

*Winter's*

**HEAT**

ALICE CLYDE

# WINTER'S HEAT

A Standalone RH Omegaverse Christmas  
Romance

ALICE CLYDE



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Epilogue

## Winter's Heat

With Christmas on the way, I'm getting ready to revamp the bakery my dad left me  
but my "family" has plans of their own.

My stepmother wants to sell *me* as well as the house I grew up in.

Bruised and broken, I take my chance to escape her but end up getting caught in a  
snowstorm. Cold and nearly frozen, with no place to hide, I wonder if this is the  
end for me.

That's when I run into Jacob and his brothers.

A dark aura surrounds them, especially around the one who has scars marring his  
face.

I promise them *anything* as long as they help me get out of town and away from my  
stepmother.

They assume I'm a hooker and I'm willing to play the part as long as they take me  
far away from the people who're hellbent on destroying me.

I never cared for the protection of a pack but their sinful scents make me forget all  
my reasons.

Can a Christmas miracle save me and my precious bakery or will I end up at the  
mercy of my conniving stepmother once again?

Find out in this heart-throbbing RH omegaverse romance story between a young  
omega and a pack of older ex-military billionaire alphas!

If you like your Christmas romances hot and steamy with a generous dash of  
sweetness, you're going to love this one. So, grab a mug of hot chocolate and enjoy  
this Christmas romance omegaverse standalone! A happily-ever-after is guaranteed!



## Winter

Wisps of snow drift toward me as the wind picks up. My breath turns into a mist before quickly dissipating into the frigid atmosphere. Digging my gloved hands into my pocket, I stride down the street with a grin on my face.

Christmas is only a couple of weeks away!

The houses lining both sides of the suburban street are decked in bright gold, red, and green lights. They're all competing with one another, trying to outshine the others with their festive decorations.

The chilly air makes my eyes water but the sight of beautifully lit Christmas trees peeking through the windows makes me smile. *Christmas is almost here*, I think excitedly as the fragrance of wood smoke wafts into my nostrils.

This has always been my favorite time of the year.

Ever since I can remember, my Christmases were spent in the kitchen of the small bakery that my parents ran. I learned to sing carols while watching my parents mix, knead, and ice gingerbread houses and sugar cookies.

An ache goes through my chest as I catch glimpses of families gathering by the fireplace in their living room. Christmas is almost here but my parents are forever gone.

“Winter! Hello?! Winter!” A loud voice chanting my name breaks me out of my thoughts.

Turning around, I catch sight of a familiar figure in the distance.

“Carol, hey!” I call out, waving at my friend.

Reaching her doorstep, I take a closer look at her disheveled hair and worn-out makeup. She’s dressed in a crumpled dark suit but her feet are encased in thick, fuzzy boots.

“Did you just get home from work?” I ask.

“Yeah,” she replies with a sigh. “What about you, though? Why were you so spaced out?” Her gaze narrows. “Is something bothering you?”

I shake my head and smile. “That giant Santa and his reindeer distracted me,” I lie easily.

Carol stares at the house which has a huge plastic blown-up Santa perched over the top of the chimney. An amused chuckle escapes her as she shakes her head.

“Mom, is that Winter?” A small voice sounds from the inner halls of the house.

“Yep, it’s her!” Carol shouts. “Come over here and say hello to her.”

Next moment, a girl of seven comes pattering toward me. Dressed in a red woolen dress and matching shoes, she

looks heart-wrenchingly cute.

“Hi, Winter!” she says with an excited grin. Hugging me around the waist, she takes a deep whiff. “Mmm...you smell like cookies. Are you coming back from the bakery?”

“Yep. And, guess what? I’ve got some treats for you.”

The child’s eyes light up at once. She eagerly reaches for the big red bag in my hand as I hold it out to her.

Carol snorts. “Did you seriously bring that for Aggie?”

I shrug. “She’ll appreciate it more, so I’m letting her have them.” Turning toward Aggie, I gently caress the top of her head. “Make sure you share them with Owen.”

“Thank you!” Aggie gushes, hugging me around the waist once more. With that, she turns away and runs back inside the house.

Carol’s face turns somber. “So, how are things at the bakery?”

“To be honest, it’s hard with just me and Johnson managing everything,” I say with a sigh. “The good news, though, is that our old patrons are coming back. They’re saying our cakes still taste the same. We’re hoping that word will spread and bring in more customers. If we can make a good profit over Christmas, we’ll be able to hire more people to work for us. Until then, we keep up the grind.”

“Does Laura still refuse to help?” Carol asks in a grim tone.

“Yeah,” I say as sadness pinches my heart. “She wants me to sell the bakery and use the money to pay for Ashley’s



college tuition.”

Carol scoffs. “What about *your* college tuition? You should be in an omega academy and training for your future. It’s not your responsibility to take care of your stepmother and stepsister.”

“I wish Laura could understand what the bakery means to me,” I say, opening up to Carol. She’s several years older than me but we’ve been friends since I was as young as sweet Aggie. She was my babysitter and has been a constant support since my mom died when I was eleven.

“Your stepmother doesn’t give a shit about you,” she says, looking angry. “Laura took advantage of David’s grief and lured him into marrying her by promising to be a good mom to you. He believed her because she had a daughter of her own. It’s horrible how he left you with them.”

Her words remind me of the sudden heart attack that took him away from me. Tears sting my eyes and I struggle to hide my emotions from Carol.

“Laura and Ashley are still my family,” I say, swallowing a choke. “That’s the reason I’m desperate for this to work out. When Laura sees that the bakery can turn up a good profit, she’ll start supporting me.”

Concern swirls in her eyes. “You should protect yourself,” she says. “Don’t trust Laura too much. Whatever profit you make, save it up for yourself.” Moving forward, she wraps her arms around me.

The subtle scent of sweet peaches wafts into my nostrils as I hug her back.

“I wish you could have an alpha to protect you,” she says with a soft smile as she caresses my hair the way she used to when I was a child. “Your parents would’ve done anything to send you to a reputed omega academy to train you into becoming a perfect match for one of those amazing packs that adore their omega. You deserve that, you know?”

A chuckle escapes me. “I’d rather be a beta like you and work my ass off to build my own future. I don’t want to depend on anybody but myself.”

Her grin broadens. “Looks like I was able to teach you something after all.” She lets out a sigh and glances back toward the house. “I wish my kids would learn the value of hard work too.”

Grasping her hands, I squeeze them. “Of course, they will. You’re their mom, you know. They watch you and learn from you every day. I honestly have no worries about them.”

A blast of wind blows at us, making her curse out.

“Ugh! You need to get your ass home before the storm hits,” Carol says, stepping behind the threshold.

“Yeah,” I say, moving away a stray strand from my eyes. “Catch you later!” Waving at her, I walk back toward the street.

A thin layer of snow is forming over the houses and the bare tree branches. Pulling the hood of my jacket tighter around my head, I quicken my pace to reach home.

A smile hovers over my lips. Even if the weather is bad, I’m looking forward to doing my favorite thing in the world.

Which is to make some hot chocolate, sit near the window in my room, and read a book.

I'd like to sit by the Christmas tree in the living room but the space is usually occupied by Laura and her boyfriend, Pete. They make me feel like an outsider even though I've been living in the same house since I was born.

Ashley, my stepsister, rarely hangs around at home. She prefers to party with her friends every night and spends most nights at one of their houses.

All through high school, Ashley pretended not to know me at all. She usually warmed up to me at home to help her with homework but beyond that, we never developed a deeper relationship.

Deep within, I know Laura and Ashley don't care about me but I'm desperate to hang onto the semblance of a family.

The other reason is that the moment I leave, Laura would happily sell On The Rise, the bakery that my parents ran. Other than the money she'd receive for the prime spot it stands on, it holds no value to her.

Our home comes into my view the moment I go around a bend in the road. It's one of the very few houses that has barely any lights or decorations on it.

Pete, Laura's partner, is lazy and refuses to do any work in and around the house. Laura doesn't care much for Christmas decorations either. With working full-time at the bakery, I haven't had a chance to put up the lights yet this year.

Suppressing my disappointment, I walk ahead.

Reaching the house, I unlock the front door and head inside.

The darkened corridor leading to the living room is warm and dry. I relish in the quiet space for a moment before walking further inside.

Familiar voices drift from upstairs as I enter the living room. Recognizing it to be Laura and Pete's voices, I ignore them and move toward the kitchen.

Opening the fridge, I look around for something to eat.

As usual, there's barely any cooked food. So, I grab the half-eaten loaf of bread and move toward the counter to make myself a peanut butter sandwich.

Low rumbles of thunder sound in the distance as I pour milk into a saucepan. A shudder goes through me as I think of the approaching storm. Hopefully, it wouldn't be bad enough to mess up the wonderful decorations that the neighbors have put up this year.

When I'm done cooking, I carry my sandwich and the cup of hot chocolate back to the living room. Since I can still hear Laura and Pete's voices from upstairs, I decide to hide here.

I'm about to put down my tray on the coffee table by the couch when something catches my eye. There are several brochures scattered there along with some legal documents. A laptop sits right on top of them.

Curious, I pull one of the brochures toward me. There are pictures of houses, restaurants, and shopping malls on it with details regarding location and pricing. Next, I pick up the

flashy pamphlets lying around and catch the name of a local construction company.

What's Laura doing with these?

As far as I know, Pete works at a nearby supermarket and has nothing to do with contractors and construction companies. My gaze falls on the legal-looking documents next. Picking up the thick stack, I sit down on the couch.

My eyes widen as I read the first page. It's a deed to the house with my name on it. Flipping to the next page, I find an official document that says that I'm of legal age and handing my property over to my stepmother!

"What the actual fuck?" I whisper, staring at the page.

Laura never brought up anything about selling the house before. What the hell is she up to?

Turning my gaze toward the laptop, I pick it up and open it.

There are several documents open on the screen that look like bids.

My mind whirs.

*"You should protect yourself,"* Carol's voice rings in my head. *"Don't trust Laura too much."*

From everything laid out on the table before me, I can come to only one single conclusion. My stepmother wants me to pass on the house to her so she can sell it to some bidder who would break it down brick by brick and build something else on its grave.

"No way," I hiss, balling my hands into fists.

My heart clenches painfully to think of my home being torn down. Even though the living room no longer looks like how my mother left it, there are still signs of her existence here. The painting of wildflowers mounted on the wall was done by her. The elegant pale-pink cushion covers were hand-crocheted by her. The smudge on the beige wallpaper is from the time I threw a bowl of mashed broccoli at it...

Tears cloud my eyes. How could Laura even think of doing something like this without telling me?

How long has she been planning this? How long did it take to gather all this information? Have lawyers been involved? Where would we go after selling this house? Would Laura even care to bring me along wherever she goes next?

Questions circle my mind as the pit in my stomach grows heavier.

I need to speak to her at this very moment.

Following the sound of voices, I march upstairs.

“Winter will go into heat any day now,” Laura’s voice immediately makes me pause outside her bedroom door.

“How do you know?” Pete’s voice filters out through the partly open door. “Don’t omegas usually stay on blockers and suppressors?”

Laura makes a derisive noise in her throat. “I changed her medications two weeks ago,” she says, chuckling hard. “Winter’s not too bright, you see. She’s been cramming those pills every morning without realizing I’ve replaced the suppressants with over-the-counter vitamin tablets.”

“Wow,” Pete breathes, sounding impressed. “You’ve thought it all out.”

“Yep. I just need her heat to strike and we’ll hand her over to Luciano’s men,” she says. “It’s still hard to believe that selling an omega will fetch us more money than selling a house like this.”

“Is it really that amazing to fuck an omega?” Pete asks in a low thoughtful tone.

She smacks his arm, looking furious. “Don’t you dare get any ideas!” she screams. “I promised an untouched omega to Luciano. He’ll kill us if we cheat him.”

Ice flows through my veins as I continue listening to Laura’s plan.

She and her daughter have bullied me every single day since my dad died five years ago. I never complained even when she used up all the money Dad left us to pamper her daughter.

*They’re my family*, I kept telling myself while working a part-time job and helping at the bakery to keep it running.

Laura never thought of me as a daughter. As if selling this house wasn’t enough, she wants to sell me too.

Her betrayal hurts so bad, I have to clutch my chest. Tears pour down my cheeks as I think of my dad. I can only imagine the pain he’d be feeling if he was watching this scene right now.

My stepmother’s shrill voice grows louder. Footsteps come closer toward me but I remain stoic like a statue, standing still at the threshold.

A loud gasp makes me look up.

Laura stands by the door with Pete. She's wearing a tight black pencil skirt that stretches unflatteringly across her pot belly. Her dirty-blond hair is styled into loose curls and there's bright makeup on her face.

She must've gone out to a lawyer's office or a mobster's den to have changed out of her usual tight pants and leopard-print kimono tops.

"What are you doing here?" Laura asks, her mouth crumpling into a frown.

"This is my home," I choke out the answer. "Where else would I be this late in the evening?"

Laura looks like she's about to throw an insult at me but Pete lays a hand on her shoulder. Something passes between them as they glance at each other.

My stepmother wipes the scowl from her face and forces a smile on her coral-painted lips. Her fake expression sickens me.

"How long have you been home?" she asks.

"Long enough to have heard what you've been planning to do with me."

Her face pales immediately. She glances toward her boyfriend who looks just as worried as her.

Turning away from the pair, I stomp down the corridor.

"Winter, wait!" Pete shouts, coming after me.

When I continue walking away, he grabs my elbow. "I told you to stop!"



“Why should I stop?” I shout, throwing his hand off me. “I was a fucking idiot to trust people like you. How could you think about selling this house? How could you even think about selling me?”

Laura comes forward. “You’re taking this the wrong way, honey,” she says in a sickeningly sweet voice. “You should’ve allowed me to explain the arrangement instead of eavesdropping at our door like this. Then, you’d have understood why we’re doing this. It’s all for your benefit, sweetie.”

“My benefit?” I hiss.

“Luciano is a powerful man in this town,” Laura says in a grim tone. “He’ll keep you safe.”

I scoff. “Why would he care about me? He doesn’t even think of me as a human being. I’ll just be an object he bought off you. He’ll throw me away the moment he gets tired of me.”

“You’re too young to understand what’s good for you.” Stepping closer, she grabs my wrist. “Just do as we say. You turned eighteen last year, so you can legally pass on the property to me so I can look after it better.”

A hollow chuckle escapes me. “Look after it? You’re going to fucking sell it!”

She gapes at me. I rarely curse, keeping it all inside my head even when she and her daughter piss me off. They make me do every chore around the house from cooking dinner to doing everyone’s laundry. Most days, I took it in my stride, telling myself they were still my family.

Laura broke that misconception today. I'm not going to let her get away with her evil plans any longer.

Turning away from her, I march downstairs to reach the living room.

"Winter, wait up!" Laura calls out from behind me.

"We'll sell the house to a construction company who wants to turn it into a bed-and-breakfast," she keeps talking. "I'll let you keep a portion of the money," she adds, thinking that would be a good enough bribe for me to let her have the house.

Moving toward the table, I grab the pamphlets and throw them on the floor. "I'm not signing over anything to you. If you don't like living here, you can leave."

Next moment, Pete steps forward and strikes me across the face.

The slap leaves me dazed for a few moments.

My skin stings from the hard hit. My body trembles as I look up at the man.

Even though Laura started dating him barely three months after my father died, he never interfered with her daughter or me. This sudden change in his demeanor shocks me into silence.

He slaps a document at my chest. "You will sign these or I'll show you the way you'll get punished by Luciano if you ever disobey him."

I glance at Laura. She's breathing hard but choosing to stay silent.

A piece of my heart breaks.

I knew she didn't love me. I was, after all, a reminder of the second husband she lost. However, I always considered her my family. I never thought she would betray me and the memory of my father this way.

Pete forces a pen in my hand. "Sign in the places with the pencil marks."

My hand shakes...in fact, my whole body trembles. Fat teardrops roll down my cheeks. Everything I've ever held dear was being snatched from me.

Lightning flashes in the darkening sky outside. Next second, an ear-splitting thunder growls, making us all jump.

In that split moment, I'm on my feet, pushing past Pete and heading to the front door.

My sudden flight buys me a few seconds as I dash toward the front door. Wrenching it open, I run out into the snowstorm.

"Get back here!" Pete's thunderous roar chases me.

I don't even turn back to look behind me, running as fast as I can toward the woods that stretch behind the houses of the neighborhood.

The wind growls in my ears and the snow stings my eyes and cheeks but I don't stop. After a few minutes, I switch directions, dashing into the dark undergrowth to hide from Pete.

My heart pounds in my chest. Nestling into a hollow space in the ground, I keep a watch over the backyard of the

neighboring houses. Snow continues to blow all around me, soaking the white dress I'm wearing.

This is the moment I realize I've left my gloves and jacket at home. Looking at my feet, I see that I'm wearing a pair of flimsy house slippers. Shit!

"Winter!" A rough male voice calls out my name. "Where the hell are you?"

Pete's voice sounds far away but it still makes me cower in fear. The cold makes me shiver but I stay crouched in my hiding hole.

I can't go back to the house where Laura and Pete will be waiting for me to return. They'll eventually break me and make me sign those legal papers before giving me away to the gangsters who terrorize the streets of this town.

The minutes tick by as my mind whirrs.

My teeth chatter from the cold but I still haven't come up with a plan yet. My phone is lying inside one of my coat's pockets, so I can't even call anyone for help. I could probably go to Carol's house and hide there, but it'd be the first place Laura and Pete would check on to find me.

Concern swirls inside me as I mull over the idea of asking Carol for help.

Laura and Pete have gotten involved with mobsters now. I can't lead them to Carol who's singlehandedly raising two young children. She'd jump in to protect me but I don't want her to bear such a burden.

The cold is becoming too much for me to bear. If I don't find a place to take shelter, I'd die in this snowstorm.

Out of choice, I walk out of my hiding spot and edge back toward the street.

There's not a soul to be seen anywhere as the storm rages around me. The glinting Christmas lights turn hazy in the thick snow flurries. I'm barely able to see anything as I walk down the street.

Laura and Pete must've already given up on searching for me in this weather.

The small relief doesn't do much to stem the flow of bitter tears that cascade down my cheeks. I still haven't come up with a plan on what to do next.

Suddenly, I'm blinded by a flash of intense bright light.

I throw up my hands in defense, realizing that I'm seconds away from being hit by a car.

Tires screech on the gravel as the car comes to a stop just inches from my knees. My legs tremble and I collapse on the ground, the shock still working through my system.

I hear the car door open and quick footsteps approaching me. The car's headlights make it difficult for me to see who's standing over me.

"Are you okay?" an unfamiliar male voice asks.

I shiver hard, my teeth chattering. Gulping thickly, I try to find my voice. Before I can say anything, the man gets onto his knees and takes a closer look at me.

While I peer at the stranger, a different set of hands touch me.

Rough, calloused palms lift my face but they're gentle.  
My breath hitches as I stare into a pair of deep brown eyes.  
Somehow, even in that dazed state of mind, I know I can trust  
this man. Call it intuition. Call it pure insanity.

My next words tumble out of my trembling lips.  
“Please...save me.”



## Kai

Heavy clouds blanket the sky outside the mansion. Gusts of wind sway the bare tree branches, blowing in wisps of snow through the open window of the entrance hall.

A snowstorm is about to unleash its fury tonight.

I'm glad the directors' dinner has come to an end. We can finally get out of here and be on our way home before the storm hits.

"Mr. Drake," a soft feminine voice calls from behind me.

Turning around, I see Olivia Du Pont, the heiress to a private oil company, standing before me. Dressed in a golden-hued mermaid gown, she looks like a dream. Her blond hair hangs in an elaborate braid down the side of her neck while her face is painted with the most sophisticated makeup.

"How can I help you, Miss Du Pont?" I ask in a polite tone.

"Mr. Drake...Kai," she says softly with a nervous chuckle. "Would you like to share a drink with me?"

"Sure," I say, gesturing toward a passing valet.

When the valet comes over to us, I grab the non-alcoholic fruit punch.

She notices immediately. “Don’t you drink alcohol?” she asks, picking up a flute of champagne.

“I’ll be driving my brothers home tonight, so I need to watch how much I drink,” I reply, raising my glass to her.

She takes a sip of her drink and bats her long, thick lashes at me.

I feel people’s weighted gaze on me. Olivia Du Pont’s interest in me has stoked their curiosity.

Most of the men and women gathered in these halls are billionaires but they still feel competitive against an ex-military guy like me. Despite owning the same amount of money as them, they still treat me and my brothers as outsiders.

While these inherited their wealth from their parents and grandparents, my brothers and I have given our blood, sweat, and tears to stand where we are today.

My brothers and I dress in the same kind of luxurious tailored clothes as them but our hands aren’t as soft and manicured as theirs. Our faces and bodies bear the mark of the atrocities we’ve seen and experienced.

I catch a pair of older men throwing snide glances at me as they pass by. Reigning in the annoyance every time I’m around these entitled pricks, I focus on the woman before me.

“Miss Du Pont—”



She shakes her head and touches my arm. “Call me Olivia.”

“Olivia,” I say with a nod.

“Would you like to stay back tonight?” she asks with a flirtatious look in her kohl-rimmed eyes. Moving closer, she grazes her nose along my neck. “You can avoid the cold and snow and stay nice and toasty in my bed.”

A note of lilac wafts into my nostrils. Olivia smells as delicate as she looks but I steel myself against her advances.

“What about my brothers?” I whisper, staring back at her with a challenging look.

Her gaze swings toward Cole in the distance. He’s dressed in an identical black suit like me, looking as suave as the rest of the crowd here but the chilly aura emanating from him keeps people away.

“He’s scary,” she says, failing to hide her discomfort at the sight of him. “How did he get those awful scars?” A shudder goes through her as she looks away from him.

I glance toward Cole, taking in the thick scars that mar his handsome face. “He got captured by the enemy while trying to save me during a mission,” I explain in a grim tone. “He’s the reason I’m standing here without a scratch on me.”

Olivia’s expression doesn’t change. Her dainty nose twists as she takes another look at Cole.

A hint of disappointment stabs me.

Olivia’s not the first woman to stare at Cole with such fear and disgust.

It's almost tragic to think of the past. He'd always been the most beautiful among us three brothers. With long silver-blond hair and icy-blue eyes, he attracted every girl's attention to him.

"What about Jacob?" I ask her.

She looks in the far corner where my eldest brother is immersed in a serious conversation with three elderly men.

Olivia rolls her eyes. "He's been stuck to my grandad and his investors for the whole evening. Jacob's handsome, I guess, but he's so damn boring." Sidling up beside me, she wounds her arm around mine. "I like you the best, Kai."

A grimace forms on my lips despite her compliment.

I'm the youngest in our pack. The only reason my face and body are flawless is because my elder brothers have always been there to watch my back. Jacob has always been the one to carry the weight of the pack on his shoulders while Cole doesn't think twice before jumping into danger to save my ass.

I could never care for a woman who looked at my brothers with such contempt.

"So, what'd you say?" Olivia says, squeezing my arm.

I unwind my arm from hers and step back. "I appreciate the offer but I must get going before the storm hits," I say in a polite but cool tone.

Olivia frowns, her cheeks turning redder.

With a nod, I turn away and walk toward Cole.

My brother stares at me with an indifferent look as I approach him.

“Ready to go home?” I ask.

Swirling the whiskey in his glass, he pushes away from the wall. “I never wanted to come in the first place,” he says in a cold tone. “I don’t know why you guys bothered dragging me here.”

“It’s so fucking close to Christmas,” I say, forcing a happy grin on my face. “We had to get you out of the house so you’d know what season it is. Besides, aren’t you glad to be around some company that’s not me or Jacob?”

A sneer forms on his lips that deepens the scars on his face. “I hate company.” He gestures toward Olivia in the distance. “She seemed interested in you.”

I shrug. “She was kind of dull,” I lie easily. “Anyway, how about we make a start? I don’t want to get stranded on the road in the middle of a fucking blizzard.”

A spark lights up in his icy-blue eyes. Gesturing toward a valet, he thrusts his half-filled glass on the tray and walks toward Jacob.

“Hello, gentlemen,” Cole says in a deep voice.

The three men turn around to face him. Their instant reaction is one of shock but they’re quick to hide it.

“We were just finishing up our discussion on their upcoming trade show,” Jacob explains.

“It’s best if you continue it on another day,” I say. “The weather will continue to worsen. If we don’t make a move

right away, we'll be stuck here for the rest of the night.”

Jacob glances toward the open windows of the foyer. The cold breeze blowing in makes him dig his hands inside his coat's pockets.

“I guess you're right,” he mutters. Turning toward our patrons, he adds, “You can visit our office in the coming week and we can finalize the security details for the event.”

“Will do,” says one of the Du Pont men.

I give them a nod and lead the way out of the hall.

“Did you ask the valets to get our car to the front?” Cole asks as we step out of the door.

“Yep.”

“Good. I hate this cold weather.”

A chuckle escapes me. “The Ice King says he hates the cold,” I tease him.

Jacob slaps Cole's back, making him grind his teeth in annoyance. He can glare at strangers all he wants but when he's among us, he has to deal with our teasing.

Snow flurries drift down on us as we descend the steps of the mansion.

Our silver Mercedes is waiting for us, accompanied by a valet in a maroon uniform. He tilts his head as we draw nearer and opens the door to the front passenger seat.

“Let's get out of here,” Cole mutters, rushing toward the car.

I slide into the driver's seat while my brothers climb into the back.

"Comfy?" I ask, glancing back at my brothers.

"Just drive," Cole mumbles as he rests his head against Jacob's shoulder.

"It looks like the weather's going to get worse," Jacob says, staring at the drifting wisps of snow. "Drive slow if you need to."

"Don't worry, Dad," I say as I step on the gas and drive down the snow-dusted path that leads to the mansion's gates.

A relaxed sigh escapes me as we move onto the deserted road.

This late at night, the expressway is nearly empty. Our home is an hour's drive away, a good distance from the main town of Syracuse.

All three of us enjoy our solitude, so we bought an old, abandoned manor on top of a hill. The woods and hills all around it gave us the best view money could buy. So, we renovated it and moved in some of our staff to guard the place.

The snow flurries get thicker as we drive through the suburban streets of Knightswood, a quaint town that sits right outside the city limits. I take a moment to enjoy the fantastic Christmas decorations on some of the houses here and internally hope they'll survive the storm that's coming tonight.

My eyes suddenly detect a movement on the road ahead.

I step on the brake hard, bringing the car to a sudden stop before it can hit the creature that'd suddenly come onto

the road.

“What the fuck was that?” Cole yells.

“I’m not sure,” I say, unable to see clearly through the thick-falling snow and the misted windshield.

“I think it’s a person,” Jacob says in a grim tone. Next moment, he opens the door to his side and walks out.

My heart pounds in my chest as I realize how close I’d come to hitting the hunched figure. What were they thinking? Were they deliberately trying to cause an accident?

Anger rises swiftly within me.

Opening the door to my side, I walk out to take a look.

A delicious fragrance hits me the moment I step outside. Vanilla, mixed with a heady floral scent, intrigues my senses. My head turns in every direction, trying to find the source.

It’s a moment before I realize the addictive scent is coming from the person on the ground. Jacob is crouched beside them, shielding them from my view.

Moving forward, I see that it’s a frail woman.

She’s dressed in a white dress that’s soaked through, giving me a glimpse of the pink bra she wore underneath. Tendrils of sunshine-blond hair fall all around her shoulders, curtaining her face from view. My anger slips away as I take in her trembling body.

Falling to my knees before her, I gently lay my palms on her cheeks and lift her face to me. A bluish hue spreads on her horribly pale skin. She has luscious lips but they’re a shade of

a sickly blue too. If she didn't have the look of pure terror on her face, she'd be quite beautiful.

Blinking through snow-laden dark lashes, the stranger stares up at me.

Something slams within me as I meet her gaze. "Are you okay?" I ask in a deep, rough voice.

She simply stares at me, swallowing hard. Her green eyes look deep into mine, causing me to pause.

My nostrils flare, desperate to breathe in more of her addictive scent. The fragrance of vanilla, tinged with that of roses, sweetens the air around her.

Omega...My heart pounds in my chest as my gaze drops down to her lips.

"Please...save me." Her trembling hands clutch onto my arm. "Please, Sir. Save me."

"Are you hurt?" Jacob asks, making her turn toward him.

I take a closer look at her while she's distracted with him.

In the beam of the car's headlights, I notice the dark bruise on her left cheek. Someone has definitely hurt her. A closer look reveals how young she is. Even though her body is womanly with soft, rounded curves, a touch of innocence still lingers in her eyes.

An ache slices through me. Who could've done this to her?

“Please get me away from here,” she says in an anguished voice. “If they find me, they’ll take me away.”

It’s strange to see a young omega on her own in the middle of a deserted street. Her addictive fragrance wrapping around me makes me doubt if she’s bothered using a de-scenter.

*Is she a hooker?* I wonder, taking in her wet clothes that cling to her seductive body. She’s gorgeous enough to be a highly paid escort but something isn’t adding up.

What would someone like her be doing in the middle of a deserted street with a snowstorm on the way? She barely has anything warm on her. Her soaked clothes and trembling body are proof enough that something horrible happened to her.

“Please, Sir,” she begs, tightening her hold on Jacob’s arm. “I’ll do anything...anything. Please just get me far away from here.”

Anything?

The wild wolf within me raises its head at her offer. Is she aware of the implications of that word? A young omega promising she’d do absolutely anything for the two alphas before her.

The beast within me growls appreciatively. It’ll do anything to get a taste of this beautiful, innocent prey.

*Stop it*, I chide myself to quell the possessiveness that arises within me. *She’s hurt*.

“Give me your hand,” Jacob says in a deep voice.

She extends her arm out and places her hand in his.



He pulls her to her feet but she stumbles the next moment, nearly crashing into his chest.

“Be careful!” I gasp, feeling a strange protectiveness for her.

“She’s cold and hurt,” Jacob says in a low, grim tone. Bending down, he sweeps her into his arms and walks toward the car. “Come on, Kai. Let’s get her out of here before she freezes to death.”

Hurrying after him, I open the door to the back passenger seat. The blast of warm air that hits my face makes me glad for the heated, dry interiors of our car. They’ll help her feel better soon.

“What the—who’s this—” Cole starts to say but falls silent within seconds. His icy-blue eyes widen as his nostrils flare. It’s easy to see that he’s just as affected by the strange omega’s perfume as I was.

Relief spreads over the young woman’s face as she nestles against Jacob’s lap. “Thank you,” she whispers. Her eyelashes flutter momentarily before they close completely.

“Don’t fall asleep,” Jacob says in a stern voice.

“Just a second,” she moans. “I’m just so tired...”

“Wake up!” Jacob shouts, shaking her awake.

Opening her eyes, she stares at him with a confused look.

“Drive,” Jacob says in a commanding tone. “We need to get her home now.”

The urgency in his voice propels me to settle into my seat and step on the gas.

“What’s your name?” Jacob asks when a few minutes have passed.

“Winter,” she whispers. “Winter Brown.”

“I’m Jacob Drake and the other man you met was my brother, Kai.”

Winter gives a short nod.

“And this is Cole. He’s my brother too.”

Cole instinctively turns his face away from her. He’s trying to appear aloof but deep within, he’s just trying not to scare her.

“How old are you?” Jacob asks.

“I’m twenty.”

I’m glad Jacob is asking her these questions. They will keep her alert and conscious until we reach home.

“Is your home far from here?” she asks, pulling me out of my thoughts.

“Yeah, it’s about an hour’s drive from this town.”

I glance back at her to gauge her reaction to that information.

A sad but determined look comes over her. “Good,” she mutters as if to herself. “I’ll be far away from them.”

Winter is proving to be a mystery. I don’t even know if it’s her real name. She could be lying to get us to help her run

away from the people who hurt her and left her to die in a snowstorm.

Even though I can see through her wet clothes, it's her secrets I want to pry open. *That's not going to be difficult*, I decide. After all, she's promised to do anything for us.



## Winter

The stranger's arms hold me securely against him as the car speeds away from town. Heat radiates off him, making me stay put on his lap.

A mix of scents wafts around me, making me feel surprisingly safe and comforted. The fear I'd felt earlier seeps away, allowing me to breathe better. The heat in the car seems to grow hotter as I stare up at the man through my lashes.

He's well-built with the broadest shoulders I've ever seen. The thick muscles in his arms bulge through the fitted, tailored shirt he's wearing. Dark stubble covers his strong chin. There's something wild about his tan skin and the way his dark hair falls into his silvery eyes. If I had to guess, I'd say he was in his early thirties.

"What's your name?" I ask in a meek tone.

"Jacob," he answers me in a deep voice that reverberates through me. Gesturing at the quiet, brooding man on our left, he says, "This is Cole, my younger brother."

Cole doesn't bother turning toward me at the mention of his name. He fixedly stares at the bleak snowy scenery passing

us by. Even in the dim lighting of the car, I can see the thick scars running down the side of his face.

A tinge of trepidation spreads through me at the sight. What kind of trouble did he get into that left him with such scars?

If I'd met him under any other circumstance, I'd be scared of him. At this moment though, I'm fleeing from worse monsters. My stepmother and her partner have flawless skin, but they're the worst people I've known in my entire life.

"That's Kai," Jacob's voice distracts me from my thoughts. "He's my youngest brother."

"Hi," Kai greets with a backward glance. His deep brown eyes are warm as he grins at me.

A ghost of a smile spreads on my frozen lips.

Jacob and Kai are both the most beautiful men I've ever laid eyes on. Their tailor-cut tuxes give them a polished look but their strong, muscular physique tells me they're hardened men who're not to be messed with. Even though they've been extremely gentle with me, I can feel the aura of power radiating off them.

They're both alphas.

I glance toward Cole. If he's their brother, he must've been a handsome man too. Shafts of long silvery strands curtain most of his face, hiding the majority of his scars from me.

What kind of alphas were they?

They stopped in the middle of a deserted street to pick up a strange woman. Did they usually do this sort of thing? Or maybe they don't feel any threat from a weak girl like me and just want to help me?

Taking a shuddering breath, I look down at myself.

My white dress is completely soaked through, making the pink of my bra and panties visible through them.

Jacob and Kai must've noticed it too.

Warmth floods my belly and I have to press my thighs tightly to stop the sudden throbbing tingles spreading down there.

What did these men think about me?

I was a lone girl they'd picked up on a dark, deserted street. My dress hadn't looked so provocative this morning when I wore it to work. Paired with a denim jacket and knee-high boots, it'd looked decent enough.

*"Please, Sir,"* my pleading voice rings in my mind, reminding me of the way I'd begged Jacob and Kai. *"I'll do anything...anything."*

With nowhere to hide, I'd promised them anything as long as they got me out of Knightswood. There's no way I can return home without a lawyer who could get me out of the vicious trap Laura and Pete had set for me.

At this moment, I have nothing.

No money, no power, no home...No lawyer would help me in such circumstances. I could go to the cops but what if they believe the twisted story Laura and Pete spin for them?

I glance toward Cole who's still avoiding me. Would he let his brothers help me if I asked for it?

A defeated sigh escapes me as I shake the idea out of my head.

Men like him and his brothers would probably send me back home to my stepmother and rid themselves of any trouble. I bite my bottom lip, thinking hard. Could I let them think what they were already assuming about me? That I was a hooker...

The car begins to slow down. Gazing out of the window, I catch sight of the silhouette of a mansion, standing darkly against the night sky.

Kai follows a winding uphill route until we come before a tall iron gate.

As the car approaches, the gates slide open automatically. I glimpse two security guards as we pass them by.

Even though it's dark, I can tell it's a lavish property. Bare trees line the brightly lit driveway that leads toward the manor in the distance. With bated breath, I wait to see what happens next.

Kai stops the car near the main front entrance.

Cole immediately opens the door to his side and walks out. Kai follows him but instead of heading toward the manor, he opens the door on Jacob's side.

"Will you be able to walk on your own?" Kai asks.

“Yeah, I think so.” I’m almost reluctant to get off Jacob’s lap as a blast of cold wind comes in through the open door. The warmth of the car almost made me forget about the chilly storm raging all around us. Gritting my teeth, I slide off him and climb out of the car.

My teeth chatter from the cold as I frantically blow on my hands.

“Shit! I forgot you’ve barely got anything on,” says Kai, hurrying to take off his coat.

Warmth engulfs me the moment he places the heavy overcoat on my shoulders. A delicious scent of oranges and cloves hits my nose, reminding me of spiced wine.

*So, that’s what he smells like,* I think to myself as a smile curves my lips.

“Come on,” Jacob says, coming to stand beside me. “Let’s get you inside.”

Draping an arm around my shoulders, he leads the way forward.

We walk up a short flight of stairs to reach the main doors of the Victorian-style manor. Kai walks on my other side, and together we step inside a glittering hall full of vintage paintings. A chandelier glitters overhead, bathing the luxurious interiors of my rescuers’ home.

I’ve never been inside a home that was as lavish as this manor. It looks like the foyer of a posh hotel, except there are no staff around.

Suddenly, I feel Jacob’s gaze on me. Looking away, I cross my arms over my chest, waiting to see what they do with



me next.

Jacob moves closer, hooking a finger under my chin and forcing me to look up at him.

His silvery-gray eyes look into mine, making my heart pound in my chest. It's not exactly fear but some unknown emotion I've never felt before.

"You don't look as awful as before," he says in a deep voice that reverberates through me. His nostrils flare as he leans close to me, the tip of his nose skimming along my neck. "Do you have any idea what could happen to an omega who doesn't use a de-scenter?"

Jacob's gives me an accusing stare.

Confusion flickers through me. I *always* use a de-scenter to mask my scent. How can he still catch my perfume? Did the snow fade away the spray's effects?

His gaze darkens, sending a thrill of danger through me.

"She needs a hot shower," Kai says, coming to my rescue. He grabs my wrist and pulls me alongside him. "Come with me."

I find Cole at the foot of a staircase as Kai leads me toward it. He watches me with cold eyes before following behind us.

Kai stops on the second floor and points along the corridor. "This way," he says, tugging at my wrist.

We pass by several closed doors until we stop at one at the end of the hallway.

"What is this place?" I ask as he pushes the door open.

“This is one of our guestrooms,” he says. “You’ll stay here tonight.”

Glancing backward, I find both Cole and Jacob right behind us. They’re both watching me, studying me as I stumble after Kai.

The room is spacious with a large bed taking up most of the space. Heat floods my cheeks as I wonder whether they’re thinking about getting into action right away.

“What were you doing all by yourself this late at night?” Jacob asks.

“Uhh...I was waiting for someone.”

The three brothers raise their eyebrows in an identical gesture. Cole’s scars make his face scarier but I don’t look away from him.

“They never came for me and I got mugged,” I quickly make up a lie. “But you know what? I can please you too.” Moving forward, I stand directly before Jacob. “I can show you a good time for helping me out.”

Jacob’s expression tightens.

“Show us what we’re working with here,” Kai says with a naughty grin and a challenging stare.

The intensity in their eyes sends a massive throb through my core. They’re complete strangers but my body is reacting to their every gesture. Pressing my thighs together, I try to quell the sudden hunger in my pussy.

The fragrance of sweet vanilla rises in the air, reminding me of a regular day at the bakery. *It’s not the cakes, it’s you, I*

suddenly realize as my perfume clouds the room.

The men breathe in deep, their gazes darkening.

“What’re you waiting for, Winter?” Cole says in a deep, rumbling voice. “Let us see what you can do for us.”

I stare at him. The challenge in his eyes matches that of Kai’s. Were they trying to test whether I was really a hooker? If I don’t strip and act nonchalant, they’ll know I was up to some kind of trouble.

I can’t let them throw me out of their house or hand me over to the cops. Laura and Pete would take me home in the blink of an eye and I’d be in worse trouble. As long as they didn’t have me and my signatures, they couldn’t get away with selling the house or *me*.

I take a deep breath, steeling myself.

My body trembles as I drop Jacob’s coat off me. Next, I reach behind my dress.

Keeping my gaze on Cole who’s standing closest to me, I slowly pull down the zipper. My heart beats fast and my cheeks flame as I let the straps slide off my shoulders.

The dress falls off me, pooling around my feet. Standing there in nothing but my bra and panties, I can no longer look into Cole’s eyes as they darken with lust.

Kai moves close to me. One of his hands rests on my waist while the other touches my chin. He tips my face upward, so he can look into my eyes. The heat from his skin sears the spot where he touches me.

“You’re beautiful, Winter,” he says in a low, rough voice.

Something tightens deep within me. The omega within is enthralled by the strange alpha before me. His sweet citrusy fragrance hits me, fanning the inferno building in my core.

*Shit!* Kai’s pheromones are starting to affect me already.

I feel a wet, trickling sensation on my inner thigh. *Oh no!* I think with a rush of panic. *Is my heat getting triggered by these alphas?*

*No, no, no!* I can’t go into heat in front of these strangers.

Hatred rises deep within me as I think of Laura’s betrayal. How could she swap my medication like that?

Kai’s expression changes. Did he detect the fear and anger swirling within me?

Stepping away, he reaches into a wardrobe in the corner and brings out a thick towel.

“Bathroom’s that way,” he says, pointing to a closed door on the other side of the room.

Relief spreads through me as I reach for the towel. Cole and Jacob watch me but don’t make a move.

Clutching the towel to my chest, I hurry inside the bathroom.

Closing the door behind me, I lean against it heavily, hoping my heart would stop beating so hard. No one’s ever made me react to them this way. There’s something about Jacob, Cole, and Kai that makes me yearn for their touch.

I should be scared of the three strange alphas I've just met. Their dark gazes should alarm me, instead, I find myself *liking* the way they look at me.

Maybe it's my rising hormones that are making me feel this way. Or maybe it's something that I'm afraid to define just yet.

"I hate you so fucking much," I hiss, thinking of my stepmother. She's the reason I'm in this mess.

Swallowing my rage, I pull off my wet bra and panties. Breathing hard, I gaze around the room. The bathroom is clean and well-furnished with a porcelain white tub in the far corner and a separate shower cubicle.

Leaving my stuff on the floor, I step inside the glass chamber and close it shut behind me. Jets of steamy, hot water cascade down on me from four shower heads the moment I turn the knob.

For the moment, I'm lost in utter bliss as my body warms up after suffering in the cold. It's a while before I'm able to bring myself to switch off the hot water.

After the shower, I wrap a towel around my body and step back into the room.

To my surprise, Jacob, Cole, and Kai are missing.

Looking around, I spot a black t-shirt and a pair of navy sweatpants laid out on the big bed.

I pick up the clothes and smell them. They have the same sweet orange and clove scent that I'd detected from Kai.

I wonder where he and his brothers went. Looking toward the floor, I see that they've taken my dress away with them.

I should be scared to be with these strangers in an unfamiliar house but weirdly, I feel rather safe. There's something about Kai and his brothers that promises protection as long as I don't cross them.

A yawn escapes me. Now that I'm warm and safe, I finally feel the exhaustion spreading through me. The bed invites me and without a second thought, I crawl under the covers. It is so warm and comforting, I fall asleep within minutes.



## Cole

A shuddering breath leaves me when I step out of the guestroom and close the door behind me. It's a relief to be out in the corridor, to be able to breathe without soaking in Winter's delectable perfume, but damn it all! I miss her deliciously sweet vanilla scent that reminds me of cupcakes with sugary icing.

Glancing at my brothers, I see that they're being affected by her scent too.

"Let's go to the den," Jacob mutters, striding down the hallway.

Kai pats my back hard and grins excitedly.

I follow after them, my mind still dazed from the sight of Winter in nothing but a pair of pink bra and panties, her skin still glistening from the melted snow. Her eyes were like pools of green emerald and her hair shone like sunshine.

Winter barely had any makeup on her but the blush spreading on her cheeks as she met my gaze made her look stunning. Her sweet scent lingers in my nostrils, making me want to go back to check on her.

“Here, take this,” Jacob says, thrusting a glass in my hand.

Looking around, I see that we’re already inside the dimly lit den. Kai has taken a seat on one of the leather couches while Jacob pours whiskey into another tumbler.

Sitting down next to Kai, I take a sip of my drink. The whiskey slides smoothly down my throat and warms me up immediately.

Feeling relaxed, I let my mind stray.

Winter’s pretty face flashes in my mind at once. She’d been freezing when we found her on the deserted street that cut through Knightswood. Maybe we should’ve offered her some of this whiskey to warm her up.

“Can we keep her?” Kai asks the moment Jacob takes his seat.

“Let’s discuss the matter, first,” Jacob says in a grim tone as he takes a sip of his drink. “We know nothing about her. Who knows if her name’s really Winter.”

“I don’t think she was lying,” I say.

Surprise flickers through both Jacob and Kai’s faces.

“Wow, she’s got Cole interested,” Kai breathes as an infuriating grin spreads on his lips. “I knew Winter was special from the moment I met her.”

Ignoring him, Jacob fixes his steely-gray eyes on me. “Are you interested in her?”

“How often does a woman look at me twice?” I say, staring back at him. “Hell, she didn’t even flinch. She kept her



eyes on me the whole time I was near her in that room.”  
Taking another sip of the fiery whiskey, I add, “Be honest, Jacob. Didn’t you notice the way she was perfuming?”

Closing his eyes, he lets out a groan. “I can still fucking smell her.”

“Do you think she could be the one for us?” Kai asks, looking excited.

Jacob opens his eyes and glares at him. “For all we know, she could just be a hooker who got stranded in the middle of a deserted street. This might even be the way she grabs men. Maybe the perfume we’re smelling is just an artificial one. And, let me remind you once again. Winter might not even be her real name.”

“I thought you were more observant than that, Brother,” I say, thinking about Winter. “She’s way too innocent to be involved in such scams. The bruise on her cheek is real. Someone hurt her and she’s running away from them. What kind of a sane person would be out in the middle of a snowstorm wearing nothing but a linen dress? Did you check her feet? She was wearing house slippers. If we didn’t stop by to help her, she’d have frozen to death on that road.”

His firm expression falters.

“Winter was blushing so damn hard when she was stripping before us,” Kai says, looking thoughtful. “I don’t think she’s ever been naked before another man.”

The thought sparks flames of possessiveness deep inside me. Were we the first males to lay our gazes on her lithe, seductive body? *Mine*, my inner beast growls.

“We need to know what kind of trouble she’s in,” Jacob insists, looking disturbed. “I want to help her but at the same time, I need to protect you guys too.”

“Don’t ask her too many questions right away,” says Kai. “She needs time to see that we’re not going to hurt her. She must understand that we’ll protect her.”

“How’s that going to help us understand her?” Jacob asks. “We need to know what or who she’s running from.”

“She’ll tell us when she trusts us enough,” I say. “Until then, we stay patient.”

“I can’t wait to get to know her more,” Kai says with a heated look in his deep brown eyes.

A smile hovers on my lips as I nod.

I want to get to know Winter too. She’s one of the very few women who didn’t get disgusted or scared at the sight of my disfigured face. She was wary of me but her expression was missing the repulsion I sensed from most people.

Closing my eyes, I let my mind stray back to the moment when she’d stripped down to her pink bra and panties. She’d blushed like the sun, making the alpha in me come alive.

I wanted to kiss her and claim her right there!

My dick throbs, making me aware of the tent forming in the front of my trousers. It’s becoming increasingly uncomfortable to stay with my brothers.

Chugging the last of my whiskey, I get to my feet. “Night,” I mutter, slapping the glass on the table before me.

“You’re going to bed already?” Kai asks as I head toward the door.

“I need a shower,” I say, pushing open the door before he can call me back.

I hear a loud guffaw from behind me but I ignore him and head toward my room.

The manor is still and quiet this late at night. Away from my brothers, my mind goes back to thinking about Winter.

One thing is clear from our discussion.

Winter is in danger. That much we can all be sure about because of the way she’d begged my brothers to save her on that dark, deserted road.

Anger flares in my chest. Why would anyone want to hurt someone as sweet and vulnerable as her?

Even though I still don’t know anything about Winter, I can’t help feeling protective toward her. Even though it’s only been a few hours since I’ve known her, I make up my mind to protect her. And if she’ll let me, I’ll keep her safe for as long as I live.

The urge to see her overwhelms me.

Deciding to check on her, I noiselessly go back up the stairs and onto the second-floor corridor. Pushing open the door to the guestroom, I walk in.

Winter’s already in bed and sleeping deeply. Her petite body seems almost lost under the layers of covers. Leaning down, I caress a thick length of her sunshine-blond hair.

Leaning closer, I inhale deeply, soaking in her sweet vanilla and exotic floral scent. It's a struggle to stop right here and not kiss her. In the end, I bury my nose into her soft hair and stay like that for a moment.

*Let Winter rest, I remind myself. She's exhausted from being in the snow for God knows how long!*

Forcing myself to straighten up, I walk out of the room.

I'll let her rest tonight. Starting tomorrow, I'm going to make sure she sees what she means to me. Once she discovers the safety and warmth my brothers and I can provide her, she'll stay by our side on her own accord.

Closing the door behind me, I go up to my room.

My cock refuses to settle down, so I get out of my clothes and head into the bathroom for a shower.

Under the jets of hot, steamy water, my mind conjures up the image of Winter's lush body. At once, my cock lengthens and hardens.

Thinking of her full, luscious lips stretched around my shaft, I fist my length, pumping hard and fast. I imagine her wide, green eyes staring up at me as I thrust deep inside her throat.

Heavy grunts escape me as my balls harden.

"Winter!" I hiss out her name as my body goes taut.

Tightening my grasp, I fist my length harder. Next moment, a grunt escapes me as I feel an explosive orgasm rip through me.

I need to support my body by placing a hand on the wall as my knees threaten to give way as streams of cum shoot out, splashing the glass of the shower stall.

My chest heaves as I struggle to control the pounding of my heart. Closing my eyes, I lean against the wall, reveling in the bliss following the intense release.

It's not just Kai who feels that Winter's the one for us. Just one whiff of her scent has done this to me. I need her like the very air I'm breathing.

When my body starts to cool down, I wash off the remnants of my essence from my thighs as well as the wall before me. Switching off the water, I step out.

After drying my body, I walk back into my bedroom and climb into bed, naked.

To my surprise, my cock is hard again, begging to be inside Winter. *Patience*, I tell myself. It's still too early to dream of her being mine.

I want Winter to choose to be mine on her own.

The untamed beast within me wants to coerce her one way or another. Threaten to call the cops or simply take what belongs to me anyway. Her soft body won't be an obstacle against my brute alpha strength, but that's not how I want to break her.

Winter's innocence is what makes her beautiful. It'll be the last thing I'd ever want to destroy.

Willing myself to sleep, I close my eyes and pull the covers over my chest, wishing it'd be morning soon.



### Jacob

A groan escapes me as I swallow dryly. My thirst won't allow me to stay asleep, so grudgingly, I force my eyes open, tearing myself out of a good dream.

Sitting up, I push back the strands of my dark hair and look toward the bedside table. A bottle of water stands there but to my annoyance, it's empty.

“The hell...” I groan, rubbing my eyes.

The ghost of a sweet vanilla fragrance, tinged with rose, wafts into my nostrils, reminding me of the dream I'd been having. “Winter,” I whisper as her pretty face flashes before my eyes.

Throwing off the cover, I jump out of bed and stride out of the room.

An insane urge to see her overcomes me. I don't even care about satiating my thirst before seeing her.

Heading to the second-floor guestroom, I push open the door.

A heavy exhale escapes me when I see the empty bed.

She's gone.

The thought makes my heart clench. As the first rays of the sun enter through the closed curtains, I wonder if it'd all been a dream.

“Winter,” I call out loudly.

A heavy silence falls over the room, making my worst thoughts come true.

Of course, she ran away without a word to us. Even though I'd challenged my brothers' assumptions about her being an innocent young woman, deep down, I'd believed it to be true.

A deep ache cuts through me as I realize I've been wrong about her. She'd probably stolen whatever she could grab and run out of here before any of us woke up.

Or was it our fault for teasing her too hard? Did we push her too far when we ordered her to strip before us? Did we scare her into running away?

There's a mystery surrounding Winter and I'm desperate to unravel it. My frustration heightens as I run my fingers through my messy hair.

Disappointment weighs heavy in my gut as I step out of the guestroom and close the door behind me.

The house is silent as it's still early in the morning. Cole and Kai are probably still asleep too. Deciding to get something to drink, I head downstairs to reach the kitchen.

My feet suddenly come to a halt at the foot of the stairs. A delicious sweet scent wafts into my nostrils, instantly reminding me of hot pancakes.

Following the trail of the luscious aroma, I walk down the corridor.

I'm only a few feet away from the kitchen when I hear the sound of clinking metal. My mind goes to Cole and Kai immediately. It's rare for them to wake up early enough to get breakfast started. I'm the one who usually gets up before them and has the meal ready for them.

Hurrying forward, I enter the kitchen.

Winter's standing at the stove, stirring something in a pan. She's wearing the T-shirt we left out for her last night.

For some reason, she hasn't put on the sweatpants. I guess they were probably too big for her. In any case, I enjoy the sight of her long, smooth legs.

With her back turned toward me, she hums a cheerful tune, flipping a pancake without a spatula and then expertly dropping it onto a stack nearby. To my surprise, there's already a good pile on the plate positioned on the counter beside her.

Our girl can cook. A smile comes onto my lips as I realize what I'd just thought of Winter as. Our girl.

"Morning," I greet her.

Winter jumps at the sound of my voice.

Turning around, she faces me. Her hands tug at the hem of the shirt consciously.

I like that she knows what's going through my mind. A wolfish grin threatens to form on my lips and it's a struggle to keep a cool expression on my face.



“It smells great in here,” I say, gesturing toward the pancakes.

A pretty pink blush slowly spreads on her cheeks at my compliment. “Thanks,” she says with a dip of her head. The motion spreads her golden tresses over her face, curtaining it from me. “I thought I’d make breakfast to repay you guys for helping me last night.”

Surprise flickers through me at her innocent reply. As the eldest among my brothers, I’m always the one taking care of them. It’s a nice feeling to know that someone else wants to look after my needs.

“Can I have some breakfast, then?” I ask going toward the kitchen island and taking a seat.

“Sure,” she says with a smile. “Um...do you like syrup with your pancakes?”

“Absolutely. Oh, and don’t forget the butter too.”

She nods, hurrying to grab a plate.

It’s barely been twenty-four hours since Winter’s come to our home and she’s already become familiar with our kitchen.

I watch her as she makes me a plate.

She stacks a generous half a dozen pancakes on a platter and covers it with maple syrup and dollops of butter. Next, she decorates it with strawberries and sliced bananas.

Pleasure spreads through me at the sight. She does everything with the elegance of a trained chef.

“Here, you go,” she says, bringing the plate to me.

She's about to leave my side, so I grab her wrist. "Not so fast. Sit with me," I say, pointing to my lap.

Winter's expression changes at once. Her green eyes widen as they gaze at me. She glances at my lap and blushes harder.

I shouldn't be teasing her so much, but it's too hard to stop. Her varied expressions send a thrill through me, making me eager and curious to see how she reacts to my commands.

"Come on," I say, tugging her wrist. "The food's getting cold."

She gives a small nod and slowly sits down on my lap.

Winter is still pretending to be a hooker. If she'd objected to my command, I'd have stopped immediately. But since she's willing to keep playing the part, I decide to tease her some more.

"Good girl," I say with an appreciative purr as her soft, warm weight settles on my thighs. I position her to sit sideways so I can look at her face.

Smothering a strawberry in syrup, I bring it close to her lips. "Eat."

She obeys, opening her mouth to bite into the fruit. Her lips are no longer pale and blue. They've returned to their soft pink hue, attracting my attention to them.

Some of the fruity juice drips down her chin but before she can brush it away, I do it for her. She stares at me with wide eyes as I bring my thumb to my mouth and lick the tip. "Sweet."

Her cheeks flame at the gesture.

Smothering a chuckle, I turn my attention to the plate before me and start cutting up the pancakes into bite-sized chunks. Once it's done, I place a hand on Winter's belly and pull her closer to me.

A shiver wracks through her body at the contact.

It's becoming difficult to hide my smile. Forking a few pieces of pancake, I bring them to her lips.

She pulls them off the fork with her mouth and eats them.

Winter's obedience makes my cock jerk awake. The alpha in me is loving how submissive she is. She's behaving like we've been doing this forever.

An intense possessiveness comes over me. The alpha in me wants to keep her by my side at all times. Other than my brothers, no man should ever be allowed to lay eyes on her.

"You should have some too," she says in a soft voice.

"Huh?"

She takes the fork out of my grasp and spears a piece of pancake. "Here, you go," she says, smiling warmly as she holds the morsel to my lips.

Leaning forward, I wrap my mouth over the piece of pancake and pull it off the fork. "Mmm," I moan as the morsel melts on my tongue, leaving behind a sweet vanilla flavor.

"This is the most delicious pancake I've ever eaten."

Her smile brightens. Moving away from me, she cuts up some more of the pancake and feeds me.

Winter's cooking is amazing, but my throbbing cock doesn't allow me to fully enjoy the pancakes. After taking a few mouthfuls, I get naughtier with her.

My hands slowly slide under the hem of her t-shirt.

Winter's breath hitches as she turns to stare at me.

Her skin is satiny-soft against my rough palms. My hands inch lower, grazing her upper thighs. I keep my gaze on her, waiting for her to object.

Winter's cheeks flush a deep red but she doesn't reject my touch. The look in her emerald-green eyes slowly turns lustful as she gazes at me.

Winter is so soft and innocent. She has no idea what an alpha like me is capable of doing to a young, untouched omega like her. My gums itch as the urge to bite her and claim her overwhelms me.

*No*, I chide myself sternly, struggling to stay in control of my senses.

No matter how turned on I am right now, I'd never take advantage of Winter. I want to protect her at all costs. Neither I nor my brothers would ever hurt her.

"Let me see what you've been hiding here," I say in a low, gruff voice as my fingers spread over her mound. Her bare pussy is exquisite. The skin is soft to the touch with curls of dark hair that hide the entrance to her hot folds.

Winter bites her bottom lip to stop the moans escaping her as my hand palms her sex. Throwing her head back, she leans back against me.

Seeing how she's enjoying my touch, I bring my hands up to grasp her breasts over her shirt.

A rough groan escapes her. She glances at me, her eyes hooded with lust.

Her hands go down to stroke her pussy but I stop her. "That's for me," I say, lowering my right hand to palm her soft mound.

"Jacob," she moans as my fingers part her wet, slippery folds. "Please...just..."

"Just what?"

Her head rolls against my chest as she closes her eyes. Something tells me she's never had a man touch her so intimately.

Knowing exactly what she wants from me, I dip a finger inside her tight channel.

"Oh, Jacob," she moans, grasping my wrist.

"Just tell me what you need," I say, enjoying the feel of her tight, hot core.

"Ohh!" Her body trembles against mine as I curl my finger deep inside her.

The fragrance of vanilla and rose spreads in the air. She's perfuming like she's about to go into heat. Winter's cheeks have turned a delicious shade of pink as she moans loudly.

Her reactions encourage me to draw out an orgasm from her. I push another finger inside her tight hole while my thumb strokes her hardened nub.

Winter's moans grow louder. Slick runs down my hand as her body tightens. Her perfume is so strong, that I'm afraid the guards surrounding my manor would get a whiff of it too.

"What's happening to me?" she whispers with a pleading look in her eyes.

"Does it hurt?" I ask.

She shakes her head. "It feels strange...but kind of good. My body's growing so hot." A moan escapes her. "Please, don't stop."

Pleasure flickers through me. I was right to assume she's never been touched this way by another man.

The very thought hardens my balls.

Winter has no idea how easily she's given away her lie. A hooker would know exactly what I was doing to her.

Knowing that she's on the verge of coming, I increase the pacing of my fingers.

She arches her back, moaning my name.

"Come, sweetheart," I whisper hoarsely. "Come for your alpha."

Next moment, Winter lets out a soft cry as her body jerks and trembles. Her folds suck onto my fingers, pulling them further inside her. Warm, clear slick runs down my hand, telling me how explosively she came at my touch.

Winter's cheeks are flushed as she leans against me, completely boneless. Her chest rises and falls as she struggles to breathe.

“You were so good,” I say in an appreciative tone. Bringing my fingers to my lips, I lick them off one by one while she stares at me with wide, astonished eyes. “You taste so very, very sweet.”

She looks away suddenly, blushing hard.

I’m sure she can feel my hardness against her ass. Deciding to give her a break before exploring her body again, I try to distract her. “Let’s finish up breakfast.”

A soft chuckle escapes her. “I forgot all about it,” she says in a shy voice.

Snorting at her little joke, I begin feeding her the cut-up pieces of pancake.

After a few minutes, she’s able to sit straight again. “I’m the only one who’s getting full here. You should eat too, you know.” Taking the fork from me, she stabs some chunks of pancakes and holds them out for me.

Gods, Winter! She’s so damn sweet.

My hold on her waist tightens possessively. I may not know who she is or where she’s come from, but I silently vow to protect her and make her mine.



## Winter

A warm smile curves Jacob's lips as I feed him a piece of syrup-laden strawberry. His powerful arms wrap around me, holding me securely to his lap.

Pure bliss flows through me as I look into his steel-gray eyes. Even though I've barely known him for a day, I feel amazingly safe and comfortable with him.

My mind goes to the way he touched me between my thighs. His fingers were gentle but relentless, making me reach my climax within minutes. I've never experienced such hot lashes of pleasure and I'm yearning for more.

"I guess we're starting the day with dessert," a familiar voice sounds from the doorway.

Turning that way, I see Cole and Kai walking inside the kitchen. They're both dressed in casual T-shirts and shorts. Their hair is messy but somehow, it makes them look sexier.

Unlike last night, Cole looks directly at me. Even though he doesn't smile, there's a warm look in his ice-blue eyes.

"Come sit on my lap," Kai says, taking his seat opposite to Jacob. "I love a sweet breakfast too."



His naughty grin sends my heart pounding in my chest. Warmth spreads on my cheeks as I look toward Jacob to see his reaction.

To my surprise, Jacob doesn't look mad or jealous. He pats my ass and gently pushes me off his lap. "You should take care of my brothers too."

Pleasure sparks in my chest. While I like Jacob, I can't stop feeling the same attraction toward both Cole and Kai.

"Would you guys like some pancakes?" I ask shyly.

"Sure," says Kai, grabbing his fork and knife. "We love pancakes."

Moving toward the counter, I prepare two more plates of food.

"How about some coffee too?" I hear Cole's voice from the corner.

"You read my mind," says Jacob.

I'm about to head toward the coffee machine on the other end of the counter but a hand on my waist stops me. Turning around, I come face to face with Cole.

His eyes watch me closely for my reaction.

The deep scars on his left cheek mar the beauty of his face but they don't scare me. Warmth swirls in his eyes, further calming me.

"Take the food to the table," he says in a deep, gentle voice. "I'll grab the coffee."

I nod. A part of me wants to smile at him but I'm too flustered and nervous to make sense of my emotions.

My breath rushes out of me as he steps away.

The smell of freshly made coffee soon permeates the air, awakening my senses fully. Cole comes back to the table with a cup of hot brew and places it before me.

“Th-thanks,” I stutter, surprised to see he’s served me before his brothers.

I glance toward Jacob and Kai. They’re both busy eating their pancakes and eggs, not at all bothered by Cole’s attention on me.

A new emotion comes over me. Is it okay to like them all at the same time? It’s not uncommon among alpha packs to share an omega between them. Could I be lucky enough to have these men all to myself?

A smile spreads on my lips as I sip my hot coffee.

“Go clean up and we’ll go shopping,” Jacob’s voice rouses me from my thoughts.

“Shopping?” I ask, staring down at the big T-shirt I’m wearing. “There’s no way I can go outside like this. How about I keep borrowing this?”

Kai chuckles, his deep brown eyes lighting up as they gaze at me. “Of course, not. You’ll give hard-ons to an entire street full of men if you go out looking like this.”

His words send a thrill through me. Do I look that sexy in this baggy T-shirt?

“We’ll bundle you up in our coats and jackets before taking you out,” Cole says, his pale eyes burning with an intensity that sends my heart pounding.

“Come on,” says Jacob as he stands up. “Let’s see what we can fit on you without drowning you in it.”

His brothers get to their feet as well. They surround me as Jacob leads the way out of the kitchen.

We follow a familiar path up the stairs that lead to the guest bedroom on the second floor. Shafts of bright sunlight illuminate the hallway, making the house seem even bigger in daylight.

“Does anyone else live here?” I ask.

“No,” Kai replies. “It’s just us.”

“The place is so clean and neat. Do you take care of it all?”

Jacob comes to a sudden stop, making me bump against his back. His hand grasps my upper arm, steadying me. “We have cleaners and helpers who come in to clean and cook in the afternoons, but no one ever stays back. We like our privacy when we’re home.”

“I understand what you mean. It’s uncomfortable having strangers in your home.” For a moment, my mind flashes back to the time when Laura and her daughter came to live with me and Dad. It’d taken years for me to get used to their presence.

My heart squeezes painfully as I think of my home and the bakery. Would I ever be able to go back there?

“Are you okay, Winter?” Jacob asks.

Cole and Kai stare at me too, trying to figure out the dark emotion that’s spreading on my face.

“I’m fine,” I say hurriedly and walk past them.

“Hey, stop,” Kai’s voice makes me halt in my steps. Moving closer, he wraps his fingers around my wrist and takes me inside a different room.

Sunshine filters through the gaps in the curtains, illuminating the vast space. A large bed takes up an entire corner while modern furniture, in red and black leather, dots the space.

Jacob and Cole walk in behind me and sit down on the luxurious couches while Kai heads toward a massive mahogany wardrobe. Opening it, he gives me a glimpse of the men’s clothing hanging from the racks. Kai’s signature sweet citrus scent wafts into my nostrils as he sifts through the rows of jackets before him.

“I wore this jacket during my high school days,” he says, bringing out a faded varsity hoodie. “Let’s see if it fits you.”

I take the sweatshirt from his hand and try it on.

The fabric is soft and comfortable but it’s still too big on me. It’s almost like wearing a short dress!

“Let’s see what we can do here,” Kai mutters, moving closer to me.

His pheromones hit me, making my core throb hard. He’s so tall that I have to tilt my head back to look into his eyes. I want him to touch me, but he simply zips up my hoodie and stands back to inspect me.

He has no idea how hot he’s making me.

“Let’s put a belt on her,” Cole says, moving forward. “That might give the outfit some shape.”

Kai joins his brother and together, they rummage among the belts hanging in the wardrobe. Glancing toward Jacob, I see that his gaze is zeroed in on me.

“Come here,” he says, patting his thighs.

I don’t even think twice before obeying his command.

He pulls me onto his lap the moment I get closer to him.

“I don’t want another strange man looking at you,” he whispers hoarsely in my ear as his hand splays over my belly.

The possessiveness in his voice makes my core throb harder.

I’ve never felt this turned on in my life. Jacob and his brothers have lit a fire inside me that’s stayed dormant until now. Their every word and gesture stroke the flames, making me yearn for their attention.

“Are you sure you want to keep staying with us?” Jacob asks. “We might never want to let you go, you know.”

A hint of fear, mixed with a thrill of passion, flares inside me. The warning in Jacob’s voice is clear but something deep inside me considers it as an invitation.

“I want to stay,” I whisper, knowing the full implication of my words.

“Then, we should buy you an entire wardrobe,” Cole’s voice makes me look up.

“Come on, let’s see if this will make things any better,” says Kai, dangling a thin belt before me.

“Why bother with any of it?” Jacob mutters as I try on the belt. “Do we need another man looking at her? Let’s just

make sure she's warm enough and head out already."

"You're right, Brother," Cole says. "Let's just get this over with so that we can come home sooner."

"Wait for us, darling," Jacob says, pressing a kiss on my cheek. "We'll get dressed and meet you here."

Biting my lip, I nod.

They march out of the room, leaving me to brew in my own thoughts. While I'm enjoying their attention, I wonder how long they'll let me stay with them without asking me more questions.

Do they still think I'm a hooker? How long would it take for them to get bored of me? Will they throw me out the moment they're done with me?

Tears prick my eyes at the very thought. I shouldn't let myself get attached to these alphas no matter how kindly they treat me. They have no idea about the kind of mess I am in. I can't let them get involved with me or my stepmother.

Jacob, Cole, and Kai are being extremely kind and generous to me. They're even taking me shopping to make my stay more comfortable. I can't repay them by getting them into trouble. I must get out of here the moment I figure out what to do next.

A knock sounds at the door, breaking me out of my spiraling thoughts.

Jacob and his brothers walk in, looking like a trio that's out to stab every woman's heart. Their luxurious suits fit their impressive physiques perfectly. Jacob and Kai have combed back their dark strands to give them a polished appearance

while Cole lets his silvery hair hang loose to curtain most of his face from view.

“Breathe, Winter,” Kai reminds me with a chuckle.

“Come on, love. Let’s get this over with,” Jacob says, gesturing toward the hallway.

I hurry after them, almost skidding on the wooden floor.

“We need to get her some shoes, first,” Cole says, grabbing my waist before I can fall flat on my face. “She can’t walk around in these worn-out slippers all day.”

“We’ll find shoes at the same store,” says Jacob.

Cole nods but refuses to let go. Grasping my wrist in a firm hold, he leads me down the staircase.

The same car from last night is waiting for us at the front entrance. A cold morning breeze blows past, playing with my loose strands. Wrapped up in Kai’s thick, warm clothes, I barely feel the chill.

The vast lawn and the bare trees dotting the area are covered in snow. Last night’s storm has painted the scenery in white. The bright sunshine makes everything shine and twinkle. I’m once again reminded that Christmas is almost here.

Moving forward, Jacob opens the back passenger seat, motioning for me to climb in.

A warm feeling rises within me at the gesture. I climb in and wait for them to join me inside the car.

Jacob takes the wheel while Kai goes to sit with him. Cole comes to sit beside me and captures my hand in his.

I watch the vast estate pass by through the window as the car moves forward. Cole talks with his brothers while firmly holding my hand. The gesture relaxes me but deep inside, I'm worried about finding a way back home.

On our way to downtown Syracuse, we pass by Knightswood. The familiar sight of the snow-dusted suburban houses sends a pang through me. I'm so close to my home and my bakery, and yet, so far away.

Not willing to risk letting Laura and Pete catch a glimpse of me, I instinctively duck my head. They're the kind of people who'd call the cops on Jacob and his brothers just to get their hands on me.

Soon, the car is driving through heavy traffic. Modern skyscrapers come into my view, telling me we're almost at the heart of downtown Syracuse.

Jacob drives us to a posh shopping district and parks the car outside a boutique clothing store. I'm secretly glad we're here early because even though I'm dressed warmly, the big, mismatched clothes make me look like a homeless person.

"Come on," Cole says, opening the door wide.

I climb out and keep my head lowered. It's highly unlikely that Pete or Laura would be here, but I still can't get rid of my paranoia.

Jacob, Cole, and Kai don't notice anything and sweep me inside the shop.

The vast, brightly-lit space looks empty at first glance but the moment we step in, a tall, elegant woman comes forward to greet us. She's dressed in a crisp crimson suit that



matches the color of her lipstick. Her short dark hair is so meticulously straightened, that not a single strand sticks out. 'Linda' is etched on the metallic nametag on her jacket.

"We're here to shop for her," Kai says, keeping his arm around my shoulders.

Linda stares at us with concealed disapproval but forces a smile. "Of course! Please, come this way," she says in a loud, cheerful tone. Welcoming them further inside the shop, she gestures at rows of dresses and jumpsuits. "These are all the items that came in just yesterday. Our store has all the latest trends from our designers, so you can choose what you like without a second thought."

Linda ignores me completely as she recites the names of designer labels, half of which I've never heard before.

Kai turns toward me. "Get everything you like." Leaning in closer, he whispers, "We'd rather not drive back here for a second trip. My brothers and I prefer keep you locked in with us."

Before I can calm myself down, Jacob steps closer. "Grab yourself a few evening gowns too. Since Christmas is almost here, we might get invited to some parties. We'd rather you came with us than stay cooped up all alone in that big house of ours."

"I have no idea how to choose a gown," I mumble. "I don't know what would look good on me. Maybe, I should go for something simpler?"

Jacob hooks a finger under my chin and lifts my face to him. "Do you want us to help you choose?" The intense look

in his eyes makes my heart throb in my chest. I nod silently because all the words seem to have flown out of my head.

A knowing grin blossoms on his luscious lips as he bends down to capture my mouth.

Kai groans, muttering about Jacob hoarding me all the time.

The kiss is brief but like a drop of hot cider, leaving me feeling warm and soothed.

“Go ahead,” Jacob says in a rough voice. “Buy everything you need. In the meantime, we’ll look through the gowns.”

Linda looks between us, appearing annoyed for no reason.

When Jacob leaves with his brothers, she starts bringing me dresses, none of which I like. They’re all too revealing, patches of fabric missing from weird places like the stomach or just above my crotch. Has she already assumed I’m an escort?

Straightening my back, I march through the aisles of the store, collecting the clothes I feel I can use. After checking out the price tags on the first few, I avoid looking at them completely. There’s no way my income as a baker would ever be enough to buy these luxurious dresses.

It’s not long before I find myself in the lingerie section.

Heat courses through me as I look at the sexy selections spread out in every corner. My mind plays naughty scenarios of me wearing them and Jacob peeling them off my body.

I select a few but my favorite one is a set of pink-lace bra and thongs. Small pearls form floral patterns on the cups as well as the panties. They're sexy but also elegant.

"Excuse me," I call out to Linda. "Could you get these purchased right away? I want to wear them now."

Linda's fake eyebrows rise high but she snatches the lingerie out of my hands and stomps away. "You won't make tips like that," I whisper under my breath.

When she comes back, I point to the baskets with the clothes I'd chosen. "Get these purchased too."

She huffs, carrying them over to the counter. Taking the pair of bras and panties, I head into one of the changing rooms nearby.

Shedding Kai's clothes off me, I put on the bra and panties and stare at my reflection in the mirror before me. Is this really me? I wonder. How can something so simple bring such a huge change in the way I look and feel?

The bra has pushed up my full breasts, making my soft globes peek out seductively over the edge. Turning to the side, I check out the swell of my ass. The lacy design stretches across my curves prettily, making me flush with pleasure.

"You're gorgeous, Winter," a familiar voice speaks from the corner.

A gasp escapes me as I turn around.

Cole stands inside the changing booth, staring at me with such an intense gaze that my heart starts pounding against my chest.

“You need to be more careful,” he adds. “You forgot to lock the door.”

“Oh,” I mumble weakly. “I’m sorry about that. I must’ve been distracted or something.”

Stepping up to me, he gazes down at me. “Do I scare you?”

I shake my head. “Not at all.” Reaching up, I gently trace the crude scar that runs across his left cheek.

He stiffens at my touch and closes his eyes, letting me stroke the most vulnerable part of him.

“I’m glad,” I say.

Opening his eyes, he stares at me curiously. “About what?”

I brush a light thumb over his cheek. “I’m glad your eyes are safe,” I whisper. “Has anyone ever told you how beautiful they are?”

“Winter...” With a sudden move, he pulls me against him and crashes his mouth against mine.

The sheer intensity of the kiss leaves me breathless. Groaning against my mouth, he pushes his tongue in, tasting me thoroughly.

*Dark chocolate and coffee*, my mind whispers as Cole’s pheromones wrap around me. His kisses are like the best mocha cappuccinos I’ve ever tasted.

Soft moans escape me as I drown in his taste, touch, and scent. My senses are completely overwhelmed as a deep throbbing erupts in my core.

My soft curves press against his hardened body as he pulls me closer.

“I’m so hot,” I moan against his lips as he continues to deepen the kiss.

A sliver of confusion flickers through me. I’m barely wearing anything and yet, heat radiates from my core, sending tendrils of fire through my veins.

It’s so hot...so hot...Oh, no! My heat!

A squeak escapes me as my eyes pop open.

Warm slick slides down my thighs as I stare at Cole.

Desire and confusion swirl in his icy-blue eyes as he stares back at me. His nostrils flare, inhaling the thick vanilla-scented air around us.

“Winter...you...are you...?”

I nod, feeling suddenly scared. “I think my heat is here.”



## Winter

Confusion and fear flow through me, reminding me of my stepmom's treachery. She replaced my blocker and suppressor pills to bring on my heat and now, it was here.

A sudden painful spasm goes through me as my lower abdomen contracts.

"Ow," I groan, clutching my stomach.

"Winter, what's wrong?" Cole is at my side immediately, looking anxious.

"It hurts," I moan, feeling lost and scared.

I've never had to go through a natural heat cycle on my own. The suppressants helped me to block my hormones, keeping me in control of my sexual urges during those periods of time.

Since I'm barely in my twenties, I never gave a serious thought to looking for a mate. My priority was to keep the bakery up and running. Now that my heat is here, I have no idea what to do.

Most omegas who go into heat and have no mates to help them would usually go to a heat clinic. The staff brings in

willing alphas to help the omega through those days, relieving them of their sexual urges.

The very thought of being touched by strange alphas triggers my anxiety. Even though it'd help me, I don't want to go to a heat clinic.

“Winter,” Cole’s voice breaks me out of my thoughts. He touches my shoulder, giving me a gentle shake. “Are you okay?”

Another wave of heat pulses through me before I can answer him.

Cole’s coffee and dark chocolate scent wafts into my nose, aggravating my sudden lust. My core throbs hard, forcing me to press my thighs together.

Confused and scared, I try to make sense of the situation when a loud banging on the door makes me jump.

“Winter, are you in there?” Kai’s voice comes in through the closed door.

“We’re both in here,” Cole answers.

“Is she okay?” Jacob’s anxious voice sounds next. “Her perfume is spreading everywhere. It’s already affecting me and Kai. What if another alpha catches her scent? We need to get her out of here before anyone comes in, wanting to claim her.”

The scent of vanilla and roses spreads in the air. It’s so thick, I feel like I’m choking on it.

Cole moves toward the door and opens it, allowing Kai and Jacob to enter the tiny space.

They stiffen the moment their gazes fall on me. Their irises expand, turning their eyes almost black.

I cross my arms over my chest, trying to hide my trembling, almost-naked body from their view.

“Are you going into heat?” Jacob asks in a strained voice as he unconsciously licks at his canines.

Lowering my head, I nod.

“Shit,” Kai curses. “This can’t be happening in the middle of a fucking store.”

My body grows hotter and my core squeezes emptily. Their pheromones are making my condition worse. I need them to take care of me right away but I’m too afraid to ask.

“We need to get her out of here,” Cole says, staring between his brothers.

“You’re right,” Jacob agrees. “She can’t be here. We must take her home immediately.”

Kai takes off his overcoat and throws it over my shoulders. “Let’s bundle you up before we step out of here.”

Cole takes off his hat and presses it over my head.

Moving closer, Jacob loosens the scarf around his neck and secures it around my neck.

I’m soon submerged in their clothing from head to foot.

“This should mask her scent for a while,” Kai says in a grim tone.

While I agree with them, the sheer layers of wool are making me feel hotter. Sweat beads my forehead and my



cheeks while a few drops slide down my neck.

“You and Kai take her home right away,” Jacob says in a commanding tone as he looks toward his brothers. “I’ll make a quick trip to the supermarket and buy all the essentials we’re going to need over the coming days.”

Surprise flickers through me. Are they all going to help me through my heat?

“Come with me,” says Kai, wrapping his arm around my shoulders and tucking me against him. Cole opens the door and comes on my other side. Jacob follows us closely, making sure no one can approach me.

“Who’s that?” A strange male voice makes me look up.

A tall, well-built man in a crisp black suit stands in our way. His gaze is fixed on me, so I duck my head, hoping to hide most of my face in the folds of Jacob’s scarf.

“Oh, they’re here to buy some clothes for their escort,” Linda says, grimacing at me.

“Escort?” A look of dark interest descends on the stranger’s face.

“Move aside,” Kai says in a low, grim tone. “We’re in a hurry.”

“Give her to me,” says the strange alpha, his expression cold and hungry.

“She needs her alphas,” Jacob says in a strong, assertive tone.

“I can take care of her,” the man insists, continuing to block our way.

“For fuck’s sake!” Cole suddenly shouts, making me jump. “Jacob! Will you keep standing there and take this shit? Get him the fuck out of our way!”

Jacob steps out from behind us and steps closer to the man. “Move away,” he says in a forcefully calm tone. “Let my brothers take our mate back home.”

“No. She’s mine!” With a sudden move, he punches Jacob in the gut.

“Oh no!” I moan, almost feeling the impact of that hit.

A murderous look descends into Jacob’s steely-gray eyes. He doesn’t look like he’s in pain at all. Anger radiates from him, sending a thrill of danger through me. “You guys go ahead,” he says in a grim, dominating tone and steps up to the man. “I’ll take care of things here.”

Kai pulls me alongside him while Cole guards me from the other side.

“Oh, aren’t you going to buy anything else?” The store assistant chirps up.

“Get out of our fucking way!” Cole snarls at her.

She steps back immediately, looking deathly scared of him.

“Hey, wait,” the stranger calls out from behind us but Kai and Cole don’t stop.

“You can talk to me, pal,” Jacob’s voice sounds from behind us.

I glance around, catching him glaring at the strange man.

“I’m the owner of this store,” the stranger shouts. “I decide who comes in and who goes out.”

“Is that so?” Jacob asks with a challenging scowl, tightening his hand into a fist. “I could break your damn jaw for what you just did.”

“Is he going to be okay?” I whisper as we step outside the shop.

“The store owner got affected by your perfume,” Cole says. “Jacob will handle him for us.”

“Don’t look so worried,” Kai says with a reassuring grin as we head to the parking lot. “The moment your perfume grows weaker, he’ll come back to his senses. For now, we just needed to get you out of there before the situation got out of hand.”

“Get inside with her,” Cole says when we arrive near our car. “I’ll drive us home.”

Relief floods me the moment we’re all inside the car. I’m still anxious about Jacob but it feels good to be away from the strange alpha who was hellbent on blocking our path.

Cole steps on the gas, quickly driving us into the traffic.

I’m glad the traffic isn’t too heavy on our way back because my body’s starting to succumb to the demands of my heat. A constant ache stabs my lower belly while cold sweat drenches my clothes.

“You don’t look so good, love,” Kai says. His deep brown eyes swirl with concern as he gently moves a strand away from my sweaty forehead.

“I need you,” I groan as my core throbs hard. The delicious tingles I was getting used to feeling when I was around him and his brothers are morphing into pure agony. I need them to take care of me or I’d die of this incessant torment.

“We’re here for you,” he assures me. “Jacob’s going to meet us back at the house soon, so don’t worry about a thing.”

A groan escapes me as I slump against him.

“Can’t you drive faster?” Kai snaps from beside me.

“Do you want me to crash the car?” Cole retorts. “We’re already going fast enough.”

I’m sure we’re going over the speed limit right now. The scenery outside flashes by in a blur, making me dizzy.

Closing my eyes, I rest my head against Kai’s arm. He strokes my hair, whispering soothing assurances in my ear.

For some strange reason, his scent and presence comfort me. It’s barely been a day since I’ve known him and his brothers but I feel a weird pull toward them.

Maybe it’s my raging hormones. Maybe it’s something else. Either way, I don’t have a choice but to surrender to them. They’re the only ones who can get me through my heat. My only hope is that I’ll come out of this experience with my body and heart in one piece.



## Winter

The car comes to a sudden halt, making me open my eyes. To my surprise, I'm surrounded by a familiar sight of frozen trees and distant snow-clad hills. We're back on the front lawn of the vast manor. Cole must've driven at top speed to get us here so quickly.

Climbing out, he opens the door for me.

I clamber out but my legs don't support me, making me fall to the ground in a heap.

"Oh, darling," Cole gasps, coming to kneel beside me in an instant. "Come here. Let me take you inside." Moving closer, he gathers me in his arms.

"Are you okay, Winter?" Kai says, looking anxious as he leads the rest of the way to the house.

"I need you to touch me," I moan as my skin burns from the heat that's raging through me. "It's the only way I'll feel better."

"It's going to be okay," Cole says, pressing a kiss to my cheek. "We'll take care of you."

A moan escapes me as the touch of his lips sends a current of pleasure through me. I want more. I need more.

I'm soon being taken inside the entrance hall and up a familiar staircase.

"Kai..." I call out in a weak voice.

"I'm right here, babe," he says, turning around to smile at me. "We're almost there."

A haze of lust spreads over my senses, drowning every logical thought and reasoning. I just need both him and Cole to keep touching me and kissing me.

Kai opens the door to the guest bedroom and allows Cole to walk in with me in his lap.

"Put her on the bed," he instructs. "We need to make her as comfortable as possible."

"Tell us what you need," Cole says, staring at me with a grim look. "What can we do to make you feel better?"

"The curtains," I say, gesturing toward the windows. "It's too bright for my eyes."

"That's right," says Kai. "I've heard omegas get sensitive to everything around them. We need to build her a nest to truly make her feel at home."

"Let's start with the curtains, first," Cole mutters, hurrying toward the windows and wrenching the drapes close.

"What else, Winter?" Kai urges. "What else would you like?"

"It feels like a volcano has erupted inside me," I say, trying to put words to the sensations going through me.

“How about something cold to drink?” he suggests.

“Yeah...with lots of ice,” I say with a chuckle but wince the next second as another wave of painful cramps twists my belly.

“You’ve got it,” Cole says, rushing out of the room.

Relief spreads through me as Kai switches off most of the lights in the room. Soon, the cool, dark surroundings bring a welcome relief to my over-sensitized eyes.

Another breath rushes out of me.

“Is she feeling better?” I hear Cole’s voice again. He’s back with a glass of milk that’s filled with ice cubes.

“She’s been the same,” Kai says in an anxious tone. “I think she’s in pain.”

“Here, sweetheart,” Cole says, placing the glass in my hand. “Try to drink this.”

The glass feels like an icicle between my scorching palms. I take a tentative gulp of the sweetened vanilla milk and instantly feel a rush of coolness through my chest. Within seconds, I finish the whole tumbler.

Kai settles onto the bed beside me. “Did that make you feel better?” he asks, gently caressing my hair.

“I’m better but it still hurts.”

“Tell us what you need,” Cole says in a rough voice.

A hazy sheen comes over my vision as I stare up at both the alphas before me. “You...I need you both...”

He glances at his brother before reaching out to gently pull the cap off my head. Kai moves closer next and unwraps the thick woolen scarf from my neck.

A cool draft skims along my naked skin, instantly bringing me relief from the inferno blazing inside me.

“She seems to like it,” Cole says.

“I’m sure she’s boiling under that coat,” Kai says, proceeding to unbutton the heavy jacket.

Soon, the overcoat is taken off me.

“Wow,” Kai breathes, staring at the luxurious bra and panty set I’m still wearing. “How the hell do I control myself when she looks like the sexiest Christmas gift a man can dream of?”

“Did we pay for it?” I ask.

Rough chuckles escape the two alphas before me.

“Oh, darling,” Cole says with a dark gleam in his eyes. “How can you still be thinking about that?”

Kai’s gaze drinks me in, causing my stomach to tighten. Moving closer, he captures my lips in a searing kiss.

A moan escapes me as I wrap my arms around his neck.

His lips feel incredibly cool against mine. Pleasure explodes in my belly, turning that painful burning into a delicious pleasure.

“More...” I croon against his lips.

Kai chuckles. “Don’t worry, Winter. We’ll give you all the sex you want and more,” he promises in a low, husky voice



that sends a tremor through my core.

I open up willingly, allowing him to sweep his tongue inside my mouth. The heat rising within me doesn't feel painful anymore. It's turned into a delicious gentle throb that spreads all over my body.

My fingers dig into his dark strands and pull him closer for a deeper kiss.

"I want you both," I say, glancing between Kai and Cole. "Please...I need you."

Their gazes darken at the pleading note in my voice.

Cole presses his lips against my neck while Kai leans in and licks at my earlobe. Their combined touches send a tremor through my clenching core, making me moan out.

The scent of coffee and dark chocolate envelops all around me, making me sink into the kiss with Cole.

"Relax," he whispers after a while and lays me against the pillows.

With a squeak, I realize that I'm completely naked before him. At some point, Kai must've unhooked my bra and slid my panties away from my legs.

The bed dips as Cole slowly climbs over me. "Are you scared?" he asks.

I look into his eyes and shake my head. "I want you," I say honestly and gently cup his face between my palms.

A heavy groan escapes him as he closes his eyes. "Then, let me take care of you, love." Straddling my thighs, he locks me in place.

I stare at him with wide eyes as he starts unbuttoning his shirt.

My tongue darts out to lick the corners of my mouth as he reveals his muscular pecs and hard abs. More scars line his body, sending an ache through me. Who could've done this to him?

Cole is such a handsome, powerfully built man. Only someone evil could mar his masculine beauty this way.

Taking another deep breath, I let my gaze sweep over him and finally meet his icy-blue eyes.

The intensity blazing in his eyes makes my heart pound. His hungry gaze sends a thrill of danger through me, heightening my anticipation.

Warm lips press against my neck as the scent of sweet citrus spreads over me. I inhale deeply, relishing Kai's delectable fragrance.

"You taste so sweet, Winter," he croons. "I'll let him go first but I'm going to keep kissing you and biting you," he whispers as Cole shirks off his shirt and lowers his body over me.

Kai's teeth graze against a sensitive spot on my neck, lighting my insides on fire. I moan as my core clenches.

Soon, I feel Cole's hands on my body. His touch sears my skin, drawing out a sound that borders on a whine.

"You smell like cupcakes," Cole says in a rough voice. "I can't wait to eat you up." His lips crash against mine in a possessive kiss.

I moan into his mouth as his tongue spears in deep, tasting me thoroughly.

For a moment, my gaze shifts toward Kai. He's staring right back at me as Cole trails kisses along my neck.

I close my eyes against the heat spreading over my skin. My heart races in my heaving chest as Cole lowers his mouth onto a nipple and sucks hard. His other hand plays with my breast, kneading and rolling the nipple between his fingers.

I never knew hunger like this. His every touch makes me crave for more. Deep groans escape me as I relish the unquenchable pleasure he's offering me.

Reaching out, I touch the hard planes of his abs.

He hisses out as my palm brushes over the hard lump in the front of his trousers. "Is this what you want?" he asks, breaking the kiss.

"I have never been this intimate with a guy before," I confess in a small voice. "I'm afraid it'll hurt but it's the only thing that can help me get through my heat without losing my mind."

Cole brushes my cheek with the back of his hand. "I won't hurt you," he says while his eyes burn with sincerity. "We'll make sure you're begging us for more."

"We'll take this one step at a time," Kai says from beside me. "Why don't you show her what she'll be working with?"

Keeping his gaze on me, Cole starts to unzip his pants.

I watch hungrily as he reveals his thick length to me. My tongue darts out to wet my lips as I swallow dryly.

“I’ll drench you in pleasure,” he promises before latching his mouth on a nipple.

“Ahh,” I moan, clasping the back of his neck. My eyelids flutter in ecstasy as he sucks and nibbles on me. Anticipation bubbles inside my chest as his thigh slips between my legs and his rigid cock nudges my belly.

His hand slides down my stomach and over my pussy. His palm feels amazingly cool against my heated flesh, bringing me delicious relief. He cups my pussy in a possessive grip and leans down. “You’re mine,” he says in a husky voice and presses a kiss to my cheek.

A moan escapes me as my hips thrust upward almost unconsciously, desperate to feel more friction against his palm.

“You’re so very wet, honey,” he croons, swiping a thumb over my seam. “Is this sweet welcome all for me?”

“Please...I want more...”

Keeping his gaze on me, he slips a finger inside my folds.

My whole body trembles at the sudden contraction of my walls. “More,” I beg. “Please, Cole...”

His eyes darken as he slips in another finger, stretching me wider.

My breath hitches as he pushes them in deeper.

“Please, don’t stop,” I plead as his fingers move in and out of me, stroking me until my body is squirming underneath

him with shivers of pleasure. My core clenches and throbs, making me burn hotter than before.

My head is thrown against the pillow as my body tightens impossibly. My breathing turns erratic as my core clenches hard onto his fingers. I can't take the rising pleasure anymore and let go, my mouth opening wide to release a breathless gasp.

Cole suddenly pulls his fingers away, making my insides clench emptily. Thick, clear strings of my slick drip down his digits. Looking into my eyes, he licks the glistening juices coating the tip.

"How does she taste?" Kai asks in a husky voice.

"She tastes like the sweetest cupcake," Cole replies in a deep voice.

"I can't wait to taste her too," Kai mumbles as his deep-brown eyes swirl with desire.

A hungry grin curves Cole's lips. "You're going to have to wait your turn, Brother."

"You're killing me, you know that right?" Kai quips, gesturing at the tent forming in the front of his trousers.

Cole chuckles before fixing his gaze back on me.

The intensity in his pale blue eyes makes my heart pound. He doesn't need words to tell me what's coming as I squirm in anticipation.

Cole moves over me, covering my body with his. Reaching between us, he catches hold of his cock and rubs the thick head over my slick labia.

I moan at the sensation and spread my legs wider.

He captures my lips in a hot kiss before rocking his hips forward. His thick head breaches through my tight opening, making my eyes open wide.

A hot flash of pain goes through me. My fingers dig into his hard shoulders as he thrusts in again.

“It’s going to be okay,” he whispers in a throaty voice. “Just relax and you’ll be okay.”

He stays buried inside me without moving. His face twists in agony, telling me how hard he’s struggling to control himself. No matter how much he wants to claim me, he’s making sure I’m okay.

Warmth spreads through me, making me like him more.

My walls throb against his rock-hard cock. The pain recedes and a pleasurable sensation erupts within me. I move my hips, eager to feel more of the delicious friction.

“Winter,” Cole groans against my neck.

“I want more,” I tell him. “Please, Cole. I need you.”

“She’s ready,” Kai says from my side. “She’s no longer in pain.”

Cole pecks my lips as he pulls out of me. With a sudden move, he suddenly plunges in with one hard, swift stroke.

I cry out from the sheer sensation of being stretched wide by his long, thick shaft.

“You’re still so very tight,” Cole grits out through clenched teeth. Reaching between us, he finds my hardened

nub. He strokes the sensitive mound of flesh, making my mind go blank with pleasure.

My hips arch into his hand as his cock slips deeper inside me.

“It feels incredible to be inside you, darling,” he gasps against my lips. “You’re so very tight and hot.” Pulling out a little, he sinks back in. “Gods, you’re amazing.”

“I want more...please, Cole,” I whisper, my hands roaming across his back.

Cole glides in and out of me at a steady rhythm, heightening my pleasure.

I’m loving the feel of his hard cock against my pulsing walls. My hips soon rock back and forth, matching his tempo.

“Winter,” Cole’s groan is both a mix of pain and pleasure.

My insides clench hard at the sound of my name on his lips. Next moment, a wave of intense pleasure crashes over me, blinding me to everything around me.

He kisses me deeply, thoroughly tasting every crevice of my mouth. I can think of nothing but his tongue in my mouth and his cock continuing to thrust deep inside my core.

“Cole,” I moan as my insides tighten in a familiar sensation but the build-up is far stronger in intensity than before.

“You’re ready to come again,” he says in a tight voice as he continues to thrust hard.

I moan into his mouth as another surge of pleasure crashes through me. My walls clench and pulse around his throbbing length while my body shudders underneath him.

Cole's movements grow more desperate as he thrusts deeper into me. His teeth graze the column of my neck, heightening my pleasure once more.

Suddenly, my core tightens further. My eyes widen as I feel the tip of his cock swelling deep inside me.

Raising my hips, I swallow him deeper, eager to feel his knot inside me.

"You're mine!" Cole gasps as his cock finally knots inside me.

I look up into his face, taut with strain, teeth bared, his skin glistening with sweat. My legs wrap around his waist, wanting to take him even deeper inside me.

"I want to bite you so badly right now," he grates through clenched teeth.

"You shouldn't do that yet," a voice speaks from the corner.

I'd almost forgotten that Kai was right here.

"She needs to trust us more," Kai says. "You shouldn't bite her and force her into a bond with you."

A growl escapes Cole as he thrusts harder into me.

My anticipation heightens as my insides tighten once more.

A cry escapes me as intense pleasure rushes through me, momentarily drowning my senses completely.



An animalistic roar escapes Cole as he's finally driven over the edge too. "Winter," he roars my name as his hot seeds gush inside me. His massive body trembles over me as he empties himself fully.

A blissed-out look comes over him as he meets my gaze with a tender look in his eyes. "You're so beautiful," he whispers, pressing his lips to mine.

A smile blossoms on my lips. Even though he hasn't bitten me, I feel a bond forming between us.

"Come on, already! It's my turn to take care of her now," Kai's voice sounds from nearby.

Cole presses one last kiss to my lips before gently pulling out of me. Rolling over to the other side of the bed, he props himself on a pillow.

Turning my attention toward Kai, I see that he's fully naked. His body is just as muscular as Cole's but his skin is flawless. Dark tattoos with intricate designs cover his left chest and the upper parts of his arms.

Lowering my gaze, I allow myself a glimpse of his hardened cock, standing fully erect.

"How do you feel?" he asks in a gentle voice as he brushes away a few stray strands from my forehead.

"I feel wonderful," I say with an embarrassed chuckle.

His eyes light up immediately.

I should feel tired but my body feels amazingly vibrant. I can't wait for Kai to take me with the same passion as Cole did.

Moving closer, Kai leans in and kisses me.

Opening up to him willingly, I let his tongue sweep in. The addictive fragrance of sweet orange soon envelops me, igniting the fire in my core.

My body reacts to his pheromones, filling the air with my thick sweet scent.

“Shit!” Cole growls from the corner. “Her perfume is making me go hard again.”

“You do smell delicious,” Kai says in a deep, husky voice.

A moan escapes me as he captures my lips once again. I can't believe I'm kissing him so feverishly right after having sex with his brother before his very eyes!

It's not uncommon for an omega to have more than one mate but such cases are rare. Most alphas are too territorial to share an omega between themselves. This doesn't seem to be an issue among Kai and his brothers though.

And, I absolutely love it! Their strong brotherly bond makes me want to be a part of their pack.

“Winter,” Kai's moan breaks me out of my thoughts.

He breaks the kiss and slides his mouth along the slope of my neck. His soft lips trail over my breasts and down my stomach, steadily aiming for the mound between my thighs.

My anticipation heightens as his hot breath fans over the sparse hair on my pussy. With a sudden move, he lifts my legs and props them over his shoulder, positioning his face right at my core.

The hungry look in his eyes makes my blood run hotter.

Leaning in, Kai flicks his tongue over my clit, sending a shiver shooting through me.

A moan escapes me as I try to keep my body from squirming too much.

His tongue dips into my wet, dripping folds, sending me into a frenzy of pleasure. Wet sounds erupt in the quiet room as he laps at my juices.

“You taste just like you smell,” Kai breathes against my pussy. “I can never have enough of you, Winter.” His tongue flicks over my clit while he slides his fingers inside me. “You feel so tight,” he whispers as my walls clench onto his digits.

My core throbs hard, sending tendrils of pleasure throughout my body. I reach my peak within minutes and come thrashing against the mattress.

“All those noises she’s making are driving me mad,” Cole groans. “I’m going to have to take her again soon.”

My greedy pussy throbs harder at his words.

Kai’s gaze darkens as he stares at my naked, flushed body. He’s goddamn gorgeous with his dark locks falling into his eyes. Moving closer, he tugs on my thighs and spreads them apart, lining his thick erection to my opening.

“Don’t make me wait any longer,” I beg him.

A wolfish grin spreads on his lips. Pressing a kiss to my left nipple, he enters me with a hard thrust.

A soft cry escapes me at the sudden fullness as he stretches me out. My eyes nearly flutter close at the sensation.

Unlike my first time, it doesn't hurt as much.

“Look at me, Winter,” Kai commands in a rough, aggravated voice. “I want you to see me while I drive my cock in you.”

I lick my lips at his dirty, possessive words and look down at the place we're joined. Satisfied that he has my full attention, he pulls out all the way, leaving me empty, and then slams back in again.

“Oh god,” I cry out.

Kai leans in to capture my mouth as he starts plunging inside me at a steady pace. His hand plays with my nipple, twisting it and pinching it.

It's not long before our combined moans and groans of pleasure fill the room.

“You're hot and sweet at the same time,” he moans against my neck as his thrusts grow harder and more desperate.

My pleasure heightens. I feel my walls clenching onto his hard rod as a familiar sensation overtakes my senses.

“Ah, fuck!” Kai roars, and the next moment, I feel his cock swelling and knotting deep inside me. Hot spurts of his cum shoot out, filling me to the brim. “It feels so good to come inside you, Winter,” he says, panting heavily.

A look of complete satisfaction spreads over his handsome face as he grins warmly. He pulls out gently, making me moan as his hot seeds drip down my thighs.

“They named you Winter but you’re so fucking hot,” Kai says with a wild, unrestrained chuckle.

A laugh escapes me even as I try to catch my breath.

He lies down beside me, panting hard but smiling.

A content grin lifts the corners of my lips too. It feels amazing to know I could satisfy the two alphas before me.

Cole comes closer and lies down on my other side. Together, we’re just a heap of bodies, slick with sweat and seed, lying next to each other in a pile of limbs.

Life seems perfect at this moment. No thoughts of my stepmother and the struggling bakery cloud my mind. Pressed between Kai and Cole, I feel utterly satisfied and complete. My eyes flutter close as a blissful sigh escapes me.



## Winter

My eyes blink open in the dimly lit room. A luxurious yawn escapes me as I smile at the two sleeping men on my side. Their bodies are incredibly hot, keeping me thoroughly warm under the blanket.

Gentle snores fill the quiet room, making me smile. Closing my eyes, I wait to fall back asleep but something keeps me awake.

Next moment, a loud rumble sounds from my stomach. I groan, realizing that I'm starving.

Sitting up slowly, I wonder if I should wake them up.

Cole and Kai have such peaceful expressions on their faces that I decide to hunt for food on my own. It's a struggle to climb out of bed while I'm sandwiched between them but I manage it after a few minutes of twisting and squiggling my body.

A cold draft sends a shiver through me. I almost regret being away from Cole and Kai's warmth. Looking around, I catch sight of a discarded shirt.

Moving closer, I pick the luxurious white shirt and bring it close to my nose. A single whiff is enough to tell me it belongs to Cole. His coffee and dark chocolate scent makes my mouth water and instantly makes me crave a hot mocha.

Hoping he wouldn't mind me borrowing his shirt, I put it on and walk out of the room. The hallways leading to the staircase have become familiar to me by now. I'm surprised at how safe and comfortable I feel in my new surroundings.

Jacob, Cole, and Kai are truly amazing.

They're the kind of alphas that every omega dreams of having as their mates. This luxurious manor is enough proof to tell me they're a rich, powerful, and influential pack but despite it all, they're amazingly down-to-earth people.

I doubt anyone would've helped a stranded omega like me without taking advantage of the situation. They rescued me, made me feel safe, and are even helping me through my heat.

My core throbs, remembering the hot lovemaking that Cole and Kai lavished on me. I'd always been scared to face my heat but they made it the most incredible experience of my life. Their warm mouths and powerful, thrusting cocks made me come several times, proving to me how amazing knotting can feel.

Jacob's face suddenly flashes in my mind. Even though Cole and Kai satisfied me to my core, a part of me still wants to know how it'd feel to have Jacob inside me.

*You're so damn greedy,* Winter, I chide myself as the thought refuses to go away.

I think about the quarrel he got into with the strange alpha at the store. Guilt and anxiety well up inside me, reminding me of the dangerous situation he's in. My overactive hormones erased everything from my head, making me forget about it all.

*Please be safe*, I silently pray as I go down the staircase.

“Winter!” A familiar voice calls out to me.

Butterflies flutter in my belly as my gaze lands on Jacob. He's standing far away, carrying massive grocery bags in his hands.

“What're you doing here?” he asks, his gaze skimming over the overlarge shirt I'm wearing.

“I got hungry,” I mumble, looking down at my bare feet. Risking a peek at him through the gap between the long strands of my hair, I see him frowning.

“Where's Cole and Kai?”

“They're asleep. I didn't want to wake them up, so I decided to come into the kitchen by myself,” I explain quickly. “I hope you're not mad.”

“I'm mad at my brothers,” he says, continuing to frown. “They should take better care of you.” He gestures toward the corridor that leads into the kitchen. “Come with me. I'll make you a sandwich right away.”

“Th-that's okay,” I mumble quickly. “I can do it on my own.”

A heavy sigh escapes him. “You look exhausted, sweetheart. Come on, now. Let me make you something so



that you have the strength to go through your heat without getting sick.”

An ache goes through me. His words remind me of my dad instantly. He used to be the only person who took such good care of me.

I follow Jacob as he heads toward the kitchen.

Entering the room, I see that the whole counter is filled with bulging grocery bags.

“I decided to buy as many supplies as I could for the week,” he explains when he sees my surprised expression. “We can’t risk another male entering the house while you’re in heat. So, I bought everything I could think of to tide us over the next couple of days.”

“Thank you,” I whisper. “Also, I’m sorry for all the trouble I’m causing.”

Putting the bags down, he comes to stand before me. “Look at me, Winter,” he says in a deep voice.

I don’t think twice before obeying him. Raising my face, I stare up at him.

“You don’t have to thank us,” he says, brushing a gentle thumb over my cheek. “You don’t have to apologize either. We just want to keep you safe, you know? None of this is trouble to any of us.”

His touch leaves a trail of heat on my skin. A dull throbbing arises in my core, igniting a different kind of hunger within me. Slick runs between my pussy lips, spreading my thick, sugary perfume everywhere.

Jacob's nostrils flare as he senses my rising desire. His dark pupils expand, erasing the silvery-gray of his eyes.

Stepping closer, he pulls me against his hard chest and smashes his mouth to mine.

I blink, too shocked to react momentarily, but my body seems to know what it wants. I feel myself molding against him as his arms wrap around me.

His lips move against mine in a slow, relentless kiss until I open up to him. A throbbing need erupts within me as his tongue sweeps in, tasting every crevice of my mouth.

A moan escapes me as I deepen the kiss, getting a feel of his warm, velvety tongue swirling around mine. Fire surges through my veins, driving away the cold and heating me to the very tips of my fingers.

His mint and lemony scent wraps around me, reminding me of freshly done laundry. My senses drown in the kiss, making me forget about everything.

Lust consumes me. I barely notice that we've crossed the room and ended up near the kitchen island. The back of my knees hits the edge of a chair as Jacob's weight presses on me further, making me fall back against the table.

A squeak escapes me as my legs lift off the floor while my back hits the table. He doesn't give me a chance to sit up, moving swiftly to cover my body with his. Leaning over me, he stares into my eyes.

"Winter," he breathes.

"Do you truly want me?" I ask as a different need arises within me.

My sudden emotional outburst isn't that surprising to me. After being abandoned by the very people I trusted, I am desperate for reassurance. My heart's already in the hands of these alphas who're mere strangers to me. I'll be completely broken if they betray me too.

A tortured look comes over Jacob's face. "I want you more than I want to admit to myself."

My heart throbs in my chest while my core aches and pulses for him. I want Jacob too.

The heat of his body seeps into mine through the thin fabric of our shirts and I want nothing at the moment but to feel it sear my naked skin.

"Winter," he calls my name in a soft whisper, leaning down to place soft kisses along the side of my neck. "I do want you, darling."

Jacob's fingers slowly unbutton my shirt while his lips press a kiss on a spot underneath my earlobe.

"Jacob," I moan, letting my fingers lace together in the soft curls of his dark hair. My control is waning. His pheromones cloud my senses, making me yearn for his touch.

He gazes at me for a moment before clashing his mouth to mine, kissing me so fervently I lose all train of thought. Nothing matters anymore but the feel of his tongue dancing with mine, the hardness of his body pressing against me as I let his hands slip the shirt off my shoulders.

His mouth trails a line of kisses down the column of my neck. The feel of his warm lips on my skin is searing. Small

noises escape my throat, embarrassing me to no end but all my control over my body is gone.

Jacob's lips descend down on the swell of my breasts. Taking a red-tipped nipple in his mouth, he sucks it before teasing it with light grazes of his teeth.

I moan, my body arching off the table's surface.

Jacob halts, looking over me for a moment.

"Please, don't stop," I beg, feeling like I'd cry if he doesn't end what he's started.

A wolfish grin tugs the corner of his lips. The look in his eyes darkens as he straightens up for a moment. Before I can curse out loud, his arms slip beneath me. "I need you in a better position," he says in a rough voice as he places me further along the table.

He pulls off his shirt completely, giving me a view of his perfectly chiseled abs. My gaze falls on an elaborate tattoo on the left side of his lower torso. It's the sigil of a lion with wide-open jaws, displaying its cruel canines.

I'm so distracted by it, a gasp escapes me the moment he lies on top of me, capturing my lips in a hot kiss.

"Jacob," I groan as his mouth hovers over my breasts again. He's slow and patient, taking his time to kiss every inch of my boobs before moving down to kiss a trail down my soft stomach.

Shivers spread through me as his mouth hovers over my pussy. "I want to eat you out but I can't hold back anymore."

“Then, don’t,” I moan, burying my fingers into his hair and pulling him up to capture his lips.

“You’re perfect,” he groans against my mouth while his hardened length presses against my naked pussy. He sucks and lightly bites the skin of my neck as his fingers delve through my dripping slit. “You’re so wet already,” he whispers.

“Please, Jacob,” I plead. “Don’t keep teasing me. I need you.”

A harsh breath escapes him. Lowering his mouth to mine, he aligns his cock against my entrance.

I burn with anticipation as the head of his rigid cock breaches through my pussy lips. He thrusts into me, his thick head pushing against my channel.

I cry out, tightening my arms around his broad, muscular shoulders. My insides feel impossibly full, his thick girth stretching my pulsing walls. He remains still, allowing me the time to get adjusted to him.

His pheromones thicken the air. I know he’s desperate for release but he’s making sure to take care of me first. The gesture makes my eyes prick with tears.

“What’s wrong, honey?” he whispers, brushing away the tears that roll down my cheeks. “Am I hurting you?”

Struggling to control my emotions, I shake my head.

He lowers his forehead to mine in the most intimate gesture while he stays buried inside me. “I’ve never wanted anyone as much as you.”

The sincerity in his voice makes my heart flutter.

“Don’t be scared,” he says in a soft whisper. “I’ll be gentle.”

I feel tears pricking my eyes again. Jacob’s reassurances make me feel like the luckiest omega.

I cursed my fate when my stepmother betrayed me but it was the very same thing that brought me to Jacob and his brothers. No matter what happens between us in the future, I’d never regret letting them be the alphas who helped me through my first heat.

He captures my lips in a slow, fiery kiss, easily distracting me as he pulls out of me an inch before thrusting in again. Sliding smoothly inside me, he buries himself fully.

Breathy moans escape me as he begins moving inside me at a slow but steady pace. My fingers grip his shoulders as pleasure builds inside me. It rises with each of his thrusts, making my walls squeeze and throb harder.

Soon, his thrusts increase in speed and intensity.

I groan, loving the feel of his rock-hard length moving inside me, hitting me at a particular spot that sends shivers of pleasure coursing through me.

“Jacob.” Throwing back my head, I moan out his name over and over again until my pleasure coils tightly in my core. “Don’t stop,” I beg, wrapping my legs around his waist, so he could keep thrusting inside me like that.

A sudden cry escapes me as all my control crumbles.

My body shudders underneath him as waves of pleasure cascade down on me. Fire sings in my veins as my inner walls grip his length tightly.

“Winter,” he bites out, still moving inside me. His voice sounds strained and the muscles on his back and arms tighten as he plunges inside me harder and faster than ever before.

Just as the overwhelming sensations subside, I feel another mountain of pleasure building inside me to take its place. He lowers his head between my breasts as his hands come to hold my wrists firmly, pinning them to the side of my head as his cock pistons inside me relentlessly.

“I’m close,” he grates through clenched teeth, tightening his hold on my wrists as if he’s making sure I couldn’t get away from him. He groans, thrusting into me until I feel my insides coiling into that moment of intense pleasure.

“Winter,” he grates against my neck as his cock hits a particular spot and knots inside me.

Shivers of pleasure spread through my entire body as I hang onto his neck, feeling the knot take root deep inside me. The feeling is so intense that I end up biting his shoulder several times.

With one hard thrust, he roars out and shatters inside me.

“Jacob!” I cry out, losing all control.

My insides clamp onto his cock, drawing out heavy grunts from him as he comes to a sudden halt over me. A deep growl escapes him as he throws his head back.

A gush of fiery-hot liquid gushes inside me. Burying his face in the crook of my neck, he groans my name while his hips continue to move inside me as bursts of his essence fill me to the brim.

Our bodies shudder together as we give in to the pleasure coursing through us. Gasping for breath, he slumps over me.

My own heart is beating hard while I struggle to catch my breath.

With a slow and gentle movement, Jacob pulls out of me.

Every ounce of strength seems to have been drained out of me. I continue to lie on the table while he bends down and covers my body with his heavy overcoat.

“Are you all right, honey?” he asks, kissing my cheek.

Out of breath, I simply nod. Safety steals through me as I close my eyes.

“Winter?” Jacob’s voice rings in my ear.

“Hmm?”

“Winter, darling, wake up.”

My eyes fly open. To my surprise, I realize I’d dozed off right after closing my eyes.

“Come on, let me help you,” he says, putting down a plate of food.

Coming closer, he helps me to sit up straight on the table.

That’s when I notice the overcoat that’s covering me. Jacob’s gone back to wearing his clothes again. A delicious aroma spreads in the kitchen, reminding me of cheese and bacon.



“What happened after we left the store?” I ask him in a quiet voice.

“The store manager came back to his senses a few minutes after you left,” he says in a gentle tone. “Your perfume faded away, turning him sane again. He was still interested to know who you were but I walked out of there before he could waste my time.”

“So, everything’s okay?”

He gives a nod and squeezes my hand. “Stop worrying about that stupid alpha. Being in heat must be exhausting for you,” he says, handing me the plate of food. “How about you finish eating this before getting distracted again?” His silvery eyes twinkle as he suddenly smiles at me.

My hand goes to my chest as his beauty nearly blinds me. Jacob is a handsome man but when he smiles, he’s almost angelic.

“Go on. Eat it already,” he urges, pushing a fork in my hand.

Looking down, I see the plate piled up with a mountain of scrambled eggs, rashers of crispy bacon, and buttered bread rolls. The smell that wafts from the plate makes my stomach groan with need.

Without another thought, I dive in, shoveling as much food as I can into my empty stomach. The eggs are amazingly soft, buttery, and creamy while the bread rolls are stuffed with melted cheese. A deeply satisfying crunching sound erupts in the kitchen as I bite into a piece of bacon.

“There’s something else I wanted to ask,” he says as I devour the food.

“Sure. What is it?”

“What kind of stuff do you like?” he asks with an interested look in his eyes. “I want to build you a temporary nest while you go through your heat, so I must understand your preference.”

His words send another flare of warmth through me. He’s so damn caring! Cole and Kai have already been amazing at making me feel comfortable in the guestroom. And now, Jacob wants to make me an actual nest!

“I love Christmas,” I tell him as a goofy smile comes onto my lips. “Fairy lights, fuzzy socks, loads of cushions, Christmas trees, hot chocolate...” I recite the things that make the holiday season my favorite.

A chuckle escapes him. “I get it. You love everything about winter.”

My grin broadens as I take another bite of my bacon. Within minutes, I finish up the delicious food he’s made me.

When I look toward Jacob again, I find him smiling at me with a warm look in his eyes. “Do you want some more food?”

“Do you have anything sweet?” I ask hopefully.

“We have ice cream, fudge brownies, and chocolate donuts. What would you like?”

“All of them,” I say as a blush creeps up my cheeks.

A chuckle escapes him. “I’m glad I didn’t skimp on buying the sweet treats.” Walking away from the counter, he starts preparing a dessert plate for me.

A sense of immense coziness settles over me. Wrapped up in his overcoat, I feel amazingly warm.

Once again, I can’t believe how lucky I’ve been to cross paths with Jacob and his brothers. Even in my wildest imagination, I could’ve never thought of becoming a mate to these amazingly kind and gentle, yet powerful alphas.

The word ‘mate’ echoes in my mind. I’ve never desired anything as much as them. If Santa’s out there, I just have one thing on my list this Christmas.

The Drake Brothers.



### Jacob

Winter's face rises in my mind as I walk toward the towering manor before me. I've been away from her since early this morning because of my job. It's the second day of her heat and I've been aching to go back to her.

Since Winter's heat came on so suddenly, we were taking turns managing all the admin duties that came with running a private security company. I went out to tackle some of them this morning and was only returning home now.

A warm afternoon breeze blows past me as I push open the door to my home. The moment I step past the threshold, I catch a hint of Winter's signature vanilla and rose scent.

Walking further inside the entrance hall, I cast a glance over the tall windows that line the walls, making sure they're all tightly locked. Even though our private soldiers live on an estate a few miles away, we still have a good number of beta guards who patrol the area around our home.

Winter's perfume is so exotic and alluring, it'd drive them mad with lust too. It was best to keep her scent contained and locked in so that only I and my brothers could inhale it.

Wanting to see Winter, I hurry further inside the manor. Just as I'm about to climb up the stairs, I catch sight of Kai.

"Hey," I call out.

"Did you just come back?" he asks, rushing down the stairs to meet me.

"Yeah. How's Winter doing? Is she okay? Have there been any problems—"

Kai puts his hand up, cutting off my questions. "Of course, she's fine. Cole and I have been taking care of her." An annoyed expression comes over his young face. "Do I have to go to work right now?"

"We've got to do the bare minimum," I tell him in a grim tone. "It's better to keep an eye on our operations so that things stay under our control while Winter needs us."

His mouth forms a thin line but he nods, understanding the need to stay present to make sure our men are doing their jobs.

"Where's Cole?" I ask.

"He's with her," he says. A noise of frustration escapes his throat as he kicks the air. "I wish I could've stayed with her longer. What if she needs me?"

"I'm here now," I say, slapping his shoulder. "Just go to work already so that you can come home sooner."

He groans. "I hate my job."

A chuckle escapes me as I leave him on the stairs and climb up to the second floor. Kai usually gets his way by

making that cute face since he was a baby but it's not going to get him out of doing his job today.

Reaching the guestroom, I push open the door and halt at the sight waiting for me there.

Cole stands by the bed with Winter kneeling at his feet. He faces me but his eyes are closed at the moment. Winter's back is toward me, so she doesn't notice as she bobs her head up and down my brother's shaft.

"Ahh, Winter," Cole lets out a guttural groan. "Your mouth is as hot as your pussy." His fingers crush the strands of her golden blonde hair as she keeps sucking him off enthusiastically.

Neither of them is aware of my presence, allowing me the opportunity to study them.

Cole hasn't been with a woman since the incident that left him with those deep, ugly scars on his face. Almost every woman we meet stares at him with either fear or disgust in their eyes.

It's almost surreal to see him having such a connection with Winter.

*We need Winter with us*, I realize, surprising myself.

She's the only woman who can complete us. My possessiveness grows as I silently walk inside the room.

The air is heavy with Winter's delectable perfume and a hint of my brothers' combined scents.

"Ahh, Winter!" Cole growls as his hips jerk uncontrollably. "I can't—stay in control anymore."

Winter doesn't stop but relentlessly continues to suck him off.

Cole's hands tighten around her cheeks as he lets out a roar. His body shudders from the force of a massive orgasm as he shatters in her mouth.

Breathing harshly, he pulls his cock out of Winter's mouth and pulls her to her feet. His arms wrap around her, pulling her into an embrace. "You're the most incredible omega in the world," he whispers before capturing her lips in a kiss.

I wonder if he can taste himself on her tongue. The thought makes my cock twitch in my pants.

"Jacob," Cole's surprised voice makes me look up.

I meet his gaze as Winter turns around to face me.

She's still panting hard after the way Cole took control of her mouth. Her chest rises and falls as she leans against him. Under the dim light of the bedside lamp, her cheeks glow red, enticing me to take a bite from them.

My gaze takes in the rest of her body. She looks like a treat with her flushed neck and breasts right now.

I still can't wrap my mind around the way we came across her. *It doesn't matter how she came into our lives*, I decide as a familiar possessiveness wraps around my chest. *She's ours and we're never letting her get away from us.*

"Did you just get back?" she asks, trying to hide her pink pussy from view.

"Yeah, I just got home."

“I’m so glad you’re back,” she says with a shy grin.  
“I’ve missed you.”

My heart throbs at the sound of her sweet voice. “Come here,” I command in a deep voice.

She stumbles forward and moves closer to me.

“I’ve missed you too,” I say, leaning into her and capturing her lips. My hands roam all over her naked skin while I kiss her deep and hard.

Warmth spreads through me when I notice her breathing has turned erratic. It does something funny to me to watch her be this affected by me. It makes me want to cherish her and protect her, but it also compels me to ravish her and own her.

I lower my mouth onto a crimson-tipped nipple and suck hard. My hand plays with the other, kneading and rolling the tip between my fingers.

Winter moans and thrusts her hips against mine.

“Are you always so impatient?” I ask with a dark chuckle.

“You’ve been away for hours,” she says with a ridiculous pout on her luscious lips. “I just missed you a lot.”

Deep chuckles escape me. I can’t help but lower my head and kiss those pouty lips. To my surprise, I feel her hand brushing over my crotch. My cock has already been straining against the confines of my trousers and her touch makes it throb harder.

“I want to reward her too,” Cole’s voice sounds from the corner. “She’s been such a good, sweet omega to me.”



My brother is still fully naked. His pale blue eyes gaze at Winter with a fevered intensity. He's drinking in her soft curves, her flawless skin, and the patch of silky blond hair adorning the triangle between her thighs.

"Get back to the bed," Cole says with a husky note in his voice.

She readily obeys him and climbs up on the bed.

Sitting down beside her, Cole spreads her glistening pussy lips with his fingers. Winter's eyes flash with need as her gaze shifts toward him.

Unable to contain myself, I move toward them and take my place beside her. Wetting my thumb, I press on the dark little bud at the top of her pussy.

"Jacob," she moans as a shudder runs through her.

Cole hooks two fingers and pushes them inside her. "She's so tight," he growls.

"Let me see," I say. As soon as he pulls out, I push my fingers in, making her moan again. Our sweet omega is so fucking tight. I coax her pulsing walls, inserting a third finger inside her.

"Please," she hisses as her toes curl. "I want—" Her hips buck but Cole holds her down. Shifting closer, he pulls her onto his lap.

My cock throbs hard as I watch him grasp her boobs in his massive hands.

"Please, Jacob," Winter's voice is heavy with desire and need as she lies down to rest her head on Cole's thigh.

Pulling my fingers out of her clenching walls, I hurry to take my shirt off. She isn't the only one in need. My cock is on the verge of tearing through my boxers and trousers too.

When my cock is free, I guide it along her entrance. Cole leans down and captures her lips just as I part her thighs and slam my way inside her.

Winter's pussy swallows my thick length all the way in. Her tight walls clamp around my cock with every thrust until I feel myself losing to the rising pleasure in my body.

Winter's body twists and shudders underneath mine but Cole keeps a steady hold on her, making it easier for me to thrust inside her at the best angle.

Her moans and cries ring out all around me, heightening my pleasure.

"Fuck, I want her so much right now," Cole whispers, staring at me.

"What's stopping you?" I ask, continuing to thrust inside Winter.

"I want to be inside that tight pussy," he says in a rough voice.

My gaze slides down his body and rests on his erect cock, shamelessly pointing at me. It takes me a moment to understand what he wants from me.

I stop thrusting inside her and gaze down at her. "Do you trust us, darling?"

Her walls throb against my cock as she gives a slow nod. Her beautiful emerald eyes have gone hazy with lust and her

cheeks are flushed a lovely deep pink.

I pull out of her, drawing a grumble from those luscious lips. My cock drips with a combination of her juices and my precum but still twitches and throbs.

“Get over here,” I say in a deep, commanding voice.

Cole obeys at once, taking up my position.

Winter’s gaze darts between us.

“We’re going to take you together,” I say “You’ll have us inside you at the same time.”

Some of the lust in her eyes clears away at my words. “Together? At the same time? How exactly—”

I have no idea what she wanted to say because, at that exact moment, Cole plunges into her, burying himself balls-deep inside her. She moans as his thrusts pick up pace within seconds.

The veins in his thick neck jut out as he pounds into her. “She feels so fucking good,” he hisses through clenched teeth.

At one point, he lifts her from the bed and holds her against his chest as he keeps slamming into her. Winter wraps her arms around his neck and holds on for dear life. Her legs wrap around his hips, keeping herself in the perfect position to take in his thrusting cock.

I move behind her and stroke her buttcrack with my cock. I let some of my precum dribble onto my hands and use it to slick up the tight ring of her ass.

“Jacob, what are you doing?” she manages to blurt out.

“You’re going to be okay,” I reassure her as I insert a slicked finger inside her tight hole.

Winter’s body shivers.

“Fuck, she’s getting tighter,” Cole groans. “Keep up whatever you’re doing.”

A smirk rises on my lips. Moving toward the bedside table, I bring out the bottle of lube that I bought yesterday.

While Cole keeps her distracted, I pour a thin string of the oily concoction over her crack and smear her bud with it. I keep stretching and loosening Winter’s hole until I’m sure she can take me inside me.

Positioning myself behind Winter, I slowly coax my cock’s head through her tight bud.

“Jacob,” Winter gasps out as she feels my hardened shaft entering her.

“You’ll be okay, darling,” I whisper gently. “Just allow yourself to relax, okay?” My hands grab onto her shoulders while Cole’s arms circle her waist. Even though my jaws are clenched hard with need and the intense desire throbbing through me, I’m going to make sure I don’t hurt her.

Inch by inch, I bury myself inside her hot, clenching body.

Groans of pure pleasure escape me as her tight muscles sheath my cock in a tight, hot embrace. “Your body feels incredible,” I moan as my balls thrust against her ass.

Winter is soon caught between me and Cole as we drive inside her.

Our combined moans and groans sound deafening in my ears, making my pleasure rise to uncontrollable heights. Never in my wildest imagination did I think I could share a woman with my brother, but doing so right now feels amazingly good.

Both our focus is on the moaning woman between us. Her body greedily swallows our cocks, demanding more with each breath.

My balls slap against her ass as I thrust into her, but suddenly she tenses and squeezes around me so hard, I feel all my control crumble.

A roar escapes me, combining with Cole's growl and Winter's soft cry.

For a moment, the three of us are locked in a bizarre embrace as our bodies shudder with the force of our release. My fingers grip her waist tightly as I empty inside her.

Winter's body slumps against Cole's chest.

I slowly pull out of her, leaving a trail of my creamy, hot seeds on her ass and the back of her thighs. My heart hammers wildly as I sit back and try to catch my breath.

Cole lowers Winter among the pillows and lies down beside her.

A deep flush spreads on Winter's cheeks, neck, and breasts as she pants and gasps. Her dark eyes glow with pure satisfaction as her chest heaves and her body shudders with tiny tremors.

I lie down next to her and wrap an arm around her. "You did so well, love," I whisper and kiss her neck. "You've no idea how happy you make me."

“I’d have to agree with Jacob,” Cole says in a deep voice as he presses a kiss to her cheek. “I’ve never felt so satisfied in my life. You make us very happy, Winter.”

A smile blossoms on her lips as she closes her eyes. “I don’t think I can feel my legs anymore.”

Cole chuckles from beside her and pulls a blanket over us, covering me as well.

Pure bliss settles over me, driving away the stress and exhaustion of the past few days. Closing my eyes, I bury my face against her neck.

Winter’s warmth is enough to lull me into a deep slumber...



## Winter

A wide yawn escapes me as I slowly sit up. Stretching my legs out under the covers, I relish the warmth of the blanket.

Late afternoon sunshine streams in through the closed curtains at the windows. Even though it's bright enough, I see a myriad of string lights that illuminate the room with a warm, soft glow. Further away, the mantle over the fireplace is filled with shimmering green and silver mini-Christmas trees.

A smile blossoms on my lips as I look around the messy bed and find familiar pieces of clothing all over it. Grabbing the nearest sweatshirt to me, I bring it close to my face and inhale the scent wafting from it.

The scent of sweet orange spreads around me, reminding me of Kai immediately. An inexplicable happiness bubbles inside me as I look around my nest.

Nest. The word registers in my mind. It's incredible to think I've spent the last five days in this room.

Kai and his brothers were with me at every moment during my heat. They took care of me, showering me with indescribable pleasure. Heat floods my cheeks as I think back on the times I had hot, sweaty sex with them. My hormones

drove me so horny sometimes, I needed them to take me at the same time.

A weird noise escapes me as I press a pillow to my face. My heat made me beg them for sex and each time, they obliged.

Now that the haze of heat and lust has lifted off me, I feel a wave of embarrassment coming over me. How could I do that with three alphas I barely knew anything about?

Despite the awkwardness I'm starting to feel, I can't deny the warm tingly sensation in my belly. Jacob and his brothers have been so incredibly nice to me over the past week that I've helplessly fallen for them all.

Now that my heat is over, I wonder what they'll do with me. Should I continue to let them believe I'm a hooker and just hide in this big mansion with them? Or do I tell them the truth and ask them to help me?

A soft knock sounds at the door. "Winter?" Kai's voice whispers from outside.

"I'm up," I call out to him.

The door opens and the next moment, Kai steps in, looking breathtakingly handsome in a pair of loose slacks and a buttoned-up shirt. His hair strands turn a deep auburn as he comes to stand under a shaft of sunlight.

"I'm glad you're up," he says with a warm look in his soft brown eyes. "How're you feeling today?"

"My body aches but in a good way," I say, suppressing a yawn. "I think my heat is finally over."



Kai steps closer and sits down on the edge of the bed. Reaching out, he pushes back a thick strand of hair and takes a closer look at me. A sigh escapes him as he leans in to press his forehead against mine.

Warmth flares in my chest at the intimate gesture. I might be lying to him and his brothers, but my feelings for them are true. They make me feel so safe and protected that I don't even want to think about leaving them.

“How about you come down with me?” he says, unaware of the storm raging inside me. “Jacob's making us some late lunch. Why don't you join us?”

“Is it okay if I take a shower first?”

Kai and his brothers wiped me every chance they got but I need a proper shower to remove the dry, sticky patches of cum in my hair and between my thighs.

“Sure, you can take your time.” He gets to his feet and grins. “We'll wait for you downstairs.” Stealing a kiss on my cheek, he crosses the room and walks out of the door.

A stupid smile is etched on my face as I watch him walk away. Giving myself a shake, I climb out of bed and move toward one of the windows.

Even though I've been in this room for almost a week, I never got the chance to look out of the windows. Taking a deep breath, I slide the curtain and look out at the snowy hills in the distance.

The grounds and the valleys surrounding the manor are quite bare at the moment but when spring arrives, everything

would be layered with shades of green. A deep desire to see the sight flares inside me.

*Don't think about the future right now, I tell myself, stepping away from the window. Just do one thing at a time until you figure out what to do next.*

I walk inside the bathroom and shed off the long shirt I'd been wearing in bed. With a fleeting glance at the mirror, I enter the glass-walled shower stall.

A moan escapes me the moment jets of hot, steamy water cascade down on me. The heat soaks into my skin and penetrates deeper into my muscles, relaxing them. My aches begin to fade, bringing me so much relief, I find myself smiling from a simple shower.

I grab the soap and shampoo next. The smell of pine and lemon makes me recall the scent I usually catch on Jacob's clothes. My cheeks warm with pleasure as I lather up the gel and dig my fingers into my tangled strands to clean them.

It's a while before I feel fully fresh and clean. Soaking from head to foot, I step out of the shower stall and grab a man's robe that's hanging from a hook.

I move toward the mirror in the corner and take a long look at myself.

I'd expected to look like shit after not caring for myself over the past week but to my surprise, my face glows with health. Memories of the times when Jacob and Cole fed me come back to me.

We'd all been affected by my perfume but they never forgot to take care of me. They acted like my mates during that

time, keeping me safe and protected from the cruel world that wanted to hurt me.

I clutch my chest, feeling the rapid beating of my heart. Would I ever be able to leave them behind? “Just get dressed,” I tell my reflection. “Don’t think of the future just yet.”

Taking a deep breath, I start drying my hair.

When I’m done, I walk back inside the room and look for something to wear.

That’s when my gaze falls on the stacks of shopping bags that crowd a corner of the room. Moving toward them, I pick one of the packages and peek inside.

To my surprise, I find a neatly folded dress inside it.

I quickly look through the other bags and find more clothes. The memory of being inside a boutique store comes back to me. Did Jacob bring back all the clothes I’d chosen?

Picking up a bottle-green woolen dress, I check the label hanging from it. One look at it and I know it belongs to me because of the size stamped on it.

A smile comes onto my lips as I grab a pair of underwear from one of the bags and start putting it on. I love wearing Jacob, Cole, and Kai’s clothes, but it’s a different feeling to put on something brand new after a good shower.

I revel in the feel of the soft, yet warm fabric against my skin. Paired with tan boots, I look like one of those girls you see on the pages of a fall-themed magazine.

Feeling confident, I walk out of the room and head downstairs.

My excitement grows as I get closer to the kitchen. I can't wait for Jacob, Cole, and Kai to see me in the clothes they bought me.

"Guys, Winter's here. Finally!" Kai calls out the moment I step inside the kitchen.

A wave of shyness hits me the moment I gaze up at him and his brothers. They're all staring at me with warm gazes that make me want to smile wider and break into a dance.

"I've got some food for you," Jacob says, attracting my attention toward him.

Dressed in a navy sweatshirt, he looks amazingly handsome.

I go toward him and sit on the empty chair between him and Cole.

"You look pretty in this dress," Cole says, leaning over to me.

Without a thought, I put my arms around his neck, pulling him closer.

Surprise flickers in his eyes as he stares at me. "Kai said your heat's over," he says in a lowered voice. "Do you still feel attracted to me?"

How could he still doubt the way I feel about him?

I press my lips to his, answering him in the only way he'd truly believe me.

Cole's arms wrap around me, and within seconds, he's kissing me back with a passion that makes my pussy flutter

again. My fingers dig into his hair as his tongue dances around mine, tasting me thoroughly.

I'm a breathless mess when the kiss finally ends.

"Let her eat," Jacob chides. "She hasn't eaten a thing since last night."

"Sorry," Cole apologizes but his blue eyes shine with mischief.

"Tell me if you want me to make you another one," Jacob says as I take a big bite of the massively stuffed sandwich. "I wish I could cook us something nicer but cold cuts are all we've got left in the house. We'll have to go out for shopping to bring in some fresh stuff soon."

"This is delicious," I say, taking another bite of the sandwich.

"Hey, you want some hot chocolate?" Kai asks. "I was thinking about making some for myself."

I nod. "Thanks!"

I finish off the sandwich quickly and eagerly reach for the cup of steaming hot chocolate that Kai places before me.

"Winter," Jacob calls out my name. "Are you sure you're feeling fine? If you want, we could take you to a doctor to get you checked."

I shake my head and smile up at him. "I feel absolutely fine."

The grim look on his face remains. "Can you tell us the truth now?" he says. "What were you doing all alone on the road that night we found you?"

I put down the cup of hot chocolate and look into his silvery eyes. There's no accusation there. He simply looks concerned.

"Can we talk about it tomorrow?" I say, meeting all their gazes. "You guys have been so wonderful to me that I don't want this dream to end just yet. Can I have one more day before I face reality?" My voice catches in my throat, forcing me to take another sip of the hot chocolate.

Cole places his hand over mine and squeezes. "You know we'd help you, right?" he says gently.

I nod, looking into his beautiful blue eyes. "I know."

"Did you see the Christmas tree in Reagan Square this year?" Kai asks, distracting me from my thoughts.

"What're you talking about?" Cole asks, fixing his gaze on his younger brother.

Kai shrugs. "If she doesn't want to talk, why don't we all go out tonight and celebrate a little?" Turning his attention back on me, he asks, "Do you like to skate, Winter?"

"I love to skate but it's been a while since I've done that," I confess. I want to tell him how busy I've been over the past few years with managing the bakery but I hold myself back. We can talk about my troubles another day.

"So, what'd you say?" Kai says, wagging his eyebrows. "Do you want to go out with us?"

The Christmas tree in Reagan Square is the biggest one in all the neighboring towns. People flock there every evening to see the beautiful lights, enjoy the treats being sold by street vendors, and then, skate on the massive ice rink there.

Growing up, it was my favorite winter hangout. The festivities would start right after Thanksgiving and go on until the first week of the new year.

I've been so busy with the bakery that I never got the opportunity to see the Christmas decorations this year. Kai's suggestion sends a jolt of excitement through me, easily distracting me from my depressing thoughts.

"Can we really go?" I ask, looking between him and his brothers.

"Of course, we can go," Jacob says. "You just have to say the word."

"Yes! Let's go!"

A glowing smile lights up Jacob's handsome face. Getting to his feet, he moves closer and hugs me from behind the chair.

"We're here to keep you safe," he whispers in my ear. "Never forget that, love."

Safety steals through me at his reassurance. "Thanks. I'll never forget the way you've helped me through the most difficult time in my life."

"Hey, cheer up," Kai says as he stands up. "Go put on something warm and I'll go get the car to the front. Let's leave now so we can reach there before it gets too crowded."

Jacob and Cole nod and get to their feet too.

Excitement rushes through my veins as I watch them scatter around the kitchen. While Kai walks away, Jacob and Cole start clearing the mess from the table and the counters.

I head out after Kai and hurry up the stairs to reach my room.

Going over to the mountain of shopping bags, I fish out the one that contains a new crimson overcoat with ornate gold buttons.

“This is so gorgeous,” I mumble, holding the coat up.

I try not to look at the price tag as I tear it away. The coat is heavy but it’s amazingly warm and comfortable. Bundled up for the evening ahead, I go back downstairs.

Jacob and Cole are already waiting for me in the entrance hall. They’re both attired in luxurious overcoats that heighten their bold personalities. Warmth and pleasure flare in my belly when I realize they’re both going to be my dates for the evening.

“Let’s go,” Jacob says, gesturing for me to come forward.

I nod and step between him and Cole. They’re both so tall, I almost look like a schoolgirl among them.

“You should have this too,” Cole says, unwrapping his scarf from his neck.

“Hey, that’s okay,” I say but Cole drapes the thick, woolen scarf around my neck.

“Good thinking,” Jacob says, proceeding to take off his tan-hued beanie. “The forecast says it’s going to be chilly tonight, so we can’t let her get cold.” He pushes the cap on my head and fiddles with my stray strands to arrange them perfectly.



It's been too long since anyone's shown such care for me. I greedily soak up their attention without complaint, letting them turn me into a wool-wrapped doll.

"Shall we?" Jacob asks as Cole opens the door.

I nod and step forward.

A chilly breeze blows by but I only feel it on the exposed parts of my face. Chuckling to myself, I walk toward the familiar car that's waiting for us.

"Come sit with me," says Kai as I get closer.

Opening the passenger-side door, I climb into the front.

"What did my brothers do to you?" he says, laughing.  
"You look ready to go to the North Pole or something."

"It's going to get colder," Jacob says as he settles into the backseat. "I don't want her to get sick."

"Winter looks ridiculous," Kai retorts. "She's too nice to say anything to you guys but I'm gonna!"

"It's okay," I say as Cole settles down beside Jacob. "I know I look silly but I also like that you take such good care of me. I can't thank you guys enough—"

"Stop thanking us already," Kai cuts me off, looking grim. "We all had the pleasure of taking care of you."

"He's right," Cole says as Kai steps on the gas.  
"Besides, forget about everything. Tonight's all about enjoying ourselves. Just let go of the things you can't change and relax."

His words soothe my worries. Settling into my seat, I watch the beautiful scenery outside pass by.

The sun's almost dropping below the hills in the distance, casting a deep orange glow to the sky overhead. By the time we reach the town square, it'll be dark enough for us to enjoy the Christmas lights.

I'm secretly thankful Kai drives us through a different route that doesn't go through Knightswood. Despite being with him and his brothers, I'm still wary of being spotted by Laura and Pete.

Relaxing further, I enjoy the ride as we head toward town.

"What's your favorite thing to do at the Christmas fair?" Kai asks as we get closer to the town square.

"I have to choose one?"

"Yep. Just one."

"Mmm..." I mumble, mulling over the question. "If I have to choose one thing, then it'd have to be the Christmas tree. Its magic never fades. One glance at the shining ornaments and the twinkling lights, and all my sadness disappears. I can spend hours just standing under it."

"What if we got a tree at home?" Jacob says from the back. "Would you be able to decorate it?"

"Me?"

"It has to be you because the three of us rarely care for such traditions," says Jacob.

"Why's that?" I ask curiously. "I mean, you guys are a family. Is it because you're non-religious?"

“Nah,” Cole answers. “It’s just that we never grew up in the same place. Our parents were also in the military. It was rare for both of them to be stationed in the same town during the holidays. Jacob would usually stay with our dad while Kai and I would usually get stuck with our mom. We rarely had a Christmas where both our parents were around.”

“It’s a miracle how they managed to make their relationship work,” says Kai with a chuckle.

“I’m sure they loved each other very much,” I say. “You guys are together now, though. You’re a pack. Every pack should have a Christmas tradition.”

“Why don’t you start one for us?” Cole says from the back.

Just as I’m about to reply, my gaze falls on a glittering star in the distance. “Oh, wow,” I whisper excitedly, pointing to the front. “It’s the Reagan Square Christmas tree! Do you guys see it?”

Chuckles sound all around me.

“Of course, we see it,” Kai says, slowing the car down as he maneuvers it toward the parking lot.

“No Christmas tradition is complete without a tree,” I say assertively. “You guys must have a tree as big as that in your front hall.”

“If a big ass tree is what you want, we’ll get one for you,” Cole promises.

A fluttery feeling erupts in my belly at his words. He wants to get me a tree.

“Where do we get started?” Kai asks the moment he brings the car to a stop.

“The tree, obviously!” I cry out excitedly.

A laugh escapes him as he nods and climbs out of the car.

Happiness bubbles inside me as I follow him. I can't remember the last time I felt so excited and cheerful.

It'd probably be the time when my mom was still alive. She made everything seem magical, especially the holiday season.

Jacob and Cole come to stand close to me.

Suddenly, I realize that they're all circling me. Jacob and Cole keep their stares ahead, their gazes roving every corner of the deserted parking lot while Kai keeps his arm wrapped around my shoulder in a protective stance.

“Should we go that way?” I say, pointing toward the corner of the town square that houses the Christmas tree.

“Sure, let's go,” says Kai, turning me around. Jacob steps forward, guiding us while Cole positions himself behind us.

“People are staring at us,” I whisper as we move through the crowded sidewalks to reach the tree. “Do we have to walk like this?”

“It's for your protection,” Kai says in a grim tone. “Don't worry, darling. We'll not let anyone come near you.”

I feel everyone's gaze on me. Surrounded by these massively built, sharply-dressed men, I must look like an

heiress with her bodyguards.

“They think I’m someone special,” I whisper urgently. “Do you guys have to walk around like you’ll kill someone if they get too close?”

“You *are* someone special,” Cole says from behind me. “You’re *ours*. And we will kill anyone if they try to hurt you.”

The sincerity in his voice sends a tremor through me. His possessiveness should scare me but it ends up making me feel safe.

Kai’s arm squeezes my shoulder lightly. “Forget about everyone,” he says. “We’re here to enjoy ourselves. Let’s just do that, okay?”

He’s right. Once they know the truth, they might not want to get involved in the shitty situation I’m wrapped up in. I won’t blame them for it because they’ve already done enough for me.

This might be the last time I get to enjoy such a beautiful evening with the men I’ve fallen in love with. So, I stop worrying and decide to simply live in the moment.

Looking around, I see that the place is already coming alive with the squeals and shouts of young children. Strings of fairy lights twinkle overhead. Gigantic bells and glowing reindeer displays add to the holiday decorations, creating a magical atmosphere.

The smell of roasted chestnuts soon wafts into my nostrils. I glance around, catching sight of the stalls selling delicious food, toys, and handcrafted goods. They’re all

fencing the path that leads up to the massive, twinkling tree in the center of the square.

My breath leaves me in a rush as I finally stand below the Christmas tree with Kai and his brothers. Its lush branches are laden with streams of fairy lights, baubles, tinsels, and holly garlands. A dazzling golden glow surrounds the evergreen fir, making me feel like I'm part of its magic.

"How tall do you think it is?" Cole's voice breaks me out of my thoughts.

"It's got to be at least 20 feet," Jacob mutters, his gaze roving over the massive tree.

"Think we can fit one like this in the living room?" Kai asks next.

I stare at the three brothers. "You guys can't be serious," I say, hesitating. "You want something as big as this tree?"

"Why not?" Jacob says, grinning. His silvery eyes have turned a shade of gold as he continues staring up at the tree. "If we're doing a Christmas tree this year, we might as well do it right."

*I shouldn't get too excited*, I tell myself as a part of me wants to dance around at the idea of having a tree that's as magical as the one standing before me. I still need to confess the truth to Jacob.

"Do you want to eat something?" Jacob says.

"Chestnuts!" I say without a thought. "I smelled them the moment we got out of the car."

“Sure,” he says. “Anything else? How about some fudge and Christmas candies? I know you like sweet treats and there’s plenty being sold around here.”

“Oh, you’d buy me some?”

“Of course,” Cole says, smiling brightly. “Anything you want, love.” His grin stretches and deepens his scars, making his face appear scarier. People around us stare and point at him, but he ignores them all.

Stepping closer, I wrap my arms around him.

Cole must feel their gaze on him. I’m sure he doesn’t want to be in a crowded place like this where people can point at him openly but he’s staying here because of me. He’s keeping me company to make me happy.

My arms tighten around him. Who cares what his face looks like? Cole has a heart of gold and I’m glad he’s given me the chance to see it.

“Hey, are you okay?” Cole asks, gently caressing my back.

“Yeah, I just wanted to hug you.”

He drops a kiss on my head and holds me close.

“Are you guys coming or what?” Jacob asks, gesturing toward the food stalls in the corner.

“Yeah,” Cole replies, stepping away from me.

“Stay with her,” Jacob commands, fixing his gaze on Kai. “We’ll be back with the snacks.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll keep her safe.” Kai turns toward me as Jacob and Cole walk away. “Why did you hug Cole like that?”

he asks.

“I didn’t like the way people were staring at him,” I say. “They don’t have the right to judge him without knowing who he is. I wanted to protect him.”

Kai leans in, his deep brown eyes boring deep into mine. “You really care about him.”

“I do. And, it’s not just him. I care about you and Jacob too.”

A sigh escapes him as he closes his eyes. Next moment, he pulls me into a tight hug. “You’re the one I’ve been waiting for,” he whispers in my ear, biting the shell lightly.

A shiver runs down my body. “Kai...” I moan as a familiar throb erupts in my belly.

Raising his head, he stares at me for a moment before capturing my lips in a searing kiss. His touch makes me blind to the world as I drown in his addictive scent.

The kiss leaves me breathless.

“They’re already coming back,” Kai says, looking over my head. “Listen, Winter. Can you do me a favor?” An urgent tone infuses his voice.

“Sure. Anything.”

“Ask Cole to go skating with you,” he says breathlessly.

“Huh?”

“Cole has always loved it since he was a kid,” Kai spills the words as fast as he can while his brothers beeline toward us. “He hasn’t gone skating after the incident that left those scars on his face. He’d never agree to go out there by himself



but if you ask him, I'm sure he'll agree. You're the only one who makes him this happy. Can you do it for him?"

"I haven't skied over the past couple of years," I confess, feeling nervous. "I'm rusty as hell, but if Cole doesn't mind, I'd love to skate with him."

Before Kai can say another word, Jacob and Cole reach us.

Jacob hands me a warm bag while Cole hands a steaming cup to Kai.

"These smell so good! Thanks!" I say, staring up at Jacob.

"Go ahead," he says with an encouraging nod. "Eat them while they're hot."

Opening the bag, I pass it around to them all. When they've each picked a chestnut, I grab one for myself.

I crack the thin shell with my fingers and easily peel it off to reveal the soft, sweet nut inside it. "Mmm, this is so good," I moan, happily chewing the chestnut. "Brings back so many memories, you know."

I feel Kai's elbow dig into my side gently. Getting his hint, I turn my attention toward Cole.

Even though he's standing with us, his gaze is on the ice skating rink on the other side of the square. Desire swirls in his blue eyes as he watches the people on the ice.

Moving closer to Cole, I grasp his hand.

He glances down at me. "Are you okay?"

I nod, grinning. "Do you want to skate with me?"

His eyes widen a fraction. “You want me to go with you?”

I nod, smiling up at him brightly. “I’ll confess I’m rusty but I’m sure I can pick it up once we’re on the ring.”

He glances toward his brothers.

“Go ahead,” Jacob says with a firm nod.

“Break a leg,” Kai says with a wink.

Cole glances back at me. “If you’re sure, let’s go.”

“I’m sure! Do you guys want to join us too?” I ask, looking toward Jacob and Kai.

“Nah, we’re fine,” Kai says, waving his hand. “Neither of us likes zooming around when it’s this cold.”

“Want me to buy you some more mulled wine?” Jacob suggests.

“Yes, Bruh! You’re the best,” Kai says, slinging an arm around his eldest brother.

“Shall we?” Cole says softly.

I nod and let him lead me toward the stands where we can rent figure skates.

The area surrounding the ring looks like something out of a holiday postcard. Fairy lights twinkle in every corner, creating a magical glow all around it. A cheerful Christmas carol blasts through the speakers, making me sing along to it.

People stare at Cole as we reach the stands. Holding his hand firmly, I ignore them all and keep my attention on him.

Once we have our figure skates, we take off our boots and put them in the racks.

Excitement flows through my veins as I hear the wild, unrestrained squeals coming from the people who are skating around us. My breath rises in a cloud before me as we move toward the ring. The air is chillier here but it doesn't bother me one bit.

I stumble a bit on the ice but Cole is there to support me. His big, powerful arms hold my waist firmly while I try to regain my balance.

"Sorry about this," I mumble, looking down at my trembling knees. "It's been a few years since I last skated."

His eyes sparkle with warmth as he meets my gaze. "It's all right," he says, continuing to guide me toward the center of the ring. "I'm sure you'll get adjusted to it soon."

To my surprise, he's right!

A few minutes in, I'm able to skate longer distances without needing his support. An unrestrained laugh escapes me as I push forward, zooming rapidly away from Cole.

The wind roars in my ears and makes my scarf flutter wildly, reminding me of the thrill of ice skating.

"Where'd you think you're going?" Cole is beside me in an instant, his lips curving into an excited grin. His arm wraps around my waist as he propels me further along.

Despite the chilly weather, I feel utterly warm and cozy inside.

Out in the ring, no one's staring at him or me. People of every age gather around us but they're all busy having their own fun. Suddenly, it feels like we're both part of the magic.

"Do you trust me?" Cole says after a while.

"Sure," I say.

Without warning, Cole grabs me by the waist and lifts me off my feet.

"Oh my God!" I gasp as I hang in the air while he pushes forward. A shriek of pure exhilaration escapes me as the cold wind hits my face. Laughter and wild cries sound all around me, drowning my excited shouts.

I'm a breathless mess by the time he puts me back on my feet.

"That was something," I gasp breathlessly.

Cole's eyes shine with pure joy. Despite his scars, he looks utterly beautiful to me. Moving closer, I put my arms around him.

"Thanks," he whispers in my ear.

"For what?"

"For being you."

Raising my head, I look up at him.

The sincerity in his eyes sends my heart throbbing in my chest. *I love him*, I think to myself as an ache flares deep inside me.

Leaning in, he kisses me.

Heat rushes through my veins, driving away all my worries. I kiss him back with the same fervor, trying to make him understand my emotions. I don't know what'll happen tomorrow but tonight, I'll let myself believe in the magic of Christmas.



### Jacob

I stare at the blown-up photograph on my computer screen. It's one of the photos Kai snapped when Cole and Winter were skating in the ice ring at Reagan Square.

Cole's unrestrained smile sends a pang through me. I haven't seen such an exuberant expression on my younger brother in a long, long time. Shunned by almost everyone he meets because of the hideous scars on his face, he's put up a wall around his heart.

Back in high school, Cole was among the most popular jocks. He was an amazing basketball player and his smile attracted every girl's attention. Everyone wanted to be his friend and supporter back then.

As his eldest brother, I hate that I couldn't protect him during the rescue mission that ruined his life. We were able to escape with him barely alive but he'd lost too much that day.

That familiar brooding expression on his face has been his armor against the looks of disgust, shock, and fear he receives from others. He's worn it over the past years, nearly erasing the cheerful person I've known all my life.

My gaze focuses back on the photograph before me.

Winter is the reason behind Cole's smile. Hanging onto his neck, her mouth is open in a wild shriek as he swirls them around at blinding speed. She's the only woman who can make my brother happy.

It's not just Cole who's been affected by her. Both Kai and I want her too. We'd do anything to keep her by our side and make her a part of our pack.

And yet, we have no idea where she's from or what she's been running from.

Winter's still too traumatized from the incident that left her stranded in the middle of a snowstorm. She barely had a jacket or coat when we found her. Frozen and scared, she'd begged us to help her.

I don't want to push her for answers before she's ready but I need to find out what she's running from. I can't let my brothers fall deeper in love with her without finding out about her background.

"I have to find the answers myself," I decide.

Grabbing my phone, I select a single photograph of Winter from the hundreds that Kai took yesterday. Next, I open a chat app and send the picture to Detective Tom Miller. He's an acquaintance of mine who works at the local police department and often helps us with our security business.

*Find out as much as you can about her, I type out the words below the photograph. She says her name is Winter Brown but it might not be true. Do this for me and I'll reward you for your efforts.*

I'm about to put the phone down on the desk when it suddenly starts vibrating in my hand. To my surprise, I see that Miller's calling me back.

"Hey," I say, answering the call.

"How do you know this girl, Jacob?" Miller asks in a low, grim tone.

"What does it matter? Just find out what you can about her."

"Jacob, it matters." He takes a heavy breath before continuing. "She's a runaway. The cops are searching for her everywhere."

"What?" I straighten up in my chair.

"Her posters are everywhere in Knightswood."

"What about her name?" I ask desperately. "What's her real name, Miller?"

"I thought you knew," he says with a sliver of confusion in his voice. "It's Winter. Her name's Winter Brown and she runs that old bakery On the Rise in Knightswood."

My breath rushes out as relief floods my veins. Winter didn't lie about her name. She's been truthful to us about that, at least.

"Tell me what you know about her," I demand at once.

"The girl lives with her stepmother. No previous reports of any troublemaking. She's been working at that old bakery for the past couple of years now. Last week, she left the place late in the evening and stopped to chat with one of the neighbors. That was the last time anyone saw her."



Some of the things Miller says matches up. It would explain how Winter could make such heavenly pancakes and how she has a penchant for cooking amazing food. I also trust the fact that she's no troublemaker. Living with her for a week is proof enough. However, the part about her living with her stepmother irks me.

Winter had been scared the night we found her in the middle of a deserted road. Her cheek was bruised and there was a cut on her lip. I never asked her to explain her injuries, hoping she'd tell us what happened when the trauma of the night wore off.

"What do the cops think happened?" I ask.

"Possible kidnapping and homicide. They didn't find her body, so they're still searching for her." He's quiet for a moment. "How do you know her? When did you last see her?"

"I found her on the day she disappeared," I say, thinking back on the night when I first laid my eyes on Winter, all wet and scared.

"Where is she now?" he asks in a desperate tone. "Jacob, the police are searching for her. Any information you have can help us locate her before she gets hurt."

"Winter is safe."

He lets out a frustrated noise. "How do you know that?"

"She's been living with us."

"Listen to me," Miller says in an urgent tone. "You need to bring her down to the precinct and clarify matters. Her family's worried about her. We need to let them know that she's safe."

“What family?” Winter’s voice makes me look up.

She’s standing at the threshold of the room with a tray in her hand. Cole and Kai are right behind her, their gazes fixed on me.

“They’re the ones who drove me out of the house.”  
Coming forward, she places the tray on the table and stares down at the phone in my hand.

“Wait, is that her?” Miller’s whisper through the phone’s speaker is loud enough for everyone to hear him.

“Yeah,” I reply.

“Can you switch on video calling? I need to make sure it’s really her.”

“Are you going to be okay?” I ask, looking up at Winter.

A determined look comes over her as she nods.

Taking my phone, I switch on the camera and hold it up so that Miller can get a glimpse of her.

“Holy shit! It’s her,” Miller breathes. “Thank fuck she’s okay. We were worried she was dead.”

“I guess things would be easier for my family if I were dead,” Winter says in a cold tone.

“Listen, I’ll call you back later,” I say.

“Hey, hold up—”

“Not now, Miller,” I say firmly. “Later.” With that, I switch off the call.

A plate of cookies and four steaming mugs of coffee sit on the tray before me. I’m guessing Winter heard the whole

conversation with Miller just as she was bringing them in.

“I guess it’s time to tell you the truth,” she says, turning around to look at Cole and Kai.

Kai’s beside her in an instant, capturing her hand in his. “Don’t be scared,” he assures her. “No matter what trouble you’re in, we’re going to help you.”

Moving closer, Cole grabs her other hand. “We’re with you, love.”

I can’t take my brothers’ anxious looks anymore. Getting up from my desk, I walk around it and reach Winter.

“You can trust us,” I tell her. “We’ll not let anyone hurt you. Hell, we won’t let anyone ever touch you again.”

Winter’s breathing has turned erratic. Tears gather in her green jewel-like eyes as she looks up at me.

“Come here,” I say, sweeping her into my chest.

Her arms wrap around me, holding me tight. I hate the broken expression marring her pretty face. Someone’s clearly hurt her in the past and she’s scared to face them.

No matter who it is, they’ll have to deal with me. Holding her hand, I guide her toward the couch and make her sit.

Kai brings a coffee mug and places it in her hands.

The three of us fan out around her, desperately making sure she feels safe enough among us to tell us the truth.

Winter swallows a few times before she can find her voice. “Laura...my stepmother, you know...I overheard her talking to her boyfriend about wanting to sell our house to

some high bidder. They were also planning to sell me off to a mobster. She switched my blocker and suppressant pills, making sure I went into heat before handing me over to him.”

Thunderous expressions descend on my brothers’ faces as they hear her story. Rage bubbles inside me, threatening to explode. How could someone be vile enough to sell her?

“I refused to sign on the papers they gave me,” Winter says, looking down at her knees as teardrops roll down her cheeks. “Pete...Laura’s boyfriend became violent when I wouldn’t obey her.”

“Is that why your face was bruised?” I ask, feeling anger coursing through my veins.

She nods. “Luckily, they got distracted for just a second and I was able to bolt out of the house. I hid in the woods behind the houses in our neighborhood and later walked out into the street. I was too cold by then and needed a place to hide before they could find me.” Her teary eyes look up at me. “That’s when you found me. You guys saved me that night.”

Cole wraps his arm around her shoulders, pulling her against him.

“How long has your stepmother lived with you?” Kai asks.

“Ever since my father married her...some eight years ago. She’s living in our home with her boyfriend and her daughter after he passed away. Things weren’t always smooth between us but I always tried my best. Even though we’ve spent so many years together, she doesn’t give a crap about me. She wanted to sell the house, switched my meds, and

planned to sell me off..." Squeezing her eyes shut, she shakes her head. "I couldn't take it."

I can feel her pain from her crumpled expression. She still hasn't been able to overcome the betrayal of her stepmother.

"Has this boyfriend for hers ever hurt you before this incident?" I ask, my voice coming out in a growl.

"No. He's never shown any interest in me like that." Her forehead creases as she thinks harder. "At least, I never noticed anything. My head was always too full of worries about my dad's bakery."

A sliver of relief flows through my veins. There's no way a grown man can ignore a beautiful, untouched omega like Winter. I'm sure he's noticed her even though she remained oblivious to him.

*At least, she's away from him,* I think, glad to know that bastard can never touch her. My brothers and I will make sure he never gets near her again.

"Laura must've been planning this shit for a long time," Kai says thoughtfully. "You can't gather bidders to buy property overnight. She must've done her homework to learn about the paperwork needed to snatch everything from you. I doubt she's ever loved you."

Winter stares down at her knees while her shoulders shake with silent sobs. Cole holds her tighter but it's not enough to comfort her.

Taking a shaky breath, she looks up at me and my brothers. "I'm sorry I pretended to be a hooker," she says. "I

didn't want to lie but I didn't have a choice. I didn't want you guys to drive me away and send me back to my stepmother."

"Don't be sorry," Cole says, kissing her cheek. "You gave us an excuse to keep you close to us and we don't regret a second of the time we spent with you."

"Yep. We've had the most amazing times of our lives with you," Kai says with a wink. "We'd have never sent you back to your awful stepmom. Like I said earlier, we're here to help you. We won't let anyone hurt you."

"Do you mean it?" she asks as her green eyes light up with hope.

"We want you as our mate," I say, hoping she'd sense the sincerity in my voice. "We've wanted you since the moment we met you."

Her bottom lip falls apart as she stares at us in turn.

"It's true," Cole reaffirms, capturing her lips.

Her arms lock around his neck as she surrenders to the kiss.

Warmth floods me, urging me to go to her and kiss her, but I control myself. Winter is too overwhelmed right now.

I catch Kai looking at me. "We need to get a lawyer."

"Yeah," I agree. "If the house belongs to Winter legally, she can tell her stepmother to leave. I'm sure the neighbors have witnessed her treatment of Winter over the years and can testify in her favor. If there was abuse involved, she'll be in huge trouble."

“I doubt Laura will leave,” Winter says with a dejected look. “She and Pete would just force me into signing those papers again.”

“Who says I’ll let you go to them alone?” I growl. Has she forgotten I’ve vowed to protect her? “My brothers and I will handle these matters. In return, I just want you to trust us.”

My brothers have the same determined look as me.

“We’ll do everything to make you happy,” says Cole. “If saving your home and bakery will make you smile, we’ll gladly fight for them. Just promise us you’ll always be ours.”

“Thank you,” she whispers, brushing away the tears still clinging to her lashes. “I love that house and bakery. My parents left so many memories there that I’d do anything to protect them.”

There’s nothing we value more than family. Winter’s loyalty and attachment to her parents is another sign that she belongs in a tightly-knit pack like ours.

“We won’t let anyone snatch them from you, sweetheart,” Cole says, drawing her close to him.

Kai gets to his feet, looking eerily calm. “I’m going out to meet Mercer.”

“Mercer’s in Bali with his girlfriend,” I say, thinking of the best lawyer in our arsenal. His law firm has the best attorneys in town. They’ll be able to handle any complications in our war with Winter’s stepfamily.

“Then, it’s settled. I’m going to Bali to bring him back,” says Kai.

“What?” Winter stands up and moves toward him. “Do you have to go that far? Why don’t we wait for him to return home? Laura has no idea I’m here. I can just hide here until your lawyer friend gets back from his vacation.”

“The police are searching for you,” I remind her. “We should go to them and file a complaint. Their support will further help you to win your case against your stepfamily.”

She looks uncertain at the idea. The scared look on her face sends an ache through me. I want to show her that she has nothing to be afraid of when we’re with her.

Moving closer to her, I wrap my arms around her and pull her into a hug. “Don’t worry,” I say, struggling to keep the roughness out of my voice. “Kai will be back in a few days. We’ll keep you safe until we’ve figured all this out.”

“I hate the trouble I’m causing you,” she whispers in a choked voice.

“It’s no trouble at all,” I say, caressing her back while my mind makes up a plan to punish the vultures that hurt my sweet omega. “You’re ours, Winter. We’ll do anything to keep you safe. Just trust us and let us show you what we do to those who harm us.”





### Cole

“Did that batter offend you or something?” I ask, watching Winter whisk something with a frenzied look on her face.

She looks up at me while her hand continues to whisk. “I’m making tiramisu for dessert,” she mumbles, stopping to add a spoonful of sugar to the creamy white batter.

“We have an electric mixer somewhere around here. Should I bring it out for you?”

Shaking her head, she puts the bowl down on the counter. “I bake when I need to de-stress,” she says with a sad look in her eyes. “I hate how much trouble I’ve brought on you guys.”

Winter’s innocence makes me want her more. She’s unable to see how much we want to do this for her. Making her happy has become the sole aim in our lives because seeing her smiling makes us smile too. Moving closer to her, I pull her into a hug. “You’re ours, aren’t you?”

“Yeah,” she mumbles into my chest.

“Then, it’s our responsibility to take care of you, pumpkin. Just leave everything to us and relax.”

A snort escapes her. “Pumpkin?”

I smile at the grin lifting the corners of her lips. “Don’t like it?”

A light chuckle escapes her. “Nah, it’s sweet.” Her arms tighten around my waist as she rests her head against my chest. “I miss Kai already.”

Now that the weight of hiding her identity has been lifted off her shoulders, Winter has become more open to us. My brothers and I knew she wasn’t a troublemaker or a bad person even before her confession, but it has helped us understand her better.

Rage simmers in my chest every time I think of her stepmother. How could she treat Winter so cruelly after she lost her dad?

An omega who’s as beautiful and sweet as Winter deserves a place in an elite omega training academy. She has a talent when it comes to cooking and baking. Given the right opportunities, she’d blossom even more. Not only that, Winter deserves the most powerful alphas to fight for her and protect her.

I hate seeing the heartbroken look on her pretty face. Her stepmother’s betrayal came as a shock to her. Until now, she’s always tried to hide her pain but we could all see the deep sadness in her expressive green eyes.

“Do you have any news about Kai?” she asks, breaking me out of my thoughts.

“He’s reached Bali and has already spoken to Mercer,” I tell her. “His law firm has started an investigation on Laura

Hill and Pete Monay. Soon, we'll know whether Laura has any claim to the properties that belonged to your dad."

"I still can't believe Kai flew all the way to Bali."

A chuckle escapes me. "Mercer was kind of glad he did. The poor guy ate a local fish and ended up having a lethal allergic reaction to it. He can't wait to be back home and eat mashed potatoes for the rest of his life."

Her soft laugh makes my heart pound. Does she have any idea what her smile does to me?

"Don't worry too much about this stuff," I say, pecking her lips. "Our lawyers will figure out the best way to save your home and bakery. We won't give up without a fight."

"I'm sure it'll cost a lot of money," she says, chewing on her bottom lip.

Leaning down, I swipe a tongue over her reddened, swollen lips. "You're part of this pack now, darling. What's ours, is yours."

Her cheeks turn a deep pink as she looks into my eyes. "I still can't believe you guys want me as your mate."

"You're the most beautiful woman we've ever met," I tell her. "You're kind, sweet and loyal. It's all that we've looked for in a partner. We'll never find anyone who fits in with us as much as you do."

"I feel the same way about you," she whispers. "It's a miracle you and your brothers were the ones to rescue me that night. No one else would've taken such good care of me."

“We’ll always protect you and keep you safe, Winter. You’re ours,” I remind her.

Her arms go around my neck as she captures my lips.

My lips curve into a smile against hers. I like how she’s getting bolder with us.

With a little coaxing, she opens up to me, allowing me to sweep my tongue inside her sweet, hot mouth. I drink up her soft moans and keep her pressed against me.

A growl escapes me as she suddenly breaks away.

“Did you hear that?” she whispers, her gaze turned toward the doorway of the kitchen. “Is someone in the house?”

I swallow the curse that builds in my throat. My cock throbs in my pants, fighting to get out of its confines. I wanted to have Winter all to myself but someone’s decided to interfere between us.

My phone vibrates in my hand. I reach for it and bring it out to take a look at the flashing screen.

“It’s Jacob,” I say as Winter looks at me curiously. “Hold on.” Sliding a finger across the phone’s screen, I take my brother’s call.

“Cole,” he whispers urgently. “Is Winter around you?”

“Yeah...”

“I have a surprise for her. Can you blindfold her and bring her into the entrance hall in like fifteen minutes?”

“What the hell are you talking about?” I grunt, wondering why he’s talking about blindfolding our girl.

He lets out an annoyed huff. “I bought her a Christmas tree.”

“Oh.”

“Just play along and don’t let her into the entrance hall until I’m done setting it up.”

A grin threatens to lift the corners of my lips. Winter’s going to be so excited when she sees the tree. She’d been going on and on about us having one in our home since we went to the Christmas fair in Reagan Square a few days ago.

“Is everything okay?” she asks, looking worried.

“Yep. Everything’s fine,” I say, schooling my features to avoid giving her a hint.

“Where’s Jacob? Is he home? Did we hear him coming in?” Her head swivels toward the doorway again when she hears a heavy thud.

“Jacob’s out there with some of our men,” I say, pretending to look grim. “They’re bringing in some heavy stuff for winter training, so it’s best to stay out of their way until they’re done.”

She gives an understanding nod and walks toward the counter. Picking up her bowl, she starts whisking up the batter again.

Winter is so darn trusting of us. It’s no wonder she’s been living under the same roof with her conniving stepmother without understanding her evil intentions. My possessiveness for her grows with every moment I spend with her. There’s no way I’ll ever let anyone hurt her again.

I watch her layer up a glass dish with layers of whipped cream and pieces of coffee-soaked cookies. A soft smile lights up her face as she works. It's easy to see how much she loves to cook and bake. Once again, I vow to make her the rightful owner of her parents' bakery so that no one can dare try and snatch it from her again.

My phone vibrates in my pocket. Taking it out, I check the incoming text that Jacob has sent me.

*Everything's ready. Make sure to cover Winter's eyes before you bring her out here- Jacob.*

Glancing over at Winter, I watch her dusting cocoa powder over the gorgeous tiramisu she's created.

"Are you done with that?" I ask.

"Yeah, I'm almost done. This just needs to be put in the fridge to chill and it'll be ready by the time we eat dinner."

"There's something that I'd like to show you," I say as she heads toward the fridge.

"Oh?" She turns around to face me. "What is it?"

Grasping her hand, I lead her out of the kitchen.

"Where are we going?" she asks as we head toward the entrance hall.

"There's a surprise waiting for you. Oh, and before I forget, let me do this." Stepping behind her, I gently cover her eyes with my hands.

A chuckle escapes her. "Is Kai back already?" she asks hopefully.

“Is that what you’d like?” I ask, carefully leading her down the hallway.

“Of course, I’d like him to be back home early,” she says. “I miss him.”

Warmth flares in my chest. Unlike most omegas, Winter isn’t seeking jewelry and expensive designer stuff. She’d rather have us than the superficial crap our money can buy her.

“There’s my sweet pie,” Jacob says the moment we step inside the entrance hall.

“Jacob?” she breathes.

“Yep.”

“Can I look now?” Winter asks, extending her hand forward.

Jacob moves closer and grasps her hands firmly. “Are you ready for the surprise?”

“Where’s Kai?” she asks with a hopeful grin spreading on her lips.

Jacob glances toward me.

“She thinks Kai is the surprise,” I explain, feeling a twinge in my chest. She’s definitely going to be disappointed. Hopefully, the giant ass fir tree that Jacob has dragged in would make things up for her.

The tree is almost as big as the one we saw in Reagan Square. Green needles litter the floor, casting a haphazard pattern on the carpet. A wonderful smell fills the air, making me inhale deeply.

“Ready?”

“Yep!” Her hands curl into fists as she bounces on her feet with excitement.

I slowly remove my hands from Winter’s eyes.

Her gaze swings around the room before finally settling on the tree. “Oh, wow!” she squeals, running toward it. “You bought a Christmas tree!”

“She looks like a kid in front of it,” I say in a lowered voice.

Jacob chuckles. “What’d you think? I found it after looking through five shops around town.”

“It’s huge, all right,” I say, snorting.

“What are these boxes for?” Winter asks, turning around to face us.

“Decorations,” Jacob says. “String lights, tinsel, ornaments. I thought you’d need them to fill up this tree.”

Winter’s green eyes light up immediately. Turning away, she grabs the boxes and starts opening them one by one.

“These are so beautiful!” she exclaims, picking out silver-glazed snow globes from one of the boxes. “Thank you so much for bringing them over!”

A quiet sigh escapes me. “At least, she’s not too disappointed,” I murmur. “Our girl was hoping it was Kai.”

“Isn’t she perfect, though?” Jacob says, staring at Winter who’s now covered in strings of tinsel. “She cares more about us than anything else.”

“Yeah. She’s our Christmas miracle. Without her, we’d never be celebrating with a tree and everything. She’s helping



us become a pack—”

My words are cut off as I see Winter running back toward us. Flinging her arms around Jacob, she hugs him tightly. “Thank you! This is the best Christmas present I’ve ever received.”

Jacob beams. His arms hold her gently as he drops a kiss on the top of her. “I’m glad you like it,” he says.

“So, is Kai coming back tomorrow?” she asks, staring between me and him.

“Yeah,” I say. “I’m sorry this wasn’t the surprise you were hoping for.”

She shakes her head. “That’s okay. How about we decorate this tree tonight so that we can give him a surprise too?”

I glance toward my brother.

A look of utter satisfaction fills his silvery eyes as he stares down at Winter. “Sure,” he tells her. “We have zero experience in decorating trees, so you’re going to have to command us.”

She gives an enthusiastic nod and smiles brightly.

Winter’s truly our Christmas miracle. I could’ve never imagined we’d have a mate who could like us all this way. The need to protect her grows stronger within me.

I can’t wait to put Winter’s stepmom in her place. She must know that Winter’s no longer alone. My brothers and I are here to protect her now. Neither she nor her partner will get away with the things they’d planned for our mate. Returning

Winter's home and her freedom would be our gifts to her this Christmas.



## Winter

Standing with Jacob, Cole, and Kai, I look up at the tall, glittering Christmas tree before me. I can't believe we've been able to make it look even more charming than the one in Reagan Square!

A fresh scent infuses the air around the tree, making me inhale deeply. The warm glow of the fairy lights forms golden patterns on my white coat. It's so absolutely peaceful and tranquil to stand before it that I almost don't want to step outside the house to face Laura and Pete.

A week has passed since I confessed the truth to Jacob and his brothers.

My mates didn't waste a moment getting me the best lawyer in town. While I stayed home baking and decorating the tree, they took care of everything for me.

"Come on, it's time to leave," Jacob says, wrapping his arm around my shoulders.

I give a reluctant nod and let him lead me out of the house.

My breath clouds before me as I step through the door. My cheeks feel the wind's chill but my luxurious overcoat keeps me warm and toasty. Thick layers of snow on the bare tree branches glitter as the bright sunshine pours down on them.

"It's such a beautiful day," I say with a sigh. "We should be having fun at the fair in Reagan Square or be drinking hot chocolate before the fire."

"We'll do all that and more," Kai promises with a wink.

"Let's take care of this matter with your stepmom and then we can go hang out in the ice skating ring for the rest of the day," says Cole.

"At least, that's something to look forward to," I mumble as Jacob moves toward the car. He takes the driver's seat while I settle down between Kai and Cole in the back.

The snow-dusted scenery on our way to Knightswood is beautiful but I barely appreciate any of it. My mind is filled with the consequences of facing Laura head-on.

While I don't care about the curses she throws at me, I won't be able to stand it if she starts insulting Jacob, Cole, and Kai. I also worry about Pete and his reaction to my mates. He wouldn't miss a chance to be rude to them either.

My mates have been so good to me that I hate the idea of anyone throwing a slur at them. Still, I'm glad of their company. Their presence will give me the courage to stand up to my stepmom and her partner.

I blink as the view outside the car window suddenly shifts. We're no longer driving at top speed through the

expressway that leads into Knightswood. We're already moving through the suburban streets that'll take me to my home within minutes!

"Hey, relax," Kai says, squeezing my trembling hands together. "No matter what happens, we're going to be right beside you. We won't let anyone hurt you."

I gaze up at him.

Warmth swirls in his soft brown eyes. A light grin blossoms on his face as he leans in to kiss me.

"Is that the house?" Jacob's voice makes me break away and look toward the front.

The familiar two-storied structure comes closer as Jacob drives straight forward. A pang goes through me as the house sticks out as the only one with no decorations or lights on it.

"This neighborhood looks like a holiday card," Cole says, staring out the window. "No wonder you're a sucker for the season."

I chuckle. "Yeah, my neighbors have always celebrated Christmas this way. There's no place I'd rather be during the holidays than here." A sliver of sadness wounds around my throat, choking me. "If you guys hadn't rescued me that night, if someone else picked me up, I might've never gotten a chance to return to this place again."

"Winter, hey," Kai says, pulling me into a hug as a tear slides down my cheek. "It's all right. You're home now."

"Maybe we should've let Winter stay back," Cole mutters from my other side. "We could've handled the matter with Laura and Pete Monay on our own."

“There’s no way I’d let you guys come here alone,” I say, hastily brushing away my tears. “This is my fight. I can’t be a coward and stay back while you guys face the rudest people you’ll ever meet.”

“Hey, isn’t that Mercer?” Kai says, squinting over Jacob’s shoulder.

Turning toward the front, I catch sight of a tall, lean man in a dark suit. He’s standing beside a luxurious black car that glints in the morning sunlight.

“Yep, that’s him,” Jacob says, slowing the car down.

“Great! He’s right on time!” Cole says, rubbing his hands together.

The car comes to a stop right outside my home.

I follow Cole and climb out of the car. Since I’ve already met Mr. Mercer before, I wave at him.

Kai trusts him, so I’ve decided to put my faith in him too.

Mr. Mercer has thoroughly investigated the properties that belonged to my parents. His advice to go to the cops also helped us. The local PD knows where I’ve been staying and has been willing to help if Laura and Pete get violent with me again.

“I think they’re both indoors,” Mr. Mercer says, glancing toward the house. “I can hear the TV from out here.”

I cringe. This is what they do when they’re hungover from drinking the night before. They usually get me to make

them food and like an idiot, I always did so without complaining.

*They're family*, I always told myself.

I was a fool for putting up with them for so long. Laura never thought of me as her family. She'd never sell her precious daughter or try to snatch away her precious possessions. She only dares to do those things to me because I mean nothing to her.

Steeling my spine, I walk ahead, leading the way through the fenced gate of the property. The front door is locked but I know the exact spot that hides the extra key. Bending down, I slip my hand under the worn-out rug and bring out the key.

The last time I left through these doors, I didn't know whether I'd ever be able to come back again. Fear and loss were all that were going through my mind when I fled from Laura and Pete.

Confidence surges through me as my hand extends toward the door.

It's all because of the men who patiently wait behind me. They're the reason I'm no longer scared of Laura. I no longer need to suffer through my stepmother's cruelty just because I'm afraid to be alone.

A low creak sounds as I push open the door. It's so subtle, that I doubt Pete and Laura heard it over the sound of the blaring TV.

Stepping inside the house, I follow the familiar path that takes us into the living room. Even though my house isn't as

grand as my mates' mansion, I still feel proud of how pretty and homely it looks.

“Is someone out there?” Laura’s voice shouts over the TV. Before any of us can reply, she stomps into the hallway.

Her dark eyes widen as they fall on me. Slowly, she raises her gaze to meet the curt stares offered by Mr. Mercer and my mates.

“Thank you for bringing my daughter home,” Laura says, putting a lock of hair behind her ear.

I roll my eyes as she tries to impress Mr. Mercer. His eyebrows rise high as he stares down at her.

“She’s such a troublemaker!” Laura shouts, glaring at me. “Get inside now, Winter. We’ll talk about how irresponsible you’ve been after I’m done thanking them! How could you disappear like that for weeks?”

“Were you worried about me?” I ask, stepping forward.

“Of course, I was worried!” she rants. “The neighbors have been up my ass every day. They arranged search parties every evening, forcing me and Pete to go out in this cold weather to search for you. Where the hell have you been all this time?”

Ignoring her, I walk inside the living room.

My nose crinkles at the stench of stale whiskey, rotting banana peels, and cigarette smoke. Empty chip packets, crushed beer cans, and takeaway containers litter the floor. Did no one bother to clean the place while I was away?



Pete was stretched on the couch but he quickly sits up at the sight of me and the strange men who enter the room behind me.

“Why don’t we turn down the TV?” Mercer says, walking into the room and grabbing the remote.

“Who the hell are you?” Pete asks with a grumpy look on his unshaven face.

“Hello, Mr. Monay,” Mercer replies with a curt nod. “I’m Miss Brown’s attorney. We’re here to give you a week’s notice to vacate this property or be prepared to get sued by us.”

“What?” Laura hisses, her eyes landing on me. “What’s the meaning of this? Who are these people? What lies did you tell them?”

“You clearly don’t want to live here,” I say, meeting her glare. “You want to sell the house but I’m not going to let you do that. It’s my dad’s home and you’re not taking it away from me. You should take your stuff and move to someplace that makes you happy.”

“Wait just a minute,” Pete says, lurching to his feet. “How did you get these people to come in here and threaten us? Did you have to suck on their cocks to waste their time on you?” He grins, displaying rows of browning teeth. “Is she that good, fellas?”

Identical expressions of rage cloud Jacob, Cole, and Kai’s faces.

Before I can do anything, Cole marches forward and pulls Pete by the front of his t-shirt. “That’s no way to talk

about a lady,” he growls.

Pete’s gaze takes in the lines of scars that stretch across his face. Fear clouds his eyes but he still has too much ego to back down. “That kid ain’t no lady. She’s an orphan that we’ve sheltered in our home for all these years. She’s a fucking liar too. Whatever she’s told you about us, is all lies!”

“That’s not true,” Mercer says in a quiet, calm voice. Walking toward Cole, he touches his shoulder. “Let’s not resort to violence just yet,” he whispers.

Clearing his throat, he looks toward Pete. “We’ve done our investigation. The Knightswood PD has also gathered enough evidence to side with Miss Brown. She’s been doing chores at home and bringing in money by working at the bakery. She considered you as her family but you’ve gone too far by forcing her to sign over her properties to you. My client intends to stop allowing you to live in her home any longer. Please clear the premises within the week or we’ll sue.”

Mercer’s curt words impress me to no end. I could’ve never managed to tell someone to fuck off in such polite words!

“Sue?” Laura demands, marching toward me. “How dare you play this kind of game with me? This is my husband’s house. You have no right to throw me out. I’m going to sue your asses for threatening me instead.”

“We’ve gathered all the evidence, Miss Hill,” says Mercer. “You wanted to sell this house and didn’t plan on giving a dime of that money to Winter. Both you and your partner physically abused her to sign the papers. To make matters worse, you even plotted to sell her.”

Laura scoffs. “Winter can tell such lies! Sure, I wanted to sell the house but it’s my right to do so. It belonged to my late husband!”

A cold laughter rings out in the room. Jacob looks calm but there’s a storm brewing in those gray eyes of his. He steps closer to Laura so that she’s forced to look up to meet his gaze.

“You wanted to sell her to Luciano, didn’t you?” he continues in the same soft voice. “Did you know I play golf with Luciano Sr. on the weekends?”

“What?” Laura’s face pales.

“You see, my brothers and I run a security company,” Jacob says, circling her with a predatory look in his eyes. “We’re not good guys, Laura, but we’re willing to go to any length to protect what’s ours. Winter is ours.”

Laura casts a fearful glance at me. For the first time, I see her hesitating before cursing me.

Cole steps up beside Jacob. “Do you see this?” he says, pointing at his face. “Do we look like we’re here to be heroes? We don’t have time to play your stupid games, so you better give up before you get seriously hurt.”

Laura’s eyes trail over the thick scars that mar his face. She’s sensible enough to know not to cross the man before her.

“Grab what you can and get the fuck out of Winter’s house,” Jacob says, injecting dominance in his voice. “Don’t ever show your face to her. If you do, you’ll see the real beasts within us.”

“You can’t bully us like this!” Pete shouts, refusing to back away.

“Pete, don’t,” Laura says quickly.

“Quiet down, bitch,” he says, kicking an empty beer can on the floor. “I will do the talking from now on. If these guys think they can throw their weight around here, they’ve got another thing coming for them. We will not leave. If they want to drag us to court, let them. They have no proof to accuse us, that’s why they’re trying to threaten us.”

“You’re mistaken there,” Mercer says, flicking an invisible speck from the sleeve of his immaculate coat. “Your neighbors are willing to testify in favor of my client. You see, they’ve watched her grow up since she was a baby. They’ve also seen the way you’ve treated her all these years. Your next-door neighbors heard the argument that led to Miss Brown fleeing this house.”

I think of old Mrs. Humphrey who lives next door. She’s a sweet lady who lives with her son and her half a dozen fur babies. I can’t believe she’s ready to help me like this.

“The situation doesn’t look good for you,” Mercer says. “You’ll face jail time if we go to court with our accusations.”

Pete’s head swivels toward me. “You cock-sucking bitch!” he screams, coming toward me. “If I’d known you were this good, I’d let you have mine.”

Fearing he’s about to hit me, I raise my arm to shield myself.

“Never insult her like that again!” A roar erupts in the room.

Looking up, I see Kai standing before me like a solid wall, facing Pete. Before I know what’s happening, he pulls

his elbow back and punches Pete in the face.

Pete howls, clutching his nose. Blood dribbles from the gaps between his fingers as he steps away from Kai.

“Say another nasty thing about Winter and we’ll make it personal,” Jacob growls, looking murderous.

Kai’s arm goes around my shoulders. “Come on, let’s get out of here. Mercer will handle the rest for us.”

I take one last glance at Pete who’s sitting on the couch with his head down and refusing to look at anyone. Laura stands in the corner, looking small and defeated.

Taking a deep breath, I let Kai guide me out of the room. Jacob and Cole follow behind us as we head for the front door.

A strange emotion comes over me. Without my mates’ help, I’d never be able to stand up for myself. For the first time, I realize what it feels like to be safe and protected.

“You have a beautiful house,” Kai says as we walk through the door. “It’s a shame you got those assholes living here.”

“Not for long,” Jacob says from behind us.

“I can make this house look even more beautiful,” I say, looking out at the front yard. “In summer, these trees are in full bloom. And as spring arrives, the place gets filled with bluebells. Laura didn’t allow me to plant more flowers or I’d have beds of roses and hydrangeas. Oh, and there are all those paintings that my mom did. Laura didn’t like them, so I had to keep them in the attic.”

“Do you want to live here?” Cole asks.

“Yes,” I say, turning around to face him. “And I want you guys to stay with me. Your place feels a little too big for the four of us.”

Jacob, Cole, and Kai chuckle. The anger has vanished from their faces, relieving me.

“I suppose the manor is big,” Jacob says, looking thoughtful. “Also, all of us are going to need one bedroom anyway. So, if living here would make you happy, we’ll stay here with you.”

“Let’s spend Christmas and New Year at our place,” says Kai. “By then, Pete and Laura would’ve gotten the hell out of here. When the new year begins, we’ll all shift here.”

“Sounds like a plan to me,” Cole says, winking at me.

“You’d really do that for me? What about your work and everything else?”

“Most of our men stay at a different location,” Kai explains. “They need a bigger area to train and exercise daily. The men you see around our property are there just there for admin work. We can make the trip to oversee them from time to time. It’s not a big deal at all.”

Warmth bursts in my chest as I look up at Cole and his brothers. I can’t believe they’re willing to shift here from their luxurious mansion.

“We’d do anything to make you happy, darling,” Jacob says, pecking my lips.

Wrapping my arms around his shoulders, I get up on my toes for a deeper kiss. A moan escapes me as he catches my waist and pulls me closer, meeting my lips.

A loud, fake cough sounds from behind us.

Turning around, I see Carol, my old neighbor and friend.

“Hey!” I say as my excitement spikes. Stepping away from Jacob, I move toward her and hug her tightly. “You have no idea how much I missed you!”

“Did you?” she snaps but lets me continue to hold on to her. “Where the hell have you been? Do you have any idea how worried everyone’s been? No one could find you for weeks! It was like you disappeared into thin air!”

“I’m sorry,” I say, looking up at Carol. “I didn’t even get the chance to grab my phone when I ran out of here. Hell, I didn’t even have my shoes on.”

“What?” Carol’s expression falters. “What exactly happened to you?” Her gaze roves over the three men who closely guard me. “Who are they?”

I grab her hand and squeeze. “It’s a long story. How about I tell you all about it over a cup of coffee and ginger cookies?”

“Uhh...” I notice her staring at Cole who’s put on a cold expression.

“This is Jacob,” I say, pointing toward him. “That’s Cole and that’s Kai. They’re the reason I’m still alive and standing before you. I don’t know what would’ve happened to me if they weren’t the ones who found me on the night I ran.”

A grim expression comes over Carol. “You’re going to have to explain everything.”

I give an earnest nod. “I will.” Turning toward my mates, I gaze up at each of them. “Is it okay if I spend the rest of the day with Carol?”

“What about skating at Reagan Square?” Cole says as a hint of a grin spreads on his lips.

“Carol and everyone else who’s been looking for me deserve an explanation,” I say. “They’re the ones who’ve been watching over me after my dad passed away. They need to know what happened. And...I also want to tell them about my wonderful mates.”

“Mates?!” Carol exclaims, staring up at Jacob, Cole, and Kai with a funny open-mouthed expression. “They’re all your mates.”

“Yep,” I say, smiling happily. “They’re mine.”

Moving toward me, she wounds her arm around mine. “Come on, you. Let’s go to my house and talk. I have the day off and the kids are away with their dad for the weekend. You’re going to have to tell me everything.”

I glance toward my mates and wave at them. “I guess I’ll see you later.”

“Not so fast!” Kai says, moving closer to kiss me.

Jacob and Cole gather around us while Carol mutters about space. I chuckle as Cole comes over to kiss me next.

Happiness and warmth surge through me as I realize I’m finally back home again. And, this time, I’m no longer alone. Jacob, Cole, and Kai are my new family. My pack.





### Cole

I gaze toward the ice-skating ring while my brothers lead the way toward the giant Christmas tree. There are barely any people skating on it at this time of the day, making it seem vast compared to the time when I'd been with Winter.

“Why are we here exactly?” Jacob asks as we come to stand underneath the tree.

“Winter wanted to come here,” I say with a shrug. “We might as well wait for her here instead of driving back home.”

“It's kind of nice to be out here,” Kai says with a grin. “You can enjoy the place without having to deal with the crazy crowd that gathers in the evening. How about we walk around and explore some of the stalls?”

“Let's start with buying some chestnuts,” Jacob says. “Winter's got me addicted to them.”

A snort escapes me. “Sure, let's go.”

“How about we buy some crepes too?” Kai suggests. “Punching that asshole has got me craving for something sweet.”

With a nod, Jacob leads the way to the closest shop selling roasted chestnuts.

“Did Mom and Dad buy these for us when we were younger?” Kai asks when we reach the stall. “I feel like I’ve eaten them before but don’t remember when.”

I stare at the huge black vat in which the chestnuts are roasting. The heavenly aroma does ignite a nostalgic feeling within me but I can’t quite place it either.

“I took both of you to a Christmas fair like this one when we were living in Oklahoma,” Jacob says with a light grin. “Cole was six years old and you...” he says, glancing toward Kai. “You were barely three at the time.”

“It’s strange how we remember the smell of them,” I say, watching the shopkeeper load up a paper bag with the hot chestnuts.

Moving forward, Jacob orders three bags.

“I guess we have to thank Winter for igniting our memories,” says Kai as Jacob hands him his share.

“I hope she’s doing all right,” says Jacob. “I feel like going back there to make sure she’s safe.”

“She’ll be fine with her friend,” I say, hoping to suppress the anxiety I feel when she’s not close to us. “Winter’s neighbors love her. They’re willing to testify against Pete and Laura to protect her. She’ll be fine among the people she grew up with.”

“I’m so glad we were able to do this for her,” Kai says with a thoughtful look on his face. “She was holding on to a lot of pain. Laura’s betrayal broke her heart. Do you remember

how she was willing to do anything just to make us help her when we first met her?”

“Yes,” Jacob growls. “I don’t even want to think what could’ve happened if she came across some rogue alpha. They wouldn’t give up on the opportunity to take advantage of a vulnerable omega like Winter. Her heat had been dangerously close when she met us. There are enough assholes around who’d abuse an omega in heat and then, leave her for dead.”

“Either that or she could’ve died from the cold that night,” Kai says, looking grim.

The thought of never meeting Winter sends a chill through me. I can no longer imagine a life without her.

“We must propose to her,” I blurt.

My brothers halt in their steps, staring at me.

“I don’t want Winter to have any doubts about our intentions,” I say, meeting my brothers’ gazes. “She must know what she means to us. I want her to know that we’ll never betray her, that she’s become a part of our pack.”

“Let’s do that,” Kai says with a nod. “What’d you say, Jacob?”

“I don’t want to scare her by coming on too strong,” Jacob says in a grim tone.

Kai lets out a frustrated huff. “You’re always like this! Why can’t you be spontaneous for once in your goddamn life, Bruh?!”

“I’m taking Winter’s feelings into consideration,” Jacob says with a frown. “She’s in an emotionally volatile state right

now. We should wait for the right moment to ask her such a serious question.”

“Christmas is her favorite time of the year,” I say, walking toward a shop that’s selling ornaments and handcrafted children’s toys. “We could propose to her on Christmas Eve. It’ll be the perfect time to ask her.”

Jacob sighs. “You guys have made up your minds,” he says, looking between me and Kai.

“Yep,” I say without a hint of doubt in my mind.

A smile lifts the corners of Jacob’s mouth and spreads to his silvery eyes. “All right, then. We propose to Winter on Christmas Eve. Any ideas on how we do it?”

“Can I help you?” A soft feminine voice pipes up.

Looking ahead, I catch sight of a young woman wearing a green elf costume. Standing behind the counter of the toy shop, she enthusiastically waves at us.

Her excitement drops when she gets a proper look at me but she puts on a brave smile.

“Let’s buy something for Winter,” I say, moving closer to the counter.

Kai comes to stand beside me and points toward a shelf of painted globes. “Can you bring them closer,” he says. “Also, do they come with hooks? I want to know if we can hang them on a tree.”

“Yes, they come with hooks,” the shopkeeper says, turning around to go to the counter. “But, there’s something else that’s special about them.”

We wait until she comes back with a large blue-glazed glass orb. It's so big, she has to use both her hands to hold it.

"You can open the top," she says, unscrewing the top half of the globe. "You can put in chocolates, holiday cards, or any little surprise inside the ornament, and hang it up on the tree. On Christmas morning, the kids can have some fun while they're opening their presents."

"We can put a ring inside it too," Jacob says, picking up the ornament.

Kai and I exchange a look and grin. Jacob pretended to overthink about proposing to Winter but he's just as desperate as us to keep her with us.

"We'll take them all," I tell the shopkeeper.

"Oh, wow! Thanks!" she says, her eyes lighting up with excitement. "Give me a couple of minutes and I'll pack them up for you."

I pop a chestnut in my mouth and savor the sweet, nutty flavor. It's been a while since I've felt this happy to be out with my brothers.

"Let's put these in the car and come back for some crepes," Jacob says as the shopkeeper places about a dozen boxes on the counter for us.

"How about we skate too?" Kai suggests, scooping a couple of boxes in his arms.

"Sure," I say, excited by the prospect of skating again.

"We should do this more often," Jacob says as we head toward the parking lot. "Other than work stuff, we rarely hang

out anymore.”

“We have to thank Winter for bringing us together,” Kai says with a warm look in his eyes. “Without her, we’d never hang out like this outside of work. She makes our bond stronger.”

I nod, agreeing with him wholeheartedly. Popping another chestnut in my mouth, I desperately wait for her to come back to us.



It’s late in the afternoon when we finally hear from Winter. Putting my coffee cup down on a bench, I pick up her call.

“Hey, are you okay?” I ask breathlessly.

“Yeah, I’m all right,” she says in a relaxed tone. “What about you guys? Have you gone back home?”

“No, we’re still in town,” I reply, glancing toward my brothers. “We’re hanging out at the fair. It’s starting to get crowded again, so if you’re still looking forward to skating, you should come here right away.”

She chuckles. “I’m planning something else for you guys. Wait for me by the benches near the tree, okay? I’ll get there in fifteen minutes.”

Before I can say anything, the call disconnects abruptly.

“What’d you think she’s planning?” Kai asks as soon as I put my phone away.

I shrug. “Whatever it is, I’m sure it’ll be fun.”

“Let’s wait right here until she finds us,” Jacob says as he glances down at his watch. “After that, we’ll go wherever she wants to take us.”

“You should’ve asked where she was,” Kai says, crushing his coffee cup. “We could’ve picked her up.”

“Just be patient,” Jacob says in a grim tone. “You don’t want her to feel like she’s being controlled by us all the time.”

“I’m not trying to control her,” Kai says with a hurt look in his eyes. “I just want to see her sooner.”

Slapping his back, I wrap my arm around his shoulders. “Don’t worry about her. She’ll be here soon.”

Raucous laughter erupts around us as a couple of school kids amble onto the scene. They’re all holding lit cigarettes as they giggle uncontrollably.

“They don’t even look old enough to be driving,” Kai mutters, glaring at them.

“Forget about them,” I say, choosing to ignore the loud brats.

“They’ve probably skipped school to be here,” Jacob says, watching them as they gather around a nearby bench.

“Who’re we to judge?” I mutter, thinking back on all the times I skipped my classes to hang out with my friends.

“We’ve all been there.”

Jacob’s eyebrows rise high. “I never skipped school.”

A loud guffaw escapes me. “You never got rid of that stick up your ass, did you?”

Kai barks out a laugh. “That’s why you’re the leader and we’re the sidekicks.”

Jacob’s lips purse into a thin line. The familiar annoyed expression on his face makes me chuckle harder.

“I’d have whooped your asses if I’d been around,” Jacob mutters darkly.

“Hey, loosen up,” Kai says, sniggering. “Cole was among the popular kids, so he had to do that to be cool.”

“Yeah, right,” Jacob scoffs, glaring at the kids on the nearby bench.

“Hey, look,” Kai says, springing to his feet. “Our girl’s here!”

Looking down the pathway, I catch a glimpse of Winter in her white coat. With the Christmas lights reflecting off of her, she looks like a beautiful angel as she walks toward us.

Shrill whistles ring out from behind us, followed by loud jeering voices.

“Come sit with us, baby doll,” one of the kids shouts, waving at Winter.

Winter’s gaze falls on the boys. A sliver of confusion crosses her face as she moves toward us.

“Look, she’s coming over to us,” one of the kids gasps, thinking Winter is responding to their calls. “Move over to make some space for her.”

“That’s it,” Jacob growls, striding toward the boys.

“Shit,” Kai says as he chuckles hard. “Those boys are about to get their asses kicked.”



“What’s going on?” Winter asks the moment she reaches us. “Why is Jacob cursing at those boys?”

“He hates kids who skip school,” Kai explains, continuing to laugh.

“Also, they dared to flirt with you. So, yeah...Jacob’s going to bore them to death with a lecture,” I say, grinning.

An amused grin lifts the corners of her lips as she watches the boys slink away from Jacob. “He’s kind of strict, isn’t he?”

“He didn’t have a choice,” I tell her. “He grew up with troublemakers like me and Kai, so he had to grow up too fast.”

Jacob jogs back to us and grins at Winter. His bad mood with the loud brats evaporates the moment she looks up at him.

“Hey, did you enjoy your time with your friends?” he asks her.

“Yeah, it was amazing. I talked my heart out with Carol and told her everything that happened since the night I left home.” She looks at each of us in turn. “Carol wants to thank you guys for everything you did for me.”

“Tell her she has nothing to thank us for,” Jacob says, caressing her cheek. “We don’t want any thanks for keeping you safe. It was our luck we found our mate that night.”

Stepping closer to our brother, she hugs him.

Kai and I move in, wrapping our arms around both of them. Winter’s familiar scent wafts into my nostrils, warming me up immediately.

“So, what have you planned for us?” Kai asks.

“I’m taking you to On the Rise,” she says, grinning. “I’d love to show my little bakery to you guys.”

“Is it still operating?” Kai asks.

“Yeah, Mr. Johnson has been watching over it while I was away,” she says, looking disturbed. “He was being bullied by both Laura and Pete over the past week. They wanted to convince him that I was dead and never returning. They wanted him to close shop and forget about the bakery.”

Jacob rubs a fist. “They need to get out of your life before I give them a real taste of what happens when someone messes with us.”

Winter takes his hand in hers. “I’m back now. The cops know what’s going on, so I doubt they’ll risk getting into any more trouble. I just hope Laura takes Pete and Ashley and moves somewhere else soon.”

Jacob plants a kiss on the top of her head. “We’ll make sure they don’t bother you again.”

Leaning against him, she rests her head against his chest. “Thank you.”

“How about we get going?” Kai says.

“Sure,” says Winter. “The bakery is just a five-minute drive from here.”

“Wow, that’s close,” I say. “How about we walk there?”

Winter grins. “That works too.” Looking around the crowd forming around the town square, she nods. “You know

what? It'll be easier to walk than driving through this throng. Come on."

"Your bakery is in a prime location," I say as we start walking with her. "It should be easy to get customers there, especially during the holiday season."

"I know," she says, glancing up at me. "That's why Laura wanted the bakery business to fail. She wanted to sell the space to a fast-food chain or something."

"How are the staff at the bakery?" Jacob asks.

"Esther and Kat are amazing bakers and joined us three years ago," she says with a smile on her face. "But, we need more bakers to help us stay open for longer hours. Kenny Johnson is our manager and he's been working for my family since the time my mom was alive. He's the reason I inherited the recipe books that my parents compiled while they worked here. If it were up to Laura, she'd never let me have them."

A frustrated expression comes over her. She always gets agitated whenever she mentions her stepmom. It must've been awfully hard to live with Laura all these years without wanting to give up on everything.

"There it is!" Winter shouts excitedly and skips ahead.

Looking ahead, I see the entire street is filled with cute boutiques and cozy restaurants. Strings of fairy lights crisscross over our heads, adding a festive glow to the whole neighborhood.

"On the Rise has a lot of potential," Jacob says as we follow our excited mate into the bakery.

“Yeah. With the right staff and management, Winter can make something out of it,” I reply.

A heavenly fragrance of baked goodies envelops my senses the moment I step inside the bakery. Inhaling deeply, I look toward the counter in the front that’s full of freshly baked pastries and cakes.

“Oh, my Lord! It’s you, kiddo!” An elderly man walks out from behind the counter and wraps her in his arms.

“Hey, Johnson,” she says, hugging him back.

“Carol called to tell me you came back home today,” he says, stepping away. His gaze sweeps over her, making sure she’s not hurt. “Did Laura and Pete seriously drive you out of the house?”

She nods, her smile faltering.

I want to reach out to her, comfort her, and tell her that we’ll never allow anyone to hurt her again.

“Esther! Come over here!” A different voice shouts, distracting me. “Winter’s here!”

A middle-aged woman in a pink apron grins excitedly as she strides toward us. She brushes away a few stray strands that manage to sneak out of her hairnet and hugs Winter.

“I’m so glad you’re safe, sweetheart,” she says, squeezing Winter hard.

An older woman peeks out from behind a door near the counter area. Her confused look disappears the moment her gaze falls on Winter. “Oh, it’s really you!” she says, hurrying toward Winter.

My brothers and I hang back and watch them hug our mate.

Winter is adored by the staff of the bakery. Relief spreads through me as I realize they're happy to have her back among them.

"It's good to see that Winter wasn't alone all these years," Jacob says in a low, strained voice. "Her neighbors and friends watched over her and took care of her even when her stepfamily wouldn't."

"Winter looks so happy to be here," Kai says with a dreamy look in his eyes. "I'm so glad we were able to figure out a way to save her home and bakery. She'd be heartbroken without them."

Winter comes over to us and captures my hands, pulling me closer. "Come say hello to my friends," she says.

A tinge of anxiety slivers around my throat. "Are you sure you want to start by introducing me first?"

Rising on her toes, she pecks my lips. "Yep, I want them to see how amazingly sweet you are."

I smother a chuckle. She has no idea how merciless and lethal I can be toward an enemy. All the sweetness in my heart is reserved for her and no one else.

"This is Cole," she says, clutching my arm.

I catch the familiar uncomfortable expressions that people usually have when they first meet me, but they're quick to hide it.

“Cole and his brothers were in the military,” she continues bravely. “They run their own security company now. They’re the reason I’m still able to stand before you guys.”

The elderly man moves forward and thrusts his hand toward me. “Thank you for protecting her,” he says.

Grasping his hand, I shake it. “It was nothing,” I say with sincerity.

Winter smiles and gestures toward Jacob and Kai. “They’re all my mates.”

“All three of them?” Kat, the middle-aged lady, says with a surprised look on her face.

Winter chuckles and stands proudly between me and my brothers. “Yes, I belong to them all.”

“Good for you, kid,” Esther says, sniggering. “You deserve an army to protect and cherish you.”

“We’ve always been worried about her because she spends all her time here,” Johnson says, looking toward us. “Winter should’ve been in an omega training academy to hone her skills. Instead, she labored day and night to keep the bakery running.”

“I’m never stopping,” she says with a wink. She glances toward my brothers and adds, “That’s okay, right?”

“Sure,” Jacob says with a nod. “As long as it makes you happy, we don’t mind you working at the bakery.”

“Yes!” she squeals, hugging him tightly.

Johnson, Esther, and Kat watch the exchange with relieved expressions on their faces. They truly care about her.

“I’m coming back here early tomorrow,” Winter announces with a cheerful smile. “We’ve got to make the best of the holiday season!”

Just as her friends start to agree with her, the bell over the doorway rings loudly. Two women walk in with their children and head over to the counter with excited looks on their faces.

“How can we help you today, ma’am?” Johnson greets them, heading back behind the counter.

Esther and Kat hurry back inside the kitchen while Winter scoots into a corner with us.

“Is it okay if we stay here longer?” she whispers.

“Sure, as long as you can sneak some of those pastries for us,” Kai says with a wink.

Grinning brightly, she goes back behind the counter and fills up a box with the pastries Kai wanted. She comes back with them and offers them to my brother.

“Thanks,” Kai gushes, grabbing one of the sugar-dusted pastries.

“Do you like it?” she urges as he takes a bite.

“Mmm...” Kai makes a noise as his eyes close in pure bliss. “This is absolutely scrumptious!”

“Let me try one,” I say, eagerly reaching into the box.

“Nope,” Kai says, slapping my hand away. “These are all mine.”

Winter giggles and wraps her arms around my waist. “It’s okay. I can always make more of them at home.”

Leaning down, I capture her lips in a kiss. “Nothing tastes as good as you, love,” I tell her.

Her cheeks flush crimson as she buries her face in my chest.

She’s so damn cute, I want to eat her up on the spot. *Good thing we’re proposing to her soon*, I think, remembering the decorative orbs we bought this morning. I can’t wait to make her ours forever.





## Winter

The days leading up to Christmas Eve fly by in the blink of an eye. Determined to make the best of the holiday season, I've been spending most of my time at the bakery.

Kat and Esther seem to have a permanent smile on their faces as they labor to bake our patrons' favorite holiday treats. Their enthusiasm fires me up, enabling me to create lovely Gingerbread houses that some of our clients specially ordered.

Since we're staying open for longer hours, our business has tripled! The cakes and pastries have been flying off the shelves, making us feel humble and grateful for our patrons' support. Nothing feels nicer than being appreciated for all our hard work.

I'm slowly starting to understand why my parents loved the bakery so much. Deep within, I'm grateful to Jacob and his brothers for helping me save On the Rise. Without their support, I'd have never been able to see it flourish like it did during my parent's time.

"Merry Christmas, everyone!" Kat's voice startles me from my thoughts.

Turning around, I see her hugging Esther and Johnson. It's late in the evening and almost time to close up the shop. We'll be reopening after three days to roll out our special menu for New Year, so we're saying longer goodbyes tonight.

"Have a good long rest," I tell Kat as she comes over to me.

"You too, kiddo," she says, giving me a one-arm hug. "You've been working very hard lately. It's time you relaxed and let those handsome, hunky alphas take care of you."

A laugh escapes me as she winks.

"Come on, you guys," Johnson says, stepping toward us. "It's time you all went home already."

"Are you sure you want to stay back to close up?" I ask.

He nods. "Absolutely. Just get your asses home before the snowfall gets heavier."

Looking out of the window, I catch a glimpse of the light flurry that has started. A smile lifts the corners of my lips as I realize we're going to have a white Christmas morning tomorrow.

Taking a deep breath, I smile at Johnson, Esther, and Kat. "I love you guys so much," I say, my voice catching because of the sudden emotions surging through me. "Merry Christmas!"

My vision goes blurry as they wave at me and shout back their wishes. Turning around quickly, I wipe my eyes before opening the door and walking out.

A blast of chilly air hits my face. An intense emotion comes over me as I take in the bakery that my parents built. Flashing red, gold, and green lights illuminate the shop front. It's one of the very few shops that are still open at this hour on Christmas Eve.

“We've done well this year,” I say, smiling to myself.

Taking a deep breath, I turn away and make my way toward the parking lot at the end of the street. Without Laura's overbearing presence in my life, I've been able to fully focus on a holiday menu that has been popular among both our older and newer patrons.

With the profits we're making, I'd soon be able to hire extra workers to help us as our business expands. The chilly wind continues to blow all around me but it doesn't dim the excitement I feel.

Reaching my car, I unlock the door and slide in. As the warm air circulates through the interior, I relax and look forward to meeting Jacob, Cole, and Kai.

The Drake brothers have been busy taking care of their business as well. Since the upcoming weeks will be filled with parties and celebrations, they're taking extra security measures for all their clients.

Stepping on the gas, I drive through the nearly deserted streets.

My holiday playlist keeps me singing along as I make my way toward home. Even though I've been busy throughout the day, I've missed Jacob, Cole, and Kai. Their absence felt

like a constant dull ache that refused to make me forget about them.

It's a relief to catch the first glimpse of their mansion in the distance as the car drives up the hill. The snow flurries get thicker, covering the windshield as I pass through the vast gates of the estate.

As the car nears the brightly lit manor, my gaze fixes on the three dark figures that stand in the distance. Jacob, Cole, and Kai materialize before my eyes like a dream as I drive closer.

Making the car come to a stop, I hop out and run toward them.

Stepping forward, Jacob opens his arms.

Without a word, I fling myself into his embrace.

My nostrils flare as his fresh lemon and mint fragrance hits me. Hugging him tighter, I lay my face against his hard chest. "I've missed you so much," I whisper.

Burying his face in my hair, he holds me against him. "I missed you too."

Snow falls on us but the warmth surging through me keeps me happy and comfortable. Staring up into his silvery eyes, I ask the question that's been on my mind all day.

"Will you be able to take the next few days off?" I ask, stepping away.

"Yep. If nothing goes wrong, you're looking at spending Christmas with our pack."

"Yes!" I cheer, pecking his lips.

“Come here, love,” Cole says in a deep voice. His blue eyes are warm as he extends his hand toward me.

Grasping his hand, I let him pull me against him. His lips crash onto mine, kissing me with a passionate fervor.

Heat sings in my veins, making me forget about the world for a moment.

“I can’t wait to spend Christmas with you,” Cole whispers in a ragged breath.

“Me too.”

The scent of sweet oranges pervades my senses, making me aware of Kai’s presence. Turning around, I see he’s standing right behind me.

Putting my arms around his neck, I pull myself closer to him.

“How was your day?” he asks, his soft-brown eyes filled with warmth.

“Busy,” I say with a chuckle. “I’m almost relieved to be home for the next couple of days.”

Leaning down, he captures my lips.

The kiss we share is slow and sweet. Warmth and happiness bubble in my chest, making me feel like I can soar up to the sky like a hot air balloon.

“Have you been waiting long for me?” I ask as cold flecks of snow gather on my eyelids.

“We came out when our guards spotted your car near the hill,” Cole says.

Kai presses a kiss on my cheek. “We couldn’t spend a second without you anymore.”

Jacob’s hand closes over mine. “Come on, let’s get you out of this cold.”

With a nod, I let him lead me inside the house.

The moment we step inside the entrance hall, my attention goes to the enormous glittering Christmas tree in the corner. I’ve been seeing it for over a week now but each time I lay my eyes on it, I feel a burst of happiness and warmth within me.

It’s a moment before I realize why the space looks different from its usual setting.

My mates have dimmed all the lights, allowing the Christmas tree to stand out with its fairy lights and shimmering strings of tinsel. Several red and white candles dot the place, adding a warm glow to the room.

“What do you think?” Jacob asks.

“It’s beautiful,” I whisper.

Stepping further inside the room, I catch the scent of several spices, noting the strong hint of ginger, cinnamon, and orange.

“Did you guys make mulled wine or something?” I ask, staring up at Jacob.

“It was Kai’s idea,” he says. “I wanted to make hot chocolate but Kai wanted something that’d make us all relax.”

Turning toward Kai, I grin. “This is amazing! Thanks so much for making this the perfect Christmas Eve evening.”

Kai chuckles and ambles over to me. “I knew you’d be too tired for anything else.”

“Also, it helps to have you a little drunk,” Cole says, winking at me.

The gesture makes butterflies take flight in my tummy.

My mates lead me toward the Christmas tree and that’s when I notice the luxurious cushions on the floor. They help me sit on one of them and settle down beside me.

“This feels so nice,” I croon, staring at the glittering ornaments hanging over my head. “I love it, guys.”

“Let’s get you relaxed some more,” Kai says, easing my boots off my feet.

Pure bliss flows through me as Cole comes behind me and starts massaging my shoulders. My head falls back on his chest as a moan escapes me.

“Jacob, go get the wine,” Kai whispers.

“On it!”

Opening my eyes, I watch Jacob hurrying toward the hallway that leads to the kitchen.

“Are you hungry?” Kai asks.

“I’m too tired to be hungry,” I say with a chuckle. “But, I guess I could eat something snackish.”

“Aww, our darling has overworked herself,” Cole says, wrapping an arm around my shoulder. “Come here, love. We’ll take care of you.”

“How about some music?” Kai suggests.

“Sure,” I say, leaning against Cole.

A Christmas song starts playing in the background, creating the perfect Christmas Eve setting. A smile blossoms on my lips as I stare at the candles flickering in every corner.

Soon, Jacob comes back into the room with a massive tray in his hands.

As he draws nearer, I catch a glimpse of the surprise they’ve planned for me. Among the steaming mugs of spiced wine, there’s a small stove with a cute little pot over it.

“Oh, wow!” I gush. “You guys made fondue.”

I straighten up the moment Jacob places the tray on the carpet.

“Let’s light it up,” Jacob says, proceeding to turn on the stove.

My gaze moves over the basket containing toasted pieces of bread. They’ve also included bowls of mini sausages, roasted potatoes, and chopped apples. All their inclusions would go amazingly well with the gently simmering cheese in the pot.

“Can I tell you guys a secret?” I whisper, looking around at my mates.

“Any time,” Kai says with a wink.

“I’ve never had fondue before,” I say with a chuckle.

“Oh, honey,” Jacob says, pulling me against him.

Leaning forward, Cole skewers a piece of toast and dips it into the cheese. A thick string forms as he pulls out the bread.



The sight makes my mouth water immediately.

“Here,” he says, holding the cheesy morsel before my lips.

I wrap my mouth over the piece of crouton and pull it off the skewer. “Mmm,” I moan as the cheese melts on my tongue. “This is so, so good.”

Grabbing a skewer, I stab a piece of sausage and coat it in the melting cheese. “You should taste it too,” I say, holding the morsel to Cole’s lips.

“Thanks, love,” he says, proceeding to eat it.

“Hey, try the wine next,” Kai prompts, holding up a mug.

Picking my cup, I take a tentative sip. “This is amazing too!” I croon, enjoying the deliciously sweetened and spiced wine. “This is like the perfect combination for an evening like this.”

The snowfall grows heavier but settled among my mates with hot mugs of wine, I feel utterly cozy and comfortable. The cheesy bites of bread and meat soon fill me up, leaving me feeling warm and fuzzy.

Feeling playful, I press my feet against Jacob’s thigh. “What do we have for dessert?”

“We bought some brownies earlier this afternoon, but I was thinking of having something sweeter.” His silvery eyes darken as he leans in close to me. “Can I have a bite of you, love?”

The moan that escapes me alerts both Kai and Cole. They sit up straighter and watch the exchange between me and their brother.

Jacob's thumb hooks under my chin, lifting my face.

"I'm yours," I whisper.

The look in his eyes intensifies at my declaration. "Lie down, darling," he says, patting the cushion beside me. "Now."

A thrill goes through me at the hint of dominance in his voice.

The omega within me hurries to obey her alpha. I lie down on the carpet before my mates.

Hunger descends into their eyes but no one pounces on me. They simply surround me, aroused and hard.

Jacob reaches out and turns me to the side. His fingers grab the zip of my dress and pull it down. Easing the sleeves off my shoulders, he bares me to his brothers.

I'm left wearing only my lace bra and black leggings.

Jacob's finger traces the outline of my lace panties visible through the thin material of the leggings. A shiver goes through me even though our naked skins haven't touched yet.

Something glistens in the corner of my eye. Turning my head, I see a small knife in Cole's hand.

"Look at me, love," Jacob says in a deep voice.

I obey, shifting my attention back to him.

"Do you trust us?" he asks.

“Yes,” I say without any hesitation.

“Very good, my sweet omega,” he croons, gently caressing my hair.

Closing my eyes, I lean into his touch.

I barely notice as someone eases the leggings off my legs. Something cold and hard presses against my thighs. Before I can open my eyes and see what’s happening, the sound of ripping silk reaches my ears.

Cole sits right next to Jacob, his hand still holding onto the hilt of the knife. My panty dangles from the tip, heightening the thrill of danger.

A shudder runs through me, pebbling my nipples.

“Get her bra, next,” Kai says in a low, husky voice.

Cole leans forward and lifts a strap with his finger.

A gasp escapes me as the cold blade is slipped under the strap. It takes only a light swipe for the knife to cut through the lacy fabric.

I close my eyes as another shudder goes through me. Deep within, I know Cole and his brothers would never hurt me but it’s thrilling to be put on the edge like this. My pussy is damp and throbbing even though my mates have barely laid a finger on me.

Jacob signals toward his brothers. His silent command is enough for them to sit back. Cole sheathes his knife and pockets it while his ice-blue eyes continue to watch me.

Moving closer to me, Jacob parts my pussy and leans down to take a sniff. “You smell like a sweet cupcake,” he

says in a deep voice that reverberates through me. “Let’s see if you taste like one.”

His warm tongue swipes over my clit.

“Ahh!” I gasp, my body bucking.

“Relax, babe,” Jacob commands, placing a hand over my bare navel. “Let me take care of you.” He slides in a finger and it easily slips inside my damp, slippery channel. “You’re so very wet already,” he says, dipping in a second finger.

My hands tighten into fists as he unleashes a sweet torment within me.

“Did you like the way Cole handled his weapon?” he asks.

“Y-ye-yes,” I stutter helplessly as my core squeezes hard, almost on the verge of releasing the mountain of pleasure building up inside me. “I liked it.”

Kai shifts next to me, his hand running over the erection in his pants.

“You’re the most perfect omega for us,” Jacob says with an appreciative grin.

“And you’re the most perfect alphas for m—” My words are cut off as he leans down to lick my sensitive nub.

Kai stands and lets his trousers fall off. A groan escapes him as he releases his thick, hard length from the constraints of his boxers. His eyes meet mine as a tide of pleasure washes over me.

My body lays limp over the table, my thighs splayed wide for him and his brothers.

“You’re like the best kind of dessert,” Kai says, reaching out to pinch a rock-hard nipple.

A cry escapes me, making me thrash against the pillow.

Cole shifts, distracting me as Jacob leans down between my legs again. His fingers are already closed around his bare cock as he stares fixedly at my dripping pussy.

Jacob’s fingers enter me again while his tongue laps at my swollen clit.

The sensations running through me make my body buck against the soft carpet but Kai’s strong hands keep me in place. Lashes of pleasure thrash through me, making me groan and cry out for release.

“I want more,” I say through a sob. “Please, Jacob... please, alpha...”

Jacob is relentless, continuing to torment me with his tongue and fingers. He’s not just torturing me but himself too.

“Come for us, Winter,” Jacob says, thrusting his fingers deep inside me.

My walls clamp onto his digits as my core coils tightly. With a gasp, all my control wanes. A tsunami of pleasure washes over me, leaving me shuddering underneath him.

Gazing deep into his silvery eyes, I catch the hint of suppressed desire there. The omega in me can’t stand seeing him like this. I want to give him the same pleasure he lavished on me.

Even though I don’t want to move a muscle, I force myself to sit up and crawl toward him. Reaching closer, I

unbuckle his pants.

A hard lump is already tenting Jacob's boxers. He leans back, allowing me to pull them off him.

My fingers close over his hardened erection. His skin feels as soft as velvet against my palms as I fist him.

A pearl of precum forms at the tip. Running my thumb over it, I spread the cream around.

"You're getting so good at this, darling," he says, closing his eyes.

His appreciation makes me want to please him harder. Bending down, I position my body between his parted legs.

Cole and Kai watch me as I lower my head and lick their brother's tip. The taste of his familiar saltiness sends a surge of warmth through me. I take him in deeper, allowing half his length to reach inside my mouth.

"You're such a good darling," Jacob says, his hand lying on top of my head. "That's it, honey. Take me in deep and suck hard."

In my enthusiasm, I nearly gag but the sensation passes away quickly. Gripping his cock at the base, I stroke him, long and hard.

Hard moans escape him as his body goes taut.

Reaching out, he captures my boob and squeezes it hard.

A jolt goes through me, settling in my core. His arousal is heightening my own desire. My juices run down my thighs as I suck him hard.

“Gods, yes,” he groans as his length throbs against my throat. “You’ve become such an expert at this.” His hips buck, his cock plunging in and out of my mouth.

Just when I feel like I’m going mad with my own desire, I feel a pair of warm hands spreading over my ass.

“You’re dripping honey and ecstasy,” Kai’s voice sounds from behind me. “I can’t stand it any longer. I must have you, Winter.”

I want to tell him to take what he wants but my mouth is too full of Jacob’s cock. So, I silently jut my ass out and rub all over his hardened length.

“Is this what you want?” Kai asks.

Wordlessly, I grind against him, telling him how desperate I am to have him inside me.

A jolt goes through me as I feel the thick head of Kai’s cock at my entrance. My anticipation heightens, making me suck onto Jacob harder.

A soundless gasp escapes me as Kai enters me. My slippery folds greedily clamp onto his hardened cock.

He pulls out, almost all the way before he gives another rough thrust.

My body pushes forward, taking in Jacob’s cock deeper into my throat.

Kai’s mouth trails along my spine, reaching between my shoulder blades. Alternating between bites and kisses, he drives me to the peak of my torment.

He pulls almost out again, barely inside me.

Desperate, I arch my body, trying to draw him back inside me.

He lets out a growl and thrusts in harder. “You know how to beg, my sweet darling,” Kai grates through clenched teeth as he plunges in rough and hard, filling every inch of me.

His movements become faster. More desperate.

At the same time, I feel Jacob’s cock swelling against my throat. The groans escaping him tell me he’s close to his release too. His fingers clutch onto my hair as he struggles to keep my mouth on him.

With one deep thrust, Kai hits that particular sweet spot that undoes me.

At the same time, Jacob plunges deep into my throat and shatters. His hot cum shoots out, filling my mouth while his hips shudder against my face.

A cry escapes me as Jacob finally pulls out his cock from my mouth. Strings of cum drip down my lips as Kai grips my hips and continues to thrust hard.

His teeth sink into my shoulder as his own orgasm takes over him. His white-hot seeds gush deep inside me, filling me to the brim.

“Winter, damn!” He growls, gasping for breath. “I fucking love you.” His body collapses over me, making me slump onto Jacob’s lap.

Cole kneels before me and gently caresses my head. “Are you okay, love?” he asks.



Looking into his eyes, I see the desperate hunger in them. He just watched me reach my peak along with his brothers. Behind his ravenous desire, I catch his never-ending concern for me.

Despite needing me, he's making sure I'm okay. Love and warmth burst in my chest, almost making me ache for him.

I barely have the strength to move but reaching out, I hug Cole.

His arms wrap around my waist, pulling me against him. Within moments, his hungry mouth finds mine.

Opening up to him, I let him slide his tongue through my lips.

Cole's kiss isn't soft or sweet. It's raw and desperate. Almost aching.

With a sudden move, he wraps his arms around my thighs and hauls me up. His strength allows him to stand up, taking me along with him.

I kiss him back fervently, desperate to have him inside me.

His back hits the wall, allowing me to shift without making him fall backward. I align my entrance against his erection, waiting for him to make his move.

"Winter," he grates out through clenched teeth. His gaze meets mine. "Do you want me?"

I nod, crashing my lips against his.

Cole's arms tighten around me as he positions himself. With one thrust of his hips, his thick head prods through my wet, slippery folds, burying itself deep within me.

A gasp escapes me as his massive girth stretches me to my limits. To secure my position, I wrap my legs tightly around his waist and hold onto him tightly.

Clinging onto him, I let him ravish my mouth as he starts thrusting inside me. Fire rages through my veins, heightening my pleasure. In my desperation, I claw at the back of his neck as his cock plunges in and out of me.

My body sinks onto his stabbing cock, taking him deeper than ever before. His every thrust hits that particular spot, sending jolts of electricity throughout my body.

Cole's mouth presses kisses along my neck. His teeth graze along the sensitive skin, making my core clench harder.

"Winter, love," he growls against my neck. "You're so demanding, I doubt I'll last longer."

A wild chuckle escapes me as I cling to him. "I'm so close too."

His mouth closes over mine once again. Drunk on his frantic kisses and the pleasure coursing through me, I let go of all control.

With one final thrust, he buries deep inside me. My core clenches around his throbbing length, drawing out a wild cry from his lips. He explodes inside me, filling me with his seeds.

He crashes back among the cushions with me on his lap.

Rough groans and moans escape me as I continue to cling to him.

“You’re so fucking amazing,” Cole says in a rough, breathless voice. “I love you so much, Winter.”

Resting my face against his heaving chest, I whisper the same words. “I love you too.”

My body feels deliciously spent. Even though I’m completely naked, I don’t feel any cold. Snow continues to fall outside, coating the window panes white.

Wrapped up in Cole’s arms, I feel utterly at home.

With a sudden realization, I understand something deep. It doesn’t matter whether I live in this lavish manor or at my parent’s suburban cottage. Home is where my mates are.

My eyes close from pure bliss.

“She’s nearly passed out,” I hear Jacob’s voice from nearby.

“Let’s cover her up before she catches a cold,” Kai’s voice sounds close to me. Next moment, someone drapes a warm shawl over my shoulders.

“It’s late already,” Cole says. “How about we take her to bed?”

“Good idea,” Kai says. “She needs to rest after the hectic week she’s had at the bakery.”

Cole’s arms tighten around my body once again as he hauls me up.

Blissful slumber comes over me. Jacob, Cole, and Kai make me feel so safe, that my mind switches off without a

second thought, allowing me to slide into a deep sleep.



## Winter

Soft kisses pepper my cheeks and lips, waking me up from a deep sleep.

“Morning, love,” Cole’s voice greets me as I slowly blink open my eyes. “It’s Christmas!”

A smile blossoms on my lips as I quickly sit up. Even though I’m excited, I can’t help the huge yawn that overwhelms me.

“You’re still tired,” Kai says from my other side, looking sheepish. “I’m sorry we kept you up late last night.”

Warmth blooms in my cheeks as I remember the hot lashes of pleasure the three brothers lavished on me last night. They were generous with me, making me come over and over until I simply passed out in a haze of lust and deep satisfaction.

Smothering another yawn, I’m about to climb out of bed but Kai stops me. “Where’re you hurrying off to?” he asks.

“I’m going to get started with breakfast,” I say, moving a stray strand of hair from my face. “I’ve planned a huge feast

for Christmas dinner, so I want us to eat an early breakfast to make sure we're hungry for it."

Cole chuckles. "There are three of us, honey," he says, pecking my cheek. "We're an army of our own. You won't find a morsel for leftovers when we're finished with your Christmas dinner."

"Is that a challenge?" I ask with a grin.

"Nah, we'll just make sure not to waste anything you cook for us," Kai says, pressing his lips to mine.

My arms go around his neck, pulling him closer. His sweet orange scent is so addictive, that I deepen the kiss. If I wasn't truly worried about making breakfast, I'd simply never leave this bed and my two mates.

"Where's Jacob?" I ask, forcing myself to break the kiss.

"He'll be here any minute," says Kai, his eyes still half-hooded from our kiss.

"We made breakfast for you this morning," Cole explains. "This way, you can catch a break before attempting that massive feast for us."

"Seriously, Winter," says Kai, taking my hand. "You don't have to go overboard for us. We'll be happy with soup and ham sandwiches for dinner."

Warmth flares in my chest. They're worried about me tiring myself out.

Shaking my head, I grin. "We're making traditions this year," I tell them. "You guys got me the most wonderful tree in

the whole world, so it's my turn to whip up the best Christmas dinner to mark our celebrations.”

“All right, then,” Cole relents, leaning his head against my shoulder. “Just let us help, okay?”

I nod, enjoying their closeness.

A soft knock sounds at the door, attracting all our attention toward it.

“Winter's awake,” Kai responds loudly.

The door opens and Jacob walks in with a massive tray in his hands.

A delicious aroma spreads in the room, reminding me of hot pancakes and freshly brewed coffee. An eager grin lifts the corners of my lips as Jacob comes over to the bed and lays the tray before me.

“Wow,” I breathe, staring at the spread.

Along with steaming cups of coffee, there's a large bowl of cut fruits, a mountain of chocolate-chip pancakes, jars of syrup and whipped cream, and a platter of scrambled eggs and bacon.

“Thanks, Bruh,” Kai says, grabbing a piece of bacon. He bites into the crispy rasher and moans. “Mmm, I was getting so damn hungry.”

Moving closer, Jacob kisses the top of my head. “Merry Christmas, darling,” he says, smiling at me. His silvery eyes shine with warmth, making me hug him tighter.

“Merry Christmas to you too,” I whisper, breathing in his delectable scent. “Thanks for making us breakfast.”

An appreciative hum escapes him as he leans in closer to kiss me.

Heat sings in my veins as his arms wrap around me, keeping me pressed to his hard chest. I drown in his warmth when suddenly my tummy decides to ruin the moment.

A loud rumble erupts in the room, making me break away. My hand flies to my stomach as my embarrassment heightens.

“Sorry,” I mumble, looking up at Jacob.

He chuckles, leaning in to peck my lips. “I’m sorry, love. You must be starving after everything we did to you last night.” Turning around, he loads up a plate with pancakes, eggs, and fruit. “Here, have some of this food, first.”

“Thanks,” I say gratefully, accepting the plate from him.

Over the next several minutes, we’re all quiet as we stuff our mouths with the delicious spread before us. Each time, I meet one of their gazes, they smile warmly at me.

As the days pass by, I wonder how I could’ve lived without them all these years. It feels like I’ve known Jacob, Cole, and Kai my whole life. Maybe it’s our mate bond, or maybe it’s just my heart that’s offered itself to the three Drake brothers.

Either way, I have no doubt in my mind that they’re the mates I’ve always longed for. Jacob, Cole, and Kai are mine.

“How about we go downstairs and open some presents?” Kai says as I sip my coffee.



Excitement surges through me at once. It doesn't matter that I'm no longer five. The prospect of opening gifts on Christmas morning is the best feeling in the world.

"Let's go," I say, carefully climbing off the bed so I won't spill any of my precious coffee.

I catch something passing between the three brothers just as I'm about to leave the room.

*Did they get me a surprise gift or something?* I wonder with a quiet chuckle.

As we reach the staircase, I catch wisps of a familiar Christmas song. Humming the tune, I hurry down the stairs and reach the entrance hall.

To my surprise, the entire room is decorated with garlands of tinsel and holly. Soft mounds of white cotton, mimicking snow, are spread on every surface. The ornaments on the beautiful Christmas tree shine and sparkle. Strings of fairy lights run overhead, casting a magical glow to the whole scene.

"When did you guys do this?!" I exclaim as I step inside the room.

When I went to bed last night, this room only had the Christmas tree.

"Do you like it?" Jacob asks.

I nod dumbly, staring at the magic they've created for me.

"We have more surprises waiting for you," Kai says, looking excited and ready to pounce on me.

“There are more surprises?” I ask, staring at them.

“Oh, we haven’t even started yet,” Cole says with a mysterious grin.

I stare at each of them in turn as my curiosity heightens. With a start, I realize they’re all dressed in casual but smart clothes. They look amazingly handsome in cozy Christmas sweatshirts while I’m the only one who’s still in her pajamas.

“You guys should’ve let me shower,” I mumble with a pout.

The surprised looks on their faces tell me they hadn’t thought of it at all.

“Uhh, do you want to go and shower?” Cole asks, suddenly looking worried.

“Yeah, I don’t want to be the only one who’s sloppy on this special day,” I mutter. “I’ll barely be gone for ten minutes,” I say quickly as I catch Kai grimace and glare at Jacob.

*What have they been planning?* I quietly wonder by myself.

“Go ahead, love,” Jacob says with a nonchalant grin. “We’ll wait right here for you.”

“Thanks! I’ll be back ASAP!” I assure them before running out of the room and hurrying up the stairs.

Hoping the delay in opening the presents won’t put a damper on their plans, I quickly go into my room and strip off my PJs. The bed is still messy but I decide to tackle it later.

Heading inside the bathroom, I take a look at the mirror. My blond hair is a tangled mess and my cheeks are too pink. A sigh escapes me as I realize it'll take me more than ten minutes to fix my appearance.

Grabbing the toothbrush, I start by brushing my teeth.

Once I'm done, I walk inside the shower and switch on the water. While the steamy heat relaxes me, I squeeze a dollop of body wash onto my hand and start lathering up.

Since I'm running out of time, I don't shampoo my hair.

Walking out of the shower, I grab a robe and start fixing the tangles in my hair. My patience runs low but I grit my teeth and continue detangling my long strands.

By the time I'm dressed with a light layer of makeup, I see that I've spent nearly half an hour getting ready. "At least, I won't look like a homeless person in all the photos we take today," I mutter at my reflection.

My green woolen dress, matched with a pair of tan boots, looks amazingly classy and fashionable. The shade of coral on my lips adds a flare of color to my face. A teardrop emerald necklace at my throat completes the look, allowing me to breathe a sigh of relief.

Taking a deep breath, I head out of the room and make my way downstairs.

My spirits lift the moment I hear a familiar Christmas tune coming from the entrance hall. Hurrying forward, I reach the room and find my mates standing by the tree and talking in hushed voices.

"Hey," I call out nervously.

Jacob and his brothers turn their heads toward me in unison. Identical looks of awe and surprise spread on their faces as they walk toward me.

“You look gorgeous,” Jacob says, reaching me first. Wrapping his arms around my waist, he pulls me in for a kiss.

The gesture relaxes me instantly.

“So, can we do presents now?” Kai asks with a hopeful look on his face.

“I hope you didn’t buy me something ridiculously expensive,” I say, meeting his gaze. “You’ve spent enough on me over the past couple of weeks. To be honest, I’d be happy with a stocking full of candies.”

“Who says we haven’t got a stocking full of candies waiting for you?” Kai says with a challenging grin.

“All right, then! Where is it? Christmas time makes me crave sweets like crazy.”

Jacob, Cole, and Kai exchange another look.

“You should open those ornaments,” Cole says, pointing to a group of huge glazed spheres that are hanging from the lowest branches of the tree. “Your surprise is waiting for you in one of them.”

“Ooh!” I stride forward and touch one of the ornaments. “Did you buy these from the fair?”

“Yep.”

“Huh, I completely missed them,” I say, picking the ornament off the branch. “They’re very pretty, though.”

“Go on,” Kai urges. “Open it up.”

Looking down, I unscrew the top half and stare at a fresh red rose. A smile comes onto my lips as I pick it up and smell the addictive fragrance. “Thanks,” I say, looking over at my mates. “It’s so damn romantic to receive flowers like this.”

Jacob, Cole, and Kai glance at each other and grin. Their excitement tells me it was a group effort to create this surprise for me.

“Go ahead and try the others,” Cole says. “We’ve got more in store for you.”

One by one, I proceed to open the rest of the ornaments.

More roses and foil-wrapped truffles are revealed to me, making me happier and more excited. The child in me comes to the surface, eagerly opening each of the ornaments to see what surprise it’s hiding within it.

I don’t even look at my mates when I open the last ornament, hopeful for another sphere full of chocolates. *Stop being so greedy*, Winter, I chide myself as I unscrew the sphere. *Roses are just as sweet as these lovely sweets!*

For a moment, I stare at the nearly empty sphere in my hand. There are neither roses nor chocolates in this one. Just a solitary ring that clatters against the glass.

Blinking slowly, I pick up the ring. A gasp escapes me as the jewel on the top sparkles so brightly that I feel nearly blinded by it.

I turn the ring over, appreciating the intricate design that’s carved on the sides. Slowly, very slowly, I realize that it’s not an ordinary jewel.

It’s an engagement ring!

I turn to look toward Jacob and find him and his brothers on their knees before me. My heart pounds in my chest while my mind processes what's happening.

“The stars shine brighter when I'm with you,” Kai says in a voice that's brimming with sincerity. “The songs start making sense, the world turns colorful, and all I want to do is dance with you in my arms. Will you be my forever mate and let me be your partner for the rest of my life?”

My heart beats harder, bringing up waves of bittersweet emotions. Tears well up in my eyes as I look at Kai.

“Winter?” he whispers.

Tears run down my cheeks as I nod. I want to tell him YES in so many different words but none come to my lips.

“I'm going to need a vocal affirmation, darling,” he says with a nervous chuckle.

Still nodding hard, I utter the word.

The moment my “yes” leaves my mouth, Kai is on his feet and pulling me into a kiss. His sweet orange scent wraps around me, making me feel happier than I've ever been.

Someone coughs loudly, breaking us apart.

“Oops! Sorry, I forgot you guys were still waiting for your turns,” Kai says, grinning cheekily. He pecks my lips and goes to stand next to Cole.

I turn my attention to Cole next.

“Winter, you're the friend and soulmate I've been waiting for all my life,” Cole says, his voice trembling with emotion. “I love to see the person that I am through your eyes.

Without you, my life was gray and cold. Your parents may have named you Winter, but to me, you're spring. You color my life and make me the happiest man on this planet. Winter Brown, will you be my forever mate?"

I start to say "yes" when I notice his trembling hands. He's trying to hold in his emotions but I know what he's feeling.

Dropping to my knees, I hold his hands in mine. "I'll always be yours," I promise him before pressing my lips to his.

Cole wraps his arms around me in a tight hug as he deepens the kiss. He nearly chokes me but I hold onto him, refusing to let him go. I want him to know I love him to the depths of my heart and the only way to make him understand that is to kiss him with a passion that equals his.

I'm a breathless mess by the time we separate. He wipes a tear from my cheek and helps me to my feet.

My gaze finally falls on Jacob who's still waiting on his knees for me.

"I thought I had it all," he says, his silvery eyes shining with emotion. "My brothers and I struggled over the years to establish ourselves and make an empire of our own. The years went by but nothing filled the emptiness in my heart. It was only after I met you that I realized what was missing. You're the missing part of my heart. Without you, it'll always be incomplete and broken. Winter Brown, will you keep my heart whole and full for the rest of my life?"

“Yes!” I say in a broken voice as he straightens up and hugs me. “Yes, yes, yes!”

He kisses me passionately, kindling an inferno in my heart. Happiness flows through my veins, warming me to the very tips of my toes! I feel drunk even though I haven’t had a sip of wine.

“Let’s put it on,” Jacob says, taking the ring from my hand.

Cole and Kai gather around us as he slips the ring onto my finger. The diamond twinkles under the fairy lights like a star in the sky. “I’m Dreaming of a white Christmas” by Michael Bublé plays in the background, making my heart sing with pure joy.

“Did you like our surprise?” Kai asks, grinning happily.

A chuckle escapes me. “Yeah, your surprise surpassed all my expectations. Thanks so much for the roses and the chocolates too. I love them all.”

“That was just the preview,” says Jacob, laughing.

“Hey, we got you more flowers, by the way,” Cole says, jogging over to the tree. He pulls out a huge bouquet of red roses that they’d hidden among the presents and brings it over to me.

“These are gorgeous!” I squeal, staring at the most beautiful roses I’ve ever seen. “Thank you!”

This has to be the best Christmas of my life! It’s the day my mates and I promised to be with each other forever.



Suddenly, I'm pulled into a hug by them. Cocooned in their combined embrace, I feel the happiest and safest I've ever been.

"I love you," Jacob says, kissing the top of my head.

"I love you too, Jacob." As Kai and Cole squeeze my hands, I look up at them. "I love you guys too."

"I love you, Winter," Cole and Kai chorus and kiss my cheeks.

A deep sense of humbleness and gratitude pervades through the warmth and happiness surging through me. After years of neglect, I've finally found my mates. Their presence lifts the sadness that has weighed on me ever since my dad left me.

Tears roll down my cheeks as I stay in Jacob, Cole, and Kai's embrace.

"Are you okay, love?" Jacob asks.

I nod and smile. "I'm just so happy," I tell him with a chuckle. "You guys are my Christmas miracle."

"And, you're ours," says Cole. "You have no idea how happy you make us, how complete we feel when you're with us."

Pure bliss flows through me as I realize my happy ending has just begun.



## Epilogue



## Winter

### *Nine months later*

Cole sits at the foot of the couch, rubbing my swollen feet.

Moans of pure pleasure escape my lips as I feel the comfort reach up my legs. From time to time, he gently places a hand on my swollen belly to feel our baby moving inside me.

We'd discovered I was pregnant soon after we moved into my parents' house. Happiness bubbles inside me each time I remember that day.

Carol and our neighbors gave us an amazing welcome, filling our dinner table with casseroles of their signature dishes. Jacob, Cole, and Kai were so overwhelmed by their hospitality, they invited everyone for a housewarming party the next day.

“Oww!” I gasp, massaging my belly as the baby gives a particularly hard, excited kick. “Daddy’s not going anywhere but if you keep kicking me like this, I’ll have to run to the bathroom.”

An easy laugh escapes Cole. Warmth surges through me to see him being so happy.

“Be good to your Mama, Son,” Cole says in a gentle voice as he runs a soothing hand over my tummy.

My last checkup showed that the baby was healthy and growing well. While my mates were a ball of anxiety, I had no doubt everything would be okay.

Jacob, Cole, and Kai have been taking such good care of me, I’m confident about both my and our baby’s health. Even when they’re busy with their jobs, one of them is always around, making sure I’m safe.

Since I’m in my late pregnancy, I have decided to take a break from the bakery. Despite my absence, I’m no longer worried about On The Rise.

Johnson has an assistant manager to help him while we’ve hired three more bakers to help Esther and Kat. The bakery stays open during the weekends too, so we have more business coming our way these days.

“Are you hungry?” Cole asks, distracting me.

“I’m always hungry,” I say with an embarrassed chuckle.

“Jacob should be done with lunch anytime,” he says, gently lowering my foot back on the cushion. “I’ll go check up on him and be right back.”

“Thanks, Honey.”

Leaning closer, he presses a kiss to my lips.

A quiet, content sigh escapes me as I watch him leave the room.

For the first time in years, I feel at home. It's mostly because of my mates' presence but I'm sure Laura and Pete's absence also helps me feel safe and secure.

They made no trouble after facing my mates, leaving the neighborhood in the dead of night. They took most of the furniture and whatever they could carry with them.

Deep inside, I didn't truly care.

I'm glad they saved me the trouble of getting rid of the furniture they used. They tried to pull one last nasty trick on me but have no idea they were doing me a favor.

Jacob, Cole, and Kai helped me pick out new furniture so we could start our new lives as a pack here. My gaze falls on a painting of a bright sunflower on the opposite wall. It's one of the few pieces I'd been able to save from Laura's grubby paws.

After my dad passed away, she sold most of my mom's paintings, claiming she needed the money desperately. A sliver of anger wraps around my chest as I think of the past.

"Ooh! Baby, stop!" I gasp, patting my belly. "Mama won't think about Laura or Pete. They're both gone from our lives and we're so much better for it."

The baby calms down, allowing me to lean against the chair with a relieved smile.

"Hello?" Kai's voice sounds from the outer hall.

"We're in here!" I call out, eagerly waiting to see him.

Kai appears at the threshold, looking hot and sweaty from the hour of sweeping the front yard. A bright smile

comes onto his lips as he rushes over to me.

“Do you want to go for a walk later?” he asks, kissing me.

“Mmm,” I moan against his lips, relishing his sweet orange fragrance.

“The weather’s amazing today,” he says, breaking away. “It’s neither too cold nor too windy. And, you’ve got to check out the amazing dragon display on Mrs. Groff’s lawn.”

I nod, chuckling. Kai has been in love with our neighborhood’s enthusiasm for decorations during the holidays.

A glance at the window gives me a glimpse of the Jack-o’-lanterns that sit near the edge of our fenced gate. Old sheets, propped up on sticks, mimic ghostly apparitions and stand guard beside them.

“Do you think Mr. Groff will tell me where he got his?” Kai asks, looking thoughtful.

I laugh. “You can always bribe him with some of my apple pie pockets. He loves them!”

Lightly punching my arm, he presses a kiss to my cheek. “Thanks for the tip, love!”

The sound of footsteps makes me look up. Jacob comes inside the room, looking like the perfect mate in a flowery apron.

“I’m glad you’ve come inside,” he says, glancing at Kai. “I was about to send Cole to bring you in.”

“Is it time for lunch?” I ask hopefully.

“Yes, darling,” he says, moving closer to me. “You look so beautiful today,” he whispers, running a hand over my belly.

“Ow!” I mutter as the baby kicks hard again. Blowing out a breath, I massage my sore belly and smile up at Jacob.

I don’t know what he sees in me. My advanced pregnancy makes me feel as big as this house. Most days, I’m too exhausted to move or do anything much to improve my appearance.

Jacob’s hand captures mine. “Come on, love. I made your favorite.”

“Ooh! You made steak for lunch?”

Both Kai and Jacob chuckle at the excited look on my face.

“I made something you love even more,” Jacob says with a mysterious look in his eyes.

I’m on my feet immediately. “What’re we waiting for, then? Let’s go!”

Kai sniggers as he wraps an arm around Jacob’s shoulders. “Now, I’m curious to see what you made for her.”

“If I’m feeling generous, I may share,” I say with a backward glance at Kai.

Kai stares up at Jacob. “Would I want her to share with me?”

“Probably not,” he says, chuckling hard.

Reaching the dining room, I see Cole standing at the head of the table. He gives a small bow and pulls out the chair.

Feeling thoroughly pampered, I move ahead and sit down.

The dish before me is covered with a silver cloche. Jacob's definitely going out of his way to make this a surprise for me. Looking around, I see he's also made us mac-and-cheese and chicken salad.

When everyone has settled around the table, I eagerly reach for the cloche and pull it up.

Two gigantic sandwiches sit on the plate before me. "What's this?" I ask, proceeding to peek between the bread slices. "Oh, wow! Is this Nutella with tuna and pickle slices?"

"Ugh," Kai and Cole mutter with ridiculously funny expressions on their faces.

Jacob smiles nonchalantly. "I told you it's going to be better than steak."

A giggle escapes me as I eagerly reach for a sandwich and take a massive bite. Who knew the sweet chocolaty taste of Nutella would go so well with salty tuna?

"You guys want some?" I ask, looking toward Kai.

"Nah, you go ahead. It's your favorite, after all," he says, suppressing a grimace.

Jacob coughs, hiding his laugh.

Deep inside, I know the combination I'm eating is weird as hell but I can't help myself because it tastes too good.

"Try some of this too," Jacob says, ladling some mac-and-cheese on my plate.

"Thanks!"



The amount of food makes my happiness soar. I don't even mind my baby's excited kicks as I devour the sandwiches.

“Oh, I can't wait to meet you, you sweet, little weirdo,” I whisper.

I take a moment to stare at my mates. Warm expressions spread on their faces as they eat their lunch.

Their presence is like the sun, chasing away every shadow of the past. The coming of this baby makes them shine brighter. No matter how busy they are, they always take care of me.

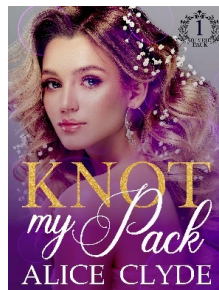
Love and warmth surge through me, making me realize that I'm finally, truly home again.



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