



Naughty Witches 6

Adrena

ERIN R. FLYNN

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Naughty Witches 6



Adrena



ERIN R FLYNN

Growing up as a foster kid means a rough start, but then thinking you're crazy because you start fires and weird things happen around you makes it all worse. Adrena Gomes had no idea that she was a witch until one of the oldest light witches found her and rescued her from the hell she was living in.

Finneas Costa was pulled out of a group home by a witch saying he was born with magical blood. He believed the words of the woman who could do things he never thought possible which filled in a lot of gaps for him. But she sends him off to help another witch and maybe find his path if he can prove he's worthy of it.

When he finds the most beautiful woman he's ever met, he's both happy and upset because that complicates things for him. She makes him feel valued and things he's never felt before.

Except she needs a man at her side, not an idiot ogre sticking his foot in his mouth and tripping over what he wants. Finn will have to decide his path and if he can be lucky enough to be what she needs.

Naughty Witches is a burning paranormal romance novella series with strong female leads, fun so sexy it raises the temperature, and mismatched people who find HEAs that give us all hope fate won't forget us. Each book is a new pairing in the same world, with an overall series arc.



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1

Adrena

When I arrived at my new home in southeast Shreveport, Louisiana, I almost fell over in shock. Thora hadn't just "jumped ahead" like she'd told me, but it was *done*.

The house was completely renovated with a huge addition I didn't think I'd ever need. Every inch of it was to my taste and perfect without that over the top feel that would make me freak I could hurt imported tiles or whatever.

My new six-hundred-acre farm had over a hundred acres of fully functioning, completely set up, and ready to harvest greenhouses with all I needed. I had ten acres of solar panels with a note that they'd be back to put in more.

I had water collection under them and filtration already going. The entire setup was like Sia's *updated* and better secure everything.

I looked up and let out a slow breath. "I'm sorry I've been such a grumpy bitch for all the delays. I thank you, Gaia—for Thora and all she has brought into my life and being so generous with me, all of us. I will do better and prove your faith in me is well placed."

And that was before I saw I had the vehicles I needed, *including* her "jam van" she kept teasing me about getting.

Tears filled my eyes as I went over to my "brewhouse" keeping the term like Sia since I would be brewing up a lot but not potions or medicinal products. Everything was there that I needed or had even *wanted*. Thora had also upgraded it all as well.

"That damn woman is so ready for all of us to take the world by storm and make all the money possible to help people," I rasped, rubbing my hand over my heart.

When I had stayed with Sia to help with a situation a few years ago, I'd been so, *so* jealous of what she'd had and her

setup, everyone supporting her because she was gifted and special.

Not all of us could be blessed with totem magic like Briony or be the strongest potions witch in centuries like Sia. Granted, they were older than me, but I'd worked hard too.

I'd been so angry and jealous that Thora kept extending our deal, pushing back my dream so she could harness my gifts to help. It wasn't that I wouldn't have done it, it just hurt to see what I'd been working for getting further away.

Now I would take it all back. I would work extra hard to deserve this and reflect on my resentment that I hadn't mattered as much as others.

Because clearly that wasn't the case, and Thora had put a *fortune* where her mouth was to invest like this in me. And she really did think of *everything* from mounds of coveralls for employees and having a washer and dryer in the brewhouse all the way to carts, trolleys, and lifts for the greenhouses.

It was like she took every wish list I'd had, all of what Sia had, *and* every possible list ever and bought it all.

She even had three barrels of pickles in the huge walk-in fridge made with my recipes so they were ready to go soon. Un-fucking-real.

There was a note that she added one extra greenhouse of loofah to help Sia, and if I would harvest them and have them sent to Sia, the upgrades and extras she splurged on were more than worth it. Wow, yeah, I could handle that.

Were we all going to have an extra loofah greenhouse for Sia? She was going to be crushed under the weight of loofahs if we weren't careful.

And yes, I knew how light they were. Well, when dried. This said just to harvest them and send them over. I wouldn't have to get all involved. Nice.

I decided to jump right in. My belongings were coming in a few days and it wasn't all that much really. I'd finally started ordering stuff besides everything I'd have to get eventually to furnish that huge house.

So I wasn't going to have much downtime settling in. I knew a lot of the machines and flow given I'd worked with Sia's and everything I'd always been looking into, but I could play with the rest while the kettles cooked.

Heading to the first greenhouse, I let out a huge squeal as I danced around that I *had* greenhouses and land and everything I'd dreamed of. I put all that excitement in what I was making, but eventually I settled down enough to cook up other things.

It was back the next morning though so yeah, I might have a lot of energy to keep going for a while. It definitely fueled my first week handling it by myself and getting comfortable with it all before I even tried to add in others. I'd have to—and soon—but yeah, I wanted to do it right.

My first big step was my booth at the Bossier City farmers market, and I was so excited I barely slept the night before.

This was it. This was my time to shine and not just learn and work behind the scenes but spread my wings and soar. I didn't want to become like Tallulah or Meave or even Sia... I just wanted to be me.

“Can I give you a hand?” a guy asked from behind me.

“Ah yes, thank you,” I said, turning and smiling at the attractive guy. His accent was killer, and I once again mentally sighed that it worked out I landed somewhere with hot accents.

They were so nice on my ears.

“It's what we do for the newbies,” he chuckled, giving me a wink.

“That obvious?”

“You drove by your spot three times.”

I sighed. “In my defense, I assumed I got it wrong because I am a newbie and it seemed like no way I'd get such a swank spot right by my allowed parking.”

“You must have someone looking out for you,” he teased. “No, the committee is really fair and those who sign up first get what they need and they take it all into consideration.” He glanced from my van to where we were going. “We were

shocked no one showed for the opening of the season last week.”

I sighed. “I called to apologize and assure them I’d be here this week. There was a thing and a delay with my move.” I shrugged as if saying that was being an adult.

“It happens.” He looked past me at the van, smirking. “Adrena’s Bounty, huh? And are you Adrena?”

“I am,” I chuckled. “You’ll get it when you see what I have.”

“Oh, I already get it,” he promised, giving me another wink.

Damn, a hard flirt like that before eight on a Saturday? I might need more coffee before the farmers markets then.

He looked like he might be regretting the offer when I opened the back and it was *packed*. I teased him that he could change his mind and he just gave me a look like he might ask for something later.

I didn’t need three guesses to know what he’d ask for and I was totally into it.

“That is a clever name for a preserves company,” he said after the third load with the folding dolly I had.

“You haven’t even tasted samples yet,” I shot right back.

He threw back his head and laughed and it was a good laugh. He was relieved when I showed him the electric van had a pull-out ramp which Thora of course thought of.

Once he helped me drag it all over, he admitted he had to go check on his own food truck, pointing out where it was. I thanked him, promising to enjoy some of his wares later and heat filled his eyes.

I easily managed to get up one of the snazzy booth tents Thora had bought for me with my logo on the top. She went all out, getting one with a back to help block sun and even side panels so no one was just sneaking over and grabbing inventory when I was busy.

I unfolded my tables and my eyes itched when I saw she even had my logo put on the damn tablecloths.

That woman... I so loved her even if she was a demanding pain in the ass. She always appreciated it. I had felt so guilty, I made so many extra free samples as if giving that back to people helped restore the balance of how bitchy I'd been the past few years.

My displays were simple, classic, and I preferred it that way. I hated going to booths or displays that were so *busy* it was like an overwhelming of my senses.

Besides, I had cases and cases more jars stacked behind me, so there was no reason to set them all out. I made sure the signs were visible to warn adult only.

I wouldn't card, there was nothing in them that made them that way... Besides magic.

I had a problem with kids having most magic especially with moods and some of the moods were naughty, so that was really wrong. I'd warn people, but at the end of the day, there was lots that parents and people did that I didn't agree with and I couldn't stop it all.

Though, most parents were pretty good about not giving their kids stuff if you told them.

The samples would make it pretty clear as well.

I was glad I brought the cooler because even if it was mid-April, it was still Louisiana and damn, I needed a drink after all of that. I made sure what I wore was tasteful but comfortable. Some people were turned off by seeing any hint of tits at a family friendly event or voluptuous women showing much skin, so I made sure to keep covered.

"What dis?" someone asked just as I sat down.

I blinked down at the adorable little boy who couldn't have been more than five. Smiling when he gave me a curious look. "That's jaboticaba. It's like a grape but from the Amazon."

"What dis?" he asked next.

“That’s a star fruit. It tastes sort of like an apple.” I chuckled when his eyes lit up. “Do you like apples?”

He nodded. “And apple juice.”

“Everyone likes apple juice, silly.” I glanced around frowning. “Where are your parents, buddy?”

He shrugged. “What dis?”

“That’s a lychee and kids can’t eat them.”

He didn’t like that answer, giving me a hurt look like I said something bad. “Why?”

“Because it messes with little tummies. It’s fine when you’re older.”

“I didn’t know that,” a woman said as she joined us, giving the little boy a tired look. “You promised to stay with Momma.” He apologized and she smiled at me. “Sorry about that.”

“Not at all,” I forgave. “And it’s not like they’re toxic to kids, it just drops sugar levels, and in kids that can be dangerous—”

“Especially when they snarf down what they like,” she finished.

“Momma, wanna try,” he said, pointing to the jaboticaba.

“It’s fine, it’s a South American grape,” I explained when she gave me a hesitant look. I moved around to the front and squatted down to his height. “Are you ready for some magic?”

His eyes lit up again and he nodded. I picked up one of the jaboticabas and put pressure on it to break the skin, showing him the fruit inside.

“The grape peel pops off. You don’t want to eat that part, it’s sour.”

He leaned in like a cute little bird and ate what I was holding for him. He took a moment to deliberate before beaming at his mom. “Yummy.”

I winked at him. “They’re my favorites too.”

“May I?” the mom asked, and I nodded, showing her how to do it. Her eyes went wide. “That is good. And you make it into jam?”

I nodded again. “That jam isn’t for kids as the mix of berries has a sort of *oyster* effect.”

“Really?” she chuckled, giving me a disbelieving look.

I reached over and picked up one of the tiny sample jars, giving her a wink as I handed it over. “Put a little on an after-dinner snack, like share a sundae with your partner, and I promise you will *fully understand* the name.”

She burst out laughing when she saw it was called Berry Naked Night.

I let the little boy try a few other fruits, and she ended up purchasing several jars of my Morning Done Right which was a yellow dragon fruit, lemon, mango, and strawberry marmalade and Afternoon Boosted which was a jam mix of goji, blueberries, and kiwi.

I had jars open with little wooden spoons and an array of what people could put it on except like toast since stale toast sucked. Others like the Berry Naked Night I wasn’t having people try right there and had sample jars for them to take home.

My eyes itched again as I waved bye to them, thrilled I was finally here. I ended up taking pictures of it all and sending them to Thora with a message I made my first sale and I would be forever grateful to her and the path she put me on when she saved me. The response she sent me almost made me fall over.

Thora: Good, we’ll get your store set up on your farm before the end of farmers market season as I know you will be a glorious success and no one will want to stop buying your amazing wares no matter the season.

Wow, she really knew how to make a woman blush and she wasn’t even my type.

And she was going to build me a store? I’d heard Sia had converted a house when she’d expanded, but it must have been

going well from a security standpoint if that was what Thora was pushing for.

It made me realize I really needed to get the fence up from what Briony had already been sending here. I felt horrible for that as I'd been delayed and she'd been through so much after her shop and stock had been burnt down.

But she'd simply told me to send an extra case of jams when I got my ass in gear. She was awesome like that.

She sent me another message that a present was coming for me soon and I rolled my eyes. Knowing Thora that could be *anything*. I mean, the sky was the limit with her and the way her mind worked.

And there was no way to plan for her because it could be everything from a puppy because she didn't want me to be lonely to something completely naughty and made me blush.

Which was part of why it was so much fun to be her friend if I was honest.

I bit back a curse when I saw the two pickle barrels, having forgotten to offer some to her with her purchase. It might seem odd given I was selling jams, marmalades, and preserves, but I also sold tomato jam for bruschetta or I even loved it over a nice baked potato.

"Hi, sorry, is this where the kids can get that star fruit?" a woman asked before I could even sit down again.

"Oh, sure, I have lots more," I told her. I ended up checking if she knew the mom and when she did, I had her grab extra pickles to give her. She bought a bunch of jars too, taking samples.

"You should offer a sampler pack," she suggested.

I nodded. "I hadn't thought of that. Thanks. I could slip in a sheet of what it all is and warnings."

"Make sure to sell it even if for a couple of bucks. Some people come just to see how much they can get for free and it's like a competition some post online about. I'd even limit your

samples, or someone trying to get the most views could start a fuss about not getting more.”

I blinked at her, frowning when she nodded she was serious. “Well, that’s one way to take the fun out of samples and tastings.”

“Someone always has to ruin it, but most are good people.”

She was right. The vast majority just wanted to shop and enjoy the event. I did see what she was saying as someone came along who was taking pictures of the brownies I’d baked with my jam or the other samples as they “sampled” all of it.

I gave her a withering look and flared a bit of magic to make her scam.

But a few pests couldn’t put a damper on my day when I *completely* sold out. I didn’t even realize it at first that I was getting so low since I was nervous about using the credit card payment thing with my phone.

I was so sure it would go down or be a pain just like every time I ordered delivery. But it was awesome and the signal to the market was great, so things went smoothly.

“Hi, is this where we get the exotic fruit jams?” someone asked.

I turned around and giggled. “I’m so sorry, but I’m *completely* sold out.”

She did a double take and beamed at me. “Good for you. First time selling out?”

“First farmers market ever,” I admitted, nodding when she chuckled. “I’ll be back next week with more, I promise. I’m just getting going, and I might need to hire part-time help already it seems.”

She smiled. “Well, you are the talk of the market as the newbie hit.” She held out her hand to me. “Sarah. I teach at one of the high schools near here. I know some students looking for summer jobs if you’d like?”

“Oh, I’d like, and I’d even bring you some jars as a finder’s fee.” I bit back a chuckle when she told me which high school and it was the closest one to me.

Thank you, Gaia. For sure I would need someone to help me run the booth and bring extra cases as I was exhausted with all the foot traffic and keeping an eye on it all.

But apparently, not tired enough to ignore the potential for fun.

I let people take pickles and samples as I started packing it in, mostly so the barrels were lighter as I got them back in the van. I was all loaded before one and decided to check out the food truck with my flirty helper.

“Well, that’s a big smile,” he teased me.

“I sold out. Completely. I think I deserve it.”

“Yeah, you do,” he praised. “I didn’t even get to try any.”

I held up a paper bag for him. “Silly man, I put a bunch of sample jars plus some of my goodies I use it in. And just because I’m nice, I added some pickles.” I leaned in as I handed it over. “I like a nice pickle. I could use one now.”

Which was how we ended up on the side of the closed bank on the edge of the parking lot that the farmers market was at. He kissed me hard and groped my tits like a man who enjoyed good tits.

I made sure to use one of Sia’s spelled condoms just like I always did. I’d been storing all that power up in totems for over a decade, but now I could get the next batch tied to my greenhouses.

Just thinking that made me even more excited and almost made up for his dick being a bit lacking. Oh well, as long as he knew how to use it, right?

He spun me around and yanked the back of my straight-leg yoga capris down and thrust in without even fingering me first. Fine, he wasn’t big, and this wasn’t the time to play around as we could seriously get caught soon.

“Oh fuck, *oh fuck*,” he groaned as he pumped his hips and moved his hands back to my tits under my shirt. “I love girls with so much padding. Fuck, you big girls always have fat asses and huge tits. It’s exactly—”

I moved my hand back over his mouth. I didn’t need to hear that shit from the guy with the lacking dick.

Plus, he was ruining my fun. He kissed my hand like he was praising me for keeping him quiet when we needed to be.

Idiot. Whatever, he shut his face and got back to the task at hand.

Which was *his* getting off. I would have been left high and dry if I hadn’t figured that out and taken care of my own needs. Wow, so he really saw this hookup as payment for helping me.

And here I’d just meant to have fun.

Oh well, it was a naughty fun celebration to my rocking out and I enjoyed it as that, nothing more. And nothing I would repeat.

I did smirk at him when he handled the condom, knowing the spell on it would give me a magical boost every time he spanked his meat thinking of me. I would guess that would be a *lot* given the dopey smile and sated look when we were done.

Still, I didn’t ever repeat with men who disrespected me. I didn’t care if I was five hundred pounds, you don’t talk to me like that during fun we’re *both* supposed to enjoy. I didn’t run my mouth that he wasn’t half bad at using a below-average dick because you didn’t say shit like that.

I also made sure to get out of there before he tried to ask for my number so it was clear this was just a one-time hookup. Hell, I would pretend it never happened after he spoke to me that way, and he was lucky that was all I’d do.

On the drive home, I started thinking of an idea for Sia or Thora that maybe we could have charms made of the same thing so it didn’t have to be sex but touch, any touch. Shouldn’t we get the boost if anyone jerked off thinking about

us? It sounded like fair payment even if we hadn't had sex with them.

The last thing I expected was someone waiting for me when I pulled up to the gate. I raised an eyebrow at the *stunning* specimen and swallowed a laugh.

Had Thora sent me a stripper?

Oh fuck, she probably sent me a stripper. Nice.

Actually, *way better* than nice. He looked like the love child of Alexander Skarsgard and someone with piercing green eyes and darker skin.

And it was a *killer* combination. Dark blond hair, a bit of scruff, the height and build of one of my favorite men to fantasize about with some sexy contrasting improvements. He had to be part Hispanic or South American.

Yum. Just *Yummmm*.

2

Finneas

I fucking *loved* a woman with curves who knew women looked good with curves. They were so much sexier than little girls or twigs.

When the sexy goddess got out of her van, I about swallowed my tongue. She was almost a full foot shorter than me, no taller than five-five to my six-four with rich, milk chocolate hair that had all kinds of lighter shades that shined in the sun.

But the punch to the gut was the seriously light ice-blue big eyes she had when she took off her sunglasses. Shit. She was fucking gorgeous.

In the same moment, I prayed she was the one I was supposed to stay with... And prayed she wasn't because not touching her would be the hardest thing I'd ever had to do and I didn't want that sort of entanglement.

I had no idea what I was doing or where my life was heading, where I wanted it to head even, and complicating things that were already ridiculously complicated sounded like the stupidest thing ever.

"Honey, I do not have enough cash on me to tip what you'd undoubtedly deserve." She smirked at me when I raised an eyebrow at her. "Are you Alexander Skarsgard's love child or what?"

My lips twitched. She wasn't the first one to see that. I didn't, but I'd had several people tell me I looked like the ethnic version of him and fifteen years younger.

I took it as a compliment? I'd been filling in from my growth spurt junior year, and I thought that was a way to say I'd been doing it right.

"Not to my knowledge," I answered.

“You are a stripper though right? Thora sent me a hot stripper to celebrate?” She didn’t wait for me to answer, shaking her head. “That woman. I didn’t even know there were stripper services around here.”

I almost thought of fibbing for a few moments just so I had a chance to get naked near this woman, but I knew my rhythm was shit and would never be able to keep up the act.

“Not a stripper, though if this doesn’t work out, it’s nice to know that’s a viable option.”

“This?” she asked and then groaned. “She said a gift was coming for me. What kind of gift are you?”

I opened my mouth but then closed it. “I have no idea. Klara sent me here. She said I’m like you and you’d keep me safe.”

She frowned. “Well, you don’t have a fat ass and huge tits, so how are we alike?” She tilted her head, studying me. “Right, she sent me a puppy and something naughty. I should have known it would be both with her.” She waved me quiet. “I’m hungry. Let’s get in the gate and figure this out. I brought food.”

I bit back a chuckle when she muttered under her breath about me stealing her leftovers as she got back in her van. I climbed in the rental Klara had gotten me to make the trip here, wondering what the hell else she’d gotten me into.

I followed her through the gate and up to a large commercial building. I joined her at the door and offered to carry what she had.

She nodded, handing some of it over as she unlocked the door and then turned off the alarm.

“Sorry I’m not taking you right up the house, but I need to make the marinade for dinner. I’m super excited to use my new Traeger. It just arrived and got set up yesterday, but I was putting everything into today, so now I can start playing.”

I nodded along with what she said as if any of it made sense as I checked out the huge place. It looked like a factory out of one of those educational shows I enjoyed. How It’s

Made was one of my favorites and yeah, it looked like a super cool version of one of those factories that made food from there.

She led me over to some prep tables and sat down, setting everything out and sliding me a container. “So who are you and how are we alike?”

“Finneas Costa,” I answered, checking the container to find a loaded gyro platter. Nice. “Finn. And I didn’t know I was born with magical blood.”

“Ahhh,” she sighed as she opened her own container. “Adrena Gomes.” She checked the bag and tossed me some sauce and utensils as if this was our regular thing and not she was just learning my name now. She built her gyro and took a bite. “Costa? Portuguese?”

I shrugged. “Your guess is as good as anyone’s.”

Her face softened. “You didn’t just not know, but you were lost too.”

I gave a slow nod. “Klara found me in foster care. I felt... I’d felt that magic before, other people coming to check me out but never knowing what it was until she explained it.”

She gave me a sad smile. “People sensed you, but you’re only a boy, so they didn’t care. Yeah, that blows. It does and I’m not downplaying that, but I didn’t know and I’ve got magic.

“Being a foster kid is hard enough, but I kept setting shit on fire and all kinds of crazy that I thought—I really thought I was nuts. Thora found me after I was in a place because I’d tried to kill myself.”

I almost dropped my food. Not just in shock of someone I’d just met telling me that but how easily she said it. “I’m sorry.”

She shrugged. “I’ve forgiven myself and I think Gaia has too. I had no idea and my power focuses on emotions. It’s... It was eating me alive, and I wanted out even if it meant burning in hell or wherever forever.

“Thora found me and saved me, promised to help me and fill in all I didn’t know if I helped her. She knew what my focus was.” She cleared her throat as if realizing how much she’d admitted.

“It’s overwhelming,” I offered, not sure what else to say. “I’ve known less than a year and I believe, you can’t not believe around Klara, but it’s just so...”

“Yeah, I’ve known for twenty years, but there are still some days I wake up and wonder if I’m really crazy.”

I studied her this time. “Twenty years? You look mid-twenty at most.”

She smirked at me. “Thirty-seven. We stop physically aging at thirty, but you might be pushing that mid-twenties.”

I wasn’t. Without makeup, she had a baby face with full, sexy cheeks and dimples when she smiled.

Fucking dimples. Damn.

She focused on her food and pursed her lips. “It’s not bad, basic, but I could do better. I think I’m going to be ordering a lot of takeout and delivery with all I’ll be cooking already.”

It was hard not to laugh. That was what she was focused on? “So, you’re just cool with me showing up?”

She chuckled. “It’s been a long damn day already, sorry. I’m still riding the high of completely selling out today at my first farmers market booth.” She gave a happy sigh before taking another bite and then focusing on me. “So you need protecting?”

I snorted. “Don’t we all?”

“Good point,” she agreed. “Well, it makes sense that Klara can’t—I mean she *can*, but she’s always traveling absorbing hot spots of magic or pulling all the BDE power from a site so it can be used as light magic.” She frowned at me. “How old are you?”

“Eighteen.”

She narrowed her eyes at me. “Then you should be in school. Why aren’t you in school?”

“She helped me graduate early,” I answered. “I had only one final class this semester to graduate and the high school let me finish early once I got everything turned in.”

I had no doubt with extra pushing from Klara, but I was glad to be free.

She nodded and then I saw the light bulb go off over her head. “I need help. Got it. She sent me help who knows what I am and I won’t have to hide, and once I get to claiming my land, no one can get you here either.” She seemed to sit with that for a few more bites. “But why you? Do you know farming or greenhouses?”

“Um, no.”

“Food prep?”

“No.”

“Cooking?”

“Yeah, no,” I sighed, feeling about two inches tall. “I’m not smart, but I take direction well. I’m great at manual labor.”

Her lips twitched which I thought an odd reaction. “Whatever you say, ogre.” She chuckled quietly. “I’m so calling you that.”

“I don’t get it.”

“You’ll catch up.” She waved me off and glanced around. “Okay, so what’s her plan? I hire you as like a manager since you know about me and can help keep things on the DL if needed? I mean, what are you asking me for?”

I rolled my eyes when she looked at me. “I don’t know Thora much and Klara for just over a year. And I know enough that if they didn’t warn you and fill you in this is—”

“Their idea of a test for both of us,” she finished with a heavy sigh. “Me to deserve the help and asset they undoubtedly think you and for you to deserve a chance at what others don’t have and a home.” She shook her head. “It took

all these years for me to get here, so of course they would think Gaia wants me to help someone not endure the same.”

“Hell if I know, and I’m *sorry* this is a surprise to you. I really didn’t know Klara planned on just dumping me on someone else.”

“Hey, that’s not how Klara rolls,” she defended. “I get you’re scared and confused, but don’t lash out. I was doing that the past several years, and I feel like an idiot now that Thora went way over on our deal with all of this.”

I let that settle a few more bites. “She really didn’t tell me much about you. What deal?”

“Being an empath—for lack of a better word—isn’t rare for a witch, but I don’t have clairsentience, which is the ability to psychically feel, that is to receive messages from emotions and feelings.

“We can all see auras, but my focus is sort of like an emotional echo. My ability differs from the basic witch model as they’re able to influence emotion and feelings, the state of a person.

“Like how Klara sucks up energy, I can push my own emotions out and make someone echo what they’ve felt before, not just my feelings.” She waited until I nodded that I got the idea at least. “So when Thora met this crazy teenager pushing her emotions around and getting echoes back as well, she saw the potential to do more than save me but save others.”

I slowly nodded, thinking I caught it. “So like there’s something going on in an area and you can go in and Professor X or Gene Grey people to calm down.”

She snorted. “I’m not that talented, kid.” She held up a finger for me to hold on. She went over to a box on another counter and grabbed a small jar from it. She slid it over to me before sitting back down. “Have a taste of that and you’ll get it better.”

I didn’t bother asking what would happen or why after living with Klara for a year, but it was just easier to do it. I

glanced at the label, thinking Melon Me Out was a funny name for a jam.

Opening it up, I used my clean plastic knife to try it. It was good. Really fucking good. I checked the label and saw it was made with horned melon and papaya as the main ingredients.

I felt chill like there was nothing else on my mind or to worry about as I saw it was made with honey instead of the normal sugar. I didn't know jams had lemon juice or apple in them if not made with pectin. That was cool. I'd have to look that up later.

“How do you feel, ogre?” she asked softly.

I blinked at her, having totally zoned out. Then I realized her question.

“Chill. Completely chill and not worried like after I got out of school early and could at least put that behind me, able to breathe for the moment. And just not freaking out yet for what came next because Klara promised she had an idea and Klara doesn't lie.”

She bobbed her head. “Yeah, I have to be chill when I make that one. It's hard sometimes and with all my own stress, and unfortunately I can't use my own magic to get the right mood.” She scrunched her eyebrows together. “I wonder if pot would work. That would be awesome. That's the hardest one to make sometimes.”

“This is really fucking cool,” I whispered, staring at the jar. “Like *really* fucking cool.”

Her cheeks flushed. “Thanks. I'm not Briony or Sia with all her awesome potions and able to do so much crazy. Thora helped me figure out fast that I did my best magic if it's pushed into food. It's my own personal stuff as to why probably but yeah, so I can't Professor X a situation, but you'd be surprised how much a basket of muffins can help sometimes.”

I met her eyes and hoped she believed what I said because I truly meant it. “You're *just* as awesome as Sia because I've

tried her products and this mellowed me out just like taking a bath with her stuff.

“Fine, she’s got the medicinal edge of healing aches and pains, but a lot of everything starts in the mind. And if you can help people with that, I think you’re better than any of the X-Men.”

“You sound like Thora,” she muttered, focusing on her food. “Thanks. You’re the first male with magical blood that didn’t look at me with disgust like I was trying to turn people into drones or erasing free will.”

“People can be stupid. How long does it last?”

“Not through full digestion as that can be up to eight hours,” she answered, nibbling on her lower lip. “It depends. The sleepy one relaxes you to sleep, but then you’re just asleep.

“The morning energy one is a burst for however long it takes you to work through that. The mellow is more dependent on what’s going on around you. No matter my emotions, I won’t mellow you out if you’re plummeting to your death.”

“Makes sense.” I set it down and we finished our food, staring at each other like we had no idea what to do next. “So, you could *use* help, right? You said that?”

She slowly nodded. “How about we just say you’ll help out the next few days, and if you’re not into the full idea of a job here or whatever, you might just pull some weight for room and board?”

“Yeah, um, sounds good.” At least for the moment.

She frowned and stood, looking hurt for some reason. What had I said? I wasn’t sure, but it made me even more hesitant as we cleaned up.

Should I have been more grateful?

Probably. That made sense, but my head was spinning even if I was totally mellow about it.

“Thanks for lunch and, um, giving me a shot.”

“You’re welcome,” she whispered as we headed out to her van.

She relocked the brewhouse, explaining that the fence wasn’t up nor the spell to protect everything yet, so she was being careful. She’d driven right from the farmers market, so we used the van to get over to the greenhouses instead of her normal ATV which was cool she had.

“So what was the deal with Thora?” I asked, realizing we hadn’t finished.

She got out and met me around the front of the van. Gesturing all around, she looked anywhere but at me.

“This. I worked with her, trusted her, and helped out other witches and situations, and she used a fraction of her vast wealth to make my dream come true in a way I could never really imagine. She made all of this happen, upgrading and having it all set up when there were delays.”

“All set up?” I asked.

She chuckled as she unlocked the greenhouse. “I just moved here like a week ago. She had everything done. The house was renovated and she expanded it.

“The brewhouse, acres of solar panels, and all the greenhouses. Done. She took my plans and ideas, found the right place, and made my dream come true in ways I could never really imagine.”

And I’d just acted like I was stuck here. I moved my hand over hers on the doorknob as she was about to open it.

“I’m sorry. It’s a *great* dream. Really, this whole place so far is super cool. I didn’t mean to act like it was anything but. Your brewhouse is like something out of my favorite show. I’m just lost. I feel like I’ve been lost since Klara found me and she’s always traveling, so it was—”

“Still more of the same loneliness of being a foster kid and not knowing where you fit, came from, or belong,” she finished, bobbing her head. “It’s okay, really. I’m just a bit shocked you’re here, and I’m trying to get my own groove as I worked so hard for this and now it’s *here*.”

“That’s scary.”

“It is and I will not fail,” she said, her determination sexy, especially when I felt like I was just always treading water. She glanced up at me like she’d just realized something. “What show? You said your favorite show?”

I nodded, moving my hand off of hers when I realized it was still there. “Um, How It’s Made. I like some of the other ones like How It Works, Dirty Jobs, and lately I was into Food Factories.”

She chuckled as she opened the door. “That’s why she sent you. I thought it odd that she sent you *here* just because we were both lost foster kids who didn’t know.

“There are other, more established farms or places that could use the help. And they’re not trying to find their place, but if that’s what you’re into, you’re about to live the show.”

“Cool,” I admitted. I totally wasn’t against that, and it was nice to not have to make a decision right away.

She grabbed an electric cart loaded with empty produce bins and led me over to a row of tomato plants. I might not know much about greenhouses or farming, but even I knew what a tomato looked like.

“So people who cook know that marinades tenderize meat along with giving it flavor, but what not all of them know is how that works or what parts tenderize and which is just flavor.” She handed me a pair of gloves before slipping on her own and grabbing a pair of clippers. “Tomatoes tenderize because of the acidity in them.

“And the first lesson on working these greenhouses is we only harvest what’s ripe. Commercial greenhouses or farms that sell their raw produce clipped early so there’s more travel time and shelf life before things go bad.

“That’s counterproductive here where it gets used to be cooked or whatever. Now, some of the fruits I’ll chop and let sit in honey a day or two before using them, but they still need to be ripe.”

“So no green?” I surmised, watching which tomatoes she selected.

“So no green on tomatoes, yes. Firmness is not as big of a deal with the magic and I’ll be cooking them. Personally, I like my tomatoes with a bit of a snap to them, so not overly ripe is where I like them.” She filled two trays before turning to me expectantly.

I nodded and searched the vines, touching which ones I would pick. I checked with her, and after several I felt I could at least handle this. I smiled. “Okay, what else, you prune right?”

“That takes a bit to really get it right, and that’s not being judgy, but people who have had gardens for years can make mistakes too.” She showed me three different leaves. “First thing you check is where the lowest fruit is.” She gestured to the bunch of tomatoes still ripening. “You only prune below that. The middle is more confusing. So of these three, which do you pick?”

“The one with brown on it?” I asked, thinking it was half-dead looking.

“Yes, but the answer is all three. Brown goes. Always. Any yellowing *under* the last fruit goes as it will become brown. Higher up can mean new growth needing more sun.

“And this is a sucker in what’s called the ‘armpit’ of the branches and it’s trying to form a whole new vine. We don’t want that as we have vines and we want to focus the plant to grow fruit.”

She showed me the best ways to clip them and what to be careful of and I was completely fascinated. Not just because it was cool and I liked learning new things, not just dates in school or calculus, but she was an engaging teacher.

Plus, hot and her voice was sexy. Really sexy and sort of musical without that too high of squeak some girls had. Well, she was a woman, not a girl.

We moved on to bell peppers and the pruning was the same, along with picking ripe.

“Now green peppers are actually unripe bell peppers. Bell peppers are always yellow, orange, or red, and green ones haven’t ripened yet which is why they’re not as sweet and have that bite of aftertaste.”

“I never knew that,” I admitted, studying the vines and seeing for myself she was right as there were colored ones on the same vine as green but only one color on a vine. “That’s really cool.”

“I think so,” she agreed. “And there’s an enzyme in peppers that tenderizes meat too. Onions, pineapples, and papaya as well.”

“Sounds like a Hawaiian marinade or sweet and sour sauce which is like my favorite.”

“That’s what I’m making basically,” she chuckled. “Most would add brown sugar or sugar and ketchup, but I have tomatoes and there’s sugar in papaya and pineapples so yeah, it’s a full flavor palate for sure.”

She showed me how to harvest the rest, saying that for now she didn’t want anyone touching the pineapples but her since it was easy to damage the plant and only one grew on a plant so not to waste it.

Fair enough.

“Now I don’t spray anything, and I know they weren’t before I got here, but this is food for eating and people are going to touch it or it’s been in the bins that maybe something touched, so it gets washed.”

She showed me the electric thing to drive that pulled multiple carts and drove fine over the path to the brewhouse. But for now, we just loaded up the van after she showed me where to toss the dead leaves and prunings.

She explained that another witch, Sia, needed loofah, so if I didn’t mind helping her get a bunch of those harvested for the truck coming Monday, that would be awesome.

I nodded. Yeah, I was fine with helping. Klara had everything done always. She had a cleaning lady and there was

money to grab food after school and she didn't want me working and I just felt... Alone.

Spoiled in a way no other foster parent had spoiled me, but it had been boring. And no point making friends when I had no idea what came next and there was that whole I lived with a centuries-old witch.

That made things weird.

This was better. I could have a purpose here. Maybe. I wasn't signing up for anything yet, but I liked the feel of this place. It felt a little lost still and so did Adrena as she tried to get her footing for her dream.

I'd been treading water for so long I'd never really thought of a dream. Was that why Klara had sent me here? Push me out of the nest I'd finally felt safe in when it was time to find a future?

That sounded like her and something I could wrap my mind around. I couldn't even be miffed she didn't explain that better as there wasn't really a good way probably to explain it.

When we were back at the brewhouse and unloaded, I understood what she'd been saying earlier as she turned on the produce washer line and showed me how to use it. Everything went right in, and then she demonstrated how to prep it on the other end like chopping off the tops of the peppers and getting out the guts or peeling the onions. No big.

I could even handle the pineapple and papaya peeler. The chopper was a bit more intimidating, but she said even if she got help getting everything to that stage, it was huge.

Still, I watched her do it with ease and then lugged everything she said was ready to the kettle she pointed me to. That too was intimidating as it was huge and self-stirring and had more settings than an oven.

Once that was all done and going, she brought me to a different greenhouse and walked me through how to harvest loofah. If they felt heavy for their size, they were still wet and maturing.

Any turning yellow were drying out and would feel lighter and that was the sign. Other operations would wait until they dried out more, but Sia had a system and didn't need that. Easy enough.

She told me how much room the truck would have and the amount of pallet-sized containers that it would load and then left me to work... Which was odd.

I mean, I'd driven a while to get there and had no clue what Klara was plotting. Now I was just mellow in a greenhouse doing something that was shockingly enjoyable and weirdly comforting.

Odd.

It took about an hour to get it done, and that was only because I was new since the size of them took up space fast. I wanted to make sure I didn't mess them up and make them all end up rotting or something.

She'd left the key with me, so I locked up once all the full bins where they should be.

She'd said she'd probably be done with the brewhouse by then and the van was gone, so I drove the rental to the gate, getting out how she'd told me. It was a smart system of two separate entrances on the property, one for the brewhouse and a drive that led to the greenhouses.

And one just for her house. She'd given me the code to get in the gate and I put it in once I drove around.

I wasn't shocked to find another mansion. Klara had one too. It seemed a witch thing and not the luxury or having money but making their home everything they wanted after having to run or so many troubles.

Klara said they felt tied to the land they claimed, and it just worked out that a witch wanted her place to be her castle.

I couldn't argue with that.

I parked and grabbed my biggest bag just to bring some of it in. I didn't have all that much since I felt weird spending Klara's money.

Technically, she'd been my foster mom those last several months until I'd turned eighteen, but I'd barely known her. I knocked, but the door pushed open, and I wasn't sure what to do or if I should worry.

"In the kitchen prepping meat," she called out. "Sorry, I figured just to leave it a crack in case I was prepping meat and the timing worked out that way. Lock up behind you."

I did, heading inside and following her voice. I glanced around at the *swank* kitchen with several ovens and just about anything someone who liked to cook could think of. "Well, Thora clearly knew how to spoil you."

She smiled as she glanced up from what looked like pork. "Yeah, she used to say that the worst part of us having to travel was I wasn't comfortable in kitchens that weren't mine. I tried to remind her that her kitchen wasn't mine either, but she'd just laugh and say it certainly wasn't hers given she never cooked."

"She sounds nice."

"She is, dedicated to making sure we all make it. So, sometimes that's a lot to deal with when you're the sidekick but yeah, her heart is full of everything good." She finished cutting things up and then loaded it all into a glass bowl that I assumed had her freshly made marinade in it. "How are you with dishes?"

"Good. Laundry still baffles me, but I got kitchen duty a lot at some of my foster homes."

"I suck at it, so if I cook, you up for cleaning?"

"Yeah, I can handle the house or—"

"Naw, just the dishes and day to day. I have a charm from Meave that will do like a real clean and bathrooms and everything. I can put power into it every other week and we're good. It's what's at the brewhouse and why I'll cook alone."

"Sure, I got the dishes."

She smiled at me and my heart fluttered. Damn, she was beautiful. She finished up what she was doing and washed her

hands.

“So I haven’t gotten furniture yet really even. My new mattress and box spring were just delivered, and all I have to offer is the blow-up mattress I was using. For now. Sorry. We’ll get a real bed and room for you. I need to do all the guest rooms.”

“It’s fine, really, I get this was sprung on you and you’ve had a lot.”

“Thanks.”

She waved me to follow and I did. It was the room next to *one* of the master suites as apparently Thora had built a second in the addition where we were. I would have thought she’d put me in a room on the other side of the house then, but I saw she had the mattress and some other basics already in that room, so it made sense.

“I’m going to start up my new Traeger and then finally try out the pool for a bit. That’s my big celebration and blowing off of steam while dinner marinates. You’re more than welcome to use it as well or settle in or take a tour—whatever. Just let me know what you need.”

“Um, just to drop off the rental Klara got me.”

She nodded. “We’ll go after dinner so you can just leave the keys instead of risking they want to have Klara sign something or it’s a kid driving it.”

“Cool. Thanks.”

She shrugged. “Thanks for harvesting all those loofahs. That’s one less thing for my list.” She gave me a quick smile and then left.

I sighed as I glanced around. The room was completely empty, not even a painting on the wall... And I liked that. It was like a blank slate instead of feeling like a guest in Klara’s fancy, fancy mansion.

There had been a painting worth over a hundred grand on the wall. It made me nervous just to be in the same room as it was like having the lights on could ruin it.

This was just chill. Or was that still her jam? Either way, it felt peaceful and a good fit. Yeah, I didn't think the jam could make me feel that. I chuckled at how crazy it was to have like Prozac jam and found my swim trunks. Klara had an indoor pool plus a full gym, so I'd really worked on filling in after my growth spurt.

As if having that purpose made me any less lonely.

I headed back to the kitchen after I changed and found a towel before checking out which way the pool had to be. I froze after opening the door, about swallowing my tongue at what I found.

Namely, Adrena wearing nothing but swim shorts and a matching halter top dancing around with earbuds in. She was humming something and after a moment I caught it was Shawn Mendes's "There's Nothing Holdin' Me Back," which was rather fitting given the victory she had.

Still, I had to move the towel over my groin as I watched her huge tits bounce with her movements and her full booty shake. She had her hair down, and it whipped all around her in a way that made me think of how perfect it would be spread all over pillows and bedding... While we were having sex.

Oh, I was in so much trouble.

Thank you, Klara?

3

Adrena

Once I got Finn settled and the smoker fired up, I decided to enjoy my victory and put in my earbuds, pulling up my happy music list on my iPod. “Just Like Fire” by Pink was first, and there was no way not to sway and hum that song, but it built into more even before Shawn Mendes. Then I was really dancing and spinning around.

I’d sold out. I’d completely sold out with people wanting more. I could really do this and have this dream. I’d earned the money to invest in myself and now it was coming together.

I yelped as I caught sight of someone when I spun around, yanking on my earbuds before I realized it was Finn.

“Sorry, a swim sounded good,” he muttered, his eyes raking over me. “I didn’t mean to interrupt the victory dance.”

I chuckled. Yeah, it sort of really had been one. “No worries. I’m sure you’ll see this a lot. Well, not the dancing maybe, but I get lost in my head a lot to focus my magic. I have playlists that help, and even when I’m just doing prep, I tend to listen to audiobooks.”

“I’m just jealous you know how to dance. My rhythm is really sad,” he admitted, giving me something to ease my embarrassment. “It always looks so fun but not when you look stupid.”

“Oh, ogre, we’ll have to fix that.”

He frowned. “I really don’t get the nickname.”

He didn’t which was what made it that much more fun. I simply shrugged and set down my iPod. I gave him a wink before diving into the pool so I couldn’t answer.

I resurfaced and wiped the water off my face as I looked at him. “It’s a sick setup, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, gorgeous,” he agreed... While only looking at me. Cute.

I, however, looked around at my oasis. I pointed to the two smaller pools that overflowed into this full-size one for laps. “Both have control panels, one meant to be a cold bath and the other a hot tub. There’s one for this pool too including the jets.”

“How did you wait a week to use it?” he asked, looking at the setup with interest.

I shrugged. “Some part of me didn’t feel it was mine or I’d earned it really until today.”

“Yeah, I get you.” He frowned. “I hoped that feeling would have gone away sooner.”

“My situation was different than yours, and I incurred a bunch of debt getting help in my mind while Thora thought it her duty and really built up the debt she owed me.”

I shrugged, not sure how else to put it. I decided to focus on how cool my place was.

“The firepits are gas and the slats above the area over there lower to make an awning in the sun. It’s all on that panel there.”

“Once you get the furniture, it’s like the ultimate party setup.”

I chuckled. I couldn’t imagine it given how I was always the odd duck or the one who didn’t fit at the parties I’d been to. Granted, I was normally there working as a caterer to help Thora for one reason or another but still, that was a far cry from just having a party.

“Klara has an indoor pool and gym and said she worried I was part fish how often she found me there.”

“Thora said it was my first priority wherever we went.” I smiled as I floated along, careful of the sun. “There’s just something so damn peaceful. I might die in the Louisiana summer, but getting more chances to use the pool might be

worth it.” I glanced over at him. “Could you help me set up a gym? I have no idea what I’m doing there.”

“Would you use it?”

Instantly, my fun was over.

Him too? Wow, apparently, I was just going to get torn down by any man lately. Awesome. That was really awesome for a woman who loved sex.

My phone rang and it saved him from me saying something snippy like not to be an asshole if he wanted to live with me. I went for the stairs and didn’t even look at him. His comment was forgotten when I saw it was Meave, worried something was wrong.

“Hey, what’s up?” I answered.

“Hey, congrats on the big win,” she praised.

“Oh, thanks. Is everything okay?”

She chuckled. “Yeah, I’m good. Thora told me what happened, so I wanted to get with you for deets and to start the next phase of your rollout.”

“Huh?”

She burst out laughing. It took her a bit to calm down. “Thora didn’t tell you she asked for my help, did she?”

“Um, no. I was shocked to see your name appear on my screen.”

“Yeah, we’ve not overlapped much. I wish we had as everyone speaks highly of you. I had so many targets I was always worried of people stepping in the path.”

“I know, Thora had me help on a few.” I waved off the memories. “What’s the next phase? I mean, I have social media. Help with that? Because she said she wanted me to have a store here like Sia by the end of summer.”

“Yes, with that, but it would look fishy if I just randomly promoted you, so we need a bit of ramp-up. The buzz was good, and people have posted how great your stuff is already and you sold out.

“Awesome, now we have a launch party. Think of it as a housewarming party you’ll invite potential partners to instead of neighbors.

“The popular and trendy ice cream shop there can use your jam as toppings on a signature sundae. Bakeries could certainly have a display at their stores for you or use it in their cookies.

“Thora said she’s addicted to your swirl brownies with it. Donut shops? Yup, they can use it too. Even restaurants and you’ve got that bruschetta jam too.”

“Meave, that sounds like a lot, and a lot I’m not ready for,” I admitted, wishing I had chairs so I could sit down. Instead, I plopped down on one of the stone walls facing away from Finn. “Klara sent someone to help but—”

“You’re not alone, Cousin,” she said gently. “I’ve got this and I promise it will be wonderful. It’s just a meet and greet to let them try samples like you did today. I’ve narrowed down caterers that will work with using your stuff, and I have a list ready of who to invite. Keep it light and just like a housewarming party since you’re new to the area.”

“I don’t even have furniture.”

“It won’t be tomorrow. I’m talking in a month. You don’t want to wait for summer, but this gives you time to hire help and everything you’ve already planned. I just thought Thora told you I had this part.”

“I can’t ask you to do all of this, Meave.”

She laughed. “This seems like a lot to *you* but to me, it’s a cakewalk, I promise. If I had to jump in your shoes, I’d be flipping shits. You send me some cases of that mellow jam, and it will be more than worth it as my lover is freaking out over finals and college and everything I never went through.”

“Me neither,” I admitted. “I didn’t know he was so young.”

“Young is the way to go I’m finding,” she purred. “So eager and trainable. It’s honestly addictive. And it’s fun to spoil him since he never had a chance to get the douche ego.”

“Ahh, that might be the key,” I chuckled darkly, thinking back to what Finn had just said. “I’ve never had to furniture shop before. All I’ve gotten is a mattress. It’s all overwhelming even if I’m totally grateful.”

“Yeah, that is a lot,” she agreed. “If you want help I have a few friends—my photographer especially—that would love the chance to play. Send a few photos of the space and maybe a few ideas of your style from a Google search, and I promise they could get you a whole inventory of everything matching, coordinated, and not ridiculous in cost. At least it gives you a place to start.”

“That would be really helpful,” I sighed. “Thanks, Meave.”

“No problem, Cousin. You came to my aid when you didn’t know anything about me. We help when we can.”

We talked some more about party ideas and what she envisioned with a bit of tweaking with what I thought I could really pull off and not make a huge ass of myself. Right as we wrapped up the timer went off saying I’d run the full hour on the smoker as I was supposed to the first time. It also meant it was time to get dinner cooking.

“I said something and I don’t know what,” Finn muttered as he moved in my path. “I think I’m starting to get the ogre joke. I’m acting like a big, stupid, Shrek ogre, right?”

“No, you believe it like Shrek did, but most times he was the only one with any sense in his head,” I corrected.

“I do eat my foot a lot, so please tell me what I did so I can apologize.”

I sighed. “Look, I get I’m chunky but—”

“You are *not* chunky,” he corrected adamantly. “You’re curvy and it’s sexy.”

I didn’t know how to respond to that, so I kept on with my point. “But I work my ass off and maybe I’m not a gym bunny but—”

“There we go,” he sighed. “I didn’t mean it as an insult at *all*, Adrena. I thought you were thinking you had to fill the gym because the house has one, like you said it was all overwhelming. You didn’t sound like you *wanted* one and yeah, given how I saw you busting your ass this afternoon, I wouldn’t think you needed a gym workout.”

Well, that was much nicer than what I’d thought. I mentally winced as I had assumed that was what he’d meant. Damn.

I blew out a slow breath. “Sorry. I shouldn’t have assumed that was what you meant. I got shit on today too and some hits landed. Thanks for clarifying.” I nodded past him. “I’m going to get dinner started. Enjoy the pool.”

“Thanks.” He looked like he had more to say, but he stepped aside and let me cool my head.

I turned the heat down a bit on the smoker and then built the onion, pineapple, and pork kabobs. I almost dropped the platter when I stepped back outside.

My mouth actually fucking *watered* at the sight of him without a shirt on. He was completely ripped and filled in very nicely, his caramel skin looking even more vibrant with water dripping down his body.

I was going to smack Klara when I saw her next for bringing this temptation into my life. Okay, fine, I wouldn’t as she could squash me like a bug, but seriously?

Seriously?

I got dinner on the smoker and went back inside to make the salad. I had some brown rice already going in the rice cooker with a bit of garlic and butter, but I liked my rice fairly plain and a good addition to food instead of a whole side flare.

It was hard not to smile when I opened the fridge and it was all my food. Or from my place, but Thora’s magic had given it such a boost to all grow crazy.

And it was sort of funny that the people she hired to handle the place and upkeep had moved out before I got here. But I’d been delayed, so there was supposed to be more of a

handoff. However, they'd booked something next, so it wasn't like they could just delay.

Besides, if they did, that was when questions tended to be asked. Weird for a bit was blamed on the new location.

Weird for longer than that tended to be blamed on the people and started trouble.

When everything was ready, we ate outside. Finn's aura shined with joy when we sat down, and having been a foster kid, I understood how nice it was to have what most took for granted.

"Shit, this is extra," he moaned after his first bite. He tried the salad next and shook his head. "I don't know that I've ever had a salad this fresh."

"It's nice getting it right from the greenhouse," I agreed. "When I helped Sia, she had a whole dance with restaurants and all these extra hoops to stay under the radar for such a large operation. It was impressive, but I was so jealous she could have everything to cook just about anything at her fingertips totally fresh. Unfortunately, she can't cook."

He snickered. "It's such a weird thing that witches are either gifted cooks or just look at you like you're nuts to suggest they do more than zap a meal."

"Yeah, it is." It was nice having him around and we had a fun meal, talking about plans and the next few days. Even if tomorrow was Easter, neither of us celebrated, and we just decided to get work done.

I swam for a bit while he cleaned up—which was really nice and something I wouldn't take for granted—and then we took in his rental. All of it was good, working together after and he was an interested student.

But something changed and I missed what. The next morning, there was an air of... Challenge? I couldn't put my finger on it. He came to breakfast shirtless, and I got that feeling of when I guy was trying to push my buttons to notice him.

Or I just needed more coffee. Probably that.

“Do you sleep?” he asked as he stared over all I’d done. He scrubbed his hand over his longer hair that was sticking up all over and looked sexier than guys who worked on theirs to try for that feel.

“I slept great,” I promised. “Just woke with ideas of what Meave was saying about catering and the party. I could use some input.”

He nodded and sat at the island counter, reaching for a piece of jam crumb cake but then froze. “Wait, what of this can I eat and not like zonk back out?”

He was so adorable how he asked and sounded so confused even though I couldn’t blame him for checking. “I don’t use emotion-infused jams for test cooking. I’d be all over the place and probably on the ground a complete mess.”

He nodded but glanced at me while he picked up the cake. “I thought you said it doesn’t work on you?”

“No, it works on me, believe me. I can’t use it to set my mood and then use magic to make the next batch. I can’t loop it like that, it all voids out.”

He made a noise as he took a bite and then moaned, like *moaned*. “This is fucking amazing, Adrena. Holy shit. If you feed me like this, I’m going to need extra lists of what you want me to harvest so I work off the calories.”

“I can manage that,” I chuckled, really enjoying watching him dig into what I made. It was different than when Thora tasted my stuff. This was... Primal.

It made something pull low in my stomach and reminded me how sexy it was that a man truly enjoyed what I offered even if it was just my talent for cooking. I slid over the cheesecake next and he let out a deeper moan as he tried it.

“This is *seriously* a winner.”

“Good. I was thinking of making a few pans of that with nostalgia or happiness and taking it over to the teacher I met yesterday, Sarah, so her students will be in a good mood when she brings up I’m looking for help. I already posted on one of the college online job boards that I was taking applications and

resumes. I think I'm going to try and see who I can get for after school Monday."

He nodded. "And walk them through a few basics like you did me and see who's interested?"

"Exactly."

"Sounds like a plan."

I was hoping so. The timer went off and I pulled out an egg bake so we were having more than carbs and sugar for breakfast. He was totally into that too. It was cute but really sexy.

We cleaned up from breakfast and headed to the greenhouses, this time riding one of the ATVs I had at the house. He was really into the learning as I had been when I was younger, well a lot younger than him, but I didn't think curiosity really ever went away, and I always thought it was a good quality to have.

He had the brightest damn smile when he saw how to pop out the jaborcaba. He ate it out of my hand just like the little boy had done yesterday, and a boy Finn might still be, but little he was not. And I was a bit damp when he licked his lips and told me it was sweet while giving me a heated look.

So yeah, not like yesterday.

It made me want to show him the rest of everything—including my body—but I stuck to work, showing him how to eat lychees and mangosteen which was one of my favorites. Honestly, I loved most fruit and it was all my favorite. I didn't want to overwhelm his palate, so for the moment we stuck with that and we got to picking.

"How did you learn all of this? I mean, I know it's a profitable market niche as you can't get these at just any store, but you seem to really be into it."

I smiled sadly, focused on the mangosteen tree in front of me, thinking about the first one I'd ever seen.

"That's a conversation for another day." I cleared my throat and changed the topic. "So what cover are you thinking

of?” I glanced at him when I felt his confusion. “Like my backstory is I was a travel companion for an older woman for many years, and when she couldn’t travel anymore, she made my dream come true.”

“That explains how you got the startup, but most wouldn’t push as it’s vague but close enough to the truth with Thora,” he muttered, bobbing his head. “Orphan your friend took in as a foster kid, but you needed help, and she thought this might be a good future for me? It’s the truth if you leave off the whole light witch network part.”

“Fair enough.”

We worked to fill over a dozen deep collection carts. It was funny how he was more confident on the height-adjusting people trolley cart but seemed at a loss when driving the front one-seater electric engine for the whole train. And I was just the opposite, plus I had the experience.

I was grateful he was fine with the heights because even though I was shorter and longed for more height when I was younger, I wasn’t a fan of ladders or lifts. He was a worker though. I mean *damn*, once he got the hang of what to do with a type of harvest, he was all over it.

I ran out of steam before him and brought the first load over to the brewhouse.

I unloaded and started washing jaboticabas thinking I should get a jump on making the jelly that I would blend later with the other fruits that went in Berry Naked Night. I got it all in the kettle and figured I’d been quick enough since he’d have a lot more harvest trays to load and put into the collection carts.

Oh no, the boy could *work*. He was out of trays and carts when I got back. I just blinked at him. Like *dayumn*.

“We should do a huge juice run if you’re this awesome,” I admitted. He just shrugged, and I ended up calling Sia to see if she could send another truck however she did that to get all my rinds. I needed some for peels, but I got those when I used

the fruit. I used the juice as part of the natural pectin, but then I had a ton of rinds.

Or like pomegranate oil was made from pressing the seeds. But I just needed the juice to make jelly, so she could use all of that, right?

Turned out the answer was a *very* excited yes. Yes, she could. Awesome.

We did so much work that day that it took a bit of weight off my shoulders and helped get me in a better place to go see Sarah the next day. But in typical fashion, I was nervous and sort of overcompensated.

Like a lot.

Luckily, their cafeteria was outside by the parking lot, so she saw me pull up and came over with a group of teachers who were curious. She introduced me around, looking seconds from bursting out laughing.

I shrugged. "I'm mostly Wiccan, so I don't really celebrate Easter."

"Mostly?" one of the teachers asked, giving me a wry look.

I gave it right back. "If you can tell me you know all the answers and couldn't be wrong, I'll smack you for blaspheming every religion as we don't know all the answers."

"Fair enough," he agreed, amusement dancing in his pretty eyes. "You're hiring?"

I nodded. "I checked the law, and I can hire all the way to fourteen which seemed young without a permit, but I'm part-time anyways. If I can get some freshmen in the mix then maybe I'll have them all through high school instead of training a bunch that just keep going off to college."

"Smart," Sarah praised, glancing around and waving a few people over. "Derrick, get some help and hand out treats and flyers. Ms. Gomes is hiring and we've got a bunch looking for summer jobs. Freshmen too and make sure people behave."

“Good pay?” Derrick asked as she took what I handed over.

“I start at minimum wage, but those who work are kept on after the two-week trial and get raises. Those who don’t get taught a lesson that life isn’t easy and how to find a new job.” I smiled when several people snorted. “I train though and always need tasters and love to cook, so there are perks.”

“I’m in. Thanks. I could use a way to start saving for college.”

The flyers were basic, just a picture of the greenhouses, the address, my logo, and a few things I was focused on most along with times to come and apply. I was hoping for ten workers Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and that would be a huge help.

“So I had a good crop of citrus already,” I explained as I showed Sara the boxes of juice bottles. “I use citrus and apples for pectin so yeah, I needed it, but it’s really friggin’ good fresh pressed.”

“You have a juicer?” she asked.

I snorted. “I have a monster citrus juicer that even does pomegranates, and then I have a commercial cold press juicer that my investor got that I’m not sure what I’m going to do with.”

“So just one investor?” she asked, wincing when I raised an eyebrow. “Sorry, there were a lot of whispers when the greenhouses and everything started going up at that foreclosed development that went bankrupt. And then you made a huge splash at the farmers market and people put the address together and haven’t stopped talking.”

I sighed, knowing this was going to happen and figuring to get it out of the way. “On the record? Yes, I have one investor. Off the record, that investor is technically me as the money was owed to me.

“I went through some shit when I was young as a foster kid, but someone took me in, and she had her own issues I helped with. She wanted to travel, so she promised if I helped

her do that, she'd make my dream come true as well. She went way over her promise in my mind, so it's a lot."

"Sounds like a movie I've seen," someone chuckled.

I shrugged. "Travel companions used to be a thing just like nannies for the rich who get to go on vacations. She didn't have anyone and neither did I so yeah, she got to do what women couldn't when she was younger, and I couldn't believe she paid me over getting to travel. It was hard to part, but she didn't want me to be forty and starting my own life. Plus, it was time."

Sarah's face dropped. "I had to put my mom in a place and it was the worst day."

I nodded. "She's not my family but yeah, the next stage was more than I could handle. I'm not qualified. We're more than blood though." I chuckled. "I sent her pictures Saturday, and she was bragging I sold out. She says I'm the daughter she didn't have, and she didn't want me to get my inheritance after she was gone to enjoy it."

"That's really nice of her." Sarah made a gesture to lock up her lips. "Anyone asks, you found a smart investor as anyone who tried your samples knows you got the recipes. I hope you grow fast before someone tries to bully you."

"I fight dirty, and I will absolutely kick anyone's ass that tries. I've been waiting for this for a while and no one's going to ruin it for me."

"I'm scrappy too," she promised, beaming at me. "Do friends get to snag some other juice too? I've been dying to go on a cleanse before summer but—do you know it's over a hundred dollars for three days? I'm a teacher. I can't afford that."

"That's insane," I agreed, shaking my head. "Yeah, come help me prep fruit and we'll make juice. I won't have everything, like I think some are coconut milk or chia seeds, but a lot can't get what I have, so we might need to make a real plan. I would think mangosteen would substitute for better."

“Which is that?” she asked, checking out the fresh fruit I’d also brought with juice, baked treats, and an assorted case of full jars.

I showed them how to cut into one and eat it, chuckling when the other teachers didn’t move on and students were watching. By the time lunch period was over and I was headed home, I was hopeful that we’d have a handful of people show up.

Oh, how silly I could be.

Over fifty kids showed up after school realizing others were interested, so they wanted to get through the door first. So there was that.

And that night when I went out on my balcony before bed, Finn was swimming below me... Naked and watching me watch him.

So there was that too.

4

Finneas

Adrena had been hopeful for ten to show up after her visit to the high school. She was all excited it went well and her excitement was sexy.

But she was talking about unemployment and hearing it was at an all-time low and she didn't know the local rates. *But* that was only for those *on* unemployment or full-time workers who lost their jobs.

No one counted the kids who were just old enough to get one or after-school jobs in most of their polls and research. And with a lot of stores and malls closing, those jobs were harder to get as well. So my guess was she'd get more than ten.

Over fifty didn't really shock me since she said it seemed like a large high school and she'd made a splash at lunchtime. High schools were notorious for gossip for a reason as information flew around at neckbreaking speeds.

I had her phone still from when she'd left as that was synced up to the gate to let people in. I'd handled the shipment to Sia and her honey delivery from another witch.

Now I understood why Klara was trying to find more of us who couldn't practice magic but had it in our blood and were at risk for jobs that would be protected. If they kept on building up territories and farms—which I was pretty sure was the goal—they could have a fleet of trucks and drivers. Not to be sexist like only guys could be truck drivers, but we couldn't be the witches.

Hell, I would drive a truck to stay safe and in the network after the little I'd seen of BDE witches and how they treated males with magical blood.

I'd been driving over another load with that stupid one-seater electric tow tractor that made me feel like I was going to

break it under my weight like a kid's ATV when her phone started buzzing. I pulled it out and saw it was the gate, glancing up and found it wasn't just one vehicle but several like they caravanned it over.

Oh boy. This should get interesting fast.

I let them in and drove over, glad when they waited for me to show them where to park out of the way of the path. I went back to the brewhouse door when they were pulling in next to each other and opened the door.

"Uh, Adrena? You've got some students here," I called in, my stomach knotting and my blood pumping when she turned and smiled brightly at me.

Damn. The woman just had to smile and I was seconds from a hard-on and overwhelming lust. She hurried over looking excited and I hated to ruin that, but I knew I had to warn her.

"You got more than ten. They caravanned over."

Her eyes flashed shock and she ducked out with me, flinching when she saw how many were already out of their vehicles and heading for us. She simply blinked until we had a group gathered and waiting on her.

"Well fuck me, that turned out way better than I'd hoped unless you're all duds."

Several people chuckled, but I wasn't a fan of the guys my age that gave her looks like they hoped fucking her was actually an option. Over my dead body.

"So for those of you who don't know and thought this was just a field trip for ice cream, there is no ice cream and I'm Adrena, owner of Adrena's Bounty and I need to expand. This is Finn. He works here too. That's it right now."

"So you're like us?" one of the guys asked, looking me over and guessing my age was about his.

I didn't know how to answer, raising an eyebrow at Adrena as if saying I was letting her field that one.

Her lips twitched. “I’m the owner, he’s the overseer. He’s my big, bad ogre to make sure all the kids behave and the punishment if they don’t. Don’t piss off Finn.”

“Whatever you say, Adrena,” I agreed, trying not to laugh and playing like I had any more clue than they did.

“So you make awesome jam here? Is that what you do here?” someone else asked.

“I do the same thing I try to do every night, Pinky,” she answered, wiggling her eyebrows. “Try to take over the world.” I tried to cover up a snort, but the rest just looked at her like she was nuts. “Really? Not a single Animaniacs fan?”

“Wow, I feel old for the first time ever, you little shits.” She blew out a harsh breath. “Okay, I didn’t think there would be so many. Let’s start with a tour and see who runs.”

And then she waved them inside as if that didn’t sound more like someone might be offered up as tribute to try and survive than a cartoon joke. She opened the bay door and I drove in the cart, hurrying to unload it on the tables at least so it was out of the heat and the sun.

A few more people buzzed the gate and I let them in while she checked what she had going. She rounded the new arrivals up and ten minutes later we were at the greenhouses.

“Take this as a sort of intro orientation to see if you really want the gig before I handle too much paperwork and we have to do tax shit,” she said to the group.

“Wait, um, I looked up something while I was eating lunch,” I interjected before she taught them something she’d have to change. I waited until she nodded. “Papaya essential oil is made the same way pomegranate is by grinding the seeds. So are passion fruit and lychee.”

She smiled brightly—no *beamed* at me in a way I wanted to see a lot more.

“Well, look at you taking this so seriously. Awesome. I didn’t know that. You’ve got my phone. Call Sia and see if she wants us to start adding any of that to what we’re already keeping for her. Less to compost is always better.”

I nodded and walked away a bit to make the call, half listening to her lecture how to harvest raspberries and blackberries that were growing in this greenhouse. She supervised for a few minutes after telling people to really get started and was a patient teacher if someone messed up.

I finished up after they had loaded a collection cart with trays and went over to her. “Sia wants and said if you really love her, send her an array of your scraps and it will give her a chance to play.”

She shrugged. “Sure. It’s the least I can do for letting me learn at her setup and then copy it all. You’re awesome. Thanks.”

“Glad to help.” I was, and I hoped she knew I was serious on that.

We moved on to pineberries which were a white strawberry with red seeds from South America. I bit back a smile that I now knew that. I loved learning this kind of stuff and how cool the world was.

“It’s like a strawberry and pineapple mix,” one of the girls said after she had them try it.

“Very good,” Adrena praised. “You have a nicely refined palate as a lot of people miss the hints of pineapple. Or they think it just tastes of pineapple and miss the strawberry undertones. It’s also how ripe or early picked they are. Let’s get a few trays real quick so we can talk on the other end.”

She stopped one of the guys and went over how to pull gentler when he about yanked out the whole plant.

We moved on through a few more greenhouses, just down the main path so they got the feel of how large the operation was.

“So that was fun, or my idea of fun,” she said as we headed back to the brewhouse, walking backwards like a tour guide as I pushed the single cart. “But it’s serious, and you can get seriously hurt if you fuck around. Those lifts can really hurt you. So can clippers. Shit, you touch the hot peppers

without gloves and then your eyes and we're heading to the emergency room.

"I want that to be clear as I'm all for people having fun, and I don't care if you rock out in the greenhouse we're in that day or people ride back in the collection carts after we unload, but this is serious, a job, and I need people I can trust."

When we arrived back, she started the washer and showed them how it would all go in, giving the same lecture she gave me. Then she brought the pineberries over to a prep table and brought out what was needed.

"Now, you cook blackberries and blueberries whole until they're done. Give them a bit to dry and then into the pails that will stack on pallets in the walk-in fridge. Other fruits we're just getting started after washing. Pineberries are easy since you chop off the tops like strawberries. You're cooking, so you don't need to hull and they'll be chopped on that beast."

She gestured over to the commercial slicer, chopper, dicer, and just about anything cutting.

"Then they go in pails for when I'm ready for them. Some things I will cook in front of you. Some you'll help with. It's not a secret how to make pomegranate or even jaboticaba jelly, but the rest I like to cook on my own without eyes or risking people stealing my secret awesomeness. So I do it early on my own or after everyone's gone."

"So the guys will harvest and we'll prep?" a different girl asked, glancing around as if she thought she could handle that.

Adrena smirked at her. "No, I'm not sexist like that. I'm an equalist. I think boys can cook too. There's like this career, chefs, I think?" She gave the girl a wink to take the sting out of her snark. "I'm a girl, and I promise I can harvest faster than any of the guys here." She snorted and looked at me. "You might have me beat on the easy stuff you friggin' ogre machine with your height and muscles."

I ducked my head when I flushed. How could she sort of insult me *and* turn me on like it was a hard flirt at the same time? Unreal.

“So the way I find it best is working to harvest a bunch of carts and then come sit on my ass doing prep or something not in the hot greenhouses. If you are scared of heights and don’t like the lifts, that’s *fine*.

“I hate those fucking things too. You can pick the low stuff. I have another beast that automates cleaning jars, filling, capping and then in the fridge they go to get the vacuum sealed once they cool.

“But people can be in the cooler brewhouse to put on labels and box up orders once I get to that level. I wasn’t expecting fifty of you, but I could *use* fifty of you, trust me.

“I want some of you to be friendly faces at the farmers markets all over the area. I plan on getting more vans for deliveries to bakeries that I want to use my stuff in their everything.

“And just so you believe me on that fun thing, I was talking to a friend of mine who has a monthly cookout and party for her employees. Granted, it’s a vineyard and winery and you’re all underage, but I do like spit-roasting full pigs and my pool is fucking killer. So if we work hard and you help me take over the world, I’m good with real perks and paying well.”

“No one ran,” I offered when she seemed at a loss of what to do next. “Just so we’re clear, now would be the time to bail out.”

One of the bigger guys my age snorted. “A summer gig that won’t conflict with morning football training camp workouts? Yeah, I’m in. I just want to know if it’s flexible once school starts again.”

She shrugged. “I don’t mind if you do weekends only during football season if you’re my summer minions. A lot want off summers for vacation too, so being flexible means not losing good employees.”

“I’m in,” he replied, several others nodding.

“Okay, I have applications then to be all official like,” she said heading over towards the wrong way before spinning on

her heel and going the right way.

“Um, do you know how to handle the employee stuff and getting it all in the system?” I asked her, a bit worried since she didn’t know how to get my phone synced with the gate. “Should I call Sia’s, um, that guy who—”

“Lover?” She teased me. “Sia’s lover? That’s the word you were going for?”

“Sure.” I had been thinking familiar but yeah, couldn’t say that. “I didn’t know it was official. I just thought I caught the vibe but I don’t really know them.”

“Ahh, yeah, we might need Deon out here. I have no fucking clue what I’m doing. He was the one who upgraded all the everything and then it got added to mine after I knew her old stuff. We might have to paper and pen it for now until we get the ID badges that swipe to clock in.”

I sent Sia a text from Adrena’s phone asking Deon to contact me on my phone in regards to all this part that maybe he could walk me through or there was an instructional video for. I thought I might be able to handle this part at least.

“Seven twenty-five? Seriously? That can’t be the minimum wage in Louisiana,” Adrena exclaimed. “Wow, good job having the highest percentage in poverty and only requiring the federal minimum wage. Greedy assholes.”

“Is she for real?” that same guy asked me quietly.

“Yeah, she is,” I promised, getting she seemed completely like this was a joke. “Her launch got delayed big time and then she was a huge hit, which I don’t think she believed she could really pull off.

“It’s interesting, she’s a great teacher of useful stuff, and she feeds me awesome food. This is like the best place ever.”

He snorted. “So you stay here?”

I nodded. “I graduated early for this year. She’s friends with the woman who took me in from a bad foster family last year. But she had her own stuff going on, I never had time to come up with a plan being bounced around and... Yeah, she

said her friend needed help and I had no plan, so it might work.”

“Robby,” he introduced.

“Finn,” I replied, shaking his hand. I dropped his hand and saw there were too many to do what Adrena needed to handle effectively. “How about I take half and we get some work done that I’ll time and log once we figure it all out?”

“Yeah, that would help,” she admitted, giving me a relieved smile. “I could use a fuck ton of mangosteen to make some Cleared of Noise tonight.”

“Got it.” I ended up taking more than half after saying I wanted all the upperclassmen to come with. I started the timer on my phone and we brought back all the carts. I showed them the cabinets by the water filtration for gloves and clippers and we got to work.

It didn’t take us all that long to fill all the carts with thirty-two people, but then we drove them back for the next step, people seeming to get there was going to be a bit of back and forth until they learned what to do and found a groove.

Adrena was still working with people on applications, so we went through the washing slower this time and then gathered around prep tables after I found knives.

I made sure to put a pail of the skins off to the side for Sia, but the rest I showed them how to handle. It was all going in the huge open-top container for a composting farm not far away.

“So this middle part you break off the sections and put the good ones in the pails for her to use,” I explained since she’d already taught me. “The bigger ones have a seed in them you need to get out.” I showed them a bruised one. “And this, toss. Anything not like bright white toss or leave to the side for Adrena to check.”

“You really just eat them?” Robby checked, giving it a suspicious look.

“They’re really fucking good,” I promised, popping a piece in my mouth. “It’s like peachy banana.”

“That is good,” one of the girls agreed. “My mom was going apeshit over the sample she got at the farmers market and was bummed she didn’t buy any. She’s going to burst when I tell her I’m working here.”

Deon called me, and one of the girls actually knew the system from helping the summer before at her mom’s office. So she got on the phone and walked us through what to do but promised she had it.

Well, she was certainly hired in my mind. She was nice to jump in like that, so I hoped it worked out, but Adrena was so relieved I was glad we had a solution.

“Before everyone goes, Adrena’s security guy told me to make it clear that no pictures are allowed. This is private property and she can say that. No posting about here or any social media that’s not done through her people.

“Corporate espionage is a real thing and her friend just had a shit ton of crap with it. So everyone’s a bit sensitive, but it will protect you guys too,” I said a couple hours later when they were done.

Everyone seemed in agreement, a few asking if they could keep their phones on them for emergencies or in case their parents called.

“I think we should have a phone on the table rule,” she admitted. “People are going to be going back and forth, but if everyone leaves them on vibrate and checks them now and again, that would be better than a smartphone getting smashed in a pocket. And I say that as someone who’s done it against the carts. Twice.”

“Just text your helicopter parents when you start your shift like I do mine,” Robby said to the others when they started to object.

I was glad he’d come up with that. Speaking as someone who’d never had anyone care until Klara, she basically left me alone.

They took off and Adrena looked equal parts thrilled and exhausted.

But she was like the little engine that could, and after she got all the kettles loaded and cooking, she grilled us up some *amazing* steaks along with baked potatoes, corn, and a salad. And all of it was awesome down to her black tea she brewed with fresh blackberries and honey.

“Can I help after the dishes?”

“Sure, but I feel like I’m taking advantage of you,” she worried.

Was she for real?

I chuckled. “I’m having a blast Adrena. Honestly. We can figure out a real job and whatever if you want, but don’t worry about me. This is way better than Klara’s.” I winced when her eyes flashed shock. “She was never home and it was awkward since she was the one who filled me in and she wasn’t really my foster mom, but she was and then I was of age—”

“I get it, that limbo feeling of not being able to grab onto anything and making you cranky. Well, I’m glad because you’ve been a *massive* help already. Really, thank you, Finn.”

I nodded, feeling my face flush slightly. That was the other thing about staying here that I liked. Adrena might be a real adult, but she didn’t treat me like a little kid. Klara was centuries old, and to her I might as well have been a damn toddler. Here I could be useful and find a role. I liked it.

She accepted the help though. She taught me how to pick star fruit and guavas for what she was cooking in the morning and then finished up in the brewhouse.

I had just brought the last of the carts over and then they were locked up for the night when she stood like she’d made a touchdown. I saw the last of the jars were done and on the rack to go in the fridge.

After she stowed that away, I got to see again how her cleaning charm worked before we drove the ATV back. She said she was heading to bed, and after she’d talked at dinner how she liked her balcony, I decided to get a bit of revenge for the past two nights.

It worked because not five minutes after I dove into the pool I glanced up and saw her standing on her balcony.

And she was giving me a hungry look, clearly able to tell I was naked but not what I had. I met her intense gaze with my own, trying to let her know I felt the same and still sort of issue a challenge that she join me.

Or maybe accept what I was clearly offering.

To my immense disappointment, she didn't. She simply licked her lips as she eyed me over and then headed back into her room.

Damnit. Even worse, she did it again that night after I was in my room.

And Tuesday night.

And Wednesday night.

And Thursday night.

It was driving me fucking crazy. By Friday, I thought I was going to burst. We got along great and I knew she enjoyed the view of me, but that was it.

We were friendly, worked hard, and talked about normal things during meals and got on fabulously as if she wasn't torturing me.

I tried to put it out of my mind, I really did. The farmers market was in the morning and it was two locations this time, so she wanted to get up extra early. I could manage that and we were in bed earlier than normal because of it.

And then she did it again.

I blew my lid, rolling off my new mattress and about ripping open the door. I turned for her room and yanked that door open too, not caring I didn't even knock.

She let out a yelp and stared at me with wide eyes.

"No more with the fucking vibrator, Adrena," I growled, storming over to the bed and eating up her body which unfortunately wasn't naked.

She had on a nightgown and tried to fix it as she made startled noises, but I locked on the fucking toy that had been driving me insane. I grabbed it from her, glancing at it before hitting the power button and tossing it down. I knelt on the bed and in between her spread legs.

“If you need release, I will *gladly* give it. Enough with torturing me with that fucking toy. Use me. *Let me.*” I leaned down and moved my hand to her nightgown. “Let me. Please, Adrena. *Please* let me instead of the mother fucking toy. I will do everything you want and like.”

She fisted my hair and pulled me down to her wet pussy, both of us moaning as I licked her. I remembered in time how it worked and offered up my first time having oral sex and first time touching her to Gaia, hoping it worked even if I wasn't her familiar. I felt magic flare and she gave a whimper.

“Yeah, offer it up, Finn. Shit, offer it all up. I offer up my first time touching him, Gaia. I offer up my pleasure. Fuck, eat me good, my ogre.”

I didn't need to be told twice. I did everything I'd ever seen in porn or heard guys say their girlfriends liked, glad she was vocal and helped me figure it out.

She came fast and I didn't want to stop, her juices tasting as sweet as the fruit she grew and even better. I moved closer, grabbing her thighs and spreading them wider as I kept eating her until she finished again.

I still wanted to keep going, but she clamped her thighs on either side of my head, jerking against me and I looked up, disappointed it was over.

She gasped for air as she stared down at me with wide, glazed-over sexy eyes. “Wow, you're *really* into being taught and trained.” She waited until I nodded. “I bet you think I'll suck you too now, huh? Is that why you did it?”

“No, I wanted to taste you,” I growled, still wanting more. “I couldn't take any more hearing that fucking toy every night when I was dying to taste you. I just want more of you, Adrena.”

“You don’t want head?” She chuckled when I shivered.

“Yes, of course I want that too, but I didn’t offer just to get it. I’d give you a hundred orgasms before I’d ask.”

“Oh, don’t make deals like that when magic is involved, kid,” she purred. “Is that what you offer? A hundred times eating me and I’ll suck your little ogre?”

“A hundred orgasms I said,” I growled, getting this was real and she was seriously open to it. “And I’ll act as your familiar for the full moon Sunday. I’ll offer you up and do whatever.”

“A bargain has been reached,” she declared. “Eat my pussy.”

I groaned, loving that she would just demand it like that. I did, sucking her clit and lips, licking up all she gave me without even fingering her.

I just wanted to drown in her tonight for my first time doing this. Three more orgasms and she couldn’t take anymore, twitching as she pulled away.

“You are seriously good at that,” she moaned from behind her hands. Then she peeked out at me. “And for the record, I’m *mortified* you heard the vibrator. I wasn’t doing it on purpose. I thought the master bedroom was soundproofed. Thora said they put in great insulation.”

Oh fuck, I was a total asshole. Here I assumed she was screwing with me and I’d completely busted her. “I thought...”

“Yeah, I got it. I’m not that subtle when I fuck with men,” she admitted with a wink. “I would have gone on the balcony naked and done it if I wanted you to jump me.” She sighed happily. “But I am not complaining. Fuck, it’s been a while since a man has eaten me like that, if ever. I don’t think ever with such enthusiasm.”

And then she just said goodnight. That was it.

I honestly couldn’t even blame her when I’d been the asshole that burst into her room.

Right?

Shit, I wanted way more than to just eat her no matter how delicious she was.

5

Adrena

Part of me had thought maybe it was a dream. Finn had come storming in and *demand*ed he be allowed to eat me out. Like seriously, that's the kind of stuff I dream of, but then he made a deal with magic riding us to keep doing it.

And here I wanted to melt into the ground that he'd heard me masturbating every night. Not that I had to defend it, but it helped me sleep. And especially after using magic with my own emotions to make naughty infused jams—it got a witch a bit wound up.

But the next morning, he was up earlier than normal to help me, giving me a few looks here and there like he didn't know how to handle what happened either. That was a sure sign it wasn't a dream and as the real adult, I had to address the elephant in the room.

“It's just fun, and take it as more of your education just in the bedroom,” I offered. “It doesn't make us a couple. It makes us scratch our itches.” I chuckled. “Well, mine but yours eventually.”

“Alright,” he agreed, sounding like he wasn't sure or that really wasn't what he wanted to say.

I left it alone, having enough already going on.

We loaded up the van and headed back to the brewhouse where we had people coming to help us get everything. It took a while to load up, but they were getting paid for it, and I was giving them extra for gas so yeah, they were excited about the hours.

That might change when they saw how crazy the farmers markets got, and it would probably get worse as summer came closer as these were still the first weeks.

We trekked it over to the same one I was at last week—with a quick stop for coffee and breakfast sandwiches since we

would need the fuel—and this time I felt at ease with the help.

Sarah arrived when we were wrapping up, agreeing to be the adult of the booth for me. She did that and I would get her all the juice and jams she wanted.

I hadn't had time to try with the college kids yet, and having a high school student run the booth was a recipe for disaster no matter how good my new workers were. And they were so far.

Also, I'd realized that I didn't want people using those plug-in swipers on *their* phones. That was another possible disaster. So I hurried and got a few of those mobile terminals made just for situations like mine where it was smarter not to just have the employee use their own phone. Meave said they worked great at conventions, so I felt like we could handle it.

"So you have help this time," a voice said from behind me.

I turned to find the food truck guy from last week and realized I didn't have to play off not remembering his name because I really didn't know it. "Oh, hey, yeah, thanks for the help last time. I never got to try your food truck."

He chuckled deeply like that was a pickup line and gave me a heated look. "Yeah, we'll have to meet up again."

I caught Finn's head snap in our direction and his nostrils flare as he caught on probably, but I ignored it.

"Oh, I've more than got it this time, thanks. Sarah's running the show here today, and I'm headed to the next market I'm starting today."

"Oh, that's great for you," he said, not hiding his disappointment well as he slapped on a fake smile.

Really? I didn't learn his name or ask for his number, but he really thought there would be a repeat and was waiting here for me?

Oh boy. Well, I didn't want to start trouble, so I just smiled and thanked him for helping me set up last week,

offering him a free jar for it. He gave me a not happy look and I just smiled, trying not to laugh.

Had he really thought he might get sex all summer for helping? Wow.

He took it before he made a scene and left.

“He was checking you out last week, even I saw it,” Sarah chuckled quietly.

I shrugged, not willing to focus on it or have it interrupt what was already a busy morning. I showed them how I set up and reminded them of prices. I had a variety, but jars were all the same price, six at a discount, and now the new sampler pack of all fourteen flavors for three bucks. And free pickles with purchase.

“I got this,” Robby promised as I started to go over how to cut fruit. “Alice went over it with me, she’s picked up the new shirts last night, and should be here shortly. One backing up the adult and two offering samples and fruit. We got it.”

“Sorry, it’s only my second time, and now I’m not going to be here,” I muttered, feeling bad I was lecturing. “Just don’t offer samples for the naughty or sleepy ones. Those are take-home only.”

“Show me,” Sarah said as we finished up. She nodded, promising if she could control a class of high school students several times a day, she could handle this.

Good point.

“You have most everything I want to juice, but I’m going to pick up a few things here before I follow them back after this and we can have some fun,” Sarah said.

“Awesome.”

“I thought the damn South was supposed to be hot. This is just too cold with this wind. I could have frozen my nuts off in New York,” a voice said from behind me. “There you are!”

I turned and blinked at the man, not having enough coffee to register him and where I knew him from for a moment. “Jamison?”

“Hello, lovely,” he sang, giving me a huge hug. “You look fab. The business owner life suits you.”

“What are you doing here?” I asked, hugging him back. “I sent you everything to help decorate, right?”

He blew a raspberry and leaned away before tapping my nose. “The space was too gorgeous to just play through pictures. I wanted to come myself.

“Plus, Meave wants me to talk to some possible business help for you, we have pictures to take, *and* Sia asked I deliver her payment on everything you’re letting her have because I guess it was *fab-u-lous*. That’s why I came straight here.”

“Crazy says what now?”

He frowned at me. “I know your tricks.” He reached out and pinched my chin between his thumb and fingers.

I smiled up at him. I hadn’t spent much time with Meave when I’d helped her, but her friend and photographer had become someone I truly cared for as he made my obvious discomfort at my surroundings seem completely normal.

He was in our network more helping Tallulah and Sia now it seemed, but he didn’t really know the full story. Though I got the feeling he thought we were something, but probably not witches.

I think he thought like female Illuminati, but knowing him he wouldn’t care as we were good people.

He held up a set of vehicle keys. “Sia got you one of the new electric trucks and a tow trailer to help out with the events as one van is just not going to be enough for you, lovely.”

My eyes went wide. “That’s one hell of a fucking payment for giving her my scraps.”

He clucked his tongue. “Yes, but those scraps are gold to her and she has done something fabulous with one of those. Mango something.”

“The mangosteen? Awesome. She can have gobs of them.”

“I’m sorry I’m running behind because of the truck, but let’s get pictures and all the awesome going so you can rush off and set up at the next one,” he said when I opened my mouth to ask more questions.

Right, priorities.

Alice—who had pulled out in front of the others working for me and was graduating this year—had perfect timing to show up with my new shirts.

“She got you a ninety thousand dollar truck and a refrigerated, insulated trailer that’s probably at least another ten,” Finn told me as he came back.

“Damn.” I chuckled, shaking my head. “And here I thought I’d owe her forever for letting me copy her setup. I just knew she was hoping to get any extra goji as her provider has been running light and talking about upping the price. Maybe I’ll send her some saplings next time. I was already thinking of adding the soursop seeds since we didn’t think of those to try.”

“I’ll text you if I think we’re going to run out of stock,” Sarah promised.

I nodded. I’d almost doubled from the week before, and I couldn’t think we’d really sell more than that no matter how well things were going.

We left and hurried to the new place, finding our spot and getting set up in time only because Finn was a machine and my other helpers busted their butts.

Jamison got some good pictures that would work well for social media to fill in when we needed it. I wish I’d put on some real makeup besides a bit of mascara as he also kept taking them with me.

He left not long after to meet with a photographer in the area he was hopeful I could work with when I needed one. Awesome. He took the van though, so he wasn’t riding all around with the trailer and knew how to get back to my place.

Things started off really well, especially with the samples and it being the first day of the new season for this market.

But then there was a slight hiccup which was a nice way to say someone was a bitch.

“I’m so sorry, there seems to be a mistake,” a woman said loudly with a fake smile about an hour in. “I don’t know what you put down to get a booth here, but we only allow local produce.”

I blinked at her and her almost gleeful tone. “Yes, or products made with local produce. I didn’t put down anything but what I sell, so I’d appreciate you not making me sound like a swindler. And especially not with the intent of embarrassing me.”

She blinked right back at me for calling her out on her shit. “You expect me to believe you locally grew a list of fruit I cannot even pronounce and never heard of?”

I chuckled softly, smirking at her. “Your ignorance aside, I’m wondering why I’d have to convince you of anything.”

“I’m one of the coordinators and—”

“Okay, you’re one of the *assistants* because I spoke with the manager who approved my application when I assured her everything I sell comes from my *greenhouses* which are local. Besides the honey. She allowed that because I’m allergic to bees and something as benign as honey or sugar is fine, but the *produce* in my wares is local. All of it.”

She pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes at me before remembering the performance she was putting on and smiling again. “Really? You grow acai trees in your greenhouses?”

“Dwarf ones, yes, and I’m not the only one I know of,” I answered. “I have several types of dwarf trees including citrus.” I rolled over her when she opened her mouth again. “Are we done with this disturbance to the market and the kind people who came out to support it?”

“I don’t expect some local politeness for the new girl who just moved here and hired people, but you’ll give an apology, right?”

“Apologize for what? Checking you’re here validly and not a con?”

“Your vernacular and making a scene for one,” I threw right back. “To assume someone’s conning people instead of maybe a *mistake* and there’s not one, so you’re in the wrong. Most people with manners apologize. If you won’t, I’m sure you’re busy assisting all the vendors and have lots to do.”

She gave me a half sneer and half smile before strutting off like she owned the place.

“What the fuck was that?” Finn asked under his breath, his gaze following her as mine was.

I shook my head, catching the eye of one of the guys working the booth across the way.

“You’re competition with her family’s farm that sells jams and jellies,” he told me. “It seems she doesn’t take kindly to having competition like the rest of us have.”

“Wow, that’s fairly cutthroat to come over here and cause a scene, accuse me of lying and conning people just because of that,” I grumbled, shaking my head. “Thanks for the heads-up.”

He shrugged. “Nothing wrong with a bit of healthy competition as long as everyone plays fair. And most of us feel that way, so welcome to the market.”

“Thanks.” I was still upset though, so I let out a slow breath and handed the credit card reader to Finn. “I’m going to do a lap and change my mood. I didn’t even get to really see the market last time working it by myself.”

“Besides that food truck,” he muttered quietly, giving me a knowing look.

Yeah, bringing that up didn’t help my mood. I didn’t even touch his poking, but just thinking of that guy and what he’d said to me, how he’d acted today, miffed me all over again.

I walked around, checking out the produce and impressed with what I found even at the beginning of the season. I bought a few cloth totes that the marketplace booth sold to support the event before heading to the meat section which was pretty rare for a farmers market to have from what I knew. Which admittedly wasn’t as much as I probably should have.

I bought a few pounds of local shrimp that looked fabulous. Then I got some steaks from a grass-fed beef farm that offered more. I talked to the owner about getting some whole hogs over the summer and they said they could handle that which was nice.

My mood slowly started improving as I talked with nice people and saw lots having fun, enjoying the almost fairground atmosphere.

Finn took what I bought from me and put it in a section of the larger cooler we'd brought so it was separate from the drinks even if it was already wrapped in plastic and then again in the totes. He gave me a quick worried look before leaning in so close that his breath tickled my ear.

"The market's manager came over after hearing there was an issue. I told her one of the other booths had accused you of being a con and lying to get your booth. She asked who and I told her the bitch didn't bother to tell me her name but she announced she ran the whole market. She seemed to know who I meant then and was not happy, said to tell you she apologized for the bad behavior."

"Nicely done," I praised. I let out a slow breath. "The hit landed hard because of what I can do. I've gotten a lot of shit about it all being unnatural and no better than BDEs."

"That's bullshit. Fuck them," he said firmly.

Yeah, I agreed, but sometimes there just wasn't a switch we could flip inside of us to make us feel that way. Which was *why* I liked selling my mood jams. We couldn't do it, but sometimes it was nice to have a little push. That was all I did.

That was all I'd ever want to do.

Sarah texted me when there was less than an hour left saying they were running low but wasn't sure it was worth the trip to bring more. No, probably not, so I answered they could pack it in early if they sold out. We would probably too as we only had a few cases left and had had a constant stream of customers. We'd long sold out of the sampler box, and next time I'd have to add more.

We packed it in, and the temperature was rising almost back to where it had been lately, only dipping yesterday and this morning. Maybe it was spoiled to expect seventy-degree weather in April, but I was sort of having fun getting to use my pool now.

“Nice fucking truck,” I muttered as I started it up and pulled out of the lot. It was, handling smoothly even with the trailer hitched to it. “Seriously, Sia, you’re too much.”

We picked up food and met the others at the brewhouse plus those who wanted hours to work.

I got them started, noting something annoying again that I had at the market, and we ate before Finn actually went to help Sarah. Good, I needed a bit to get back on track.

I fell into the right groove when the first carts came in and I could sit on my ass and scoop out horned melon, cantaloupe, and papaya so I had it ready to go. I taught a few others what to do, and every time I looked the piles were growing.

Sarah came back with her haul and all smiles. “This is awesome, thanks, Adrena. My husband said I couldn’t be your friend unless I knew how you made your jams, but I told him that was ridiculous.”

Yeah, it was, but I laughed it off. That sounded like one controlling douche I never wanted to meet, and it was a shame since she was such a happy person.

We finished up the day and luckily I’d gotten enough at lunch that we had extras for dinner because I was honestly too tired to cook. Jamison was staying at a hotel because of meetings but promised he’d be by early in the morning to get started.

Everything was put away and where it should be, and I decided I just wanted to relax in my hot tub with a glass of wine. I was fairly sure I’d earned it and the night off.

I changed into my swimsuit and made it reality, sighing as I sank into the warm water, the jets tickling my ass and back.

“Can I join you?” Finn asked as he squatted down on the tiled edge.

I nodded. “Good work today.”

“You too.” He sat down and moved his legs in the water, studying me. “You seem like something is still miffing you. Can I help?”

I heard the underlying huskiness in his tone and decided to poke back since I realized he was part of why I was miffed. “I don’t know, can you?”

“I’d like to try if you tell me how,” he answered after a few beats.

I took a sip of my wine, staring at him over the top of the glass. “Pull down the front of your trunks and let me see the little ogre. That might put me in a good mood.”

He hesitated but then nodded, doing what I wanted and leaning back on one hand. I blinked at the *huge* cock he was seriously sporting.

Little ogre my ass, that thing was a real ogre and third leg. Damn.

Like *dayumn*.

“Did you show that to any of the little girls who were flirting and touching all up on you while you were making comments I let the food truck guy fuck me before I met you?” I asked, noting the way his nostrils flared at my admission of what he’d suspected.

“No, and I even told a few I was working and liked my job so to please not make me lose it.”

“And the ones who work for me that flirt all over you?”

He cleared his throat, looking uncomfortable, and not at what I said, but maybe the attention he’d been getting. “I reminded them we were at work.”

“And?”

“And turned down two who asked for my number. I’m not interested in them.”

But he was into me. It hung in the air, and I liked he was so quick to be loyal even if we’d just had a bit of play. “I

should reward you for that.”

“Yeah?” he asked, his tone hopeful.

“Yeah, stroke it for me and tell me something you want. Maybe I’ll give it to you.”

His big hand wrapped around his growing dick. Dear fuck, it was still getting bigger. “To kiss you, not just your pussy tonight. I get we’re playing and there’s magic and I’m into it, but I don’t like feeling like I disrespected you by not even kissing you.”

I shivered. A guy who respected women was like catnip to me. I tossed back my wine and set down the glass, moving closer to him but not as close as he wanted from the hunger in his eyes.

“What if I said you lost one of your count if you get a night with kisses?”

“Totally fucking worth it,” he panted, his hand moving faster. “What else is on that list of tradeoffs?”

Oh game on, kid. “What else do you want to do to me?”

“Everything. I want to do everything to you and with you, pickle.”

“Pickle?”

He nodded. “Yeah, you’re fresh and always full of snap and tasty.”

“Nice, but I think we can do better. Where did you even learn that one?”

“I heard someone tease their girlfriend when they were walking by the booth and saw the pickles. I thought it was way more fitting for you.”

I hummed at the compliment as I reached out and touched his knee. “Yes, but I’d prefer a pet name not borrowed, ogre.” I licked my lips as I watched his hand before meeting his gaze. “You can do better if you really want me, right?”

“I want to say dimples because your dimples when you smile are fucking sexy, but you’re so much more than your

physical. Sunshine because you're all warm and light up when you're happy. Sweetness isn't enough, but you are sweet through and through as even your pussy is."

I moved my other hand to his knee. "You're really taking this seriously."

He nodded. "I'd admit I couldn't come up with one or don't know before doing it half-assed or blowing smoke." He frowned. "A lot work with you. Sweetness, gum drop, sugar, but that doesn't take into account the rest of you." His hand slowed as a grin grew on his lips. "Cinnamon. You're sweet and sometimes spicy, but you go with everything, and it's always better with you."

Dayumn.

"Lean back," I whispered, waiting until he let go of his cock and leaned back on his hands. I moved between his legs and slid his cock between my wet tits still in the swim top. His eyes went wide as he watched what I was doing. "Ever titty fuck with big tits like mine?"

"Never done it at all," he panted, his long eyelashes fluttering as I started moving. "Shit, I never thought it would be like this. I offer it up to Gaia."

I gasped when the magic flared. I hadn't even checked what last night's offering had done, but right then I wanted to focus on nothing but him. "I'll give kisses for free if your answers to little girls *stays* what they were today."

"Oh fuck, yes, yes, Adrena, I—"

"Don't promise with magic," I reminded him.

He rolled his head to rest on his shoulder and smiled. "I promise that will be my answer as long as you're still interested in touching me, letting me touch you."

Wow. I offered up what we were doing too and then moved faster, getting him off quick with all the buildup and teasing. He came all over my tits and even hit my neck, his eyes fixed on every drop.

I moved away and ran my fingers through it. “Come get your kiss, my ogre.”

He pulled up the front of his trunks, still hard and wanting, and slid in the hot tub. He stopped right before touching me. “I get all the kisses I want?”

Oh, he really wanted to play. “For tonight. We’ll see how you do and I’ll decide after that.”

He nodded and then his huge arms surrounded me, pulling me against him and lowering his head... But not to my lips. He used one hand to cup the back of my head as he kissed along my shoulder, his tongue darting out and licking up any drop of water as he made his way along my skin. His other hand splayed over my lower back, his fingers teasing the top of my ass.

“Even your fucking skin tastes sweet,” he moaned as he nuzzled my neck. He kissed every inch of it, groaning when I shivered. And then he moved along my chin and gave the same attention to the other side. It was like five minutes of just enjoying my skin and the chance to touch me.

Damn, that was hot.

“I’ve never come so hard in my life, Adrena,” he murmured, his voice making me shiver it was so deep and tickled my skin. “I want to make you come like that. I want to make your body feel everything and more.”

I hummed happily and then he lifted me up, sitting me on the ledge so we were the same height. His lips were on the move again as his hand got tangled in my hair while the other framed my face. He gave me a soft brush, just a whisper and nothing more before kissing along my chin and then back up for a longer kiss.

Holy shit, this kid was making me wet just from kissing. I was damp and seconds from demanding he fuck me, but he just kept up with his slow, sensual attack.

“What else is on the list? Three hundred orgasms to be inside you?”

I chuckled. “I think that would be less than a blow job since I’d enjoy it too and it gives men big heads. Why don’t you give me a kiss like you want to fuck me and I’ll think about it?”

So he did. His lips were demanding and possessive as he kissed me. He moaned when I ran my tongue over his and then pulled his bottom lip in my mouth. He shivered when I nibbled and let it go, coming back for more and pressing his body into mine more.

He pulled away gasping, something dark in his eyes as he stared at me. Then he pulled me back and *attacked* my skin.

I knew there would probably be tons of little marks, but I was fine with it. It felt that good. He kissed my tits but didn’t take them out of my top, just moving down. When he reached my shorts he paused.

I yelped as he picked me up and got out of the hot tub at the same time, shocking me with his strength as I might have been on the shorter size, but I wasn’t light. I mean right about a healthy weight with a bit extra for my huge tits—which I didn’t think should count—but definitely not a twig. He brought me over to the stone high top table that Thora had put in as a hidden altar and laid me down.

My shorts were gone a second later and his face buried in my pussy. I moaned, offering it up to Gaia as I fisted his hair and enjoyed everything he gave me. Honestly, it was one after another, and I lost count of how many orgasms he’d really given me.

“I think fifteen,” I gasped when I couldn’t take anymore. “They just kept coming in rapid fire.”

“I want inside of you so bad, cinnamon,” he whispered, kissing my inner thighs. “Let me have you.”

I froze, not wanting that which was *insane*, but then it hit me why. I wanted him too, not just physically, but I wanted him like for *real*.

Which was insane, but there was something between us more than chemistry, and I’d felt how well we worked together

all week. We had a similar flow, moving together whether it be meals or any of it, and it shouldn't have been that easy as strangers.

We were on the same wavelength and I'd not felt that before. I wanted that, and I didn't think it could be only play and casual if we took that step.

"Be sure you're ready for what that might mean," I whispered as I sat up, cupping his face when he gave me a confused look. "You're lost and play is fine, but more and things could get complicated. Maybe you should figure out what you want before getting entangled so neither of us ever doubts why you did it."

His eyes flashed shock but then hurt before he slowly nodded. "Yeah, that's fair. I didn't think that left the realm of play if we did."

"I wouldn't have either but if I'm honest, I think it does."

"It does," he agreed. "Okay, I'll make sure, but we're still playing because I'm addicted to your pussy."

"Then have another taste and jerk off your ogle." I brushed my lips over his. "Jerk him off thinking about me all the time and how I'll feel."

He groaned, like *groaned*, and then did as I said. Nice.

At this rate, we'd hit a hundred orgasms in a few days.

6

Finneas

I took what Adrena said to heart. I did want to find my path and what I wanted, but I was starting to think maybe Klara sent me here because she knew it was here and Adrena was the woman I never knew I needed.

I'd floundered all my life for a family and parents, but maybe that wasn't ever what I needed but a partner who spoiled me and *appreciated* me.

And she did both. Especially the fucking spoiling. It was unreal, and she didn't even understand how good she was to people.

When Jamison arrived early the next morning, I pulled him off to the side and explained my idea of helping her with all the samples and getting one of those tabletop depositors that had injectors. I saw enough of the farmers market to think filled cornbread mini muffins and even jam over mini rolls would be great.

"I'll handle it," he promised, shocking me that I barely had to talk him into it. He gave me a wink. "You look at her like Ash looks at Meave and I'm all for that. But you need to know that woman has been hurt like you cannot imagine and has come a long way from the scared young woman who was ready to break any second. If you want her, good, but be good to *her*."

"I'm trying to figure out my own shit first," I admitted, he seemed to approve of that.

Yay? I wasn't sure but they were going to start plotting the house and furniture and everything I would not be helpful with and feel like a kid and third wheel.

Instead, I told her I was heading to the greenhouses to get work done. She asked me for strawberries, yellow dragon fruit, and mangos which was what she needed for her Morning

Done Right jam. That shit was awesome and way better than a few large coffees or shots of espresso.

I headed over with the ATV and smiled. I knew which jam it was for. I was catching on.

And it felt right. Really right. I liked being her partner and backing her up.

My eyes went wide as I opened up the first greenhouse. Holy shit had Gaia blessed it. I hadn't been in this one yesterday, and with two offerings, this place was *brimming* with fruit. Wow.

I started thinning because I didn't know much, but even *I* knew dragon fruit trees didn't bear several fruits on each one of the cactus-type branches. So thinning might always be the best path to keep things under the radar. I got in a good flow with my earbuds in, and the next thing I knew I had a bunch of carts loaded.

They were at the brewhouse taking pictures when I got there to start getting carts out of my way. She beamed at me at how fast I worked, my "little ogre" twitching with need for her.

"I got overwhelmed with all the options and not having furnished a house, so Jamison suggested a break to get some batches going because he wants to take lots back," she told me.

"Only worry about the places people will see as it's going to be an outdoor party mostly, right? Just inside for the bathroom?"

"Actually, I thought you should get one of those upscale bathroom trailers," Jamison cut in. "The invite isn't going to include kiddies, so it should be fine. It's not an all-day thing. I do love this idea that you deliver the invite with a sampler case for that personal touch."

"That is a good idea. So you really only have to do outside and a bit inside for the caterers."

"That helps," she agreed, looking lighter.

And she totally spoiled me for that help. She brought out a spread for breakfast before employees started showing up. She stuffed me so good with her awesome home cooking, I knew I needed to work off the calories.

Adrena now had seventy-five high school workers, but not everyone was coming that morning, but we did have fifty. I was just about to start organizing the plan with a few of the older ones who were good team leaders when Adrena came over staring at her phone.

“Apparently, Sia sent the wrong truck, and a *full semi* is coming tomorrow with my new forklift and a shit ton of those huge plastic pallet totes for produce to protect them.” She snorted. “And Deon wants to know if he can coordinate with you in the future as apparently we’re not allowed to anymore. I didn’t fuck up. Why am I getting benched?”

“Probably something off your plate and he doesn’t want to add to it,” I comforted. I thought about how much that was and nodded. “Got it. We’ll have to do some extra large double plastic bags to hold it all for when the truck comes, but you’ll need more of those totes to exchange out if she’s planning a full semi each time.”

“Yeah, good point, thanks, ogre.”

Her voice was soft when she said it even as she focused on her phone, and the nickname made me bite back a smile. I liked it when she said it, not feeling bullied or messed with that I was so huge, but it was an asset in a way a woman like her would appreciate.

“Okay, let’s get a huge round of peaches and apricots that we can run through to wash and prep fast and get a ton of large seeds,” I told the group. “Then when we’ve got a group going, some will start harvesting loofah as those don’t need the fridge and we can pile them in a corner. We rotate from there in the three groups to get in AC and a break to sit.”

Well, now that the stools she’d ordered had come in, so that was a plus.

“Thanks, guys,” she said to everyone. “If you can crank this out to fix my friend’s mistake, I’ll put some hams on the smoker and we’ll take a real lunch break at the house. Alice, I might send you with my card to get some bread, chips, and drinks in a bit.”

“Shit, real smoked ham? Nice,” Robby muttered as we moved out.

“I eat like that all the damn time,” I bragged.

“Spoiled. You’re spoiled,” one of the other guys griped. Yeah, I was.

And I loved it.

We worked like mad, and I about jumped in the pool with my clothes on when it was time for lunch it was so inviting. But we kept going, having fun as we did, and even a bunch of people stayed longer than their shift.

Adrena had made it clear no full-time hours for kiddies as she could get in trouble, but she didn’t care if anyone hit right under if there was work to do.

There was.

“Think we’ll pass the trial?” Robby asked quietly before he headed out. “I don’t mean to push, but it would be nice to know that I don’t have to keep looking.”

“Yeah, I’m sure you’re good. There’s only a few she’s thinking of not keeping that she’s told me, but you’re leading a team, so I think you’re good. I’d put you on the list if she asks.”

“Awesome. I like this gig way better than fucking with customers or idiots.”

I snorted. “Right?”

I was pretty confident we’d hit the mark but just in case, I kept working after dinner as she did. Jamison had left to go back to his hotel and get started on ordering what they’d decided. She was *exhausted* when we wrapped up.

“Tell me I can kiss you again tonight,” I murmured as I cornered her by the door as we were leaving and she activated the cleaning spell.

“I wouldn’t object to that, but I might fall asleep on you,” she admitted.

“Then I’ll have to completely tire you out so you do sleep,” I growled, ushering her out the door.

The second after she locked up, I had her up in my arms, carrying her to the ATV. I sat down with her still on my lap, attacking the spot on her neck that made her sigh happily and squirm. I kept her against me as I drove us back to the house, her amusement dancing all over me the way she held on.

Then I carried her into the house, locked up, and to her room. I wanted to see her naked in the shower, but that seemed greedy even if I was eating her out and playing. I’d not even seen her tits yet. Instead, we made out on her bed and she demanded to see my little ogre when I went to eat her out.

“I’m all sweaty and icky,” she explained.

“Shower? Please say we can shower,” I groaned, thrilled when she nodded.

Her tits were *everything*. I ached to hold them and do everything with them, especially feeling them on my cock again, but she seemed to have this wall between us for now and I understood it, accepted it even.

For now.

When we were done, I about tossed her on the bed, rolling her to be stomach-down and then attacked her pussy that way, licking her ass and teasing her hole when she told me to.

I even loved that with her. I was so fucking hard thinking of her letting me play with her ass.

“He’s so fucking hard for you, Adrena,” I moaned as I jerked off while licking her. She fucking loved it, pushing up her ass for me more and screaming my name when I made her come again and again.

When she couldn't take anymore, she turned on her side and rubbed her hand next to her. I moved up and she wiped up her juices still on my face, heat dancing in her eyes as she had me suck her fingers clean.

"Thank you for today. All of it. I don't know if I could manage all of this without you." She didn't wait for me to answer, scooting closer. "How about some nice steaks tomorrow?"

"You don't have to always cook and spoil me," I murmured as I pulled her against me. "I can pick up food. We can do more leftovers."

She made a soft, noncommittal noise. "I like cooking for you. You're like this huge, sexy, ogre puppy that lights up when I feed you. I love it. I love how much you appreciate me. It's new."

"Wait, the full moon, we forgot about the full moon."

"This was better for sure," she mumbled.

I sighed when a soft snore escaped her plump lips. Yeah, it was new for me too, and I adored she appreciated it. I wanted to stay and hold her, but she was right that I needed to think some more and make a real decision. I tucked her in and went back to my room.

My room. It felt like my room here unlike at Klara's. Granted, now I wanted to be only in Adrena's room, but still this felt like home.

The more I thought about it, I thought it could be a great life even if I took Adrena out of the picture. I didn't want to go to college and I liked the work I was doing. I even liked managing people and coordinating so things were always fresh.

But I should take more time. I wanted to learn more and get real plans going to help but maybe make some of the projects my own? I thought it was a good idea and if nothing else, it would help Adrena.

We made the shipment in time, but then I called Deon and we worked out some logistics if Sia really wanted to make this

a thing, which apparently she *really* did. The only problem with that was there needed to be more storage room then.

He worked some magic, and with Adrena and Sia's approval, we had a new industrial shed kit coming that would house ample storage, a ton of those containers, a seed washer, and a small air tunnel to dry them so nothing got moldy on the wait or in transit. Awesome.

Really awesome because he helped find the right people to finally get going on putting up the fence around the property. They were glad for the extra job as the one lined up had been delayed, so it wouldn't all get done, but they were discounting it then and were the same people Thora had hired to handle the greenhouses. Which meant their work was good.

So there was a lot of dancing and ducks in the air still after Jamison left.

But what she didn't want in the air any longer was making my job official. She came to me Friday night after work was over and handed me a packet.

"I can't do it any longer. I can't keep not paying you. It's fucked up. I just hired sixty of the high school students officially and gave them raises, and this week is interviews with college students and hopeful team leaders and maybe a few part-time managers, but I can't figure it out without a solid plan. So I'm sorry if you wanted more time, but that's the full offer."

She walked right back off and went back to making sample food.

Okay then. She was waiting on me, and I was waiting for a point she could be ready to go over some details. I blinked down at the employment contract and saw she was offering sixty grand for the official title of greenhouses manager.

What?

I went into the kitchen and cornered her. "You cannot offer me this much. I'm not worth it."

Fire and anger flared in her eyes. "First, you are worth it. I know you meant you don't have a college degree or

experience, but you're good, like really good, and manage better than I do and work like crazy.

"You're already putting in crazy overtime, but you also get room and board and meals. So I felt bad only offering the average salary for a manager of this size, but you're just starting out too."

Well shit. I was really so, so spoiled. I only had one question left. "There's no rules against being with you, right? Can I make sure there's no HR?"

She chuckled. "We're not human, my ogre."

"Damn right, we're not," I growled, setting down the packet and cornering her against the fridge. "Yes. My answer is yes." And then I dropped to my knees and ate her sweet pussy until she screamed my name. "As the manager, I have an idea of letting Ash and some of the guys he knows do the farmers market in Colorado Springs and sell in Sia's store like you can sell her stuff in yours later."

"Convince me, ogre," she purred. So I did. Three times, promising more and more if she let me help.

Apparently, she liked the idea as she wasn't hard to convince but just wanted me to eat her more. That was fine with me.

We rocked out the farmers markets again and soon one would have a Tuesday option and then there was downtown market Friday afternoons that would start in a few weeks she would sell at. And right before the launch party, Deon would have everything set up for her complete and super secure website.

He was coming out then to help with security and cameras before more people showed up.

Good. Adrena was insanely popular, and every time I turned around she was getting checked out. But I *hated* the way guys treated her and not just because I wanted them to all fuck off and her to be mine.

I didn't know what was wrong with some men, but I'd heard more than one call her chunky as if acting like because

she was heavy, she'd be easier for them to snag as she was *way* out of their league.

And I got the feeling that food truck guy had done the same because he definitely had landed some sort of hit. One, she wasn't chunky, and women who were could absolutely be beautiful and sexy.

She had curves, but her stomach was flat and the rest of her fairly toned. She wasn't a twig and no eight-pack, but for the love of fuck she wasn't fat.

"I made the cut," Robby muttered as we were packing it up after selling out again even with the extras we brought. "I was sort of shocked she cut fifteen."

"I see... More than you do or people think," Adrena offered as she moved behind us. I blinked at her and then it hit me. Auras. She could see auras, and she saw something in them that she didn't like. "There were some princesses in the group and I'm not all about that. One guy quit because I'm a slave driver, and he basically just rode the cart back and forth from the greenhouses to the brewhouse."

"Yeah, he was good at looking like he was working hard," I agreed.

"Well, I'm here for whatever you need, boss, and some of us were wondering if you were serious about letting us use your pool."

She shrugged. "I don't care. I'll be working, and kids should enjoy their summers too. Obviously, no drinking, but if you want to use it after football but before your shift, fine with me. Just don't use all your energy to play."

I shook my head. She was too damn nice. She'd already raised their pay to ten an hour to start with a schedule of reviews and raises. I'd told her it was too much and she looked at me like I was nuts, saying part-time mail carriers made nineteen an hour and half the time they fucked up her mail.

Well... Okay, fair enough.

That night I thought about cashing in my hundred orgasms I'd given her for more fun, but she was so stressed that I

figured I'd just add to the tally, actually leaving a count on the notepad on her nightstand. Until the launch she was too stressed, so everything was about her even if she wouldn't stop spoiling me.

I moved over her and held down her hands, interlacing our fingers as I kissed her. She wrapped her legs around me and used her wet pussy to pump my cock while her tits bounced all around and drove my need for her up.

I wanted her so badly that I ached for her.

But she also seemed to be enjoying all the making out and foreplay. Maybe being a real adult meant skipping that much, and I enjoyed being the one to give it to her.

A lot. Which was why I kept misbehaving at the brewhouse when no one was working yet. She loved it. She abso-fucking-lutely loved it.

She also seemed to love being pinned down because she went wild under me until I came. When I did, she rolled us and used her huge tits to jack me off again, smirking how easily she could drive me insane.

I rolled us back, and this time I fingered her instead of just eating her out.

We'd done that a bit backwards.

"Fuck, you have big fingers, my ogre," she moaned, arching her back and spreading her legs more. "When we get to sex and you decide I'm keeping you, I expect one of those in my ass when you fuck me with your little ogre."

I almost came. I almost spontaneously creamed myself, the image of that so hot. I got so riled up, I took care of her until she passed out. And still, I wanted more of her.

"I want to be your familiar so you better fucking keep me," I whispered against her lips before tucking her in.

Again, I wanted to stay, but I was worried about rocking the boat until after the launch. All the invites had been delivered with sample packs, and businesses were wanting to start ordering before the main date.

Two weeks seemed forever.

But work helped the time fly. Over half the fence was up and the new industrial shed with everything we needed inside.

Things were moving fast, and more help was being tried out with a bunch of the college students. The only problem was a few didn't want to listen to me since I was younger.

Too fucking bad. I was bigger than all of them, so they could shove it or Adrena would find different help. She bought two electric cars for deliveries that had fold-down back seats for more cargo room as apparently there was a *lot* of interest and pushing to get first in line to start using her jams.

After talking with Meave, she offered to have the launch be part business association event as she was allowing people to bring samples of what they wanted to use her products in. Adrena wasn't just allowing them a bunch of free jars, but if they had a specific idea, she would let them purchase the jars they needed to make it happen and a discount idea later for bulk.

Damn.

The best was when she talked with a catering place and they gave her the amount to do a crawfish boil and cook it at her house. Her reaction was hysterical as she kept telling them that couldn't be the right number.

She went on her laptop and about blew a gasket when she found she could buy a super nice seafood boiler for about the price they were offering and cooking time was about five minutes once warmed up.

So instead, she got the larger version that could do two big bags of crawfish with all the fixings and now had it for any time she wanted to do any seafood boils. I loved how she just cut through the bullshit like that.

She had the spit roaster and a pig coming, more food for her huge smoker, and all around it seemed like a party I'd want to go to even if everything else sucked.

Things progressed and more got done including getting the storage area loaded with more and more cases so she was

ready the moment the website started. And she would need it because she still sold out the next Saturday at the farmers markets too.

That was reason to celebrate and only a week left to the launch, I wanted to make sure her stress was low, but I messed up.

“Have you made your decision?” she asked me, her voice hesitant, and I couldn’t read what was swimming in her eyes.

I kissed her, not about to play off I didn’t know what she meant. “After the launch. Let’s talk after it.”

She flinched and her look changed. “Sounds good.”

But I didn’t think that was what she really wanted to say. I went to ask what I’d said wrong, but instead she pushed on my shoulder and I took the hint, getting lost in her body and making her feel good... But it was harder to make her finish.

It seemed distant, not even that connection like the first night. Had I messed this all up again?

She couldn’t think I was rejecting her, right? Clearly, something had changed though. And for a couple of days, I thought it was just being busy, and then Deon came out for the last of everything.

I didn’t understand it and tried to bring it up after Deon left.

“You love my big titties, right, Finn?” she purred as she pulled off her clothes. She waited until I nodded. “Why aren’t you sucking on them while you finger me with those big fingers? Bring that fat cock over here and I’ll take care of you too.”

And that was when it hit me... No pet names.

No calling me her ogre or anything else. I didn’t think she’d called me Finn in bed at all so far.

I wanted to fix this. I wanted to promise I wanted her and to be real. I couldn’t commit to forever after not even a month, but I knew I wanted it to work out like that.

Still, I did as she wanted, loving the feeling of her hand on me, her skin under my lips, and her cries of bliss echoing in the room. But I wanted my cinnamon back.

I wanted my spicy sweetheart that spoiled me rotten. This was just going through the motions. And then I realized even the food was great, but she didn't ask what I wanted or check I loved it.

It had just been food, not her attention.

Shit.

But I still didn't want to distract her from the launch.

And then the launch came, and I suddenly didn't give a fuck about the mother fucking party as she drew every eye in her light blue sundress that matched her eyes and looked made for her.

Her long hair was up in a high ponytail and the dress was low cut enough to show a good glimpse of her ample chest. The skirt wrapped and tied to one side, and while long, it had a slit that went up to mid-thigh on one side.

All my patience burst as I watched guy after guy flirt with her... And her flirt back. She laughed at their lame jokes and let them touch her.

I was seconds from turning into a bull and ramming them all away from her before I dragged her off and showed her exactly how big of an ogre I could be.

I couldn't even enjoy how big of a hit the party was as it was killer and she'd totally nailed it.

I cornered her in the garage after she had some of the guys get more crawfish ready for the next round of boil. I snuck in behind her and snaked my arm around her waist, pulling her back against me and nuzzling her neck.

"Don't make dates with them. Don't let them touch you anymore. Let me. Make dates with me, cinnamon. Don't let them have you. Let me. All I want is to be inside of you."

She shocked me when she elbowed me and I instantly let go. The hurt look she shot me over her shoulder destroyed me.

It was like the hardest punch to the gut I could imagine.

“Now you care? Now you fucking want me because others do? I’ve done everything short of climbing on your cock in your sleep to offer myself to you. And all you did was push it back or tell me we’d talk later like I don’t fucking matter and could so easily be brushed aside.” She sniffled and looked away. “Fuck you, Finn. Maybe I’ll just let a whole group of them fuck me since you didn’t want me for real.”

She walked away and I knew what hell felt like. I stared at the ground and my eyes itched.

I’d fucked this all up and done exactly the opposite of what I’d meant to. It made so much sense from her side, but I hadn’t seen it.

And now I’d blown it.

No, no, there had to still be a chance.

I couldn’t watch someone else take her from me. I just couldn’t.

7

Adrena

From the moment he'd signed the year employee contract, I'd done just about everything to progress to sex, thinking he was in now. At first, I thought he was shocked how easy it was to say yes, this was the right place for him and he needed a bit more time.

Fine, I was actually having fun just making out like I never got to when I was his age.

So no problem. But I still wanted to cross that line with him as I felt a pull and it was new to me.

It scared me, but it scared me worse that it could slip away.

Then I flat out asked him when I realized he might just be young and dense... And I got the line that we needed to talk later. Seriously?

Seriously?

He was going to let me down gently after the launch? Why wait? Did he think I was going to rip up his contract?

No, but I would move him to a different bedroom and pretend the intimate stuff never happened.

But the moment he'd said that, I felt my shields coming back into place. I started inching distance between us which was hard because he lived in my house and was in the next bedroom, but I knew how to do a lot without feelings or change mine to what I needed.

And I needed to not be so into Finn Fucking Costa. Asshole. He'd started all of this and the chasing.

Fine, it hadn't been his thing, but he didn't have to be that guy who drew it out like my life would be over and he didn't want to risk drama.

It was easier to put space between us when Deon arrived. The guy was good, and I could *totally* see him being Sia's type as she needed someone who challenged her.

And he was so clearly and deeply in love with her it felt like a shot in the heart. Yeah, she deserved that, she really did.

But so did I.

Fuck Finn.

It seemed like he tried to bring it up again a couple of times, but I shut it down with a bit of flirting. That was all it took and he was on me.

It hurt because I realized he didn't want to end things but didn't want real. That was the "talk." He didn't want real and wanted to work that out in a way that didn't ruin my launch.

I was going to beat his... Everything. Just everything after tricking me he was so respectful of women and appreciated how I treated him.

I felt like I blinked and it was Saturday. I didn't even go to the farmers markets that day, focused on the launch and all the last-minute everything.

The site was live and already getting orders in that would keep us seriously busy. People were taking care of the local delivery for orders over a hundred dollars or with a small delivery fee. Some businesses wanted me to do exclusive deals with them and I wasn't feeling that.

I barely knew anyone, and to try and do exclusive my first month was silly. If I had people offering that, why would I limit myself?

It was almost showtime now that the caterers had taken over, and some of my employees were helping out with drinks and working the party. I had an outfit picked out, but then I thought of how Finn had been acting with me, hesitant and like he was waiting for the other shoe to drop because he didn't think I'd give him the answer he wanted, so I changed my choice.

Maybe he shouldn't have been so hesitant to grab someone so awesome when he had the chance? Sure, now if I could convince myself I was such a catch.

But I did feel much better when he saw me step out in the sexier sundress and it looked like he'd swallowed his tongue. Good.

The party started at four, and it shocked me that people arrived then instead of fashionably late or just for dinner. I'd thought it odd to start so early, but Meave said it was clear it was a late afternoon into dinner party instead of dinner and *night* party where trouble could start.

Smart. But the invites said people could use the pool and a few looked ready to jump on that.

And the wine we had. Tallulah had sent a shit ton of wine for the party from her fancy labels and more of her new fruit wines since I'd sent her a ton of extras and some saplings she couldn't get anywhere else very easily.

I'd gathered everything for my greenhouses myself in my travels so yeah, it wasn't all that easy, and using cuttings to make magical dwarf trees took some know-how.

But there were several fruits they made wine from in South America that she wasn't. She might be now and was really grateful.

What I wasn't grateful for were the looks Finn kept giving me like he was going to bury the people I was talking to in the greenhouses. Fine, the men, but what was his deal? He'd had his shot, and why didn't I deserve real?

Why didn't I deserve to be adored like Deon adored Sia?

It made me be petty and flirt back with the guys who started it. Fine, I got really flirty, but it was a hot day and the party was a hit.

A *serious* hit, so fuck it. I could take the victory lap and maybe make a date or ten if I wanted to. That was what being single meant.

And *then* I kept finding little girls around him, flirting and not being brushed off.

Oh, that was it. We were completely done, and if he thought he'd bring girls into my house, he could find another place to stay.

Still, I enjoyed my victory even if some of the business owners were getting a bit pushy about me only selling to them. A few were just ridiculous about me not selling to *any other* business, not only their competition.

Why in the world would I only bulk sell to one local bakery who wouldn't even have a sales display of my wares and cut out anyone else? And the discount they were asking was ridiculous.

I wouldn't be bullied like that, and finally I had to say as politely as I could that clearly I had lots of options as I gestured to the party.

I headed off with Derrick and a few others to show them where the next bags of crawfish were to start rinsing them as the boiler was reheating. People had given me funny looks that I wasn't doing Cajun-style and I flat out said I wouldn't be able to do it proud not being a native from Louisiana, but I could cook damn fine food my way.

That seemed to go over pretty well since I wasn't turning my nose up at them.

Hell no, I loved Cajun food. It didn't always like me, but I loved it.

Still, there was a nice kick with my aji Amarillo hot peppers, and I'd made my hot sauce to add for the daring. I couldn't use it, but good for those who had iron stomachs and numb tongues.

An arm snagged behind me as I pulled up the back of the group to leave the garage. The body was big and muscular and one I knew, so I didn't freak out, but then I was annoyed, so I was about to pull away as he started nuzzling my neck.

"Don't make dates with them," he practically begged. "Don't let them touch you anymore. Let me. Make dates with

me, cinnamon. Don't let them have you. Let me. All I want is to be inside of you."

Rage flared in me as I elbowed him as hard as I could and he let me go. I shot him a hurt look over my shoulder I couldn't swallow down. I managed to keep my voice down, but that was it, and that was hard enough since I wanted to scream at him.

"Now you care? Now you fucking want me because others do? I've done everything short of climbing on your cock in your sleep to offer myself to you. And all you did was push it back or tell me we'd talk later like I don't fucking matter and could so easily be brushed aside." I sniffled and looked away. "Fuck you, Finn. Maybe I'll just let a whole group of them fuck me since you didn't want me for real."

Fuck him, he wasn't going to make me cry at my own damn party. I stormed off, making sure I cooled it before I reached the party again, but I did grab another glass of wine which probably wasn't smart, so I did nurse it.

I didn't like having booze with high school kids working the party, but I'd made it damn clear that if any of them got into it I would not only fire them but tell their parents and call the cops.

I'd never seen so many faces lose color so fast. Yeah, I gave good threats and I kept them, so it was good they knew that already.

JR—the owner of a popular steakhouse who I'd been talking with earlier—found me and smiled. "You're a hit."

"We'll see," I sighed, moving my wine glass in front of my mouth in case anyone was paying attention. "Some seem to be here just to pee on me so no one else gets me. Leaves a woman a bit miffed." I swallowed down how that pertained to my personal life at the moment.

"Well, I just like talking to you about your love of cooking and good cuisine. I'm not even sure how I could use your awesome jams, but maybe if we had a sampling of my menu

Friday, you could find some ways? With a nice bottle of wine? I wanted to ask if you know an in with this vineyard.”

“I do and—”

“We have that thing Friday already,” Finn said from behind me.

I swallowed down my shock in time at what he’d said but jumped like he startled me. I gave him a death look to back off, but he was glancing out at the party like he knew he might turn to ash if he met my gaze.

“Right, I’d forgotten about that.”

“Maybe another time,” JR muttered, glancing at Finn. “He works for you?”

“He manages my greenhouses.”

He gave me a curious look. “He’s a bit young, isn’t he?”

I shrugged. “Maybe, but he’s dedicated to the job and is good at motivating the worker bees since he’s not a dry, old manager type.” I wasn’t sure what else to say, but I wasn’t going to keep flirting with Finn right there. “Finn, get JR’s card and we’ll get it to Tallulah’s distribution person.”

“Of course.”

I excused myself and moved to another group... Only to find Finn there moments later, and the shit did everything he could to cock block me. Hell, I was very sure he shot someone a death look for just coming to talk to me.

“This party was amazing,” Sarah praised. “That dress is killer.”

“I took a chance and I think it fit in,” I agreed, giving her a half hug.

“This is my husband, Peter. Peter, this is Adrena, the genius behind the jams and letting me snag juice from her.”

I didn’t extend my hand after meeting his gaze because he was not a man I wanted touching me. I almost used my power to see his aura, but Thora’s teaching echoed in my mind that

sometimes that was all it took to out a witch in a group, so I went with a nod and focused on Sarah.

“Hey, you’ve been picking the fruit and helping me out at the farmers market. It’s the least I could do.”

“I’ve been enjoying it. Not much longer as it’s going to be too hot and I melt,” she teased, but I heard her, assuring her some college students would take over soon.

“Sarah says she doesn’t know how you make your jams work so well, but I figured you would tell a friend,” Peter said, his voice off, and I reminded myself not to snap.

“I find real friends don’t *ask* as she didn’t, and I’ve never asked my other friends’ business secrets.”

“Right, but how do you do it and affect emotions? You have to tell people that then.”

“No, I don’t actually as I don’t slip in St. John’s Wart or drugs.” I waved off what he was going to say next. “Lots of people use lavender to help sleep. Citrus and mangos to give energy from vitamins. Enzymes in fruits to soothe and mellow people. Spices to bring heat to a body and such. I’m certainly not the only one, and a bit of suggestion works well if you let it.”

“Exactly,” Sarah agreed, giving her husband a look to leave it. “Well, I just wanted to say thanks for inviting us, and congrats on being such a hit.”

“Thanks for coming. It was nice to know at least one person would be here who liked me.” I gave her another quick hug and shot her husband a look that I knew clearly he didn’t like me but I also didn’t give a shit.

What the fuck reason did he have not to like me? If you didn’t want to eat the jam, then don’t.

See, simple?

People started leaving, and there was so, *so* much food left I had the caterers boxing it up for my employees to take home. Well, the pig, dinner, and everything I’d provided. Other stuff

was for me to try and ideas how to use my jams and convince me to make a deal with them.

It took a couple of hours for the last guest to leave and the cleaning to be finished, but with all the help it wasn't too bad. I made sure the last vehicle left and used the security panel Deon had installed to turn off access to the gates for the night. Sure, not all the fencing was in place yet but over half and all around the house.

“Can we talk? Please?” Finn asked from behind me.

“No. I'm too tired, and I think my head would explode if I tried to even figure out what the fuck was wrong with you.” I spun around and shoved him away when I felt him move closer. “There is a difference between playing around and playing with people. I won't just accept you playing with me.” I shook my head when he tried to argue. “Right, cock blocking me and letting little girls flirt with you all night.”

His eyes flashed shock. “I didn't. I mean, I wasn't always listening and they were talking around me, but I didn't—”

“I don't care,” I snapped. “Switch rooms away from me and go flirt with your little girls all you want. Just don't bring any into my house if you want to keep staying here.”

I spun on my heel and headed for the stairs. I wasn't doing this. I wasn't going to let him rain all over my parade.

“We made a deal, a binding deal,” he called when I wasn't three steps away.

I almost tripped over my sandals. “What?”

“We made a deal. You said it was binding.”

I felt tears burn my eyes. Fuck, I'd been so very, *very* wrong about him.

A witch couldn't go back on her word, so he absolutely had me. I turned and went back to him, giving him a look of hate before I sank to my knees.

“Wait, no, I didn't mean the blow job,” he argued, stepping away. “I mean, yeah, I want you like that—no, yes, but I wasn't trying to force you.”

I blinked up at him. “Do you even know what you’re saying right now?”

He blew a raspberry. “No, and I’m making this worse.” He gave me a destroyed look. “I would never just cash in for a blow job from you like that, Adrena. Never. I meant this wasn’t over. Fuck the deal. I release you from it. That’s what I say, right?”

“Yeah, that’s what you say,” I whispered, feeling it like a slap across the face. I took a few deep breaths before I pushed to my feet. “And that also means we’re done.”

“Wait, I didn’t mean that either.”

“Too late.” I grabbed an open bottle of wine on my way and headed to my room, locking the door behind me.

I was too tired to even call Meave or message Thora it had gone well. Instead, I plugged in my phone and went to take a cool bath. The temperature was dropping now, but it had gotten hot during the day and I felt the humidity on me.

I felt a lot on me I thought a nice soak would handle. Once full with some of Sia’s muscle ache bath salts, I slid in and dunked under before turning on the jets. I soaked a few minutes and then reached for the wine, yelping when I saw I wasn’t alone.

My eyes went wide and looked towards my door, knowing I locked it. “Did you break my lock?”

“Um, no, I managed to get up the balcony from your altar,” he muttered, clearing his throat as he seemed to struggle between not looking at me and raking his gaze over me. “And you need to lock your balcony door.”

“*Clearly*,” I drawled, pulling my knees to my chest and covering as much as I could. “Get out.”

“No, I can’t do that,” he rasped. “Please, *please*, just listen to me, Adrena.”

“You were talking downstairs—”

“I want real with you!” he half shouted. “I get how you saw it now, but that wasn’t how I meant it. I did this all wrong

and I don't want to—I *can't* end things with you. Please, just—I was trying to not push you.”

I stared up at him. “Are you fucking with me?”

“No, I swear it.” He let out a growl and fisted his hair as he started pacing my bathroom. “It made sense in my head. You had all of this going on and—”

“Okay, maybe you are dense because I gave you every sign to stay in my bed and I wanted more,” I grumbled.

“You did?” he asked, his eyes wide. “I wanted to stay in your bed. I hated leaving, but you said it was play. How—what signs?”

“Reaching for you when you got out of the bed is the universal sign of ‘don't go,’ you idiot.”

“I thought you were just letting me sneak another kiss,” he muttered before growling again and kneeling next to the tub. “I'm sorry. I'm a stupid, stupid man, but I want real. I wasn't going to tell you I didn't want you.

“What kind of fucking moron would do that? I thought we could celebrate tonight and make it real. I want to stay here and have a future here and I want you. I want both!”

I did a great impression of a fish. I couldn't believe what he was telling me and he'd missed so much. “How in the world did you come up with that being the way to go?”

“Because I'm a stupid man,” he repeated.

“Right, but there are—”

“Because I'm a virgin,” he blurted, and my eyes went comically wide.

“You said you've been with girls,” I argued.

He cleared his throat and focused on the water. “I've kissed a few, made out with and felt up one, but nothing—only with you really. I didn't want to sound like a useless idiot who couldn't please you. I mean, you have experience and—”

“Stop talking,” I ordered, amused when he snapped his mouth closed. I scooted over and knelt almost in front of him,

loving how his eyes at me up. “Did you want to give me your virginity?”

“Yes, I want to be yours, Adrena,” he murmured, leaning in.

I moved my fingers over his mouth before he kissed me but let his shirt get wet as he pressed against my naked tits.

“You did everything wrong and gave every signal you didn’t want real with me. So I’m having trouble believing you after weeks of that.” I waited until he nodded. “Maybe next time instead of acting like an experienced adult and falling flat, you *talk* to the adult you want to be with.”

Hurt filled his eyes, and no matter how big he was, he did a great impression of a scolded puppy. My ogre puppy. He nodded, kissing my fingers.

“I don’t know I’m able to just flip a switch and offer you real again,” I admitted, moving my fingers away as I sat back on my feet. It hit me hard that it was my truthful answer. “I spent the week putting up shields from the hurt that was clearly coming. Then you were a dick tonight at my party after saying it was because of the party that—”

“I know, I know, and I’m so sorry. Please, give me a chance to show you I’m serious and not playing games. I mean, fun games only, not mean ones.”

I studied his earnest expression and wanted to believe him. “And if I said sex wouldn’t mean we were real anymore?”

He reacted like I slapped him, getting he’d broken that trust and desire with me. He let out a slow breath and then met my eyes, his gaze determined.

“I’d still give my virginity to you because there is no one else I’d ever want to give it to or be with. I’d figure out a way to show you I *want* real instead of playing because I thought it was less stressful for you. Please, give me that chance.”

It was so ridiculously sweet, I found myself nodding before I even realized it. I was a damn idiot, but I wanted to believe him. “Okay.”

“Okay.” He let out a shaky breath. “Okay.”

He reached in the tub and plucked me out, ignoring my yelp and hitting the lever to drain the tub before carrying me to my bed. I watched as he yanked off his clothes as his eyes ate me up and I didn’t have the heart to remind him I hadn’t said we were actually going to have sex then.

“Is this how you want your first time?” I checked as he finished and knelt on the bed.

He nodded. “Yes, fuck yes, I need you, Adrena. I’ve been dying for you. I want my cinnamon and to be in you finally.”

I shivered, nodding when he moved over me. “I have the protection charm.”

“Right, babies and all of that,” he muttered, shaking his head. “Wow, I’m seriously nervous. Before, I was just aching, and now I’m freaking I won’t show you what I should and you’ll think I’m fucking with you again and—”

“Finn, shut up and just let me take the lead then.”

“Please,” he sighed, flopping down to the bed next to me. “I like it so much better when you boss me around and instigate. It’s so fucking sexy.”

“Oh, it is?” I chuckled as I turned and pushed him to lie back. I slid my leg over him and straddled his stomach.

“Yeah, it really is,” he moaned, running his hands over my wet skin. “I need you, Adrena.”

I licked my lips. “Offer me your virginity, Finn. Offer it up to Gaia with me.”

He worried his lower lip. “Will you call me your ogre again then?”

I frowned. “I’m not buying your—”

He let out a wordless shout and covered his face. “Fuck, I can’t say anything right. I fuck it all up and keep insulting you when all I want is to love you!”

I swallowed my shock on that last part because I didn’t think he’d meant he was actually in love with me. I moved his

arms away and laced my fingers with his. “I want you to be my ogre, but I’m not sure I trust you really are yet.”

“I deserve that,” he muttered, mostly pouting. “I am yours, Adrena. I offer my virginity to you. I offer all of me to you and Gaia. Do with me whatever you want. I’m an Adrena addict and you have to keep me. You said you would if I wanted you to. That was the deal I meant.”

“Okay, that’s much sweeter than demanding a blow job,” I admitted before lowering my lips to his. “Tell me how you want your first time, my ogre. I’ll get us there.”

He lifted his head and kissed me deeply. “I want you screaming my name and making every other man seem like a limp dick loser compared to what I give you. I want you to become as addicted to me as I am to you. I fucking *crave* to eat your pussy, cinnamon. I want you to crave me too.”

“I crave you when you’re sweet,” I confessed. I traced his lips with my tongue. “Tease my pussy like I’m your woman and you know I’m wet for you, my ogre. Cup my face and kiss me while you please me.”

“Gladly,” he growled, doing both in the next breath. He groaned as my tits rubbed against his chest and kissed me deeper. “So wet. You’re going to be my woman for real. I’ll show you. I’ll show you that I’m the only man for you.”

“Damn right, you will,” I agreed as I pushed his finger in me. He gave me another and I begged him for more. It hadn’t even been a week and I missed this passion, this need for each other. “Are you finally going to fuck my tight pussy with your little ogre?”

“Yes, and we both know he’s far from little,” he chuckled against my lips. “And I’m staying in your bed tonight too. I’ll keep it quiet around others, but from this moment it’s real to me, and I’m going to deserve my cinnamon who spoils me, not just sate her every need.”

Shit, that was hot. I came on his fingers, shocking him, and part of me hoped he didn’t catch on as it was sort of embarrassing, but part of me hoped he did so he’d really take

it seriously. “Flip me over and lick it up. Show me you’re an addict.”

He growled and did it, burying his face against me and making those delicious slurping noises that were hot, not over the top. I honestly had a new appreciation for his talented mouth knowing I was his first.

I shivered. Fuck, I was the only pussy he’d ever tasted. Damn, that was hot.

He brought me twice and then I pushed up, making him sit back on his heels. I climbed on his lap and moved his cock in the right spot, slowly sinking down on him. I cupped his face as I did so he looked at me.

“You’ll finish fast if I do what I should. That’s okay, we’ll keep going because you need me that much, and I want every drop of you to come inside me tonight.”

“Fuck, cinnamon, I almost came from that,” he groaned, attacking my neck and palming my tits. “I seriously like the idea of our everything mixing together inside of you. I’m not one of those assholes that talks of breeding women, but I just want us together, mixed.”

“I know what you mean,” I promised when he gave me a worried look he was messing up again. “Tell me how I feel, my ogre.”

“Heaven. You feel like heaven,” he murmured before his lips were on mine again. “You feel like mine.”

“Oh?” I chuckled, working his dick in me more. Shit, he really had a monster. It stretched me wider than any had before and I fucking *loved* it. I pressed my lips to his ear. “Are you sure? I’m a pain in the ass, a workaholic, and I have a huge sexual appetite.”

“Yes,” he hissed as he moved his hands to my ass and squeezed hard. “You’re not a pain in the ass at all. I’ll help you with all the work and I enjoy it too. And I promise you I’ll want to fuck as often as you do if not more. And eat your pussy. And anything else you’ll let me do.”

I kissed him quiet when he started listing ideas, not wanting to finish already either. I got as far as I was going to go down on him and started rocking my hips, hitting a good spot in me without going his full length and making him feel really good from the noises he was making. “Claim my pussy then, ogre.”

“Fuck,” he grunted and then growled my name as he came so hard inside of me that I would swear it set off my own orgasm.

“Fuck, baby, you need that,” I chuckled when we were done. “Want more?”

“Yes,” he hissed, pushing up and dropping me on the bed, his cock still inside me. “You didn’t fucking scream. Now you will.”

Game on.

8

Finneas

Sex was way better than I'd ever dreamed, and there was a goddess under me because after hearing how it all seemed to her, the fact she was even giving me another shot, made her a divine being. And being inside of her was heaven.

Hearing her scream in pleasure and beg for more might just kill me, but I didn't care and wanted more. I thrust harder and harder into her, way harder than I would have thought I could do without hurting a woman, but she loved it.

I loved it too, and pinning her hands down while she stared up at me with glazed eyes and dripping wet for me just made me feel fifty feet tall.

"This pussy is so mine now, cinnamon," I growled, spreading my legs wider so I got a better angle. She cried out in pleasure, arching her back as I hit something inside of her that I thought might be her cervix. That hurt women, right?

"Fuck, yeah, hit my cervix. Make me come that way like my man should," she demanded.

Okay then. I did what she wanted, my body going insane when she came again. I held off for a bit longer, but then my orgasm hit me like a train. I loved coming inside of her.

"Tell me I'm the only one," I demanded, almost wishing she would lie to me if it wasn't true.

Her eyes flashed shock as she gasped for air. Then she smiled, licking her lips. "Yeah, you're the only one to fuck me bare. That's the first time I had an orgasm from my cervix being hit. It was unreal." She moaned as I did it again. "Not something we can do every time. I'll be sore, but it will be worth it, but with your size, it's more once a marathon like anal sex will be."

My cock twitched in her, and I was pretty sure another spurt of cum came out at the mention of anal sex. “Will I be the only one bare in your ass too?”

“Yes, yes, you will if I let you. You were naughty, so don’t think everything’s forgiven and you get everything.”

“Never,” I promised, giving her a soft kiss. “I’m more than willing to take the time and show I deserve you. I’m sorry I hurt you, Adrena.”

She looked away. “Me too.” She let out a shaky breath. “I was trying to pull you closer even though it scared me because I was scared of losing this connection more and then I was the only one who felt it.”

“You weren’t,” I promised, my heart hurting like it was in a vice as I leaned down and kissed her neck. “It wasn’t just you. I’m just a fucking moron. I want only you, Adrena. I want a life with you, us together. I swear it.”

“I’m not asking you to promise me forever, just don’t fuck with me if you don’t want real.”

“I won’t. I want real.” I hoped that made it clear, but my head was mush, so I was probably screwing up again. “I want you again and again for real.”

She chuckled. “I think I’m done in. Today was just too—and so—yeah. I’m fading. Sorry. Was that enough for—”

“Yes,” I promised, giving her a soft kiss. “My cinnamon rocked my world in a way I never even dreamed my first time would be. Sleep, baby, and I’ll take care of you.”

“Don’t leave this time, you dumb ogre.”

“I won’t,” I promised, but she was already out, my cock still hard inside of her.

Fuck, I wanted her again, but even I knew it was a dick move to wake her for more sex. I was dense and inexperienced, not an asshole.

At least I tried not to be.

I got up for a washrag and cleaned her up, tucking her in and leaving to handle some things, but I was absolutely coming back. She just always seemed to get up before me, and I didn't want to risk she would this time too.

I took the ATV to the greenhouses, thinking of something Deon had told me about offerings even if we weren't witches. I hoped my virginity was enough of an offering to make the greenhouses go crazy and the magic was there too, so I figured it was the good place to do it.

"Please help her sleep and heal," I whispered as I stroked my cock and stared up at the glass ceiling. "Take everything from me, Gaia. I offer it all to my witch and you."

And then I masturbated in a few of the greenhouses, feeling like a total creepy perv but feeling the tingle of magic. It felt as if Adrena was touching me, and honestly it was seriously hot... Even if I was probably acting like a creepy perv.

I picked a bunch of her favorites so they were fresh for breakfast when she got up and then headed to the brewhouse where I'd stored her present. When I signed the contract, she'd deposited back pay so I had money of my own now.

I'd seen this booth of gorgeous flowers and knew it was perfect to celebrate her win of the party and I had still thought we'd be together after it.

Okay, it worked out that way but only because her heart was too big. I was still an asshole. I grabbed the bunches I'd fibbed and said were for the party and locked up before bringing everything back to the house. I put two of the bunches in water in the sink, the fruit on the counter, and then wrapped the last one in the only vase I could find for her room.

"You left," she whispered when I came back in. "Why did you leave? You think you can just come and go in my bed?"

I flinched and almost dropped the vase the pain in her voice was so thick. "I went to get your flowers I bought today."

“What?” she gasped, sitting up and blinking in the mostly dark room. She turned on the light on the nightstand and her eyes went wide as she took in the huge bunch of Gerber daisies. “Wow, those are gorgeous.”

“You’re gorgeous, these are just pretty,” I muttered, setting the vase down on her dresser and moving closer. “I hid them in the brewhouse, and you get up so early I wanted to surprise you.” I sat on the bed next to her and leaned over, kissing her cheek. “I wasn’t going to turn down your invite to sleep here. I just wanted to spoil you a bit.”

“Thank you, my ogre,” she purred, pulling my head down for a kiss. “I’m sorry I keep doubting you but—”

“I know, we’re new and I messed up. We’ll get there when I earn your trust back.” I slid my hand under the covers and cupped her breast. “When I show you that you’re mine.”

“Am I?” she challenged, giving me a heated look. “I must have missed that.”

I growled, having thought my dick was spent but apparently not. I undressed and moved over her, eating her out before making love to her in a way that seemed to shock her.

And that she really liked.

“I’m falling in love with you, Adrena,” I panted when we were done. “I know that’s what this is. Don’t give up on your dumb ogre. Please?”

“Never,” she whispered, hugging me to her when I got choked up. “You belong here with me. I feel it too. Just fight to make it over this bump, and I believe we’ll be okay.”

Thank fuck.

I cleaned her up again and pulled her to lay on my chest, loving how she fit against me, feeling so perfect and peaceful with her leg thrown over mine. This was what I’d always longed for, wanted, and didn’t even know it. And not just with any woman, I knew that. I wanted it with her.

She was everything.

I woke with a gasp, wet heat wrapped around my cock. I blinked up and Adrena was sitting on my little ogre.

She smiled sweetly at me. “He was poking me and begging for attention. I thought I’d show you why you should *always* stay in my bed.”

“Show me,” I agreed, moving my hands behind my head. I moaned as she started moving, itching to touch her but knowing that wasn’t the game we were playing.

Or apparently, I was wrong again.

“Touch my clit, my ogre. Grab my ass and show me you think it yours.”

Yeah, that was a much better idea. I did both, groaning as she played with her own tits. She was dripping all over my cock, and I was about to lose my mind when she orgasmed. I followed her right over and it was perfect.

Topped with another round of hot sex in the shower where I learned I *really* liked doggy style and fucking my witch good. Plus, the sounds she made echoing in the bathroom just got me seriously hot.

“Now that was better than coffee,” she purred as I showered her. “You’re doing a good job to reach your goal, my ogre.”

“Spoil you?”

She chuckled in that sated, sultry way I loved. “That too, but I meant making me a Finn addict. Tallulah told me she offers up every first she had with her virgin lover and I do mean *every* first and it was awesome. They’re working on every acre of her vast land too.”

“Shit, that’s hot,” I moaned, realizing I had felt the magic this morning too. I just associated it with her and how amazing it was that I didn’t differentiate magical tingling from sex to be separate from tingling from sex.

I actually felt bad for people who didn’t get to be with witches or in tune with the magic around them.

She was thrilled when she saw the fresh fruit I'd picked for her. She used them to make us pancakes which were my favorite when she made them. And part of that was her amazing fruit syrups.

"One day maybe you should expand and sell those too, cinnamon," I suggested as I cut into a huge stack. "Those are amazing."

"Thank you. Maybe. I thought maybe I'd pass those recipes on to another light witch who needs her own path and land and home." She cleared her throat, and I realized I might finally get more insight into her past and why the jams were so important to her. "The other recipes mean so much to me, which is why I can infuse them with my magic."

"Your family?" I tried, having thought she didn't know them.

She smiled sadly. "The only family I knew, but she was my foster mom. I was with her for five years and she was the best ever. She was from South America, mostly Brazil. She immigrated here and couldn't have kids, but then she found me and said we were a pair meant to be like sweet and tart."

"I'm sorry," I whispered, getting she was gone. I reached over and moved my arm around her, thrilled when she leaned into me.

"She got a lot of flak for taking me in. Here she fosters a child with the last name Gomes and they all assumed I was like them. Her sister was not kind about it and bitched constantly that she took in a little White girl instead of someone who really needed help. She blamed me when my mom had a heart attack, saying it was because I was spoiled and demanded too much of her."

"That's just shitty, no matter how much she was grieving too."

She nodded. "She wouldn't let me take anything, saying I was greedy, but I just wanted one of her blankets we'd made together. I got put back into the system since none of her family wanted me, said it was my fault. I was glad later she

didn't give me a blanket because it probably would have gotten damaged as I was bounced all around, and I would have been crushed if I'd set it on fire."

I didn't want her to talk about all her pain and hardships. Well, unless she wanted to, but I didn't think it helped, just poked old wounds. "I'm sure she'd be *very* proud of you for turning what she taught you into something so awesome."

"I hope so," she whispered against my chest. "That's why I wanted to make nice ones with the right moods. I can make people feel bad emotions too, and I get why Thora's asked me to and it was needed, but I just want happy. I want to spread happy and help people."

"You do. Your damn name means happiness, cinnamon. I know you were born to bring happiness to all who need it, including me."

"You know what my name means?" she asked, kissing my neck when I nodded. "And you just looked that up?"

"It's a pretty name and I was curious."

"Eat your pancakes, ogre, because you need to eat me after."

Fuck the pancakes, I went for her first. Twice.

And then I ate the pancakes that were still awesome. She was laughing so hard when I did that, I knew she was past her sad mood. Good.

I got my answer on the greenhouses and they had *exploded*. There was no hiding it before people started arriving, but Adrena reminded me we'd also been focused elsewhere, and the same people weren't in the same greenhouses every day to notice. Good point.

I had all the carts full and was driving a train over when most people were clocking in. "There's a lot to catch up on now that the launch is over. We're really light on the pickup tomorrow, so we're focused on pomegranates and jaboticaba so Adrena can have jelly going while we work. From there all the citrus since we're doing a massive juicing and sending the rinds. Then I want loofah."

I had Robby and Alice get their teams to start unloading and then went to assign a few of the college kids what teams to handle. I sighed when one gave me a look that I needed to chill out.

“Look, I get it, you’re older,” I said, realizing we’d just need to get this out. “But this is my career and it’s your part-time gig. So enough. I know the players and the parts, and this is the way things are. I’m going to be working right there with you, but I’m the manager.”

“And he has the authority to fire bad kids and recommend team leads,” Adrena sang as she walked by us.

“I do?”

“Yes, ogre, you do. Chop chop. We’ve got orders coming in fast and that’s also a lot to box in the cool AC to break from the greenhouses. But they gotta earn that AC.”

That seemed to work, not the AC perk, but knowing I could really fire them. They backed off then which was nice because it set a bad example for the other college kids.

And Adrena wanted to hire more. The farmers markets would stop, but she was having a store and offices built on the property.

But I appreciated the backup, and that night I made sure she knew it. I’d about jumped her in the pool and offered up our first pool sex to Gaia. I drilled her so good she was limp against me while we recovered.

“Fuck, my ogre, what did I do to deserve that because I want to do it again,” she said with a slight giggle as she curled up on my lap as I sat on the bench.

“You always deserve that, and if my woman wants to be fucked, I will beg to fuck her good,” I murmured in her ear. “But I wanted to make sure you knew how much I appreciated the backing today.”

She smiled up at me. “You back me and I back you. That’s how this works.”

Apparently, it also worked that if I appreciated her, she'd ride me in the pool. Hot. She was so fucking hot.

Things just kept getting better and better and I didn't mean sex-wise. No, the closeness and need were back.

I saw the shadows of doubt slowly leave her eyes every day I was clear I wanted her and we were real. And work was awesome. We were doing crazy things in the greenhouses, and with all the orders coming in, she needed it and hired more part-time work.

Spacing them to afternoons every other day and a full day on weekends was working well for sure. No matter how much we brought to the farmers markets, we sold out, and everyone was excited for that.

I was too but then really excited for how good of a mood it put her in Saturday nights after the win. She made a huge spread of smoked lobster tails and everything to spoil me rotten.

And that was before I got dessert.

I about swallowed my tongue as I brought in dishes and found her in nothing but super sexy lingerie. She sauntered over to me and took the plates, setting them down before her hands moved to my fly.

"I believe you. This is real."

"It is, I promise. I love you, Adrena." I'd been so scared to say it, but now it was so right that it just came out.

She beamed up at me. "I love you too, Finn." She gave me a soft kiss... And then dropped to her knees. She smirked at me as she pulled out my little ogre and licked him. "My man still hasn't gotten his first blow job. And now that I know he's mine, I'm going to suck him off good."

"Oh *fuck*," I groaned as she swallowed me down. Yeah, there wasn't much else to say. Oh fuck covered it pretty well. She hummed as she bobbed her head, playing with my balls as she also pumped my cock.

I offered my first to her and Gaia, always in the habit now even if I didn't say it. It was like saying thank you that she wanted me. I just needed to do it.

Like it was in my blood or something.

She swallowed me down but wasn't done with me, jerking me off and begging me to come on her tits. *Then* she had me fuck her tits.

"I need you," I panted when I was done, reaching for her.

"Tonight's about you, baby," she said gently.

"I *love* eating your pussy. That is for me. If you want our first sixty-nine or to tease me while I do—fuck, sit on my face, cinnamon."

She shivered and did, sucking me off again as I feasted on her. It was the hottest thing ever—well, everything was with her—and I just wanted this with her forever.

Thank fuck she seemed to want the same.

9

Adrena

For our month anniversary of being real—and I went off the date of Finn giving me his virginity—I had something special planned that I knew my man really wanted. I had toys and everything ready when it was time, but first I cooked him a thick steak, making every meat and dirty joke I could so he knew there were plans for after. Then I sat on his lap naked while we shared some cheesecake.

It was the craziest thing, but the man loved feeding me naked. It was like he needed me to know he didn't think me heavy and loved my body, loved my appetite and maybe for more than food.

“Carry me to bed, baby,” I purred in his ear. “I've got a surprise for our month anniversary.”

“I do too,” he admitted. “I asked Sia to come up with something special, but let's do it tomorrow.”

“You are so fucking amazing.”

He was. I'd never met a man who was so all about spoiling the woman he was with. He said I spoiled him but really, he spoiled me.

Maybe we spoiled each other and that was how it was really meant to be if it was going to last?

He carried me upstairs and his eyes went wide when he saw what was on our bed. Yes, our bed as he was moved out of the guest room and we shared my room and my bed once he confirmed no other man had ever been in it.

My man was super possessive and jealous and I thought it was hot.

“I'm not sure I deserve all of this,” he murmured, nuzzling my neck. “Is this what I think it is?”

“You’re going to fuck my ass tonight, my ogre, but first you’re going to learn how to get me ready so you can have me like that whenever you want.”

“Fuck, cinnamon, you really spoil me too much.” He kissed me desperately and set me on the bed, yanking off his clothes fast enough I heard a seam tear from his shirt. “Show me everything.”

So I did. I showed him how to use the lube right and it was edible, moaning as he ate my ass as he fingered me. Then we went onto anal beads and stretching toys that he used to give me so many orgasms I was about done in.

Not all of this was *needed* for anal sex, but it had been a long time since I’d had it and he was fucking huge so yeah, we were going to have a bit of fanfare to make it work.

“I’ll be gentle,” he promised when he knew I was nervous.

“Only because it’s been so long for me.”

His breath was hot as he kissed my neck. “How long? Tell me I’m the first man in years and the only to be bare in you.”

“Yes, years, and I already told you it was only you.”

“I know, but I love hearing you fucking admit it,” he growled as he gently pushed in me.

He groaned when I mewled and arched my back, wanting more. He was gentle, his hands tightening on my waist to let me know he was dying to just thrust in one shot. But no, he rocked us, and by then I was pretty ready and open, so I moved my hips back to take more of him.

“Shit, that’s it, cinnamon. Demand more.”

“Give me your cock, my ogre. You said it’s mine.”

“It is yours,” he promised. He bottomed out so his hips touched my ass and then leaned over, nuzzling my neck. “I’m seconds from blowing. Give me a minute.”

I moaned, loving when I could drive him that crazy he couldn’t hold out. His stamina was growing the more we played, but I still loved that I could completely own him. I

moved my body and he swore under his breath, realizing he'd waved the red flag in front of the bull.

"I'm going to keep fucking you until I go soft now, cinnamon."

"Game on," I whimpered as he moved faster. He finished and then kept right on going after a moment because he was still hard. He felt *fantastic*. That line of too much and just right blurring along with pain and pleasure. "Fuck me until I can't feel my body, my ogre."

Now I'd waved the red flag in front of him. He thrust hard and deep but not fast. It was like I had just enough time to take in a breath before he slammed into me and it all came out in a rush. It was glorious, and I came harder than I ever had from anal sex.

And he wasn't nearly done with me.

When he was, I'd lost count of all the orgasms, melting into the bed as he *finally* went soft. Dear fuck, my ogre could really fuck.

"You're a monster," I moaned, glad when he chuckled and slipped out of me. He flopped onto the bed next to me and like he always did, immediately reached for me like he couldn't bear the idea of not holding me after sex.

"You made this monster," he murmured, kissing my hair. "That was so much better than the amplifying lotion I got from Sia."

"I don't know, we haven't tried it," I argued. "Amplifying what? Pleasure? I think that might kill me."

"No, power. Deon said she was working on it for her hidden list, and I asked to let you test it since you've had all these orders. It would be nice if we were working from a stockpile instead of so much crazy. For you. I'm fine."

"I have been getting flustered lately," I accepted, knowing what he meant. "I think I know what it is. It amplifies when we absorb totems like if we use a familiar as an amplifier."

“Use me however you can, Adrena. I want to help you like that.”

I froze, slowly glancing up at him with shock. “You’ve never said you wanted to be my familiar, just with me.”

He frowned, hurt in his eyes when he looked at me. “Of course, I do. I want you *forever*. I’ve said that. I want all of you and you’re a witch, so of course I accept that. Did you think I just wanted until I died? That would be horrible for you.”

“No, I just didn’t think on it yet,” I admitted. “You’ve just never used that word.”

He sighed. “Because I didn’t know much about it, but I’m learning from Deon, Levi, Theo, and even some from Ash. Logan says it’s like the next level of offering up since Tallulah can’t summon spirits. I never wanted to ask, but you don’t either.”

“I can’t,” I sighed. “Dark spirits can sense certain things like fucking beacons. A witch who hurt herself is a mother fucking beacon. Thora showed me once and it was bad. I could never do it on my own. But I have totems too. There are other ways.”

He tensed under me. “I would think I give you everything you need, and those ‘other ways’ aren’t needed anymore.”

I smiled against his skin. “You think I could even try to handle another man when you fuck me like that? It’s only you, my ogre, I promise.”

“Good.” He huffed, sounding like a big ogre since he knew it tickled me. “I’m not saying we bond permanently as there’s no rush, cinnamon. But yeah, use me like a familiar. I want to. You’re not going to pull out my intestines on your altar, so use me.”

“No, but I will ride you and blow you on that altar every full moon.”

“Why would you think I’d be against *that*?” he drawled. “Yeah, sign me up twice. I want to be your familiar, Adrena.”

Apparently, my body could still keep going because that was so hot I asked him to stop neglecting my pussy and fuck me some more. After that, I was seriously done, but he learned that referring to himself as not just my man but my familiar was a good button to push on a witch.

Yeah, most of us.

Sunday was its normal crazy, but it was nice to really get into a schedule better. We harvested a lot of loofah for Sia and juiced a fuck ton of fruit. I think both of us needed that and it helped.

Not just because it went to my best sellers as I was pretty evenly selling the jams unless they were spicy options, but working hard didn't have to be so frazzled.

But he insisted we try some takeout he went to get, saying enough with my making him breakfast, lunch, and dinner every damn night with how much cooking I was doing of jams. It made me feel special and seen, appreciated, so I let him.

He even got enough that we had a few lunches of leftovers, which I really appreciated.

School was out now and the temperature was getting crazy. I woke with a start Monday morning thinking it had been too hot so early so we'd left the balcony door open, but that wasn't it.

"What's wrong?" Finn asked, his voice heavy with sleep.

"I don't know. I feel like something's coming," I admitted.

"Woman, the only thing that's coming is me while inside my delicious witch with the thick ass and huge tits I was just dreaming about. Get on my cock."

I blinked at him. "Are you still sleeping?"

"Maybe. It just came out."

"We'll have to check the calendar. I'm not awake enough yet to think where the moon is or what events are around the corner." I slid my leg over him and pushed up to straddle him. "Now what were you demanding, my ogre?"

“Get on my cock,” he growled, moaning deeply when I did. “I so fucking love you, Adrena.”

“Love you too, baby,” I murmured, swallowing tears.

I really did. He had so quickly become everything to me and everything I’d ever wanted.

He was extra tender with me after, always like that when he got demanding and rough with me. Which meant I loved when he did because it was fun, but also I knew what was after.

Hell, he was practically cooing at me over coffee and breakfast.

We got to work and the pickup arrived, Finn all over that, but about an hour later my phone buzzed from the gate, and I couldn’t think of what it was. I looked at my screen and saw Sarah waving.

Right, she was going out of town and asked me to get her mail for the next two weeks and keep an eye out, and she’d stopped to pick up some goodies for the trip.

I buzzed her in, and that feeling I’d had when I woke up was back. Right, the husband. He was probably with her. I tried to remember his name as I headed for the door, nodding when I remembered it was Peter.

And Peter had something dancing in his eyes I didn’t like. Then a victorious smirk formed on his lips like he’d been vindicated or won some argument, and I took the risk, using my power to check his aura.

He flinched and smiled widely. “Hello, witch.”

“Ahhh, that explains a lot,” I chuckled darkly, getting my power ready and feeling my charms jump to life at the threat.

“I told you she’s not a witch,” Sarah sighed. “Enough, Peter. I know your parents were all kinds of crazy but—”

“Yes, hunters are fucking nuts,” I agreed, not taking my eyes off of him. “But he can feel the magic. It’s in his blood.”

“What? No, you can’t really be a witch,” she argued. “You’re not evil or—”

“Not all witches are evil,” Finn cut in as he joined us. “Adrena is a light witch.”

Peter snorted. “There’s no difference.”

“There *is*,” Finn snapped.

He shot him a look like he was dense. “She uses her powers to fuck with people’s minds. You seriously think to defend that?”

“She helps their *moods* and to sleep. Yeah, what a bitch,” he drawled as he moved closer to me. “Why is he not dropping from Briony’s spell? Does he not have witch blood on him?”

I winced, not having realized he knew that much about the fence and the spell she put on it that I had to power up. “I can’t have that part of it. I have light witch blood on my hands too.”

Peter snorted. “Oh right, you’re one to judge me then.”

“I have *my blood* on my hands, you asshole,” I seethed. “I didn’t know what I was because zealots like you probably killed my parents and I was put in foster care. I tried to kill myself.

“Technically, I died for a few moments, and that blood is on my hands. That is *not* the same as the blood I see in your fucking aura. You’ve killed at least two light witches as it stains your aura.”

“You’ve killed people?” Sarah whispered, giving her husband wide eyes as she took a step back. “You said it was self-defense.”

I chuckled darkly, answering before he could. “Hunters believe it’s always self-defense with abominations like witches. Funny because they rob and steal their magic, so they’re also hypocrites.”

“So he’s one too?” Peter asked, assessing us like he was ready to get on with things.

“Touch her and I’ll fucking end you,” Finn warned.

“Oh, he’s not going anywhere with blood on him like that and to warn his hunter friends,” I promised. I moved to launch the right spell to incapacitate him, but Sarah’s next sentence froze me.

“I’m pregnant!”

Peter’s head snapped in her direction and he finally looked at his own wife instead of excited for the kill he saw about to happen. His nostrils flared and rage filled his eyes that even made me want to shiver. “You’re what? You tricked me.”

“No, it was—”

“You lying fucking whore! I told you no kids *ever*.”

“It was an accident,” she rasped, taking a few more steps away and towards me which was smart. “Jesus, we even tell the kids at school that birth control isn’t foolproof. Nothing is a hundred percent.”

“We’ll get rid of it,” he declared.

“What?” she gasped. “I know you don’t want kids because of how you were raised, but you got out of that life, and we don’t—”

“There’s no ‘getting out’ of being a hunter, Sarah,” I told her gently. “He’s been lying to you. They kill their own who try to get out because it’s betraying their calling. Sort of how the Black and Evans families of hunters went after their sons.” I smirked when he flinched. “Yeah, friends of yours?”

“You murdered them?” he seethed, taking a threatening step towards me but stopping when I brought fireballs in my hands.

“No, but that was *actually* self-defense as they showed up with a fucking rocket launcher to take out their kids who didn’t want to hunt innocent people who don’t hurt anyone even if they have magic,” I sneered. “That’s what he’s not telling you, Sarah.

“He’s *not out*. He might get to live on the line and have a normal life if he’s still loyal and helps on hunts, kills witches he finds, but if he has a *child*—”

“He’s required to make it go through their zealot school or they’ll kill him and take the kid,” Finn muttered. “You too if you’re not on board.”

“That’s *insane*,” Sarah hissed, moving her arms protectively over her stomach.

“It is but look at his face. See the rage and death in his eyes,” I told her. “For me, for your baby, and how it will ruin his life.”

“You lecture and judge me, but you’ve taken a fucking *slave*,” Peter bellowed, gesturing to Finn. “Sarah’s told me how you work him like a dog, and he follows his bitch around like he’s mindlessly in heat.”

“That’s not what I said,” Sarah snapped. “I said he stares at her with puppy love eyes and I wondered if it was more.”

“It’s more, but he’s not my familiar, so don’t think if you get one of us we’ll both go down,” I warned Peter but realized she was still close to him and I needed a distraction. “Finn, get Sarah out of here.”

He moved closer to her, and that was the moment Peter reacted, going for his *wife* to handle his unborn child as he saw that as a bigger threat than I was.

I extinguished the fireball and launched the spell to incapacitate him and moved in front of Sarah just in case. Peter went down like a rock, totally out. I let out a slow breath.

“He was going to hurt me,” Sarah whispered. “You killed him?”

“No, he’s just out,” Finn guessed. “We need answers and who he’s been talking to.”

“We do, get him in their vehicle and to the house. I’ll get Sarah with the ATV,” I ordered, spinning around to face her, gently grabbing her arms. “Focus, Sarah.”

I waited until she met my eyes.

“I know this is a lot and scary, but you have to choose and fast. They will come for your baby. They will take it from you

and probably kill you as they're low on numbers and you're growing a magic-sensing new recruit."

"I-I, he..." She glanced down at her stomach and I saw it in her aura, the shame as she thought something she didn't think a mother should.

"It's your choice and nothing anyone should judge."

I swallowed loudly and tried to push down my own feelings that life was sacred. I never blamed women who chose abortion, especially for health reasons, but for me, I could never do it with how tied to life I was.

"But witches believe something different than hunters. They were gifted the ability to sense magic, not to harm or kill witches. It's so they could find their other half as they are destined to love and protect witches.

"Find males with witch blood and bring more light to the world as we live to help the planet and those who live here. Not all witches are evil, just like all humans aren't. I know this is too much and terrifying, but we can keep you safe."

"What?" she rasped, her eyes going wide.

I nodded. "I'm part of a network of light witches, Sarah. We save others and have even helped hunters who don't want to hunt. You have other options, but right now I need to call for help to handle Peter.

"They're going to need answers from him to keep Finn and me and others safe. Right now, I need you to agree to let me do this and go with them. They can give you more answers, okay?"

"Okay, yeah, okay," she rasped, tears filling her eyes. "I knew he had a dark past and was too controlling, but then he'd go on a hunting trip and..." She let out a sob as the last piece of the horror puzzle she didn't know she was part of was filled in.

Yeah, those hunting trips weren't for deer, but witches, and he was happy when he got home after having murdered a person. Ouch.

I got her on the ATV and we drove over to the house. Just as we reached there, my phone beeped for the gate, and I about lost my mind with worry. Hadn't Finn just come in with the code?

Yes, he was there parked and about to pull Peter out of his vehicle, so who the fuck was at the gate?

Oh shit.

I checked and fear surged, but I swallowed it down to hit the intercom. "Yes? Who are you?"

"Carter Black. Theo should have let you know I was coming?"

"I've got a bunch of messages I didn't hear and haven't checked," Finn admitted, pulling out his phone. "I was coming to find you that I thought something was up." He cursed under his breath. "Yeah, from Theo saying there's an emergency and Carter's coming with Demi."

I buzzed Carter in and saw the resemblance to Theo better when he parked and got out. The few pictures I'd seen from Briony were clear though and this was definitely a relative.

I closed the distance between us and punched him with all I had.

"Adrena!" Sarah gasped as Finn moved up next to me, ready to jump in.

"That is for the life you took that was full of light," I snarled.

"I'm sorry," he whispered, adjusting his jaw. "I am. I thought—"

"I heard, but I'd met her, and it just came out seeing you."

He nodded. "I accept that. I deserve it."

"Good you realize that." I waved everyone inside, not wanting to risk anyone else seeing what they shouldn't. I gave a nod to the woman who was probably Demi who just frowned like she wasn't thrilled at the warm reception.

Yeah, well, I wasn't perfect.

“How did you know?” I asked once we were all in the kitchen, Peter on the ground with my spell.

“We were listening in on someone to get more names and locations and Peter called them,” Carter explained. “He said he might have a lead on a witch, and he planned to confirm it and would call in for handling.

“They made a stink that he had to handle you and they would send cleanup. When he argued it could hurt his cover here, they bitched he had a cover and could change that.

“Also, that if he really told his wife like he’d said, there wouldn’t be any problem. They were already pissed he picked someone infertile so to get his shit together if he wanted to keep being his own half-dedicated team.

“Then they called someone else and said to check up on the situation, and they were fairly certain Peter wasn’t loyal anymore as they doubted the wife knew, and if that was the case, take care of it.”

Take care of it?” Sarah whispered, sitting heavily on one of my kitchen stools.

Carter nodded. “Kill you and Peter. You knew enough to be a threat, and it’s against the rules to marry someone who can’t birth the next generation of hunters.”

“He lied. She was on birth control, but she’s pregnant,” I told him.

“So there’s no chance of rehabilitating this one?” Demi checked, shooting Peter a worried look. “We’re sure?”

Finn snorted. “He went for Sarah when she told him she was pregnant. No, there’s no rehabilitating someone who would hurt their wife and kill their unborn child against the mother’s wishes to protect themselves.”

“We were handling another situation and were closest to get to you fast,” Carter continued. “If you can keep the spell going for at least a day as I think it’s like a twenty-hour drive back to Wyoming, Demi will leave now with Peter and Sarah. We don’t know when the backup will arrive, but I’ll stay and

check out their place and find what we need to while Briony handles the story with Larissa.”

“You want me to go with a strange woman to Wyoming?” Sarah checked when I looked at her.

“Yes, because I know Briony, and I know she’ll help you. If there is *anyone* I would trust to protect you and your baby, it’s Briony. That woman is fierce and lethal when it comes to keeping people safe. Thora and the others who are older have too much else going on.”

She scrubbed her hands over her face. “They’re going to kill Peter, aren’t they?”

“Yes, once they get what they need from him,” I said again. “You’re not safe with him alive either, Sarah, and he’s murdered people. There’s no jail for witch murderers.”

“And his own people would kill him in regular jail as it’s made clear to us early on that if we’re caught, we’re dead as it risks us all,” Demi muttered, focusing on anywhere but looking at us. “We’re brainwashed early on stuff like that.”

“Yes, but unlike you who wants to do what’s right now that they’ve gotten help, Peter was excited he got to kill us,” I told her gently. “That’s a big difference.”

We talked for a bit about what the vacation plans had been and how fast people would come looking for Sarah. We had a bit of time, but she was too shaky to get in a vehicle and leave just yet.

“Why don’t we get some goodies for the trip and they can bring some to Briony?” I suggested. “We have a bit of time before anyone else will start showing up.”

“Yeah, okay, a bit in the greenhouses,” she rasped and about booked it to the door, careful not to look at Peter.

That made sense. I’d have problems with that too. Demi went after her, but Carter made no inclination to move yet.

“So are all light witches ridiculously hot as like part of being on the side of good or am I just lucky to meet them all?” Carter asked. I blinked at him, finding the bold flirt a bit hot,

but Finn growled, moving behind me and wrapping his arms around me. “So you’ve got a familiar.”

“Not yet, and Briony has two so—” I gasped as Finn shoved one hand in my shorts and under my panties while the other went up my tank top and pinched my nipple hard.

“I’m going to fuck you all night and make you scream that I’m enough.”

“You are, my ogre, you are,” I panted. “I was just teasing.”

“Not funny,” he growled, nipping my neck. “You said you’re all mine. That means no looking for others.”

“You should totally fuck me in front of him and show him how well you take care of me.”

“Shit, I so want to now,” he groaned. “Is he staying here?”

“I will if I get to watch her be fucked,” Carter chuckled, shaking his head as he followed after Demi and Sarah. “How anyone lies this is the bad side is insane unless they’re prudes. It’s the naughty side.”

“We are,” I called after him, moaning as Finn pinched my clit. “I really was teasing him because he was so bold. I’m not shopping for anyone else, baby.”

“You will scream that tonight while I fuck your tight ass and he watches. Now come for me.”

Shit, that was hot, and I actually did. A small orgasm, but he seemed happy he could control my body the way I owned his. That was hot.

Really hot and something we were going to explore after the next round of crazy.

Epilogue

Two and a Half Years Later

Adrena

“Adrena, I’m going to trip and crush you walking around with a blindfold on,” Finn grumbled as he stumbled after me. “I told you I didn’t need anything for my twenty-first birthday. You spoil me every day and I like that better than presents.”

“Well, I wanted to give you something extra special and for us.” I opened the door in the back part of the house that no one would stumble upon.

Plus, I’d put in a lock.

“Don’t move,” I ordered as I let go of his hand, waiting until he nodded and ignoring the sigh. I took off the dress so I was only wearing lingerie I knew he would love and stiletto heels. “Okay, open your eyes, my ogre.”

He did, blinking and immediately locking on me. “I take it back, I fucking love presents, and I’m going to unwrap you and enjoy you all fucking night, cinnamon.”

“I hope you do but look around. That’s your gift.”

He eyed me over a few seconds longer but then moved on, his eyes bugging comically wide when he saw he was standing in our new play room... The adult kind.

I’d taken a page from Briony and gotten the room set up, decorated, and honestly it was really difficult to have managed it without him noticing. He was so shocked, he did a great impression of a fish.

I took that moment to kneel in front of him, opening his fly, and bringing out his little ogre that instantly grew in my hand. “Happy birthday, my love, my ogre, and, I hope, my familiar.” I swallowed him down as his gaze snapped to mine.

“You’re serious? You’re asking me to bond with you?” He beamed at me when I nodded. “Best present ever. Yes. Yes, cinnamon, I want us together forever. I absolutely want to bond with you and be your familiar.”

I hummed happily and moved his hands to my head, sucking harder and harder as he tangled his fingers in my hair and moaned. He came fast and I swallowed it all. The second he was finished, he plucked me off the ground and wrapped me around him.

“I love you. Bond us. Bond us now before you change your mind or something happens and I lose you.”

“You won’t lose me,” I whispered, knowing how scared he was that would happen after all we’d been through when we were younger.

After sharing magic and using him as my familiar on the full moon, we shared dreams, and he’d seen my nightmares of when I tried to commit suicide. Ever since then, he’d been worried I could go to such a dark place if not grounded.

And I loved him for caring so much about me.

“Please do it,” he rasped against my lips. “I want this more than anything.”

“Next full moon, I promise. I’m sorry it took me so long to be ready.”

“You were worth the wait and the smarter of us to be patient,” he promised.

“Do you want to restrain your witch and make her scream? I won’t run.”

“Fuck,” he groaned, deeply and with feeling. He restrained my hands over my head and dropped to his knees this time. I screamed in bliss as he attacked my pussy.

And then he fucked it.

And then he fucked my ass.

And then he promised to do it all over again and did.

“Thank you for choosing me, loving me,” he whispered when we were done.

“Thank you for choosing me, loving me,” I said right back, kissing him deeply. “Take off the cuffs. I want to touch you too.”

He smirked at me as he stepped away and went for his clothes. “Not just yet.”

I pursed my lips as he pulled out his phone, angling it before I heard clicking. “You’re going to get punished.”

He snorted. “Your idea of a punishment is my idea of a good time, cinnamon.” He moved closer and lifted my leg so he could take a picture of the mess he’d made of me. “Shit, this is really fucking hot.” He moved behind me and spread my ass cheeks for more. “Holy fuck, Adrena, I think I found a new kink.”

“Well, I was hoping we could explore just about every kink which was why I put in a play room.”

He chuckled deeply, setting down his phone and palming my tits. “Yeah, you mumble in your sleep about having your ogre chain you up and fuck you all he wants. For the record, I plan to, and you will love every second of it, my naughty witch.”

I had absolutely no doubt about that.

The End

THANK YOU for reading this book!!

Thank you so much for trying a different series of mine. This is for those of you who said they missed the naughty, naughty novellas and sparked something in my head. I woves all of you lots for your continued support and wanting more of my books.

If you want more, please leave a review! It really helps me out (and to know which series people are looking forward to the most most) and it’s encouraging. I appreciate the support!!

Hugs to you all,
Erin

Find A New Series To Love...

Accidentally Wolf

Seraphine Thomas 1

Special Agent in Charge, Seraphine Thomas, lives for her job at the FBI. One of the youngest female agents with her own team, she thrives in undercover work to make the city she loves safer. But Sera's on-track life is thrown into chaos when she's attacked during a bust gone bad and is left figuring out what it means to be a werewolf.

Right away, she learns that she's more powerful and able to do things that she shouldn't be able to do so quickly after her transition. The rules of her old life don't seem to apply to much now that she's a shifter, and knowing who she can trust is even more complicated.

When she's transferred to a special branch of the FBI made up of paranormals policing others of their kind and given a promotion, things start looking up—until her abnormal level of power creates a list of enemies for her before she's even learned who her allies are.

Seraphine Thomas is a crime series filled with Chicago attitude and a strong heroine that pushes what most would think a female lead capable of, along with the heat being involved with several men brings while trying to figure out what she wants.

Upended Life

Artemis University 1

My name is Tamsin Vale and my life is about to get real... Really complicated and ridiculously dangerous. Which is almost funny given at nineteen I already know too much of the darkness of the world and people, the secrets they keep.

Or so I thought.

Turns out those quirky abilities I've been keeping secret expose me to a world I didn't know existed. Sure, I knew I wasn't human—but how exactly do I find out more without ending up in the wrong hands?

And I'm not so sure I'm in the right hands now given some of the reactions to finding me. They say I'm the last fairy. I'm not sure I should trust them when their thoughts are mostly of power and how to use me.

But I'm also not sure I have much of a choice. My powers are dangerous and I don't know how to use them. They promise to teach me what I need to know and give me a chance at something I've never had before.

A normal life. I don't think anything about Artemis University and those who attend is normal, but it's still better than the life I've been living if they keep half their promises.

I think hoping they'll keep half is generous.

Artemis University is a hot burning reverse harem, university-age paranormal academy series with darker elements, strong language, violence, and a heroine who follows her own moral compass of what is right... And who she ends up giving her heart to.

Avery 1

Tantalizing Trilogies 1

Avery Walker has lived a life of being bullied, abused, and taken advantage of by people. Because of how early it started, and with her family being the worst offenders, she stopped pushing back or expecting anything else from life. But when a student slaps her in class and the school tries to sweep the incident and her feelings under the rug, Avery hits the breaking point.

What a perfect time to play the lottery, right?

All of Avery's bad luck she's suffered with her whole life gives her one moment of good luck and she actually wins the largest jackpot on record... But what now?

Ryder James is a vampire who is trying to make changes in his life when he meets Avery who helps him see the world in a different way.

Griffin Peterson is an Alpha werewolf that has been so focused on his pack that he forgot he needs things as a man until Avery stepped into his life.

And Lorenzo Ganan is a warlock suffering because of the tragedies that have struck his family and Avery makes him feel as if he might be able to open his heart again.

But can any of these men be the right one for a woman who has been so beaten down by life?

Tantalizing Trilogies is a series of trilogies by author Erin R Flynn. The worlds will be different, the characters won't intermingle or overlap, and each trio stands alone... But with the convenience of always being in the same location. No confusion here, simply strong females, hot romances, and a bit of kicking ass and taking names.

No Longer Home

House of Garner 1

My name is Inez Garner, and my story has sort of been told... But not. I'm turning twenty-three and find out I'm not human; I'm apparently a vampire. Sure, who hasn't read that story? Oh, but I'm a princess. And there's a zombie apocalypse—although I'm debating where the line is of apocalypse vs. post-apocalypse. There's also a quest that I'm compelled to be on, and it might all be coming from the Goddess.

Awesome. It seems She has big plans for me. And I have to deal with ghosts. When I kill corrupted—the nice PC name

people call zombies, as it's not their fault they eat people—I then have to deal with their ghosts. Which is super when being hunted for years by some guys I don't want to know better.

Add to everything, I have to apologize to heroines for judging them when they fall in bed with the hot guy and buy the story he gives. I get it now. Sex is splendid. I'm not one to believe a con, but he's got answers I need, like why I have no memories before I was eighteen.

Plus, the fangs sort of sold it for me. I hope he forgives me for shooting him.

House of Garner is an apocalyptic, hot burning, reverse harem romance with darker elements, strong language, violence, and a heroine who doesn't let anyone get in her way.

Rough Beginnings

Karma Bakery 1

Imagine there weren't three main gods of Olympus, but four. A sister who went through something so horrible, so traumatic she left and was written out of history.

Arabella Baker and her two adopted daughters are moving to Boston to open a new business and start over. Things will be different this time with the new names and new life. The twins will live on their own at college—though still right in Boston—and experience something a bit more normal. The store she bought has a hefty price, but the location is fantastic, and she got the best spot in the new development... Which apparently comes with an immensely attractive man who owns it all.

Nothing goes smoothly in opening a new business though, sample days, crazy busy, and fluff interviews taking dark turns. Honestly, it leaves Arabella asking one main question—why did she think opening in such a large city and right before the holidays was such a great idea?

Karma Bakery is a slow-burning romance with multiple interested parties that is full of sugar, spice, and everything

nice while trying to find your place in life, doing the best you can, appreciating what you have, and figuring out a way to move beyond a traumatic past.

Undisclosed Assets

Untraceable Succubus 1

A succubus working as a stripper sounds like a cliché or start of a bad joke, but Lola Chase is in a human only province in Canada for other reasons. Someone is murdering women society looks down on, and she's there to stop it. As a demon, she's bottom of the supernatural food chain and knows how often people ignore crimes against them.

From the start there isn't much to go on, and she ends up getting in a bit of trouble following any leads she gets. Things get complicated when an ancient, big name vampire takes interest in her and getting away from him proves to be much harder than her normal admirers.

Thankfully, although her cover is a stripper, Lola loves to dance and the fun she has helps balance out the stress and worry of the case.

Plus, she finds some very hot men to play with and feed from. The question is whether or not she can balance it all and find a murderer before he kills again.

Untraceable Succubus is a murder mystery series where the sex is hot and often and the main character kicks some serious ass on the road to finding out if she can have real love in her life even if it comes from multiple men.

Demon of Death

Enchantress 1

Soraya Devil is the Enchantress, one of the most powerful magics in the world... But she's so much more than that, and

everyone's constantly attempting to unravel her past and secrets. She's not worried though, as many have tried and never find out the truth.

It's safer for everyone that way.

The owner of Paranormal Investigations—among other companies—she has her own answers to find. Though she's continuously pulled in too many directions, she always answers the calls that make even her magic tingle in warning at the danger.

When a sprite begins killing people in Chicago, she has to team up with SPU—Supernatural Police Unit—to figure out who summoned the demon and why before more die. While that's enough of a challenge, the main hurdle is the team lead on the case who loathes all magics. But when he can't seem to get past his hate and do his job, can Soraya make an ally from an enemy, or will the evil unleashed in the city she loves win the day?

The Enchantress is a fast paced ride of sexy fun while balancing the needs of her coven, police investigations, work, supes, and the world that wants so much from her and still trying to move on from her past to find the love we all deserve.

Meave

Naughty Witches 1

Leaving NYC and a troubling past, Meave Washington is starting over. She has a good plan, but she's probably bit off more than she can chew. So she embraces the chance of fate that lands help at her feet—and if he's smoking hot, all the better.

Distracted by a text while driving, Ashton Perry injures Meave. He's horrified that he could have killed someone, and steps up to make it right... And not just because she's the most beautiful woman he's ever seen.

Sparks immediately start flying and the desire is undeniable but it's not that simple to take the leap. But Ashton's barely a man, and Meave is hiding something important. When the woman is older, age isn't just a number and Meave isn't sure Ashton can be who she needs.

Ashton steps up to prove he's not just a man, but the man his bewitching lady deserves. He doesn't care what she is—only who she is. And he'll do whatever it takes to prove it.

Naughty Witches is a burning paranormal romance novella series with strong female leads, fun so sexy it raises the temperature, and mismatched people who find HEAs that give us all hope fate won't forget us. Each book is a new pairing in the same world, with an overall series arc.

The Turning

Dr. Kelly Murphy 1

Graduate medical school, start competitive internship, don't get cut from the program, become a surgeon. It was a great plan. One Kelly Murphy loved and had dreamed of most of her life... And it was blown to hell in a night with an uninvited bite.

Now she's missing three days of her life, trying to handle her freaked out best friend and parents who called the police when she went missing, all as she realizes she's not the same person she was before. She's different. Like has fangs different.

When he shows up on her doorstep claiming to know what happened to her, Kelly's not sure that makes things any less confusing. But at least he can guide her, right? Either way, she has a plan and a choice she didn't make won't stop her... Even if she might have the urge to bite her patients from now on.

Owned

Secure Settings 1

Kate Boyle has lived through more loss than most people twice her age. She's strong and independent, so letting people in to help her handle her grief or problems is next to impossible for her.

The owner of a successful company, Secure Settings, Kate devotes all her time to keeping people safe and rescuing those who can't save themselves. When she gets the call that her grandpa died and she's now inherited his ranch, a storm of epic proportions starts. Smart enough to know she can't watch out for danger while grieving, she calls in a favor for help.

Jared and Dean Acker just got out of the Marines and are a little lost as to what comes next for them. So when they're asked to back up a friend of a friend, they're in... And meet the woman of their dreams. Now, if they could just convince her.

Wounded

In My Dreams 1

Gas station coffee is the highlight of Lily Slone's boring outing until fate intervenes... Along with the barrel of a gun and a lost soldier who saves her life.

Jasper Hutson—a homeless Marine, discarded by his family after returning home from the war wounded—reacted on instinct. But this one act brings him to Lily's attention, and not because he saves her life. She sees something else in him. Something no one else sees.

Refusing to give up on him when everyone else does, Lily offers Jasper a place to stay and an opportunity to get back on his feet. That one offer will change her world. When they grow closer and Jasper makes Lily's life so much easier, she's not sure she can go back to living without him.

As life moves forward and they get into their own rhythm, Lily discover something about Jasper that he's kept hidden.

Will she continue to reach for her happily ever after or will they both remain wounded?

About the Author

Erin is a Midwest girl at heart, born a Chicagoan with the mouth to prove it, a loyal Cubs fan, but still a die-hard Green Bay Packers gal who cheers for her alma mater, the Illini from Augusta, Georgia, where she lives. She has always been interested in the darker aspects of life and mythologies—especially vampires, shifters, the occult, and anything paranormal.

To date, she has published over 100 paranormal books in different genres with dedicated readers who await each release to her numerous series under any of the three Flynn names she writes under.

ErinRFlynn.com

linktr.ee/erinrflynn

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NAUGHTY WITCHES

Meave

Briony

Sia

Tallulah

Larissa

Adrena

DR. KELLY MURPHY

The Turning

The Transition

The Decision

SECURE SETTINGS

Owned

Claimed

IN MY DREAMS

Wounded

Alone

Broken

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Naughty Witches 6: Adrena

eBook ISBN:

First E-book Publication: February 2024

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