



GILDED GODDESS

GILDED EMPIRE SERIES BOOK TWO

JILLIAN FROST

GILDED GODDESS

Gilded Empire Duet

Book 2

JILLIAN FROST

Also by Jillian Frost

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Chapter One

OPHELIA

ORCHESTRA MUSIC FILLS THE SILENCE IN THE BANQUET HALL. I STAND AT THE back of the room, clutching a bouquet with white flowers stained to match the cabernet color of my dress. My hands are sweating so badly that I hold the base tighter.

Ares, Apollo, and Atlas wear black tuxedos, standing beside my dad at the end of the long aisle.

I'm the maid of honor.

Everyone looks at me. My cheeks flush from all the attention. I hate having this many eyes on my body in this dress.

But I look beautiful.

I feel sexy.

Because of the Demetriou brothers, I am more confident and assertive. And as I walk down the aisle to the music, I hold my head high and focus on them.

I look at Ares first, who stares at me like he wants to fuck me on the floor like an animal. Then Atlas. His eyes light up as he takes in all my curves, my breasts falling out of the top. Apollo's eyes flick up and down my body before settling on my mouth. He always stares at my lips like he wants to kiss me. But he never gets close enough to make a move.

I glance at my dad. He's smiling at me like he's proud and hasn't been acting strangely all month. It sucks that we've grown apart since Mom died, but maybe this is what we needed to make us complete. Perhaps he was right about needing to be a family again.

I wonder what Mom would think and if she's watching over us. Tears

sting my eyes, but I can't let them spill after applying so much makeup. People cry at weddings all the time. But I can't be that girl.

If I cry, it's not tears of joy. Instead, the tears will be for my mother and everything I have lost.

You got them. They've helped you become more confident and stronger.

As I reach the end of the aisle, I smile at my dad and take my place on the other side. Ares licks his lips, eyeing up my breasts. One look is all it takes for my skin to set on fire.

In a few minutes, he's going to be my stepbrother. So will Atlas and Apollo. A part of me feels like it's dying on the inside.

I don't want this.

When the song changes, my head snaps to Athena. She's wearing a white gown fit for a royal wedding. Lace sleeves cover her arms. A long train trails behind her, brushing against the carpet lining the walkway.

Her black hair is pinned up, with loose curls framing her face. Athena is stunning. She passed on her good looks to her sons. And as she approaches us, she looks like she's on a runway in Paris.

I wish I had her confidence. She would steal the show, even if she weren't the bride. Athena has something special that makes people stop and notice.

I only have that when I'm Mistress O. My alter ego is nothing like Ophelia. We're two halves of the same whole but different in every way that counts.

Dad lifts Athena's veil and smiles when their eyes meet. My heart is severing from my chest, breaking into a million pieces.

Mom.

I think of her as Dad takes Athena's hand. My eyes fill with tears when they say their vows.

I force a smile.

Wipe away the tears.

I'm not happy.

I want to scream.

Mom.

I can't breathe, and my heart pounds so hard that I can't focus on anything else. The room spins around me.

I fan myself with my hand.

It's not enough.

Too hot.

Need air.

I see a flash of movement, and then a strong arm wraps around me. “Breathe, Ophelia.”

It’s Atlas.

“You’re okay,” he whispers, holding me against his chest. “Just take a few deep breaths for me.” Then he says, “Keep going without us.”

The minister proceeds.

Atlas leads me away from the ceremony with his hand on my back. I try not to look at anyone as we exit the room through a side door.

I’m so embarrassed.

Why does this keep happening?

“It’s just a panic attack.” Atlas bends down to look at me once we are safely outside. “Everything is going to be okay, Ophelia.” He hugs me, which hurts because now he’s my stepbrother. And I want him to help me take away the pain. “Breathe for me. Can you do that?”

I rest my head on his muscular chest, breathing through my nose. I blow it out of my mouth as I listen to his heartbeat. “Thank you, Atlas.”

He kisses the top of my head and sighs. “I hate it, too.”

It’s not about the wedding.

Or the fact we’re family.

This changes everything.

We both know it.

I FORCE MYSELF TO GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF THE NIGHT AND SLAP ON A happy face. My heart still wages war inside my chest, but I can relax with Atlas. He makes me feel better and hands me glasses of champagne until I’m too dizzy to stand. Apollo tells me to eat more and fusses over me.

Ares sits beside me at the bridal party table with his hand on my thigh, his touch keeping me grounded. “You know, it’s customary for the best man to fuck the maid of honor before the end of the wedding.”

I glance at him and shake my head. “I doubt that’s true when the maid of honor and the best man are step-siblings.”

He rolls his broad shoulders against the chair. “This changes nothing,

little dragon. You're still mine."

I hope so.

Ares was part of the reason I panicked. Well, he and my mother. I can't stand to lose anyone else. He's become my addiction, and I don't want to give him up. I like the way he makes me feel. But I also like how his brothers make me feel. When I'm with them, I'm not the same Ophelia.

I pat his hand and smile. "We can only ever be us in the dark, Ares. That will never change."

His shoulder presses against mine, and he bends down to speak against the shell of my ear. "As long as I'm with you, the darkness can swallow me whole."

My heart does a little flip.

I smile and blush.

He holds my hand under the table as our parents have their first dance as a married couple. I pray that no one can see what we're doing, not after the spectacle I made during the ceremony.

I think I'm falling for him.

I think he feels the same.

Because when it's just the two of us in the dark, he says things that make me believe he's all-in with me. This isn't just sex for Ares.

After dinner, I dance with my dad again to another slow song.

"When I return from Fiji, I'll sign the papers." He spins me in a circle on the dance floor. "You've upheld your end of the bargain, Phe." He smiles. "Thank you for making this day everything I had hoped it would be. You'll see this is good for both of us. I can already tell you're leaning on your brothers."

My brothers.

Kill. Me. Now.

I will never call them that. We may be family on paper, but I will never consider them my brothers. But I don't tell him that. Instead, I keep my mouth shut and smile like I have done all night.

Chapter Two

OPHELIA

MY EYES OPEN TO THE SOUND OF SOMEONE MOANING. THE ROOM IS DARK, with only the faint glow of the candle on my dresser shining a light on the space.

Am I dreaming?

My head feels fuzzy after taking a few pills to quell my anxiety. Days have passed since my dad left for his honeymoon, and I have barely gotten out of bed. I have no sense of time. Thankfully, Constantine is helping me with the club until I get my act together.

I roll onto my side and curl up with the pillow, ready to fall back asleep when I hear it again. A woman moans, followed by male grunts. I would know those sounds anywhere.

I shoot out of bed, my blood boiling in my veins. If Ares is fucking a woman in my house, he's a dead man.

Dressed in a tank top with no bra and a pair of booty shorts, I fling open my door. So much for a peaceful night to sleep and rejuvenate. To forget that my father married my mom's best friend and is now in Fiji on his honeymoon.

I poke my head into Ares's room, surprised he's not there. Okay, so it wasn't him. Then I repeat the same process with Apollo and Atlas, getting the same result.

"She looks like Ophelia," I hear Apollo mutter from a distance, his voice somewhat strained. "Fuck, look at her tits."

What in the hell?

"You should fuck her," Ares tells him. "Her pussy is so wet and tight."

And she screams like a porn star.”

Apollo groans. “You know I can’t do that.”

“She’s the one,” Atlas says. “I think Ophelia is going to break Apollo’s curse.”

His curse?

This must be what Ares couldn’t tell me about his brother. He wanted to watch us have sex, but I have no idea why. And when I invited him to join, he acted all weird and left the second he came in his hand.

Apollo sighs. “I’m not cursed, you numb nut.”

“You wanna watch me fuck her again?” Ares asks, and his voice is getting louder, like how he sounds when we’re having sex.

“I want to watch both of you fuck her,” Apollo says, and I hear skin slapping.

I know that sound.

Is he jerking off?

What is going on in there?

A woman moans and a man asks her if she’s a good whore and if she likes it. I don’t recognize either of their voices. She whimpers and says yes, and then he slaps her ass.

Are they watching porn?

I listen and keep my distance. My panties soak from all the moaning, and I’m considering joining them to see what they will do.

“Apollo, how do you want her?” Atlas says.

This conversation sounds so clinical, as if they always do this. Ares said they like to share and that Apollo likes to watch. But is this something they usually do?

I want to know.

“I haven’t decided yet,” Apollo tells his twin.

I find the three of them in the den. It’s dark. The only light comes from the flat-screen television hung on the wall. All three are shirtless, their bodies sculpted to perfection. Atlas is on the chaise part of the couch, legs spread and his hand down the front of his shorts. He’s stroking his dick to the woman on the screen.

She does look like me.

Same length and color hair.

A lot of curves and big boobs.

Ares is on the right side of the couch with one foot propped up on the

coffee table, also jerking his monster cock that hangs out of his shorts. Apollo sits in the armchair, hand wrapped around his big, pierced dick.

I've only seen two men with piercings at the club. And in the dark, I could hardly see much of them. But as I stand in the entryway, I get the privilege of seeing him up close. How did I not notice it in the bathroom? I must have been so drunk on Ares that I wasn't paying attention.

"Am I interrupting your fantasy of me?" I move into the center of the room, hands on my hips. "Or would you prefer the real thing?"

I can't believe I'm doing this.

"Get over here, little dragon." Ares lets go of his hard dick to beckon me with his index finger. "Come ride me like a good girl."

I stare at his brothers.

Apollo's boxers and pants are on the floor around his ankles, still holding his dick. And Atlas's hand hasn't moved from beneath his shorts.

"Well?" Apollo asks with his eyes on me. "Are you going to fuck my brother?"

I nod and rush over to Ares, who scoops me into his arms as if I weigh nothing. He hooks his arm around me, and I straddle his muscular thighs, rubbing against his hard dick.

"You could have woken me up if you were this horny." I kiss his lips. "I'm never too tired to fuck you."

"You haven't been feeling good, baby. Atlas said to let you sleep it off." Ares glances at his brothers and laughs, his hand on my waist. "This is a typical night for us."

"So you normally jerk off together?"

Ares rolls his broad shoulders. "We do everything together. Nothing we haven't seen or done without the other."

Atlas removes his hand from his pants and slides across the cushions until he's beside us. "Turn around, goddess." Atlas puts his hand on my back and runs his long fingers lightly down my spine. "Apollo can't see you."

He grips my arm and helps Ares turn me around, so I sit on top of Ares with my back to his chest. Atlas spreads my thighs apart and licks his lips. "You're so fucking sexy. Ares isn't allowed to keep you all to himself anymore."

I stare at him.

Blink a few times.

When I don't respond, Ares says, "Unless you're not ready." He licks my

neck and pinches my nipple. “Huh, baby? Are you ready for all three of us?”

“It depends,” I moan when his hand cups my sex. “What are you going to do to me? Do I get a safe word?”

Ares yanks down my top so his brothers can see my breasts. “You know all about those, don’t you? Our girl is a dirty little thing.” He rubs his dick between my legs. “Do you think you need one with us? Or is that just what you tell the girls at your club?”

“So far, I haven’t needed one with you.”

“You don’t know us well enough,” Apollo says before his brother can reply. “I’d choose one just in case.”

“Okay.” I bite my lip and look at Ares and Atlas. They look like hungry wolves ready to take a bite out of me. “How about cherry?”

Ares squeezes my breast. “Sounds good, baby.” Then he looks at Atlas. “You good with that?”

He nods, then his hand is on my waist, pulling at my shorts. “Take these off. Show us your pretty pussy.”

Thankfully, it’s dark, so they can’t see everything I hate about my body in full color. I slide to the seat between them and inch my shorts and panties down my legs. But Ares is so impatient he tugs on one leg, and Atlas grabs the other. In seconds, I’m bottomless, giving Apollo the perfect view.

He brushes his thumb across his bottom lip and grunts in approval. “Spread her open,” he tells his brothers.

I’m already so wet that when Ares and Atlas lean over to peel back my pussy lips with their thumbs, I drip onto the couch.

“Fuck,” Apollo hisses. “Lick her pussy.”

Atlas bends over to lick some of my juices from my inner thigh before his tongue rolls over my clit. I whimper when he does it again, driving me wild with each flick.

My hand falls to the back of his head. “Atlas,” I whimper, slipping my fingers through his silky, black hair. “Oh, God. That feels good.”

He seems to like the encouragement and holds my gaze as he tastes me, eating my pussy like he’s starving. His fingers dig into the backs of my thighs, and I stop giving a shit about my body. Because after everything Atlas has said to me, I know he likes me. He thinks I’m sexy and powerful. And because of him, I feel more confident.

“You like that, Mistress?” Apollo asks, fisting his dick with a sick grin on his handsome face. “Huh? Tell me how much you like it when Atlas licks

your pussy.”

“Mistress?” Ares asks. “Why are you calling her that?”

I look at Apollo, licking my lips. “It’s our little secret. Isn’t that right, Apollo? Only you know that side of me.”

“We’re talking about this later,” Ares grumbles and then nudges Atlas’s shoulder like he’s tapping into a wrestling match. “My turn. This is *my* pussy.”

I am his, aren’t I?

Now, I’m theirs.

I love the sound of that.

Chapter Three

ATLAS'S LIPS CRASH INTO MINE. HIS INKED HANDS ROAM OVER EVERY INCH of my body before pinching my nipples, tugging on the swollen buds.

Ares is between my legs, fingers pumping inside me as he sucks on my clit. This beautiful man is every bit the god he was named after. My entire body trembles with need, each lick bringing me closer to the finish line.

As Atlas bruises my breasts with his rough hands, he kisses me roughly, his tongue parting my lips like he's trying to devour me. It doesn't last long. A kiss here, another peck. And then he glances over at his twin.

Apollo strokes his dick so hard it probably hurts. "She's so tight. Help Ares prepare her."

What the fuck does that mean?

A shiver rolls down my spine. "Prepare me for what?"

Ares lifts his head, his lips glistening with my cum. "I know you've been sore, baby." He kisses my pussy. "You can't hide it from me. We have to stretch you out a little more so you can handle us."

My mouth goes dry. "Like inside me at the same time?"

I've seen women do it at the club, and I have no idea how. One man is enough. Ares is so big he could split me in half with his dick.

But two big dicks?

No.

Nobody could handle them simultaneously without a trip to the emergency room afterward.

Ares laughs. "No. We're sick but not *that* fucked up."

"Okay," I mutter, still a little confused.

“Don’t worry, goddess.” Atlas strokes my cheek with his inked fingers. “We got you. Use your safe word if you need it.”

Ares moves beside me and holds one thigh as Atlas grips the other, spreading me open for Apollo. I’m wetter than before, a mixture of their spit and my cum leaking onto the cushion, sticking to my skin and running down my thighs.

“Fuck me, little dragon,” Ares groans. “Your pussy is so pretty when it’s full of cum.”

“It is,” Atlas agrees before he pushes two fingers inside me, working my inner walls. “Damn, you’re tight. I guess Ares hasn’t broken you in yet. But we will.”

My head is spinning, drunk on the feeling of Atlas and his magical fingers. Between the two of them, I’ll probably end up coming so much I pass out.

I hope I do.

And then Ares pushes two fingers into me beside Atlas. “Open up for me, little dragon.” He can’t get in all the way, and it’s not for lack of trying. “You can take my cock. So I know you can fit our fingers.”

“Maybe you should fuck me so I have more room for both of you.”

“What do you think, Apollo?” Atlas shoves my shirt up my stomach and raises it over my head, chucking it across the room. “Want more foreplay?”

“Ares will fuck her,” he commands in an authoritative voice. “While she sucks you off.”

I like how the three of them work together. It’s making this more enjoyable for them and, in turn, better for me.

Atlas scoots over a few cushions, so Ares has enough room to bend me over on the couch and get behind me. His hands are on my ass, and I’m on all fours, panting for him as he inches into me.

“Fuck, little dragon.” He grips my ass hard and slams into me, forcing me forward with a yelp. He’s rougher than usual and going even harder. “You might need that safe word tonight.”

Something is different about Ares. Is he not the same when he’s with his brothers?

Are we not the same?

He goes deeper and harder, even faster than we’ve ever fucked. My pussy aches with each thrust, and because he’s so big, I can feel him in my stomach.

Atlas gathers my hair in his hand, holding it as he shoves his cock into my mouth. He's not as big as Ares, but not much smaller. My cheeks puff out, and within seconds, I'm choking as his hips move to meet my mouth.

Out of the corner of my eye, I watch Apollo jerking his shaft like he wants to do damage. Atlas yanks on my hair, choking me until tears stream down my cheeks. And Ares is pounding into me like he's trying to make a mold of his dick in my vagina.

I slap Atlas's stomach when I can't handle more and push him backward. He eases up on my hair and sits back so his cock pops out of my mouth.

"Cherry," I bite out.

Ares stops moving inside me but stays there, reaching around to cup my chin. "What's wrong, baby?"

"I couldn't breathe. Your dicks are too big to be slamming into me like that. I don't know what you three are used to, but you need to break me in before you *actually* break me."

"Fuck." Atlas bends down to look at me. "I'm sorry, goddess. I was matching Ares's rhythm. I thought you were into it."

"I *am* into it. Just calm down until we get used to each other." I pat Ares's hand that's on my ass. "Fuck me like you normally do."

His palm rubs over my cheek. "Think you can handle Atlas if I flip you over?"

Now that he's mentioned it, that probably would have been the better way to go the first time around. The position was what made it so hard to handle them.

I bob my head and look at Atlas. "But don't get too rough."

"I won't," Atlas promises. "If it's too much, tap my leg."

Ares flips me onto my back, splitting me open with his dick. He glances over at Apollo, who I had forgotten was watching us because he was so quiet.

"Do you want to join us?" I ask.

He shakes his head, hand still firmly wrapped around his thick shaft. A severe expression crosses over his handsome face like a storm cloud.

"What if Mistress O comes out to play? I know you like her, Apollo."

"I better get to meet Mistress O," Ares groans. "Fuck, baby. What are you hiding from me?"

I look up at him and wink. "It's something you have to see for yourself. Even Apollo was a little shocked."

"Not tonight," Apollo says. "Fuck my brothers, Mistress. Let me see how

well you handle them.”

“You can come in my mouth if you want,” I offer because I want to include him. “Or on my tits. Wherever you want.”

“He won’t, “Atlas tells me before he shoves his cock past my lips. “Apollo never participates.” He traces the length of my bottom lip with his thumb. “Your mouth looks even sexier full of my cock.”

“It does, doesn’t it?” Ares comments, thrusting into me at his usual pace. “She has a pretty mouth.”

He’s never gentle, but I expect more care when he slams his footlong dick into me. With them working together, my thighs shake uncontrollably, a tremor rocking through me like a hurricane as I tighten around Ares and come all over him.

Now that I’ve had an orgasm, I can handle more. But since my mouth is full of Atlas, I can’t tell Ares he can go harder. So I move my hips faster until he gets the message, his body in sync with mine.

“Harder?” he asks.

I bob my head.

He thrusts into me, his long fingers marking my hips. I moan on Atlas’s dick, which only increases the vibration. I can feel his orgasm building, so close to finding his release.

Ares reaches between us and rubs my clit. “Purr for us, kitten.”

He says I sound like a kitten when I come, purring in his ear. Atlas removes his dick from my mouth as I’m coming again, and those soft moans Ares loves slip past my lips.

Atlas grunts as he comes into my mouth. I barely have time to swallow before Ares wraps his hand around my throat, and then his lips are on mine. He kisses me like he wants to drain the air from my lungs. I wonder if he can taste Atlas and if this freaky shit turns them on.

As our lips separate, Ares lifts my legs over his shoulders, pumping into me like a maniac. He’s rough, but it’s perfect this time, shattering my existence. His cock works my inner walls, making me feel so good I moan his name as a mind-blowing orgasm wrecks me.

“Cum on my cock, little dragon.”

I love it when Ares calls me that. He drives into me deeper and bends down to suck my nipple into his mouth. His teeth graze my hot flesh as he pounds into me like a man on a mission.

Ares curls his fingers around my throat. “Use your safe word if you need

it.”

Pain isn't always a bad thing, especially not with Ares. He can choke, bite, and bruise my skin, and I'd still beg him for more. I like it when he dominates and worships me like a goddess.

Like I'm his.

“Ares,” I moan as his hand closes over my windpipe. “Atlas.” A whimper escapes my throat as I look at him. And then my gaze moves to Apollo, and I scream his name, too.

I see movement to my right, and Apollo approaches us naked, stroking himself harder. He leans over me, his eyes on my mouth, and a stream of warm cum splashes my tongue. Our eyes stay locked for a moment, and I see the shame I saw in the bathroom wash over his face.

“He must really like you,” Atlas whispers as Apollo flees the room.

“He's never done that before,” Ares mutters right before he finally comes, and when he does, it shakes my entire body.

I feel him leak out of me, run down my thighs, and onto the couch. And now, I'm wondering why we didn't take this to the bedroom. At the very least, I must turn this cushion over before my dad sees it.

Ares holds me against his chest. I'm covered in cum and dripping all over the place.

Atlas sits beside me, dragging his long fingers down my arms. “You're mine now, too.”

“Yeah?” I look at him and smile. “I'm good with that.”

It's more than okay.

I finally got my wish after lusting over them for the past month. I never thought all of them would want me. How the fuck did I get so lucky?

Atlas grabs a shirt from the floor and cleans me up. “Look at the mess you made for us.” He licks his lips, eyes on my pussy. “I can't wait to feel you coming all over my cock.”

I will probably die when I have them on the same night. But it will be okay because I'll be in heaven and won't give a single shit.

“Can we talk about Apollo?” I say after fully catching my breath, still in a sex haze.

Atlas sighs, raking a hand through his sweaty, black hair. “That's his shit to sort out.”

“But why do you do it?”

“Because it makes him feel whole again, even if only for a little while.”

“Because we love him, and he keeps this family together,” Ares adds. “We need Apollo just as much as he needs us.”

I’m an only child, so I don’t know what having siblings is like. But I can see they’re bonded and need each other.

I bite my lip. “Something terrible happened to Apollo, didn’t it?”

Atlas nods. “Wait for him to open up about it. Don’t push him, or he might snap.”

“If it were my secret, I’d tell you.” Ares plants a kiss on my cheek, rubbing my breast. “Apollo likes you. Tonight is proof.”

“Give him time.” Atlas runs his fingers down my thigh. “This was a big step for him.”

“I think I know what happened to Apollo,” I mutter, afraid to say it aloud because it will become real. But I need to discuss it with them because I hate that he’s hurting. “Some girls at the club were raped before they came to me. They’ll never leave because I take care of them. Apollo shows all the signs.”

Ares looks away and sighs.

So does Atlas.

“He likes to watch you with women because it makes him feel like he’s in control again. I get it.” I consider what I say next, wondering if this is already too deep of a post-sex conversation, but I blurt out, “Three years ago, the same thing almost happened to me.”

I’ve never really talked to anyone about it, and I finally feel safe for the first time in my life.

“A group of men tried to gang rape me out back of Olympus. They were from a rival family and hated my dad. They wanted to get back at him and thought they could use me to do it.”

Ares leans into me, eyes wide, clinging to me with possession. “What happened?”

“Thankfully, I always carry my Glock, so it didn’t get far. I shot the first three in the head. The other three in the back as they tried to run.” I wrap my arm around my middle and lean back on the cushion between them. The horrific memory causes me to shiver. “That’s why my dad hired Constantine. He’s saved my life dozens of times since. My dad has a lot of enemies. And that makes them mine, too.”

“You’re the strongest woman I have ever met,” Atlas says, his lips inches from mine. “I’m glad you’re finally coming into your power.”

“My little dragon is nothing short of amazing.” His lips graze my cheek.

“You never have to worry about anyone hurting you again. We’ll protect you.”

“I think I know how to help Apollo,” I tell them. “We need to start at The O Club. He’s different there. I could see it in his eyes. Even his shoulders were more relaxed, like he could lower his guard.”

Atlas looks at me with a hopeful expression. “Maybe he’d open up to you at the club. Something is changing with him. It has to do with you.”

Ares pulls me closer, resting his chin on my head. “I want to see Mistress O. I’m jealous Apollo knows about her, and I don’t.”

I look at Atlas, and he nods to agree.

“We’ll go to the club together. It might help Apollo more if we’re all there.”

“Just don’t push him too hard,” Atlas suggests. “He’ll panic.”

I nod. “I’ve helped the girls. I can do this for Apollo. Anything to help him heal from the past. Mistress O never interacts with the guests. But I can make an exception for one night.”

“Enough about Apollo, little dragon.” Ares kisses the top of my head and holds me against his chest. “Come to my fight on Friday. I need my lucky charm to cheer me on from the front row.”

Losing his last fight destroyed Ares. I had to stitch him back up physically and emotionally.

I lean back on his chest. “I wouldn’t miss it.”

Chapter Four

OPHELIA

ON FRIDAY NIGHT, WE LEAVE THE HOUSE AS A FAMILY. ARES IS FIGHTING AT Akropolis for the first time since he lost. I promised to be his lucky charm after that delicious fuckfest with him and his brothers.

As Constantine drives us in the limo, I unscrew the top from the vodka bottle and take a swig. The liquor burns on the way down, and it feels good. Ares sits on the opposite side of the car, headphones in his ears to block out any sound. He says it's part of his pre-fight ritual and can't break it.

So I don't even bother talking. As usual, Atlas is sketching me. And from where I'm sitting, it looks like my mouth is wrapped around him, staring up with my eyes wide.

"Is that how I looked?" I ask him.

His eyes trace my mouth for a moment. "You looked even better." He brushes his thumb across my bottom lip, and I catch the usual hint of charcoal on his skin. "Our stepsister sucks cock like a good little slut."

I think he means that as a compliment. Ares says similar things to me all the time, and then when I scowl, he tells me to learn how to take a compliment.

Our moment fades in an instant, and Atlas returns to his sketch. He's shading my lips as we pull up in front of a rundown building on the South Side of Beacon Bay.

The sign over the door reads Akropolis in blue and white lettering. I can tell Atlas drew the club's logo because of the detail in his work. The K comes down to a sharp point, like a lightning bolt.

A sea of cars crowd the parking lot and take up almost every spot on the

street. Groups of people are smoking outside of the entrance, and from the smell of it, someone is smoking weed.

Constantine parks out front and opens the door. I hop out, and Atlas doesn't miss an opportunity to touch my ass.

"Get your hands off of Miss Drakos," Constantine tells him.

"It's okay, Connie. Atlas isn't going to hurt me."

Constantine glances at Atlas, then back to me. "He's your brother, O."

No fucking shit.

"Stepbrother," I correct, giving him a sweet smile.

He seems confused. Even though we're friends, I don't know how to tell him what I'm doing with my stepbrothers. He would disapprove. And given his feelings for me, I can't tell him without making things awkward.

With his hand on my back, Ares guides me toward the building. "C'mon, little dragon. This way." At the door, Ares tips his head at a bouncer. "Hey, Frankie. This is Ophelia Drakos. Don't let anyone get close to her while I'm in the ring. You got it?"

He says my last name because everyone in town knows it.

Frankie nods, a look of pure terror in his eyes. "Sure thing, boss." Then he looks at me. "Welcome to Akropolis, Miss Drakos."

I smile in response.

His brothers greet the bouncer, and then we enter the building as a group. I flick my long hair over my shoulder, feeling overdressed once we're inside. The women are barely clothed. There are more men than women, which I expect for a fight club.

Since I'm with Ares and his brothers, all eyes are on me. Women give me disgusted looks as we pass them. I know what they're thinking.

What is Ares doing with her?

I grip Ares's arm, staying close to his side so these bitches know to back off.

He's mine.

There are two boxing rings, four bars, and three concession stands. People are waving money in the air, taking bets. Almost naked girls are shaking their asses.

We weave through the crowd toward the VIP row before the ring. The air stinks of sweat, bleach, blood, beer, and smoke. Bright overhead lights sear my skin.

I wish I had taken Ares's advice and worn less clothing. I look too prim

and proper in this blouse, out of place in this group of deviants. Mistress O would fit in perfectly with these girls.

Next to the Demetriou brothers, I always stand out. I look frumpy wearing boyfriend jeans and a loose blouse. But when Ares looks at me like he's stripping me bare, I suck in a breath.

I love being wanted by him.

"Well, if it isn't the God of War," a man with massive arms says to Ares. He's shirtless and wearing black-and-red boxing trunks that hang low on his hips. "Who do we have here? Is this your girl?"

I can already see the judgment in his eyes, the same look I have gotten hundreds of times.

"I didn't know you were into fat chicks," he says to Ares, laughing. "Oh, how the mighty god has fallen."

Ares's nostrils flare. "What did you fucking say?"

My sexy man doesn't wait for him to respond, fists crashing into his face. Atlas wraps his arms around me and drags me backward as Apollo moves in front of us, throwing out his arms to shield me.

A crowd gathers around us, cheering on Ares as if this is the main event. Ares knocks the man to the ground, raises his foot, and kicks him in the face. Blood spews from his mouth and nose.

"You're fucking done at Akropolis, you piece of shit." Ares hits the guy, who clutches his ribs. He kicks him once more in the face and flags over two bouncers. "Get him the fuck out of my club. If I see him in here again, he's dead."

I'm shaking in Atlas's arms, on the verge of tears. Ares has never acted this way around me, and I'm terrified of how much damage he can do with his fists. But I'm also thrilled that he beat that man up for me. No one has ever defended me before.

After the bouncers lead the bruised man out of the building, a blond man approaches Ares, also wearing boxing trunks. I assume he's another person fighting tonight.

"What the fuck, Ares?" He shakes his head. "I was supposed to fight him in twenty minutes."

"Walk away, Mercer," Ares growls. "Or we can start the fight sooner. This is none of your business."

"What did he do?" Mercer folds his arms over his thick chest, staring at Ares.

“He talked shit to my girl.” Ares angles his body to point at me. “See that beautiful woman over there? If you or any of your asshole friends say anything to or about her, I’ll kill you. And I won’t give you a chance to run away like a scared little bitch like I did last time.”

“Yeah, okay,” he says. “Whatever. Fucking chill.”

He hurries away, and within seconds, Ares closes the distance between us, stealing me from his brother’s arms. His lips crash into mine with a wild passion I’ve never felt from him before. This kiss means something, and since he’s kissing his stepsister in front of a large crowd, he wants people to know I’m his.

“I’m sorry, baby.” He flicks his tongue over my bottom lip. “That guy is an asshole. He won’t be coming here anymore.”

“I’m used to people calling me fat.” I shrug. “I can handle it.”

“Well, you shouldn’t have to.” His arm curls around me, and he presses another kiss to my lips. “You’re a goddess. And I’ll destroy anyone who makes you think otherwise.”

My heart flutters.

Ares has his moments.

“I have to get ready for my fight.” My gorgeous god of a man leans closer, lips parted. “I need one more kiss for good luck, little dragon.”

This kiss is quicker than the last one but equally intense.

“I’m winning this fight for you.” He squeezes my ass, lifting my feet off the ground. “Sit with Apollo in the front row.” Ares tips his head at the reserved seating, separate from the rest of the crowd. “Atlas is coming with me.”

Apollo moves behind me. “C’mon, Mistress. We’ll meet up with my brothers after the fight.”

I stare at Ares as he walks away. It’s hard not to when he’s the epitome of perfection. His back has more muscles than I can count, and his ass... holy hell, he has a nice ass. Don’t even get me started on his abs or those thick arms. And that big cock beneath his black-and-gold boxing trunks.

Apollo hands me a silk pocket square. Of course, he’s wearing a suit. The man never dresses down, except the night he watched me with his brothers. I saw a lot more of Apollo and loved every second of it.

I narrow my eyes at him, confused by the gesture. “What’s this for?”

“So you can wipe the drool from your mouth.”

I swat at the silk square and roll my eyes. “I’m not drooling.”

He tucks it into his pocket and laughs. “Yes, you are.”

“What can I say?” I follow him to our chairs and sit beside him. “Your brother looks good without a shirt. And he just kicked that guy’s ass for me. I’m a little worked up over it.”

We take our seats and cheer along with the crowd. I have no idea what to do, so I look to Apollo, who knows all the fighters.

After two more fights, it’s time for Ares to enter the ring for the main event. The announcer steps into the center of the ring with a microphone in hand.

He raises it to his mouth and says, “Bets are closed. So, put your money away, motherfuckers. If you didn’t get here in time, oh fucking well. I don’t want to hear it. Next time, do what you’re told.”

He announces Ares’s opponent first. His nickname is Sugar Shane, and the crowd boos him. But Ares, who fights under the name God of War, gets a round of applause. The place goes wild, fists punching the air and people screaming his name.

They love him.

And why wouldn’t they?

Both fighters step into the center of the ring, and the referee gets between them. Ares rolls his shoulders to loosen up, shifting his weight from one foot to another.

With a crooked grin, Ares leans forward to speak to his opponent. The other man scowls—an insult, I assume, since I can’t hear him from this distance.

The fight begins with the bell sounding, and the other guy goes straight for Ares. But Ares is faster than him, light on his feet, dodging his advances without much effort.

Shane raises his right hand in front of his face. He ducks a punch and then jabs at Ares. But Ares is there one minute and gone the next.

He does something that reminds me of a dance, goading Shane into chasing after him. His theatrics send me into a fit of laughter. The more he teases Shane, the harder I chuckle.

This is hilarious.

He’s making a mockery of the entire event. Despite his best attempts, Shane can’t land a single punch to save his life. Beaten down by his efforts, I can see the life slowly drain from his body. This must have been Ares’s plan.

A switch eventually flips inside Ares, his eyes lighting up as he attacks

his opponent. Ares looks more focused than ever, landing a punch that knocks Shane to the floor. He rolls over on the blue canvas, blood spilling from his mouth. Ares hovers over him.

The referee pushes out his arms to keep Ares at a distance, counting down from ten. A bell sounds, and the crowd goes wild.

They chant, "God of War."

Ares seems unaffected by the attention. He must be used to having people scream his name. His opponent is unconscious, whereas Ares looks like he just stepped into the ring. And when the referee raises his hand in victory, Ares winks at me, staring like I'm the only person in the room.

He won for me.

Chapter Five

OPHELIA

WE'RE ALL RIDING AN INTENSE HIGH AFTER ARES WINS THE FIGHT, AND THE four of us want to party.

I head into the kitchen to grab the open bottle of champagne from the refrigerator. Ares takes it from my hand, throws me onto the counter, and rips off my clothes.

"You're so fucking sexy, little dragon." He tears off his shirt and throws it on the floor, licking his lips. His shorts and boxers are next, his dick already hard and ready for me. "I won. Now, I get to claim my prize."

"Play nice, Ares." I glance at Atlas and Apollo as they undress beside us. "Your brothers want to play, too."

"You were mine first," he says the second he slams his big dick into me, stealing a moan from my lips. "Isn't that right, baby? Tell my brothers who owns this pussy."

"You do, Ares," I whimper as he pounds into me so hard my ass slaps against the countertop. "Oh, fuck. You do."

Thankfully, no one has attempted to turn on the lights. Ares knows better. I think his brothers do, too. The under-the-cabinet lighting is enough to cast a golden glow over their bodies. They can see enough of me that I'm not feeling overly self-conscious.

As we fuck, Ares grabs the bottle of champagne and pours it on my naked body. Atlas gets on the counter behind me and pins me down. He watches the champagne trail between my breasts and down my stomach. Then he leans over and licks my skin.

I grab his big dick, and he sits back to look at me. He's kneeling, with his

thighs between my head.

“I want to taste you.” I slide my tongue across my lips. “Put your dick in my mouth.”

I’m so obsessed with these two I can’t even think straight when I’m around them. Of course, Apollo watches us from a distance, but his eyes never leave my body.

I know not to ask him to join.

He’ll come to me whenever he’s ready... if that time ever comes. I hope it does because I want to make him feel better.

Apollo doesn’t provide his usual instruction. Instead, he sits in a dining chair, hand wrapped around his thick, pierced shaft. His eyes stay on me, and my skin tingles from the tiny bumps spreading down my arms.

When I can feel Atlas getting closer to chasing his release, his dick pops out of my mouth. He doesn’t want to come yet. So he lifts the bottle of champagne and drizzles it on my tits and stomach so he can lick it off.

“You taste divine, goddess,” he whispers in my ear.

I love my nickname. Whenever I’m with Atlas, he makes me feel like a goddess.

Powerful.

Strong.

Beautiful.

Sexy.

We know each other better now. So when Atlas pushes his cock past my lips again, he doesn’t fuck my mouth like he’s trying to kill me.

I don’t need my safe word.

They’re keeping a better pace this time and giving equal love to every inch of my body. And when Ares comes inside me, his orgasm is so forceful it makes mine even more intense. His tremors shake through me, and with our bodies melded, I feel everything.

He pulls out and stares between my thighs. A smile tips up the corners of his mouth. “I love filling you with my cum, little dragon.”

I don’t want him to stop doing this.

Not now, not ever.

Atlas hasn’t come yet and rubs my swollen lips with his thumb. “Can you handle more, goddess?”

“Say it again,” I whisper.

“Say what?” His eyebrows raise. “Goddess?”

I nod.

Atlas bends down and kisses my lips. "Goddess."

I love it when he says this to me.

He makes me feel sexy.

They all do.

"How do you want your goddess?"

He slides off the counter. "Stay like that. Don't move."

Atlas swaps places with Ares, who sits beside us and massages my nipples while stroking his semi-hard cock wet with our cum.

I'm dripping when Atlas pushes inside me and groans my name. "You're so full, baby. Fuck." He bites his lip, clutching my hips as he lifts my ass off the marble to change the angle. "You're our little cum slut, aren't you?"

My eyes widen at his words. He's never said anything like this to me before. But I like this side of Atlas.

"You like taking it like a good little whore, don't you?" Atlas goes so deep that his pelvis hits me with each thrust. "What turns you on more? That we're brothers? Or that we're *your* stepbrothers?"

"Oh, God," I choke out, barely able to catch my breath as he fucks me even harder. "Don't stop, Atlas. Mmmm... Harder."

Ares's hand slips beneath my chin, and he kisses me, draining the air from my lungs. Between the two of them, I might die. But, at least I'll be happy and completely satisfied when I leave this world.

I heard a loud noise, the sound coming from a distance.

Ares pulls away from me. "Shit."

Atlas stops fucking me.

And before I know why, it's too late. The overhead lights turn on as an orgasm washes over me. It's impossible to stop it. My brain can't process anything until I come down from this delicious high.

"What the fuck is going on in here?"

No.

My brain fog clears, and I can now focus on his voice.

Dad?

Atlas pulls out of me, still in between my thighs, as we turn to look at the entrance. The fury in my father's eyes sends a chill down my arms.

I cover myself with my arms, wishing I could find my shirt. But our clothing is scattered across the floor. Even if I wanted to hop down, I would give everyone a show. So I tuck my legs into my chest and try to cover

myself as best as possible.

Dad stands a few feet away with a shocked Athena at his side.

Her hand covers her mouth, speaking between her fingers. "Ares, why is your penis in my fruit basket?"

"It's not in the fruit basket, Ma." Ares chuckles. "Is that seriously what you're worried about right now?"

"Belen, you have to do something about this," Athena shouts. "Your daughter and my sons?" She sobs, turning her head away from us. "This is unacceptable. Disgusting."

"I agree, darling. Let me handle it."

As Dad approaches us, Athena hangs back, closer to the door, unable to look at her sons or me.

I don't blame her.

This looks like a porno.

The woman hates cursing and sexual innuendo. She's clutching her pearls and praying for our souls over there.

My dad's eyes look darker, like bottomless pits. "Ophelia Cora Drakos," he shouts so loudly it pierces my eardrum. "What in the hell would possess you to fuck your brothers?"

"They're not my brothers," I spit back. "We don't share any DNA."

"That is beside the point, young lady." He walks toward us, not giving a single fuck that we're all in his kitchen butt-ass naked. "I never should have let you run The O Club. That place has corrupted you." Dad shakes his head, disgusted, and picks Atlas's shirt off the floor, throwing it at me. "Get dressed. Now!"

I use the fabric to cover my body since lifting my arms to yank it over my head would only make this more awkward.

"Look at you," Dad sneers. "You've turned into a whore. How could you let your stepbrothers take turns with you?"

"Dad, I know how this looks." My voice trembles with each word. "Just calm down."

"I will not calm down." He throws his hands in the air, bursting with anger that flushes his tanned cheeks. "You have ruined everything, Ophelia. Everything! I gave you a family again, and this is how you repay me?"

"I never wanted them to be my family," I fire back.

"Now I know why!" Dad's nostrils flare as his eyes sweep over the kitchen to each of my men. "You took advantage of my daughter. I know

Athena didn't raise you to be sick perverts."

"In all fairness, Belen," Ares says, "you don't know us well. And we like your daughter."

I love that Ares is coming to my defense, but it's not helping the situation. Because hearing how he feels about me only increases my father's rage. He balls his hands into fists at his sides, teeth clenched. For a second, I think he's going to hit Ares.

That won't end well.

Ares will knock him out.

"My daughter isn't some toy for you to pass to your brothers," Dad yells. Then his eyes are on me again. "Effective immediately, you're disowned, Ophelia. All of you pack your bags. Get out of my house. I never want to see you again."

"No," I protest. "You can't do that to me."

The guys don't argue. At least they have somewhere else to go while I'm homeless and destitute, everything I have tied to my father.

"I can do whatever I want." His eyes flicker with heat that causes my stomach to twist into knots. "You can kiss the clubs goodbye. Forget the life you had. It's all gone, Ophelia. I hope tonight was worth it."

My club.

Tears streak down my cheeks. "Dad, no. Please. I'll do whatever you want. Don't take Olympus from me. I need it."

He has no idea how much becoming Mistress O has helped me to accept myself. And my girls? What will they do without me?

Dad sneers. "We're done, Ophelia. You're not my daughter anymore."

Chapter Six

OPHELIA

MY DAD KICKED ALL OF US OUT OF HIS HOUSE. BUT AFTER SOME CONVINCING from his new bride, my stepbrothers got to continue living under this roof.

It's not fair.

I throw clothes into a bag, still crying uncontrollably. Atlas tries to hold me, but I push him away. When that doesn't work, Ares wraps his strong arms around me from behind, squeezing me so tightly I can't move.

"Baby, calm down. We'll help you fix this." His nose nuzzles my neck. "You don't have to cry. It's going to be okay."

"No, it's not," I snap, chucking the shirt in my hand onto the bed. "He disowned me. And can I blame him? He's right. You *are* my stepbrother." I shake my head, angry with myself. "This is my fault. I shouldn't have walked into the den that night. I let this get out of control."

I tug on his arms, and he releases me so I can spin around to look at the three of them. Apollo sits in the armchair by the window while Atlas lounges on the windowsill, staring at me.

"Chin up, goddess," Atlas says with a cute smile. "This will all blow over. Give it time. Our mom will convince your dad to let you come home."

"Yeah," Apollo agrees. "This is only temporary. Stay with your uncle, and we'll come for you when the time is right."

I wipe the tears away and sniff. "He's never going to forgive me. My dad wanted a family again. I fucked this up for him."

"We'll never see you as our stepsister." Atlas gets up from the windowsill and crosses the room. "I doubt you will ever think of us like brothers after what we've done to your body." He gives me a sexy smirk. "But we'll find a

way to make this work.”

“Just give Belen time,” Apollo says, always the voice of reason. “You’re his only daughter. Once he calms down, he’ll let you come home.”

“I hope so,” I mutter.

They help me pack enough clothes and personal items for a month and follow me downstairs with my bags. My uncle will be here any minute, so I grab Ares by the shirt and press my lips to his.

He palms the back of my head and kisses me back, sucking the life from my body. Ares kisses me like he knows this is the last time we’ll ever see each other. Like he knows as well as I do that nothing can fix us. My dad will never allow us to be together, even if he forgives me.

As our lips separate, I lock eyes with him.

I want to kiss him again.

But I don’t.

My dad is probably watching us from one of the windows overlooking the driveway.

I have to say goodbye.

It’s the middle of the night. A sliver of moonlight shines down on us through the tree line. I lean over and kiss Atlas seconds before my uncle Alexander pulls up beside me in a black Rolls-Royce Wraith. As our lips separate, he glares at each of the Demetriou brothers individually and scowls. I expect him to say something about them defiling his niece.

“Get in, my sweet girl.” He grins at me, but his gaze moves to Ares, silently declaring he’s won. “Uncle Alexander will take good care of you.”

What is with my uncle and the Demetriou brothers?

Ares grabs my arm when I reach for the door handle. He kisses me again, this time more passionately than before. “Call me in the morning, little dragon.”

He loads my bags into the car, and then I get inside.

My uncle peels away from the curb. “Your father thinks he can get rid of us so easily.” A crazed smirk tugs at his mouth. “We’ll see about that.”

Chapter Seven

OPHELIA

IT'S BEEN A WEEK SINCE I MOVED INTO MY UNCLE'S HOUSE. DAD STILL won't return my phone calls or texts. I reached out to Athena with no luck. Apollo spoke to his mother and begged her to see reason. Even Atlas and Ares tried to convince her. But she's equally pissed as my dad.

Ares texts me dozens of times every day. Most of them are naughty, and some include pictures and videos of his big dick. While my uncle was out one night, we video-chatted and got off together.

I'm lying on the bed, staring at the ceiling, when my phone dings. It's after eleven o'clock when I would have been at The O Club if not for my stupidity.

I only have myself to blame.

As I read the text message from Ares, I smile at the picture of his hard dick and the words accompanying it. His head is always in the gutter.

ARES

My cock misses you. :)

OPHELIA

Do you think with anything other than your dick?

ARES

Sometimes :)

Atlas misses you. He hasn't stopped sketching you since that night.

OPHELIA

You know where I'm going with this, Ares.

ARES

Fine, little dragon. I miss you.

I miss having you in my bed.

My sheets barely smell like you anymore.

OPHELIA

I miss you too. I hate this.

No one will ever understand.

ARES

I don't care what anyone thinks.

You're mine.

My heart swells in my chest. Ares isn't the man I thought. When we first met, I wanted to kill him. I can't imagine going through a single day without him.

The front door slams and my uncle says, "Ophelia, where are you?"

I sit up and leave the phone on the bed, following his voice to the kitchen. His house is about half the size of mine. But he lives here alone, with only the staff. He never married or had kids.

Alexander pours a glass of scotch and hands me a bottle of water. I take it and twist off the top, eyeing my uncle suspiciously.

"You should sit for this." He slides a chair from the table and sits beside me. "I have a friend who works at the courthouse. She called after your father filed a new will this morning."

I take another sip and set the bottle on the table. "My dad cut me out, didn't he?"

My uncle nods. "I'm so sorry, sweet girl. You don't deserve this." He slides a folder in front of me. "It's rather interesting."

I remove the papers from the folder. "Did he disinherit you too?"

Another nod. "But I expected it."

Alexander had filled me in on the beef with my father. They had been fighting for a few months, but I didn't think it was that serious. Just the usual brotherly fights. Alexander selling his stake in Olympus to my dad for cash must have been the last straw.

I scan the pages, reading so quickly that I'm unsure I understand everything. However, I fully grasp that Athena will inherit my father's fortune when I have worked so hard to become my father's heir.

*To my wife, Athena Drakos, I leave all my personal and business assets,
homes, jewelry, cars, art, and valuables.*

*And I leave a word of advice to my daughter, Ophelia Drakos. Challenge this
will, and you will get nothing. If Athena forgives you one day, she will decide
what you deserve.*

I collapse into a boneless lump on the table and sob. The tears stream down my cheeks like water breaking through a dam. “I thought he would get over it.”

My uncle leans over to rub my back. “We can have a will changed. This isn’t permanent. Belen isn’t thinking clearly. Athena has gotten into his head and is fucking with this family. And when I prove it, she’s dead.”

I hate Athena.

I hate *them*.

Chapter Eight

ARES

I WAKE UP IN OPHELIA'S BED FOR THE THIRD TIME THIS WEEK. MY SHEETS NO longer smell like her, and I can't get to sleep without her scent. The sun shines on my cheek through the curtains, which shouldn't be open. I remember closing them to block out the moonlight before I passed out.

Rolling onto my side, curled up with Ophelia's pillow, I don't want to get out of bed. I want to stay with her for another minute. This is the only time when I feel like she's still here.

"Get up," Apollo says in a deep tone that forces my eyes open.

I glare at him and wrap my arm tighter around Ophelia's pillow. "Go away!"

"If I didn't know better," Apollo says, "I would think Atlas is right about you being in love with Ophelia. But my big brother is too self-centered to love anyone more than himself."

Fucker.

I lift my head from the pillow and sit up. "Why are you in Ophelia's room?"

"I woke up, and you weren't in your bed. This is getting out of hand, Ares. You knew the consequences before you touched her. I told both of you to keep Ophelia close. Not to fuck her."

My head snaps to Atlas, perched on the windowsill with his knees bent, the sketchbook on his lap. He taps a charcoal pencil on the page, biting his bottom lip.

"Save your speech." I push out my palm to silence Apollo. "Atlas comes in here every day to sketch her. And I don't hear you giving him shit."

“I hear it,” Atlas shoots back. “But I don’t care what either of you thinks. Ophelia is my muse. I need the connection to her.”

All of us got it bad for her. Ophelia is the only woman we’ve ever been with and can’t let go. Even Apollo is catching feelings for her. If this continues, he might break his curse. He might have a shot at a normal life again.

I slide my legs off the bed and stretch my arms above my head, yawning. “I miss her. So fucking what? I know both of you do, too. I want her to come home. This house is unbearable without her.”

“She will,” Apollo says with confidence. “After we finalize the last part of our plan, I will drag Ophelia back here.”

“Not like she has a choice,” Atlas adds. “If she wants her inheritance, she has to come home.”

None of us ever wanted to hurt her. This was always about taking down Belen and Alexander Drakos. Unfortunately, the will change was necessary.

Belen had to disown Ophelia for our plan to come to fruition. And he would only do that if he saw her with us. We knew that would be the final straw to force her out of the family. Our mother, bless her saintly heart, even suggested it.

I hate myself.

My brothers feel horrible.

“She’ll come back,” Atlas agrees. “This is her home.”

“So is Olympus,” Apollo interjects. “She can have it. I don’t want it.”

He wants *her* more.

“She’ll come back for The O Club,” I say with certainty. “And if she forgives us, maybe she’ll stay for us, too.”

We hurt Ophelia because it was the only way to avenge our father and reclaim what we lost. But, once she discovers her mother’s dying wish, she will change her mind. My little dragon will see that we’re not the villains in her story.

The letter from Cora is real, written by her mother one week before she passed. She was my mother’s best friend since high school.

They were like sisters.

There’s one more secret we need to reveal. A big one that will make Ophelia see things differently. We just need to get her back on our side.

Chapter Nine

OPHELIA

I HAVEN'T ANSWERED ANY OF ARES'S CALLS OR TEXTS. EVEN WHEN ATLAS sends a sketch of me, I delete the image and throw the phone at the wall. Apollo tries to reach me, too.

I hate them.

They used me.

I'm so disgusted with myself for falling into their trap. They must have known what they were doing all along. I was right to push them away at the beginning. All it took was some flirting with Ares and some sweet words from Atlas to change my mind.

I'm so stupid.

I believed their lies.

Let them see me.

Touch my body.

Now, I wish I could carve them out of my brain. If it were possible, I would erase every memory.

It's well after eight o'clock when I'm flipping through the channels on the television. My uncle is doing one of his side hustles on the South Side, and I have nowhere better to be. I haven't left his house in over two weeks. Not since my dad disowned me.

Alexander isn't home much, so that's an added benefit. I can sit around and eat ice cream, watch Netflix, and mope. Most days, I don't even bother to shower or brush my hair. Today is the fourth day in a row wearing the same pajamas.

I stop scrolling through the channels when I spot one of my father's clubs

pop up on the screen. Kallidromo, the old warehouse my father converted into a nightclub, is on fire. Flames lick the front and sides of the building, smoke billowing out from every angle.

BREAKING NEWS flashes across the bottom of the screen. It's a live feed from the Beacon Bay News Network.

The pretty blonde reporter surveys the firefighters extinguishing the inferno. "Local favorite, Kallidromo, has had its share of problems over the years."

That's an understatement.

I told my dad to sell that club years ago because it's cursed. We've had everything from police raids to shootings at the club. Once a month, my dad runs an auction in the basement. I threatened to sell myself there when Dad first threatened to disown me.

Maybe I should have.

Then, I wouldn't have a place to live, trapped at my uncle's house like some refugee. But if not for his charity, I would have nowhere to go. Constantine offered to let me stay at his house, but our relationship is too complicated. He still collects a paycheck from my dad. Plus, he still likes me, even though we pretend the sex never happened.

The camera sweeps over the burning building, and the reporter continues, "The Beacon Bay Fire Department suspects arson. We're looking for the owner and local businessman Belen Drakos, but he's unavailable for comment. He could have been in the building when it set fire."

"No!"

I rise from the couch with tears in my eyes, hugging my middle to stop the tremors rocking through me. My dad might have given my birthright to my stepmother, but I would never wish harm on him. He's still my dad, even if he doesn't want me to be his daughter anymore.

I run to my bedroom and change into jeans and a cleanish-looking T-shirt. My hair looks like a raccoon crawled into it and made a nest. So I brush through the tangled mess and pull it into a high ponytail. Inspecting myself in the mirror, I shake my head.

Boy, do I look bad?

Like I'm homeless.

Or escaped an asylum.

But mostly, I feel lost. I have been a zombie for the past few weeks, and my life has no real purpose.

I grab a set of car keys and dial my uncle, who answers on the second ring. “Did you see the news?”

“I just heard,” Alexander says, breathing hard into the receiver. “It’s only a matter of time before the police show up, asking questions about Belen’s whereabouts.”

“Do you think my dad was in the building?” I ask on my way out of the house, clicking the button on the keyfob to open the doors to a black Mercedes.

“It’s likely.” Alexander sighs. “He spends most of his nights at Kallidromo.”

“Is it possible he set fire to the club for an insurance payout?”

It wouldn’t be the first time.

“Doubtful,” he says immediately to dismiss the idea. “Your father would never do something that stupid on a Saturday night.”

On an auction night.

It’s the first Saturday of the month. Some of the men who attend will pay millions. The women come to the club looking for quick cash—anything to get themselves out of debt and have a better life. And my father receives a large cut of every transaction.

“He’s dead, isn’t he?” I barely get out the words as I drive off the property and onto the street, headed toward my old house. “I know it.”

“The timing is rather convenient,” Alexander says, his voice deep and angry. “Your father changed his will last week. And the only person who stood to gain from his death swindled you out of your inheritance.”

That fucking bitch.

Seeing through the window with all the tears in my eyes is hard. So I blink them away, clutching the leather steering wheel. My house is only a few blocks from Uncle Alexander’s. I fly between the tall hedges that line the long driveway and race toward the house. Four cars are out front: Ares’s Camaro SS, Atlas’s G-Wagon, Apollo’s Audi A8, and Athena’s Porsche Cayenne. The wheels screech when I slam on the breaks outside my old house, intentionally hitting Apollo’s car.

Fuck him.

I throw the car into park and get out with the engine running, my Glock tucked into my waistband beneath the oversized shirt. To my surprise, the front door is unlocked. I push it open and step inside.

The house smelled like Athena before I left, but now it feels even less like

my childhood home. On the way to the sitting room, I catch a whiff of Chanel. Several loud voices float out from the room as I silently approach, straining to hear their conversation.

I poke my head inside as Athena says, “Good job, Atlas.” She cups her son’s face with a smile. “You did well. Letting Belen catch you in the act with Ophelia was perfect. I couldn’t have timed it better myself.”

What the fuck?

The four of them planned this. Was the letter written in my mother’s handwriting even real? Did she forge it? Or worse, force my mother to write it before she died?

“And you, Apollo.” Athena slides her arm across his neck and kisses his cheek. “My little mastermind. Your father would have been proud. If not for you, we wouldn’t have uncovered the truth.”

About what?

“Ares,” she lalts as her heels click on the floor. She hugs him, and since he’s so much taller than his mother, her head hits his chest. “You were always so sneaky. I’m so glad your talents paid off.”

He kisses her cheek. “Anything to help, Ma. Dad deserved better than what he got.”

They are obsessed with their mother, and I can see the adoring looks in their eyes. While I thought they were mine, they were always *hers*.

“My darling boys,” Athena says with a smile as she stands between them. “You did such a good job keeping your stepsister under control. Now everything is ours.”

Dad is dead.

They killed him.

The authorities haven’t recovered his body from the fire, and this bitch is already plotting what to do with his money.

Fuck this shit.

I enter the sitting room with my gun pointed at her head. “You conniving bitch. I knew you were full of shit, but my dad wouldn’t listen to me.”

“Oh, honey.” She covers her heart with her hand, a fake smile on her lips. “Don’t take it personally. I did this for you, not to you.”

“Bullshit.” I inch closer to Athena. “You think I won’t shoot you? I could empty this clip in seconds, and I’ll still sleep tonight.”

“You can’t kill me,” she hisses. “Then you’ll get nothing.”

I narrow my eyes at her.

“If you kill any of us, you get nothing. It says so in the fine print of the will.”

My hand shakes as I keep the gun raised. “I don’t want anything from you.”

“I own everything,” she says harshly. “And if anything happens to my sons or me, the entire estate goes to charity.”

This can’t be true. My father doesn’t donate money, so why would he start now?

I turn the gun on Ares, my hands shaking from the anger coursing through my body. “I was right about you all along. You were never interested in me.”

“You’re wrong, little dragon.” Ares steps closer, and I point the gun at his head, keeping him at a distance. “As my mom said, this was never about you. We only wanted to hurt your father. He took everything from us.”

My finger hovers over the trigger, but I can’t pull it and unleash my hatred because I still care about him. “But you used me to do it.”

Atlas nods when I glance at him. “It’s not what you think, goddess. We did this for you as much as for us.”

Apollo folds his arms over his chest, and I swear I catch a look of pity in his eyes. I don’t want him to feel sorry for me. I want him to hurt as much as I do. “You were collateral damage,” Apollo says. “I’m sorry, Ophelia. But you’re still family. You can come back home.”

Not a chance.

“I’m going to contest the will,” I tell Athena, ignoring her sons and their stupid fucking faces. “You won’t get away with this.”

I spin on my heels, and as I’m about to leave, she says, “With what money, Ophelia? Everything that should have been yours belongs to me.”

Maybe there’s a loophole we can exploit to invalidate the will. There has to be something. I will not let my bitch stepmother and her piece of shit sons steal my inheritance, not when I worked so hard for it.

I turn around to look at her, clutching my gun in my trembling hand. But even with the nervousness coursing through my body, I can get a clean shot.

“This is what your mother wanted,” Athena says. “Don’t do something you will regret.”

“The only thing I will regret is letting you live.” I raise the gun and aim at the space between Athena and Ares. “You may have my father’s money and clubs, but you don’t have the respect that comes with my last name. If you

want a war, I'll give you one. I'm taking back what's mine. You'll never own this city."

She's right about the will. My uncle has already gone over it dozens of times with his lawyers. Athena had this all planned out and knew what she was doing. So until I can get the proof I need to take back my family's empire, I need her breathing.

I fire the gun.

She yelps when the bullet lodges into the wall behind her head. Ares's teeth grit in anger, and he looks like he wants to tackle me to the floor.

"I missed on purpose," I tell Athena, already plotting to get my revenge. "The next time I point this gun at you, it'll be a kill shot."

I leave the dining room in a hurry, the tears stinging my eyes, and get the fuck out of this house.

They've won for now.

But I'll be back.

This isn't over.

Chapter Ten

ARES

MY HEART IS STILL POUNDING FROM OPHELIA FIRING HER GUN INCHES FROM my head. Maybe if she's lucky, I'll forgive her for that.

It's the least I owe her.

We weren't expecting her to rush to the house the second the news about her father hit the media. Everyone in Beacon Bay is talking about the whereabouts of Belen Drakos. Pretty soon, the police will be here, asking tons of questions.

And we need her to stay.

"Go after her," my mother says. "Ophelia is essential to the last part of our plan. Make her see this is the only way."

Ophelia thinks we screwed her over, but she doesn't know the whole story. She only knows whatever her shady-ass uncle told her. We're not the bad guys. Once we get our girl to see reason, she'll understand we did this for her, too.

"I'll go," I offer.

Since she likes me the most—at least she did—I leave the sitting room searching for her. My brothers don't complain. Apollo would be better at handling her foul mood. He excels at diffusing complicated situations but not good at dealing with his own shit. And Atlas would probably draw her a picture of his feelings and say something poetic.

But she's getting me.

I'm terrible at communicating with people, but I understand her feelings. I know what it's like to think you're not good enough, especially when I'm standing beside my brothers.

I race down the hallway and head outside. From a distance, I hear her sneakers on the pavers.

She's still here.

I dart outside, whirling past her to reach the car door before her.

“Get out of my way, Ares!” Ophelia raises the gun and points it at my chest. “I will shoot you this time, you fucking bastard piece of shit.”

I deserve that.

I lean back against the driver's side door, arms outstretched. “Then go ahead and shoot because I'm not moving.”

The engine is still running in the black Mercedes. She must have borrowed it from her uncle. Her fender presses against Apollo's bumper, the headlamps shining on the damage to the Audi A8. Apollo will stroke when he sees what she did to his car.

Ophelia aims the weapon at me. “Ares, stop playing games. Get out of my way and let me go.”

She doesn't want to hurt me anymore than I already crushed her. It didn't have to go down like this. I would have done things differently if there were any other way to get what we both wanted.

So would my brothers.

“Put the gun down, little dragon.” I hold up my hands in surrender. “I just want to talk. No one has to get hurt.”

“Too fucking late,” she snaps, the tears streaming down her cheeks. “I trusted you and your brothers. And you took everything from me.”

She's screaming now, nearly hysterical and ready to lose it. I'm afraid she will accidentally shoot me if I don't get her to lower the Glock.

“Baby, c'mon.” I push off from the car, one hand extended. “Give me the gun. I know you don't want to kill me.”

“You don't know shit,” she fires back, her entire body trembling from the emotions sweeping over her. “You pretended to like me. I knew a man like you would never like a woman like me. And I was right.”

She's so fucking wrong.

And I think Apollo is right about me. I love Ophelia, or at the very least, have strong feelings for her that could be love. I wouldn't know since I've never been in love before.

I can't tell her this.

Not now, anyway.

She'll only think it's another lie to control her—another manipulation to

keep her returning for more.

“How could you do this to me, Ares?” Ophelia’s hands are shaking as severely as the rest of her body. “I cared about you. I told you shit no one else knows. I let you see me. Touch me. There’s nothing I wouldn’t have done for you.”

She loves me, too.

Or at least she did.

Fuck.

I see a flash of movement out of the corner of my eye and snap my head to the door. My brothers stand at the edge of the driveway, Apollo with his arms folded over his chest and Atlas with his hands stuffed into his jeans pockets.

I give them a look to stay put.

I got this under control.

Ophelia’s eyes follow mine, and then she starts crying even harder. “What the fuck is wrong with you three? Just let me fucking go! Haven’t you taken enough from me?”

I don’t know if she’s crying like this because of the will or because her father is dead. We didn’t set the fire. That was the work of The Serpents.

Atlas signed over his bar to the street gang in exchange for their help—a small price for what we will get in return. And once Ophelia knows the truth about her father and what he did to her mother, she will wish she put a bullet in his head.

I finally see an opportunity to grab the gun from her hand. She lowers it toward the ground, ready to collapse onto the pavement from sobbing so hard.

I tip my head at my brothers. They understand without words and cross the space between us. As I take the gun, Atlas moves behind Ophelia.

He wraps his arm around her, cradling her head against his chest. “We didn’t mean for this to happen, goddess. None of us wanted this for you. I’m sorry.”

“You killed my dad,” she chokes out, yanking on his hands to get free. “You fucking killed him and took my inheritance.”

“No,” our mother says from the front step. “I did. If you want to blame anyone, it should be me. My boys followed orders.”

Mom knows I have feelings for Ophelia. I even asked her to back off when I knew things between us were getting serious. After the second night

she slept in my bed, I knew she was it for me. I didn't care if I had to share her with my brothers as long as she was mine.

"Oh, I do," Ophelia hisses, struggling to break free from Atlas's arms, but he holds her against his chest in a death grip. "I blame you most of all. You're a fucking snake, Athena. I knew you were full of shit."

"You've got it all wrong, little dragon."

Her head turns to me. "Fuck you, Ares. Fuck all of you." She elbows Atlas in the stomach, and he groans but doesn't relinquish his hold on her. "Get off me, Atlas. Jesus! What the fuck is your problem? Are you assholes going to kidnap me, too?"

"We're not going to hurt you," Apollo says in his peacekeeper tone, slowly moving toward her. "Just give us a few minutes to explain everything."

She shakes her head, snot dripping from her nose. I hate seeing her like this, so I rip off my shirt and wipe her face.

"Get away from me, Ares!"

"No."

I continue dabbing at the tears and snot until she looks like my Ophelia again. Then I steal her from Atlas, hugging her. I want to kiss her. The feel of her against my bare skin brings back memories of better times.

I missed her so fucking much.

Two weeks without her.

It's been too long.

She looks like she hasn't showered in days. Smells like it, too. But I couldn't care less because she's here with me.

"Have you eaten today?" Apollo asks her. "You don't look well, Mistress."

Mom's eyebrow raises at his nickname.

"Don't call me that," Ophelia shouts. "You took my club from me, you stupid fucking piece of shit."

Ophelia curses a lot when she's angry. But tonight, she's rabid and looking like a feral animal.

"Shhh." I cup her face, stroking her cheek with my thumb. "I got you, little dragon. It's going to be okay."

She relaxes in my arms. My nickname must do it for her because she stops struggling when I say it again.

"I hate you," she mutters.

I swipe the tear-soaked hair from her face and brush it behind her ears. “I know, baby. But we’ll get through this. You’ll see. I’m not the man you think I am.”

“No,” she whispers. “You’re worse.”

I hear rustling to my right and spy a nosy neighbor standing on their porch, gazing at us.

“Are you okay over there, Ophelia?” Mr. Barker asks her.

He’s in his sixties and couldn’t handle one of us, let alone all three. The old man is way out of his depth and needs to get back in his house before the cops come here looking for Belen. If they see Ophelia in this sad shape, with her throwing around accusations, the detectives will take all of us down to the station for questioning.

“How about we take this inside?” Mom suggests, keeping her voice low. “We don’t need to involve the neighbors.”

“I’m fine, Mr. Barker,” Ophelia says.

“I just saw the news,” he says. “I hope they find your father.”

“Me too,” she chokes out, sniffing back more tears. “You can go back inside. Sorry to bother you.”

He gives each of us a strange look and then walks back into the house. I won’t be surprised if he watches us from his window.

I bend down and smash my nose against Ophelia’s neck, breathing her in after missing her for the past two weeks. “Can we talk about this in the house, baby?”

“I’m not your baby anymore,” she fires back.

“Okay, that’s fair.” I kiss her cheek so she knows I still care about her and want her more than oxygen. “But we do need to talk. All of us.”

She laughs. “Sure, let’s talk about my dad being too stupid to listen.” Ophelia’s eyes shift to my mom. “You used his grief to control him. And you thought you could do the same to me.” She shakes her head, another sob escaping her chest. “I’m not my dad. You can’t manipulate me.”

“Darling,” Mother lilts as she approaches us, her expensive heeling clicking on the flagstones. “You don’t know the real story. It’s time you learn the truth about the real Belen Drakos.”

Chapter Eleven

OPHELIA

I'M A TOTAL MESS. SNOT DRIPS FROM MY NOSE, AND THERE'S NOT A SINGLE part of my face not wet with tears. It's like the floodgates of Hell opened, and I can't stop crying.

The second I saw Ares, I lost it. He came after me when I wanted him to stay inside with his family. I wanted to walk away and never look back.

Then, I saw him.

And I felt *everything*.

All my feelings came pouring out of me, leaking onto the ground at my feet. They consume me, and I hate how much I want him.

Need him.

As we walk into the house, Ares slings his arm over my shoulder. "Baby, I missed you. I'm so glad you're back."

My heart aches for him, ripping a little more with his words. How can I be falling for a man who killed my father? He came into my house with the intent of tricking me.

So did Apollo and Atlas.

It was all a game.

I hate them.

"I'm not back." I shove his arm off me. "You betrayed me, Ares. I will never forgive you for this."

"Give it time," he insists, trying to reach for my hand, but as our fingers brush, I pull away. "You'll see that I'm not the bad guy."

I follow Athena as she leads the pack into the sitting room. Atlas and Apollo are at her sides, the dutiful sons doing whatever Mommy wants.

I'm so stupid.

I thought they were mine, but they were always Athena's. They were only here to fuck with my head and make me compliant. I wouldn't be here if not for my feelings for Ares. I would have shot him, got in the car, and returned to my uncle's house.

Athena points at the couch, flashing perfectly white teeth as she smiles at me. "You should sit for this, Ophelia. What I have to say is not pleasant."

I smirk. "Nothing with you ever is, Athena."

"Sweetheart." Her nose scrunches, and she blows out a deep breath. "I'm not a monster. You might think I am, but I assure you everything I have done is for a reason."

I sit on the couch beside Ares, glaring at my stepmother from hell. "The villain always thinks they're doing the right thing. There's nothing you can say to prove you're not pure fucking evil."

Athena sighs, shaking her head. "I'm not the villain here. That role goes to your father." She strolls over to the table and grabs her purse. "I only married your dad to get even." Digging through the contents of her Mary Poppins bag, filled with a little of everything, she pulls out an envelope. "Your mother wanted you to have this. She thought it was time you know the truth about your family."

Apollo leans against the wooden bar on the right side of the room and pours five drinks. He hands two highball glasses to Atlas and then crosses the room with the other three. He offers one to Athena first, Ares, and then me.

I stare at him.

Blink.

"It's not poisoned, Mistress." He nudges the glass at me. "Drink. It will help calm your nerves."

I watch him pour the whiskey from my father's stash so I know it's okay to drink. But still, I'm highly suspicious of him and wouldn't put anything past any of them.

The first time we met, red flags went off in my brain at one glimpse of Apollo's mischievous smirks. I knew better than to trust him and Ares most of all.

I'm such an idiot.

So weak and pathetic.

They played me.

I taste the whiskey, and then Apollo drinks from his glass, raising it as if

he's ready to toast. If he does, I might kill him.

Ares places his hand on my knee and squeezes. I used to hate it when he touched my legs. It made me all too aware of how much I hate my body. But because of Ares and his brothers, I'm not the same insecure girl. I feel stronger with them, so I overlooked their deception.

I never saw this coming.

Athena hands me a pink envelope. "This might change your mind about my sons and me. We're only here because your mother made it so. She was my closest friend, like a sister. And on her deathbed, she had one wish."

I can smell Mom's perfume on the paper. The scent is faint, but there's no mistaking the hint of honey in her favorite Jo Malone scent.

My eyes water when I read my name on the envelope in my mother's handwriting.

My Sweet Girl

"Mom," I whisper.

It's the same perfect cursive she scrawled on every note in my lunch box. I still have almost all of her letters that tell me I'm beautiful and strong. Those notes still get me through some of the worst days.

I feel something small and thick inside. So I slide my finger beneath the seal. A flash drive falls out of the envelope with a handwritten letter.

"What was her dying wish?" I ask Athena.

"That you know who you are."

Everyone in the room watches me with curiosity. My eyes flick from Athena to Apollo as she perches on the arm of the couch beside him.

"What is that supposed to mean?"

Athena gives me a sweet smile. "Read the letter, sweetheart. Then we'll explain everything."

Apollo sips from the glass, eyes on me. Atlas also holds my gaze, and for the first time, he doesn't have his sketchbook on his lap. No sign of the charcoal pencil he usually tucks behind his ear.

I lift the flash drive, confused about why my mother would leave this behind. She hated computers. When Dad bought her a laptop three years ago for Christmas, she couldn't even figure out how to turn it on.

I taught her how to use a cell phone when I was eight. Mom was lucky she could send text messages without them going to the wrong person. Technology was not her thing.

My hand won't stop shaking, so Ares slips his fingers between mine.

“You hate us now,” he says in a hushed tone. “But we’re the only family you’ve got. And we’re here for you, Ophelia.”

I stare into his eyes for some sign of malice and only see love written all over his handsome face. Ares isn’t the same man with me that he is with everyone else. When we’re alone, he opens up to me. He tells me his secrets, his desires, all of his fears.

That’s why I can lower my guard with him, even though I hope my gut feeling isn’t wrong. I want to trust him, but I have been burned too many times in the past.

“I’m scared,” I whisper.

Ares moves our joined hands to his thigh and kisses my cheek. “I know this is hard. If I were holding a letter from my dad, I’d feel the same way. So, whenever you’re ready. Open it. We’ll still be here when you do.”

I glance at his brothers, then Athena. It sounds strange to call them my family. Our parents weren’t married very long before everything fell apart. One week after their wedding, Dad caught me having sex with my stepbrothers. Then he disowned me as if I were nothing to him. Like losing his only daughter was insignificant.

“What if everything changes after this?” I ask Ares.

“It will,” he says without a trace of doubt on his face. “Your life will never be the same.”

I set the flash drive on the coffee table and open the letter. The pink paper was her favorite stationery. My mom loved personalizing her stamps, notepads, and letters.

The top of the page says *From the Mind of Cora Drakos* with a hand-drawn heart through the middle of the page. Bringing the letter to my nose, I breathe in her scent and cry. I don’t care that everyone is watching me. These are the last words my mother wrote me, and I want to savor every second.

Ares’s hand is still on my thigh. I look down at his inked fingers, then over at him. Just knowing he’s beside me calms down my rapid heartbeat. He shouldn’t make me feel this way, but he does.

“No matter what the letter says,” he says softly. “I’m here for you.”

“Ares,” I mutter. “You’re not allowed to care after what you did. You don’t get to be *my* person.”

“Well, I *am* your person. So deal with it, little dragon.” He shakes his head, a dark strand of hair dropping onto his tanned forehead. “If you want to make me your punching bag, I don’t care. Hit me all you want. Scream at me.

Tell me how much you hate me. Just promise not to leave me ever again.”

My heart drops into my stomach harder than an anchor hitting the ocean floor. Is he afraid of losing me? Ares should have thought about that before he conspired with his family to kill my father. To destroy his legacy and take what is mine.

I think that, but don't say it. Instead, I read the letter my mother wrote me. With shaky hands, I hold the paper and blink away the tears. I'm crying so much it's hard to read her perfect handwriting. She made this little swoop with her C's, S's, and W's. I tried to emulate it when I was younger, but it looked like chicken scratch.

To my sweet girl,

IF YOU'RE READING THIS LETTER, I'M NO LONGER HERE WITH YOU. BUT A piece of me is always with you in spirit. In your heart and memories. Whenever you feel lost, just know I'm not far away.

I wanted to tell you things before I passed on to the next life. There were so many things I wished I could say but could never find the courage. Your father had such a chokehold on you that I was lucky to have those stolen moments of happiness with you. You were my daughter first, but he claimed you the second he saw you.

He loves you. I know he does, even though he doesn't always show it. And if you're reading this, Belen is also gone.

Athena is your stepmother now. She will take care of you, my sweet girl. I know you must feel so betrayed and upset right now. But just know we never did any of this to deceive you. We only want the best for you.

Watch the video I recorded for you on the flash drive. It will explain everything.

Why I did the things I did.

Why I tried to protect you.

I hope you can forgive me for keeping so many secrets from you, but it's time you know the truth.

I will love you forever.

LOVE,

Mom

My vision blurs, black dots swimming in front of my eyes. Even more tears are falling, sliding down my cheeks as the page slips from my fingers. The sobs that escape my chest suck the air from my lungs, and I can't breathe.

It's too hot.

Too much.

Ares catches me in his strong arms before my head hits the couch. He yanks me backward and onto his chest as tears flow out of me and onto his bare chest.

Just promise not to leave me ever again.

His words rattle around in my head as he holds me, his long finger trailing up and down my arm. There's no place I would rather be than with Ares, and I hate myself for it. I hate that the only person who makes me feel better has also hurt me beyond repair.

"It's going to be okay, baby." Ares presses a kiss on my forehead. "Your Mom wanted this, you'll see. We'll watch the video together, and then you'll understand."

"Okay," I mutter, clutching his jeans with my fingers as I cry on his rock-hard chest.

Apollo hops up from the couch with his laptop and kneels beside me as he sets it on the table. He inserts the flash drive into the slot, waiting for the computer to load.

I watch as he clicks the buttons. His fingers are just as long as his brothers but not tattooed, and I wonder how they will feel on my body. This isn't the right moment to be thinking about sex. But I want to think about anything other than my life.

I need a distraction.

And not like Apollo would touch me, anyway. So I lean into Ares and let him console me. I brush up against him as he whispers cute things to me. He promises to take care of me, and I believe him.

I want to believe him.

My mother's face pops up on the screen.

Apollo's finger hovers over the trackpad, and he looks at me. "Are you ready, Mistress?"

I nod.

But before he can hit Play, someone bangs on the door. Then the bell

rings. Through the thin curtains, I see blue and red police lights flashing in the driveway.

Fuck.

I'm sure they're wondering about the situation out front. My uncle's car is still running, the fender smashing into the bumper of the Audi. If Apollo is mad about that, he hasn't said anything. Not like I would care.

"I will handle this." Athena rises from the couch, smoothing a hand down the front of her dress. She looks at me. "Ophelia, no one knows you've been living with your uncle for the past two weeks or that your father changed the will."

"My uncle knows," I tell her. "That's why I stopped talking to your sons. Uncle Alexander came home with signed and stamped papers from the courthouse. He will tell the police you had something to do with Dad's murder."

She presses her lips together, smearing the pale shade of pink. "Your uncle is another problem we'll address."

Ares and Atlas nod.

"I'll go with you, Mother," Apollo offers and comes to stand at her side. "Let me take the lead."

Chapter Twelve

APOLLO

WHEN I WAS A BOY, MY FATHER NOTICED I WAS DIFFERENT FROM MY brothers. He saw my talent for numbers and raised me in his likeness. And even though I'm younger than Ares, our dad always treated me like I was the oldest.

The more responsible one.

While Ares was out getting high and fighting, I learned how to be the man of the house. Dad said my job was to protect the family when he wasn't around.

I was only fourteen.

That was ten years ago.

Back then, Atlas always had his head in the clouds. He was too busy looking for inspiration to care about anything happening in the real world. Not much has changed in all these years.

My brothers have their strengths. But in our current situation, neither can help dig us out of this mess. Not after the police take one look at them covered in tattoos, immediately rendering them thugs.

As I open the door for the police, I step into the role my father groomed me to play. I am the head of this household.

"Hello, officers," I say with a pleasant smile aimed at the middle-aged men on our doorstep. "How can I help you?"

Be polite.

Smile.

Those were my dad's rules if the police or any of the authorities ever came knocking. He worked for Belen for most of his life. Even when they

were in high school, hustling money from kids, Belen was always the boss. My dad was more straight-laced and, even back then, handled the cash.

“Good evening, we’re looking for Mrs. Athena Drakos,” the tallest of the cops says.

“That’s my mother,” I tell them and hold open the door wider. “I’m Apollo Demetriou.”

The taller man nods. “Is your mother home, Mr. Demetriou? We need to ask her a few questions.”

Mom appears in the entryway, dabbing at her fake tears with a silk scarf. “I saw the news and have been worried sick. Belen won’t answer my calls. Do you think he was in the building when it set fire?”

“Ma’am, can we come inside? We’d like to ask you a few questions about your husband.”

“Of course.” She tips her head back and gives an Oscar-worthy performance that looks real to anyone who doesn’t know her. “Anything to help find my Belen.”

I want to gag.

My mother is nothing short of spectacular, as usual. Our mother can fool anyone. She’s good at pretending she gives a damn about Belen.

Ares and Atlas are keeping Ophelia busy in the sitting room. She was too much of a mess. Even though she offered to help, I didn’t see any reason for it. With how unstable she’s been all night, the police might become more suspicious.

I guide them into the kitchen and point at the table. “We can sit here and talk.”

Mom offers them coffee and turns her back to us to get the French press ready. “My husband and I regularly donate to the Beacon Bay Police Department. We’re very supportive of everything you do for this community.”

Maybe tone it down, Athena.

Sometimes, my mom can be over-the-top. But turning on the charm is what she does best. I learned that from her.

As she fixes the coffee, I sit with Officer Lawrence and Officer Matthews at the kitchen table. “Do you have any leads on the fire at Kallidromo?”

“The fire department has already ruled it as arson,” Officer Lawrence says. “Whoever set fire to the club had intent. The club is now a crime scene.”

I remain expressionless and ask, “Do you have any suspects?”

Officer Matthews looks at my mom, eyes narrowed. Does he think she had something to do with the fire? He doesn't speak, turning his head away when he catches me watching him.

Officer Lawrence says, “We have a few people in mind but no solid leads. Until we find Belen Drakos, we're keeping all options open.”

So they think Belen could have set the fire to the club. It wouldn't be the first time one of Belen's clubs mysteriously burned down to collect the insurance money. That's why I suggested it to my mother. If he perished in the fire, it would look like another one of his schemes went wrong.

No one got hurt.

Only Belen.

The club doesn't open until nine o'clock, and The Serpents set the fire at eight-thirty. They locked Belen in a back room to burn to death as planned. He deserved much worse for making our lives hell for the past ten years.

So far, the news hasn't reported any casualties. But soon enough, they will recover Belen's body. And when they do, we inherit the Drakos empire.

My poor mother had to have sex with that piece of shit so we could get this far. That, in and of itself, was a real sacrifice. The thought of his slimy hands on my mother made me want to vomit each night we spent in his house.

Knowing we had a short-term goal got me through it. My carefully laid plans are falling into place like chess pieces moving across the board.

We're so close.

Mom sets the coffee, creamer, and sugar on the table in front of the police officers and takes her place beside me.

“Mrs. Drakos, do you know where your husband went tonight?” Officer Matthews asks.

She sits up straighter, head held high. “I ate dinner with Belen and my sons around six-thirty, and then he left to deal with one of his businesses. I honestly couldn't tell you which one because he owns so many.”

“Where were you at eight-thirty this evening?”

“At home with my sons.”

“How many sons do you have?”

“Three.”

He nods. “Are they home now?”

She flicks her dark hair over her shoulder, maintaining her flawless

exterior. “They’re in the house somewhere.”

“We need to speak with them, Ma’am,” Officer Lawrence says before turning his gaze to me. “What were you doing at eight-thirty this evening, Mr. Demetriou?”

“I was at home with my mother and brothers, watching a movie in the den.”

“Which one?” Lawrence asks.

“Our mother’s favorite,” I lie, “Gone with the Wind.”

He narrows his eyes at me. “You were home on a Saturday night watching classic movies with your mother?”

“And my brothers,” I add.

That earns me another nasty look from Lawrence. “How old are you, Mr. Demetriou?”

“Twenty-four. But I don’t see how my age relates to what I was doing this evening.”

Down boy.

I regain my composure and act untouched by their line of questioning.

“We’re going to need to speak with your brothers.”

I push myself up from the table and nod. “Sure, I’ll go get them.”

Mom gives me a look that says, *Make sure Ares looks decent*. He wasn’t wearing a shirt the last time I saw him because he washed away Ophelia’s tears with it. And Ophelia didn’t look so hot, either. She looked like she hadn’t showered or eaten in days.

Seeing Ophelia in bad shape broke my heart. We did that to her, and I hate myself for it.

“Ares, stop it,” Ophelia says as I enter the sitting room, slapping his hand. “I’m mad at you.”

“Baby, I’m sorry.” He leans in for a kiss, but she pushes on his chest to keep him away. “I’ll do anything to make it up to you.”

“Not now, lover boy.” I cross the room to stand in front of the coffee table. “Get upstairs, dress in a long-sleeve shirt, and hide your tattoos.” My gaze sweeps over to Atlas. He looks less like a thug than Ares, but cops take one look at all that ink and think they’re in a gang. “Maybe you should, too, Atlas. The police want to speak with both of you about us staying in with Mom and watching *Gone with the Wind*.”

“What the fuck?” Ares groans, tugging at the short ends of his black hair. “I hate that fucking movie.”

“Well, Mom loves it. I told the officers we watched it with her in the den at eight-thirty.”

Atlas gets up first. “Do they think we had something to do with the fire?”

I shrug. “Who knows? But they’re asking questions like they think we could be involved.”

“Those are just standard questions,” Ophelia says. “The cops come here all the time, grilling my dad about stuff that happened at his clubs. They need your alibis to rule you out as suspects.”

I clap my hands since Ares isn’t moving from the couch. “Chop, chop. Get upstairs and change into something decent. You can’t walk into the kitchen without a shirt and all that ink.”

Ares slips his arm behind Ophelia’s back and lifts her off the couch.

“Ares,” she whines. “You know I hate—“

“You’re fucking perfect, little dragon. There’s no part of you I will ever find disgusting.” He bends down and kisses her forehead, his hand dipping beneath the hem of her T-shirt. “This is mine.”

A soft moan slides past her lips as he caresses her beneath the shirt. “Ares, I’m not yours.”

“Mine,” he growls as his hand falls away from her body. “C’mon. We gotta talk to the cops.”

“She can’t come with us,” I interject. “I didn’t mention Ophelia being here tonight. They’re already suspicious. We don’t need to add fuel to the fire.”

“So,” Ares shoots back. “She lives here. Ophelia has every right to be in this house.”

“Technically, I don’t live here anymore,” she says in a clipped tone. “I live at Uncle Alexander’s house.”

“The police will ask why your dad kicked you out,” I tell her. “It’s best you stay here until they leave.”

She moves in front of my brothers and looks at me. “Which officers are here?”

“Matthews and Lawrence.”

A smile tips up the corners of her mouth. “I know Lawrence. He’s in my dad’s pocket. I’ll go with you.”

Ares curls his arm around her and smirks. “Come help me change, little dragon.”

She rolls her eyes, but there’s a desire in them. He attempts to kiss her

again, and she turns her head.

“This isn’t playtime, Ares. The cops are waiting for us.”

Chapter Thirteen

OPHELIA

MY HEART HASN'T STOPPED POUNDING SINCE I SAW THE CLUB ON FIRE. Despite whatever my mom wants to tell me in the video, I still love my dad. Even though I know he's not, I hope he's still alive.

Atlas admitted to selling his bar in exchange for help from The Serpents. They're a no-nonsense gang known for pulling off complex jobs. There's no way they set that fire and left my dad alive. Not unless they had something to gain by doing so.

He's dead, I tell myself as I change into a pair of jeans and a clean blouse. *They killed your dad*.

Tears sting my eyes that are raw from crying so much tonight. I dab some concealer beneath my eyes and run a brush through my hair.

Good enough.

I know one of the cops, so it shouldn't be that big of a deal. We can talk ourselves out of this mess. And after that, I'm watching my mom's video. It's all I have been thinking about from the moment I read the letter.

Ares meets me in the hallway with Atlas. They're both dressed in black long-sleeve button-down shirts and jeans. The collars conceal most of their tattoos, except for the ink on their hands.

I lick my lips. "You two clean up nicely."

"Don't let this shirt fool you," Ares says with a wink. "You know what's beneath it, baby." He shoves it up a few inches to reveal his inked, muscled stomach. "Take a good look. I know you want me. Stop denying it."

My core aches with need as I gaze upon his body. I have missed Ares too much over the past two weeks. Every day has felt like complete torture. Even

after discovering the will change, I thought about him at night. I dreamed of all the dirty things he used to do to me in the dark.

“You need more than a hot body and a pretty face to win me back,” I say, acting like I don’t care about how good he looks and smells.

“At least I got those two things going for me.” He smirks. “If you’re a good girl, maybe I’ll reward you later with my cock.”

I flip my hair over my shoulder and turn my back to him, headed toward the grand staircase. “Do you ever think with anything else?” I shake my head and descend the stairs. “You know, Ares, you could say something sweet for once. Maybe take a cue from Atlas. Or even Apollo.”

“What?” Ares scoffs. “I *am* sweet. I just offered you a ride on my cock. That’s all the romance you need.”

Atlas laughs. “You’re such caveman.”

“And dense,” I add, glancing at Atlas as he moves beside me on the steps. “Ares doesn’t seem to understand that his compliments sound more like insults.”

“We’ve gone over the compliments thing,” Ares protests as we hit the ground floor. “Saying I want you to wrap your *thick* thighs around my head, so I can lick your pussy until it’s dry is one of the highest compliments in my book.”

I snicker at his idiotic attempt. “Keep it up, Greek God. You’re not making your case.”

“Yeah,” Atlas agrees. “Maybe stick to the basics. Tell Ophelia she’s a goddess, and you want to worship at her altar.”

Ares snorts with laughter. “Gross. I would never say some corny shit like that.”

“Not gross,” I interject. “I love when Atlas says that kind of stuff to me. It’s cute. Romantic. Even Apollo says nice things to me, and he won’t even touch me. Step up your game, Ares. Or your brothers will leave you in the dust.”

I love fucking with him.

“My dick is bigger,” he points out. “They can’t make you come like I do.”

I stop before we get too close to the kitchen and lower my voice. “Relationships are about more than sex. And if you want me to even think about letting you back into my life, you have to change.” I put my hand over his heart and feel it thump beneath my palm. “I want to know what’s in here,

Ares. Not in your pants.”

His mouth falls open, shocked by my response. But he doesn't get the chance to reply before I spin on my heels and march toward the kitchen.

“Sorry to keep you waiting, officers,” I say as I enter the kitchen, looking more like myself than the homeless woman who arrived an hour ago. “Steve.” I look at Officer Lawrence. “Have you found my dad yet?”

He shakes his head. “Sorry, Ophelia. Nothing yet. We're still waiting on an update.”

The cop I don't know, Officer Matthews, narrows his eyes at me. “Where were you tonight around eighty-thirty this evening, Miss Drakos?”

“I was at my uncle's house,” I tell him. “Alexander Drakos. I was watching TV when I saw the fire at the club and rushed over here to check on my dad.”

“Alex is on his way,” Lawrence tells me. “He had much to say when I spoke to him on the ride over here.”

My heart beats faster, sweat sliding down my back as I look at the officers. Something is wrong. Their gazes keep moving between Athena and her sons.

Then back to me.

If Uncle Alexander is coming here, he's already told the police what he thinks about Athena. He believes she only married my dad to trick him out of his money and my inheritance. All of that is true. But after reading my mother's letter, I know there's more to the story.

Fuck.

Until they find my dad's body, he's still alive. So, I won't allow the grief to watch over me. I have to hold myself together and try to remain calm. The cops survey me with suspicious looks, even Lawrence, who was always a family friend.

Is he not on Dad's payroll anymore? I'm discovering much I don't know about my dad and his life. He has kept so many secrets from me.

Kicked me out.

Disowned me.

Why is it so hard to stop loving someone, even when their actions prove they don't love you back?

Chapter Fourteen

ATLAS

THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS, AND SECONDS LATER, ALEXANDER DRAKOS APPEARS in the kitchen, dressed in a five-thousand-dollar suit.

He rushes straight to Ophelia. “My sweet girl,” he whispers, yanking her away from Ares with possession. “How are you?”

“Not good.” She wraps her arms around his neck and cries on his shoulder. “Uncle Ale, Dad is... dead. He’s...” Ophelia chokes on each word. “And we left things on a bad note. I didn’t get to tell him that I love him.”

“I’m here now.” He kisses her head. “It’s going to be okay. Your dad knew how much you loved him. And he loved you.” Alexander kisses her again. “Come home with me. I’ll handle the necessary arrangements for your father.”

We were planning to move Ophelia back into the house after she watched the video of her mom. And since she hasn’t done that yet, she doesn’t know the truth about Alexander. She doesn’t fully understand why we unintentionally hurt her.

It wasn’t just our revenge.

We did this for her, too.

Alexander offers his hand to Officer Matthews, and they shake hands like old friends, patting each other on the back. They exchange pleasantries and talk about the case. The remains found at the club and if they are possibly my father’s dead body. I block out their conversation, not ready to accept reality. Until the coroner pronounces him dead, my father is still alive.

And that gives me hope.

After the cops leave the kitchen, Alexander tugs on Ophelia’s hand and

pulls her toward the exit. “We’re leaving. This disgusting relationship with your stepbrothers can’t continue.”

“We’re not her stepbrothers, are we Alexander?” Ares steps forward, hands on his waist, glaring at Alexander. “But you already knew that.” He reaches for her hand and misses by an inch because Alexander pulls her back. “Ophelia is staying with us. This is her home.”

Ares is so desperate to keep her. I’ve never seen him like this with anyone else. He’s in love with her. There’s no denying it. All of us have feelings for her. She makes it hard not to love her.

“Keep your filthy hands to yourself and get out of my way,” Alexander growls in Ares’s face, peeling his fingers off Ophelia’s arm. “You are *not* her family.”

Ares points a finger at his chest, then at me and Apollo. “We’re her family now.”

Alexander pushes out his palm to create distance between Ares and Ophelia. “Stay away from my niece. You will end up behind bars if you come anywhere near her.”

“Niece?” I say to break the silence once and for all. We agreed to tell Ophelia the truth when the time was right. “How about you stop lying to Ophelia?”

Ophelia gives me a pained look before aiming her gaze at Alexander. “What is he talking about?”

“Not now,” Alexander says through clenched teeth, tugging on Ophelia’s hand to lead her toward the kitchen’s entrance.

“Alexander Drakos is your father.” To my surprise, Apollo steps toward them, and he yanks her away from Alexander, breaking his no-touching rule. “He’s known for years. But Belen didn’t find out until before your mother got sick.”

“No,” Ophelia mutters, covering her mouth with her hand. “My mom wouldn’t do that to him. She loved my dad.”

“She loved *me*,” Alexander said to confirm her worst nightmare. “She only pretended with Belen.”

“Alex,” my mother says, summoning him with her index finger. “We need to talk.”

Alexander glances at her, and when their eyes lock, his face softens. They were friends as kids and grew apart. Probably because of the secret they were both keeping. Until we found the proof in the records The Serpents gave me,

we had no idea our father had been hiding anything from us. She acted like her plan to marry Belen was a ploy to avenge our father when it was about Cora, too.

Alexander follows my mother out of the kitchen, where they can talk privately. We'll need him on board for the next stage of our plans.

As Ophelia sobbed into her hands, Apollo wrapped his arms around her. Observing this rare moment of affection, I wonder if my twin is finally healing. Ophelia was the last person we thought could help him, yet she's done so much for all of us. I see a positive change in Ares, too. Until he fell in love with Ophelia, he was a miserable asshole who didn't care about anything or than fucking and fighting.

Even I feel my heart opening up to new possibilities. What the three of us have with Ophelia isn't cheap and tainted like the other girls who came before her.

She's perfect.

Perfect for *us*.

Chapter Fifteen

OPHELIA

MY HEART BEATS A MILE A MINUTE, PUMPING SO HARD IN MY CHEST THAT I might black out. The room spins around me, and I stagger into Apollo's chest. He tightens his grip on me, holding me with a gentleness I have never seen before.

I thought he hated touching, but you would never know it. Not with how he takes care of me, concerned more about me than his rules.

And I love him for it.

Tears stream down my cheeks like water breaking from a dam, soaking mine and Apollo's shirts. He doesn't seem to care and tucks my head under his chin, soothing me with soft, loving strokes of his fingers that trail down my back. Ares is beside us, wiping the tears from my face with the pad of his thumb.

"I'm sorry," Alexander says to me, and for the first time in my life, he's not Uncle Alexander but... Dad? I can't even fathom calling him that after all these years, not when the man I thought was my father was just burned alive in one of his clubs. "I wanted to tell you, my sweet girl. I tried so many times and chickened out. Your mother thought it was best you didn't know. And I agreed with her until she was gone." He sighs, scrubbing a hand through his short, blond hair that's the opposite of mine. "Well, now you know why I have always been there for you. Why I practically lived at your house growing up. And why I insisted you work with me at Olympus. When I stole Belen's empire from him, I wanted my daughter by my side."

I slip out of Apollo's embrace and look at Alexander—my father—my entire body trembling from fear, grief, and overwhelming sadness. "All the

nights we worked together at the club. The things you saw me do.” I shook my head, staring down at my feet in shame. “Why didn’t you say anything? You let me become a Madam. I hid that side of my life from my father... from Belen.” I choke on my words. “I don’t even know what to call him anymore.”

“He raised you,” Alexander says, reaching for my hand. “You can still call him your father. He earned that much. But biologically, you don’t share any DNA with him. You wouldn’t have inherited his clubs. So I told Athena the truth about what Belen did to Adrian. He killed her ex-husband, even though he tried telling Belen he’d never touched your mother.”

My gaze snaps to Ophelia. “How long did you know?”

“Cora was my best friend. She told me everything.” Athena strides across the room and stands before me, giving me a sweet smile. “Your mom thought she was doing right by you. Marrying Belen was the smart choice. She cheated on him with Alexander and knew Belen would make everyone’s life hell if he didn’t think you were his. So we went along with her plan.”

Alexander moves beside her and cups her shoulder, snapping her attention back to him. “I didn’t want to ruin your perfect image of your mother. She was a saint. And she would have done anything for you. She married Belen to give you a life she never had. I couldn’t give it to her. Not then, anyway. And by the time I could, it was too late.”

“Ophelia,” Athena says in a singsong tone. “There’s more to the story. You should hear it from your mother.” She extends her hand to me. “We’ll watch her confession together.” Her gaze shifts to her sons and then to Alexander. “As a family.”

AFTER APOLLO SETS UP HIS LAPTOP TO PLAY THE VIDEO ON THE TV SCREEN, I sit on the couch with my men. Ares is on my right, Apollo on my left. Atlas lounges on the arm and leans over Apollo to place his hand on my shoulder for support.

My uncle—now my father—is with Athena on the couch across from us. I hit Play on the remote and hold my breath as my mother’s face appears on the screen. Long, dark hair frames her cherub-like face and drapes over her right shoulder like fine silk. Even sick and on her deathbed, she looks

fantastic. So beautiful and full of life.

“Hello, my sweet girl,” Mom says with a smile as if she were in the room and talking directly to me. “If you’re watching this video, I’m gone, and so is Belen, and you have many questions you want answered.” She presses her lips together, fighting back tears. “Athena will tell you everything. So will Alexander. They know the truth and can help you heal.”

Clutching my knees, I bend forward and suck deep breaths, trying to steady my nerves. I miss her so much. She was the one constant in my life, the center of my universe. The past seven months have been the toughest of my life without her. But thankfully, she sent Athena and her sons to help me recover from the loss. Because of them, I am finally starting to move on.

“I love you, Ophelia.” Mom coughs, and I hate watching her choke on her words.

The last few months were the worst. She’d start hacking and couldn’t stop for an hour, all while I had to sit and watch her die.

“Everything I have ever done was to protect you,” she says once her lungs are clear. “To make sure you felt loved and supported. I know you’ve always felt different, but that’s because you’re special.”

I smile at her words. There wasn’t a single day my mom didn’t make me feel special. Every school day, she left a note in my lunch box with an inspirational quote or words of wisdom, anything to make me feel more secure in my body. I was always so worried about weight I never focused on anything else. I figured that was all anyone could see because the kids at school made me feel bad about myself.

“For you to fully understand my choices, I need to go back to the beginning,” my mom continues. “Back to my childhood and my second year of college.”

I grab a tissue from the box on the table and dab at my eyes.

Ares slips his fingers between mine and whispers in my ear. “Are you okay?”

I bob my head, blinking away the tears staining my cheeks. “I will be.”

“We’re here for you, Mistress,” Apollo says in a hushed tone, placing his hand on my knee. He squeezes, and I like seeing this side of him.

Atlas already has his hand on my shoulder, tapping his fingers on my skin. Between the three of them, they make me feel desired and loved. Until they disrupted my life, I never felt so appreciated by any man, let alone three of them.

“I grew up with Athena and Alexander,” Mom explains, dabbing one of her fancy silk scarves beneath her eyes. She was so glamorous and classy, always dressed to the nines. “They were my best friends. We were in the same grade and had the same classes in school. I spent a lot of time at the Drakos’ house. And that’s how I met Belen. But he didn’t notice me until I was older, home from college on my summer break. I had a crush on him. He was older and a bad boy, and I liked how it felt to break the rules for once in my life.”

My dad was the definition of a bad boy. Starting in high school, he operated outside the law. He cooked books, fixed fights, anything to make a quick buck and not have to work a real job. His clubs and other businesses were all legitimate, but he started them with the illegal cash from his side hustles.

Mom sits up straighter and clears her throat. “I know you must be confused, Ophelia. But you have to understand I had feelings for Alexander, too. We hadn’t explored that side of our relationship until after I started dating Belen. Seeing me with his brother snapped Alex into action. I’d liked Alex since we were kids, so I didn’t push him away when he finally kissed, even though I should have. Especially since I was sleeping with his brother.” She lowers her head and sighs. “I’m ashamed of what I did. I should have broken it off with Belen. But when I found out I was pregnant, Alex suggested I tell Belen. He was more established and successful and could take care of us. Alex couldn’t give us that. Not back then, anyway. And if Belen knew you were Alex’s child, he would have killed him. You know by now that your father...” She pauses and then says, “I mean Belen... was not a good man. He would do anything necessary to get what he wanted. Alex and I would have paid the price for what we did. And I feared you would, too.”

My eyes dart to Alexander, who stares at the screen, tears welling in his bottom lids. He loved my mother. I always saw it and thought nothing of it. To me, he was just my uncle. Her brother-in-law. It never occurred to me that all the affection he showed us was more.

I think about all the times I watched them dancing in the living room. Movie nights with three of us curled up on this couch. Monopoly Mondays and Saturday game nights. We did everything together—like a typical family.

My dad was rarely around, so I spent most of my time with my birth parents. I used to think that my childhood sucked. That I had a shitty life because my dad was a Greek Mafia boss and whacked people for a living.

And here I was with my father all along.

“Athena and Alexander helped me get even with Belen for what he did to me,” my mom continued, breathing harder through her nose.

I hit the Pause button on the remote, and my gaze flicks to Athena. “What’s she talking about?”

“Your mother didn’t die from cancer.” She presses her plump lips together. “Belen poisoned her.”

My mouth dropped in shock, my heart thumping so loudly my chest hurt. I struggled to form words, and nothing came out when I opened my mouth to speak. Seeing my mother and hearing her voice again was hard enough. But knowing my so-called father intentionally took her away from me...

How could he?

He acted like he was so in love with my mom, even toward the end. Even after she was gone, he turned into a shell of a man. The house was a mess for the first few months. He was drunk all the time. Most mornings, I found shattered liquor bottles on the floor throughout the house. Sometimes, I found my dad half-naked and sleeping in a pool of his vomit.

Was it the guilt?

Did it eat him alive?

“My mom went through chemo,” I mutter, still in shock and blinking rapidly. “Why would Dr. Reynolds make her undergo chemo if she didn’t have cancer?”

“Belen knew the doctor,” Athena says, fiddling with the gold button on her shirtsleeve. “He paid him to swap out the tests and X-rays for a cancer patient. Everything looked real on paper. Your mother was sick and dying but not from cancer.”

“Why would he do that?” I choked out.

“He found out your mother cheated on him,” Alexander interjected, leaning forward with his elbows resting on his thighs. “He didn’t know I was your father.”

“Belen thought my husband was your father,” Athena adds. “That’s why he set Adrian up and cut him out of the businesses. My ex was a lot of things, a cheater being one of them, but he would never have stabbed Belen in the back.”

When Athena divorced Adrian, she came to the house yelling about how he’d cheated on her with women from the clubs. His boys thought he was the greatest father in the world, but he was not a good husband.

On several occasions, I'd overheard Athena and my mom talking about another woman's perfume Athena smelled on Adrian's shirt. Lipstick she'd spotted on his collar. The late nights and all the sneaking around. My dad was equally secretive and probably cheated on my mom, too.

"So you married my dad for revenge?"

Athena nods. "The note your mother wrote is real. She begged me to work with Alexander to take down Belen. It's not like I needed much convincing after discovering what she did to my ex-husband. And the poison..." She shakes her head. "That bastard deserved the same slow and painful death he gave Cora."

"Cora and Adrian deserved justice for what he'd done to them," Alexander says. "Your mother couldn't reverse her fate, but she wanted to save you from that monster."

"So I seduced your father," Athena interrupts. "Belen had shown interest in me after Cora got sick. I used his heartbreak and the note from your mom to escalate our plans."

I sniffed back more tears. "So he's really dead?"

Another nod.

"And you killed him?"

"No," Atlas cuts in, "that was the handiwork of The Serpents."

My eyebrows tip up in question. "The street gang that hangs out at your bar?"

"It's not my bar anymore," Atlas confesses. "I sold it to get the information we needed. But yeah. Those Serpents."

"Wow," I mouth, still shocked by all the news. "And the will? Is that real?"

"Yes," Athena says. "I never intended to take away your inheritance."

"The clubs are yours," Alexander says, rising from the couch to stride toward me. "And I'm returning to Olympus to work with you again."

He smiles so wide it reaches his blue eyes. We are physically so different. Me with my dark hair and eyes, and him with his light hair and pretty blue eyes, yet when he smiles, I see myself in him. We even have the same dimple on our right cheeks.

My entire world has shifted in a matter of hours. Since the day my dad brought Athena home, I knew something was wrong. I felt it in my gut and chose to ignore it because I was too busy falling in love with three irresistible men.

Epilogue

ARES

OLYMPUS IS PACKED ON SATURDAY NIGHTS, AND TONIGHT IS NO EXCEPTION. I walk through the door on the arms of my men and head downstairs to The O Club, our haven from the world. We've come a long way in the past six months. But Apollo still has rules, and I don't mind following them.

As usual, we enter my office and put on our masks. This is one of many reasons Apollo feels so comfortable at the club. No one here judges him, not like anyone does outside these walls. But when he's here, he feels comfortable, and that's important to his healing process.

Ares smacks my ass on the way to the private room I reserve for us every week. "You make my cock so fucking hard, little dragon. Goddamn, woman. I can't wait to be inside you."

He likes it when I dress up, and we all get to play this game. The three of them work well as a team and are amazing at making my fantasies come to life.

As soon as the door locks, Apollo says, "Get on the bed, Mistress." He points at the mattress covered with black silk sheets and fluffy pillows. "Take off your clothes."

I know he needs to be the one giving orders. So I strip off my shirt and bra and throw them onto the floor. My hand trembles a little when my fingers brush the waistband of my shorts. I still get self-conscious undressing in front of them, but it's getting easier. They make me feel safe and loved, and I know they're not judging me.

I slide my shorts and panties down and spread my legs for him. He hisses, running a hand across his jaw as he looks at my pussy. Since I know he likes

watching me, I spread myself open with my fingers and give him a good show.

“Do you want to touch me, Apollo?” I moan with each pump of my fingers. “Do you want to taste me?”

It took three months before he kissed my skin. Another month before he licked my pussy. After five months of letting Apollo take the reins, we finally had sex last month. It was the first time for Apollo in over four years. And it was magical, explosive, and completely mindblowing.

Naked and looking hotter than ever, Apollo crosses the room and kneels on the floor between my thighs. He knocks my hand away and inches two fingers inside me, biting his lip when he feels my slickness. “You’re so wet for us, Mistress.”

“I’m always wet for you,” I whimper, leaning back on my elbows and spreading my legs wider to change the angle.

Ares and Atlas get on the bed behind me. They tug on my arms and flatten me onto my back, each sucking a nipple into their mouth.

Ares licks and bites me, teasing me until I scream and come on Apollo’s fingers. “Are you ready for my cock, little dragon?”

“Yes,” I moan.

With the mask obscuring my face, I don’t feel self-conscious. My nakedness doesn’t matter. But this place is special for all of us. Apollo doesn’t get stuck in his head like he does at home. Ares and Atlas get off on watching Mistress O come to life. The three of them love watching me dominate the clients. They enjoy seeing me in my element.

Apollo rolls his thumb over my clit in slow circular motions as Ares’s lips descend upon mine. He kisses me roughly, his possessive side coming out to play. Ares doesn’t mind sharing me with his brothers, but when we’re together, he wants the others to know he’s claimed me.

That I was his first.

“Come for us, goddess,” Atlas growls against my lips, shoving Ares out of the way so he can kiss me.

Ares and Apollo take turns rubbing my clit and playing with my nipples until a shudder ripples through my body. Atlas massages my breast, pinching my nipple between his fingers. He tugs harder when I moan, knowing how much I love his rough side. I had to use my safe word the first night we were together. But every night since I beg him for more.

“Fuck me,” I breathe as I come down from my high ready for more.

“Please.”

Apollo likes to watch his brothers with me. He has to warm up to the idea, even though he loves fucking me.

Atlas strokes my arm with his fingers, and tiny bumps scatter along my skin. “Do you want both of us?”

I look up at him and lick my lips. “I want all of you.”

They’re a packaged deal. Whenever I get Atlas, I get Ares too. After years of this unusual partnership, they have a system they like to follow. And I’m more than okay with that.

Six months ago, I lose my nerve at Belen’s wedding, all because I thought I was in love with my stepbrothers. But finding out that Belen Drakos is not my biological father changed everything for us. We’re not stepsiblings. Now, we’re partners, the four of us in a loving, committed relationship. In my world, no one bats an eyelash when we enter the club. What we’re doing is normal to the swingers and sexually open people at The O Club.

“Not so fast, Mistress.” Apollo bends down to lick my clit, and intense waves of pleasure bloom inside me. “I want a taste before my brothers have you.” He digs his fingers into my thighs and lifts my ass off the bed, devouring my pussy like he’s starving.

I yank on the ends of his hair, and the harder I pull, the more it encourages him to keep going. Apollo needs confirmation that he’s making me feel good. He likes knowing the power he exerts over me is also pleasurable.

As Apollo takes me to new heights, his brothers kiss me everywhere, their lips leaving no part of my skin uncharted. I fist a handful of Apollo’s hair as I moan for Atlas and Ares. Just thinking about fucking these two—at the same time—sets my soul on fire. I love it when they dominate me, claim me.

After Apollo makes me come twice, he looks up at me, his lips glistening with my cum. He wipes his mouth and smirks as his eyes sweep over the group.

My insides set on fire with three gorgeous men on the bed and naked, begging me with their eyes for more. I ran the pads of my fingers over each of their muscled chests, needing to touch them. Desperate to feel their strong, hard bodies.

Ares is thicker in the arms than his brothers. Apollo is the tallest and the leanest, while Atlas is a mix of the two.

When Ares attempts to move between my thighs, Apollo shocks all of us by throwing out his arm. “No, it’s my turn.”

He usually lets his brothers go first, enjoying the show. Ares’s right eyebrow quirks up in surprise. But when he locks eyes with Apollo, he doesn’t argue and tips his head at me. Atlas gives his twin the same nod of agreement. We’re all so used to following Apollo’s orders in the bedroom that no one protests. Control matters to him but not to us. We only want him to feel comfortable and safe.

Apollo climbs on top of me, fisting his big, pierced cock. I feel the same sharp pinch and the metal rubbing against my inner walls as he thrusts into me. He goes slow at first, allowing me time to adjust to his size. The bars on the piercings massage me in all the best places, driving me fucking wild.

Once he feels my body relax, he picks up the pace and bends forward to suck my nipple into his mouth. He kisses and licks, eventually making his way up to my neck. His hot tongue rolls over my skin right before he groans in my ear and sucks on the lobe.

“Fuck,” he grunts. “It doesn’t matter how often we fuck you, you’re still so tight, Mistress.”

He pulls out of me, flips me over, and onto my knees, turning me around for his brothers. Atlas and Ares are waiting for me, hands wrapped around their massive cocks. They’re stoking themselves, staring at my lips. So I open my mouth and invite them to have their turn.

Apollo grabs my hips from behind, plowing into me so hard the bed shakes as Ares’s monster dick slips past my lips.

“Oh, fuck, little dragon,” he grunts when I feel him in the back of my throat. “Suck my cock.”

He yanks on my hair, pulling me forward, grunting as I swirl my tongue around the tip before deep-throating him. But his brother is impatient and so far neglected. So Atlas places his hand on my head and helps Ares fuck my mouth.

“Don’t come yet,” Atlas tells Ares with an evil grin.

They want to fuck me together, something they do often.

“Unlike you, *brother*, I have self control,” he says between grunts of pleasure, shoving his cock down my throat until my eyes water.

Apollo comes, and when he does, his entire body trembles, shaking through me. His warmth fills me and drips onto the bed when he pulls back and slaps my ass. “Don’t make my brothers wait, Mistress.”

He slides off the bed and sits in an armchair with the perfect view while Ares pulls me on top of him, and Atlas gets behind me. It takes me a second to adapt to the sheer size of Ares and breathe through my nose.

He pushes up into me and bites his lip. "My pussy," he says with a slick grin.

"Yours," I whisper.

"Relax, goddess." Atlas runs a hand over my ass. "I'll make you feel good."

He always does.

Apollo tosses a bottle of lube onto the mattress. I can hear him stroking his cock behind me, already hard and ready for more. "Fuck our girl," he tells Atlas. "She's begging for your cocks."

Atlas lubricates his finger and inches into me. At first, it burns, and my eyes slam shut. But once Ares starts moving in unison with him, my body relaxes, and it feels incredible.

Pressing my palms to Ares's chest, I brace myself as Atlas replaces his finger with his cock. "Oh god," I whisper.

"Look at me, little dragon." Ares slides his hand beneath my chin. "Focus on me, okay?"

I nod, releasing a deep breath through my nose. With both of them inside me, I close my eyes and focus on the feeling. They stretch me out, and I lose myself in the moment, forgetting about the pain that eventually turns to pleasure. Ares sinks his fingers into my hips, fucking me like he wants to mold his dick into my pussy.

He never treats me like I'm delicate. Neither does Atlas, who picks up his pace, gripping my shoulder as he grunts in my ear. Ares comes first, filling me up seconds before Atlas pulls out and shoots a warm stream of cum on my ass.

After the three of us come down from this intoxicating high, Ares curls his arm around me and pulls me onto the mattress beside him. Our sweaty bodies rub against each other. I can hardly catch my breath and rest my head on his chest.

He kisses my forehead. "I love you, little dragon."

I smile at the words I never get sick of hearing. "Love you, too, Greek god."

Atlas steals me out of his arms and plants a kiss on my lips. "I love you more, goddess." He laughs against my lips, knowing his comment will piss

off Ares, and it does.

“Dream on, lover boy,” Ares snaps, yanking me away from his brother. “She was mine first.”

“Both of you shut up,” Apollo interjects, lifting me off the mattress so I’m sitting in his lap. “You’re mine, Mistress.” He sucks my bottom lip into his mouth and tugs on my flesh. “Ares may have claimed you first, but I loved you first.” His nose burrows into my cheek, and he breathes in my scent. “You made me whole again, Ophelia. You fixed all of us. And we’re never letting you go.”

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Jillian Frost is a dark romance author who believes even the villain deserves a happily ever after. When she's not plotting all the ways to disrupt the lives of her characters, you can usually find Jillian by the pool, soaking up the Florida sunshine.

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