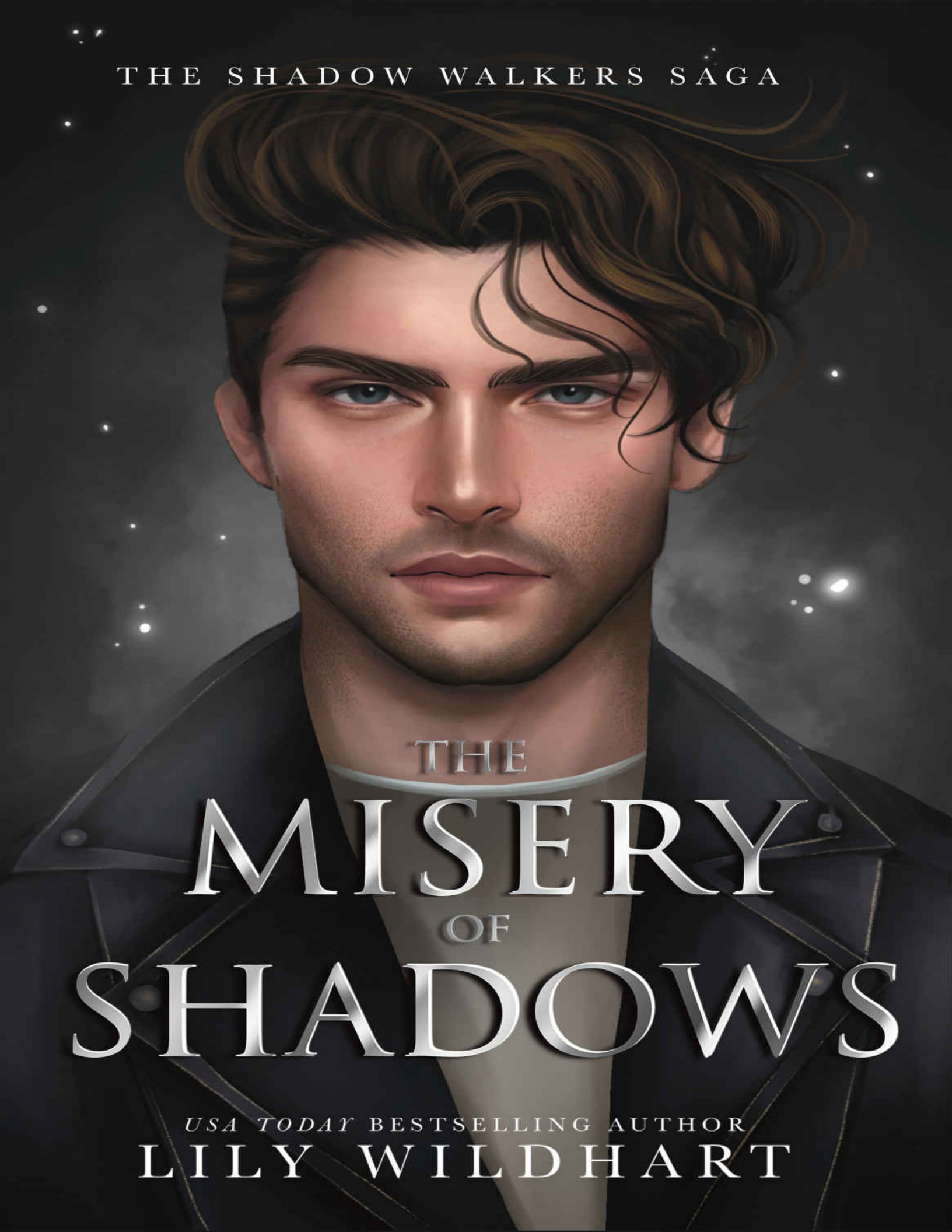


THE SHADOW WALKERS SAGA



THE
MISERY
OF
SHADOWS

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
LILY WILDHART

THE MISERY OF SHADOWS

THE SHADOW WALKERS SAGA #4

LILY WILDHART

The Misery of Shadows
The Shadow Walkers Saga #4
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The Misery of Shadows/Lily Wildhart

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CHAPTER ONE



“S he’s waking up.” The voices filter in and it’s so loud. Like everyone around me is shouting. I open my eyes and blink, because holy shit it’s bright in here. Lifting my hand to shield my eyes from the light, I try to sit, but a hand on my shoulder keeps me in place. My skin almost burns from the contact and I can’t help but flinch and the hand quickly retreats.

“You need to stay lying down, Mara.” I blink as I look up and see Caleb looking down at me.

“Caleb...why are you shouting?” I ask, because woah that was loud. “What’s going on?” I try to run my mind back, to figure out where I am, and why Caleb is here, but the last thing I remember was preparing to go to the mountain so Deacon could “trap” us.

“Mara...” his voice cuts off as loud bangs ring out, like someone’s trying to break down a door. I close my eyes and cover my ears.

What the hell is going on?

“I know she’s in there! Remy! Someone let me in for fuck sake!” the muffled voice shouts, and it takes me a second to work out that the voice belongs to Levi.

“I’m here...” I say quietly, my throat feels rough, like I’ve swallowed a desert worth of sand.

“You should drink this.” Bryce appears at my other side with a glass. “You’re going to need to let her sit up,” he says, looking at Caleb.

I’m so fucking confused right now.

Why are they here?

Why are my guys outside?

Where the hell am I?

I sit up with Caleb's help while the pounding on the door continues. I guess he didn't hear me.

I blink, my eyes watering as I try to adjust to the room. It takes a minute before I can look properly, but once my eyes adjust, I take in the room around me. I'm in a bed with purple sheets, Morgan sits in a plush black chair opposite the bed, chewing on her bottom lip, while Malik and Killian lean against the wooden door.

Bryce puts the cup to my lips and I take a sip. I gag on the liquid, wincing at the sweetness. "Oh my fates, what is that?"

"It's just some sugar water," he tells me softly, his eyes flicking up to Caleb, who looks more than a little worried, his furrowed brow and frown creating lines on his face I've never seen before.

"Where are my guys?" I ask, looking between them all. Malik and Killian say nothing, barely acknowledging my words, while Caleb and Bryce look to Morgan.

"They're outside. I needed to keep you away from them until I could be sure you wouldn't hurt them," Morgan tells me, her face straight when I laugh.

"I could never hurt them," I tell her, taking the cup from Bryce that he keeps in front of me, insisting I take another sip.

So gross.

"Mara..." Morgan starts but presses her lips together. She looks so serious and panic floods my system.

"What is it?" I ask, throwing the comforter off of my legs. I try to stand, but Caleb catches me as my knees give out. "What the fuck happened? Why can't I remember anything?"

Panic overwhelms me as Caleb tries to put me back in bed, but I struggle until he releases me and keeps a hold on my elbow as I stand again. I wrap my arms around myself and pin Morgan with my stare, only now realizing how soft my skin is. The calluses on my hands aren't scratching the skin on my stomach. I look down at them and blink.

My skin is...different. I look to my upper arm. My Angel mark is still there, but something about it all just looks off.

I look back up at Morgan, who looks torn as she chews on her lip.

"Mara...you should sit," she says calmly, but her eyes look wild.

I move on shaky legs to the chair next to her, trying not to freak the fuck out. Bryce and Caleb stay close, one of them by each of us.

“Why can’t my guys come in here?” I ask, as Levi continues to bang on the door so hard it shakes.

“They can come in, but I need to explain a few things first. You’ve been out a couple of days,” she says softly, leaning forward and resting her elbows on her knees. “What is the last thing you remember?”

I blink at her. Why have I been out for a few days? I try to think, but my head feels so fuzzy. “I remember prepping to go to the mountain,” I say, and she looks to Caleb, chewing on her lip again. “Why? What happened?”

My heart starts to race and it’s like the room gets lighter, the air thinner. Bryce stands from his perch on the arm of Morgan’s chair, while Caleb moves closer to me.

“I’m going to need you to calm down, Mara,” Caleb says softly, moving into a crouch in front of me.

“Where are my guys? Why can’t they come in?” I ask frantically, just as a loud boom rocks the room and Malik and Killian curse loudly.

“Remy!” Levi shouts, rushing toward me.

“What did you do?!” he growls at Morgan, while Malik and Killian strain to hold him back.

“Calm your shit,” Caleb says to him, firmly, while I blink at the sight of my angry Angel.

“I did what was necessary,” Morgan states. “Let him go, but Leviathan, keep your distance.”

“I’m not going to hurt her!” he roars, and she doesn’t even flinch.

“That isn’t my concern,” she says softly, and he startles, looking me over. His eyes go wide.

“What did you do?” he asks again, stilling in the Horseman’s grip.

“I was just trying to explain that,” she says with a sigh.

“I don’t understand,” I say, looking between Levi and Morgan.

“You’ve lost a few days, Mara,” Morgan tells me softly. “A lot has happened since you went to the mountain. But before you went, when we looked at your power...I...” She pauses and smiles sadly. “I was worried. So I left a little piece of your power out and I unlocked the immortality it contained, but it would only be triggered if you died.”

I sit back, trying to take in what she’s not saying...because she’s not saying what I think she is.

Right?

“When that poison entered your bloodstream, by the time Caleb got to you, his power was already in use. He couldn’t save you. So your mortal body, essentially, died,” she tells me and takes a deep breath. “You are now as you once were. An Angel. An immortal. With full access to your power. That is why we kept you here. We didn’t want anything to happen during the transition.”

“Holy fucking shit.” My breath whooshes from my lungs at her words.

“Remy,” Levi says softly, moving closer until he’s kneeling in front of me. “It’s going to be okay.”

“Where are the others?” I ask him, still trying to process what the fuck Morgan just said, and his face falls, so I look back to Morgan.

“There’s still more we need to tell you, Mara.”

Levi picks me up, sits in the chair, and puts me back on his lap, wrapping his arms around me like a vice. I relax into him, but it’s strange how different he feels underneath me. Harder somehow, as if I’m more aware of every dip and curve of him.

So fucking surreal.

I’m a fucking Angel.

Holy shit, does that mean I have wings?

“Mara...” Caleb’s voice is soft, but like he’s trying not to laugh at me. “You need to focus.”

“Right, sorry.” I blush a little, because I know they have stuff to tell me, and I want to know where the fuck the other three are, but it’s like I’m a kid on a carousel and there’s too many bright sparkly things distracting me.

“It’s fine. You’ll adjust, it’s just...” he starts but I interrupt him.

“Right, the others. Where are they?”

“Kain and Roman are resting. They’re asleep at the minute,” Levi says softly, his breath tickling my ear before he kisses the side of my head. I snuggle back into him, and realize he’s waiting for a response from me.

“Sorry, this body is weird. Why are they resting? What the hell did I miss?”

“You didn’t miss anything, you just forgot it,” Bryce says, a little

exasperated. "You really need to focus, Mara."

"Why the fuck don't you just give me a minute to catch up with the fact your Queen turned me into a fucking Angel, and then maybe I'll focus, Bryce." The words come out with way more venom and rage than I'd intended, but the rage boils up and threatens to spill over. My breathing becomes hitched and Bryce and Caleb move to shield Morgan as Levi runs his thumb up and down my ribs.

"Calm, Angel," he murmurs to me. I close my eyes and focus on his voice as I let the anger ebb away. "Your emotions are obviously heightened right now, but all of this is pretty new, so we'll give you some time to adjust."

"Thank you," I let out a deep breath. "Now why are they resting? Are they okay? And where is Creek?"

Levi flinches beneath me at my questions and I turn to look up at him as Morgan starts speaking again.

"They were both injured when we were fighting Azriel's Demons. They just need some time to finish healing fully. Being here makes things slower for all of you," she says, and another piece of the knot in my stomach loosens. "As for Creek...Mara, he's in a bad way, and you need to prepare yourself."

My stomach jumps to my throat and I think I'm going to be sick. Levi's arms tighten around me as I sit taller. "What do you mean, he's in a bad way?"

"I mean that Caleb currently has him in stasis. He's alive, but essentially frozen because the injuries he sustained...he won't survive them," she tells me straight but softly, and panic seizes my body.

I try to swallow, to make my body respond, but it's all I can do to not burst into tears. "He's going to die?" I ask, my voice breaking.

"He might," Caleb answers, coming to crouch in front of me. "But there might be another way to save him."

"What does that mean?" I ask, and Levi stiffens beneath me.

"It means," Morgan starts. "It means that I could infuse him with my blood. He would be something that hasn't been before. Part Angel, part Demon. It could also unlock any and all memories from past Hunter lives. I don't know how long it will take for them to start coming through, if they will, but it's a real possibility."

My eyes go wide at her words.

He could survive.

But would he want this? He could just cycle and come back as a Hunter. Except, I'm not a Hunter anymore, and would he want to be the only one of us that disappears for an unknown amount of time? We'd have to stay away from him until he aged out.

It's selfish of me to not want to have to go through that, for either of us to go through that. But can I do this to him? Can I even make that decision for him?

"You need to make a decision, Remy. No one else here can make that choice. But you're running out of time. I can't keep him in stasis for much longer. There's only so long Death can be held off before he comes for us all."

"Death is a person? No wait, scratch that." I take a deep breath because there are so many thoughts whirring through my mind I can't think straight. "I don't know what to do. What would he want to do?"

I drop my head in my hands and start to cry, and Levi runs a hand up and down my spine as he pulls me closer to him.

"The others should be awake soon, and your witch friend is here too. She's with Deacon, giving you time and space to recover," Morgan tells me with a small smile, trying to give me something good to hold on to.

"Holy shit, Fallon. I didn't even...I am a terrible human." I sigh.

"Remy, it's fine," Levi says softly. "Give yourself a break and take a breath, you've been awake less than an hour and your whole world has been turned upside down. Again." He growls the last bit as he eyes Morgan, and I can't tell whether he's happy about my newfound Angel status or not, but I don't have the brain space to focus on that right now.

"Nothing about any of this is fine," I say, trying to stop the tears from overwhelming me. "I should've made all of you stay behind...I should've found another way."

"There was no way to know what would've happened, and not one of us would've been left you behind, Remy," Levi tells me firmly.

"He's right," Morgan says softly, Caleb and Bryce nodding beside her. "There are casualties in war. That they were as few as they were is something to be thankful for. Your friend is fine, your men are fine. You are going to be okay, Creek will be too, either way. You just need to decide if you leave him as a Hunter or if you want me to change him. It's not an easy choice no matter which you make, I understand that, but at least this way, if you choose it, you have time to say goodbye."

She leaves the room, her guys with her, each murmuring their goodbyes to us while I sit and cry wrapped in Levi's arms.

What the fuck am I going to do?

"We should talk about what this all means for you," Levi says softly once everyone has left us alone.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you're an Angel now, Remy. There are going to be some adjustments for you. You were once an Angel, but this body, this body was created as Nephilim. So while you're used to some of the enhancements humans don't have, being an Angel is a whole different thing. You won't need to sleep or eat as often as you once did, you can go longer without breathing, even though you'll continue to breathe as you always have because that's what your body remembers. The heightened emotions, crying at the drop of a hat, it will fade soon enough, but this is all just the tip of the iceberg, and I'll help you turn the glowing down eventually too.

"I'm sure your sight and hearing has adjusted already, but it is more. You will be able to hear more, see further. You will move more quickly, which you'll need to master. You've only really walked since you woke up, but we need to train like we would if you were a child. You have wings now; you'll need to work them and build them up like any muscle. After you manage to make them appear and disappear at will. That's not counting additional power that you will have on top of that. Shadow Walkers are rare. Your blood was almost as potent before, but now, you'll be back to full power, maybe even more powerful than that.

"There were Angels who resented you the first time because of what you were. When you became a Hunter, that went away, but if you think they won't be aware of everything and be watching, you're mistaken. Plus, any extra powers you might have..."

"Levi, I'm going to need you to slow down, because this is a *lot*. My mind was already spinning, and I hadn't even thought about all of this."

"I know. That's why I'm thinking about it for you. While you becoming this helps you be less breakable, and a ton of other stuff. It also makes you more vulnerable. Angel laws are no joke, and Angels can hold grudges for a

long fucking time. Any Angels you might have pissed off before, that left you alone because you were a Hunter, they're likely to find their way back into your life, whether you want it or not."

I let out a deep breath and sit down because holy shit, that's a lot.

"Okay, so can we just focus on the shit we can actually do something about to start with? My wings, powers, whatever, we can focus on after we deal with everything else. I need to focus on Creek, on Fallon, on Archer. There's only so much I can handle, and as nice as it was that Morgan did this so I didn't die or whatever, this isn't something I would have chosen for myself right now. I just wanted life to get back to normal and now there is all of this with me, with Creek and..." I feel lightheaded just saying it all and Levi crouches in front of me, capturing my chin in his fingers and making me look into his eyes.

"You focus on what you need to. I will worry about you first, always. I know you have those things you think you need to handle, but you come first, Remy. You can't look after any of that if you don't take care of yourself." His voice is firm but echoes with underlying worry.

"I know. I know. I suck at prioritizing and there is so much to do still. So many decisions, so much to worry about."

"You are not alone in this, Remy. Lean on me, let me help you. Please. You are not in this alone." He sits on the floor and pulls me into his lap, his arms wrap around me and his wings appear, wrapping around us, cocooning us together. "I've got you. I will always catch you, be the person you can lean on. There isn't any storm we can't weather together, Remy."

"Thank you." I sigh, feeling safer than I have in a while inside this little safe space he created for us.

"Always. Just don't forget it. I know there's a lot going on, but you can always come to me, even if you just need to escape. We'll fly away together somewhere nothing and no one else can reach you."

I kiss him softly, thanking him without words, because I needed to hear this, even if I didn't know it.

"We have a lot to focus on, but for today, let's just focus on what we can control right now. I need to make a decision about Creek, I need to check on the other guys, and I need to check in on Fallon." Despite the determination, my stress slowly creeps back.

"How about I check on Roman and Kain, and you can worry about Creek and Fallon?" Levi offers, and I bite my lip. I can't just leave those two.

“Yes you can,” he says, and I realize I must’ve said it out loud. “They will understand, they’d probably even encourage it. They’re both going to be fine. Fallon and Creek are where you need to focus your attention. Maybe Fallon can even help you with your decisions.”

“Thank you,” I tell him, kissing his cheek. “For everything. For just being you.”

“Anytime, Angel. Anytime.”

CHAPTER TWO



My stomach starts to rumble, so I leave the room to find something to eat. Thankfully, I've started to learn my way around the maze that is Morgan's palace. Levi tried to come with me, but after about an hour of... let's call it passionate reasoning, I flat out told him I need to breathe. I get him being next-level protective after everything, but I'm still in the goddamn palace, I'm probably safer here than I am anywhere. So I sent him to go check on the guys, with the promise that I'd bring him food if he just let me have some time to myself. A ton of grumbling later, and he left me to it. After wandering around for twenty minutes, it occurs to me that the only time I've eaten here, Morgan has had it brought to us.

Well shit.

I wander toward the throne room and find Mireya skipping down the hall toward me, humming to herself. She looks so much like her mom it's scary.

"Hi, Mara," she says with a wave, coming to a stop in front of me. "Are you looking for my mom?"

"I was actually looking to find some food." I crouch down to her height and smile. "I have a hankering for some ice cream. Feel like helping me find some, and we'll get you some too?"

Her grin could light up a room.

"Yes, please!" she squeals. "I'll show you where the kitchens are. Just, don't pay attention to Cook. She's a big meanie." She holds her hand out to me with a frown on her face.

"I'm pretty sure if she's a meanie, I can kick her butt. How's that?" I

smile down at her and she grins back again.

“Yes!” She does a fist pump with one hand as I take the other. “Hold on tight!”

I do as she asks, but when the darkness takes me, it’s different than when Morgan or Caleb do it. Colder almost. But way quicker.

In a heartbeat, I can see again and my feet are steady on the ground. I blink and take in the sights around me, the bustling kitchen, a-dozen-or-so people shouting and laughing as they move as a well-oiled machine. I’m guessing they’re used to people just popping up because no one pays any attention to us at all.

“Psst! This way,” Mireya whisper-shouts, tugging on my hand and pulling me away from the main hub of people toward the back of the room. She pulls me through a darkened doorway and flicks on a light switch, revealing row after row of metal doors.

“The freezers!” she whispers as if she’s still afraid of being overheard.

“Perfect.” I smile and pull her back to the main room so I can find someone to tell me where the real food is. I get the attention of the older woman in the room, and from Mireya’s wince, I’m assuming that’s Cook.

“Hi, I was just wondering if I could get some food for me and my boyfriend?” I ask her, cringing at the word boyfriend because that’s the first time I’ve used it and, well, it feels so juvenile at this point.

“And who the hell are you, in my kitchen?” she yells at me, her accent thick. It almost sounds Irish.

“I’m Remy Bennett. Morgan’s guest,” I tell her, standing a little taller. I’m not about to be spoken to like trash just because I wanted some food.

“The Queen has gone soft. Angels and the like running around the place,” she squawks, and I roll my eyes and she continues to mutter.

“You have no right to speak about my mom that way!” Mireya shouts, and stomps her foot, making the room shake.

“Sweetie, it’s okay. Your mom wouldn’t care about the opinion of someone who obviously doesn’t know her at all,” I soothe, trying to calm her down.

“It’s not right!” she shouts, and the room shakes again, squeaks coming from the Demons in the room. “You should say sorry!”

The cook looks pale as she takes in the little girl at my side. “Sorry, little miss. I didn’t mean any disrespect.”

“Then next time, don’t talk with disrespect,” I tell her bluntly, and she

nods her head, her eyes still wide and fixed on Mireya. “I’ll sort out that food for you now, miss.”

The woman scurries away as Mireya slowly calms at my side. Killian pops into the room, looking around until he finds the two of us and frowns. “Now then, young lady. What have we told you about that temper?”

He walks over to us, no argument in his tone, just sheer disappointment. It’s not even aimed at me and I feel guilty as shit.

“Sorry, Daddy, but you should have heard the nasty things Cook was saying about Mom!” She twiddles her thumbs while trying to justify her lack of control and Killian smiles at me, shaking his head, while she looks down at her hands.

“Mireya. Just because people say mean things doesn’t mean we get to lose our temper and shake the entire palace,” he says, crouching down in front of her and taking his hands in his. “But you’re right, Cook shouldn’t be saying mean things. I’ll have a word with her in a few minutes. Next time, just come and find me instead of lashing out, okay?”

“Okay, Daddy. Sorry. I love you,” she says, clutching her arms around his neck, and my ovaries just about explode at how cute he is with her.

“I love you too, Princess,” he says, standing and lifting her up. “What were you ladies doing down here anyway?”

“Remy promised me ice cream!” She giggles and I shrug as he turns that look on me.

“Hey, I had no idea how to find this place, and who doesn’t love ice cream? In my defense, she’s too cute.” I laugh and he shakes his head, smiling again.

“That she is. Did Cook get you sorted?” he asks.

“After this little one nearly brought down the ceiling, yes.” I laugh as he shakes his head again and rolls his eyes.

“Of course. Well, I’m glad. I’ll make sure they know that you’re to be treated as if you were Morgan herself.” He winks at me and my shock makes me laugh. Those are the most words I’ve heard him speak and then he *winks!*

“Thanks,” I say, smiling back at him.

“And I know this has all been a lot, but I’m glad you made it out okay, Mara.” He smiles warmly as Mireya snuggles into him, and I almost blush.

“Thanks, Killian. You too.”

“I know you have some big decisions to make, but trust that, deep down, it’ll be okay. If it helps, I’d want Morgan to change me. Even if I wasn’t what

I am. I wouldn't want to miss out on even a minute being by her side."

I wrap my arms around myself and give him a sad smile. "Thank you. Again."

"Any time. I'm going to get this one back upstairs, she's supposed to be in class. Find me if you need me, okay?"

"But Daddy, ice cream!" she coos, and I laugh.

"After school," he promises before looking back to me. I nod at him and they disappear from sight.

I sigh, trying not to let everything weigh down on me, but damn.

Cook reappears and has a basket in her hands. "Please, let me know if you need anything else."

"I will." I smile at her, not willing to say thank you, because she is still a Demon. Morgan and her guys are different, but it still seems rude. "I appreciate it."

Now I need to find my way back upstairs.

Shit.

It's been a whole day since I woke up as an Angel, and I haven't needed to sleep yet. Levi was right, Angels really don't need as much sleep as others. I don't even feel remotely tired. Roman and Kain are still asleep, so I've been pacing the room they're in with Creek. The three of them are just sleeping, completely immobile, and I can't help but pray to whatever fates are out there that this all works out okay.

I've never had to contemplate their loss. Any of them. I always knew they could recover from anything, but down here, nothing is guaranteed. I hate how it weakens them, but that is probably exactly why Archer trapped Fallon here. He knew we'd be at a disadvantage.

I still can't get over that he did this. I can't fathom his drive, because not liking the way things are seems a bit extreme, but I guess power does crazy things to people. Something doesn't feel like it quite makes sense, it doesn't add up. I've spent the last day going over it, trying not to think about the decision I know I'm going to have to make.

I just wish I could talk to him. Ask him what he wants.

Especially since I've barely been able to concentrate on one thought for

longer than a few minutes since I woke up. My brain is like living in a pinball machine right now.

“You should try to rest,” Levi says as he enters the room. The harsh lighting of the medical room makes him look like he almost glows as he stalks across the room toward me.

“I’m not tired,” I tell him, shaking my head as he reaches me and wraps his arms around my waist.

“That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t rest. We have no idea what the transformation is still doing to you. The last thing I want is for something to happen to you too.” He kisses me softly and I relax into him. “Please, rest.”

“Fine,” I say between kisses. “I’ll rest.”

He grins against my lips as he picks me up in his arms and walks us over to the spare single bed in here and lays me down against his side. “Sleep. I’ll keep an eye on everything, and if anything happens, I’ll wake you. Okay?”

“Promise?”

“I swear. Now please, sleep. I’m worried about you, Remy. I’ve never heard about someone going through the process the way you did. Usually, the only way to become an Angel is for a Hunter to choose the final death, and even then, they usually only get to stay in Avalon. The offer to become an Angel is only given on rare occasions. And by then, the person is already dead and the council makes the decision as a whole. This is... unprecedented. So please, just rest and let me hold you.”

“Okay, I can do that,” I say, snuggling into him while keeping an eye on the others. I hadn’t thought about the repercussions of what Morgan did beyond what the fuck it has done to me. The fact that I could’ve pissed off an entire other species just makes me feel awesome.

Like I haven’t dealt with enough.

Here’s hoping that my previous Angel status means that it doesn’t ruffle too many feathers.

I giggle at the thought and Levi just tuts, squeezing me tighter.

I can’t imagine what he’s been going through the last few days, being the last man standing. Waiting for Morgan and her guys to let him even see me. Fates knows I’d be more than a little overprotective too, which is the only reason I’m not giving him hell for bundling me into this bed.

Morgan and her guys have stayed scarce the last day, and I haven’t heard from Fallon either, but Morgan said she was safe. If she’s not ready to see me again, I understand that. Though, I’m shocked she isn’t here for Creek. But

then again, I still have no idea just what she's been through, so maybe she's not ready to face him either. Especially considering everything.

I let out a deep breath, enjoying Levi's warmth, the steady beat of his heart as I lull into a half-asleep state.

"Remy..." My eyes spring open at the croak and I look across to Kain, who is stirring from his sleep. He winces as he comes around and tries to sit up.

I fly from my place beside Levi over to Kain, careful to keep my distance in case I hurt him, but it's one of the hardest things I've ever done.

"You're okay," I breathe, hoping to the fates that my words are true.

"I feel like I got hit by a truck," he groans, lying back down. "What on earth happened?"

"That is not a simple answer," I tell him and he looks me over closely before closing his eyes again.

"I can see." He frowns, yawning and scrubbing a hand down his face.

"You should probably still try to sleep. Morgan said you were badly injured," I say softly, taking his hand as his bright-blue eyes find mine again.

"Are you okay?" he asks me seriously, squeezing my hand.

"I'm alive," I tell him, it's the easiest answer because, honestly, I have no idea if I'm okay. He hums his response and his eyes flutter closed again as he slips back into sleep.

The relief that he woke, that he seems okay, even if he is tired, it's huge. "When was the last time he fed?" I look to Levi, who gives me a small smile.

"He fed from you before the mountain and Caleb gave him an IV of my blood when we got them back here." He shrugs and my jaw hits the floor.

"You gave him your blood?"

"It will accelerate his healing. Caleb and the others donated too. To him and the others."

"Well, shit." I blow out a breath and plop down onto the bench at the end of Kain's bed. "How did this happen? I still don't remember anything."

"Morgan said it would take time. Maybe you should give yourself time to remember," he says with the smallest of flinches. At the sadness flickering in his eyes, I let it drop because I'm still getting my head around everything that's happened to us all since we arrived here.

"Okay, I'll give it some more time," I tell him with a soft smile and try not to let my disappointment show. He's obviously dealing with something, something I can't remember, and if it's painful enough that he doesn't want

to talk about it yet, I'm not going to make him.

"What do you think I should do about Creek?" I ask him quietly.

"I don't know," he says honestly, running a hand through his hair. "He has always been a Hunter. He's not like you. The change could be way more drastic than yours, and I've honestly never heard of a Hunter turned Demon...but then, I never thought I'd be staying in the palace of the Queen of the Shadow Realm either. What would he want? You know him better than anyone."

"I don't know. He loves being a Hunter," I tell him honestly. "I don't want to take that away from him."

"He loves you too, Remy. And he'll still be part Hunter. If it were me, I'd say turn me. I wouldn't want to lose a moment with you. Especially now that you're immortal again. You're it for me, Remy. Now that we don't have to hide anymore, I'm not going anywhere. We haven't spoken about it, but I'm pretty sure that Creek would feel the same. That being said, you know him better than I do." His words practically stop my heart. I didn't think I could love him more, and then he goes and says something like that.

I climb out of the bed, Levi having fallen asleep, and creep from the room. I need to make some decisions, I know I do, but first, I want to speak to Fallon. I can't keep waiting for her to show herself. She might need space, but I at least need to make sure for myself that she's fine. Everyone else's word just isn't going to cut it.

I softly pull the door closed and trek down the hall, making my way to the entrance hall. From here, I can now find pretty much everything I need. I head toward the throne room because they said that Fallon was with Deacon, but failed to mention if that was here or still back on level six.

I don't pay much attention to the people flitting around the palace; there are so many people here now. I'm assuming from the fallout of what happened, but I also haven't had much chance to ask the questions bouncing around inside my skull.

Note to self: pull my head out of my ass.

Becoming an Angel really hasn't been great for me so far. I shake my head and keep walking, trying to rid myself of the insanely selfish thoughts

that run through me.

I come across the throne room, the doors back in place today. I guess it's been a busy day for them all. I push the doors open and find utter chaos in the room. Morgan and the guys are up on the dais on their thrones and I do a double take as I take them in. They look every bit the royalty they are. The black crown on Morgan's hair sparkles in the light, it's freaking beautiful. The guys have crowns of silver with black stones that are just as striking as they are. The five of them look like a force to be reckoned with, and well, I guess they are.

People are lined up in zig zag rows across the room, taking turns in laying out their issues, their needs, their grievances. I groan on their behalf, because fuck this. This is part of why I didn't want on the elder council, and that wasn't even close to this sort of chaos.

I join the back of the line, and I'm not here even a minute before Caleb stands up and spots me. I shake my head when he grins at me, but he's beside me in an instant.

"Mara, you don't have to stand in this line. You're one of us. You get to strut right to the front like the little bad ass that you are," he says with his signature cheeky smirk.

"I don't mind waiting, I was literally just trying to find out where Fallon is. I haven't seen her since everything..." It feels so weird asking him to see my best friend. I don't know what is going on with me fully, but I really just want to feel more like myself again.

"She's not here, she's with Deacon. I think...I think she feels a little ashamed, maybe. But she had to be with him to do the unbinding. Once it's complete, Morgan will heal her, as promised." Even though he speaks softly, I can feel the eyes of the room on us, the Demons in here wondering what their king is doing talking to an Angel.

Still feels weird thinking that I'm an Angel.

"I can have Deacon bring her here if you'd like?" he offers softly, leading me away from the masses.

"Thank you. That, or I can go there. The guys will be okay, right?" I ask, worrying my lip.

"Not a chance that Morgan is going to okay that plan, Mara. Nope. I'll have Deacon bring her here tomorrow. Will that be okay for you?"

"That works. Oh, Kain woke up. Just waiting on Roman now."

"That's good, I'm glad. They've been out a while, but this place isn't kind

to people who aren't Demons. Have you made a decision about Creek?"

"Not yet," I say quietly.

"You've probably got another day or two to make a decision before we run out of time." He sighs and I nod.

"Okay, I'll make a decision tomorrow."

"Just let me know as soon as you do."

"Thank you, Caleb. Really, for everything."

He pulls me into a quick hug, squeezing me tightly. "I know you don't remember everything yet, Mara. But the five of us, we probably wouldn't be the five of us without you. Hell, I probably wouldn't even still be alive, so there isn't much that I wouldn't do for you."

I blink at his words, because that was not something I was expecting to hear, but I hug him back quickly before pulling away from the embrace.

"I'm going to head back upstairs, see if the guys are awake yet. Have fun with...well, whatever this is." I wave my arms at the masses around us and he chuckles.

"Oh, yes. This is the most riveting part of having killed a higher Demon. We have to sort out his bullshit problems while Deacon finishes the transition." He rolls his eyes and I can't help but giggle at his exasperation.

"Oh, the problems of power." I stick my tongue out at him and he barks out a laugh.

"Something like that. Go on, get back to the guys. Let us know if you need anything."

"I will. Thanks again, Caleb."

CHAPTER THREE



T rue to his word, Caleb shows up bright and early the next day. Roman woke briefly in the night before passing back out. Apparently, Bryce gave him and Kain a shot of something to keep them out while they heal, which is why they're still sleeping, but I'm just so relieved they've both woken up and are okay. Caleb assured me they would be back to their normal overbearing asshole selves in no time. His exact words. Which means my worrying can be focused on Creek. And Fallon. And Colt.

Way too much in my head right now.

I follow Caleb as he leads me through the halls of the palace to an atrium full of plants, light shines down through the glass ceiling and the chirp of birds surrounds us. I look around in awe. I've never seen anything like it. It looks like a scene straight out of Avatar. It's like freaking Pandora in here!

"Wow," I gasp and Caleb grins.

"Yeah, this place is kind of awesome. If you tell the others I brought you here though, I swear to all things evil, Mara..."

"Secret's safe with me. What is this place?" I ask.

"This is my little sanctuary. I thought it would be a nice calming place for you and Fallon to talk." He gives me a small smile but it doesn't reach his eyes.

"I swear I won't tell a soul."

"Thank you." He snaps his fingers and a small table with two chairs appears in the middle of the room, with a tray complete with tea pot, cups, and an assortment of cakes.

"How very quaint of you." I laugh lightly and he joins me.

"Well, you two were essentially human. This is how I picture things happening up there still. It's been a long time since I visited Earth." He sighs, wistfully.

"Morgan said you guys can't go there. That sucks."

"It does. Though, I imagine things are very different from when I lived there."

"You were human?" I ask and he shakes his head.

"No, but we've all spent plenty of time there at one point or another. You'll remember it all eventually. Especially now that you're you again, but the four of us have been friends for a very long time. Demon's once just roamed the earth, before the humans were there, but once the humans evolved, we found the Shadow Realm was better suited to us. Plus, thanks to a deal made by the Demon King, there have always been mortal souls sent here after death. Morgan was just a princess back then. Man, we were all so young." He shakes his head as he rubs the back of his neck. "Things were very different, but we all fell for the same girl. And then...then there was you. You helped us, and when her father... *died* and she ascended, she made all of us her official consorts."

"I am sure there is much more to that story..." I ask eagerly.

"There is... but..."

"But now isn't the time. Maybe you can answer one question for me. When we first arrived here, we were trapped in a cave, and the Demon who caught us knew I was a Shadow Walker and it terrified her. Any reason why?"

"That was probably Kate. Let's just say you and she had a...disagreement in your old life, and well, the guys and I fixed the problem. Most Demons here knew about it. We made sure it wasn't a secret not to fuck with you, but that was a long time ago and, obviously, some people forget the teachings of the past." He grins like he can't wait to fix that small problem of his.

"Oh, okay. As long as it's nothing too insane. I can't deal with another crazy thing on top of all of the crazy I'm already juggling."

"Don't worry, Mara. We've got you. If anything happens, we'll help. I'd love to spend hours telling you exactly how I'm going to make these assholes pay, but alas, Fallon will be here any second. So story time can continue later." Just as the words are uttered, Fallon appears in the room.

"Fallon," I gasp and rush to her, hugging her tightly.

"I'll see you ladies later," Caleb calls out before disappearing. Fallon hugs me fiercely and starts to cry, her body shaking with her sobs.

"Remy, I am so glad you're okay. I thought you were dead. How is Creek? How are the others?" she asks through her tears, and I hug her tighter.

"I'm fine, but most importantly, how are you? I am so, so sorry it took us so long to find you, Fallon." I sigh, squeezing her.

"Remy, can't breathe," she laughs, and I let her go.

"Sorry. Come on, let's sit. I'm sure there's so much to catch up on."

We sit and talk for hours about her time down here, and about the fun and games we had getting to her. Saying it all out loud together, it sounds like something from one of those cheesy fantasy movies we used to watch, but she laughs and cries as we talk, the shadows in her eyes lightening a little.

"And well, I mean, I died," I say with a small shrug and she about chokes.

"What do you mean you died? You're here." Her voice is a few octaves higher, and I try not to wince at the tone.

"I mean that being down here, it unlocked something inside of me, a power of sorts. Morgan, she did something before we came to get you, made sure that if I died, I wouldn't die. Well, not really."

"Remy I am so confused."

"I'm an Angel now," I tell her quickly and her eyes widen as shock sets in.

"You're a...I mean...you can't be! Can you?" I can practically see her mind at work, running off in a million different directions.

"Apparently, I can be, and I am. My mortal self died, I was out for a few days, and when I woke up, I was this." I wave my hand in front of my face and she takes in the slight glow I still don't know how to turn down, my slightly sharper features, my shinier hair.

"Holy fuck. You're an Angel. Oh my goddess, do you have wings?"

"Levi says so. I haven't gotten that far though. Apparently, I'll get all of my memories back eventually too. Like *alllllll* the way back."

"Wow."

"I know," I sigh, sitting back in my chair and trying not to focus on it when my stomach bottoms out and the image appears in my mind.

"Oh my God," I gasp as the memory hits me. Telling her about everything must have triggered it, but holy shit.

Everly.

Tears run down my face as I remember and there's nothing I can do to

stop them. More memories hit me, of the few days I lost, the vision of Azriel ripping Creek apart is one I have no idea how I forgot. I'll never forget it again in my entire existence. My heart shatters all over again. I tell her each piece as it comes to me and she just squeezes my hand and cries right along with me. Then I tell her about Morgan and Caleb's offer.

"So what are you going to do?" she asks as I finish telling her the whole story.

"I have no idea, but I have to make a decision today," I sigh. "I don't want to lose him, Fal. But I don't want to turn him into something he'll resent me for, for the rest of our lives."

"Which are going to be intensely long now!" She gives a dry laugh and it hurts my heart. Knowing the pain I'm going to endure watching my friends, my family, grow old. Even though some of them will come back, it won't be the same. I won't be who I am to them anymore. Though, I suppose I never really was.

"Something like that. Providing no more insanity rains down on us, anyway."

"You really shouldn't tempt the fates like that, Remy." She rolls her eyes but pats my hand. "But I get it. Honestly, I wouldn't know what to do if I was you either. If you let him die, it could be another fifty to a hundred years until you get to see him again. Which, for an immortal, is a drop in the bucket, but at the same time, your mind isn't one of an immortal yet. Fifty years is a long time. I don't know that he'd want to be gone from you for so long knowing that you were still alive. Especially since the others will all be around."

"This, right here, is exactly the dilemma I'm having. I'm seriously considering asking Morgan if I let him die...once he cycles back to use, if she'll give him the option then. I don't want to be the person making this decision. It shouldn't be mine to make. It'll suck not having him around, but like you said, fifty or so years is a drop in the ocean to an immortal, right?" I put my chin in my hands and prop myself up on the table. "Talk about first world problems, but fuck my life, Fallon."

"I get it. The thought of going back home after everything here. I don't feel...I don't feel like myself anymore." She looks so sad, it breaks my heart all over again.

"I know. Morgan said something about that, but she's going to help."

"I still can't believe that the Queen of the Shadow Realm and her Four Horsemen are good friends of yours. So weird, and yet, totally believable. It's

unreal." She laughs dryly, but I get it. It's still super weird to me too.

"Has Deacon unbound you yet?" I ask cautiously.

"Nearly. Apparently, it takes time so that he doesn't shred my soul completely or something. Honestly, I'm not even sure I'm ready to go home yet, so I don't mind. Don't get me wrong, I miss Mama and Rebel and everyone so freaking much, but I don't feel like I belong there anymore."

"Oh, Fal, I'm so sorry that they did this to you. Once we're ready, and Deacon pulls back his Demons, I'm going to tear Archer to pieces, just for you. Fuck everything else. No one fucks with my bestie like this. I wish I could fix it all for you." She laughs at my words, but the shadows are still there and it breaks my heart.

"Hopefully Morgan can help. But I'd still like to see him as fish food. I'm not gonna lie. As long as you let me help." She winks, and I laugh softly.

"Whatever you need."

Fallon left pretty abruptly. I'm not sure exactly what is going on with her, but I know when she's ready, she'll talk. I'm not going to push her, because fates know I know far too well about keeping shit bottled up.

It's the only way I'm coping right now. I have barely processed the fact that I've changed, yet again. I'm trying to focus on everything else, because if I don't, I'm not sure I'm going to be able to keep it together. I'm just so grateful the people around me are as amazing as they are.

I wander back to the bedroom because I have no idea where everyone else is and find Levi stretched out on the bed, reading.

"I didn't expect to see you here."

"I worked out all morning. With everything quiet right now, there isn't much else to do. I figured I'd take advantage of the down time before we head home. Fates know that's going to start the merry-go-round again," he says with a shrug before tucking his bookmark in the pages and setting the book back down. "How was your morning with Fallon?"

I sigh and sit on the end of the bed, crossing my legs to face him. "It was okay. She's not herself, which I totally get, I just wish I could help her more."

"She'll be okay, and if she's not, you'll be there to help her. Once we get her home, she'll be okay. We all will." He stretches and reaches for my hand

before tugging so I end up sprawled across the bed. We lie there, facing each other in silence, just content in each other's company. It should feel weird, or uncomfortable, but it just doesn't.

"I can't stop looking at you." He presses his palms against my cheeks, slowly making their way down the column of my neck and across my collarbone as though checking for any injuries.

"I'm fine, Levi. I mean your fingertips feel like tiny electric bolts running through every nerve ending in my body, and every one of my senses are amplified but—" He cuts me off with a searing kiss that lights up every erogenous zone in my body. My breathing instantly hikes up like I'm running a marathon and the finish line is my next orgasm.

"I was terrified I'd lost you forever, but now..." He's holding onto my jaw, his mouth just a breadth away from mine, speaking from deep within his soul. "Now, you're literally my Angel again."

When I smile, he smiles along with me and the sight of it is balm to my soul. His happiness magnifies my own. Everything about me is multiplied by ten; my senses, my feelings. My need to have him, feel him, is out of control.

"I want to try something, Levi," I tell him, bringing my lips to his jaw and kissing a path straight to his delicious lips. "I want to know just how heightened my senses are when I'm with you."

"Angel, there's nothing I want more but you're not ready..." With fervor I didn't know I possessed, I latch onto the hair at the back of his neck and smash my lips to his, demanding a kiss with my searching tongue.

Levi doesn't push me away, he can't. I know it, he knows it. Together, we are like magnets to steel, like bees to sugar, like everything right in the world.

With his hands exploring every inch of my clothed body, we kiss until our lips are sore. I can feel every breath he takes, the battering beat of his heart as his chest is pressed to my breasts. I can hear the rhythmic thrumming of his blood running through his veins. The more we touch, the faster the rush.

It doesn't take me long to hook my fingers to his shirt and yank it apart, buttons flying across the wooden floors of the bedroom, scattering to the four corners like forgotten treasures. As soon as my fingers touch his heated skin, I'm panting, wanting.

"I need you, Levi," I tell him the truest words I've ever spoken.

His gaze is fixed on my hands spread across his chest, my nails digging into his pale skin and leaving marks of hunger.

“Oh, Angel. Those words are usually the quickest way to get my dick out and inside you within seconds but, you just died. I...” His gaze travels from his heaving chest to my questioning eyes. “I can’t hurt you. It would kill me.” A small smile twitches at the corners of his lips. “No pun intended.”

“Right,” I whisper, bringing my lips to the base of his neck and kissing him tenderly. “Too soon.”

“Hmm.” The sound reverberates from his chest and into my soul.

“I need this, Levi,” I tell him, trailing kisses down his chest, looking up at him, gauging his reaction.

I know he can’t resist me, just like I can’t keep away from him. This is happening in spite of his apprehensions.

Once I’m on my knees before him, my eyes pinning him with my desire, I know I’ve won.

“Please,” I beg from my kneeling position, giving him the last word, a sense of control that he didn’t have. Our love, our needs, control us and we’re okay with that.

“Unzip me, Angel,” he orders, his hand falling to my head, his fingers tightening in the dark strands.

“My pleasure.”

With nimble fingers and speed I hadn’t possessed before, I unbutton his pants and pull down his zipper, exposing his beautiful cock as it pops out of the V.

“You look delicious, Levi,” I admit, my eyes devouring every hard inch of him.

“Open your mouth for me.”

I do as I’m told, my tongue exposed, waiting for my first taste. My eyes close and I imagine him wrapping his hand around the base of his dick and placing it on my awaiting tongue. The anticipation builds with my blindness. I’m so far gone already.

The second I feel the velvety brush of his head, I moan in satisfaction, like a cat rubbing against his master’s leg.

“Now, Angel, suck my cock deep in that gorgeous mouth of yours.”

Placing both hands on his thighs, I open my eyes and stare into his soulful gaze as I wrap my lips around his dick and suck him in and out of my mouth. With every thrust, I let him go deeper, closer and closer to the back of my throat until my entire mouth is filled with him. With his essence, his power, and love.

“Yes, Angel, that’s it. Swallow me whole, taste what you do to me.” He thrusts in and out, taking over now and fucking my mouth like his very life depends on it. I revel in his control. I don’t have to worry about anything because Levi knows. He knows what I need.

“I’m going to spill every drop of my cum down your throat and you’re going to be a good little Angel and drink it up.” His words are almost angry, like he’s punishing me for dying in front of his eyes, and despite one hand clutching at my hair, the other is caressing my cheek like the grateful lover he is.

“That’s it, Angel, take it. God, I love watching my dick disappear inside your mouth.” His words aren’t rushed, they are awe-filled and thankful for the second chance.

My hands slide from his thighs to his ass cheeks and I dig my nails in with every thrust.

“Fuck, I’m going to come,” he warns before he pushes his cock deep to the back of my throat and holds it, the base rubbing against my face, my eyes watering with the effort of not gagging.

And then I feel it. The tremble in his legs, the hitched breath as he holds the air inside his lungs just as his essence spills down my throat. I can feel it all sliding down just as his body relaxes and his smile illuminates his entire face.

Slowly, he pulls himself out of my mouth and kneels down in front of me.

“I love you, Angel.” His words heat my body up like a spark to a bonfire.

“I love you, too, Levi.”

His kiss is sweet and slow, exploring the depths of my mouth and my very being. I know he can taste himself on my tongue and the thought gets me from content to fiery hot in mere seconds.

“I need you inside me, please, Levi. Please, fuck me.”

Biting my lower lip, he closes his eyes as though contemplating the consequences to his actions before I practically see him telling the universe to fuck off. I’m in his arms and on the bed so quickly I’m almost disoriented from the speed.

“For the record, I was going to eat your delicious pussy and then let you sleep, but now? Now, I’m going to feast on you, then I’m going to fuck you, and then...then if you’re a good Angel, I’ll let you rest.”

My grin spreads across my face with each promise he throws my way.

I don’t have time to contemplate any of his mouth-watering threats as I

find myself naked and spread open on the soft fabric of the bed. Leaning back on my elbows, I watch as an evil grin lights up Levi's entire face, his wink telling me he is going to enjoy the taste of me.

The first contact is the tip of his tongue as it slides from the base of my slit to the hard nub of my clit. I melt, my moan auditory proof of my welcome pleasure.

As my hips bolt from the mattress, I dig my nails into his scalp and grind my pussy into his face.

"Levi, oh God, yes." His entire face is buried between my thighs, his tongue probing inside me, licking up every drop of my pleasure like an elixir for immortality. With his hands on my ass cheeks, he angles his head just an inch to the left and my entire world goes black for a millisecond as he pushes two fingers inside my ass. I'm full, I'm complete. Pumping in and out of my pussy with his tongue, he inches back and circles around my clit before his teeth bite down with perfect pressure on my hard nub, making me practically black out.

It's all too much, the sex-filled aroma wafting around us, the sounds of his tongue bringing me to my climax, the electric feel of his touch. I lose complete and total control of myself and the scream that barrels from between my lips surprises even me.

But I can't control it. With every breath I take, Levi continues to lick up the juices as they freefall from my pussy and onto his tongue.

It's the most erotic thing I've ever seen and it makes my orgasm last for what feels like forever.

Before I'm down from my high, Levi is on top of me, kissing me with everything he is, licking the inside of my mouth and making sure I can taste myself. It's fucking erotic and before long, I'm ready for more.

Levi knows this.

His cock is inside me just as my orgasm subsides, bringing me right back to where I was; hot and horny for this man. This Angel. Mine.

He's not being gentle. His good intentions have flown out the proverbial window as he fucks me relentlessly. Without mercy or fear. He's imprinting himself inside of me, making the universe understand that it can't take me away from him, ever. He's fucking me like the fates can fuck right off, because I belong to him and him to me.

He's pounding me with desperation and love.

Owning me until the very essence of our worlds hear his roaring need for

me.

The thought alone brings me right back to another orgasm. An orgasm he kisses away, my screams swallowed by his mouth. With his entire body laid out on top of me, I feel his love and his need for me. I feel it all coursing through my veins, my nerve endings, my entire bloodstream is filled with just him.

Releasing my mouth, Levi rears back and roars out his own climax, a sound so beautiful and powerful that we forget where we are, what we're doing. We forget the existence of anything and everything. All that exists is his cock inside my pussy, his love inside my love.

All we know is that we're alive and we're together.

I may have ripped him apart when I died, but right now, at this very moment, Levi is back together again and that thought alone is enough for the both of us.

“Oh, Angel...all I ever needed was you.”

CHAPTER FOUR



The others are heading to the training room with Caleb and the other Horsemen to do some physio. Apparently, sleeping for a few days makes you more than a little stiff. But if that's all that's wrong with them after everything, I am going to be nothing but happy. They came to see me before wandering off, to make sure I was okay, even though they're the ones who were in a coma. Getting scolded for essentially dying again was the highlight of my morning, though they both took my change in their stride, like it was nothing more than me getting a haircut. After about two hours of reassurance that I'm okay, and more fussing than I ever thought was possible, Caleb took pity on me and whisked them all away. Thank the fates for him.

All I want to do today is hide, which is why I climbed into bed with Creek. I miss him. If this were happening to any of the other guys, he's the one I'd talk to about what the hell to do. He'd give me sage advice because that's just what he does. I don't want to be the person to make this decision but I'm the only one who can.

Knowing I only have a few more hours until Caleb comes knocking for my decision makes me feel sick to my stomach. I close my eyes and just pray for some sort of answer. I feel myself falling asleep, but considering the reality waiting, I let myself slip away.

I look out over the lake and sigh happily as the wind whips my hair around

me. Arms circle my waist as a body heats my back and I sigh, smiling as I lean back into his embrace.

“Hey, beautiful.” His deep voice soothes me and I close my eyes, enjoying this little bit of peace and happiness we found.

“Hey yourself, handsome,” I answer, leaning to the side so I can reach up and kiss his cheek.

“What are you doing hiding out here, Remy? You don’t run or hide from your problems,” he says softly, and I shake my head. I don’t want to think about all of the problems we have outside of here. Right here, right now. There is none of that. “You know you can’t hide here forever. You’ve got to wake up and face it eventually.”

“Yes, but eventually isn’t right now. I don’t want to face it. Deal with something so life changing. I’m not the person that should be making those kind of decisions, Creek.” I sigh and his arms tighten around me.

“But if not you, then who?” he asks, and I know he’s right. But dammit, I just wanted to enjoy this place, this moment. The stillness of the lake, the singing of the birds. I just wanted to enjoy a moment without real life.

“Is this real?” I ask him, and I feel him shrug behind me before he kisses my neck.

“Does it matter?”

“It does, because if it’s real, then you can tell me what you want.” I turn in his arms and look up at him.

“And if it’s not?” He smiles down at me and my heart breaks. I want to save this moment, this memory, forever. When everything is perfect.

“If it’s not, then I’m still making decisions I don’t want to make. Decisions I shouldn’t be making.” I rest my forehead on his chest as he runs a hand up and down my back.

“It’s not that hard. Not really. Not if you think about it,” he murmurs, and I look back up at him, resting my hands on his chest.

“It’s not?” I ask, and he smiles.

“Not at all. My world starts and stops with you Remy. I don’t want to miss even a second with you, even if I have to share you for eternity, you’re still mine.”

“But what about everything else? Your family? Your friends?”

“Everything is...well, it’s important, but none of it is as important to me as you are, Remy. My friends, my family. They will all understand. So what if I’m not what I’ve always been? It’s just another adventure for us. And with

you being what you are now, it doesn't feel right to be the only one of us all that is gone. Because I will be, and we'll never know for how long. But staying as I am, time could be taken from us far too easily. At least as something new, I'd be a lot harder to kill." He laughs and I can't help but laugh with him.

"It's been a while since you said that much all at once."

"Oh hush, pretty girl. And stop trying to change the subject. I know this isn't something you want to face, and I'm not saying it's going to be easy, but what in life is? This is the start of something new for us, Remy. And any adventure with you is one I want to go on. Let's start a new chapter, write a new story for ourselves. What's in the past is just that. This, this could be a whole new version of the future for us."

"Are you sure?" I ask, trying not to sound as terrified as I feel.

"Of course not, but am I sure of you? Always. I'm not scared of any of this because I know you'll be there, right by my side the whole time. Plus, not being the biggest liability of our new family will be an advantage."

"You're not a liability."

"Remy, it's fine. It is what it is. And it's fine, but this opportunity, to not have to leave you, to be able to protect you better. It's not one we might get again, so I want to take advantage of it." He leans down and captures my lips and it's like a fire is lit inside of me. I reach up and clasp my hands behind his neck pulling him closer to me. Losing myself in him. He pulls back to catch his breath and smiles down at me.

"Fates, I hope this is real."

My day is up, and I need to make a decision. Which is why I'm still lying in bed with Creek, wrapped around his essentially comatose body, trying to work out what the fuck it is that he'd want me to do. I don't want to be selfish with this decision. I mean, I do. I one hundred percent don't want to lose any time with him. But I also hate that I'm the one making this decision.

I know I had the dream earlier, despite it feeling so real, no matter how much I want it to have been. There's no way it was. Speaking to Creek in my dream isn't like actually speaking to him because there's no way it could've been real. Not a chance. Right?

"Remy." Levi's voice reaches me in my haze and I turn to look at him. Roman and Kain are standing with him, each of them looking so sad, as if they can feel the pain I'm in. "We're going to head out for a bit, give you some time alone to make up your mind."

"Yeah, we've been cooped up in here too long." Roman says, his eyes softly glowing. "I need to get outside."

"Okay, that's cool. I'll be here. Just, please be careful. I nearly lost you guys once, please, please, just be careful," I plead.

"We'll be fine, *mon amour*. We'll be careful too, just for you. We won't be leaving the palace grounds," Kain says softly, giving me a small smile. His hair falls into his eyes as he tilts his head, watching me, and I grin at his frustration at it.

"Thank you. I love you guys," I say, before laying my head back on Creek's chest.

A chorus of 'love you too' comes back before the door closes and silence envelopes the room. I close my eyes, hoping for the answer to just quite literally hit me in the face, so I know what to do. I can't have more than an hour before Caleb rocks up asking what I want to do. He's given me space, but I know keeping Creek like this must be a drain on him.

I lie and just enjoy the silence and what could be my last few moments with Creek, not bothering to wipe the tears that run down my face.

I can't let him go. I can't.

It's selfish, but I can't let him die.

That's when I realize that I've already made my decision.

I'm going to ask Morgan to turn him, and just hope to the fates that he doesn't hate me for it for the rest of time.

I take a deep breath and sit up. Just as I start to climb down from the bed, there's a knock at the door, and I just know that it's Caleb. I hurry to the door and open it and there he stands with a grimace on his face.

"Are you ready?" he asks, and I nod my head.

"I'm ready."

"So you made your decision?" he asks, walking into the room behind me and I nod and clench my hands to stop them from shaking. He notices anyway

and looks at me like a sad lost puppy, and I hate it. I hate being so indecisive. That's not who I am, not anymore.

"I think so. If I let him die, could Morgan offer him this again once he's back? So he can make the decision?" I ask him, my voice wobbling as I say the words. The thought of letting him die shreds me, but the other option...a tear slips down my face as the lump in my throat grows. I don't want to let him go, but I don't want to make him something he'll hate. I've been too afraid to ask Morgan, and now my time is up. My shoulders shake as the thought of letting him die, of it being my decision, floods me and I can't keep the tears in anymore. Caleb's arms wrap around me as he lets me cry.

"She could, but there's no guarantee that if he dies here, he will come back. Once a soul is in the Shadow Realm, it's rare that it is freed. It could take us a century or so just to find him once he passes if he stays here. By then, I can't tell you what might have happened to him." Caleb's voice is soft, like he's talking to a wild animal that might bolt. I can tell how sorry he is to not give me the answer I was hoping for.

He squeezes me and I shake my head. I can't risk it. I won't. Losing him would break me entirely. Even with the others still here. It might be selfish to love him so much that I can't let him go, but I accept that.

"Let's do it. I can't risk losing him. He would never forgive me if he didn't come back. I don't think I could live with that. I can't live without him, I don't know that I'll survive losing him." I chew the inside of my cheek, because as sure as I am, I'm still totally unsure.

"For what it's worth, I think you're making the right decision. Come on, Morgan is waiting. I told her where I was going. Let's get this started before you change your mind, or before it's too late." He takes my hand and puts his other on the foot of Creek's bed and whispers us to Morgan, who's waiting for us in their private rooms.

"Do you want the others here?" Bryce asks, standing from the couch as we arrive. I nod and he disappears, I'm guessing to find the others. I don't want to pull them away from whatever they're doing, but this...I need them here for this.

In less than a minute, Bryce reappears with them as Killian and Malik appear from one of the other rooms attached to this one.

"Looks like everyone's here," Morgan says with a small smile. "If you guys can step back and give me some space." Roman steps forward and takes my hand before pulling me backwards, my back against his chest as we move

out of their way.

I thought this would be just Morgan, but the five of them take up positions around Creek's body. Morgan cuts the tip of her finger and draws symbols on Creek's body, the whole thing reminding me of my awakening a little. Once the symbols are complete, she opens his mouth and spills some of her blood into his mouth.

Roman's arms tighten around me as the five of them start chanting, the words harsh and unrecognizable. The sounds of them almost make my skin itch and my ears feel like they might bleed, but I try to ignore it as I focus on Creek. Levi hisses as the chants get louder and I guess that whatever this is, it's affecting him just like it is me. I guess an Angel being privy to a Demon ritual isn't something that happens all too often.

I watch as Caleb removes the stasis from him, Creek's body relaxing before his back arches and his hands grip the sides of the bed.

"Creek!" I try to move toward him, but Roman holds me in place. I struggle, but it's no use, I'm not going anywhere so I sag in his arms and watch the five of them as Creek's body relaxes again. Their words stop and Morgan spills more blood, then there is a deafening bang in the room as flames circle the six of them.

My heart feels like it's in my throat as I wait for the wall of fire to subside. It feels like forever before it disappears. Morgan and her guys are all lying on the floor and I rush toward them. I bounce back on my ass when I hit some sort of invisible wall.

"What the fuck!" I shout, panic rising up as the others try to breach the wall too. I have no idea if this is supposed to be happening. Caleb and Morgan didn't give me details.

Fuck, fuck, fuck!

I really hope this is part of the process.

I look to Levi, who looks as worried as I feel as he steps back from the barrier. Kain and Roman follow suit as I wrap my arms around my knees, pulling my legs up to my chest, praying to anyone that's listening that everyone is okay. That I haven't just killed all of them somehow with my selfishness.

A gasp breaks the silence as Morgan sits up and I almost burst into tears.

"You're awake! Thank fuck for that!" I scramble toward her but end up back on my ass because the stupid fucking invisible barrier is still in place and she doesn't even acknowledge my words. Levi comes to my side and

helps me stand and the other two close in around me. We watch on as Morgan sits up, then Caleb gasps and sits up like someone just kicked him awake.

I let out a deep breath, and slowly, the other three come around too.

“Are you guys okay?” I ask, staying back, because bouncing off of that power shield really isn’t fun.

Caleb looks at me and tilts his head, as if he can’t hear me speaking. Then, as if a light switches on in his head, he starts to laugh and, with a snap of his fingers, I can hear his laughter.

“Sorry about that. Totally forgot about my failsafe,” he says with a shrug and I want to glare at him, but my eyes are on Creek in the bed who still hasn’t moved an inch, other than the steady rise and fall of his chest.

“Did it work?” I ask, my voice barely more than a whisper as I can’t take my eyes from Creek’s body.

“It worked,” Morgan says, her voice a little shaky.

“Are you guys okay?” I ask again as I take them all in properly. They all look paler than usual, and more than a little tired.

“We’ll be fine,” Caleb says, wrapping his arm around Morgan’s waist as she leans on him. “The spell and power transfer is complete, but it’s going to take a few days before he’s likely to wake.”

“Thank you,” I say as Levi lets go of me, and I hug each of them in turn. “Thank you so much,” I whisper to Morgan as she hugs me back.

“Always. I still owe you more than a few favors.” She laughs softly as I pull back from her.

“Consider us even.” I tell her, squeezing her hand.

“Never.” She smiles and shakes her head. “Now, we’re all going to sleep. Caleb, you got enough left in you to take them back to their room?”

He smiles and nods his head before kissing her on the top of hers. “Come on you guys, let’s get you back and then I am going to sleep like the dead. I don’t have enough juice to bring Creek back, so he can stay here, but it’s probably best that we monitor him anyway. You never know how he’s going to wake.”

“Then maybe I should stay with him,” I say, worrying my lip.

Morgan shakes her head. “Go. He will be fine here with us until he awakes. I can monitor him until then, and I know that he’s not going to kill everyone on sight. Once I know it’s safe, I’ll call for you.”

I don’t like it, and I start to say something, but Caleb takes my hand and

shakes his head. “He’ll be fine, love.”

Kain takes my other hand and once everyone is touching, Caleb whispers us back to our room and I sigh when we arrive, thinking about climbing back into that giant bed rather than the hospital-like beds we’ve been in the last few days.

He makes sure we’re all standing on our own two feet before disappearing with a gentle “Goodnight.”

I look back at the other three who look as tired as I feel, even though I napped earlier.

“Bed?” I ask, and they each smile at me.

“Are you okay, Remy?” Roman asks, and I give him a small smile.

“I will be when he wakes up and doesn’t hate me for what I did to him.” I shrug and Kain strides forward and wraps me in his arms, hugging me tightly.

“He could never hate you, no matter what. We will all be here to help him through whatever comes.” He breathes the soft words into my ear and I melt into him. “Now come on, let’s get some rest. It’s been a long few days.”

I let him lead me to the bathroom and he braids my hair while I stand and watch him in the mirror. He kisses my neck when he’s done and leaves me to finish getting ready for bed, but after the last few days, and everything today, I just want a long bath. I look at it and settle on a shower. I turn the water on to practically scalding and undress while it heats.

Once steam fills the room, I twist my braid up on top of my head to keep it out of the way and jump under the hot water. I hiss as it hits my skin, then relax into it as the heat beats my muscles into submission. A mix of relief and despair rushes through me and I don’t stop the tears that fall, mixing amongst the shower spray. Mom always said crying is good for the soul, so I let everything out. My grief for Everly, the loss of everything I had with Jack, because what I thought was good, was all just a lie, and everything that happened here. Creek, Roman, and Kain being injured, Fallon’s quiet pain when I saw her, even Morgan’s obvious guilt at everything. I cry until I can’t cry anymore, and I’m thankful the guys leave me to it.

When the tears stop, I take care of myself, washing everything away before shutting off the shower and climbing out, wrapping myself in the beautifully-soft towels that are on the rail. I pad over to the mirror and take in my reflection, letting my braid out of its binds on top of my head. I look different. Even though I’m tired—*apparently baby Angels still get tired, who knew*—I look shiny and new, that glow that comes from being what I am now

still there. I go back into the bedroom and stare at the three of them draped around the room. Kain on the sofa at the end of the bed, Levi sprawled across the bed, and Roman in a chair beside it, each of them a book in hand. I've no fucking clue where they came from, but do you know what's hotter than seeing a guy reading? Seeing three.

The sight of it makes me smile and I feel a little lighter. I drop my towel and all eyes turn to me.

“Bedtime, boys.”

CHAPTER FIVE



“Sorry I left so abruptly the other day,” Fallon says as she sweeps across the room, and Killian disappears from her side. Apparently, it was his turn to play transport, I’m just happy to be back in the throne room with an almost never-ending supply of food.

She seems lighter than she did the other day, and I wonder how much of that is to do with the bond being nearly incomplete, and how much of that is the amount of time she’s been spending with Deacon. It was hard to miss the eyes he was giving her, and the fact that he came to Morgan and the guys to help her in the first place tells me enough about how he feels about her.

“It’s totally fine. I can’t believe that was only two days ago. The last two days have felt like forever, and well, I slept through most of yesterday.”

“What did you decide about Creek?” she asks hesitantly, as she sits at the dining table with me and pours herself a glass of orange.

“I did it,” I say quietly, and shove another piece of bacon in my mouth. Levi might’ve said I don’t need to eat as often, but I sure as hell want to when everything tastes just so much *more*. I try not to groan as the flavor bursts across my taste buds, or notice how still she’s gone.

“You really did it?” she says, almost disbelieving, and I nod. I just watch as she processes the reality of what I just told her, then relaxes.

“It’s for the best, I guess. At least you’ll have another powerhouse at your side. Not that you need any more, but you know what I mean. This way, he doesn’t need to leave you, he won’t age when you don’t.”

“There is that I guess. I just... I had this dream, and it felt so real. I saw

him and he told me to do it. While I don't believe this could be even close to being real, I can't say it didn't play a part in my decision. I can't lose him, Fallon."

"You'll never lose him, even if he wouldn't have picked this. Though, knowing him, he would've. Even if he wouldn't, he'd never leave you. I believe that in every piece of my soul." She takes my hand in hers and squeezes.

"How did our lives get so complicated? I miss the days when our biggest problem was how much of a jackass Jack was." She laughs, and I realize I didn't tell her.

"So...Jack's a Demon...and he's a friend of Archer's," I spit out and she nearly drops her glass.

"I'm sorry, what?! How did you manage to leave that bit out?" she screeches, and I shrug bashfully.

"I guess, with everything else I dumped on you, I forgot to tell you." I laugh and she swats at me.

"How the fuck do you *forget* something like that, girl? Holy fucking fuck. Jack is a Demon? No wonder your family hated him! Explains his grade A douchebag status too." She lets out a bewildered laugh and I shake my head.

"I don't know how I could've been so blind." I sigh and she shakes her head.

"Oh no, girl. That is not on you. You had no idea about this whole world then. Man, I can't wait to cut off Archer's dick and stomp on it."

I laugh at her bloodthirsty attitude. This place might have affected her, but she's still Fallon underneath it all.

"So..." I start, cooing as I pick up another piece of bacon. "You and Deacon...."

"There is no me and Deacon," she says, rolling her eyes. "He...he helped me when he got the chance, and I'm sure he shielded me plenty too, but there is no me and him. Honestly, I was just on the cusp of something with Colt, but after all this...."

"Colt loves you," I tell her, ignoring her guffaw. "He might not have said it, but it's in everything he does. You should have seen him after you were taken. If he didn't know it before, he knows it now. I'm not going to tell you to pick him because he's my brother, I just want you to be happy. If that's with Colt, awesome. If it's with a Demon, then so be it."

"Honestly, right now, I just need to find myself again," she says softly,

wrapping her arms around herself.

“Now that...that I understand.”

“I bet you do. Here’s me complaining when you’ve got all of this going on,” she says, and I wave her off.

“Don’t even. Your problems are just as important as mine.”

“Nobody’s life or death weighs on my problems, Remy. I’m pretty sure yours are a *tinsy* bit more important, but thank you. It means a lot that you came here for me. I didn’t say it before, there was so much going on, but thank you. You guys risked a lot. Everything, really, for me. I’m not sure what I did to deserve a friend like you, Remy, but I am so fucking thankful that I have you. You’re my person. My ride or die. Just, ya know, you can’t really die now,” she says laughing, and I try not to cry. Goddamn these heightened emotions, all I’ve done is cry since I woke up. I can’t wait for this to fade like Levi promised it would.

“I love you, Fallon. There is no way in Hell I wasn’t going to come for you. Even with everything that happened, even if I’d known, I’d still have come. Might have left the guys at home, but I’d still have come. You’re my ride or die too. If I had the power to make you immortal, I would.”

“Thanks, but no thanks.” She laughs. “I like the idea of a limited time. That things could be that much more precious because there’s only a limited time to experience them. Plus, an immortal witch? Can you imagine the outcry with the covens?”

I giggle with her, because, having met the covens, I fully get it.

“How is my mama?” she asks quietly, and I squeeze her hand again.

“She’s your mom. She’s worried as fuck but staying strong for everyone else, just like always. I left her and Colt to keep home running smooth, and I’m sure they’ve had Archer running in circles.”

“I can’t believe how long I’ve been gone.” She sighs.

“Yeah, but time moves differently down here,” I tell her, and she looks pretty shocked, which I get. “It’s faster here than home, so you haven’t been gone that long to them back home. It just feels longer.”

“Well shit. I guess that explains why it took so long for you to find me. Well, on top of the Demon assholes.”

“They weren’t all assholes,” I remind her, and she shrugs.

“No, I suppose not. I’m still kind of reeling from how nice the Four Horsemen of the freaking Apocalypse are. Definitely not what I pictured. And a Queen of Hell, or Shadow Realm, or whatever. Also not what I

pictured.”

“I guess that’s the thing about our world. Nothing is ever really what it seems. Well, most things at least.”

“At least it’s not boring?” she says with a laugh and I feel inclined to agree.

Nothing about our lives is boring anymore.

“This afternoon, mon amour, you are mine,” Kain says when I find him strolling the halls of the palace. “I was just coming to find you.”

“Oh really? And what, pray tell, are we doing this afternoon?”

“Well, I thought that since it was such a beautiful day down here in the Shadow Realm, and since we have barely had a chance to catch our breath, that we would have a picnic. Just the two of us. It’s been far too long since I had you to myself.”

“Well, kind sir, what sort of girl could turn down such an offer?” I can’t help but laugh and he smiles.

“Definitely not my girl. Especially since I have cheesecake.” He winks at me and I swoon at him.

“You sure know the way to my heart.”

“I’ve had a long time to make the journey.” He smiles, taking my hand, and I can’t help but sigh contentedly.

“So, where, exactly, are we having this picnic?” I ask, because I haven’t actually left the palace since we got here, except for that one little unfortunate trip. Exploring the central ring of the Shadow Realm hasn’t been high on my to do list.

“Not far, I figured we could eat in the far eastern corner of the back of the field. Safe enough since we’re here, close enough, but private enough.” His voice drops a little and tingles run down my spine.

Since I woke up, everyone’s been very accommodating and given me distance to adjust, to let the shock of everything wear off, which I definitely needed and I’m still not sure I’m totally myself yet, but at this point, I just want them. The other day with Levi was unlike any experience I can remember. It was bliss. Utter bliss.

“That sounds perfect,” I tell him, stretching up and kissing his cheek, and

his beaming smile in return tells me it was the right answer. He pulls me through the halls to the main entry hall, where a picnic basket and blanket are waiting for us and I can't help but laugh at just how prepared he's been.

"Shall we?" he says, grabbing the basket from the table with one hand, while keeping my hand firmly in his other.

"We shall," I say, beaming. I missed this side of him. I've seen glimpses of a carefree Kain in my memories, but our lives since we met this time... well, it's been pretty intense. I like seeing this side of him. I like that we finally have a minute to breathe so that he can be this side of himself.

We walk in a comfortable silence across the grounds toward a giant oak tree. Just the sight of it makes me laugh, because something so mundane isn't something I expected to be here, but then, well, why not, I guess. Really, other than the magic that binds this place, there aren't that many differences between this world and my own. Not really.

Kain releases my hand to lay out the blanket, scowling at me when I try to help, so I step back and leave him to his chivalrous act. Once it's down, he shifts the basket and pats on the blanket for me to sit opposite him as he pulls a bottle from the hamper.

"What do you have there?" I ask lightly.

"A bottle of bubbles for my bubbly girl," he says with a cheesy grin, and this time I can't contain my bark of laughter. I don't know what got into him today, but it can stay.

"Well, color me flattered. What else is in your magical goodie basket?"

"Oh I have all of the good things in here," he says, his giant grin making me laugh.

And just like that, I'm buzzing inside, and it has nothing to do with the bubbly and everything to do with the buzz of him. The dual sides of him have brought me back to him time and again. His vicious, protective side coupled with his attentive, loving one make him irresistible to me. Every version of me. And right now, this version needs him more than she needs cheesecake, which is saying something.

Placing a hand on his as he tries to open the basket, I let my eyes do all the talking. It doesn't take him long to understand, and when he does, his pupils dilate into imperceptible slits of desire making me rub my thighs together.

"Remy, this wasn't my intention," he says, but I call his bluff.

"Really, Kain?" I fall to my knees after quickly scanning our

surroundings and pull my shirt over my head and discard it to the side. "The thought of fucking me senseless didn't once cross your mind?"

Kain licks his lips as though both hungers are awakening.

"I'm trying to..." he doesn't finish that sentence as his gaze falls to my now-bare breasts as I drop my bra, nipples peaked from the cool breeze and the feral hunger consuming me from the inside.

"Don't be ashamed of wanting me, Kain. Doing the right thing can also mean fucking the very breath from my body and *then* feeding me all the good things. No pun intended." I drop my gaze to his crotch because I wouldn't mind being fed his cock and drinking from the source.

My words have their intended effect and, within seconds, Kain has us both naked and I'm at his mercy.

"I was trying to be a gentleman, mon amour, but you play dirty." As his lips crash into mine, my entire body buzzes with my desire for him. My need to feel him inside me. The high of knowing he's feeding from me, that my veins give him strength and our blood bond gives our love the ultimate power.

"Be impolite and improper first. And when you're done defiling me and fucking me within an inch of my life, then you can be gentlemanly."

With a growl from deep inside his chest, Kain places his big palm on my jaw and stares straight at me, his voice steady and lethal.

"Too fucking early for death jokes, Remy." And then he's kissing me with every fiber of his being, his tongue exploring my mouth and his extended canines nipping and scraping my lips with every movement.

With moans and grunts, our sounds envelop us just as the scent of our combined arousal surrounds us like a protective spell.

Kain lays me out across the soft blanket and covers me entirely, shielding me from any prying eyes and heating me with his burning skin, his need for me evident in the trembling of his muscles.

"I love you like this, under me, wanting me. Needing me."

I don't answer because there is nothing to say, he's right. He loves me at his mercy, and I love being there.

Just when I think he's about to rear back and impale me with his hard cock, he palms each of my knees as he folds my legs, and with a cocky grin that promises so much pleasure, he slides down my naked body and buries his face in my pussy.

I shouldn't be surprised but I am. I thought we were skipping all the

preliminaries but here I am with a mouth latched onto my clit and my fingers clutching the poor blanket as he devours me.

"Oh, God, Kain. So good, so fucking good." My words are incoherent as he pushes two fingers inside me and hooks them just perfectly, finding that spot that makes me lose my mind.

"That's it, mon amour, let go."

My first orgasm roars out of me without preamble.

But Kain is nowhere near finished with me. As I'm shaking through my climax, he turns his head just to his right and sinks his fangs into my femoral artery and drinks from me, intensifying every already-overwhelming feeling that I have.

Licking away any drops, he runs his tongue over the perfectly symmetrical holes then goes back to licking me from slit to clit. This time, his fingers find their way to my puckered hole where he plays with the entrance, lubricated from my own juices, before he breaches the entrance and fucks my ass as his mouth fucks my pussy.

The sensation is too much for me to ignore and that's when my second orgasm comes to life, my screams drowning out every other noise in the realm.

"Your taste, mon amour, is Heaven and Earth combined. It's different than before, darker, but so very delicious."

Trapping my bottom lip between my teeth to avoid any more screams, I close my eyes and feel him rather than see him, and it's just as powerful.

"More, Kain, please, more."

With one more lick and one final thrust of his fingers inside my ass, Kain glides his way back up my sweaty body and naturally, without a single hitch, slides his cock inside my hungry pussy.

He fucks me with a steady rhythm, in and out, with a hard thrust when he bottoms out making my breath hitch every time.

My nails on his back latch on and slide down, leaving a trail of blood that I can feel dripping down his shoulders, and the thought and feel of it makes me even hungrier for him.

Rising up on his elbows resting on either side of my head, Kain looks down at me, drunk on his own desire and on my blood, and smiles.

When I lick my lips, looking at him with my own need, he knows, and he wants it just as much as I do.

"Yes, mon amour," is all I need to hear before my nails rake down his

chest leaving rivulets of blood dripping from his nipples where I catch them on my tongue and moan from the deliciousness of it all. Blood isn't usually a thing for me, but here, now, it strengthens the bond between us and adds to everything bursting inside of me.

His thumb and forefinger is on my chin, lifting my gaze to his all the while fucking me slowly, like a ritual.

"Shhhh," he orders as he takes the nearby knife and slices a small wound into the side of his neck and guides my mouth to it.

He's still fucking me, still making my body feel every inch of him pleasing me, but now, with my mouth on his wound and my tongue yearning for our blood bond to deepen, I'm hungry in so many different ways, and so is he.

His thrusts increase as I drink from his vein. He latches on to my own neck and feeds from me again. This time, our fucking isn't the only source of bliss. We're both feeding, fucking, feeling the high from our unbreakable bond, our eternal love. It's everything I've ever wanted.

Both of his hands are on my shoulders as he rises to a kneeling position, my arms around his neck as I suck in his blood source, unable to get enough of him, lost in everything we are, lost in him. His cock, his blood, his hunger.

We're close, so fucking close, as his thrusts become quicker, erratic, our moans a single sound around us, the scent of sex and blood increasing our rising orgasms.

With two more thrusts, Kain stills, spilling himself inside me as we suck the blood out of each other, the orgasm taking us over completely.

It's better than a drug, more potent than anything in this universe.

Panting, we both slow down, our mouths relenting on each other's necks, our tongues licking the remnants of our blood.

As we reluctantly abandon each other's necks, we look at each other and, with that drunk feeling swimming in my mind, we kiss.

Our blood mingling as we devour each other's mouths once more.

He's still inside me, still hard, still thrusting even though he's already come in me, but it doesn't matter. This is the winding down from our thirst, our intense orgasm.

Trapping my bottom lip between his teeth, Kain looks back at me and grins, "Let's celebrate, mon amour."

It feels like we've been here forever and I'm getting antsy to get home. I know I'm not alone. I can feel the tension from Roman any time we're within a few feet of each other. Like his wolf isn't convinced that I'm okay and he's trying to claw out of the cage Roman has him locked in. Which is good because I'm not even sure what would happen if he tried to change down here. If he even can.

The desire to go home is real, but Creek still isn't awake. Though, I'm almost tempted to try and send the others home first, so they can get back to themselves. It's different for me. I don't remember being an Angel, so I don't feel weighted, or diminished, even though I know I will be. I can't imagine how hard it must be for each of them, especially when we've been here so much longer than we planned.

Plus, I'd like to know what the fuck is going on with Colt. Now that we know we can communicate, they could just take some Angel glass home. Though, that would probably endanger the Hunters even more.

Why can't anything be simple?

"Remy, are you okay?" Roman pulls me from my musings as he lays on the bed next to me.

"I'm fine, just away with the faeries." I smile at him as he turns to face me, his hair falling in his eyes. "Wait...faeries aren't real too, right?"

He laughs at me and rolls onto his back, pulling me with him so I'm tucked into his side. "Not as far as I'm aware, Princess. What's up? Not enough monsters to deal with already?"

"Hey! We're not monsters, we're just what the humans think of as monsters. Or at least they once did, now it's all just romantic notions, but I digress. No, there's plenty, it just popped into my head. How are you doing?" I ask him, genuinely concerned, because I feel like I haven't spent much time with him recently and I know that all of this has been a lot. For all of us.

"I'll be fine. We've been through worse. You're here, and that's what matters."

"Would you go home if I asked?" I murmur quietly. It's worth putting it out there. I might be here, but these guys all have people back home relying on them too.

"Not without you," he answers gruffly. I push myself up on to my elbow to look at him properly.

"But you're suffering. I can see it. I can practically feel it. And I hate that you're going through that because you're still here. We've been here way

longer than we ever imagined.” I sigh, and he huffs at me.

“Remy, there is no way, at all, that I am leaving this place and leaving you here. Even if Caleb and his horsey gang are here, and they’re your friends. If our family isn’t here with you, I don’t trust it. I trust us, that’s it. So, if you’re here, we’re here, understand?” I open my mouth to object, but he kisses me fiercely before I get the chance to even form a thought. He kisses me until I’m almost breathless, rolling us so that he’s on top of me, my fingers intertwined with his as he presses my hands into the bed.

“Never ask me to leave your side, Princess,” he growls against my lips. “Never.” He traces a path down my neck with his kisses and I can’t help the moan that passes my lips as his teeth graze against my skin, his stubble creating its own beautiful friction against my sensitive skin.

“You kids having fun?” I squeak as Kain’s voice reaches us and as Roman rolls off of me, groaning. I spot Kain leaning against the wall, arms crossed, a carefree grin on his face. “Sorry, was I interrupting?” he laughs, and Roman throws a pillow at him.

“Cock blocking blood sucker,” he grumbles, but laughs in jest and Kain just shakes his head.

“Sorry to be a buzzkill, but Morgan asked me to find you guys,” he says nonchalantly, and it piques my curiosity.

“Why?” I ask, and he grins.

“I mean, I could just leave you guys to it.”

“Please do,” Roman says, and I just roll my eyes.

“What does she want?” I ask again, and he smirks at me.

“Creek’s waking up.”

“Why the fuck did that take you so long! Let’s go!” I say, hurrying off of the bed and out the door.

The two of them chuckle behind me as I haul ass down the hall when I realize I have no fucking clue where I’m going. “Where are they?” I call back to Kain, who laughs.

“In their room still,” he answers, and I take off at a run, before having to halt. Levi wasn’t kidding about that speed. I stop when I reach the bottom of the stairs then run the rest of the way through the maze that is this palace, up what seems like a million stairs, and burst into their room.

“He’s awake?” I ask quietly when I enter, and the talking stops.

“Not yet,” Morgan says softly, heading toward me. “He’s waking. I figured you’d want to be close, but you should probably wait outside.”

“Not a chance. He won’t hurt me,” I tell her firmly.

“You don’t know that, Mara.” Bryce backs her and I shake my head.

“I’m not leaving. If he hurts me, then I’ll take it.”

“At least he can’t kill her, well not with ease anyway,” Malik chips in, and I grin.

“What he said,” I say, and stride past them to stand beside Creek’s bed. He stirs briefly and seems to fall back to sleep.

“You maybe shouldn’t get so close, Mara,” Caleb says, stepping up next to me. “Being here is one thing, but if he startles as he wakes up, you’re going to be the first in line for that hit. Think about how much he’d hate hurting you like that.”

Guilt crawls up my neck and I relent. “Fine, fine. I’ll wait outside.” The last thing I want to do is make him feel bad when he wakes up, he’s going to have enough to deal with.

“Maybe you should let us talk to him first,” Killian says softly as I head out the door, and I turn to face him.

“I made this decision, I should be the one to tell him,” I say firmly, and Killian nods, respect in his eyes. The easy way out isn’t something I’ve ever taken, and I’m not about to start with something like this.

CHAPTER SIX



Bryce closed the door behind me when I left and I sat out in the hall. The others found me here not long after and they're sitting with me while we wait. It feels like forever since I left that room. Time might move quicker here, but right now, it's passing so freaking slowly.

"How long does it take to wake up?" Roman mutters and Levi nudges him.

"Shut up," Levi says, and gives me a sad smile. "I'm sure it won't be much longer."

"I feel like I'm going to be sick." I tell them, and Kain drops his arm around my shoulder.

"It's going to be okay, you'll see," he says, squeezing me against him, and I rest my head on his chest.

"Fates, I hope so."

A loud crash sounds and I jump to my feet and try to open the door, but it's locked. "Fuck!"

"Yep, it sucks when they do that," Levi says, and I remember he was in exactly this boat a few days ago when it was me waking up in there.

Another crash sounds from the room, followed by a groan, before the door opens. Creek is panting as he faces me, his eyes wild and his chest heaving. He steps forward and grabs for me, wrapping me in his arms, and clutches me to his chest.

"I didn't know where you were," he mutters, repeating the words as he holds me, and I wrap my arms around him.

“I’m here. It’s okay. I’m okay, and so are you. We’re going to be fine,” I murmur, and I can feel the others behind us, watching closely, ready to move in an instant if it looks like he’s going to hurt me. I peek over his shoulder and see Bryce being helped up off the floor by Malik while Caleb shakes his head, grinning. “We should go back inside the room, Creek. You’ve been out for a while and we need to talk.”

I say the words softly, and it takes a minute, but they seem to sink in. Rather than releasing me, he lifts me and carries me in the room while the others follow. He moves straight for the bed and sits on it, shifting me so I’m on his lap.

“The last thing I remember seeing was you being attacked by that Demon. Then everything went dark,” he says quietly to me, and I nod.

“Maybe Mara should come sit over here while we have this conversation, Creek,” Killian says, soft but firm, and Creek literally growls beneath me.

“It’s okay, Creek. They just want to make sure you don’t hurt me,” I reassure him, and he pales.

“I would never hurt you. I couldn’t,” he says, shaking his head.

“That’s not technically true right now.” Morgan coos, and I turn to face him.

“I’ll just sit on the chair beside the bed. How’s that?” I don’t really want to move, but I understand the logic of it.

“What happened?” he asks as I shift out of his arms and climb down to the chair.

“You were hurt. Really fucking badly,” Caleb starts, and Creek just stares at me.

“Caleb used his power to make sure you didn’t die, but that was all that was keeping you alive,” I say to him, and wince at the face he pulls.

“So how am I here?” he asks.

“We had to make a decision,” Levi starts.

“No, *I* had to make a decision. Let you die...”

“Let me die or what, Remy?”

“Let you die or make you an immortal. Half-Nephilim. Half-Demon.” I look down at my hands, because the look on his face, it guts me.

“You did what? How?” he asks, his voice hollow, and I think I’m going to throw up.

“Remy didn’t do it. I did,” Morgan says clearly and firmly. “You would have died without some sort of intervention, and yes you’re a Hunter, you

come back. Usually. But a Hunter has never died in my realm before. We don't know that you would've come back. So I gave Remy the option, risk it, and potentially lose you forever, or I could do this, turn you into something new, something that has never been before, and neither of you ever have to lose time without the other ever again."

I stare at him the entire time she speaks, at the conflicting emotions on his face. The anger, sadness, confusion, all mixed with happiness and love. I can kind of imagine how he feels. I mean, I did just turn into an Angel, but that's very different than becoming part Demon.

"What everyone isn't telling you, is that Remy already went through a transformation of her own," Levi adds, scowling at Creek, his protective side coming out. "She had very little time to make this decision because she had her own revelation upon waking. You thought you saw her die. Well, you did. That moment will haunt my entire existence, thinking that she was lost to us all again. The not knowing if she'd come back because we were here. I wouldn't wish it on anyone."

I look up at him, my eyes a little teary, and smile.

"What do you mean? Holy shit this is a lot!" Creek runs a hand through his hair before rubbing his eyes.

"Look at her, properly," Roman says shortly. I guess the way Creek looked at me wasn't missed by any of them.

"She's an Angel," Kain adds softly, and Creek's eyes widen as he really looks at me. His face looks more intense as he takes it in, the small changes since I woke, and knowing how little I've even begun to process what's happened to me, he probably sees stuff I haven't even noticed.

"I..." Creek starts, then his mouth opens and closes like he's trying to find the right words.

"Maybe we should let you rest," Morgan says, her guys staying quiet in the room, but prepared to act if they need to.

Creek nods slowly, like he's trying to wrap his head around it all, and I get it, it's a lot, but my heart hurts that he might have chosen otherwise.

"Do you want to come back to our room?" I ask softly, and he blinks at me.

"Maybe he should stay here for now, until his powers manifest?" Morgan offers, and I know it's as much for me as it is for Creek, so if he says no, it's not just because of me.

"No, I want to go back. I've been out for days, right? I don't want to be

away from you any longer than I have been,” he says directly to me, and I let out a sigh of relief. If he hated me, he wouldn’t want to come back to our room, right?

“Okay, but if anything happens,” Caleb starts, but I shake my head.

“We’ll find you. I promise.” I smile at him, but he still looks uneasy.

“Creek, you will have power of some sort. Morgan created you herself, but since her power is almost, well, unfathomable, it could be anything. Maybe we should talk before you leave. Alone.” Caleb says, his eyes bouncing between Creek and me.

“Nah, I’m just going to tell them, so you might as well just say it,” Creek says, waving toward me and the guys behind me.

“Okay fine. So, essentially, we’re worried about your power. We can sense how much of it you have, and, well, it’s more than you were meant to get and we don’t know why. It could be because of your Angel DNA but, like I said, we don’t really have a clue. Our biggest concern is that it could either control you, or that you could hurt someone.” His eyes flick to me, and his meaning is obvious. He’s worried that Creek is going to hurt me. And if he hurts me too bad, well, the grief would tip him over the edge. “We’d prefer that you stay with us, but I know that’s unlikely. So if you feel anything that doesn’t seem right, come and find one of us. Please,” Caleb says.

“Can’t Morgan just sense his power?” Kain asks, his head tilted.

“I can, but he’s still too new. His power doesn’t seem to have manifested yet, which is why Caleb and I are being cautious. But I trust that you guys can look after yourselves and that you’ll find us when you need us.

“Thank you,” Creek says, looking relieved, even if he still does look a little lost. His physical features don’t seem to have changed much, though his skin is a little paler, his eyes a little brighter, and his hair a little darker.

He stands and I follow suit as he captures my hand with his. Levi watches him closely, while Kain just smiles at us. I can tell he’s happy, but I think he’s just happy that I’m happy. At least, that’s the feeling I get through our bond. I’m glad that *that* at least survived my transformation.

“Thank you,” I say again softly to Morgan who waves me off with a smile.

“Be good, kids,” Caleb says with a laugh, and I can’t help but chuckle at him as we make our way back to our room.

Creek and I sit on the bed, facing each other in silence. It's been less than an hour since he woke and, after a ton of assurance, the other three left the two of us alone to talk. Except all we've done is sit here. As much as I don't mind the silence, I also know he has to have a trillion things running through his mind that he wants to ask. That he wants to say.

I'm not sure where to start, or even if I should, so I'm waiting, letting him get to grips with everything we told him. Except my patience is wearing thin. I don't want to wait. I hate the awkward tenseness that there is between us right now.

"Creek..." I start, but he puts a finger on my lips to stop me.

"Don't say you're sorry, Remy. I can't imagine how hard it was to make the decision you made, but you made the right one. It's just taking me a minute to wrap my head around it. Around the fact that you died. That this journey here fundamentally changed what we are. I haven't even had a chance to think about all of the other things I should be thinking about, like Fallon, Colt, everything back home. Right now my brain is stuck on the fact that I'm a Demon."

"I really am..."

"No, Remy. I'd have made the same decision. So stop. You have nothing to be sorry about. It's just a lot. How are you even coping with all of this?"

"I'm not." I shrug. "I'm just keeping moving as much as I can until I run out of steam. I'm focusing on all things you, and Fallon right now."

"Remy." He sighs, and shakes his head before his face contorts, like he's in pain.

"Creek, what's wrong?"

"Remy, get Caleb..." he says through gritted teeth. I stand but pain rips through my body and I fall to the floor, screaming as I go down. It's like I'm burning from the inside out, like my skin is being flayed from my body. I've never felt anything so intense, so painful, in my entire life. I can't focus on anything but the pain. My vision goes dark and all I can hear is the ringing in my ears as my skin feels like every nerve has been exposed. I writhe on the floor, unable to move, my lungs burning because I can't breathe.

"Remy!" I barely hear my name, I don't recognize the voice and I can't focus on it, no matter how much I try to, because the feeling of flames licking up my skin, as if it's bubbling and melting, is all that fills my mind.

In a heartbeat, the pain stops, but it takes a minute for my mind to catch up with the reality of it. For my body to realize I'm not being attacked. I suck

in a lungful of air and scramble backward until my back is against a wall.

“Remy...” Creek’s voice is broken as it filters into my mind, but I can’t open my eyes yet. I wrap my arms around my knees to reassure myself that I’m okay.

What the fuck was that?

I open my eyes and find Bryce standing over Creek, who looks devastated.

“Are you okay, Mara?”

Bryce’s words are soft, gentle, kind, so very unlike him, so I focus on him and notice the concern on his face, the rigid stance of his body.

“I...” My voice is hoarse, like I’ve been shouting and screaming for days. I swallow and try again. “I think so.”

My voice is still husky, and Creek looks beyond broken.

“What just happened?” I ask, still reassuring myself that I’m okay.

“Creek’s power manifested,” Bryce says soothingly, like I’m an animal that might bolt at the smallest thing.

“That was you?” I ask, turning to look solely at Creek, and his head drops.

“I am so sorry, I don’t know how it happened. I was fine, then all of a sudden I was so angry, like there was a burning rage consuming me. Then you started screaming and I couldn’t stop it, the anger overwhelmed me. I am so sorry, Remy.”

“It’s fine. I’m okay,” I say, my voice a little stronger. “It just wasn’t expected, I know you didn’t mean it.”

“If this is just a drop of your power, you need to come and work with Malik and me. Our powers are probably the closest to whatever this is, but we can swing by and see Morgan to get a full read on you. You’re going to need to stay away from everyone for a few days while you learn how to manage your power. We should just about have enough time to make sure you’re ready to go home with the timeline on unravelling Fallon’s bond.” His mouth twists, a mix of concern and intrigue painted on his face.

“I can’t leave Remy, not after that. And I’ve already been MIA for like, what, a week? I don’t want to lose any more time,” Creek croaks, and I smile at him.

“I’m fine, I promise. Maybe it’s best if you go with Bryce if it means you get a grip on your power, because if that was just a taste, I can’t imagine what full power would be like. Plus, what is a few days when we have eternity?”

His face falls even further and I hate that I did this to him. That everything is so messy right now.

“I really am sorry, Remy,” he says despondently before standing and leaving the room.

“He’ll be okay,” Bryce tells me as I stand and sigh.

“I’ve never felt anything like that before in my life,” I tell him honestly. “I thought I was going to die.” He winces at my words and straightens his tie.

“We’ll work with him, make sure he has at least a basic control over his power. Once you’re on Earth, his power will be reduced anyway, but not massively, not if he’s as powerful as I think he might be. But Morgan will have a look over him and determine what it is he can do, and we’ll go from there. Maybe, maybe you should give him a few days.”

“I’m not going to ban him from seeing us, but if he chooses to stay away, I’ll understand. I haven’t even started to think about my powers yet, I’m just glad everything is staying pretty much dormant right now.”

“The advantage of you being here. Angels are at their weakest here, which is probably what’s helping you. Unfortunately, it’s probably why Creek’s power affected you as much as it did.”

I sigh at his words and pinch the bridge of my nose.

But of course.

“Thank you for helping him.”

“Of course. I heard you screaming from the other side of the palace. Be glad I got here before anyone else heard you. I don’t want to think what would’ve happened if your other men had got here first. Luckily, they’re in the basement and it’s pretty well sound proofed down there, because, well, reasons. I will help him anyway I can, Mara.”

“Thank you, Bryce. It means more than you know.”

“Hopefully he gets things under control before you need to leave, because I don’t imagine you’ll be happy leaving without him.”

Roman finds me curled up on the bed and is on me in an instant. He lays behind me, wrapping his arms around me, pulling me back into his chest. “You okay, Princess?”

His words brush over my ear, tickling the skin making me shudder.

“I’m okay. Just been a long couple of days and I miss home a little,” I say softly, turning to face him.

“You sure it doesn’t have anything to do with what happened earlier?” he asks, looking down at me with a mix of displeasure and sympathy.

“You heard about that?” I snuggle into his chest and his arms tighten around me.

“Not many secrets in our lives these days, Princess. Bryce saw Levi and explained, he’s still breaking shit down in the training arena. I vented enough, so I wanted to come and check on you while Kain makes sure that Levi doesn’t tear the palace apart. Diminished strength apparently isn’t a thing when it comes to you being in pain.” He chuckles as he murmurs the words into my hair.

“I just didn’t want you guys to be angry or think he was dangerous. I really am fine.”

“I know. Bryce told us. You think we’d have stayed away if we doubted him? Kain also pointed out you might want a hot minute to yourself after everything, so we destroyed shit. It was fun.”

“I’m glad you guys are all getting along better at least.”

“We are, it’ll be a whole new thing to work out with Creek being different now. He seems different, not even the powers thing, just in himself.”

I sigh and he pulls me back so I can see his face.

“I didn’t say that was a bad thing. Different isn’t bad, it’s just different. We’ll adjust. If we did it with everything before, we’ll do it again. You are priority number one for all of us, Remy. If we want it to work, it will. It might be a little weird to start with, but we’ll be fine.”

“Thank you. I needed to hear that.” I kiss him softly, the barest brush of my lips on his, but my entire body heats. He groans and I know he can scent my arousal. I can sure as hell feel his.

“We agreed to take things slow with you after everything, Remy. You are killing me here.”

“I won’t break. And I don’t want to go slow. I’ll tell you what I told the others when they pulled that bullshit line: I’m alive, I’m breathing, and I am goddamned horny. Probably more than I was before. I want you.”

“You really know how to test a guy’s strength, don’t you?” he says, a small laugh under his breath.

“I just know what I want. And right now, I want your cock inside of me.”

“Fucking hell, Princess.” I can almost see the second his resolve snaps and within a heartbeat his hand is bunched in my hair, my scalp stinging and his lips on mine, kissing me as if we don’t have any more tomorrows.

He pushes me backward and rolls on top of me, settling in between my legs, his hardness pressing down on me, creating the best kind of friction.

"Hmmm, I like bossy Roman. He fucks the sass right out of me." I'm teasing him, trying to rile him up. Of all my men, Roman is the one who enjoys playing on the fine line between pleasure and pain the most. He's my escape, my moment of reprieve when the whole world is going to shit.

"Yeah well, bossy Roman is going to go slow and make love to you."

If I weren't pinned to the bed with his huge cock straining in his jeans hovering at my center just waiting to push inside, I'd stomp my foot like a toddler to show my annoyance.

"What if I don't want slow and make-lovey?" I add in a small pout to drive home my point.

"Well, sometimes you don't know what's best for you, so that's why I'm here. To remind you that you're not at a hundred percent yet."

Fuck this shit. I'm going to have to get creative.

With that, he kisses me, slow and longing. Soft and loving. Every ounce of his love is spoken through that kiss. He tells me I'm beautiful with every lick. Repeats how strong I am with every nip of his teeth. He's reverent, moaning his approval at my compliance. He lifts off his t-shirt, before removing my tank, baring me to him. He kisses me again and I squirm beneath him.

“You are fucking everything, Remy.”

I sigh into his kiss and reach down to unbuckle him and he moves, kicking off his jeans, leaving just the thin layer of my undies between us.

He tuts before kissing down my body, my back arching as he kisses down my ribs, slipping my lace shorts off. I moan, my voice not much more than a rasp, loving this, but wanting more.

But I'm biding my time because as much as I'm enjoying his soft side, I crave the hungry beast that lies just beneath his perfectly controlled façade. He kisses back up, laving my nipples with his tongue before kissing up my neck.

My hands slide up and down his back, squeezing the firm globes of his ass just as he pushes inside me and pauses, his gaze searching mine out, making sure I'm okay.

This needs to stop. I'm not some porcelain doll that needs to be handled with care.

I died.

And I came back stronger than ever.

I let him love me tenderly with a few more strokes of his cock, bottoming out and kissing down the column of my neck before hooking my leg around his waist and flipping him over so that I'm on top of him, his cock buried deep inside my hungry pussy, squeezing every inch of him while my grin tells him I'm done playing the victim.

Roman just rolls his eyes, his patience wearing thin.

"Remy, what are you doing?"

He's not a fan of being a bottom.

Roman is the epitome of control. Me on top is not his go-to position, but if I tell him that it's what I need, he'll accept it.

But that's not what I need.

I long for his dominance. His out of control fucking that makes me feel alive with every hard thrust.

"I'm doing what I want. You're the one who said I'm a brat."

"I never said that, Princess."

"But that's what you think, right?" I bend down, sliding my tongue from one corner of his mouth to the other. My hands are holding him down by the wrists and I know for a fact he's not liking that. But I'm trying to call out his beast. I need it.

"You call me Princess. Is that because I'm a spoiled little brat?" Lifting my hips until the head of his cock is just barely inside me, I slam down until he's buried to the hilt once more and I can feel the air rush out of his lungs.

"Remy." It's a warning with a bite of a threat. A threat that I long to free.

"Roman." I mimic his tone and that does not bode well for me, but glee and anticipation floods me.

"Are you trying to piss me off, Princess?"

God, yes.

"Why would I do that?"

Roman flips me over and, at my sass, his resolve is almost broken. Just a little more push and I'll have him exactly where I want him.

Now my wrists are the ones trapped beneath his big hands, his entire body covering mine as he slides in and out of my pussy. Leisurely fucking me like we have until the end of time to bring on our climax. With Roman's

stamina, we could do this all night; him fucking me out of my mind and making me come five times before he's ready to call it quits.

"What's wrong, Roman? Aren't you able to fuck me properly anymore? Did my death break you?" His hands are trembling with the force of his control.

"Remy." He warns me again, telling me with one word that if I keep this up, he's going to lose it and I may very well regret my actions.

But there's a very slim chance of that being the case.

I'm craving his kind of loving and I won't stop until he gives it to me.

"If you won't give it to me then maybe I'll ask Levi to do it."

And that's the moment the last drop makes the small tether of control he had left explode into a million pieces.

"Fucking hell, Princess. You asked for it."

In five seconds flat, I find myself draped over his lap, my ass raised, the side of my face resting on the mattress as Roman's starving eyes devour every inch of my skin. His gaze is following his fingers as they trail from my neck to the curve of my ass and down my thighs. He's calculating my punishment and I can feel my juices coming to life.

Taking a deep breath, he looks over at my satisfied smile and shakes his head slightly.

"Don't scream victory, yet, Princess. You don't know what I'm about to do to you."

He barely finishes his sentence when I feel the first slap of his palm on my right cheek. I squeak out a surprised yelp and quickly close my mouth. If I give him the slightest hint that I'm in pain, he'll stop it all and I'll have to start this charade all over again.

Roman glides one finger down the crack of my ass and inside my pussy to test out his handiwork.

"So wet. My little princess likes it when I spank her. I wonder if this will tamper down your sass." He answers his own question with a resounding slap on my left cheek and immediately thrusts two fingers inside my pussy, hooking his fingers and searching out my hot spot.

"Never," I whisper, shaking my ass, demanding more.

I'm suddenly left with a sense of emptiness as his fingers pull out and he alternates his slaps from one cheek to the other in rapid succession until the burning feel of his punishment makes me acutely aware of his fingers as he slams them back inside me.

I'm a panting, moaning mess by the time he throws me back onto the bed and thrusts his hard cock inside my pussy and fucks the breath right out of me.

I'm holding on to the wooden bedpost, trying not to lose my footing. His big palm is around my neck, not choking but feeling my pulse beating inside my artery and I'm sure he's loving the fact that my breath, my life, is in the palm of his hand. He would never hurt me, but he wants to be the reason I live.

My orgasm comes in the form of a feral scream that escapes my control. A long vowel sound that echoes in the bedroom like music to our ears.

Just when I think he's going to come inside me, he pulls out and buries his face in my pussy, licking up my juices. I can hear him lapping it up like he's a starving man needing sustenance.

When I feel his tongue glide up to my puckered hole, I know. I know he's going to change the game.

I feel the lube before I register that he's taken a bottle from somewhere and is preparing my ass for his intrusion. A welcomed invasion. God, I want it.

"Yes, fates yes, please Roman. Fuck me."

I don't have to beg twice.

By the time I've finished my plea, the head of his cock has breached the hole and he's breathing hard, trying to control himself, trying not to hurt me.

But I want it. I want to feel the sting of life. I want to know I'm living to the fullest.

I want Roman to make me feel that edge of pain.

And he knows it.

With one hard thrust, he buries his cock so deep I can feel him as he bottoms out. I'm a writhing, panting mess, so wanton I should feel ashamed, but I feel nothing but unadulterated bliss.

I'm so lucky that my men know me so fucking well.

"Take it, Princess."

And I do.

Roman's hands are now spread across my hips as he holds on to me tightly, fucking me into the mattress, the bed squeaking with every one of his thrusts.

Snaking one hand to my clit, Roman pinches the hard nub and sends me over to another climax just as I feel him slide out. As my orgasm begins its

descent, I feel the warm liquid of his cum cover my entire back.

I'm panting and trying to catch my breath when I feel Roman at my ear, his whisper almost lethal with its warning.

"Next time you threaten to call others in here to satisfy you instead of me..." His tone is calm but the words are hard as he massages his cum into my skin, spreading his seed all over my back. "I might just call them in myself and see how many holes we can fill at once."

And holy fuck, my mind went there, and I don't think I'll get that visual out of my mind ever again.

CHAPTER SEVEN



Two days.

It's been two days since Creek's powers revealed themselves, and two days that I haven't seen or heard from him. Two days that I've been driving the other three crazy because I'm tired of being here. As much as I love Morgan and the guys, I'm tired of being separated for one reason or another.

Sick. Of. It.

Which is why I find myself at the table for breakfast, antsy, like I'm sitting on pins, waiting for Morgan and her guys to get here, hoping that Creek is with them. I feel like a kid at Christmas waiting to see if Santa has come. It's ridiculous, I'm aware of it, but I can't help myself.

I miss him.

My guys filter in first, half asleep, but Kain gives me a half grin, telling me he knows exactly what I'm up to. He shakes his head softly as he murmurs to Roman, whose smirk is instant before he laughs at me too. I shrug at them with a grin as Levi kisses the top of my head and takes his seat beside me.

"You okay, Angel?"

"You might need to come up with something new to call me now," I chuckle, and he rolls his eyes at me. "But I'm okay, thank you."

"Good. Love you," he says softly, squeezing my hand as if he can sense my anxiety before pouring himself a mug of coffee and sipping it quietly as Kain and Roman join us, still laughing and murmuring between them. My heart squeezes in my chest at the journey these guys have been on, how far

everyone has come, and how well they get along now.

Morgan and Bryce pop into the room next, whispering as his arm wraps around her waist and he kisses her softly. It's a rare display of affection, but it's kind of adorable. My heart sighs at how happy they look together.

"Morning," Morgan says with a faint blush as she finally notices we're here and Bryce smiles at us all widely.

"Good morning, indeed," I say to her, wagging my eyebrows, and Bryce bursts out laughing, which I think might be the first time I ever remember hearing him laugh.

"You guys itching to get home yet?" he asks, and the guys' nods are pretty comical.

"My wolf is craving a run," Roman tells him, and Bryce frowns a little.

"Yeah, I get that. It should only be a few more days till everything is okay enough for you to go. I know we're meeting with Deacon later to sort out the Demon situation on Earth. Then Remy and Morgan just need to work out how they're sealing the realm well enough that this isn't an issue again."

"I actually had a thought about that already," Morgan says, lifting her teacup to her lips and taking a sip.

"Oh?" I inquire as I load up my plate. Caleb pops into the room then and takes his seat between Bryce and Morgan.

"Yes, I figure the only reason it failed last time was because you became a Hunter, and while the magic was obviously dormant in you, because you were a Hunter, the seal was weakened. Now that you're back to full strength, you should have all of your Shadow Walker powers back, so we should be able to seal it the same way we did last time, which means that only you or I can open it. Or someone who has our blood."

"Sounds simple enough, though I don't remember how we did it last time."

"Good thing I do, plus your memories should all start coming back soon enough. Though there are going to be a *lot* of them, so it's going to take a decent amount of time," she confirms, and I smile. "Plus, that reminds me. We should take a moment so I can read your power now that it's unlocked again so you don't get any surprises before your memories unlock. I know that Levi will have a good idea of what you can do, but it never hurts to make sure you're prepared."

"That's fine by me," I say with a smile, hoping my impatience isn't obvious as my eyes dart to the empty chairs at the table. Shoveling food into

my mouth so I don't ask a million questions about Creek, or if he's coming, I sit and listen as conversations start up around me. My guys are apparently going to train... again. Something about being at their lowest power levels and training meaning they will be even faster and stronger when they're home. Kain worries about how that might not be true for him, since the Dracul were created by Demons and he hasn't suffered that badly with being here.

I tune out of their conversation and focus on the one Morgan and her men are having, all while staring intently at the bacon on my plate.

"How is he getting on?" Morgan asks softly, her voice barely more than a murmur. Thank Hells for even more enhanced hearing!

"He's struggling. He can inflict pain, that isn't the problem. It's controlling himself once he unleashes the power, and he is strong," Bryce tells her.

"What about the other aspects?" Caleb asks.

"I think that this is the most prominent because he's angry. He's getting used to all the changes, and anger is an easy emotion. He won't manage the others until he learns to contain this bit of it. I just hope we have enough time, because there's no way he can be around Remy until he masters it and learns to lock down his power, even when his emotions get out of control."

I tune out of their conversation, guilt pooling in my stomach. I did this to him, so I didn't lose him, but now we can't even be in the same room. I feel like I'm going to be sick. The food in my mouth is like ash and I swallow, begrudgingly, just so it doesn't seem strange.

"Are you okay, Remy?" Levi leans over and murmurs in my ear softly. I don't look up, but I nod. I shouldn't have been listening in.

"Well, considering I know you're not, how about I promise to take you on a flying lesson today? Something to take your mind off of everything?" I can't help the small smile that graces my lips.

"What about training?" I ask, turning to face him.

"This is like training, my wings won't feel as strong, so it's just as useful," he says, and my eyes flick to Kain and Roman, who are pretending not to listen to us. They each meet my gaze and smile. I know they won't mind if I spend the day with Levi, but I don't want anyone to feel like I'm not paying them enough of my attention. But if they don't mind, then I think flying would be fun.

"Hell yes, but I need to do this power thing with Morgan first, so you can

go train with the boys first if you want to.”

“I think I’ll stay, it will be good to find out what’s new with your powers, all things considered.”

“That’s fine by me, and thank you.”

“What for?”

“You know what,” I say, nudging his shoulder. Thank fates for my guys, because I have no idea what I’d do without them.

Breakfast passes pretty quickly. Bryce and Caleb disappear first, to help Creek, I assume, but Morgan hangs back for me.

“We’ll see you later?” Kain asks softly as I stand to say goodbye to him and Roman.

“Of course.” I smile at him and he drops a soft kiss onto my lips, leaving me wanting more of him. Like I always do. He passes me over to Roman, who sweeps in and kisses me with every inch of the fierce alpha that he is. It consumes me and I’m practically panting when he releases me.

“Well damn,” Morgan says, chuckling and fanning her face, making me blush.

“Catch you later, Princess,” Roman says as he walks toward the now-permanent doors of the throne room with Kain.

“I’m beginning to understand why Luna kept a Lycan,” Morgan jokes, and I shake my head. “Anyway, shall we?”

She waves her hand and the table shortens and clears, leaving the three of us seated around a circular table.

“I suppose it’s better to know.” I shrug, because as much as I want to know, I also don’t. What if it’s some horrific power that could stay dormant. Everything’s stayed locked down for the last week or so.

“You’re apprehensive?” she asks, a frown on her face.

“Of course. No power has manifested. What if this unlocks it? What if I can’t control it? I don’t want to hurt anyone.”

“Remy, whatever it is, we’ll handle it the same way we do everything. Together. Whatever happens,” Levi tells me fiercely. His words settle my nerves a little, but the butterflies in my stomach still feel like they’ve multiplied.

“Okay, let’s do this,” I say, letting out a deep breath.

Morgan takes my hands in hers as Levi squeezes my thigh, but removes his hand again for the reading. She closes her eyes and I follow suit, building that door into my shield for her again. I can still feel that power, it’s deep inside of me still, locked away where I kept it before, but it doesn’t feel all that different from the last time we did this before I died.

I feel as she broaches my mind, but I focus on staying calm and in control. On trying to not pay attention to what it is she’s doing, the invasion of it all, as she probes that seed of power I have locked up tight.

After last time, she’s more hesitant as she opens the door to where my power is locked away, just opening it the tiniest amount so that she can look at it properly. I try harder not to wince or pay attention as my power trickles down into my consciousness while she has the doorway open. Sweat starts to bead on my forehead as I try to keep my calm and stay in control while she’s doing what she does, but the taste of copper fills my mouth and I realize I’ve bitten my lip pretty badly.

I swallow the blood and toy with my lip, a good distraction from what’s going on inside of my head. As she closes the door, my power retreats and my head clears. I reseat the door in my mind before opening my eyes to find her looking at me, confused.

“What is it?” Levi asks before I can.

“It’s...so strange. Has Kain drank from you since you changed?” she asks and my brow furrows.

“Yes,” I feel my cheeks heat but ignore it. “Why?”

“Did he say anything about you tasting different?”

“What the fuck is going on?” Levi demands, his patience wearing thin.

“Your power, I don’t know if it’s just because you’ve changed state so many times, or if it’s because you came into yourself down here, but your power is...darker than I’d expect.” My breathing hitches at her words and I try like fuck not to panic.

“What, exactly, does that mean?” I ask, my voice hoarse.

“I can’t read you properly. Your powers are locked down so tight in that fortress inside of you that it’s hard to get a full picture. You’re still a Shadow Walker, that much is obvious, and that always made your power a little darker than a typical Angel anyway, even an Archangel of War like Levi here. But there’s something extra, something darker, that wasn’t there before Mara. I can’t read exactly what it is unless you unbind yourself. There’s a lot

of power locked up in there. Way more than you had before. More light, and more dark.”

“This is insane,” Levi groans, scrubbing a hand down his face. “So you can’t tell her what her powers are exactly because she has them buried too deep?”

“Pretty much. Most Angels and Demons are born, or at least born again. Their powers are new and grow with us, they’re always there so you don’t know what life is like without them. Something about Mara being a Hunter means she had some power, but the rest of what she was, was essentially locked down. She’s spent so long, unconsciously keeping it locked away, that now, it’s locked away so deep I can’t see the bottom of the well of power in her.”

“Err, guys, still in the room,” I sigh, but mainly because I am so not ready to deal with this. “Okay, so we know a little more than we knew, but we don’t know everything. Honestly, I don’t know that I’m ready to deal with extra power. Not until this bullshit with Archer is dealt with, and it’s not like I can’t slip back down here now to see you when I am ready to deal with it, right? When I actually have a minute to catch my breath and learn my powers properly.”

“Technically, yes,” Morgan sighs. “But one slip up, one tiny mistake, could unravel everything. The fallout from unleashing everything I felt inside of you, and possibly more, because I couldn’t reach everything. It could be catastrophic, Mara.”

“How fucking awesome,” I groan and drop my head onto my arms on the table.

“Morgan, can you give us some time to discuss everything?” Levi says softly, rubbing a hand up and down my spine.

“Sure. Just let me know when you make a decision.” I throw a thumbs up to her and she chuckles before the sound of her heels clicking on the floor tells me she’s moving away from us. I wait until the sound disappears.

“Remy...” Levi sighs and I push back and face him.

“Why is it always so fucking crazy? Why can’t anything about my life be simple?” I whine and roll my eyes at myself.

“Because nothing worth having is ever simple,” he says with a small smile. “You know this is something you need to do right?”

“I do, but if I’ve kept it locked down for this long, I can keep it locked down. I don’t want to have to stay here longer than necessary. Once Deacon

recalls the Demons, dealing with Archer should be simpler. Once that disaster is sorted, we get to get our lives back, right? So then, then we can come back and deal with what we need to for my power. Hell, we don't even *have* to come back here, though it would be nice to see Morgan and the guys without all of the crazy going on."

"If that's what you want, I'll support you, but we have to tell the others. And if you ever feel your hold on it slipping, you *need* to tell us. Promise me, Remy." His tone barter no argument, so I have no choice but to agree.

"I promise. Dealing with it alone probably wouldn't be successful anyway."

"Hmmm. Now then, how about we start flying?"

"This sucks!" I groan, and Levi's laughter rings out in the meadow around us.

"You'll get there. You just need to focus," he says with a grin and I roll my eyes. Focusing while he's there, sweaty, topless, in gray sweatpants. Yeah, super easy to focus.

"You can do it. Think of how much fun it will be when you can fly. But we can't fly until you unfurl your wings." His chuckle makes me want to throw something at his stupidly pretty face. "How about I take you flying, it might inspire you?"

"Yes!" I exclaim. "Let's do that." Anything but this frustrating nothing that has been our entire morning.

"Okay, good," he says, his wings unfurling from his back are a beautiful sight. I don't even remember my wings from before, but I wish I did.

"Were my wings like yours?" I ask as I link my arms around his neck and place a kiss on his chest.

"Kind of. They were black closest to your body, and then became the most beautiful light blue toward the tips. Like snow and ice when it shimmers."

"They sound beautiful. Do you think they'll be the same?" I ask as he turns me around, my back to his chest, kissing my neck, teasing, before picking me up into his strong arms.

"Maybe. Wings can be linked to your power. I am an Archangel of War. Hence the black wings. Most of my soldiers have black wings too, there's

some red in there. Yours were the only ones I'd seen of their color, but Shadow Walkers are rare. But if Morgan is right, and your power is different, there's no telling what they might be this time around. You're not Amantara, not really. I mean, you are, but you're different, so you can't expect things to be the same now as they were back then."

The second his sentence is finished, he pushes off and we soar into the skies. I swallow the squeal of surprise and just enjoy the feeling of being in his arms, and the rush, the freedom that comes with flying. I notice his shoulders strain more than usual. Normally, flying is as easy for him as breathing, it's not even something to think about, but flying here must be harder for him. I feel bad that I haven't noticed before, and that I'm letting him fly carrying me.

"You okay, Angel?" he asks softly in my ear as his wings stretch out and we glide through the warm air.

"More than okay. I love being up here," I tell him with a huge grin.

"Good," he says with a wicked glint in his eyes. "Remember I love you."

His words barely register as I find myself falling. A scream loosens from my lungs as the air whips around me.

"Pull out your wings!" he shouts, my panic making me feel sick as I hurtle toward the ground.

"*Remy! Pull out your fucking wings!*" I want to scream back that I don't know how but I don't have time. I close my eyes and beg my body to respond to my pleas.

One second the wind is whipping my face and the next my back is screaming in agony.

"*Hell yes!*" Levi's shouts reach me and I open my eyes and realize I'm not falling. Well, I am, but I'm gliding rather than hurtling full speed toward my death. He flies beside me, my panic and fear still riding me, along with the relief that my wings actually appeared. It doesn't take long for us to reach the ground, and he lands before me, to catch me so I don't fuck up my landing.

I barely have my feet on the ground when my stomach rolls. I twist away from him quickly and lose my breakfast on the ground.

So gross.

I wipe my mouth before pinning him with my stare. "*What the actual fuck was that!?*"

He at least has the decency to look sheepish, but he's still pleased with

himself.

“You needed to get out of your head and just react. Learning to fly as an adult isn’t exactly easy. Most of us learn as kids. I needed you to stop thinking so much. I never would’ve let you crash.”

“You’re still an asshole,” I grumble.

“Yeah but I’m an asshole that you love.”

“Debatable.” I glare but there’s no heat in my words and he knows I don’t mean it. What I hate most is he’s right. When I stopped thinking about the how of it, it happened.

I try to stretch my wings out again to get a glimpse of them and wince as they follow my command, even though the muscles shake with the strain.

Black.

My wings are almost pure black, with the tiniest hints of the light blue Levi mentioned before.

I can’t tell if I’m happy or disappointed about it, but something deep inside me pangs at the loss of the blue. Some part of me I don’t really recognize, so I ignore it, stuffing it back down.

I tuck them back behind me, not sure how to make them disappear.

“You should try to keep them up off the floor.” Levi says softly, just watching me. “The last thing you want is crap in your wings when you try to fly, plus believe me when I tell you, a splinter in your wings is fucking horrendous.” He moves towards me, and runs a finger down my cheek.

“Our wings are incredibly sensitive,” he says, brushing a finger over where my wings join to my body and a shiver runs through every inch of me, making me gasp at the sensation. It’s unlike anything I’ve ever felt. “You need to protect and shield your wings as well as you can.”

“I’ll try,” I tell him, my hands resting on his biceps as I try to lift my wings from the ground. I try not to groan with the strain, but I know that if I don’t keep at it, the muscles will never grow strong enough.

“Want to try and glide again?” he asks, obviously aware of how much pain I’m in with the wings.

“Not right now,” I tell him before kissing his cheek. “Thank you for this. For today. For everything.”

“Of course! There isn’t anything I wouldn’t do for you, Remy. No matter what happens to us, around us, I’m on your side, I have your back. Forever and always.”

CHAPTER EIGHT



My back is still screaming at me, but after a few hours of trying, I finally got my wings to disappear again.

So. Much. Pain.

Levi reassures me that it will get easier each time, and that, eventually, it will be just like stretching when you wake up. Though, he did drop me from the sky earlier, so I'm not sure how much of it I'm in the mood to accept right now.

Which is why I'm at dinner, slouching like a motherfucker, trying to avoid resting my back on the chair, because fucking ouch.

"I heard her screams from the dungeon," Malik laughs, and I shoot him a glare, which just makes him laugh harder as the rest of the table joins in.

"You seriously thought he'd let you crash?" Killian asks, bemused.

"I wasn't exactly thinking with logic and sense as the ground was hurtling towards my face," I groan. I know it's all in good fun, and I'm not really as grouchy as I sound, but they seem to be enjoying my misery, bonding over my insanity, and who am I to stop it? Killian and Malik are as quiet as Creek and Kain typically. It's nice seeing everyone getting along.

Even if Creek and Bryce are missing from the table.

"You're lucky, Levi. If that had been me, I'd refuse to suck your dick for at least a week," Morgan chuckles.

"Now there's an idea." I grin from her to him and he laughs.

"If you think you would go that long..."

"I have three other dicks to play with," I say, sticking my tongue out at

him, and the whole table laughs.

“Fine, fine, I’m sorry,” he says laughing.

“Oh, I know,” I drawl with a wink.

“Sorry to interrupt.” I look up and find Deacon standing in the doorway, his discomfort obvious though I have no idea why, and Fallon silent at his side. “But shit is happening, and I think we need to call back the Demons running riot over there.”

Well shit.

“What’s happening?” I sigh, pinching the bridge of my nose. Fucking Archer.

“Archer used the Demons in an attack. I don’t know much more than that. But we can’t keep waiting, especially if we want to keep casualties to a minimum. I think they know about Az.”

“Will they even come that easily?” I ask, looking back to Morgan, and she nods.

“They likely do know about Azriel, which is why Archer has lashed out. But, if Deacon pulls the leash, they’ll come back. And then maybe Archer will stand down.”

“What if Archer isn’t leading all of this?” Fallon asks quietly. She looks tired and withdrawn again. I frown as I take her image in. When I saw her last, she was looking better, the bond was almost broken.

“What do you mean?” Morgan asks her, her eyes calculating, and it makes the butterflies in my stomach take flight.

“Azriel said something when we were together about how he wasn’t answering to Archer, how it was just an added benefit of his deal.” My stomach bottoms out at her words.

That can’t be true.

“Did he say anything else?” Levi asks her from my side, gripping my hand.

“No.” She shakes her head.

“He was probably just talking out of his ass,” Killian says, rolling his eyes.

“But what if he wasn’t?” Roman questions, and suddenly, I’m really not hungry anymore.

“If it wasn’t, then that’s something to worry about after we deal with all of this. Right now, we know what the situation is and how we can fix it, so we’ll do that,” Morgan says, and there’s no arguments, even if Caleb is

frowning a little, he keeps quiet. Right now, she's every bit the queen dealing with her subjects and getting shit done.

"What do we need to do?" I ask her.

"You don't need to do anything. This is a Demon problem. But if you want to lend us a little power, I'll never turn that down." She smiles at me.

"We can do that?" I ask, my gaze bouncing between her and Levi.

"It's not something we can all do, and usually it's rare that it can happen at all." Levi tells me. "But you and I have done it before, and I'm pretty sure that's how you and Morgan sealed the portal before."

Morgan nods at his words and I let out a deep breath.

"Okay, well count me in. How do we do this?" I ask.

"Is this really a good idea?" Kain asks.

I need to get home and sleep for a week. I wish I could remember all of this super vital stuff, I hate that I'm missing so much. Right now it's fine, but in any other situation it could get someone killed. Morgan said my memories should come back, but as of right now, I've had dick all.

"It is a little risky," Caleb says. "But I think it's also necessary. We can do it without you, Mara, though we'll still need your blood for the portal to bring that many Demons from your realm at once, but an extra show of power, especially considering they're going to fight the tether, can't hurt."

"Okay then. I'm in."

After clearing the throne room, my guys decided they were all staying for this, and despite Caleb's insistence that we get Bryce, Morgan shut him down saying we had this covered with my added power.

I just sat back and let them argue it out because that is one lovers' quarrel I want nothing to do with. I have enough testosterone of my own to handle.

Deacon moves to the throne and stands in front of Morgan before she waves me over to them.

"So, what exactly do you need me to do?" I ask cautiously. I can see how tense Levi, Kain, and Roman are and I don't want anyone to lose their heads. Not right now.

"You just need to let me in like normal. I'll do the rest, but you should probably keep your eyes open if you can, since, ya know. Demons." She

shrugs, as if she's not talking shit about her own people, but it just makes me smile.

"What is the plan once they're here?" Levi asks tersely.

"They will be dealt with," Caleb tells him, leading him and the others to behind the thrones where Killian and Malik are already sitting. Caleb takes his seat and nods at Morgan, prompting her to take my hand. Deacon moves to stand at her other side and drags his extended nail down his forearm, blood rushing from his vein as he starts speaking, that harsh language making my skin itch again. Morgan spills her own blood, and then mine. I hiss as she slices through my flesh, but I grit my teeth. I knew they'd need my blood for the portal, I just wasn't ready for it. I quiet my mind and picture the doorway into my power for Morgan as she smiles at me. It takes longer than usual because I'm staying aware of my surroundings, even if the guys are behind me should I need help.

Morgan joins in the chant as beads of sweat roll down Deacon's face and Fallon gasps before I see the portal opening before us. So very different to the ones the witches opened on Earth, a pulsing angry red, rimmed in black. Demons start to fill the room, shouts growing louder as Caleb and the other Horsemen demand compliance.

I lose track of how long I stand there, the cut on my arm long-healed, dried blood on my wrist from where it dripped previously. The pool of blood on the ground is gone, but there are so many Demons.

All of them were just running riot on Earth.

I feel a lead weight in the pit of my stomach at what might've happened to prompt Deacon to insist they come back without any more hesitation, but I can't think about it right now. Deacon and Morgan quiet and the shouts from the Demons in the room grow louder as scuffles break out as the portal closes.

"*Kneel!*" Morgan shouts, the power from her word making me stumble, and the Demons in the room fall to their knees. "Traitors, you have broken one of the very few rules I enforce, and for that you will bleed."

Screams ring out around the room and I catch Fallon spinning around to avoid the sight before us. Blood from the Demons, various colors, pour from their orifices. They tremble, some unable to even stay kneeling. I school my features, not reacting to Morgan's show of power. The punishment. This is fully her domain, no matter my personal feelings about it all.

"*Silence!*" she shouts, and it's as if she stole their tongues, not so much as

a whimper sounds out in the throne room.

“Who among you wants to gain my mercy?” Her voice rings out against the silence as she watches the masses to see if anyone volunteers themselves. No one moves.

“So be it,” she says, shaking her head. “Your betrayal will cost you the ultimate price. You will not volunteer for my mercy, you lose all access to it. Your lives will be forfeit.” Fallon gasps, but Kain wraps her in his arms and keeps her still.

Caleb shuffles behind me, but he doesn’t say a word against his queen. None of them do. I can feel the discomfort of my guys from here, my own just as tangible, but then, I am not a queen of Demons. This might be the easier punishment for them. I can’t imagine torture isn’t on the list of the Horsemen’s skillset. Just the thought of it makes me shudder.

A lone man stands toward the back of the room. Or at least, I assume it’s a man. He has male features, but he also has horns protruding from his forehead and his skin is scaled and scarred. I look around the room, searching for Jack. I can’t see him, so either he’s managed to keep himself from Morgan’s power somehow, or he’s already here. Or dead. I can’t decide which I’d prefer. The man whimpers, drawing my attention back to him as he cowers.

“You wish to speak?” Morgan asks, an eyebrow raised. The man nods his head quickly, the pain on his face obvious.

“So be it. The rest of you, I shall leave to Deacon.” Deacon looks to her and nods. “To the cells?” she asks him, and he nods again, as if speaking might break him. Though, I suppose her power could have extended to him. I really haven’t learned that much about what she can actually do in my time here.

“So be it,” Morgan says almost sadly, and with a clap of her hands, the Demons disappear from the room.

“I forgot how much of a punch your power packs,” Deacon says, rubbing his jaw.

“I didn’t mean to get you in it,” she says, frowning, but he waves her off.

“Can I leave him with you guys? I’m going to have a hard few days’ work with what looked like a few hundred Demons. And I still need to break the final tether with Fallon.”

“Of course. I’m sure Malik and Killian can get the information we need from him.” Her gleeful smile reminds me that she truly is a Demon, but

thankfully, I know that's not all she is. "And leave Fallon here while you handle the others. These guys will be heading home in a day or so. I'll call for you when we need you for the final tether so I can capture her soul."

He nods at her before looking wistfully at Fallon and disappearing from sight.

The room clears and my guys volunteer to go with Caleb to check in on Creek and Bryce while Killian and Malik disappear with the Demon, leaving me with Morgan and Fallon.

"I'll leave you two alone, I want to drop in on the sixth level and make sure no one thinks about trying to save their friends. Demons are typically loyal, especially to kin. They're also just so goddamn greedy on that level." She waves her fingers at us before disappearing from sight and Fallon sags in relief as she disappears.

"She is...woah," Fallon says, her eyes still wide.

"I know, right!" I smile softly at her before hugging my friend. "Sorry, that was a lot, even for me. I can't even imagine, especially with everything you've been through lately."

"It's fine, I'll be fine."

"Are you sure?" I ask. "You look tired again."

"It's been a lot. Undoing the tether is a lot, it's draining, far more so than creating the damn thing was. Maybe it's because it was Azriel's bond and he's not the one undoing it, but it's hard. At least it's nearly done." I watch her closely, her almost-sad tone as she mentions Azriel causes even more concern, but I could be mistaken. It could just be because she's tired.

"Well, from what Morgan just said, I guess we'll be going home in a few days, once she works her magic on you. Hopefully that helps."

"Seeing Mama and Rebel again will help. It feels like we've been gone for a year." She smiles sadly at me and I hug her again.

"Is everything else okay? I know we haven't spoken much about Azriel or Deacon," I ask, watching her reaction closely.

"I'll be fine. I just need to get away from here and never come back. It's been different since Az...but I'm still in the same room, still wandering the same halls, the gallery. I just...I really need to get home."

“I get that. I miss home too. Except going home means facing everything that’s happened since we left and I’m not sure I’m totally ready for that.”

“I know that feeling. The thought of Mama’s face when Rebel was taken because of me haunts me. Awake or asleep.”

“You can’t think she blames you, Fallon. You were being held prisoner!” I exclaim, because there is no way she should be carrying guilt for that.

“I don’t really know how I feel about anything right now.” She sighs and drops down to sit on the edge of the dais where the thrones sit. “It’s so strange, because I know Az was an asshole, he held me prisoner and bound me to him for fuck’s sake, but there was also another side of him. And it’s hard to align all of that inside myself, especially since he’s gone now. Then there’s everything else, what I endured, Deacon, Colt, going home, facing everyone. I know Morgan is going to fix me or whatever, but I’m different, Remy. I feel fundamentally different. How do I face everyone back home who expects me to be the same person?”

“You just be yourself. Broken parts and all. You let the people who love you help you heal,” I say softly, knowing I should probably take my own advice once I let myself deal with my own grief, but I’ve always been terrible at that. I am a class A pro at shoving my feelings away so I don’t have to deal with them though.

“Yeah, I guess,” she says quietly.

“Is there anything I can do, Fallon?” I ask, resting my shoulder against hers.

“You’re already doing it. Just being here is everything right now. Not pushing me to talk, to feel. Just letting me be.”

“I can keep doing that. You know I’ll only push if I can see you need me to.”

“I know, and I love you for it.” She rests her head on my shoulder and I try not to feel too sad about it. Fallon has always had such life, seeing her like this, it’s hard. But if she needs me to let her just be, then that’s sure as fuck what I’m going to do. I know, maybe better than anyone else in her life, just how overwhelming dealing with so much change internally is.

“I love you too, Fallon.”

“Ride or die,” she whispers, and I feel her tears on my skin.

“Ride or die.”

After the insanity that has been this day, I cannot wait to fall into my bed, but Morgan asked me to come and see her quickly before I sleep. Which is why I'm trudging through the halls up to her room. Thank fuck for Caleb having shown me the way last time I came here.

Not all of us can whisper anywhere we want to go.

I wonder how many people actually live in this palace. It's huge, but I so rarely actually see people.

I knock on the door to her suite and she opens it, a coy smile on her face.

"Is everything okay?" I ask, and her smile grows.

"I have a surprise for you." She keeps the door pulled to, so I can only see her face, and I try not to huff. My impatience and want to sleep is real.

"Three doors down on the opposite side of the hall. Knock. And you're welcome." I hear Malik's laugh from behind the door before she softly shuts it. I don't even have time to say thank you before it's sealed.

Curious, I make my way down the hall and knock on the door she told me to. I hear banging and then the door is yanked open.

Creek.

"Remy?" he breathes, his eyes wide. "What are you doing here?"

"Well, I guess the guys think you're ready to see me again, because Morgan offered me a surprise, and well...Surprise!" I move toward him and he softly closes the door behind me, capturing me in his arms, just staring down at me. His bare chest is warm under my touch.

It feels like forever since I last touched Creek. The pain and suffering from his transformation has changed something in him. I don't know how, yet, but I want to find out. I need to help him.

I lightly caress his cheek with my fingers, his eyes closing with the intimacy of my gesture. Creek has always been the most human of them all, the one who was most like me.

Now, the balance of it all has shifted. Levi is most like me and Creek is... unique. But he's still my Creek.

My best friend.

My husband.

The man I will love until the end of time.

He smiles down at me, that boyish grin that always gets to me.

"Hey," he croaks out, trapping my hand on his face with his large paw-like one and rubbing his cheek like a contented cat.

"Hey." My whisper is barely audible to my own ears. "How are you

feeling?”

Creek takes a minute before he answers, like he’s taking inventory of his body and his mind.

“My body feels tired, but my mind is...well, I’m not sure yet.”

I take a small step closer, closing the small gap that separates our bodies. He kisses me softly, barely a whisper, before leading me to his bed. Lying on his bed, the crisp white sheets a complete contrast to his tanned torso and arms, his long golden hair like a messy halo across his pillow, he pulls me in closer with his other arm until we are nose to nose. Lips to lips.

“But I’m not too tired to do this.” Before I can register what is happening, Creek is kissing me again, but hungrier this time. The sweet, loving touch of his lips on mine is another reminder of my everlasting bond to him.

I lie there for long minutes kissing him slowly, making up for a week without seeing him. Reminding him of our bond and the love that is clearly here to stay. He undresses me between kisses, his touch so soft, when he removes his shorts too.

“I missed you,” I tell him, sincerity in every word I tell him.

“God, Remy, I’m so sorry.”

With an arm snaking around my waist, he rolls us over until I’m on my back and he’s lying on top of me, gloriously naked.

“Hey, hey, don’t. It’s not your fault. I’m okay, you’re okay. It’s in the past, let’s just keep it there, okay?”

As I’m looking into his eyes, I see his mood change from remorse to hunger in a split second. His hips are already making slow circles against my center, his hard dick sliding through my wet slit, our chests rubbing deliciously against one another.

“I’m hungry,” he growls out. Like, legit growling. Usually, it’s something I expect from Roman with his wolf that likes to go alpha on me, but Creek? He’s the sweet one, my tender lover.

Well, this is an interesting twist. With a grin like the Cheshire cat, I lift my hips just enough for his cock to glide right inside me and we both pause for a second, taking it all in. As soon as that familiar pleasure takes over our senses, Creek begins fucking me slowly, reverently. Like a careful lover who fears breaking the woman he loves.

“Fuck, I’ve missed you, beautiful. I’ve missed burying myself in your heaven.”

His entire body is tight, his muscles tense like he’s trying to hold himself

back, trying to protect me, maybe?

And we can't have that, can we?

Placing both my hands on his cheeks, I force him to look straight into my eyes. "I'm yours, Creek, and I won't break. But I swear to fuck if you hold back on me, I will make you wait another week before I let you fuck me again."

The change is immediate. The tension from his shoulders lifts just as quickly as the feral hunger shows its face and it is glorious.

"Yes, Creek. Show me your Demons, share everything with me."

With his teeth clenched and his eyes wild with desire, he lifts us both to standing, the head of the bed at my front where my hands are holding on to dear life while Creek is behind me, the length of his gloriously naked body touching mine. With a quick thrust inside, he places one hand on the wall to the side of my head and the other on my hip and begins fucking me in earnest.

His concern for me is longer in protecting me from pain. What he wants is to make sure I come harder than ever before. The only worry he seems to have is that of my immeasurable pleasure. So he fucks me from behind, slamming the bed post against the wall with every animalistic thrust.

He's no longer human, he's a beast showing his dominance and it's fucking hot as hell.

"More, Creek. Don't hide from me. Fuck me like you mean it." I'm not sure what the fuck I'm saying to him, but I do know that my words could spark the Demon lying dormant inside of him that could possibly hurt me.

His soul loves me too much to do damage, but the Demon is an unknown.

My stomach is slamming against the hard wood of the bedpost when his growls reach my ears and his words sink in.

"You are mine, Remy, my pussy, my heart, my soul." I know I'll have bruises from his grip and from the wood hitting my stomach every time he slams into me. I know, and I love the mere thought of it.

"Yes, yes! Fuck me, Creek. Harder, please."

He adjusts behind me, bending his knees just enough to place both hands on my hips and pulling me up with every thrust down into me.

My hands smack the wall in front of me to avoid hitting my head, to catch the momentum of his thrusts.

When his fingers make their way to my clit and begin quick, hard circles to make me come, I lose every ounce of control I've ever had.

Behind me, as my orgasm builds to torrential proportions, Creek tenses, like he's about to lose it as well.

“Ahhhh, fuck, Remy. You need to come because I can't...”

He doesn't finish his phrase when I throw my head back and cry out his name with an animalistic sound that makes us both fly over the edge of pleasure. His power hits me, but there's no pain. His sheer pleasure hits me, heightening mine, and it feels so good it almost hurts, but it's as if every nerve ending is open and his pleasure fills every inch of mine alongside my own. I almost can't breathe.

He's not just fucking me, now, he's battering my body with his eyes as our orgasm takes over our entire being.

The crack and boom of the bed startles us as we feel ourselves falling into the mess of sheets and mattress, but something is off.

With him still inside me, we lie in a spooning position for a few minutes, the position uncomfortable for reasons I don't understand, but I can barely focus on it as his power withdraws from me, taking his extra pleasure with him and my heart no longer feels like it's going to explode inside my chest.

“I think we literally broke the bed, beautiful.”

Blinking, I open my eyes and look around.

The bedpost is cracked and broken in four places and the mattress is folded in two where the wooden slats would normally be holding it flat.

“Holy shit, Creek.”

He chuckles behind me and squeezes me closer to him, without a word about his power, but he looks down at me and winks.

“You wanted my Demon, beautiful. You got him.”

CHAPTER NINE



I spent most of yesterday wrapped up in Creek, though Fallon did join us for lunch, and it made my heart happy seeing how being around each other helped them both deal with the struggles the changes of who they are have brought.

I can still see Creek struggle with his emotions, but he's getting the hang of it, and no more pain since Morgan gave us the green light, but that pleasure thing? That can sure as shit stay!

I've never felt anything like it. I still can't quite always wrap my mind around the fact that they're all mine, and that they're happy about it, but they're all very open about it.

I finish putting the last of our stuff in the pack that's been with us most of our time here and I sigh wistfully. Morgan announced last night that everything is under control here, so we can finally go home, and we can reseal the portal. While I am beyond ready to get home, I almost don't want to lose the retreat from reality.

Going home means dealing with Archer. With Jack.

With the loss of Everly.

I push the thoughts back down and lock them away. That's for future Remy to process.

Right now, I'm focused on everything we have to sort out before we get that far.

Fallon. The portal. Goodbyes.

Even if it's not really goodbye. Plus, I'm trying, on top of this, not to

worry about the potential for mine and Creek's power when we get home, and the potential inability for us to control it.

More future Remy worries, I guess.

I take a last look around the bedroom, blushing a little thinking of the broken bed Creek and I left in the other room. We've come a long way as a family since we arrived here. In more ways than one.

I think back to Fallon's main worry and I realize I've changed a lot too. Even more than the obvious changes.

"Remy?" I look up and find Kain smiling at me from the doorway. "You okay?"

"I am. Just making sure we haven't missed anything."

"How are you feeling about going home?" he asks as he walks toward me, his suit meticulous as ever and his hands in his pockets, eyeing me carefully.

"Is it terrible that I feel mixed about it? Don't get me wrong, I want to go home, but..."

"But you don't want to be the person responsible for saving the world all over again? You don't want to deal with the reality of what going home means."

I nod at his words. "Does that make me a terrible person?"

"Not at all, mon amour. It merely makes you human. Even if you're not." He winks and I laugh softly as he wraps his arms around my waist. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

"You're already doing it." I smile up at him, before pushing up onto my tiptoes and kissing him softly.

"Well, if you need anything, you'll tell me?"

I smile and nod. "I will, or at least, I'll try."

"Good," he says softly, before kissing me again, barely more than a brush of his lips. My want flares and I feel something extra inside me flare with it. I wipe the start of a frown from my face as I feel it, and if he notices, he doesn't say anything. Taking my hand, I follow him from the room and let him lead me down to the throne room where the others are waiting for us, while trying to reassure myself that I'm okay.

I've noticed it there, quietly, since I helped Morgan call the Demons back. As if a part of my power got out, but only the smallest part. Something else for me to worry over.

I'm going to be the only Angel in existence with gray hair and wrinkles.

By the time we reach the throne room, everyone else is already here. I might have been dragging my feet, and Kain was more than happy to let me.

A wave of sadness washes over me at leaving my new...old...whatever, friends behind.

“Don’t look so sad, Mara. We’ll miss you too,” Malik says, hugging me. I keep my shock from my face as best as I can and hug him back as Kain moves over to stand with my other guys. “Take care of yourself. And if your Demon gets out of hand, or everything just gets too much, come and find us now that you know how.”

“I will, thank you.” He hugs me again quickly and moves over to where Morgan is speaking to Deacon and Fallon. Killian approaches me next, stepping away from my guys, and hugs me too. Today really is full of surprises.

“It was good to see you again, Mara. Hopefully next time isn’t quite so fraught and dramatic.” He gives me a kind smile and I return it.

Nodding, I squeeze his hand. “I hope so too.”

“Come on, K, you’ve been talking for an age, my turn,” Caleb says with a laugh.

Killian rolls his eyes at him. “But of course. I am done with my lengthy goodbye, Hells forbid you don’t get to say a thing.” He walks away, still chuckling when Caleb wraps me in a bear hug, lifting me from the ground and spinning me.

“Don’t stay away so long this time, okay Mara? A guy would think you’ve forgotten about him.” His grin is contagious and I can’t help but laugh at him.

“Forget about you? Only dying could make it so.”

He winces before putting me down. “Little too real there, Mara. But I’m not kidding, don’t stay away so long. Morgan misses you, even if she doesn’t say it. I know it. If we could come to you, we would but...”

“But visiting me would literally be the end of the world as we know it.” I laugh as he nods.

“Yeah, not exactly a stellar way to leave the Earth, just to see a friend.”

“I get it. But I’ll make sure to come back. Just remember time moves faster here. Before I forget in the whirlwind...what are we doing about the major amounts of Angel glass back on Earth?”

“Bryce already dealt with it. He had a trusted friend go and relieve Archer of all of his supplies. Didn’t want to send you back and leave you vulnerable.”

“Thank you, Caleb. Really.”

“Anytime, Mara.”

He squeezes me again before strutting over to Morgan, leaving me with Bryce.

“Thank you,” I say to him in hushed whispers. “Thank you for helping Creek, for helping me. For everything. Thank you doesn’t seem like enough.”

He shakes his head, jamming his hands in his pockets. “You have nothing to thank me for, Mara. I know you don’t remember yet, but when you do, you’ll get it. It’s nothing you wouldn’t and haven’t done for me.”

I shake my head, because I have absolutely no idea what he’s talking about, but he hugs me quickly before joining the others. I turn and find Fallon locked hands with Morgan and Deacon. The murmurs are low from Morgan and Deacon, but a beat of power thumps through the room and Fallon’s knees sag. Caleb is behind her in an instant, holding her as Morgan takes her other hand from Deacon.

I watch as Fallon slowly rises, a dull hum turning to a bright glow around her until she practically radiates light. Her eyes are closed, but I’ve never seen her look more at peace. Morgan smiles, meeting my eyes, and nods. A weight I hadn’t realized I was still carrying lifts from my shoulders. Fallon might still have a lot to work through, and a lot to heal from, but at least in this way, she’s healed.

The glow around her dims and Morgan withdraws her hands. “How’s that?”

Fallon takes a minute, but once the glow completely recedes, she smiles. “Thank you, I…” Her voice breaks and she practically jumps on Morgan, hugging her. “Thank you so much.”

“I guess this means we’ll be going,” Levi whispers in my ear and I jump. I hadn’t noticed him coming towards me. I’m not sure what it says about me that I was able to let my guard down so much in the Palace of Shadows, but fuck it.

“I guess it does.” I sigh as he wraps his arms around me from behind. Sadness fills me, alongside a weariness that I know will only grow until we finish this shit with Archer.

“Are you ready?” Morgan asks softly, walking toward me.

I smile at her sadly and nod. “It doesn’t matter if I am, we have things that need to be finished.”

“You know where we are if you need me, and we are always here for you, Mara. Always.” She takes my hand and squeezes it as Levi steps away, giving us some space.

“That works both ways, you know,” I tell her softly. Who would’ve thought that an Angel and the Queen of the Shadow Realm would be such good friends? I laugh a little thinking about it.

“What?” Morgan asks as I shake my head.

“Just thinking about my brother, Colt. He’s never going to believe this. Honestly, you should’ve seen him the first time he met Levi. I think him meeting you and the Horsemen...” I start laughing again at the thought of it and she joins me.

“Any friend of yours is welcome in my home, Mara. I’d like to meet him one day maybe.”

“You can count on it,” I tell her with a small lump in my throat. I clear my throat and blink back the tears of goodbye. Because this isn’t goodbye. I refuse to believe it.

“Keep an eye on Creek. He might need to come back here every now and then, and he is welcome anytime too,” she warns me and I frown.

“I will. Is he going to be okay?”

“I’m sure he will, it’s just not usual for a new Demon to leave here at all, let alone so quickly. I’m just being cautious.”

“Okay, thank you. For everything Morgan.” I hug her tightly and she hugs me back just as fiercely. This might have started out in the worst of ways, but our family is growing, and while I want to kill Archer slowly, I can’t be angry about the journey this brought us on, when it brought me back to these people.

“Shall we get this portal sealed once and for all?”

I nod at her words with a smile. “Let’s.”

I pull the necklaces with the vials of my blood from the pack and give one to each of my guys, handing the last to Fallon, who pulls a face when she realizes what it is. “Please don’t expect me to keep this.”

I laugh at her words, shaking my head.

“You’d be amazed how many people would pay a hefty amount of money for the blood of a Shadow Walker, but those vials aren’t necessary when you travel on a portal opened with Mara’s blood.” Caleb winks at her and she shakes her head at him.

“You and Colt would have the best of bromances,” she chuckles, and I join in, because she’s not wrong, though Caleb looks all kind of confused which just makes me laugh harder.

“I have one request,” Bryce says quietly, and we all turn to face him. “Please keep our friendship known to only those who need to know. We have enemies everywhere. I would hate for you to be used as a pawn to get to us.”

“We can do that,” Levi says, shaking his hand. “I’m not sure how many would believe us anyway.”

I smile at his words because he’s not wrong.

“Well then, let’s get you guys home, shall we?” Morgan says, clapping her hands. “Mara, if you help me open the portal, then it will be easier for us to complete the seal.”

I walk toward her but glance back at Fallon, glad that our return isn’t riding on her power, especially since she said her magic doesn’t work here. I wonder if Archer knew that would be the case. I shake off the thought, trying to refocus because I’m about to lose a whole lot of blood, not just to open the portal, but to seal it as well. Morgan warned me already, but I’m not looking forward to it at all.

“Let’s get this show on the road,” I say, smiling at where my guys are standing with Fallon.

Morgan slices her arm and draws a circle on the floor of the throne room with her blood before motioning for me. I offer Morgan my arm and she slices it with a sharpened talon. “Lay your blood over mine.”

I walk the circle as instructed, holding the cut open as she did to keep the blood flowing. Once I meet her again, she grimaces at me before slicing my arm once more and doing the same to herself again. She dips her fingers in my streaming blood and draws runes on the floor. They’re similar to what I saw on the Hunter altar so long ago, but not quite. She mixes her blood with mine as she quietly mutters beneath her breath. Once the seven symbols have been drawn on the outside of the circle, she moves to the center and draws a final one.

“Everyone that is going back needs to be inside the circle, but do not

disturb the markings,” she says softly, before rejoining me and slicing our arms again so a stream of our blood joins at our feet.

“Just picture where you want the portal to open,” she says quietly to me, so I close my eyes and picture the manor. My heart breaks all over again knowing that Everly isn’t going to be there, my knees threaten to buckle, but I know that Everly wouldn’t want me to break, so I shove it down and focus again on just the manor. Morgan’s mutterings reach my ears, the harsh language once again making my skin feel as if it’s charged with electricity. I open my eyes and watch the portal taking shape as Morgan slices our arms again to keep the blood flowing.

Rapid healing is a bitch on blood rites apparently.

I hiss at the sting, I swear a dagger to the shoulder hurts less than these slices.

“I’ll see you soon,” she says to me quietly before turning to the others. “You guys can start going through now. Mara will come through last so we can seal it.”

“Thank you, all of you, for everything,” Kain says proudly before stepping into the portal. Roman waves before following suit.

“I’ll see you guys soon,” Creek says with a smile, taking Fallon’s hand and walking through with her.

“I’m ready when you are, Angel.” Levi says. Of course he wouldn’t leave without me. Stubborn asshole. I roll my eyes while Morgan giggles beside me.

“Caleb would be the same,” she whispers to me. I snort a little, because I know she’s right.

“Remember, keep your blood flowing until the portal is fully closed, and just add a small drop of mine to it once you’re back. I’ll sort the rest. Just really don’t stop bleeding until it’s closed, I can’t even tell how important that is. Only you and I will be able to open it, or someone who has either of our blood. Even then, only with the key we discussed. So someone with your blood can open it if they need to, but they need the key. However, if you want to come straight to the palace, use a drop of both of our blood, and it will bring you straight here.”

“I remember, thank you. Really, Morgan, for everything. I don’t know what we’d have done without you.”

“You’d have found a way, you always do, Mara. You will be fine. You’ll overcome anything you put your mind to. Now go, quickly, before we both

bleed out.”

“I’ll see you soon.” I laugh, using my fingers to keep my wound open so the blood keeps flowing.

“You will,” she says, handing me a glass bottle, the thick red liquid sloshing around inside. Her blood, should we need or want to open the portal again. She has one of mine already that I donated last night. We only need the blood of one of us, but it never hurts to have a failsafe.

I walk with Levi to the portal, and with one last glance behind me at the five of them, I step through.

CHAPTER TEN



I stumble out of the portal, Kain catches me, and helps me stand while I continue to bleed all over the ground. I pop the cork on the bottle of Morgan's blood and pour a small amount of it on the ground to mix with mine.

"Et clausum sigillum. Semper et in saecula saeculorum. Tantum aperiatur nulla voluntas et cogitatio nostra porta patet." I murmur the words Morgan told me to while our blood soaks into the ground, until the portal shuts.

My head goes a little fuzzy, so I lean on Kain, who is still holding me up until it clears. I take in the clear, darkening sky, the chill in the air, the birds chirping, and something inside me settles.

Home.

"Is it done?" he asks softly.

"It is," I tell him, taking a deep breath and enjoying the fresh air, the smell of home. I hadn't really noticed it since we left, that it smelled different, but it really did. "We're home."

"We are," Roman says, his chest rumbling. "I need to run. I'll shift and clear the perimeter, make sure we're clear out here before I go."

I take in his face, the strain on it. "Okay. Go, run. We can catch you up with anything once you're back."

He nods at me and takes off for the tree line. Thank fates for how remote this place is.

"I'll check the house," Kain says, and flashes away from us.

"I need to call Mama," Fallon says, sniffing.

“Come on, I need to call Colt too,” I say, taking her hand and turning toward the house. I look back at Levi and the look on his face will haunt me forever. My footsteps falter as we move toward the house, knowing Everly isn’t going to be inside to greet us.

I don’t know that I’m ready for this, but I do know that I don’t have a choice.

“Come on,” Creek says softly as he steps up to the other side of Fallon and Kain reappears in front of us.

“It’s safe. Let’s go in together,” Kain murmurs, and I nod, turning to Levi, who has remained silent this entire time.

“Levi...” I start, but he shakes his head. His wings unfurl and he shoots up into the sky without a word.

We walk toward the house as one as I pretend to be ready to deal with the pain of the memories that wait for us inside.

Kain opens the glass doors for us and the smells of the house hit me. The clean laundry smell, the flowers Everly would have put out fresh on her last morning here, the sweet smell of her perfume. Things I hadn’t paid attention to before, that hit my senses like a battering ram.

Tears fill my eyes as I walk through the house, Fallon and Creek breaking off to go get his phone from his room while Kain stays with me.

What hits me is the entire place looks untouched. As if she was never taken, it’s like she’s just stepped out to go to the store.

“Remy...” Kain says, and I break. Sobs rack my body and I crumble to the floor, right in the middle of the kitchen. I clutch my chest, my heart hurting. I’ve tried not to think about it, about her, but now that we’re here, there’s no escaping it.

Kain sits beside me and wraps me in his arms, letting me cry for the woman I lost. He murmurs soft, soothing words, but they don’t register through my grief.

I don’t know how long we sit there on the floor, but when my tears stop, my throat is hoarse. Creek and Fallon are sitting with us, everyone’s faces wet with tears. “I want to do a memorial for her. We need to reach out to her family.”

“We can do that,” Fallon says softly. “I called Mama, she’s on her way here with Colt, they’ll probably be here in about half an hour. Once we’re done finding out what we missed, we can reach out to her family.”

“That sounds like a plan.” I give her a watery smile. “I’m going to

shower, put on some of my own clothes, and try not to cry all over again.”

As I climb from the floor, the others stand with me. I give them a smile and leave them to head to my room. I don't know what day it is, how long has passed here since we left, but it's been weeks since I used my shower and I can't think of a better way to try and shake off the feeling of foreboding that's creeping down on me.

I rush through the house. It feels empty without her here, but I try not to focus on it and get to my room as quickly as I can. I close the door behind me and lean on it, glad to be back in my own space, though I really need to go to my apartment soon too and decide what the hell I'm doing with it.

I shake my head and move toward the bathroom. Too much to do, not enough time or focus to do it. Turning on the hot water of the shower, I strip out of the clothes from the Shadow Realm and climb under the harsh spray. I close my eyes as it beats down on my skin, the pressure a welcome pain, enough to distract me from the hurt in my heart.

I wash myself a dozen times, enjoying the lavender and lily scent of my soap, the comfort in that more than I thought it would be.

Once I've washed down for the last time, I climb from the shower and wrap the fluffy towel around myself and pad over to the vanity. I wipe the mirror, steamy from my shower, and take in my reflection. The glow from my skin is brighter here than it was in the Shadow Realm, my hair is glossier and thicker, and my violet eyes seem brighter too.

I still look like me, but other.

I haven't tried to unfurl my wings since my flying lesson, but I wonder if they'll look any different here. If they'll be any easier to manage.

“Remy, you've got about five minutes until your brother arrives,” Kain calls out from my room. I sigh, then put a smile on my face and head out to my room. Might as well work on the mask now before everyone arrives.

I smile at him sitting on the end of my bed, concern on his face when he sees my smile.

“I'll be okay,” I tell him when he opens his mouth. “I have to be, and there's still too much to be done, unless Colt has miraculously stopped Archer while we've been gone, but I doubt it.” He doesn't say anything, so I head into my closet and pull out jeans and a t-shirt, underwear and some fluffy socks. The smallest piece of comfort for what is likely to still be a long day.

I'm sitting on the couch cross-legged, mug of coffee in hand, when Colt and Marie finally get here. I checked my phone. Two weeks. That's how long it's been here since we left. Even though for us it was about twice as long. It's amazing what can happen in two weeks.

Fallon's squeals and cries echo through the house as Marie walks in, and I smile. I hear Kain take them to the library so they can have some private time to catch up.

Creek is beside me, as tense as I've possibly ever seen him. I guess the thought of his best friend's reaction to everything that's happened is getting to him. I put down my mug and squeeze his thigh as he throws me a tight smile.

Colt appears in the doorway, his cocky swagger and carefree smile missing.

I guess a lot really can happen in two weeks.

"Remy," he sighs, and I jump to my feet and rush to hug my big brother. He hugs me tight and when I pull back, he has a sad smile. I guess his reunion with Fallon wasn't everything he hoped for.

"You okay, Little Bit?" he asks softly, looking me over. I notice his eyes widen when he does so I smile at him.

"I'm okay. We just have a lot to catch up on."

"Tell me about it." He runs his hand through his hair and plays with the stud in his tongue.

"Hey, man," he says, moving to greet Creek. They do that bro hug thing that I still don't know what to call, and I smile as they do. These two need each other. I know that Colt always had Bauer, and Creek has the other guys, but at the heart of it, they've always been as close to each other as they have to Fallon and me.

I give them a few minutes and grab another mug of coffee, finding Kain in the kitchen. He follows me back to the sitting room, his quiet comfort there for me like always.

"I don't even know where to start," I say as I sit back down. The others sit with me. "Maybe you could tell us what happened here, since less time passed here?"

I look between the three of them and they all nod. Colt repositions himself, getting comfortable before he launches into the last two weeks on

Earth. "Okay, so. I'm sure it's been quieter and less insane than what you went through, but recap. I found Bauer, he was in a magically-induced coma, Marie managed to pull him from that with some help from her coven. We also might've blown up a dozen or so of Archer's sites. Armories, cabins, stores. His numbers were hit in more than a few ways."

Kain's mouth twists, but he stays quiet while Colt continues. I know he's thinking about the people lost in those attacks, but these people were rogues, happy to hurt anyone and everyone for their own pleasure, so I can't find it in me to feel that bad. He keeps on telling us about Bauer and what he learned from him about Archer before he takes a deep breath.

"I had another blow out with Dad, so that was fun. What else? Oh yeah, Archer unleashed rogues and Demons on the high school. Thank the fates for Marie because, without the witches, I have no idea how we would've kept that one under wraps. We found out Archer has a brother, who is at school with Nirvana."

"I'm sorry, what?" Creek interrupts, and I can almost feel his anger bubbling. I hope to the fates that he's got a hold on his power right now.

"She's safe. We made sure of it. Safe and unaware, exactly as she should be." Colt's words soothe Creek, and he relaxes again. Well, as relaxed as he was before anyway. "Bauer took a shot at Archer's brother and Archer retaliated."

"What the fuck was he playing at?" I hiss. "We don't hurt kids."

"He didn't, he just passed on a message, but Archer's retaliation...it was bad."

"What did he do?" I ask.

He pulls his phone from his pocket, and after a few taps he hands it over to me. I hit play and Archer's face comes onto the screen.

"You Bennetts, you think you're so smart. Hitting my sites, like I didn't have others just in case Bauer turned on me." He laughs manically and it's hard to watch as the camera flips and refocuses. The view makes me want to throw up, but I keep it down. "Their screams were like music to my ears. A special song just for me. This was on you Bennett brothers. Just know your sister and her little witch will pay for this too." Laughter rings out as the screen goes black before finishing. I sit stunned, still staring at the black screen.

"What the fuck is wrong with him?" I shout, handing Colt's phone back before I crush it. Guilt rises up my throat, and the sick feeling washes over

me. I try to swallow the excess saliva in my mouth that accompanies the feeling, but it just makes my stomach flip.

“That was before the Demon attack that happened yesterday. The humans are putting it down to a group of crazies running riot in the mall, but there’s a lot of damage, and the witches are pretty much drained from dealing with the memory replacements that were required. They burned the mall to the ground. Thousands of people were in there. The body count is still coming in. It was fucking horrific.”

I scrub a hand down my face and lean back.

All this while I was safe in the Palace of Shadows, waiting to come home. We spent so much time there, hell I had a night with Morgan just enjoying ourselves. My soul will never recover from all of this blood.

“This is not your fault,” Creek says softly as Kain squeezes my thigh.

“He is right, mon amour. You don’t know it would’ve been any different if Azriel hadn’t died, or if we hadn’t gone in the first place.”

“Who is Azriel?” Colt asks, confused, and I laugh. Because of course that’s his question. Thank the fates for my brother and his unwillingness to drown in guilt and pity.

“Azriel is the Demon Archer was working with. He’s dead,” I tell him, and launch into what we’ve been doing down in the Shadow Realm. I don’t leave out any details, other than my sexual adventures, because there are just some things he doesn’t need to know. I don’t gloss over what happened to Creek and me, though I leave out what happened to Fallon. That’s her story to tell. I tell him about Everly, about Jack, when a thought occurs to me.

“I didn’t see Jack in the throne room. If he wasn’t called back, where is he?” I ask. Colt is still stunned silent, trying to process everything. “Thoughts for later. But yeah, so that’s pretty much it. The seal is back in place, and well, you know the rest.”

“I knew I hated that mother fucker!” Colt shouts and starts to pace, his anger is quick and fierce as he mutters to himself. He didn’t know Everly like we did, so I don’t expect the tear that runs down his face. We let him be, processing what we’ve had time to do.

He stills after a few minutes, his mutterings going quiet, and looks to Creek. “You’re really part Demon now? An Immortal?”

“I am,” Creek confirms with a nod of his head, and Colt just starts laughing.

“And you’re an Angel...that’s friends with the Queen of the Shadow

Realm, whose lovers are the Four Horsemen?” I nod and he cracks up laughing again. He clutches his stomach as he laughs, bending in two.

“Oh shit,” he says, sucking in air and wiping away a tear. “You couldn’t make this shit up. How is this our lives? Centuries we’ve lived, and the biggest, craziest thing in our lives was the rogues. And now this.” His laughter starts up again. I’d be concerned if it was anyone else, but this reaction is so typically Colt.

“You don’t care?” Creek asks, eyes wide.

“Man, you’re still you, right?” Colt asks, and Creek nods. “Then I don’t give a fuck. Though, cycling is going to be weird without you two now. I’m going to be the lonely little Hunter.”

Creek nudges Colt’s shoulder, which just makes him laugh again. “Of course that’s your reaction,” Creek says, rolling his eyes.

“What makes me laugh harder is that my sister is an Angel. Please tell me you have wings?”

“I do. They’re beautiful, but fuck me they’re hard work,” I say with a lighthearted huff.

“It has been an interesting few weeks, for sure,” Kain says with a smile. “Now that it is dark, I’m going to go and give Luc a call. He will be less cranky.”

He leans over and kisses me softly before standing and leaving the room. I watch him go, that tight ass of his in his black trousers makes me bite my lip, because maybe one day soon, I might bite it just for fun.

“So how are you guys really?” Colt asks, bringing my attention back to him.

“It’s hard,” Creek admits. “The thought of telling my parents...trying to keep control of myself so I don’t hurt anyone with this new power. It’s rough.”

“So you have powers too?” Colt asks, eyes wide.

“Yeah,” Creek confirms. “I can inflict pain, pleasure, apparently I can take away pain too, but I haven’t had time to learn it all yet. There’s more to it, but that’s effectively it.”

“Dude, that’s kinda badass,” Colt says in awe before turning to me. “What about you?”

“I have powers, we just don’t know exactly what they are beyond the Shadow Walker parts yet.”

“So cool. Please tell me you plan to unleash fucking *Hell* on Archer.”

I smile at my brother. He's just as full of rage underneath it all as I am. "He is going to beg for death when I'm done with him."

We sit and talk shit for hours until, eventually, Roman strolls in, butt ass naked. He smiles and says hello, before strutting down toward his room, shaking his ass. These men and their asses. Hot damn.

I try not to worry about Levi. I know he feels things so much more deeply than he ever lets on. I have no idea where he'd go, but knowing him, he's likely just flying around, trying not to create storms wherever he is.

A loud thud sounds outside and I just know that's him.

"On that note, I better be going. I'm sure you guys need a day or so to get your shit together. We've got people out searching for Archer, I'll keep you updated, but we could probably use your help dealing with the fallout of everything when you get a second."

"I can do that," I tell him, pinching my lips together. "How are the Hunters dealing with the changes?"

"As expected. Most are okay, others are still fighting against it, but it will all work out for the best."

I sigh at his words, but stand as he does.

"I'll try to be ready in two days so I can help however I'm needed."

"Thanks, Little Bit." He hugs me before saying goodbye to Creek, who sees him out.

I walk to the glass doors at the back of the room, leading out to the yard, and find Levi sitting on the ground, staring up at the dark skies.

"Hey you," I say as I sit cross-legged next to him. He stays silent, still just staring up at the sky, his wings out. "Where did you go?"

"I tried to go to Avalon," he says quietly, his tone tight, like his anger is just below the surface. "I wanted to make sure that Everly was there, where she should be, but they wouldn't let me in. Cast out by Michael himself means that without his say so, I'm not getting past the gates."

"I'm sorry, Levi. For Everly, for being the reason you can't go back to Avalon." I take his hand and kiss his palm.

"It's not your fault, Remy. None of this is your fault."

"Can you speak to Serafina or Nevin? Can they find out for you?" I ask,

and he nods.

“They can, but it’s not like seeing her myself.”

“I could try to go. I’m an Angel now.”

“I have a feeling that you’ll be on the not invited list too. If they’re even aware yet. They can’t see into the Shadow Realm, so unless someone told them, they won’t know. And we don’t want them to know. Not until you’re stronger.”

I sigh at his words. Protecting me as always. I wish he’d realize that I’d sacrifice myself for him in a heartbeat.

“Is there anything I can do?” I ask him softly, leaning into his shoulder, and he wraps an arm around me.

“Just being here. That is everything.” His voice breaks and I squeeze him.

“Always.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN



I slept like the dead last night. We all ended up in a puppy pile in Levi's room. After getting used to sleeping that way the last few weeks, it felt weird to be alone. Apparently, everyone agreed because, one by one, everyone ended up in here.

I wake up, desperate to pee, and slink from the bed and rush to the bathroom. After I take care of myself, I shimmy back to bed and take my place back in the pile.

Kain's arm wraps around me from behind and I smile. "Morning, Precious."

"Morning. That's new," I say quietly.

"I figured it was time for a change. And you are precious. Though maybe I'll go with Peach, like that ass of yours that's teasing me so deliciously right now." His words are more of a purr than anything and I shudder as his hardness presses into my back.

I bite my lip as Levi's eyes open. "Don't start something you're not ready to finish." His voice is low and gravelly, it does delicious things to me and I try not to groan as Kain tweaks my nipple.

Roman groans as he wakes up and props himself up on his elbow. "Playing without me, Princess?"

I moan again as Levi tweaks my other nipple and Creek wakes.

"Wouldn't dare dream of it, Roman," I sass back at him, knowing it'll get him riled up just perfectly.

In the next second, I feel the slap on my ass that I'm sure is Roman's

doing, and it pushes me closer to Levi, who's now lowering his head so his mouth can latch on to my free nipple.

As my body is tingling from the stimulation of my nipples, I hear Creek's curse and heavy breathing as he rises to a kneeling position in my peripheral vision.

All of my men are awake and horny, causing the tingling to become an electric bolt that courses from the base of my neck to the tips of my toes.

This is going to happen again. Me, the feast; they, the starved patrons, and I can't wait to be devoured all over again.

"Creek, I do believe our little Angel here needs to have her pussy eaten," Levi orders, and by the time Creek has me on my back with my legs folded at the knees and spread open for his unabashed view, Levi has already directed his attention to Kain, who is now at my side.

"Kain, suck her nipples in tandem. Make sure she's nice and wet for Creek's mouth. He looks quite hungry." It doesn't take Kain more than a second to latch his mouth onto my nipple as he tweaks the other then switches back and forth.

"Better not be leaving me out, brother," Roman growls, but it holds no venom and we all know it.

"Oh no, Roman. In fact, I do believe your princess is hungry and in need of a cock in her mouth."

My mouth waters at the thought and Levi smirks in my direction. He always knows what I need, and I could kiss him for that. And I will, once my mouth is available.

Creek places two hands under my ass and slides me down, allowing Roman to kneel over my face, the tip of his cock sliding across my lips, teasing me until I give him the look that says *now*. He's not in control of this scene, so he just winks and pushes his dick into my mouth and I begin sucking him in earnest.

It's not easy when one talented tongue is expertly licking every inch of my pussy and another is sucking my nipples raw. The tingling that became an electric bolt is now a roaring, boiling of my blood. The desire coursing through me is heating every drop inside me and making me squirm from the need and want.

My eyes go to Levi, who's just watching, his dick in his hand, stroking and contemplating.

Then I see it.

The spark lights in his eyes and I know he's got other plans for us.

"Creek, lick her asshole. She's looking a little bit too calm for my taste. I prefer our Angel a bit more restless and crawling out of her skin with need," Levi tells Creek, but his eyes never leave mine.

Creek raises my ass up just enough to get his tongue on my ring of muscles and just when I close my eyes in ecstasy, I feel two large fingers thrust inside my pussy, one thumb resting harmlessly on my clit.

I'm officially being pleased and loved by all of my men and it feels out of this world.

With Roman fucking my mouth slowly and meticulously, his balls slapping against my chin every time his dick hits the back of my throat, I struggle not to choke. Kain is lavishing my nipples like it's his duty to praise their existence, and Creek eats my ass, his tongue probing inside me while Levi fucks my pussy with his fingers, curling just perfectly so and making my body light up like a bonfire.

I'm moaning onto Roman's cock and the vibrations are making him clench his teeth, his eyes closing to keep his control intact. I know he needs to come, I can feel his balls retracting closer to his body, the slapping not so prominent against my chin.

"Fuck, Princess, your mouth is Heaven. Swallow me up, take it all."

Although I know I'll break some kind of silent rule, I reach around Roman, one hand on his ass cheek and the other on Kain's head, pushing him closer to my tits, urging him to give me more.

I'm on the verge of my first climax and it's going to be out of this fucking world.

"You look gorgeous, Angel. All your holes filled and your hands busy. But it's time to shake it up a bit. Come for us. Now."

And I do.

With my ass being tongue-fucked and my pussy finger-fucked, while my mouth is full of cock and my nipples are being sucked into oblivion, I couldn't stop the orgasm barreling through my system, even if I wanted to.

Roman pulls out just slightly, allowing me to cry out in pleasure, spit running down my lips, his eyes intense and focused only on me.

My fingers curl into Kain's scalp as he sinks his canines into my flesh and sucks on my essence.

"That's it, Angel, let it go. Give it all to us."

As my orgasm takes flight, I feel Creek's tongue leave my ass and two

fingers enter me. Fucking me as Levi continues to assault my aching clit.

My mouth must be too much for Roman. He pulls out and as I scream out my climax, he pumps once, twice, then comes all over my face, my mouth, my neck, my collar bone. Marking me with his cum. Knowing he contributed to this moment of pure, unadulterated bliss. Even in my semi-conscious state, I lick his orgasm from my lips and revel in its deliciousness.

When I come down from the power of their attention, everyone has changed positions and Levi starts to adjust me too.

Like a rag doll, they move me around as Kain comes back with a warm towel to wipe me down, carefully and adoringly.

I'm on all fours across the giant bed, Creek under me, looking like he's equal parts loving me and wanting to destroy me, with his huge cock just resting against my unbearably wet pussy.

Looking around, I see the guys positioning themselves as though they had planned this out ahead of time. Kain is kneeling to the side of me, having gotten rid of the cloth, his cock playing against my lips, his eyes saying all the things that I know already.

I can't wait to fuck your mouth.

I love you.

You're beautiful.

I smile and he winks back at me.

That's when I feel someone at my back, a dick gliding through the crack of my ass, carefully circling my puckered hole.

Looking over my shoulder, I confirm what I already knew to be true.

Roman is going to fuck my ass while Levi orchestrates, stroking his cock back to hardness all over again.

"Don't worry, Angel. I'm giving Roman here a head start and then I'll be fucking that gorgeous ass as well."

How did I get so fucking lucky? My men know me. Every single one of them knows me perfectly.

No one is inside me yet. From the corner of my eye I see Levi walking around the bed toward Roman at my back, then I feel the cool glide of lube coating my hole and fingers massaging my ring of muscles before Levi returns to my side and looks at the erotic canvas in front of him.

"Have you guys been planning this?" I ask, but get no answer. Levi simply looks at Creek and immediately, his cock is piercing through me, thrusting inside me, going deep without mercy.

"Oh, God!"

My head is thrown back in pleasure, my mouth dropping open with the delicious invasion.

That's when Kain puts a hand at the back of my head and pumps his cock into my mouth, his head all the way to the back of my throat, and holds it there a few seconds, until he hears me gagging and pulls out to start all over again.

I've barely had time to adjust to the fullness that is Creek and Kain when Roman breaches the tight bundle of nerves at my ass and doesn't stop until he's fully inside me.

I can't speak. I'm panting, fuller than I've ever been, loving every second of the sensation.

"That's it. Give it all to her," Levi orders, and I barely have time to see his hand on his own cock, his eyes fixed on Roman where he's thrusting in every time Creek pulls out. They fuck me in tandem as Kain keeps my mouth and throat busy with his own thick cock. My hands are planted on either side of Creek's head, overwhelming pleasure making it difficult to hold myself up.

"Gorgeous. Fucking stunning with Roman's cock fucking your ass as Creek pounds your pussy and Kain fills you up with his cock. You're never more beautiful than at our mercy." Levi's filthy words spur me on.

I can feel my juices gushing from me and onto Creek's cock. The sounds in the room of slapping ball sacks and thrusting cocks makes me lose my mind. I want to thrash and fuck harder. I want more. I want deeper. I want no mercy.

"More. Please, give me more. Harder. Faster," I murmur when Kain gives me a second to breathe.

"Hear that, guys? Our Angel wants to be ruined by us."

Roman pulls all the way out and that's when I feel Levi push inside me and groan his pleasure like he's finally breathing again. Creek is holding me down by the thighs as his thrusts become more and more erratic.

Roman comes to my side and whispers in my ear, "Your ass is fucking amazing, Princess."

I can't answer, my mouth full of thrusting cock, but my eyes water with the emotions of these men doting on me like I'm their reason for living.

Levi's hands are on my hips and he's grunting and fucking me like a savage.

Looking over at Roman, I see him washing his cock down with the warm,

soapy towel and then lubing up his hand again before stroking himself violently, in time with Creek and Roman. And even Kain.

"Looks like Kain is going to be the first to blow," Roman says, teeth gritting, eyes on my mouth.

"It would be my pleasure," Kain responds as he pulls out then orders, "Swallow, Precious."

And I do.

I take every drop he sends down my throat, closing my muscles on the head of his cock as he empties himself in my mouth.

When he pulls out, completely spent, he bends down and kisses my mouth before stepping away and leaving room for Roman to do the same. Except this time, Roman just orders, "Open, Princess."

With my mouth wide and my tongue hanging out, I feel the first spurt of his cum as it lands perfectly at the base of my tongue.

Spurt after spurt, I swallow the thick goodness and lick at my lips for any remnants.

"You're gorgeous with my cum on you," Roman tells me adoringly.

My jaw is sore from giving them head, but my second orgasm is about to burst through me at the sensations that I'm feeling coupled with Roman's words.

"Creek, fill up her pussy," Levi growls.

"Fuck yes," he shouts as though he couldn't have held on any longer.

That's when he stills beneath me, his cum shooting inside me, warming me from the womb.

Levi doesn't stop, his rhythm more and more erratic as Creek empties his sack and groans his pleasure in my mouth as he pulls me down for a heated kiss.

"Time for me to fill up your pretty little ass, Angel," Levi grunts before losing himself inside of me.

I can't help it. Knowing he's the last one to come inside me, I lose all guise of control and let my building orgasm rattle through my entire body. My limbs shake and thrash as Levi digs his fingers into my flesh and pumps deep, with barely-controlled thrusts into me and then stills, his groin rubbing against my ass, his cum filling me right up.

We both cry out in utter and complete bliss.

That's the last thing I remember before I black out from the intensity of my climax.

After I passed back out, they guys went about their day, which is why I'm now on the sofa in my PJ's eating ice cream for lunch. The TV is on, *Chicago PD* playing, but I'm barely paying any attention. So much has happened in my life since I watched it last, and that's what's been playing through my mind while Voight and the team kick ass.

If only life were as simple as it is on screen. I could totally use their skills with finding Archer.

Colt texted me earlier letting me know that they have a few new leads, but all going in different directions. That in itself is enough to give me a headache.

Really, I'm sitting here, trying to have a day to feel like myself, and to stop myself from spinning out.

I'm failing.

Miserably.

Being in this house just makes me think of Everly, each and every inch of the place. The thought that this feeling is one I'm going to be haunted by a lot now that I'm an immortal fucking sucks.

Hence the ice cream.

I'm just hoping Angel stamina and metabolism is better than mine was as a Hunter.

I put the ice cream down and turn off the TV. I can't keep just sitting. It's not helping. I need to tire myself out so much that I stop thinking.

While this morning was the best type of distraction, I can't keep fucking away my pain.

Well, I can. I just shouldn't.

I sigh as I stand and head back to my room. Once I change into my leggings and sports bra, I head to the gym. Best way to stop thinking is to work out. Hard.

I stretch and put the stereo on to dull the silence, then climb on the elliptical. I fucking hate the elliptical, which means it's exactly what I need.

I spend the next two hours battering my body. Running, rowing, squatting, and by the end of it I'm sweating like a whore at church. I strip down and dive into the pool naked.

The cold water steals what little breath I have, but I stay underwater, testing the limits of the breathing thing Levi told me about until my lungs

start to burn. I push off the bottom of the pool and surface with a gasp.

“Twenty-three minutes. I think that’s a new record,” Levi says with a smirk.

“What can I say? I like to outshine the competition.”

“Well, we can compete again later if you like, but I finally got ahold of Olivia, Everly’s daughter,” he says, the smile slipping from his face and the peace I had finally got a grasp on slips away. “Her and her daughter are coming here tomorrow, so I thought we should prepare the house for them. I thought something mundane like grocery shopping and chores might be just what you need. Fates knows I do.”

“Sounds good. Give me five to get cleaned up and we’ll head out.” I pull myself out of the pool and I can feel his eyes on me.

I laugh as my skin heats under his gaze while I pick up my discarded clothes.

“Down boy.”

CHAPTER TWELVE



After the most hilarious trip around the supermarket with Levi and Roman, then making up beds with Creek and Kain while Levi cooked, I'm sitting at the island in the kitchen, sick to my stomach despite the amazing smells from whatever Levi has in the oven.

The thought of facing Olivia and her daughter after I essentially got her mother killed has my stomach in knots. I have no idea what she knows and what she doesn't. All I know is her family has been with Levi, for like, ever.

The knock at the door makes me jump and I nearly drop my glass of whiskey. A bit of Dutch courage to keep me going rather than hiding away like I desperately want to. I've never hidden from responsibility, not in any lifetime, but this just feels different.

Levi moves from his perch on the counter and heads to the door. I hear his hushed voice along with a woman's, and then the excited squeal of a young girl. It doesn't take long for them to find me hiding away in the kitchen. I jump down from my stool and pop my glass in the sink, trying not to fidget too much as I hear their footsteps coming toward me.

"You must be Remy," the woman, a spitting image of Everly, says as she spots me. Weirdly, she almost looks like she could be my sister, but I shrug it off. She heads straight for me and hugs me tightly. I look over her shoulder to Levi, who shrugs at me with a smile, before I notice the little girl with her hand in his, looking up at him like he hangs the moon. "My mom told me so much about you, I feel like we're good friends. I'm so glad you're okay."

"I..." I stammer, as she pulls back, trying to find the words. "I am so

sorry about your mom.”

“Thank you, but you have nothing to be sorry for. That a-hole that hurt her is the one to blame. My mom taught me to have little space for blame and guilt in my heart. She would hate it if you blamed yourself for the actions of another.” She hugs me again and I have no words, so I hug her back.

“Thank you,” I whisper, trying to hold back my tears. If she isn’t crying, I sure as hell shouldn’t be.

“Nothing to thank me for, sweetheart. Astrid, I’d like you to come and meet Remy. She was a friend of Nana’s too.”

“Hi Remy.” The little girl waves at me but stays rooted at Levi’s side. Olivia laughs and I can’t help but join her.

“Hi, Astrid. It’s lovely to meet you.”

“Do you have wings like Levi?” she asks, her excitement palpable.

“Astrid!” Olivia scolds, but I shake my head.

“Honestly, it’s fine,” I tell her before moving over to Astrid. The sight of her and Levi together does funny things to my insides. “Actually, I do have wings, but they’re not as cool as Levi’s just yet.”

I look up at Levi, who is smiling down at us, his eyes crinkled. I look back at Olivia, who is smiling too. “How much do you guys know?”

“Oh, pretty much everything I think,” Olivia says, and Levi nods in agreement. “My family has been with Levi for as far back as I can recall. We’ve known about all the things that go bump in the night. I’ve tried to start Astrid young. She knows about everything, just not the scarier parts.”

“And Levi told you about the other guys?”

“He did, and if he’s cool with them, I’m cool with them. It’ll be good to get her used to every faction.”

“Okay, good,” I say standing.

“Oh!” Astrid squeaks before running out of the room. She returns with two cat carriers and a giant smile on her face. “We brought Sushi back for you. Nana said we were only looking after him for a little while for you and Mom said we should bring him back. But he was lonely when he was with us, so we got him a girlfriend! Her name is Ranch. I wanted to call her Bacon, but ranch is my favorite even over bacon, so we called her that.”

She opens the first carrier and Sushi slinks out then jumps into her arms, throwing me more shade than should be possible for a cat.

“I did miss my little dictator, but he looks like he’s happy with you,” I tell her softly.

“I think it’s because she feeds him sardines.” Olivia laughs while opening the other carrier. Another black cat, almost identical to Sushi except for one white paw, slinks out and runs straight for Astrid.

“I was thinking,” Levi says, clearing his throat. “That we could have a memorial for Everly tomorrow, here.”

“I’d love that. Mom would too,” Olivia says with a sad smile.

“I also retrieved her body, so we can honor her properly.” My head whips to him, because he hadn’t mentioned that. I have no idea how, when, or where, but he’s not looking at me, so I tuck it away to question later at some point.

“Thank you, Levi. I’m sure she’d like to be scattered, like Dad was. Is she in Avalon?” Olivia asks hopefully.

“I’m trying to confirm but, as per the agreement I made with your family, she should be. As soon as I know, I’ll let you know.”

“Thank you,” she says softly. “Now then, what smells so delicious?”

Levi and Olivia have been outside all afternoon setting up for the memorial tonight. I offered to help, but was shooed away, so I holed up in my room, reading, which I haven’t done in forever. Getting lost in someone else’s drama has been so therapeutic. I remember why I used to read so much for fun.

The sun set hours ago, and Astrid came by a little earlier to say they were nearly ready, so I got up and showered. I’ve blown out my hair and put on a pretty black dress I found in the closet that Everly must have bought for me that I’d never seen, because dresses just aren’t my thing. I keep my feet bare, since the dress allows for it and we’ll be outside.

A tap sounds at my door and I open it, finding Fallon on the other side. I didn’t expect her to come back here after everything, but I’m glad she’s here.

“Hey,” she says softly, coming in and closing the door behind her. “How are you feeling?”

“Honestly? I don’t know. I feel like I’ve cried so much. There’s a lead weight on my heart, the guilt from what happened to her is eating at me. It’s like I can’t escape it. And yet, at other times, it’s as if I forget that she’s gone and I think about her as if she’s coming back. But when I sleep, I see it, again

and again, but every time I still fail to save her.”

“I get it.” She smiles sadly as she sits next to me. “Grief is a weird thing, it hits us in different ways. It’s brutal.”

“It’s worse, because I didn’t know her that long, not really, and it feels like I’m being greedy in my grief. Olivia and Astrid are handling it way better than I am.”

“Maybe they are, maybe they aren’t. But they didn’t witness it, Remy. That’s going to be a score on anyone’s soul. You feel everything so deeply, I’m not surprised it’s haunting you. You’re allowed to grieve however you need to.”

“I guess.” I frown. “I just don’t want to be a big mess tonight.”

“Just feel whatever you need to feel.”

“Enough about me.” I squeeze her hand and she looks at the floor. “How are you?”

“I’m getting there.” She gives me a tight smile and I wonder if this is something she’ll ever fully recover from. “It’s going to take time, but I refuse to let them take away the good parts of myself. Morgan helped. Whatever she did, it helped. I feel less...broken.”

“If there’s anything I can do...”

“I will let you know, but you have enough to worry about.” She squeezes my hand back before standing. “Now then, come on, we don’t want to hide away in here all night and miss this.”

“I know,” I sigh, and stand flattening the skirt with my hands.

I follow her through the house to the sitting room and out the doors to the back yard. The moon shines down around us, helping to light the space. Lit candles form a pathway across the lawn, so we follow the path laid out to us. We enter the tree line, pressing forward until we come to a clearing, completely lit with candles, and a low wooden pyre in the middle with Everly’s body laid across it. Her eyes are closed, coins on both of them, her arms crossed on her chest, and she looks at peace. I guess whatever witchy-woo Marie laid over her when they found her helped keep her looking almost alive.

You can’t even tell how she died. She just looks like she’s sleeping.

A lump forms in my throat as I notice the candles and flowers lining the base of the pyre. Olivia and Astrid walk toward us and Olivia places a crown of flowers on mine and Fallon’s heads. They match the flowers at the base of the pyre. She hands us a candle each and ushers us over to where Levi, Kain,

Roman, and Creek are waiting.

We move to stand with them, my smile tight as my eyes water. I have no idea how Olivia is so calm.

More voices approach and I go stiff until I realize everyone else is fine. Colt and Marie approach where Olivia and Astrid are waiting for them.

A tear slips down my face.

This is it.

We're really saying goodbye.

I am not ready for this.

Fallon moves to stand with her Mom and Colt while my guys surround me. Levi moves toward the pyre along with Olivia and Astrid.

"Tonight, we say goodbye to an old friend. A mother, a daughter, a sister, a nana," Levi says, as he smiles sadly down at Astrid, who is starting to cry softly. "Everly was more than just a friend, she was one of the brightest souls I have encountered in a millennia. She was taken from us far too soon, but I know that she is still with us. In our hearts, in our memories, watching down on us.

"I remember the first time I met Everly. She was a young woman, headstrong, especially for her time. She loved passionately and was fiercely loyal. She called me out on our first interaction, and I think I loved her a little right then. I knew she would be a dear friend.

"I remember when she met the love of her life, and how her own mother fretted about a love that could burn so bright, her fear it would die out quickly, but Everly knew better. And oh how right she was. Her life was not without its dark moments, but she taught me to see the light in things. Not to dwell on those low moments, to look forward to when the light would re-enter our lives and lead us out of the shadows.

"If it wasn't for her, I might have been lost a while ago. She kept my feet firmly planted and I will miss her deeply.

"Until we meet again my friend.

"Until Avalon."

"Until Avalon," Olivia and the others murmur, so I join in as much as I can around the lump in my throat as my tears stream silently down my face.

"My mother was a proud woman. But she was also full of light and laughter. She always had a kind word when you needed it, or a stern one if that's what you needed instead." Olivia laughs a little as a tear falls. "She loved like no other, and I can only hope to be half the person, the mother, that

she was, but if I manage that, I still know that she'll be proud of me. She always was. No matter how many times you fall down, it's getting back up that matters. That's what she'd tell me.

"I miss you, Mom. I wish we had more time together, but I know that you're still with us, and I'll make sure that Astrid remembers just how amazing you were. That she has a real childhood, even amongst everything life throws at us. I love you." She picks up Astrid and kisses her head, trying to keep her tears under control, and I break inside.

Marie joins Levi standing over Everly, and they bless the body, wrapping her in the white sheet laid over the pyre. Once they step back, Levi waves, beckoning us to move closer. I bite my lip, holding in my cries, and follow the others.

"We send this soul to Avalon, and may she watch down upon us in eternal happiness." Levi's words are thick and he clears his throat before leaning down and placing his candle at the base of the pyre. We each follow suit and, with a few words, Marie spreads the flames until they engulf the pyre and Everly's body.

I am so sorry, Everly.

The line between these two trees is my path of rage. From the oak to the pine and back again, I pace, trying to subdue this anger that is boiling in my veins, this fury borne from the pain of losing Everly. My tears having turned to fierce burning anger. That's how Roman finds me, rage-walking from one tree to another, doing an about face and rage-walking right back. Over and over again.

"Do you plan on digging a trench?"

Whirling around at the sound of his voice, I latch on to his snark, that annoying smirk at the corner of his mouth, and let my emotions fly.

"Well, some of us don't have your uncanny ability of self-control. Not right now, Roman, I'm not in the fucking mood." Before I can turn around, he's right there in my face, my back slammed against the trunk of the oak tree. Solid and hard just like the body that is now pressing against mine.

"Not in the fucking mood, huh? Well, that's not something you say every day." His voice is soft, but his words are harsh. I latch onto that and run with

it.

“Now you’re just being an asshole,” I spit back, all the while my body reacting to his. It’s almost as though my body is programmed to light up whenever he touches me.

“I thought that was something we established a long time ago, Princess.” He leans in, his lips so close I can practically feel them on my own. Without thinking, I reach out, yearning for his touch. Wanting so much to kiss him, but this anger is consuming me and simply fucking isn’t going to be enough to get me out of this hate-filled rage boiling inside me.

“Yeah, well, I guess you’re still able to surprise me sometimes.” I’m goading him, pushing his buttons. I’m desperate to feel his personal brand of distraction.

“Is that right?” Roman presses me against the bark, rubbing his thick, hard cock against my stomach, his smirk still firmly in place as he practically reads my mind.

“Yes, and to be honest, you’re not really all that in the sack, either.” Fuck, I may have gone a teeny bit overboard with that one.

With one eyebrow cocked in disbelief, he glides his big palm over my throat and pins me to the tree with a look of determination. A look of raw, unrestrained hunger paints every inch of his face and it makes me so fucking hot, it burns the blood in my veins.

“I guess we’ll just have to test that theory then, Princess,” he murmurs as his other hand nimbly unbuttons his pants and slowly slides down his zipper until his cock is freed.

“Isn’t it a bit late, old man? Think you can keep up with me?” What the actual fuck is wrong with me? I can’t stop the words pouring from my mouth, my anger fueling everything.

Roman chuckles, dry and humorless. He reminds me of a villain right before he rips out the heart of his enemy. Except, with Roman, he’ll be ripping an orgasm or ten right out of me as a confession to my lies.

He rips the flimsy pajamas I was wearing and throws them to one side with his free hand. They’re now scattered around us and I’m completely naked and at his mercy. He’s still dressed except for his cock that I can feel caressing my bare stomach.

“Spread your legs, Princess, and count to twenty. When you reach nineteen, you will come all over my dick without making a single sound.” Then he kisses me, his mouth demanding, his tongue silencing any and all

protests that he thinks I might harbor. But I'm not here to protest anything. I want this. I need this more than my next breath. Roman knows it and I know it. He's the cure to my madness, the thing that can stop the dark spiral I'm falling down.

The next thing I feel is his cock thrusting into me, bottoming out and searching out that hot button that makes me lose my mind.

"Count, Princess."

"One."

He pulls out and slams back into me then gives me a look that says *obey* and leaves no room for even a hint of an argument.

"Two."

He fucks me like this, no mercy, no pity, for the next fifteen seconds and by the time I reach seventeen, I'm writhing against the bark of the tree trying desperately to find some relief.

"Not a fucking sound, Princess." Still holding me by the neck, he thrusts back in and I keep my count although my body just wants to come and scream into the night.

"Eighteen," I rasp, barely able to speak.

Bringing his free hand to my clit, he thrusts in one more time as he pinches it, hard, and I don't have time to count to nineteen as my entire body thrashes and shakes from the power of my climax. I can feel the bite of the wood against my skin as much as the pleasure of the orgasm coursing through my entire system.

"Not a sound," he reminds me, then devours my mouth like a crazed, starving man, swallowing any noise I might have emitted.

"That's my good girl. Now, turn around, Princess." I do as I'm told because that's how we always play this. Roman is my anchor, the one that relieves me from my too consuming thoughts.

With his entire body flush against my back, he fucks me from behind. He fucks me like the animal he is inside. He fucks me like our lives depend upon the next orgasm. And maybe they do.

At my ear, I hear his whisper, "Do not ever underestimate the power of a good rage fuck, Princess. When you're hurting, you come to me. I will fuck every hole you have if it means you feel better. You understand me?"

I nod because every word is accentuated by his hard, deep thrusts and my mind is barely functioning beyond the ecstasy that he's gifting me.

One hand still on my neck, he turns my face to the side and kisses my

parted lips, drinking from my mouth as though my breath was his fresh glass of water. His other hand snakes around and rubs incessant circles around my clit until another climax buzzes through my nerve endings, starting at the base of my spine.

“I love fucking you, Princess. I can do this all night,” he growls into my ear, his cock pistoning in and out of me with animalistic fervor. “Now come for me again, so I can take you back to your room and remind you that my stamina is stronger and longer than all the others combined.”

Well, I wasn't sure about that, but fuck, I definitely want to test his theory.

I throw my head back with the power of my climax and this time he lets me scream into the darkness. He fucks the anger right out of me. The pain and the desperation evaporate from my pores with every shake as I come hard and long on his beast of a cock. But I feel him, too. I feel his cum pouring inside me, filling me up with his essence just as his body trembles behind me.

When we're both quiet for a minute, our heavy breaths the only sounds around us, he nips at my ear and whispers, “How do you feel?” And all the love he feels for me comes alive with those simple words.

“Thank you, Roman, I feel better.” Turning around to face him, I place both of my palms on his cheeks and smile. “I love you.”

“Keep that in mind. Someday, you might not like your punishment, Princess.” His smirk is the last thing I see before he throws me over his shoulder and carries me back to my room.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



I t's been a week. One hellish rollercoaster of a week since we came back, and I finally feel like I can catch my breath. I stop the treadmill and breathe deeply, while Archer is still MIA, I feel lighter, like the happiness I've been craving is within reach. I swear I can almost taste it.

My phone buzzes again, this is something I hadn't missed when we were away. It's been almost constant apologies from Bauer, and I'm not quite ready to deal with him yet. The fact that he told me what was happening only goes so far. I know I went easy on him before, when he told me, but I had a few more pressing things to worry about. Whereas now, Archer being missing is the only thing on my docket left to sort. Kain and Roman left first thing today to meet with their people to discuss what to do with the rogues that seem to be trying to come back to clans and packs in droves.

While I know what I'd do, I'm letting them handle it. It's their people and I trust them. I know that Colt and the elders got a bit of heat for allowing it if Colt's phone call this morning was anything to go by, but this is a new age. Hunters don't rule all and I couldn't be happier about it. I finally get a minute to feel content. Like everything we've been working toward is so nearly here.

But of course, that comes with its own issues. Like the feeling that this isn't over. I don't know if I'm a pessimist, or if my intuition is just singing, but whenever I've had happiness within my grasp, something has come in and blown it to pieces.

I pick up my phone and see another dozen messages from Bauer, but also one from Colt.

Colt: We have an Archer problem. Can you come home? Fair warning, Dad is here.

And just like that, I feel the happy slipping further away. Archer better hope that someone else gets ahold of him before I do, because for everything he's done, I might just let past Remy come out to play, and that bitch is brutal.

I take a quick shower then head to find Creek and Levi. They are both in the kitchen with Olivia and Astrid. Astrid is in Levi's arms on the counter, her little arms moving quickly while they laugh as she tries to mix the batter in her bowl. Creek is smiling, watching them while Olivia laughs as she takes out the previous batch of cookies from the oven. They don't notice me, so I lean against the archway and just smile as I watch them. Reveling in the innocence of it all.

I know they said they'd stay here. The deal Levi made with their family long ago means that Olivia would become the new keeper of the house, but with everything still not resolved, I can't help the pit of fear of keeping them here. Especially Astrid. If anything were to happen to them...

I know that Levi echoes my fears, but Olivia was so insistent, and considering everything, I know he didn't feel like he could turn the offer down.

"It looks like I've been missing out on all of the fun," I exclaim, as I make myself known and head into the kitchen fully.

"We've been making chocolate chip cookies and muffins!" Astrid squeals as Levi tickles her before putting her down on the floor.

"And making a giant mess while doing it too," Olivia laughs. I take in the vision of Levi, flour dusting his face, dough and batter all over his t-shirt, and smile.

"Still looks like great fun," I say as I jump up onto a stool at the counter.

"It is." Levi grins.

"Well, I'd love to join in with the fun, but I need to head to my dad's," I say, and Creek flinches. "Either of you fancy tagging along?"

"No, Levi needs to stay and finish baking!" Astrid cries, but Olivia shoots her a look and she quiets.

“It’s fine,” Creek says quietly. “I can go.”

“Are you sure?” I ask. His parents are likely to be there, and he hasn’t seen them since we got back.

“No, but I can’t hide forever. I don’t have to tell them, not yet. I just need to keep control of myself. I can manage that.” He stands from the table and Levi watches him.

“I can go...” Levi says, but Creek shakes his head.

“You stay here with our little ray of sunshine. You’re of more use if something happens here. We still don’t know where Archer is,” Creek says sternly, and I do a double take because I don’t remember ever hearing him speak to Levi, to anyone, like that.

“Okay.” Levi nods and Astrid squeals with happiness.

“Astrid. Levi has important work to do, Nana told you that before. He can’t just stay here baking with you all of the time,” Olivia tells the little girl, who starts to cry.

“Honestly, it’s fine, she’s been through a lot. Levi is okay to stay, I don’t need them both. Either of them, really. Just, my dad...” I wince, but she shakes her head.

“She knows better. But thank you, I appreciate it,” Olivia says, looking back down to the little girl sniffing as she wipes away her tears.

A flash of a memory, of me as that little girl, comes to the forefront of my mind. Except, I lost my mom. If Levi staying here is safer for them both, that’s what’s going to happen. I look up to Levi and he nods, as if reading my thoughts.

The drive to my dad’s is quiet. Creek’s nervous energy is contagious, and I try not to bounce my leg the closer we get.

“Are you sure this is okay? You don’t have to come in,” I say for the billionth time since we left. I don’t want him to have to go through this before he’s ready, even if I’m not quite ready to face my dad alone.

“I’ll be fine,” he says softly, barely looking at me as we turn into the driveway to my dad’s house. Butterflies riot in my stomach as we pull up to the house. Colt is at the door already, waiting for us. That can’t be good.

“Ready or not...” Creek says as he unbuckles and opens his door. I take a

deep breath before climbing out of my car and look up to the house. Shouts reach me even here and I wince.

This is going to be about as much fun as poking pins in my eyes.

I drag my feet as I walk toward the house with Creek at my side. He jogs up the stairs and says hello to Colt. They speak quietly and I give them a second. I hear Maddie and Nate's names, and Creek shakes his head. I guess he's telling Colt he doesn't want to tell them yet because Colt sighs, but nods his head before moving out of the way to let Creek in the house.

"Hey, Little Bit. Sorry. It's chaos here today, but I need your input. Those two fucking idiots have been at it all morning," he says, gesturing inside the house, I assume at Bauer and Dad.

"What's going on?" I ask as we move inside and head to the kitchen. The shouting is coming from the sitting room, so I'm kind of glad not to go in there. I haven't seen my dad since the night I was sentenced to die. It's not exactly that I'm afraid of seeing him, more afraid of his reaction to seeing me. I might not have always been super close to him, and all things considered, I should probably despise the man, but he's still my dad.

"Archer. He's literally disappeared," Colt sighs and slumps into one of the dining chairs.

"How does a person disappear?" I ask, sitting at the table with him, and Creek follows suit.

"We don't know. But none of the factions can find him. We've tried spells, hunts, everything. He's not in the Shadow Realm, unless he was there before you sealed the way across, but we had eyes on him around then. None of the rogues know where he is, at least, not that are telling Kain or Roman. Witches are interrogating witches, Bree is heading that up, finally getting herself involved. But no one knows a thing."

"Fucking hell." I blow out a breath. "And what is that all about?" I motion toward the raised voices behind the now-closed door.

"That is a little about you, a little about me, and a lot about Archer." He runs his tongue bar across his lips, a nervous habit I've noticed, and drops his head into his hands. "It's a bit of a shit storm in there. But I need us to focus on Archer. Can you reach your Demon friend?" he asks quietly as his eyes dart to the door.

"I can, but Archer won't have any friends down there. If he's there and Morgan or the guys find him, they'll treat him the way he deserves." I smile darkly and Creek laughs.

“That’s an understatement. Did you miss how protective of you those guys were? They’ll destroy Archer if they find him.”

“They weren’t that bad,” I scoff and he barks out a laugh again.

“If you say so.”

“You sound jealous,” Colt says with a smile, and Creek shakes his head.

“Nah, man. It’s not like that. You should see how they are with Morgan. Remy is like the little sister they cherish.”

“Well, I can’t be sorry that more people are looking out for you, Little Bit. It’s good to know you have plenty of people in your corner.”

“Thanks, but shall we get back to this Archer thing? What haven’t we done that we could be doing to find him?”

“Honestly, I can’t think of anything. That’s why I need your help,” Colt says, scrubbing a hand down his face.

“We could ask Nevin?” Creek suggests, and I ponder it. I know that Levi doesn’t like to call on his Angel friends too much since he’s been cast out, but if Nevin could help us with the Archer issue, then that could help us a lot.

“It can’t hurt to ask, I guess. The worst he can say is no,” I tell them, and Colt looks more than a little relieved.

“Thank you, honestly. I’m not sure how exactly I became the unofficial leader of the elders, but Remy, I’m blaming you for it. Everyone looks to me for an answer, and I have a call with them all later. The thought of telling them I have no idea what else we can do...yeah, not something I want to do. Especially with Daddy Dearest undermining my every decision.”

“I’m glad you see it that way.” My dad’s voice reaches us and I look up to see him and Bauer in the doorway to the kitchen.

“Well, it’s not like he’s wrong. You’re being a dick,” Bauer says, barging past my dad and joining us at the table. His lips are a tight line and I guess things haven’t been exactly easy for him dealing with everything since I went to the Shadow Realm.

“Maybe I wouldn’t be a dick if you all didn’t keep fucking up.”

“Denny, you need to watch your fucking words,” Creek growls, and I catch a glimpse of his clenched fists, the white knuckles as he moves his hands under the table.

“I’ll say whatever I want in my own house, boy. You should think about who the fuck you’re talking to,” my dad shouts, grimacing in my direction.

“It’s not your fucking house,” Colt shouts, and I cover my shock, because what? “It’s mine, and that pisses you off, but you don’t have to be here, and if

you are, you will speak to us with some goddamn respect. Fates knows we've all earned it over the years."

"Respect?" My dad barks out a disgusted laugh. "Not one of you deserves my respect. My daughter runs around with the filth, slutting herself out..."

"*That is enough!*" Creek's voice booms and my dad falls to his knees, eyes wide.

"Creek," I say softly and move around to him. I grab his chin and bring his face to mine. "Creek, I'm okay. His words don't mean a thing. You don't want to hurt him."

"The fuck I don't." Creek scowls.

"Please," I say softly, caressing his cheek when I hear my dad suck in a lungful of air. I look at my brothers, both wide-eyed and very still.

"What sort of abomination are you?" my dad spits.

"That is e-fucking-nough." I move around the table and stand in front of my father. The man I used to look up to, but not anymore. Not after everything. "You can say whatever the fuck you want about me, I really couldn't give less of a shit, but Creek, the others, they are twice the man you will *ever* be. Mom would be horrified by the twisted thing that you've become. You killed me once and tried to have me killed again. You failed and tried to have me cast out. You treat Colt like shit because our people recognize that he is a better leader than you could ever be. Fuck knows what's going on with you and Bauer, but I've had enough! You either get on board with who we are, the people we've become, or you get out of our lives for good. You do not deserve to be around us with such bigoted hate in your heart."

My dad steps towards me and Creek growls behind me, but I don't move a muscle. I am sick and tired of this insanity.

"You are filth," he spits, and I roll my eyes.

"Ya know what? Fuck it." I grit my teeth and unfurl my wings, thank fuck for wearing a tank. I ignore the pain that comes with stretching them out in the fucking kitchen and watch happily as my dad falters, stepping backward. "How can I be filth, father, when I am the one thing you hold so fucking dear?"

"No, it isn't possible." His words are barely audible and he goes white as a sheet. I put my wings away, trying not to wince again.

"It's more than possible. Maybe you need to go away and think about your own bullshit, and whether Avalon will even accept you, should you

choose it at this point,” I say, crossing my arms against my chest. He stumbles backward and heads upstairs. I turn my back from the direction he went to find Creek still wrestling his anger while my brothers both just stare at me. Bauer is wide-eyed, but Colt just has a shit eating grin on his face.

“That was so fucking bad ass, Little Bit!” Colt whoops and starts to laugh.

Bauer, however, just keeps staring at me. “You’re an Angel?”

“I am,” I tell him, my tone unrelenting as my anger at my dad still rides me.

“And I’m part Demon,” Creek grits out.

“Are you okay?” I ask him, and he nods, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath. I watch him closely. Once he starts to relax, I ease up and loosen up myself.

“How?” Bauer’s eyes bounce between the two of us, as if he’s trying to work it out.

“It is a long ass story, and maybe one day, I’ll tell you. But the Shadow Realm wasn’t kind to any of us,” I tell him, and he winces.

“I’m so sorry, Remy...” he starts, but I shake my head.

“I don’t want to hear it, Bauer.” I sigh and tilt my head from side to side, stretching out. “You did what you did, and that had consequences. Lucky for you, you didn’t have to pay the cost of them. Though, that cost might just be the guilt you’ll carry, knowing that my forgiveness, *our* forgiveness, is going to be hard fought. The things we went through, that Fallon went through...” I shake my head again and sag into a seat.

“I didn’t know,” Bauer says, his head hung.

“It doesn’t matter. It’s done,” I snap.

“Remy...” Colt starts, and my gaze whips to him. I glare at him and whatever he was going to say dies on his tongue.

I hear the front door open and let out a sigh of relief, expecting it to be my dad leaving but then her voice reaches us, and my gaze jumps to Creek.

Maddie bounces into the room with a grin on her face. “You’re home!”

After one of the most draining afternoons of my life, playing buffer between Creek and his parents, I am about spent. Colt dealt with Dad, I don’t even

want to know what happened, but he didn't say another fucking word about any of it, or about Creek and me, and Bauer disappeared upstairs after Maddie and Nate left.

Now I'm sitting here, drinking coffee like it's the elixir of life, in a food coma from the masses Maddie made us eat, because apparently, we look different and food is the answer. The video call with the elders is at the ass crack of night because time zones fucking suck. It's nearly two in the morning and I am desperate for my bed, stupid baby Angel bullshit. I'm looking forward to the not being tired part the most, but at least this way, all of the elders across the world get to be on the call.

Why Colt wanted me to stick around is beyond me, but trying to tell him no was about as fruitful as getting Roman to stop being an asshole. It was easier to just stop fighting it and concede. Fates knows I owe him, he handled shit here amazingly while I was away and, while it's not my job to make sure things go well, I still feel responsible, since I seem to have set this whole thing into motion.

Colt finishes setting up his screen in the tripod contraption he has for it on the opposite side of the table then comes to sit next to me. Creek is staying out of view. Last time I saw him, he was watching a game in the sitting room, lying on the couch. I'd put money on him being asleep already, but I won't begrudge him it. I'm just jealous I'm not asleep.

The screen comes to life and a dozen boxes appear on the screen, each with a different elder. I smile and wave while Colt says hello and they all manage getting their audio to work properly.

"Thanks everyone for jumping on tonight, I know the hour isn't great for all of us," Colt says, and it's like he transforms into someone I don't recognize. He's like an actual adult, taking charge, and it's easy to see how he ended up in the unofficial seat of leader. He carries it well.

I tune out as they discuss the mundane bits that they have to talk about, only refocusing when I hear my name.

"Sorry, I missed that," I say with a small smile, and Nasari chuckles.

"I can't imagine how tired you are after your recent journey, so we won't keep you long. We understand it was a successful trip?"

"It was. We retrieved the witch that was taken and Archer's ally in the Shadow Realm was neutralized. We also managed to come to an agreement where the Demons were retrieved, and the portal to the realm has been resealed. It is not possible for it to be opened again," I tell them. Colt knows

the truth, but I can live with keeping the others in the dark. They don't need to know right now, and I don't know all of them. I'm not giving my secrets out to the world.

Every girl needs a few secrets.

I finish giving them the need-to-know information, and Colt takes the reins back. I answer questions where asked directly, but it's nothing I haven't already gone over.

After an hour of it, Colt calls the meeting to an end and I'm about to pass out on the table.

"Sorry," he says, as he ends the call and the screen goes dark.

"It's fine." I yawn, stretching out. "We should head home though."

"Home?"

"The manor," I say softly. "Roman and Kain will be back by now, and I doubt any of them will sleep without me being there."

"I'm glad you're happy little sister."

"I really am. With them at least. The rest of the world needs to give us a break, then I can be really happy."

"We're getting there."

"We are. I'll speak to Levi about Nevin in the morning and let you know, okay?" I stand up and give him a hug.

"Sure thing. I'll let you know if we hear anything in the meantime."

"Sounds good." I move into the sitting room where Creek is snoring softly, almost drooling on the couch. I shut off the TV. Crouching in front of him, I gently wake him. Startling a Demon not used to his powers is not something I recommend. He stirs and smiles at me before stretching out.

"Hey, beautiful," he says through his stretch before sitting up. "All done?"

"I am, fancy heading home?" I ask sleepily.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



I stretch out as I wake, yawning so hard I get a cramp in my jaw.

Fucker, that hurts!

After jamming my thumb under my jaw to rub out the muscle, I realize that there's someone else in my bed. I spot Creek sleeping peacefully and slip away soundlessly. Padding across the room, I grab my robe and leave the room, gently shutting the door. He hasn't been sleeping so well, so I'm not going to wake him. Not when he's been through so much. The dark circles under his eyes are becoming almost permanent, and I hate it.

I creep to the kitchen and start a carafe of coffee. It's strange, the house being so quiet. Olivia and Astrid are heading home today to pack, apparently. Levi's little gem when I got home last night. It's not that I begrudge them being here, but Astrid is so young. She deserves to grow up away from this madness, but apparently the agreement was made and they're moving into the wing Everly stayed in.

I mostly hate that she's gone, and it feels like we're betraying her memory just letting someone move into her space so quickly. Even if it is her family.

She was family to me and the thought of *replacing* her makes me sick. But it's not my decision to make, apparently. The millennia-old arrangement takes precedence. To be fair, I don't know the terms of it, but still. I guess that's just another thing out of my control.

The smell of coffee soothes me and I take a deep breath. Maybe I should take up yoga or something. Something to help ground me and clear my mind

because there is way too much going on up there at the minute.

Levi stumbles into the room, half-asleep, in just sweatpants and heads straight for me. Fates above, I am not awake enough to protect myself from the reaction to that sight.

“Morning, sleepyhead,” I say quietly as I grab another mug and pour one for him too. I sigh as I sip the liquid nectar.

“Why on earth are you up so early? It’s barely sunrise and you didn’t get in that long ago,” he murmurs.

“Couldn’t sleep. I guess I really don’t need as much sleep anymore.” He rolls his eyes at me, but kisses my cheek as he takes his mug from my hand.

“As long as that’s all it is.” He watches me closely, examining me, as if trying to find all my broken pieces.

“It is.” I smile at his look of concern and we sit in silence for a little while, just watching the sun rise out the glass doors. “Oh, I forgot to ask last night. Is there any chance Nevin could drop by today? I need his help with something. I know you don’t like to ask your Angel buddies, but...”

He cuts me off with a shake of his head. “It’s fine, I’ll send word to him. I need his help figuring out how to let Avalon know you got your wings back anyway.”

“Oh. Right. Will Serafina be helping too?” The sour look on my face makes him chuckle.

“No, Serafina has gone dark. I haven’t heard from her in a while.”

“Is she okay?”

“I don’t know. Another thing to ask Nevin when he gets here.” He pops his coffee down beside the stove and grabs a pan from the shelf below.

I move over to the stool at the island counter as he works his way around the kitchen, grabbing the stuff to make breakfast, even at this unearthly hour. I’m not going to complain. Levi said we need to eat less, but I can always eat. “Are you going with Olivia and Astrid today?”

“No. Roman has some wolves in the area that are going to escort them and help with any heavy lifting.”

“Aww, look at you all, finally getting along,” I joke.

He looks up at me, his gaze heated as his eyes darken. “Oh I think we’ve all been *playing* together very well.”

“Oh, you’ve definitely been doing that.” I stick my tongue out at him and he grins. “But that’s not what I meant, and you know it.”

“I know, it’s just fun to watch you get worked up.” He chuckles as he

starts to cook.

“I’d call you a tease, but we both know you’re not.” I grin at him and he shakes his head.

“Nope, definitely not a tease.” His eyes sparkle and I can’t help but laugh.

“You guys are up way too early.” Roman stretches as he walks into the room in a pair of shorts, yawning before he grabs the coffee pot.

“Sorry if we woke you.” I wince slightly because, even though we’ve been talking a while, it’s still not exactly a decent hour of the day. Anything before noon should be considered indecent.

“It’s fine, I had to be up early anyway. Two of my guys are swinging by in about an hour to grab Olivia and Astrid. They found them a truck, so they should have more than enough space for anything they want to bring with them. We cleared a few of the rooms in their wing last night, so there’s space here for them too.”

“Thanks, man.” Levi nods at him and Roman grunts back as he takes a mouthful of coffee.

“Anything I need to know about your trip yesterday? You were back late,” Roman says to me as he slips onto the stool next to me.

“No, not really. Just a fun trip home. Got all of the elders up to speed, caught up with my brothers.”

“She’s leaving out the fact that her dad was a giant asshole and the fact that I nearly killed him,” Creek grumbles as he enters the room. At least *he’s* pretty much dressed. Two bare chests are enough of a distraction right now, thank you. He heads straight for the fridge while I feel Levi and Roman’s eyes on me.

“What? It wasn’t a big deal. You didn’t kill him, and he was being a giant ass bag.”

“Also leaving out the fact that you bitched him out and told him about your new Angel status. I swear I’ve never seen Denny Bennett look so terrified.” Creek chuckles and I roll my eyes.

“Your dad knows?” Levi asks, and Roman grumbles under his breath.

“It wasn’t planned, but yeah, him and Bauer both know. They’ll keep their mouths shut. Bauer’s still hoping we’ll forgive him and Colt dealt with my dad. I have no idea what’s happening over there with their power dynamic, but it’s weird as fuck.”

“I second that,” Creek says, raising his hand.

“What did I miss?” Kain asks, strolling into the kitchen, suited up and not

a hair out of place. I grin, because he always seems to make the rest of us look like a group of bums.

Creek catches him up while I pour another coffee and Levi finishes cooking. We move to the table and barely speak as we inhale the food. I might not need to eat as much, but I love food way too much to quit it.

“If I didn’t think it would upset you, I’d happily rip your father’s heart from his chest,” Kain announces so casually that I almost think I’ve misheard him.

“I second this.” Roman nods and my eyes go wide.

“You said yourself your dad is a dick bag.” Creek shrugs, agreeing with them.

“Thanks...I think? As much as he pisses me off though, he’s still my dad.”

“No, Angel. He’s your father. A dad doesn’t treat his daughter the way yours has treated you. He might’ve been good to you when you were pretending to be something you weren’t, but whenever you’ve shown him who you really are, he’s shown his true colors,” Levi growls.

I mull over his words, and the truth of them hits me and my heart hurts all over again.

“You’re right, I know you are, but he’s still my dad in my heart. So he’s still firmly on the do not touch list.”

“I assume your brother, Bauer, is on the same list?” Kain asks smoothly.

“For now.” I nod and he shrugs.

“Fine, as long as they don’t hurt you further, I’ll agree to your list. But you are my family, Remy. People don’t get to hurt my family without consequence.” Kain’s words startle me, because he is usually the chill one of the bunch, but apparently my family has pushed him too far this time.

A few hours later, once the heat from the conversation over breakfast has dissipated, and Olivia and Astrid have left, I find myself in the backyard, trying not to get frustrated about the lack of something to do. I’ve waited how long for a day of peace, and now that I finally have one, I have no idea what to do with it. Though it could be because I’m just waiting for Nevin to appear too. Patience is apparently not my strong suit anymore. Not after months of

everything being full speed ahead.

I hate twiddling my thumbs waiting on other people. I roll out the yoga mat from the gym on the pavement, and start the yoga video on my phone that I found while trying to find something to help me Zen. I move into the first position and close my eyes to count out the stretch time.

“That looks pretty uncomfortable.”

I blink, looking up, and tumble to the ground with absolutely no grace. Nevin chuckles as I faceplant and groan.

Fuck my life.

“It wasn’t so bad,” I say as I climb to my feet, brushing myself down from my tumble.

“You summoned me?” he says with a smirk, and I flip him the bird.

“Hardly, but I could use your help. Please?” I ask as we walk back into the house.

“If I can,” he says. His voice wavers but his face remains steady, so I let it go. Levi meets us in the kitchen along with Kain, Creek, and Roman. “What’s going on?”

His gaze bounces between the four of them. Something doesn’t feel right, but I have no idea what. But I always trust my gut. It’s rarely led me astray.

“Archer Dotoro. He’s seemingly disappeared from the face of the Earth. We’re pretty sure he’s not hiding in the Shadow Realm, and no one can find him here, so we wondered if you had any ways to track him that we don’t have access to,” Kain explains, pinning him with his stare.

“I’d snoop myself, but obviously Michael has me on every single no-entry list.” Levi snorts, but I can practically feel the anger about it rolling from him. “I also need your help with breaking some news to him.”

“What news?” Nevin asks, and I swear he’s sweating.

“This news,” I tell him and unfurl my wings. He takes a step back, eyes wide, before composing himself.

“How in the ever loving fuck did you get your wings back without going to Avalon?” Nevin asks, blinking at me as if trying to convince himself that he’s not really seeing my wings.

“I died in the Shadow Realm,” I tell him straight as I tuck my wings back away, thankful it hurt less this time, and he pales.

“This is so fucked up,” he says, sitting down. “Angels should not get their wings anywhere but Avalon. Have you considered the consequences?” He looks directly at Levi, who runs a hand through his hair. It’s grown out a bit

recently and I'm not sad about it.

"Wasn't something I did. Didn't even know it was possible. The Queen of the Shadow Realm did it," Levi tells him and joins him at the table, so we all follow suit.

"Holy shit." Nevin takes a deep breath. "Anything else I missed?"

Creek raises his hand and smirks. "I'm half Demon now."

Nevin looks like he's going to fall off of his chair and pales. "I'm sorry, what?"

"You heard," Roman snorts and folds his arms. I don't know what the hostility is about today, but I tuck it away to remember to ask later.

"How is that even possible?"

"It's a long story, one for another day," I tell him. "For today, the main thing we need help with is finding Archer, to finally resolve this bullshit."

"I will try and help, but our numbers are spread a little thin at the moment. Even my coming here will be noticed." Levi's eyes narrow at Nevin's words, but he doesn't say anything, even when panic fills Nevin's eyes as he finishes speaking.

So strange.

"Any help would be appreciated," I tell him, and the others all murmur their agreement.

"Can you get me a meeting with Michael?" Levi asks him, his gaze assessing every movement of Nevin's.

"I can ask, but he's a little distracted right now." Nevin's eyes flash as he speaks, and it's as if he can't keep his words from Levi and is freaking the fuck out about it. I don't understand any of it. Politics in general give me a headache, but Angel politics? No thank you. Not today. Not for as long as I can possibly avoid them.

Levi doesn't say anything else and Nevin lets out a relieved breath. The others start talking about something to do with the rogues and I zone out a little. We got what we needed, but now there's more waiting.

Awesome.

I hate having this hanging over our heads. I just want Archer dealt with.

"Could Archer be in Avalon?" I ask, not directing my question at anyone in particular. The table goes quiet and I feel all eyes on me. "It would explain a lot. Why no one could find him. And Fallon mentioned that Azriel said Archer wasn't the guy calling the shots. Could they be working with an Angel?"

I let my questions settle in the room and turn my gaze to Levi and Nevin.

“Not a chance,” Nevin says while Levi seemingly agrees. “Angels and Demons don’t mix. You are the anomaly, you always were. As for him being in Avalon, I doubt it, though you do have more than a few enemies over there that might give him sanctuary if they even knew what was happening here. To be honest, most Angels are so self-centered, they wouldn’t even think about anything like this.”

“Of course she has more enemies,” Roman says, rolling his eyes. “You never really were one for playing nice.” His chuckle is joined by the others and I shrug. I’m not going to apologize for ruffling a few feathers.

The thought makes me laugh, all Angel things considered.

“Amantara wasn’t the easiest person to deal with. Very single focused, and if you got in her way...well, you’d better watch the fuck out,” Nevin says with a smile.

“Doesn’t sound all that different to Remy now,” Creek chuckles.

“Hey! I’m not that bad,” I object, but I smile, because they might be right.

“Were there any other sparkling revelations before I head back?” Nevin asks, looking a little stressed.

“No, that’s pretty much it,” I tell him with a smile. I know we’re asking a lot of him, especially with all things considered. Plus, I realize I have absolutely no idea what his usual day to day demands are, but considering the lines around his eyes and the dark circles beneath them that I didn’t think were possible for Angels, I’m guessing he has a lot going on. I try not to feel guilty asking this favor of him, but fail epically. “Thank you, for everything.”

“Anytime. I know if it was the other way round, you’d do it for me. As for meeting Michael, I’d probably wait on that. I know he’s going to be pissed, but he’s pissy all the time right now. Don’t get her cast out before she gets a chance to visit because he’s got a stick up his ass.”

“Is everything okay?” Levi asks him, and Nevin clamps his lips together and nods.

“It’s fine.” His words are short and mumbled, but he stands to leave without any further explanation. “I’ll let you know when I know anything.”

“Thank you,” I tell him, and he nods before stepping outside and disappearing. “Well, that was weird.”

Levi looks at me, his face almost unreadable, but I can see the concern there.

“It was.”

Creek pulls his phone from his pocket and groans when he looks at the screen. “My mom wants to see me, so Colt offered for me to go to his place so he can play buffer, but I told my mom I couldn’t. That being said, I am going to go and hang with Colt for a bit.”

“Okay,” I tell him, reaching out to take his hand, laughing in my head about their bromance that has managed to survive all of this craziness. “If you end up crashing there, because I know what you two are like, just let me know?”

“Always, beautiful.” He kisses my cheek and pats down his pockets, grunting when he confirms he has everything he needs, and gives a two-finger salute to us all as he leaves.

“I need to go to Avalon,” Levi tells me later that night as we climb into bed. The others will join us shortly, I’m sure. “Something doesn’t feel right.”

“I thought you couldn’t get in.”

“I can’t.” He shakes his head. “But I need to find a way. I can’t explain it, but something feels very wrong. I felt it before, but I thought it was everything going on here. But some of the stuff Nevin said earlier, it didn’t make sense. I need to at least try.”

“Do you want me to come with you?” I ask him. I’m not going to try and stop him, much as I want to. The thought of him being in danger, or being away from me, makes me feel horrific, but I know I can’t stop him if his mind is set on it.

“No, it’s not safe for you there yet.” He sighs and I slip under his arm and snuggle up against him.

“It’s not exactly safe for you either.”

“I am the Archangel of War. In Avalon, I am almost indestructible. I’ll be fine. It’s been a long time since someone bested me on home turf.” His voice rumbles through his chest and I place my hand over his heart.

“I know who and what you are, but that doesn’t make it safe. Almost isn’t completely, and just because it’s been a long time doesn’t make it impossible.”

He pulls me closer and places a kiss on the top of my head.

“You don’t need to worry about me, Angel. They won’t even notice I’m

there. I just want to have a poke around. I'll be back before you know it, but I won't be contactable while I'm gone. Just like in the Shadow Realm, contact between places is limited," he tells me, and I sigh. He maneuvers us so we're lying down with him spooning me, wrapped in his strong arms.

"I will always worry," I tell him softly. "That's like asking water not to be wet. Not going to happen."

His chuckles soothe some of the fear in my heart, but it doesn't dispel it completely. A niggle in the back of my mind tugs, but I'm too drained to pull on the thread.

He shifts to lay on his back and pulls me under his arm, so I'm lying on his chest, and kisses the top of my head. "Sleep, Angel. I'll be here when you wake, but I'll leave first thing tomorrow."

"How long will you be gone?" I ask, my voice small.

"I don't know. Time moves differently there too, but I will try to be back as soon as I can."

"Okay," I say softly, playing with the duvet. I hate the idea of him being gone, but I know, reasonably, that the likelihood of all five of us being able to stay together all of the time is slim. Kain and Roman are essentially kings in their own right, they have people they're responsible for. Doesn't mean I like it though and being reasonable isn't a strength of mine.

Especially when it comes to these guys.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN



Levi was gone before I woke and, while I half want to nut punch him for not saying goodbye, I also get it. There's no good in goodbyes. Even if it's only a short amount of time. Goodbyes fucking suck.

Olivia meanders into the kitchen, startling a little when she finds me at the island sipping coffee as I stare out into the distance as the sun rises. I might not be a morning person, but not needing so much sleep is making me see the sun rise more and more.

"Sorry, I didn't realize you'd be up already," she says with an apologetic smile as she moves to the other side of the kitchen to pour herself a mug.

"It's fine. Did you guys get sorted and settled yesterday?"

"We did, thank you. Who knew having Lycans on board would make moving that easy? They lifted everything like it was nothing," she gasps. I guess knowing about everything is one thing but seeing it in action is a whole other beast. I chortle at my musing as she sits and joins me.

"Do you think you will all move in here permanently?" she asks me softly without looking at me, just watching the sunrise.

"I have no idea what the hell our plans are, if I'm honest. That's future Remy's problem." My smile is tight as I look at her. "Future Remy can deal with that when life goes back to normal."

She giggles at me, shaking her head. "You really are exactly how Mom described you."

I raise my eyebrows at her words and take another swig of my now lukewarm coffee. "She was a good woman."

“The best.” She sighs, her eyes glistening. We sit in silence for a little while, watching as the sky turns from a dark purple to a burst of pinks and oranges.

My phone starts ringing on the counter in front of me and Colt’s name flashes on the screen. I sigh, because there can’t be a good reason for him calling this early.

Gunfire blasts through the phone along with the screeching of tires. Footsteps thunder through the hall as I put the phone on loudspeaker, though they can all obviously hear it already.

“Colt? What the fuck is going on? Where is Creek?” I screech as Kain and Roman reach us, eyes wide.

“It was an ambush. We need you, Remy. Now. At the house.” The line goes dead and I take off at a sprint to my room and throw on some clothes. My heart thunders in my chest as I try not to freak out. Of course Levi had to leave already.

Fuck.

I strap on every blade and gun I can find before finding the others in the sitting room, ready to move.

“Let’s go.”

Roman drives my car like we’re being chased, for all I know, we are, but all I can think about is Colt, Creek, and whoever else was with them at the house.

Kain leans forward between the seats and takes my hand without a word. My panic is riding me hard, but I feel that quiet rage just below the surface of it, ready to swallow me whole if I need it. I cling to it, that quiet calm, let myself slip into it, pushing everything else back.

We have no idea what we’re walking into, but I give absolutely zero fucks. Archer is behind this. I can feel it in my fucking bones, and he’s going to die.

I’ll bleed him out myself with a fucking smile on my face.

“Remy,” Roman growls, but I shake my head. I can’t hear it right now. If I think about the possibilities of losing anyone else right now, the quiet calm will shatter, and I’ll shatter right along with it.

We can’t afford that.

“Are your people on the way?” My voice is clipped, cold, as I ask the question.

“They are,” Kain confirms from behind me, my hand still in his. I can barely feel it. The longer I stay in the quiet calm, the more numb I go.

I jolt forward as Roman slams on the brakes of the car. I grip the dash to stop myself face planting as the car swerves. That’s when I notice the cement slab in the middle of the fucking road.

What the actual fuck?

“I guess we’re going on foot from here.” Roman grunts, and I pinch my lips between my teeth.

“That’s what he wants,” I say, my voice still void of any emotion.

“We don’t have much choice,” Kain sighs before letting go of my hand.

I take a deep breath and let it out slowly. “You’re right, and we can’t wait here like sitting ducks. If we cut through the houses, and then through the woods, we can get to the back of the house. We don’t know what’s going on, but that’s probably the best way to access. Unless we split up and some of us come from the front.”

“Let me call Lysandra. I’ll have her bring the Dracul via the front way. If we can surround them, we’ve got the upper hand,” Kain says, pulling his phone from his pocket and Roman follows suit.

“I’ll call my guys, have them come from the east, and we can attack from the west. It’s not a total covering, but it’s better than us three splitting up.”

“Okay, but only a few to start with, we don’t know what this is and we don’t want everyone here in case this is a distraction,” I say and climb from the car. I heave out another breath, slipping back into that calm. This is all taking time, precious time, when I don’t know who is at the house, who might be injured already. Any of it.

But I can’t focus on that.

I need to be stronger than that. I feel that power inside of me stirring, but I shut it down. I still have no idea what would happen if I open that Pandora’s Box, and now is not the time. After this though, after this I am learning that power and making it my fucking bitch. I’m not being caught off guard again, not when I have it in my arsenal, no matter the consequences. If anyone dies today because I’ve been too afraid to use it, I won’t forgive myself.

“Let’s go,” Roman grunts as he and Kain climb out of the car, slamming the doors behind them. Leaving my car in the middle of the road makes my stomach twist, but it’s just a car.

“This way,” I tell them as I cut between houses and start weaving the streets toward my dad’s house. I don’t think about people seeing me with a gun on my thigh or my swords on my back. My sole focus is getting to my people.

I have no idea how many people will be at the house. I’m assuming it’s Archer, but I know that most of the rogues have reached out to Roman and Kain for clemency. So I have no idea who would be left fighting with him.

It has to be him, because I can’t deal with the fact that something else has popped up. Just no.

I don’t think about anything but reaching the house undetected as we move as stealthily as we can through the back alleys and reach the woods. I feel them, both in full predator mode, at my back as we move into the thick of trees. I hear the gunfire and shouts as we run toward the house, ducking and dodging the trees and their branches as we silently move across the terrain.

I stop about a hundred feet from the backyard of my dad’s house and crouch, the others dropping beside me without a word.

My people are here and ready to move. Kain tells me inside my mind as he tucks his phone back inside his pocket. I look to Roman and he nods, as if he knows what I’m asking.

I loosen a breath and shake out my arms, pulling my gun from my thigh holster. I don’t really care who is out there. They’re attacking my family and that signed their death warrant.

I stand, my movements fluid and graceful as I rush toward the chaos in the opening behind the house. I raise my gun and take out the four people I can see on the edge of the tree line—headshots each time—so quickly, the others didn’t see it coming. Roman whistles at my side and then the wolves attack from the other side.

My eyes widen as I take in just how many people are surrounding the house. How are there this many people here?

I head into the fray, holstering my gun and pulling a sword from my back. I don’t notice the blood spatter that coats me as I work through the masses heading toward the house. I saw Colt’s head for a split second by the back door, so that’s where I’m going. I know that Kain and Roman can handle everything out here without me.

I take heads, not caring what faction people around me are from. If they’re coming at me, they’re not on our team, so I couldn’t give less of a

fuck.

“Colt!” I shout as I reach the bottom of the porch steps, dispatching another person, barely seeing them. I hear the flick of the lock and rush up the stairs, tugging the door open and getting inside quickly. I take in the sight, trying not to be sick. There’s blood fucking everywhere. Bullet holes scattered across the kitchen, and Maddie is working on someone on the kitchen table.

“What the fuck is going on?” I hiss and Colt scrubs a hand over his face.

“The elders met here last night. We’ve only been communicating virtually, but information leaked, so we wanted to meet face to face in case the video feed was being hacked. The communication must have been intercepted, because there was an explosion out front at sunrise and then all fucking Hell broke loose. Fallon is in the sitting room trying to heal people, but she’s still not...she isn’t doing great. Creek is out front, trying to slow people down, but he was freaking out about using his powers, in case he hurt people he didn’t want to. I don’t know what to do, Little Sister. I have no idea where Dad is. I saw him slip out just before the chaos began and I haven’t seen him since.”

“You don’t think he...” I shake my head. My dad might be an asshole, but surely even he wouldn’t go this far.

“I don’t know anymore.”

“Archer?” I ask, and he nods.

“I got a voicemail from him just before the explosion. He’ll be here somewhere. He gets off on this shit.” Colt swears as a scream sounds from the guy on the table.

“I’m heading back out there,” I tell him, my voice flat. “Get people upstairs, keep down here clear. I’m going to fucking finish this.” I adjust my grip on my sword and stalk through the house, heading out the front, to Creek and whatever else waits for me out there.

I rip open the front door and bullets spray the front of the house. I drop to the ground and scan for the shooter. I pull my gun, finding them, and take them out.

I am sick to death of this bullshit.

“Archer, you fucking coward! Show yourself!” I scream as I join the melee out front. Chaos and mayhem reign out here. There is no order, just utter bedlam. I don’t look, I just feel and move toward where I saw Creek. More people just keep coming and I can’t help but wonder where the fuck

Archer got all these people from. Unless those rogues coming back to Roman and Kain were just a distraction, and they're here too.

I hear a dark chuckle near my ear and spin to find nothing but air.

I slit my eyes, scanning my surroundings as much as I can with the onslaught of bodies coming toward me.

Fuck this.

I zone out and let the killing calm take over as I murder my way through the throng of factions across the front yard until I reach Creek.

"Thank fuck you're here," he says, heaving in a breath as I put my back to his.

"You need to use your power," I tell him through my pants as I pull my gun and reload before shooting the two Lycans and Dracul coming toward me.

"I can't, there is no way I wouldn't hurt our people," he says, his voice almost pleading.

"You *need* to Creek. They're going to overwhelm us."

"Where are the others?"

"Kain and Roman are out back."

"Where the fuck is Levi?" He hisses as his heat leaves my back and he takes on two people while I take on another.

"He's gone," I grit out as someone attacks from the side and slashes my arm.

"What?" He screeches, before ducking and I spin, raising my gun and shooting the woman about to stab him point blank. Her blood and brain splatter over us, but I don't think about it. I can't.

"We don't have time for this. You need to use your power. You can do this. I'll give you time. Just focus." I breathe and pull a second gun. I start shooting and risk a glance at him as he goes pale, but he stills and I feel it, that power leaching from him, its coils moving toward the people around us.

People start dropping to the floor, screaming, and I keep shooting as they drop. "Get to the back!" I shout to our people who are still standing. The six of them take off around the house while Creek holds the rest of the opposition out here and I take care of dispatching them.

By the time I'm done, he's trembling and sweat is running down his face.

"You did it," I say softly, touching his chest, and he sucks in a breath. "I knew you could. Let's get to the back and help the others."

He takes in the piles of corpses around us and shakes his head before

looking me dead in the eye. “Let’s go.”

I nod and start around the house. The back yard is in much better shape, the Lycans and the Dracul, along with Kain and Roman have subdued most of them.

“Oh, well done, little Hunter, or should I call you Angel now?” Archer says as he steps from the tree line, clapping before he starts laughing manically.

Roman growls and one of his guys appears behind Archer, a gun raised at the back of his head. Archer just laughs again before he stills, putting his hands up.

“You can kill me, but you won’t stop what I started. This is bigger than all of us.” His grin takes over his face.

A loud crack rings out and Jack appears behind the Lycan and snaps his neck in less than a heartbeat. I grit my teeth as my guys move to my sides and the others fan out around us.

“Looking good, Remy.” Jack winks at me and I grind my teeth together to stop myself from saying anything. Fucking asshat.

“What are you doing here, Jack?” Creek says from beside me. The tone of his voice is bored, but he’s drained, I can see it in how he holds himself.

“Oh, just in the neighborhood, you know. Usual stuff. Wanted to check in on my dear love, see how she’s coping with her grief. We all know how she spirals and bottles her emotions when it comes to death.”

“Seriously, Princess? You dated this jackass? What on earth were you thinking?” Roman’s glibness makes me smile, but I know it’s not a pretty smile.

“I was obviously just slumming it before I came to my senses.”

Jack laughs at my words, shaking his head, while Archer just looks smug as fuck, despite the fact that there’s only two of them.

“That’s right, I hear you’re a bit of a slut these days, just handing yourself over to anyone who looks in your direction. I mean, your pussy is good, but it isn’t *that* good. By now I bet its gapey as fuck.” A crunch breaks up the stiff silence. Suddenly Jack is on his ass with blood pouring from his nose and Kain is standing in front of me.

“Say it again, asshole, and you’ll have more than a broken fucking nose.” It’s easy to forget Kain’s nature, since he’s so laid back most of the time, but when he flips that switch, fuck, it’s totally hot.

“Ooh, the Dracul has teeth.” Jack laughs. “But it doesn’t matter. When

you finally unravel everything—” His words are cut off by the crack of a gunshot. A hole in the center of his forehead dribbles blood and the back of his skull is gone, splattered across the grass and trees behind him.

“I’ve wanted to shoot that fucker for *years*,” Colt shouts, and I see him hanging out of a window from the first floor of the house. His glee is obvious and almost contagious, except I’m kinda pissed cause I wanted him to die slowly, but that screams of first world problems, and I’ve got bigger ones right now.

“Now!” Archer shouts, and more bodies appear.

“Fucking rogues,” Roman growls, and I know that my earlier thoughts were right. The rogues didn’t intend to come back to the packs and clans at all. There are so fucking many of them. Even with the four of us, plus Colt, Bauer, and the others inside, we are sorely outnumbered. Even if Levi were here...it wouldn’t make a huge difference.

I send up a silent plea to anyone that’s listening, because we need help.

“I told you before, arrogant Bennetts, that you shouldn’t underestimate me. I’m not alone, and even if you stop me, someone else will take my place until the humans bend the knee and cower below us as they fucking should. Until the other factions bow to us. The Demons might not be here anymore, but that was just one head of the beast. Where one is cut off, two more appear.” He winks at me as me and the guys move so our backs are to each other, the few Lycans and Dracul with us making an almost outer ring around us.

“Let the games begin,” Archer shouts, his eyes wild as he laughs. He leans down and picks up the gun and sword from the Lycan that Jack killed as a frenzy starts around us. He jumps into the fray as we become overwhelmed.

I lose count of my kills, just trying to stay alive. I barely feel the blood spatter at this point, my skin coated in blood and grime.

“Fuck,” I shout as I run out of ammo, if I can reach the armory I might, *might* be able to get more. I still hear gunfire around us, and I look up to see Colt, Bauer, and some of Colt’s friends giving us covering fire, while we try to fight as best we can, but without some sort of miracle...

Nope, I won’t think it. We have people fighting for us.

At least that’s something, but the ammo won’t last forever. The smell of smoke reaches me, and I realize my dad’s armory is on fire.

Fuck, tits, and wank.

I pull my sword back from its sheath, my small reprieve over as I jump back into the fray.

I lose myself to the slashing, cutting, and beheading, not paying attention to the many, many hits I take. They can't kill me, not without the Angel glass. Not unless they take my head.

A steady beat sounds above us and my heart soars.

Levi.

But I look up and I'm struck still.

"*Mom?*"

"Sorry I'm late, baby," she says, as she and three other Angels drop to the ground and join the fight. The gunfire from the house ceases and I hear my brothers' shouts, but it's muffled. Like I'm in a bubble and sound barely penetrates.

This must be shock.

"Come on, baby girl. Game face on. We can talk after."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN



The arrival of my mom and the Angels with her turned the tide. My mom is a fucking *badass!*

I can't quite get over it.

Now, in the instant aftermath, it's chaos.

Helping our wounded. Hell, *finding* our wounded. We took a lot of hits, and there weren't many of us to start with.

After the Angels arrived, a lot of the rogues went running, archer with them, but Kain and Roman are hunting him. I hope they bring him back alive, but I'm not going to be devastated if they don't.

Though, I do want to slap my brother upside the head for killing Jack. After Everly, I wanted that kill. He died *way* too quickly for my liking.

"Fuck! Remy!" I spin towards the house at Bauer's voice. Creek looks sideways at me before I take off toward the back door. I yank the door open and head toward the commotion, when I find Roman with an unconscious Archer over his shoulder and Kain carrying my dad.

Whose chest is red.

Fuck.

"Dad?" I gasp, and I feel Bauer come up behind me as Maddie directs Kain to the kitchen. I follow them and look up to see Creek opening the door with my mom behind him.

"Denny?" Her voice is strained, and I can't say I blame her. Dad is in a bad way.

"What happened?" I turn to Roman, who winces before dropping Archer

on the floor like a sack of shit.

“I guess Caleb’s guy didn’t get all of the Angel glass. That asshole still had a blade of it. I’m guessing that’s all there was of it though, because he fought pretty hard not to lose it. Unfortunately for him, it doesn’t fuck me up. Your dad was with him when we caught up to him. They were arguing, but fuck knows what about. Denny charged Archer just after we arrived, then this happened. We subdued the fuckface as quickly as we could then hauled ass back here.”

“Angel glass?” My mom’s gasp makes my heart shrivel. “Oh fates no. Please no.”

I turn back to her and Roman takes my hand while Kain works with Maddie to try and help my dad. She’s just standing by the back door, silent tears streaming down her face.

My dad’s eyes flutter open and he looks at me, his gaze still full of disdain. My heart breaks all over again, because even on the precipice of death, he can’t put his bullshit aside. His eyes flicker over to my mom, and he does a double take.

“How...how are you here? Am I dead already?” he says, his voice hoarse.

“No, you’re not dead.” Her voice shakes as she moves over to his side, her hands trembling. She takes her hand in his, and it’s like my dad transforms. He relaxes, and he smiles. I haven’t seen him smile like that... well, since she died.

“Then how?” His voice croaks and she shakes her head.

“Later, we’ll talk later. You stubborn fool.” She looks up to Maddie, who shakes her head, and I feel my heart sink.

He’s not going to make it.

Bauer turns and leaves the room while Colt sinks to the floor.

It’s going to be harder on them. Especially with Mom being here as she is, because that means she chose the true death. She’s not coming back to us. Not as she was.

Our family line is officially broken. And that hurts my heart even further. With me out of the loop it was fucked, but not too badly. They’d still all have each other. But if dad picks the true death too, that means the line will be irrevocably changed. Bauer and Colt will remain Bennetts, but whoever comes to grandfather as a child won’t be dad. He won’t marry mom. The guys will have different parents. And so the cycle spins again.

So confusing, and yet so heartbreaking.

“Don’t leave me.” My dad’s voice is barely more than a whisper, and Mom grips his hand tighter.

“I’m not going anywhere,” she says, but her face betrays her. She’s pissed, but I can’t work out why.

“This is bullshit,” Colt fumes, standing back up. “You don’t get to die, not with everything still unresolved. You don’t get to act like a giant fucking asshole, and then die before we get sorted.”

“Colt,” Mom scolds, but he’s too angry. He’s pacing, and when he’s like this, nothing is going to slow him down.

“No, Mom. You weren’t here. You haven’t been here.” Her flinch at his words is like a knife to the gut, but he doesn’t care. He’s too far gone. “He doesn’t get to treat Remy the way he has, and then look at her like he couldn’t give a shit that he’s dying. It’s such a fucking cop out. He doesn’t deserve the easy way out of this bullshit.”

“Believe me, Colt. Your father and I have things I’d really quite like to discuss. Including his father’s hand in having me fucking killed, but it doesn’t look like now is the time.”

“Fucking *what?!?*” Colt rages and punches the wall, plaster dust flies, but I’m too busy processing Mom’s words to take it in.

“Colt.” Creek steps forward and clasps his arm. Colt stops and shakes his head before turning and storming from the room. Creek looks at me, asking me with his eyes if I’ll be okay. I nod at him and he leaves the room, following Colt.

“I’ve missed a lot, huh?” Mom looks at me. I don’t really know what to say, because Colt wasn’t wrong, this last year has been fucking *insane*.

“You could say that,” Maddie sighs, her eyebrows raised as my dad’s eyes close.

“I’ll see you soon,” my mom whispers and kisses his forehead. I swipe away the tear that runs down my face. I’m still too angry at him to let myself cry yet. Plus that bomb my mom just dropped is going to take a minute to sink in. Kain moves to my side and takes my hand as I remain unmoving, just staring at my dad as his breathing labors.

It doesn’t take long until he’s gone, but I remain in the same spot, staring at his unmoving body. Both of my parents are dead.

Even if Mom is here now, she won’t be allowed to stay.

Everly is gone.

Creek nearly died.

People around me just keep dying and I can't stop it. The panic sweeps over me faster than I care to admit. I can't catch my breath, but then Roman is on my other side and he and Kain hold me, quite literally holding me together while I break.

It didn't take me long to put myself back together. Fates knows I've had enough practice. Maddie gave Archer a sedative before Creek, Kain, Roman and I brought him back to the manor. He's now in the basement, nice and secure while I sit in the sitting room daydreaming about how to torture him. Torture isn't usually my thing, but Archer needs to die. Slowly. Painfully. Begging for his death.

"Are you sure it's okay?" I hear Creek's voice filter through, and I notice him talking to Olivia.

"Of course. I get that with Astrid being around, things aren't as...simple as they would be usually," Olivia tells him with a sad smile. "I swear it's fine. I have no doubt we'll be safe. No one even really knows who we are."

"We'll put you up in a hotel. I'll drive you myself and get you settled in," Kain tells her softly, his gaze darting to me. "We won't risk you, even if you think it's fine. I'll have people stationed at the hotel just in case."

"Thank you. I'll go get some stuff packed. I won't be long." She turns and leaves the room when they nod in acknowledgement. I flip the throwing dagger in my hand absentmindedly.

I don't remember the last time I felt so bloodthirsty.

Archer has taken so much from me, for nothing. For some skewed ideal of how the world should be. But his comment about it not ending with him is eating at me. I know the rogues ran, but if they were following Archer, then who is in this that has slipped from our notice?

Or is he just fucking with me?

I questioned Bauer about it before we left, but he had no idea. Which was obviously a big help. I roll my eyes at my own thoughts.

I've been trying not to think about the fact that my mom is at the house with my brothers, Maddie, and Nate. She told me to go earlier, once Archer started to stir, said we'd catch up. But I saw the look on her face. She doesn't have much time, but she's with my brothers instead of me. Just like Dad. I

guess disappointing both of my parents isn't a big stretch considering everything. I know she knew about Roman and Kain, but I guess loving all of them, all at once, isn't something she approves of.

I shake away the thoughts, nothing but skepticism, as Roman kneels in front of me. "You okay there, Princess?"

He rubs circles on my thighs with his thumbs, his big hands spanning them easily. His heat penetrates the numbness of my body and I look into his silver eyes. They're glowing faintly, the emotion of the day obviously has his wolf on edge. I don't blame him. I'd want to climb out of my skin today if I could.

"Are *you* okay?" I ask him instead. I don't want to talk about me. I don't even want to think about my own shit right now.

"I'll survive," he says, looking me over. I healed from my physical wounds hours ago. I showered and changed when we got home after making sure the rest of them were okay, but still he checks, because he knows I hate admitting when I'm feeling shit.

"Then let's head downstairs, shall we?" With a wicked glint in his eyes, he smiles at me. "I have a few things I want to make that dickhead pay for, and I know just the perfect way to make him bleed...make him scream... without killing him. "

My smile matches his as he takes my hand to pull me up.

"I'll be back shortly. Don't have all the fun without me," Kain says, before wrapping an arm around my waist and kissing me breathless.

I sigh happily as he releases me. "I would never."

"I love you, Remington Bennett. I thought we might lose you today. I don't want to ever feel that way again." Kain's words hit me straight in my locked down, shattered heart and it beats again.

"I love you too." He kisses me again, then leaves the room to take Olivia and Astrid to their hotel. My guys really are a step above. They arranged all of this without me even blinking. I honestly have no idea what I'd do without them.

I just wish Levi was here. I have no way to contact him, and he is going to be so fucking pissed that he missed all of this. I just hope that whatever it was he needs to find in Avalon, he finds it, so that it wasn't all for nothing.

If I'd died today, and he'd been in Avalon...I don't even want to think about the fury he would rain down on the world. Here's hoping he never has to.

“So what is this fun you have planned?” I ask Roman as he opens the door to the basement. I grin at Archer’s groans.

“I’m more of a shower than a teller.” He winks at me and motions for me to go down to the basement.

I send up a silent prayer that Archer doesn’t crap out and die on us before I’m ready, because my rage is beyond real.

“I don’t want him to die yet. I want him to feel the pain he’s inflicted on everyone else a thousand times over. I don’t want this to be quick.” My voice is hard, and while I usually balk at any sort of torture, Archer is a bag of dicks who deserves no better.

“Don’t worry, Princess. I’ve got this.” His grin sends waves of heat to my core. I might not be the bloodthirsty type, but damn if him showing his inner psychopath doesn’t make me hot.

We reach the bottom of the stairs and find Archer tied to his chair, gagged and blindfolded with noise canceling headphones on. Rage flares inside me, but I shove it down.

Slow, Remy. We want this asshole to pay.

Roman chuckles as he sees the look on my face. He heads over to a table at the back of the room, and pulls a leather roll from a cabinet, unraveling it on the table. The blades glint in the low light and my grin matches his.

“I like to use my claws too, but this seemed more fitting. Considering Everly,” Roman growls and my heart stutters. Just hearing her name still hurts.

“We’re not slitting his throat, not yet,” I practically growl, and he nods.

“Oh no, not yet, Princess. Hopefully Levi will be back soon and will get to join in the fun. I know he has all sorts of fantasies about how to make this asshole suffer. He’s got a few millennia on me for torture methods.” His eyes glow in the dark room and I can practically feel his excitement. He slides a thin blade from the roll and hands it to me.

“Flaying is a skill I learned from my dad, who learned it from my grandfather, who was close with a few Assyrians. They taught him the best ways to remove the skin from any faction to cause the most pain, but keep the person alive the longest. He can stay alive for days with his skin removed if you do it right. You start at his feet, the screams are the prettiest then.”

Being in my room doesn't sit well with me. I miss Levi. He's been gone too long as far as I'm concerned, and I hate that he doesn't know everything that's happened. At least, I don't think he does, otherwise, surely, he'd have come home. Unless he couldn't.

Just the thought makes my heart sink.

I hope he's okay.

The guys are all gone, off dealing with stuff from earlier and the house is too silent, and my soul is too fractured.

My feet automatically take me to Levi's room, his huge bed like a beacon to my boneless body and foggy mind.

Sliding onto the comforter, I take his pillow and bring it to my nose, inhaling his strong, comforting scent into my lungs, calming me for a brief moment. I don't want to cry but the loneliness is suffocating. I know the others will be back soon, but everything that happened today with my dad, my mom, all of it...

I'm so fucking drained right now.

Just as I feel sleep creeping up on me, the warmth of a hard body slides up behind me and I relax a little. From the scent, I know it's Creek, his long hair tickling my collarbone as he settles behind me and I melt into him. My eyes are still closed, the effort of opening them feels like too much right now.

That's when I feel another warm body cozying up to my front, lips sliding from side to side across my mouth. Kain. He's here with me, too.

But that's not all.

A powerful hand slides across my scalp as the bed dips under his weight and I don't need to take in his scent to know my wolf is here, each of them ready to take all my hurt away.

"Princess," Roman says to me and my eyes snap open. He has that power over me. My body inexplicably attuned to his commands, even if I don't always like it.

"Let us take away the pain for a little while."

I want that.

No, I need it. I need it like I need my next breath.

"Yes, please." My voice is raspy with the anticipation of losing myself in them.

All three of my men grunt in approval, my well-being their one and only priority.

Slowly, Creek takes my tank top off as Kain glides my pajama shorts off

and Roman continues caressing my hair in a soothing rhythm. “We’ll make it all better,” he croons, and I believe him, even if it’s only for a little while.

Once I’m completely naked, Roman’s hand disappears, and I’m turned onto my hands and knees in the middle of the large bed. “What you need, Princess, is to follow my commands. No thinking, no decisions. Empty your mind of any and all things except the number of orgasms we’ll give to you. Do you understand?”

Roman is back in front of me, his upper body naked, his jeans hanging low from his hips. All abs and smooth skin making my mouth water like a horny teenager.

I finally nod at his words knowing he won’t continue until I let him know I understand and agree. Just another way of him showing his control, and I fucking love it.

“Words, precious. Use your words,” Kain says from behind me.

“Yes, I understand.” Again, they all grunt and as one, they each place a hand on me, as if it’s practiced, but I know it’s not, we just mesh together so well now.

Kain is gliding his fingers from my right rib cage to my hip while Creek mirrors him on the other side until their hands meet at my ass and separate my cheeks so they can circle my ring of muscles.

Roman, on the other hand, is at my front, his hand at my chin, raising it with a firm movement so I can look at him.

“We’re all going to fuck you, Princess. Our cum will be inside you mixed with your juices. We’ll be with you inside and out.” At his words, my pussy contracts begging for a cock to squeeze and Roman, being who he is, watching me so closely, doesn’t miss the movement.

“Gentlemen, I do believe our little Angel is horny and in need of some dick in her.” His crude words are like a jolt of lust zipping through my veins. Yes, I want it all. Their tongues and fingers and cocks. All of it inside me, on me, over me. I just need to lose myself in them and be fucked so hard that all reality disappears.

“Creek, get that pussy ready for us, will you?”

Not two seconds later, I feel Creek’s tongue lingering at my clit before he slides up my slit, slowly and torturously, until he reaches my ass and circles the puckered hole twice then starts all over again.

I’m already writhing in pleasure, my eyes closed, gasping with my waiting mouth open for Roman.

Kain's hand is at my nipple, twisting and pinching, then caressing until I feel his hot mouth latching on and sucking like he's hungry for it. And maybe he is. Gods know, I am.

There, in my mouth, I feel a thumb and the rest of Roman's hand still under my chin. "Suck, Princess. Take it deep like it's my cock and you want to swallow it whole."

Behind me, Creek grunts, "Fuck, that just makes her wetter, she practically gushed into my mouth. Do it again," he tells Roman who grins with utter satisfaction.

"I can't wait to shove my dick in your pretty little mouth, Princess. Fuck it while you salivate for more." Fuck his words have a direct line to my core, making my pussy even wetter for Creek who hums in approval.

"Kain, get beneath her, she needs a good fucking."

Gods, yes.

In quick movements, I find myself straddling Kain while Creek is behind me, his cock gliding lazily between my ass cheeks as he prods a finger or two in my ass hole, the lubrication abundant and helping to ready me for the next step.

Roman is tapping my mouth with his beautiful cock, pre-cum glinting at the slit of the head. My tongue darts out and licks it up and I hum in pleasure making Roman grin like the feral beast that he is.

"Like that, Princess? You like my cum?"

"Yes, I love it. Give me more, please."

And he does. Just as Kain slams his long, thick cock inside my pussy, Roman slowly glides his length between my lips and bumps the back of my throat.

I moan and the vibrations make him swear, his fingers tightening into my hair where he holds me, ready to fuck my mouth like a savage.

"Fuck, her pussy feels like a goddamn glove," Kain groans and I can't help but smile even if it's difficult with my mouth so full.

"Your turn, Creek. Let's fill her up."

And he does.

Slowly, as if trying not to hurt me, Creek breaches my tight ring and I can feel Kain sliding out to allow Creek entry. The space between is thin and with their sizes, it's a fucking tight fit but holy shit, it feels so fucking so good.

Roman in my mouth, Kain in my pussy and Creek bottoming out in my ass. I've never felt so full, and a shudder runs through me.

But then they start to move in tandem and my vision gets blurry from the onslaught of pleasure. Their rhythm feels almost practiced, Roman and Creek go fully in while Kain slides out.

My head is held steady by Roman's grip in my hair and every time he hits the back of my throat, my nose is buried in the musky scent at the base of his cock. It's heady and as potent as an elixir. I'm high on them, every touch, every movement like a caress of my tortured and broken soul.

My orgasm is nearing, the bolt of electricity starts at the base of my spine and travels outward toward my extremities and directly to my clit where Kain somehow senses I need attention.

With a singular pinch of my clit, he sends me over the edge and into oblivion. My screams are silenced by the head of Roman's cock down my throat, as his fingers fist tightly into my hair.

Both Kain and Creek have stopped moving, their cocks inside me making me feel fuller than ever before.

And I'm coming.

I'm coming so fucking hard, that tears are falling my eyes and I feel my wetness dripping down my thighs.

"Fuck," I hear them all say at the same time.

"You are the most beautiful fucking sight I've ever seen when you come, Princess."

Roman is the first to pull out, followed by Creek and finally Kain. Gently, they lay me down onto my back, my legs spread as the aftershocks of my climax have my body shaking and spasming.

Kain takes this opportunity to taste me, his tongue running along my opening and circling on my clit before he sucks on it and I cry out. Holy fucking shit. I feel him grin against me before he does it again. He moves aside and Creek takes his place, licking and sucking on my clit while fucking me with his fingers making me cry out all over again. Lastly, Roman comes around and buries his entire face in my pussy and eats me like a long-awaited buffet.

That's when I come again. A smaller, more intense version of the first. My legs are shaking, and my breath is hitched. I can't take it much longer, my poor clit is sensitive to the touch but my mind wants more. More orgasms, more cock, more everything.

They know this. All of them. They can read my body like a goddamn book, and I just know that's why none of them have come yet.

It's as if they're waiting until I'm completely exhausted and unable to take anymore before they give in to their own pleasure.

I'm their priority. Always.

Kain sidles up next to me and turns my body to the side so I'm now facing Roman, his smile warm and hungry all at once. "Hey Princess, how are you feeling?"

I'm drunk on lust and floating on a post-orgasmic high, so I give him a drunk grin and bite my bottom lip as I feel Kain's breath at my ear.

Creek has gone, he's washing up in the bathroom and when he returns, the set-up has changed but the intent is the same. Handing the bottle of lube to Kain, Creek pulls up the large chair and sits comfortably with his hand on his still-too-hard cock, facing us. At first, I don't understand. His view is of my legs and feet but then Kain, who is behind me, palms my thigh and raises it until I'm giving Creek an unabashed view of my pussy, open and on display. With a tight pull on his cock, Creek grunts as though it's a signal for the shenanigans to start back up.

I feel Roman's cock first sliding into my pussy, thrusting a couple of times before he pulls out and Kain pushes inside my ass, bottoming out and staying there for a few seconds while I adjust to the stretch again. His breathing is hitched, his teeth nibbling at my throat and I just know he wants to sink his teeth and drink from me. He will, I'm sure, right as he comes.

From where he's sitting, Creek can see both cocks fucking me. Just thinking of it makes me wetter and by the sound of his jacking off I'm guessing he's enjoying the view.

"Creek? Do you like watching me getting fucked? Do you like seeing two cocks inside me?" My words are breathy, and they spur my lust. I'm not only writhing but actively thrusting, searching for more cock.

I want more.

I want it harder.

"Oh gods, please. Don't be gentle with me."

Roman breathes out a, "Fuck," while Kain groans, his dick deep inside me.

They are alternating, one dick in, the other out. Their bodies aren't touching each other but always touching me. It's heady and absolutely fucking delicious.

Creek is fucking his hand like he needs it to survive while Kain is sucking on my neck, marking me and I love it. Roman on the other hand is watching

me, his mouth parted slightly until he can wait no longer and slams his mouth onto mine, kissing me until I can't think of anything but him, his tongue in my mouth and the two cocks fucking me.

"Fuck," Creek groans, and before I know what's happening, I'm coming again. I'm twitching and grunting, the scent of sex is all around us and making my orgasm that much stronger.

"That's it, Princess," Roman croons, "Come all over my dick." And I do. I don't know where it all comes from, but my climax is making my mind nearly black out with its intensity.

I'm not coming down yet when I feel Kain move away, aiming for the bathroom and Roman takes his place. It's like a merry-go-round of dicks and I'm the center wheel. Creek is breathing heavily when he lays down on the bed and pulls me on top of him.

"Hey beautiful," he whispers and then kisses me senseless, his mouth hot with need and his tongue eager for attention. My ass naturally raises into the air where Roman is waiting, his cock circling my puckered hole but not pushing inside me.

Kain is back, wiping down his cock, still hard and stands at the foot of the bed where he grins at me as I look up at him.

"Mon amour," he croons, and that's when all three men push inside me at the same time. My mouth full of Kain, my pussy fucked by Creek and my ass being slammed by Roman.

This time, their rhythm is choppy, their patience waning. I can almost feel how badly they want to come. I'm their rag doll and now all bets are off. It's time to fill me up with their seed and they're on a mission.

With both his hands on my face, Kain fucks me reverently, with love and adoration etched all over his gorgeous face. On my knees and with my ass up in the air where Roman is digging his fingers into my flesh, I get pushed onto Creek's cock every time Roman thrusts into my ass and then get pushed onto Roman's dick every time Creek pushes me off his cock. All while Kain follows the beat of his own fucking. He's erratic, like he can't hold off too much longer and I can't wait to taste his cum on my tongue.

"Princess, you're going to have to give us one more orgasm before we let go. So, you better make it fast," Roman says with gritted teeth as though he's about to shatter them with the control he's keeping.

"I can't," I gasp, I just don't think I have it in me.

Creek brings both of my breasts to his mouth and sucks on my neglected

nipples in turn. The erotic string that runs from my nipple to my clit is promptly ignited and I feel the pull of another orgasm forming in my lower belly. It's there, waiting to erupt like a volcano that has been dormant for centuries.

With my nipples getting sucked and licked and bitten by the beast inside Creek, my pussy and ass getting fucked with an erotic violence that I beg for tirelessly and my mouth being deliciously assaulted like I need cock more than breath, I feel Creek's hand snake down to my clit where he forcibly pinches it and sends me into a spiral of screams and thrusts. I don't know what's happening to me. Every single erogenous zone is being assaulted and I'm on the precipice of total madness.

Creek is the first to blow. His teeth sink into my breast and I know, without a doubt in my mind, that he's leaving a mark. That thought makes me spiral even more. Right after him, I feel Roman's dick get impossibly harder and then the warm jet of his semen inundates my ass and makes me feel full from the inside out.

When they both finish, Kain lifts me up like I'm his personal ragdoll and instead of coming in my mouth, he slams me against the wall and thrusts twice inside me before sinking his teeth into my throat and comes inside me all the while sucking the blood right out of me.

My thighs are rivulets of cum dropping from my pussy and my ass. Marked in every way.

All of it staining the bedspread of Levi's bed.

He lays me back down on the bed and Creek appears with a washcloth, cleaning me gently. I sigh, content and my mind a blissful blank. My eyes close as sleep finally finds me and the last thing I remember is the grunt of a very satisfied Dracul.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



Sitting in my car, I tap my thumbs on my steering wheel nervously.

Why am I so fucking nervous?

I roll my eyes at myself. It's my mom. But right now, I'd happily face a hoard of Demons, rather than walk into my childhood home and face the Demons inside of me.

My dad is dead.

My mom is here.

And my grandfather might've had her killed.

I mean, this wouldn't shock me. He had me killed too, and Dad did nothing to stop it. But if he knew about the plot for Mom...that seems so much worse somehow.

I jump at the knock on my window and my mom is looking down at me with a smile. "You coming inside, baby girl?"

My stomach churns. I've wanted to see my mom for so long, I missed her so much. Hell she arrived and quite literally saved our asses. But now, what do I say to her? I unclip my seatbelt and climb from the car.

"Oh Remy, that shirt?" She laughs and I shrug awkwardly. When I dressed this morning, I found the pile of snarky t-shirts Everly got for me. I fucking love them. Today's slogan is, *'If only sarcasm burned calories'*. It felt fitting, and well, I wanted a little bit of armor for today, just in case.

She's on me in a heartbeat, her arms around me and squeezing me so tight. I relax and hug her back, every defense I thought I had, crumbling.

She still feels the same.

She still smells the same.

And all I want to do is cry.

“Come on, baby girl. Let’s head inside. We have lots to talk about. I’ve sent your brothers out, so we could have some time just the two of us.” She strokes my hair back from my face, tucking it behind my ear, and suddenly I’m ten years old again.

I’ve never felt so twisted inside.

I can’t make sense of it. So I follow her inside, and we sit at the kitchen table.

“Remy...I am so, so sorry. For everything,” she starts, with a sigh. “I’ve been watching, and I wanted to come sooner, but things in Avalon are strained and interfering in events on Earth is prohibited. I’m sure Leviathan will tell you all about it. He’s the reason I was able to come. He couldn’t, but I thought he was going to tear the entire place apart. I’ve never seen the council of Archangels afraid, but when they called on me and told me I was granted a few days, and I was to come here immediately, they were definitely afraid. I didn’t meet your Leviathan, but I’ve heard and seen plenty.”

I don’t really know what to say to that. What can I say?

She squeezes my hands and smiles at me sadly.

“I am also sorry for the past. For not fighting harder, it was a different time back then, but that is no excuse for my behavior. When I found out what your father and grandfather had done, I was a mess. And then, each time you came along, they wouldn’t put you through the ceremony. It killed a piece of my soul each time. Honestly, I’m surprised my soul didn’t go to the Shadow Realm for my sins. I could have done more. I *should* have.”

“It’s in the past, Mom.” My words sound as resigned as I feel. “There’s nothing we can do about it, and while I’m pissed about it, all we can do is move forward. I’m not one to hold a grudge. I don’t need that poison in my veins.”

“I missed you so much, Remy girl.” She sighs. I thought seeing my mom again would be such an emotional thing, but maybe I’m broken. Maybe I’ve finally reached my capacity for heartbreak and I’ve gone numb, but I practically feel nothing. Nothing but tired.

“You said that Grandfather had you killed?” My question seems to shock her, whether it’s the change of conversation, or the emptiness of my voice, I don’t know. “And if you were watching, do you know why Archer killed Dad? Why were they together? Do you know who else Archer is working

with?”

“I’m sorry, baby. No, I don’t know any of that. I was here when your dad was injured, and as for Archer, I couldn’t see him when I was in Avalon.”

I hold back my sigh, and just smile instead.

“It’s fine,” I tell her, while trying to work out why this feels so awkward.

“This is weird, huh?” she says and laughs softly. “It was so easy with your brothers, but then, their lives have always been far less complicated than yours.”

“It is. I don’t understand it. I missed you so much, but now you’re here, and we’re both Angels, except, the other Angels don’t *know* I’m an Angel. We’re both immortal now, but you have to go to Avalon. And well... I have four boyfriends. That sounds weird. Plus like, I was always an Angel. Dad is dead, Grandfather is a giant bag of dicks. But yeah, complicated about sums me up.”

“I get it. Things aren’t going to be as easy as they were, I’ve been gone a long time. But hopefully, we’ll get a chance to see each other more now. I’d love to be a part of your life. Get to know these err, boyfriends, of yours. Well I mean, I already know Creek, but you know what I mean.” I laugh as she blushes.

“That would be nice. Everyone should be around in the next few weeks, once we sort the Archer mess out.”

“I have to go back to Avalon today. But I’ll try and get word to you when I can come back. I’d say you guys can come to see me, but only Angels or the dead can come into Avalon. Which kind of rules out most of your guys.” I purse my lips, of course that’s a rule of Avalon.

“That sounds good, Mom. When are you heading back?” I try not to sound as disappointed as I feel. She only just came here a few days ago and now she has to go back. The Archangel council really are assholes.

“I told them I’d come back as soon as I’d had a chance to speak to you. The others went back yesterday.” She smiles, but it’s sad. She doesn’t want to go either.

“Thank you, for all of this, for everything. I’m not sure what we’d have done if you guys didn’t arrive.”

“You’d have figured something out, you’re one of the most resourceful, quick thinking people I’ve ever met in my many lives. And that’s not just Mom bias. You really need to work on your powers though. I know they’re a little scary, baby girl, but it would make me feel so much better if you were

prepared in every way. You won't hurt your people. I think you're incapable of hurting them. Look at how much you have sacrificed for the people you love. You won't hurt them. I have every faith."

"Thanks, Mom." Heat creeps up my neck as I blush. Compliments aren't something I cope with well.

"You tell Creek I said he needs to do the same. I saw what he did yesterday. I also saw how drained he was. He'll only improve if he pushes himself. As much as the power terrifies him, he has excellent control." She has that mom voice on, and it makes me smile. It's not something I've heard in a while.

"I'll make sure to tell him."

"I spent some time with Maddie yesterday too. I know she saw Creek, and then he disappeared with you before they could talk. She's in shock, so is Nate. But they'll come around. They love him with all that they are. Just try to make sure he doesn't hide too much of himself from them." Her eyes go soft as she takes me in. She takes a deep breath before squeezing my hand again.

"It's time?" I ask, my voice hoarse as a lump forms. I know this isn't goodbye, but I want more time. Time where it isn't awkward between us like it is right now.

"It is, baby, but I'll be back as soon as I can. I'll see if I can find anything out for you too, but you seem to be handling everything pretty well yourself. Remember to lean on the people around you, baby girl. You can trust the people around you, especially your guys. Don't go and get yourself killed because you want to handle everything yourself."

"You sound like Kain," I chuckle, because she really does.

"Well, he sounds like a very wise guy." She winks and I laugh properly. We stand and she hugs me again. This time, it doesn't feel weird. This time it's like everything I've needed since she died. Tears well in my eyes and I try to blink them back.

"I love you, baby girl," she murmurs into my hair before kissing my head.

"I love you, too, Mom."

Driving home, I swipe tears from my eyes more times than I care to admit.

I'm a hot freaking mess right now. I couldn't even say exactly why I can't stop crying, but I can't. No matter how much I try to hold it back.

By the time I pull up at the manor, my eyes are red and puffy, but the tears have slowed. I take a few minutes to compose myself. If I go inside and see them all now while I'm this worked up, it's going to cause chaos.

I calm myself down and walk around the house, so I can enter at the back and dash into my room. Luckily, no one is back here, so I sneak in undetected and hurry to my room. Once I'm in my room with the door closed, I let out a deep breath. I hate how much I don't feel like myself right now. Where did the snarky asshole who didn't give a fuck go? I miss her. I need to sort my shit out so I can go back to being myself. I'm not this crying, wishy-washy mess.

I strip and head into the bathroom. Splashing some cold water on my face to help with the puffiness before turning on the shower. I might've only been gone a few hours, but it feels like I've been gone all day.

"I thought I heard you come home."

"Holy shit!" My hand clutches my chest as my heart races. Creek smirks at me from across the room where he's sitting on the counter by the sink. "How the fuck did I not hear you come in here?"

"Demon perks I guess." His grin doesn't diminish at all, even with him casually throwing out the D word. Hopefully that means he's coming to terms with what he is now. Raking my eyes down his body, I notice the blood spatter on his arms and gray t-shirt.

"Been busy?" I'm more concerned about talking to him about his parents seeing what he is, but baby steps.

"Yeah, though, got to give it to the bastard, he still isn't talking. If Levi doesn't get back soon, there won't be much of him left to talk though. Roman and Kain are brutal. I didn't do too much, though I tested some of my power on him to see what he could take, and see how much control I have over it."

"That's good. That you're practicing I mean, not that Archer isn't talking." Sighing beneath the hot spray, I wash quickly and shut off the water. "Can you hand me a towel please?"

"Sure thing, beautiful. I'd rather not cover you up, but I'm a little gross to take advantage of it right now."

"You're never gross." My grin mirrors his before he starts to laugh. "Okay, that's not true, there was that one time, when you and Colt slipped in that swamp when we were younger."

He bends down and swipes my legs from under me, holding me in his strong arms without any strain. “That’s hardly fair, and I didn’t slip. Colt slipped and dragged me with him trying to save himself.”

“If that’s your story.” My eyes squint as I try not to laugh at him as he throws me on my bed.

“It is.” His chest shakes as he laughs and lies down next to me. “But the reason I wanted to come and speak to you is because I’m starting to get more memories back. I thought it was just dreams, but then it’s like a glass ceiling shattered, and now...my memories are...it’s so weird. It’s like they’re there if I want them, but not if I don’t. Tucked away, not affecting any part of me if I don’t want them to.”

“That’s so cool!” I roll over and straddle him in my excitement and he sits us up. “I’m kind of jealous mine don’t seem to have made any more of a comeback yet.”

“It is cool, and maybe you’re blocking them. It’s not like we don’t have enough going on. You could be blocking them without even realizing it.” His bright green eyes look directly into mine, as if he can see right into my soul.

“You could be right,” I say, resting my forehead on his, my lips barely a whisper away from his.

“I think I need to go back to the Shadow Realm.” His voice is so soft, that if we weren’t so close, I’d have missed it. I lean back and rake my gaze over him. My concern level just raised dramatically.

“What? Why?”

“I need to learn more about what I can do. I’ve figured some stuff out on my own, but I only had a few days training with Bryce, and that was just enough that I wouldn’t hurt you. It wasn’t exactly a master class of everything I can do. Something in my gut tells me that even though we have Archer, this whole thing isn’t over. I want to be ready. Prepared. I don’t want to be the weak link in our chain, Remy. The only way for me to truly learn is to go back there.” His eyes plead with me to understand. And I do. I completely understand. I just don’t like it.

I don’t want to be separated from my guys, even though common sense dictates they won’t all be around all of the time. Everyone has their own shit going on.

“I know you don’t see it, but I’m struggling, Remy. I can feel the power inside of me. It’s like a churning sea during a hurricane. It’s swelling and I’m afraid I won’t be able to get it under control. I don’t want to hurt you. Hurt

our friends. Our family. The only way I can see to do that, is to go back.”

“Okay,” I whisper, nodding slowly. “I want what is best for you, and I get it. I need to start figuring my own shit out too, which probably means spending a ton of time with Angels, which doesn’t exactly thrill me, but at least I know you’ll be safe there with Morgan and the guys.”

“I love you, Remy. Know that if there was any other way...”

“I know. I love you too. When do you want to leave?” I ask, already sensing the answer.

“I was going to go tonight. I have your blood, and I remember the key. I’m good to go. I just didn’t want to go without your blessing. I know Levi is still gone, and the timing is shitty, but I want to be of use to you if something like the other day happens again. I was practically useless after using my powers once.”

“Okay, well if you’re doing this tonight, I guess you’d better say goodbye properly.” I smirk as his hands glide under my towel and grab my ass.

“Well, if you insist.”

I wake up in the middle of the night, an itch traveling down my bare calf that’s lying outside my sheets. I try kicking it away, but it promptly returns. From my knee to my ankle and back up again, I’m getting annoyed, afraid it might be a fly.

Groaning, I kick out my leg and am met with a hard surface.

What the fuck?

Slowly blinking myself awake, it takes me a few seconds to realize that it isn’t a fly but a feather caressing my skin and that feather is attached to a large, beautiful frame.

“Levi?”

“I’m home, Angel. I’m sorry I left and missed the chaos.” At the sight of him, I’m instantly awake and grateful for his presence.

“Welcome home, it’s fine. Was it a successful trip?” My smile is genuine, and my body is levitating toward him as though the universe compels us to be as one.

“You could say that. Though I have some plans of my own now that I’m back. I assume Archer isn’t dead yet?” His gravelly voice makes me so

freaking hot. I should probably be worried that his voice promising pain makes me excited, but I can't find it in me to care.

"Plans of your own, huh?" I raise my eyebrows, hoping he catches my meaning because I don't want to think about Archer any more today. Levi doesn't miss a beat, he knows what I crave. He can see my desire sparking as soon as our eyes meet. With one last caress of his feather, probably from one of his wings, he rises to his feet, eyes on me, and slowly, methodically undresses. First his shirt, button after button, driving me to the brink of sanity. Then he unfastens his jeans and discards them on the nearby chair after folding them in three perfect piles. Like Roman, Levi exudes control. Feeds on it.

"Open." One word and I'm lying on my back, legs spread, knees folded so he has a view of my pussy. His eyes immediately fall to my opening and a lascivious smile appears on his mouth.

"You're beautiful like this, Angel. Spread out like a buffet and all mine." Next, his mouth is on me, his tongue licking every exposed inch of skin. I raise my arms above my head and curl my fingers around the bedpost, almost snapping the wood in two from his talented mouth on my pussy.

"Oh God, Levi. Oh my God, just like that. Please, don't stop." I'm a writhing, shaking, and moaning mess on my mattress while Levi does exactly what he wants with my body. I gave him that permission long ago because pleasure is his specialty and I'm a sucker for orgasms. Especially of the late-night variety.

My clit is in his warm mouth as two fingers plunge deep inside me, then his mouth is gone, traveling up my lower belly to my navel before he reaches one nipple and begins sucking again.

My fingers hurt from the effort of keeping my hands off him, letting him have complete and total control of the situation.

"Your taste makes me crazy. I crave it when I'm away. I crave you," he admits, before kissing his way to my mouth and kissing me hello. I can taste myself on his lips and it's heady, making me hornier than I already was.

"Levi, please. I need you to fuck me."

His fingers inside me curl and stop. His mouth disappears and his stare is so powerful that I can feel it even with my eyes closed.

When I open them, I'm greeted with the intense blue eyes of a man on a mission.

"Oh God," I groan, and that's a mistake.

“Who’s in control, Angel?” One finger inside my pussy moves just enough to tickle that secret place of ecstasy, but he only gives me a taste before he stops completely.

“Levi, come on!”

Pushing his fingers in deeper, he curls them once more then stops again. Every nerve ending in my body is screaming for him to finish the job, but he won’t until I voice an answer to his obvious question.

“You. You’re in control,” I say through gritted teeth, trying and failing to keep myself from growling.

“That’s right, Angel. I’m in control and I will fuck you when I say so, when I think you’re ready.”

With those words, he slides back down my body and eats my pussy out once more, making my juices glide down my thighs. Staying away from my clit, he lavishes every other inch of me before curling his fingers once more and kissing his way back up to my mouth.

I’m a mess.

Between having to keep my demanding mouth shut so he doesn’t make me wait for his cock and the desire to flip him off for making me wait for my orgasm, I’m practically exhausted from the effort.

Finally, with the weight of his gloriously naked body spread out on top of me, his fingers pull out of my pussy and are replaced by his hard, thick cock.

My relief comes in the form of a long, drawn out moan. My chest arches into his touch and Levi doesn’t disappoint. His mouth is immediately on my nipple, sucking and licking and biting until I’m writhing all over again and too far gone to control my needs.

“Yes, oh God, yes,” I say over and over again as he pumps into me with hard, forceful, delicious thrusts.

“I’ve missed you, Angel.” His words are like a prayer, his tone filled with awe and love.

Opening my eyes, I let go of the headboard and wrap my arms around his neck, reaching up to kiss his parted mouth.

He fucks me in rhythm with our kiss and when he bites my lower lip, we both come in a tangle of sweaty limbs and satisfied groans.

“I missed you too, Levi.”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



With Creek gone, the house feels strange. Especially since Kain is gone too. I woke up to a text this morning telling me he had something he needed to deal with back home. I guess one of the witches opened a portal for him, because he said he'd only be gone a few days.

It seems so quiet. With Olivia and Astrid still at the hotel, that leaves this huge house for just Levi, Roman, and me. Levi disappeared into the basement this morning, a giant grin on his face, as if he's looking forward to meting out punishment to Archer.

All things considered, I can't say I blame him too much. Fates knows I had my fun that first day with Roman. Even if I did bow out after a while. There's only so much blood and torture I can take apparently.

That's how I find myself in the backyard with Roman in wolf form. He trots along beside me, happily chasing birds and rabbits. He's obviously feeling quite playful, but it feels like forever since we had some time together that didn't include blood and gore, so I'm just enjoying being in his calming presence.

We reach the river's edge and I take a seat, crossing my legs and laugh as Roman jumps into the cold water. It's cooler here now, and fall is definitely in full swing, making me glad for my full-length yoga pants and long sleeved t-shirt. I sigh happily, taking in the color of the changing leaves, the cooler air, and just that clear air feeling. Leaning back I close my eyes, smiling at the splashing sounds in the river.

A little while passes like that, just enjoying the peace. The nature. The

utter stillness of life. I open one eye as the splashing gets closer and Roman exits the water. He looks at me and I see his eyes narrow, his wolf practically snickering before he shakes, making me squeal as the cold water rains down on me.

“Asshole!” I laugh trying to shield myself, but I have no shield and he knows it. Once he’s done, he shifts back to human form, that wolfish grin still on his face.

“Oh come on, Princess, you love it when I get you wet.” He drops down next to me, butt ass naked, and grabs the bag I brought out with us with his clothes in. He pulls on a pair of shorts, no boxers, then relaxes next to me, his midnight hair shifting in the light breeze.

“HmMMM, do I though?” I sass, and smile over at him, covering my eyes from the bright setting sun.

“Ahhhh there’s my princess.” He reaches over and pulls me toward him, so I’m laying with my head on his chest. “I’ve missed that sassy ass.”

“I’m sure you’ll be sick of it soon enough.” I play with the small smattering of hair on his chest to stop it tickling my nose.

“I’ll never be sick of you. Or your sass. It’s part of why I love you. So very few people call me out, you never have any issues pushing me or my wolf. Sometimes it feels like you’re only happy when you’re pushing our buttons.” The laughter in his voice takes some of the sting from his last words.

“I’ve felt a little lost lately. So much has been going on, and I’m trying to be everything everyone needs me to be. Plus add in the whole, I’m an Angel thing. It’s like I’ve lost a part of myself since I was brought back to life in the Shadow Realm.” My words are quiet, because voicing them is very different than saying it inside my head. It feels more real, like I’m whining, when I could have lost so much more.

“Princess, you’ve been through so much, in such a short amount of time, I’m surprised you haven’t completely cracked and straight up lost your mind. It’s understandable that you feel a little lost, so much has changed. But I’m always here, I can be your anchor, the place that keeps you steady. I’ll always remind you of who you are if you stray off the path. Let me be that safe place for you.” His words fill my heart with warmth, and I tip my head back, nipping his chin playfully.

“Thank you, Roman. For being strong enough to be my anchor when I need it.” His eyes soften at my words and I kiss his cheek, his stubble

scratching against my soft lips. He takes my chin with his finger and thumb, holding me firmly as he looks into my eyes.

“I will be here to be whatever you need, Remy. Just as I always have been. Even those lives where you needed me not to be a part of your life, so I wasn’t. Even when it killed me to keep my distance. So if you need somewhere to come and hide. To reset. Or even just fuck away all of your stress and anger, I will always be that place for you.”

How is a girl supposed to keep her panties from melting with declarations like that? He must see it on my face because he releases my chin but captures the nape of my neck and kisses me like I’m his oxygen.

When he pulls back, I suck in a lungful of air. While I might be able to hold my breath longer now that I’m an Angel, my brain and body haven’t quite got the memo yet. He grins down at me and swats my ass.

“Now then, how about we burn off some of this energy. It’s been an age since we did any real training. Don’t want to lose your edge, do you, Princess?” I roll my eyes at him, pushing myself to stand and he swiftly follows suit. At least I’m kind of dressed for it, I guess. “Let’s warm up first, shall we?”

He takes off running, and I can hear his laughter as he rushes ahead. Arrogant asshole that he is, but I can’t help but laugh with him. It’s contagious, and he’s also not wrong. I haven’t worked out in an age. So I reach up and tighten my ponytail, narrowing my eyes at him and prepare to take off to chase him.

He should know better than to run from a predator. My heart races at the anticipation of the chase. The thrill of it. I haven’t felt like this in...well, a while.

I soften for a second, knowing he did this for me, to help me feel more like myself, but if he thinks I have any intention of losing, he doesn’t know me as well as he thinks. I shake out my arms and grin at him, even if he can’t see it.

I’mma go catch me a wolf.

When we finally head back into the house, I’m hot, sweaty, and tired. But I feel better than I have in weeks. I almost feel like the me I was before the

Shadow Realm. I know I'll never change what happened to me down there, but I also don't want it to define me.

More than anyone, I understand Creek's struggle. This change I'm going through isn't one I picked for myself. Would I rather be dead? Well of course not. But I also can't help but feel like this was done to me against my will. The more I examine the insanity inside of me, the more I realize that is why I can't seem to get a grip of myself.

My existence has been a series of people making choices for me. I'd started to finally get control back. Not letting the rules of our society dictate who I loved. Who I killed. What I did with my life. I know that Morgan was only doing what she thought was best, and I love her for not wanting me to die. I just wish I'd known what she was doing.

There's also that small thing about no one really understanding if me becoming an Angel in the Shadow Realm is going to have made a difference to the power inside of me. But what I do know is that I can't ignore it anymore. My mom was right. I need to learn these new parts of myself. They're here to stay, for better or for worse, and no matter what I discover inside that cage I've kept locked down within me, I can handle it.

Fates knows I've gotten through worse.

And that was without my guys around. Without this epic amount of support. I know that Roman will never let me get lost. Levi won't let me go power mad. Kain will always remind me of my baser needs to bring me home. And Creek. Creek will always be home.

Which is why I'm standing in the kitchen, threatening to cook, because I know Levi won't want me to burn his kitchen down. For someone who gave over his—I mean *our*—house to someone else for centuries, without a worry, he sure doesn't like it when I try to cook in his precious kitchen. My smirk takes over my face, thinking about how messy we got the last time I tried to cook.

"You're not trying to cook, are you?" Levi's amused voice makes me look up. He's wiping the red from his hands and grinning at me.

"I can cook." I huff and grab the saucepan I poured pasta into and put it on the stove.

"We both know that you can't. How about you let me deal with food, and you sit there and tell me how you got the smile I missed so much back on your face?" His eyes sparkle with amusement, but I can see the tenderness in his gaze.

“I had a day of working out with Roman and did some reflection in the shower after.”

“Reflection, huh? That’s what we’re calling it?” Roman swaggers into the kitchen chuckling at his words and my grin grows.

“Yes, reflection.” I stick my tongue out at him and his eyes darken.

“I’m sure we’ve told you about that tongue of yours, Princess.”

“I know we have,” Levi says, his voice scratches across my skin and I suppress a shudder. These two should not be allowed to smolder like that together. There’s too much power between them. Way too much alpha. It makes my mind fuzzy.

“Stop it,” I tell them, crossing my arms and they both just smirk at me, like they’ve done nothing.

Assholes.

“So...I was wondering. Are there any other Shadow Walkers in Avalon?”

Levi’s eyebrows rise at my question and Roman just chuckles.

“Not that I’m aware of. They’re rare. You were the last I knew of before. Why?” My heart sinks a little at Levi’s words, but I’m not too shocked. Nevin had said as much before, but I still held a little hope.

“Because I want to learn how to use my powers. I think by keeping everything so suppressed, I’m stopping my old memories coming back too. I was hoping there would be someone who might be able to help me.” I wring out my hands, I didn’t realize just how nervous I was about this, but apparently, I really am.

Fuck.

“Even if there was, we’d need the permission of the Archangel Council to allow them to come here to train you.” Levi scrubs a hand down his face and Roman takes a seat at the counter, rubbing the back of his neck. “Of course, I want you to learn, but this might mean having to go to Avalon. Which means leaving the guys behind, because they can’t go there.”

I sigh at his words and take a seat next to Roman. “I don’t want to leave anyone behind. It sucks being separated from any of you. But I also need to learn. I can’t just have this potential power, and not use it. Our lives aren’t exactly easy. We seem to end up in danger a lot, and my gut tells me that even though we have Archer, this bullshit isn’t over.”

“You don’t believe him?” Roman asks, incredulously, and I nod.

“I do believe him. Whatever started all this, it feels like it’s been in the works for centuries, maybe longer. I also don’t think he’s smart enough to

plan all of this himself. Even with Bauer's help." I shrug as they both watch me closely. I've always trusted my gut. They know that. Hell, *they've* always trusted it.

"Well, shit." Roman huffs.

"Exactly." I look between them, and I can practically feel the tension rolling from them. "I don't want to be the liability here. Not knowing my power could get you guys killed. It could get *me* killed." They flinch at my words and while I don't want to hurt them, I also don't want them to try and protect me from whatever it is I need to face. I'm not some damsel that needs saving.

"So, is there anyone who can help me? Someone that, no offense, isn't you. I need someone who isn't going to worry about me getting hurt." Levi frowns at my words, but I know I'm right in this. Training with my guys is fun, and yes it pushes me, but they hold back. All of them. Even when we've been under attack, I know that Levi has been holding back, so that there's no friendly fire. Could he have wiped out every opponent in a heartbeat in our last attack? Hell yes. But he wouldn't, because we'd have been hurt too. I get it, but he'd also do the same training me, whether he realized it or not.

"I have someone I could ask," Levi tells me and I smile at him, though Roman remains stiff at my side. "But you're not going to like it. If Morgan could come here, she'd probably be best, since she can see what your powers are."

"She wouldn't leave her guys, even if she could come here." I smile, because I know the feeling. Being separated from the ones you love sucks. Even when you have no choice.

"I know. But the only other person I know, with powers even remotely close to what yours *might* be, that we don't have to speak to Michael to grant it, is Serafina."

Roman bursts out laughing while I scowl at Levi.

Of course it's her.

Awesome.

"Well, at least I know she isn't going to go easy on me," I say through gritted teeth before turning to Roman. "Is Theron still at the compound?"

He looks at me, the corners of his mouth tipped up. "He is, why?"

"Could we go there? I'd like to train with him too. He's not exactly my biggest fan either. I need to learn how to fight the factions with my new powers and my wings. And you, like Levi, would hold back. Theron won't."

I shrug and he leans back in the chair.

“We don’t need to go there. He already asked to come visit. So we’ll tie it in. It’s not for a few weeks, but if Levi can get Serafina here first, then you’ve got time to learn with her before Theron arrives.”

My grin is so wide, I think my face might split. “Awesome, thank you.” I throw my arms around his neck and kiss his cheek.

“And where’s my thanks?” Levi chuckles and Roman flips him the bird.

“Wait your turn, Angel boy.”

“Now then, boys, no squabbling.” My words are broken by my laughter and they both smile at me. “Okay, so now that’s settled. How are things going with Archer? Has he given up any more?”

“No. I don’t think he’s going to. He’s said what he needs to say. It’s almost as if he’s been spelled to not speak of it. Which, if I was the guy pulling his strings, I’d have done too.” Levi tells me with a hint of admiration. I guess his strategic mind can’t find fault in the technique.

“Okay, so what do we do with him now?” I ask, looking between them, and Roman’s wolfish grin gives me the answer I sought.

“We kill him.” His words merely confirm it. Levi nods, agreeing with him.

“We can’t let him live. Not after everything. Especially because we know that he won’t stop. While I don’t doubt his fanatic followers won’t stop with him gone, they’ll at least have to go to ground until someone else takes over. Or so we can hope.” My heart sinks a little. So much for everything being over soon. The thought that the people he had brought together keeping on hadn’t really entered my mind. It’s been a little busy up here with everything.

“I just want this to be over. Is it so wrong that I just want to live in peace. I don’t want to have to worry every time one of us leaves the fucking house that they might not come back.” I pinch the bridge of my nose and Roman squeezes my thigh.

“It’s not, Princess. We’ll get there. Even if we have to tear the world apart and rebuild it again to make it happen.”

“So how do we do it?” I sigh, as much as I want him dead, I want to be past this.

“You don’t have to worry. We’ll work it out,” Levi tells me and Roman nods.

“I wanted to kill him myself, but now, even after everything, I don’t want to waste my time on him. I know that Everly wouldn’t want that. He doesn’t

deserve it, not after everything, but don't drag it out too long. I just want him gone."

"There goes my plan to cook him from the inside out." Levi grins at me and I can't help but laugh.

"Sounds like it could be messy."

"Probably as messy as my desire to let him bleed out. Do you know what happens when you die of blood loss? The pain a person experiences? It seems fitting. We could make it less messy." Roman smirks and I shake my head at the pair of them.

"I'm in love with a bunch of psychopaths."

"Yeah, but we're *your* psychopaths." Roman wags his eyebrows and I lose it. I laugh so hard, I cry.

"Yes, yes you are."

Three days later, Kain and Creek are still gone, but Serafina showed her face. Which is why I'm currently face down, eating dirt from being thrown across the backyard. Learning how to fight with my wings out *sucks*. I've been getting my ass handed to me for the last few hours. Though it sucks, I'm looking forward to wiping that smug fucking grin from her face.

I was right about one thing.

She isn't holding back, and she *really* doesn't like me. I had to make Levi and Roman leave, muttering something about being back in a while because they both looked murderous after the first hour. I might not like her that much, but I'm also not going to let them stomp around. I push myself up from the dirt and she yawns.

"After hearing so much about the great Amantara, and then the legend of all things Remington Bennett, I'd really thought this would be more of a challenge. Even for a baby Angel, you fucking suck." I grit my teeth at her words and clench my fists while I climb to my feet. I hurt all over, but I'll be damned if I'm quitting now.

I narrow my eyes at her and stretch out my wings, pumping them once to shake out any debris caught up, how she showed me earlier. One good thing about all this, is they don't hurt so much to have out. The muscles are straining, but it's a good burn. Unlike the others all over my body, which just

make me want to go lay in a nice hot bath and tell her to shove her training up her ass. But I asked for this, and I need it. So I keep my mouth shut and attack her again, keeping my wings tucked in until I need them.

She smirks and meets me face on. And damn she is good. She's not even slightly tired.

"Your stamina is disgraceful," she taunts, as she jabs me in the ribs, knocking the air from my lungs. She's not wrong. I've really let myself slip with working out, and now I'm suffering for it. "You're weak, and undisciplined. Until you learn not to feel the pain, it will just be a weakness, and you will never beat me."

I shift, trying to avoid the right hook she throws my way, but she anticipates it and drops down, knocking my feet from me, using the movement against me.

"You're tired and sloppy. This is a waste of my fucking time. If you're not going to take this seriously, then why the fuck should I?" she shouts, and she pins me to the ground by my throat. "There, now you're dead. What would happen to the rest of them if I was really trying to kill you? Get your head out of your fucking ass, and start focusing."

Because I'm not focusing already.

It takes a lot of restraint not to roll my eyes at her, but she's not entirely wrong. I've been fucking up all morning. She releases me and stands, holding out a hand to help me up. I take it, because I'm not trying to be a royal bitch, especially since she's here to help me, and she doesn't have to be.

"I need to go. At least now I know where we need to focus. And we didn't even get started on your power. But relying on your power is a weakness. Your body needs to be ready first. I'll be back in four days. Use them well. Maybe when I come back, you won't tire so easily. Or be so off guard." With a nod, she stretches her wings, and with a few beats, she rises from the ground and disappears from sight.

I might not like her, but I can't help but admire her.

She is fierce as fuck.

I lay back on the ground. Now that she's gone, I don't mind dying a little. I was never going to show her just how bad she winded me in that last bout. Not on my life.

Doesn't mean that I can breathe any easier though. I suck in deep gulps of air until I even out. Being an Angel, I'm supposed to have heightened everything, but apparently my mind hasn't caught up yet. As far as it's

concerned, I'm still essentially human, which is making adapting to all of this that much harder.

Closing my eyes, I dive inside myself to that cage where I keep everything locked away. I feel it, the power in there. So much light, but with light comes the shadows. I can feel them writhing around in their cage, desperate to come out to play. I know that more than my power lies in there. My memories, the good and the bad, are locked up in there too. I've just been too afraid to let it all out, but now, now that I know that I have no choice but to face my inner Demons, and everything that comes with it, I'm less afraid. Serafina's last words really hit home.

What if I died? Then what? There are no more second chances. This is my last round. I might be harder to kill now technically, but all it takes is me going up against another Angel, and well, Serafina showed me that, clearly, right now, I'm fucking screwed.

Loosening the chains on the cage inside of me, I gasp as the power rushes free. It tries to overwhelm me, but I grit my teeth and try to control the flow of it. I will not be a slave to my power. This is exactly why I hadn't let it out. I don't want to be controlled by it. I am in control, damn it.

I slow the flow of the power coming from the box with nothing but sheer will. Sweat runs down my face, but I don't care. The light came out first, but I can feel the shadows lurking in the cage, waiting, trying to catch me off guard.

"Remy!" The voice distracts me, and the cage bursts open. Shadows, light, and memories rushing through me all at once. I scream out, but I don't hear it over the roar of power inside me. I try to wrangle back my control, to not let it overwhelm me, but there's so much. I kept it locked down for so long, and I can almost feel how happy it is to finally be free.

"Fucking hell, Remy!" Shouts reach me as I float between the light and shadows, before I feel like I'm falling. I gasp and open my eyes, sitting up as adrenaline floods my system.

"Thank fuck for that, what the hell were you thinking?" Roman's voice sounds concerned, but the anger in there is real. I blink as my eyes readjust to the sunlight and take a deep breath. I have to close my eyes because everything is so bright.

"Can she like, dim herself down?" Roman's question confuses me.

"She can, she just needs to focus," Levi tells him and I smile. "Remy, you need to focus, your power is like a dimmer switch, remember what I told you

in the Shadow Realm. Right now, you're on full glow. We need you to dim it down a bit, Angel. Then we can reach you."

I nod, so he knows I've heard him and try to focus as my thoughts race a million miles a minute. We tried this once already, I sucked at it before, but everything feels heightened right now. I picture the dimmer switch in my mind, and slowly dial it to the left, turning it down.

"There you go, Angel. Just a little more." Levi encourages me and I finish turning the dial as far as it will go. "You can open your eyes now."

My eyes flutter as I open them, and I wipe away the tears I hadn't realized were there. Everything looks as it did before I decided to go exploring inside myself, except, it's almost sharper. Like someone just gave me HD glasses, when I thought everything was clear before. How wrong I was.

"Are you okay?" Roman asks and I turn to face him. Tilting my head I take him in, is this what it was supposed to be like when I awoke in the Shadow Realm? Is this what Creek experienced? It's so strange. It's like what I experienced when I woke up, just *more*.

"I think so," I respond, reaching out to touch his face. His stubble stings my fingertips as I stroke down his jaw.

"What the fuck were you thinking?" Levi hisses as he paces in front of me. "You could have gotten yourself killed! I'm going to wring Serafina's neck for leaving you alone."

"It wasn't her choice, it was mine," I tell him firmly and stand. The action more fluid. Graceful. "And I was thinking that I was too weak. She kicked my ass from here to kingdom fucking come. Even without training, I feel like I'm more in touch with my body. With my wings. With everything."

"That is because you've awoken fully. But fuck me, Remy. You couldn't have waited until we were home, so you weren't vulnerable? Anything could've happened to you while we were gone. Fuck knows how long you were out here for." His growls light me up, but I consider his words. The sun is close to setting, so I was definitely out here longer than I thought.

"I'm sorry for being so reckless. I didn't think..." They both go wide-eyed, shocked at my apology and I snort laugh. "I can apologize when I'm wrong, ya know."

"News to me," Roman grunts.

CHAPTER NINETEEN



The last few days since I was stupid enough to release my power have been, well, an experience. I woke up floating one morning. Bruised my ass as I fell to the ground. Apparently asleep me can fly and hover with no drama. Awake me, not so much.

Luckily, unlocking Angel powers also comes with the perks of almost-instant healing. The downside though... the nightmares that plague me every time I close my eyes. I don't know if they're just some really fucked up memories, or just my imagination running wild, but either way, they suck. Second upside, I really don't need much sleep now. Levi said it before, but I was still so tired. Apparently I was locking down more than I thought. Go figure.

I haven't actually tried to explore my power yet, just get used to it. It's like an electric current under my skin, even with that dimmer switch turned all the way down.

"You look lost in thought." I blink and realize Roman is opposite me at the kitchen table, the mug of coffee in my hands is thankfully still warm. I smile at him before chugging back the coffee, because while some things have changed, my love for coffee hasn't.

"Kind of. Just adjusting still. Trying to prepare myself to deal with Serafina today." He chuckles as he stands back up and heads over to the fridge.

"Do you want something to eat?" he asks as he sticks his head in there. "We're going to need to get some more food in. Everly really did look after

us well, and with Olivia not here...well, we all suck as adults, apparently.”

“I can ask Maddie if she wouldn’t mind doing a shop for us today? She’s been texting me a lot, asking if there’s anything she can do to help. I think she just misses Creek and me being around. She hasn’t seen him since my dad...” I shake my head, refusing to go down that path. The shadows linger just under the surface of that electricity, and if I go down that road, I know they’ll show their stupid faces.

“You can. Or I can run to the store while you’re with Serafina. I’ll take Levi with me, so neither of us try to separate her head from her body.” He grins wolfishly as he shuts the door to the fridge holding bacon and eggs in his hand. I burst out laughing, because the thought of those two doing something so simply mundane slays me.

“What’s so funny?” Levi asks as he enters the kitchen. He takes one look at Roman prepping breakfast and shoos him out of the way while I try to compose myself.

“I suggested that we’d go grocery shopping while Serafina beats the snot out of her,” Roman tells him, and I just start snickering again.

“I don’t get it,” Levi tells him, looking confused, which just makes me laugh.

“Stop. Please. I can’t...” I try to form words, but it’s just not happening. They just stare at me like I’ve lost my mind, and I mean, I might have. It takes a few minutes, but I get myself under control and breathe properly again.

“Phew, no idea where that came from.” I grin at them, while Levi just shakes his head and goes about making breakfast. “So, any idea what time Serafina is dropping by to kick my ass again?”

“Probably mid-morning, why?” Levi answers without even looking at me.

“I want to get another swim in before she gets here.” I get up and pour another cup of coffee before joining Roman again. I’ve spent the last few days training. *Hard*. Getting my ass handed to me wasn’t exactly fun, but I also wanted to see just how far I could push myself with my powers unlocked. The two of them hovered the entire time, making sure I didn’t overdo it, but over the last few days, I’ve tripled my running time, managed to quadruple my deadlift, and actually take off from the ground with my wings.

It seems like a lot, but apparently for an Angel, it’s still baby Angel status. My competitive side hates it, but I keep having to remind myself that I

am a baby Angel technically. These guys have literally had a couple millennia to hone their deadly skills. I've had like, a few weeks at most. What I'd really like are my memories to come back. Amantara was supposedly a badass, and if I get all her memories, I'm hoping I get like, instant badass status. I laugh at myself and they both look at me again like I've completely lost it.

It's a real possibility, folks.

Levi brings the food over to the table, and I try not to hoard the limited amounts of bacon.

"Do we need to make a list?" Roman muses and I snicker quietly again, while Levi rolls his eyes.

"Am I interrupting?" Serafina says as the glass doors to the yard open. Fates she pisses me off. As if she doesn't see that she's interrupting. If I didn't need her help, I'd tell her to go eat a dick. Maybe it would chill her out a little.

"Serafina, nice to see you again." Roman smirks before shoveling bacon and eggs into his mouth. Sometimes I wonder if people would know he's a wolf. Then I see him eat and I wonder how they don't know.

"I'm sure," she snarks and rolls her eyes. "You ready to get your ass kicked again?" Her gaze fixes on me and I catch Levi and Roman stiffening out of the corner of my eye.

"Maybe. I think I might be more prepared than you think." I wink at her and her eyes go wide, like she wasn't expecting it, but then her lip curls in disgust.

"Hurry the fuck up and get outside." She spins on her heels and heads back outside, without even a word to Levi. Strange.

"Are we sure she isn't a shadow spawn?" I ask and Roman laughs loudly while Levi sighs.

"Are you sure that training with her is a good idea? Especially now that you released your power?" Levi asks, his brow furrowed.

"It will be fine. She's a big girl. If I lose control, which is unlikely, I'm sure she can recover. She's a badass, remember?" I roll my eyes and he smiles thinly.

"Just try not to knock down the manor, please? It took us a long time to build it."

"No it didn't, it took like two weeks," I say, and gasp. "Holy shit."

"You remember?" Levi asks, his voice full of hope.

“I guess, like I don’t remember, but I just know...Does that make sense?” I try to think about building the manor, and I’m catapulted back in time, through my memories, to my time with Levi, when we built the house. The arguments over design, the make-up sex after. The fun we had building it with our own hands. The time we took redecorating it over the lifetimes. I open my eyes and a tear slips out. “I remember.”

My voice is thick with emotion, how do I remember? This is so different from how my memories came back before. Does this mean that they’re all back? Is this why I’ve had nightmares? Because I remember.

Levi squeezes my left hand, while Roman takes my right and they both smile at me. “This is a good thing, Princess.”

“What he said.”

My training sessions with Serafina have been grueling, and I can’t say I like her any more than I did to begin with, but I do have a new-found respect for her. My training is coming along in leaps and bounds. Though we’ve still barely started using my powers. She’s firmly of the belief that they should be an extra advantage, not something I rely on. So it’s been a whole lot of fight training, two freaking weeks of training all day every day, except for the day we did the memorial for my dad. But her methods are working. I finally pinned her yesterday. Which is why today, I get the day off.

I’d do a happy dance, but my entire body aches.

The doorbell sounds, the one I insisted the guys install since this place is so fucking big and I’m usually nowhere near the front door. I pad through the manor and open the door tentatively, my speech of how to swiftly fuck right off prepared because I wasn’t expecting anyone. My plan for today is to soak my poor muscles all damn day. I might be an Angel, but apparently, baby Angels still get sore.

Figures.

“Fallon?” I blink, not expecting to see my best friend on the other side of the door.

“Hey girl. It’s been a minute,” she says with an awkward wave. You could say that. I’ve barely heard from her since we got back from the Shadow Realm. And I get it. She was taken because of me. Everything that she went

through, that she suffered, that she lost, is essentially my fault. It doesn't matter that I got her out, or that Morgan healed her soul. As I've been discovering, memories can plague you even when you think you're free.

Which is also why I've slept alone the last few weeks. The last thing I want is to hurt the guys while I lash out. The absence of Creek and Kain weighs on me heavily too.

"It has, come in," I say, finding my voice through the shock of seeing her. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," she says as she breezes through the door. "I just missed my best friend, and dealing with trauma sucks. Trying to get back to what life was before is almost fucking impossible. So I just needed a little piece of normal. What's more normal than brunch and mimosas with my bestie? Plus Mama asked me to come and set some new wards on the place, but first, we drink."

"I am so down." I grin at her and hug her tightly. She stiffens for a second before she relaxes and hugs me back. She didn't seem so bad once we came back, but I guess everyone deals with stuff differently.

"Let's head to the kitchen shall we?" she says, waving to the grocery bags she bought with her, and I see the bottles of champagne, orange juice, and fates knows what else.

"Sure." I smile and grab a few of the bags, while she does the same and heads to the kitchen. I can't help but feel a little weird. This feels awkward, and while I know why, I don't like it. But I also have no idea how to fix it. Fallon has always been the non-awkward talker of the two of us. Or we had Creek or Colt as a buffer. But it hasn't felt this awkward since that time in seventh grade when she made out with a guy I had a crush on, who she thought was a loser and kissed him to prove it.

"This feels weird," she says as she drops the bags onto the counter. "It shouldn't be weird."

"It does," I agree and move to get the champagne glasses. "But mimosas will help."

"I'm sorry I'm making it weird. This is what my entire life feels like right now. Like everyone around me hasn't changed, and then there's me. It's like I don't fit here anymore, as if I left a part of myself in the Shadow Realm. It's almost like I...miss it." Her last words are so quiet, I almost don't hear them. I sit, shocked, because that is not what I expected to come out of her mouth.

"We've all changed, Fallon. But you went through a lot down there, and

maybe you did leave a piece of yourself there. I mean, Deacon...he came to Morgan to save you. You guys were bonded, even if it was adopted from Azriel.”

“Sometimes I find myself missing him. Sad that he’s gone,” she murmurs, unable to meet my eyes.

“Deacon?” She shakes her head in answer and my eyes go wide.

“Well yes, but I mean Azriel. I know, it’s the worst. He was awful. But there was more to him than that. I saw glimpses of it. The man beneath the mask. And his art...Remy, the depth of emotion he put on canvas...I just... It’s terrible, I know, and maybe it’s just a lingering effect from the bond between us. But sometimes, I miss him. The talks we’d have. I hated him, but I hated him so fiercely that I think the line blurred a little. It’s the same with Deacon. He helped me, then he bowed down to Az, but in the end, he fought for me. No one has ever fought for me like that. And then I see Colt, and I know he would’ve fought for me if he could. But he didn’t. Even if he was fighting here. I just. I feel broken.”

“Oh Fal,” I stand and hug her and she sinks into me. I don’t know what to say, but fate knows I am the last person that’s going to judge. “You feel whatever you feel, I’m not going to think any different of you, no matter where your heart leads you.”

“Thank you, Remy.” She sighs as she pulls back, and tries to compose herself. “Now, about those mimosas.”

Between training, trying to be there for Fallon, and trying not to neglect my guys, I’ve kinda abandoned my brothers. While I’m not that fussed about Bauer, I feel bad about leaving Colt hanging out in the wind. Creek’s gone too, and I know his relationship with Bauer is strained, plus from what Fallon told me, she hasn’t been able to be around him without just feeling a mountain of guilt. His text this morning was short, but I can tell he’s lonely, which is why I planned today. It’s been forever since we did something stupid.

Currently I’m sitting in my Mustang, tapping my thumb to the bass of the rock song on the radio, waiting for him and Bauer to appear from the house. I got word to Colt’s friend Elijah, and him and his guys are on board too. I

can't wait to see Colt's grin. Mine is huge just thinking about it. We deserve a day of carefree fuckery.

They finally appear, both looking dubious as they head over to the car. The passenger door opens and Colt bends down to look at me. "Are you going to tell me what the fuck we're doing?"

"Nope." I grin, over pronouncing the *P* and he shakes his head. Bauer climbs into the back and Colt moves into the front seat. The minute the door is closed, I take off. For guys, these two take forever to get fucking ready. Even with a day's notice.

I drive out of Salem's Bay and head to our destination, music the only sound in the car. The tension between the two of them is thick enough to cut with a blade, but I am not going to let that get me down today. No siree. Not today.

I pull down the dirt road and Bauer groans, but Colt bursts out laughing. "Hell yes, Little Bit!"

He practically fist pumps and his excitement becomes contagious.

"Right!" I squeak and he laughs.

"This is exactly what I needed today!" Colt's smile makes my heart happy, and I'm glad I decided to do this. My big brother has been carrying some serious weight lately. He's always been the happy go lucky, carefree, happy soul of the three of us. I just want him to know that his life isn't completely responsibility, even with everything that's changed.

"Paintball? Really?" Bauer sighs and I flip him the bird.

"Yes, dickhead. Paintball. It's no laser tag, but I figure the anticipation of the pain makes it more fun."

"Pain for us, maybe. You're an Angel. Unfair advantage." He groans and I roll my eyes.

"Stop being a fucking killjoy. If you don't want to play, you can sit on the fucking side like a mope," I scold him as I pull into the parking lot and find Colt's friends chatting with Levi and Roman.

"You planned this?" Colt says softly, looking at me.

"Course I did, you might be a pain in the ass, but you're my pain in the ass. You've been so weighed down recently, and I haven't had a chance to thank you properly for everything you did while I was gone." I shake my head as he tries to interrupt me. "I know you didn't do it for me, but still, you carried the torch I lit while I disappeared. I started all of this, and you've ended up bearing the weight of it. This was the least I could do. Plus, after

everything with Mom and Dad, I figure we all needed to blow off some steam.”

He squeezes my hand and my heart tugs inside my chest. I thought I knew how bad things had been for him, but the shadows in his eyes right now, I can see how well he’s hidden it before now.

“Thank you,” he says quietly before climbing from the car, and I turn to face Bauer.

“Seriously, if you’re going to be a killjoy, stay in the fucking car. You are part of the cause for those shadows in his eyes. You helped the enemy. You might have helped us, but I’m not going to forget what you did, even if I eventually forgive you. You’re here today for Colt. He needs his brother back. If you’re just going to be an asshole, then you’re not welcome here, and I’ll beat your ass if you ruin today for him.” I don’t wait for him to respond. I just climb from the car and slam the door before painting a smile on my face.

My eldest brother is a fucking dickhead.

I shake my head and push my anger at him down. Today is about Colt and fun. I head over to where Colt has joined the others, and I can see from here how animated the Delta boys are about going up against the three of us.

“The Hunters versus the immortals. Seems fair to me.” Colt grins when I reach them and puts his hand up for a high five, which I answer. We haven’t done that since we were much, much younger. But then, I can’t remember the last time we went paintballing either.

“Is Bauer coming?” Colt asks, looking back at the car where Bauer is yet to emerge.

“If he can pull his head out of his ass, then yes.” I turn back to my guys and grin. “Ready to kick some Hunter ass?”

“Hell yes!” Roman says, confidence oozing from every pore.

“Rules of combat?” Elijah asks, and Levi grins at him.

“Are the rules of war ever followed?” Levi laughs and Colt groans. I follow them inside where we can get our guns, ammo, and gear.

I wait quietly, enjoying listening to them all chat shit, while the guys behind the booth gas up the guns. It’s nice seeing everyone in my life get along. Seeing how at ease Colt finally is with Levi and Roman. It makes me hopeful. The door opens and Bauer struts in and nods at me. I return it, but I swear, if he ruins today, I’ll tear him a new asshole.

CHAPTER TWENTY



“So Theron arrives tomorrow?” I ask Roman as I sit on the edge of the pool, watching as he lifts weights in just his gym shorts, while I try not to drool too much. Serafina is officially away on some mission for the mysterious Michael, which means I get a few days off from getting my ass beat by an Angel, to have a Lycan take over.

Awesome.

“He does,” Roman grunts. “He’s bringing Leandra with him too.”

“Yessss! I can’t wait to catch up with her.” I grin. I don’t mention the pregnancy, because I’m sure Roman *is* aware, but if he’s not, then I am not going to be the one to drop the baby bomb. “Any updates on Olivia and Astrid? Are they coming home now that Archer is gone?”

“Yeah, my guys are helping them pack their stuff up today, they should get here tomorrow too.” My thighs press together as he groans, pushing the weight bar up and putting it on the rack. I grin as he sits up and realizes just how much I’ve been perving on him.

“Okay awesome. I’m not sure this is the best place for them though, our lives are in a constant form of disarray, it doesn’t seem like the best place for a little girl to grow up—even one who knows what we are. The thought of her getting hurt...” The thought is like a bucket of cold water over my head.

“We won’t let her get hurt. This is probably one of the safest places for her.” He tries to reassure me before he dives into the pool in his shorts.

“That’s what I thought about Everly,” I mumble as he surfaces.

“Princess, what happened wasn’t your fault. The pieces of shit that were

responsible are rotting in the ground now.” His voice rumbles from his chest as he wraps his big hands around my ankles and yanks me into the water.

I squeal at the shock of it, water shooting up my nose and stinging. I push off the bottom of the pool once my toes graze it, and resurface. “You’re such an ass!”

“Yeah, but you love me.” He laughs as he pulls himself from the pool. “Now come on and dry off, we’ve got to set up the other rooms for when Theron, Leandra, and the rest of them get here.”

I laugh at his nonchalance, but follow him from the pool, glad I was only in shorts and a tank. If I’d had my cell in my pocket, I might have rebelled. I don’t use it much, but replacing it would have been a total ball ache.

Once I reach my room and strip out of my wet clothes, I shower quickly before heading into my closet. It might seem strange to some, but I feel weirdly close to Everly when I’m in here. She picked out everything in here pretty much, including the stack of snarky t-shirts, which are quickly becoming my favorite shirts. There’s at least a dozen of them, but I haven’t gone through them yet because I like the surprise each time I decide to wear one. I grab a pair of jeans, some underwear and take the top t-shirt from the pile and head back to my room to get dressed.

After I roughly blow out my hair, I throw the clothes on and I can’t help but laugh at the accuracy of today’s t-shirt, *‘I am not responsible for what my face does when you talk’*. I’m learning to find joy in the smallest of things, because joy, true joy, isn’t always that quick to come about these days.

I head to the guest wing of the house and find Roman wrestling with a fitted sheet. “You need some help there?”

My voice is tight as I try not to laugh, but it’s a losing battle.

“I fucking hate making beds,” he growls, and I wonder, honestly, how many he’s ever had to make, because from this, I’m going to assume really not many. I take a deep breath to try and move past the rising laughter and take two corners.

“You tuck that side, I’ll do this one. Go for opposite corners, small trick my mom taught me when I was younger, makes it way easier.” I tell him and he blows his hair from his eyes. His frustration at something so mundane is adorable. Big, bad Lycan can tear down a civilization, but he’s bested by a bed sheet.

“Yeah, yeah,” he grumbles before knuckling down and helping me make the rest of the bed, followed by four more. I guess there’s a few more Lycans

than I expected joining us.

Once we're finished, we head down to the kitchen, where I find freshly made lemonade on the counter, the jug practically dripping with condensation, making my mouth water. I grab a glass sitting beside it and fill it, the ice cubes clacking as they leave the jug. Not going to lie, I worked up a sweat helping Roman out, and by that I mean, doing most of the work while he watched. I'm going to need to jump in the shower again before everyone gets here. Maybe Roman can join me and get me dirty before I clean up.

"Thirsty, Angel?" Levi smirks and I jump as he appears from the utility and Roman snickers behind me.

"Did you make this?" I ask, bringing the glass to my lips as he nods. The cold hits my lips and I gasp as the sweet-but-sour liquid reaches my taste buds. I practically inhale it, I hadn't realized I was so thirsty. "Holy shit that's good."

"I'm glad you like it." He winks at me. "It's your recipe."

"I'm sorry what?" I blink, because nope.

"Yeah, it was the one thing you could make, even all those centuries ago, though it wasn't called lemonade back then."

I hold the counter edge as the memory hits me. Us laughing, squeezing lemons, and me shooing him away while I tried to get the right ratio of sugar for sweetness.

"We were almost carefree back then," I whisper, trying to cling to the memory.

"We were. Things were much simpler that long ago," he says wistfully. Roman reaches around me and pours himself a glass and takes a drink.

"It's okay I guess," he jokes and I roll my eyes. He really is an asshole.

"Remy!" Leandra squeals as she rushes toward me, arms wide. She hugs me fiercely when she reaches me, and Theron's eye roll makes me laugh. Some things never change.

"Hey." I squeeze her back softly, careful of her, because she's pregnant, and I have no idea what that's like. "How are you and the little one doing?"

"Cub is fine, thank you." She beams. "And me, well I've finally stopped puking, and now I just want to eat everything in sight! How have you been?"

Theron said stuff has been pretty dire around here, but the protective fool wouldn't give me any real details, so he didn't stress me out."

She steps back and takes in the manor behind me. "Also, holy fucking houses, this place is yours?"

"It's Levi's. And mine, I guess. Yeah." I shrug and she whistles.

"I bet that sticks in Roman's craw. This place is bigger than the mansion back on the compound!" She giggles as Theron and a few other Lycans, whose faces I remember but names I don't, join us.

"Remy." Theron nods stoically, I kind of like that he doesn't like me that much. And the twist of his mouth as he takes in today's second t-shirt is hilarious. Another awesome little gift from Everly which just keeps giving, reads '*Underestimate me. That'll be fun.*'

"Theron, good to see you," I say with a grin. "Roman's inside, I just thought you guys would prefer my pretty face as your welcoming party."

"You were right," Leandra says with a wink. "His grumpy mug is not the one I wanted to see this morning. You and I have things to catch up on, let the boys do their boring business thing." She links her arm through mine and pulls me toward the front door. I let her, because well, mama Lycan isn't one I'm about to fuck with.

"Do you have any ice cream?" she asks and Theron barks out a laugh.

"Le!" He chuckles, shaking his head and she sticks her tongue out at him. The only time I ever see him soften is with her and it's adorable.

"Remy doesn't mind. I bet Roman gets her ice cream by the ton." I shake my head as she grins at him, because she's not wrong. That grocery shop they did, which him and Levi have done weekly because apparently it's fun to provide, contained more of my favorite things than I've ever indulged in all at once. They even did a special trip to get my lavender and lily stuff from the homemade soap store in town. Not going to lie, I did some pretty depraved things to thank them for being so thoughtful.

I lead Leandra to the kitchen, while the guys filter out to the back of the house where Roman is waiting for them. She hops up onto a stool as I head to the freezer. "What flavor do you want?"

"What're the options?" I look over my shoulder at her and grin.

"Literally like anything." I laugh and her eyes go wide.

"Wow, you've got your boys trained well. How about some rocky road?"

"Girl after my own heart." I pull a fresh tub from the freezer and grab two spoons. "Ice cream for breakfast is definitely something I need to do more

often.”

“Thank the fates for the supernatural metabolism.” She raises her hands in the air and I can’t help but laugh at her as I hand her a spoon and the tub.

“So, come on. What’s been going on with you?” she asks, and I let out a deep sigh. “Oh, God, that was a deep sigh.”

I take a breath and lay out the story of everything that’s happened since I saw her last. She doesn’t interrupt me once, and it occurs to me as I tell her everything, that my life is a fucking rollercoaster. Yay me.

“What the actual fuck! If I’d known all of this, I’d have been here sooner. I am so sorry, Remy. I’m going to kick Theron’s ass for not telling me what was going on.” She worries her lip, while her eyes flash with anger. Angry hormonal Lycan is not what I want.

“Honestly, it’s fine. There isn’t much you could’ve done, and you’re here now. That’s what counts,” I reassure her, and she eats another spoonful of ice cream. “Plus, you’ve had enough going on, you need to look after you and yours.”

“Pfft, still. I’m going to string him up.” I laugh at her eye roll, as she destroys the rest of the ice cream in the tub, and I don’t even resent that I only had one mouthful from the entire thing. I am not messing with a pregnant chick and her food. “So, did Roman tell you why we were coming here?”

“Nope.” I say, popping the *P*. “He just said there was business. Vague as ever.”

“Theron wants to start his own pack,” she whispers and my eyes go wide.

“I’m sorry, what? He’s leaving Roman?” I ask and she nods.

“Tobias can more than handle things, stuff just isn’t that insane these days like it used to be. Plus, Theron wants a new life, one with a legacy for cub. He doesn’t want to be a beta forever, and he doesn’t want to challenge Roman or his dad.”

“Is that even a thing?” I lean back in my chair, because, woah.

“It’s rare, but not unheard of. When the numbers get too much, it’s possible, and they’re getting to that point again.” She shifts uncomfortably on the stool as she looks into the bottom of the ice cream tub. I can’t help the small laugh that escapes at how sad she looks. “I probably shouldn’t eat a second tub.”

“Le, you’re pregnant. Eat whatever the fuck you want,” I tell her.

“I can’t. I’ll be the size of a house, my appetite has been...well, insane.”

She shakes her head, almost looking ashamed.

“You could be the size of three houses and you’d still be my queen,” Theron says softly as he sneaks in and wraps his arms around her waist. I swoon a little on the inside. He might be a jackass to me most of the time, but his love for her is undoubtable.

“Feeling broody, Princess?” Roman asks with a smirk as he saunters into the room.

“Not even a little. I love kids, but they’re not for me. Could you imagine trying to have a kid with our lives?”

“I can picture you pregnant, and glowing,” he murmurs into my ear before moving around me and heading to the coffee pot. He’s cute, but that’s not happening. It’s not something any of us have talked about, but how would that even work. *If* it could even work.

Nope, not something I’m even going to think about.

The Lycans disappeared for most of the day, but Roman and I are hosting them for dinner apparently. I’ve got no idea where Levi has disappeared to, but he swung by earlier telling me not to wait up for him, so it’s been just Roman and me for most of the day.

Not that I’m complaining, because I haven’t had much one-on-one time with him lately, but it feels weird only having one of my guys around. While I hate how selfish that sounds in my head, I’m also not going to berate myself for wanting to be around the people I love.

So Roman is cooking, while I sip on a glass of wine watching him. I didn’t even know he could cook, I mean like *really* cook because breakfast foods don’t count, and after the bed making fiasco, I didn’t have much hope, but apparently lasagna isn’t all that hard. Despite this, I was still banned from helping.

I roll my eyes at him again and he shakes his head. “Remy, I want to cook for you, I want to feed you. Provide for you. My wolf is pissed we haven’t got to do it for a long time, so please, just sit, enjoy, and let me cook.”

“Fine, fine.” I take another sip of my wine, it’s no skin off my nose, as long as it’s not because he doesn’t think I can’t help without burning the place down, I don’t mind.

“Something smells good,” Leandra says, as she sniffs her way into the kitchen. “I hope you made plenty.”

“I essentially made a lasagna per person.” Roman laughs.

“Probably a good idea the way Lycans eat,” Theron says, more relaxed than I think I’ve ever seen him. “Did you tell her yet?”

“Tell me what?” I ask, looking between them.

“About his request to create a new pack,” Roman says softly. “As my bonded, the decision belongs to you too.”

“Oops.” Leandra giggles. “I might’ve already told her.”

Roman shakes his head, a soft smile on his face.

“What do you think?” I ask Roman, and Theron stiffens a little, as if he doesn’t think he’s going to like what I have to say.

“I think it’s been a long time since we allowed a new pack, and Theron has been the best second I could’ve asked for,” Roman tells me as he ducks down to start pulling lasagnas from the oven.

“Well, I think as long as it’s not going to have a negative impact on the pack, then do it,” I say, taking another sip and relishing the shock on Theron’s face. “There’s obviously going to be some unsettling times within the pack while the changes happen, so I’d probably ask that it doesn’t happen right this second, not until things settle down with the factions overall, but I won’t be pissed if you guys announce it like tomorrow. Just my two cents.”

“Thank you, Remy,” Theron says, his voice lower than usual.

“Of course.”

“Have you thought of a name?” Roman asks, ushering us all to the table as the other Lycans Theron brought with him join us. Apparently they are his security for Leandra. Pregnant Lycans aren’t all that common, and with everything, I don’t blame him for being cautious. Roman brings the lasagnas to the table, placing one in front of each of us before sitting at the head of the table, me on his right, Theron to his left.

“I want to name it after our daughter,” he says, his eyes glowing a little.

“You’re having a girl?” I gush and Leandra nods.

“We’re going to call her Luna,” she tells us, and I suppress my shiver and look at Roman, who smirks. Leandra didn’t meet the bitch higher Demon, so she has no idea why that name makes me a little stabby, but I’m sure an adorable Lycan pup is the best way for me to get over it.

“So the pack name?” Roman asks Theron.

“The Crescent Wolf Pack,” Theron announces and I swear I get chills.

“I love it,” I tell them and Roman nods, agreeing.

Roman stands and Theron follows suit, and they do that bro hug thing, while Leandra sniffs back her happy tears. “Well, welcome to the alpha club, man.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE



“I imagine you’ve been looking forward to this,” I say to Theron as we head outside. I’m in my workout gear, preparing myself to tussle with the new alpha.

“You have no idea.” He grins, and it’s ruthless.

“Why is it you dislike me so much?” I ask, tilting my head as we come to a stop and I start stretching myself out, ready for today’s training session.

“Roman said you have access to most of your memories, even though you’re not necessarily aware of them?” he asks, and I nod, confirming what he was told. “Well, then you’ll probably remember as I tell you, but when you and Roman were first together, when he took over as Alpha of Alphas, I was coming up as my father’s second. Roman and I had always been close, so when he asked me to be his second I obviously agreed, even if my father was a little annoyed about it. You didn’t think I was strong enough to be Roman’s second. You said I’d get him killed. So you quietly challenged me. Only in front of Roman, and none of the others ever knew. You thought I was weak, and then we fought.”

“Oh, shit,” I say, my eyes going wide as I’m thrown into the memory of our fight. It was fucking brutal. Neither of us walked away unscathed, but no one yielded either. “Man, past me was a bitch.”

“Something like that,” Theron says with a shrug. “So I’m very much looking forward to today, Angel, Hunter, I don’t care. We have some unfinished business.”

His grin is all teeth, and while I should probably be a little afraid, all I feel

is a thrill. Roman, Levi, and Leandra all appear outside together and head toward us.

“Is this a good idea?” Leandra asks. She’s obviously aware of our history too.

“I think we have an old score to settle,” I say, smirking at Theron. “Don’t worry, Le. I won’t break him too badly.” My voice is more confident than I am, but fuck it. I’ve been training my entire lifetime for this, and after my last few weeks training with Serafina, even without having a clue about my powers, I feel more confident. I also know that I can keep my power under wraps no matter how pissed off I get.

“He told you then?” Roman says, and Levi looks at him questioningly. I nod and move away from them a little so Theron and I have more space. I see Roman talk to Levi, obviously telling him what Theron just told me and his face looks like thunder.

“No killing him if he hurts me,” I shout out to them both, but Levi just crosses his arms while Roman laughs.

Theron lunges at me without warning, and so it begins. I let everything around us fall away, and find that place inside of me where the warrior I used to be lives. I let her memories wash over me and lose myself to the love of battle.

I duck and weave, laughing out loud as I evade his latest attack and swing back, my fist connecting with his jaw and he flies backwards. “Ready to yield yet?”

He just growls, rolling into a crouch as he lands on the ground. I brace myself as he charges for me, grinning like a maniac. I let him capture and pin me, laughing still as he does.

“This isn’t exactly you fighting back,” he growls, pushing off of me and standing. I look over to where the others watch as I stand. Roman is laughing, while Levi looks like he’s going to rip Theron’s arms from his body.

“This was supposed to be training,” I tell him with a shrug. “It served its purpose. Plus, I kinda like the fact that neither of us won.”

“Of course you do,” he groans, rolling his eyes.

“Well, that was...entertaining.” Roman chuckles as we reach them. “Did you get what you needed, Princess?”

“I did.” I smile at him, taking the towel from Levi and wiping my face down before chugging back a bottle of water.

“I didn’t,” Theron growls, but Leandra pats his chest and I’m all but

forgotten.

“Are you hurt?” Levi asks, his chest rumbling.

“No more than he is,” I say, going up on tiptoes to kiss his cheek. “I’m fine.”

“You better be.” He says as his hands grasp my hips and he kisses me fiercely, with so much heat he steals my breath.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see the others move inside the manor, leaving us out here as I wrap my arms around his neck. “Did you get what you needed when you left yesterday?”

“I did, but I hate that I keep having to leave you.” He sighs, dropping his forehead to mine. “This shit isn’t over. There are still too many whispers. I’ve been trying to reach out to my friends across the world to see if anyone knows anything, but I’ve got jack shit so far.”

“It will all work out. It always does. Now, how about you help me clean up in the shower?” I ask coyly and his grin is devilish.

“I’m sure I can manage that.”

The Lycans left this morning, and while I was sad to see Leandra go, I could tell that she was missing home. It’s not like I won’t get to see her soon. After issues with the hotel, Olivia and Astrid are finally coming home this afternoon. I’m still more than a little anxious about this, especially after everything with Everly. Even if Archer is dead, whatever the driving force behind him was, it’s still out there. Even if I try not to focus on it.

Which is why I’ve been on the treadmill for the last hour. It’s a torrential downpour outside, got to love West Coast winters, we don’t get much rain, but when we do; holy fucking shit. So treadmill for me. I might not be able to get sick anymore, but I’m not risking it. I fucking hate being sick.

Except, even after an hour of running, my anxiety is still riding me like a fucking bitch. Especially since Levi disappeared again this morning. I spent the night with him last night after our shower, and for the first night since they started, I didn’t have a nightmare. So maybe staying away from the guys wasn’t such a great idea. My pussy sure wasn’t thanking me.

“What’s wrong, Princess?” Roman says as he drops his bar back on the rack and sits up to face me. “I can feel you thinking from over here.”

I chew on my lower lip as I stop the treadmill and come to a stop. "I feel like something bad is coming. I don't know what or when, but Marie hasn't said anything about that vision she had, and with Archer being as elusive as he was...I don't know. I don't even know if the feeling is about that, I've got too much going on inside of my head. I'd hoped that with Archer out of the picture, shit would chill out, but it's like a niggle inside my brain that I can't seem to ignore."

"Well, maybe you shouldn't ignore it, but if you need a distraction, I can think of a fun way to hide from your frustrations," he says, his grin wolfish.

"You can't always fuck away my frustrations," I laugh.

"Why the fuck not?" he asks, standing and coming over to the treadmill, and moving to press up against me, his breath tickling my neck. "Fucking away your problems is something I'm so very good at."

His hands brush up from my hips to my ribs and I shudder beneath his touch. He kisses my neck, before gently biting me and I can't stop the gasp that escapes me.

"Your body knows I'm the best distraction there is. Every shudder and every gasp belongs to me. Every thought is crushed by the mere touch of my fingers, my mouth, my tongue. You know this, Princess, so why would you even try to deny it?"

As though on cue, my pussy clenches at his words. He's right of course, but he doesn't need to know that.

"I have no idea what you're talking ab—" I don't have time to finish my sass as Roman has my shorts off and my panties ripped away like they were thin strips of nothingness.

"I suggest you change your tune, Princess, if you want to keep what little clothes you have left." Instinctively, my ass pushes into him, into his thick, hard cock, unmistakable under his gray sweats.

Fuck, he's so hot, he makes my blood boil with the need for him.

Naked from the waist down with only my sports bra on, it occurs to me that I'm not going to win this one.

"Well, then. I guess you should work your magic and distract me already."

Roman doesn't even bother to take his sweats off. Over my shoulder, I see him reaching behind his waistband, plunging his hand inside and pulling out his cock. It's glorious and thick and veiny, just begging to be inside me. Weeping with precum for a taste of my pussy.

"This is my favorite part, Princess. The second before I fuck your thoughts away. That perfect moment where my dick is so hard it hurts and your pussy is so wet it drips down your thighs. Fucking perfect."

I gasp as he plunges inside me without another warning. I'm gripping the bars of the treadmill like my life depends on it and I pray he doesn't push me against the treadmill dashboard and accidentally turn it on. That would be bad.

With one of his hands snaking around my waist and up to my neck, he settles his fingers just below my chin and squeezes just enough to catch my breath with every thrust inside me.

"Fuck, Roman."

"Shhh, Princess," he grunts at my ear before pulling out, waiting a short second, and then slamming back inside me, "Don't think. Just feel. Feel my dick getting incredibly harder every time I bottom out. Feel the head of my cock nudging at your cervix. Feel my cum when I fill you up so good you can almost taste it on your tongue."

His dirty words do it for me.

But more than that, the subtle squeeze of his hand on my throat with every thrust of his cock makes my pussy clench around his girth and has him grunting and moaning behind me.

"Do that again," I hear him whisper, and I obey.

I clench my muscles on his next thrust and he squeezes my neck in response which makes my pussy even wetter.

It's like we're pushing each other higher and higher until one of us loses complete control.

Until I lose complete control.

Roman knows this, everything he does is calculated to make me come. Every word and every movement. He knows my body better than I know it myself.

"I want your juices all over my cock, Princess. Come for me. Get my dick nice and soaked for me."

I can't help it, his words are like gasoline to my fire.

I come on a cry, screaming his name as my fingers dig so hard onto the bar of the treadmill that the metal groans beneath my hands as two of my nails break with the effort.

But Roman doesn't stop there. Of course he doesn't. He thrusts into me two more times before he tells me, "Don't move."

Through the haze of my orgasm, I feel him getting on his knees, his hands sliding down my outer thighs before his mouth latches on to my pussy and starts licking and drinking every drop of my juices. He feasts on me like I'm his last meal. He drinks from me like I'm a cool glass of water after a hike in the desert. He worships my pussy like I'm his goddess and his tongue is a prayer.

Hearing him eating me out is so erotic that out of nowhere, I feel another orgasm take hold of me.

"Oh my God, Roman," I whisper as I feel the telltale signs, the shaking, the mouth-opening feeling that comes only with a deep-rooted orgasm.

"Give me more, Princess."

Again, I obey. I give him everything I've got and I break a third nail in the process.

Only when my legs feel like Jell-O does he get back up to his feet, turn me around and push inside me from the front. Face to face, he makes love to me. He fucks me hard, but he looks at me like I'm the sun to his every new day. He grunts at every thrust, but he tells me I'm the most beautiful, the most caring, the sexiest woman he's ever met. He tells me he loves me, he worships me, he would do anything for me.

"Hold on tight, Princess," he groans as his thrusts get faster, harder, just as he spills his cum deep inside me where it belongs.

Roman knows just how to fuck me like his whore and love me like his queen.

"I love you but I swear to fuck, it makes me hard just knowing you're full of my cum."

"Mmmm," is all I can say because my brain is on hiatus and my body is about to give way.

"Come on, Princess, let me take care of you."

"What the fuck do you mean there was a car accident?" Levi shouts into his phone. His knuckles are so white, I worry he's going to crush the phone before he finds out what the fuck is going on. I practically hold my breath while he paces in front of us. Each step is a little harder than the last as his anger ramps up.

“Which hospital?” I feel my eyes go wide at his question, and my stomach sinks. I fucking hate hospitals. “We’ll be there soon.”

He ends the call, and his movements are stiff as he tries to control his rage.

“How bad is it?” I ask, my voice wobbling. The thought of losing anyone else...I can’t even.

“Olivia is okay, just a few cuts and bruises. She was in the back behind the driver but the truck hit the car on the side Astrid was on. She’s critical and being rushed to the hospital now. The Lycans are fine, but we need to go.” He grabs my keys from the bowl by the window and heads to the front door. Roman and I have to practically run to keep up with him.

“I should drive,” Roman tells him softly. “You guys are both more emotional than I am right now. The last thing we need is another accident.”

“Fine,” Levi growls, and hands Roman the keys before wrenching the door open.

“Fates, please let her be okay,” I say quietly as I lock the house and feel the new wards Fallon set when she was here snap into place.

I climb into the back of my car, my hands shaking a little, so I shove them between my thighs on the tense drive. It’s silent except for the purr of the engine the entire way. I try to speak, but I can’t think of anything to say that will make it any better. I know Levi feels responsible for everyone in his care, but this seems like more than that. I don’t understand what it is, but I know that this second isn’t the time to ask.

As the car rolls to a stop by the doors to the emergency room, Levi and I jump from the car. “I’ll find you guys.”

I nod at Roman’s words and turn to follow Levi, who is already inside. He’s scowling down at a nurse at the station, while she firmly seems to be telling him no. *If only she knew...*

He storms toward me, and his storm tingles against my skin. “They won’t tell me anything.”

“Wait here. Let me see if I can find anything out,” I tell him softly and head back over to the nurse in question.

“Hi, I’m sorry, my husband can be a bit of a force of nature. My sister and niece were brought in recently. Car accident. A truck t-boned them, they said my niece was critical. My sister’s name is Olivia.” The nurse’s eyes soften and she shakes her head.

“Sorry, it’s crazy in here today. Surname?” I panic momentarily, but then

Levi is back by my side.

“Bennett,” he tells her, and I blink up at him in surprise. He shakes his head softly, so I stay quiet, but how fucking weird.

“Okay, yes. Your sister is okay, just a few bumps and scrapes. She’s just getting some stitches. Your niece is currently in surgery. If you’ll follow me, I’ll take you to your sister, and your niece’s surgeon will be with you as soon as there is any news.”

“Thank you.” I breathe a sigh of relief and follow the nurse as she leads us through the insanity that is the emergency room. She pulls back a green curtain, and I find Olivia sitting, deathly pale, while a young man stitches closed the gash on her forehead.

“Astrid?” she asks the second she sees us, but the nurse shakes her head.

“There’s no news yet, I’m afraid. As soon as we know anything, we’ll be with you,” the nurse tells her before leaving us.

“Okay, you’re all set. Do you want me to take you to the OR waiting area?” the young doctor asks with a kind smile.

“Please,” I tell him. He doesn’t even shrink under Levi’s glare as he looks me over.

“Of course, if you’ll all follow me.” He removes his gloves and throws them in the trash before leading us from the craziness that was that room to a much quieter waiting room. “If you wait here, the doctor will find you when there’s any news.”

He leaves us as Olivia walks into the room like a robot and sits down without saying a word. Levi takes a seat next to her while I pace the room.

I fucking *hate* hospitals.

I stare out the windows, watching the people pass by, like I’m not holding my breath hoping to any beings out there listening that that little girl is going to be okay. The squeak of sneakers on the shiny floor alerts us to the nurse coming our way.

“What’s wrong?” Levi asks the instant she opens the door.

“Astrid is rejecting the blood from the transfusion, we need more blood. Are any of you blood relatives that can donate?” Her gaze bounces between us quickly, the urgency in her voice makes my heart sink. I look to Olivia who is shaking her head.

“I’m not a match, we were already tested.” Her voice is hollow and I feel like I’m going to be sick.

“My wife can donate,” Levi says. “She’ll be a match.”

I swing my head toward him, because I'm sorry what?

"Perfect, I'll have someone come and get you right away, we need to move as quickly as possible," the nurse says before scurrying away.

"What the fuck? I can't donate." I hiss at him.

"You can." He sighs, scrubbing a hand down his face. He looks to Olivia, who just looks about broken. "You're an Angel."

"So the fuck are you," I tell him, he doesn't know about my aversion to all things hospitals...I think...but fucking still.

"Remy, we don't have time for this..."

"The nurse isn't here yet, fucking talk." His aversion to telling me what the fuck is going on makes me nervous.

"You remember that you had lives, fully human lives with no awakening?" he asks and I nod. "If you think I didn't contemplate taking you from your family because they were such raging assholes, you're wrong. The only reason I didn't is because I know how headstrong you are, and you'd never have forgiven me. The one time I finally built up the resolve to do it, was the life you'd finally fallen in love. You fell in love and had a little boy. By some twist of fate, he wasn't a Hunter. I don't know if it's because of how you were made, or who you were, but the boy was a human. After you passed, I approached him. Even as a human you believed that there was more to the world, and he was just like you. He was the first of the line that has worked with me for lifetimes. They are your family Remy. I couldn't just leave them out in the cold. Just in case anyone ever discovered the truth and tried to use it against you. By some other twist of fate, each person in the line has only ever had one child. The deal passed down the lines, and I have worked with each and every one of your descendants and protected them as if they were my own family. It was the least I could do, since I didn't save you from your family. That is why they are Olivia and Astrid Bennett. They are your bloodline. So I could donate Remy, but your blood would be better."

"Holy fucking shit." I sit in the closest chair, because I'm not sure my legs will hold me. Because *holy fucking shit*. Everly was my family, Olivia and Astrid are my family. And he took care of them when I couldn't. When I didn't know.

The door opens again and a male nurse appears. "Are you ready?"

Shock still floors me, but I nod my head. "Yes of course."

"I'll need you to complete these forms," he starts, and Levi takes them.

"I can do this, you start drawing her blood." His hard voice makes the

nurse pale, but he smiles through it.

“Of course, sir. Miss?”

“Please, call me Remy.” I stand and move to the door, and the nurse looks relieved.

“If you’ll come with me.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO



“Miss me?” Kain’s voice has me lifting my head from my pillow. I blink against the light as sleep clouds my eyes.

“Hell yes I did.” My voice is practically a purr as he sits on my bed in his suit. He still looks perfectly put together and it makes me want to ruffle him up a little, but the little smirk he gives me tells me he’s more than happy to get rough.

“Did you get everything sorted?” I ask, as I stretch and yawn.

“I did, I brought you a present too.” He pulls a black rectangular box from inside his jacket and hands it to me. I eye him as I take it, because I’m not really a present kind of girl. “I’d say call it an early Christmas present, but I’m looking forward to Christmas.”

I sigh happily and untie the ribbon on the box, both eager and nervous about what’s inside. As I lift the lid I gasp. “Oh Kain...”

“I thought it would match your ring.” He smiles softly at me as I pull the necklace from the box. A black gold chain, with a violet teardrop which matches my ring perfectly.

“I love it.” The grin on my face almost hurts, but I don’t care. He’s totally adorable.

“Want me to put it on for you?” he asks and I nod, handing it over to him before turning around and lifting the bird nest that is my hair out of the way. His hands are like ice as they brush across my skin, which pebbles under his touch.

His lips brush across my shoulder once it’s in place, before he turns me to

face him. The pendant nestles on my chest, and he grins. “It looks as beautiful on you as I thought it would.”

“Thank you. You didn’t have to.”

“I know I didn’t, precious. But I saw it, and thought of you. I was gone far longer than I thought I would be, so this kept me company when you couldn’t.”

“Is everything okay with the clans?” I ask as I push my hair up into a messy bun with the hair tie on my wrist.

“It will be fine. Just my father causing some unrest, but it is settled now,” he tells me reassuringly. “Now, I brought a few people who would like to see you, if you’re ready to get up for the day?”

“People? Who?”

“Well, that would ruin the surprise, wouldn’t it?” He winks at me and stands, smoothing down his shirt. “Get dressed and come find us in the kitchen when you’re ready.”

He leans down and softly kisses me again, almost teasingly, before straightening and leaving the room. I let out an impatient sigh and throw back my covers. I both love and hate surprises, which I’m pretty sure he knows. I’m way too impatient, but if we have company, I need to sort myself out. I’m just grateful that since I’m an Angel, any marks the guys leave on me, which they all seem to love to do, fade quickly enough. So the deep purple hickey Roman left on me the other day has now all but disappeared.

Wearing a scarf just isn’t a good look for me.

I shower and dress quickly, deciding on yet another of my t-shirts from Everly. If our guests are a surprise for me, they won’t care what I’m wearing. I hope. I throw it on with a pair of jeans and head for the kitchen.

The voices reach me first and a grin cracks across my face.

I’d know that voice anywhere.

I round the doorway and head into the kitchen when I see them. “Nonnie!”

“Remy girl!” Nonnie hurries over to me and wraps me in her arms, and I sigh happily. “I missed you, pretty girl.”

She pulls back from me and looks me over before frowning. “Have these boys not been feeding you?” She tuts and heads back over to the stove. “I’ll feed you. These boys should be looking after you properly.”

She waves a spatula at Kain, Levi, and Roman and I can’t help but laugh. Roman and Levi both look amused, if a little terrified of the spatula-waving

old lady while Kain joins me in laughing.

“It’s probably my own fault, Nonnie,” I tell her, sitting in the spare stool at the island counter. “I’m a dreadful cook.”

“You poor girl. I stay and I cook for you. Kain won’t mind.” She grins and I shake my head. Levi and Roman both look like they have no idea what to do with the whirlwind of the woman in our kitchen.

“I mean, I wouldn’t say no.” I grin widely and Kain’s eyes go wide. “But think of all the people back home who would miss out on your cooking.”

“You’re right. I’ll have to go back. I’ll just make sure you’re fed while I can.” She tuts again and goes back to cooking whatever it is that smells so good.

“I will eat every morsel,” I tell her and blow her a kiss. I do love food.

“Thank you for my surprise,” I say to Kain, who chuckles while Levi and Roman still just both stand, each with a mug of coffee in hand, taking the whole scene in.

“You guys have a good morning?” I ask them and pull their gazes to me.

“I haven’t been batted away from my stove for a while, so it was definitely interesting,” Levi says grouchily, but comes and kisses the top of my head before pouring me a mug of coffee too.

“Is there any news on Astrid?” I ask him, and he shakes his head while Roman takes the seat next to me.

“What happened?” Kain asks, and Roman fills him in while I pout over my coffee. If my blood doesn’t help that little girl, I’m going to be devastated. Especially now that I know she’s family. I just hope the Angel blood doesn’t fuck with her. It’s some weird kind of cosmic miracle that the line isn’t Hunters, I don’t want to fuck that up. While I’ve loved my lives, I wouldn’t wish it on anyone. It’s not an easy life.

Nonnie finishes dinner, and ushers us all to the table before she starts serving. “What is this? It smells amazing,” Roman asks her, and she beams.

“This is a dish I have been making for many years. Ratatouille toasts with fried eggs. It is a specialty back home. Now eat! Don’t let it go cold.”

I take a bite and groan around my forkful.

“Oh my word, Nonnie. This is every bit as delicious as it smells.” She preens around the kitchen like a peacock while we all dig in. It doesn’t take long for me to clear my plate, I’m stuffed, but still kinda sad that it’s over. The guys’ cooking is good, but Nonnie. Her and Everly would have gone head to head in the finals of MasterChef or something. So freaking good.

“Did you all eat without me?” Luc saunters into the kitchen and Nonnie kisses both his cheeks.

“I saved you some,” she says, pushing him toward the table and grabbing him a plate.

“The other part of my surprise?” I say to Kain, who smiles softly and I grin. “Miss me, Luc?”

“Remy, not hearing your sass daily breaks my goddamn heart.”

“So you came out of everything pretty unscathed?” I ask Luc as he walks with me around the grounds. I just wanted to get out of the house, the guys are all busy with the stuff they had to deal with before I came along, and Levi is back at the hospital checking in on Astrid before checking on another lead on who he thinks Archer was working with, so Luc offered to come with me.

“Reasonably. Got some wicked new scars, a lucky Lycan got a cheeky shot in, but nothing life endangering. I hear you didn’t make it out quite so easily?”

I unfurl my wings for the first time since Serafina left and stretch them out. It feels so good, like stretching when you first wake up, but Luc’s face is enough to make me laugh.

“Fucking hell, you really are an Angel now.” I didn’t think he could get paler, but there he is. “Have you been flying? Do you have powers too? I have so many questions. I’ve been fascinated by Angels for years, but they’re not exactly a talkative bunch.”

“Tell me about it.” I laugh and he rolls his eyes.

“Soooooo...” He rolls his hands, trying to get me to talk and I laugh again. Turns out I’m not all that talkative either.

“I’ve flown a little, though the first time was more of a glide than actually flying. As for powers, I have them, but I haven’t even tried to use them yet. I’m still a Shadow Walker, but I’m more now apparently. Now that it’s all unlocked, I want to go see my friend Morgan, see if she can help me figure some stuff out, since the Angels at my disposal really aren’t all that talkative.”

“You mean, Queen Morganna. I love how casually you’re just like, ‘oh my friend Morgan,’ and the rest of us shit our pants in her very presence. The

creator of the Dracul. Holy shit.”

“I kind of forgot about that,” I tell him softly. “Kain didn’t mention it when we were there either.”

“Of course he didn’t. Stoic till the end. But I bet he was nervous, even if you didn’t see it.” Luc grins and I shake my head, my grin matching his.

“Well if he was, he hid it well. To be fair, she didn’t say anything either.”

“Well duh, she’s the Queen of the Shadow Realm.” He rolls his eyes and I nudge him with my shoulder as we walk. “Your wings are kind of awesome though. So shiny.”

I laugh at him again and drop to the ground. He follows suit and we lay under the almost cloudless sky in silence, just watching the few clouds there pass us by.

“Do you think it’s going to get worse before it gets better?” I ask him quietly and he turns to his side to face me.

“Probably. It usually does. I just don’t know how. You have three of the most powerful immortals of our world on your side. The Queen of the Shadow Realm. Your brother is affecting the way the Hunters look at things, how they move in the world, and is effectively their overall leader even if no one says it officially. The only way I can see this ending not in our favor, is if whoever is behind everything is more powerful than we think, or have more powerful allies than we think. I know for a fact that no Dracul clans have betrayed us. Kain’s father...well, he was the only one, maybe, but that isn’t going to be a problem anymore.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means that his father is dead, by his own hand. But I didn’t tell you that, Remy, so wait for him to tell you himself, and if he seems a bit distant, at least now you know why.” I blink at him like he didn’t just drop a nuclear truth bomb. How the fuck am I meant to pretend that I don’t know about that?

“Fucking hell.” I blow out a deep breath and lay back, covering my face with my hands. Kain said nothing, he didn’t even hint. He just acted like nothing happened. “That’s why you guys were gone so much longer?”

“Yeah, his dad challenged him and Kain still honors the old ways. The challenge was pretty public, so he wouldn’t have had a choice anyway...” he filters off and I sigh.

“How’s his family?” I ask. I don’t want to pry behind Kain’s back, but they were good people. Kain’s mom must be the reason because, while I

don't like to speak ill of the dead, Kain's dad was a giant jackass.

"They're better than you'd think. Dealing with his bullshit has been... wearing on them. And there's only so much I could ever do to bring him to heel. I think life at the castle will be better without him, their poisoning the well, as it were." He shakes his head and rubs his eyes. "It was hard though."

"Why didn't he tell me there was a challenge? I would've come to stand by him. Supported him." I look back to the house, as if I can see Kain.

"I don't know. I told him to. But if I had to hazard a guess, he didn't want to add anything to your already-full plate. It's not like you haven't been dealing with enough yourself." He tries to soften it, and while I understand kind of, I also don't. But I'm not going to get butt hurt about it. Kain obviously has enough to deal with.

"Is that why Nonnie came back with you guys?" I ask him. "Because of Kain's dad?" It's reaching, but I don't get it otherwise. Luc just laughs and shakes his head.

"No, that is all you. She essentially demanded to come and see her new favorite person. If you think she isn't making cheesecake right this second..."

"Yes!" I fist pump the air and he laughs at me again.

"Thanks for this Luc," I say, sitting back up and nudging his shoulder with mine.

"For what?"

"For being my friend. For helping distract me from the world right now. For being here."

"We've been friends a long time, Remy. I'm not about to abandon you now when shit gets really tough. I'll always be around, and if you wanna hang out with a guy who isn't all stuffy and alpha male-ish about you, you can always come find me. Wherever I am in the world."

After a lazy morning, I spent the afternoon training with Luc. Which is why I'm now on the floor of the shower letting the hot water beat the crap out of my muscles. Since I met with Serafina a few weeks ago, I've upped my training. A *lot*. My poor body might be Angelic now, but fuck me.

I'm still eager to train with my power, but Serafina has been cagey as fuck about it since she disappeared from the communications I've managed

to have with her, and Levi doesn't seem to want to push it.

I just don't understand.

Which is why I've thrown myself into something I can do. I never want to be as unprepared again as I was for when this shit storm started.

Upside, Luc was right. I have some seriously powerful allies. Archer is dead. Azriel is dead. Jack is dead. I just wish I knew why this feeling in my gut won't go away. I need to speak to Marie. I know she said she can't tell me about her vision, but maybe she can help me deal with the crazy going on inside of me.

I shut off the water and climb from the shower, wrapping the fluffy towel around me. Nonnie told me dinner would be ready in a few hours. I pick up my cell from the counter by the sink and check the time. That was an hour ago.

I guess I needed the rest more than I thought. I'm not sure at which point I stop being a baby Angel, and shit stops hurting, but I'm hoping it's not too far away. I'd like to level up now, please.

My phone buzzes in my hand with a message from Fallon

'Mama and I are heading over. We need to talk.'

Sometimes I swear to the fates that girl can read my mind. I shoot her a text back and let her know it's fine, before dressing and heading to let Nonnie know we'll be having company. Pretty sure Fallon and Marie won't even blink about a few extra Dracul around the house. Not these days anyway. Maybe Nonnie can get them carb drunk, enough to spill some secrets about that goddamn vision.

"There you are, my girl! Are you feeling better after that grandson of mine was very ungentlemanly?" Nonnie coos as I enter the kitchen and my heart stutters seeing her in here like this. I know why Kain brought her here, but her and Everly are so alike. My breath catches, but I clench my fists and shake it off, smiling at the warm older woman.

"I'm okay," I tell her, hoping I manage to mask my emotion.

"You're lying. Come tell Nonnie all about it." She pats the stool at the island and moves back to the stove. I hop onto the stool and sigh.

"Okay, but before I forget, my witch friend and her mom are heading over, do we have enough for them to join us for dinner? I only got the message a few minutes ago."

"Of course, sweet girl. I always have extra, just in case. I'm used to feeding the entire castle, a few more of your friends won't be a problem.

Now tell me why you are so sad.” Her warm smile and kind eyes break down the wall of the dam I built around my emotions, keeping all of my sadness tucked away. Everyone grieves in their own way. Mine is by avoidance. I’ve lost too many people, if that dam breaks, I’ll be lost in the tidal wave that sweeps out.

“You being here, it just reminded me of the human woman who used to look after this place. Look after us. I found out recently that she and her family are my descendants from a life I have no memory of from very long ago.”

“Ah, yes. Kain did mention the woman, Everly. I do not wish to upset you by being here, sweet girl.” Her eyes dim a little, but I shake my head to reassure her.

“It is not you, Nonnie. I love that you’re here, truly. I am just sad that she is gone.” I smile at her as my eyes water, and I wipe away the tears before they can fall.

“It is okay to feel the sadness, sweet girl. You’re an immortal now, no? Eternity is too long to carry such grief. Eventually it will eat you alive,” she tells me, waving the wooden spoon in her hand at me.

“I thought killing the man responsible for her death would make me feel better.”

“Ah, vengeance is said to be sweet, but rarely is it as fulfilling as people promise.” Her eyes glint wickedly, and I realize I don’t know much about the woman in front of me, but considering her age, the fact that she is Luc’s grandmother, I realize that she must have one hell of a story.

“How do you do it, Nonnie? Let it all go I mean?” I ask.

“Well, once upon a time, I would have taken the heads of those who wronged me and bled them dry. Everyone thinks Vlad the Impaler was a myth of a man the humans dreamt up... \Of course my legacy was gifted to a man.” She winks at me, and I blink at her in shock. That shit was real?

“Holy crap, Nonnie, you really are a badass.”

“I was once upon a time, sweet girl, these days I’d poison my enemies’ soup.” She cackles, just as Luc and Kain enter the room.

“Nonnie, what devious whisperings are you spilling in here?” Kain asks with a low chuckle as he steps behind me and kisses the top of my head.

“Oh, hush. I was doing no such thing,” she scolds him playfully, shaking that wooden spoon of hers again.

“Pretty sure I heard the word poison, Nonnie,” Luc says laughing softly.

“You should probably watch your dinner then, shouldn’t you?” she teases him, and it’s nice, watching how they all get along so well. I suppose after literally lifetimes together, they all know each other very well.

“Oh, I know you’d never hurt me,” Luc teases her back. “We all know I’m your favorite.”

She tuts in response and puts her hands on her hips. “Maybe once, but now, Remy, she is my favorite. Silly boy.”

“Nonnie!” Luc exclaims, and Kain’s shaking chest on my shoulders gives away his quiet laughter.

“Did you have a good day, precious?” Kain asks me quietly while Luc and Nonnie bicker playfully.

“It was okay. Even if I did get my ass handed to me once or twice. I got my own back.” My teeth show as I grin at him and he smiles softly, though it doesn’t reach his eyes. I want to ask about his dad, but I swore to Luc I wouldn’t. Stupid male ego bullshit. “How was yours?”

“It was...tedious, but everything from my trip is pretty much wrapped up now.”

“Oh?”

He looks me over and sighs deeply.

“Luc told you?” he asks, and my eyes go wide.

“How?” I ask, flabbergasted.

“I’ve known you a long time, Precious. I know you, and all of your tells. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you sooner.”

“Kain, you have nothing to be sorry for. I am sorry I wasn’t there for you.”

“No, mon amour. I just, I didn’t want to add anything more to your already very heavy shoulders.”

“Kain, that’s why I’m here, so you can share this stuff with me. You don’t have to carry things alone, especially stuff like this. Are you okay?”

“I am as well as could be expected. You met my father, this was a long time coming. I am sadder for my mother, but she is also handling this all far better than expected. He was my father so it is sad, but it is not a great loss. We have lost many more recently whose loss I will carry a deeper scar for.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE



Nonnie swept Fallon and Marie up the second they arrived, charming them in the same way she did me when we first met. It took a minute, but they both warmed to her, and she and Marie have been chatting up a storm since. Nonnie even let Marie help her with dinner, which I understand from Luc is unheard of, and the highest of compliments. So I've sat here with Fallon, both of us nursing a glass of Johnnie Black that Roman presented me with when he returned about half an hour ago.

That Lycan sure does know the way to a girl's heart.

Kain and the guys are all at the dining table, shooting the shit. It's nice to see everyone so relaxed, but Creek being gone is even more apparent right now. It's like a piece of my heart is missing.

"You miss him?" Fallon asks, I swear, she is either an empath, or a mind reader. My suspicion is backed by the fact that she laughs at me before emptying her glass. "It's all over your face when you look at them all over there. You might have an epic poker face Remy, but those of us who know you, well, we know you. You don't let many people in past your walls, but those of us that get through, we burrow in deep. So I know when you're missing Creek. You had a similar look when he disappeared after his twenty-first birthday."

"Well...shit." I laugh and take another sip. "I do. But we're not talking about me. We were talking about you." I raise an eyebrow at her and she rolls her eyes.

"I'm sick of talking about my bullshit. All I've done is try to talk about it,

and it wasn't helping." She pours herself another glass and shoots it back before pouring another. "I'm broken. I thought I wasn't. I thought I was shiny and new after Morgan fixed my soul. I thought I could come back and pick up where I left off. But that isn't what's happening. There's more important shit to talk about than me and my feelings anyway."

"The reason you texted me earlier?" I ask, and she nods, a grim look on her face.

"Yeah, Mama has been trying to get ahold of Lizzie for weeks, since we got back pretty much. Her coven has gone completely dark. Until we started hearing chatter this morning that they've been attacking other factions across the UK, which is their base. I'm not sure if word has reached your guys yet, but from looking at them, I'm going to say it's either a lie, or it hasn't reached them. That or it was the Hunters they were attacking, in which case, that would explain why I haven't heard back from Colt."

"Yeah I texted him earlier, and he hasn't responded to me either," I tell her, trying not to worry about my brother.

"Hey," I call over to the guys at the table. Heads swivel toward me, and I bite my lip in case I'm about to open Pandora's Box, but here goes. "Have any of you heard from any of your clans or packs in the UK?"

Luc and Kain shake their heads, while Roman pulls his phone from his pocket and shakes his head too before frowning.

"Nothing," Roman confirms, and I try not to look too alarmed.

"The coven based in the UK has been dark for weeks, since you returned from the Shadow Realm," Marie tells them, her forehead creased. "We got word of some chatter this morning that they've been attacking faction groups in their territory."

Kain looks to Luc, who pulls his phone from his pocket and leaves the room, while Roman taps his screen a few times and lifts his phone to his ear. He growls as the call rings out, and then leaves the room too, trying the call again.

"Has anyone spoken to the Hunters, to Colt?" Levi asks, looking around the room.

"I tried to reach out to him, but nothing." Fallon tells him.

"Same," I agree, and his brow furrows.

"You should try and call him again, Remy." His eyes stare into mine, like he's trying to tell me something, but I can't work out the message. I pull my cell from my pocket and dial Colt.

“It’s just ringing out before going to voicemail,” I announce, my stomach swirls, and that bad feeling I had before ramps up.

“I’ve got no reports.” Luc says as he re-enters the room. “All quiet for us.”

He sits back beside Kain, but I still can’t get over the fact that we’re missing something.

“Your vision...has it happened yet?” I turn and ask Marie. Fallon’s face falls and I know it hasn’t, even if they won’t tell me.

“You know I can’t tell you anything about it, Remy,” Marie says softly, and Nonnie tuts.

“Nonsense, if there is danger, of course you tell her!” She flings the tea towel on the counter and crosses her arms. “You want more people to die because of some witch superstition. Pfft.”

“It is not superstition,” Marie argues. “Telling her what I’ve seen could change it. Then I can’t help when needed.”

“Ha! If you can change it, maybe that would be better,” Nonnie counters, and I sigh.

“Stop, please. I know you both mean well, but arguing amongst ourselves isn’t going to help anyone.” Roman stomps back in the room as I finish speaking, his face thunderous.

“My alpha isn’t picking up his fucking phone. Theron is on it now,” he grunts, as he sits back at the table.

“Everyone should sit and eat, then you can go and save the world,” Nonnie says, ushering us over to the table.

She brings over dishes of potatoes, cooked meats and vegetables, and everyone digs in, but the whole room is tense. We eat in almost silence, and I don’t manage much, because my stomach is churning at the endless possibilities.

I clear the little I put on my plate, then try to call Colt again. Still nothing. “I’m going to head over to my brother’s, see if I can find out what is going on.”

I stand and Levi stands with me. “I’ll come with you.”

“You don—” I start, but he cuts me off with a shake of his head.

“I’m coming. Something doesn’t feel right.”

“Is this in your witchy vision?” Nonnie snickers and Marie rolls her eyes.

“Nonnie!” Luc groans.

“It’s fine,” Marie says, standing. “We should be going too.”

“Let us know as soon as you find something out?” Kain asks, and Roman grunts his agreement.

“I will. Love you guys.” I smile as I turn to leave, but it drops the minute we step outside the house.

Levi conceded and let me drive my Mustang. I need Betty’s calming leather smell, and a distraction from all of the possibilities of why the fuck Colt is ignoring both Fallon and me that are running through my head.

I pull into the driveway, happy that the damage to the house seems to have been fixed since we were here last. Still, something feels off, so I grab my gun from the glove compartment and climb from the car. Levi follows swiftly and is at my back as I climb the stairs to the door. The front door is open when we reach it and a cold chill runs down my spine. I push the door open quietly as I flick the safety off of my gun.

Levi taps my shoulder to let me know he’s behind me and we move forward through the house. It’s been torn a-fucking-part. The outside might look okay, but in here, it’s like a riot broke out and no one invited us.

We clear the ground floor and then move upstairs. It’s not much better up here, but only Bauer’s and Colt’s rooms seem to have any damage. My room, and Dad’s are untouched.

What the ever-loving fuck happened here?

Levi points up towards the library and I nod. I still when I hear a creak from upstairs.

There’s someone else here.

Levi’s eyes narrow, and he puts out a hand, stopping me from moving. He puts a finger to his lips and I roll my eyes because I’m not fucking stupid. I follow as he moves out of the room, unwilling to let me go first and climbs the last flight of stairs. He hesitates as they open up to the top floor. I raise the gun in my hands when Bauer appears at the top of the stairs, his eyes wild.

“Holy fucking shit, I nearly shot you,” I hiss and lower the weapon. “Why the fuck didn’t you call out?”

“I didn’t think anyone else was here,” he says shrugging, and I narrow my eyes.

“What the fuck happened?” I ask, turning and heading down the stairs, expecting them both to follow, which they do.

“I have no idea. I wasn’t here last night, I went to see an old friend. When I got back about a half hour ago, this is what I found. Have you heard from Colt?” Bauer asks, and I shake my head, just heading for the kitchen out of habit.

“No, he’s not answering his phone,” I tell him. I look at Levi, who’s being strangely silent. He’s watching Bauer, and I realize that Levi doesn’t trust Bauer at all. Even if he did give up the information about Archer.

“Which friend were you with?” Levi asks Bauer, who shifts nervously.

“Just a girl,” he says, shifting from one foot to the other. Levi doesn’t say anything else, he just watches Bauer closely.

“Have you tried to call Colt? Or any of his friends?” I ask Bauer who shakes his head.

“No, I searched the house as soon as I got home, then you were here,” he says, rubbing the back of his head. It takes every ounce of control I have not to slap him upside the head.

“Call him,” I grind out, and he shrugs, pulling his phone from his pocket. Just as he does, mine starts to ring. I pull it from my pocket and hurry to answer.

“Colt? Where the hell are you? Are you okay?”

“*Woah*, Little Bit. Chill, what happened?” Colt laughs over the line and I take a deep breath, counting to five so that my anger doesn’t lash out.

“What happened is, you haven’t been answering your phone for two fucking days and the house is trashed,” I tell him.

“Shit, Remy, I’m sorry. I didn’t think. I was flying for most of the last two days, I just landed back home. I’ll be there in a few minutes. I only just looked at my phone. I’m fine. Is anything missing from the house?” he asks, and alarm bells go off.

“What would be missing, Colt?” I ask, and Levi raises an eyebrow at me.

“I can’t talk right now, but I’ll be home soon. Is Bauer there?” The way he asks questions makes the alarm bells ring louder.

“Yep,” I say, not giving anything away.

“Shit. Could it have been him that trashed the house?” I turn and leave the room, because what the fuck is going on?

“What does that mean?” I hiss down the line quietly. I hear Levi’s voice in the kitchen as he starts asking Bauer questions. I really do love that man.

Angel. Whatever.

“It means, could Bauer have been the one to trash the house?”

“He was here when I got here, but if it was him, I don’t think he got whatever it is you’re talking about. We found him in the library, but his room was trashed too.”

He sighs down the line.

“Look, just keep him there, I’m only about ten minutes out.”

“Okay, but we need to talk. About more than this too,” I tell him.

“The witches?” he asks softly.

“Yup. Now hurry the fuck home.”

It takes Colt twenty minutes to get to the house, all while Levi keeps an eye on Bauer as I try to straighten up the house, which straight up looks like a bomb went off. I really don’t want it to be Bauer, I don’t want to think that he’s still playing both sides.

“What the actual fuck!” Colt moans as he walks in, even with me having tidied up a little.

“This, this is why I was freaking out. Where the fuck have you been?” I ask, and he looks into the kitchen where Levi still has Bauer essentially cornered.

“I was visiting Nasari. I needed to talk to him, face to face. He had some information for me, but he didn’t trust technology after all the breaches we’ve had recently,” he tells me, and hands me his satchel. He puts a finger to his lips and so I just keep the satchel to look at later.

“I’m going to have a look around and see if anything is missing,” he says, side-eyeing the satchel, which is when it hits me that whatever it is that he’s making sure isn’t missing, is in this bag, and he doesn’t want Bauer to know.

“Okay, I’ll tidy this place up a little.”

“Thanks, Little Bit. Just keep safe,” he says, as his gaze darts back to the bag and heads upstairs.

“Everything okay?” Levi asks as he enters the room, watching Colt leap up the stairs three at a time.

“Yeah, I’m just going to clean up a little, but then we need to head home,” I tell him as he notices the bag in my hand. He raises his eyebrows,

but I shake my head and drop the satchel behind the armchair.

“Okay, everything good with Colt?” he asks, as Bauer enters the room.

“Yeah he just had some Hunter business that kept him MIA. Everything’s fine. Just need to clean up and he’s going to make sure nothing’s missing.”

“Glad to hear it,” Bauer says, looking around the room. “I’ll go see if I can help him.”

Bauer heads up the stairs after Colt and Levi turns to face me. “I don’t trust him. Something doesn’t feel right.”

“Well, apparently Colt agrees with you,” I tell him quietly. “We need to get whatever is in the bag out of here and away from Bauer.”

“Okay, well let’s not hang around too long,” Levi says, and starts putting cushions back on the couch, and closing the open drawers in the units in here.

“Can we swing by the hospital on the way home?” I ask him and he looks pretty shocked. I haven’t been back since we found out Astrid made it through the surgery and my blood helped her. My aversion to hospitals is a real and tangible thing.

“Yeah sure, Olivia would love that.”

“I was thinking about giving them my apartment,” I tell him, like it’s not a big deal. But they’re my family, and I want to keep them safe. “I’m never there, and as much as I would love to have them at the manor, it’s not a place for a child. Not really. And before you tell me it’s secure, Everly still died living there. My apartment is on the fourth floor. There’s a doorman there. The only other way to access it is by the roof, but Fallon can help put up wards, and we can install some more security around the apartment for them.” The words practically vomit from my mouth but he smiles at me.

“I think that’s a great idea. Plus, trying to explain to her about all of your boyfriends isn’t a conversation I want to have. I’m sure Sushi will enjoy being back home. If you’re sure, then we’ll sort it.”

“I am,” I tell him with a grin. “We can get all my crap packed up and moved to the manor, or leave some stuff there for the two of them. It’s not like I need it.”

“I know you don’t always think it, but you really are one of the best, kindest-hearted people I’ve ever known,” he murmurs as he comes over to me and wraps his arms around my waist.

“Shhh! You’ll ruin my street cred.” He barks out a laugh at my words, shaking his head.

“Your secret is safe with me. Does this mean you’re going to officially

move into the main bedroom in the manor?”

“I hadn’t thought that far ahead. I bed hop so often, or we all pile in, but I like the closet space in my room. Plus, I love my bathtub.” I grin up at him and he shakes his head.

“You and that tub have an unhealthy relationship.” He chuckles. “But fine, I won’t push for now. I get that it’s not as simple with the whole, ‘five of us’ dynamic.”

“Thank you,” I tell him softly, rising on my tiptoes and kissing him gently.

“You can thank me later.”

I smirk at his meaning and run my hands up his abs and over his chest. He shivers beneath my touch, and my smirk turns into a wicked smile.

“Oh I very much intend to.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR



Astrid’s stay in the hospital was extended until tomorrow—the doctors were concerned with some swelling on her brain. Apparently my miracle blood helped her, but not how Levi expected it to. Angel blood is meant to heal all. But it would seem the anomaly that kept my blood line from being Hunters, also made them immune to magical assistance. That was not a fun little fact I wanted to know.

The only small upside is that it gives me a chance to empty my crap out of the apartment before Olivia and Astrid arrive. I’m leaving all of the furniture here, I sure as hell don’t need it at the manor, I just need to empty all of my personal shit, and my clothes. Though, I’m considering donating a fair amount, because Everly, fates bless her wherever she may be, filled my current closet to almost overflowing.

The door opens and Colt stumbles in with a ton of boxes ready to be assembled and filled. “Where do you want all of this?”

“Anywhere, I’m just sorting through my crap,” I tell him. “Thank you for helping with this.”

“Sure, I still don’t get why you’re handing your apartment over to strangers,” he says with a shrug but puts all of the stuff in his arms on the counter.

“They’re not strangers,” I tell him, and realize with everything that’s gone on, I haven’t had a chance to bring him up to speed. So I tell him everything Levi told me, along with the tidbits I’ve managed to pull from my memories. When I finish, he sits staring at me wide-eyed, his mouth opening and closing

but not actually saying anything.

“I mean...holy shit. I didn’t think your life could be any more twisted and then you go and drop that *plot twist*. Fucking hell, Remy. How did none of us know about this?”

“Levi,” I tell him, and he nods.

“Makes sense. On another note about how twisted things are right now, did you look in the bag I gave you?” He stands and starts putting together the cardboard boxes for me to shove my shit into.

“No, but it’s safe. Literally. In the safe, which I had no idea about, at the manor. It’s literally a fucking vault off of Levi’s torture chamber.” I laugh as Colt shudders.

“I don’t want to think of the ways that guy has to torture someone. I’m not squeamish in the slightest, and he obviously worships the ground you walk on, but out of all of your guys, he’s the one I least ever want to take on, so please, no bad break ups.”

“You’re such a dork.” I throw a cushion at him, and he catches it grinning.

“Yeah, but you love me. Anyway, when you get a second, inside that bag is a journal we found at Archer’s place. It’s why I went to see Nasari—he’s set up a fund for Dylan and made sure he’ll be looked after with Archer gone. We also had an elder’s vote to ensure that Archer doesn’t get awoken if he cycles back. Personally, I hope he ends up in the Shadow Realm with your friends. Seems like poetic justice. Anyway, I read through it and nothing in there jumps out at me as being useful, but I figure extra eyes on it could be useful, especially since I’m convinced it was Bauer that tore the house apart looking for it. I told him we’d found some of Archer’s journals just before I left. I don’t want to think that he’s still hiding shit from us, but there’s just this voice inside my head that tells me not all is what it seems with him. Even though he looks to be on our side and helping us.” He flicks his tongue bar through pursed lips, like he always does when he’s stressed.

“Okay, well once we’re done here, and Olivia and Astrid are settled in, I’ll mention it to the others. We have a friend who might even have some insight into it. He’s a historian of sorts for the Angels.”

“Oh woah, awesome. Thanks. I don’t understand why Bauer would be so interested in it, unless he’s still up to something,” he says sadly. “Is it wrong to distrust him so much? Family is supposed to come first. Always.”

“What I’ve learned over the years, Colt. Is that blood isn’t always family.

Family are the ones who turn up. Time and again. Pull you from the depths of despair, or the fire you find yourself in, no questions asked. They're the ones that are there, no matter how bad you fuck up. Blood isn't everything."

"I guess you're right." He shrugs and turns away from me. "What do you want me to box up?"

"If you start packing all of my pictures and trinkets in here. I'm going to leave all the kitchen stuff for them. Fates knows Everly had more than enough stuff in the kitchen at the manor. I'm going to strip my bed, and throw the stuff in the laundry, but otherwise, literally just my clothes and stuff."

"Okay, that shouldn't take us too long. I'm meeting Elijah and the boys for poker tonight. It's been way too long since I lightened their wallets." His grin makes me laugh as he turns and starts packing away the few bits I have in the main room of the apartment.

I head to the bathroom, throwing all my stuff into a travel bag, which takes me like five minutes before I work my way to my bedroom. The spare room doesn't need anything. It's all made up, and I never really kept anything in there. I enter my bedroom and it hits me how long it's been since I slept here. So much has happened this year... This used to be my safe space, and now, now it doesn't even really feel like home. The manor is where I've come to think of as home, and that's why I know that this is the right decision. Even with the bedroom allocation problems, I'm sure with time that will feel less, well, awkward. Though, I like the idea of keeping my room, even if Levi does want me to move. While my guys are happy to share, they also all very much like to have me to themselves, so us all having one bedroom just doesn't make sense.

I shake my head realizing I've been sitting on my bed staring into space for fates only knows how long. I grab the roll of black bags from the pile of crap on my bed and start working through my closet to see what can be donated and what I want to keep.

"Need a hand?" Colt asks as he pokes his head around the door. "All the stuff from out here is boxed up."

"Sure, you can just help me bag up stuff," I tell him with a smile. He moves and sits on the floor in the middle of the piles I've started.

"The left is donation, right is keep, middle is I don't know," I tell him, and head back into my closet. Who knew it would take so long to go through it all?

“Remy, what’s this?” Colt says, holding up a black envelope. “It fell out of the pocket of your leather jacket.”

I take the letter from him, and cast my mind back. The stranger who delivered it. Bauer said it was one of his friends, that the letter was from him. I contemplate just throwing it out, but my curiosity gets the best of me and I tear it open.

Amantara,

By the time you read this, it might be too late, but I hope I get to you in time. There are so many who are working against you right now. I’m working to find out who your enemies are here in Avalon, but it may take me some time. In the meantime, do not trust anyone. Even those you think are closest to you.

This seems to go back centuries and the more I dig, the darker it gets. Your Earth brother, Bauer, he works against you. Do not trust him. Even if he confides in you. Whispers tell me he is the closest one to you, in the best place to betray you when you let your guard down.

There are traitors in every faction, whether you see them or not. I am hunting Amelia, I believe she could be the key to all of this. If she finds you first, do not trust her.

I will try to reach out to you again soon, but things are treacherous here. Do not trust anyone, little bird.

Your faithful friend.

M.

What the fuck?

After showing Colt the letter, we left the apartment in disarray and headed back to the manor. It was pretty late by the time Roman, Kain, and Levi stopped freaking out. We have no idea who sent the letter, and no matter how much I try to think back, I can’t think of who *M* could be.

Levi about bugged out, but after a few hours of pacing and shouting, everyone calmed down. Colt went home to keep an eye on Bauer, and I

remembered to tell the guys what was in the vault.

Archer's journals.

There are just too many breadcrumbs and nothing seems to line up fully.

This morning, all of that is put on hold, because Olivia and Astrid are finally leaving the hospital and moving into the apartment. Roman had some of his guys head there last night and finish packing up my stuff, they brought it here, and it's in one of the spare rooms for me to go through when I get to it eventually. The same guys went to the storage unit of Olivia's and got their things first thing this morning to unpack it into the apartment so it can start to feel like home from the minute they arrive.

Levi and I are currently hovering in the waiting room, while Astrid is discharged. Kain and Roman decided to wait for us at the manor. I'm not the only one with an aversion to hospitals it would appear.

"Any more thoughts on who that letter could be from?" I ask Levi while we wait, and he shakes his head.

"Honestly, you had more enemies than friends. Shadow Walkers aren't exactly common, and because of their affinity with darker powers, a lot of people weren't willing to risk getting too close in case they incurred your wrath. Which was kind of legendary in and of itself. There are so many unknowns. I don't want to take you to Avalon, but at this point, we're running out of options." He runs his hand through his hair as he looks down the hall for Olivia and Astrid again.

"I'm not running away to Avalon," I tell him firmly.

"That's not what I mean," he starts to say, but then Olivia and Astrid are coming towards us, Astrid's little smiling face warms my heart.

"Sorry that took so long," Olivia says, blowing some hair off of her face. She looks more than a little exhausted and flustered.

"Nothing to apologize for," I tell her with a warm smile. "Let's get you guys to your new home, shall we?"

"Are you sure it's okay? I mean, we gave up the lease on the old apartment after Mom, but I don't want us to be a burden. Plus the arrangement we've always had..."

"It's fine," I reassure her. "This will work better for everyone. Plus, the building manager just hired a doorman. It's nice and secure, plus it's not too far away if we need you guys, or vice versa."

"Thank you, Remy. We really do appreciate it."

"Don't. You're family. This is what family does, and it's not like I'm

using it. Better this than it sit empty.” I crouch down, and the smiling little Angel that is Astrid giggles at me.

“How are you feeling, sweet girl?” I ask her and she smiles wider.

“I’m okay, thank you. Mom said Sushi and Ranch were okay, and waiting for us at home, so I’m just excited to see them. I missed them a lot.” Olivia heads over to the nurses station to finish the paperwork to get us all out of here.

“I’m sure they missed you too, but yes, Levi assured me this morning that the little rascals are absolutely fine, and are waiting for you in your new place.” I tuck some of her curly hair behind her ear and she giggles again. Oh to be that young and innocent. “Let’s get you home, shall we?”

“Yes!” she squeals, and I can’t help but laugh at her enthusiasm. I look up to find Levi watching us, the look on his face makes my heart stutter. Pure, unadulterated love pours from him.

“All good to go,” Olivia says cheerfully as she rejoins our little group, and pushes the wheelchair Astrid is in toward the main doors.

“I’ll go grab the car,” Levi says, pulling the keys from my back pocket and jogs off into the parking lot.

“Are you sure the apartment will be secure?” Olivia asks me. “I know Levi would never let anything happen to us, I’m just...nervous. Especially after this.”

“I swear it. We’ve had my witch friend there this morning laying wards down, so no one who intends harm to you can even get in the building, let alone the apartment. There’s also upgraded security that Kain had some of his Dracul install this morning while Roman’s Lycans were moving your stuff in. I spoke to my brother, and he’s had the doorman appointed. It’s an older Hunter, but he’s still good at what he does. Plus, we have an alarm system set up that comes directly to all of our phones, so if anything happens, one of us can be there within minutes.”

“Oh, wow.” She blinks at me, like she can’t quite fathom what I just said.

“Like I said, you’re family. Me and mine look after our own,” I tell her with a smile, and she hugs me tightly. While I don’t know her very well, I’ve essentially made sure we moved mountains to keep them safe. For Everly. I don’t know that she’d ever forgive me if her family were harmed. I already failed to keep Everly safe. I won’t fail again.

After getting Olivia and Astrid settled, we head back to the manor to deal with the shitshow that is our lives. I drop a text to Fallon asking her and Marie to meet us at the manor and then one to Colt, telling him that his friends are welcome.

We could use all the allies we can get.

I really fucking wish Creek was here too. I miss him more than I care to admit. I know he needed to go, that it's my own fault for making the decision to make him what he is, but it's like I'm walking around without one of my limbs.

I push down the emotions swirling inside of me, because there's other stuff I need to focus on that's more important right now, I just hope he's getting what he needs from being away.

"We really need to work on my powers," I say to Levi whose eyes dart to me from the road.

"That was a little out of the blue."

"Hardly. I've been wanting to work on them for weeks, but Serafina wanted me to work on my fighting skills first, then disappeared. It's as if none of you want me to learn them. We're lucky I have such a good handle on my power that I can keep it pretty much locked down. I'm tired of not being at my best. I'm a warrior at heart, Levi. You know that better than anyone. Not being at my full ability is driving me insane. I'm trying not to be a whiny little bitch about it, but put yourself in my shoes."

He sighs and grips the steering wheel so tight his knuckles turn white. "I get it. I just...I don't want you to get hurt, Remy."

"I know that, but I'm a big girl. If I get hurt, I'll brush myself off and get back up again. Getting hurt isn't something that I'm a stranger to," I tell him, refusing to back down this time.

"Fine. Just, fine. I know what it's like to be cut off from your power. The Shadow Realm fucking sucked, and that wasn't even being fully cut off. We'll start tomorrow, with the shit I know you should be able to do. We might have to visit Morgan to work out the rest, but I swear, we'll get you trained."

"Thank you." I don't let how happy I feel show on my face, because I can almost see how afraid he is. I kind of get it. There are so many unknowns, and as he's told me before, working with my power could alert the Archangel council to the fact that I've become an Angel again—something we haven't told them, and don't intend to until we have to.

We drive the rest of the way to the manor in a comfortable silence, and by the time we get there, Colt and Fallon have both texted me to say they're on their way.

"Can you grab the journals from the vault? Might as well do all of this in one hit," I ask Levi as we enter the manor.

"Sure, I'll grab them and bring them up to the kitchen. Sounds like that's where everyone else is," he says, before kissing me quickly but full of heat, and then disappears toward the basement. I make my way to the kitchen, where, as Levi predicted, everyone else is waiting for us. They're playing a card game of some sort, and from the stack of matchsticks in front of Nonnie, I'm going to say she's cleaning everyone out.

"This looks like fun." I sit at the table and laugh at the mixed expressions.

"Woman is a thief," Roman grumbles, and Nonnie just laughs.

"Shouldn't bet if you can't play, wolf," she teases, and Roman just huffs making me laugh softly.

"Well, I'm sorry to spoil your fun, but we have some stuff we need to go through," I tell them solemnly. "We need to go through the journals, see if anything in there makes sense to anyone, and try to decipher this letter properly too."

"Well, I already know it was my father who was the traitor in the clans. He is gone, and with him any trace of dissent. I don't think my reign will be challenged again any time soon, and the generals are all keeping a close eye on their people," Kain says, while Luc nods his head in agreement.

"He's right. The Dracul are secure," Luc confirms.

"I spoke to Theron last night, he's looking into it, but I can't imagine any of the alphas turning on us," Roman says, crossing his arms across his chest.

"What about Echo?" I ask, and he doubletakes at me.

"Echo is dead."

"I know he is, but could that have been why he challenged you? It would be a good position for him if he wanted to challenge the direction we were heading in. Plus if he'd won, the Lycans wouldn't have supported us bringing everyone together," I tell him, and he looks at me like he's considering my words.

"I'll speak to Theron, see what he thinks. I know Echo was an ass, but I just can't picture it."

"It's those closest to us whose betrayal we never see coming. That's why they cut so deep," Nonnie interjects, before getting up from the table. Levi

enters the room and drops the satchel on the table. He takes a seat next to me and pulls the journals from the bag. There's at least a dozen of them.

Oh goodie.

"I guess we better dive in," Kain sighs, as Colt, Elijah, Danny, and Fallon enter the room.

"Oh good, we arrived in time for the fun stuff," Colt says, rolling his eyes. "I caught Fal and the guys up on the way here. Anything new we need to know?"

"Not yet, we were just about to dive into the journals," I tell them.

"I will start sorting dinner for everyone," Nonnie announces gleefully, and we all shift to make space for the newcomers at the table.

Roman passes the journals down so everyone has one each. "Let's descend into madness, shall we?"

I sigh at Roman's words, because his assessment isn't likely far from the truth. Everyone quiets as they start reading, just the sounds of Nonnie cooking keep us company. So I crack the journal in my hands open and start to read. I go through pages of utter nonsense until I come across an entry that seems like it could be something.

I met with everyone again today. The code names seem like bullshit to me, but everyone has one, so I have no choice but to go along with it. Especially if I want what I was promised. Why we're working with those who should be our slaves is beyond me, but he says that we are just using them as a means to an end. A necessary alliance for the time being to bring our vision to life. Angels and Hunters ruling above all. The humans and other factions working for us. Accepting us as the superior races.

Angel blood cleanses all.

The filth shall be below us with their taint.

Though the Archiver sure does enjoy pulling the strings of his puppets. Making them dance for him. Tonight, we brought our second and thirds to the meeting with us. We took the usual precautions, just in case, but finally, things are starting to come together.

Even if that stupid fucking Lycan got himself killed. At least his chosen second filled his place. Our foothold still exists there. Though we still can't seem to infiltrate the Dracul. I've no idea why it seems to be such a problem. But he won't let me step in.

Soon, soon we shall reign superior, and that little bitch will be my plaything once and for all.

“Erm, you guys...” I look up from the journal and find all of their eyes on me. My voice sounding as creeped out as I feel. “I think I found something. It doesn’t make much sense, but maybe it does to one of you.”

I read the passage aloud, and people curse around the table. Roman the loudest when I mention the Lycans.

“Who the fuck is the Archiver?” Colt asks, and Levi looks alarmed momentarily, but the flash in his eyes is gone almost as quick as it appeared.

Fallon’s phone rings, breaking the silence and she winces. “Sorry guys, it’s Mama.”

She answers but the shouts and screams of the other side of the line filter through to us all. “Where are you?”

Fallon’s voice is terrified, and the words on the other line are muffled before it disconnects.

“I need to go,” she says and stands.

“I’ll come with you,” I tell her without question. Whatever that was, I’m not letting her go alone. Not after everything.

“Okay,” she says, and mutters under her breath, a portal opening in the kitchen.

“What the fuck is going on?” Roman shouts.

“You cannot just rush into whatever is happening without a plan,” Kain says softly, trying to reason with me.

“She’s family,” I say with a shrug and step through the portal behind her, reckless or not.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE



I step out of the portal into chaos. I have no idea where we are, beyond the fact there's green fields as far as the eye can see, but in the immediate area, there are witches and Lycans everywhere, fighting, both with blades and magic. I curse for not having grabbed my sword but there was no time. Thank fates I keep a blade of both iridium and obsidian tucked in my boots these days. I pull the obsidian one and follow Fallon into the fray.

I hear cursing behind me and look back as everyone who was just at my dining table appears through the portal just before it closes.

"What the actual fuck!" Roman roars, and a ton of the Lycans still, hearing their alpha's voice. That's when Fallon's scream rings out across the madness. I spin in the direction of her voice and see Marie fall to the ground.

"Fallon!" Colt yells, and runs towards her. I follow close behind, as a roar sounds behind us. I spare a look over my shoulder and see Roman's midnight wolf tearing through witches and Lycans alike. His rage is almost palpable, as if I can feel it inside myself. I turn back just as the others join the fight, but I know my guys can look after themselves. If Marie is hurt...

By the time Colt and I reach Fallon, she's curled over Marie, sobbing.

"Fallon, let me see her," Colt says softly. She shakes him off and light shoots from her hands. Brighter than I've ever seen. Marie moans under the light, but Fallon keeps pushing it until Marie passes out. I look at Colt over Fallon's shoulder, and he looks as worried as I do.

"Fallon..." I say softly. She looks up at me, but her eyes are just white, and the glow from her hands starts to pulse through her entire body.

“I will kill her,” she says fiercely, in a voice I don’t recognize. She looks around the mass of people, and her gaze locks onto the coven head I recognize as Lizzie. This must be the UK coven that has been causing issues. Everything starts falling into place in my mind as Fallon stands. She almost floats across the field, heading toward Lizzie, the glow from her growing brighter, making my eyes water, and everything goes quiet, like I’m linked to her light.

“Fallon,” I call after her, but it’s like she can’t hear me.

“What is happening to her?” Colt shouts, as the noise around us filters back in.

“I have no idea. You get Marie the fuck out of here, and I’ll try and make sure Fallon doesn’t get herself killed, or do something she regrets.”

“Her power, it is growing,” Marie moans as her eyes flutter open. “She is different since she came back from the Shadow Realm. Her power, it is different.”

She passes back out and Colt scoops her up in his arms, and I stay crouched, watching as he gets her away from this craziness. Elijah and Danny jog on either side of him, making sure he’s covered. I look around and spot Kain and Roman tearing through the people attempting to attack them. It takes me a minute to realize Levi is above us, wings out, but the air gets thicker, and I know he’s calling on that power inside of him that he so rarely uses to its full extent.

My eyes lock with his, and I can almost feel that tether between us. The link from his mark on my skin, I feel his power inside of me, as if it stretches after a long sleep. I unfurl my wings, and join him in the sky.

“You wanted to learn what lived inside of you, Angel. Give me your hand and I’ll show you a taste.” I give him my hand without thought, the shock that runs through me as our skin touches is like a whole new kind of awakening. As if when my power awoke before, it was merely a sleeping beast stirring, but this, it’s like I prodded that beast with a bolt of lightning, and it roars to life.

“Let’s show them why they shouldn’t fuck with us, shall we?” He winks at me and I feel the pressure in the air build.

Kain?

Yes, precious?

Can you and Roman get everyone clear of the field? Colt and the others have Marie and are making for the outskirts of the fight, and I can’t see Luc.

Levi and I are about to unleash a small piece of Hell, and I don't want you caught in the crossfire.

Anything for you, mon amour.

I close the connection between us as I see Fallon looking up at me, her eyes still just pools of light. She nods and then those of her coven are wrapped in bubbles of the same gold glowing light coming from her.

I feel as Levi unleashes a fraction of the power between us, thunder cracks through the sky as lightning scorches the ground. The witches and Lycans who aren't protected start to scramble, but Fallon still heads towards Lizzie. Portals start to open, but the lightning stops some of our enemies before they can reach them. More disappear than don't, but there are more than a few scorched bodies scattered on the ground beneath us.

A scream rings out below us, and I see Fallon with Lizzie on her knees before her. Fallon's glowing hands are on the coven leader's head, her screams sound tortured, and I do nothing but watch as Fallon fills the witch with the light coming from her hands.

Fallon releases her, and the witch falls to the floor, screams still ringing out as she writhes on the grass. I let go of Levi's hand, the power between us still there despite not having contact between us, and I fly to where Fallon stands above the witch, landing with as much grace as I can muster.

"Fallon, you don't want to kill her. Killing her will leave a stain on your soul that you won't be able to clean," I say softly as I approach her, the glow starting to dim. The pressure in the air lessens and I feel my power going back to sleep inside of me just before Levi touches on the ground beside me.

"She tried to kill Mama. She deserves to die," Fallon hisses, her eyes slowly coming back to normal.

"She does, but your mom is okay. Colt has her. You should let your mom decide her fate, since it was her life she tried to take." I have nothing against the witch dying, but I know that Marie wouldn't want this for Fallon. Especially if this is the power talking, not her. I've seen witches destroyed by the power inside of them when it is stronger than they are. Memories filter through my mind that send a shiver down my spine. That is not something I want for my best friend.

"Fallon," Kain says softly as he approaches from behind her. "Your mother is asking for you."

Fallon's shoulders sag as the last of the glow disappears, and she looks up at me like she's lost.

“Go to your mom. We’ll deal with the witch,” I tell her softly, and she nods.

“She isn’t a witch any longer,” Fallon mumbles, shock finally hitting her at what she did. I look to Kain, who nods at me.

I’ve got her, mon amour.

His voice filters into my mind via our bond, and I smile at him as he puts an arm around Fallon’s shoulders and soothes her as he leads her to where they have Marie.

“What do we do with her?” I ask Levi, who grins.

“We truss her up, and hand her over to Marie once she’s regained her strength. No one is better at interrogation than a persecuted witch.”

Fallon’s coven came back to the manor with us, opening enough portals for everyone to get back, including carrying their fallen, though they were few, thanks to Fallon and her new power. Once everyone was sure that Marie would be okay, they left us, under the promise we would not harm Lizzie without Marie’s say so.

It would appear that all of this has just cemented Marie’s unofficial seat as their high witch. I’ve never gotten too involved with witch politics, but this seems pretty huge. Maybe once Fallon comes back from the shocked state she’s in, and Marie wakes up, things will calm a little, but the witches are a little keyed up, and I can’t say I blame them.

Having those closest to you betray you hurts in the worst kind of way.

“How is she?” Roman asks softly, as I close the door to my bedroom where Marie and Fallon are now sleeping.

“It took some chamomile tea, and a lot of reassurance, but Fallon is asleep. Marie hasn’t woken up yet, but she seems okay. It’s likely she just needs to heal,” I say wearily. I can’t wait for our lives not to be a constant fucking rollercoaster. I also don’t even want to think about the possibility of losing Marie. Not yet. I know it’s inevitable, but we’ve lost enough people. Our circle isn’t big enough to lose anyone else.

We move back to the sitting room where the others are waiting for us.

“I spoke to Maddie and Nate, let them know what happened. Maddie offered to come on by, but I told her we’d call her if we needed her. I’ve

updated the elders too,” Colt tells me the minute he sees me. He looks like he’s aged about ten years this afternoon. “How is she?”

“She’s okay, considering,” I tell him softly as I sink into the corner of the sofa. My spot. “She’s confused, upset, and drained, but all being what it is, she’s okay. They’ll both be okay.”

It’s like the whole room lets out a breath and relaxes. Everyone sits around the room, and we just sit in silence for a few minutes, enjoying the peace.

“This means it really isn’t over yet, huh?” Colt asks quietly. I lift my head up and look at him. Really look at him. He has changed so much these last few months, we all have. To think that Thanksgiving isn’t that far away. It blows my mind how little time has passed with how much has happened. Our lives are unequivocally, and irrevocably changed.

“No, it’s not,” Levi responds. “It might not be for a while. One thing I’ve learned in my life is that the wars that are the longest, tend to change your life in the most inexplicable ways, but the people that stay with you throughout it, they tend to be the ones that will be around forever.”

Nonnie enters the room, wooden spoon in hand, and her smile dims a little when she takes us all in, the weary sight before her. “Come now, you need to eat. It will help your souls feel better. Food helps everything.”

“Nonnie,” Luc starts, but she waves him off.

“No, you all, come eat, it will make you feel better.” Her tone brokers no argument, so we each stand and work our way back to the kitchen, coming face to face with the feast Nonnie has prepared. I didn’t even know we had half of this stuff in the house. There are fresh pastas, sauces, meats, rice, curries, and so many different types of bread, meats, and cheeses.

I might not have been hungry before, but looking at this, my mouth waters.

As we sit, Nonnie pours blood into hers, Kain’s, and Luc’s glasses from Kain’s stash, and then pours red wine for the rest of us. She sits between the two Dracul and raises her glass. “To everyone making it home.”

The rest of us raise our glasses to her toast, and my heart pangs with the fact that Creek isn’t here with us. I just hope he will be back soon.

It doesn’t take long for the chatter to pick up as everyone digs into the food. I eat quietly, enjoying having everyone together, wishing we had a bigger table, and that all of our friends could be here too.

Maybe one day, when this madness is over I’ll get my wish.

And hopefully we're all still here to make it a reality.

Fallon woke the next morning without issue, though she still seems a little spaced out two days later. Marie woke up once, we managed to get her to eat a little and she fell back asleep. Fallon doesn't seem worried, so I'm trying not to. Apparently after being so close to death, and healing, the body shuts down a little. It's to be expected. The cost of the use of magic. I hate that there is always a fucking cost.

Especially for saving a life.

But it's not like I can talk to the earth and tell it not to be such a dick to my friends. If I could though, I probably would.

The last few days have been quiet. After speaking to the elders, Hunters were sent out to try and track the missing witches, so the Hunters and covens have been working together, but so far, there hasn't been much luck. The coven has scattered to the winds, and with portals being able to be used, they can literally jump to anywhere.

Plus, since we don't know who the leader of this merry band of misfits is, we don't know what extra protections they have in place.

What we do know is that whoever it is, must be getting desperate, because having lost their foothold with the Hunters, witches, and Shadow Realm, and potentially the Lycans, depending on who it was they turned, their forces must be dwindling. My biggest worry with that is desperate people make desperate, unpredictable decisions.

Which is exactly why I'm in the library, pouring over Archer's journals. Most people have left here now, even Luc went back to the castle to ensure that everything is running smoothly with the generals and clans. Though he left Nonnie here after she threatened to never cook for him again if he dared to force her to leave before she was ready. The look of sheer horror on his face still makes me laugh a day later.

I sigh and drop my head onto the table. Reading through the inner workings of Archer's mind is well...dreary. He really did have a few sandwiches short of a picnic. It's like reading the inner dialogue of a mad man. I suppose that is what it is, but still.

So many codenames to try and decipher, though the one he started calling

the puppet master, he originally referred to as the Archiver. It tugs at something in the back of my mind, though the thread doesn't seem to be one I can pull to the forefront of my memory. But it feels familiar.

Unfortunately, with the mistreatment of my memory stores through soul transfer, awakenings as a Hunter, and everything else, I fear that some memories I will never retrieve fully, even though they're all unlocked now.

Kain wants to ask Marie if she has any ideas, her being a seer, he thinks that the magic that makes her a seer, could be linked to how I can access my past memories. Personally, I'm skeptical, but then, magic isn't something I've ever really paid attention to outside of how it could help me. That makes me sound awful, but I've had other things to focus on throughout the years.

"You fancy getting away from that drivel for a while?" Levi leans on the doorframe. "You look like you could use a break, and I was thinking we can work with your power some more."

I feel my eyes widen as my heart rate picks up. "Hell fucking yes!"

I slam the journal in front of me closed and jump to my feet. He chuckles at me, but motions to the door where the library leads out to the gardens. "Not in here, too many things could be obliterated."

I smile widely and dart to the doors. It's taken too fucking long to get to this point, but I'm not going to put my foot in it and say that out loud when he's finally dialing back his inner caveman and is ready to help me. Even if he doesn't really want to.

He walks beside me until we're around the middle spot of the space between the manor and the tree line. Plenty of space for shit to go wrong without destroying the place I guess.

"Okay, so," he starts, running a hand through his hair. "As you might have gathered the other day, you can both filter your power to me, to increase my power, or you can steal it, and use it. It's one of the reasons most Angels avoid Shadow Walkers. No one wants to be around people who can potentially strip them of all power." My jaw drops at his words...I took some of his power? I didn't even realize.

"This is one of the reasons I've been hesitant to train you. Not because I'm afraid you'd steal my power, but because of the fact that if people knew what you were, that you had control over your gifts, it would add to our ever-growing list of enemies. But after the other day, I already know that people have started paying attention. It's another reason I rarely use my power. It's like a homing beacon to those who want to see what we're up to. By using

our power, it's like painting a target on our backs for the other Angels." He lets out a deep sigh and clenches his fists. "But, I'm also not willing to leave you powerless. There are only two people I've ever known referred to as the Archiver, they are both Angels, though there is no way that they're behind all of this."

"Who are they?" I ask wearily.

"Well, one is Nevin," he says, and I laugh.

"Yeah, there's no way. He's your friend."

"Exactly, the other hasn't been seen or heard from since the War of the Fallen. But still, I'd rather know that no matter what, you have every tool at your disposal."

"So what else can I do?" I ask, practically bouncing on the spot.

"Well, this is all a guess based on what you could do as Amantara, but as you know, you have the rare power to walk between realms without a cost. You only need to spill blood so others can pass with you. As well as that, you can control the elements. Water, air, fire, earth. Fire used to be your closest affinity, though I have no idea if that is still the case, but that's kind of the idea of today. You could also control the shadows. Wrap yourself in them and move between places. A little like the whispering that Morgan and her guys could do, though not quite the same. The biggest unknown is the extra power that Morgan hinted to, but let's start on what we do know and we can work from there."

"That sounds like...a lot." I gulp, nervous all of a sudden. I don't want to be that powerful.

"It is, but I've got you. I'm an Archangel, so technically, I should have the power to shut you down, though the only person who could ever truly reign you in when it got too much was Michael. But since he's now the head of the Archangel council, let's hope we can keep you reasonably muted and off his radar."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX



Four days.

That's how long it took for Marie to wake properly.

That's how long I've been working on my powers with Levi. Despite the fact I still only have a very basic grip on what we've worked on. I can't manifest any elements as yet, but I can manipulate them if they're around me, and fire is still my strongest element. The memories of handling my powers are all there, but accessing them is different than it was when I was Amantara. It's like I have to walk through a sticky film to access the elemental power within me.

While I say fire is my strongest element, I'd probably actually say it was the shadows, I mean, if they were an element. That has been the easiest power for me to harness. I even completely masked myself from Levi. He couldn't even sense me with his own power. Which is apparently unheard of and left me with a rather pissed off Angel, until I explained that this could be a good thing considering how many Angelic enemies he keeps reminding me I likely have.

Kain and Roman have been surprisingly chill about everything. Roman has been focused on trying to find out who the betrayer in the packs is, but as yet, is coming up empty via Theron. He's threatening to leave and go find the damn person himself, while I try not to sulk about another one of my guys disappearing on me.

"Are you ready?" Levi asks. I'm at the table with Kain, eating lunch. Well he's eating, I'm here trying not to let the heat between my thighs rule

me as he licks up the blood from the bite on my wrist.

“Thank you, mon amour. Nothing ever tastes anywhere near as good as you.” Kain winks at me, and touches the corner of his mouth with his handkerchief, smiling wickedly at me. Levi shakes his head, his chest shaking while he laughs at us as Kain leaves the room.

“Now I’m ready,” I tell him, trying to picture something gross to tamper down the rising heat inside of me.

“Good, because today we’re going to work on using your elements in battle.” His grin is wicked and I groan. This is undoubtedly going to hurt me, far more than it’s going to hurt him.

“That sounds delightful.” I roll my eyes, glad I put on my workout gear this morning. “But, before we do that, can I ask you a question?”

He eyes me warily, but sits opposite me at the table. “You don’t normally ask to ask a question. What’s up?”

“I had a dream last night, well more of a flashback. To when you saved me, in this life. You called me the *nisi vite*—the balance. I’d completely forgotten about it, what did you mean?” It’s been bugging me since I woke up, but he wasn’t here for me to pester first thing. He looks up at the ceiling and lets out a deep breath.

“You probably haven’t remembered it yet, because I’ve no doubt you would have said something. But the life you had before this one, you saved my life. That’s how you ended up with my mark in this life. We were already linked from so long ago, not that you knew it, but I digress. When I took your soul as Amantara, and moved you to the body of a Hunter, I tipped the balance. It is because of that act that the Hunters cycle. That was the counterbalance to you not losing your life, those of the same race would be essentially cursed in the same way. If they gave you the true death, I had no idea how that would affect the race as a whole. Just as I have no true idea now that you’re immortal again, what will happen.” He squirms in his chair, while I try to process what he’s just told me.

“You mean that my dad, and any other Hunters that have died since I became an immortal, might not come back?” I lean back in the chair, stunned.

“It’s a possibility.” He rubs the back of his neck. “It’s part of why I went back to Avalon when I did, to see if anyone knew anything. If any Hunters who had died had ended up there. It was inconclusive, but it’s also why I was in favor of you turning Creek the way you did. I didn’t want you to risk the possibility, Shadow Realm or not.”

“Holy fucking shit.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you sooner, I just wanted to have answers before I said anything.”

“We need to tell the Hunters. We really need to tell Colt and the others.”

“I know, but what if it’s for nothing. We could cause panic for no reason,” he counters, but I shake my head.

“Yes, but people could also be doing stupid shit, thinking it won’t matter, when really, it could matter a fucking lot.”

“It could, but it could also mean a new view for the Hunters. Life could have more meaning again, because it is finite.” He sighs, running his hand through his hair again.

“It could also put strain on the other factions. Fuck, tits, and balls.” I put my head in my hands. I’m glad I know, but I get why he didn’t tell me. This isn’t an extra stress I needed. It’s the only reason I’m not losing my shit at him right now. “Would Michael know?”

“He’s probably the only person who would be able to give me a definitive answer, but reaching out to him could put you in danger.”

I worry my lip at his words, but me being in danger isn’t something new.

“Reach out to him. Me being in danger isn’t the biggest issue. The Hunters are. My family, Levi. If this is the last opportunity I have to spend time with them, I need to know it. This could change everything for Colt and Fallon. It would also mean that there really is no way Archer can ever come back. But fucking hell.” I blow out a breath and try to settle the hurricane inside of me.

“I’ll send word to Michael via Serafina. She is still close with him,” Levi tells me, still apologizing to me with his eyes.

“Okay. And I’m going to call my brother, give him a heads up. We can train after. Because fuck me. This is going to be like dropping a nuke on a tiny island. Devastating.”

“I really am sorry, Remy.”

“You didn’t make me an Angel again. I get now why you freaked so much when Morgan mentioned it was even a possibility to start with, why you’ve been so hesitant about all things Angel when it comes to me. Thank you for being honest with me.”

“I will always do what is best for you, Remy. Always.”

I pull up at my brother's house and rest my forehead on the steering wheel. This conversation is going to fucking suck. Even though I had no control over any of it, I just can't imagine it going well. My only hope is that he's here alone.

I climb from the car and make my way up the front steps, dragging my feet because I really don't want to do this, even though I know I have to. Levi offered, but I can't think of a bigger cop out than letting him break this news to my brother.

I knock once before opening the door, and spot Colt coming from the kitchen. "Oh hey, what are you doing here?"

"Good to see you too, big brother. Do you have a minute?" I ask, and he rubs the back of his head, his eyes darting into the kitchen.

"Erm, yeah sure." He walks towards me, but I dance around him, laughing as he groans, and move into the kitchen where I find Fallon straightening herself up.

Oops. Guess I'm the cockblock today.

"Oh, *hey* Fal. Fancy seeing you here." I waggle my eyebrows at her and she flips me the bird while Colt groans behind me.

"Hmmmmmm, I was coming to see you later anyway, so this will save me a journey," she says, as she runs her fingers through her silky black hair.

"So is this...like, a thing?" I say with so much glee I kind of want to bounce, and she just rolls her eyes.

"Shut up, Remy," Colt begs and I turn to grin at him.

"Okay, for now, I'll zip it. I mean, this totally makes me doubly sorry for coming to see you though," I say, as I stroll to the fridge and grab myself a can of soda before sitting at the table. "You should probably sit."

Colt looks at me like I just spoke in Japanese, but Fallon smiles and sits next to me. Colt follows, sitting on her other side. While I wanted Colt to be here alone, Fallon at least, is a good buffer for this conversation. She'd have found out soon enough anyway.

"What's going on?" Colt asks unsteadily.

"I found something out this morning, and I wanted you to hear it from me. We're still looking into stuff, but I wanted you to be aware. That being said, what I'm about to tell you can't leave this room until we confirm it," I tell them, eyeing the doorways. "Is Bauer here?"

"No, we're alone," he says, and pulls up an app on his phone. "And now, if anyone was trying to listen, they can't anyway. I installed a jammer in

here.”

“What’s going on Remy?” Fallon asks me, her whole face devoid of light. It’s like she knows I’m about to break havoc on any sort of happiness they might have been working towards.

“So, I don’t know how much you remember about the day Levi saved me, Colt. But when he busted in on the council and saved me, he mentioned something about me being the balance.”

“Yeah I remember,” he says, nodding as he leans back in the chair.

“Well, I’d completely spaced, but I remembered it in a dream a few nights ago, and this morning I asked Levi about it.” I take a deep breath and blow it out, trying to find the right words. “Essentially, the reason he saved me from the true death was because the Hunter cycle was linked to my mortality. It was the balance created by the forces around us. Because my immortal soul was saved, the curse of the Hunters was born—that we would all re-cycle, that we wouldn’t know a finite lifetime. That even in death we would continue on, either being reborn, or in Avalon alongside our ancestors. The Hunters were only meant to be a one or two generational thing. It was never meant to be a long-term race. But then Levi saved me.”

“I don’t understand what this has to do with me?” Colt says, his brow furrowed.

“Oh shit,” Fallon gasps, like she worked it out, and I just nod.

“I’m not a mortal anymore, Colt. It means that we don’t know if the curse is broken. If Hunters will continue to cycle now that I’m not a Hunter. It means that if it is, Hunters will still be Nephilim, but they will only have one life.”

“What the actual fuck?” he shouts, and flicks his tongue bar around his lips, while he grips the edge of the table so tight his knuckles go white. “So Dad, everyone we’ve lost since you became an Angel…”

“We don’t know,” I confirm, and hang my head. “I’m sorry, Colt. We’re trying to get answers, but I couldn’t keep this from you.”

“I need to tell the elders.” He pushes his chair back, but I put my hand on his and shake my head.

“You can’t Colt. Imagine the panic. What if it’s not true? We need to wait until we have answers.”

“And how fucking long is that going to take?” He shakes my hand from his and paces the kitchen.

“We’ve asked for an audience with Michael to get answers,” I tell him

softly, and Fallon goes wide-eyed.

“Isn’t he like, out for your blood though, Remy?” she asks, and Colt stills.

“That’s the theory. But this is more important than one person. This is the fate of an entire faction. Our way of life is at risk. That is worth more than the risk of Michael finding out about me and trying to kill me.” I close my eyes and take another deep breath.

“Remy, no,” Fallon argues, but Colt growls.

“We need to know what the fuck is going on. I don’t like this though. Is there no other way?”

“If there was, then I’d have tried that way first,” I tell him. He starts pacing again, murmuring to himself as if trying to weigh everything up. He stops and pins me with his stare, a grimace on his face.

“Then into the lion’s den we go.”

Things with my brother went about as well as I imagined, but one good thing came from the visit. Fallon gave me a gift. One I can’t wait to get home and see if we can try. But first, I need to see Marie. Now that she’s up and about, I promised Kain I would go and see her, to see if as a seer she had any insight as to why my memories have been so hard for me to access.

I pull up in front of her house, with Fallon in my passenger seat. “Rebel is staying away with a trusted friend. After everything, Mama wanted her away from it all.”

“That makes a lot of sense. Are you sure she’s up to this?” I ask, worrying my lip. The last thing I want to do is be a burden to Marie after she’s been through so much.

“She’ll be fine. And she’d hide my ass if she found out that I stopped you from at least asking, even if she can’t do what you ask.” I laugh, because I can fully picture that. We climb from my Mustang and I follow Fallon into the house. It always smells like sage and rosemary in here. Now that I know they’re witches it makes more sense. Herbs to keep away the unwanted, but before I knew, I always just thought it was a little quirky. Just like the black salt in the window boxes around the house.

“Mama!” Fallon calls through the house, and we find Marie sitting out on the back porch, on a swing, reading a book with a blanket over her legs. It’s

not cold out here, but it's not exactly warm either. November in Salem's Bay is a strange time of year.

We missed Halloween in the madness of everything, and a pang of sadness hits me, but I shake it off. Fates knows we've got more important things to worry about than my favorite holiday of the year.

"Hello girls. Are you okay?" Marie asks with a kind smile and pats the swing next to her.

"Remy wants to ask for your help, she's a chicken shit so I'm just giving you a heads up. I'm going to go and jump in the shower." Fallon kisses her mom's cheek, before grinning at me and heads back inside.

Witches.

"What can I help you with, Remy girl?" I sit as she asks, crossing my legs and facing her.

"I'm having issues accessing my memories. I'm supposed to be able to access all of them, all the way back, now that I'm an immortal again, but it's like pulling on a never-ending tether, with nothing at the other end. Kain thought that because you're a seer, you might have an idea about how memories work, and know a way to, well, jog my memory I guess."

"And here was me thinking you might be here about my vision again." She winks at me, her shoulders shaking as she laughs. Of course the woman nearly dies but still finds it in her to rip the shit out of me. Her laughter is contagious, and once I start, it's like I can't stop. Before long I'm taking deep breaths and wiping tears from my eyes.

"That was not that funny," I say, trying to keep myself from starting again.

"No, but it is good for the soul to lose yourself like that sometimes, Remy girl." She pats my leg, before her face falls a little. "Now, there is nothing about me being a seer that can help with your memories, but I do know of something that might be able to assist. I'd need Fallon's help, I'm just not strong enough for it yet, but it's not going to be fun or easy for you."

"When is anything ever fun or easy for me these days?" I shrug, because yep, story of my life.

"You have a point." She winks at me, her smile returning a little. "But I will need something in return from you."

"You know you can ask me for anything."

"I need you to speak to the queen about Fallon. Her power, it is different. She has too much. As witches we draw our power from the earth, it is our

way, but Fallon's power since she got back has changed. It is like a living thing inside of her, ruled by her emotions. I am scared for her. For our people."

"I can ask," I tell her, but that pit of worry in my stomach grows again.

"That is all I can ask of you. Now then, tell me more about these issues with your memory so I can make sure the spell we do for you works properly."

I sit down in the salt circle that Marie has drawn out on their sitting room floor after Fallon and I moved all of the furniture to the edges of the room. Marie hands me a vial with an orange liquid in.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" she asks, for like, the fifth time and I just smile at her. "Not all of your memories are going to be good. Sometimes our body makes them inaccessible for a reason. Not all things are best dug up."

"I will be fine, I'm a big girl. If I see something I don't like, that's on me." She rolls her eyes at me and motions to the bottle in my hand.

"Fine, well you'll need to drink this. It won't smell or taste great, but you need to drink all of it. It's going to help you access your memories." I pop the cork off the vial and wrinkle my nose at the smell. Won't smell great is a major understatement, it smells like dead skunk.

I throw the liquid back like a bad tasting shot and swallow before it can really touch my tongue. I still feel like I might gag just from the smell, but nothing worth doing is ever easy.

"Oh, girl your face." Fallon laughs from across the room and I flip her the bird as my stomach churns.

"Let's do this, shall we?" Marie says, scolding us both. "Remy, you'll want to lie down, stretch your arms and legs out so you take up most of the circle. Just try to remember, that no matter what you see, it's all just memories. It can't hurt you, at least in the physical sense."

I lay back and stretch out as she said. I try to look around, but everything seems a little fuzzy.

"Close your eyes, Remy girl," Marie murmurs, but it's almost as if I'm underwater, and the words don't quite sound right. Her voice gets further

away, and a hissing fills my eyes as my body goes ice cold.

It only lasts a moment, then it's as if I'm paralyzed. I can't move a muscle, not even my eyes. Then the floor falls out from beneath me and I plummet into nothingness. I try to scream but no sound comes out.

I want to stop. I changed my mind. But I can't tell anyone any different.

My heart pounds in my chest as I pick up speed from my fall.

Then, as quickly as it started, the falling stops.

I open my eyes, but I'm not in the Laveaus' sitting room anymore. I sit up and find myself in the front drive of a house I don't recognize. Fog rolls across the ground, and the wind picks up, the branches of the trees beside the property rustling together.

Pushing myself up off the ground, I dust myself off and take in wherever the hell it is I am. The house and trees are the only things as far as the eye can see, the flat ground just rolls off into the horizon. The dark night is illuminated by a bright full moon, making the fog seem as if it glows. I turn back to the house. I guess this is where I'm meant to go, but really, I'm just winging it.

I move toward the house slowly, making sure that nothing jumps out at me. This might be a spell, but it's still my memories. For all I know this is a memory, and some asshole is going to jump out of nowhere and try to gut me.

I climb the rotten stairs that creak under my weight as quickly as I can and push the door open as quietly as possible. I close the door behind me, and the scene before my eyes changes in a blink. The bright white light stings my eyes against the harsh white walls and red doors that line either side of the never-ending hall. It's so fucking bright.

Music starts playing, and I recognize the song—*Pavement* by SayWeCanFly. I'm not sure if that's a good sign or not, but I love the song, so I try to relax a little. Taking a few steps forward to the first door, I notice it has a plaque on. I move to the next door, on the opposite side of the hall and then the next. They all have them. With just a few words on each.

I walk slowly past the doors, some are quiet, some are so loud that I almost want to run away. None of the plaques seem to make any sense, but then I come across a black door amongst the red. The plaque is blank. My interest piques, though something inside of me tells me not to open the door. At least not yet. But the whole reason I came here was to learn what my mind didn't want me to know, so I open the black door and hold my breath as it

creaks against the quiet.

I step inside to darkness before me, moving forward a few steps hoping something that isn't going to make me shit the bed will happen, when the door slams closed behind me. It's so dark I can't even see my hand in front of my face, but I feel something wet trickle down my face. I try to back up, to find the door, but there's nothing solid behind me. The floor disappears from beneath me and I start to free fall again.

I gasp as I sit up and open my eyes. I blink a dozen times as my eyes readjust to the light and realize I'm back in Fallon's sitting room.

Shit.

"Thank fuck you're back. You scared the fucking shit out of us." Fallon is kneeling by my head, and helps me sit up.

"Why am I back?" I ask, my voice hoarse. It feels like I've swallowed the fucking Sahara. "I barely started looking."

Marie hands me a glass of water, which I sip, but it still feels like swallowing razor blades. She hands me a flannel next, and I look at them confused. "You're bleeding Remy. It's why we had to pull you out. Eyes, ears, and nose."

I sit and blink at her, because what? I raise a hand to my face and pull it away with a crimson stain. What the fuck? I use the flannel to wipe my face clean, then finish the glass of water, because I still feel like I've been drowning in sand.

"What did you see?" Fallon asks, so I walk them through the bizarre but short experience and Marie frowns.

"It should have worked, though of course you picked the one door that didn't look inviting. I'll do some research and see if I can work out what happened. Then we can try again," Marie reassures me, but Fallon shakes her head.

"Is that a good idea, Mama? I don't want Remy to end up hurt." Fallon looks between us both, and for the first time in a while, she looks afraid. It floors me, because my friend is rarely afraid of anything.

"I'm not going to let anything happen to her," Marie soothes her before standing and taking the flannel before leaving the room.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN



After the failed spell, I was feeling pretty dejected. That was until I got home and remembered the present Fallon had given me earlier. I was just hoping all of my guys were home so I didn't have to wait around.

I pull the Mustang into the drive, taking a second to appreciate Betty before I head inside.

"Honey, I'm *home!*" My voice echoes down the hall, and I hear their laughter coming from the kitchen. Excellent.

I find them in the kitchen playing a game of beer pong.

Beer pong.

What the fuck?

"Erm...? What is this?" I ask, trying not to laugh at how serious both Levi and Roman look, while Kain seems to be playing ref as I drop my bag onto the counter.

"It's a long story, but essentially, Roman bet Levi that he had better hand eye coordination, under any circumstances. So obviously, beer pong was the answer, except none of us drink beer, so this is whiskey pong," Kain explains, as Roman takes another shot and the ping pong ball lands in one of the red cups in front of Levi.

"This is the most bizarre thing I have ever come home to. And considering our lives, that's saying a lot." I don't hold back my laughter this time and move to stand next to Kain. He lifts his arm and so I snuggle into him, letting the bizarreness continue, but with how much shit these guys deal with, the levels of stress, who am I to stop their fun?

When it's obvious that neither of them are going to lose, they call it quits, and share the whiskey around. I sit and sip my whiskey, enjoying the moment, because it's so rare we get an evening like this.

"Did you have a productive day, Princess?" Roman asks, grinning at me.

"Well, I mean, my brother doesn't hate me, all things considered, it's a good day. Though I tried a spell to access my memories with Marie, and that tanked. Also...Fallon gave me these..." I grab my bag from the counter and pull out the box Fallon handed me earlier. I open it and pull out the five rings, each with a different color stone set in them. One daintier than the others.

"What are they?" Roman asks, peering into the box.

"These are talismans for Morgan and the guys. To contain their power so they can actually come here if they want to," I say, my glee evident from the huge smile on my face.

"Does this mean we're going back?" Kain asks, watching me closely.

"I mean, you guys don't have to come, but I was thinking about going. I need to speak to Morgan about Fallon, and maybe we can bring Creek home with us," I tell them. They don't have to come with me, I don't intend to be gone for long.

"Of course we're coming. Is it just us going?" Roman leans forward, as if calculating what he needs to put in place so he can disappear for a day or two. I'm hoping Morgan and her guys can come back with us, so we don't have to be gone too long, but I don't know the logistics of it in reality.

"Well, I was thinking about taking Fallon too, so that Morgan can have a look at her power, along with mine. I didn't mention it to her earlier because I wanted to speak to you guys first, but I got the feeling when she gave me these, she's expecting the invite," I tell them, closing the box and putting it back in my bag.

"I wonder why she made them?" Levi muses.

"I think partly for me. Being an immortal can be lonely without immortal friends. I also think she wants to see if it works, so that she has a reason to go back there. She has some unresolved stuff with Deacon. I'm not sure if she's hoping he can come here, and what that means for her. But yeah, I didn't ask. She didn't look ready to tell me even if I had."

"Well, I guess we'll find out," Kain says with a smile. "When do we leave?"

"Tomorrow morning? That gives me time to speak to Fallon, and you guys to sort anything you need to here."

“I expected you to say now,” Kain chuckles. “So I will definitely take the night to make sure Luc has everything under control.” He kisses my head before leaning down to my ear. “But tonight, mon amour. You’re mine.” His breath tickles my neck as he whispers to me and a shudder runs down my spine in anticipation.

I smile as he walks away and the other two are just smirking at me.

“Guess we better get our shit in line too.” Roman smirks, because even though Kain whispered, the ears in this room miss nothing.

“Are you hungry?” Levi asks me, and that’s when I realize Nonnie isn’t here.

“Where’s Nonnie?” I ask them, and Levi shakes his head.

“Luc dropped by, they have a witch at the castle at the moment apparently. Nonnie went back with him. Something about an urgent birthday cake. But she left you a cheesecake in the fridge, along with a ton of other stuff so that, and I quote, *you don’t get all skinny since these boys obviously can’t feed you right.*” I laugh at his words because that totally sounds like Nonnie!

“Ah, okay,” I say through my laughter. “But no, I’m not that hungry. You better believe I’m eating some cheesecake though.”

Roman snort laughs at me as he leaves the kitchen, to go do whatever it is he needs to do, and Levi heads to the fridge and grabs the cheesecake and a fork before sitting back down with me. I grin at how well he knows me. He didn’t get me a slice, he bought me the entire damn thing. This is one of the reasons I love him. He just gets me.

“So, your brother doesn’t hate you, but how did that conversation go?” he asks once we’re alone. I lift the fork and take a bite of the cheesecake, groaning at the zesty, creamy goodness of it.

“It went as well as could be expected. He about lost his shit, but Fallon was there so he kept a lid on it. If she wasn’t, he probably would have flipped said lid. But I was expecting much worse. This cheesecake is definitely helping though.” I take another huge piece from the dish and smile around the mouthful as Levi chuckles at me.

I take another piece and offer it to him, trying not to be offended at how shocked he looks that I’m sharing. I’m not *that* bad. Okay maybe I am, but I can share sometimes. I start to withdraw the fork when he makes the funniest grunting noise as he bites down and eats the deliciousness offered to him.

“Did you speak to Serafina while I was out?” I ask, taking another bite

and trying not to sound like I'm orgasming in my mouth. Cheesecake really is the best food ever. I'll fight anyone that tries to disagree. Other than mac and cheese. Or tacos. Man, I haven't had tacos in forever.

"Are you back with me?" Levi chuckles as I bring my attention back to him. I feel my cheeks heat when I realize I didn't hear a word he just said. "Where did you go?"

"I was daydreaming about food. Mainly tacos. I haven't had them in forever. I guess I'm hungrier than I thought." I shrug with a grin and he shakes his head.

"Do you want some real food?"

"Don't you insult cheesecake like that!" I scoff and take another bite. He holds up his hands in surrender while he chuckles.

"Sorry. But to answer your question. Yes, I spoke to Serafina. She's going to request a meeting with Michael for us," he tells me, stealing my fork and taking another bite of my cheesecake. My jaw drops, looking at him in horror, but I can't keep it up before I start laughing at his smug face.

"Awesome. I bet she was all kinds of excited about that."

"Actually, it'll make life easier for her if I'm no longer banished. She's taken over as General of the Death Dealers. She is not enjoying it. She's a soldier. She's not a fan of keeping everyone in line, and they're a rowdy bunch."

"Huh, didn't expect that," I tell him, taking the fork back. I take another mouthful, then make the sad decision to put the cheesecake away. "We should probably head to bed since we're going back to the Shadow Realm tomorrow."

"You're not wrong. I half want to steal you away or suggest sharing you with Kain." He grins at me devilishly, wrapping his arms around my waist when we stand. His hardness is more than apparent.

"Well, you are very good at sharing."

I head back to my room alone, much to Levi's dismay. After sending a quick message to Fallon about joining us tomorrow, I jump in the shower, because it's been a day, but then decide to pretty myself up. It's been a hot minute since I had some alone time with Kain, so after I shower, I blow out my hair,

letting the soft waves cascade down my back, put on a little makeup, and find some very lacy, but very hot red-bandage underwear. Corset style strings between the cups of my bra and sitting just above the crack of my ass on my panties.

Simple but effective.

The red seems even bolder against the pale of my skin now that my Angel glow is there. I paint my lips the same shade of red as the underwear, then pad down the hall to Kain's room. I knock softly before opening the door, and find him and Levi in the room talking.

Oops.

I close the door behind me, their eyes practically scorching my skin.

"You look good enough to eat," Kain rasps, adjusting his tie. The man really knows how to wear a suit.

"I thought you might like me all wrapped up," I say, my voice lower than usual. My thighs clench together as he removes his tie, and Levi just watches us. The tension in the room rises, and I wonder if Kain will ask Levi to leave.

My gaze bounces between them and Kain smirks at me. "Levi pleaded his case to join us, and who am I to deny a starving man the best meal around?"

My mouth is already dry at the prospect of his words and my pussy is aching for their touch. A saint couldn't resist them and even as an Angel I'm far from a saint on a good day.

My gaze darts to Levi as he makes himself comfortable on the bed, lying back on his elbows, his legs stretched and spread, his cock pushing against his fly like he's been waiting for me to walk in.

And he probably has.

"So, you guys are planning how to fuck me now? How domesticated of you." There's no venom in my voice, only lust as my hand slides across the silky feel of the underwear just below my heavy breasts.

"Angel, if I could, I'd be fucking you twenty-four-seven and only taking breaks to eat your pussy like my favorite buffet."

Well, then.

"And you've discussed *how* you're going to fuck me?"

"At any given moment in my day, there are about six different scenarios on how I'd like to fuck you so yes, Angel, we know how it's going to go down." When Levi's eyes dart to my right, I turn to see that Kain is bare from the waist up, his dress pants open at the zipper, his cock playing peek-a-boo with his boxer briefs. He's delicious and I want a taste.

"See something you like, Precious?" Licking my lips, I look up at Kain and nod.

"What do you think, Levi? Shall I give her a taste?"

"Hmm, she does look hungry. Maybe we should offer the house special. Two dicks for one mouth."

Now, I'm biting my lower lip not only to keep my moans of desire at bay but to avoid chuckling at Levi's terrible metaphors.

In his trademark style, Kain takes my hand gently as though handling the most fragile of flowers and leads me to the bed where Levi looks at me like he wants to ruin that flower in the best kind of ways.

Two men, two completely different ways of showing how much they love me. They have completely different ways of making my pussy beg for their touch, and fuck do they make it practically weep.

Crooking his index finger in a come-hither move, Levi winks then looks at his crotch before throwing his devilish grin my way.

"I'm feeling a bit snug here, Angel."

It takes every cell in my body not to roll my eyes, but I make it to him and unzip his slacks, freeing the monster he calls his cock, because of course he has nothing on underneath.

Instinctively, I lick my lips, my eyes glued to the thick head of his cock glistening with the pre cum that is trying to escape.

As I reach out to touch his cock, Levi's hand goes straight to my wrist, his fingers circling tight enough to be a warning but softly enough to remind me that it's for my own pleasure, that he's in control of all of it.

"Kain needs your help too, Angel. You're not going to make him suffer, are you?"

Turning to see Kain's head down but his eyes up and staring right at me with a mixture of lust and mischief, I take two steps toward him and instantly drop to my knees before repeating my movements. Undoing his button, then zipper, and I'm rewarded with his delicious cock in my face.

"*Tsk, tsk, tsk*, Angel. You can't start eating until everyone is at the dinner table."

This time I do roll my eyes, but only because I have my back to Levi making sure he can't see my sass shining bright.

"No need to roll your eyes, Precious. In the end, it's all for you."

Well, haven't they developed quite the bromance as of late.

"I didn't take you for a snitch, Kain." I may have growled my words but

we all know that right here, right now, wet as I am, that I am all bark and no bite.

"Come here."

Kain and I both make our way to Levi as he adjusts his cock, stroking it a few times before pulling his pants down just enough to make my mouth water.

"On your knees," he commands, and I obey without a second thought. I might not be that submissive usually, but here, with them like this, it sends a shiver down my body, right to my fucking pussy as he orders me around. "Give us your mouth, Angel."

On my knees, I have Kain on my left and Levi on my right, both focusing their attention on me. The world outside could burst into flames but by the look in their eyes, they wouldn't notice, let alone give a single fuck.

Fisting a cock in each hand, I look back up at Kain, then Levi, and without hesitation I bring Kain's cock to my mouth, licking and laving it until I can easily slide it inside my mouth to the hilt. My nose buried in his groin as his hand twist in my hair, keeping me on his cock as his scent invades my senses, all the while my hand fucks Levi's cock in rhythm and it's so acutely erotic that I can feel my pussy begging for attention.

Levi takes pity on me, he bends down and runs a single finger through my lips, ending the tease with a circle around my aching clit.

I moan around Kain's cock, wanting to bitch Levi out but it's impossible to do with this many inches fucking my throat.

"My turn," I hear Levi say, and on command I turn my head and suck his cock all the while not releasing Kain from my hand.

"That's my good girl. Taking two big cocks and not even complaining. Think you can take more, Angel?"

I nod. Of course I can. This isn't my first rodeo.

"On the bed, Angel. Head hanging off the side."

I position myself as he asks and find Kain is standing right there, his cock proud and strained, probably yearning for my mouth.

Pulling my head up, I look down the length of my body and see Levi running a finger on the fabric of my underwear, following the lines of its design. Suddenly, he stops, looks above me and says, "This was your present, Kain. You should unwrap it."

They swap positions and I see Levi standing above me, his hands cradling my head so I can watch Kain peel off my underwear without hurting my

neck.

They are both so gentle at times that it always takes me by surprise when they take on their controlling, domineering ways.

They know I love it. I crave it even.

With nothing but skin for their eyes to admire, they share a silent message before Levi lets go of my head and taps on my chin for me to open.

Immediately, his cock is in my mouth, his hand at my neck, rubbing the column of it reverently. Lovingly. Dominatingly.

That's when I feel Kain's mouth at my core, his tongue playing with my clit, his teeth nipping at my labia.

Closing my eyes, I let them take control. One fucking my mouth, the other eating my pussy. Both doing everything for me. For my pleasure. Quenching my thirst.

"Take it all, Angel. I want to see my dick in your throat. I want to feel it as it goes down." I'm practically choking on his dick, but I can do it. I want to do it.

"That's it, Angel. Such a good girl."

When Kain thrusts two fingers inside me as he sucks my clit raw, I buck and swallow around Levi's cock and he squeezes my throat just a little more.

"Fuck," is all he says, but I know how much he likes it when I swallow around the head of his cock.

"Make her come, Kain, or else I'm going to blow my load in her pretty little mouth."

Kain places both his hands on my inner thighs and spreads them impossibly apart before he assaults my pussy with a determination only he possesses.

"She's so fucking delicious, it's sinful."

"Our sinful little Angel," Levi repeats, thrusting his cock back down my throat and grinning down on me as saliva and tears gather. I'm loving this. Being taken like this. It's sexy and a turn on beyond belief.

But my men have plans for me. I know this when Kain's fingers curl and massage that illicit piece of Heaven deep inside me. Before I can finish off Levi's cock, he pulls out and cradles my head again as I let out a scream of ecstasy.

"That's it, Angel. Tell him how good he feels."

I'm coming all over Kain's hand as he continues to fuck me with his fingers but it's when he applies a crazy amount of pressure on my lower belly

that I lose my mind completely. I can feel myself coming hard, my juices are flowing freely, my mind is completely blank, my bones no longer solid.

"You are absolutely stunning, Angel."

Before I can acknowledge what the hell Kain just did to me, I'm being positioned onto Levi, my ass jutting out for Kain's pleasure.

Kain brings both his hands down on my ass cheeks and digs his fingers in my flesh before sinking his teeth into my ass. I yelp and Levi grins, knowing I'm enjoying every second of this torturous pleasure.

"The lube is in the drawer there, Levi, pass it over?"

As my senses begin to clear and my mind is battling through the fog of my orgasm, I realize that Kain is about to get my ass ready for his cock. Levi, however, is leisurely playing with my pussy, his dick running through the slit, enjoying how utterly wet I am.

At the feel of Kain's fingers pushing inside my ass, I grunt. Levi puts his hand behind my head and pulls me in for a kiss. His tongue is demanding, his lips are sure. He kisses me like needs to feel my every reaction to Kain's ministrations. When I feel Kain separate my ass cheeks I know he's ready.

"Wait!" I call out and everyone stops without question.

"Are you okay, mon amour?"

"Yes, I just..." Looking back at him, I grin, "Kiss me first?"

And he does. Kain is all tongue and teeth, like he's searching out that drop of blood to feed his soul.

When I'm satisfied, I send him back to his task at hand and sink onto Levi's cock just as Kain is pushing through the ring of muscles in my ass. I'm filling up slowly, the sensation is so erotic, I have to close my eyes to focus. Once they are both inside me, Kain lifts my hips, effectively keeping his cock inside as I pull away from Levi's. That's when the tandem starts.

Push and pull, in and out. Kain goes deep inside as Levi pulls away and then Levi is slamming inside my pussy as Kain is pulling away.

It doesn't take long for a steady rhythm to take place. Levi's hands are everywhere. My face, my lips, my breasts. He plays with my clit and kisses my tits like he feels bad to have abandoned them for so long.

"When I fuck you, the world outside disappears completely. This is my safe place, Angel. You are my haven."

With his fingers pinching my clit, I explode. The words, the fucking, the incredibly erotic atmosphere takes me to the edge once more and I can't think or speak. All I can do is cry out for my men. My head thrown back, my

mouth open wide. Levi thrusts two fingers inside my mouth and pulls me down.

"Taste your cum, Angel. Taste how delicious you are. This is why we are addicted to you. Your fucking scent and taste, they are our drug and we don't want to stop."

"Fuck!" Kain stills behind me. I can feel his cum coating me from the inside swiftly followed by his teeth sinking into the side of my neck. Kain unloads himself inside of me, all the while drinking from me. It's fucking hot as Hell.

Below me, Levi digs his fingers into my scalp and lets himself go.

Two cocks spilling their seed inside me is everything I never knew I wanted in my life.

"Goddamn, your pussy is fucking perfect."

We collapse in a tangle of broken limbs and healthy souls.

My men have their faults but when it comes to my pleasure, they are perfection.

I wake up sweating like I'm in a furnace, but realize it's just because I'm wrapped up in my two guys. I blink as my eyes adjust to the room, and I find Roman standing at the end of the bed smirking down at me.

"Morning Princess, I see I missed out on some fun," he teases, and offers me a hand as I untangle myself from the mess of limbs. I wince a little at the soreness, but I wouldn't have changed last night for anything, so I welcome the reminder.

"Sorry?" I whisper and follow him from the room.

"Oh never be sorry, Princess. I usually get you to myself, I much prefer that over sharing you. Not that I dislike any of it." He grins at me and I shake my head as we pad down the hall to my room.

"I'm just going to jump in the shower quickly," I tell him as I open the door and we enter the room. He closes the door softly before turning back to me and he kisses me softly before smacking my ass.

"Okay, I'll wait here," he says as he climbs onto my bed, crossing his hands behind his head and leaning back against the headboard. I shake my head, but dash into the bathroom. I put my hair in a messy bun on top of my

head, since I only washed it last night, and jump beneath the hot water. The jets sting as they hit my skin, but I enjoy the sensation of it. Plus, heading to the Shadow Realm smelling like sex isn't on my to-do list.

After a quick shower, I wrap myself in my fluffy white towel, thank the fates for Nonnie and her love of home making. I don't want to think about the laundry situation before she arrived. I laugh at myself, realizing what a sucky adult I am, but give myself a little grace, because in my defense, running around trying to kind of save people's lives takes priority over laundry.

Roman chuckles as I dart from the bathroom into my closet. I grab some underwear, and my usual comfy jeans and one of the snarky t-shirts from the dwindling pile. I know Morgan and Caleb will appreciate whatever it says, they get me like that.

I drop the towel and slip on the thong and bra, while Roman's chest rumbles in appreciation. I smirk at him as I shimmy into my jeans and slip into my t-shirt. He chuckles at me as I pull my hair from the bun and I turn to the mirror to read today's t-shirt.

If you're going to be salty, bring the tequila.

Fitting. I smile as I shake my head. Everly really did just get me on every level. I hate that I didn't find out that she was my family until after she was taken from us. I just hope I get the chance to see her again.

"You ready?" Roman asks, still sitting with his arms behind his head. His white t-shirt has ridden up, giving me a tease of the golden abs beneath, as his jeans sit low on his hips. I bite my lip at the sight of him, though I'd much rather bite those abs of his.

"Kind of," I tell him, and then head back into my closet to grab a few changes of clothes and shove them into a bag.

"Now I'm ready," I tell him when I reappear, but hold up a finger and grab my stuff from the bathroom. "Okay, now I'm really ready."

"You sure?" He smirks and I roll my eyes.

"Yes, I'm sure." He climbs down from the bed and stands. He smirks down at me as he towers above me but grabs my hand and leads me to the kitchen. He lifts me into my usual stool at the counter and goes about making a pot of coffee for us both.

"You okay?" I ask him, because he's not usually this guy, but I'm not about to stop him.

"I'm fine," he says, before kissing the top of my head and placing a mug of coffee in front of me. "You want some breakfast?"

I take a sip of the coffee, sighing at the java goodness, trying not to wonder who has possessed my Lycan. “It’s rare I say no to breakfast.”

He laughs and grabs some eggs, bacon, and sausage from the fridge, along with a container of frozen biscuits from the freezer, and with some gravy. *Thank you, Nonnie!*

I sit and watch him happily as I sip my coffee. Kain joins us after a little while, and just as Roman dishes up the food Levi appears. They all sit at the island with me rather than us moving to the table. As nice as this is, it makes me more aware that Creek is gone, and more excited at the possibility of seeing him today. I zone out a little while I eat, letting the guys talk around me, thinking about seeing Creek later, and getting some answers for Marie from Morgan. I hope that one day soon, I get to see my friends, just to see my friends not for another reason, but until then...

I groan as I eat the amazingness on the plate in front of me. I don’t even care how animated I get about food. Food is good, and I’m going to appreciate that shit.

“What time is Fallon getting here?” Kain asks me, pulling me from my daydreams about running away with Nonnie and her cooking skills. I check my phone and smile at the message from Fallon.

“She’ll be here any minute. Apparently Colt is with her.”

“That boy is officially struck.” Roman chuckles.

“Like you assholes can say anything,” Colt says, as he saunters into the kitchen with Fallon beside him. I jump, but that’s what I get for being so distracted with the guys I guess. I think we all feel so safe here, that we don’t keep our guard up. Or maybe that’s just me.

“You decided you want to walk on the dark side?” I chuckle and Fallon rolls her eyes, grabbing a mug of coffee.

“Hell yes. I have a new appreciation for life,” he says, his gaze fixing on me. “I figure I’m going to experience everything I can while the opportunity poses itself.”

“Hundred bucks says the kid shits his pants when he meets the Horsemen,” Roman says to Levi, who nods and shakes his hand. I burst out laughing along with Fallon while Colt grunts.

“Fucking immortal assholes.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT



I grab the necklaces with the vials of my blood and hand them around, giving mine from last time to Colt, and pour a small amount of Morgan's blood into a shot glass. I don't need much now that I have my powers, and while they shouldn't need the vials of my blood, I figure they can't hurt. Colt pales a little when I tell him what it is, but he puts it around his neck and clears his throat.

Thanks to the spell Morgan sealed the realm with, I know I'll end up portaling into the throne room. I just fucking hope that there's no wild orgies going on with her Horsemen when we arrive. We all move into the back yard, because blood on the tile isn't something I want to clean up.

"*Intra ac tenebras.*" I mutter the words that Morgan gave to me, repeating them as I spill mine and Morgan's blood on the ground. I repeat the words until I feel the power pull from me, and the portal starts to open.

"So fucking weird, and yet so fucking cool," Colt murmurs, and I can't help but roll my eyes at him. How many lifetimes as a Hunter, but he's still weirded out by me having a power of sorts? I mean, I kind of get it because this is totally new, but we've spent so long living in this world, I'm surprised anything phases him anymore. Even more so now that he's essentially heading up the elder council.

Roman and Kain walk through the portal first, and I watch as Colt takes Fallon's hand and she looks a little uncomfortable. "You're going to feel like you're falling, just don't throw up," I tell Colt, and he rolls his eyes at me.

"I've got this, Little Bit," he says before stepping through the portal, and

Fallon's laughter rings out as she follows him.

"You ready?" Levi asks, taking my hand.

"Yup, let's go!" I step through the portal, and mutter the incantation again, repeating it until my feet land on solid ground and the portal closes behind me.

"Mara!" Caleb rushes to me and picks me up off the ground before I even have a chance to take in my surroundings. He spins me around and I squeal until he puts me down. "Wondered how long it would be until you came to get your boy."

"I missed you too, ya big crazy." He crushes me against him and I can't help but laugh at him.

"You need to learn to share better, Caleb." I pull free from Caleb's arms at the sound of Creek's voice and run toward him. He catches me as I wrap my arms around his neck and my legs around his hips. I kiss him, and he kisses me back like I'm the oxygen he needs to survive.

"Hey," he says as he pulls back, smiling at me.

"Hey," I whisper as I slide down him and stand on my own two feet again.

"You brought new friends, Mara?" I turn and finally take in the rest of the room. It's just Caleb and Creek in here, the room's basically transformed into a gym. Less than a second later, Morgan, Killian, Bryce, and Malik appear. Their power fills the room, I'd forgotten what it felt like being around the five of them now that I'm an Angel.

"Guys, this is my brother, Colt," I say, "Colt, meet Caleb, Killian, Bryce, and Malik, the Four Horsemen, and my friend Morgan, the Queen of the Shadow Realm."

Colt pales, and kind of looks like he's going to be sick. He swallows visibly before getting a hold of himself, and some of his color returns. "Hey. They're not as scary as you made out." He grins and I shake my head.

"Sure we're not, kid," Bryce says, grinning at Colt with enough malice that I glare at him.

"Bryce, stop it. He's our guest. Any friend of Mara's is a friend of ours, right?" Morgan says, patting his shoulder before coming to hug me.

"It's good to see you again," she mutters, as she hugs me and I squeeze her back.

"Who is Mara?" Colt asks, and Kain chuckles.

"Mara is your sister," Killian tells him with a wicked grin, and Colt just

looks confused.

"We've known her since she was Amantara," Morgan tells him. With a wave of her arm, the room transforms. No longer a gym, but the long banquet table reappears, full of food as ever. "Breakfast anyone?"

"Holy shit," Colt whispers.

"I like this one." Caleb laughs and puts his arm around Colt's shoulders, leading him to the table. I turn back to Creek, who is still grinning at me.

"I missed you," he says softly as the others leave us alone. "But I didn't expect you here yet. I'm not ready..."

I shake my head before he can finish his sentence. "That's kind of why I'm here. I have a solution. I hope. I hate you being gone. I missed you, too."

"What do you mean?" he asks, but I lead him over to the table.

"Let me tell everyone at the same time." I smile at him and sit next to Morgan. The table is set up pretty much the same as usual, except Levi set an extra chair down so Creek could sit next to me.

Thank you I mouth to him and he nods.

"Tell everyone what?" Morgan asks, and everyone looks at me. I pull the box from my bag and hand it to her.

"I wasn't going to jump straight in with this, but since we're all here, why not? Fallon has come up with a way for you guys to be able to come to Earth, without causing literal chaos," I tell her, looking at the faces around the table. "Obviously, you don't have to use them, but I was thinking that this way, we get to see each other more, and you guys get to come and see us without issue. Plus, if we get into deep shit, it would be awesome if you could come and save our asses," I joke, and Bryce and Caleb chuckle.

"The Four Horsemen save the world. There's a plot twist," Colt says, and I can't help but laugh, as does everyone else. I'm a little proud my big brother is handling being here as well as he is. Especially considering how he reacted the first time he met Levi. I guess he's either getting used to it, or the guys haven't done anything even remotely Demon-like enough to scare him.

"Yup, the kid can stay." Caleb grins, messing with Colt's hair. I don't know that the world can survive those two being friends. It could be the most epic bromance in the universe, but fates save us all with the utter anarchy they could cause together.

"How did you forge them?" Malik asks Fallon, who shrinks a little under his gaze. I forget that she didn't spend as much time with these guys when she was here.

"I adapted a spell from Antoine's grimoire for binding a Demon's powers. I made it so that they're not bound, just muted unless you want to use them. I bound it to the rings, rather than spelling you, because a stone holds a spell for an infinite amount of time unlike a spell bound to a person," she tells him, and he nods as if everything she just said makes total sense to him.

"They should work, but we should test it," Killian agrees. "Bryce should probably be the guinea pig, he's going to do the least damage if anything goes wrong."

"Oh thanks." Bryce rolls his eyes and Caleb grins.

"Just don't cause too much damage, please?" Morgan groans, and takes a sip of the mimosa that appears in her hand.

I laugh at them and Creek squeezes my thigh. "How have things been down here since we left?"

Morgan groans and downs the rest of her glass. "It's been interesting. The power shift on level six has been a pain in my ass. Caleb has been down there a lot trying to help Deacon with the transition while Bryce has been working with Creek, but it's been a headache." She sighs and Colt stiffens at the mention of Deacon. Interesting. "Other than that, it's been reasonably okay. Not too different than normal, if you don't count the influx of Fae down here all of a sudden from Eteriya."

"Eteriya?" Colt asks, eyes wide. "Aren't Fae just Demons?"

"Oh, I forget how limited the knowledge pool is for you guys sometimes. Fae aren't Demons. They're like distant cousins, but they have their own realm. Eteriya."

"Did you guys know about this?" I look at my guys, who shake their heads, except for Levi, who nods. Of course the Angel knows. Which means, I probably knew at some point, which reminds me, I need to add that to my Morgan question list.

"Well, every day is a school day and all that," Colt says with a shrug, before digging into the mountain of food on his plate. No one can say that these guys don't eat.

"Well, since you're all here, fancy helping us round up some bolshy Droken on the third level? Callie is having a fucking nightmare. I do love me a good hunt." Caleb grins, looking at the others. I grimace, my last run in with the Droken was enough, thank you.

"I need to speak to Morgan about some stuff, but you guys feel free." I smile sweetly and my guys all shake their heads. I'm sure they haven't

forgotten about the gruesome Demons either.

"Sure man. Shouldn't take long," Levi tells him, while Colt looks like a kid in a candy store. Except, he's about to go Demon hunting instead.

"Awesome. Well, if you guys are done with food, we'll gear up in the armory and head there?" Bryce says, and they all nod.

"I'll stay here with you guys." Fallon smiles, and I return it. Suits me. She should probably hear what Morgan has to say anyway.

"Sounds good to me. Then tonight, we're celebrating." Morgan grins and her guys groan.

"What's up?" I ask, and Malik looks towards me, almost pleading with me.

"Morgan celebrating means karaoke," he tells me, and I grin.

"Hell yes!" I say, and Morgan giggles. "Where is Mireya? I want to say hi to her while I'm here."

"She's with her tutors," Caleb answers me, as he pushes back from the table. "I'll let her know you're here. I've no doubt she'll want to come and say hello."

"Good. I love her."

"I didn't make her a ring," Fallon whispers, but Morgan smiles at her warmly.

"I wouldn't take her to Earth just yet even if you did. Her powers are too unstable. Even if the ring kept her in check, all it would take is one tantrum, and civilizations would fall." Morgan chuckles warmly as she refers to the hellion that is her little girl.

"Whaaaa?" Colt asks, and Roman clasps his shoulder.

"We'll fill you in later. You have got to see their armory. It's enough to make a guy jizz in his pants."

The guys headed out, and Morgan whispered us up to her private rooms above the palace. There is already a bottle of bubbles in a bucket of ice and three glasses waiting for us when we arrive. I didn't realize it before, but these guys drink all damn day, and it doesn't even touch them unless they sink a sea's worth. Unless they drink that nectar shit Morgan fed me last time I was here. That stuff fucks them up.

"So what did you want to ask me?" Morgan asks, as she strides to the open space at the edge of the room where windows should be, but instead there is just a free fall to the ground way, way below us.

"A few things, but I'll start with one that's simple enough. My memories, they were supposed to unlock when I became an Angel. They have for the most part, but some stuff still seems to be locked away from my reach for some reason. We even tried a spell to try and retrieve them, and well, it could've gone better."

"Memories are a strange thing," she sighs, sitting in the chair on the other side of the room as Fallon and I settle into the couch closest to us. "If you did something in the life they belong to, to stop you accessing them for whatever reason, without reversing what you did you won't be able to access them. But you won't know what you did, because you locked away the memory."

"Well fuck me, that's complicated. Of course past me is screwing with current me. That is literally the story of my life this year." I groan and pinch the bridge of my nose. "At least that's some semblance of an idea as to why the fuck it's going wrong."

I take a deep breath, and sink further back into the couch, sneaking a look at Fallon before I ask the next question.

"So this question isn't from me, but from Marie Laveau." Fallon's gaze whips towards me, a flash of hurt in her gaze. I look at her silently asking for her forgiveness, but if Marie is worried, then so am I. "When we were home, there was an attack from some witches, and Fallon's power seems changed. Marie wanted to know if you altered Fallon's powers when you healed her soul, as the power she was using wasn't drawn from the earth, but from within herself."

"I'm fine," Fallon sighs. "But she's right, the power was different. I don't think it was Morgan though."

"Oh?" Morgan asks, tilting her head. "I didn't give you anything that you didn't already have inside of you."

"I think it was Azriel." Fallon sighs. "He promised me power if I stood by him. I noticed something inside of me when I was down here, after he said it, but I didn't think anything of it. I just assumed it was part of being down here. Then when he died the feeling disappeared, so I assumed that whatever it was died with him. But when we got home, I felt it again."

"Why didn't you say something?" I ask her, and she shrugs.

"I had a lot to process. We all did. I figured I'd either deal with it or find a

way to come back here to fix it. It's part of why I agreed to come here today." I guess I should've spoken to her first, but I did promise Marie I'd ask Morgan.

"Okay, well, I can have a look at your power. If it's causing issues, we can try to remove whatever it is, but that doesn't always go so well. If it is something from here, I'm sure we can work with you to help you learn to control it properly," Morgan says softly, smiling at Fallon. Fallon nods, wringing out her hands. "Was there anything else?"

"Yep, though I feel like a total skeeve just coming here and asking you for a ton of shit," I say, squirming in my seat a little.

Morgan laughs at me and waves her hands at me. "Mara we've been friends for a long time, you can ask pretty much anything of me. Just ask, it's fine."

I take a deep breath and blow it out. "I wondered if you'd look at my power again. I've worked some stuff out, not much, but some, with Levi. But it's like there's a bottomless well inside of me, and I don't really want to drop into it without some idea of what's waiting for me down there."

"That makes sense, but of course I will. I've been offering since you woke up as an Angel. I don't know what had you all twisted in knots." Morgan laughs.

"She hates asking for help," Fallon snorts, and Morgan nods her head.

"She's always been the same. You have no idea how long she tried to seal the realm on her own before she asked for my help." Morgan rolls her eyes and the two of them laugh at me. But I don't care, because seeing two of my closest friends get along, even at my expense, is awesome. Especially since Fallon seems so wary around Morgan.

"Now then, I had plans for a relaxing spa day type thing today, you ladies want to join me?" Morgan says, grinning widely.

"Hell yes, girl. I haven't had a spa day in far too long." Fallon's excitement is contagious and I find myself nodding.

"Why the fuck not? We all deserve some down time. Let's just maybe not tell the guys since they're chasing Droken." I shiver at the memories of the gruesome little fuckers.

"Colt is going to have an experience, that's for sure," Morgan giggles, and I snort laugh.

"That's the understatement of the century."

After a day of massages, facials and just utter relaxation, Morgan, Fallon and I started the party a little early. Morgan busted out the nectar, pouring some for all of us, though after last time, I'm drinking mine slowly, with a whiskey chaser.

The guys popped back about half hour ago, covered in gook, complaining about their day versus ours, but they all looked like they had an awesome day anyway. They all disappeared to shower about thirty minutes ago and so far, only Malik has made it back to the throne room.

Morgan is on the karaoke machine, blasting *Toxic* by Brittany Spears, and I can't help but laugh at Malik's grimace as she points to him while she sings. Fallon giggles beside me, having not taken my warnings about the nectar, she's already pretty far gone.

The others start to filter in slowly, grabbing food from the spread on the table, pouring themselves whiskey. Roman braves a glass of nectar while Levi laughs at him. I haven't felt this relaxed and at ease for longer than I care to remember, which is exactly why I banished all thoughts of reality and decided to live in this moment.

"*Your turn*," Morgan coos, as she drops onto the sofa next to me. I shake my head and point to Fallon.

"Nope, it's Fallon's. I went before you." I grin as Fallon looks like I just betrayed her in the worst way.

"Yes!" Morgan shouts. "I get to pick your song. I pick everyone's first song!" She jumps to her feet and over to the karaoke machine, waving for Fallon to go over to her. Fallon groans but stands, glaring at me before heading over to Morgan.

Creek slides into the seat she vacates and pulls me over to sit on his lap. Usually, I'm not much of a lap sitter, but considering how long we've been apart, and the amount of nectar I've drank, I allow it.

"Hey beautiful," he murmurs in my ear. My skin pebbles as the scruff on his face brushes against my neck when he kisses me. "You had a good day?"

"I did, did you?"

"It's infinitely better now." I try my hardest not to swoon, but you try being away from someone you love, someone you crave, for this long and not swoon when they say shit like that. I twist myself around in his lap and link my arms around his neck, leaning in to kiss him, when laughter bubbles up as

the opening bars of *Girls Just Want To Have Fun* plays across the room. Creek shakes beneath me from his own laughter, and I can't tell if it's the song, or our friend who can't stand this song giving in to Morgan and singing karaoke.

"So her and Colt have sorted things out?" he asks, as I lean my head against his shoulder.

"They're working on it," I tell him, giggling as Fallon gets through the song, flipping the bird at me when she sees us laughing. I look around the room, my other guys are standing with the Horsemen, eating, talking, while Morgan cheers Fallon on from the makeshift stage she created by the karaoke machine. The dim and flashing lights make it look like a bad elementary school dance from the 90s where the boys stand on one side awkwardly while the girls dance together on the other.

"How's it been here?" I ask him softly. I know his powers were a bit of a touchy subject before he came.

"It's been good for me. I've learned a lot. I'm still not exactly a pro with them, but I've learned how to master the pleasure pain thing." He winks at me, and I am very much looking forward to discovering the pleasure side of his powers. "But I've also learned other powers too. Just don't freak out when I use them."

"Huh? What?" I look at him and he looks a little uneasy.

"Turns out, when I came back, and learned how to dig deeper into the power inside of me, when I use it, my eyes go black. Like full on, all black Demon eyes."

"Woah." I blink at him, but then smile. "It's okay, you're a hottie to me no matter what."

He relaxes beneath me, and I don't know if I should be offended that he thought that his eyes turning black would change how I think about him considering I made the decision to make him what he is. I'm not a judgy person. He should know better. But I get the insecurity thing. Fates knows I've got enough of them.

"*Roman!*" Morgan squeals from across the room as Fallon's song finishes and I burst out laughing. If she gets my Lycan up there, I'll be amazed.

So when he struts forward, and she claps her hands, my jaw drops. She whispers in his ear, and he shakes his head, making her pout. He says something back to her, and her glee is back. I can't help but laugh as Fallon stomps across the room over to where Colt is pouring another drink. I watch

them for a minute, they seem okay, I just hope that whatever it is that's going on with them, they work it out. I know Fallon has had a thing for my brother for a lifetime, and unbeknownst to me, he had one for her.

"Oh my God." Creek laughs as the start to *Livin' on a Prayer* starts playing and my jaw drops again as Roman's gravelly voice nails the first verse.

Kain drops on the couch next to us, and Levi stands behind us, and I look between them. "Did you guys know he could sing?"

They both shake their heads, a mix of amusement and awe coloring their faces.

Morgan has Caleb dancing terribly on the makeshift dance floor with her, while the others sit at the table she set up. Fallon and Colt are still by the bar. I turn my focus back to my Lycan.

He finishes and I let out a woop. Morgan takes the mic from him and he bows, winking at me as he does before sauntering over to where we're all sat.

"Anybody else suddenly very tired?" I ask, clenching my thighs together. I don't know if it's being here, knowing that we're all sharing a room together again, or the nectar plus Roman's singing, but I'm suddenly very much in the mood to be alone with my guys.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE



I wake the next morning desperate to pee, so I untangle myself from the puppy pile I find myself in and tiptoe to the bathroom. We're going back home today. I agreed with Morgan yesterday during our spa session that Bryce will come back with us to test the rings, and all being well, we'd stay at home and I'll send him back. *If* the rings work, Morgan and the guys are going to come to Earth in a week or so, just in time for Thanksgiving. The other upside of going back today is that Creek is coming back too, after some persuasion.

I get myself sorted and head back out to the bedroom, finding the four of them already awake and in different stages of getting dressed. Then there's me, naked as the day I was born. Four sets of eyes turn to me, and I can't help but feel a little self-conscious under their gaze. Last night was one thing, but in the light of day it feels a little different. I shake it off, knowing they love me no matter what I look like, and start getting dressed.

I throw my hair up into a ponytail and grin at the others, who are ready and waiting for me.

"Breakfast?" Kain asks, and I nod.

"Hell yes. Worked up quite the appetite last night." I wink at him and Roman roars with laughter as I follow Creek from the room back down to the throne room. We knock for Colt and Fallon on the way, their rooms just down the hall from ours, and let them know where we're going.

By the time we get down there, Bryce and Caleb are waiting for us.

"Where's Morgan?" I ask when Caleb hugs me good morning.

“She’s a little worse for wear. She apologized, but she said she probably isn’t making it down for breakfast,” he tells me softly. My forehead creases a little as I frown, since we’re leaving first thing, but hopefully I’ll be seeing her soon anyway. “I’m surprised you guys look so fresh.”

“I didn’t drink that much.”

“That’s not what I meant,” he says, winking at me. I elbow him in the ribs and he picks me up, starting to tickle me.

“Caleb, put me down you big asshole. Stop it!” I squeal, I’m so goddamn ticklish, and I have no idea how he knows, but fucking hell.

“What is their deal?” I hear Colt ask no one in particular as Caleb continues his torture.

“Please stop,” I plead and he stops, but only because he’s laughing so hard he’s struggling to keep hold of me. I run across the room and hide behind Levi and Roman while Caleb tries to pick himself up from his laughing fit.

Asshole.

“Seriously? How are they so chill?” Colt asks, and Bryce clasps his shoulder.

“So, you know we’ve known Mara since her first life as an Angel...well before we were the Horsemen, back before Morgan was queen, there was a war down here. Mara was our friend, even back then. I’m not even sure that Levi knows that,” he says, nodding over to us, and we all sit down at the table, starting to pile our plates. But I listen with keen interest, because this isn’t a memory I have yet.

“Well, Mara didn’t exactly fight in the war, but she definitely helped us. Anyway, Caleb was separated from the rest of us. Captured by Morgan’s dad. He was injured, fatally, and Morgan’s dad left him in the dungeons to bleed out. But our precious little Mara broke in, not giving a flying fuck about the King of the Shadow Realm and his very well-known wrath. She gave Caleb her blood to help heal him—good old Shadow Walker blood. She didn’t know if it would work, but she risked it anyway, and got him back to us. The blood transfer bonded them. Ever since they’ve been like brother and sister, always fucking about, always tearing into each other, but that bond has never broken. It’s why if she bleeds on the ground here, we know where she is. When we powered up as it were, and became the Horsemen, we did a blood transfer, which means her blood is in each of us.”

“Holy shit. My sister is a badass,” Colt says, leaning back in his chair,

and I throw a biscuit at him.

“As if you ever doubted it.”

“Yeah, but I mean, Remy, that is *badass*. Like without you saving him, the Four Horsemen of the fucking Apocalypse wouldn’t exist.” My neck heats at his words as my blush rises, but I brush him off.

“Yup, our Mara is literally my savior.” Caleb winks at me as he sits opposite me. “Luckily for all parties, our bond never went beyond annoying little sister.”

“Hey!” I throw a biscuit at him too. He catches it and takes a bite, so I flip him the bird instead.

“You know I love you really.” He grins around his mouthful. “But yeah, now you know. Mara was saving worlds long before she started saving yours. This place wouldn’t be what it is today if we hadn’t had her help back then.”

“Can we like, talk about something other than how awesome I am, please?” I groan, cringing inwardly at the praise. Apparently compliments really aren’t my thing. “Ready for your trip to Earth, Bryce?” I ask him, anything to take the focus from me.

“I haven’t really thought about it to be honest. It’s been so long since I was there, it’ll be strange for sure, even if I am only there for a few minutes,” He tells me before taking a bite of the french toast on the plate in front of him.

I tuck into my own plate, it’s good, but not as good as Nonnie’s. Not that I’m telling anyone that. “Remy!”

I turn and find Mireya running towards me, so I push back and crouch down to hug the little girl. She looks so much older already, despite it not feeling like much time has passed. I guess Demon children grow faster than humans.

“Hey sweet girl. How are you doing? Causing chaos for your mom and dads?” She nods eagerly at my question and I chuckle. She looks over my shoulders and sees the others, but her gaze stops on Colt.

“I know you,” she says, and I do a double take. The noise at the table halts as she walks toward him, and my brother looks freaked the fuck out.

“Mireya, this is Colt. My brother. He’s never been here before,” I tell her softly.

“But I know him,” she insists, and Colt pales even further. “I saw him in my dreams.”

“Mireya. What do you mean?” Caleb asks cautiously.

“I saw him in my dreams,” she says again, as if his question is ridiculous.

“What dream, baby girl?” Bryce asks, and she stomps her feet.

“I don’t remember, I just know I saw him,” she screams, and starts to cry.

“It’s okay, sweet girl,” I say, pulling her back to me and hugging her.

“Come on Mireya, let’s get you to your tutor,” Caleb says, standing and moving toward us. “I’ll catch you guys soon hopefully.”

He looks suspiciously at Colt, and I can’t help but frown. What the ever-loving fuck does this mean? Bryce looks at me, wiping his mouth with the napkin on the table and furrows his brow.

“I guess we should get to trying this ring.”

We get back, and the world doesn’t shrivel up and die when Bryce steps through the portal, so I call it a win and send him back, after making him promise to come back in time for Thanksgiving next week.

Once I close the portal, I head inside, where the others already went, and drop onto the sofa.

What a weird as fuck morning.

“So you have no idea why that girl recognized you?” Levi grills Colt.

“I don’t have a fucking clue.”

I put my head in my hands, because this isn’t how I want to spend my day.

“It could be anything,” I sigh. “Colt’s involved in a lot of what we do. He’s been on our side the entire time, let’s just take a breath, shall we, before we start turning on each other.”

Levi glares at me, but I couldn’t give less of a fuck. Colt has been solid this entire time. I’m not going to stop trusting him when Mireya didn’t even remember her dream. It could literally be *anything*.

“I was thinking of going and seeing my folks today,” Creek says, as he sits down next to me on the sofa. “Want to come with me?”

“I’d love that.” I smile at him before turning back to Colt and Fallon. “Are you guys heading out right away?”

“Yeah, I should get back to Mama, make sure she’s okay.” Fallon smiles sadly.

“I should make sure Bauer hasn’t trashed the house looking for Archer’s

journals again,” Colt tells me, and I nod. I stand to hug them both and walk them out before going back to the sitting room where my guys are all talking.

“I trust Colt. He hasn’t given us any reason not to,” Creek says to Levi, and leans back on the sofa. I move and take my seat next to him again.

“Me too,” Roman agrees. “Kid’s a smug asshole sometimes, but since he wrapped his head around everything, he’s been solid.”

“Kain?” Levi asks, turning to him and he shrugs.

“I’m inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt.”

“Fine,” Levi huffs. “I’m going to go and check in with Serafina. See if she has an answer about Michael.”

I sigh as he leaves. I get his mistrusting nature, especially when we’ve been betrayed by so many people, but Colt hasn’t done anything at this point. And Mireya could have dreamed of anything.

“Are you two up to much today?” I ask Kain and Roman.

“Just checking in with the packs,” Roman says with a shrug.

“I’ve got to go to the castle, check on the clans. And retrieve Nonnie. If the message from Luc on my phone this morning is anything to go by, she’s kicking up a stink that she’s not back here yet.”

“I kinda love her,” I tell him with a smile.

“We all do.” Roman grins as he pats his stomach.

“Okay, well, I’m going with Creek, but you guys know where we are if you need us,” I say to them, before turning to face Creek. “Have you texted your mom or dad to let them know we’re coming?”

“Nah, I figured we’d show up and surprise them. Nirvana won’t be home for the holidays just yet, so we can talk about the whole Demon thing without too much of a worry.” His words seem carefree, but I don’t miss the tightness in his shoulders. He’s worried about how his parents are going to react to him, and his new Demon status. I squeeze his hand and he smiles at me.

“Okay, well let me go shower, and maybe nap for like another hour so I’m more human, and then we can head over?”

“Sounds good to me, beautiful.”

We get back home from dinner with his parents, which was not the least awkward situation I’ve ever been in, but it definitely could have gone worse.

They took everything in stride, and it ended up being a really nice day. Maddie looked like she was going to cry a few times, but she kept it together, and Nate didn't seem to act any different toward either of us. Which was a relief, because it would have broken me if they couldn't accept the person their son had become.

We've barely make it in the door before Creek is on me. He picks me up and strides through the house, his lips on mine. We ignore the others as we pass through the sitting room and head for my bedroom.

I open the door and he kicks it closed behind us and throws me onto the bed. He reaches back and pulls his t-shirt over his head. Those few weeks training in the Shadow Realm made him even more sculpted, if that's even possible.

I bite my lip as he watches me. Devouring me with his eyes before he stalks toward me.

He grabs my ankles and pulls me to the edge of the bed, leaning toward me teasing me with the temptation of his lips. Fisting my fingers in his long, thick hair, I bring his mouth to mine so I can taste him. His big, reassuring hands slide up my thighs to the top of my jeans. He unbuttons them and slides them down my legs without breaking our kiss. Our mouths are battling for control when he curls his fingers around my lace panties and rips them from my body before moving to kiss down my neck.

Before I have a chance to so much as moan, his lips leave my neck, I'm topless and my bra is thrown across the room.

Creek pauses and takes a step back, his gaze running over every inch of my exposed body, lighting a fire with the hunger written all over his face.

"Fuck me, you are so fucking beautiful," he groans, as he pulls himself further away from me.

He kicks off his boots, before stripping completely naked, giving me a show as he does. The heat inside me increases, and I feel my wetness on my thighs. He watches me as I bite my lip, trying to restrain myself from jumping on him, the hunger on his face fueling the fire within me.

"Let me show you just how well I learned to use my new power, beautiful."

CHAPTER THIRTY



A week after we got back from the Shadow Realm, I find myself humming as I decorate the manor in every single fall decoration I could find at the very many stores I dragged the guys around. Fall might just be my favorite time of year. Who doesn't love hoodies, hot chocolate, pretty leaves, and snuggly evenings?

I've never been able to decorate for fall before, but it's Thanksgiving tomorrow, and Morgan and her guys are supposed to arrive today. To say I'm excited is an understatement.

Nonnie is cooking, and literally everyone is coming. Fallon and her family, Maddie and Nate, Colt and his friends, Luc, Tobias, Theron and Leandra, even Bauer is coming. Plus, of course, Morgan and her Horsemen, and I've never been so excited. We went out and got the biggest dining table I've ever seen, and the guys spent the morning swearing at me as they assembled it and the eleventy billion chairs that came with it ready for tomorrow.

But I'm too happy to care. Things seem to have quieted down. The witches are quiet, the packs are happy, the clans were always happy. Hunters seem to be easing into the new way of life with relative ease. All I wanted was one day where we could all be together without the madness, and I think I might actually get it. I cross my fingers, so I don't jinx myself, and climb down from the ladder where I put up the *Happy Turkey Day* banner in the sitting room.

"Those boys are causing chaos in my kitchen!" Nonnie clucks as she

wanders into the sitting room, wringing out her hands. “Please, make them leave. I cannot prepare for such a big day with them making such a mess.”

“Let me go see what they’re up to.” I chuckle and the older woman follows me into the kitchen, where I find the table and about half of the chairs assembled. I grin as the guys scowl at me.

“Hey guys.” I laugh under my breath, because apparently DIY really isn’t something any of them enjoy.

“No. Don’t you, hey guys, us. You wanted this stupid table, then left us to build it,” Roman grumbles, and I try my hardest not to snicker.

“You’re doing such an awesome job though!” I flutter my lashes at him, teasing him because it’s so much fun to sass them right now. “Though, I’m going to help, so that Nonnie can get on with dinner prep for tomorrow.”

They all grumble, but I jump in and help them get it done. I might cause more chaos than I actually help with, but we get it wrapped up, along with the gazebo I wanted set up outside—with more fairy lights than should be possible in one room, but it looks so pretty all lit up—and Nonnie shoos us from the kitchen. I head for the pool, because one, I need to cool off, and two, I freaking love being in the water. The guys follow me without so much as a question. I strip down to my black underwear and dive in. I’d have jumped in naked, but I don’t know when Morgan and the guys are due to arrive, so I don’t want to be mid-fuckery when they pop up.

We might be close, but even for us, that could be awkward.

As I break the surface, the guys jump in, causing a mini tsunami in the pool. I can’t help but laugh at their coordinated jump. Creek surfaces first, behind me, wrapping his arms around my waist as I tread water. “This was a good idea.”

His breath on my neck makes my skin pebble, and I can feel how hard he is against my ass, but nope. I am stronger than their penis wizardry. I am not getting caught in an orgy when Morgan arrives, no matter how hot they are or how good they feel. I push away from him, his laughter echoing in the room. Roman catches me, and devours my lips with his, stealing every last breath I have. I wrap around him, sinking into his kiss. His cock nudges against me, so I pull back and push away from him too.

“No goddamn penis wizardry or fuckery. No!” I say, and swim toward the steps of the pool.

“You’re no fun,” Levi calls out, I look back at him and stick out my tongue, making him roar with laughter.

“I’d really rather not see any of your dicks today.” Caleb’s voice rings around the room, Nonnie at his side, who frowns at me, and heads back toward the rest of the house.

“This, this is exactly what I was talking about!” I say, as I climb out of the pool and grab a towel from the rack. The guys all snicker behind me, but I just ignore them and turn to Caleb. “Your ring works then. Awesome. Where are the others?”

“I left them in the kitchen, figured if there was a whole lot of cock flying about, I’d save them that sight,” he teases, but hugs me even though I’m wet. “I also wanted to get you alone for a second. I wanted to tell you something.”

“Oh?” I say, nervous because he seems both excited and nervous as he bounces on the balls of his feet.

“I know, that even without you saying anything, you were disappointed at how quickly Jack died, since Colt shot him. Buttttt, a gunshot to the head isn’t quite enough to put a Demon like Jack down. It is enough, however, to send him back to the realm. Which is exactly where he is right now. Shackled to a table, and still bleeding pretty bad right now. He won’t be coming back to hurt you ever again. That much I can promise you.” His grin is almost feral as my heart stutters, unsure how to feel about what he’s telling me. “But, I will pry every single secret he’s keeping, no matter how long it takes, or how creative I have to get. I have some very special things planned for Jacky-boy.”

“I...I don’t know what to say.” I laugh, because his eyes practically dance at the thought of inflicting pain on Jack, and while I am one hundred percent down for that, I’m also a little conflicted. Pulling Caleb into my messy past, present, and future.

“You don’t need to say anything. I have plenty of...feelings about Jack. He’s going to learn not to hurt my family,” he practically growls. “Now, you go see Morgan, she’s been excited about coming here.” His words are almost drowned out by the shouting and splashing coming from the guys.

“Thank you. They’re idiots,” I say, waving toward the pool where the guys are now play fighting. I’m not sure what happened to make them all so carefree for the last day or so, but I’m not going to knock it.

“They might be, but after chilling out in the realm for so long, I’m totally joining them!” He strips down to his boxers and cannonballs into the pool, and I just stand there, shaking my head at him and the cheers from my guys. I pull my clothes back on once I’m dry enough and make my way to the

kitchen.

I find Morgan, margarita in hand, with Nonnie fussing over her, while the other three just look amused at the older woman. I guess compared to Cook, Nonnie is a fucking wet dream.

“Where is Caleb?” Bryce asks when he spots me.

“Play fighting in the pool with the others,” I tell him with a soft chuckle. His eyes light up and the other two look at him excitedly. “Through the sitting room, to the end of the hall. You’ll hear them before you get there.”

They scurry away like kids and Morgan’s laugh twinkles through the air. “Boys never really grow up, do they?”

“No, no they don’t,” I tell her, as Nonnie hands me a margarita too and I sit down. “How’s it feel being up here?”

“It’s weird as fuck. I can feel my power, but it’s so muted compared to normal. I know if I call on it, it’d still wreak havoc, but it’s usually just there under my skin. That being said, I have never celebrated Thanksgiving, so I am all kinds of excited about being here with you for this.” She squeezes my hand, and that’s when I notice the barrels by the back door.

“Erm... what’s that?” I ask her, and she shakes her head, laughing again.

“Nectar. Caleb wanted to make sure you had enough for a party.”

“Oh fates,” I groan, pinching my nose. Giving nectar to everyone who is coming here could either be hilarious, or a complete disaster. I guess we’ll just have to wait and see how that goes.

I look around the table, the mishmash of people here, the love in this room, and my heart swells. This room is my family, and I’d die for any one of them, hell I *have* died for some of them. Even with the ups and downs we’ve been through. I’ve never been more thankful than I am right now that I can have all of these people in the same room as me.

Nate clears his throat and stands, raising his glass. “This year has been one of the most turbulent ones I’ve lived in all of my lifetimes. I am happy and grateful that we can be there together, as a family, and celebrate this day. I know there are faces that are missing from the table, but I like to think that they’re still with us. Here is to family, and a quieter year next year.”

Everyone raises their glasses in toast, and Nonnie hands the carving knife

to Nate, who somehow has ended up at the other end of the table to me and has been designated speech giver and turkey carver.

Every other year, my dad has done it, but it feels right that Nate, my father-in-law, is the guy to carry that torch now. Once the turkey is good to go, everyone digs in, and I just sit and enjoy the love and laughter filling the room while I eat with abandon.

I groan as I push my plate away, feeling like I'm going to burst. "Nonnie, you truly outdid yourself. That was amazing."

"I hope you saved space. I made cheesecake." She grins at me, knowing that I definitely didn't but dammit. Cheesecake.

"There is always room for cheesecake." I grin at her and my guys just laugh at me, while Maddie shakes her head.

"You and cheesecake. I've never known anything like it," Maddie chuckles.

"What can I say? I'm one of a kind."

"You can say that again." Caleb grins and laughter rounds the table.

"Shall we take this outside?" Colt suggests, standing, his hand on the back of Fallon's chair.

"Yes, let's get this party really started," Caleb says, standing too.

"I'll start getting cleared up," I say, smiling at the others.

"Do you want some help?" Kain asks softly, but I shake my head.

"I've got it. You guys all go have fun. It won't take me long," I say it loud enough for everyone to hear. Nonnie scoffs, but Kain and Luc make her leave me to it. She cooked this insanity, I'm not going to ask her to clean it. Maddie hangs back and starts helping clear the table.

"You really don't need to," I tell her with a smile, but she shakes her head at me.

"I want to," she says, as she clears food from plates and stacks them in the dishwasher.

"Well, then thank you," I tell her, and we clean in a comfortable silence.

"I'm glad you're so happy, Remy," she says wistfully. I turn to find her staring out the backdoors at my family all drinking and dancing. I can't help but laugh softly as Colt and Caleb have what looks like a dance off.

"I really am. Even with everything that's happened, I'm happy."

"Is Creek happy?" she asks, turning back to face me.

"It's been a bumpy road, but yes, he's happy," I tell her, and she smiles.

"Good, that's all I've ever wanted for him. It will be strange, living

another life without my baby boy.” Her voice is thick, and guilt pinches at me, but I have to remember that this was the only real option. “We should get out there.”

She swipes at her eyes but smiles at me. I finish wrapping the last of the leftovers, and head out with her. The music is playing a terrible dance song, so obviously every single person is dancing, and the drink is flowing. My heart swells with the happiness in our space. Creek saunters toward us with his dad. They each hold out a hand to us, which we take and get dragged out to dance too.

I laugh as Creek pulls me in close and rocks his hips in time to the music. Dancing has never really been his thing, but he spins me around, and pulls me back toward him. His hand on my hips and we dance, letting the beat carry us away.

After a night of dancing, drinking, and laughter, I’m a sweaty-but-happy mess. Some people have started heading to bed, after we made sure that everyone had somewhere to sleep. Fallon and Colt are still slow dancing, even though the music is a fast song, Theron and Leandra are at a table, while he rubs her feet. Tobias is laughing with Roman about something, while Morgan and her guys dance up a storm. Creek, Kain, and Luc are arm wrestling, because boys. Levi smiles at me as he heads inside to grab me a bottle of water when Bauer sits beside me.

“Thank you for letting me come today, Remy. I know some people wouldn’t have been exactly welcoming me with open arms.”

“You’re family,” I say simply, because really, that’s all there is to it.

“I know, but still. Can we go talk? Away from all the noise?” he asks, and I look around at my family all smiling and having fun, then nod.

“Sure, even just outside of the gazebo it’s quieter, we can walk toward the river.” I stand and he follows me from the gazebo. It takes me a minute for my eyes to adjust to the darkness, but we walk in relative silence as we walk towards the river.

“So what’s up?” I ask, when the music grows quieter with the distance.

“I just, it’s been an insane few months, and I’ve been processing a lot recently. Especially since Archer’s death. I’ve done a lot of reflecting and

soul searching. I wanted to be able to apologize to you properly. Away from the madness, all of the new people. Just you and I. Everything that's happened was you. It's all because of you."

"I had a lot of help—" I start, but he cuts me off and starts pacing.

"No Remy, it was all you. Right from the beginning. You started everything in motion all those lifetimes ago that brought us to right here. It was all you. And I'm sorry." His arm lifts towards me, when I see the glint off of the glass in his hand. He slams the blade into my shoulder, and I scream as the glass burns.

Then I see Levi, with his hand on the back of Bauer's neck. The crunch and squelching noises as he literally rips Bauer's spine from his body would usually make me gag, but the pain in my shoulder takes over every part of me.

"Remy!" Colt yells, but I'm inside a bubble of electricity. The lightning weaves around the bubble, lighting up the space.

"Remy." The anguish in Levi's voice hurts my very soul. "I can't touch it, it's Angel glass."

He lowers the bubble and lets Caleb walk forward, who approaches with his hands raised. "I've got her, big guy."

Caleb leans down and wraps his hand around the hilt of the blade. "I'm sorry, Mara. This is going to hurt." He pulls out the blade and white dots blot my vision when the full-body pain amplifies as he rips the blade from my shoulder. I scream so loud, even though I try not to. Once it's out I whimper softly as Levi picks me up off to the ground, careful not to jostle my shoulder.

"Fallon," Levi growls, as he walks back toward the house, Caleb at our side. I look back and see Bauer's head, detached from his body, just discarded on the ground. I can't feel anything but pain, so the betrayal and sadness don't touch me, but I know it will.

The sky lights up, and Levi passes me to Caleb as he stands in front of us, protecting us from whatever that was.

"Move aside, General," The low voice calls out. "I will not harm her."

"Michael," Levi growls, and enough people around me gasp, knowing who that is. Caleb holds me tighter, as Bryce, Morgan, Killian, and Malik surround us, with my guys stepping up beside us. I get the feeling Caleb is ready to disappear the fuck away from here at the smallest signal from Levi.

"Why are you here?" Levi asks. It's hard to focus as the burning in my

shoulder gets worse, as if the fire from it is spreading towards my heart.

“I’m here to help,” Michael answers him, and the light moves toward us. Levi doesn’t move until the light is so bright before us, I have to squint to see.

“Then turn down the light, asshole,” Caleb growls, the light must be affecting him too. The light dims and Levi moves aside. The man before me, well Angel, has huge, white feathered wings. His blonde hair practically glows, but his eyes are like warm pools of chocolate.

“Give her to me,” Michael tells Caleb, who looks to Levi. I’ve never seen him look so torn.

“It’s okay,” I tell Caleb, and try to climb down from his grasp, but his hold tightens.

“Do it,” Levi grinds out.

“What the fuck is going on?” Colt asks, but Fallon shushes him as Caleb transfers me to Michael’s arms.

It’s like an instant cooling, and I sigh at the relief of it. It’s like I’ve been dipped in a calm, cool bath, and the burning in my shoulder starts to withdraw. “Hello, Little Bird. I tried to warn you in my letter not to trust anyone.”

Michael smiles down at me, and it’s so warm, full of love, I can’t help but smile back.

“I think it’s about time you came home.”

A blinding light swallows us and I can’t see through it. I blink, trying to get my bearings, but a whoosh fills my ears just before the light dims.

I look around our surroundings, a room, painted in white, with soft gray furnishings.

“What is this? Where are we?”

“Welcome back to Avalon, Little Bird.”

Thank you so much for reading *The Misery of Shadows*. I hope you loved the start to Remy’s breach into the unknown. The gang returns in the fifth book, *The Reaping of Envy*. Available soon!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lily is a writer, dreamer, fur mom and serial killer, crime documentary addict.

She loves to write dark, reverse harem romance and characters who will shatter your heart. Characters who enjoy stomping on the pieces and then laugh before putting you back together again. And she definitely doesn't enjoy readers tears. Nope. Not even a little.

Visit her website at www.lilywildhart.com to sign up for the newsletter or find her on social media through the links below.



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