



HER  
*Protector*

LOLA DAWSON



# *Her Protector*

**DADDIES OF WAM: LOTTIE BOOK TWO**

**LOLA DAWSON**

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Lip Gloss and Black - Atreyu

Heavy - Linkin Park ft. Kiiara

Lost - Linkin Park

Shed My Skin - Within Temptation ft. Annisokay

Humane - Lacuna Coil

Dead End - Lord of the Lost

Cut Me Out - Lord of the Lost

Masterpiece (Motion Picture Collection) - Motionless in White

Voices - Motionless in White

Eternally Yours - Motionless in White

Voodoo Doll - Lord of the Lost

No More Tears to Cry - Bullet for my Valentine

Alone in a Room - Asking Alexandria

Unity - Shinedown

Lonely Day - System of a Down

Like Screams in Empty Halls - Lacrimas Profundere

# Prologue

ANDREI

**B**lood coated my hands as I fought for control of my breathing. Sergei shook my shoulder, and I jolted back to awareness.

“Get it together,” my cousin snapped. His clothes and arms were covered in blood, and more pulsed down his chest from a gunshot wound in his shoulder. “We’ve got to go!”

The room’s sounds snapped into focus, and I fell back into the moment.

The exchange had gone bad. The Armenians didn’t like something about us and had opened fire.

Sasha was dead. A bullet had struck him in the chest. I told him to wear a damn vest, but my best friend and bodyguard said it was going to be an easy day. My *grandfather* said it was going to be an easy day.

Now, his lifeless eyes would haunt me. It was his blood that covered my hands.

But now was not the time for mourning the dead.

It was time to avenge them.

I pulled my gun out from its holster and fired several shots as I leaned out from my hiding spot behind some shelves.

One dead.

Two wounded.

I snapped back behind cover as bullets flew at my location.

Sergei nodded, his face paling as he grimaced with pain.

“Let’s get the fuck out of here,” I snapped and made a run for the back door, Sergei close on my heels.

He tried to go to the driver’s side, but I cut him off. “Seal your damn wound. You can’t drive when you’re already swaying.”

Sergei gritted his teeth but rounded the car to the passenger side.

I hopped in the driver’s seat and started the car to gun it out of the parking lot. I was thankful to Sasha, who told us to park in the back in case we needed to make a quick escape.

“Fuck,” I bit out and slammed my fist against the steering wheel.

“Call Doc,” Sergei gasped out, holding his phone for me. I turned to see him lift his hand from the wound, blood dripping from his fingers. His face was deathly pale.

Another string of curses passed from my lips, and I grabbed the phone. Expertly, I steered through the streets of Moscow and flipped the phone open to call my grandfather.

*“Da.”*

One word. Not surprising.

“Get Doc over to the house immediately.” I dodged a police car that began to give chase before giving up quickly.

No one crossed the Volkovs. Not even the police. Not when the commissioner was good friends with Viktor.

“What happened?”

“The Armenians turned face and started shooting,” I snarled. “Sasha is dead, and Sergei is losing a lot of blood. I’ll be back in five.”

I disconnected the call, in no mood to listen to anything more from Viktor.

Sergei grunted and leaned his head back to rest against the seat. “Fucking hurts.”



“Getting shot usually does.” I’d taken one in the leg a few months ago and almost bled out, much like Sergei was right now. “But you know that.”

At twenty-eight, my cousin was ten years older than me. Bratva men learned early. Blood and violence were our bread and butter. There wasn’t anything soft or caring for us. We cut our teeth on target practice. My grandfather taught me how to shoot a gun when I could barely hold it.

And what was it all for?

More money? A better Russia? Yeah, that was laughable.

Sergei grunted his approval, and I looked over to see his eyes closed.

Fuck. I pulled into the driveway, not bothering to park in the garage, and floored it to the front door. Viktor was already waiting, a lit cigar clutched between two of his fingers and a glass of vodka in the other hand.

At least Doc stood next to him.

I slammed the car in park and was out the door without bothering to get my keys out of the ignition. My cousin was the priority right now, not a car. I had five others in the garage.

Opening the passenger door, I grabbed Sergei’s arm and dragged him from the car. “Wake up, cousin. You still need to take your long-distance shooting award back from me.”

He barked out a laugh, and I was thankful for the sound.

Doc assisted me in getting him inside before shooing me away.

Babushka met me at the bottom of the stairs, her face a mask of concern as she took in the blood staining my clothes. It wasn’t the first time she’d seen me like this, and God only knew how many times she’d seen my grandfather like this.

I was so tired as she opened her arms for me, and I walked straight into them. She was the only warmth and comfort I had in this world. My mother died when I was just a baby, so she was the only reason I’d ever known love and affection.

“Andrei.”

I dropped my forehead to her shoulder, hunching so she didn't have to bend too far. We had almost a foot of height difference, so bending was required.

“Sasha is gone.” I wasn't sure I even said the words out loud, but I must have because she squeezed me tighter.

“He saved your life, Andrei.” She pulled back and framed my face in her small hands. “It should not be in vain.”

I nodded and gritted my teeth to keep from betraying too much emotion.

Viktor was never far away where me and *Babushka* were concerned.

“Go, take a shower.” She patted my cheek. “I left you a sleeping pill on the bathroom counter in case you need it. If anything changes with Sergei, I'll come get you.”

I was only able to nod. There were no words left. At least none that mattered.

Three days later, Sergei was recovering, and I boarded a plane to the US.

Nothing would ever be the same again.

*Lottie*

“My name is Viktor Volkov, and I believe you know my grandson, Andrei.”

My jaw dropped as I realized why the man—Viktor—looked familiar.

He was Andrei’s grandfather.

When I was shoved into the back of the car by two Russian goons, I would never have thought it would be Viktor Volkov, one of the most powerful Pankans in the Bratva, and one of the most feared men in Russia.

“I go back to my original question. What is it you want with me, Mr. Volkov?”

I was putting up a brave front, but inside, I was a nervous wreck. Bile crawled up my throat, and I fought back the urge to vomit. I shifted in my chair and, through sheer force of will, kept my leg from bouncing up and down.

His bushy dark brows rose before a smile spread over his face. “You’re a feisty one, Ms. Alexander. My grandson needs that.”

“With all due respect, Sir, I don’t think you can speak for what Andrei needs. You haven’t seen him in how many years?” Where was this attitude coming from? Maybe it was because I was finished getting stepped on, and after David, I knew what true fear was.

Viktor was dangerous. There was little doubt about that. But I didn’t think he’d hurt me. He had an agenda, and I was sure it didn’t have anything to do with hurting me.

He threw his head back, and rich laughter filled the room. “You remind me of my wife. Which is a high compliment.”

Andrei did say his grandmother was the only reason he was able to get out of Russia.

“But to circle back to your question, I wanted to meet you.” He strode to a wet bar in the corner of the room and poured two healthy glasses of clear liquid, which I assumed was vodka. He handed one to me and sank into the other chair in front of the fireplace. Viktor drank his vodka in one swallow and set the glass on the side table.

He gazed at me expectantly, looking down at the glass and then back to my face.

Okay. I could roll with the punches here. Hopefully, he wouldn't make me take more than this one shot. Well, it was closer to two or three shots, considering the glass size.

Damn Russians and their alcohol.

“Do you always mutter under your breath every thought that pops into your head?”

Fuck me. I was doing it again.

I lifted the glass to my lips and swallowed it before I could talk myself out of it.

Holy shit, that burned. At least it was good-quality vodka, but damn, I was already feeling lightheaded, and it had only been seconds since I swallowed it.

“The answer to that is yes,” I replied, my voice high-pitched and tight from the vodka. Damn, it still burned.

“Hmm,” Viktor leaned forward on his forearms as he regarded me critically. “I want a relationship with my grandson. You will help me to forge this.”

I bit down on my bottom lip to keep from laughing as my eyebrows rose nearly into my hairline. “And you expected to accomplish this by kidnapping me...”

“That is why you will make it so.” He spoke simply and left room for no argument.

But of course, being me, I was going to say something.

“Again, I say this with respect, but are you fucking bonker bananas? I don’t know the full story yet, but I got the impression that he hates your guts, and it’ll probably be even worse once he finds out you took me.”

“You’ll convince him.”

He was fucking delusional. There was no way I was going to force Andrei to have a relationship with a man he hated.

“Viktor, what are you doing in here?” An older woman snapped in a Russian accent as she appeared in the room. The moment she saw me, a string of Russian curses fell from her lips.

She marched up, standing before Viktor, and smacked the back of his head.

Viktor’s eyes warmed with affection and lust—gross; I didn’t want to see people their age getting it on, even if Viktor was a handsome man for someone in his late sixties.

“You told me you’d stay away!” She slapped Viktor’s chest this time. “How dare you lie to me. Andrei is going to be even more furious at you for taking his woman. Are you a fucking idiot?”

Viktor smiled at the end of her tirade and gently grasped her wrist when she was poised for another blow. “Darling, you know he’ll come for her, so then I’ll at least be able to talk to him.”

She shook her head again. “Me, he may talk to. You, on the other hand, he’ll probably shoot.”

“She’s got a point,” I muttered under my breath.

Both paused and looked in my direction, almost as if they had forgotten about me in the midst of their argument.

The woman smiled, her face transformed with the gesture. Her silver hair was piled on the top of her head in a messy bun with tendrils framing her face. She had ice-blue eyes framed by laugh lines. I could see the small similarities between her and Andrei. The set of their mouths. The shape of their eyes.

Despite being the wife of a Bratva Pakhan, she had something decent and pure beneath the fire because she was sure as hell snarky and not afraid to tell her husband when he was being an ass.

“I’m Mariya, Charlotte. It’s very nice to meet you.” She held out a hand, and I shook it gratefully.

“Nice to meet you as well, Mariya. Please call me Lottie. I’ve heard nothing but great things about you.” Not that I’d heard much of anything, but I didn’t want to be rude. But there had been affection in Andrei’s voice the few times he spoke of his *babushka*.

“On behalf of my husband, I need to apologize for how you’ve been treated. Are you hurt?”

I shook my head, but I absently rubbed over the raw skin of my wrists. Mariya zeroed in on the movement and cursed. She whirled on Viktor again and broke off in a streak of rapid-fire Russian as she wagged her finger in his face. The man took it in stride, trying not to smile as his wife went off on him.

“Are you quite done, dear?” Viktor sighed as Mariya finished. His grin was wide but was more amused than angry or vengeful. He wrapped an arm around his wife’s waist and guided her to sit on one of his powerful thighs. “The girl is quite okay, as you can see. Our stubborn grandson will be here soon, thanks to me.”

“Thanks to you kidnapping me.” I rolled my eyes, bitterness injected into the words. “But let’s just see what Andrei has to say.”



## CHAPTER 2

### *Andrei*

**F**ury, white hot and boiling, swept through my blood like liquid magma as I fought to control myself.

Now that I'd done a bit more digging, I found who was behind the shell corporations that rented the cars that had been tracking Lottie.

VV Enterprises.

What a fucking joke.

More like, what a fucking idiot.

Who used their initials on a shell corporation if they were trying to stay hidden?

Viktor Volkov, that's who.

He didn't want to stay hidden because he wasn't in any danger.

He was too powerful in Russia, but here in the U.S., he was almost as invincible. That's what happened when you were rich, fueled by blood money.

"I'm going to fucking kill him," I snarled in Russian as I grabbed my phone and ran from my office. "Kaleb, let's go."

If he didn't get his ass out here by the time the elevator came, I wouldn't hesitate to leave him behind.

"You found her?" He was out of breath, his voice frantic as he swept a hand over his forehead. "How? Where is she?"

I slammed my palm on the elevator call button repeatedly, but it didn't make the damn car come any faster. "We need a

new building or move floors because I'm tired of being so far up that I'm forced to take the elevator."

"I get that you're upset, but I'd like for you to tell me what's going on before I knock your teeth loose." It took Kaleb a while to reach his temper, but once he got there, nothing could stop his wrath. I'd been on the receiving end of a few of those punches, and trust me, I didn't recommend it.

"Fucking Viktor."

The elevator arrived with a ding that echoed on the empty floor, and we went in.

"Are you fucking kidding me?" Kaleb spoke evenly and calmly, but I knew him well enough that this was just the calm before the storm. "I asked you if it was him yesterday, and you assure me it wasn't."

"Well, I was wrong." I clenched my hands into fists and barely concealed my fury. "The FBI and CIA don't even know he's here, or my informants would have told me. So, he's gone fully under the radar to come here."

"Your arrogance has put Lottie in danger!" Kaleb shouted at me, his face turning a bright shade of red as his eyes darkened with fury. "You should have investigated all angles, even Viktor. Now we don't even know where the fuck she is!"

I held up a hand and pointed a finger in his face. "I didn't say that. I know exactly where she is, and that's where we're headed right now."

"Where is she?"

"Lake Oswego. Because, of course, Viktor would be pretentious and rent a house there." One of the most upscale portions of the area. Typical Viktor style.

"How did you find this out?" We exited the elevator, and Oscar was waiting for us, with Colby in the back seat.

"Let me get in the car, so I only have to tell the Goddamned story once." I handed Oscar a scrap of paper with the address on it, and we barely got the doors closed before the car took off.

**Babushka:** He won't let her go unless you come yourself. I know you don't want to see him, but he's too stubborn, just like a few other Volkov men I know.

I didn't appreciate my *babushka* comparing me to the man I'd hated most of my life, but I knew she was right. Just because I didn't appreciate it didn't mean it wasn't true.

Slamming the front passenger door behind me, I muttered under my breath, cursing my fucking grandfather and him interfering in my life.

"So?" Kaleb asked as Oscar peeled out of the parking garage.

"I don't know what he wants yet other than to talk to me." In agitation, I tunneled my finger through my hair, tugging at the strands and letting the sharp bite of pain center me back in the present. I didn't need my temper to make itself known right now. That would do nothing but hurt Lottie.

Which was the last thing I ever wanted to happen.

I was so fucking head over heels for this woman, it wasn't even funny.

Between the incident with David and this, she probably wanted nothing to do with us anymore.

Not that I would even blame her. Trouble seemed to find me wherever I went and drew anyone I cared for into it.

"Andrei," Kaleb blew out a frustrated breath and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Stop blaming yourself for this. I'm sorry I added to it, but Viktor is the only one to blame right now."

"And Viktor wouldn't want her if she wasn't our girlfriend." The word girlfriend seemed tame for what she was to us. Little. Submissive. Love of our lives. She was all that and more.

"It's not your fault that your grandpa is an insane, bloodthirsty bratva boss, Andrei." Colby was the epitome of calm. Poised. The things I should be, and probably would be, if it wasn't Lottie that was affected. "Just like it wasn't my

fault my dad was an alcoholic. We all have family that we don't claim, but what's happening right now is not. Your Fault."

Fucking hell, why couldn't I get that through my stupid head right now?

I closed my eyes and concentrated on breathing.

"My *babushka* texted me the other day that she was in town. She didn't mention Viktor. She knows how much I despise him." I kept up my deep and even breathing. "I told her briefly about Lottie. She wouldn't tell him. She swore it on my father's grave. But fucking Viktor knew. I wouldn't put it past him to have an alert set up any time my name appeared on a police report."

"You have the same thing for him, alerting you when he travels." Kaleb nodded, his cheeks still flushed, but he had calmed down and didn't look as if he were ready to explode.

"Yeah."

"She's the one who texted me a little while ago when she found out Lottie was in their house." My hands clenched into fists. "Why would he do this? Involve her? Take her like that?"

"Because there's something going on and it's making him act rashly," Colby pointed out. "Do you know if there is anything going on with his health? Maybe a scare or false alarm that made him desperate to reconnect with you?"

I shook my head. "Not that I know of. I'm at a loss right now. I don't know what is so important now."

"I guess we'll find out soon, won't we?" Kaleb asked, his jaw clenching after he spoke.

I just hoped that things wouldn't get too bloody.

## CHAPTER 3

### *Lottie*

I tapped my foot along with the music playing in my head, trying to distract myself from the rising tension in the room. The vodka had done its job, making me warm and loose. My cheeks were flushed, and my body seemed unable to stay still.

“Lottie, do you need something to drink?” Mariya asked gently, resting a hand on my knee.

“Something with alcohol,” I blurted out. “Lots of alcohol. I think I need it.”

The adrenaline was wearing off quickly, leaving me even more on edge and shaky.

Mariya narrowed her eyes at Viktor and jerked her head toward the corner.

Rising, Viktor said, “Yes, darling. I will make drinks.”

The moment he was out of immediate earshot, Mariya leaned closer. “Andrei is coming. Viktor won’t harm you.” She let out a heavy sigh. “I don’t know why he planned this, but I am truly sorry, sweetheart.”

She wrapped her arm around my shoulder and brought me in for a hug. This woman was a dichotomy. Fierce on one hand but loving and tender on the other.

Mariya was a loving mother. One who had lost her only child because of Viktor’s stubbornness, if Andrei was correct in his accounts.

Viktor returned, and Mariya withdrew her arm as he handed me a glass. It had just a hint of pink and I brought it to

my nose. Vodka with just a splash of cranberry juice, if I wasn't mistaken.

I took a sip, the familiar burn of the alcohol sliding down my throat and warming my belly. Fuck, I was going to be drunk by the time Andrei even got here.

But hell, if I didn't need it if I were going to survive in the presence of Viktor the Bratva Pakhan.

Taking a healthy drink, I drained half the glass and placed it on the table before me. On a coaster, because I wasn't a savage.

And maybe because I didn't want to cross Mariya if I got a water stain on the fancy coffee table.

"We'll make a good Russian wife out of you, little one." Viktor winked at me.

Fucking winked.

Was this my life? Because I felt like I may have been dreaming this whole goddamn day.

I clenched my jaw to keep from speaking because I was now decently tipsy if the burning in my cheeks was any indication. However, that could just be my nerves and the fact that Andrei inherited most of his good looks from his grandfather.

Obviously.

I would consider myself a very lucky woman indeed if Andrei aged as nicely as Viktor. Especially the way he kept his full head of hair. The perfect mix of salt and pepper. I only hoped it was natural and not dyed, because that would be a shame.

Mariya coughed, the sound suspiciously forced.

"Damn it," I grumbled, picking up the glass and draining the rest of the contents. "I was saying everything out loud, wasn't I?"

"I can assure you my hair is quite natural. Mariya can confirm, can't you darling?" He gave me a wicked grin, the



gesture so reminiscent of Andrei I could only openly stare at Viktor.

Mariya patted my hand with a smile. "It's okay, sweetheart. Luckily Viktor has a good sense of humor."

"Just what I need." I blew a stray piece of hair out of my eyes. "A Bratva boss with a sense of humor."

Viktor threw his head back and let out a boisterous laugh. "You slay me, little one. I know what my Andrei sees in you."

"I'm not *your* Andrei."

My eyes grew wide at the sound of Andrei's voice, and I sprang to my feet.

Sudden movements like that weren't advisable when I was stone-cold sober, so it was no surprise it was a disaster when I was tipsy. I stumbled over my foot, and cringed as I went careening toward the table.

Andrei's arms wrapped around me in a flash and brought me against his rock-hard chest. His caramel eyes were warm as he inspected me, probably checking for injuries from Viktor. "I can't leave you alone for five minutes, can I?"

"Not my fault I got kidnapped by two goons with guns," I muttered.

Eyes hardening, Andrei gently placed me on the couch and kissed my forehead. "Hi, *Babushka*." He kissed Mariya's cheek and gave her a quick hug.

"I'm sorry, *rodnoy*."

"It's not your fault," he bit out through gritted teeth. "It's his."

Andrei didn't even look in Viktor's direction.

I grabbed his hand, tears filling my eyes. Damn it, I was an emotional drinker. "Please, can we just go home?" I pleaded, my voice cracking. "Please, Andrei."

I desperately wanted to call him Daddy A, but I didn't want to expose that side of his life to Viktor. He didn't deserve to know that about his life.

“We need to talk, son.”

Fucking hell.

Hands curling into fists, Andrei whirled around with barely contained fury. “You have no right to call me ‘son.’ Not for many reasons. I would list them all out, but my girl is tired and traumatized, thanks to you, so I’m fucking leaving.”

Without another word, Andrei bent down and gathered me into his arms. I wrapped my arms around his neck and rested my head against his chest. I was trembling, and the tears escaped from the corners of my eyes despite desperately fighting them.

Viktor yelled in Russian, something I couldn’t even begin to understand. Mariya joined in, obviously trying to settle Viktor down.

Andrei hesitated for a handful of seconds. Whatever Viktor and Mariya were saying was affecting him.

I laid my hand on his cheek, and his haunted eyes glanced down at me. “Let’s go home. We can calm down, and then you can call them tomorrow.”

“I don’t fucking deserve you.” He kissed me gently, then walked out the door to the waiting SUV.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Kaleb*

**M**y jaw ached from how tightly it was clenched. My fingers drummed frantically on my knees as I stared at the closed door.

Andrei insisted on going in without us.

Something that wasn't sitting right with me.

Not because I was worried for their safety. More so because I wanted to punch Viktor across his smug face.

I knew his type. Men who thought their power gave them the excuse to behave without consequences.

Men who would kidnap their grandson's girlfriend without remorse or regret.

My breath left my lungs on a harsh exhale as the door swung open, and Andrei emerged with Lottie in his arms. She cuddled against his chest, her arms wrapped around his neck in a death grip.

Before I knew what I was doing, I opened the door and gathered them into the SUV.

"Baby girl, are you alright?" I desperately wanted to take her from Andrei's arms and pull her onto my lap, but he needed her strength more than I did right now.

"Tired and cold, but otherwise okay." Her voice was low. Much quieter than her usually passionate speech.

I adjusted the temperature in the backseat to give her some heat.

“Oscar, get us the fuck out of here,” Andrei growled harshly, his arms tightening around Lottie.

With a silent nod, Oscar obeyed, for once not saying a word.

The cabin of the vehicle was quiet.

Too quiet.

And it infuriated me that Viktor took Lottie and put that look of terror on her face. That he snatched her before we’d put heavier security on her.

It felt like I had failed both her and Andrei.

“I’m so sorry, Lottie.” I reached out and played with a strand of her hair. I wanted to do much more than that, but I settled for the easy touch.

“Please stop saying sorry.” She leaned back and caught the look of Andrei, blanketing him with the same statement. “It’s over, and I feel like he won’t be able to get near me with the guys that will be hovering by the time I wake up in the morning.”

“By the time we’re even home,” Andrei growled in agreement. “I won’t let anyone touch you again.”

Lottie sighed. It was a deep, shuddering exhale as all of her fight left in that instant. Tears filled her eyes. “I don’t have the energy to argue with you.”

I laid my hand on her back, rubbing up and down. She may be in Andrei’s arms, but I needed the reminder that she was here with us.

It had only been two hours at most, but it felt like it had taken years off my life.

“We can talk more about security tomorrow.” I pressed my lips to her temple. “I won’t let Andrei get too out of control.”

Hardened caramel eyes cut over to me and his jaw hardened. I knew what he was thinking already. Yeah, right.

But I knew Lottie would never want an army around her.

I couldn't stifle her. Once Andrei calmed down and reasoned, he'd realize it as well.

Lottie needed room to spread her wings.

This thing with Viktor couldn't change us so severely that we lost sight of our girl and what she needed and wanted.

We had to support her, not clip her wings so she plummeted to the ground before she even got to fly.

The car ride was filled with thick, silent tension that made breathing difficult.

I kept my hand on Lottie's back. Her eyes fluttered shut, and eventually, her breathing evened out.

"This can never happen again," Andrei whispered. "I don't think I'd survive if anything happened to her."

I knew in my heart I felt the same way. She had brought light, laughter, and love into our lives.

If something happened or she left us, all that would go with her. We'd be back in the darkness, just going through the motions. It wouldn't be living. It would be existing.

"But we can't take away her freedom in the name of protecting her," Colby replied, taking the words right out of my mouth.

"I know, but I can't let him retake her. He'll try it. I know him. He'll do whatever it takes until I do what he wants." Andrei's jaw clenched as he gazed out the window.

"What did he want?" I asked, trying to figure out more of what was going through his head.

"He said just to talk, but it's more than that, I fucking know it."

"What about asking your grandma what he wants?" Asking too many questions could lead to Andrei shutting down completely, but I wouldn't let him get away with silence for the rest of the car ride.

Andrei leaned his head back and closed his eyes. "She knows our issues, but I can't be sure if she'd tell me. I think

she wants us to start talking again.”

The somber mood in the car intensified as we pulled into my driveway.

“You both staying here tonight?” I was almost positive I already knew the answer to my question, but I needed to double-check.

Oscar pulled into the garage and turned off the car.

“Yeah, I don’t want to leave her,” Andrei said quietly as he looked down at our girl.

“Me either,” Colby added.

It was exactly what I expected. It would be the same for me.

“Take turns holding her?”

They agreed with me as we folded ourselves out of the car.

“You got her?” I asked Andrei, who nodded and waved me away. He exited the car gracefully with our girl in his arms.

She was still fast asleep, the crash of adrenaline draining her completely. I only hoped she’d sleep through the night and wouldn’t have any lingering nightmares.

Fucking hell, this has been a day. A week. Month. Year.

I ran my hand over my stubbled jaw before entering the kitchen. I was exhausted, mentally and physically. Not something I’d ever wanted to admit, but all I wanted to do was crawl into bed, holding our girl and fucking her until all she knew was pleasure.

Then maybe keep her in there for a year or two until I felt like she was safe again.

None of us said a word as Andrei made his way to the stairs, climbing them easily, even with Lottie in his arms.

All I kept thinking was: What are we going to do about Viktor? I knew Andrei would want to take this all on his own shoulders, but there was no way in hell I’d ever let that happen.



Colby hesitated, not following after Andrei and Lottie. I turned back to him with a quizzical glance.

“Should I make something to eat?” He looked lost, something I wasn’t used to seeing from my other best friend. This day was a difficult one in more ways than just the obvious.

I couldn’t blame him because I felt the same way.

What was there to do right now? I didn’t want to shake Lottie awake so we could have a sit down conversation about what Viktor had told her or if he hurt her.

Although I did see the marks around her wrists; red and inflamed, from some sort of bindings.

Bindings that were too tight and too rough for her fair skin.

I wanted her in my ropes, but I’d make sure they were only the softest of materials and not anything that would give lasting damage to her skin.

Some marks were expected after a good rope-tying session, but nothing that would linger more than a day or two.

“Yeah,” I sighed. “I think that’s a good idea. Let me go talk to Andrei.”

“I don’t want him to spiral.” Colby rubbed his hand over his eyes. “He can’t shut down, and he can’t keep her in a bubble. I’m worried about both.”

“Me too.” I pinched the bridge of my nose, trying not to think the worst. All we could do now was support them both. Plus, make sure that Andrei didn’t go completely insane.

“He needs to talk to Viktor,” Colby whispered, his eyes darting up the stairs to ensure Andrei was out of earshot.

“I agree.” I let out a heavy sigh, feeling like the world’s weight was descending on my shoulders.

Andrei hated his grandfather, but there had to be a serious reason for him to go to these lengths to get Andrei to speak to him. We just needed to find out what the fuck it was.

“The question is, how?”

That was the conundrum of the year.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Calby*

**K**aleb and I stood just below the stairs, silently contemplating what we would do now. But I couldn't just stand here for much longer and do nothing. I had to do something, even if it was something as simple as cooking dinner.

Without another word, I entered the kitchen and began rifling through the cupboards and fridge. We needed comfort food. Something that would put a smile on Lottie's face when she woke up.

A light bulb flashed over my head as I thought of my favorite meal my mom always cooked when I had a rough day. Breakfast for dinner. Specifically waffles, eggs, bacon, and hashbrowns.

Just because I wanted to be even more "extra" and ensure that a grin appeared on our girl's face, I'd make them chocolate chip waffles with a happy face.

As I prepared everything, my mind continued to whirl. I'd known of Andrei's past. It wasn't a pretty story, but something he'd confided in me many years ago. It was why he was so guarded.

I couldn't imagine living with a past as dark as his. My childhood hadn't been all sunshine and roses either, but I had a mom who loved me and worked her ass off to make sure me and my sister didn't want for anything.

Wiping the sweat off my brow with the back of my arm, I forced my thoughts away from the past.

We were in the here and now. Dwelling back in memories did nothing but make my doubts and anxiety spin out of control. They were already on high alert today; I didn't need anything more added to it.

"Can I help with anything?" Kaleb asked as he handed me a glass of wine.

I took a long drink before answering. "If you want to fry up the hashbrowns, you can." He topped off my wine and nodded. "Thanks."

We worked next to each other in quiet harmony. Both of us were too hyped up to put our thoughts into full sentences.

Which was ironic as fuck for me, considering I'd written so many papers, journals and never lacked a clever comeback.

But there were moments like today where words just failed you.

We finished everything up and dished up four plates. I grabbed a tray and some glasses to fill with milk and orange juice.

"Grab the butter and syrup?" I asked Kaleb as he turned off the stove burner.

"Yep." He placed them on the tray next to the milk and juice.

"Should we wake her up if she's still sleeping?" I pondered as we finished gathering the last of the items.

"She needs to eat so she doesn't crash completely." Kaleb let out a deep sigh. "Even if she eats a few bites while we talk to Andrei, it's better than nothing."

I nodded, trying to figure out exactly how we would talk to him. He had to open up.

Lottie would probably be the only one who could get through to him now.

We grabbed the tray and plates and ascended the stairs. Usually, Kaleb would let food in his bedroom over his dead

body, but I think we all knew it was an atypical evening. Rules had to be adjusted.

The fact that Kaleb's master bedroom had a full sitting room with a couch, coffee table, and TV was just a bonus.

Setting the tray down on the coffee table, I turned and looked at Andrei and Lottie. He had her in his arms, and her head pillowed on his chest as he slowly ran his fingers through her hair. His eyes were closed, and his breathing even, but he wasn't asleep. His jaw was clenched too tightly, and his free hand was curled into a tight fist.

Gods, this day had done a number on him.

"Drei?" I asked in a whisper.

His eyes snapped open, and he let out a sigh. "What if something had happened to her? If the scumbag soldiers had gone too far? Or my grandpa decided he wanted to send her back in pieces? He's done that so many times to so many families, he wouldn't lose a wink of sleep over it."

"I don't think he'd harm her." I moved closer and stood beside the bed. "You've said it yourself; he may have been cold to you, but he was never cruel. He didn't physically strike you or abuse you. Yes, he ordered you to do horrible things, but I don't think he'd kill Lottie to get to you. Not after all this time."

Andrei gazed up at the ceiling. "I don't like you defending his actions, Col."

I shook my head and pinched the bridge of my nose. "I'm not defending him, Drei. I'm just pointing out the facts. He wants to talk to you. At the very least, you need to speak with your *babushka*. She's come all this way with Viktor, and you haven't seen her in almost twenty years."

"I'll think about it."

Lottie stirred, her eyes opening as she wiggled against Andrei's side. "Think about what?"

"Talking to my *babushka*."

She blinked, awareness slowly penetrating through her sleepy gaze. “I think that’s a good first step. You miss her. I could tell that just in the short time I’ve known you.”

Andrei’s brow furrowed, and he peered down at our girl. “First step? *Kroshka*, it will be the only step. I will not speak with the man who kidnapped my girlfriend just to tell me he wants to speak with me.” He growled, his words harsh. Cold. Unfeeling. This was not the Andrei that we knew and loved.

This was the Andrei who left Russia a broken man.

Lottie drew her bottom lip into her mouth as she slowly untangled herself from Andrei. Pain reflected in her gaze, and she kept her eyes dropped.

“Christ, Lottie, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean for that to come out so harshly.” Andrei turned away from her and swung his feet off the bed. His head fell into his hands. He muttered something in Russian and rose to disappear into the bathroom.

“Fucking hell, Andrei.” Kaleb sank into the opposite side of the bed and drew Lottie into his arms. “Please, baby girl. Don’t give up on him. Seeing Viktor has brought back a lot of very painful memories for him. He’s not thinking clearly right now.”

Her shoulders shook with silent sobs, and it felt as if my heart was crumbling to pieces. I climbed up on the bed and embraced her from behind. Kaleb and I tried to give her the comfort that we could, but this was uncharted territory for us.

Before, we’d never gotten close enough to women to comfort them while they cried. We had superficial relationships. It fucking killed me, but we had never found the one that made us want more.

Now, we had found Lottie, and Andrei was going to fuck it up if he didn’t get his head out of his ass.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Andrei*

I leaned over the counter and splashed cold water over my face. What the fuck was wrong with me? Snapping at Lottie like that? That wasn't me.

Fucking hell, I don't know what came over me.

I couldn't let Viktor do this to me. I couldn't let my emotions overwhelm me. It wasn't worth it. Lottie had just come into our lives. I couldn't be the cause of her leaving. Not by pushing her away.

Shame swept through my body, bleeding through my pores, and I turned away from my reflection in disgust. I didn't deserve that beautiful, kind, trusting woman out there. I'd only cause her pain so far.

I may have fucked it up for myself, but I wouldn't let my actions reflect on Kaleb and Colby. They still deserved a chance with her.

My hand hovered on the doorknob as the sounds of her sobs reached my ears. I cracked open the door, allowing me to peer out and observe Lottie firmly secured in Kaleb and Colby's arms.

"Shh, baby girl. He didn't mean it." Kaleb brushed his fingers through her hair, soothing her with his voice and gentle touch.

"I'm sorry," Lottie murmured, the words muffled by the fabric of Kaleb's shirt.

I couldn't stand here anymore. Despite the shame lingering in my veins, I needed Lottie to know how much I loved her.

Because despite only knowing her for such a short amount of time, I loved her with every ounce of my being.

Slowly, I stepped out of the bathroom and approached the bed.

Colby caught sight of me, and he nodded. Respect and admiration reflected in his eyes as he let me kneel before our girl.

“*Kroshka*,” I managed to croak out as I took her face between my hands.

“I’m sorry, Andrei.” Lottie sniffled as tears continued to stream down her cheeks.

Fuck me, she was killing me.

I shook my head, the shame intensifying within me. “I’m the one that needs to apologize. You did nothing wrong, *kroshka*. Nothing.”

My thumbs swept over her cheeks, wiping away the tears. She opened her mouth to speak, but I shook my head again. “No, Charlotte. This was all on me. I apologize for snapping and the way I behaved.” I let out a deep sigh and swallowed the emotions thickening my throat. “I need to tell you about my past, but I’m afraid you’ll look at me differently. I was not a good person.”

My voice was hoarse, the words drawn out from my very soul. I knew I needed to tell her the horrible things in my past, but I couldn’t handle it if she looked at me differently.

“Daddy A, no.” She shook her head and placed her hands over mine on her face. “I’d never look at you with anything but love.”

Did she...Did she *love* me?

“Well, maybe some sarcasm and humor. Only good emotions, not anything bad like hatred or disgust. I could never, Daddy A.”

Gods, I loved her rambling.



I leaned forward and kissed her gently. “Thank you, *kroshka*.”

Lottie sniffed, her tears ceasing, and she cocked her head to the side. “For what, Daddy A?”

I would never tire of hearing her call me that. It made my heart sing and my cock hard. A heady combination for a man in love.

I drew Lottie onto my lap and kissed the top of her head. “For trusting me. For not being angry about being kidnapped. For just being the most beautiful person I’ve ever had the pleasure to know. For allowing me to love you.”

She stilled against me, my words penetrating through. Drawing back, her eyes began to fill with tears once again. “You love me?”

I caught a tear with my thumb as I nodded. “Of course I do, Little girl. How could I not? You’re our perfect Little.”

Her mouth parted, and a soft sound escaped her throat. “I love you, too.” She turned to catch Kaleb and Colby’s gazes. “I love you all.”

Kaleb grinned and took one of her hands. Here he went, kissing her knuckles again. “Love you, too.”

Colby turned her head in his direction and softly kissed her. “Love you, Princess.”

I cleared my throat. “Did you guys bring food up? Lottie needs to eat something, and then maybe we can relax and watch a movie before bed.”

“Breakfast for dinner.” Colby grinned. “My favorite comfort food. Figured we could all use it tonight.”

“Waffles?” Lottie perked up.

“Yes, baby girl. Waffles, eggs, hash browns, and bacon.”

“Yummy!” She wiggled in my lap, and a groan escaped me.

I clasped my hands down on her hips. “Please have mercy on me, *kroshka*. I only have so much willpower after

everything that happened today.”

Lottie stilled as red spread over her cheeks. “Sorry.” She dipped her head, but the smile that curled the corners of her lips told me she wasn’t remorseful.

“How about we talk more tomorrow?” I swept back the hair that had fallen in her face. “Let’s just eat and rest tonight.”

She nodded. “There’s plenty of time for talking.” She paused for a moment and pondered her words. “Hopefully, we have our whole lives ahead of us to talk, and if you don’t want to tell me anything right now, you don’t have to, Daddy A. I love you despite your past, and nothing you say can change what’s in my heart.”

My eyes fluttered shut as I pressed my forehead against hers. “I don’t know what I’ve done to deserve you, Charlotte Alexander, but I’m thankful you came into our lives when you did.”

Lottie’s fingers sank into my hair. “I think I’m the lucky one here. Never thought I’d ever find one guy as good as you, much less three.”

We chuckled, and I savored the feel of her in my arms and on my lap. After several moments, I patted her ass. “Let’s get you some food. I know you must be starving.”

As if on cue, her stomach made a gurgling noise. “Crap!” She exclaimed as she placed her hand over her belly. “Bad tummy, we don’t make noises like that in front of our guys.”

I bit back my laughter as Colby climbed off the bed and held a hand out for Lottie. “Come on. Little girls need their dinner.”

She scrambled off my lap, and I watched as Colby placed a hand on the small of her back as he guided her to the sitting area of the room.

Kaleb laid a hand on my shoulder. “I’m glad you came to your senses. I was not looking forward to having to punch you in the face.”

“Somehow I don’t believe that.” I scoffed. “You would have loved punching me.”

“Probably.” He shrugged and grinned as he rolled off the other side of the bed.

Sighing, I followed them to the couch and sank into the chaise. Colby had already settled Lottie on his lap, scooting the coffee table closer so he could eat easily. Or feed Lottie, was the more likely reason for the move.

She caught my gaze, her head tilting to the side as her eyes reflected all the questions she couldn’t say out loud.

Was I okay? What secrets was I hiding about my past? Did I deserve her love?

The last question was one my anxiety filled in. I’d been too stressed out and filled with plans of revenge to even think about what must be going through her head. But now I did.

And I hated every second of it. How I’d be forced to walk along the edge with her, afraid that I’d hurt her with something I said.

Fuck, I loved her. I knew rationally that none of these thoughts were true.

But the monsters in my nightmares currently had hold of me, and I was a slave to their desires.

## CHAPTER 7

# Lottie

I watched as a sea of emotions flickered across Andrei's face, and my heart rose into my throat. Hatred. Pain. Regret.

But most of all, a self-loathing that made me sick to my stomach.

Andrei was hurting. Badly.

Whatever had happened to him during his time in Russia still haunted him to this day. Something familiar called to me as I blinked at him.

There was fear. Deep, raw, aching fear.

Fear of the unknown. Fear of being loved. Fear of loving something and them not loving you back. It was there, all reflected back at me through his sad, amber eyes.

Colby said something close to my ear, but I didn't even register the words.

No. Everything within me was focused on Andrei.

Colby grew silent. So did Kaleb. The air was heavy around us, the tension thick. The rising panic within me made it difficult to breathe.

"*Kroshka*, you're going to destroy me if you keep looking at me like that," Andrei said, his voice low and thick with emotion. He ran a hand through his hair and looked down at the floor. "I despise myself for putting that sadness in your eyes. Tell me how I can erase it?"

When his gaze finally lifted to mine, his amber depths were watery with tears. Colby dropped his arms from around me and allowed me to move toward Andrei.

“Stop thinking this is your fault, Andrei.” I sighed and gathered the thoughts that wanted to spin out of control. “You can’t control the actions of others, so stop blaming yourself.”

His jaw clenched, and he shook his head. “But it’s because of me this happened.”

I counted slowly to five, then ten, before I responded. Because the stubborn, pig-headed male did not understand what I was trying to convey to him.

Colby placed a hand on the center of my back, and energy filled me. Just the simple touch was enough to help me gather my wits.

“Andrei, get your head out of your ass before I do it for you.” Kaleb stood before the couch and crossed his arms over his chest. “We’ve said stop, Lottie said stop. It’s time to let it go. If you can’t even forgive yourself, how do you think anyone else will? You’ll hold on to the guilt until you’re bitter, and then it’ll just keep eating away at your insides until you’re nothing but a shell of yourself.”

“What he said!” I exclaimed. “The same way you guys keep telling me to trust you to not leave, or believe you are attracted to me. It’s like jumping off a cliff into the water. You’re scared, yes, but you know it’ll be okay because your friends are down in the water having a great time. A blind leap of faith, trusting those you love and that love you in return.”

Andrei turned those molten caramel eyes on me, and I found myself sucking in a harsh breath. The raw desire and love reflected within them stole the breath from my lungs. He leaned forward and took my face between his large hands. “We’ve asked you to trust us blindly, so we should do the same for you.” His accent was thick with emotion before his lips brushed over mine in the lightest of kisses.

My toes curled as he held me to him. I found myself kneeling on the couch just to get closer to him. Colby let me

go but kept one hand on my back so I'd know he was there. The simple and chaste kiss made the world around me brighten.

Andrei lifted his head, and his gaze danced over my face. "Thank you for not being angry with me." He ran his thumb over my bottom lip, and I shuddered against him.

"I don't think I could ever be truly angry with you," I whispered in reply. My heart shattered at the desolation in his voice.

Kaleb snorted. "Just wait, baby girl. I'm sure that'll be put to the test throughout our relationship."

Andrei rolled his eyes and scratched his temple with his middle finger. "Love you too, Wulf."

My stomach chose that moment to let out a loud gurgle. What was it with my digestive system and making the most obnoxious noises during emotional conversations?

The guys did their best to hide their humor, but as soon as I started laughing, they followed suit.

Leaning forward, Andrei kissed my forehead. "Let's get you some food, *kroshka*."

"Good idea," I agreed and reached toward the coffee table for what I guessed was my plate. Because I highly doubted that the guys would make themselves a smiley face on top of my waffle with bacon for a mouth and eggs for eyes.

"Let me please." Andrei held his hand out for my plate, and I handed it over with a nod. He balanced it on the arm of the couch as he guided me to sit sideways in his lap. My legs dangled over one of his powerful thighs to stretch out on the couch.

Colby gathered my feet and started to rub the arches soothingly. Energy flowed into me, and despite how difficult the evening was, I felt safe and loved with my guys.

Andrei began to feed me small bites of waffle, each with a bit of eggs and dipped in syrup. I wiggled happily on his lap, enjoying the combination of savory and sweet.

“I love breakfast for dinner.” I licked my lips, tasting the stray bits of syrup. “It’s my favorite. So comforting.”

Colby gave me a strange look, his head cocking to the side. “Mine too.” He cleared his throat. “My mom raised me by herself, working two jobs and sometimes more. But she always managed to put food on the table, and this was one of her favorites. Even if it was just pancakes or waffles and eggs, she always had to make sure there was lots of butter on the waffles, then the syrup. A very specific order.”

I smiled, enjoying the light of love that entered his eyes as he spoke of his mom. “It’s the only way to do it. Lots of butter and syrup.”

The laughter that filled the room at my statement made my heart lighten.

Kaleb put on some mindless TV in the background. Anime, because it was a great compromise between cartoons and adult shows. I need to make sure I rewatch this one later. The mage was some sort of Wendigo who gave off total Daddy vibes. Yummy.

Andrei finished feeding me and then took a few bites for himself. I relaxed against his chest and continued to watch the show as time slowly ticked by. I tried not to think about Viktor and Mariya.

But it was next to impossible.

I needed to put it from my mind. I didn’t want Andrei to clam up again.

His hand moved up and down my back, soothing me with the lightest of touches. My fingers curled against his chest as I fought back the yawn desperately trying to crawl out of my body.

I failed.

Andrei chuckled, having felt me trying to fight it. “Let’s get some sleep, alright?”

I groaned, not wanting to get up just yet. But once Kaleb paused the show, I knew they’d turned Daddy Mode on, and

there would be no arguing.

“Come on, *kroshka*.” Andrei rose to his feet with me in his arms and approached the bed.

“What about work tomorrow?” I asked, then a monster yawn stretched my lips as he placed me on the soft bedding.

“Lucky for you, the snooty executives know your boss was recently arrested, so I think they’ll give you a pass if you need to work from home.” Kaleb flipped back the comforter and crawled in on the other side.

“Are all of you sleeping in bed with me?” I asked, only slightly panicking at the thought of the three sexy as fuck guys surrounding me. How was I supposed to maintain control?

Kaleb’s brows rose and his lips curled into a devilish smirk. Oh shit. I’d said the last part out loud.

“Dammit,” I muttered.

The guys laughed.

“I’m gonna crash on the couch,” Colby pointed his finger over his shoulder at the couch as he smirked. “Love Kaleb and Andrei to death, but don’t really feel like snuggling or spooning with them.”

I giggled. “Not into MM within the harem?”

Three sets of eyes glanced at me with curious expressions. “Book language. It’s when the guys also have physical interactions with each other as well as their female.”

Andrei coughed before he burst into laughter. “I agree with Colby. I love you both, but I’m straight.”

“Sorry, baby girl.” Kaleb grinned and kissed my forehead. “No ‘MM’ here. Sorry, not quite the same as your book boyfriends.”

“Book boyfriends? You’ve been on BookTok, haven’t you?” My brows furrowed as I pointed a finger at him.

Kaleb shrugged. “Possibly. Wanted to know more about what you like to read. Which led me down a crazy rabbit hole.”



I bit my bottom lip to keep from laughing. The fact that this man had done research on BookTok was both hilarious and one of the sweetest things ever.

“No more about BookTok,” Andrei grumbled. “Spent entirely too much time of my life on that damn app. Time that I’ll never get back. Now, let’s get some sleep.”

I sat up in bed and stared down at Andrei, who was getting settled against the pillows.

“What?” He asked me with a furrowed brow as my mouth dropped open as I continued to stare at him.

“I can’t believe you both spent time on BookTok.”

Colby cleared his throat. “All of us, not just them.” Heat rushed to his cheeks, redness rising to the surface as I smiled.

“You guys are just incredible. I hope you know that.” I was overwhelmed with emotion. They had wanted to know more about what interested me and looked into it. No one had ever cared so much about my interests, not even Ryan.

Andrei settled me against his chest, my ear just above his rapidly beating heart. “Love you all, my perfect Daddies.”

## CHAPTER 8

### *Kaleb*

I let out a soundless sigh, not wanting to disturb Lottie or Andrei—the latter had finally fallen asleep after tossing and turning for a while. I turned onto my side so I could watch Lottie sleep. Her golden hair was pulled up into a loose knot on the top of her head. I found it endearing that she insisted on wearing it up to sleep.

“It’s hot and gets all in my mouth,” she commented with a wrinkled nose.

I bit my tongue to keep from snickering at her comment. Colby’s cheeks darkened, and Andrei furrowed his brow.

“I think we’d all love to give you something hot in your mouth.” Colby broke first, then groaned. “Now, I’m the one with the brain-to-mouth filter problem.”

A smile spread over my face, as I remembered how Lottie had giggled.

Andrei had his arm draped over her middle. His face had relaxed in sleep, although there was still a harshness to his features that hadn’t been there before.

I hated my best friend going through this pain. It was all too familiar.

#### *FIFTEEN YEARS EARLIER*

*I wiped the sweat from my brow with my forearm and sucked in greedy lungfuls of air. The air around me was heavy and stifling. The air conditioning in the small gym hadn’t been able*

*to keep up with the ridiculous heat wave the city had been dealing with this week.*

*But I didn't mind. In fact, as long as the bag I was pounding my fists into didn't break, I was content here.*

*My mom wouldn't be caught dead in a place like this. It was on the wrong side of town. Too low class. Too many homeless on the streets. Not enough plastic in the people working here or working out.*

*The moment my twin sisters were born, she thrust them into the arms of the new nanny and went back to her ridiculous lifestyle.*

*A lifestyle that my father had paid for and was still paying for even from his grave.*

*With a snarl, I resumed punching the bag, hitting it so hard it rocked back and forth on the hook it was suspended from.*

*Before I could catch it, a dark-haired man caught the back and braced it in front of me. Without a word, he inclined his head, and I resumed punching the bag. His caramel eyes held as much pain as I felt, and he grunted with the force of my blows.*

*Panting and breathless, I paused and gestured to the bag, silently offering to hold it for him. With an incline of his head, we switched places.*

*There was tape wrapped around his knuckles and wrists, much like my own. The man wore a loose-fitting pair of shorts and a tight black shirt. His hair was wild around his head, the loose top knot he'd gathered in it falling loose. A thick beard covered his cheeks, chin, and throat. This man was wild.*

*The pure agony in his expression and his tense posture told me this man was hurting just as much as I was. We were kindred spirits at that moment. We didn't need to use words. It was evident in every punch, every move, every grunt.*

*Hours passed, and we still didn't utter a word.*

*I handed him another water bottle, and we both drank as we rested on a bench.*

*Finally, I broke the silence as I held out a hand, still covered in tape that was stained with sweat and blood. “Kaleb Wulf.”*

*“Andrei Volkov.”*

*“I don’t know about you, but I could use something to eat after a shower.” I let the invitation hang in the air. Something told me this was a man who was destined to be in my life, and I didn’t want to part ways so quickly.*

*“Meet you back out here in fifteen.” His voice was thick with a Russian accent. Deep and raspy, as if he didn’t speak much.*

*Fifteen minutes later, we had our backpacks slung over one shoulder as we walked down the street toward my favorite little hole-in-the-wall restaurant. As I stopped in front of it and held the door open for Andrei, the first semblance of a smirk played over his lips.*

*“You like eating here?” He asked as he sat down at one of the small tables.*

*“Best pierogis in town.”*

*Andrei’s smirk grew as Anya, the owner’s daughter, crossed the space and set two waters in front of us. “Kaleb, good to see you.” She nodded at me before turning to Andrei. “Long time no see.”*

*Andrei chuckled as she walked away. “I live in the apartment upstairs,” he said at my look of confusion. “Igor and Katya are distant relatives of mine. They gave me a place to stay when I left Russia.”*

*I watched as his brow furrowed and the smirk faded, replaced by sorrow. “I take it you didn’t leave for good reasons.”*

*He shook his head as he drained half of the glass of water. “Not at all, but that is a story for another day. One that requires lots of vodka before it comes out.”*

*“Understood.” I nodded. “Vodka was never my drink. More of a whisky man myself.”*

*“Figures.” Andrei scoffed.*

*“What’s that supposed to mean?”*

*Those rich amber eyes saw more than Andrei let on. “You may try to hide it, but you come from money. People with money like whiskey or scotch. Simple concept.”*

*I rolled my eyes as I shook my head. “Don’t think I didn’t notice that watch or necklace you’re wearing. Coming from money, as you say I do, I can notice the difference between real diamonds and fake ones right away. And that’s a vintage Rolex you’re wearing.”*

*“Touche.” Andrei inclined his head in acknowledgment. “Although these are old family heirlooms. I refuse to sell them no matter how desperate I get.”*

*There was a story there.*

*Something told me it had a lot to do with how he came to be in an apartment above an Eastern European restaurant in a not-so-great part of town.*

*I cleared my throat and held out my hand, the thick band on my middle finger flashing in the light. “This was my dad’s, and his dad’s before him. So, I know what you mean about never letting go of those pieces closest to your heart.”*

*“Somehow, I think we were meant to meet today, Kaleb Wulf.”*

*“I think we were too, Andrei Volkov.”*

I jerked back to reality as an arm fell across my neck, a palm landing square on my face. Shocked, I looked over to see Lottie still fast asleep, her chest rising and falling with deep, even breaths. Even in her sleep, this female could wreak havoc. I barely resisted the urge to let out a snort.

With a deep sigh, I grasped Lottie’s wrist and placed her palm over my chest. My eyes fluttered shut, and I let myself fall into a fitful sleep.

*Andrei*

When I opened my eyes the next morning, it took several moments for the events of the past few days to come back to me. I couldn't just remain blissfully unaware of my grandfather for even a few minutes while I enjoyed my Little being in my arms.

Nope.

But one thing was certain as my mind cleared of the anger, and the adrenaline left my system.

I needed to talk to Viktor and my *babushka*. As loath as I was to admit it, it was clear that whatever Viktor had to tell me was important if he went to such extreme measures to get my attention.

Carefully extracting my arm from beneath Lottie, I shuffled out of the bed and to the bathroom. I assumed Kaleb and Colby were already awake as I didn't see a trace of them in Kaleb's large room. I took a quick shower and padded back into the room with a towel wrapped around my waist.

"Andrei, is that you?" Lottie's eyes widened as she caught sight of me in nothing but a towel. My hair was wet and dripping down my chest, and her eyes traced the path of several drops as they ran along my abs to my towel.

"Yes, it's me, *kroshka*." A smirk tilted the corners of my lips as she licked hers. Her stormy blue eyes darkened as I stepped closer to her. Her hair was still pulled on top of her head, but the tail had loosened, and strands of hair were wild around her. Her lounge pants had dancing penguins on them,

and the simple tanktop left very little to my imagination, with her tits spilling out.

I very much wanted to constantly play with those perfect tits.

“Good lord, you’re way too hot for me.” She squeaked, realizing what she said, and slapped her palms over her mouth. “I didn’t mean it like that,” she added, her voice muffled by her hands.

“From where I’m standing, *kroshka*, you’re the one who’s too hot for me.” I bit on my bottom lip, and my eyes trailed over her body. I settled my hands on her hips, my thumbs skating beneath the hem of her shirt to caress her bare skin. “Such luscious curves. I just want to eat you up.”

“I can’t wait to eat you up too.” She slapped her forehead with one of the hands that had just been on her mouth. “I just can’t get the filter under control today.”

“*Kroshka*.” I wrapped a hand around her wrist and drew it away from her face. I placed her palm to my chest, right over my heart. “Remember, no hurting yourself.”

Her gaze zeroed in on where her hand was touching my flesh. A delicate flush spread over her cheeks as she raised her other hand to join the first. “Is this okay?” Her words were tentative. She was hesitant.

“Okay for you to touch me?” My head tilted to the side. “Of course, you can touch me. Just no touching my cock until you have permission.”

Her lips parted, and the suggestion had her eyes falling to the bulge growing beneath my towel. “Okay,” she finally squeaked out.

With a soft chuckle, I wrapped an arm around her back and drew her closer against me. My lips brushed over her earlobe. “I think you like the idea of touching Daddy’s cock.”

Her fingers curled, her nails digging into my flesh as she trembled against me.

The aforementioned appendage was now rock hard, and my towel was in danger of falling off unless I got myself under control.

But I couldn't retreat from Lottie when her lips were parted in such a sweet invitation.

My mouth slanted over hers as I tangled my fingers in her hair. Lottie melted into the kiss, brushing her tongue against mine as her hands swept up to grip my shoulders. She pressed her body more firmly against mine, and I felt the hard points of her nipples.

I drew back so my lips hovered over hers. "You make me forget everything bad in my life, little girl."

Her hand reached up to run through the wet strands of my hair. "I want you to forget all the bad. I want to be good for you. Your light."

A smile spread over my face. "You are all that and more, *kroshka*. I feel like I can finally see the beauty in this world, thanks to you."

Lottie kissed me then, just a light brush of our lips. "We should probably go look for the others?" She phrased it as a question, with the slightest lilt at the end.

"We can stay up here for a little while longer if you'd prefer?" I ran my hand up and down her back, loving how she shuddered at my touch.

"Hmm," she hummed. "Maybe a little longer."

I kissed her again, teasing her tongue with my own before I swept light nips and kisses down her neck. Our little girl loved to have her neck touched and kissed. Her hands tightened in my hair as a deep moan reverberated through her chest. "Andrei," she gasped out as I bit down on the sensitive area where her shoulder and neck met.

"Do you like biting, *kroshka*?" I moved to her other side and repeated the action.

This time, her moan was even louder.

"Yes, I love it."



“Good girl,” I purred, my hands clenching and biting into the flesh of her hips. The damn towel around my waist had enough and slipped from the loose knot I’d tied it in. I cursed under my breath, drawing away from Lottie and reaching down to secure the ends. “I think that’s my cue to go and get dressed.”

I gave her one final kiss and used my free hand to give her a light swat on the behind. A wicked thought entered my brain as I strode to the closet and grabbed clothes from the stash I kept here.

Securing the bundle in one arm, I returned to the bedroom. Lottie was standing in the same place, her eyes still laser-focused on me.

I stopped and looked over my shoulder at her. “Get dressed, *kroshka*.”

Her head bobbed up and down as she bit her bottom lip. Her white teeth clutched at the tender flesh to keep from speaking. I knew it was more than just a contemplative gesture. Her teeth left indents, she was biting down so hard.

Our little girl was trying to keep from blurting out whatever was on her mind right now.

“What’s going on in that beautiful mind of yours?” I asked with a knowing smirk.

Her lips parted, and I was thankful she wasn’t causing herself any more pain by biting down so hard. But she shook her head, refusing to speak.

“I think I may be able to guess.” I licked my lips and lifted my hand that was securing the towel in place. “Let me know if I was right.”

The fabric fell to the floor, and I didn’t utter another word as I stepped back into the bathroom.

The sound of her curse was like music to my ears as I shut the door and began to get dressed.

I couldn’t even get mad at her use of bad language because my cock was so hard I was cursing as I pulled my clothes on,

the thoughts of Lottie doing nothing to tamp down my rampant lust.

Fuck, I wanted to make her mine—ours. I wanted her under me. Her wrists and ankles tied to the bed as her body was at my mercy. She would beg me to let her come, and I would only allow it after she gave me what I wanted.

Her complete and utter submission.

*Lottie*

Did that really just happen?  
Did Andrei drop his towel and flash me his gorgeously sculpted ass? His gorgeous, you could probably bounce a quarter off it, ass?

Yep. He did.

Because why else would I have made that up? I mean, I would make something like that up, but I wasn't dreaming, and the towel was still lying in the center of the room.

But just to be sure, I walked over to it and touched the corner of it with my foot.

Yep, the towel was really there.

So that meant the image currently burned in the back of my brain of Andrei's ass was, in fact, one hundred percent real.

Holy shit snacks. His ass was even better than Chris Hemsworth's. Or Tom Hiddleston's.

My mouth watered, and the heat between my legs intensified just thinking about it. Digging my heels into that solid flesh. Or my nails. Whatever would make him move faster and harder.

I stood there for a few more seconds before I realized I was supposed to be getting dressed, too lost in my lustful thoughts.

Yes, Lottie. Clothes. Andrei told you to get dressed, and we don't want him to come out and discover that we haven't

done that yet.

Now I was referring to myself in the third person and as ‘we’. Just great.

Could someone be hypnotized by a butt? I mean, I’d heard of being dickmatized, but *buttmalized*? I really needed to get a grip on reality here.

I went to my suitcase and retrieved a simple pair of jeans and a shirt. It was one of my favorites with a red fox that said, “You say crippling anxiety like it’s a bad thing?”

Don’t know if the guys would find it all that funny, but we’ll see.

By the time I was done brushing out my hair and resecuring my ponytail, Andrei emerged from the bathroom. “Ready to go downstairs and get some food?”

“Coffee first, I think.” I sprang to my feet.

“Coffee sounds perfect.” Andrei held his hand out for me, and I took it eagerly. He bent down and kissed my temple. “Did you like what you saw, *kroshka*?”

“I had to go over and touch the towel to make sure it actually happened, and I didn’t just imagine it.”

Andrei threw his head back in laughter. The sound was utter perfection, and I savored it after the heaviness of all that happened in the past week. He lifted our joined hands and kissed my knuckles. “I love you, *kroshka*.”

I don’t think I’d ever get tired of hearing any of the guys say that. Butterflies sprang to life and danced around in my belly. It was just like the first time they said it. Each time they repeated it, I grew to love it more and more.

“Love you too, Andrei.”

We made our way down the stairs and into the living room. Kaleb and Colby were sitting on opposite ends of the couch, each with their laptops perched on their legs and a random show playing on the TV in the background.

“About time you two stopped sucking face and got down here.” Kaleb winked, and I let out the breath I’d been holding, knowing he was kidding. Sometimes it was hard for me to tell with him.

“We only sucked face for a little while. Then we got dressed, but before that, Andrei decided to drop his towel and gift me with the lovely view of his ass.”

Oh, man. That was probably not the best thing to say out loud. But I did, and now there was nothing I could do about it.

But when Kaleb and Colby burst into laughter, and Andrei and I joined in, I decided all was well and right in the world.

Even if the thing that was all and right was my lack of filter.

“Sit down, *kroshka*.” Andrei kissed the top of my head. “I’ll get us some coffee. Have you had breakfast yet?” He called out to the guys.

“Nope.” Colby grinned as he patted the couch cushion next to him, insisting I sit down beside him. I crossed the room in a few strides and snuggled up next to him. “We were waiting to see what you guys wanted to do first.”

“I’ll volunteer for breakfast duty.” Andrei gave me a dazzling smile. “Since I got to suck face with our girl this morning, and she complimented my ass.”

“Is he actually smiling after what happened yesterday?” Kaleb whisper-yelled as he leaned closer to me. “Because if so, I’m gonna ask who the fuck kidnapped my best friend. Or maybe aliens did a brain swap while we were sleeping?”

I snorted as I laughed.

“I think it just shows you the true magic of being in love,” Colby replied, wrapping his arm around my shoulders to bring me even closer to his side. “I think you have been making us all smile a lot more lately, baby girl.”

I couldn’t help the massive grin that spread over my face. “I know you guys are making me smile a lot more, too.”

“Good.” Colby grunted in approval. “We’d never want to cause you any pain. Well, unless you’re getting a punishment spanking from us.” His brows arched as he gave me a knowing smile.

“Nope.” I shook my head back and forth in exaggerated motions. “I’m a good girl. I don’t need any spankings.”

They chuckled, and Kaleb placed his laptop on the coffee table and adjusted his body so he was lying with his head in my lap. “You’d be surprised how good it’ll make you feel, sweet girl. Once the punishment is done, whether that’s a spanking, corner time, or no desserts, the guilt is gone, and all is forgiven. It’s as simple as that.”

We’d briefly touched on the subject before, but the more I got comfortable with these men—Daddies—and the lifestyle, the more I leaned into it. Guilt was something that always weighed heavily on my mind. Things that I’d done wrong years ago still plagued me at the least opportune times, like when I was trying to sleep.

If a spanking or other punishment helped put my mind at ease, then I was all for trying it.

Lord knows that I liked to pile too much guilt upon myself.

“So, what is the plan for the day?” I asked, shifting the conversation away from spankings and punishments.

It was a tactic that I used a lot. Deflection, thy name is Charlotte Alexander.

“That would be up to you.” Colby tapped the tip of my nose. “We’re relaxing for the day. I’ve canceled my classes for tonight, and Kaleb and Andrei have already covered work for you.”

Speaking of work, there was one thing I knew I needed to do, but dread pooled deep in my belly. I groaned and scrubbed a hand over my face.

“What’s that look and sound for?” Kaleb asked, sitting as he became instantly concerned.

“I need to call Ryan and tell him what’s going on.”

I loved my brother dearly, but he could be an overbearing ass. Although he had gotten better since meeting Bryanna, but still, once he found out a *bratva pakhan* had kidnaped me, he might go full crazy marine on me.

As the silence stretched, I glanced at Colby, then Kaleb, and saw how their lips twitched. “I just said that all out loud about my brother, didn’t I?” I sighed and covered my face with my hands.

Kaleb grasped my wrists gently and pulled them away. He kissed the center of each of my palms and then laid my hands on his chest. “Yes, but you didn’t say anything we didn’t already know.”

“You remember Bryanna is my niece, right?” Colby chuckled as he leaned down to kiss my forehead. “She’s told me all about his overprotective streak. Not that I have anything against it.”

“Nice to know that I now have four overprotective men in my life,” I muttered.

The room burst into laughter, and I could even hear Andrei chuckling from the kitchen.

Ugh.

*Men.*

Not just men. *Daddies.*

*Calby*

Lottie's eyes blinked heavily as I brushed my hands through her hair. After we finished eating, I pulled her hair free from her ponytail, and she curled up with her head in my lap. I loved feeling the soft strands cascading through my fingers. She was soft right down to her hair.

The perfect contrast to the hardness and harshness of the three of us.

"Shh," I soothed her. "You can go to sleep if you need to, little one."

"Thank you, Daddy C." A large yawn made her jaw click as she opened wide and stretched her arms out. Then, she turned over, her face brushing against my stomach as she curled up and shut her eyes. Moments later, her breathing evened out as she fell into a deep slumber.

"She is too goddamn good for us," Andrei whispered, his molten caramel eyes locked on her sleeping form.

"She is," I agreed. "But that just means we have to strive to be even better men." I pinned my Russian friend with a knowing glance, and he let out a heavy sigh.

"Was that my hint to call and talk to my *babushka* about whatever Viktor wanted to say?" His voice was clipped. Strained. I knew he didn't like us pressuring him, but there were things we all needed to know. But he, most of all, needed this bit of closure.

His past had haunted him for too long.



I shrugged one shoulder. “That or you reach out to your cousin and see if he knows what Viktor could want.”

Andrei groaned and ran his fingers through his hair. “I thought about that, but I haven’t spoken to Sergei in almost as long. I doubt he’d be receptive to my calls now.”

“You never know,” Kaleb added. He’d gotten back on his laptop, needing to take care of a few things so he could stay home with the rest of us today.

Andrei muttered something in Russian under his breath and grabbed his phone from the coffee table.

I went back to staring down at Lottie as she slept peacefully.

Despite the trials she’d got through in the past week, she still trusted us. She loved us. It was something that I never thought was possible until she came into our lives.

I would cherish her with every fiber of my being until my heart ceased beating.

Lottie slept curled against me, and I typed away on my laptop. I’d canceled my in-person classes for the next two weeks and moved everything online. I wouldn’t let my students get too far behind. I had two advanced history classes that several needed to graduate this semester, and there was no way I’d let them fall behind.

I spent the next hour catching up on emails and typing out several discussion posts that I used instead of lectures. I still had a few term papers trickling in that I would have to grade over the weekend.

At least I always saved the good ones for last. It made for a much better end to the batch.

“You know she won’t be content to work from home all week,” I remarked absently as I brushed away the strands of hair that had fallen over her face.

“I know,” Kaleb replied with a sigh as he removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes. He only wore them when he was tired, and his eyes were too irritated from his contacts.

“So, you’ll need to plan something.”

This time, Andrei sighed. “I know. I get it. Just give me some time to simmer down and feel like I can let her out of my sight.”

I knew this was difficult for him, but he would have to learn one way or another he couldn’t stifle Lottie or she’d end up resenting him.

The Russian put a hand in the air. “I already fucking know what you’re thinking. Don’t keep her down. She’ll get restless. She’ll want to run away from us because I am too controlling.”

I nodded. “Yeah, that is exactly what I’m thinking. Thanks for saving me the trouble of having to say it all out loud.”

Andrei narrowed his eyes on me. His jaw was set in a firm line, the muscles in his neck standing out from the force.

“Guys, come on. It’s getting late.” Kaleb interjected, trying to be the peacemaker. “Let’s get to bed, and we can figure out more in the morning.”

He was right. Lottie was already fast asleep, and we needed to get her up and into bed before she got a crick in her neck from sleeping wrong.

I brushed my fingers over her cheek and whispered her name. “I’m going to pick you up, little one. Don’t be scared.”

Her eyes fluttered open, and she smiled at me. “Where are we going?”

“Getting you up into bed.” I rose and then leaned down to take her in my arms.

“What, no, Colby.” She squeaked. “I can walk, don’t hurt yourself carrying me.”

I snorted. “I’m built pretty solid for a nerdy history professor. Don’t worry about me. Just relax.”

She huffed a sigh but wrapped her arms around my neck and let me carry her up the stairs.

Good. The sooner Lottie learned we would always care for her, the better.

*Andrei*

I thought about what Colby said all night as I scrolled through the contacts on my phone the next morning.

Would Sergei talk to me?

We'd exchanged emails and text messages from time to time over the years, but nothing remotely recent.

He was Viktor's second in command after I left. He'd married a woman Viktor had wanted him to. Had two children.

Last I heard, his wife died of cancer just after his daughter was born.

I opened up the email app and typed in his name. I only hoped he still had the same email address. However, I'd never know if he didn't respond to me, if it was the wrong address, or if he just didn't want to speak with me.

The email I sent was simple.

*Cousin,*

*We must speak. Viktor is in town and kidnapped my woman in an attempt to talk to me. Curious if you know what he's so desperate to contact me about now after all these years. My current phone number is below.*

*-A*

Ten minutes passed before my phone chimed with a text message. My brow furrowed as I saw a local area code.

Unknown: Meet for drinks at Henry's on Burnside at 2pm? -S

Sergei was in town as well?

I sat up on the couch and gazed down at my phone screen. I didn't expect a reply, much less one within ten minutes and from a local number.

"Sergei is in town," I said out loud, still baffled at the turn of events. Who was overseeing operations in Moscow while Viktor and Sergei were both here?

"Really?" Kaleb replied, his head cocking to the side.

"Fuck me." I groaned and leaned back against the couch. "Guess I'm going to see my cousin."

Two hours later, I gave Lottie a lingering kiss goodbye and hopped in my Audi to head towards downtown. Kaleb didn't care for driving himself, so Oscar took him around, but I embraced the feel of the steering wheel beneath my palms as I sped through the streets.

Without Lottie in the car with me, I could let loose on the gas and not worry about her safety.

She hadn't liked being left behind, but I couldn't risk her. I didn't know what Sergei was like now. Just because I'd been told he was a fair and just man doesn't mean he didn't get up to all sorts of nefarious things behind closed doors.

Our blood was still filled with the taint of the Bratva.

I pulled up to the valet outside of the building and tossed my keys to the kid with stars in his eyes. It may not be the most expensive or fastest car in my collection, but it was certainly one that turned a lot of heads. Thank you, Marvel and Iron Man, for making Audi's more popular.

As I entered the upscale gastropub, I buttoned up my suit jacket. I had dressed in my familiar fitted suit to put the mask back on, so to speak. Nothing like an expensive hand-tailored suit to make you feel more powerful when meeting a cousin you haven't seen since you were eighteen.

"Andrei." Sergei stepped forward as I glanced around the bar. He held his hand out for me to take, and I shook it gratefully.

My cousin had aged in the two-plus decades it had been since I laid eyes on him. The look surprised me. Something Viktor would have hated. It was the reason I grew my hair out after I left Russia.

Sergei was ten years my senior, and the gray in his hair showed his age, even if his face remained as handsome as ever. His hair was long, brushing his shoulders.

Courtesy of those same bloody Bratva genes.

I was hesitant as I approached him. Sergei and I were always friendly, spending a lot of time together despite that age gap.

He pulled me in for a brief hug and slapped me on the back. “It’s good to see you, cousin. I wish it could have been under better circumstances.”

I nodded and cleared my throat, following him to the small table he’d been sitting at in the corner.

Perfect sightlines to all of the exit points. No one to his back. Just what I would have expected.

“Why are you here?” I asked, cutting straight through the bullshit and right to the heart of the matter.

Sergei barked out a laugh, picking up his drink and draining it in one long gulp. Judging by the clear liquid, I’d bet on that being straight, top-shelf-label chilled vodka. “I’ve missed that tact.”

The bartender came over, and Sergei ordered two more glasses of straight vodka. Guess I was embracing my heritage tonight.

We drained the glasses as soon as the man brought them over, and he handed us two more. These ones we would savor. Had to hand it to the man behind the counter. He was good at anticipating our needs. I’d be sure to leave him an excellent tip at the end of the night, even if I would insist Sergei pick up our tab.

“As for why I’m here,” Sergei began. “Pretty sure you can guess I’m here at Viktor’s orders. Or that’s what everyone

knows.”

Curious.

“When did you get here?”

Sergei narrowed his dark eyes at me. “Am I under inquisition here, cousin? Can’t I just be happy to see my long-lost cousin after so many years?”

“Honestly?” My brows rose as I pointed my finger over the glass clutched in my hand. “No. You’re here for a reason.”

He nodded. “I am. But I’ve been here for several years.”

My blood turned to ice in my veins. “What do you mean you’ve been here for several years?”

Pain flashed across his face before the stoic mask fell back into place. “Viktor sent me here six years ago.” He paused, contemplating his next words. “My daughter required better doctors than we had in Russia. So I came here.”

I eyed him curiously, searching for any sign of dishonesty, but I found none. Sergei may be many things, but a liar was not one of them.

“Your daughter. How old is she?”

A softness transformed his expression. “Ten. My son is twelve.”

“I heard your wife passed away a few years ago. My condolences.” I was sincere in my sympathy. Even if their marriage hadn’t been a love match, I’m sure it was painful to lose the mother of your children.

His jaw clenched, and his hand tightened around the crystal glass. “Thank you.” His words were clipped. There was a story there. One that I wouldn’t ask about right now.

“You’d like your second cousins. Maxim reminds me a lot of you when you were his age,” Sergei adds, quickly moving the conversation away from his late wife.

I chuckled. “Volkov blood is strong. We were all angsty pre-teen assholes.”

“Indeed.” He nodded. “Now, let’s move on to discussing the reason you’re here. You want to know about Viktor.”

My mood soured and the shift. “Yes.”

“He kidnapped your woman?” Sergei’s brows rose as he finished the question, just as the bartender refreshed our glasses of vodka.

Looks like I’d be calling Oscar to pick me up after all. I would never drive after having more than one drink.

“He did. From the office building where we work. After tailing her for several days.”

Sergei sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Why our grandfather has to be such a dense idiot is beyond me. If he just had Babushka reach out to you, he wouldn’t have had to go to such extreme measures.”

“Probably.” I tapped my fingers on the cool, solid surface of the table. “So what is it he needs to discuss so urgently with me he would do this shit?”

He didn’t answer right away. In fact, his gaze dropped away from me, and an emotion I can’t name crossed over his face. “He’s sick.”

The color drains from my face. “What?”

“He’s sick. Lung cancer. It’s treatable but can be risky. Especially with his age. Although he’s remained healthy, it’s still a risk.”

His words barely penetrated through my brain as I couldn’t comprehend them.

As much as I despised my grandfather for what he forced me into, he was still my flesh and blood. I never wished him dead.

“He’s been trying to keep it as quiet as possible, but he’s come here for the treatment. Babushka is barely holding it together. Maxim, Sofia and I have been staying with them on and off for the last few weeks since they arrived in Oregon.” Sergei shifted. “*Babushka* came with us six years ago when Sofia was sick. They became even closer. My wife was not cut

out to be a mother, so the only positive female in Sofia's life has been *Babushka*."

"Fuck, Sergei," I cursed, draining my glass again. "I'm sorry."

There was more I wanted to say, but I held my tongue.

Why didn't he reach out to me? Just because I turned my back on the Bratva and Viktor didn't mean I abandoned my family completely.

Right?

Sergei shook his head and waved a hand through the air. "It's the past now. We must move forward and try to mend the fences of the past. If for any reason, the sake of your woman and my children. Your future children. The Bratva is brutal, but we must know that we are more than just Bratva men. We are Volkovs. Volkovs stick together."

As I returned home, Sergei's words echoed in my ears. Would I be able to forgive my grandfather? What if he were dying, and this would be the last opportunity I had?

If you asked me when I was eighteen, right after Sasha died before my eyes, I would have said to fuck off.

But now? I was older and wiser. Learned patience and thinking before reacting. Well, mostly.

Somehow, finding a woman you loved tended to put things into a different perspective. Lottie wouldn't want the hate and negativity around her. She was a bright soul and already had enough darkness in her life. She didn't need me adding any more on top of it.

For the sake of her and *Babushka*, Sergei, and his kids, I had to put my pride aside and hear what Viktor had to say.

Sergei was coming over tomorrow evening to talk more. I had hoped he would bring his Sofia and Maxim, but I understood he wanted to shelter and protect them first.

From there, I would talk to Lottie, Kaleb, and Colby and decide what we'd do from there.



Whatever I did would make a difference in all of our lives. I couldn't shut people out anymore, especially those closest to me.

*Lottie*

Nerves put me on edge as I kept pressing the button to illuminate my phone or look down at my watch to check the time. Andrei had been gone for over two hours, and I slowly went bonkers with impatience.

“Hey.” Kaleb drew me back against his body and placed his lips on mine. “Andrei will be fine. Nothing is going to happen to him. He’s not going to run away or decide he doesn’t want to be with you anymore.”

“Did I say all of that out loud?” This was really getting to be a problem. I couldn’t just burst out with every little thought in my head. They would think I’m crazier than they already do.

“Charlotte.” Kaleb tipped my chin up, and my eyes bulged from my skull as he used my full name. That was much more of an Andrei thing to do.

“Listen to me, alright?” His hand slid around to tangle in my hair. “Andrei needed to talk to Sergei about why his grandfather is here. If anyone knows, it would be Andrei’s cousin.”

I nodded sagely, my cheeks heating with my embarrassment. I didn’t like to be this anxious mess, but somehow, I always ended up as a puddle of nerves in front of them.

“Baby girl. You have nothing to be embarrassed or hide from us.” Kaleb gave me a smile filled with warmth and affection, reassuring me that I was safe in his arms. I would be safe with all three of them, no matter what craziness I blurted

out. “I find some of the things that come out of your mouth ridiculously adorable. Your head is a fascinating place. It doesn’t matter if it’s a month, a year, or a decade from now, I’ll still find it endearing.”

A flash of emotion surged within me at his words, and I had to blink back the tears burning in the back of my eyes. “Thank you,” I breathed out, my throat hoarse with the emotions currently warring in my body.

He shook his head and leaned down to kiss my forehead. “You don’t have to thank me or any of us. You don’t need to apologize unless you’ve done something naughty. You’re ours, and we will take care of you.”

I nodded, the words escaping me, and I couldn’t speak past the lump in my throat.

Kaleb grinned, his hazel eyes darkening to a deep green. “Now, let’s watch some mindless TV until Andrei gets home. I’m sure it won’t be too much longer.”

I laid my head against his chest as he turned on the Food Network. “Ooo, yes, Guy Fieri.”

He chuckled and set the remote down on the end table. “Guy Fieri it is.”

Somehow, I’d fallen asleep against Kaleb’s chest. A feat that was normally unheard of for me. Sleep wasn’t easy, so I’d celebrate the win from the small nap.

I’d done it more than once in the presence of my guys. Being snuggled up next to them

“Wake up, *kroshka*.”

Andrei’s familiar accent roused me, and my eyes fluttered open to find him kneeling before me. I jolted forward into his arms, probably much more enthusiastically than I should have been.

He grunted and fell backward, but after half a second, he laughed.

I pressed my nose into his throat and inhaled his deep, rich scent. My lips brushed over his flesh as I held him close to my

body.

“*Kroshka*. Nothing happened. In fact, I’d like you to meet Sergei tomorrow. I invited him over for dinner.”

My brow furrowed, and I leaned back. “Are you sure?” I was completely and utterly terrified of what Viktor might do. He’s a man of some morals and principles. As much as a member of the Bratva can be. Andrei assured me he never harmed women or children unless it was for self-defense. Or if they were truly evil.

Andrei felt my shudder and held me tighter to him. “You’ll have to trust me on this one, *kroshka*.” He kissed my forehead. “There was a reason he didn’t harm you and never will. Even if you weren’t my woman, he doesn’t harm innocent women.”

He let out a heavy sigh and buried his face in my neck. “As much as I hate to admit it, my grandfather does have some scruples.”

I tangled my fingers in his thick hair and massaged his scalp. He made a noise of appreciation deep in his throat that made fire dance between my legs. “Somehow, I don’t think your babushka would stand for harming innocent women or children.”

“No.” Andrei shook his head against my neck. “She would pull his gun on him and shoot him if he did. But that doesn’t mean he’s innocent by any means. That man has gallons of blood on his hands. He’s tortured. Killed. Strangled. All of it in the name of the Bratva.”

And Andrei had done the same before he’d left Russia.

It wasn’t something I wanted to admit or say out loud. But it was the truth. He may have been young when he left, but I saw the guilt in his eyes when he spoke of his time there.

A different set of hands ran down the length of my arms. Kaleb. “Are you hungry, little one?”

As if he read my body before I did, my stomach let out a grumble of hunger as he finished speaking.

They chuckled. “Guess that answers my question.”

After we ate dinner, Colby insisted I take a bath to relax. I stood barefoot on one of the bathroom rugs as the scent of lavender and vanilla drifted through the air. He knelt on the edge of the tub, leaning forward to test the temperature of the water. When he was satisfied, he pulled the stopper closed and rose to his feet.

He wore a casual sweater with the sleeves rolled to his elbows and dark pants. He was devastatingly handsome as he stood before me. His gaze trailed over my body like a physical caress, leaving heat trailing in its wake.

“Can I help you get undressed and settled in the tub?” His voice was a deep, husky growl, and a spark of arousal burned to life between my legs.

I nodded, unable to form any actual words.

If I tried, it would likely come out like gobbledygook.

Colby prowled closer, his movements graceful and sensuous. I watched the muscles in his forearms flex as his hands clenched into fists at his side. What was it about a man’s forearms that was so damned sexy?

The way the muscles bunched and expanded. The veins. Colby had a few colorful tattoos decorating his skin, playing off his complexion perfectly. A Japanese-style seascape with deep blacks and rich blues.

“Lottie?”

My name jolted me back to reality, and I snapped my gaze back up to Colby’s face.

An amused smirk was painted across his face, and I ducked my head.

Caught again.

Would I ever stop ogling these men as if I were starving and they were my only source of food?

Gods, I hoped not.

I licked my lips and forced myself to lift my eyes back to his face.

“Distracted?”

“Mmhm,” I hummed as I bopped my head up and down.

Colby chuckled and shook his head. “Arms up, little one. Let’s get you undressed and in the tub.”

I obeyed him, but now that I wasn’t as distracted, I realized he’d be seeing me fully naked for the first time.

Heat blazed to life in my cheeks as I fought back the urge to cross my arms over my chest when he pulled my shirt off.

“No need to be embarrassed.” His fingers trailed over my fiery cheeks, and I leaned into his touch.

He didn’t break eye contact as he bent to one knee and pulled the leggings from my body.

I silently thanked my good sense to bring some cute bras and undies so I didn’t just stand before him in plain beige utilitarian undergarments.

The smooth black fabric was soft, comfortable, and decorated with small white stars. It was easy enough to wear every day and gave me just the boost of confidence I needed.

“Adorable.” Colby grinned as he rose and slid two fingers beneath the strap at my shoulder. He tugged it once before letting go.

His eyes were on fire as they trailed over my half-naked body. “Fucking gorgeous, baby girl. Turn around for Daddy C.”

I did as he instructed, anticipation making my limbs shake like jelly.

Cool fingers brushed over my skin, going to the hooks of my bra and releasing it. He slid the straps down and let the garment drop to join the rest of my clothing on the floor.

The silence was heavy between us as he knelt again and pulled my panties down.

“Fucking hell.” A new voice joined us, and I spun on my heel to see Kaleb and Andrei standing just inside the doorway with hungry eyes.

But of course, that just couldn't be all I did. Because then I wouldn't be me.

I lost my footing and went flying backward. Colby grunted as he caught me, but I ended up completely on top of him with him on his back.

Why did I have to be so goddamned clumsy?

*Colby*

Lottie knocked the air out of my lungs, but I didn't give two shits about that as I made sure to wrap my arms around her, keeping her head from hitting the solid tile of the floor. "I've got you," I murmured softly as a noise of distress escaped her lungs.

"Are you alright?" Kaleb rushed over to kneel beside us, and his hazel eyes darkened as they darted between me and Lottie. "Lottie? Colby?"

"Fine," I managed to bite out as Lottie started to squirm against me.

"Colby!" She exclaimed. Her ass—her very bare ass—collided with my groin, and a deep groan rumbled to life in my chest. "I'm so sorry. Let me up. I'm crushing you."

Her soft skin trembled beneath my touch as I splayed my hand out over her belly. "I'm groaning because you keep rubbing that luscious ass against my cock."

"Oh." She stilled, and I barked out a laugh. "Sorry."

"No sorries, little one." I moved into a sitting position, Lottie still draped over my lap. "I'm not sorry in the slightest." I trailed kisses up her neck before nibbling on her earlobe. She melted back into my chest, and my traitorous cock was screaming at me to delve between her thighs and touch her pussy.

But I had more willpower than that. We'd been waiting for our Little for so long, I wouldn't fuck it up by thinking with the wrong head.



Even if Lottie was on top of me naked.

“Let’s turn the water off before we flood the bathroom.” Kaleb reached behind me to shut the taps off as he laughed.

“Good idea. Don’t need to get Colby all wet.” Lottie was starting to ramble now. “I’m the only one who should get wet tonight. Not that I’m not already, just not in that way. Water wet. Oh, fuck I need to stop talking now.”

I bit down on my bottom lip as I resisted the urge to burst into uncontrollable laughter.

Lottie slapped a hand over my chest. “Don’t you dare laugh at me.”

She was so unbelievably adorable when she was flustered.

I kissed the tip of her nose and wrapped my arms around her. “I wouldn’t ever dream of laughing at you, little one. These two, on the other hand.” I gestured over my shoulder to Kaleb and Andrei. “Totally would.”

Andrei’s brows rose as he crossed his arms over his chest. “My *kroshka* knows the truth of that.”

Seconds ticked by, and slowly, a smile formed on his face, and Lottie giggled. “I laugh at myself when I’m not wanting to hit my head against the wall.”

That effectively silenced the laughter.

“Not hitting your head on anything.” I pinned her with my gaze. “We don’t care how off the wall or out of the blue a thought is. We don’t mind hearing it. Unless it involves you harming yourself or putting yourself down. Alright?”

“Okay.” She nodded, her head looking a bit like a bobblehead. “Sorry, Daddy C.”

I hugged her to me and kissed her forehead. “No sorries, little one. You’ve done nothing wrong. We’re all still learning about each other. Just because we know what’s in our hearts doesn’t mean we’ve found out everything in our brains.”

“Good way of putting it.” Kaleb dropped a hand on my shoulder and squeezed it before turning his attention to our

still very naked Little.

She was pressed against me, but it didn't hide her ample curves.

“We have the rest of our lives to explore everything.” I kissed my way down her neck. “We'll fight. There's little doubt about that. People in relationships do that; if they don't, they need to talk to someone.”

Another giggle. I loved it when I could make her laugh or smile. Everything about her brightened when she did. Our ray of sunshine.

“But we'll also live and love. That's the important part of life. Enjoying it by really living.”

“And this is why he's the professor with the fancy words.” Andrei nodded. His posture had relaxed, and there was a hint of a smile on his face. He was waiting to tell us more about his conversation with Sergei with him present. I was looking forward to meeting the cousin that we heard fondly about.

It was about the only part of Andrei's past he actually spoke about—other than about his *babushka*.

“I love the fancy words.” She leaned back and framed my face in her hands. “But I love the growls and other gestures, too. I don't always need the fancy words. They're nice, but actions speak the loudest.”

How right she was.

I forced my gaze to focus on her face and not drift down to the ample swell of her breasts against my chest. I could feel her hard nipples on my flesh, and my cock was protesting being confined behind layers of fabric.

“We'll always tell you and show you how much we love and care for you, little one.” I smoothed her hair away from her face and splayed my hand over her neck. My thumb skated over her pulse point, rapidly fluttering beneath my touch.

“Thank you,” she breathed out, her stormy blue eyes shimmering with unshed tears. “I don't know how I got so lucky.”

I smiled, letting true happiness wash over me for the first time in so very long.

“It’s us who are the lucky ones.”

With that, I gathered her into my arms to lift her up. She squeaked from the sudden movement but wrapped her arms around my neck to cling to me. “Time for your bath, little one. Then bed.”

“Yes, Daddy C.”

*Kaleb*

Lottie sat sideways on my lap as I fed her dinner the next evening. In our short time together, I enjoyed these little things, such as feeding her or caring for her needs. Brushing her hair. Helping her dress.

“You guys are spoiling me with all this amazing food.” She laid her head against my shoulder. Her eyes fluttered shut, and I placed the half-empty plate on the end table. I was learning more and more about her. She didn’t eat a lot at a time but tended to snack. A nibbler.

Andrei had grilled up steaks and chicken, along with sides of mashed potatoes, corn, and green beans.

“Thank you for the compliment, *kroshka*.”

Her eyes opened, and she gave Andrei a soft smile. “When is Sergei supposed to be coming over?”

Our little one was also inquisitive. She wasn’t happy that Andrei hadn’t shared what Sergei told him last night.

Andrei glanced down at his Apple Watch. “In about thirty minutes. I’ll get started on the dishes.” He moved to his feet, and Colby joined him.

Lottie relaxed against me, and I ran my hand up and down her back in soothing strokes as we watched TV and waited for Sergei to arrive.

A knock of the door echoed around the living room, and I glanced over my shoulder to see Andrei striding toward it. His eyes had darkened, and the muscles in his neck bulged from

how tightly he clenched his jaw. He was on edge, and I hated to see him like this.

So...conflicted.

Andrei greeted his cousin in Russian and led him into the living room. Lottie was on the couch beside me, insisting that she didn't want to be on my lap as she met a family member for the first time.

I helped Lottie to her feet as Andrei brought Sergei into the living room.

"Nice to meet you, Sergei." I extended my hand. "I'm Kaleb Wulf. We've heard a lot about you."

He shook my hand, his grip powerful and firm. Inclining his head, I made note of the similarities between him and Andrei. They had similar bone structures, but Sergei was hardened, his face showing signs of his age. Long salt and pepper hair reached his collar, and stubble decorated his jaw.

"Nice to meet you as well." His accent was thicker than Andrei's. His voice was deeper. His dark eyes drifted to Lottie, and a hint of a smile spread over his face, making his features appear softer.

Andrei breezed past Sergei and stood on Lottie's other side, wrapping an arm protectively around her waist. "This is Lottie, our woman."

The smirk grew into a full smile as Sergei took in Lottie's features. "Very nice to meet you, little one. You have nothing to be frightened of with me. I'd rather stab myself than harm a woman or child."

At least the Volkovs all had that in common. No innocent women or children were to be harmed. Even in Viktor's faction, men who disobeyed were dealt with harshly. Or at least that's what Andrei told me.

"Thank you," Lottie replied. Her back straightened, and she held her hand out for him. "Charlotte Alexander, but please call me Lottie." She wrinkled her nose. "I hate being called Charlotte."

Sergei nodded, a hint of longing sparking in his eye. “Lottie it is. Thank you for having me in your home, Kaleb.”

“No thanks needed. You’re family. Please sit. Colby should join us shortly.”

As I finished my statement, Colby entered the room. “Colby, nice to meet you Sergei.” They shook hands, and we settled onto the couch.

I think Sergei chose an armchair situated further away out of respect for Lottie and his cousin. He didn’t want to intimidate her.

“Okay, I’m dying here.” Lottie tapped her feet up and down. “What’s going on?”

Sergei’s brows rose as he visibly fought back a smile. “She’s an impatient little one, isn’t she?” He directed the question to Andrei.

Lottie stiffened, her back going perfectly straight as she narrowed her eyes at him. “Is there a problem with that?”

“Shhh,” Andrei murmured, kissing the top of her head as he tucked her beneath his arm. “Sergei doesn’t mean anything by it. Or at least, he better not or I’ll kick his ass just like I did before I left Russia.”

Dark eyes hardening as he stared his cousin down. Sergei then moved his gaze to Lottie. “I most certainly didn’t mean anything negative. Quite the opposite, in fact.” The harsh mask fell from his face as he smiled and spread his arms out. “Cousin, I am not the same hardened man that you remember. I touched on it briefly last night, but after you watch your daughter, the pride and joy of your heart, battle a vicious disease, and you aren’t sure she’ll pull through? Yeah, it puts a lot of shit in perspective.”

Lottie gasped, and her hand covered her lips. “I’m so sorry. I can’t even imagine how difficult that must have been.”

Sergei closed his eyes briefly, then opened them again and nodded at our girl. “Thank you. Sofia is in remission, thank God. Has been for four years after fighting for four years before that. She was only two when she was diagnosed.”

Fuck, my gut twisted at the agony that little girl must have gone through. No one deserved that, especially not a child who was innocent of all sin.

“Anyway,” Sergei cleared his throat, closing the topic. The pain evident in his body language told me how deeply it had affected him. Family was important to the Volkovs, but almost losing your daughter? I could only imagine how that could change you as a man. “I came to the United States for Sofia’s treatments, and we decided to stay. We only moved to the Portland area in the last year after living in Seattle.”

“Why didn’t you ever reach out to Andrei if you lived here?” Lottie asked, her question holding no malice or ill intent. She was a naturally curious person and didn’t hesitate to ask the questions that popped into her mind. “I mean, I can imagine that he would have loved to know you were so close.”

“I confess I watched his accomplishments and didn’t want to interfere with his life.” His dark eyes softened as he regarded Andrei with the love and affection of a brother rather than just a cousin. “At first, I’d been so focused on Sofia that everything else fell away. When she went into remission, so much time had already passed that I didn’t want to disturb you.”

Andrei’s hand clenched into a fist on his thigh, and Lottie snuggled further into him. He was hurting. Had been hurting since Viktor came back into the picture and brought so many old memories surging back.

My heart ached for my best friend. He was going to need us more than ever to get him through everything right now.

*Andrei*

Lottie did her best to soothe me with her comforting touch after I stiffened up at Sergei's statement. It was the first time I truly regretted the way I severed ties with my old life. Sergei only had *Babushka* with him as he had to care for Sofia while still raising Maxim as best as he could. The pain could have hardened my cousin even more, but instead, I recognized the love he embraced.

"For that, I am truly sorry, Andrei." The Sergei I knew from two decades earlier would have never apologized for something like this.

The new Sergei was definitely growing on me.

"There is no apology necessary, cousin." I cleared my throat, trying to hold back the emotions that were threatening to choke me. "We've both done and said things that we regret. I, for one, think this should be a new beginning for us, regardless of what happens with our grandfather." I leaned over the coffee table separating us and extended my hand for him to shake.

"Agreed." He grasped my hand and shook it firmly before dropping it. "That takes us nicely into what we really need to discuss."

"What did Viktor need to speak to Andrei about so desperately he kidnapped Lottie to get his attention?" It was rare for Colby to use such a stern tone. We'd all lost a few years of our lives after she'd been taken. Colby wouldn't have any love for Viktor anytime soon. Not that I did either, but I had blood tying us together.



“Viktor is sick. Has been for about a year now. Lung cancer. He’s in the area for advanced treatment, but our grandfather is a realist and wants to get his affairs in order.” Sergei sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. “With the treatment, he has about a fifty-fifty shot. It can hopefully slow the growth and keep it from spreading while they work on shrinking the tumor.”

“Oh no,” Lottie gasped and glanced up at me. Tears were already lingering in her stormy blue eyes. This woman had such compassion, even for those who have wronged her.

“Shit.” Colby cursed and regarded me. “I know that’s not an excuse for his methods. He could have called or dropped by the office. Cornered him in the parking garage. He didn’t need to take our woman.”

Damn right, he didn’t need to.

“No, he didn’t,” Sergei replied. “And if it makes you feel any better, *Babushka* walloped him good for it. I think he really regrets it, if for no other reason than that. Although, I do know that he took a shine to your woman. Thinks she’s perfect for you.”

“Damn right, I am,” Lottie blurted out, then slapped a palm over her mouth. “Darn it.”

Sergei burst into laughter, the sound deep and rough. It felt good to hear him laugh.

Our Little with the mouth control problem was perfect for me. For us. I was a lucky son of a bitch and I knew it.

I bent and brushed my lips over her ear. “You are perfect for me, little girl. Seeing your body last night made that even more true.”

“So, he wants to make amends with Andrei or something?” Lottie asked, quickly moving on before I could say more to make her blush.

“Yes, that’s what I’ve gathered.” Sergei nodded before he let out a heavy sigh. “I can’t tell you what to do, Drei, but I know for myself, I’m doing this for *Babushka*. She’s been there for us, sacrificed for us. Raised me after my parents were

killed, then raised you after the same. Volkovs stick together. We're family now and forever. Whatever you decide, I'll support you."

"Now that I have you back Sergei, you aren't getting away." I grinned through the pain of my past. "I want to be part of Sofia and Maxim's lives as well. I think they could use Uncle Andrei to spoil them."

Sergei inclined his head and returned my smile as he rose to his feet. "Come over this weekend. It's Maxim's birthday, and we're having a big family dinner."

I squeezed Lottie's hand and then joined him in standing.

There was an implication in his gaze and his words.

Viktor would be there.

I let out a deep exhale and looked back at Lottie. She gave me a reassuring smile and nod.

Once again, I found myself in awe of this woman. Her strength and support. It was hard to believe we'd only known each other for a few short weeks.

"We'll be there." I pulled Sergei in for a hug, and we thumped each other's backs. "Thank you, cousin."

"Volkovs stick together."

Lottie snuggled up on my chest, her head resting just over my heart. One hand splayed out over my ribs as her soft breath tickled my skin with every exhale. "Are you sure you're okay?" She asked for what had to be the hundredth time.

I chuckled and kissed the top of her head. "Yes, I'm sure." I let out a soothing exhale. "You give me the strength to do things I never thought I'd be able to do."

She tilted her head up toward me so I could see her bright eyes. "We all make each other stronger."

"We do." I grasped her hand and brought it to my lips. "Now, you should get some sleep."

"We should get some sleep." She emphasized the we as she patted my stomach.

Her touch was innocent enough, but it set me on fire all the same. Having her near me, drawing in her enticing scent, was enough to make me hard as a rock. To feel her long fingers just inches from where I wanted them was pure torture.

“As you wish, *kroshka*.”

“I think something might be keeping you up all night.” She giggled at her own pun as her hand drifted lower. Her hand lingered just above the waistband of my sleep shorts. Damn it, was it her goal in life to tempt me constantly?

I broke off into a string of Russian as she continued her exploration, pushing her luck and wiggling two fingers just beneath the elastic. Fuck, I couldn't take it anymore.

“Do you want Daddy A's cock, little girl?” My voice was little more than a husky rasp.

“Yes, please, Daddy A. I want to touch it and make you come so you sleep better.” She kissed my chest, and her nose nuzzled along my heated flesh.

Fuck it, I needed her touch so desperately it was driving me insane with need. I needed her to ground me. Remind me of what I had the thing I wanted most in life.

Her.

I placed my hand on top of hers and guided it beneath my pants to wrap around my aching cock. The moment her fingers closed around my length, I let out a deep moan.

She gave me several firm strokes, and I bucked my hips. Her tight fist felt so good.

“That's it, stroke Daddy's cock.” I guided her to go faster and tighten her grip a bit more. Of course she was a natural at this. I didn't even want to think about the other cocks she must have practiced on. She was ours now, and our cocks would be the only ones she'd be touching from now until eternity.

Her breathing increased, and she lifted her head from my chest to watch her fist on my cock.

I growled and shifted to slide my shorts down to expose my cock so we could watch.

Up and down, her hand moved as I whispered phrases in Russian. How much I loved her hands on my body. How good she felt against me. How I couldn't wait to feel the warm, tight heat of her pussy surrounding my cock.

“Can't wait to be inside of you, *kroshka*. I'll make you feel so fucking good.”

“Yes, Daddy.” She moaned and sank her teeth into my flesh.

“Faster, baby girl.” Like a good girl, she followed my instructions, her hand moving up and down in a frantic rhythm as I chased my release. My balls drew up tight to my body, and white spots danced in my vision as I came in spurts over Lottie's hand.

A sound of satisfaction escaped my lips as her hand slowly moved up and down, drawing out every drop of cum from my body.

“Better?” Lottie asked, her voice husky and her eyes filled with deep satisfaction.

“Fuck yes.” I gave myself a few seconds to relax and let the pleasure of climax sink into me before I rolled out of bed and moved to the bathroom. I returned to Lottie with a warm, damp washcloth and cleaned her hand.

“Thank you.” She giggled again, looking damn pleased with herself.

I tossed the cloth back into the bathroom and climbed back next to her. She started to cuddle up next to me, but I shook my head. “I'm not done with you yet,” I growled and pushed her to the mattress and loomed over her. I placed scorching, open-mouthed kisses down along her neck to her breasts. She only had on a flimsy tank top and soft sleep pants.

Pushing down the straps of the tank, I continued my exploration of her body by kissing every inch of skin I exposed before taking one nipple into my mouth.

Lottie tangled her fingers in my hair and arched her back to push her tits further into my touch and mouth.

I skated my palms down her sides and worked to push the fabric from her hips as she lifted and helped get the pants off.

“Andrei.” My name left her lips on a desperate plea as I kissed down along her stomach before hovering over her pussy.

“It’s only fair that I repay the favor.”

*Lottie*

I arched my back and groaned in ecstasy as Andrei's mouth descended on my pussy. He nibbled, sucked, and licked me as if I were his favorite dessert, and he was the kid that could eat until they were sick.

I tangled my fingers in his hair, the texture of the thick strands grounding me and surrounding me with even more sensations. His mouth was merciless, and I could barely breathe with the force of my desire weighing down on my chest.

"Daddy A, please," I begged, tightening my fingers in his hair. I needed more. I needed it all. Everything that he had to give me, I wanted it. But it went beyond just want. It was a need, a craving for him that pulsed through my blood with each pump of my heart. Consumed every thought.

I couldn't breathe without these men by my side and in my bed.

Andrei lifted his head and gazed up at me with those molten caramel eyes, and it was as if I were diving into those pools of his. "Have you been a good girl today, *kroshka*? Do you think you deserve to come?"

I nodded frantically as I searched for the words that I could use to convince him to allow my release.

"Hmm," he hummed and blew warm air over my soaked folds. "You were a good girl today, and those hands of yours gripping Daddy's cock were magical."

He circled my clit with his fingertips before dipping down and thrusting two digits inside me.

A groan caught in my throat as I choked on the raw pleasure of the sensations. I bucked and wiggled my hips, anything to get the much-needed friction on my aching clit.

Andrei grinned, delighting in my frantic gestures like the meanie that he was.

“Did you just call me a meanie?” His features hardened, and I squeaked as I realized I said that out loud.

Fuck a duck.

“Language, little girl.”

“Why can’t I just keep my thoughts to myself?” I slapped my palm to my face as I groaned.

Andrei’s shoulder shook as if he were holding back laughter. I’m sure he was. I would laugh, too, if I were observing someone blurt out such random nonsense while naked and on the receiving end of being eaten out.

“Relax, *kroshka*.” The two fingers still inside of me curled and pressed against a spot that made me see stars. “Back to me, focus on my voice, my hands, my tongue. Nothing else matters right now.”

I arched my back and stroked my fingers through his hair like it was my anchor. My lifeline to the real world as he cast me out into space.

“That’s it,” he cooed, his voice deepening as his accent thickened. “You’re so fucking beautiful with your tits in the air, and those little mewls of pleasure are the best fucking sound in the universe.”

He dropped his head back down to my pussy and swirled his tongue in circles over my clit.

Pleasure built and coiled tight in my belly as the peak came closer and closer. Pleas and random gibberish fell from my lips as my mind went askew from sheer bliss pulsing through my body.

“Good girl.” Andrei purred against my pussy. “Come for me, *kroshka*. Come all over my face and fingers.”

His words were all I needed as my lips parted on a silent scream while the climax drew me under. My vision went black as wave after wave of intense pleasure swept me up.

Through it all, Andrei continued thrusting his fingers in and out of me in an opposite rhythm from his tongue swirling and devouring me. He murmured in Russian, and though I couldn't understand any of it, the words ratcheted up, and euphoria sang through my veins.

As I came down from what was one of the most intense climaxes of my life, Andrei withdrew his fingers, sucking every last drop of my essence from the digits before wiping his chin off and settling beside me. “Glorious. I could feast on you for days, surviving only on your cunt for sustenance.”

My brow furrowed as I fell back into my body and processed his words. “That's just silly. You can't survive on pussy alone.”

Andrei chuckled as he brought me against his body and kissed my forehead. “I could survive. You underestimate your pussy's value.”

I snorted. “Silly.”

“We'll agree to disagree on that.” He winked and let out a contented sigh. “Get some sleep, *kroshka*. I know you're dying to get back to work, so we'll stop in for a few hours tomorrow.”

I yawned and nodded. “Good idea.” My eyes fluttered shut, and I rested my head against his chest. “Night, Daddy. Love you.”

“Love you too, *kroshka*.”

Something tickled my nose, and I batted it away sleepily as a groan rumbled in my chest.

“Go away.” I grabbed the blanket to pull it over my head. I like to wake up on my own time, thank you very much.

“Charlotte.”



The stern voice saying my name made me open my eyes and glance at the bed next to me.

Kaleb lounged next to me, looking as polished and put together as ever as he laid on his side with his head propped up on his bent elbow. “Morning, sleepy head.”

He was entirely too chipper when I hadn’t had coffee yet.

“Fifteen more minutes,” I grumbled sleepily, shutting my eyes and trying to roll over.

“No can do, baby girl.” Kaleb grasped the blankets and flung them from my body.

The chill on my skin made me gasp and curl up into a ball. “Meanie. Such a meanie.” I shivered as I scooted closer to him, trying to get his warmth despite calling him a meanie. If he’d keep me warm, then he wouldn’t be such a meanie after all.

“There’s coffee waiting for you in the bathroom.”

I glanced up at him, my eyes narrowing into slits. “I’m listening.”

“Remember, Andrei told you that you could go to work today to get caught up on things.”

I was so pathetic letting them bribe me with things like going into the office.

“We like bribing you with other things, too.” His deep voice made goosebumps erupt on my skin as a wave of arousal tingled between my legs. “I can think of a lot better things than work or coffee.”

Those hazel green eyes darkened as they lazily trailed over my body, taking in every inch of my skin.

It took me a moment to realize I was still cold because he’d ripped the blankets from my body just mere moments before.

My lips parted, and I wiggled closer, soaking in his warmth. Just as our lips were about to connect, he placed a finger on them and shook his head.

“Sorry, baby girl.” Those damn lips that I would much rather be kissing right now twisted up into a smile. “If we want to be on time and please those slave-driver bosses of yours, we need to get you in the shower and dressed.”

With a laugh, he rolled off the bed and clapped his hands together. “Up and at ‘em.”

“Such a meanie.”

*Kaleb*

Lottie had been muttering meanie under her breath and shooting daggers at Andrei and I with her eyes until we pulled into the drive-thru of Dutch Bros.

“Yay!” She brightened and wiggled in her seat.

Andrei shook his head and barely contained his laughter. “How did I know this would cheer you up and make you stop calling us meanies?”

Lottie twisted her lips to the side, looking utterly adorable as she thought about it. “Because you know my great love of coffee and Dutch Bros?”

“No more calling us meanies, got it, little girl?” I murmured in her ear. My teeth sank into the tender flesh, and she inhaled sharply. “Daddy isn’t going to be so understanding in the future. We respect our Daddies.”

She looked up at me, devastation lingering in her big blue eyes. Her bottom lip trembled as she lifted a hand to touch my chest. “I didn’t mean anything. I was teasing. Please don’t be mad at me?”

“Lottie.” The complete and utter despair in her voice had me cursing myself. “Sweetheart, we’re not mad. Shh, don’t be upset.”

Andrei glanced at me over her shoulder, his face screwed up in confusion. “What are you doing over there, Wulf?”

“He didn’t do anything.” Lottie shook her head and swiped at the stray tear that leaked from the corner of her eye. “I

shouldn't have called you meanies. That's my fault. I'm so sorry."

*Shit. I'd fucked this up royally. Come'on, Wulf. Get it together.*

"*Kroshka.*" Andrei placed a comforting arm around her shoulders. "Please don't cry. You're breaking our hearts. We are still learning the ins and outs of this relationship. We aren't going to be angry about something small like calling us meanies. If you had called us pooppy butt assholes, then maybe we'd have to have a stern conversation, but not this."

Leave it to the quiet one to say everything I wanted to say but was too tongue-tied to spit out.

"Andrei is right." I tilted her face toward me with a palm on her cheek. "I'm sorry I upset you. I was teasing as well. I should realize that I don't have the best tone for sarcasm and be gentler with my words."

I needed to remember Lottie had survived and escaped an abusive relationship. One where words were weapons that wounded her every day and kept her a prisoner. Nothing would be accomplished if she was frightened of us. I needed to be more aware of how I was projecting myself and not use words that could be taken so literally when I was kidding.

And I gave Andrei shit for being an asshole. Instead, I was the one who was in danger of destroying the fragile trust we'd built if I didn't watch my words.

"It's okay." She sniffed and blinked away the rest of the tears. "Like Andrei said, we're still learning about each other every day. You had no ill intentions and neither did I. So all is forgiven."

I pressed my forehead to hers and savored the sensation of her breath mingling with mine. "You're too good for us, little one. How you can forgive so easily is one of the things I truly love about you."

I noticed Andrei nod out of the corner of my eye, and a satisfied look etched into his features. When I lifted my head, I saw Oscar pulled into the drive-thru. I really needed to give

him a bonus. He'd pulled off to the side and waited for us to finish our conversation without anyone having to tell him to do so.

I needed to pay better attention to my surroundings.

Several minutes later, Lottie had her coffee and sipped it happily as we finished the trek to the office. I wasn't keen on letting her out of our sight for the day, but Oscar volunteered to hang around her floor to keep an eye on her.

Lottie still wasn't thrilled with the idea of someone watching her every move, but it was the only way we agreed to let her back in the office.

Her safety was the number one priority right now.

I knew Andrei and I would watch the cameras closely today just to keep ourselves at ease.

"Are we in the office the rest of the week, or should I make sure to bring enough with me to work Thursday and Friday from your place?"

"I'd much rather have you at home where I can keep an eye on you." Andrei ran a hand through his thick hair. "Let's plan home for the rest of the week and then Monday in the office. I know I have some in-person meetings I need to take care of on Monday."

Lottie nodded, accepting his answer. It was the perfect compromise for all of us. "When are you going to call your *babushka*?"

Andrei stilled, his jaw clenching at her question. I could practically see the wheels turning in his mind as he debated his reply. "Let's talk about that tonight when we get home?"

"I'm not going to let you forget or try and distract me." She was a feisty little thing when she wanted to be.

She was the perfect balance for us. Andrei needed the snarkiness to put him in his place and get out of his head. I needed her compassion and forgiving nature. Colby needed her balance of humor and seriousness. Not to mention all her nerdy love for history.

We pulled into the underground garage, and Andrei took Lottie's coffee while I grabbed her bag and she slid out from the middle seat.

Of course, in Andrei's direction, because as she would say, coffee is life.

We rode the elevator up to her floor in comfortable silence. We exited on her floor and followed her to her office.

"This just feels weird," Lottie murmured as she unlocked her office door and swept inside. "It's like I have an entourage."

"You're that important." I drew her into my arms and kissed the top of her head.

"We have to make sure you're protected," Andrei added. "You're the most precious thing in our lives."

Lottie melted against me, sighing. "I get that. Just don't like when everyone stares at me."

"I know, baby girl." I ran my hand up and down her back, trying my best to soothe and comfort her. "But it's for our peace of mind."

"Kaleb, we need to get up for our management meeting." Andrei glanced down at his watch after it chimed with an alert.

I nodded and stepped away from my girl. Anxiety made me swallow hard, and I loathed having to leave her. "You call if anything funny happens, alright?"

She cocked her head to the side as her brows formed a perfect V between them. "Viktor already got his message across. I don't think he's going to try and take me again."

Andrei took my place and drew her into a hug. "You never know, *kroshka*. With my grandfather, you can't predict the next move."

"Okay," she said with a deep sigh. "Now, shoo, I have work to do."

"Someone is getting sassy." I playfully slapped her ass.

“At work, I’m always sassy.” With a smirk, she stepped away from Andrei and placed her hands on her hips.

“I have a good way to keep that sassy mouth occupied,” Andrei growled.

A delicate flush spread over Lottie’s cheeks as lust blazed to life in her blue gaze. “Promises, promises.”

A growl rumbled to life deep within my chest as images of Lottie on her knees before me flashed in my mind. She’d have her hands behind her back and her mouth open, waiting for me to feed her my cock.

“You’re sleeping with me tonight, so I’ll make good use of that little mouth of yours.”

“Now, you both really need to go.” Her breathy voice betrayed her lust. I loved that husky rasp she got when she was turned on. “I won’t be able to think and concentrate on work. Remember those slave-driver bosses of mine.”

A smile spread over my face. “I think your bosses wouldn’t mind you using your talented mouth for these purposes. But we’ll leave you.” I kissed her on the lips briefly before moving back to the door. Andrei did the same and joined me.

With a final wink, I blew her a kiss, and we made our way up to our floor.

*Andrei*

I couldn't concentrate in our meeting; the benefits director droned on and on about something or another. Maybe retention rates? Why did we even discuss that anymore? The stats were leaps and bounds above comparable business, so we were going pretty well. Bryanna boasted the numbers proudly any chance she got.

No, my thoughts were centered on the curvy brown-haired beauty currently on the thirtieth floor and the implications of my family.

We'd agreed to go to dinner on Saturday.

I had three days to mentally prepare myself for facing off with my grandfather again.

My sick grandfather. Who had kidnapped my woman just to get in touch with me?

Fuck, why did my past have to come back and haunt me like this?

"Andrei, what do you think?"

Kaleb's question drew me back into the present moment and away from the endless questions flowing through my mind.

"Uh, I agree with whatever you suggest."

A smirk tilted up one corner of Kaleb's lips. He knew I wasn't paying attention to the inherent dribble being spoken around me.



“Perfect, then we’ll choose the better medical plan for next fiscal year. Great job to Bill for negotiating the excellent rate so we can get better coverage and pass savings onto our employees.”

Now, the discussion of retention rates made sense.

I scrubbed a hand over my face and tried to focus as the discussion continued on and on. Each director spoke about their wishes for the new fiscal year. I didn’t know how Kaleb always kept a smile on his face through these endless meetings.

I had to call *Babushka*. I needed to get to the bottom of this, or it would drive me crazy. Saturday was both an eternity and imminent at the same time.

“Great discussion team. I’ll review all the proposals with Andrei and get back to you next week. Thank you for all your hard work.” Kaleb rose, everyone else around the table following his lead. There were handshakes and bullshitting, but I’m sure the sour expression on my face kept everyone away from me.

“You really need to work on your poker face.” Kaleb turned to me after the last person left the conference room.

“Too much going through my mind to try today,” I replied and closed my laptop. As I rose, Kaleb placed a hand on my shoulder.

“We’ve got you, brother. Remember, you don’t have to face these burdens alone anymore. We’ll all be there with you on Saturday.”

I nodded, his logic beginning to break through the stubborn wall I’d built. I pinched the bridge of my nose. “I want to call my *babushka*. Something is bothering me about all of this.”

Kaleb inclined his head as we made our way back to our offices. “Do you want me to sit in with you while you talk to her?”

Letting out a deep exhale, I shook my head. “I’m good. I’ll let you know what she says.”

“Got you. Just a wall away.” He held his hand up, and I gave him a fist bump before going into my office and closing the door behind me.

I set my laptop on my desk, placed my elbows on the solid wood surface, and held my head.

*Man up, Volkov. It's time to get this shit straightened out. If not for you, then for Lottie.*

I lifted my head and pulled out my phone. I pressed the contact and held it to my ear as my heart rate ratcheted up, and I tapped my foot on the plush carpet.

“Andrei.” *Babushka* sounded relieved. “I’m so glad you called. I was over at Sergei’s today, and he said he spoke with you.”

“He did.” I let out a breath, debating about what to say next. “Is it true? Is grandpa ill?”

*Babushka* let out a soft sigh, and I heard a door open and close in the background. “He is. He doesn’t want any of his underbosses to know right now. His excuse for being in the States is to visit our grandchildren.”

“How long?” The depth of emotion emanating from my voice surprised me. I cleared my throat and started over. “How long has he been sick?”

“He was diagnosed a little over a year ago and underwent a few treatments in Moscow before deciding to come here to seek better care.” *Babushka* sniffed, and I imagined her sitting in a chair, tears silently falling down her face. For all my grandfather’s faults, he loved my *babushka* deeply and would burn the world down if something ever happened to her.

As a hotheaded eighteen-year-old, I had a much different view of the world and realized my assumptions of my family may not be the same.

“How does it look?”

“So far, it isn’t responding to treatment, but it’s not been very long. He’s been getting affairs in order, not believing he’ll beat this.”

The agony in her voice felt like a knife slicing through my flesh. Despair flowed from the wounds like blood, and I was rendered incapacitated.

“He’s a proud man and was desperate to get your attention.” *Babushka* paused and composed herself. “I told him not to get your Lottie involved, but he believed it was the only way. You wouldn’t talk to him otherwise.”

My free hand clenched into a fist on top of my thigh. “He hurt her.”

She let out a string of Russian curses. “Believe me, I’ve already made my displeasure about that quite clear. I won’t go into any details, but suffice it to say he won’t be hurting her or any woman again if he values his manhood.”

I cringed and reflexively cupped my cock and balls. That was one reason I’d never cross my *babushka*. She was a fierce woman when she was angry. Definitely not one to be crossed.

I pinched the bridge of my nose. “I don’t want to get into a fight at Sergei’s on Saturday. It’s Maxim’s birthday, and nothing should ruin it.”

“Agreed.”

“I’m not going to be able to forgive and forget overnight.” I rubbed at a spot over my chest that was beginning to ache. “But I’m willing to try. If being with Lottie has taught me anything, it’s that we must let go of our past in order to embrace our future.”

Without her, I would never have even thought I’d be talking about this, much less actually agreeing to be civil with my grandfather.

But for hers and *Babushka*’s sake, I would do my best.

I didn’t want to live my life with regrets, and if something happened to Viktor because of his illness, I would regret not making peace for my own sake.

Let go of the past.

Embrace the future.

*Calby*

I bobbed my head to the music playing from the speakers as I moved around the kitchen. The guys and Lottie should be home soon, so I wanted to make sure to prepare a good meal for them.

Nothing better than a nice hearty shepherd's pie when it was cold and raining outside. At least, that's what my gran always said.

I heard the garage door open just as I pulled the dish out of the oven.

"Oh, that smells good." Lottie was the first to enter the kitchen through the garage, and I pulled her into my arms and kissed her cheek.

"Hope you like shepherd's pie." I crossed over to the island and poured her a glass of wine. "I figured you could use a nice warm meal and a glass of wine today. I'm sure those two hovered over you most of the day."

Lottie grinned, and it was like a switch being flipped on to let the sunshine in. That smile warmed me from the inside out, and I would do crazy things to keep it on her face.

"They weren't hovering too much. Except in the morning when I had to kick them out of my office.

"You were being entirely too delectable." Andrei wrapped his arms around her from behind and nibbled on her neck. "It was difficult to walk with the erection you gave me, *kroshka*."

Kaleb poured three more glasses of wine, finishing up the bottle and tossing it in the recycle bin. He handed one to

Andrei and me before taking a sip of his own. “Then, after lunch, it was even worse.” He groaned. “Watching her eat and make those little sounds of pleasure as she ate her ice cream were so fucking erotic.”

“Who knew eating could be such a turn-on?” Andrei rumbled in agreement, and Lottie drew in a swift breath as his hands slipped down to settle on her hips.

“Note to self: make sure to add ice cream to the shopping list,” I muttered aloud before laughing at Kaleb and Andrei’s approving nods.

“Is that your gran’s famous shepherd’s pie recipe?” Kaleb glanced at the oven, and his smile widened. “That is the perfect thing for a wet day like today.”

“It’s Oregon. We have tons of wet, cold days here.” Lottie rolled her eyes.

“True.” I pulled her away from Andrei and into my arms instead of his. “But this always makes it all better. Just ask the rest of the guys. They love it so much they salivate whenever they even get a whiff of me cooking it.”

Kaleb moved to the door and shouted out into the garage. “Hey, Oscar. Colby, make shepherd’s pie, get the fuck in here and get a plate before we demolish it all.”

Not even three seconds passed before Oscar was barreling into the kitchen. “Where?”

I laughed and shook my head, pointing over to the second tray I’d pulled out of the oven. “I made a whole extra for leftovers, but feel free to dig into whichever dish you want. Take a plate to Layla, too.”

Oscar didn’t need to be told twice as he grabbed a plate and dished himself up with a mounding heap of food. “Thanks, Colby,” he said around a mouthful of food as he walked across the lawn to his dwelling. The property was big enough for him and the housekeeper, Layla, to have their own places across the lawn.

He knocked on her door and accepted the dish with a smile, and waved toward the main house.

In times like this, I learned to embrace what my gran said about never underestimating the power of good food.

I lifted Lottie up into one of the chairs at the island just as Kaleb placed a plate in front of her.

“It’s really hot, baby girl.” Kaleb kissed her temple. “Be careful and make sure you blow on it first.”

Her lips twitched up at the corners, but she nodded gratefully. She knew that we valued her safety and comfort. Nothing was patronizing about what we did or how we treated her. It all came from a place of love and affection.

We truly desired her to want for nothing.

As a Little, I knew she loved how we took care of her.

I took a sip from my wine as Kaleb dished up portions for each of us. We each took seats at the island and ate a few bites before Andrei set his fork down.

“I talked to my *babushka* today.”

My brows rose close to my hairline as we all turned our attention to Andrei. He’d been wrestling with how to move forward for days. Sergei had given us some insight, but Andrei struggled with his inner demons. I couldn’t imagine the things he’d gone through and how much blood he’d witnessed before he left Russia.

He told us some stories, but certain things were better left unsaid and buried in the past.

Lottie reached over and laid her hand over his, giving him what comfort she could. None of us spoke, giving Andrei whatever time he needed to gather his thoughts.

“He was diagnosed a year ago, like Sergei told us. Didn’t have any progress with treatment in Russia, so they came here. So far, he’s not responding to anything here.” Andrei let out a sigh and tunneled his fingers through his dark hair. “She said he’s getting his affairs in order and making peace with things. Like he doesn’t expect to survive.”

I barely held back the curse running through my mind. Viktor was still Andrei’s family, and despite the years of

separation and mountains of baggage between them, he still cared about him. That was plain to see in the pain radiating off Andrei.

“Forgiveness can’t happen overnight, but I’ll be civil. Talk to him.” His jaw clenched. “I can’t promise that I’ll ever truly forgive him. Plus, he needs to fucking apologize and make it up to Lottie for hurting her.”

Lottie cocked her head to the side. “I get worse bruises when I hit the corner of my desk at work, Andrei. I really wasn’t hurt that badly.”

Despite her vehement protest, I doubted any of us truly believed her.

She may not have been hurt much physically, but she was scared, and that did mental damage. I didn’t miss the way she flinched at certain sounds. She’d survived so much in her short life. She didn’t deserve any of the terrible things that had befallen her since she got together with us. Damn it. Just thinking about it made my blood boil.

First, that asshole David, then Viktor’s flunkies. If I ever got my hands on them, they’d see how many of my boxing skills from my twenties I’d retained.

Andrei turned and cupped one of Lottie’s cheeks, his thumb sweeping over her skin. “That may be true, but it doesn’t mean that I’m not still furious that you were hurt. Plus, it was more than just physical, and don’t try to deny it.”

Lottie sighed wearily but didn’t say anything.

“Are you liking dinner, sweetheart?” I asked Lottie, wanting to give her a subject change and smooth out her wrinkled brows.

She brightened, turning toward me with a smile. “It’s so good. Gordon Ramsay would be proud.”

Kaleb disguised his laughter with a cough, but Andrei didn’t even bother.

“Of course she likes Gordon Ramsay,” I muttered.

Of fucking course. The British chef had a heart of gold when it came to kids and anyone down on their luck. I just never wanted to cross him in the kitchen.

“Speaking of Gordon.” I took a drink of wine. “New episode of Hell’s Kitchen was on last night. Are you caught up?”

Lottie squealed and clapped her hands excitedly. Gods, she was too adorable for words. “Yes! So we can watch it after dinner tonight?”

Andrei and Kaleb groaned.

“Hush, you two. You know you like Gordon, and you just don’t want to admit it.”

Kaleb rolled his eyes. “I’ll agree to watch it just because I know Lottie is coming to bed with me tonight.” He gave our Little a look filled with promise, and I didn’t blame him one bit for looking forward to his night alone with her.



*Kaleb*

Lottie yawned as I led her upstairs after finishing not one but two episodes of Hell's Kitchen.

It really annoyed me how much I liked the damn show. But the things we did for love and family, right?

The rain hadn't ceased, and several flashes of lightning lit up the sky through the windows as we entered my room. Lightning wasn't something we saw every day in Oregon, so it concerned me.

A violent clap of thunder vibrated the house, and Lottie squeaked and jumped beside me. I wrapped my arm firmly around her waist to keep her from falling as I helped her toward the bed.

"Not the biggest fan of thunder?" I kissed her temple and smoothed my hand up and down her back to comfort her.

She took a deep exhale and shook her head. "Not terribly scared of it, but that caught me off guard. I was a bit in my thoughts."

My brow furrowed as I eased her to sit on the side of the mattress and knelt before her. "What were you thinking about?" I removed her slippers and rubbed my fingers along the arch of her feet.

Groaning, she relaxed into my touch. "Just about Andrei and his family. Work. David."

I stilled. "Why are you thinking about David?" The question came out much harsher than I intended it to, and I didn't miss the subtle flinch that crossed over her face.

“My mind is a jumbled mess of crazy shit sometimes.” Her lips turned to the side as she gazed down at her feet.

Once again, I was putting my foot in my fucking mouth.

“Why can’t I get this right?” I muttered under my breath. “First in the car this morning, and then now.”

I kept making her flinch and turn away from me. Maybe I was an emotionally stunted idiot like my mother said I was.

“Kaleb.” Lottie cupped my cheek and drew me back to her. “Daddy K.” She shook her head adamantly. “You’re not doing anything wrong. I can’t help when I flinch because of the tone or thinking about stupid things.”

I gently dropped her foot and rose onto my knees to press my forehead against hers. “I should be better about controlling my tone.”

“Stop it. I don’t want you treating me like a frightened rabbit about to bolt.” Her fingers curled around the back of my neck. “Because I refuse to be put in a glass cage. First of all, cause I’d break it unintentionally. I mean, I trip over my own feet without even trying. Can you imagine me in a glass cage?”

I couldn’t help but laugh. I ran my fingers through her soft hair as I brushed my lips over hers.

“I love you so fucking much.” I squeezed my eyes shut and held her. “I never had a good example of a healthy relationship or love. My family is fucked up.”

I’m fucked up.

I didn’t say it out loud. But it hung in the air regardless.

“Just don’t give up on me,” Lottie whispered, clutching me tightly. “I know I have my issues, but please—“

I cut her off with a finger to her lips. “As long as air is in my lungs, I promise I’ll never give you up.”

The words were drawn from my very soul.

“Just don’t give up on me—on us.”

“Never.”

Desire sparked to life within me. The need to possess and own her. She was ours. The only ones I'd share her with were Andrei and Colby.

“I need you tonight, little one,” I growled. “Please, may I touch you?”

Lottie sucked in a harsh breath, her eyes darkening with lust. “Touch me, Daddy K. Take what you need.”

With a growl, I rose to my feet and made quick work of my clothes, then hers. I laid her back in the middle of the bed and settled my body over hers. My hands were planted on either side of her face as her legs parted, and I settled between them.

“I want to sink my cock inside that tight little cunt of yours,” I growled as I trailed my nose up her neck. “But not tonight.”

She groaned, whining as her hands slid around to my back, and she clutched me tightly. “I need you, Daddy K. Please.”

No amount of begging would change my mind. She wasn't ready for us to fuck her yet. Play with her? Tease her and make her come until she couldn't remember her own name? Oh, fuck yes.

But when one of us finally sank our cock inside of her, there would be no going back. No changing of minds.

She would be ours forever and always.

I'd slip a collar around her neck and a ring on her finger, showing everyone who she belonged to so there would be no doubts in anyone's minds.

“I want you so out of your mind with want that when one of us finally slips their cock into that little cunt of yours, you'll not even be able to speak. It'll feel so good.”

I lifted one hand and wrapped it gently around her throat. Not squeezing. Just showing possession of her. She loved our brand of possession. Ownership. Her body was ours to play with. To fuck. Whatever we liked.

“You’ll beg for it even more than you are now.” My lips brushed over her ear as I tilted her head up. “Now, hands up above your head and hold onto the headboard.”

Lottie obeyed me without a second thought. Her arms lifted, drawing her breasts up. The soft mounds begged me to suck and bite them.

I worked my mouth down her neck, the soft sounds of pleasure that escaped her throat making me even harder for her. Not that I thought that was even possible. She arched into my touch, thrusting her breasts into my mouth as I closed my teeth around one taut nipple.

Her arm lifted, and I felt her fingers on my neck as I lifted my head. My brows raised, I gave her a knowing look as I clucked my tongue. “Back up, little girl. Touch me again, and I’ll stop, and you won’t get to come.”

With a whimper, she placed her arm back above her body, and her fingers curled around the bars of the ornate iron headboard.

“Good girl,” I purred as I kissed down her stomach to hover over her pussy. I blew a stream of warm air on her wet, sensitive flesh, and she squirmed and whined.

“Please, Daddy K.”

“‘Please’ what, little girl?” I nibbled along her inner thighs, spreading her wide open for my exploring hands. “Do you want my mouth on your pussy? Maybe my fingers inside your cunt?”

“Both,” she panted. “Both, please.”

I chuckled. “Such a demanding little thing, aren’t you?”

I loved how much she craved and needed our hands on her body. But now, it was only me giving her pleasure. My hands and mouth would be the ones to make her come.

Slipping my fingers through her wet folds, I teased her clit with the lightest of touches.

Lottie cried out and cursed my name as she tried to buck her hips against me to gain friction.

I clucked my tongue and stopped my movements. I could still feel the heat as my fingers hovered above her soft flesh.

“You need to be nicer, baby girl, if you want me to make you come.”

She arched her back, and her head thrashed back and forth on the pillow. A series of pleas fell from her lips as I used the tip of my tongue to swirl over her clit.

“Good girl. Being so nice and begging for my touch.” With exquisite slowness, I slid one finger inside her and continued to tease her with my tongue. “Do you want to come, baby girl? Do you want to soak my face with your sweetness? I want to taste you on my lips for days. I want to drown in your intoxicating fragrance until you’re the only thing I smell every time I breathe.”

Lottie’s entire body trembled under my words, her pussy convulsing around me. Fuck me. She would come just from these light touches and my words alone.

“That’s it, good girl. Come all over me.” I sealed my lips around her clit and sucked as I slipped another finger inside her. Her thighs quivered and shook as the first pulses of climax swept through her.

I curled my fingers, brushing along her inner walls to that perfect spot that made her mouth part and a keening cry echo around the room. The way she came so beautifully will be etched into my memory for all time. There was no way I’d ever get enough of this perfect woman beneath me.

She was everything and more.

I eased her through the rest of her release and peppered kisses along each of her thighs. “Fuck, baby girl. I almost came in my pants like a horny teenager.”

A lazy smile spread over her lips, and she giggled. I loved that sound almost as much as when she screamed in ecstasy. Screaming my name was only slightly better.

“I take it you like the idea of Daddy being so out of his mind for you that he comes without you even laying a finger on him?” I crawled up her body to hover over her.

Her stormy eyes were bright with lust as she licked her lips. “Maybe?”

“You little minx.” I nipped the side of her neck before moving to lay on my back beside her. I pulled her against my chest, and she gave a contented sigh as she snuggled into me.

I kissed the top of her head and stroked her hair, savoring the sensations of her deep and even breathing and the feel of her skin beneath my fingers. “Love you, baby girl.”

Lottie nuzzled her nose along my bare chest. “Love you too, Daddy K.”

I fell into a deep slumber, lulled by the feeling of having my Little in my arms.

*Lottie*

**T**hursday and Friday passed by in the blink of an eye, and before I knew it, Saturday was here, and Andrei had been withdrawn and quiet all day leading up to leaving for Sergei's.

Kaleb slid into the driver's seat as he'd given Oscar the weekend off to spend time with his aging parents. Colby took the front seat, and I slid into the back with Andrei.

He gazed out the window, his jaw tightened as his hands clenched into fists on top of his thighs.

Reaching out, I turned his arm and loosened his fingers. Silently, he turned toward me, his amber eyes reflecting the sunset. "It's okay, Daddy A." I laced our fingers together. "We've got this."

He gave me a wry grin. "I'm supposed to be the one reassuring you, *kroshka*. Not the other way around."

I shrugged. "Who says we can't both do it for each other? There's no one-size-fits-all relationship, and we're already unconventional, so let's just roll with it."

"You're right." I leaned forward and kissed my forehead. "I should always be listening to the wise and all-knowing Charlotte."

Wrinkling my nose, I shook my head. "None of that Charlotte stuff."

Andrei just laughed and lifted my hand to his lips. "Thank you."

“You don’t have to thank me for anything,” I replied, saying their own words back to him. “Or at least that’s what a few smart people told me.”

“Brat.”

“Yes, and you love it.” I stuck my tongue out.

A moment later, I squealed as Andrei struck, tickling my sides. “No! Ah! Stop,” I gasped out between peels of laughter.

“No sticking your tongue out at me. Remember, I still need to make good on my promise to give that pretty mouth something to occupy it.” His eyes blazed with lust, and I swear the temperature in the car rose several degrees.

“Promises, promises.” Man, I loved how he growled when I acted like a brat. It was so much fun to tease him, and the fact of the matter was he needed it and craved it, too. He’d spent too long stuck in his apathetic shell that he’d not really been living. He was a shell going through the day-to-day motions but didn’t experience life as it was meant to be lived.

“You just love to tease me, don’t you, little girl?” His voice was raspy, filled with the evidence of his desire, and it sent a shiver down my spine. I yearned for the way his accent thickened.

It made me feel like I was one of the most beautiful women in the world when I knew I wasn’t.

“Charlotte,” Andrei, Kaleb, and Colby snapped, almost completely and perfectly in sync.

Uh oh. That means I said the part about not being beautiful out loud.

“Do you really think you aren’t one of the most beautiful women in the world?” Andrei asked, his brow furrowed with his head slightly tilted. “Because that’s not how any of us think of you. You *are* one of the most beautiful women. I think we need to work on some affirmations for you to see yourself as we do.”

Affirmations? That didn’t sound like fun.



“I think that’s an excellent alternative form of punishment,” Colby added as he twisted in his seat to face us. “Make her say twenty positive things about herself every day.”

“Or writing lines.” Andrei nodded, and my gaze volleyed between them.

“You’re enjoying coming up with punishments way too much.” I grimaced, not loving the idea of having to write outlines or say positive things about myself. I’d much rather just have the spanking. It would probably be less torture.

They let out a chuff of laughter. “*Kroshka*, punishments aren’t supposed to be torture, but they aren’t meant to be fun, either. You need to understand the consequences of your actions, be challenged; and then earn forgiveness. Then it’s gone. As if it never happened, and we begin the day anew.”

I nodded, my throat thick. I appreciated what he was saying. If there was one thing about these men that I valued the most, other than their capacity for love, it was their patience. I knew I wasn’t the easiest of people to love or be in a relationship with. Trauma was a bitch that liked to rear her ugly head at the most inconvenient times.

But I knew they’d never harm me. Sometimes, their patience made me crazy, and I wanted to challenge them. But I knew that was my inner brat craving some structure and guidance.

“I love your brat.” Andrei drew me away from my musings with his thick, accented voice and smoldering caramel eyes. “And I would never seek to stifle her too much, but I know you require that back and forth. The defiance and response.”

“Did I say my thoughts out loud again?” I gave a small chuckle. “Because I was just thinking how much I liked being defiant sometimes and getting a response.”

“You actually didn’t, but I could see the wheels turning, and knowing you as I do, I took a good guess.” Andrei smiled ruefully. “Thank you for taking my mind off where we’re going. I know it probably wasn’t your intention, but I appreciate it all the same.”

I squeezed his fingers and gave him a grin. “I know what it’s like to need a distraction from your thoughts sometimes.”

His hand slid up to my neck, pulling me forward just enough to press his forehead against mine. “You’re too good for me.”

I clucked my tongue. “We discussed saying that and how it’s not allowed.”

“We did. I’m sorry, *kroshka*. I’ll refrain from saying it in the future.”

“Good.” I giggled. “Don’t make me use my stern voice on you.”

“Okay, love birds.” Kaleb glanced over his shoulder after he put the car in park. “We’re here.”

The smile slid from Andrei’s face, and he looked toward the front door as if it were about to reach out and bite him in the ass. “Is it too late to turn around and go back home?”

“Hey,” I grabbed his hand again. “We can do this together, remember?”

“Yeah,” he breathed out. “Together.”

*Andrei*

I let go of Lottie's hand to exit the car and jog around to her door before anyone else could enter. Not that they would try. Kaleb and Colby allowed me whatever grace I needed to get through the night.

I was grateful for that.

Because I was one step away from either draining a bottle of vodka to remain calm, or throwing up. Maybe a bit of both, especially if I drank the vodka.

Sergei opened the door before we reached it, meeting us halfway between the SUV and the door. He held out a hand, and I shook it before bringing him in for a back-slapping hug. "Welcome to my home, cousin."

"Thank you for having us."

My cousin dipped his head with a grin and held his arm out for the rest of my family. "Welcome. Nice to see you again."

This new, polite Sergei would take some getting used to. He opened the door and gestured for us to join him inside.

"Papa!" A little girl ran straight up to Sergei as he entered the foyer. "Where did you go?"

Her dark hair was in braided pigtails, and when she smiled, she was missing two of her bottom front teeth. Her dress swirled around her knees, and black Mary Janes were on her feet. She looked like the female version of Sergei. Good thing she inherited the softer side of his features.

Sergei scooped her up into his arms and balanced her on his hip. “Remember I told you we were having special guests come today?”

She nodded and eyed us cautiously. But she still smiled. Her head rested against her dad’s shoulder as if she were torn between shyness, outgoingness, and confidence.

“This is my cousin Andrei and his friends Lottie, Kaleb, and Colby.”

Lottie grinned and waved. “I heard your name is Sofia. That’s such a pretty name.”

And just like that, Sofia lifted her head from Sergei’s shoulder and he set her back down on her feet. She marched right up to Lottie and crooked her finger at her. Lottie got down on one knee to be at Sofia’s level.

“You’re really pretty. I love your purse.” Sofia jumped up and down. “Grogu is my favorite ever! Well, maybe Groot, too. But he’s one of my favorites. Do you want to come see my Grogu toys?”

“Sofia, sweetheart, let everyone come in and get settled.” Sergei didn’t hide his grin at his vocal daughter. “Plus, it’s Maxim’s day, remember? He was very polite when it was your birthday and gave you all the attention. Now, you need to show him the same courtesy.”

Sofia’s bottom lip jutted out in a pout, and she dropped her head. “Okay, Papa.” She kicked at the ground but gave into his request as she took a step away from Lottie.

I didn’t miss how the smile on my girl’s face dropped slightly at the action of the small girl.

Sergei held his hand out and wiggled his fingers, and Sofia grabbed on as he showed us into the house.

I helped Lottie to her feet and tucked my arm around her waist. “You’re a natural with kids, *krashka*.”

“I don’t know about that, but I just talked to her the way I liked to be talked to. It sucks when people like to talk down to you,” she whispered, pain entering her eyes and making them

dull. I wanted to kill whoever talked down to her and made her feel inferior in the past.

I kissed her forehead, even more in awe of her with every moment that passed. “I love you.”

She tilted her head up, and I kissed her lips. “I love you too. Now, let’s go before we get yelled at.”

“She’s got a point, cousin.” Sergei clapped me on the shoulder as we entered the living room. “She’s a very smart woman. You’ve done very well for yourself. However, I don’t know how you got so lucky. She definitely lowered her standards for you.”

I barely resisted the urge to roll my eyes. I felt like the young boy always running after my big cousin Sergei when he spoke to me like that. Although it was better than the times he yelled at me.

“This must be Maxim.” A miniature version of Sergei joined his sister. The boy wrapped an arm around his sister, protecting her from the new people who entered their home.

After all, they’d gone through together, seeing the ferocity in his eyes when it came to his sister warmed my heart.

The bond between them was deep and fierce.

“Maxim, this is my cousin Andrei. You can call him Uncle Andrei or just Andrei.” Sergei nodded when Maxim looked up to him for confirmation.

Maxim held his hand out. “Nice to meet you.”

“Same. Happy birthday.” I reached into my inner jacket pocket and pulled out the envelope for him.

His eyes widened before lightening up as he accepted the present. “Thank you.”

“No opening it now,” Sergei said with a stern tone. “Put it with the others, and we’ll open everything at once. After dinner.”

Maxim nodded and moved to obey his father.

“Andrei.” *Babushka* set her spoon down in the kitchen and swiftly crossed the room with her arms open wide. Her smile was wide, and tears were gleaming in her bright eyes. “Thank you for coming.”

Lottie stepped away from me with a squeeze of my arm, and I embraced *Babushka* tightly. I took several deep breaths, knowing what would be coming next. The years of bloody work by my grandfather’s side were still etched in my brain. No matter how much time or distance I put between us, some things always haunted me.

Sasha’s death was one of them.

“It’s so good to see you here.” *Babushka* released me and patted my cheek. “Here with Sergei, Maxim, and Sofia. With your family.”

Her words hurt as if a knife had plunged into my back. Family meant the world to me. Until I lost my best friend at just eighteen because of some stupid deal gone wrong.

“Family is more than just blood,” I rasped out as I stepped back. Lottie touched my back, which was a soothing balm on my fractured soul. She was the only one who was able to tame the wild thoughts and bring me back down to Earth. She was my everything.

“It is, Andrei. You’ve made a family here, and we just want to be a part of it.”

The deep, accented voice had my hands curling into fists at my side. I watched as my grandfather emerged from down the hall. When I saw him after he kidnapped Lottie, I had been too angry to take in anything about his appearance. Or if I did, I didn’t commit it to memory.

But now, as I looked at him, I saw the small signs of his illness. The pale skin. Purple circles under his eyes. The way his lips pressed into a thin line.

I didn’t have much to go off of other than a brief encounter when my emotions and memories from twenty years ago were out of control. Despite that, I could tell Viktor Volkov looked like shit.

He moved slowly, his gait still strong, but he took each step carefully until he was standing before me. Without a word, he extended his hand.

I glanced down at it. Stared at it. A million thoughts swirled through my mind, threatening to drive me mad before I could process them all.

He was offering me more than just a simple handshake. It was a way to move forward with our lives. Let bygones be bygones. Or at least for now.

Forgive, but not forget.

Yet, Lottie's gentle touch on my back grounded me. I pulled back to the present and knew this was about more than just Viktor or me. This was about our whole family.

My hand met his, and we shook.

To my utter dismay, I saw tears shimmering in my grandfather's eyes as he took my hand and pulled me in close for a tight hug.

"I know I was a fool for bringing you into the organization so young." His voice wavered as he spoke. He didn't release me, content to suspend our embrace. "I've made so many mistakes, Andrei. Now, I'm a tired and sick old man filled with regrets. The biggest is how I treated your parents and then you. I have no excuse."

He pulled back and grasped my upper arms. "I finally know what matters. I couldn't see it until after you left. Even losing your father didn't teach me everything important. That is family, both by blood and those forged through friendship and time."

The silence hung heavy in the air as I contemplated his words. My eyelids fluttered shut as a myriad of emotions and thoughts whirled through my head, spinning so fast I was getting whiplash.

After several moments, I realized I needed to make peace with my grandfather, not for him, but for myself. I'd held on to my anger for too long, and it had poisoned me.

It wasn't until I met Lottie that I realized how far gone I'd been.

With her by my side, I could see the truth standing in front of me all along.

This was more for me and embracing my future than it was about them.

"Volkovs stick together," I replied after several moments of silence.

"That we do, cousin." Sergei clapped me on the back.

The piece of my heart that I kept locked because it was battered and broken was set free and partially healed. It would knit together and scab over with time, but the scar would remain forever.

I could forgive, but I wouldn't forget.



*Kaleb*

I held Lottie's hand in my lap as we sat on the couch and watched Maxim open his presents. The boy was full of life, smiling and laughing as his father teased him. Yet, an intelligence behind his eyes far surpassed his twelve years.

He'd been through so much in his short life. It was to be expected.

When he finished, he was smiling and walked around the room to give thankful hugs.

"Thanks, Uncle Andrei, this is the coolest." He squeezed Andrei tightly. My best friend swallowed harshly, returning Maxim's embrace. Andrei had the idea of getting him tickets to go up to Seattle and attend his first football game after Sergei told him how much he loved the sport. He planned to make it a full weekend for the three of them: Sergei, Maxim, and Andrei.

I couldn't be happier for him as he reconnected with the best part of his family.

"Dad, did you see he even arranged for us to go down on the sidelines before the game?"

Sergei scooped his son up and turned him back toward the kitchen. "Yes, I did. But make sure you thank your other new uncles, Colby, Kaleb, and Aunt Lottie too."

"Thank you!" The couple of favors I called in to make the sideline passes happen were worth it to see the grin on this kid's face.

Maxim returned to the table, and Sofia joined him as he showed her his new skateboard. The bond between them was so apparent it hurt me to watch it.

I wished I could have that close bond with my sisters, but there were just too many years between us. Not to mention when they were younger in order to see them I had to deal with my mother and Rupert.

I'd rather have cut my balls off than spend any more time with him than I had to, even for my sisters.

Which reminded me my mother called for what had to be the hundredth time this week. After all that had happened with David and then Viktor, she was the furthest thing from my mind.

Again, I would rather chop off my balls than deal with her right now.

My mood soured momentarily, but when Lottie squeezed my hand and eyed me with a question in her eyes, I took a deep breath and focused on the here and now.

Not my bitch of a mother and her husband.

We ate dinner, and I delighted in the stories of when Andrei was young that Sergei insisted on telling us.

“He seriously ran into the middle of the lake. In winter.” Lottie shook her head as her whole body shook with laughter.

Sergei nodded, pointing at her with his fork. “Butt ass naked. I can't believe he thought I was telling the truth when I said it was a Bratva right of passage.”

Viktor barked out a deep laugh. “Still in shock, you told him that.”

“He had pneumonia and had to be in hospital for two days.” *Babushka* narrowed her eyes at Sergei. “I ended up making you pay for that.”

“So did I,” Andrei growled, but his eyes glimmered with mirth. “I took your ass to the cleaners when it came to range time. If I remember correctly, I bought my first car with your money.”

“You always were a good fucking shot.” Viktor got a faraway look in his dark eyes as he shook his head. “From the first moment you picked up a gun, you excelled in marksmanship.”

The mood turned somber as Andrei looked away and clenched his jaw tightly.

“Dad, when are you going to let me go out to the range with you?” Maxim asked, interrupting the daunting silence.

“And me, too!” Sofia raised her hand high in the air and waved it around. She just wanted to do anything her older brother did.

Sergei held his hands in the air, his eyes going wide. “I need a few more years before I can think about that.”

“Maybe you should do it before you get too much older.” Andrei smirked. “I mean, you aren’t a spring chicken anymore. Who knows if your heart can take it in a few years.”

“Ha ha,” Sergei said with nothing but laughter. “You’re so funny.”

The rest of the room burst into laughter, including Maxim and Sofia.

When it was time for us to head home, Sergei embraced Andrei like the long-lost family they’d been. “No disappearing on me now, cousin. My kids love you, and I’m not letting you get away again.”

When Andrei pulled away from the embrace, he grasped Sergei’s upper arms and nodded solemnly. “Never again, cousin. Volkovs stick together.”

*Volkovs stick together.* I was beginning to like the mantra.

Sofia hugged Lottie tightly, their bond evident in how the girl clung to our woman. “Promise me I’ll see you again?”

“Oh, sweet girl.” Lottie smoothed back her curls. “I’ll see you as much as you’d like. Don’t worry, I’m not going anywhere.”

At this, Sofia clutched her even tighter. “You promised, so I’m holding you to that. Papa said I shouldn’t be around them if people don’t keep their promises.”

“Your papa is a smart man.” She held the girl tightly to her chest. “Those people aren’t worthy of a sweet girl like you.”

There was a similar goodbye between Andrei and Maxim. The preteen hesitated to show his emotions but sniffed and cleared his throat as he released his long-lost ‘uncle.’

“I’ll get with your dad and arrange everything for our weekend, okay, kiddo?” Andrei saying ‘kiddo’ was so out of his previous character that I barely resisted the urge to gawk.

When it came time for Andrei to say goodbye to Viktor and his *babushka*, we all stepped away to give them a modicum of privacy.

Viktor hadn’t been what I expected. However, I was sure that had more to do with his illness than any misrepresentation from Andrei. Going through cancer treatment had to be a life-altering experience.

I only cared about seeing my friend happy. If that meant he made amends with his family, then I was thrilled for him.

If I were being honest with myself, I was ecstatic that this change had come over him. It wasn’t the first time I was grateful for Lottie and how she was opening our eyes.

She made us better men. Men that were worthy of her love and affection.

I pulled her close to me and kissed her temple. “I love you, baby girl.”

She glanced up at me, a bright smile on her sleepy face. “I love you too. It’s so nice to see him happy.” She glanced at Andrei as he said his final goodbyes and hugged his *babushka* and Viktor goodbye.

It wouldn’t always be sunshine and rainbows, but we were on the right track. We’d do whatever was needed to support Andrei as he worked through this new chapter in his life.

But one thing was for certain.

It was damn nice to have family who loved you.

*Calby*

I opened the car door for Lottie and held out a hand to help her climb to her feet.

She placed a hand over her mouth as a yawn drew from her lips. “Sorry,” she said after she sighed. “Guess the day kicked my butt a bit more than I thought it would.”

I placed a hand on the small of her back and led her into the house. “Let’s get you in bed, little one. You need to get your beauty sleep. Not that you need to get any more beautiful.” I glanced down and smiled brightly. “If you were any more beautiful, it might hurt to look at you. Can’t have that, now can we?”

Lottie snorted and slapped my chest playfully. “Stop being such a charmer.”

When we got into the kitchen, I helped her out of her coat, and leaned down to nip at her neck. “Nope. Never.”

“It’s your night, isn’t it?” The subtle tiredness in her eyes vanished as she licked her lips.

We’d settled into an easy routine living here at Kaleb’s. Each of us had our own room. Perks of being rich and having a massive house, I suppose. It was nice having friends in high places.

We rotated nights where Lottie slept in our bed with us. We could use our night as we saw fit, provided Lottie consented.

“It is.” I watched the motion of her tongue, wishing I could feel it on my cock. I wanted to see her on her knees for me.

Hands behind her back as I fisted her hair and spilled down her pretty throat.

But I was a gentleman.

And my woman always got her pleasure first.

“How about we go up and take a shower?” I traced my fingertips along her cheek, to her neck, and over her collarbone. Goosebumps erupted in my wake, and a delicate shiver made her body quake against me. “I’ll wash your hair and every inch of that pretty pale skin.”

“I think that sounds like an excellent idea,” she breathed and relaxed back into me.

Before she could react, I spun her around and threw her over my shoulder to carry her up the stairs.

The best part about this house was the unique layout. There were multiple master suites, and each bedroom we’d claimed had en suite bathrooms.

A fact I was very thankful for as I set Lottie on the counter to turn on the water in the shower. Kaleb had remodeled all the bathrooms before he moved in, so each was similar in size and amenities.

“It’s really great Andrei is reconnecting with his family.” Lottie swung her legs back and forth while waiting for me to prepare everything. “Maxim and Sofia are really good kids, and Sergei is hilarious.”

“They are, and I’m happy to.” I stood before her and gently drew the clip out of her hair to let the strands fall around her face in soft waves. “You’re so fucking beautiful it makes me ache.”

A mischievous look entered her eyes as her fingers worked on the buttons of my shirt. “I think I know which part is the one that aches.” Once she freed the last button, her hands splayed out over my chest.

Lottie nibbled on her bottom lip as she slid her hands down toward the waistband of my pants.

“You think you know, huh?” I rasped, my voice thick with lust. My cock was aching inside my slacks, her hands being so near but separated by layers of fabric.

“Mmhmm,” she hummed and drew my belt free. “Maybe I’ll find it in here?”

“You’re playing with fire, little girl.” Damn it, she was driving me mad. I wanted to feel her. Her mouth. Her pussy. Her ass. I wanted to claim every single part of her and make her mine.

“I’ll happily burn for you, Daddy C.”

Oh, fuck it.

She snapped the last fraction of control I had, and I lept into action. I bent down, opened the cabinet beneath the sink, and laid a towel on the ground. Didn’t want her knees to get sore.

“On your knees for me.” I didn’t care that the water was still running in the shower behind me. The world beyond Lottie and me ceased to exist. It was just this moment. Here and now.

Like the good Little girl she was, she slid off the counter and gracefully went to her knees on the towel. Her hands were planted on my thighs, and she looked up at me with those baby blues, and I was a goner.

“Unbutton my pants and take my cock out.” She complied, and soon my head fell back on a groan as her fingers wrapped around the base of my shaft. “Such a good girl.”

Lottie hummed in appreciation and boldly leaned forward to lick along my slit. Fucking hell, she was too in tune with my desires.

“That’s it.” I threaded my fingers through the soft strands of her hair and brought her mouth back down on my dick. “Take me deep into that hot little mouth.”

Pleasure danced through my body as her mouth closed around me. She bobbed up and down, cheeks hollowing as she sucked me harder.



“Fuck, baby girl. That mouth feels so good around Daddy’s cock.” She ran her nails up and down the tops of my thighs, enhancing the ecstasy. “Just like that. I’m going to come down that pretty throat, and you’re going to swallow every drop I have to give you.”

My hips jerked as I moved her faster along my dick. She was taking me so perfectly. Letting me use her mouth exactly the way I wanted to. Little noises of pleasure vibrated her mouth around me, and I knew she was enjoying this just as much as I was.

“Next, I’m going to fill up that pussy. Give you all my come and fuck a baby into your belly.” She groaned louder around me, and I grinned down at her wickedly. “You love the idea of your Daddies breeding you. Filling up that tight cunt with all our come. You want it all, don’t you, greedy girl?”

Lottie murmured her ascent as best she could with a mouthful of cock.

“Show Daddy how much you want it.” I tightened my fist in her hair. “Fuck, yes.”

Her throat contracted around me as the pleasure built inside my balls, and the first waves of climax rolled through me. I held her head still, her nose touching my skin as I spilled down her throat.

Like the perfect, good girl she was, Lottie swallowed every fucking drop.

If I weren’t already so fucking in love with her, it made my heart hurt, I would be now.

Lottie curled against me, her fingernails brushing through the hair on my chest. She was yawning so much as I washed her hair I didn’t have the heart to keep her up even longer by fucking her.

There was plenty of time for breeding her.

Our whole lives, in fact.

“You okay, little one?” I ran my hand up and down her arm, delighting in how her skin pebbled with goosebumps.

She shifted her head to gaze up at me, and a lazy smile spread over her lips, which were still swollen from her earlier attentions. “I’m perfect,” she replied sleepily. “So perfect.”

I couldn’t agree more as I drifted to sleep with her in my arms.

*Andrei*

I wasn't sure what I expected after I bridged the gap with my family. Would we have regular Sunday dinners? Only see each other on holidays? The latter wasn't something that I wanted, especially when it came to Andrei and his children. Or Babushka.

Viktor, on the other hand...

I still had misgivings about the whole situation. I couldn't change my entire way of thinking overnight. It would take time.

It had been two weeks since Maxim's birthday dinner. I'd spoken with *Babushka* and Viktor several times, and had plans to have dinner soon. Sergei had already come over several times with Maxim and Sofia. Lottie had loved showing Sofia her collection of purses and backpacks, not to mention Groggu figures.

Which she had slowly been bringing over, one by one.

"Stop thinking so hard," Lottie murmured as she snuggled further into my side. "You're so tense and it makes your muscles all hard. Which isn't a bad thing, but it does make you super uncomfy to lean on."

My lips twitched, and I fought back a smile. "I'm greatly sorry for that, my love." I kissed her head and slouched into the cushions, forcing myself to go limp. "Is this better? I'm afraid I can't make all the muscles go away immediately."

She wiggled her head around, moving my arm into her desired position. When she finally found a comfortable

position, she leaned back into me with a contented sigh. “Much better.”

“I shall endeavor not to move.”

Kaleb and Colby snickered from their positions on the opposite end of the couch.

“This is where it’s nice to have a dad bod.” Colby patted his not-quite-flat stomach. “Nice and comfortable for a Little to lay on.”

Lottie’s eyes snapped open, and she pursed her lips. “Better not be just any Little laying on it.”

I coughed to disguise my laughter as our girl stared daggers at Colby.

His eyes grew comically wide, and he held his hands up in surrender. “My Little. Our Little. Meaning only you, little one.”

She nodded, accepting the response and laying her head back on my chest.

“*Kroshka?*” I brushed away the strands of hair from her face, my touch lingering on her soft skin. I loved how she was wearing her hair down for us more. She hated dealing with it, so she’d just throw it up in a ponytail. But now that we are here, we help her brush and wash it whenever she likes.

“Hmm?” She replied, her hand absently gliding back and forth over my abdomen.

“What would you say if we moved the rest of your stuff here?” My gaze collided with Kaleb’s, and he gave me a wide grin. We briefly discussed it last week after we brought more and more things over from our respective places. Colby and I weren’t attached to our condos in the slightest. They were a place to lay our heads and crash, but there were no emotional attachments.

We’d much rather make our home here, with all four of us together.

Lottie moved to sit up straight, her head tilting to the side. “Like to make me more comfortable? Or like move in? Then

I'd expect you and Colby to move in, too. But only if Kaleb is okay with it. Kaleb, are you okay with it?"

"Slow down and take a breath, little one." I placed a finger on her lips.

"Andrei wouldn't have brought up the question if I wasn't okay with it." Kaleb reached out to place his hand on her knee. "We want you here. All of us."

"And, of course, we'd move in too," Colby added. "We pretty much already have."

"But if you want to take some more time, you can." I hoped that wasn't what she wanted, but we'd respect her decision either way. We wanted her to be here forever and always. No escaping to her own place. If she needed space, we'd build her a room or even a whole She-Shed outside if that's what she wanted. But she belonged with us. Living here with us.

She nibbled on her bottom lip, contemplating and processing what we were saying. "Can I have my own office with all of my squishmallows and collectibles?"

"Of course," Kaleb answered first. "I already cleared out room in my closet since it's the biggest for your clothes and things. But if you want your own room and space, we'll do whatever you want."

"I need an office when we work from home. I love you guys, but I don't want you breathing down my neck when I'm always working." She'd been sharing Kaleb's office with him for the last few weeks. It wasn't ideal, especially when Kaleb liked to distract her with kisses. "Because I take my work very seriously and don't want my reputation to be tarnished by the fact I'm sleeping with the CEO."

"And CFO," I added under my breath. "And their best friend, too."

Lottie tilted her head back toward me and stuck the tip of her tongue out. "Yes, all three of you. That would just make them go even crazier. The rumor mill would be epic. I can imagine the things they say."

Kaleb and I glanced at each other, our eyes communicating that we were on the same page.

I took Lottie's hand in mine and squeezed. "We would never put your job or reputation at risk. We have a lot of employees who are married or dating. As long as they aren't direct supervisors and it's not interfering with their work, we let people have their personal lives. Honestly, I don't think anyone would bat an eye."

"Gloria would probably be ecstatic." Kaleb grinned. "She's been on me to settle down for ages. Bryanna too. They'd all be thrilled more than scandalized."

"I know that." Lottie let out a heavy sigh. "I just don't want anyone to ever think I'm being given special treatment or anything like that. I've worked really hard to get where I'm at."

"Baby girl, if I knew you wouldn't say no, I would have offered you the head of the department job." Kaleb's eyes darkened, glimmering more green than brown in the low living room light. "Don't think I don't know who's really been running your entire floor. There are a few things I'm insisting on when we get someone in place as leader."

"But—"

He held up his hand and used his stern Daddy face. "No buts on this one. You work too hard, and it's been on my agenda to review your department and add more positions for months. We'd been waiting for the investigation with David to play out and not rock the boat. But now that it's done, you're getting some help and doing higher-level tasks."

Lottie's bottom lip jutted out in a pout. "How do you know I'll still say no if you offer me the department head job?"

Surprise coursed through me at her question. I opened my mouth to speak but thought better of it. This was Kaleb's forte. He worked magic with employee placement. David had been a shit hire he hadn't been involved in, and now that he was gone, there was no way he wasn't going to be right in the thick of vetting new hires.

His brows rose, and his lips twitched as he fought back a smile. “Don’t joke with me right now, little girl. If you’re serious about this, we’ll talk to Bryanna on Monday.”

“Let me think about it.” She paused, stifling a yawn with the back of her hand. “I’d have some conditions. I’m really tired of being told how to do my systems when I’m the one who built them from the ground up.”

Kaleb leaned forward, planting a hand on the edge of the couch behind her. “Which is exactly why I want you for the department head.” He curled his other hand around the back of her neck to draw her in for a kiss. “Now, I think it’s bedtime, little one.”

*Kaleb*

**I**t was my night, but earlier, we thought it would be fun to have a movie night snuggled up on the couch in my room. I rose to my feet and held a hand out for Lottie to take.

With a soft smile, she placed her small hand in mine, and I pulled her up to stand beside me. I snaked an arm around her waist and pulled her close. My head dipped to her neck, inhaling her unique and intoxicating scent.

Her hands splayed out over my chest, her fingertips curling into my flesh through my simple cotton shirt.

One hand slid down to cup her generous ass, and I rocked my hips into her soft flesh, letting her feel my rapidly growing erection.

“See what you do to me?” I pressed harder against her, so she was forced to feel the thick rod of my shaft. “One inhale of your scent, and I’m hard as a fucking rock. You drive me absolutely crazy, wanting you constantly.”

A mischievous grin tilted up her lips, and she giggled.

Actually giggled.

“Uh oh, baby girl,” Colby laughed. “You may have poked the bear with that adorable little giggle.”

I untangled my arms from around her to bend down and throw her over my shoulder. “And now the bear is going to poke back.”

Lottie squealed and kicked her legs as I marched up the stairs to my room. “Daddy K, I’m sorry!”



I clucked my tongue and took a handful of her ass. “I think you may like my brand of poking, little one. So rest easy.”

That hadn't been part of the plan, but I would just roll with the punches.

She'd surprised the hell out of me tonight, practically agreeing to take the department head position. I wanted to tease her or guide her to see reason that she was the only person for the job. I hadn't posted it. Hadn't even sent Bryanna the requisition. I'm sure my long-time head of HR knew what my plan had been.

She had already told me multiple times, in not-so-subtle ways, that Lottie needed to take the job.

But the fact that I didn't have to do a lot of persuasion told me that she already knew what she wanted. I'd wait to see what her demands were. I was prepared to give her pretty much anything she wanted.

Which wasn't that much different from our everyday lives.

She wiggled against me, obviously liking the thoughts my statement put into her head.

Footsteps followed shortly behind me, Colby and Andrei on our heels as we climbed the stairs.

Maybe instead of a relaxing evening on the couch with a movie, I'd finally take that tight little pussy of hers.

As we enter my bedroom, I glance over my shoulder at Colby and Andrei. The same carnal lust is glimmering in their eyes.

They're on the same page as I am.

“I think a change of plans is in order for this evening.” My voice was little more than a husky growl as my cock hardened in anticipation. I bent and set her down on the couch before hovering over her and sliding my hand over the bulge in my pants. “I think we should celebrate you agreeing to move in with us and your new promotion.”

“I haven't agreed to take the job yet.” She blew a piece of hair out of her face. “Or even move in with you.”

“You didn’t?” I asked innocently. “It seemed to me like you said yes to both. We just have to work out the particulars.”

Her arms came up to wrap around my neck. “You are too damn confident. All of you.”

I shook my head. “No, we’re not.” I bent and trailed my lips along her neck. “We just know you and are confident we’ll do whatever you want to make it happen.”

“Arrogant.”

I feathered kisses up to her ear. “Do I need to flip you over and show you what happens when you call your Daddies names?”

Lifting my head, I met her gaze as those deep blue orbs shimmered with her nefarious intent.

“Maybe?” She squirmed beneath me. “You keep talking about these magical spankings, but I still haven’t received a proper one yet.”

Oh fuck me sideways.

Groans echoed from all three of us, and I sprang into action. I moved to sit on the couch and patted one of her spread thighs. “Andrei and Colby are going to pull those adorable pants and panties down your legs, and then you’re going to bend yourself over my thighs and present your ass to me.”

With grins plastered on their faces, Andrei and Colby moved to either side of Lottie, grabbed her sleep pants’ waistband, and pulled them down.

She arched her hips as she nibbled on her bottom lip, allowing them to pull the fabric free.

“Up you go, baby girl.” Colby caressed her thigh before grasping her hand and dragging her to her feet. “Now, bend over like our good sweet girl.”

Red scattered over her cheeks as she blinked down at me. “It’s okay. I promise we’ll make it all better afterward.”

Andrei placed a hand at the small of her back and bent her forward. Her breasts spilled over my other thigh as I adjusted her into position with her ass turned up slightly toward me.

“Look at how gorgeous this ass is.” My palm smoothed over the lush flesh, our skin a contrast of pale ivory to rich olive. “It will look even better when it’s red and sensitive from my palm.”

Lottie wiggled, her breathing accelerating at my words.

“Hold still, little one.” I pressed a hand to the small of her back, imploring her to stay still. “Since this is your first one, I won’t go too hard on you.”

Colby pulled the coffee table back a few feet and sat on the edge. Andrei joined him. Their eyes darkened with lust, and there were noticeable bulges straining in their pants. Watching this turned them on just as much as if they were doing the spanking themselves.

I knew it to be a fact because it would be the same if our roles were reversed and one of them had Lottie sprawled over their thighs.

“You’re going to count out loud.” I ran my fingertips down her spine, goose flesh erupting along my path. “And you’ll make sure at the end to thank your Daddies for your spanking. Those will be the rules any time one of us spans you, got it, sweetheart?”

“Yes, Daddy K.”

*Lottie*

I think Kaleb was trying to kill me. There was no other explanation. I would simply die of pleasure for what seemed like the hundredth time with them. I knew it wasn't a hundred times, but my brain was addled about the fact that I was bent over Kaleb's thighs, and his hand was caressing my ass.

There was only so much a girl could take.

"Ready?" Kaleb's voice deepened, taking on a husky tone that made me want to squirm.

"Yes, Daddy K," I replied in a breathy whisper.

"Good girl."

I could die happily after being called a good girl by them.

My thoughts of my praise kink distracted me, and I wasn't prepared when his palm came down over my flesh.

"Owie!" I lifted my hands, seeking to soothe the pain, but Andrei grabbed my wrist.

"No touching, *kroshka*." He clucked his tongue. "And don't forget to count, or he'll start over."

"One." I didn't want to start over 'cause that hurt like a son of a bitch.

Although the sting was beginning to fade, and it was replaced by a pleasant warmth that heated my skin.

Again, I was distracted by my thoughts, and his hand came down over the other cheek while I wasn't paying attention.

“Two,” I gasped, remembering my self-preservation skills and counting as I’d been instructed.

“Three.”

“Four.”

“Five.”

Each swat came in rapid succession, and tears fell down my face as I wiggled and writhed on his lap.

The explosion of pain and pleasure melded together and

“Such a good girl,” Kaleb murmured. “You did so well for your Daddies.”

More hands joined Kaleb’s in soothing me, and their voices added more praise.

Andrei was the one who helped me off Kaleb’s thighs and pulled me onto his lap. His strong arms surrounded me, cocooning me in warmth and lulling me further into a Little headspace.

“We’re so proud of you, *kroshka*.” His hand ran up and down my back, and I snuggled into him. “It’s all better now. All is forgiven, and the slate is wiped clean.”

Kaleb leaned in, and his lips brushed over my temple. His warm breath fanned over the side of my face, and I savored the minty aroma of his favorite gum. “You were beautiful.”

I saw Colby exit the bathroom with a white container in his hands. He set it on the coffee table and sat next to Andrei.

A content sigh left me as I had all my Daddies surrounding me.

“Let’s get you into bed, little one.” Colby placed his palm over my thigh. “We’ll put some lotion on your bottom and get some sleep. How does that sound?”

A smile tilted up the corners of my lips. “That sounds perfect.”

The next two weeks flew by in the blink of an eye.

With Ryan's and the guys' help, we cleared out my townhouse and moved everything to Kaleb's. It was a bittersweet moment as I stood in the empty space.

This had been my healing space after leaving Alec. I found myself in this space. It had been the one time I truly had a space of my own.

"You okay?" Colby came up behind me, his warmth seeping into my back as he pressed against me.

A stray tear fell down my face, but I quickly whisked it away. "Yeah." I cleared my throat. "Just thinking about how much I healed after moving in here. How much I grew into who I am today."

He twined our fingers together, lending me his strength and love. "You'll always have those memories and that strength. Now, we'll grow and heal even more together."

Warmth spread through me at his words. We had already done so much growing and healing in the short time together. It may have only been a couple of months, but most days, it felt like it had been a lifetime.

"Unless you're Kaleb, in which case he'll always have a bit of growing up left to do," Colby added, eliciting a giggle from me.

"I love that part about him." I knew that Kaleb had demons in his past. I knew he wanted to tell me, but I wasn't sure how. I noticed how every time his mother called, he ignored the call or stepped into another room. The shouts and clipped words that could be heard from him couldn't be ignored. They were entirely out of character for my sarcastic and sometimes goofy man.

The call last night had put me on edge, but Kaleb said we'd talk more about it after the final move.

I was already stressed enough.

Or at least that's what they told me.

"Ready to go, *kroshka*?" Andrei called from the doorway.

“Yeah,” I replied, my throat suddenly thick with unshed tears.

I let myself look around the bare living room one more time before following Colby and Andrei out of the townhouse.

As I shut the door, I realized that the saying was true.

When one door closes, another one opens.

It just so happens that my new door is the one I’ve always dreamed of.

# Epilogue

KALEB

I glanced down at my phone as the text notification chimed.

Andrei: Just leaving. Be back home in fifteen.

A sigh escaped my lips as I ran a hand over my smooth head. The phone call from my mother last night was bothering me more than I wanted it to. Somehow, her words always found a way to dig beneath my skin, infecting me with her own brand of poison she designed especially for me.

*“We have some matters to discuss. Why don’t you bring your new girlfriend over, and we can have a nice dinner first?”*

There were no matters we needed to discuss. I barely tolerated her in my life, let alone have any sort of business with her.

But the bigger question swirling through my mind was, how did she know about Lottie?

The only ones who knew were the people we worked with. They were our family, much more than the woman who had given birth to me.

I wanted her nowhere near the love of my life. I wouldn’t let that cancer taint the light I’d finally found.

I curled my hand around my phone, closed my eyes, and counted slowly to ten.



I wished I was with Lottie right now, but there was a last-minute meeting I had to attend. I knew I should have just blown it off.

With a sigh, I unlocked my phone and typed out a quick response to Andrei.

Me: Dinner will be waiting for you. Ordered Casa Mia.

A GIF of a bear rubbing its tummy from Lottie had me smiling. Pizza was her favorite, and I wanted to make sure she had something special tonight. Moving in with us and closing the chapter of her life where she lived in her townhouse was rough on her.

I wanted to make her smile. Take away all her worries. Make it so she never had to have grief or strife darkening her brilliant light.

If only I could stop my own darkness from doing that...

Andrei thought he was the darkest of us all, but little did they know the skeletons I had hidden in my closet.

The End

For now...

## *About the Author*

Jenn D. Young is a native of Washington, currently living in Arizona. Lola Dawson is her sweet alter ego who is obsessed with all things Daddy. She has an unhealthy addiction to Dr. Pepper and Squishmallows.

She has always dreamed of writing about the characters that have been floating around in her head. Ever since the age of 14, she has been obsessed with romance novels and reading them as fast as she can get her hands on them. You can typically find her listening to music or an audiobook, reading, or hanging out with her dog Loki.

She loves to hear from her readers, so please give her a follow below:

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