her cunt clenches over just the first inch or two of my length. My feet plant on the bed and I ignore Liam, fucking up into Oakley, but also trying not to go too deep. It's so close to what I crave, but also not quite enough.

Oakley shakes against me as my cock kicks. I hold her to me with a punishing grip and fight the desperate urge to rut.

"I'm apparently a very giving lover," Liam says, finally pulling his hand from between me and Oakley. "I've given you way more orgasms than you've given me." He laughs, kissing her shoulder as she rolls her hips. "I'm only joking. I love hearing you scream."

"I'm pretty sure you just fucked my world up." I push up on my forearm to nuzzle my cheek to hers. "Normally the urge to murder him for inviting himself into our first time together would be strong."

"It's okay, you can admit pack life isn't so bad." Liam chuckles. "I can't wait to discover all the ways we can shove our cocks into our darling omega."

Oakley sits straight up and her shoulder slams into Liam's chin. "Oh shit, sorry."

Liam just laughs. "It's fine."

"I need to nest." She glances around. "Someone point me in that direction."

She's so serious. My head falls back against the bed as I laugh. She wiggles off my crown, suddenly an omega on a mission.

“Who knew America would be so goddamn enjoyable?” Liam snorts, lifting her with his forearms.

I’m still hard and desperate for more than just the tip, but Oakley glances around and bolts for the bathroom. I assume she’s going to clean up, but she comes out in the shirt I was wearing before our bath. My heart grows about five sizes as she cocks a hip and glances between us.

“Would someone like to point me in the direction of the nest?” she asks with a huff.

“I’ve got you, sweetness.” Liam walks over, tossing an arm around her.

I sigh as they head off. My hand flies to rub over my face. I’m fucking terrible at sharing. I want to cuddle up to her in the nest and snarl at everyone else to stay the fuck back.

Which is exactly how not to be successful in pack life.

It’s not like I don’t realize why our society drifted toward pack life. One omega can easily meet the needs of five or six alphas, and without an omega we tend to drift toward going feral. I huff, maybe I’m heading that way faster than I’d like to admit. Soaking up an omega’s pheromones is supposed to help, but the only true cure for the condition is bonding, which I’ll never do if I can’t share properly.

I push myself out of bed and head to get dressed. I might as well check on Marcus and Sullivan.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Liam

Oakley is an adorable mess. Her strawberry blonde hair is wild around her face as she digs through Marcus's suitcase, sniffing everything and tossing it aside when it's not ripe enough.

"They must have sent our laundry out right before we came here." She frowns, yanking out a pair of sweatpants and pulling them to her nose. "Why would they do that?"

"They do our laundry daily when we're in a hotel," I remind her.

"And the bus is an hour away. I can't even get access to your pillows." She hits her butt next to the suitcases and starts digging in my bag. "Being an omega is ridiculous. I actually feel like I might cry all because I can't find any clothes that smell like you guys."

"It's kind of strange, but it does make me feel like a king," I admit, running my hand down her back.

Whoever brought up our things left our bags in one of the guest rooms right next to the nest. I'm guessing they didn't know what belonged to who, so they piled it up in the room closest to where they thought we'd be spending most of our time.

Oakley yanks out the hoodie I wear regularly and sniffs all over it. She glances back, pulling it over her head. The look on her face has me chuckling. It seems like she's afraid I might try to pry it off of her.

“How about we grab a couple of those outfits you’ve haphazardly discarded and bring them out to the guys?” I suggest, squatting at her side. “They can work on making sure they smell right while you and I set up the nest.”

“Okay,” she grumbles.

“I don’t have the first clue who any of that belongs to.” I nod toward the mess of clothes. “Collect something from each of them.”

Oakley hits her hands and knees, digging through and grabbing out clothes for each of the guys. Hawk’s giant T-shirt, covered by my hoodie, slides up, giving me a tantalizing view of her bare ass and a little peek of her pussy. My head falls back as I curse under my breath.

Oakley is pure goddamn trouble, and I’m absolutely going to make her mine.

“What do we do now?” Oakley asks, peeking around the nest.

Um, how the fuck am I supposed to know? I thought an omega built their nest from instinct or something.

I glance around, scratching my bare chest.

I changed into basketball shorts while Oakley was sucking face with her drunken alpha, but now it’s time to do the damn thing.

I nod to the plastic bins near the door. “I’m guessing those have stuff you can personalize it with.”

Oakley grunts, side eyeing the bins. “That seems like a lot of work. There are tons of pillows and a nice, thick comforter.”

“Yeah, but you’re still running a fever.” I frown because that’s normal with a heat, but she was also really fucking sick a few days ago. “Maybe there are some light blankets that would be better?”

She gives the stuff a sour look, so I saunter over and squat to pull the lid off.

I snort when I get a good look inside. “Oh holy fuck, my life would be complete if I can get you in this dinosaur onesie.”

“What?” she scoffs but comes to kneel at my side.

I wiggle my eyebrows, yanking it out of the bin. “It has a tail.” I shake it at her. “And a pussy flap.”

She laughs, resting her head against my shoulder. “Okay, so it is cute and really soft, but no way am I risking you taking pictures of me in that. They could be used for blackmail.” Her face goes extremely pale. I frown, tilting my head to try to figure out what happened. She’s back to looking in the box, and she pulls out a different version of the adult onesie. “Fine, I’ll wear the T-rex if you wear the triceratops.”

I snort, shaking my head. I’m still wondering if she’s got some past experience with an asshole ex who took dirty pictures and tried to blackmail her. I frown. That doesn’t make much sense because I’ve clearly heard Marcus mention she was a virgin when they got together, which blows my mind on a completely different level. It doesn’t necessarily mean it’s not a possibility.

My eyes fall back to the box, and I spot lube and what I think might be massage lotion. They stock the nest completely, unless this is from one of the guys. I don’t see how since we got here last minute, but I grab the lotion.

“How about you stretch out and let me work a little magic on your muscles?” I suggest, smirking.

Oakley tilts her head, blinking up at me. “Yeah, okay.”

“Go on.” I nod to the mattress. Oakley scrambles to her feet. Instead of walking on the small, carpeted area on either side of the bed, she hits her knees and crawls up.

My head falls back as my palm runs over my thickening length. Fuck, my impulses scream to pounce, trap her to the bed, rut her full of me, and sink my teeth into her soft little body.

This isn’t a disaster waiting to happen or anything.

My dick is trying to act a fool.

Oakley isn’t helping with her soft grunts and groans while I work her tight muscles. She wiggles about, begging me to push harder on an especially stubborn knot in her right shoulder. However, my cock is convinced she’s begging for something completely different.

My fingers brush over her neck as I release the nodule. If I work it too hard, she won’t feel great tomorrow, and the last thing I want to do is bruise her. My mum is a massage therapist. I know all about trigger points, knots, and pressure.

I thought Oakley would want light pressure and mostly relaxation, but the little omega won’t stop asking for me to work out every knot I find.

I chuckle as she frowns at me over her shoulder. Her hair is still wet, but it’s drying into a wild tangle of long wavy curls. “Can you work my lower back, just above my bottom?”

I bite my lip, wiggling my eyebrows. “I could do your glutes too.”

Oakley groans as my thumbs caress her spine, working lower on every swipe of my hands. My shorts aren’t doing shit to hide how far my cock juts out. It would be comical if I wasn’t trying to get to know her. It’s sending the wrong kind of image, and I know where my head is at. I can only guess what it seems like to her.

I work my thumbs into her lumbar region while my palms brush over the top of her ass. Marcus wasn’t joking. She’s slender for an omega, but she’s got curves; they’re just slightly less pronounced. I’m a skinny fucker. I generally find myself attracted to softer bodies, otherwise cuddling is a mess of whose bones can jab deeper into the other person. However, we’ll figure it out, even if I have to toss a pillow on my chest so that we can snuggle.

“So, what’s your beef with onesies?” I ask conversationally.

“Nothing. I even like dinosaurs.”

“Is there some ex out there that we should send Hawk to have a visit with?”

“No, nothing like that.” Her head shakes as her face rests against her forearm.

“Okay, then—”

She cuts me off by saying, “When I was three, my mom was kidnapped and held for ransom. My maternal grandparents are old oil money. The type of sickeningly rich that five or ten generations couldn’t blow if they gave it their very best effort.” I quirk an eyebrow because I’m pretty sure I could if I really tried, but that’s not the point. “They hired an acquisitions team to get her back and kept it out of the press. They had her for seventeen days before a highly-illegal mercenary team extracted her.” She sighs. “She came back, but she was never the same. She became a raging alcoholic—the type to mix drinking with all the prescriptions they gave her. She died when I was sixteen. Her organs couldn’t take the abuse anymore.”

“Jesus Christ,” I mutter. I didn’t see that coming.

“I know blackmail isn’t the same thing as ransom. For whatever reason it just happened to trigger those memories.” Oakley shudders out a breath.

I slide my hands up, giving her shoulders a squeeze. “I’m sorry for your loss.”

“It is what it is. I don’t blame her for being tormented, but I do resent the fact that she failed to be a mother because she was far too wasted to be bothered with her kid.” Her face rolls around her arm as her scent gets sour.

“My dads pretty much bombed at parenting too. They also didn’t have the first clue how to treat an omega with respect.” I go on to tell her a little about how we ended up in England. My mum took a chance, lied about her designation, and ended

up falling for her new bosses, all with a quite unhappy and sullen son in tow.

“Shit, I’m glad things worked out, but I bet that was hard on you.” Oakley stretches a hand back and pats my thigh.

“It was better once I got into the music scene. I didn’t begrudge her finding a new pack, and I certainly wasn’t going to stay in Cork with my fathers.” I grimace, praying she doesn’t ask about my former band.

“Well, you’ve got magical hands. That’s for damn sure,” she groans as I work the top of her ass and hips.

“Oh, sweetness, you have no idea.” I chuckle.

The massage continues until I’m sitting on Oakley’s thighs while working her glutes. The scent of her pussy long ago flooded my senses.

My dick is a sticky leaking mess in response to her pheromones. It’s a fact of life that alphas and omegas are extra juicy during sex. It’s all about the breeding, which I have no interest in normally. At the current moment, my brain is convinced I should rut, claim, and breed the wiggly little omega under me.

Am I purposely driving her crazy as I pull her pussy apart to work the bottom of her ass cheeks? Yes, it’s a real possibility. She’s nude. I could be inside her in three seconds if I really tried, and the nest is so saturated in her lavender scent that somehow, I’m pondering the possibility of kids and a white picket fence when normally all of that is the furthest thing from my mind.

This is why omegas are so goddamn treacherous.

Oakley shocks the hell out of me by rolling over. I push up on my knees and tilt my head, studying her to make sure she’s not going to run. That would be a bad move on her part because I would absolutely chase.

Her hand slides over her stomach and down to tease her clit. “You’ve pretty much been tormenting me for the last half hour. Don’t pretend like it wasn’t purposeful.”

I laugh, gesturing toward my cock which is hard to miss. “Do you need something, sweetness?”

She nods as her chest rises and falls in rapid movements. My hand hits the mattress next to her head, and my cock bounces against her hand, which is still working her pussy. Pushing up on my knees keeps me from completely trapping her to the mattress.

“I didn’t hear you ask for anything,” I taunt.

“What is with alphas? Do I really have to beg?” she huffs.

“It does help if you’re clear what you’re asking for. I’ve got fingers, a tongue…” I pull her hand away from her clit and aim my cock to bump against it as I grind. “Then there’s my —” My words cut off when she pushes herself up and shoves her tongue into my mouth.

It’s hot, but the fact her slick cunt is so drenched it soaks my shorts has a much more dangerous effect on my control. Her pheromones flood the air, and the intense smell of her perfume sends my head into a fog.

I’ve read extensively about the process. It’s one step away from completely losing ourselves to rut. Oakley’s hot hands slide down my stomach and into the waistband of my shorts. I’m not sure how I missed how warm she is, but I do believe she spiked a fever at some point during the massage.

My cock bounces out as she pulls my shorts down.

My brain is pure fucking chaos.

I’m pretty sure we’re on the same page. I like her. I think she’s kind of into me. I mean, I’ve fucked around with her and Marcus twice, which means absolutely nothing in relation to if she actually likes me.

What the bloody fuck is wrong with my head?

I’ve a fairly decent sense of self and a big dick.

This shouldn’t be an issue.

A low sound between a snarl and growl escapes as Oakley spreads her legs as wide as they can go, teasing the head of my dick through her slick pussy.

“I’m hot, and I want you inside me,” she begs.

“Can I slide in here?” Sullivan’s voice makes me jolt. My gaze flies to the side, and I bare my teeth, letting out a low, vibrating growl.

“Hey,” Oakley snaps, squeezing the hell out of my dick. “Don’t growl at Sulli.”

I actually kind of dig it. My tip dribbles pre-cum all over her clit and we both moan.

“Damn.” Sullivan whistles under his breath. “So it’s full-blown heat or just a wave?”

“Wave, I think,” I grunt. “You can stay if you shut up.”

“Ohmigod, that sounded like Marcus.” Oakley chuckles. “Where is he?”

“He fell asleep on the couch. I don’t think he got much sleep last night worrying about you.” Sullivan tosses himself down on the edge and smiles. “Feel free to continue. I liked watching the three of you after the show.”

Oakley shudders out a breath. “I ache,” she whispers, staring straight into my eyes. Her lashes fan over her slightly red cheeks as her eyes clench closed.

She’s fucking stunning, and she loves music as much as I do. I’ve always kept my distance from omegas. It seemed like a biology trap I didn’t want to fall into. Now I get why they warn us that it’s nearly impossible to fight the instinctual pull when you meet a compatible match.

“I’ve got you, sweetness,” I assure her, wrapping my right arm under her thigh and falling on top of her. It slides my cock down directly to her tight little hole. “Fuck, I forgot you’re already full of Hawk’s cum.”

“Damn.” Sullivan rolls closer.

I shake my head, trying to stay clear, and my hair falls over my forehead. Oakley works her clit, but her fingers brush over my shaft. She stares up at me with a pleading look I can't deny.

I bite my lip to keep from biting into her. My eyes fly to Sullivan, who has cuddled quite close while I was distracted. "Don't let me bite her."

"Aww, fuck," Sullivan grunts.

Oakley uses her feet on my ass to impale herself on my cock. "I'm fine with bites," she moans, grinding over my length.

That's about all the consent my jacked-up brain needs. Luckily, the tight clench of her pussy over my shaft distracts me from doing something exceptionally stupid.

"Marcus would absolutely kill you," Sullivan says softly. "And if he didn't then Hawk would."

"Fair enough." I adjust my grip on Oakley's ass. Her leg is still tossed over my right arm, and I push back enough that I can stare at her tight little hole clenching around my tip. Everything gets hazy as I watch myself disappear inside her. My hold goes rigid as my eyes fly up to hers. "Okay, *shit*. I know you and Marcus fuck without condoms, but I don't know if he had a vasectomy or something."

"What? He better not have." Oakley frowns. "Wait, why do I even care? I don't want kids."

"Yeah, me neither. Outside of the ridiculous impulse to breed you, but let's be real, the fantasy is way hotter than the consequences. So, back to my question, are we covered?" I lick my lips, watching her carefully. It would absolutely suck to pull out of her right now, but I'm really not sure I ever want to procreate.

"God, this is so unsexy. I have an implant. We're as covered as any other form of birth control can provide." She clenches around me as I exhale in pure relief.

"Sex is complicated," Sullivan says.

I don’t take my eyes off my omega. “Perfect, then lie back and let me fuck your world up.”

“Yeah, do that,” she begs, thrashing around under me. I pull out completely and jerk my cock against her clit. She’s extremely wet, and I really dig that I get to add my cum to the mix. She bites her lip, wiggling and begging as pre-cum spurts all over her pussy. I like the way she trembles, sobbing out pleas for me. I’m sure I don’t deserve her, but I’m not a good enough human being to walk away. “Put your dick inside me, or I am going to have to hurt you.” Her voice is sultry and desperate.

I smirk. “You’re cute when you’re bossy.”

Her nails slide down my back to the top of my ass, digging in as I work back down to her opening.

My palm falls to the bed to hold me up. My movement scrunches Oakley into a pretzel since I’ve still got her leg over my arm. I shove just the tip inside her, and my head falls back as I curse.

I give her a couple of deep thrusts, and my tip bounces against the bottom, despite how soaked she is.

Fuck, I probably should have prepped her a little better.

Oakley seems fine. She tosses her face into my chest since she’s not tall enough to reach my throat. The dirty little vixen bites my pec, flicking her tongue over the indents.

“You’re real fucking dangerous,” I growl. “And you feel incredible.”

“You do too.” She nods. “Please, Liam. Fuck me deep.”

“I’m going to go ahead and apologize in case I embarrass myself.” I bend down, nuzzling my cheek to hers. “It’s been a long fucking time.”

“That’s the benefit of being an alpha with an omega.” Oakley smiles against my cheek. I laugh because I had definitely forgotten about that. “Now, rut me, alpha.”

My head gets foggy as I breathe in her sweet scent, and I do exactly that. My balls slap against her ass as I work my

way in and out. My eyes meet hers, and it's like I get tunnel vision. I can feel her tits bouncing against my chest and the way her toes dig into my ass, but it's the deep connection that seems to burn between us that sends me straight into the fog.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Oakley

There's something so raw and vulnerable about the look on Liam's face as he shoves his mouth to mine. I forgot that he isn't circumcised. It feels very much the same and also kind of different. Not that I have all that much experience to compare.

Liam growls into the kiss, unhooking my leg from his forearm. I didn't mind it. It made me feel like I was stretched wide open, but the way he plasters himself to me, fucking me into the mattress, I don't know. It feels more intimate this way.

"I've never been inside someone bare before," he murmurs against my lips. "It's a whole different experience. I'm a little afraid I'm going to get addicted to you."

My silly heart flames as he pulls out, slamming back in. His palm caresses my cheek as he stares into my eyes.

The stretch is extreme, but it's the way his tip feels like it's firmly planted in my stomach that makes me beg. I ramble out pleas for his bite as he rolls his pelvis against my clit.

His weight feels delicious. He's pressing me so deeply into the mattress that it's hard to move, but I do try to work his shaft from below.

"Please knot me," I sob as everything gets fuzzy. I'm hyper focused on Liam's scent, and the warm brush of his skin against mine.

"I don't think I can like this. I'm already bottoming out. I think you need a little more prep…" He bites his lip, running his hand over the top of my head. "I wasn't patient enough."

“Alphas,” I huff, planting my feet for leverage before grinding to meet him. It still doesn’t force his knot inside me. “Use me, I need you to rut.”

“Would switching positions help?” Sullivan leans with his head on his palm, but he’s close enough that I can feel his breath fan over my arm as he speaks.

“It might,” Liam concedes as his words run together with his accent. “But I also like feeling her trapped under me.”

Sullivan nods. “How about I sit up on the pillows and you flip her over. Kind of like Marcus did the other night, but doggy style. You can climb over her back if you need to.”

“No, this is fine,” I snap. “He just needs to try harder or, in this case, fuck me deeper.”

Liam pushes himself up while I try to claw him back down. I still haven’t processed what Sullivan said. It’s surprising he might want to participate, but in a good way. I remember how miserable he looked when he said the biggest thing was that he didn’t want me to make a big deal out it.

Liam pulls me up as Sullivan spreads wide and pats his thighs.

“Let me take care of you.” Sullivan’s face transforms into the smile that makes my heart race.

“You’re sure you’re clear-headed—not at all pheromone drunk?” I whisper, pulling an arm up to cover my boobs.

Sullivan chuckles. “There are some benefits to being a beta.”

Liam shoves me forward, and my arms wrap around Sullivan’s chest. He’s wearing a white T-shirt and sweatpants.

His scent makes my nose twitch.

The overpowering smell of alpha threatens to overwhelm everything, but my nose is especially sensitive to Sullivan Hayes. Beta or not, my body always responds to Sulli.

Liam slams inside me. My pussy throbs. Initially, I’m unsure if I moan in pleasure or pain, but my system buzzes,

and pure bliss radiates in my core.

I didn't realize going through a heat would randomly make me feel drunk or high, but that's the closest I can come to explaining it. Everything outside of desire feels muted, and my body is hypersensitive.

"Back up assistance is supposed to fucking *assist*." Liam slaps his hips into mine. "I'm not exaggerating when I say it's been ages. Make sure I don't embarrass myself, mate."

Sullivan nuzzles his cheek to my head as I moan into his shoulder. "I've got you." I don't know who he's talking to, but he wraps his arms under mine, lifting my top half. "Hands on my shoulders."

I scramble to listen, and Sulli leans close, brushing my lips in a tender, but too quick kiss

"Come in to find my girlfriend being railed by my bandmate while her best friend watches." Marcus tosses himself down on the left side of the mattress. "Could be the makings of a solid telenovela." He leans over, ignoring Sullivan, and pulls my mouth to his. "Love you, princess."

"Me too," I sob as he pulls back. I'm expecting him to participate, but he grabs a pillow and appears to be going back to sleep.

My lip pokes out dramatically as I blink back tears. Why isn't he participating? I've got plenty of holes that aren't being filled!

"You're okay; we've got you." Sullivan kisses from my neck down to my collarbone.

"All right," Liam says, sliding a hand around my middle. "Since I have to do everything on my own." His thick fingers strum over my clit, but then he moves them higher. Once they're around my middle, he pulls me up completely until I'm kneeling.

My head rolls back against Liam's chest as he thrusts up directly into my g-spot. Every slam of his tip against that perfect place has me writhing. Okay, this is why Marcus backed off. It's mine and Liam's first time, and he deserves to

enjoy that as just the two of us—well, kind of. Sullivan isn't fucking me, though he does flick his tongue down my sweat slicked neck.

I gasp when Sullivan's mouth appears right in front of mine.

"I'm going to *really* kiss you this time. Is that okay?" he asks.

I nod, and he wraps his hand around my head bringing my mouth to his. This time he shoves his tongue all the way into my mouth, and it makes me even hotter. I leak slick as Liam continues working my clit, but I get super foggy when I realize Sullivan is the one pinching my nipples. His tongue teases mine, but it's the combination of their scents and the way Liam's knot teases my lower lips that makes me combust.

"Knot me," I sob. "Now, Liam!"

"Oh fuck," Liam growls as my pussy begins to tighten in waves.

It's not enough.

On the next smack of his hips against my ass I wiggle back, and his knot slips inside me.

His hands tighten on my hip and lower stomach. "What the fuck are you trying to do to me, sweetness?"

"Rut," I beg, wiggling my hips as I sob into Sullivan's cheek. I have no idea how I'm even upright at the moment. Pleasure sizzles through my system, making me jolt and tremble. "Rut, please, harder."

Sullivan wraps a hand in my hair and brings my mouth to his. "I like hearing you moan while I kiss you." He sucks on my lower lip, but I'm leaning so far into him it's difficult to feel like I'm doing the kiss justice.

His knot swells, fully locking us in place, and he curses. "I can't really thrust like this."

"Lie back," Marcus suggests, winking at me. I thought he fell back asleep, but apparently, he just wanted to be close while giving me a moment with Liam and Sullivan.

“Me?” I ask as I finally start to come down from my orgasm.

“No, Liam. Then you can ride him and Sullivan or I can help.” Marcus looks at Sullivan. “Hold her up enough that he can slide his legs out toward us. You won’t have to move at all.”

Sullivan helps by positioning his hands under my knees. I know it probably doesn’t feel great, but he lifts me enough Liam is able to stretch out.

“Grind on your alphas knot,” Marcus says, smirking. “I’d like to see your ridiculously snug cunt embarrass someone else for a change.”

“You should never be embarrassed,” I assure him, smiling. My chest heaves, but Liam grips my hips, swiveling them in a circle, and my body seems to overload with pressure and pleasure. My hands fall to his thighs, and my nails dig in deeper than I’d feel comfortable with if I was more coherent.

“Yeah, I’m going to bust,” Liam snarls, sitting up and framing my back. “That’s it, clench on my knot. Damn, dirty girl, I’m going to fucking blow.”

Sullivan keeps me upright as I wobble.

I don’t know what sends me over the edge this time, but I toss myself forward, biting his neck as I come.

“Yeah, you’re mine. I’m never letting you get away.” Liam continues murmuring soft words of praise about how perfect I am and how amazing I feel while he works me over his swelling length. He jolts inside me as Sullivan palms my head.

It’s very difficult to even process this is reality, but if this is my new normal, I’m totally here for it.

I spend a solid hour or two locked to Liam before he and Sullivan escape the nest in search of food.

Hawk joins us with the stupid contract the resort apparently needs filled out. I thought it was optional, but I'm guessing for legal purposes, they want it signed by all of us.

"No," I grunt, rolling closer to Marcus. "I don't want to."

"Little one," Hawk growls, "keep trying me and you'll get a trip over my damn knee before you know it."

"You two are quite entertaining." Marcus wraps his hand around my head, pulling me back to his purring chest. "She's obviously not interested in filling it out for herself. Maybe try asking her the questions and fill in her responses?" He kisses my forehead. "If Hawk does the majority of the work, you'll sign it, won't you, princess?"

"I guess," I grumble, but in all honesty, I don't want a contract for my heat.

It feels so impersonal.

I hate it.

I get why omegas who don't know the alphas they're matched to need one, but I trust my pack.

I go rigid at the thought, but my impulses are firmly pleased with thinking of them as mine.

They are my pack.

We're meant to be together as a unit.

My instincts are sure of it.

The longer I go without the suppressants, the easier it is to feel confident I'm right.

A slow smile crosses my face. It's a huge relief to admit it to myself.

"What was that thought?" Marcus chuckles, kissing my cheek. I shake my head against his shoulder. "All right, you better get started, that thing is fucking thick, and she's already getting warm."

Hawk grunts out the questions, and I answer them easily enough. It feels like it goes on forever as Marcus digs his

hands into my nude back. He's purring and snuggling the hell out of me as he works my sore muscles. I'm legitimately shocked no woman had the intelligence to scoop him up before I came along. Well, not long term anyway, and none of them appreciated or valued him like I do.

I end up frowning because I legitimately hate thinking of him with anyone else, especially Reba Sparks.

"Somnophilia? What is that?" Hawk sounds truly perplexed.

"Um, I don't know either," I groan as Marcus teases a hand down my middle until he's cupping my sex.

"That would be fucking when one party isn't awake." Marcus snorts, looking down at me. "That sounds worse than it is. We've done it before, like when I get you all turned on while you're still asleep and slide inside you before you're fully awake. Or if you wake up desperate for my cock and sink down on me when I'm still partially asleep. That kind of thing."

I love the sparkle in his eyes while he speaks. No, I just really love him. It's quick, but they say things move fast with alphas and omegas.

"I'm fine with that," I say as Marcus works a hand down, circling my clit with his middle finger.

"Choking, restraints—either with devices or our bodies?" Hawk asks.

"Yes and yes," I agree. My instincts are obsessed with the feeling that comes when they trap me between them. "Maybe, no to devices. I prefer it when you hold me down. Choking is a *yes, please* all the time, though."

"Such a good little fuck toy," Marcus growls, reversing his strokes on my clit.

I frown, pushing against his chest. "I like it better the other way."

"I know." He tilts my chin up even further and captures my mouth; I moan into the kiss, and he pulls back. "I'm not trying

to send you over the edge. Just keep you in a compliant princess state while Hawk finishes the million questions."

"That's smart." Hawk chuckles. "Spanking, anal, double penetration?"

"Yes, maybe, and maybe," I groan, grinding against Marcus's hand.

"Breath play, primal play—including chase scenes. Wait, what's the difference between breath play and choking?" Hawk flips back to the previous page.

"Could be that she can't breathe because she's too busy choking on your giant cock. But breath play could include water," Marcus says. "Honestly, I don't know, but I do think we're getting a little too focused on the specifics. We aren't going to do anything she doesn't want."

"Yes and yes." I nod. "And chasing sounds extremely hot, but I don't want to leave the nest right now."

Marcus slides a finger inside me as his palm grinds against my clit. My nipples ache as my pussy tries to clamp down on a knot. I let out a desperate little whine when no knot magically appears to fill me up.

"Degradation?" Hawk sounds like he's frowning, but I can't see his face. "Humiliation? Is this a BDSM contract? Did they give us the wrong one?"

"Um." My head shakes while Marcus continues working my body up. It makes it very hard to concentrate. "I don't know what the first one is."

"Yeah, you do." Marcus grins. "We've played with that one. Nothing too graphic, but a mild example would be me telling you that your needy little pussy soaked my jeans because you're a dirty girl who's desperate to be fucked." I moan, recalling that memory. It was actually a really good time. "Or the time I made you crawl to me while begging and pleading for me to fuck you. Otherwise, I told you I'd jerk off and make you watch then have you lick up my mess."

"Oh." My cheeks heat as my pussy tightens over his thick finger. I didn't mind that either. I mean, it's a little

embarrassing, but Marcus has always made me feel extremely wanted, even when he's talking mad shit. "Yeah, I'm good with that kind of stuff."

"Really?" Hawk sounds incredulous.

Marcus laughs. "You really are my goddamn perfect match."

Hawk clears his throat. "Okay, we're a little late on some of these. Fluid exchange is a *yes*, correct?"

"Yeah," I agree breathily.

"Marcus coordinated all of that for you." Hawk runs a hand down my head. "Okay, contraceptives are covered."

"Yup." Marcus starts twisting his fingers in and out in a way that makes me shake and grind to meet his hand.

"Uh, so bonding?" Hawk sounds super uncomfortable. "Should I just mark *no*?"

My heart pounds as Marcus swirls his tongue ring between his lips. He quirks an eyebrow.

"Um, not without consent," I moan as I get closer to coming all over his hand. "But not off the table."

"Are you really sure about that, princess?" Marcus taunts, adding another thick digit. "Because you won't make it out of this heat without my teeth penetrating your flesh if you don't put up a hard limit on that."

I surprise both of us, rolling over on top of him. My mouth attacks his as my pheromones flood the air, but I'm nowhere close to incoherent.

I pull back, heaving for breath, but get very close to his ear. "If biting you would make you mine, then I'd have done it by now. I really do love you. I hope you understand exactly how much."

Marcus rolls us this time. He pulls his hand from my pussy, yanks down his sweats, and thrusts deep inside me as my body spasms. The stretch of his thick length is intense, but those piercings are like pure heaven for my vagina. Ten out of

ten—would recommend every woman goes for a guy with a ladder at least once in her life.

"I really hope you're not lost to the fog, otherwise you'll be really fucking pissed at me once your heat is over." Marcus bumps my face to the side and strikes as he slams his knot inside me.

The tingling ache of his teeth digging into my throat takes my breath away. Or maybe that's the unreal feeling of him locking us together. It could also be the way his emotions slide into the bond.

My heart pounds as I clutch him tightly to me. I sob out something incoherent, but I'm actually really freaking happy. I pray he can feel that as I tremble under him. Tears burn in my eyes, but I'm completely content.

"Motherfucker, I get sidetracked for thirty damn seconds with an internet search and…" Hawk rants but pauses. "You know what? Nevermind. Congratulations. Oakley, you're going to need to sign this when you're clear." He crawls out of the nest as Marcus licks over his bite. "Otherwise, it puts the resort and Marcus in a bad spot."

"I will," I choke out.

"I love you so fucking much," Marcus growls against my skin. "And I'm going to spend the rest of my life making sure that I deserve you." Tears leak down my cheeks as I clutch his shoulders. I can feel the sincerity in his words, and it takes my breath away.

I've never felt the type of connection that radiates in the bond between us. It's humbling perfection.

"You already do," I assure him. "But me too. I'll always take care of you in return."

"Everything just changed." Marcus brushes his fingers over my cheek.

I nod. "Yeah." My lower stomach aches with a wave of cramps that come out of nowhere. I groan, bending toward him. "Not to ruin the sweet moment, but I really need to come. I'm so hot."

Marcus slides a hand under my back, pulling me up until we're chest to chest. It takes some maneuvering because I don't know what to do with my legs. We can't move too much since we're locked together, but eventually, I end up squatting over him while he kneels with his ass on his heels.

"Kiss me while you grind on my knot," he murmurs, palming the back of my head. I do exactly that as my heart races. His emotions flood the bond, and I'm sure mine do in return. Feeling his pleasure combined with mine sends me over the edge. "Come for me, pretty girl."

"I am," I sob, unsure if it comes out clearly enough to understand.

Marcus pulls me even closer, rolling his pelvis so it teases my clit. Terribly embarrassing sobs and demands spill from my lips.

"That's it, princess, clench your tiny cunt around me while I fuck you into oblivion." His shaft swells as his knot pulses, and he comes inside me, holding me to him like he'll never let me escape.

I start to come down before he does, and I tilt my head to stare up at his gorgeous face. He's so damn beautiful, and he's absolutely mine. I tremble against his chest as he palms the back of my head and brushes his lips over my forehead.

It's absolutely a perfect moment in time.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Sullivan

I’m a jealous asshole.

I can admit that.

Over the last day and a half, I’ve seen Marcus and Liam fuck Oakley in a smorgasbord of positions I didn’t even know existed. I’ve been tempted to do more than just watch, but I have serious doubts that I’d be able to please her and not just because of my designation.

Hawk has participated, but he hasn’t had full-blown sex with her. Although, I’m fairly sure that’s because he’s afraid of hurting her. I don’t know for sure since I’m not in his head, but that’s just the impression I’ve picked up on. Every time Oakley tries to pounce on him, he manages to distract her with his hands or mouth.

Speaking of Hawk, he pulls me into the hallway while the other three catnap. “Jamen has called a ton of times. I’m not sure if it’s important, but I’m going to give him a call back while they’re asleep.”

“Okay.” I take a step back toward the nest. I’m not sure why he needed to pull me out here to tell me that.

“She hasn’t had anything to eat in almost twelve hours.” Hawk nods toward the living room. “I ordered food and it’s waiting.”

I frown even harder.

Does omega perfume rot alpha brain that thoroughly, or am I just slow because I haven’t slept more than two hours in a

row?

“You want me to wake them up to eat?” I ask, scratching my jaw.

“I thought maybe you’d like some one-on-one time with Oakley.” He shrugs. “If not, no worries. I’ll wake her up when I get done making my calls. She’s probably going to be moody anyway. Heats shut down most unnecessary physical responses, but the packet of papers said she shouldn’t go longer than twelve hours without eating something, even if it’s a small amount.”

“Got it,” I agree, glancing back toward the door to the nest. “I’ll handle it.”

Hawk nods, meandering down the hallway toward the main bedroom. I head back into the nest and climb the stairs. There’s a bathroom off to the right, but Hawk was right. Oakley has hardly needed to visit it. I’m guessing that’s because she’s rarely eating and drinking.

Liam and Marcus are passed out on either side of Oakley. It takes some creative thinking to figure out how I’m going to get to her. I take a page from Hawk’s playbook and walk up the carpeted side and lean over Liam to scoop Oakley up. I grunt as I stand, and her eyes flutter open.

A sleepy smile covers her face. My heart races as my cock perks up. She’s so freaking beautiful, but it’s the weird yearning in my chest to make her mine that takes my breath away.

“Hey,” she says, pulling a hand up to run through my beard. I haven’t bothered trimming it lately, and I’m starting to look like a damn mountain man. “You’re extra furry. I really like it.”

I chuckle, apparently I’ll be keeping the full beard.

“It seems like you’re settled for the moment. How do you feel about eating a little something for me?” I ask, clearing my throat. It’s so weird to carry her around with a half-hard, bouncing cock. I want her in a way that’s difficult to explain, but I don’t know how to make that a reality and it’s frustrating.

She frowns, and my hand tightens on her hip in warning. I'm not going to threaten her with a spanking like Hawk would, but I'm also not opposed to giving her plump ass a swat or two.

I chuckle at the thought.

"Okay," she agrees, resting her head against my arm. "But no jalapeños."

I snort, nuzzling my cheek to the top of her head. She smells like Liam and Marcus, but it doesn't bother me. I'm more thrown for a loop that she and Marcus bonded. On the other hand, I should have seen it coming a mile away. Marcus is getting closer to thirty.

I'm not surprised he jumped at the chance to claim something good.

I don't even blame him.

I wouldn't call us friends or anything, but I can acknowledge that we have a common goal. That goal is keeping Oakley safe and content. We also share a love-hate relationship with the music industry. Although, I'll be the first to admit Marcus's reasons are valid even more so than my own.

I get us settled on the couch and realize Oakley is only in a T-shirt. I think it's Liam's based on the scent, but their smells are so blended that it's practically impossible to tell. She wiggles around my lap until her knees rest on either side of my thighs. I'm sure she can feel my length bumping against her ass, but she doesn't mention it.

I yank the small throw blanket off the back of the sofa, wrapping it around her before stretching forward to grab one of the trays off the coffee table. It has a sandwich and fries.

"Does this work?" I ask, nodding to the plate.

"Yeah, as long as it's turkey." She snuggles deeper into my shoulder.

I pull the top off, and it's indeed a turkey club. I keep my left arm around her lower back, letting my hand clutch her hip

to help her feel secure. I'm sure it's difficult being out of the nest, but that place smells like a straight up fuck fest. I can't imagine it would be sanitary to eat in there.

Oakley grumbles, but she nibbles from the food I hold out. She runs her fingers over my chest, but she seems very pouty.

This reminds me a little of when Keith Foster broke up with her the summer before senior year. She was heartbroken and didn't leave her room for days. It wasn't until I showed up to check on her that her dad finally realized he hadn't seen her recently.

She was all full-blown pouty omega then too. She made me snuggle in her room for days until my mom showed up to give us the most awkward safe sex talk in the history of existence. It's funny looking back on it, but it still annoys me how much her father shut down when her mom died. I think it was even more traumatic because they didn't have a pack to rely on for support. It's rare for a single alpha to bond an omega, but I don't let myself wonder how they managed it. I'd rather not imagine any of our parents fucking.

Oakley continues nibbling at the food, but it's clear she's not truly hungry. I help her finish off the last few bites of the sandwich she ate and offer up a few french fries. I give her another drink and set it back on the table.

Having her this close makes me extremely warm and fuzzy inside. I frown, realizing some of it may be literal heat wafting off her.

Oakley grunts, running her fingers over my neck. I'm shirtless, but I do have on a pair of thin sweats. She's been extremely hot, which I know is normal, but it was kind of cold when they jacked the AC down to practically frigid.

"Is it that hard to be out of your nest?" I offer her a drink. She takes a quick swig and snuggles back close to my armpit.

"No, I don't know." She shrugs. "But I am full."

"That's okay. I feel better knowing you had something." My hand runs up and down her back.

“You know I love you, right Sullivan?” She pushes up on her knees but buries her face in my throat. “Yes, as my best friend, but I’m also attracted to you. I have romantic feelings for you.”

“I feel the same way,” I agree as she nuzzles closer. My stomach bubbles with butterflies as she kisses my hairy jaw.

“Did you feel uncomfortable at all with everything? I mean, you stayed in the nest pretty much the whole time.” She shrugs, but her head tilts until I can see her face. “Did you like it?”

A low groan escapes at the thought. I more than liked it. I was fucking entranced and jealous as hell half the time because I wanted to be in their place.

“I did,” I say as her warm breath fans over my neck.

“I usually don’t like being the aggressor, but I was wondering. Are we dating or just friends?” Her fingers run through my beard, and she tenderly tilts my face down to hers.

“I’m good with whatever you are,” I assure her.

“So, if we’re dating, that’s new.” She pushes up on her knees, brushing her lips over the corner of my mouth. My dick jumps under her as my hands tighten on her hips. “You feel so familiar it’s hard to convince my system that we—”

I cut her off by slamming my mouth to hers. She gasps as I lick at the seam of her lips. Her hips swivel, grinding over my thickening length. I might not be an alpha, but her scent still sends a pulse to my shaft. I don’t think it’s a biological reaction to her heat either. I’m fairly sure it’s just that I’m head over dick in love with her.

“I want you in a way I’ve never wanted anyone,” I whisper against her lips as we pull back, heaving deep breaths.

“I want you too,” she agrees, nodding against my cheek. “So much.”

“How utterly romantic.” Liam swaggers out in a pair of basketball shorts and nothing else. “Are you two finally getting ’round to the good stuff?”

Oakley shivers, staring up at me from under her lashes. “Are we?”

Well, I thought that’s where we were headed before Liam butted in.

My hand moves to cradle her neck as my thumb brushes over her plump lower lip. “I thought so, but I enjoy everything with you. There’s no rush.”

“I’ve nearly thrown up multiple times recently. You’re all entirely too sweet.” Liam tosses a bottle of lube, kneeling behind Oakley. I release my hold on her neck as he pulls the blanket and tosses it aside. “Shall I help keep things moving along, sweetness?” He pulls her hair to the side, kissing her neck.

I’m very tempted to glare, but I can accept when I’m in over my head. It might not hurt to have backup. He’s clearly more experienced than I am. Having help may prevent me from embarrassing myself.

Oakley trembles as his hands fall to the bottom of the shirt she’s wearing. Her eyes meet mine and she shrugs a lithe shoulder.

“I’m good with that,” I assure her.

“Of course you are.” Liam yanks her shirt off, throwing it into the chair next to us. “You’ve got no clue what to do.” He winks. “Luckily, I do.”

Oakley’s chest rises and falls rapidly. It makes her tits bounce as her nipples tighten before my very eyes. My hands are drawn to the curve of her waist and up to cup her breasts.

“I’d say he’s officially mesmerized.” Liam chuckles, and my eyes fly up to see him kissing over her bare shoulder. “Stretch up on your knees and kiss him.” My heart thumps violently as she complies. Her tongue dances around mine, and my cock jumps. It just so happens, Liam has switched to fingering her, and he chuckles in response. “Shit, I forgot a step. Let’s help with these.” His hands land on the top of my sweats.

I swallow thickly as he pulls them down until my cock bounces out. He even helpfully removes them from my legs, but I'm still focused on the feeling of Oakley sliding her slippery sex over my shaft. Her hands land on my shoulders as she swivels and grinds.

"Holy fuck," I hiss as my eyes fall shut.

The calloused hand that grips my cock leads me to believe it's not Oakley that points my tip directly toward her hole. I don't care who it is as she sinks down. Every bit of air evaporates from my lungs. That was fast. I don't think I'm even fully hard, but as she rises and falls, I get there really fucking quick.

"Never let me hear you say that I'm not a good friend." Liam chuckles.

"Yeah," I agree, but even that comes out as a groan. "Thanks."

Oakley whimpers, and the sound makes my length jerk inside her as she wiggles her way down further. She's incredibly snug. I've got nothing to compare it to outside of my fist, but I can't imagine anything in the world feeling more perfect than she does. I ramble that against the side of her head as she rises and falls.

Liam helps lift her before dropping her with more force. My hands dig into her waist as all the air seems to evaporate from my lungs.

"Holy shit," I groan. "You're so wet and so tight. Jesus Christ, you're perfect."

"I love you, Sullivan." She shoves her mouth to mine for a filthy kiss that makes my cock pulse inside her. It's difficult to know what to focus on as her walls clench around me at the same time her tongue teases mine.

"How do you feel about letting me in on this threesome action?" Liam chuckles. He doesn't wait for a response, and I curse as he slides two fingers inside Oakley. They tease against my shaft when I'm already precariously close to embarrassing myself.

Oakley nods. “I’m still not convinced you’ve prepped me enough for anal.”

“Oh, sweetness.” He chuckles. “It’s not your ass I want to fuck. Not this time anyway. We’ve got to get you ready for Hawk’s monster cock. I figure if you can take us simultaneously then the big guy will have to admit he’s being overly cautious.” He grabs the lube, flipping the click top before squirting a generous amount. I can’t see it, but that’s what it sounds like. I stretch around Oakley, and sure enough, he’s got his cock out and he’s working it. His eyes meet mine and he grins. “Are you good with this?”

“Yeah.”

At the same time Oakley says, “Ohmigod, yes, please!”

“Such an easy to please little omega.” Liam smirks. “Why don’t you really bounce on his cock. I imagine he’s desperately trying to hold back long enough to make this a pleasurable experience, but his cum will only help make you slicker.”

My head falls back as Oakley does exactly that. She sobs against my chest, begging for a bite I can’t give, but fuck me, I really wish I could. My hand slides up to cradle the back of her head. The bouncing is nice, but it gets too much to handle when she takes every inch and grinds. It’s like her pubic bone, or fuck if I know, but something rubs against the base of my shaft.

My cock thickens, getting even harder with each swivel of her hips. She’s so slick my entire pelvis and balls are coated, and it makes everything even hotter. Oakley’s warm breath puffs over my throat as she buries her face against my skin.

Liam snorts. “Huh, we both got lucky. I forgot to tease her clit, but I think she’s been grinding it against your pelvis. Are you going to come all over his cock?”

Oakley nods frantically. I’m there too, and I tilt my head down, shoving my mouth to hers. It’s awkward until she pushes up to meet me. Liam is still working his fingers in and out of her, but it’s the rolling waves of her pussy contracting

over my cock that send me tumbling over the edge. My balls get tight as my cock swells, and it's only another grind or two of her hips before I freeze, coming hard.

Oakley sobs into my mouth, and I briefly worry I'm holding her too tightly. It's not like I can do anything besides jolt, filling her with my cum.

"That's a good omega, ride him through it," Liam coos. My eyes pop open as I start to come down, and I'm shocked to see him kissing his way down her back. Her tits bounce against my chest as she begs through the last waves of her orgasm. "You good, can I try to slide inside you now?"

"Yeah," Oakley agrees.

"You're super fucking wet, but I bathed in the lube just to be sure since you're mind-bogglingly tight to begin with." Liam laughs, pulling his fingers free. He wraps that hand around to tease Oakley's clit. His cock slides against mine and then he's thrusting.

Oakley gasps so loudly that I freeze, tilting my head down to study her face. Liam stills and catches my eyes.

"What? Don't stop now!" our little omega snaps.

"Yes ma'am," Liam growls, pushing even deeper inside her. My dick is still hard despite the fact I just came, but I'll chalk it up to omega pheromones and the fact I want Oakley more than anything.

She nuzzles close to my throat as Liam works in and out of her. I'm not sure why it took me so long to realize I can thrust up into her, even while sitting, if I use my feet as leverage. It's unreal feeling her body stretch over both of our cocks. The sounds she makes spur me on.

Liam kisses over her shoulder, and I get a little concerned when I realize exactly how hazy his eyes are. Oakley begins to feel even warmer than she has. That's also alarming, but it's really hard to focus as she moans and begs.

"I really wish I could bite you," she murmurs, kissing my cheek. "If it would make you mine then I would."

Liam growls.

Oakley's body physically responds. She shivers and her cunt leaks slick. Her lavender scent is so potent in the air that it's making me a little fuzzy. Oakley whimpers, begging to be knotted and demanding to be bitten.

"Do you mean that, sweetness?" Liam growls, slamming deep.

Oakley begins to contract in rhythmic waves. "Yes*yes*yes!"

Liam's head tilts predatorily, and my heart sinks. I can't decide if she knows she just agreed to a permanent claiming bite. Liam pulls her hair to the side and moves to strike the top of her shoulder.

"Whoa, hey, wait a minute," I snap, sliding my wrist between them. Un-fucking-fortunately, he's too far gone to stop in time. His teeth break the skin on my inner wrist on my right arm. His eyes pop open, widening with shock. There's a split second of time where my system understands that I can refuse the bond. I don't know much, but I do know a rejected bite turns black and it's excruciatingly painful to the alpha.

I blow out a heavy breath and accept the link. I've always known I wanted a bond with Oakley, and the opportunity just presented itself. A millisecond later, Liam also accepts the connection, and he slides into my senses.

Liam licks over the bite, giving me a purely bewildered look. "Shit, mate."

"Yeah," I grunt.

"You stole my bite," Oakley pouts, slapping my chest. "That was totally meant for me."

I snort as my head falls back.

"No, sweetness. He was trying to save my ass." He thrusts his pelvis deeper into her backside. "And yours in case you weren't quite ready for a bond with me just yet." He meets my eyes. "Thank you."

I give him a ragged nod.

“Now I just feel left out,” Oakley grumbles. “My turn next.”

“Oh, fuck yeah,” Liam growls.

The next thing I know, he’s bumping my arm away and striking her shoulder. The first tingles I get are pulses of Liam’s excitement followed quickly by Oakley’s pure bliss. From the wild contracting going on in her pussy, I think it’s safe to say it sends her over the edge. She trembles, whimpering and tightening over both our lengths.

Liam’s eyes meet mine over her shoulder, and he winks, looking extremely smug. The bond radiates with a strange warmth, like he’s been desperate to be accepted and find somewhere to belong.

My head tilts as I watch him, but Oakley’s pleasure is too much. I come before I have the chance to overthink why that is.

Oakley’s warm breath puffs out as she scratches my chest, and she gets so loud I’m a little afraid security will make a visit to our suite.

“Shh, you’re okay,” I groan, pulling my hand up to tilt her mouth to mine. “We’ve got you.” It’s nearly impossible to focus as Liam fucks her on my cock through his orgasm.

It’s pretty goddamn clear everything just changed. It’s pack life from here on out. A slow smile spreads across my face as I catch my breath. I’m totally okay with that. I get to keep Oakley forever.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Oakley

My entire body trembles as the bond settles into place. Liam carefully pulls out of me, but he frames my back, leaning close as he pulls my mouth to his. The angle is a bit uncomfortable, but I'm so blissed out on the bond that I barely notice the crick in my neck.

Sullivan's chest heaves as he grins down at me. I freaking love that look on his face.

"It's been a solid few days of fucking," Liam says. "Do you think you can handle being out of the nest a little longer?"

I frown, but nod. I am super sticky and well-used, which makes me oddly satisfied. There's only one member left for me to claim and our pack will be complete. I don't care if Hawk has to bite me to make it happen. I'm claiming my alpha before this heat is over.

Sullivan snorts. "It's wild being able to tell what you're thinking about." He palms the back of my head. "I'm fairly sure Hawk would jump at the chance if you want to shower with him."

"I don't hate that idea, but I also don't want to abandon the two of you right after bonding," I admit, chewing at my lower lip.

"Neither of us will feel cast aside." Liam chuckles, nuzzling his cheek to mine from behind.

There's a loud echoing knock on the door leading to the suite, and I squeak in response.

“Go find Hawk,” Sullivan says, lifting me off his cock. “We’ll handle whatever it is.”

Sullivan helps me stand as Liam looks around, I’m guessing checking for their discarded clothing. I give Sullivan a quick kiss before bolting down the hallway to find Hawk.

This time Hawk and I share a delicious shower that has my hormones pumping. He shampoos and conditions my hair. It’s been days since our bath, and I have no doubt I was looking rough.

There’s something about the way he teases and tantalizes every inch of my skin as he works in the soap that makes it nearly impossible to keep from pouncing on him. He kneels, lifting my right foot and bringing it to rest on his thigh. My hands fall to rest on his shoulders as he soaps my ankle all the way down to my toes.

I giggle, squirming as he gently lifts my foot and soaps the bottom. “That’s so weird.”

Hawk peers up at me and his blond hair falls over his forehead. “Does it tickle?”

I nod, biting my lip. “This foot is actually more ticklish than the other.”

A slow smile spreads across his face, making my heart race.

“Sorry, little one. We’ve got to make sure you’re nice and clean so I can lick every inch of your body.” He cups water in his hands, rinsing away the soap on the bottom of my foot. I think he’s ensuring I won’t slip. He carefully puts my foot back on the floor, and his huge hands land on my hips.

I catch sight of his massive cock, and a sharp breath shudders out. He’s huge, and I’m not trying to be dramatic about it, but it’s a little intimidating. Not so frightening that I won’t be trying to climb on it in the *very* near future, but it’s without a doubt the biggest dick I’ve ever seen.

It makes sense why he's been constantly focused on taking things slow, but I just managed Sullivan and Liam at once. Which I never thought would be a bragging point of my life, but I am really damn pleased with myself. Nearly scalding water beats down over my front and back, rinsing away any remnants of the soap.

My head tilts and I blink, watching Hawk watch me. My fingers seem to have a mind of their own as I run them through his thick beard.

"You should sit on the bench and let me clean you up." I grin.

"I'm fairly sure you watched me scrub myself while doing you." Hawk grins, moving to stand. My hand falls from his jaw to run over his chest.

"Yeah, but…" My brain stops working as he smiles dangerously. I'm surrounded by devastatingly handsome men. It's really not fair how attractive he is. It makes it hard to form a coherent argument. "Just sit on the damn bench."

He quirks an eyebrow, sliding his hands around to cup my ass. One second I'm standing, and the next, Hawk is sitting on the bench with me kneeling over him. I stretch up and kiss him, and just as we pull back for air, I slide down between his knees.

I'm guessing the move surprises him because Hawk makes a grab for my arms, but I gently slap them away. My hands land on his muscular thighs as I grin up at him. The carnal look on his face has me rubbing my thighs together, desperately trying to find some friction for my aching clit. My right hand wraps around the base of his cock. His knot is already slightly swollen, and it pulses as my fingers tease over it.

My tits bounce with how strongly my chest heaves. My tongue flicks out, circling the crown, and my mouth waters. Despite the shower, his scent is incredibly potent.

"Aww fuck," Hawk hisses as I flick my tongue over the weeping slit. He's so hard, and the crown of his cock is

incredibly thick. Not that his length isn't, but he's definitely got a mushroom head. My tongue runs along the ridge, following it around, and he goes rigid. "That feels fucking amazing."

I grin, preening at his words, and work my way deeper. I'm not the most experienced with giving blow jobs, but I did get some extra practice with Marcus and Liam the last few days. My nostrils flare as Hawk's tip dribbles pre-cum as I work my way toward his crown. It hits my tongue, and my thighs clench. As I get super foggy, a pulse of heat travels through my entire body.

Hawk growls, making a variety of sounds from completely pleased to possibly pained. He hits the back of my throat, and I'm not even halfway down his length. I was kind of able to relax my throat and let Liam and Marcus go deeper, but Hawk's crown makes that feel impossible. I wrap one hand around his knot as the other works the remaining inches of his shaft. I do my best to blow his mind. He's made me come more times than I can count, or even accurately remember.

"Little one," he growls. It sounds like a warning, but I double down my efforts, and he gets even bigger and thicker. "I'm going to come if you don't…" His words trail off as I hollow my cheeks, making sure my lips catch on his crown and my tongue licks over the slit. "You want me to come down your throat? Hmm?"

I nod, diving deeper on the next descent. My tongue flicks over his length, and I can feel actual ridges that I think might be his veins. My pussy aches with an empty feeling.

Hawk wraps his hand in my hair. "Are you good with me taking over?" I nod. "I'm going to flood your mouth and you're going to swallow every drop. Aren't you, little one?"

"Yes," I gasp, drooling all over his length as he truly does take over. He pushes off the floor and slams me deeper. It's actually really freaking hot to feel like he's using me to get himself off. I yank a hand off his cock and bring it down to tease my clit.

“That’s it. Work your pussy. Make sure you’re nice and slick for me. Once I come down your throat, I’m going to take your cunt,” Hawk growls as his shaft grows even larger. “I’m going to stretch you out over me and own you.”

I moan, teasing my clit.

Warm water beats down on my back. I’m not sure if it’s running out of hot or if I’m getting warmer.

Hawk curses as his cock throbs in my mouth. He doesn’t shove as deep as he has been, and that’s probably a good thing because I don’t know how I’d handle the volume of cum he spills all over my tongue. He snarls, tenderly running his fingers over my cheek as he jolts.

Hot spurts of cum fill my mouth as my tongue flicks over his tip. He tastes salty and delicious. He hardly gives me a second to enjoy tasting him before he scoops me up, bringing me to rest in his lap.

His hands seem to span my entire ass from my ass cheeks to my lower back, but it’s the way his cock jumps as it’s trapped between us that has me shivering. He kisses me, shoving his tongue into my mouth, and a growl rattles out of his chest.

The lips of my sex perfectly cup the base of his cock just above his knot. My left hand falls to his shoulder as I slide my right down to tease his length. The bench is perfectly positioned so water cascades down my back and over my arms, splattering against the few blondish-brown hairs on Hawk’s chest.

Starting at the base of his cock, I circle my palm around him, pushing him further between my pussy lips. He wraps a hand around my neck, pulling my mouth to his as the fingers of his other dig into my hip. The low, feral growl he releases makes my nipples tighten. I’m addicted to the frantic way he shoves his mouth to mine.

His cock jumps in my hold as he consumes me with passionate kisses that make my nipples and core ache. I don’t

know why he's so worried about hurting me. Omegas are extremely resilient.

I push up on my knees while his teeth rake over my lower lip. My hold on his cock allows me to position him at my opening, and I sink down before I can talk myself out of it.

"Fuck, little one," Hawk growls, sucking on my bottom lip. I'm still holding the bottom of his shaft as I rise and fall again. I don't get as far as I'd like because the stretch is unreal. I know it's possible though, thanks to Liam and Sullivan, so I suck in a deep breath and relax my body. "Are you okay?"

I nod against his cheek as he palms the back of my head. "So good."

"You're such a good little omega." He nuzzles his cheek to mine and plants his hands on my hips. On the next rise and fall, he helps pull me down. It feels like the tip of his cock ends up buried near my belly button. It's almost too intense for a second or two, but the aching pain quickly transforms into mind boggling pleasure. I release his knot as I fall against his chest. "Fuck, Oakley. Are you okay?"

"Okay? I'm great," I moan, nodding wildly against his chest. "So damn good."

"Thank God," he groans as my hips wiggle from side to side. He wraps a forearm under my ass and stands before pulling my feet around his ass. "Let's continue this in bed."

I definitely approve of that plan.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Hawk

I'm going to claim my omega. My teeth will be digging into her supple flesh before I come again. I know I'm teetering on the edge of going feral. I can admit that. The fact my head is filled with pure alpha fog makes denying it impossible.

We make it out of the shower, and I shove Oakley against the wall, grabbing the towel from the holder. I'm still buried deep inside her slick, warm heat. I do a shitty job of drying the both of us. Normally, I'd be ashamed of that, but Oakley claws at my lower back, whining and begging me to hurry. My forearm slides under her ass as I pull her off the wall.

I'm not far enough gone to forget safety, and we're both still slick from the shower. I toss the towel down and lie Oakley's head on it. My forearms hit the bed on either side of her head, and she gives me a killer smile that makes my heart beat funny.

"Are you going to claim me, Mr. Hawkins?" she asks, tilting her head and clenching her pussy.

"Oh, little one. I can assure you, you're already mine," I growl, capturing her mouth. She feels so tiny under my massive frame that it does give me pause, but she wiggles her hips like she's aching for more of me. Her pussy flutters around me in a way that makes it impossible not to pull out and slam back in. "Fuck me."

"Just like that," she begs against my lips.

It’s hard to meet in the middle, but we manage. My hand frames the top of her head as I give her a final peck and pull back to kneel. It makes it easier to measure my strokes. I couldn’t care less if I can never bury my knot inside her. This is enough. It might have to be considering she’s barely taking half my length.

Alpha and omega biology is supposed to fit together, but Oakley is relatively petite, and I’m really fucking not.

“Hawk,” she whines, thrashing around under me. A low groan escapes as she slides a hand down to work her own clit. “I ache. I need you to rut into me!” Her head bobbles up and down as her teeth dig into her lower lip.

I pull out until only the head is left inside her and slide my forearms under her thighs before testing just how far I can slam home. The fact my cock is wet with her slick doesn’t help my composure in the least, but feeling her skin, it’s clear she’s warmer than she was. I repeat the process as I work in and out of her tight little cunt. My tip bounces against the bottom, and the feeling makes my chest heave.

“Can I bring this up here?” I ask, maneuvering one of her ankles to rest on my shoulder.

“Yes,” she moans. Now that she’s a little more stretched open I work on figuring out the best way to make her scream. I’m torn between watching the faces she makes and staring at where I disappear inside her. “You’re not rutting!”

“Uh-oh,” Marcus says, tossing himself down on the bed at Oakley’s side. “You’re not doing your job, alpha. Your omega is about to bring out the claws.”

I snarl, baring my teeth at him like a wild animal. Or in this case, a feral alpha. “Fuck off, Gaffney.”

I’m the only one without a bond, and having him this close sends my hackles up.

Marcus runs his fingers over Oakley’s cheek. “She’s not going to break, but she might have a fit if you don’t settle the wave of cramps she’s currently experiencing.” He’s in a pair of low-slung sweats and he does a sit up. “Try doggy style.”

I glare because I want to watch her face. He grabs her arm, pulling her up while I'm still inside her. It causes her leg to fall from resting on my shoulder.

Marcus gives my chest a shove and I roll, pulling Oakley to rest on my lap.

"Oh fuck," she hisses, bouncing on her knees. "This is good. I like this."

"That's what we call compromise." Marcus chuckles, pinching her nipple. "And would you look at that? She's almost able to take your knot." He moves to kneel near my knees as his hands land on her hips. He helps yank her down, and the feeling is almost too much.

All the air leaves my lungs as she rises and falls the next time. My feet plant on the mattress, and I fuck up into her as she grinds down. My slightly swollen knot slips inside her body.

I sit up and she falls to rest against my chest, which is now heaving like I've run a marathon. Holy fuck, that's unbelievably intense.

"Are you okay?" I finally choke out.

Her eyes are hazy, but she grins. "I told you I could do it."

"You sure did," I murmur, kissing her forehead.

Marcus slides a hand between us, teasing her clit as my knot swells, locking us together.

Oakley's body ripples around me in a way that triggers my impulse to rut. I don't worry about Marcus as I plant my hands on her hips, helping her grind on my knot. The fog slips in as I dip my mouth to hers. The naughty little omega digs her teeth into my lower lip as she swivels her hips and instinct takes over. She can't form a bond, but I sure as fuck can.

My hand slides up her back and into her hair as I take over the kiss. Oakley moans long and loud at the bite of pain as I yank the base of her skull. Her pussy clenches and releases, milking in waves, as she whines into the kiss, and my teeth dig into the soft flesh of her lower lip.

Everything else disappears as she slides into my senses. Her pleasure hits first, but immediately after is her intense excitement and satisfaction at completing her pack. I lick over the bite as my knot throbs. I've never come locked inside someone. Oakley pulls back to catch her breath, and I use my feet as leverage to fuck up into her as much as I can.

Her tight little hole clenches in a way that has me bursting before I can get my bearings. I growl, rutting and helping Oakley grind over me.

Marcus's low chuckle fills the air as I come, filling our little omega with hot jets of my cum. Oakley falls into my chest, biting my pec and running her tongue over the indents. An intense wave of euphoria hits me square in the chest, and as I finally start to come down from my orgasm, I can pick out lingering hints of the guys' emotions and thoughts in the bond. It's fucking insane, but the fog is a little too thick for rational thought at the moment.

Oakley begins to grind on my cock, and that's about the last coherent thought I have for hours.

The next two days are filled with consistent waves of Oakley's heat. She's extremely snuggly and not prepared at all for the type of cramps that come early in the morning on the third day.

She grunts, trying to successfully disentangle from me and Sullivan. She wraps an arm around her bare middle, giving me a look of pure horror when I sit up.

"No, go back to sleep," she groans, jabbing a finger in my direction.

Heats are filled with lots of cuddling and fucking, but if there's no conception, then nature fills the next few days with what the pamphlet described as menstruation for a female beta.

I knew it was coming, considering she has a birth control implant.

“Did the post heat cramps start?” I ask, pulling her arm down.

She nods. “God, this sucks.”

I frown. It sure does seem like women get stuck with a lot of the more uncomfortable situations, especially regarding procreation or the lack thereof.

I roll to kneel, scoop her up despite her complaints, and aim for the bathroom. My hand tightens on her hip as she tells me I can just drop her off so that I can get back to sleep.

“Sorry, little one. Now that I’m more awake, I can pick up your pain in the bond.” I nuzzle my cheek to the top of her head. “Let me do my job and take care of you.”

“Okay,” she grunts, nuzzling close to my chest. “Thank you. I love you.” She goes still at the admission, but my heart races like a drum.

I tilt my head down, kissing her cheek. “I love you too, sweetheart.”

I only wish I could help her feel better, but for now I’ll have to settle for being here for her.

“Why are you in the dinosaur onesie I bought for *Oakley*?” I snort, trying to glare at Liam. It’s pretty much impossible to keep a straight face when he spins around shaking his ass in the ridiculous T-Rex outfit that rides up his skinny legs because he’s way too tall for it.

“It was the only way we could get the princess into the triceratops costume.” Marcus laughs, swiping a hand over his face. “And yes, it’s as adorable as it sounds.” He glances around at the boxes lining the coffee table and floor. “Should we have Sullivan bring her out?”

“Yeah, we’re good to go,” I assure him.

Liam grabs the giant stuffed kraken that I’m still not sure who it’s from and does some awkward thrusting that has me

questioning how I ended up stuck with these guys for life.

“The omega monster has arrived,” Sullivan says, toting a very pouty omega into the room. She’s got her short little arms crossed over her chest and the hood on her triceratops onesie has slid down mostly covering the top of her face.

“Rawr,” she says in a tone that’s less than jovial.

“You’re the only omega I’ve ever seen pout about being given courting gifts.” Marcus heads over, bending close to give her a kiss before sitting on the edge of the coffee table.

“I didn’t really want to leave the nest,” she grumbles as Sullivan takes a seat on the couch. “But more than anything, we’re already bonded. You guys didn’t have to buy me courting gifts. I feel guilty I don’t have anything for you.”

“You’ve always been really bad at accepting gifts,” Sullivan says, nodding at the closest pile.

“Yeah, princess.” Marcus laughs. “The entire point is that you’re the gift.”

“Oh,” Oakley whispers, blinking huge blue eyes. “Well then, pamper away.”

I laugh.

She’s really goddamn cute.

“It was hard getting everything ordered and delivered on such short notice.” Liam drops the giant stuffed octopus at her side on the couch. “So have pity on us.”

Oakley immediately plucks it up, pulling it into her lap. “It’s super soft and squishy!”

“Indeed.” Liam chuckles, tossing himself over the back of the couch and into the seat next to Oakley and Sullivan. “I figured if ever you’re in need of a cuddle, he can simulate all of our arms at once.”

“That’s very sweet.” Oakley squishes the giant thing between her side and the couch, leaning over to kiss Liam.

Once they pull back, Marcus hands Sullivan the box from him. Liam grabs the giant stuffed animal and uses it as a

pillow with the tentacles thrown over his chest.

“This one is from me,” Sullivan says, dropping the small box in Oakley’s lap.

She tosses her triceratops hood back, looking at him over her shoulder. “I love it because it’s from you. You know I love you, Sullivan.”

“I love you too,” he agrees, bending his head so that they can share a quick kiss. Marcus and Liam, in true teenager fashion, give them background kissing noises.

Marcus leans over, removing the lid for Oakley. She and Sullivan pull back, and she squeaks. “You got me a new strap for my Gibson?”

“I did,” Sullivan says. “Since I can’t do anything to help with your tiny hands.”

“I happen to like those tiny hands,” Liam says, nodding at Marcus. “Go on, you can be next.”

Marcus glances at me, but I shake my head.

“All right.” Marcus shrugs, grabbing the bag from behind him on the coffee table and chucking it at Oakley. “It’s not like we were able to go all out or anything.”

“I’m sure I’ll love it,” Oakley says, smiling brightly. The smile quickly fades as she pulls out a zip up sweater. She yanks it to her nose and frowns. “It doesn’t smell like you.”

Marcus snorts. “I know how you like to swipe mine, so I bought you your own in a more reasonable size. You’ll be able to wear the finger holes without it constantly slouching and falling down.” Oakley gives him a polite smile, but I don’t think any of us buy it. “If you’d rather keep stealing mine I’m fine with that.” Marcus stretches out his arms and Oakley catapults herself into his chest.

“Thank you. I love you,” Oakley whispers, blinking up at him.

“I love you too, princess,” he murmurs. They share a kiss as my palms start sweating. I’m in the hot seat now. Marcus helps her stand and she comes over to me.

“We got you a few more things from all of us—” I start.

“I want the one from you.” She wraps her arms around my waist, resting her head on my chest.

“Pull your hood up,” Liam calls out. “We need the full dino-experience.” At some point, it fell down around her shoulders.

Oakley raises a hand, flipping Liam off as I pull the bracelet box from my back pocket. I yank up her hood with my free hand because she is really fucking cute. I think it’s extra special because I picked it out.

The onesie was also a much less stressful experience if she didn’t like it. Unlike the one she’s about to open.

Oakley pops the lid, and her jaw falls as she gets a look at the charm bracelet. She told me about her mom months ago. “You got me a charm bracelet like my mom’s?” She tilts her head, studying me.

“I did. That way you can have your own.” I shrug a giant shoulder. I still don’t know if it was the right call.

“I love it. Will you help me put it on?”

“Of course,” I agree. She pulls it out of the box, and I set to work, getting it clasped around her wrist.

“Thank you.” She pushes up on her tiptoes, and I lean down to make the kiss possible.

“You’re welcome. This way we can add charms to it through all of our future adventures.” I nuzzle my cheek to hers.

“Okay, so now that we’ve opened courting gifts. Can we please head back to the nest?” Oakley asks, peeking around at the guys from under her hood.

Marcus chuckles, pushing himself up. “Whatever the princess wants.”

Chapter Thirty

Liam

We ride out the last few days at The Exchange. Hawk eventually reminds us all that Jamen has been trying to get in touch with us for days. It's probably not the most professional we've ever been, but luckily he's a decent enough human being to not punish us for Oakley's designation. Or that's the hope. The others seem more confident of that fact than I am, but whatever, there isn't much we can do about it now.

Marcus handles communicating with the label for us. We started in Florida, but Ruined Records opened a Colorado office earlier this year. It just so happens it's not even an hour away from where we've been staying at The Exchange. Apparently we won't be heading back out on tour with Trigger Finger because Jamen wants us to come into the Ruined offices.

It leaves a bit of a bad taste in my mouth, but I'm fairly sure if he drops us now that he could be on the hook for a huge lawsuit for discrimination. Not that he can't afford it.

We were technically ready to leave yesterday, but Jamen's wife told us to hang around the resort an extra day. She's his executive assistant, and it didn't seem to put anyone else on high alert.

Who knows why my nerves are shot, but they are. It's like I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop now that things are going good.

It likely also has something to do with the fact that I've had plenty of opportunities to come clean about my past. We've done nothing but sit around shooting the shit and waiting for Oakley to feel better.

It would have been the ideal time to open up, but I chickened out. For all the hell I gave Hawk about how it comes off when you keep secrets, I sure can't seem to take my own advice.

We've been summoned to the new Ruined Records arena, not the offices, and I don't have the first clue why. We pack everything up into two label SUVs and take off. Most of our shit is taking up the other vehicle, so we're packed into one. Hawk and Sullivan are in the middle row, and Marcus and Oakley are in the back with me.

"Are you okay?" my little omega asks, patting my thigh. "You seem riled."

"I'm good, sweetness," I assure her, tossing my arm over her shoulder.

Her head tilts as she studies me, nuzzling deeper into my chest. "If you're sure."

Her eyes are so sincere as she blinks up at me that I have to hold myself back from telling her I love her. That should probably come once I let them all in on the reality that I'm the reason my entire previous band is dead. If I wasn't such a selfish fuck, I probably would have done that before we bonded. She's stuck with me now whether or not she wants to be.

I blow out a heavy breath, and Oakley turns even further in my direction. I'm not busting out my past in the back of a moving vehicle. Instead, I paste on a fake-as-fuck smile and promise myself I'll lay it all out there the next chance I get.

Unless I chicken the fuck out again.

The Ruined Records arena is next level. The entire area is packed with people, and it becomes clear pretty fast that something is up. The traffic is unreal, and the radio on the way in is hyping some special benefit concert.

I'm not sure how I don't put two and two together until we're inside the arena. Storm and Griffin are two of Lyric's pack. They started out as part of her security team, but now they run the Colorado office of Stone Security. They usher us from the talent drop off to the backstage area.

"Does anyone else feel like this is weird?" Marcus mutters, bumping his shoulder against mine.

"Yes," Sullivan and I say in unison.

"I feel like we're being corralled toward something," Hawk mutters, glaring at Griffin and Storm.

"Me too," Oakley agrees.

Griffin pushes through a door, and there are bodies everywhere. The guys from Ruin are all standing around in a semicircle with Dexter Clark and Issac Matthews.

The vibe instantly puts me on edge even further, if that's possible.

"Oh, hey, you guys made it." Lyric smiles, and it looks like she might be physically in pain.

"We did," Marcus says, crossing his arms over his chest. "Anyone want to tell us what the fuck is going on?"

"Yo, no one told Liam about the concert for his friends?" Lachlan swipes long brown hair back from his face. "You guys suck. If this was a surprise concert then we totally should have been prepped for the big reveal."

My gut drops as I stagger back a step. Someone gives my shoulder a squeeze. They offer a little shove back toward the group I'm trying to escape.

“We thought you might want to perform.” Lyric approaches slowly.

Ryder swipes long whitish-blond hair back from his face as he gives what I think is meant to be an encouraging smile.

“What do you mean a concert for Liam’s friends?” Sullivan asks.

“Oh yeah, we’ve got fliers.” Lachlan bounces around, heading back to one of the tables. “It’s a damn shame what happened, but thank fuck you were smart enough not to get in the car. Am I right?”

My vision actually goes spotty. It would be a dumb move to take a swing at him. My fists clench at my side as I try to remind myself that would be a great way to get sued.

If I had been around, they wouldn’t be dead. Andrew wouldn’t have been behind the wheel on that dreary night, and they’d likely still be alive. Or I’d have been driving the van, and I’d be dead too.

“Do you *ever* think before you speak?” Callan asks, shoving his shoulder into Lachlan’s.

“Jesus fucking Christ, Lach,” Rook mutters, shaking his head. He looks at me. “It’s fine, you can take a swing at him. I do on a regular basis. It helps.”

Lachlan starts handing out brochures or pamphlets to my packmates.

“We didn’t mean to spring this on you last minute.” Ryder slides up beside Lyric, tossing an arm around her lower back.

That’s a nice sentiment, but it’s exactly what they did. They also assured me that they wouldn’t tell my future band the circumstances behind how I ended up here.

Oakley gasps as she turns to face me, and my stomach churns.

I’m fairly sure I’m going to puke. “Yeah, so…” A heavy sigh rattles out of my chest. “I was supposed to be the DD. They couldn’t find me, so they left. It was raining. The van took a curve too quickly and…” My head shakes involuntarily.

“They’re dead as I’m sure that lovely packet of information explains.”

“It wasn’t your fault,” Ryder and Lyric say in unison.

“It really was,” I scoff.

“And you thought hey, I know the perfect way to fuck him up even further?” Marcus growls, advancing on his sister and her beta. “What the fuck even is this?”

“We wanted to do something to give back to the five families that lost their sons,” Lyric says in a pained tone.

“But we assumed Liam had informed you of what happened,” Rook says, crossing his arms over his chest.

“That’s kind of a ridiculous assumption to make,” Oakley snaps.

But is it? I *should* have told them by now. Long before we bonded.

“If you don’t want to be a part of this concert, that’s understandable,” Rook says.

“It was perhaps a bit too optimistic,” Ryder says at the same time. He catches my line of sight. “But I do think it’ll do you some good to finally put those feelings of guilt to rest.”

“I can assure you that those feelings aren’t going anywhere,” I mutter, spinning in a circle.

Why does my chest feel like it might collapse under the weight of trying to take a breath? My hands shake as my heart races. My vision is actually going hazy. The little black specks are kind of alarming.

“I need to get the fuck out of here,” I hiss, trying to figure out if I’m about to pass out. That would be really fucking embarrassing in front of a room full of rock superstars. Fuck my life.

“Yeah, I recognize that look,” Dexter Clark says, swaggering over. “Come on, we’ll find you guys somewhere away from the masses.” He tosses a tattooed arm around my shoulder. “I’ve got just the spot. It’s the room they gave Baby

so that she can feed Bellamy without having to pop a tit out in front of everyone."

I frown for several seconds until I remember he calls Love by her first name, which is Baby.

I open my mouth to protest, but Dexter pats my shoulder. "Trust me, she doesn't mind. She'd whip a titty out on stage if Bells needs to eat. It's fine. They give her a room because it makes me and Issac more comfortable. Baby doesn't give a shit." He laughs. "Sorry, I know their hearts were in the right place, but that doesn't mean they get everything right."

He leads us past several of the other acts, and if I wasn't about to keel over, I might laugh at the sight of Jude Walker with baby Bellamy strapped to his chest. Dexter leads us out into the hallway and into a small room across from the original room everyone was in.

There's a couch, which is about all my brain can seem to process. I shrug out of Dexter's hold, muttering a quick, "Thanks."

My ass hits the sofa, and I bury my face in my hands as my brain races. Yeah, it's a cool gesture they're doing a benefit concert for my friends' families, but I shouldn't be anywhere near it.

"They died because of me," I say before I can hold back the words.

"It sounds like they died because they made a bad call," Hawk says, crossing his arms over his chest. Dexter heads out and Hawk shoves himself against the door. I quirk an eyebrow at him, but he shrugs. "You don't need to talk to them until you're ready."

Chapter Thirty-One

Oakley

"I don't think I can do this," Liam says, swiping his hair back from his face as he stands up. He's always pale, but he looks like he might hit the ground at any moment.

"I can take the lead if you want. Tell them no thanks and get us the hell out of here," Marcus offers, coming over. He shoves his hands in his pockets, giving Liam a soft smile. "But I think it could be cathartic."

"Fuck, Oakley," Liam whispers, wrapping his arms around me. He's shaking so badly that I don't know what to do. He bends down, burying his face in my hair. "I really don't think I can do this."

"That's okay." My hands dig into his slender back. "It's a lot. If I had known it was coming…"

"Yeah, I'll be having a conversation with my sister about this bullshit." Marcus comes closer and grabs Liam's shoulder, giving him a squeeze. "We follow your lead. If you want to call it, then we leave right now. All of us together."

"We've got your back," I murmur, running my hand up and down Liam's spine. He shakes, and I'm pretty sure he's crying into my hair. His scent is acrid with his stress and discomfort. My system hates it, and I immediately focus on trying to release soothing pheromones. "It's up to you."

Sullivan comes closer, hugging Liam and me from the right side. "You have no obligation to perform tonight."

There's commotion behind me, but I can see exactly what's happening.

"I said *fuck off*," Hawk growls, slamming the door in someone's face. They try to open it, but Hawk spins around, plants his back against it, and crosses his arms over his chest. My head tilts until I can see him. He nods back to Liam, but I don't have a clue how to fix this.

Liam chokes or coughs. It's a pained sound that makes me feel like I'll claw out of my skin if I can't help him feel better immediately. "I'm the reason they're dead, and I'm supposed to go out there and perform in their honor?"

"No," Marcus barks. It startles me to the point I jolt in Liam's hold. "Sorry, princess." He runs a hand down my back. "Your friends died because they made a bad call. It's a fucking tragedy, but it's not your fault."

"Survivor's guilt put me in therapy, and my mom died of alcoholism. I knew there was nothing I could have done to save her." I clutch Liam even harder. "We're leaving. This is causing you too much misery. It's—"

Marcus swats my ass. When my eyes fly to his, he gives me a look. "Can you give us a minute?"

"What? No!" I hiss.

"Yeah, this is a bro talk," Marcus says, nodding from Sullivan to me.

I hold onto Liam even tighter because I know what's coming, but Sullivan scoops me up and carries me toward the door as I fight his hold.

"Stop it," I snap. "He needs me."

"And he'll have you after this." Sullivan nods at Hawk, who opens the door and corrals back Lyric, Ryder, and her alpha Storm.

"You're a big motherfucker," Storm growls in his low tone, jabbing a finger at Hawk.

"Yeah, you're still not getting in there." Hawk crosses his arms, blocking the door as Sullivan sidesteps him to give us

some breathing room.

Ryder nods. “We made a mistake. Truthfully, we were trying to give him solace.”

“Well, it didn’t work,” I snap, kicking my feet and wiggling until Sullivan lets me down. “I’m so angry right now.”

Lyric frowns, rolling her lips together. “Please, let us apologize. We haven’t announced that he’d be performing. Ruin can take an extra set.”

Callan Crewes, one of Lyric’s other alphas, comes up to stand next to Lyric and Ryder.

“When we lost Bryan, I almost lost myself,” Callan says, his voice full of emotion. “I’d like to speak to Liam if you’ll allow me in.” He looks at me, and I have no idea how I was nominated as the person to make that call.

My mind races.

I know Callan was really close to Ruin’s former bassist Bryan Thomas. The tour I met Lyric during was the memorial tour for Damian Sinclair and Bryan. I honestly don’t know if it would help or hurt Liam to talk to someone else who lost someone close to them in such an abrupt way.

“It was hard as hell to get up on stage for that tour. But every time we played ‘Darkest Nights and Dirty Habits’ it honored Bryan’s memory.” Callan shoves his glasses up, looking extremely miserable. “And that alone helped me.”

“People heal in different ways,” I say weakly. “I don’t want him to hurt anymore than he already has.”

“I know what it’s like to blame yourself for someone else’s death. To cry and grieve and curse their memory for the choices *they* made. All while convinced that if you’d done something differently, they’d still be here,” Callan says.

Ryder stretches out an arm, wrapping it around Callan’s back. Callan watches me, and I honestly don’t know what to say.

I’m lost.

My feelings are all over the place. Some of it is spillover from Liam, and that makes my heart ache even worse. I want to wrap him up and keep him safe from all of this.

I know Callan is a good guy, but what if he says the wrong thing and it sets Liam off? I can't lose Liam. I couldn't give a shit less about the band or making a multi-album contract. If it comes at the cost of Liam's mental health, it's not worth it.

What if it helps? It might give him comfort to talk to someone who has been through something similar. I honestly don't know, and the fear of making a bad call is paralyzing me.

"I don't think it could hurt," Sullivan says in barely more than a whisper.

My eyes ache, and I feel like I'm about to burst into tears. The emotions are so much deeper than what I should be feeling. I turn, studying the door. If this is just crossover from how he's feeling then… God, he's suffering in a way I don't have words to explain. I have to do something.

Callan still watches me carefully.

"Okay," I agree.

"Only Callan," Hawk growls. "And you fuck off too if he doesn't want to talk." It's the wrong time to notice it, but it makes me proud seeing our pack come together to protect Liam.

"I will," Callan says, sliding by us. He heads into the greenroom, and my heart races.

What if I made a bad call and Liam ends up hurting even worse because Callan opens up all of his festering wounds?

My eyes fly to Lyric and Ryder. "Why didn't you warn us that his entire band—all of his friends—died?"

"That was his choice. He didn't want your pity or your judgment." Ryder nods to the door. "He wasn't in good shape when we found him."

"We just settled into the house here in Colorado," Lyric says, rubbing her red nose. "But the pub owner—the same bar they left from that night—had been trying to get in touch with

Saint for a while." I frown until I remember Lyric calls Ryder by his last name. "Try Hard Hero was the last band we met before we broke up. The songs I gave them weren't great because I was grieving and not in a good place." Her head shakes. "We were going to offer them better compositions. We tried to get in touch with them, and that's when we heard what happened." Her eyes are glassy like she might shed actual tears.

"We needed to check on our flat," Ryder says, giving me a sad smile. "But we also knew we needed to check on Liam, so we took a quick trip." His head shakes. "He hadn't much fight left in him. We offered him a slot in a band and dragged him, mostly unwillingly, back to the US with us."

My heart drops. He's amazingly talented. It makes so little sense how some artists make it when others don't.

"Jamen put him with you guys, and it was a good fit," Lyric says. "It's been a year tomorrow, which I guess you didn't know, but we wanted to do a benefit show for the families."

"You sprung it on him with no notice," Sullivan snaps. "What the fuck did you expect?"

"You were occupied for several weeks, and we made assumptions that he opened up during your bonding," Ryder says. "It was a bad call, which we've acknowledged, but it wasn't malicious."

I don't know what else to say or do, so I spin around and bury my face in Sullivan's shoulder.

"He'll be okay." Sullivan kisses the side of my head. "We'll be sure of it."

I nod, but I don't know that he can make those type of assurances.

Lyric and Ryder eventually leave with Storm to go check on the stage setup. Matted Whine, Ruin, and a whole host of other

bands on the Ruined Records roster are here to do a few of their fan's favorite songs.

Hawk pulls me into his chest as I try to pace the floor in front of him. "Are you okay?"

My head shakes. I know it's selfish. I didn't experience what Liam did, but it still feels like my chest is collapsing under the weight of it. His emotions are bleeding into me, and I don't know how to stay calm when everything feels like it's exploding.

Sullivan leans against the wall with a booted foot kicked up behind him. He's obviously anxious too. He and Liam are close. He opened up to Liam before even me, which doesn't bother me. I'm just sad Liam didn't do the same in return.

My face brushes against Hawk's shirt as he palms the back of my head.

"I just feel like he needs me," I whisper.

God, maybe I am an asshole. This isn't about me. The door opens and my head immediately swivels to see who it is.

Callan comes out, giving a sad smile. "He's asking for you."

"I'll walk you back to the greenroom where Ruin is," Hawk grunts, releasing me with a pat on the ass.

"Thanks," Callan says, shoving up his glasses.

I don't wait to see what happens next. I make a break for Liam. The door pulls open with what feels like very little effort, and I bolt inside.

Liam sits on the couch with his head in his hands. His scent is sour, and it makes my heart race as I approach. He glances up when he spots me and tosses himself back against the cushions.

Marcus nods from a few feet away and heads for the door.

Liam watches me carefully, but he doesn't stop me when I climb into his lap. His arms wrap around me, hugging me so

tightly it's almost painful. "Now that you've had time to think about it, do you hate me?"

"God no," I gasp, clutching him tightly. "Never. We're bonded. You're stuck with us, but more than that, it's genuinely not your fault."

He sighs, burying his face in my neck. "I was supposed to be the designated driver. I had a beer—one single drink—I would have been fine to drive, but I got sidetracked with someone."

I grimace, but do everything I can to block my distaste from spilling through the bond. I know it was before me, but hearing about him with anyone else doesn't feel good. I'd never hold it against him, though. He didn't know I even existed back then.

"I know why you feel guilty. I think it's a natural response to going through something like that," I assure him.

"It is on me, though. You don't get it." His head shakes violently as I frown.

"Then explain it."

"You won't look at me the same way," Liam says with a hitch in his voice.

"I can guarantee you that we will." Sullivan takes the seat next to Liam on the couch, wrapping an arm around his shoulder.

"They were led to believe I was in no condition to drive." Liam's head shakes. "One of my ex hookups was at our show. She made it seem like I'd fallen back into old habits." His shoulders bounce. "I guess I had. I wasn't there when they needed me."

"You feel guilty because someone else made the choice to lie to your friends, which led to them making a terrible mistake," I repeat the information. "This isn't on you, Liam. Every adult is responsible for his or her own actions. You can feel guilt and remorse, I think that's natural. But answer me this—under similar circumstances if one of them was in your shoes, would you blame them?"

Sullivan rests his head against Liam's as we hold onto him for dear life. "Do you want to go out there and put on a hell of a show in their memory, or do we sit this one out?"

Liam shudders out a breath. "We rock the fucking house down."

I exhale in pure relief as his eyes meet mine. "We're here for you. Always and forever from here on out."

"I know." He slams his mouth to mine.

"Do you know that I love you?" I ask, nuzzling my cheek to his.

"Yeah?" His face breaks into a wide smile. "I love you too."

I push my mouth to his for another quick kiss.

"I've picked our three songs," Liam says, staring Jamen and Lyric down. His brown hair falls over his forehead, and even though he's desperately trying to block his emotions, they're all over the place. "You're going to have to eat the penalties for two of them."

Lyric nods, stepping forward with Jamen's son, Rook, at her side. "Of course, I'll pay it personally. I'm so—"

"The label will pay the penalty if the songs aren't negotiable," Rook says firmly.

"We will," Jamen agrees.

"Does that mean you're a sure thing?" Rook wraps an arm around Lyric's lower back.

"Yeah." Liam rolls his jaw from side to side. "But we need a chance to practice."

"You can go last. You'll be up after Matted Whine," Jamen says. "You can close it out."

“Point us to where our instruments are.” I cuddle close to Liam’s chest. He palms my ass and nuzzles his cheek against the top of my head.

Chapter Thirty-Two

Marcus

The new Ruined Records arena is fucking insane. I knew it coming in, but even the energy backstage is enough to make me wish I had time to pull Oakley away for a pre-show quickie. We've practiced as well as we can under the circumstances.

It's wild that we'll be closing out a show that features some of the biggest names in our generation.

I'm still fucking baffled how they set this thing up and how Jamen always manages to stack his shows with bands that aren't even signed to his label. I guess that's the benefit of being in the industry for thirty years.

Lyric and Ryder pull Liam aside for a quick talk before we take the stage, but Oakley won't leave his side. She glares at my sister and Lyric's beta during the entire tense conversation. Not that I mind. I still don't particularly like Ryder. I tolerate him solely because he treats my sister well.

Matted Whine bounces off the stage and back out again to the screams of fans. Who knows if the audience will be satisfied with us when they've been utterly spoiled with well-known, huge name bands.

I shove my hands in my pockets as Jamen approaches. He and Donovan Lee have been taking turns introing the next artist on the line up. Donovan is out there thanking Dexter and Issac and he's about to call for us.

"You've been dodging my calls," Jamen says conversationally.

“If I had known this was coming, I’d have dodged your wife and Lyric too.” I raise my eyebrows so there’s no mistaking the *fuck off* that goes unsaid.

Huh, I guess I am evolving. There was a time I would’ve just said it.

“Yeah, it wasn’t one of their brighter moments, but I think it’ll do him some good. The longer he kept the truth from you, the more it would’ve become a festering wound.” Jamen sighs. “There’s some other shit I want to talk to you about, but I’m not going to drop it on you right before you take the stage.”

“If you’re about to cut us—”

“For fuck’s sake,” Jamen interrupts me. “No, PR has gotten more requests for you guys than any other up-and-coming band on the label.”

“I’m sure that has everything to do with Angel,” I mutter, swiping a hand over my face. If not my lovely biological mother, then possibly the controversy surrounding Liam.

“No,” Jamen says firmly. “It’s part of what I need to talk to you about as a group after the show, but we’d like to get Wicked Truths in the studio to record.”

My jaw falls.

Recording means radio is within reach. It also means an entirely different level of fame.

“You’ve got to get out there.” Jamen nods, clapping me on the back. “I’m proud of you and how far you’ve come.” My head shakes as a weird feeling fills my chest. It might be pride, or I could be about to puke on his boots. It could go either way. “Damian would have been proud to see you now.”

Motherfucker.

Like that doesn’t hit me right in the gut. It’s still a mess of emotions I don’t know if I’ll ever fully overcome. I hated him for so many years, but at the same time, I longed for his approval.

“He would have,” Lyric says, giving me a sad smile. She doesn’t give me the opportunity to object. She simply wraps

her arms around my middle, giving me a tight squeeze. “I’m so happy for you and Oakley.” She smiles. “For your whole pack.”

“Thanks.” I pat her awkwardly on the back and disengage to head to the stage.

Oakley lights up when she spots me. Her heels don’t give her a hope in hell of reaching my height, but she stretches up, covering both of my cheeks in her scent. My hand slides up the back of her flirty little skater skirt. It’s too bad I don’t have enough time to flip it up, shove her against the wall, and slam my cock inside her.

Oakley finishes covering my cheeks in her scent, and I smirk.

“You know that’s not necessary anymore, right, princess?” I dip my mouth to hers.

It’s a quick but thorough kiss that I greatly fucking enjoy.

She grins against my lips. “Yeah, but I can’t cuddle you like I want out here in front of everyone, so it’ll have to do.”

“I love you.” I kiss the side of her head.

“I love you too.”

I’ve learned twenty-thousand fans is the number that officially takes my fucking breath away.

The screams are overwhelming as Liam steps to the front of the stage following our first song.

“Some of you may be aware I’m the only member of Try Hard Hero left after the horrible accident that claimed the lives of five of my best mates. Let this be your public service announcement. Don’t drink and drive. There’s every chance you won’t be around to regret the aftermath if you do.” Liam flicks the long brown hair back from his face as he glares at the closest camera. “Also, here’s your reminder that actions have consequences. You might find it to be a joke to lead

someone to believe something, but that very sentence could end with devastating effects. Think before you speak."

"You've got that right." I step up to his side, slapping him on the back and squeezing his shoulder in silent support. "Tell them what we've got for them."

Liam takes back over and we all hit our spots. Sullivan counts us down. This one is drum and bass heavy. It's all on Liam and his ability to sing the fuck out of the song while we create the haunting melody to go with it. Oakley seems happier and more confident than ever before. It's good to see her back to loving being on stage. I think the nurse practitioner was right about the suppressants causing the majority of her anxiety.

We play the song over the sound of twenty-thousand screaming fans. They're either really good at faking it or they truly dig our performance.

"Just Pretend" by Bad Omens is a perfect fit for Liam's voice and stage persona.

It's not the easiest to pick up someone else's composition after only a handful of playthroughs, but we've got the benefit of knowing the song. Outside of Liam, Sullivan has the hardest part since the song relies so heavily on him landing every single slam of his sticks.

It's unreal the talent Liam's got buried under all that cocky swagger. I'm thinking Oakley is right and we're more alike than we'd ever admit. I hide a lot of pain under a sarcastic, don't-give-a-fuck veneer.

The audience goes dead silent as the beat picks up. I'd imagine this song has different meanings for everyone who listens to it, but that's the beauty of good music. I get full-on fucking goose bumps as Liam tilts his microphone toward the crowd belting out the lyrics.

Oakley is our only guitarist on this one. I scoffed when Lyric recommended it, but I've got to admit, less is more. I join Liam on the pre-chorus and the chorus. Oakley stares at Liam and, like he can feel her eyes on him, he turns and winks

right as he takes over on the post-chorus. It's a damn near perfect performance as we finish out the ballad.

Surprisingly enough, after all the bullshit he spewed about not melding with Oakley's accent, it was his idea for him to perform "Carry On" instead of doing it how we normally do.

I couldn't give a shit less.

This is his moment to shine and hopefully release some of that lingering guilt.

The venue staff is on point like I'd expect for a Ruined Records performance. They set up the piano and swap out instruments while we intro the song.

The second Liam breaks in on the first verse, my jaw falls. Not because of his voice, I've always known he's got a killer range. I feel like an idiot because it's clear that song was written for Liam. The lyrics are spot on for his situation. It's vague enough that you wouldn't pick up on it without knowing the circumstances, and like any good musical creation, it hits differently for each listener.

I'm in awe of Lyric and Ryder when they write together. I think they've recently added Callan to the mix, and it elevated their writing to an entirely different level.

Oakley catches my eyes and tears sparkle back at me. Yeah, I might not be on the verge of crying, but my chest gets tight as Liam finishes out the chorus.

I hope this helps him heal.

Hopefully he also understands I'm not taking back over on a song that was clearly written for him. The beat slows as we reach the end, and the audience loses their minds.

Liam hops up from the piano and clutches Oakley to his chest like she's his lifeline. Sullivan and I join them at the front of the stage, and we all take a bow.

"I'd trade it all if I could have them back," Liam murmurs, but the mic still picks it up. The last part I catch only because I'm close enough to pick up over the audience's screams. "The fame, not you."

“I know,” Oakley says, pulling her guitar aside and kissing the hell out of him.

Colorado is significantly cooler than it would be in Florida right about now.

It’s been wild traveling and seeing the different climates and the seasons. Not that we get to spend long appreciating one because we’re constantly on the move to the next one, or we were before Oakley’s heat hit and now everything is kind of up in the air.

We’re all in good spirits if not completely fucking beat as Hawk guides us down the long corridor that leads to the parking area. We’ve got to find a hotel or somewhere to stay tonight. I frown, shaking my head as I realize Jamen wants to talk to us before we leave. Oh well, it’s a little late now as we head down the staff tunnel to the parking garage.

Oakley is tucked in close to Liam’s side with her free hand wrapped in Hawk’s. Sullivan and I are up front behind the other two A Team guys. We reach the end of the tunnel, and they give us the signal to hold.

“I thought I asked you to stick around long enough to talk to me,” Jamen calls out from behind us.

I spin around, cursing under my breath. I’m still not pleased with what went down today. Only time will tell if it helps or hurts my packmate. I’m really not a forgiving guy.

I’m trying to be a better man for Oakley. She and Liam are the two that want this music career the most.

I spin around, blowing out a breath to center myself. “It’s been a long fucking day. Can’t it wait until tomorrow?”

Jamen jogs toward us with a couple of the venue security guys at his side.

“Your performance stole the show.” He glances between the four of us. “I’m serious. We want to set you up to review a

new contract and get you in the studio immediately."

Oakley swallows thickly, glancing between us. The frown on her face has me crossing my arms over my chest. I damn sure don't know what that look means.

"Thank you for letting us know," Liam says, squeezing Oakley tighter to his side. "We'll need some time to discuss things amongst ourselves and figure out how we'd like to proceed."

A slow smile crosses Jamen's face. "Good, I'm glad to hear you're a united front. Unfortunately, that's not all I wanted to warn you about."

I sigh, shaking my head. "Go for it."

"Are you sure you want to discuss it here?" Jamen pointedly glances at each one of us.

Oakley pats Liam's chest, coming over to wrap her arms around my middle. I uncross my arms and pull her closer.

"We're not just bandmates," I say coolly. "They're my pack. They'll hear about it anyway."

"Angel made a final last-ditch effort to force you to meet with her. Fuck, knowing her, it's probably not even her final move, but she reached out to Wayne and Susan, assuring them that she could get them face to face with you if they'd agree to sign a release to be on her show." Jamen grimaces.

"Tell me they didn't agree," I growl, clutching Oakley a little too tightly. "After all the lies she spread about their son. What the fuck is she thinking?"

"They did not agree," Jamen assures me. "But they did reach out to me again, begging me to put them in contact with you."

I scoff. "No fucking thanks. I haven't even healed from the scars they inflicted the first time around."

Oakley goes rigid. Her eyes fly up to mine, but I shake my head. Now isn't the time for any of that. I know she gets the idea, and it's no one else's business.

“It sounds like it might be time to consider a restraining order or two.” Hawk comes over, clapping me on the back.

Jamen tosses his palms up. “I made no promises. They can’t stand me either, so I imagine they’re desperate. I warned Lyric, and I’m doing the same for you.”

“Okay, well…” I have no clue what to say to that. “Thanks for the warning I guess.”

“I know you’re beat.” Jamen digs in his pocket and grabs out a thick envelope. He takes a step forward, tossing it at Hawk.

“What’s this?” Hawk asks.

“It’s got all the details for one of the furnished apartments. It has a secured parking garage and full-time security. All of your belongings from the bus are there.” Jamen grins, shoving his hands in his front pockets. “We’ll give you a couple days to settle in and then it’s time to renegotiate your contract.”

“Thank you,” Oakley calls out as Jamen nods and spins around, heading off.

“Damn,” Liam says, shaking his head.

“I can’t decide if he meant he wants to sign us to a legit contract,” Sullivan says, laughing.

“Based on what he told me before the show, that’s exactly what it sounds like.” I sigh.

Oakley stretches up on her toes to kiss my chin. “Are you okay? God, I swear, Angel never stops.”

“I’m good, princess.” I squeeze her ass. “But definitely ready to take a shower and decompress.”

Hawk unfolds the envelope and whistles low. “Hell, even the keyfobs are fancy.”

“At least we’ll have somewhere to regroup that’s insulation from the press,” Liam says, shrugging.

“I’ll update the team.” Hawk nods, spinning around to do exactly that.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Oakley

The apartment Jamen sets us up in is every bit as fancy as the penthouse in Florida. All of our stuff is indeed in the unit when we finally make it in. We spend the next two days not leaving the building. We do a fair amount of pampering Liam. The bond is helpful. It's not like I can read their thoughts, but I do get insight into each one of their emotions. The guys have been doing everything they can to be supportive.

Angel is a continuous problem. She's still doing everything she can to make herself relevant.

The five of us are supposed to be at Ruined Records in two hours for a meeting. We've bounced around ideas and what ifs, but it's going to come down to what is on paper when we see the contract. My lawyers, which now represent Wicked Truths as a whole, have been looking over the terms.

Hawk and I are cuddled on the couch when Liam and Marcus get back from the gym in the building. No one is more surprised than me. Marcus never hits the gym, but I think he wanted to keep Liam company. I wouldn't call myself a homebody, but compared to the guys, I think I've handled being stuck inside better than they have.

"Aww, check out that cuddle pile." Liam wiggles his eyebrows, coming to kneel in front of me. "How do I get in on the omega snuggle time?"

I snort, leaning forward to give him a quick kiss. "The first step is showering because you smell like straight up sweaty

man funk."

"We've got to be at Ruined Records soon anyway." Marcus winks. "The orgy will have to wait for after. It can be our contract signing celebration."

"Or Oakley could shower with us and we could get slightly dirtier before cleaning off." Liam chuckles, grabbing my arm to pull me up.

I laugh, patting Hawk's chest as Liam yanks me off the couch. "I suppose I could use a shower."

It's also really nice to see him doing better.

Marcus slides up to my side, shaking out the front of his sweaty T-shirt. My nostrils flare, and I have to fight the urge to bury my face in his chest to soak up his delicious, manly scent.

"Such an adorably cliché little omega." Marcus laughs. "Come on, I'm anxious to see what happens in our meeting with the label."

"Me too," Liam agrees.

The Colorado offices of Ruined Records are in the downtown area not more than a few blocks from the arena.

The charity Lyric runs, Damian's Way, is a couple of buildings over. If I wasn't still so furious about how they handled Liam then I'd check it out. I've got a yearly donation going to the charity, but that was in place prior to being signed by Ruined Records.

It's a worthy cause. They provide musical instruments, lessons, and let children meet their idols and even attend classes taught by some of the most well-known musicians of the last couple generations. It's a cool idea, especially since they focus on kids who have lost a parent due to drug abuse, suicide, alcoholism, and other mental health conditions. It personally hits close to home since I lost my mom to alcoholism. I'm pretty sure the only thing that kept me

grounded after losing her was my connection to music. Well, that and Sullivan.

Jamen's wife, Sheena Jacobs, leads us through the hallway and down toward what I assume is a conference room. She's an undeniably beautiful woman, walking with clear purpose.

"Jamen specifically asked me to show the five of you in here," she says, guiding us into one of the producing rooms. "This isn't related to your contract. It's family business."

I frown.

They definitely aren't part of my family, but everything gets clearer as we step inside. Rook, Lyric, and Jamen stand watching Angel through the glass.

This is one of the viewing rooms where the execs and suits are able to supervise band practices or jam sessions.

However, Angel Rae isn't currently performing, at least not music. She's got her camera crew like always. I can only imagine how exhausting it is to constantly be on. I don't even have words to describe how little I would be interested in doing a reality TV show.

"Why the fuck is she here?" Marcus growls, stomping closer to the one-way glass.

"Angel needs to be addressed," Jamen says calmly.

"I think you're trying to handle this like rich people. Get a goddamn restraining order and be done with her bullshit," Hawk suggests, leaning against the wall at the back of the room.

"It's not a terrible idea," Liam says.

"Angel announced her engagement to Johnny yesterday," Lyric mutters, rolling her eyes at her mother.

Damn, that has to suck. My mom hasn't been gone for as long as Lyric's dad has, but I know I frequently dread what happens when he wants to remarry. Then there's also the fact that Johnny is an awful human being.

“My mom and dad will be married?” Marcus scoffs. “It’s like all my hopes and dreams are coming true at once.” He looks at Jamen. “If you even buy her story that Johnny is my biological father.”

“I honestly couldn’t tell you.” Jamen shrugs. “She told us very little. We thought she didn’t know who the father might be.” He grimaces, giving a shrug. “It wasn’t like we had any room to talk. It really was a free-for-all back then.”

“Sometimes hearing old people talk makes me want to claw out my own eardrums,” Rook mutters.

“Me too,” Lyric agrees.

“Back to Angel and Johnny…” Marcus frowns, crossing his arms over his chest as his gaze settles on his sister. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.” Lyric nods. “I’ve been dealing with Angel my entire life, since way before anyone else realized exactly how toxic she is.”

Jamen snorts. “That’s debatable.”

Lyric smiles, glancing between Jamen and Marcus. “We’ve learned from experience that the only way to handle her is to ignore her until she gets bored and moves on.” She shrugs, and her blonde hair falls over her arm.

“But we also don’t want her to be a continuous problem for Wicked Truths, especially while you’re trying to build a name for yourselves.” Rook scratches his thick beard.

“Rook is finally stepping up to learn how to run Ruined,” Jamen adds. “I’d like to step into the role of full-time grandpa.” He glances between Rook and Lyric. “Anytime now, you slow asses.”

Rook smirks, tossing an arm around Lyric’s lower back. “I assure you, I’m doing my part to make that a reality.”

“Rooker,” Lyric gasps. “You and Griffin, I swear.” She shakes her head, laughing.

“Back to why we’re here?” Sullivan says, shoving his hands into his pockets like he always does when he’s

uncomfortable.

I head over, and he immediately wraps his arm around me, pulling me into his chest. His light scent floods my nostrils, making my heart race. I grin up at him, and he bends low enough he can brush his lips over mine.

“I’m heading into the trenches.” Jamen gestures to the room Angel is in, catching my attention. “Rook and Lyric will handle your contract negotiations.”

“Eww, not me,” Lyric says vehemently. “I’m just here because we wanted to be sure you’re okay with our plan to buy Angel off.” She looks at Marcus. “We came up with a number we’re comfortable offering her. The stipulations include no further contact with any of us. Angel is difficult to deal with under the best of circumstances, but she understands the ramifications of breaking a legal contract.”

“You’re going to pay her off?” Marcus tilts his head, nodding to Angel. “Isn’t that exactly what she’s after?”

“That or the small boost it gives her to be back in the limelight.” Jamen shrugs. “There really is no telling with her, but it’s my best guess that she blew through the millions Donovan and I gave her when Lyric needed out from under her thumb—”

“You paid her off when Johnny…” Marcus growls, shaking his head.

“Listen,” Jamen says, taking a step toward Marcus. “It burned my ass too, but I made a promise to Damian years ago that I would do everything I could to look after the two of you. Angel had legal control over Lyric. Taking her to court would have been a fucking shit show. I was named guarantor of Damian’s estate until Lyric reached maturity, but we needed Angel to sign the papers to send Lyric to the UK. Yeah, Angel got a payout, but the benefit was that Lyric gained freedom from that house. Sometimes you have to make concessions to balance between good and evil.”

“It does feel a bit like letting the villain win, doesn’t it?” Liam swaggers over, tossing an arm around Marcus’s shoulder.

“I don’t fucking care as long as she stays away from me,” Marcus mutters, shoving Liam off, but he smiles to offset the move.

“Truthfully, I think the vengeance comes from the fact Angel and Johnny get stuck with each other.” Lyric disentangles from Rook, heading over to Marcus. She tosses an arm around him, giving him a hug.

Marcus sighs but pats her back. “True enough.”

“They’ve always been majorly toxic. I give it a year. They’ll eventually destroy each other.” Lyric shrugs. “Problem solved.”

Rook steps forward, holding out an arm for his omega. “Shall we take this into the conference room? Both sets of lawyers are waiting.”

My eyes fly to Marcus’s. He nods, and a slow smile breaks out over my face. My impulses don’t love seeing another omega that close to my bonded alpha, but it’s good to see Marcus building a tentative relationship with his sister.

“This is going to be miserable,” Jamen grunts. “Whatever, make sure they sign.” He looks at Rook, but it’s clear he’s talking about us. “I want them on our main line up for this coming summer.”

Marcus laughs. “We’ll just have to see if you made a reasonable offer for our excellence.”

“I’m surrounded by smart asses,” Jamen mutters. “I think you’ll find the contract quite satisfactory.”

I’m not the only one with shaky hands when we hear the contract terms. It’s more than generous without locking us indefinitely. We spend a while with the label lawyers going over the highlights while my lawyers make notes of concessions and addendums we want added.

Rook and Lyric look extremely bored during the entire two hour meeting. We're finally nearing the end when Sullivan points at something on the page.

"What does this mean about touring?" Sullivan asks, shoving the paper at Rook.

"The world is changing. We're adapting with it." Rook smiles, shoving the paper back. "We've got the arena here. My dad intends to open two more within the next three years. A Miami and a New York amphitheater."

My brain is so fried that I stopped reading along with them ages ago.

The lawyers mostly hammered out all the details over the couple of days that we recuperated at the apartment.

I cuddle back further into Hawk's chest.

I offered him my seat a while ago, and I think we put the weight limit on the chair to the test, but so far it's held.

"But what does that mean for us?" Liam asks, stretching back in his chair.

"That's why I'm here." Lyric wiggles in Rook's lap, but she looks at me. "You're an omega. You'll need breaks every two and a half months. Heats aren't just inconvenient because of the heat itself. You'll need a week or so before it starts to get back to your home base and nest, then you'll have the week for the heat, and also the week after." She makes a face. "The last week is actually the one you'll probably be feeling the worst. It's not just the heat itself."

"That's true," Hawk murmurs, nuzzling his cheek to mine.

"Right." Marcus waves a hand like he's waiting for the rest.

"We're essentially asking for five months of touring a year," Rook says, pulling Lyric back into his chest. She turns her face, burying her nose in his tattooed neck. It's such a sweet moment I'd take a picture if my heart wasn't racing.

Hawk pats my middle, and it helps center me in a way that's difficult to explain. It's clear he's picking up on my

emotions in the bond.

“Those terms don’t really fall in line with the numbers you’re offering,” Marcus says pensively. It perfectly echoes my thoughts. I was thinking it would be a minimum of nine months on the road every year as we establish our fan base.

“It does match up,” Lyric says.

“We’re moving to a business model of pushing the label shows. Those will be our real moneymakers,” Rook says at the same time. “You’ll still be performing, but outside of the standard tour, you’ll be doing crossover shows at the Ruined Records arena. It gives you a stable home base for more than half of every year.”

“And if you’d like to donate time between shows at the new locations of Damian’s Way, then we’d love to have you. There will be a branch of the charity in each city Rook mentioned.” Lyric smiles brightly. “It’s not mandatory in your contract, but we are encouraging every act to do their part in helping build up the next generation of musicians.”

“So five months of touring…” Sullivan frowns. “What do we fill the rest of our year with?”

Lyric frowns back. “Hopefully you’ll fill some of that generous time off with volunteering—”

Rook cuts her off. “You’ll be in the studio recording, doing promotional activities like press, touring, and the venue shows. We’re moving away from the old style of burning out artists before they even get started.”

“Damn,” Liam says with wide eyes.

I’m fairly sure I mirror him perfectly. They’re offering more than I ever dreamed possible.

“Is this because we’re kind of related?” Marcus asks, crossing his arms over his chest.

“It’s not,” Rook says.

“No, but the small percentage of ownership in Ruined is,” Lyric says.

“What?” Marcus snorts.

“It’s a separate contract that we were going to surprise you with. Unfortunately, I can’t imagine sitting through another meeting like this. So yeah, surprise.” Lyric grins shamelessly. “You gave back nearly all of your inheritance. My dad wanted you to have that, and while I’m grateful because it gave Damian’s Way the final boost we needed to be able to branch out to different cities…” She shrugs. “I want no part of the portion of Ruined that I own. My guys made it clear they thought I should keep some. I am because I can use that to fund the charity, but I offered part to Issac, Dexter, and Love. The other part I’m offering to your pack.”

“No way,” Marcus scoffs.

“You can’t say no,” Lyric says, frowning. “Donovan Lee is getting married.”

“The old timers are moving on, and my dad fully wants to pass the business to the next generation,” Rook says. “It’s an opportunity, but not one that you can’t pass up.”

“Why would we want to?” Liam asks indignantly.

“Because that’s ridiculous!” Marcus sputters.

“Would you be open to us buying into ownership?” I’ve got a substantial inheritance and nothing to spend it on. I can only imagine it would be a good long-term investment.

“No, that’s really not necessary,” Lyric says. “I want to give this to you.”

“Ownership in Ruined is completely separate from your recording contract and something you don’t have to decide right now.” Rook pulls Lyric back again. She looks a little like she might jump out of the chair to escape this long-ass meeting.

“Are we going to sign?” Sullivan asks.

“Fuck yeah,” Marcus says.

“Let’s do it,” Liam agrees.

I glance at Hawk over my shoulder. “What do you think?”

“I think I’m wherever you are from here on out,” Hawk says, kissing my cheek.

“Let’s sign,” I say as I glance around at my pack.

And that’s exactly what we do.

Epilogue

Sullivan

The energy as Oakley and I head off stage at our first Ruined Records crossover show is incredible. For as terrible as it went when we tried to perform with Matted Whine, this show was nothing short of a success.

The guys from Ruin are doing two songs with Liam and Marcus, but they've got Callan Crewes on drums. That means I'm free.

"You guys rocked it," Love says, holding out a hand to Oakley. They high five as Dexter and Issac bounce off the stage. Love laughs as Issac lifts her, wrapping her around the front of his sweaty frame.

Oakley grins, linking her hand in mine. "We've got probably ten minutes before Liam and Marcus make it off stage." She drags me along the hallway toward the greenroom we were given.

We're barely inside the door when she yanks her tank top over her head. I should absolutely have developed some chill in the year that we've been bonded, but for whatever reason, the sight of her bare tits still makes my mouth dry.

She squats down in her combat boots. They're the kind with heels to give her some extra height, and the view is spectacular as she works at my belt. My head falls back against the wall as she slides my cock out of the hole in my boxer briefs. I palm the back of her head as her naughty little tongue flicks out, teasing my crown.

“You’re so sweaty it makes your scent super intense.” She grins, working the base of my shaft with her fist. “I fucking love it.”

“I love you,” I groan as she goes to town licking my length as she jerks the few inches she hasn’t worked up to taking.

“Motherfucker,” Hawk growls, sliding in the door at our side.

“You’re welcome to join us.” Oakley winks before diving back down on my cock.

“Don’t mind if I do,” Hawk says, squatting behind her. “Damn, this floor isn’t very forgiving.” He yanks off his polo shirt and bunches it up in front of Oakley. “Yours too.” He looks at me, and I finally realize he’s asking for my T-shirt. I strip the sweaty thing off and Hawk grabs it, layering it on top his. “On your knees, little one.”

Oakley moans around my shaft as Hawk helps her kneel. My thumb brushes over her cheek as Hawk rips her panties off. Literally yanks on the side, tearing the material, before moving to the other hip.

“Hey,” she grumbles.

“Those boots would have made it difficult to get them off.” Hawk chuckles. “I’ll make it up to you.”

Oakley grins, blinking up at me as she teases her tongue around my crown. I can’t see exactly what Hawk is doing to her pussy, but I do know she likes it. Warm breath fans over my pelvis as she gasps.

“Such a needy little pussy,” Hawk growls. “Damn. It’s clear your heat is coming on quick.”

My knees get wobbly as Oakley really starts to suck me off. She moans, letting my cock bump the back of her throat. I run through beats in my heat, trying to focus on anything except how warm and wet her mouth is as she makes it her mission to embarrass me.

Her hand makes an “O” around the base of my shaft as she sucks and licks. It doesn’t take long before her nose is hitting

my pelvis. She's gotten good at learning how to swallow around my tip.

"I'm close," I groan in warning.

"Let's see if we can get her there too," Hawk says, chuckling. "That's it, tighten around my fingers. Such a good little omega."

Oakley shivers, moaning around my length. It's ridiculously hard to keep myself upright as my knees tremble. Her throat convulses around my tip, and I'm done for.

I groan that as she doubles down, sucking even harder. "Fuck, Oaks, I'm there."

Oakley screams around my cock, and my eyes pop open to see Hawk shoving inside her. If I could physically hold back the response then I would, to give her a second to catch her bearings, but my cock is already swelling, and my balls feel tight. I tenderly palm the back of her head as I empty in her mouth.

My head falls back as I groan. She knows just how to tease my length to send me into a rambling mess of praising her ability while groaning that I might keel over.

I start to come down, and I pull free of her mouth, dropping to my knees in front of her. Her hands come to rest on my shoulders as Hawk wraps a hand in her hair, guiding her mouth to mine. I grin into the kiss as my heart races.

"I love you so fucking much," I say, nuzzling my nose to hers.

"Me too," she sobs. "But tease my clit… I'm there."

My hand falls, bumping around until I find her swollen nub. Her tits bounce against my chest as Hawk grinds into her.

"Aww, fuck, little one," Hawk growls.

Oakley wiggles her face until she shoves her mouth to mine again, and I happily swallow down her sounds.

The door slams open beside us, and I wrap myself fully around Oakley's front to block her from view.

“You sorry bastards.” Marcus chuckles.

“No wonder I was playing out the last song with a raging hard on,” Liam says, closing the door behind them.

“Fucking hell, just like that,” Hawk groans, sounding fully satisfied.

“We’re up next, right, sweetness?” Liam asks.

“Most definitely.” She winks, digging her nails into my shoulders.

Epilogue

Hawk

The children's center is filled with the sounds of screeching instruments. Damian's Way has an energy that's difficult to explain. We've spent time at each of the locations over the last three years. Lyric and her pack are even branching out to open a California location.

The one we're in today is the New York center. It's by far the biggest of the three. Some of the kids come and go, but normally we get familiar enough to know them by name during our time at the center.

Oakley and Liam are showing a small group of kids how to hold their guitar. We've been here for hours, but we've still got a couple more to go. Summers are always the longest days. During the school year, the program is only open for a few hours to offer after-school care, but during the summer, some of the kids are here for ten hour days.

There's a boy I've seen a lot during the last week. He's sitting on one of the couches and looking a little miserable. I don't play an instrument, so really I'm pretty useless unless I'm helping carry something heavy.

I head over, tossing myself down on the opposite side of the couch. The boy bounces with my weight, despite the fact I never touched his cushion.

I chuckle. "Sorry about that."

He shrugs a thin shoulder. "It's fine."

I nod. "I'm Hawk."

He rolls his dark eyes, turning to face me. “Kenton.”

“Nice to meet you.” I hold out a fist for him to bump. He stares for a few seconds before bumping. It’s hard to tell age based on looks, or maybe that’s true just for me. He’s smaller than most of the other kids, though I know they only accept children five and older. “Don’t you want to join in?”

He huffs, stretching back against the cushion. “Nah, I’m good.”

“Okay,” I say, wondering how else I can carry this conversation.

“I’m only here cause the group home drops us off here or at the community center. This place has better AC and the lunch isn’t bad.”

“Gotcha,” I say, because I’m not sure what the proper reply is to that. “How old are you?”

“Five, almost six,” he says, watching the group of kids that are gathered around Sullivan at the drums.

“What do you like to do for fun?” I ask, studying his too-small T-shirt.

“I don’t know.” Kenton shrugs. “Not play music.”

“But the lunch is too good to pass up.” I laugh.

“Are you going to kick me out?” he asks.

“Hell no,” I say with a grimace. “Shit, sorry we’re not supposed to curse.”

“I’ve heard worse,” he says, his gaze darting away from mine.

“So what, you come here and sit all day in the AC?” I ask, trying to figure out why I’m even so focused on it. All the kids that come to Damian’s Way have their own damage or hardships.

“Yeah, I like to be outside, but the community center isn’t my vibe,” Kenton says.

I snort. He's a cute kid with black curly hair and big eyes, but it's the *I don't give a fuck* attitude that has me itching to figure out how to make his day better.

"How about tomorrow I'll bring us a basketball and we can play?" I ask, stretching back in my seat.

"Yeah, whatever." His tone makes it clear he's not getting his hopes up, and that fucking kills me.

"You've got major skill, little man," I say late in the afternoon a few days later.

"Thanks," Kenton says, smiling a toothy grin. "I guess it's better to have skills than straight-up height."

I laugh, pulling my T-shirt up to wipe the sweat off my face.

"Ohmigod, we thought we lost you," Oakley says, pushing out the back door. "I can't believe the two of you are still out here. It's like a million degrees."

"Is it time for the bus?" Kenton asks, tightening the strap on his too large shoe. They've seen better days, that's for damn sure. I'm pretty sure everything he owns has.

"It is," Oakley says, handing him a brown paper bag. "You missed the afternoon snack. I thought you might want to take it with you."

Kenton goes rigid for a second before grabbing the bag and giving Oakley a polite smile. "Yeah, thanks. I gotta go."

"See you tomorrow," I call out as he bolts inside.

"He's such a cutie," Oakley says, coming to bury her face in my sweaty chest. "But just remember the warning they gave us."

My heart drops into my gut.

I know what she's saying. The volunteer coordinators beat it into our heads when we first started interacting with the

kids. It's dangerous to get attached because sometimes they just don't come back. Their parents can't afford the transportation to get them here or situations change and we'll never hear from them again.

"You're already attached," Oakley says, leaning up on her tiptoes to kiss my cheek. "We should talk about this more tonight as a pack."

"Really?" I ask as my heart tries to pound right out of my chest.

"Yeah," Oakley agrees. "I know you've never been as sold on going child-free as the rest of us. Also, Ravvi is a good kid. So is Declan."

She references Lyric's adopted son and Dexter's little brother that Love and her guys adopted when Dexter's mom died.

"Let's talk about it once we make it back to the apartment," I say, trying to hold back my excitement.

"So you want to add to our pack?" Liam asks, tossing himself down on the couch in the apartment we use when we're in New York.

"He's a really good kid." I clear my throat. "But I'm not trying to push for anything without it being a unanimous decision." I'm adult enough to understand that would be detrimental to all of us, including Kenton.

"What would we do when we're on tour for five months out of the year?" Marcus asks, kicking his feet up in the recliner he's sharing with Oakley. "I'm not trying to discourage this at all. I'm adopted. I've got zero doubts that we can do better than Wayne and Susan."

Oakley frowns, snuggling deeper into Marcus's shoulder.

"Maybe it's just me," Sullivan says from the kitchen. "But I'm a little burned out from all the touring." He comes in with

a giant plate of leftover spaghetti and takes a seat. “I know we got lucky pulling the contract we did, but honestly, I wouldn’t mind settling in one place.”

“We’ve got the house in Colorado, but I feel like we only settle in there at Christmas and right before heats,” Oakley says.

“I’m definitely not ready to completely step back from the industry,” Liam says. “I also wouldn’t mind settling into a routine.” He shrugs. “I don’t know what that’ll look like. We might get bored.”

“I doubt it.” Marcus snorts a laugh. “I know I’m not the only one who dreads when it starts to come around time to tour again.”

“Really?” Oakley tilts her head to look at him. “Why didn’t you say anything?”

“It’s mostly yours and Liam’s dream at this point,” Sullivan says around a bite of pasta.

Oakley sighs. “You guys should have said something. I’m kind of over constantly being on the road.”

“Me too,” Liam says.

“Look at Matted Whine and Ruin.” Marcus pulls Oakley’s head back down to his chest. “They’re doing the family thing and still performing.”

“We’ve already finished the last round of touring for this contract,” Oakley says. I can’t quite read the look on her face, but the bond says she’s contemplative. “We would be in the perfect place to negotiate, but honestly, there’s no telling if Kenton wants any part of the insanity that is our life. Especially last year, it’s a lot to deal with.”

“He’s young enough to adapt, and he’d have other kids coming from a similar situation to bond with,” Sullivan says helpfully.

“But we also aren’t married,” Liam says, wiggling his eyebrows at Oakley. “And to add on, if I won’t be working

then we might need to get hitched to ensure I can stay in the country."

That is a valid point.

"It is about time we do a pack commitment ceremony or a wedding," I agree.

"I still don't think I want to have any biological children," Oakley says, catching my eyes. "We've met so many kids who need a solid foundation…" She shrugs. "I also have zero desire to ever be pregnant."

"And that's okay," I assure her. I knew her stance long before we ever bonded. We talked about it years ago when we were just employer and employee.

"I don't hate the idea of kids like I used to," Marcus adds. "I mean look at Ravvi, he's a cool little guy."

I grin, nodding my agreement. Lyric and her pack brought him back after one of their trips, and hell, even I was a little jealous.

"We don't have to make any decisions right now. Let's talk to our lawyers and see if they can give us any insight into how long the process might take and the laws. That kind of thing." Oakley gives me a bright smile. "But I think it's a good idea."

I grin, stomping over and pulling her out of Marcus's arms before kissing the hell out of her.

Epilogue

Oakley

I'm sitting at one of the tables at Damian's Way, flipping through the newspaper as I finish my breakfast early the next morning. The quiet won't last for long once the kids make it in.

I snort, glancing over an article about Angel Rae. Things sure have taken a turn for the worst for her. Her ramshackle marriage to Johnny lasted a whopping thirteen months before he got arrested for DUI. He had a nice stash of drugs and other illegal paraphernalia, ensuring he actually got solid jail time. His former fame didn't save him from what he deserves, and that makes me smile.

I don't care if it's spiteful.

Angel's reality show was canceled at the same time and based on the few lines I read in the article; life hasn't been kind to her. That makes me even happier. Not that we spend a lot of time worrying about her these days. She took the payout from Lyric and Jamen, but it's nice to see she's finally reaping what she sowed. Lyric was confident that if left to her own devices, Angel would implode. Marcus doesn't talk about it often, but I think, for him, the freedom of no longer being faced with her bullshit ended up giving him the peace he was after.

Sometimes people are just awful. You gain nothing by keeping them in your life. There's something to be said for not allowing them to taint your future happiness.

The paper falls to the table as the door the kids come in slams open. They are a tidal wave of energy every single morning. My gaze lands on Kenton, and I give him a smile. He waves but turns away.

I gasp, dropping my breakfast sandwich and the paper on the table before stomping across the room toward him.

“What in the world happened to you?” I ask, actually afraid to touch his bruised face.

“I fell,” he grunts, moving to walk past me.

“Please, tell me what happened,” I say, squatting down.

His dark eyes flutter. “The bigger kids on the bus wanted my snack. I should have just gave it to them.”

My stomach tightens with pure horror. “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s fine.” He shrugs. “Is there breakfast? I’m starving.”

I stand up, offering him a hand.

I spent a lot of time while I was growing up wondering why my mother couldn’t love me. It made me fearful that I wouldn’t be a decent parent. Kenton links his small fingers in mine, and I realize that I do have a maternal instinct.

My mom might not have been able to be the parent I needed, but that was because of her own trauma.

Trauma that I don’t possess.

My hand tightens around Kenton’s.

It’s clear.

He needs someone to look out for and protect him.

Somebody better hold me back when that bus arrives this afternoon.

“Let me guess?” Jamen says, kicking his boots up on the coffee table in our apartment. “You can’t sign a new contract because I’m going to be a grandpa.”

Jamen stepped back from fully running Ruined Records, but the industry is in his blood. I doubt he'll ever retire one hundred percent, but he travels, scouts bands, and pretends to be retired.

Marcus snorts, flipping Jamen off with both hands. "Is my sister knocked up again?"

"Fuck if I know," Jamen says. "But it seemed important, so someone tell me why I'm here."

"We're going to need to stick around New York for the next three to nine months," I say as firmly as I can manage.

"Okay," Jamen says slowly.

"Good," I agree without elaborating.

I think we're all lucky I didn't get arrested after what happened to Kenton.

I was almost up the steps of the bus when Hawk caught me around the middle. He passed me off to Marcus and had his own moment getting Kenton settled.

Hawk made sure they understand Kenton has someone watching out for him now, and he did it without ending up in handcuffs. Which might have been more efficient than what I was daydreaming of doing.

"We are going to be adding to the family if all goes well," Hawk says, leaning forward in his chair. "We'd love it if you'd give a character statement at our adoption hearing and maybe write a letter to the court on our behalf."

"No fucking way." Jamen laughs, shaking his head. "I am going to be a grandpa again. You assholes had me nervous. I thought someone offered you a better contract."

Tears stream down my face as an embarrassing sob rattles in my chest. It's taken nearly eleven months, including three months of surprise home visits. We've dumped thousands of dollars into lawyer fees. We had a quick courthouse wedding

that seemed much less important than actually reaching this moment.

“You’re kind of snotting in my hair,” Kenton says, patting my arm awkwardly.

“Old people are so embarrassing,” Declan Clark says, waving a hand for Kenton to come over to him and the other kids.

I stand up, but I’m all wobbly.

“I love you, little one.” Hawk pulls me into his chest as I try to get ahold of my emotions.

“I thought they were going to put it off again,” I choke out.

“Someone’s getting close to her heat,” Marcus teases, wrapping his arms around me from behind.

“I’m fine,” I say, turning to kiss him.

I catch sight of Lyric, Love, their pack, Sheena and Jamen, and I almost burst into tears again.

It means so much to have all of them here.

There have been so many ups and downs and scary moments where there were delays, but it’s official.

Kenton has joined the Graves pack.

“Shall we do this?” Liam asks, yanking at his tie.

“It’s a shit show out there.” Sullivan rolls up his shirt sleeves. Damn, maybe my heat is creeping up because I lick my lips, suddenly focused on his thick forearms.

Luckily, we can now legally relocate to our house in Colorado. We’ll be in the same neighborhood as Lyric, Love, and Sheena. Kenton has spent the last few months getting to know his cousins Ravvi and Damian, as well as Love’s kids along with Declan. He’ll have plenty of family falling over themselves to keep him during my heats.

It’s crazy how quickly life dreams can change.

All I wanted was to make a name for myself in the music industry. Sullivan heads over, scooping Kenton up, and it

becomes pretty clear our purpose in life has shifted. We're going to ensure he grows up knowing he's loved and safe.

To do better than the parents that failed us.

As our friends and family join our sides to brave the insanity of the paparazzi, I'm pretty damn sure we'll make that a reality.

Or at the very least, only screw up as much as any other loving parents.

"All right alphas, put your game faces on and gather around." Lyric grabs my arm pulling me closer to the women and other kids.

"I do love it when I have an excuse to body check people," Vince Riggs says, kissing Love before shoving her toward the inside of the group.

"Okay, assholes. Let's get this over with." Marcus smirks, winking at me.

"Did no one take me seriously when I asked that we all clean up the language?" Hawk asks.

"Dude, keep dreaming." Lachlan laughs like that's the most ridiculous thing he's ever heard.

"We're ready to move." Storm waves a hand from the door.

Well, we might not get everything right, but I do think the future looks bright for the next generation.

Thank you!!

This one doesn't have as many epilogues as some of my books. That was a purposeful choice since I plan to do the next generation books at some point, and I didn't want to spoil any surprises. I received more requests for Marcus's story than any other OV character. I hope you're all satisfied with his redemption.

I really appreciate all of your support!!

If you enjoyed, or even if you didn't please consider leaving a review.

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