



JEALOUS  
HUSBAND

EVER NIGHT

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*Ever Night*

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# CHAPTER ONE

*Elsa*

Flashing a wide smile, I lean over the piano and curl my finger under the pianist's chin. He smiles back, watching me in awe as I sing for him about eternal love. It's part of the show, especially the whole pretend to be in awe thing considering I sound as if I've smoked every cigarette in the world.

I haven't. I'm just recovering from a cold and my throat scratches whenever I try hitting the high notes. Mild eyes watch me and I can tell the crowd's not impressed. Such a difficult crowd...middle aged men and women in glitzy clothes and everyone (especially the women) watch me in my tight, red leather dress as if I'm something the cat dragged in.

Whose idea was it that I should squeeze into this thing anyway?

Right...I know whose idea it was. My fiancé's. This is his party, his company we're celebrating and I have a feeling he'll be disappointed with my performance. I'm supposed to sizzle and dazzle everyone but I did warn him I wasn't feeling my best.

He insisted and here we are...

*“I’ll be yours always, love...”* I purr, looking the pianist deep in the eyes and frowning a little when he squirms. Maybe this is too much and maybe I’m making him uncomfortable. People have so many different hang-ups that you don’t know about and I pull back, dramatically snaking my arm up instead. *“Until there’s no moon above...”* I finish singing and the last of the music dies out.

Silence spreads across the ballroom. I feel a twist in my gut and climb down from the piano as gracefully as I can. Once my high heels hit the checked floors, a couple of applauds break out here and there.

*Clap.*

*Clap.*

Can somebody say lukewarm?

Grimacing inwardly, I drag a hand through my hair and tense when there’s an inhale. My eyes go to the pianist and he’s gawking at me. I’m not sure why and I wonder if maybe I look funny or something.

“What?” I ask and he gets a pained look on his face.

“I love you,” he whispers under his breath and I burst into laughter, shaking my head in amusement.

“At least someone does,” I snigger. “And I love you too, handsome,” I grin, blowing him a kiss because he tried cheering me up but he winces, letting out a sound as if he’s in agony and runs off with a hysterical look in his eyes. I frown, then shrug and make my way through the crowd.

They're avoiding me as if I got the latest mutated virus or something and I want to yell, *it's just a cold, okay?* Snatching a glass of champagne, I swipe it down and remind myself to not use the back of my hand as a wipe. If my fiancé saw me doing that, he would freak out.

He's pretty critical like that. A man who just hit his thirties, indecently handsome, a Virgo and...loaded.

Which is why I often ask myself what he's doing with a lounge singer like me? He can have anyone he wants and yet he chose me. I'm ashamed to say this but that's part of why I agreed to become his. He singled me out, pointed at me and said...*you*. In my head that had to mean something and he proposed only a month of us knowing each other.

I said yes, because he made me feel chosen and because he...has the connections to further my career.

A snap of guilt flashes in me and I look down at the engagement ring. It's a huge diamond, big enough to give some poor bastard brain damage and I get dizzy just thinking about how much it must've cost but my fiancé is head over heels with me and spares no expenses.

*Anything for my baby spice*, he likes to say. I hate it when he calls me that but you can't say that to a man who has the power my fiancé has. He could buy every single record label there is and turn me into a supernova overnight. It's something he frequently mentions, dangles it in front of my face as if I'm a poodle and he's holding a toy.

And what do I do when he does that? I salivate and stars shoot from my eyes.

He's got me hooked with that promise and he knows it. I twirl the ring around my finger. It's not like I don't love him. At least that's what I tell myself...

Feeling another flash of remorse, I ignore the lump in my throat but it grows so big I can't live with it anymore. What am I even doing? Selling myself for a cheap dream while simultaneously being unfair to my fiancé? Nothing, not even the most beautiful career could make up for a loveless marriage.

I reach for another glass of champagne and chug it down my throat. This time I don't care that I wipe off my mouth with the back of my hand because I'm tipsy and dizzy and I'm about to do something I wouldn't have the courage for otherwise. Looking around, I search for Thames because I haven't seen him in a while but he's nowhere to be found.

Frowning, I leave the ballroom but tense up the moment the fuzz on my nape stands without an obvious reason. I let out a gasp, turning around but there's nobody there. The crowd's thick, dancing bodies everywhere but it feels as if someone doesn't have their attention on keeping the rhythm.

They have their attention on me.

I gulp and continue down the hallway, unable to shake off the eerie feeling when I hear footsteps. My eyes flare and I don't dare turn around. There's something about the presence coming up behind me that sends chills down my spine. I glance over my shoulder but again there's nobody there.

There are rooms down the hallway. What if whoever it was is now hiding in one of the rooms? The thought of someone hiding and lying in wait

terrifies me and even though I know I'm being histrionic, I start running.

My heels clap against the floor and I wonder where the hell Thames is when I feel that presence again, coming closer and closer.

*Shit!*

I need to get out of here and I stop in front of the elevator, pressing the button. *Come on, come on, hurry...!* It's not coming fast enough and panic goes to my head, nearly blinding me and I let out a scream when someone puts their hand on my shoulder.

"Whoa, whoa," Thames says, chuckling and I flood with relief, turning weak in the knees. "What was that all about, scaredy puss?" The elevator pings at its arrival and he raises his brows. "Going somewhere?"

Panting, I shake my head, leaning against the wall to calm down and flash him a nervous smile. "I'm sorry, I just thought someone..."

"Someone what?"

"That someone was coming for me," I say, feeling pretty damn silly now. I drag my last frantic breath. "I overreacted."

"You're allowed to act however you want, baby spice, especially in that dress. You look like a smoke show."

"More like a smoked gammon joint," I say with a tired smile that freezes on my face when I remember that I was supposed to tell him something. I'm



supposed to tell him I can't go through with the marriage. That I don't love him.

That I got carried away with the promise of a glittering career. Looking into his eyes, I muster up the courage.

"There's something I need to tell you..." I begin but to my surprise he puts his finger over my mouth.

"Hold that thought. There's someone I want you to meet first."

Not another important hotshot, my fiancé expects me to charm so his company can advance...I try not to roll my eyes but wince when he calls,

"Tristan!"

I turn into ice. He mentioned he had a brother. He told me I would never have to meet him, told me all about his volatile nature. I'm more than taken off guard but the surprise turns into shock mixed with terror when the man comes walking toward us. My knees slash and I hold onto my fiancé's arm to not fall. With one look, the newcomer strikes fear into my heart and I gasp for air.

Thames gives me a strange look but ignores the outburst. "Elsa," he says, wrapping his arm around my waist. "Meet my younger brother..."

I wish I hadn't. I wish I had never known something like him exists. With something like him out there, no woman's safe. I'm not safe. Nobody's safe. And now I'll have to marry my fiancé.

Because I'm afraid of the look in his brother's eyes.

## CHAPTER TWO

*Elsa*

We marry, three days later on a misty afternoon.

Tossing my head back, I let out a laugh as flashes go off in my face and I twirl and pose in front of the cameras while grains of rice fall over us. Thames has his arm tight around me, firmly leading me through the crowd and I'm surprised he doesn't want to make a big deal out of this.

Usually Thames loves attention, craves it even but now he seems to be in a hurry to get home. I cheek kiss with my girlfriends, before bending down and kissing my old grandmother, the woman who took care of me growing up and the only mother figure I've ever known. She grins up at me, murmuring something about me snatching up a real catch before she grabs Thames and hugs him.

My heart softens when he hugs her back with a lot of affection. He'll be a good husband, I think.

I hope.

Shivering a little, I throw a glance over the shoulder because there's

someone who hasn't congratulated us yet. Thames's brother, Tristan. He was invited, he should've been here but he's not. And I'm not trying to be melodramatic but I've been dreading this day because I was convinced he would show up.

If I had seen him sitting in the pews, I would've begun hyperventilating but he wasn't there and he's not here now. My thoughts about Tristan dissolve when Thames softly reaches for my hand and pulls me through the crowd.

I follow him, and it dawns on me that I'm going to have to live with him for the rest of my life and I drag a deep breath. Focusing on Thames's strong back, I manage to get to the car and he lifts up the tulle of my dress to help me into the backseat because I won't fit in the front.

Thames sits behind the wheel of his Aston Martin. He didn't hire his driver today, choosing not to drink anything at the wedding and I regret not drinking anything either because my pulse is racing. I hide it as best as I can, flashing smiles left and right as I wave at our guests.

This was my wedding day. At twenty-three I married a man I don't really love.

*Shit...well done, Elsa.*

My smile dies as we drive off and I clutch my hands in my lap. Delicate lace gloves cover my fingers and I wince when I remember how much I trembled when putting them on. If I hadn't had any help dressing I probably would've ended up at the aisle half-naked.

Not sure how Thames would've felt about that. His face was a mixture of

complex emotions I didn't understand as I walked up to him and when it was time for the kiss, he pressed his lips against mine a little too harsh and it rubbed off some of the red lipstick.

When I saw what he'd done, I thought it looked like he'd marked me.

Thames catches my eyes in the rearview mirror, his lids turning hooded and I feel a flash of nervousness. We've chosen not to go on a honeymoon just yet but are heading for Thames's place. I've never been at his home before, not because he never invited me but because I didn't want to go.

I was worried things would get out of hand, clothes would drop, inhibitions loosen...I still haven't slept with him. I've never even seen him naked and he hasn't seen me. Tonight though, we'll have to consummate the marriage and I tell myself it'll be just fine.

It's just Thames and I'm pretty used to him and I should be grateful he's not Tristan. I wouldn't wish that man on any woman. Kicking off my shoes, I feel my eyes grow tired and I make myself comfortable. I'm just going to drowse off a little...

"Please don't do that," Thames rasps and I tense. He can get sharp with me sometimes, nothing over the top but he just gets that tone...not this time though. The sharpness doesn't come and he adds. "You need to keep the seatbelt on. I can't drive if I need to worry about you."

That's...thoughtful of him. How...*rare*.

Sitting up straight again, I put on the seatbelt and he shoots me a pleased smile. I frown when I feel my heart beat a little extra. He's a good looking

man that's for sure, big hands, shaved head and eyes that remind me of the tropics. His skin is somehow always tan and he didn't shave off his stubble for the wedding. It strokes his jagged features and my eyes go to his pillowy lips.

They look softer than usual but they felt hard against my mouth. I still have phantom sensations from the kiss... Turning away from him, I look out the window. The scenery's changing, we're getting closer to the ocean and I feel a thrill up my spine because I didn't know he lives by the sea. In the distance on a steep cliff, a glass house looks over the waves.

This can't be his, it's too perfect. I can already see myself sitting there, watching the tide flow while writing song lyrics and I let out an excited pant when Thames drives in the direction of the house. "Is that really yours?" I breathe.

His eyes meet my own and he replies. "*Mine.*"

A sudden grin stretches my face when we stop and Thames hurries out of the car to help me and I hold onto his arm. Taking in the scenery, I openly admire the place when I catch Thames shamelessly staring at me.

He licks his lips, rasping, "Do you think you'll be happy here? With me?"

I nod even though I'm not sure but we're off to a strong start. Thames leads me inside, opening the door and the décor is minimalistic and masculine. The large windows replacing the walls make the place feel open and not private at all, but we have no close neighbors around who could spy on us anyway.

It makes me feel a little bit uncomfortable, being a city girl and all and I tell

that to Thames.

“You’ll get used to it,” he says, a soft smile tugging at his lips and he reaches for me but I get nervous and move out of the way. The tips of his fingers brush down my hair and his eyes harden for a moment, his fist clenching but he doesn’t say anything.

I clear my throat. “I should probably get out of this dress.”

“I’ll help you.”

Inwardly I twitch at his words. I’m not ready for this. I’m not ready to let him touch me like that. “I need to use the bathroom first,” I say as an excuse and he nods, leading the way upstairs. My jaw drops when I notice the path of white petals covering the floor and blood begins pounding in my temples.

Thames moves behind me, probably waiting for me to jump up and down and squeal at the romantic gesture but instead I bolt into the bathroom. My own hysterical face meets me in the mirror, and I panic slightly when Thames turns the doorknob and I hurry to lock up.

With my breath in my throat, I wait for him to make some comment about my bizarre reaction but he doesn’t say anything, giving me much needed space and I take a deep breath. Walking over to the sink, I remove the five hundred pins in my hair, take off my makeup and the ritual slows down my rapid heartbeat. Then I proceed to take off the complicated dress revealing the handmade, bridal lingerie underneath.

I’m even wearing a lace garter.

Messing my hair up a little, to look less obscenely innocent I take a deep breath and walk outside. Thames is sitting on the edge of the bed with his hands clasped in front of him. He's taken off his suit jacket and tie, the sleeves of his shirt rolled up, his body language relaxed and welcoming but his eyes are uncompromising.

They lick me up as if he's swirling his tongue around vanilla ice cream.

His gaze roams up and down my body, laser sharp, desirous and I've never felt more wide-open to a man. "You disappeared pretty fast into that bathroom," he states but it doesn't sound like criticism.

"I was getting ready for you," I whisper with an embarrassed smile before striking a pose, "Ta-da."

Awkwardness washes over me when he doesn't grin and this isn't how a wedding night is supposed to be. We were already supposed to be...doing it.

"I wanted to undress you myself," he replies and I bite my lip. "But I don't mind you taking matters into your own hands if that's what you need." He reaches his palm out. "Come here."

My heart begins pounding. I want to run but I can't begin this marriage by already neglecting my wifely duties and I cross the floor, feeling as if I'm walking in a dream. A gasp escapes my lips when Thames tenderly pulls me closer and I stand between his open legs.

"You were stunning today," he rasps and I get shivers down my spine. He kisses the lower part of my belly. "You took my breath away and I'm still struggling to recover."



His body has recovered though, the bulge down his pants looking ready to take on a war.

He slides his hands up my butt and I let out a pant, putting my hands on his strong shoulders. “I can’t do this,” I blurt.

Thames’s eyes narrow and I cry out when he yanks me down on the bed and rolls on top of me. Panic flares in me and I whimper but he doesn’t do anything. Just strokes my temple with his hand until I shudder at the sudden tender gesture.

“Why not?” he whispers, his eyes concentrated and suddenly I don’t know why. He feels good on top of me, strong and heavy and so big he could protect me from the entire world if he wanted to. When I pinch my lips, he murmurs, “You can tell me.”

“I just think I don’t feel ready, Thames,” I whisper. “I’m sorry.”

I hold my breath, waiting for some pushback, waiting for him to pressure me but it doesn’t come. “I’m not going to force you,” he whispers, “I want you to want this.”

My cheeks heat. This isn’t the reaction I expected. I expected him to throw a tantrum at being rejected but instead he grinds his jaw and his lids flutter as if he’s mustering up self-control. “I just need some time,” I say and he tilts his head to the side, his eyes boring into mine.

Something feels off but I can’t put my finger on it. I let out a whimper when Thames strokes my neck and my skin shudders underneath his touch.

This isn't how I usually feel around him. I don't tremble or feel excited and confused at the same time.

I'm guessing this has to do with being too close to him.

"I won't touch you," Thames whispers and I bite my lower lip so hard I'll probably leave marks. "I won't ever touch you unless you want me to."

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*Thames*

Eyes like softly cut diamonds look up at me with a mixture of gratitude and surprise. Her thick lips tremble and she strokes a hand down my shoulder. "You're not angry we won't be consummating the marriage?"

"I'm not angry," I reply but I'm not telling the truth. Her rejection *wounds* me. I was madly looking forward to this and now I feel as if the rug has just been pulled under me and on the outside I'm keeping it all together but on the inside I'm falling down depths I'd rather not acknowledge. "There's time. You're stuck with me for life."

A smile crosses her face and I avert my gaze because I can't look at her smiles and not think of the way they must twist when she's about to come. I'm excruciatingly hard but I'm careful to not let her feel it. Though she did notice my arousal earlier and I saw the apprehension in her eyes when she registered how much I desire her.

"I can think of worse men to be stuck with," she breathes and I look down at her.

“Such as?”

“Your brother,” she blurts and I freeze, pulling away and sitting on the edge of the bed. “I’m sorry,” Elsa gasps, her hand going to my back. “That was so rude of me.”

Shrugging, I shake my head. “He’s an unlikeable man. I understand where you’re coming from.”

Breathing out, Elsa nods and mutters something about needing to put on a nightgown. She quickly undresses in front of me, letting the lingerie drop without warning and I bolt into the bathroom and slam the door behind me. Yanking my pants down, I tremble from the sudden overwhelm and explode into the sink. With my knuckles in my mouth, I bite down on the animalistic scream, my lids shuddering and I hear Elsa calling for me on the other side of the door.

“Thames, are you okay?” she yells, sounding worried and I forgot to lock the fucking door.

“Fine,” I growl, my tone too rough and she doesn’t enter. Turning on the water, I clean up my dick and wipe droplets of sweat of my forehead as I stare at myself in the mirror. She can’t see this face. My true face. If she saw it, she’d be terrified, maybe even accidentally hurt herself in the process and I would rather put rocks into my pockets and throw myself off the cliffs than hurt something like her.

I’ve never seen anything like Elsa. Her beauty knocked me to the ground the first time I saw her. I felt my insides hollow as if they’d been scraped out to make room for her. She made me feel as if was nothing anymore. I was

only what she wanted me to be. Funny enough, she seems oblivious to the effect she has on people, casually moving through life as if she isn't the world's eighth wonder.

That night at the hotel party...when she wore that red leather dress, she was nothing short of a bombshell. Everyone noticed, the men, the women...they were so affected by her sheer presence they acted like stiff mannequins. People need time to recover from Elsa, they need time to process her because there's too much to take in and dissect.

And then there was the pianist....the nervous little fuck who raced into the bathroom to jerk off the moment she blew him a kiss. Later, the ambulance had to come. Tragically, he'd had a heart attack, twitching on the tiles like a starfish. Couldn't keep it together, too wrapped up in my wife's beauty to be able to control himself.

No wonder his heart gave up in his chest. Or maybe it had something to do with me, with the words I told him if filthy thoughts about my wife ever entered his mind again. Hmm...yeah, maybe I was the one to blame for that little tragedy.

My gaze goes to the mirror again and I make an effort to disguise the fanatic look in my eyes and rearrange my features until they fall under a more acceptable category, before heading out. But I didn't need to go through all that trouble. Elsa's already asleep, her body tucked under the duvet and her breaths are slow and peaceful.

She must be tired from the wedding, from trying to keep up with me and I can only imagine how much energy it must take trying to disguise the fact that she doesn't love me. We both have secrets, we're both hiding something.

I'm trying to hide that I feel something that's beyond love for her and she's hiding that she doesn't love me at all. The corners of my lips curve without amusement. At least she's trying to not hurt my feelings. Taking my watch off, I put it on the bedside table before removing the rest of my clothes except for my boxers. I ponder whether to sleep in one of the guestrooms but tearing myself away from Elsa proves to be harder than suffering through a whole night without touching her.

Reaching for her, I pull her to me because I should at least fucking be allowed to hold her. Her eyes flare in groggy alarm before settling down and her face falls against the nook of my throat. I stroke my fingers down her spine, murmuring, "Do you love me?"

"Yes."

Impressive. Even half-asleep she manages to lie. I'm going to have to be careful with her. Not trust her that easily because I know the curvy, little thing has an agenda of her own regarding this marriage. It makes it all the more interesting.

For a while, I'll put up with her trickeries but eventually I'll want her full devotion.

I'm going to demand a deep and consuming one and I don't care how well she'll cope with it. It'll be her punishment for not immediately loving me with the same fervor as I love her.

I won't care if she whines about not signing up for this. I will have her. All of her. And looking down at her voluptuousness, a feeling of masculine satisfaction stirs in my chest because there's a lot to be had.

## CHAPTER THREE

*Thames*

The blinds are up, cold sunlight streaming through the windows when I awaken and I groan. My hand strokes the sheets, searching for Elsa's soft flesh but I come up empty and a sense of dread washes over me. Eyes flaring, I get up and put on a pair of sweatpants. Her side was still warm when I touched it, so she has to still be in the house.

That doesn't stop my heart from beating any harder though and I clench my fists to not yell out her name like an animal needing to feed. It's not until I hear the clinking of the piano that I calm down and I lean against the wall, squeezing my eyes.

*Calm the fuck down. She can't see you like this.*

Forcing a sleepy grin, I casually stroll into the living room, perfectly playing the role of billionaire husband or whatever the fuck this is and Elsa looks up. Her hair is pulled up in a loose cool girl bun and she's wearing skintight leggings along with a lavender top that cuts off by her ribs.

A plate with burnt toast sits on the piano and she has a glittery notebook beside her. "Good morning," she smiles. "Hope I didn't wake you." She holds up the notebook. "Thought I'd do some work before the day starts."

“Come up with anything good?” I ask, leaning over the piano and her eyes go to my muscles. I didn’t put a shirt on and maybe that was a good thing because at least my appearance pleases her.

With a flushed face, she nods, asking me if I want to hear and I say yes because I’ve already denied her too much to say no. A flash of sympathy flares in me as I watch her sing and amateurishly play on the piano. My poor wife. She has no idea I’ve robbed her of a normal marriage.

“What do you think?” she breathes and I frown. I didn’t hear anything. A buzz entered my ears the moment her lips began moving.

“That type of music perfectly suits your voice.”

Her eyes flash in triumph. “Really?” she blurts, looking ready to jump out of her skin. “That’s exactly the encouragement I needed.” Still with shiny eyes, she watches me as if waiting for me to say something else but I don’t know what to say.

What does she want? A frantic sensation flares in me as I grasp to understand how to fulfill her needs but I come up blank and I hate the feeling. I hate not knowing what she needs from me.

I rub a hand down my neck, clearing my throat when she slowly gets up and her movements seem off balance as if she’s nervous. Wringing her hands, she murmurs, “I don’t want this to come out wrong. Don’t want to make it sound as if I’m greedy, or ungracious or...,” she bites her lip until the color turns red and blood begins pounding in my temples, “but Thames I’ve been thinking that maybe you could...”

That maybe I could...? Fuck her? If so I'd be more than happy to.

“Pull some strings here and there,” she blurts and her face is on flames as if she wants to sink through the ground. “Since you have connections in the music business and all.”

Ah...so that's what she wants. Interesting. I'll have to keep that in mind for the future.

“Now everything makes sense,” I say with a lazy smile, “now I get why you married me.” I'm joking, thinking she'll laugh but her eyes dart and she looks down. Then that was the reason for why she agreed to marry me...or maybe it was just one of the reasons. “But yeah...,” I add to make her happy, “I'll pull some strings.”

“Anything for your baby spice, right?” she breathes and jealousy explodes in me, causing me to snatch her to me and I push her up against the piano and claim her mouth. She whimpers under my lips, her body tensing but I don't care, ripping my hands through her hair and she cries out in surprise, her tongue helpless against the force of mine and I eat her mouth until the jealousy in me slowly subsides.

That's my mouth, my body, my wife...my Elsa.

Panting, she leans her head back to be able to look at me. “What's gotten into you?” she gasps. “That's not how we usually kiss.”

The jealousy in me boils, draining me of strength and I sit down on the piano stool before burying my head in my hands. Elsa stands in shock beside



me, not knowing what to do before she whispers, “I liked it, though. I liked how you kissed me.”

I nod, grappling with self-control and I feel like ruining the fucking piano and using it as firewood but I don't. Elsa would hate me if I did anything to tear down her dream. She's still hesitant, waiting for my next move but I just give her hip a squeeze to show her that I've eased and she throws me a hesitant smile.

“Elsa?” I rasp and she nods in encouragement. “Stay in bed with me the next time. I prefer waking up next to my wife's warm body rather than alone.”

Her eyes widen as if she thinks it's an unreasonable request. “I wasn't sleepy anymore.”

“A good wife doesn't just leave her husband's bed like that,” I remind her and she takes a deep breath. “And if you must leave me then at least wake me up and make it known.”

Having her close to me is bliss and whenever she disappears it causes a shock to my system. The least she can do is warn me.

“Do I have to ask for permission to leave the house too?” she mutters but I don't reply to the defiant tone. She shrugs, looking slightly bummed before crossing her arms. “Can I get the keys to the garage, by the way? I tried entering earlier but none of the keys worked.”

Freezing, I bore my eyes into hers. “Sorry but the garage is off limits.” I flash a considerate smile. “There's a mold issue I need to deal with.”

A furrow forms between her brows and she opens her mouth to extract some more information when the doorbell rings. She twitches in surprise and annoyance brims in me. Who the fuck is that? We're not expecting anyone and I want to enjoy my day off with Elsa alone.

"Oh I forgot," Elsa says in a jumpy tone, "that's my personal trainer, Massimo. I always work out with him on the weekends."

Feeling as if she just stabbed a knife in my back to drain me of my humanity, I search for her eyes to touch base but she's too busy running around. She called for her personal trainer. On the day after our wedding. She called a man and asked him to come *here*. On the day after our marriage wasn't consummated.

Twisted thoughts sneak into my mind and I clench my fists when a male with muscles that scream steroids and a bandana around his head walks inside. I drag a breath. This day's too nice to do murder.

"You must be Elsa's husband?" Massimo cries, waving at me and a muscle ticks in my jaw.

Elsa's very jealous husband.

Whatever he sees in my eyes makes him uncomfortable because he squirms, looking at my wife for support and she throws me a stunned glance before murmuring, "Let's go outside. The weather's great."

Massimo hums in gratitude to get away from me, following her like a puppy but I don't stay behind. I walk over to the window, keeping an eye on

them and making sure the maggot keeps his hands to himself. If he as much as breathes on her...

They roll out their mats and strike a balancing pose. Elsa glances at me from the corner of her eye but doesn't say anything. If she thinks it's awkward that her husband is there, staring then she'll just have to get used to it. She's probably thinking I'll grow bored and leave them alone, not understanding the never-ending patience and stamina I have for protecting what's mine. When I don't leave, she lets out a sigh and waves at me.

“Why don't you join us? Come on, it's fun.”

I'd rather be castrated than spend time with my wife while another man's there but I walk out of the house. The maggot trembles the closer I come, chatting frantically with Elsa to hide his nervousness and I stop in front of them, putting my hands into my pockets.

“Massimo has been my personal trainer for years,” Elsa gasps as she makes an effort to bend over backward.

I grind my jaw. She better stop talking about him if she wants me to spare him.

“Can't say I was in top shape before we met but Massimo was brutal, drilling me and he refused to let me get away with any excuses.”

And she needs to stop fucking saying his name. Brutal? Drilling... She's just begging for me to annihilate him and I crack my knuckles. *No need to make it that obvious, baby.*

Elsa doesn't care about my presence as much as Massimo does but even she's slightly unnerved when I don't reply. They train until the wind blows colder and sweat begins dripping down Elsa's skin. "Massimo," she pants and I see red. "Am I doing this right? I'm not sure about my hip rotation."

"Push it out a bit more," Massimo declares, throwing a lustful glance at Elsa and his desire for her must've overtaken his fear of me because he moves to stand behind her while she's in downward dog. "Like this..." he salivates, his hands going to correct her hips and I shoot out with my arm, grabbing his hand and silently crush his fingers in my palm while drawing pleasure from the piercing pain in his eyes. *That's right, that's what happens when you try touching my wife.*

The bones crack, forcing him to scream and Elsa scampers. "What was that?" she yells in confusion but I've already dropped his hand, pretending as if I didn't do anything. "Oh no, did you hurt yourself?" she cries. "How?" She begins fussing over him, before I pull her back, refusing to have her anywhere near him. "Thames, we need to take him to the hospital."

"I'll have my driver take him," I say with a gentle smile but the maggot's eyes flare.

"Think I'll just deal with it on my own..." he whines, his eyes terrified when they meet mine and my grin widens. He winces. "I'll see myself out." Softly clutching his ruined fingers, he runs to his car and I look down at Elsa.

"Shame your workout was cut short."

She hums in agreement, still a little bit confused. Wrapping her arms around me, she adds, "Maybe it was for the best. It felt pretty awkward having him here while you looked at us. I don't think I'll ask him to come

around anymore.”

My heart begins pounding. She knows what I want without me even having to tell her.

“I think that would be a good idea,” I calmly reply. “And I’ll ask my own personal trainer to teach you instead.” Elsa nods in gratitude. I don’t have a personal trainer but I’ll acquire one, and it’ll be a woman of course.

“And you know...,” Elsa breathes, “if it made you jealous that I asked him to come, then it wasn’t my intention.”

“I’m not jealous,” I say and she looks relieved, thrilled even. “I trust you.” But I don’t trust other men. I don’t even trust myself around her.

The wind picks up, ruffling Elsa’s hair and she leans into me, letting out a sigh. “Aren’t you the perfect husband?”

\*\*\*\*

*Elsa*

His heart speeds up under my face and I grow worried. Why is it beating that fast? “Thames?” I murmur to get his attention and I gaze up at him, feeling a baffling shudder down my spine when his eyes meet mine. “I want to make this marriage work.”

“So do I,” he rasps, his arm going around me and in my ear he whispers, “I’ll never let you go, Elsa.”

My pulse begins racing as if I'm being chased by a monster and I take a deep breath, confused by the indecisive way my body reacts when I'm around Thames. I'm grateful he won't let me go. He's the only thing standing between me and Tristan.

"Don't," I whisper, burying my face into his chest. "Don't let me go." He wraps his big body around me and I muster up the courage to ask something I've been putting off. "You must've been disappointed with the wedding," I say in a low tone and I sense his surprise.

"Why do you say that?"

I look up at him. "Your only family member couldn't be bothered to show up."

Thames shrugs. "He had other things to take care of."

What's so important he couldn't attend his own brother's wedding? "I'm not complaining though," I add, "I didn't even want him there but you insisted."

Thames tenses. "Why didn't you want him to come?"

I pull away, slowly crossing my arms and I don't understand the question. "B...because of what he did to you, to your whole family," I raise my brows, "sometimes I don't even know why you two still stay in touch."

"He's my flesh and blood," Thames says in a chilling tone as if he suddenly

dislikes that I'm being harsh on his brother and since I have no siblings, I can't imagine what that must feel like but I still can't stop.

"You must hate him deep down."

"No."

"Tristan's still a criminal, though and I don't want you to ever invite him over and leave me alone with him." That sounds like such a nightmare scenario that just makes me want to hide behind Thames forever until the coast is clear because I know enough about Tristan to not risk it.

I know their whole story. When the West brothers were kids they lived in nice house in the suburbs together with their parents, until one summer night when a fire broke out. Their parents died and the authorities eventually charged Tristan with arson but since he couldn't be considered an adult, he spent his time in juvenile care and then prison before he was released at the age of twenty-seven.

"In my opinion he should still be behind bars," I say and Thames winces.

"Elsa..." he rasps in a low, sad tone that suddenly tugs at my heartstrings, making me feel guilty and as if I said something horrible while I believe I just said what most people think. Yes, Tristan was a child but he was old enough to know better. And it's not as if he learned his lesson and turned his life for the better. As soon as he got out of prison, he got involved with a gang and as far as I know, he's still in a gang.

Cupping my cheek, Thames says, "You shouldn't be so judgmental, baby. You know better."

My cheeks heat at his scolding and I stutter, cowering and fumbling for the right words when he presses his lips against mine and the kiss soothes the sudden shame, takes the edge off his words and mine.

“Let me make it up to you,” I breathe, “I’ve invited over my coworkers for dinner next weekend...” I trail off when Thames goes rigid and he takes a step back.

“You’ve done what?”

His tone is cold and I flinch, hurrying to explain. “Just the two of them, a couple.” I smile at Thames, wondering why it makes him so worked up and I try to pretend I’m not noticing his clenched fists. “We could invite your brother,” I blurt and in the same moment a wave of dizziness washes over me as if I just made the worst suggestion ever.

But it’s already too late. Thames flexes his jaw, murmuring, “You want to have Tristan over?”

No.

Yes.

I don’t know.

What is wrong with me? I want to stay away from Tristan but I want to appease Thames and my desire to appease is strong enough to think I’ll be able to handle Tristan’s presence as long as Thames is beside me. I can



already imagine it. Me, holding onto Thames's hand as if I'm a prey not wanting to get lost in Tristan's horror theme park while he sits opposite us and watches me with that look in his eyes.

Shivering, I nod and I can't tell whether Thames is happy or not. Meeting my waiting eyes, he says, "We've only been married for two days and you've already mentioned my brother twice."

Eyes flaring, I look down in embarrassment, wondering what he must think of me. And I decide to shut up about Tristan after I've said my peace. "Guess he made an impression on me. A bad one." I rub down the goosebumps on my arms. "Thames, Tristan repulses me. I think he's revolting but I'm willing to overlook it for your sake."

It's obvious his brother means a lot to him despite everything that he's done...

"Revolts you?" Thames says in a strange tone that makes me feel as if I'm being blindfolded and slowly pushed toward an edge. "Repulses?" He nods to himself. "I'll keep that in mind." His eyes tentatively go to mine. "Do I repulse and revolt you as well?"

"No," I say, shaking my head in all honesty.

A soft smile curves Thames's lips. "Yet you still turned from me on our wedding night."

*Burn.*

Struggling to find the right words, I let out a whimper and my eyes flare

when Thames tugs at his charcoal colored sweatpants, yanking them down along with his boxer and I let out a gasp in shock, averting my gaze even though he's my husband.

“Get on your knees and suck it,” he says in a dark tone and I jerk as if he just slapped me in the face.

Is he being serious? I must've misheard him, made up words when it had to have been just the whistling wind. I turn to look at him again. “What did you s...say...?” I stutter and that smile on his face hardens.

“I didn't say anything,” he rasps, turning around. What I see, gives me a true shock. He has a huge scorpion tattoo on his back, the deadly arachnid widely spreading, the pincers reaching his shoulder blades and the ink ends with the stinger, down Thames's thighs. Thames doesn't register my surprise, walking over to the edge of the cliff and I grow a little nervous.

Is he into cliff diving or something? He can't dive from there. It's too dangerous.

“W...what are you doing?” I stammer and he throws a glance over his shoulder, his curved brows arching over his exotic eyes.

“Do you love me?”

The question hits me right in the chest and I answer without hesitating. I always answer without hesitating, it's automatic these days. “Yes.”

He gets a look that makes me want to weep. He knows I'm lying. *Fuck*. But I don't want to weep because I think he caught me but because I think I...hurt

him. Thames averts his gaze and without warning, he jumps off the cliff.

A shrilling shriek pierces the air. *Mine*. “Thames!” I scream in panic, running over to the edge. That has to be a 120 foot drop and there are rocks down there, the waves furious when crashing against the cliffs and I hover over the edge, moaning when vertigo hits me. I can’t see him and it feels as if I’m about to hurl.

My world turns into a blur and it’s not until I register Thames among the waves, completely unharmed, not even a fracture or concussion that I regain control. He powerfully swims toward the shore while I tremble like a leaf. He could’ve died. Rolling over to stop myself from hyperventilating, I look up at the now grey sky.

He could’ve died.

He could’ve died and left me unprotected and exposed to Tristan. My stomach recoils and I gasp before wiping the tears from my eyes. This marriage is changing Thames. He never would’ve done something like that before and I wonder what’s gotten into him.

*You*, a small voice whispers in the back of my head. *This is all because of you.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Thames*

The water's rougher than I thought but I don't mind the challenge. Anything that reduces the excess energy and pent up lust in my body is welcomed. Swimming toward the shore, I crawl up on land and spit to get the salt out of my mouth.

I knew I'd survive the jump and I didn't jump for fun but because it was impossible to stay within my own skin while looking into Elsa's eyes, knowing she feels nothing for me. I couldn't contain it and needed the release.

Looking up when I hear a gasp, I see Elsa running toward me. Her face is warped with worry, her lips pale and she's trembling. Cold? I can't feel anything, can't feel the icy drops trickling down my skin and I hold my arms out in case she wants to jump into them. My heart begins pounding at the thought of her plaything body pressing against mine, clinging to me while her lips latch onto mine and I'm already getting worked up, knowing I'll be tasting her.

But she doesn't jump into my arms, or lets me taste her. Instead she hits me right in the face with an open palm to my surprise. "Are you crazy? How dare you?" she shrieks. "You could've cracked your thick skull! You could've

died!” Her lower lip trembles.

“Care about me, after all?” I let out a growl, snatching her hand so she doesn’t hit me again and she winces. “Then you should’ve said you love me and meant it.”

Her eyes widen and she bursts into tears, snatching her hand back and runs up to the house. I wipe water out of my eyes and drag a ragged breath. I can still feel the sting she left behind on my cheek and it feels good. It lets me know she feels *something*. She’s not completely dispassionate. Hunger strikes a chord in me and I prowl my way up to the house and I quickly find Elsa waiting for me on the porch with a guilty look on her face.

“I got scared, Thames,” she whispers. “I’m sorry. I’m really sorry I hit you.”

Deep affection for her fills me because I’m not angry. Shaking my head, I say, “I’m the one who needs to make it up to you.” I cup her neck so I can look into her eyes without her averting them. “Will you let me?”

She nods carefully and I spend several days fulfilling my promise. We do everything that she wants; have a picnic under one of the trees in our garden, watch foreign movies with subtexts and the intricate plots confuse me but Elsa’s thrilled, lying horizontal on the couch while I rest my face on her naked belly. Her top has slid up and she leisurely scratches my head, making me shudder.

*Fuck, this is a man’s idea of heaven.*

We shop for décor online that Elsa wants because she claims our place is a

little too neat. I have a feeling that within a couple of months the house will go from modern to shabby chic and I don't think I have a say. On Wednesday we head into town, spending the whole day having lunch and pick up frothy lattes at a coffee house.

I draw the line when Elsa suggests we go get a manicure together. "Baby, now you're pushing it," I snarl, dragging a hand down my mouth. "Am I not forgiven yet?"

Elsa sniggers and that confused/hurt/scared look in her eyes is gone. "You're forgiven."

Relief mixed with excitement floods me because I can't be sure...but it seems that she's looking at me differently, watching me as if she sees me in a new light and she takes a slow step closer to me, in the middle of the street, in front of everyone.

The possessiveness in me feels that pungent tinge of satisfaction. They should all know she's mine.

"You never used to like to do these things with me before," she whispers and the gratitude on her face is overwhelming. She must've felt overlooked, maybe even ignored at times and I promise to never ignore her. "What changed?"

Yeah, what changed...I changed. "You became mine," I decide to say and she accepts the answer, hugging me and I know I have her trust. It won't take long until the rest follows.

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Sitting in the living room by the window in Elsa's favorite chair, I throw a look at the clock. One hour until midnight. I'm alone because Elsa left for work while I was at the office. All day I looked forward to coming home, expecting to find her waiting for me when I got back but then I got a text, saying she'd booked a job at a newly opened luxury bar.

Cursing, I drag my hands over my head, my fingertips digging into my scalp and I let out a razor sharp groan. Fuck! When I come home I expect to find her here. I don't want her running around town, being a *fucking* lounge singer but if I made any complaints she'd probably find them hurtful. And I'm doing what I can to get her a proper music contract but that bullshit takes time.

Though, I'm already planning to build a recording studio here so she won't have to leave the house. There's not a ton of room around but there's always the garage...

I frown and pick up my phone, calling my driver. "What is she doing?" I ask when he answers and he clears his throat. When I found out where she was going, I told him to keep an eye on her. My request mortified him. He stuttered as if I had asked him to do something immoral but this isn't immoral.

This is just a husband looking out for his trophy wife.

"She's still on stage," he replies, "singing. She has half an hour left."

"What is she singing about?"

“Love.”

Rubbing my eyes, I stretch my legs in frustration as I imagine myself being there, seeing her raised above the crowd like the goddess that she is, her hands stroking the microphone, her voice husky while she sways her hips to the rhythm of the music. I let out a curse and get up.

“And what is she wearing?” My hand hardens around the phone. “What does she have on her body?”

“Red leather pants and a velvet top. That one in red too.”

*Red.* It’s my favorite color on her. It does something to me I can’t explain. It attracts me to her until the rest of the world turns black and white and she remains a red, pulsing heart that throbs and pulses until all I want is sink my teeth into it, never to let go. The problem is its most men’s favorite color.

Shooting out with my arm, I smack down a photo of the two of us together. It shatters, the glass ruining my face until I could be anyone. The man on the photo with his arm around her could be anyone.

“Sir, she might want to go for drinks with her friends later. What do I do?”

“Bring her home immediately,” I snap. “And if she puts up a fight tell her she can take it up with me.”

I hang up, marching into our bedroom and I open up her closet. She’s never wearing that color again. Rummaging through her clothes, I take out every single rouge, crimson, scarlet garment and put them in a box. I put the box away where she won’t find it before pouring a glass of wine and sitting down



in a chaise, while playing the role of the patient and gentlemanly husband.

My heart thuds when my car rolls up on the courtyard, the lights flashing and I know she probably can see me from the outside. Minutes later, the front door unlocks and she walks inside. I turn into liquid at the sight of her. She has smoothed her hair pin straight, a white fur bolero covers her shoulders and she must've wiped off her stage makeup in the car.

She's breathtaking, my little wife. And I can't breathe.

"What are you doing there, sitting in the dark?" she whispers.

"Waiting for you," I reply, my voice strained and hoarse. I hold up my glass. "Join me."

Elsa shakes her head. "I'm beat, can't wait to get a shower and then go to bed."

Eyes narrowing, I watch her closely. She needs to take a shower right after a night out. Why? To hide something? "Come here," I say and she frowns, hesitating. "Please."

Walking over, she stops in front of me and I clasp her hands, stroking the inside of her wrists and I want to kiss her and hold her and above all I want to fuck. I want to get stuck between her thighs and choke on her pussy.

Pretending to kiss her hands, I smell the skin but she doesn't smell of other men. "I need straight answers from you, Elsa," I gently say, still holding onto her in case she tries worming her way out. "Did anyone touch you while you were away from me?"

Her brows shoot up in surprise. “No.”

But I don't believe her. She's on stage, and hands must've reached for her, alcohol induced, twisted minds must've lusted after her and Elsa lets out a gasp that forces me to regain control.

“And I thought you weren't jealous.”

“I'm not,” I lie with a calming smile. “But you're still my wife and I need to protect you.”

With soft eyes, she bends down and gives me a quick kiss. “You do,” she whispers, sauntering upstairs and I wait for the sound of the shower until I follow. She's left a trail of clothes behind and I pick them up, smelling her pants, her top to see if there's the stench of another man on them but all I can smell is the five hundred dollar custom-made perfume she wears.

My body shudders, eyes squeezing and I listen to the stream of water as my need for her grows until it rages in my veins. Gasping for air, I frantically stroke her clothes against my body, imagining it's her and my mind begins to spin. This is her fault. It's her fault because she still won't let me touch her. I haven't fucked her and its torture turning around in the middle of the night, knowing that she's there for my taking and yet I'm forced to lay there with raging lust while listening to her peaceful breaths.

She sleeps so sweetly while I'm in agony, taunting me because she doesn't have the same need for me as I have for her.

Fury flares in me and I crumple her clothes before tossing them into the

corner. I've been very patient with her but I have my limits. Walking over to the bathroom door, I open it up, just a tad. She doesn't notice, her back turned to me and the water's too loud. There's steam everywhere and she's rolling a bar soap between her palms to suds it up before sliding it down her body.

Inwardly I groan at the jealousy, a black mist entering my mind. That body is *mine*. Only I should be allowed to touch it, to clean it and my lids shudder when she slides her hands over her curves, my jaw clenching so hard I let out a reluctant growl.

Elsa hears it. Twitching and dropping the soap, she turns around with a stunned look on her face. "Oh...I didn't know you were here, w...watching."

I remind myself to blink to not look like a fucking psycho, spying on her. Even though I was spying on what belongs to me. Raising my chin I say, "You forgot to lock the door." I cross my arms over my chest. "Most men are allowed to watch their own wives but maybe you insist on privacy?"

Biting her lip, she shakes her head but she's trying to shield her modesty with her hands and her wet hair fall in thick streaks down her breasts, hiding them from my gaze. When I don't say anything, or move she continues with what she's doing, wiping off the suds before stepping out of the shower. Reaching for a fluffy towel she wraps it around her until she looks like a marshmallow and I know she'll be soft in my mouth.

When I step out of the way, she brushes past me, walking into the bedroom and reaches for her nightgown. "Don't," I snap, harsher than intended and she twitches. Softening my tone, I plead, "Not tonight."

She hesitates, her hand in the air but then she drops it, looking at me with eyes the size of saucers before they mellow and turn hooded. I know she can

see how much I want her, but I'm not even showing her half of it. If I showed it to her full on, she'd be prepared to scratch down the walls with her bare fingernails to get away from me. She wouldn't be able to handle it. She'd start crying.

Maybe even scream.

Elsa wouldn't understand me. Things like her never understand. Nice things. They don't go together with the bad. They don't mix, they repel but she won't be repelling me anymore.

I'm strong but I'm not that strong.

"T...Thames," she stutters as I stalk over to her and she clutches her towel. "I've never done this before."

Isn't that adorable and I'm touched. She's trying to blame her apprehension on her inexperience but I know there's more to it. I know there's something about me that unnerves her and that she can't put her finger on. She gulps when I stop in front of her, her cheeks turning red and the light from the windows shine on her face.

Letting out a low moan, I pull her to me but she's stiff in my arms and it frustrates me. "I want you to enjoy this," I whisper, "not push me away." We've been married for five days and I still haven't had her. By now she should've already been so used to me, she'd ask for me as soon as she opens her eyes. Clasping her upper arms, I plant a kiss on her mouth and the moan is immediate. It bursts in my mouth like fireworks, igniting me from within.

"Baby...", I groan in ecstasy, pushing her down on the bed and the towel

slides to the floor and there she is.... Bare. Naked. Voluptuous and insanely fuckable. My eyes shudder when she doesn't squirm and I part her thighs with my hand. They're fleshy and firm, sturdy in their femininity and made for keeping me in place. I never want to leave her. No man in his right or wrong mind would ever leave her. When she spreads her legs, I nod in encouragement. "That's a good little wife," I purr and she grazes her lip with her teeth.

Mmm...those are my lips and I coax out her little tongue, when pressing my mouth onto hers. She turns into liquid, liking the feel of me on top of her and fuck, this is the most dangerous thing I've ever done. My adrenaline's racing, heart pumping as if it's about to give up in my chest and the hormones raging in me make it feel as if I've thrown myself out of a plane without a parachute.

Trailing kisses down her lower belly, I grin inwardly from how hard she's breathing. Her body's already acting as if it's trying to hold back a seizure...a rupture but there's no holding back when I'm in the dark with her.

The sounds of her growing wetness floods through my ears and I put my mouth on her lush slit, wanting to crawl into her tightness with my whole being and never come out. Become her prisoner and I don't just taste her, I drink and eat her and she's more than a feast. She's the last supper and my heart's on death row, fearing her death sentence, fearing she'll close her legs and reject me.

Panic goes to my hand and I clamp down on her thighs, causing her to let out a surprised sound. "Don't move," I growl and she whimpers something about not planning to and I twirl my tongue around her folds, rewarding her until her tits juggle from how frantically she slinks and sinks on the mattress. "Does it feel good?"

“Y...yes,” she stutters, her voice throaty and she opens up more, giving me more access and my lids shudder.

“You’ll never deny me this,” I groan against her flesh, “as soon as I want it, you’ll give it up, baby. No protests, no questions.” She nods in agreement but I’m not sure she knows what she’s agreeing to. I let out a growl, kissing and fucking her with my tongue and she peers down, her face messy and susceptible.

Her body open to danger.

Our eyes lock. She twitches and lets out a shriek, “What’s that in your eyes?” she cries and I feel a flare of panic. Fuck, fuck...I avert my gaze, pressing the remote that closes the blinds until there’s total darkness in the room.

Can’t see a thing. Neither can Elsa but it’s too late. She saw something in my eyes that got her all fidgety and she’s not under my mouth anymore. Rage flares in me and I let out a snarl, attacking the bed to find her and she’s cowering at the end of it. My hands go around her and she whimpers,

“T...Thames,” she stutters but doesn’t stop me from placing myself between her open legs again. “What was that look?”

“Don’t know,” I reply, “you must’ve imagined. Now lean back and let me lick you.” Searching her flesh with the tip of my tongue, I focus on her little clit before pressing two fingers inside and she cries out the moment I fill her.

She comes as if an apocalypse goes off in her, leaving her barren and desolate until only I can bring her back. My eyes flare in pleasant surprise,

my heart snapping from joy and I keep my mouth on her until she stops convulsing, tasting every little drop of her and it's a concoction made purely for me.

Still lapping at her, I don't stop until she begs me to and I crawl on top of her body. "It's...I can't see anything," she stutters, trembling underneath me, "can't see your face or your e...eyes."

In the dark I could be anyone.

"You don't need to see, you just need to feel," I rasp, cupping myself and I let her feel the tip of my cock. Elsa lets out a moan, wanting this even if the dark makes her nervous. "That's my dick you're feeling and it loves you very much." I brush my lips along her jaw and she inhales as if she doesn't believe me. "Just breathe," I soothe before slamming into her and she groans in relief.

She's taken me, remaining pinned on me and not pushing me out. Her pulses cause blood to pound in my temples, sweat dripping my back and I grit, "E...Elsa..." My voice comes out in a shudder, vibrating in the air, letting her know how much I need her, how I can't be whole without her and she lets out a whimper. The pressure softens, allowing me to sink in fully and I clench my jaw, crying out at the mercy.

Buried to the hilt, I pound into her, short, fast, hard pumps that cause her to bounce on the bed, her hands clutching my shoulders, her thighs wrapping around me and I want to die a happy man between those thighs.

They're everything to me. She's everything to me. Death isn't dying anymore. Death is losing her and I curse, "Fuuuuck...!" I pound harder and harder, giving her a taste of the lust I have in me and she thrashes, the

temperature in the room turning into steam and she squeezes around me, her pussy feverish and the heat seep into me and intoxicate me.

I feel it everywhere. The possession. The obsession. The love...

“Please...” Elsa moans, clamping around me and I fill with pride at how much she enjoys this. “Tristan, please....!”

Tensing, I stop for a moment and she lets out a whimper under her breath. Did she just say...? Jealousy floods me, twisting me from the inside out and I cup her face. “What’s that?”

“I’m s...sorry,” she stutters, flicking her tongue out and she can’t hold back anymore, coming all over me while jealousy still ravages my heart. Burying my face in her hair, I flood her and she takes it without disappointing.

I’m more than satisfied with her. Pleased. Thrilled even but she said another man’s name.

She said my brother’s name.

Rolling off of her, I yank her to me and she pants but doesn’t say anything. She doesn’t apologize, wants to pretend as if it didn’t happen but it did happen. She had another man on her mind while her *husband* made love to her.

“T...Thames,” Elsa whispers, splaying her hair all over my chest as if she’s possessive over me too, as if she’s the perfect wife and only cares about me. “Let’s turn on the light.”



My wife wants to see my *eyes*.

But I don't want her looking at them right now and I hold her closer, kissing the top of her fragrant head. "Let's not."

She's staying in the dark with me.

## CHAPTER FIVE

*Elsa*

There must be something seriously wrong with me. Bad wives come a dime a dozen but the ones who say their husband's brother's name whilst making love to said husband for the first time...? We're in a class of our own.

I'm mortified about what happened. As soon as I said the wrong name, I wanted to be struck by lightning just so that I wouldn't have to face Thames. I prayed he hadn't heard me, that he'd been too distracted but it wasn't as if I had whispered Tristan's name under my breath.

I screamed it. *Screamed*. I wouldn't have been surprised if our faraway neighbors had heard me.

And the worst part is that I have no idea why I did it. For whatever reason, Tristan came to mind in the most inappropriate moment of all as if I just can't push him out of my head. Pinching my lips, I inwardly nod. I *have* to push him out of my mind.

He's coming to dinner tonight and my hands tremble as I prepare the dessert. I've cooked a whole feast and I can barely see the dinner table from how much food there is. I've been busy all day and it came in handy because it gave me an excuse not to talk to Thames. I'm surprised though that he isn't

furious with me. He's not even distant or cold but I can still tell he's not happy.

I throw a look out at the terrace where he's standing with a glass of golden liquor in his hand. He seems on edge and he's watching over the sea and it's stormier than usual.

Returning my focus to the food, I put the salad bowl in the middle of the table before changing into something dressier. In my new, wispy dress I walk out to Thames and he pulls his arm around me even before looking at me.

I tense when his muscles harden, wondering what's wrong. "Where did you find that red dress?" he rasps in a low tone and I raise my brows.

"In the far back of my closet. By the way, the maid must've messed up last time she washed our clothes because all my red garments are gone."

A muscle ticks in Thames's jaw before his eyes soften. "You look beautiful in it." He strokes my cheek and the wind picks up around us. "Just like a little ruby." His hand moves down my throat, stroking the pulse, "Does my lovely wife know what rubies represent?"

I shake my head because I honestly don't but something in his tone makes me breathe faster.

"Love and commitment," he rasps and I smile because that sounds so romantic. Thames brushes his thumb over my smile. "Are you committed to me, Elsa?"

My smile dies, iciness wrapping around my veins. "Y...yes."

Thames nods, his eyes distant. “You know who else is attracted to a woman in red?” When I shake my head, Thames rasps, “Your darling Tristan.”

His dig causes my heart to fly up to my throat and I nearly choke. I want to declare that I’m loyal to Thames and only Thames and that I have no thoughts whatsoever about his brother but I can’t form the words.

Besides, Thames just took me off guard. Something’s brimming inside of him. It’s been brimming since our wedding, becoming a little stronger and stronger day by day and I wonder what it is that he’s keeping under wraps.

Lowering his gaze down my body, Thames rasps, “Won’t be able to look anywhere else when you’re wearing that.”

Who? Thames or Tristan?

Thames walks back inside while I shudder out on the terrace. Twitching when the doorbell rings, I hurry into the hallway with a plastered smile on my face before welcoming the Christie’s with open arms.

“I’m so happy you could come,” I squeal, thanking them for the bouquet and chocolate they brought. “The drive is such a nightmare, right? All those twists and turns...”

“Yeah,” Adam snorts with an eye roll before looking at his wife, Delinda. “Especially since this one insisted on listening to ska the whole way. I mean who the hell likes ska these days?”

“Hey...it’s better than lounge music,” I jest and we burst into laughter because that genre’s our necessary evil. I stir when I feel Thames walking over to us. “You know my husband, Thames.”

They shake hands and Thames barely pays any attention to Delinda but his eyes narrow in on Adam in a way I’m not totally sure about. Maybe I invited my friends over too soon but I hadn’t expected this much tension between me and Thames. Before sitting down to eat, we raise a toast and the girls and boys automatically split.

“This house is amazing,” Delinda squeals, stomping the floor as if she has the tippy taps and I let out a laugh. “You must be pretty pleased.”

I feel myself frowning when I realize that...yeah I am pleased. “Very,” I reply, “but look at you coming around. You’re the one who missed your period when I told you I’d be marrying Thames.”

“It stressed me out, okay. You barely knew him,” Delinda pouts, taking a sip of her drink. “And honestly, I didn’t think you seemed that in love while you were with him.”

Tensing because I didn’t think it had been that obvious, I raise my brows. “I didn’t?”

Delinda nods. “You’d come to work, looking all bummed as if someone rained on your parade and I thought you better break up with that dude before it’s too late and yet here you are now...disgustingly radiant.”

“Hmm...now that I think about it, you changed after the wedding.” Leaning closer, Delinda whispers in my ear. “Tell me the truth. He’s a beast in bed,

isn't he?"

"Delinda!" I squeak, sniggering behind my hand. "You shouldn't ask me that as a married woman!" The conversation moves on to Adam and Delinda and whether they're ready to become "pawrents" or not.

"So I've been thinking about a Pitbull but Adam says they remind him of his mother in law which is so freaking rude..." Delinda yaps and I nod, but I'm not completely present. My eyes go to Thames and Adam and I hear Thames ask,

"How long have you known my wife?"

Adam casually shrugs. "Since last year in high school. We hung out in the same crowd."

Thames nods. "She had a lot of boyfriends, my wife? A lot of guys chasing after her?"

"Oh yeah," Adam whistles, grinning as if they're already best buddies, "got even worse when she got older. I swear I couldn't walk down a street with Elsa without there being car accidents, men pointing at her and screaming, thinking she's a celebrity or a model..."

Inwardly I squirm, because I want him to stop talking now. Thames's face has turned into an emotionless mask and it worries me more than when he's snapping.

"And there was this one time..." Adam continues, "when Elsa and I had bought some ice cream and this fucking bad boy comes running out of

nowhere, lifts up Elsa's skirt then slaps her on the ass. She was hysterical of course, crying and causing a scene and then the cops came..."

My cheeks heat because I remember that incident. But why the hell did he have to mention that to Thames?

"What did you do when he did that to my wife?" Thames grinds between his teeth and my belly churns. "What did you do to punish that piece of shit for touching my wife?"

"N...nothing," Adam stutters in surprise, "they guy was huge. B...but Elsa filed a report..."

"But you just stood there. Doing *nothing*." The look that Thames gives him, makes *me* want to put my head in the sand and never look up again. Adam seems just as uncomfortable, writhing and there's a hint of fear in his eyes.

"Let's eat," I cry, causing my friends to jerk in surprise and Thames gives me a long look but I brush all of them off and we head into the dining room. It has the best view over the ocean and we sit down around the rectangular, oak table. "I've been slaving all day," I smile, "so even if you don't like it...pretend or else my husband will divorce me!"

The Christie's laugh but Thames's eyes go to mine.

"I would never divorce you," he says in a grave tone. "I'd rather shoot myself in the face than lose you."

Tension spreads across the table and Delinda throws me a nervous glance before declaring, "She was joking."

Thames takes a slow sip out of his glass, before firmly putting it down. “Divorce isn’t something you joke about, Dolores.” His eyes stare at us with an eerie calm but then his shoulders relax, as if he’s done being problematic. For now.

Phew...leave it to Thames to be the perfect host...I sit down and try to ignore the tremble in my hand as I help myself to the food. We take our first mouthfuls and spread moans fill the room, making me blush because I’m so happy this isn’t a disaster.

“So, let’s hear the origin story,” Adam grins, “how did you two meet?”

A hollow forms in my chest. The way we met wasn’t that special and I would have moved on from Thames if he hadn’t been determined to make me his. “Do you want to tell it or should I?” I ask and a muscle clenches in Thames’s jaw.

“You do it. My memory’s elusive.”

I take a deep breath. “We met at a bar. I’d gone there with some friends and a girlfriend of mine happened to spill her drink on his shirt. He didn’t take it that well, shall we say?” I let out a nervous laugh. “We started arguing. I told him he was a stuck-up piece of shit for barking at my girl and he said he was immune to insults when they came from bimbos on stilettos.”

Thames bites down on his lower lip and I raise my brows when I notice the rough way he’s cutting into his food. The scraping sound bothers my ears but I patiently continue, “I was ready to insult him some more when I got dragged off to the karaoke machine.” I squirm, shrugging. “Once I was done singing, Thames pointed at me and said...*You*. That was basically it...”



Trailing off, I shiver because now Thames is digging into his plate and he's practically ruining our china. I don't tell him off, blurting, "I could show you a photo. It was taken the first night we met." I hurry into the living room but to my surprise, I find that it has been broken.

The glass is shattered and Thames's face barely visible. It could be anyone next to me and I frown because, putting it back in its place. Walking back into the kitchen, I notice that Thames has finally calmed down with the knife and I mutter some excuse regarding the photo.

"Forgot to mention," I add, corking up some more wine,"but Thames's brother will be joining us."

"Oh wow," the Christie's blurt, "the more the merrier..."

Giving a tight smile, Thames leans forward and grabs the bottle because I'm having some trouble with opening it and he pours more into our glasses, murmuring, "Tristan won't be coming. He texted me a couple of minutes ago. Something's come up."

My face falls and I nearly bring down the cloth when I put my hands in my lap. He's not coming? Again. Thames's eyes go to mine and they twist and probe, searching for something and I deter my gaze then shrug to let him know I really don't care.

We chitchat about this and that and the dinner runs pretty smoothly, until the wind begins whipping at the glass and I throw a worried look at the window. "Dang," I mutter, "I do not like the sound of that." Glancing at my friends, I say, "Maybe it's best if you spend the night."

“No protests from this side of the table,” Adam laughs but Thames is on edge again.

“We wouldn’t want to intrude,” Delinda says, throwing a glance at Thames that says she just said it to be polite but Thames doesn’t protest. Feeling embarrassed about the way he’s acting, I quickly add,

“Don’t worry about it. We have a ton of guestrooms...”

“The weather isn’t that bad,” Thames shrugs. “No need to overreact. I’m sure you’ll be fine.”

Pinching my lips, I scowl at him while the storm increases. Fine? Yeah, probably but why risk it? Trying to think of something to say that could break the ice, I look up when Delinda does it before me.

“Babies!” she squeals out of nowhere in a forced joyful tone. “Tell me, have you thought about it, in which case how many, when, have you thought of names...?”

Feeling crestfallen, I stare at her because I haven’t thought about kids at all but the more unsettling thing is the dread in Thames’s eyes. I almost missed it, but I’m pretty sure I saw it.

“We’re taking it slow,” I say with a smile. “We’re still pretty young and there’s time.”

“Just want you to know I think you’ll be a hell of a mother,” Adam slurs,

pointing a finger in my face. “Your man’s a lucky guy for snatching you up.”

“Why don’t you keep your eyes on your own wife instead of looking at mine?” Thames snaps and we all twitch. Flooding with mortification, I hold down a whimper. Thames swipes his drink. “Get the fuck out of my house, *Adam.*”

Gasping for air, I stare at him and I can’t believe he’s talking that way to my friends. Delinda gets up, yanking Adam with her and they stumble into the hallway. “You’re really leaving,” I cry, “you’re going out into the storm.”

“Can’t stay here,” Delinda says stressfully, “but thanks for the dinner. It was um...lovely.”

“You should stay,” I insist, “Thames didn’t mean for it to come out the way it did.”

“I’m pretty sure he meant it,” Adam mutters and they open the door, walking out and I cry after them on the porch,

“Please, don’t leave like this.”

“Elsa!” Thames growls and I jolt, glancing over my shoulder. He’s standing at the end of the hallway with his hands in his pockets. “Why don’t you redirect that attention where it should be?” his eyes flash, “on your husband.”

## CHAPTER SIX

*Thames*

She satisfies my request and it gives me an ounce peace, but it's not enough. Elsa's eyes are wary as she walks over to me, her mouth tight and I have a feeling we're about to have our first real fight. Stopping in front of me, she blurts,

“You could've at least been nice to our guests.”

“I was,” I say, grinding the back of my teeth and I love when there's nobody but her and me in this house. Their presence was a waste of space and I'm not sure how I feel about Elsa having a friend who's male.

Shaking her head, Elsa crosses her arms. “We don't have the same definition of the word then.”

My face hardens. “He was eyeing you across the table like you were a piece of meat,” I say and she gawks. “You think I allow that disrespect in my own house? He disrespected me, you and our entire marriage.”

Her head moves in a shake as if she doesn't see it that way and she throws me a careful glance. “Just try to be more civil next time,” she pleads.

“Try not to invite over any male friends next time.” He annoyed the fuck out of me. Not to mention the couple brought up kids and I don’t want Elsa getting any ideas. No kids in this house, until I have her love for me secured. And when we do get kids...it’ll be only girls.

I don’t want the competition.

Chewing on her lower lip, concern flashes on her face. “You shouldn’t just have chased them out of here, into that storm...”

“That little friend of yours deserved it.” I drag a deep inhale, looking down at her and she needs to bend her neck to be able to keep eye contact. “He did nothing while some fucker assaulted you.”

She winces. “Assault is such a strong word...”

“He slapped your ass,” I growl, “fuck if I had been here, I would’ve ripped out his tongue with my teeth and made him eat it.”

At least I found out about it and now I can deal with it. Luckily, she was clever enough to file a report and it won’t take long before I get the fucker’s name and then I’ll make a couple of calls, make sure he gets what he deserves for putting his filthy hands on my clean woman. *Thanks for telling me, Adam.*

Elsa looks at me in shock. “It was a long time ago, Thames. I’d even forgotten about it until he brought it up.”

“Don’t care,” I snarl, “see now why you need me? You need me because I protect you from bastards like the one who assaulted you and cowardly little shits like Adam.”

Flaring out with her hands, Elsa groans, “This conversation’s over.” She tries to leave but I grab her arm and she gasps. I pull her to me, brushing my lips along her temple because I want her to know how I feel.

“I don’t like it when you turn your back on me,” I rasp in warning and her eyes flare a little. “I don’t like being pushed out, ignored or excluded. Especially...,” my lips pull over my teeth, “especially not by you.”

Panting, she looks up at me in surprise. “I’ve never excluded you,” she gulps.

My eyes narrow. “You exclude me whenever you look at another man. You exclude me whenever you think about anyone else but me. ” I place a hand on top of her heart and it races beneath my palm. “There can only be room for me in here.”

“There is only room for you,” Elsa whimpers but I don’t believe her.

She said Tristan’s name and I’m mad with jealousy. His name crossed her lips when she was with me. She chose to be with me and yet her mind was somewhere else. And where the mind is, the heart follows and I fill with pent up wrath and fucked up emotions I can barely control.

Cupping Elsa’s slender neck, I whisper, “Why did you marry me, baby?”

As expected she tenses. The question struck a nerve and my heart starts

pounding, threatening to leave my chest if she doesn't soothe me. If she doesn't say the things I want to hear and I don't know what the fuck to do. It feels as if I'm being split in two.

"Go on, tell me the truth," I encourage. "I won't hold it against you."

"Promise?" she whispers and I nod. "I married you because I knew you'd protect me from T...Tristan."

Eyes lowering, I drop her arm and she whimpers, acting as if she now feels cold but it's nothing compared to what her words have done to me. She doesn't love me. I haven't done enough to make her love me. And she hates Tristan. "What is it with you and my brother, anyway?" I rasp in a low tone. "Why does he live in that little mind of yours when you have me?"

My jaw clenches. "You don't think I'm enough?"

"You're enough," she blurts with frantic eyes. "Thames, please you're more than enough! And I feel nothing for Tristan. I hate him. He scares the life out of me, you should've seen the way he looks at me..."

"How?" I snap, boring my eyes into hers. "How does he look at you?"

Her face turns red, letting me know that there's something about the way that Tristan looks at her that she likes. "I don't k...know," she stutters but I force her to tell me and her eyes lower. "He looks at me as if he's addicted, as if he would hold onto me with his whole heart if he had one." Elsa's lower lip trembles. "He looked at me once and he hasn't let go."

"Yet that scares you?"

Elsa nods. “The lights are out in him. He’s dark, Thames.”

My eyes shudder in agony. Elsa lets out a whimper, clutching me while sniveling, “And I’m sorry, but I don’t know what to do. I feel torn and I don’t want to hurt you...”

“Do you want to leave me?”

“No,” she cries and that I believe. She may not love me but she needs me. Needs me to *protect* her from Tristan. Jealousy flares in me, vile and brutal, a scorpion crawling from the inside and stinging its poison into my heart. “Please...”

“You know why I don’t like you wearing red?” I rasp and the abrupt question makes her shake her head. “Because it makes my blood boil until I can barely control myself and I know what other men think when they see you in it.”

Elsa begins protesting, coming with excuses that other men don’t think of her in that way but I stop her.

“Adam wanted to fuck you tonight,” I say. “I could see it from the way he salivated whenever you bent over the table, displaying your cleavage.” My fists clench in anger. “The pianist wanted it, your personal trainer wanted it and...Tristan?” I clasp Elsa’s chin. “Oh, he definitely wants to fuck you.”

Shivering, she stares at me without blinking and I let go of her and walk out into the storm.



\*\*\*\*

*Elsa*

Just like that he walks out. I yell his name over and over but he doesn't reply, disappearing into the dark. My heart pounds in my chest and my limbs tremble. This night could've gone better and I knew it.

I knew he was furious I'd said his brother's name!

Groaning to myself, I walk into the kitchen and glance at the mountain of dishes. I could leave it all to the maid but I'm bogged down with emotions and furiously scrubbing a greasy pan helps. For a while. After some time, I give up and decide to just go upstairs and have a bath instead.

That'll calm the nerves and Thames will hopefully be back once I'm done. I don't like the thought of him being out there in this weather but he doesn't pick up when I call. He probably just needs some time for himself, yet my hands still tremble when I pour the bubble bath into the water.

It foams up immediately, the water turning a rose gold and I take off my clothes, wincing a little from how hot it is when I get in but after a while I get used to it. Leaning back, the events from the evening swim in my head.

While probably being one of the worst night's in my life there was still a silver lining. The way Thames kept saying *my wife* when talking to Adam. It filled me with something warm and gooey, made me all woozy and I realized that I'm pretty proud to be Thames's wife.

I didn't want to hurt him earlier but he insisted on knowing. Maybe I

should've lied but how are we going to sustain this marriage if we keep secrets? Scooping up the bubbles in my hand, I blow at them, thinking that I'll need to give Thames some time. He needs time to think and grapple with his emotions.

It's obvious he's in a bad place, the way he treated my friends...the things he said about me and other men. I twitch when I hear the front door slam and my heart begins pounding for unknown reasons. "I'm in the bath," I yell, biting my lip soon after because I just assumed he was looking for me.

He might've not been looking for me at all.

But then I hear his footsteps and I take a deep breath. "Where did you go...?" I say in a soft whisper, turning my head to the side when he stops in the doorway. The moment I look at him it feels as if the water just turned into ice.

The man in the doorway isn't Thames.

I scream, gripping the edges of the bathtub and try to bolt but Tristan only finds my reaction amusing. Letting out a horse laugh, he slams the door behind and now we're alone in the bathroom. I shake like a leaf, gawking up at him and he tilts his head to the side and there's that look in his eyes.

Whimpering, I say, "Thames will kill you when he finds out you've been in here."

"You'll be loyal to me and not tell him." Tristan shakes his head as if my words have no effect. "This will be our little secret."

I let out a sob and try to cover myself with the bubbles but I've been in here for a while and they've begun to melt. Tristan's eyes harden from what I'm trying to do and he goes down on his haunches, putting his hand into the water, stroking it and I yelp when his fingers brush my thigh.

"I've missed you," he whispers with unhinged longing, clearly not caring about the distress I'm in. "Ever since I saw you I've had nothing but you on my mind." He inhales as if in pain, his eyes going to my breasts and he licks his lips. "It hurts not being close to you all the time."

"Get out of here," I stutter, "you're trespassing." My lips tremble. "Your brother and I are married..."

"And you've caused me a lot of trouble by agreeing to marry him," Tristan snaps and I gasp. "You should've just left it alone. You should've just let me have you." He playfully splashes water at me and it hits my breast, causing an electric current to blaze in my body. "Troublemaker."

"T...Tristan....," I begin but he groans with hooded eyes,

"Mmm...I love it when you say my name. Say it again."

"L...leave," I say and he raises his brows as if to mock my powerlessness. "If you ever come around here again, I'll have you arrested."

"You'd put your brother in law behind bars?" His eyes narrow. "Don't be heartless, baby. I know there's a soft spot for me in there somewhere."

My heart snaps. The thought of Tristan behind bars *hurts* me and I realize how twisted my attraction to him is. "You just want me because you're

jealous of Thames. You're jealous of everything that he has but you could've had that too if you had turned your life around."

"Oh, I've turned my life around, don't you worry about that," Tristan rasps. His eyes flash. "Big time." His hand stops gliding on the water and I jerk when I feel it between my legs. "Fuck...there's that soft spot I was talking about."

"Don't touch me!" I cry but his caress rips down any resistance and I moan both from arousal and horror, turning limp in the bath. I try to close my legs, try to push his hand away but I can't.

He groans at my weakened defense, spreading me open to him and without caring about easing me he plunges his finger right inside. My whole body strains as he presses down on my tight bud until it puffs up in the water, my core dripping and my face flames from gratitude that at least he can't feel *that*.

I shake, the water splashing from the edges of the tub and I spasm like a mermaid on land while Tristan manipulates my flesh and I'm entranced by him, by his penetrating eyes that I now know I won't ever be able to escape. He's a murderer but all I see in him is a yearning to live one thousand nights with...*me*. I squeeze my eyes in agony as I keep responding to his touch with a fervor, I didn't know I had.

"You want this," Tristan grinds. "Your pussy wouldn't get this needy if you didn't want it."

"I don't," I sob because I'm another man's wife but the sob turns into a sharp moan when he strokes me harder and faster, the movement causing the water to ripple and he stops blinking. He's moaning too, his arm jerking,

hitting just the right spot and he whispers that I'm his.

The word rings in my ears. *You're mine, mine, mine...*

To block the sound, I slide farther down, ending up beneath the surface and I look up at Tristan, his face twisted with dark desire while he fondles me and I scream underneath the water, blowing up between my legs.

Sitting up, I gasp for air. Disorientation washes over me because I can't believe what just happened and I jerk when Tristan trickles his hand over my breast before rising. He calmly wipes his hand wet hand off my towel while I stare. "Don't try to run and hide or whine about this to Thames. He can't save your little ass. I'll always find a way to get to you."

I gasp when he lovingly cups my face. "Can I get a kiss goodbye?"

"Go!" I croak, on the verge of tears and he lets me go, deciding to just kiss me on the head.

"One more thing," he says and I turn to him while trembling. "As far as I'm concerned, you scream my name all you want. Regardless of which brother's fucking you."

My jaw slacks and I sag when Tristan finally walks out.

Thames told him. Tristan knows. They both know.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

*Thames*

Next morning my wife's distant. She was already asleep when I came home last night but when I pulled her to me, she scooped closer as if in need of comfort. Now though, she seems intent on keeping me at an arm's length. I've asked her five questions in a row and she gives me short, bland answers back.

"Elsa," I say in a gentle tone, putting my hands into my pockets. "How about you look at me when I talk to you, baby?"

Finally she looks up and stops clinking on the piano. Her eyes are glazed, body language distant. She wears white today and smells divine of...bubble bath. Walking over to the piano, I go down on my haunches and she throws me a stressed glance.

"I didn't think it was anything important. Sorry if I seem distracted."

She seems more than distracted, almost as if she wants to walk into a room, close the door and lock it up. It's not something I'd recommend. I don't like distance between me and her. For me to function, I need her to stay within my reach.

Taking her hands into mine, I murmur, “What’s the matter? Did something happen while I was gone yesterday?”

She tenses, trying to squirm out of my grip but I need to hold her close. If she gets up, she might turn her back on me again the way she did yesterday and she should know by now that it sets me off. I like watching her face and I like being able to watch her lips move when she speaks. Most of all, I need to see her eyes...she may not always see mine but I always have to see hers.

“Nothing. Everything was normal.”

I nod, rubbing her thigh because she needs to relax. “What did you do?”

Biting her lip, she murmurs, “Took a bath.”

Raising my brows, I murmur, “That must’ve been pleasurable...”

Red in the face, she gets up brushing me off and a muscle ticks in my jaw. “Nothing s...special,” she stutters, her eyes darting “How’s the schmoozing going by the way?” she blurts to change the subject.

The corners of my lips curve at the word of choice. “What schmoozing?”

“You said you’d help me get ahead with my career”

“Right.” A muscle ticks in my jaw. “About that...I’m thinking we should wait for a while. Put that on hold, just until we get more settled.”

Elsa gulps. “We should wait...,” her voice starts trembling, “there’s no we in this.”

My eyes harden and I can feel the little muscles straining. “There’s not?” Annoyance goes to my head. “Here I thought this whole marriage was based on a we.”

“But you said you’d further *my* career...” Elsa croaks and I nod.

“And I will. Just not now.”

“When?” she blurts, sounding as if she’s close to sobbing. “I’m not getting any younger and they want them young. And when we later start a family there won’t be time...”

“Baby, all I want is for you to be happy,” I interrupt, stroking her hair and it feels like silk. I love feeling it brushing across my bare chest at night and I don’t think I’d be able to handle the nights she’ll be away from me to sing in front of a crowd. “But I want to be the one that makes you happy. Not lights and singing...just me.”

“Just let me have one little try,” Elsa pleads, sounding on the verge of tears, “just once. Thames please...”

“We’ll see,” I rasp, clasping her chin, “see now how there’s a we in this, after all?”

She hums in response, her face glum and I need to cheer her up. I suggest we head into town and go to that coffee shop and while she agrees, it doesn’t put her in a better mood. During the whole ride, she keeps her eyes out the



window instead of on me. It almost looks a little bit as if she wants to escape.

What happened last night, unnerved her, put her on edge and I grind my jaw as I drive.

*There's no we in this...* fuck did those words sting. I hide the agony in front of her, pretending everything's normal because I don't want her jumpier than she already is. Wives leave their husbands all the time, every day and I can't be one of those men.

Elsa will never leave me. She doesn't know what I've sacrificed for her, the risks I'm willing to take to make sure she remains mine. The crimes I'm willing to commit. And the pain I'm willing to endure if she rejects my love.

And the pain I'm willing to deliver on those who take my place.

"Thames, you're nearly ripping out the steering wheel!" Elsa cries in alarm and I come to my senses, my mind regaining focus. Fuck, she's right and I drive to the side, parking the car and rub my eyes. Gulping, Elsa asks. "What is it?"

"Nothing."

She fidgets and the whiffs of her perfume cause hunger to burn in me. "Have I been bad?"

I flex my jaw. "Your attention's been scattered all day. I didn't want to say anything but..."

“It’s been bothering you,” she finishes and her cheeks redden. Her thick lips part when she drags an inhale and I look down in surprise when she fumbles with my belt.

My heart nearly explodes in my chest.

“Elsa, what are you...,” I begin, “fuck yes...,” I groan, my eyes rolling back when she provocatively moans and rubs me, “keep going, keep going...” I put my hand on the back of her head and my mind goes blank the moment I feel her unspoiled lips. “You’ll love me eventually,” I grind in a dark voice and she sweetly gags on my length.

Undoubtedly agreeing.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

*Elsa*

He's more affectionate than usual, touches me whenever he can and showers me with compliments. He's broodier too, his eyes hardening and his body goes rigid whenever I say something about music. I know what he's thinking. That the heart of the music industry is in L.A and we live in San Francisco. He knows I'll have to travel while he'd have to stay here to run his company.

Thames isn't into the idea of us separating. I should've known! I should've known he wasn't the kind of man who would be okay with his wife following her passion unless her passion's being barefoot and pregnant. Thames wants a trophy wife.

And that's not me.

My heart goes heavy because I am developing feelings for him. Deep ones, real ones and I could never leave him but that doesn't stop me from thinking about Tristan. My face flames. I didn't tell Thames that Tristan paid me a visit or that he did more than paid me a visit. Every time I think of Tristan coming around again, I get shivers down my spine, cold ones like the ones you get when walking home alone at night but once they resolve I get excited at the thought of him showing up.

I can't explain it. It's Thames that I want but a part of me, it wants...Tristan.

"Dammit, Elsa," I mutter to myself in anger, "that look in his eyes isn't anything special."

Oh, but it is...

A woman could search for it to the end of the world and she still wouldn't find it. That look isn't rainbows and sunshine and yet I feel blissed out when I think about it. I feel strung out as if I'm lying on a desert beach somewhere, drunk on coconut rum and crawling toward a dark and stormy ocean that could swallow me alive. Wrapping my arms around me, I imagine Tristan being here, holding me, kissing me.

*Thames, Tristan, Thames, Tristan...*

I jerk, feeling like I need a slap on the wrist. Is there a club for wives that have feelings for their husbands and their murderous brother in laws at the same time, because I'd give that club my whole paycheck if it could help me sort out this mess?

Turning on the TV for some background noise, I listen to it while preparing a snack. I haven't eaten anything all day and my stomach's churning. Thames is at work but he'll be home soon and I'll start with dinner then because lately he's been having this thing where he makes love to me on top of the dining table before we eat.

Popping a slice of orange into my mouth, I wipe the juice off my chin when the news manages to catch my attention. I usually don't care that much but there seems to have been a raid in the bad parts of town and I lean against the

kitchen counter, looking across toward the living room.

The cops have busted a gang ring, escorting men from what to me looks like a warehouse. They're being ushered toward the vehicles, their hands cuffed and some of them look like they've been ripped out of bed and aren't even wearing shirts. I gulp when I notice the ink decorating their backs.

Scorpions. Big ones, black ones, same as the one...

Confusion mixed with nausea floods me and I tear my wedding ring off my finger, staring at the red mark it left behind and start trembling from the shock.

"Baby," Thames calls and I jerk when the front door closes. "I'm home."

He's early and I freeze. The TV's on and I'm too far away to turn it off because I left the remote in the living room. His eyes meet mine and I shoot him a pale smile. Oh fuck, what is truly going on here...? Feeling lightheaded, I focus on my breaths as he stalks over to me and luckily he's oblivious to the news.

My heart begins hammering, my adrenaline rushing and I both feel like crying and demanding answers. Why does Thames have the exact same tattoo as those gang members? Thames has never been part of a gang but...

His twin brother has.

"Cat got your tongue?" Thames chuckles with a curious look in his eyes and I twitch. "I asked you a question."

I frown, while feeling as if my heart's about to give out when he stops in front of me. "W...what was the question?" I stutter and everything's turning blurry and I need to blink for Thames's features to turn to normal.

"If you've missed me as much as I missed you?"

Swallowing, I whisper, "Yes."

He smiles at me. "You're so fucking sweet," he groans, cupping my cheek and he kisses me before I even have a chance to stop him. I kiss him back stiffly and I open my eyes, noticing that he's frowning. When his eyes suddenly flash open, I let out a destitute cry but he mistakes it for a moan. "I know," he groans, "I get overexcited around you."

Breaking off the kiss, I cower, staring down at the floor because I feel that if I look at him he'll know that I know. "What's the matter?" he asks, his voice concerned and he strokes my arm. "Did somebody hurt you?"

Why does he care if he is who I think he is?

Panic flares in me. I need to get out of here.

His brows curve over his eyes as I struggle to come up with something to say but then I notice what he's looking at. My hand. "Where's your ring?" he asks, his voice razor sharp and forceful enough to make me see double for a moment.

"Took it off for a bit. Someone told me you're supposed to take it off once

in a while because it cuts off circulation.”

He snorts. “And you’re cutting off mine by not wearing it. Are you trying to give me a heart attack or what?”

I laugh nervously, not responding and his gorgeous eyes narrow.

“Put it back on, Elsa.”

Nodding, I reach for the ring but I’m so anxious that it slips from my fingers and falls to the floor. He lets out an impatient sound, picking it up and puts it on my finger himself. A slow smile crosses his face, serenity coating his eyes.

“Don’t take it off again,” he says and exhales as if he’s been holding in a breath.

“Thames...,” I whisper, feeling my heart break in my chest and his brows curve.

“Wait.” He shakes his head. “The TV’s bothering me. I’ll go turn it off.”

I lose it, the terror nearly ripping me apart and I tug at him. “Kiss me!” I yelp, to keep his focus and he lets out a surprised grunt but obliges in a split second. His mouth is husband material, his tongue intoxicating and I hold back the tears. Yanking at him, I rip at the buttons of his shirt and he lets out an excited groan.

“What’s gotten into you, baby?” His eyes flash with hunger. “Not that I

mind, I've been craving you to love me all day...," He trails off when I push him into the wall and he lets out a delirious laugh before growling and lunging at me. Next time I blink, we're on the floor with him on top of me and his hand slides underneath my dress and I brace myself, just before...

*"This evening a police raid was implemented on the basis of racketeering and possession of illegal firearms...The gang that call themselves Scorpions are notorious for the stinger tattoos on their backs..."*

As the news anchor keeps talking, I feel myself go limp underneath Thames. He has tensed and when I try to yank at his belt, he stops me, marches into the living room and turns off the TV. The silence that spreads makes my skin burn and I rise from the floor.

He's still standing in the middle of the room, his hand clutching the remote and he has his back to me. His back seems tenser than usual. Bigger, stronger...When he turns around, his eyes are unreadable and I force myself to move one leg and then the other.

"Is something w...wrong?" I stutter, still playing my role and he puts his hands into his pockets.

"You tell me."

I shake my head. "I don't think so..." Wringing my hands, I brush past the living room and grab my purse. "I'm going to have to head into town real quick. I need some fresh groceries for dinner..." I hurry up toward the front door with my heart in my throat and a flash of relief flares in me when I yank it open but I never make it out...



It slams and I shake when I feel Thames leaning into me with his big body. Inhaling my hair, he locks the door before whirling me around and bores his eyes into mine.

“You must think I’m stupid,” he purrs and blood goes to my face.

Oh shit...“I would never think that,” I breathe. “I was only heading out to...”

“Buy some groceries,” he finishes, stroking my jawline. “I heard you the first time.”

“Thames...”

He smiles lovingly and it nearly takes my breath away. “Come spend some time with your husband. I’ve had a rough day...” his voice lowers. “Could use some attention.” He strokes a hand down my spine. “Will you let me get you naked and take care of your needs, baby?”

Baby. Not baby spice. He hasn’t called me baby spice since before the wedding.

“Of course,” I pant while blood pounds in my temples. I freeze when Thames lets out a hoarse laugh.

“My blonde little genius,” he moans affectionately, cupping the sides of my face. “You can drop the act. I know that you know.”

The look in his eyes transforms, going from proper and controlled to

unhinged and predatory. Something abysmal is staring back at me and there's no Thames anymore. Only Tristan. I'm vulnerable, open to attack...I've always been open to his attack...

All this time.

Opening my mouth, I scream, praying the neighbors will hear when he slams a hand down my mouth, boring his eyes into mine and I whimper.

"Don't scream," he groans in misery. "Not when all I have is love for you..." His face twists from the pain. "Don't do this to me when I would bleed out for the two of us...when I would sell my soul for you."

"You lied to me," I cry behind his hand and the sound comes out muffled. "All this time you had me fooled..." Anger flares in me and I bite down on his hand. He lets out an annoyed bellow and I take the chance to kick his leg. It causes him to drop me for a moment and I worm past him, running screamingly into the kitchen.

Grabbing a pan, I swing left and right as Tristan stalks toward me. Once he's close enough, I swing once more, aiming for his head but he grabs my wrists before yanking at the pan with his other hand and throws it into the corner. It falls with a clank and I whimper, creeping up against the wall and Tristan brushes his head in frustration.

"You weren't supposed to find out like this."

"Then tell me..." I whimper, "how exactly was I supposed to find out? After we've been married for years, after we've had children..." I choke on my words, "after falling deeper and deeper in love with you?"

His eyes flash with vulnerability at the word love, his mouth opening to answer but I interrupt, “What did you do to Thames, you sick bastard?”

“Don’t call me that,” Tristan snaps, “you don’t know what the fuck you’re saying.”

“Then you didn’t just hijack your brother’s identity, pretending to be him all this time?” I cry, jolting when Tristan takes a step closer to me.

“You think that’s sick? Baby, you know nothing. You have no idea what I would do for love. What I would do for you.”

Dizziness goes to my head. “Where’s Thames?”

“Stop asking about him, Elsa.”

“Tell me!”

“Why?” Tristan snarls, grinding the back of his teeth. “Is it him that you want? Is it, you little bitch?” His fists clench until the knuckles whiten. “I’ll start a fucking war if you want him over me!”

A strangled cry bubbles up in my throat. “Where is he?” I yell and let out a scream when Tristan slams his fist on the kitchen island.

“He ran, alright,” he growls. “He ran when he realized I wanted you.”

“Because he was afraid.” My eyes roll back in my head from the adrenaline. “Because he thought you’d k...kill him...” I fall to my knees as Tristan looks down at me without pity. “He thought you’d kill him the same way you killed your family.”

Letting out a growl, Tristan reaches for me and I scream when he picks me up, putting me on the dining table and my head bobs. “Hurt me then...,” I whimper, “hurt me the same way you hurt everyone.”

## CHAPTER NINE

*Tristan*

“I want to kiss you not hurt you.” I clasp her face, pressing my lips against hers but she pinches her own, not letting me probe her lips open with my tongue. “Open up,” I groan. “You always open up to me.”

“I open up to Thames, not you,” she rasps and I frantically cup her neck and push her face to mine until our lashes almost touch.

“Yeah, I recall what you said,” I growl, “I’m repulsed by Tristan, I’m revolted by Tristan...but not revolted enough to not scream my name when your husband took your innocence. Not revolted enough to not come on my fingers when I ambushed you in the bathroom...”

She’s not revolted. Not anymore. She can’t be. I’ve been playing Thames to let her know there’s another side to me. And she has to have fallen for it.

“Don’t you dare sit up high on your unicorn and blame me for doing this. I had no other choice. You never would’ve given me a chance as Tristan,” I rasp and her lower lip trembles,

“Can you blame me?”

But I do blame her and I slant my mouth over hers before she gets a chance to protest. Our tongues lick like fire and she whimpers, murmuring words I'm too dazed to hear but I feel her hands pushing against my chest. I deepen the kiss, cutting past all opposition and my head swims when her fingers dig into my skin...this time to pull me closer.

I cover her slit with my palm and she's painfully wet and I throb against her thigh, needing to spread her open wide. I don't hold back, I don't care to disguise who I am anymore and I want her to know the real me, the one who would tear the world apart in exchange for one of her smiles.

"Give up your pussy," I demand with greed and she gives up, parting her thighs and I'm right where I should be again. Between her legs. My eyes roll back in my head. I'd do murder if she ever denied me this. Elsa's saving lives just by giving it up and I clasp her hips, her musky scent coating my face and she moans, grabbing my head. "Who adores having their husband eat them out?"

She squeezes her eyes, refusing to say it but lets out a sound of frustration when I soften the pressure. "Say it," I snarl.

"Me," she weeps. "I adore it." She looks up at me with eyes that say, *you baited me* but she doesn't ask me to stop. Deep down, she wants the real me, the man who hangs onto her with his whole heart even if it's black and unworthy of her.

"The way to your heart goes through this divine cunt, doesn't it?" I growl, lavishing all my attention on where she's the most sensitive. "Tristan's pretty, little slut."

Elsa screams, erupting and convulsing and I claim her before she gets a chance to recover. Her scream gets caught in her throat and I pant, buried in her and I look down at us, at my thick length rammed in her slit and my affection for her doubles until I can barely stand straight.

“Look at us,” I pant. “You’re stuck with me, baby. Look how insatiably you pull me in.” Her head moves in a nod as if she can’t help it and of course she can’t help it. We’re made for each other. “Fuck me,” I moan and she inhales, her body sliding down my cock and I fist her hair, pushing her up against the wall and she moans in rapture, her head hanging, her eyes glazed.

This one’s mine. This one was always mine. When I was a boy, when I was behind bars...all along she belonged to me. Burying my face in her throat, I let all the dark emotions wash over me that I’ve been forced to hold back all this time. They overwhelm and there’s no other outlet for them other than her.

I yank her to me, fucking her toward our peak and she begs me not to stop and I don’t, slamming into her with a pace that increases in fury until the pulsing waves from her pussy washes over me with a destruction I’ve never felt from her before and I let out a bellow.

She gasps in my ear, her breaths shaky and she ripples around me, milking the crazy jealousy in me until I grow so damn possessive over her in this moment that I fuck her harder than intended. “This is what you do to me,” I grind between my teeth while she whimpers in shock, “you make me lose control...”

“I know...,” she whispers, as if there’s some sympathy in her for me after all. Her voice is soft and sweet but it only worsens the need. It warps my mind and it warps my heart. She almost married another man. She could’ve been doing this right now to someone else and I snap my hips, lowering my

face and taking mouthfuls of her breasts. I taste and dine, savoring her on my palate and she's a rare delicacy. When I come I see double. Two Elsa's with their faces twisted from pleasure and euphoria. Two twins and she comes twice, her second time more violent than the first.

It takes her a long time to recover and I watch it all play out in front of me, the slowing of her breathing, the chest and face going from red to pink and she shivers. I've just blasted in her, used her body in the best way possible.

With hooded eyes, she goes to her knees and I'm thinking she's too exhausted, needing me to carry her. I'm about to do just that when she takes me into her mouth and I jolt. "That's my good girl...", She's ruthless though, teasing and tormenting me while her eyes look up at me as if she has rewound everything in her mind.

Is she doing this to Thames or Tristan?

"Who am I?" I growl in warning and her eyes shudder.

"You're my husband...", she pants.

Relief floods my veins. She wanted me from the moment we laid eyes on each other. I felt it and she felt it. This was inevitable and I would do it all over again if I had to.

I thrust, making her take more and her mouth's everything I dreamt of and the fact that she's sucking me while in distress, twists me from the inside out. She whimpers, her elegant face bobbing down my length until my vision goes blurry. Tossing my head back, I screw my hips and come between her beautiful lips. They're swollen from pleasuring me, puffy and that clean



loveliness of hers makes my heart clench. In the back of my mind, I know I'll never fully own her but I'm determined to own what I can. Pulling her to me, I tense when she gripes,

“Tristan, don't...”

Agony fills me. “I just want to hold you and make things good between us again.” She eases a little, liberating me from some of the guilt. “Go ahead. I know there are things you want to say.”

“Where do I begin?” Elsa bursts into tears and her lower lip trembles. The whites of her eyes turn reddish, her nose getting runny and she wipes it off with her sleeve. “You married me against my will...,” she chokes, slowly coming down from the ecstasy she just experienced, “if I had known it was you I never would have said yes.”

I ignore the hurt. “You wouldn't have said yes to Thames either, if you knew who he is deep down.”

“He's not the one who set his family home on fire!”

“And how would you know?” I growl. “Why the fuck would you believe him more than me?” She twitches and I clasp her upper arms. “Thames is not the angel you think he is and I'm not the devil you think I am.”

Her eyes flare and I take a deep breath. Old memories come to the surface. The fire...the sirens...the neighbors who came out to watch. I remember the interrogations, the good cop who asked me if I had seen anything suspicious. I shook my head, not mentioning that I had seen Thames sneak out of our bedroom in the middle of the night.

Someone had to take the blame and I had always protected my older twin brother. He knew how to get himself into trouble and I knew how to get him out of it. But Thames was weak and I was strong. He wouldn't have been able to stand the punishment, he would've been eaten alive and I was charged for his crimes.

Even after what he did, he was the only family I had left. All I had wanted was to protect him.

When I finish the story, Elsa watches me with glassy eyes. "Is that really true?" Swallowing, I nod and she whispers, "Then he's taken years from you....your whole life."

He did. And he nearly took the woman of my dreams as well but there I had to put an end to it. He'd taken my life from me but he wasn't going to take her.

"I couldn't let you marry him," I rasp. "Something snapped in me the first time I saw you at that hotel. You charged into my heart the moment I laid eyes on you." I put her hand on top of my chest. "And you've been there since, clawing at it, toying with it, manipulating it until I don't recognize myself anymore."

I was jealous of Tristan when she thought I was Thames and I was jealous of Thames when she thought I was Tristan. It drove me crazy having to pretend, never feeling like I had her full love of devotion. I was terrified she would never love me as Tristan and I was terrified she couldn't love me as Thames but now she knows.

"Now you know," I murmur, stroking her cheek and her chest heaves.

“I was so afraid of you because of the lies Thames told me. And then I saw you and you looked at me...and I thought that here’s a man who’ll do anything to get me.” She shivers. “Anything.”

She’s not wrong.

“Tristan...,” she then whimpers, burying her face against my shoulder, “I could never get you out of my mind. And I felt so twisted for carrying you within me. I thought I was bad, that I was hurting my husband...our marriage.”

“You’re not twisted. You’re my wife and I love you.”

And it feels as if I love her with two hearts, because one just isn’t enough.

“Everything will be alright,” I whisper. “I promise.”

## CHAPTER TEN

*Tristan*

That same night, Elsa and I lie in bed. She's still shook up after what happened but she's fallen asleep on my chest as if she trusts me. I play with her hair in the dark and it drips like silver between my fingers and she is my starlight.

Once she told me the lights are out on me and she's not wrong. That's why I need her, to help me navigate, help me see straight and do the right thing. I'm no longer something bad in her mind. She believed my story and my heart clenches.

She believed *everything* I said.

My good, loyal wife...I don't deserve her.

Pulling out from underneath her carefully so she doesn't wake up, I leave her sleeping in our bed and put on a pair of pajama pants before going downstairs. I don't turn on the lights but feel my way through the dark until I'm standing outside of the garage. Silently, the door opens up and I step inside.

There are no windows here and rage lingers in the air. It makes me smirk in

triumph and I switch on the light. Sharp and sterile, it illuminates the room and my eyes go to the figure sitting on a chair up against the wall. The same face that I see every day looks up at me.

My face.

I wonder what Elsa would say if she knew I had kept her intended fiancée down here this whole time.

“Hello brother,” I purr and he growls behind the mouth gag. “Why don’t you say what’s really on your heart.” Yanking the gag off, I laugh when Tristan starts screaming. His face turns red, veins popping and I can’t see his eyes anymore, just the whites. He looks like he’s about to have a seizure.

I cross my arms over my chest, waiting for him to finish. The garage is sound isolated, nobody can hear a thing anyway and I got all the time in the world. Well...until Elsa wakes up at least. Thames finally stops screaming, saliva dripping down his mouth and his chest heaves.

He’s lost some weight since I’ve only fed him bread and water like the criminal he is and like the criminal he always will be.

“Motherfucker!” Thames spits. “Why the fuck would you do this?”

“I’ll give you a clue,” I drawl. “It’s blonde, its mine and it says my name when it comes”

Rage covers Thames’s face, making me brim with satisfaction because playing with one’s victim is never dull.

“What did you do to her? That woman’s mine...” He stops talking when I smack him across his mouth with my fist. He gasps for air. “I saw her first.” His head bobs. “She won’t love you the way she could’ve grown to love me.”

“Guess now we’ll never know.”

Thames laughs and I feel like punching him again. “She won’t accept you, the way you want her to. You can’t give her the life I can.”

“I disagree. I’ve taken over your life. Everyone thinks I’m you.”

Elsa’s the only one who knows the truth but I don’t think I’ve done anything wrong. Thames created the life I should’ve had. His career, his money...but I wasn’t going to let him take my woman. Something inside of me shattered when I laid eyes on Elsa and I knew that my brother was just an obstacle in the way.

I had to get rid of him. And I did. The old me, the eleven year old kid would’ve never done something like this but the years in prison, the years with the Scorpions...well, they changed me.

“You’re a fraud,” Thames spits, “soon Elsa will see it too...”

“Keep talking,” I grind, a muscle ticking in my jaw and Thames laughs.

“You won’t be able to keep something like her down. That body draws attention wherever she goes, those legs...she’ll walk all over you when she realizes you’re just as fucked up as I am.” Thames’s lips pull over his teeth.

“You know what I’ll do as soon as I get out? I’ll crawl into your marital bed and knock up “your” wife...”

My brows rise. “For you to knock her up, you’d have to leave this place alive.”

Thames’s eyes flash and there’s a hint of fear in them before he lets out an infuriated scream. It bounces off the wall and I grab my gun, placing it between his brows.

“Good bye, brother.” I pull the trigger and twitch when blood splashes everywhere.

I drag a breath, my body shuddering with peace and I spend the rest of the couple of hours cleaning up. Then I go and lay down next to my beautiful wife as if I’m the perfect husband. She stirs a little and I fill with satisfaction.

“Did you go anywhere?” she whispers groggily.

“Been right here,” I rasp and she smiles, falling asleep again.

Safe in the arms of a man who has loved her from the moment he saw her. I don’t ask her if she loves me because I’m too worried about what she’ll answer. Inhaling, I pull a hand down my face. She knows who I am. She found out too soon and too brutally. My heart sinks because I realize I’ll have to do something big to help her cope.

Something that goes against my nature but sometimes a sacrifice is required.

And for Elsa...I would sacrifice everything.

\*\*\*\*

*Elsa*

The next morning, I wake up several hours after *Tristan*. I squirm in bed, thinking it'll take some time until I get used to calling him that. Biting my lip, I get up and put some clothes on before I look for him.

I can't find him anywhere in the house and my heart twitches when I check the garage. To my surprise it's open for once and it's empty in here except for the cars. Smells really clean and fresh too and I feel a flash of guilt.

Why did I ever think Tristan was hiding something in here?

I don't even know what it was I thought he hid...Thames? I snort on a laugh at my bizarre thoughts and take a deep breath, continuing the search when I hear whistling. Somebody's happy...

Curious, I walk to the back where the whistles are coming from and I find Tristan hunched down, polishing a beast of a motorcycle. Gone are the strict suits and ties and he's wearing boots, dark denims and a white t-shirt.

My pulse races at the sight of his sexy biceps and when he bends over, his t-shirt slides, revealing a piece of his tattoo. Are all husbands this hot or is it only mine? Tristan turns around, sensing that I'm there and he flashes a roguish grin.



No, it's definitely only mine.

"Where have you been hiding her?" I breathe and Tristan rises.

"Wanted to surprise you. You like it."

"Mmm," I murmur because I like it a lot. It's so different from the Thames I know...well Tristan, I chew on my lip because that just sounded complicated. "She's beautiful." I stroke the handle and Tristan grunts,

"Don't touch it like that, you're making me jealous."

I snigger, not sure if he's serious or not but I think it was a joke. "Is there a reason for why you put her out on display?"

"Promised you the stars and I'm going to deliver."

My jaw slacks. He can't be serious. Thames would never do something that's not in his calendar...I jerk. Thames wouldn't but Tristan would and my heart swells in my chest. "What about your work?"

He shrugs. "Zoom."

This almost sounds too good to be true. "Is this your way of making it up to me?" I ask and a somber shadow crosses his face as he cups my hands before nodding.

“I want there to be a we, Elsa,” he says in a low tone. “I never want to be excluded from anything in your life and if that means I’ll have to sacrifice some things, then so be it.”

“The career,” I murmur and he does an eye roll.

“Yeah, the career,” he mutters as if he hadn’t been referring to that at all and something flashes his eyes as if he wants to squeeze me to him and hide me away. With my hands clasped he puts them up against his heart and he does that a lot. It’s as if it makes him feel close to me. “And I know what I did was...nonconformist.”

“That’s the word,” I breathe. “Nonconformist.”

The corners of his lips curve. “I want us to move past what happened. You’re my wife and I’m your husband and I need there to be a bond between us.” He does a sharp inhale. “I understand that you might need some time but if you can’t love me a lot then at least try to love me a little.”

My knees cave, heart turning into liquid in my chest and I search his eyes as if he doesn’t want me to see the magnitude of his emotions. “Hop on,” he rasps huskily and I sit behind him, wrapping my arms around him and I tremble.

This is crazy. A new beginning. A risk but with Tristan it feels like an adventure and a bit dangerous... in a good way.

The engine purrs and I wrap my arms around him, realizing I’ll never be able to love him a little.

I can only love him a lot or not at all.

And then we drive off, closer than ever while the sun shines above our heads.

# EPILOGUE

*Elsa-Five years later*

It was perfect. A dream come true and when I look back it feels as if it was something I read in a book. We spent years in L.A and my musical heart nearly exploded from satisfaction. Tristan was with me the whole time, playing the role of Thames and wearing the suits and ties and taking the phone calls but whenever we would later meet up in my dressing room, he would eat me alive, his eyes looking at me in that special way and never blinking.

He never said anything but I could tell he wanted to take me away to our house by the sea. Once I got to the end of my pregnancy with our daughter, we decided to head back to San Francisco again and this is where we'll stay. We're happy here and this place is special to us since this is where everything began.

Besides, it's not as if the Thames will need it. I feel a flash of guilt at the inappropriate thought. Speaking of Thames, he was found three months after his disappearance. He'd fallen down a ravine, his body too difficult to identify correctly.

Tristan had to come in and he identified him as...*Tristan*.

Nobody asked any questions and nobody ever suspected a thing, not even the member of Tristan's company who used to work closely with Thames. In essence...Tristan got away with it.

"That's right, daddy got away with it," I whisper and our daughter coos in agreement. She looks so much like Tristan its crazy and it startles me a little every time I notice how similar their eye colors are. "But it doesn't matter because he loves you very much."

He deserves this life. Deep down my husband has the biggest heart. He could've hurt Thames but chose not to and that says something about his morals. Giving our daughter a kiss on the cheek, I walk out on the terrace and the wind is frisky this evening.

Tristan doesn't like it when I walk out in this weather. He thinks the wind will rip me away and cause me to fall over the railing. I do an eye roll. Yeah, that's highly unlikely...but I do love the protectiveness.

My chin jerks when Tristan's car stops in the courtyard and he walks out. I wave at him and can't stop myself from grinning when he smirks as if he knows he's getting it tonight. How did he know by the way?

He's too good at reading people for his own good.

I jump up on him as soon as he walks through the front door and he groans in satisfaction. "There's my favorite person...," he mutters between kisses and I'm so happy the baby's sleeping. I've timed this perfectly and we move toward our bedroom.

He can't say no to me about this.

“Fuck, I love this greedy side of you,” he curses. “What do I have to do to get more of it...” He rips through the buttons of my dress and I pant,

“Give me a son.”

He tenses, his eyes narrowing. “A what?”

“A son. Preferably two of them at the same time.”

Tristan shakes his head, his brows tethering. “No men in this house other than me. Not even the little ones.”

“Why?” I breathe in misery and he cups my neck.

“They’ll take my place.”

My heart sinks. “That’s not true. You’ll be so loved.” Besides, I think it could be healing for Tristan to have boys in the house. “Our family will be complete once it expands.”

Inhaling, Tristan shakes his head, his eyes going to my about to be naked body and he can’t tear his eyes away. “You’re a lot more cunning than I thought, wife but I’m afraid your little scheming has no effect on me.”

“Ouch...,” I murmur, biting my lip before pulling aside my dress, showcasing the red underwear and I feel a flash of excitement when I get his reaction. “Are you sure I can’t convince you?”

He swallows, dragging a hand down his mouth. “Might’ve spoken too soon.” He tears at his shirt and belt with a pained and aroused expression on his face. “Looks like you’ll get what you want after all.” He licks my skin. “Do you love me?”

“I love you,” I pant and he growls in my ear that he loves me more. I’m so happy he agreed to this because I didn’t tell him I’m already pregnant.

With twins. Little twins like Thames and Tristan.

We explode in an eruption of red.

Red for commitment.

Red for love. And red for...

Blood.

*The End*

Thank you for reading!! Reviews are always much appreciated <3



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