CARNAGE

Desire begets revenge. Pestilence reigns true.

SARAH BAILEY
CARNAGE

FOUR HORSEMEN
BOOK ONE

SARAH BAILEY
animal – GRASS
Where You Belong – The Weeknd
Secret Scream – The Black Queen
Apocalypse Morning – The Black Queen
Cocoa Hooves – Glass Animals
Wyrd – Glass Animals
Under the Fireworks – Sam Tsui
Dark History – Sonia Ammar
Pray – JRY, RuthAnne
Monsters – Lucy Daydream
Heart Made of Stone – The Tech Thieves
Bang! – The Tech Thieves, The ROU
Golden Throne – The Tech Thieves
If You Dare – The Tech Thieves
Hourglass – Hex Cougar, AWAY, josh pan
Evil Like Me – Hex Cougar
Chemical – KRANE, Lemay, Asha, Hex Cougar
Burn – Hex Cougar, Pauline Herr
Horns – Bryce Fox
I’m a Sucker for a Liar in a Red Dress – Adam Jensen
BLACKOUT - AViVA
HYPNOTISED – AviVA
Mercy – Hurts
Twisted - MISSIO
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AMNESIA – DREAMDNVR, Boy In Space
Secrets – Tribe Society
Outlaws – Tribe Society
Cross – Echos
Killer – Valarie Broussard
Do It for Me – Rosenfeld
The Witch – Rosenfeld, KHEMIS
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Twisted – The People’s Thieves
Now That We’re Alone – The People’s Thieves
Sweat – ZAYN
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SCORPIO – DREAMDNVR
Fuck You – Silent Child
Freak – UNDREAM, Silent Child, Hannabelle
IDFAF – Besomorph, Silent Child
I’m Gonna Get What’s Mine – Graffiti Ghosts
Psycho – VOSTOK
Love You Like Me – William Singe
Moondust (Stripped) – Jaymes Young
Often – The Weeknd
Will You Follow Me Into the Dark – Klergy, Mindy Jones
Animal In Me – Solence
Death Do Us Part – Solence
Foreign Dreams – Phantom Head
The Wall – PatrickReza
VILLAIN – MePemuro
Unthinkable – Cloudy June
Broken – Lund
Downhill – Lund
Poison – KLEINOD
Mind Games – Sickick
Kill Me Slowly - Sickick
Goosebumps – HVME
Animal – EMELINE
Sociopath – StayLoose, Bryce Fox
Can’t Forget You – NEVR KNØW
Coquette, Kuoga., Ivy
Wrong – MAX, Lil Uzi Vert
Reckless – Lund
Sing Me to Sleep – Matstubs
Method – Big X
My Mind – Mickey Valen, Emily Vaughn
Double Life – Marina Kaye
Scream – Marina Kaye
By Your Side – Archie Summers
Me & My Demons – Omido, Silent Child
Love and Lies – Anthony Ramos
This is a **DARK** romance and therefore it comes with a content warning. I don’t give this warning lightly, so please be sure you want to read this before you continue any further.

If you want specifics, then please check out my [website](#) for full details.
To all my dark, twisted queens,
This one’s for you!
The last memory I had of the life I lived before was of four boys. The way the sunlight glinted off their hair as our laughter rang through the trees. Of the heat of summer in Richmond Park. The smell of dry grass. And the haze of the London skyline in the distance. The world seemed so vast back when I was innocent and free.

A freedom cruelly ripped away from me by those who say they seek to keep me safe. Chains tether me to my new reality. One of loneliness and seclusion. It left me clinging to memories from so long ago; I forget they’re only in my imagination. I forget I can’t remember who I was before all of this happened to me.

Hours melded into days. Days into weeks. And weeks soon became years. Years since I’d laid eyes on anything outside of the four walls of the place I call my prison.

The life I’d been sentenced to weighed heavily on my heart. It kept me from experiencing everything the world had to offer. It kept me ‘safe’.

But what is safety when you cannot see anything beyond your cage?
What is life when you cannot live it?

I thought I was destined to live in solitude forever. Then one day I was released from the castle I’d grown up in and given one simple task.
To seek, infiltrate and destroy by whatever means necessary.
I returned to the city I could barely remember.
I returned to find them.
To seek.
To infiltrate.
To destroy.
I will stop at nothing to fulfil my goal. To give them their heart’s desire. Then I can finally experience the freedom I so desperately crave.

I will bring them the heads of the men known as the Four Horsemen.
Or die trying.
There’s something empowering about seeing the kingdom you rule over spread out before you. The people going about their daily lives like ants foraging for their colony. That’s what humanity is. Ants.

There are those who toil day in, day out and those who reap the rewards. Who sit in their ivory towers watching the world go by, hoarding their billions simply because they can.

Which category do I fall into? The answer would be neither.

I do not reap.
I do not toil.
I infect.

The face of our company had to be a pretty one. It’s how you win people over. Charm and charisma only come after one’s initial impression. It’s how you keep them interested. You hook them then you pounce, ensuring your claws are in so deep, they’ll never be able to extract them. Humans aren’t hard to work out. You appeal to their baser natures and soon, you’ll get what you want, leaving them none the wiser about the manipulation they’ve undergone. Blind to reality.

It’s really very simple when it comes down to it.

Women want to be with me.
Men want to be me.

I’ve got inside their heads. Made them see a perfectly constructed image of what it means to be rich handsome, powerful and successful. Pity, it was all lies they’d been fed to keep them coming back for more. Like little lost souls dangling on a string, hoping one day they’ll be just like me.

I am an infection they’ll never be free of.

It was how I liked it. Keeping them under my thumb whilst I bleed them dry until they’re nothing but a husk. A shell of the person they used to be. Then I throw them to the wolves and watch whilst they’re eaten alive.

It’s the most rewarding part. Seeing your efforts finally end with their ultimate demise.

“You observing your playground again, Pres?”

I glanced back, finding Drake standing by my desk, his fingers brushing across the glass surface. The man could be called darkness personified. Midnight black hair with indigo eyes. Drake was never seen in anything but dark colours. It suited his temperament. Something he often kept hidden, but I knew the truth. His namesake was completely on point. A dragon disguised as a man. And not to be messed with under any circumstances.

I infected, but Drake? He dissected until there was nothing left.

“Perhaps.”

Drake’s lip twitched. I may be the face of our business, but Drake was the CEO. He made the hard
decisions and took all the flack. He kept the fine balance between what we did above board and below from imploding on us.

Fortuity would not be where it is today without him.

“You ready for today?”

I inclined my head before turning back to the window. The city spread out in front of me as far as the eye could see. At the centre was us. The axis. Money made the capitalist society go around. And what did we deal in?

Money. Money. And more money.

It had never been about getting rich. It had always been about power. And we had it in spades. Money merely gave us the means to spread our influence. And spread it we did.

The four of us had built our company from the ground up. No one dared question our rule. No one stood up to us. Anyone who’d tried to do so learnt the hard way. We took no prisoners. We gave no second chances. Ruthless efficiency was exactly what we were renowned for.

“It’s time we set the world on fire,” I murmured, knowing he’d hear me.

He snorted.

“Isn’t it already burning?”

I shrugged, waving a hand at the window.

“This? This is nothing. They haven’t seen anything yet.”

“I hope you’re right.”

I grinned, turning away from the city and levelling him with my gaze. He wasn’t smiling. I could see the tension lining his brow. Drake never relaxed or chilled out. He took everything that went wrong as a personal affront. He wouldn’t stop until he’d fixed every last detail. The man left no stone unturned. It was why he ran our company, leaving me to be our public image. I had no patience for what he did.

“I’m always right.”

“More like always the arrogant narcissist.”

I spread my hands, giving him a wink.

“I have every reason to be.”

Drake rolled his eyes before he walked away towards the door. He was used to me. The way I never took life too seriously. However, I knew the market like the back of my damn hand. This was our only option to secure our future.

He paused in the frame, his back stiff and his hands twitching.

“We’re sacrificing everything. You can’t tell me it doesn’t concern you at all.”

I ran my tongue along my bottom lip. We had every reason to be afraid of future repercussions. However, we’d never done anything by halves. Always one step ahead of everyone else in this game we played. Luck had been on our side, but it would only last so long. One day it could run out. I planned to make sure it never happened.

“I leave the worrying to you.”

He shook his head. Drake would currently be wishing he could throw me off the roof of the building for my lack of fear in the face of adversity. He’d called me reckless on more than one occasion.

Where would we be without my insistence we take risks and throw caution to the wind?

No-fucking-where.
I made us who we are.
“I guess it’s time to bait the trap and watch the cards fall.”
He didn’t give me room to respond, walking out and leaving me alone with my thoughts. I shoved my
hands in my pockets and glanced back at the windows one last time.
The world wasn’t ready for us.
They never had been.
Some called us monsters in suits.
They’d be right.

We weren’t kind or nice. We ruthlessly pursued our goals, not caring who we trampled on to get
there. The casualties and collateral damage didn’t keep me awake at night. All part and parcel of who we
were and what we did.

If you want power, you cannot afford to have the same morals the little people keep. You have to step
outside the boundaries of right and wrong. Walk into the grey and never look back. It’s where you’ll find
the darkest and most depraved among us. Those who will sooner rip your throat out than lend you a
hand.

Drake, West, Francis, and I were no longer seen as men.
We were gods.
We’d stepped into the grey, proving we weren’t to be trifled with. And no one dared go up against us.
They called us the Four Horsemen.

A title I took and ran with it. The men who’d end the world had always fascinated me, but the whole
idea of us being such men amused me to no end. We weren’t the harbingers of the apocalypse. Or were
we?

It didn’t matter either way. Once you have a certain image, you have to keep up with it. And it was
time we lived up to our name once and for all.
I stared down at my watch, wondering not for the first time why I even put up with this shit day in, day out. They should be here by now. Don’t know why I expected anything different. Those three had no timekeeping skills, nor did they care how long they made people wait.

Prescott, the narcissistic fuck, would probably be primping and preening his dark blonde hair to make sure no strand was out of place. As if he cared about anything else other than his appearance and getting his own way. He had every reason to. He was the face of our company, but by fuck, did he need to learn a lesson in humility. Or maybe he simply needed to rein his shit in.

I looked up to find Drake strolling in, his shoulders tense. At least he knew what was at stake here. The guy took life far too seriously if you asked me, but it meant he got shit done. He nodded at me as he came to a standstill by my side.

“They’re late,” I muttered.

“What else do you expect?”

Prescott liked to make an entrance. But West? Well, he was a fucking loose cannon. It took all three of us to control him when he went off the rails, which happened far more often than I liked. If West went out on his own anywhere, he’d end up bloody, high on pills, balls deep in pussy or a combination of all three. Only last week he’d broken a guy’s nose for daring to look at him the wrong way. It was why we rarely held press conferences involving the four of us. You never knew what would set him off.

Drake, West and I stayed in the shadows whilst Prescott took the helm. It was how it had always been. Until now. Everything was different now.

“I expect better of you for starters.”

Drake’s lip twitched.

“Someone had to make sure Pres isn’t going to fuck up.”

“And our warmonger?”

“Fuck knows. I heard him come back late last night and he wasn’t alone.”

I stifled a sigh. West and his ever-revolving door of women. The four of us lived in the penthouse at the top of the building. We could oversee our kingdom from here. Exactly how we liked it. Being fully in control of everything. We ruled and the rest followed.

“Trouble sleeping again?”

“Always.”

Drake had suffered from insomnia for as long as I could remember. He tended to be up at all hours because of it. Stress worsened his condition, so it didn’t surprise me. We were all under immense pressure right now.

“Soon.”

His lip quirked up.
“I know.”

Drake flexed his hand at his side as our wayward friend walked in. West had his tattooed hands shoved in his pockets, his light brown hair slightly dishevelled as usual, and his amber eyes were dark with irritation. At least he'd actually put a suit on and looked reasonably smart. You never knew what kind of mood he would be in or whether he'd actually be presentable. Some days I found him lounging in his office in nothing but trackies and a dressing gown. When he did dress up, he turned heads. We all did. All of us only wore the best when it came to suits. You had to look the part in our business.

“Don't give me shit, Frankie. I’m not in the mood,” West grunted as he came to stand on the other side of me from Drake.

I glared. He knew I hated being called Frankie. Only one person had ever got away with it and it certainly wasn’t West.

“Don't rise to his shit,” Drake whispered.

Usually, I'd haul West out of here and give him a talking to about his conduct. Today was far too important for him to fuck up, but we were already running behind schedule. I didn’t have time to deal with his attitude.

“You know what's at stake,” I said, ignoring Drake. “And my name is Francis.”

“Oh, I’m fully aware of the bullshit we’ve put up with for years. If this goes wrong, we all go down,” West hissed. “But whatever you say, Frankie.”

I gave him another dark look. I would not react to his taunt. Fuck knows it would only lead to trouble.

“What a sunny mood you’re both in today,” Drake said, smirking.

“I don't know why you're giving me shit when Pres isn't down here yet.” West rolled his eyes. “Oh wait, I remember, you let the prick get away with everything.”

*Do not rise to it. Do not do it.*

I clenched my fist when said prick finally made his presence known, walking through the doors with a flourish. His blue eyes glinted as he nonchalantly strolled towards the podium. Prescott gave us a wink before he turned to the press.

*Jesus Christ, he never stops.*

“Apologies for my tardiness,” he said into the mic.

West scoffed next to me. I stamped on his foot to shut him up. He glared at me.

Prescott wasn’t sorry at all. He always left them gagging for his presence. The man captivated his audience and played up to his image of a successful businessman all too well. Underneath his perfect exterior, he was as rotten to the core as the rest of us.

We were not good men.

We were monsters who’d become gods.

Gods of the financial industry.

And it would stay that way if I had anything to do with it.

I fought against the urge to roll my eyes as Prescott went on about how we were expanding our business with a new acquisition and how we were planning on supporting the younger generation in finding new careers in finance. Bringing in new blood, giving them opportunities and cementing our status as a progressive company. Pity all of it was a lie we perpetuated for our own gain.
Drake gave me a sidelong glance as West ground his teeth next to me. The noise grated on my ears.

"Quit it," I muttered under my breath.

"How about you take that stick out your arse, Frankie," he hissed back.

"Don’t," Drake whispered to hold me back from knocking West on his arse.

It wouldn’t be the first time West and I came to blows. I had scars across my knuckles on my right hand from the time I’d missed and smacked my fist into a mirror, which shattered on impact instead. The fucker had ducked.

"For the last time, it’s Francis."

Thankfully, the assembled crowd was clapping at something Prescott had said, so no one else heard me.

"West, quit being a cunt," Drake added, "Now isn’t the time."

West snorted, flexing his tattooed hands by his sides. I ignored him, turning my attention back to Prescott. Everything he’d said was all part of our plans. To the casual observer, it may not sound like much. Pledges to do more in our industry and help the economy grow. But to us, it meant the culmination of years of waiting, biding our time until we could strike.

We’d come from very little. By all accounts, we shouldn’t be where we are today. The four of us were nothing if not determined. None of what we’d achieved had been obtained without sacrifices, or legally for that matter. Diving into the underbelly and using it to our advantage. We were unapologetic in stepping on everyone in a bid to find our way to the top. Probably why we’d made enemies. Many, many enemies.

Power is what we sought and power is what we’d gained.

My lip curled up at the side. We had made our fortune because of me. Prescott was the face of Fortuity and the Director of Marketing. Drake was our CEO. West, when he actually turned up, was the Director of Operations. And me? The Director of Finance. I ran our money and did my job fucking well. I took the small amount we had when we started Fortuity and turned it into billions.

Prescott might like to think we were here because of him, but really, it took all of us to make this company a success. We thrived because we stuck together and worked fucking hard. And now, we were moving forward with our plan to get what we all really wanted. What we’d waited for. It would only be a matter of time now.

Prescott had laid the trap, baited the bear and we would be patient whilst we reeled in our ultimate prize.

"You look happy," Drake murmured as we stepped forward to stand behind Prescott when he’d finished his speech.

"I am."

I glanced over, spying his indigo eyes twinkling. He knew exactly why. We all did. Even West, who looked like he wanted to bathe the entire room in blood. And he would as well. The guy took no prisoners.

"You think this will really work?"

Drake sounded hesitant.

"It has to. I’m not waiting another ten years."

His grim smile told me he felt the same way. We’d had enough.
Prescott glanced back at us, his blonde eyebrows raised. “You three need to cheer the fuck up,” he said under his breath, so the microphone wouldn’t pick up his words.

I plastered a smile on my face as Drake and West did the same. A united front. It’s what we had to show. Hiding our darkness underneath a carefully constructed façade. The face of Fortuity. And the men who ran it.

My smile became real when I thought about what they called us. The Four Horsemen. As if we were going to bring the apocalypse. Perhaps we would. Perhaps we wouldn’t.

All I knew was… our time had come. And none of us would allow anything to stand in our way any longer.

_We’re going to have so much fun. We’re owed this._

We only had to exercise a little more patience and restraint… then we could let it all out. And watch the world burn around us.
I swallowed when I stopped outside a building. The tall, imposing building, which towered over me, was made of black stone and glass and housed the company of four men who had risen from the ashes to take over the financial industry. Or so I'd been told. That’s the thing. I didn’t really know anything about the men I was here to see, other than what I’d been told. And those things didn't make me feel anything other than disgust towards them. However, I knew deep down there were always two sides to a story. Whilst I had a goal in mind, there would always be doubts plaguing me.

Nothing in life was simple. And revenge? Well, it led down a path I wasn’t sure I wanted to follow, no matter what they’d done.

I stared up at the sign above the doors.

Fortuity.

My reasons for being here were simple. To secure employment. Gain their trust. And to destroy them.

I shook myself. I could not afford to give the game away. It would be time to put on a façade. The one I’d worn most of my life. The parts of my life I could remember anyway. My childhood was a blank space in my memory. And anything I could remember felt like a fuzzy dream as opposed to reality.

I walked into the building, holding my head high, and went right up to the reception desk. The man sitting there looked up with a smile on his face.

“Hello, welcome to Fortuity. How can I help you?”

“Hello, I’m here for an interview with Mr Ackley… I’m Scarlett Carver,” I replied, keeping my voice even so as not to betray my nervousness.

The man nodded and scanned something on his computer before looking up at me again.

“Of course, if you’d just like to sign in here.”

He indicated a tablet on the desk in front of me. I tapped on it, typing in my name and signing a box. He issued me with a visitor’s pass and told me to head up to the twenty-eighth floor. The men who owned Fortuity lived on the top two floors of the building. The floor below where I was headed must be their offices.

The Four Horsemen.

I didn’t understand why they’d been given the name. It seemed so ridiculous. But what did I know? I’d been kept locked away on an estate in the Kent countryside for the past ten years by my parents. They’d told me it was for my own good, but sometimes I wondered if it was true.

I walked over to the bank of lifts and pressed down on the button. Someone strolled up beside me as the lift arrived. The doors slid open. I walked in with the man. He tossed a glance my way, stepping up to the panel.

“Floor?”

I took him in then. He had dark brown hair, slicked down on his head with gel in this rather suave
manner, his dark grey suit complete with a waistcoat moulded to his body like it was made for him, and his eyes were silvery-grey. I don't know why, but something about those eyes tugged at my memories. They seemed almost familiar, but they couldn't be. I'd never seen him before in my life. The need to step closer and work out why I felt this way drove through me. My fingers twitched to trace a line across his jaw and angular cheekbones.

_What is wrong with you?_

I didn't understand this at all. Then again, I'd never been allowed to go near the opposite sex other than the staff at the estate and my family. I inwardly scoffed. Yeah, so I was a twenty-six-year-old virgin. It embarrassed the hell out of me. I didn't care what my parents said. I intended to remedy it whilst I was here. Finally able to take control of my life, now I was free of their overbearing nature. The way they coddled me and kept me locked up away from the world. And yet, I was still chained to them in so many ways. Hence why I was here in the first place. In this building. Going to this interview. They were the reason.

The man's hand hovered over the panel, and his eyebrow curled up. The curve of his lip had me staring at it. The bottom one was full.

_What would it be like to experience a kiss from them? Would it feel as good as the books I've read said it does? Would be be gentle or demanding?_

“Twenty-eight, please,” I blurted out in a rush, realising he'd been waiting longer than a minute for me to answer and completely mortified by my wayward thoughts.

He dropped his hand. I noticed he'd already pressed that floor. He was going to the same place as I was. Did it mean he might well be one of the four men who ran this company?

He stepped back and stood next to me, his muscles tense and his body rigid. I fidgeted with my handbag, tugging on the strap, my fingers rubbing the leather as I tried not to allow his proximity to affect me. The scent of his cologne filled my nostrils. This heady mix of cinnamon and apple. A favourite combination of mine, reminding me of the apple crumble our chef, Gio, made most Sundays for dinner. I wasn't sure when I'd get to eat it again, considering going home to the estate filled me with dread.

My eyes were drawn to his face, watching the way his jaw ticked and his eyes remained fixed on the lift doors. If he was one of them, I could see why people called them gods. This man was undeniably attractive. He had an air of power surrounding him. Under the surface of it, danger simmered.

“I haven’t seen you before,” he said, his silver eyes flicking to me. “Are you new?”

“Oh no, I'm here for an interview.”

He cocked an eyebrow.

“Ah yes, the PA position, no?”

I nodded, unsure of whether or not to introduce myself to him. His lip curled up at the side, his eyes glinting. It made him seem almost predatory.

When I got the offer of an interview, the HR lady, Deborah Manning, told me the CEO, one Mr Drake Ackley, would be conducting it himself. She said he liked to know who he was hiring since I'd be working for him personally. It didn't fill me with any sort of reassurance. I'd never been interviewed before. My parents had falsified my employment records to make me look like a good candidate. In reality, the only work I'd ever done was help my father run the estate. In some ways, it gave me a little
experience. Plus, they’d sat me down with his own PA and she’d gone over the job numerous times with me. What would be expected. How to conduct myself in a work environment. And other such things.

I could do this, but I’d have to have my wits about me to make sure I played it all the right way.

The lift doors slid open as we arrived on the twenty-eighth floor. The man took a step out before turning back to me.

“I can show you where to go if you’d like, Miss…”

“Carver. Scarlett Carver.”

I stepped out after him. He smiled at me but didn’t put his hand out.

“Well, this way then, Miss Carver.”

He strode across the lobby, leaving me wondering why he’d not told me who he was. I quick-walked after him to keep up with his long strides. There was a lady at a desk near the corridor we were walking towards who glanced up when she heard us.

“Mr Beaufort,” she said, putting her hand up.

He stopped at her desk and leant over it, giving her a wicked grin.

“Yes, Tonya?”

She looked at me when I came to a standstill before turning her gaze back to him.

“Mr Ellis wants to see you.”

“Did he say what he wanted?”

She shook her head, glancing at me again. He seemed to notice because he waved a hand at me.

“I’m taking Miss Carver down to Drake’s office, then I’ll stop by and see Pres.”

“Mr Ackley is expecting you,” she said directly to me. “Good luck.”

Tonya looked back down at her desk. The man she’d called Mr Beaufort shoved off it, walking away down the corridor. I caught up to him a minute later, realising I was meant to be following him.

He was one of the Four Horsemen. My parents had drilled their names into my brain repeatedly.


They were my ultimate goal. The men I needed to reel in. How I’d go about it was a huge mystery to me. I’d been told it had to be by whatever means necessary. I guessed I’d have to wait and see how this all panned out.

Mr Beaufort stopped outside a door. It had a frosted glass and the name ‘Drake Ackley, CEO’ pasted on it in black lettering. He knocked once before opening it and striding in. I stayed where I was for a moment, taking a deep breath.

This was it. No going back now.

“Drake, your interviewee is here.”

I stepped in behind Mr Beaufort and took in the room. The office was huge and modern looking. Black bookshelves lined one wall with three leather sofas and a coffee table set in front of it. The desk was by the window with a high-backed leather chair set behind it. The man who owned this office stood with his hands behind his back, staring out the window in a black suit matching his hair. The sight of him intimidated me, but I dug my nails into my palm, trying to stem my nerves.

He turned, taking me and Mr Beaufort in. He waved a hand at the two seats in front of his desk a moment later.

“Hello, you must be Miss Carver, please, come in and take a seat.”
His voice was deep and rich. I straightened my spine before closing the distance and putting my hand out to him.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr Ackley,” I said as he took it.

His palm was warm and it spread up my arm. The man was seriously tall. I almost had to crane my neck up to meet his eyes. They were indigo blue, an unusual colour. Something about them made my breath catch in my throat.

He dropped my hand and didn’t smile at me but indicated his desk again. I walked around and took a seat, dropping my handbag on the floor. Mr Ackley looked over at the door.

“Did you want something else, Francis?”

I looked back in time to see a glance passing between the two of them, and a strange look appeared in Mr Beaufort’s eyes. His body tensed again and his demeanour hardened.

“No. Good luck with your interview, Miss Carver.”

He turned, glancing over his shoulder at me as he walked towards the door. Those silver eyes held something in them that confused me. A note of sadness and desperation. He disappeared, leaving me feeling unnerved.

I shook myself and turned back towards Mr Ackley, who’d taken a seat. He leant forward, placing his joined hands on his desk, and levelled his intense eyes on me. The intimidation I’d felt when I’d first seen him hit me with full force. I swallowed hard and tried not to appear as though he made me nervous, even though my palms were sweating.

*Stay focused. You have to get this job. It’s part of the plan. You need this to succeed.*

There was nothing else for it. I straightened my spine and met his gaze head-on. It was time to show this man why he should hire me.

“So, Miss Carver… shall we begin?”
God, she was beautiful. The moment I turned and saw her, my damn skin prickled. All I could think about was how stunning she was. The way she carried herself, her head held high and her hazel-green eyes assessing every inch of me. Her light brown hair fell on her shoulders in soft waves. The cream blouse hugged her figure and was tucked into wide-legged black trousers. Nude heels peeked out of them and she had a brown leather handbag completing her look.

*It's been so long. Too fucking long.*

I knew Francis felt it too. His eyes betrayed everything. Neither of us could afford to say a damn word. We had a plan and we had to stick to it. I had to get on with this interview and forget about everything else. I couldn’t get side-tracked.

Scarlett folded her hands in her lap and gave me a nod. I was known for keeping a cool head about things but having her here twisted up my insides. My mouth felt dry. It wasn’t supposed to be like this. *Get a grip.*

“I thought I’d start with asking you what you know about Fortuity.”

She shifted in her seat before meeting my eyes and smiling. And fuck, did her smile make my stomach flip. Not something I needed right now.

“You and your associates started the company six years ago when you were twenty, initially providing investments, which has since expanded into investment banking and foreign exchange. You provide your clients with top-quality service, including their own personal advisor and management of their investments. Fortuity has won many awards for its entrepreneurial success. Simply put, you’re the best of the best.”

Scarlett had done her research. Unsurprising really. We had risen fast and become a recognisable name. We were the top dogs of our industry.

“I see there’s no need for me to explain further about the company. I’ll move on to some questions then.”

“Of course.”

She smiled again. I bit the inside of my cheek and picked up my tablet resting on the desk, scrolling through her covering letter and CV.

“Tell me, Miss Carver, what made you apply for this position?”

My eyes flicked up to her, noting the hesitation in her expression indicating she didn’t know how to answer my question.

“I… wanted a new challenge.”

“You’ve worked for your family’s company for the past six years, unless I’m mistaken.”

She nodded and flexed her hands. A nervous habit.

“Yes, which is why I’d like to try something new. Spread my wings a little. Not to say I haven’t
enjoyed my time there, but doesn’t everyone want some independence from their parents at some point? It feels like the right time.”

Her voice shook on her answer, but I pretended I hadn’t noticed, giving her a nod. Glancing down at my tablet, I made a show of writing a few notes.

“Tell me something about yourself that isn’t on your CV.”

When I looked up at her, her eyes had gone wide and she bit her lip. Another one of her unconscious tells, betraying her hesitation and need to think before she gave me a response. She raised her hand slightly and gripped the arm of the chair as if to steady herself.

I liked to put people off balance. It showed whether or not they would crack under pressure. How they’d perform. It wasn’t something I only did in a work environment either. Catching someone off guard told you a lot about them. Would they slip up and reveal something they shouldn’t or would they recover quickly? I liked to get deep inside a person’s psyche, learn how they ticked so I could use it to my advantage. You push the right buttons and they fall in line.

Prescott might be able to command a room with his presence, but people trusted me with their secrets. They saw me as a good listener and the person to go to for advice. Such a shame they didn’t see who really lurked underneath the surface when they told me their deepest, darkest desires. I dissected their whole lives, learning what made them who they were so I could crush them until there was nothing left but ashes in the wind. It was such a rush when they discovered what I’d done. I loved watching the deep, visceral sense of betrayal displayed across their features. The death of everything they held dear Snatched away in a moment. It was such a sweet victory.

“Does it have to be work-related?” she finally asked.

“It’s up to you.”

“Okay. Well, I had to learn how to walk and talk all over again when I was younger. It was a long arduous process. I’d prefer not to go into the whys, but I like to think it shows I’m very committed when I put my mind to something. I want to be successful at what I do.”

I nodded again, writing down more notes. I wasn’t going to pry into her life any further, but it showed definite strength of character. Anyone who worked for me had to have a certain work ethic. I wanted someone who would run all aspects of my life, business and personal. It wasn’t what my current PA did, but with the changes to our business, I needed someone who could take a more hands-on approach.

“I imagine that was very difficult.”

She gave me a tight smile, her eyes betraying how uncomfortable she was revealing something so personal.

“Yes… life has a funny way of challenging us.”

Don’t I know it! Sitting here in front of you is a challenge in of itself.

I didn’t smile back. I rarely did. Showing emotion wasn’t something I did. Not for a long time. It made it harder for anyone to get a read on me. It’s how I liked it. I preferred not to let anyone in. It only led to disappointment when they realised I wasn’t who they thought. Most people didn’t like the ugliness inside me and the others. They wouldn’t understand the whys or how we’d all descended to the lowest of lows to rise to power. And risen we had, like fucking phoenixes from the ashes. Except these phoenixes dripped with immorality, perversion and deviancy.
“You’re aware this role can require you to be here at odd hours, liaising with my associates to keep diaries aligned as we all work very closely together, and we require you to sign an NDA.” I paused, assessing her reaction. Her eyes flickered momentarily. “Is any of that going to be a problem?”

“No, not at all. I’m very good at working with others and can adapt to my circumstances no matter what is thrown at me.”

No hesitation on her part. I liked that. So far I was impressed with what I’d heard.  

“As you said, you want a new challenge.”

Scarlett nodded and let go of the chair arm, her shoulders relaxing.

I asked her a few more questions about her experience, which she dutifully answered. Some of it felt rehearsed, but I came to expect that sort of thing in interviews. People could be very predictable. They wanted to impress, especially when it came to working here. You could tell who wanted a role for bragging rights and who was invested in building a solid career. Weeding out the former happened to be something I was well versed in.

Scarlett wasn’t one of those types. She had her own reasons. Ones she clearly kept close to her chest. The woman wasn’t entirely easy to read.  

“Do you have any questions for me, Miss Carver?” I asked when I’d wrapped up my own.

She bit her lip again. I tried to keep my attention on her eyes as opposed to the indents she made on the bottom one.

“You mentioned you work closely with your associates. Just how involved would my role be with them?”

Now there was something I had anticipated. No doubt she’d want to know if she’d be seeing the notorious Four Horsemen regularly. Didn’t everyone? Unlike the others, I could see why we’d been branded with the name. The four of us took no prisoners. No one in their right mind challenged our authority and power. We’d proven we weren’t to be messed with despite our enemies continuously circling. The four of us were ready for them whenever they chose to strike.

“It depends. Francis… Mr Beaufort doesn’t like anyone else interfering in his routines. He’d be the least of your worries. As for Mr Greer, West keeps to himself mostly. Mr Ellis is the one you’d be seeing the most other than myself. Prescott is the face of Fortuity so he’s very… involved.”

That was an understatement. Prescott liked to stick his nose in things that weren’t his business. The rest of us didn’t mind. We were used to it. Well, except for West. He outright hated the way Prescott behaved. Then again, West pretty much hated everything and everyone. It didn’t take much to set him off.

“That said, you’ll mainly be working directly with me,” I continued. “The others have Tonya to manage their schedules.”

She nodded and looked thoughtful for a moment.

“And the late hours. Do you anticipate those to be every day or…?”

“No, not every day. I try not to work late, but sometimes these things happen.”

I wasn’t going to tell her about my tendency to work at all sorts of hours, since she didn’t need to be here for that. Insomnia had plagued me for years, and it wasn’t disappearing any time soon.

“Okay… I don’t think I have any other questions.”

I rose slowly from my chair. She watched me, her head tipping back to meet my eyes.
“I think that just about concludes everything then. I will walk you out.”

I indicated the door with my hand, stepping out from behind the desk. She didn’t move straight away, watching me with curious eyes, as if she hadn’t worked me out yet.

Scarlett rose from her chair and leant down, picking up her handbag. My mouth went dry again, watching her body stretch and flex as she straightened. She gave me a tight smile and walked towards the door. I swallowed hard, steeling myself against the odd feelings erupting in my chest.

*It’s almost over. You can breathe again when she’s gone.*

I needed to speak to the others. This plan of ours needed to go off without a hitch. We were going to see this through one way or another. But first, I’d see Miss Scarlett Carver out.

I followed her to the door, watching the slight sway of her hips as she walked, completely unable to help myself.

*It won’t be long now. You’ll get what you want soon enough. You all will.*

I had to keep that in mind. As Prescott always said, everything we did was for a purpose. And our ultimate goal was to regain what we’d lost all those years ago. What we were fucking well owed. Nothing, and I mean nothing, would stand in our way ever again.
I stepped out of my office with my head buried in my phone. These fucking figures weren't adding up. It meant I needed Francis. Nothing worse than having to ask for his damn help. I didn’t like being at anyone else’s mercy. Still, we couldn’t afford to fuck up with this account, so needs must.

Voices floated up the corridor, making me glance up. I came to a complete standstill, feeling the wind knocked out of me in an instant. It’s not as if I didn’t know Drake was interviewing today. However, it didn’t prepare me for the sight of her.

I had put little thought into how it would feel. My heart thundered in my ears, the sound echoing around my skull over and over. The violence of it settled over me. I revelled in it. Wild emotions got me going in a way nothing else did.

My arm dropped to my side, my fingers curling tighter around my phone. I couldn’t help watching them. How Drake seemed relaxed, and yet the tension in his shoulders and eyes told me otherwise. The way she clutched her handbag, her fingers worrying at the leather strap like she was nervous and unsure of herself. And when they turned the corner into the lobby, I followed, tugged by an invisible cord wrapped around my wrist.

I peered around the wall in time to see them come to a standstill outside the lifts. Drake pressed the button before stepping back and staring down at her. My eyes drifted down to her pert behind, causing my thoughts to run rampant with things best left in the dark recesses of my mind. The others might have been able to fool themselves into believing shit like we were all just friends, but not me. No, I was fucking realistic. And there was no way in hell I could deny the twisted fucked up parts of us craved something more.

“So, Deborah will be in touch to let you know either way,” Drake said, sticking his hands in his pockets.

I almost scoffed. The outcome had been set in stone long before she even stepped into the building. I didn’t deal in the same nonsense as the rest of them did. Whilst I never described myself as seeing the world in black and white, I was straight shooting when it came to saying it like it is. I didn’t mince words. Probably why most of our staff stayed well out of my way. I delegated a lot of day-to-day stuff to my junior, Andrew. Easier that way. Didn’t have the time or patience for idiots. He had tact. I took a sledgehammer to people if they pissed me off. Once it happened quite literally, but the less said about that incident, the better. Francis would only lament the blood splatters ruining his favourite shirt all over again. I mean, I’d bought him a new one and all that shit, but he still held it against me. The prick held me to account for every one of my supposed wrongdoings.

“Okay, great,” she replied, looking up at Drake so I could see her face in profile.

The way her neck stretched made my fingers twitch in anticipation of being wrapped around the slender column of flesh. Holding myself back from striding across the lobby and doing so took:
supreme effort on my part. The others would have my fucking head if I ruined our plans.

It was lucky the lift arrived then, the doors sliding open. She gave Drake a smile and a nod before stepping into it.

“Goodbye, Miss Carver,” Drake said, without a single trace of emotion in his voice.

“Bye, Mr Ackley.”

She reached over and pressed a button to go down. Drake waited whilst the doors closed. I caught the flash of emotion across her face before they slid shut. The confusion there made me wonder what she’d been thinking about.

Drake turned around and walked over to Tonya’s desk, his hand still dug into his pockets.

“Tell Deb to draw up the paperwork and to let Miss Carver know she’s been successful.”

I couldn’t see Tonya’s expression, but her hand tightened around her mouse.

“Don’t you have more interviews today?”

Drake didn’t even shrug. He merely stared at her.

“I do.”

“Then why are you telling me this now? Surely you haven’t decided yet.”

Tonya had fucking balls. She would never talk to me like that, but then again, she was shit scared of me. Probably because I’d threatened her on more than one occasion, much to Drake and Francis’ displeasure. I’d only been joking, but Francis spent most of his time with a stick up his arse so no wonder he wasn’t amused. Drake had other reasons for wanting me to keep my behaviour in check. I didn’t care for either of their concerns.

Drake’s eyebrow rose, but he didn’t outwardly show any emotion otherwise. That was Drake for you. Never giving away how he felt about anything.

“Are you questioning my decisions?”

“I just… no, Mr Ackley. I’ll get it done, but I have to ask… do you still want to interview the other candidates?”

“Send them in when they arrive. After all, I have to do my due diligence.”

He didn’t let her respond, strolling away towards where I was standing.

“I didn’t think skulking around corners spying on people was your thing, West.”

Tonya’s head whipped around, her eyes going wide as she spied me. Then she turned away abruptly, but not before I saw the flash of fear in them. Something I was used to when it came to anyone other than Francis, Drake, and Prescott. Most people gave me a wide berth unless they were unaware of my reputation.

Drake stopped next to me, his indigo eyes flashing with amusement.

“I’m not,” I replied, glaring at him.

He knew exactly why I’d been lurking. As if I could help myself when it came to her.

“You out of your office for a reason?”

“Need to speak to Frankie.”

“Mr Beaufort is with Mr Ellis,” Tonya threw over her shoulder, clearly eavesdropping as usual.

*Maybe I should put the bitch in her place again.*

“Thank you, Tonya,” Drake said, waving his hand at her before starting off towards Prescott’s office. I trailed after him, shoving my phone in my pocket and leaving thoughts of tormenting Tonya behind me.
Drake didn't bother knocking, opening the door and striding in. Prescott and Francis’ voices hit me the moment I reached the door myself.

“No, I gave you a budget and you need to stick to it,” Francis said with frustration lacing his voice.

“And I just told you I need more,” Prescott replied, crossing his arms over his chest as he leant on the edge of his desk.

Francis stood a few feet away with a thunderous expression gracing his features. It hardly surprised me they were arguing over finances again. Prescott couldn’t budget to save his life, which is why Francis, despite being an uptight prick, was the Director of Finance. He could turn a few pennies into thousands. About the only attribute of his I admired without reservation.

“Pres, if Francis says no, it’s a no,” Drake interrupted, walking over to the windows and staring out over the city.

I shut the door and leant against it, watching both Prescott and Francis turn and stare at Drake’s back.

“You pulling the CEO card on me?” Prescott retorted.

“Yes.”

Prescott’s mouth pressed into a thin line and his blue eyes flashed with irritation. Served him fucking right. He was always acting far too big for his boots. I wanted to question why we’d remained friends with the self-entitled prick, but even I couldn’t deny we needed each other. We were stronger together. It’d been this way since we were kids. Even though I’d quite happily throw Prescott into a woodchipper for his narcissism and arrogance, I knew it wasn’t an option. He was useful… sometimes.

“You going to tell us how it went then?” Francis asked, continuing to stare at Drake’s back.

“Fine, she’ll do just fine,” Drake said.

“Is that it?”

Drake turned his head, a small smile playing on his lips.

“What do you want me to say, Francis? That seeing her was easy? It wasn’t, and you know it.”

Francis rubbed his face.

“No, you’re right. It wasn’t.”

“Hold on, you got to see her?” Prescott asked, his eyes widening.

“So did I,” I said, my voice quiet as I stared at the three of them.

“What the fuck, guys? I thought we said we wouldn’t all crowd her.”

I smiled. Prescott was put out by being the only one not to have seen her. Served him fucking right.

“Hey, not my fault I was coming back from a meeting when she arrived,” Francis said, shrugging as if he hadn’t intentionally planned to intercept her. I knew his fucking game.

Both he and Prescott looked at me.

“Before you get your knickers in a twist, West didn’t talk to her. Staring at her from around a corner doesn’t count as anything other than being a creep,” Drake said, saving me from responding.

Francis snorted. Prescott shook his head.

“Fuck off,” I muttered. “I was not being a creep.”

“No, I’m sure you couldn’t help yourself.”

“Oh, as if you can fucking blame me. You do have eyes, right?”

He finally turned around and we could all see the smirk gracing his lips.

“I noticed… hard not to.”
“Then don’t give me shit.”
They always gave me a hard time. I suppose sometimes I deserved it when they had to clean up my messes because I had difficulty remaining calm. My temper was violent and unforgiving. It’s not as if I was unaware of my own faults. I merely embraced who I was, unlike the rest of them hiding behind walls and never showing their true colours.

“I should’ve stuck my head out the door to get a glance at her,” Prescott mused as he rubbed his chin. “You’ll see her soon enough,” Francis said, rolling his eyes. “That’s if she accepts the job.”

Drake strolled over to where I was standing, blocking the door. He glanced back at Prescott. “She will.”

“And you know that for sure?” I stepped away from the door as he reached for it. “You doubting me, Pres?”
“As if.”

“Then trust me. She’ll accept and then we’ll see how far our little Scarlett is willing to go.” He walked out without waiting for a response.

“And you lot complain about me being arrogant.”

“You are arrogant, Pres,” I said, grinning. “No one fucking well asked your opinion, West.”

I stuck a finger up at him, which only made Prescott drop his hands from his chest and glare at me. “At least he calls you by your fucking name,” Francis muttered. Sour puss really needed to get over it. I think he only hated it because it reminded him of what she used to call him.

“Don’t get me started on your uptight bullshit, Frankie.”

“Oh boy, here we go,” Prescott said before Francis stepped towards me, his fist clenching at his side. “You know what, next time you call me that, I’m going to stab you in the eye with a fucking letter opener.”

“I’d like to see you try,” I said, grinning at him. “Last time you attempted to hit me, you ended up needing stitches.”

Francis’ face went red and he clenched his jaw shut. “Anyway, I actually need you to come look at some figures for me,” I continued. “Shit isn’t adding up with the Bykov account, and you know, I’d prefer not to tell the Russians we fucked up.”

Francis threw his hands up. “Why didn’t you fucking well say so in the first place?”

“Seeing you get all pissy is more fun.”

He stalked towards me, glaring. “One day I’m going to put your face through a glass wall.”

“Can I watch?” Prescott piped up as Francis disappeared out the door. The last we saw of him was his hand appearing to flip us the finger. I glanced at Prescott who had a wide smile on his face. “So… would you then?” he asked.
“Would I what?”
He wagged his eyebrows.
“Fuck off, Pres.”
“What? You were the one creeping on her.”
“You have a one-track mind.”
I started out of the door.
“Come on, West, you can be real with me… I know how you felt back then.”
I stiffened, stopping in my tracks.
“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”
“It means you were a lovesick puppy who wanted what he couldn’t have.”
I wanted to turn around and shove him into a wall, but I didn’t. Losing my temper with Prescott wouldn’t get me anywhere.
“You don’t know shit, Pres.”
“Hey, I’m not judging. It can’t be easy for you, so, you know, if you want to talk about it…”
“I don’t.”
Nothing would ever make me talk about that shit. None of them would get it. I wasn’t supposed to feel this way.
“Francis and Drake don’t know, do they?”
“There’s nothing to know.”
“West…”
“Just fucking drop it.”
I stalked away, irritated that Prescott even had an inkling of the way I’d always felt about her. It hadn’t changed. It permanently marked me in ways I wasn’t ready to talk about. Instead, I drowned myself in pussy, alcohol, drugs and violence to get by. My coping mechanisms were unhealthy as fuck, but I didn’t care. We all had our vices. Mine happened to be deviant and perverse. And I revelled in them. If it made me a sick fuck, then so be it. I wouldn’t change for anyone.

Prescott could go fuck himself. I wasn’t going to discuss shit with him. Digging up those old memories would not end well for anyone. I was sure none of them wanted to clean up the result of me going off the rails yet again.

I stalked back towards my office, where I knew Francis would be waiting for me, wondering how the fuck I was going to cope when she was here all the time. Guess I would have to wait and see. And I wasn’t looking forward to it. At all.
SIX

SCARLETT

Considering it was my first ever job and my first day, to say I was nervous would be an understatement. I’d been so sheltered from the world. Being out in it on my own wasn’t always easy. Especially in the city with people everywhere and no room to breathe. It wasn’t like Kent, with the fresh countryside air where I could walk on our estate and not see anyone for miles. The only person I knew here in London was Mason Jones. He was in my father’s employ and had helped me through my recovery, becoming like an older brother figure. My father insisted I have someone to watch my back. Here we were, living in a three-bedroomed flat my parents owned in an expensive part of the city.

“You sure you’re going to be okay today?” he asked, nursing a cup of coffee as he sat back on the sofa with his legs up on the low table.

“Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Well, you’re being thrown to the wolves, Scar.”

I snorted, staring at myself in the mirror above the faux fireplace whilst I applied another coat of lip gloss. Mason always worried about me. He’d been there at my worst when I’d woken up after being in a coma for weeks and having to learn how to do things like walk and talk all over again.

“I’ll be fine.”

I was strong enough to do this. Besides, what exactly would they do on my first day? Nothing. They didn’t even know why I was really here. There was nothing for me to be afraid of. I couldn’t afford to have second thoughts or doubts.

“You know their reputation. Just because Stuart thinks you’re ready to take them on, doesn’t mean you are.”

My father hadn’t had a choice. When they announced they were expanding their business, he’d jumped on the opportunity to get me a job there, close to the men who ran it.

“Oh yeah, I’m so scared of the Four Horsemen.” I rolled my eyes. “Jesus, Mase, they’re not godlike immortals. They’re four men. I can handle it.”

I didn’t want to tell Mason how intimidated I’d been by Drake Ackley when I’d had my interview with him two weeks ago. He never smiled nor showed any emotion. I couldn’t get a read on him. He had one hell of an intense gaze. I was dreading having to work closely with him.

I had to get my shit together. This was my way in. I had to work out how to break through that icy exterior of his to make him trust me. And the rest of them. I wondered what Prescott Ellis and West Greer would be like. Francis Beaufort had seemed friendly, but I couldn’t afford to let my guard down with any of them.

Even though I’d made a joke about it, they were called the Four Horsemen for a reason. They were ruthless. Something I could not afford to forget or be complacent about.

“Hmm, I’m sure,” Mason replied.
I could see him giving me a look in the mirror. Chucking my lip gloss in my handbag, I straightened my skirt and spun around.

“Do I look okay?”

Mason’s brown eyes roamed over me.

“You’re a knockout, Scar.”

“I’m meant to look like a professional, not a knockout.”

He grinned.

“You look fine.”

I glanced down at my tight black pencil skirt, sky-high black heels and black blouse with little white horses on it. It made me smile. I wondered if it would provoke a reaction when I met the men today. They had to be aware of what they were called. I hoped at least one of them noticed.

“Okay, I’ve got to get going or I’ll be late and that won’t make a good first impression.”

“Good luck.”

I gave him a smile, clutching my handbag as I made my way to the front door. Having double-checked I had everything twice earlier, I was ready to face the music.

It didn’t take me too long to get into Central London, arriving at Fortuity’s building with ten minutes to spare. I was given an induction by the HR lady I’d spoken to, Deborah, for well over an hour. I had to sign my contract and a non-disclosure agreement, legally muzzling me from revealing any of their personal lives to the world. I could deal with that part. It was a case of being careful how I went about giving their information to my family. After all, they could ruin me if they found out why I was really here. It was a risk I had to take.

After that, Deborah took me up to the twenty-eighth floor and introduced me to Tonya properly. I got a weird vibe from the woman and wasn’t sure what to make of her. I wondered how much she knew about her employers, but I didn’t have a chance to follow that thread of thought. Deborah took me down the corridor and knocked on Drake Ackley’s door. We walked in a moment later, Deborah going straight over to where Mr Ackley sat behind his desk with his head buried in some papers.

“Your new PA is here, Mr Ackley,” she said, waving a hand at me as I stood by the door, feeling awkward and unsure of myself.

He looked up, his eyes landing on me as his jaw ticked.

“Thank you, Deb. Is everything in order?”

“Yes, we went through all the paperwork and general procedures. Miss Carver is all yours.”

A shiver ran down my spine at Deborah’s words and the way his eyes darkened slightly. He gave her a nod. She smiled before making her way back over to me.

“Don’t worry,” she whispered, patting my arm. “You’re in good hands.”

I questioned what that meant in my head as she walked out of the room, shutting the door behind her. Did I look as nervous as I felt? My palms were sweating. I kept rubbing my handbag strap to keep my fingers occupied.

“Miss Carver.”

I jumped, turning my attention to the man I would be working for. He put a hand up and beckoned me over. My feet started towards him before I realised what I was doing. It’s as though the moment he told me to do something without words, I had to obey. And the knowledge of it almost made me falter
You are not going to allow anyone to have power over you, Scarlett. You need to have the upper hand. You know this.

I stopped a foot away from his desk, giving him a smile. I wanted to start out on a positive note. And I needed to stop those ridiculous thoughts about wanting to obey him in their tracks. What did I really know about this man other than what I’d been told? Nothing. Staying on my guard was my only option.

“Good morning, Mr Ackley. I wanted to thank you for giving me this opportunity. I’m looking forward to working with you,” I blurted out in a rush.

He cocked his head, appraising me with those intense eyes. My knees threatened to buckle under the onslaught.

What is wrong with you?

“You’re welcome.”

His eyes fell on my blouse. I was graced with an upward curve of his lips as those indigo eyes glittered with amusement. Clearly, he had a sense of humour, even if he hid it behind a mask of indifference. I could work with that… somehow.

He rose from his chair and stepped out from behind his desk, sliding his hands in his pockets. It struck me again how much he towered over me and how intimidating it was.

“I wanted to start by getting Annika, my current PA, to show you the ropes. She’s leaving in two weeks so it’s important you spend time with her… unless you have questions for me now.”

I swallowed, watching him continue to appraise me.

Do not be intimidated by him. You can do this. This is what you’ve been working towards.

“No, that’s fine.”

“Well, shall we, Miss Carver?”

He put his hand out, indicating we should move. I turned and started towards the door, feeling him fall into step beside me.

“You can call me, Scarlett. I’m not big on formalities.”

Plus, I wanted to break down the barriers between us and find a way inside his head. Glancing up at his profile, I could see I’d surprised him. And I almost looked away when he turned his head to meet my eyes.

“In that case, you can call me, Drake… Scarlett.”

My name on his lips made my skin tingle, and the memory of a voice rang in my ears.

“Don’t cry, Scarlett. I know it hurts. Let me kiss it better.”

I almost froze on the spot, trying to work out where it came from and what it was. There was nothing else attached to it. No images. Just a child’s voice. It unnerved me.

“Are you okay?”

I jumped, realising we had stopped by the door to his office and I’d been staring at it intently.

“Yes, yes, sorry… I must’ve zoned out.”

Drake’s expression didn’t change, but he nodded and opened the door. A man stood outside it with his hand raised, which he dropped and his mouth quickly curved up into a smile.

“Well, hello there.”

Everything about him was striking. His hair was dark blonde, his eyes blue and he had a set of perfectly straight teeth. High cheekbones and a beautiful mouth made him look as though he’d been
carved from marble. His grey suit moulded to his body as if it was a second skin and he even wore a waistcoat underneath it. Clearly, someone liked to make an impression. And judging by the way my heart hammered in my chest at his presence, he’d succeeded.

“What are you doing, Pres?” Drake asked.

“Coming to talk to you, but I see you’re occupied.” He waved at me. “Is this your new PA?”

“Yes.”

The man stuck his hand out to me.

“It’s nice to meet you. I’m Prescott.”

I took his hand, noting how soft his skin was as I shook it. The set of his jaw gave me a weird sense of familiarity. Like I’d seen it before, but I couldn’t put my finger on where or how. And after hearing that voice in my head, I wasn’t sure I wanted to.

“Scarlett.”

“Pretty name for a beautiful woman.”

I found my face growing warm from his compliment. His blue eyes twinkled and he winked at me.

So this is Prescott Ellis. He’s quite something.

“Prescott,” Drake said in a tone that displayed his disapproval. “That’s not appropriate.”

Prescott dropped my hand and waved Drake off with a grin.

“I’m sure Scarlett doesn’t mind.”

I caught Drake rolling his eyes. I held back a smile.

“I don’t mind. Thank you for saying so.”

I didn’t want to alienate any of them, considering I needed them all to trust me. Besides, being complimented felt good. I’d had very little male attention in my life so far. Mason didn’t count since he was my father’s employee.

Prescott looked between Drake and me as if he was expecting one of us to say something else. Then he stepped back and waved a hand.

“Well, I won’t keep you.”

“Wait in my office, I’ll be back in five minutes,” Drake replied, stepping out and starting along the hallway.

Prescott’s eyes were on me. My skin prickled from his gaze. I had to step closer to him to leave Drake’s office. And it did nothing to help the odd feelings his presence elicited from me.

“Do you like horses, Scarlett?”

His voice was low and had this seductive note to it, which made my heart pound harder, the sound ringing in my ears.

“Yes.”

His blue eyes flickered with something I couldn’t put my finger on.

“Then I think you’ll do just fine here.”

He’s noticed my blouse. It’s the only reason he brought horses up.

“I hope so.”

I gave him a smile before hurrying away after Drake, unsure of what to make of Prescott Ellis. Was he flirting with me? Is that why I felt so flustered and why my face was on fire? And why the hell would he when I was an employee?
I didn’t have answers to any of those questions and could only hope he was like that with everyone. I had a funny feeling Prescott could prove to be a thorn in my side if I wasn’t careful.

Am I going to have problems with all of them? Why does it even surprise me?

This task was never going to be easy. Not when I had to get close to four men with as deadly a reputation as the Four Horsemen had. Perhaps Mason had been right to be so worried about me. Perhaps I should be more worried about myself than I was. And perhaps… I’d bitten off far more than I could chew.
Scarlett scurried down the hallway after Drake, leaving me to rub my thumb across my bottom lip. They weren't lying when they said she was beautiful. Scarlett had grown into her figure a little too well. Her hazel-green eyes still held the spark in them I'd grown so fond of all those years ago. The one which told me she was up for getting into mischief. I knew better than to be lulled into a false sense of security around her, no matter how familiar she felt to me.

I'd wanted to talk to her more. To see if she still had her sharp wit. I wanted to fucking well see if she remembered anything. A single damn thing. And yet I knew deep down she didn't. Not seeing the recognition in her eyes cut me in a way I hadn't been expecting. It was one thing to know someone wouldn't remember you, and another to experience it. And fuck if it hadn't got to me. The urge to slam my fist through the wall drove through me, but I took a breath instead.

*Stay calm. Stay focused. Stick to the plan.*

I watched her and Drake enter the office, which would be hers when Annika left in two weeks. He glanced back at me with a warning stare. As if telling me to back the fuck off. Like I ever listened when any of them attempted to warn me to keep my distance. If I wanted something, I'd have it.

However, I wasn't as bad as West. He had the worst impulse control out of the four of us. Last night he'd come home high as a fucking kite. Fuck knows what he was on, but the three of us had wrestled him into bed to sleep it off. I had a feeling he'd got fucked up because Scarlett was starting today. Tonight would probably be worse. A whole lot worse.

Sighing, I walked into Drake's office. I hadn't only wanted to see Scarlett. I also needed him to get Francis to stop being such a tight arse over funding. It's not as if we couldn't afford it. Right now, we needed to expand to cover up all the other shit we were doing. It meant spending a little more than we had planned. And landing some more prestigious clients too. I had my eye on the owners of the Syndicate now we'd secured the Bykov account. It was running smoothly, no thanks to West almost screwing shit up.

I stood by the window and stared out over the city. Drake was right about this being my playground. I loved to see the world going about its day-to-day business, blissfully unaware of the dangers which lurked above them. Namely me and my three best friends. Yes, we ran our business above the law most of the time, but the other shit we had a hand in? Not so much.

My thoughts drifted back to her. The way she'd smelt like caramel with a hint of cinnamon. She'd always loved the smell of cinnamon. It didn't come as a surprise she wore a spiced scent as opposed to something more floral. It suited her. Hell, everything she'd been wearing suited her, accentuating her waist and drawing my eyes to all of her curves.

*Fuck, I want to hold her close, look into those hazel-green eyes and remind her who I am to her. Who we all are to her.*

I couldn't. It wasn't part of the plan. And I would not be the one to derail it. The loose cannon in our
merry band was West, not me. I had to keep my shit under control. I could do it. If only she didn't smell so good. If she didn't look so damn good. If only I didn't feel a fucking stirring in my damn chest and lower. I wasn't going to let a woman trip me up into losing control. I didn't allow anyone that sort of power over me. They bowed at my fucking feet, not the other way around.

Except you'd worship her if you had half the chance. It just wouldn't be the type of worshipping you did in church. would be sinful. Deviant. Immoral.

“What the fuck was that?” came Drake’s voice as he walked in.
“Whatver do you mean?”

I turned, finding him glaring at me.
“I told you I’d take her around to introduce her to everyone this afternoon.”
“I couldn’t wait.”

They’d all seen her already. It was my fucking turn.
“Oh, and could you also not keep your fucking eyeballs in their sockets too?”

I smiled. No, I definitely couldn’t. It'd been long enough. Too many years we’d had to be patient and bide our goddamn time.

She's ours. She fucking well belongs here with us.

I didn’t need to remind him. He knew it as well as I did.

“What exactly are you so pissed off about? Perhaps it’s because you’ve noticed she’s a woman now and you don’t like the fact the rest of us have. Is that it?”

Drake glared, shoving his hands in his pockets and paced away.

“No.”

“Don’t start lying to me now, Drake. You might be able to fool the whole world with your indifference, but not me. Never me.”

“Fuck off, Pres.”

I rolled my eyes. Drake hated talking about his feelings to anyone. He didn’t like admitting to having any weaknesses, but we all knew about his inability to sleep. We all knew what haunted him. I wasn’t going to let him bullshit me.

“You’re as bad as West.”

He stopped, glancing at me with a frown.

“Don’t compare me to him.”

I shrugged, knowing I hit a nerve. West could be a sick, sadistic piece of shit, only he didn’t hide it behind a mask of civility like Drake. West put it all out there. Drake didn’t like to show the world his true colours, but we’d seen them. Me, Francis and West. We’d seen each other at our worst. None of us were immune to our darkest urges. In fact, we didn’t give a shit who got caught in the crossfire when it came to indulging ourselves in them. Anyone who threatened to talk about one of us didn’t stay breathing for very long. We had our reputation for a reason. And we were fucking untouchable because of it.

“No? You not going to ask why I’m doing it?”

He let out a huff.

“Fine, I’ll bite. Why?”

I flicked my hand out.
“He won’t admit to his little crush, nor how fucked up he is now she’s back. Or did you forget he used to follow her around like a puppy dog?”

Drake lifted his hand and rubbed his chin, grazing along the scruff he had there.

“Jesus, that’s why he was high last night. Fuck, we need to get him under control or we’ll end up with a bloodbath on our hands… again.”

I shuddered. Whilst I wasn’t squeamish, the shit West had done to our enemies could turn even the strongest of stomachs.

“You suggesting we cut him off? If so, count me out. I am not dealing with him when he’s sober. He’s bad enough drunk and fucked off his head on pills.”

Drake looked thoughtful for a long moment.

“It would take all three of us, but no… I’m not suggesting that at all.”

I raised an eyebrow.

“You going to enlighten me then?”

His lips curved upwards. A rare sight for Drake to smile about something.

“I think we should give West what he wants, what all of us want, don’t you?”

It took me a second to realise what he was getting at. And I was pretty sure Drake had lost the plot.

“You’re not serious.”

“Why not, Pres? You afraid of the repercussions?”

“It’s not what we planned.”

His smile grew wider.

“Plans change. You can’t deny it’s tempting, is it not?”

“Try telling that to Francis. I reckon he’d have something to say about it.”

Francis would hit the fucking roof. The repressed shit needed to live a little. He was as fucked up as the rest of us, only he denied it completely, preferring to be the ‘nice one’. Francis wasn’t nice. He wasn’t kind and thoughtful. In fact, I’d go as far as to say he had tendencies that were as fucked up as me and Drake. None of us could compare ourselves to West. He was in a league of his own.

“Let me handle him.”

“I don’t think West is going to agree either… the last time I brought it up, he almost bit my head off.”

“Then we’ll have to persuade him.”

I shook my head.

“What happened to being good boys for Little Nyx?”

He showed me his teeth before he bit his lip.

“We’ve never been good boys, Pres. It’s time Little Nyx found that out, don’t you think?”

I couldn’t help smiling back.

“You really are sick in the head.” I gave him a nod. “Count me in.”
When Drake texted me earlier to tell me we were having a household meeting, I almost threw my phone across the room. Coming down from the drug-induced haze I’d been in last night had been shit. I’d not ventured down to the office for that very reason. Andrew could handle everything. The risk of running into her made me feel… violent. I wouldn’t subject anyone to my shit right now. Especially not her.

Prescott wandered into my bedroom without knocking, finding me in bed with an unlit joint between my fingertips. I’d been contemplating whether or not to smoke it before going down.

“Time to get up.”

“Fuck off.”

I twirled a lighter around in my other hand. Prescott advanced on me, snagging the joint from my fingers before I had a chance to stop him and walking back out. He was taking his own life into his hands with me, but he knew that. And he knew I wouldn’t really hurt him. Not in the way I did other people.

Fucking bastard!

I hauled myself up, tugged on my dressing gown, not bothering with a t-shirt and slid my lighter and phone into the pockets. Padding out along the corridor, I descended the stairs into the open plan living space. Prescott stood by the window with my joint dangling from his fingertips. Francis looked ready to kill someone. Drake lounged on one sofa with a beer in his hand.

“Nice of you to join us,” he said.

“This fuck stole my joint.” I pointed at Prescott.

“You can have it back when we’re done.”

Not wanting to punch my friend’s lights out, I stalked into the kitchen and grabbed a beer from the fridge, popping the cap with a bottle opener. I leant against the kitchen island near Francis, who glared at me.

“What crawled up your arse today, Frankie?”

Instead of replying, he leant over and flicked my ear. I shoved him in the arm. The prick thought he could take me. Too bad he always lost. I liked to push his buttons and watch him get riled up. Francis needed to loosen the fuck up and let go.

“Would you two behave like adults for once in your fucking lives?” Drake interjected.

Francis walked away from me, but not before throwing another dirty look my way, and took a seat on the sofa opposite Drake. I downed half my beer and waved a hand at him.

“Go on then, your majesty, what is this about?”

Drake stuck a finger up, making me smile.

“We need to talk about Little Nyx,” Prescott said.

My blood froze in my veins.
That fucking nickname.
I hated it. I hated it so fucking much. Echoes of the past flooded my senses.

Moonlight. The forest. Her twirling under the canopy. Her smile as she looked at me. The feel of her skin against mine, as she let me hold her.

My hand tightened around my beer bottle. I needed to keep that shit at bay.

“I told you never to say that in my presence. Do you ever fucking listen?”

“Get over yourself, West. You’re acting like none of us knows what it felt like when she was fucking ripped out of our lives. We were all there.”

If Prescott didn’t have my last joint in his possession, I would’ve launched myself at him. I didn’t have the patience or energy to get in touch with any of my dealers. If these three had left me in peace to chill out for a while, then I wouldn’t be so fucking riled up right now.

I downed the rest of my beer, needing something to take the edge off. Anything. But nothing ever fixed me. I was too fucked up in the head. Un-fucking-hinged.

Fuck, I really want to beat someone bloody right now.

“Whatever, Pres,” I muttered, moving towards the fridge to grab another beer.

“We’re going to give you what you want, West,” Drake said, making me freeze in the process of opening the fridge door.

“And what exactly do you think it is that I want? If the answer isn’t my joint, then you’re barking up the wrong tree.”

I grabbed three beers and set them on the counter before popping the caps. Picking them up, I walked into the living room and handed one to Francis and the other to Prescott. He didn’t give me my joint back, but he did nod at me. Francis had barely acknowledged me. I expected nothing less. He was already in a shitty mood for some reason.

“You want her.”

I walked away from Prescott and sat on the dining table, earning a glare from Francis as I swigged from my beer.

“How do you figure that?”

“We’re not stupid, that’s how,” Prescott said.

“No one asked you.”

Drake snapped his fingers, bringing our attention back to him.

“Enough.”

“Get to the fucking point then.”

I was done with this conversation already.

“She walked into our kingdom, a little sacrificial lamb sent to slaughter… I’m saying we treat her that way.”

“Have you been in West’s drug stash again?” Francis interjected, his expression turning outright murderous.

“No.”

“Then what the fuck, Drake? That’s not what we agreed.”

Drake’s lip curled up at the side.

“She doesn’t remember us, Francis. She doesn’t remember a fucking thing.”
“What kind of excuse is that? She’s been here a day. Did you expect all her memories to come flooding back the moment she saw us? Jesus, she has amnesia, it’s not like it’s her fault she can’t remember who we are.”

Francis had a point. I hated it, but he had a point. She didn’t have a choice. She didn’t ask to forget who we were. She didn’t ask for any of this. Especially not what we planned to do to her. How we intended to use her. Except now it sounded like Drake wanted us to use her for more. Use her in ways none of us should, but all of us wanted to, deep down. Especially me. I wanted her like nothing else. Not to be my balm like she had been all those years ago. No, I wanted to indulge in everything I’d never allowed myself before.

“We all wanted her back. She’s here, but she’s not really with us… yet. So excuse me for wanting to make sure she doesn’t leave again.”

“What? By messing with her head further? You really have no fucking morals.”

“Like you can say anything. You don’t fool anyone here, Francis. Did you forget who you’re talking to?”

Francis stood up and paced away as he knocked back some of his beer.

“No. I haven’t, but she’s one of us, Drake.” He let out a long sigh. “At least, she used to be.”

“We can’t do anything to her until Annika leaves,” Prescott said, waving my joint around, which only pissed me off further. He needed to be careful with that shit. I’d rolled it just right.

“No, but we can worm our way inside her head,” Drake replied. “See how she responds… how far she will go. I was all for what we planned until I saw her again.”

At least we could all agree on that fact. She’d grown up. Words could not describe how alluring she’d become. Not that she hadn’t been before, only now she was a woman. All woman and it made her fucking dangerous, but we could handle it. The four of us never backed down from a challenge.

“And now you want more,” Francis said, his voice quiet.

“You don’t?”

His back stiffened and he drank deep from his beer.

“I do.”

“Well, are we agreed then?” Prescott asked.

I downed my beer, placed it on the table before hopping off it. I approached Prescott and put my hand out, waiting for him to give me what I came down here for.

“You didn’t answer the question.”

“Give me the fucking joint.”

He dropped it in my hand, his eyebrow shooting up. I turned away and walked towards the stairs, digging my lighter out of my pocket.

“West,” Drake said.

“You already know my answer.”

If we were going all out, then I was in. I was all the way fucking in, because I never said no. They knew that. It was Francis they had to convince.

“I need to hear it from your mouth.”

I walked up the stairs, flipping my lighter on and off. As I reached the top, I leant over the glass barrier, staring down at the three of them. Flicking my lighter back on, I lit my joint and took a long
drag. I blew it out a moment later, feeling the hit and knowing I’d sleep well tonight.

“Is he in?” I pointed at Francis with my joint.

“If we’re in, he’s in.”

Francis glared at Drake but didn’t dispute what he’d said.

“I won’t go near her until the two weeks are up... until Annika is gone, then all bets are off, understood?”

Drake and Prescott smiled, but Francis looked like he wanted to throw himself at them.

“You planning to let her get settled in, lull her into a false sense of security?”

I stuck my lighter back in my pocket before tapping my nose.

“Exactly.”

“You are all fucked in the head,” Francis said before stalking away towards our home gym, his hand tugging at his tie.

“As if you aren’t one of us,” I called to his retreating back. “Stop being so fucking self-righteous.”

He didn’t acknowledge what I’d said. Clearly, he’d had enough of us today. Whatever shit was going through his head right now, Drake could fucking well deal with it. I was not in the mood. Then again, I was never in the mood when it came to his moral compass. Not that he had one, but he liked to pretend he did. Francis battled with demons, not unlike my own, but he never let them out. I said live and let fucking live. We were who we were. We should fucking own that shit. All of us.

Gods amongst men.

It’s what they called us. Why the fuck shouldn’t we behave that way?

“Is there anything else?” I asked Drake and Prescott.

“No,” Drake replied, waving his beer at me.

I took another drag from my joint and walked away towards my bedroom. Knowing I wouldn’t have to keep myself in check around her for long calmed me as well as the cannabis making its way through my system. I didn’t know what had got into Drake and Prescott today, but something had changed. I didn’t care either. We were all going to hell one day, so why not fuck shit up a little more in the meantime?

You have no idea what you’ve walked into, Scarlett. No idea at all.
I didn’t like what was happening with the rest of them. They all seemed so content to let their darker sides out without a second thought for how it would affect everything between us. It was something I’d always battled with. I wouldn’t deny it felt fucking good when I allowed myself the freedom to be who I was inside. To do exactly as I pleased without morality or a conscience weighing me down.

Why couldn’t I let it go like West had always done?
Why did I have to fight with myself over the things I craved?

Time for thinking about that shit was over. No matter how much I disapproved of what they wanted to do with her, I wouldn’t let them down. Prescott, West, Drake and I were in this together. We always had been. At one point, she was a part of the equation. And now? Fuck knew what she was to us. It’d been ten years. Ten fucking years of waiting for the opportune moment. And now it was here.

I had to deal with it. Do what I was supposed to. And be who I was.

They call you a fucking horseman, act like it.

I clenched my fists as I walked into the kitchen, knowing I had to sort my shit out and get with the fucking program. My feet came to a standstill the moment I saw a woman standing by the counter tapping her purple nails on it whilst the coffee machine whirled.

Her light brown hair was pulled up in a tight ballerina bun on top of her head, with little wisps framing her face. When my eyes drifted lower and fell on her behind, perfectly encased in her tight black pencil skirt, I swallowed hard as my mouth watered. She had black heels on with little purple bows on the back of them. Her legs were bare and made me wonder what she was wearing underneath her skirt.

I’d tried not to look at her like that. As someone desirable. As someone I’d want to tie down with chains, listening to them rattle whilst she screamed and fought against their hold. As someone I’d torture with pleasure and pain because I fucking well could. As someone who was ours to do what we wanted with.

She was that. She belonged with us... no... she belonged to us.

Fuck. This. Shit.

“Good morning, Miss Carver,” I said, my voice calm and collected, not remotely betraying my inner thoughts about all the depraved things I would subject her to. What we would all subject her to because it was who we were.

Scarlett turned her head and smiled at me.

“Good morning.”

“Good morning.”

My conscience fled. I didn’t give a shit where it went, either. Her smile made me want to let my inner deviant play with fire. Play with her. Just like we’d agreed to. To push her until she snapped. Then we’d really learn what went on inside that head of hers. Force those secrets between all of us out in the open. One day, but not yet... not until we were ready.
I stepped closer until I was almost brushing against her. Her head tipped up, her hazel-green eyes widening slightly.

“Drake is rather picky about how he takes his coffee.”

“He is? Annika didn’t tell me.”

My lips curved up. Annika wouldn’t have. She was used to Drake’s ways. Plus, he wasn’t too strict with her. Scarlett would learn that whilst Drake had infinite patience, he also liked to get his own way at all times. He didn’t concede. And now he’d decided to mess with her, I was sure he’d use every little mistake to his advantage.

“Well, perhaps I should teach you exactly how he likes it.”

Before she could say anything else, I stepped behind her and reached up to the cupboard, pressing myself against her back as I tugged out a mug. She sucked in a breath. It didn’t stop me from leaning over her and setting it down as I laid my other hand against the counter.

“This is his.”

Scarlett looked down at my arms, where I’d effectively caged her in before her eyes fell on the mug. Prescott thought it would be funny to get us all mugs related to what he called our namesakes. Drake’s mug was black with a white horse running and below it, the text read: *You cannot outrun Death*.

“And if you don’t want him to give you one of his disapproving stares, you need to select this option.” I pointed at the buttons on the machine. “No milk. His coffee is like the man himself… dark with a bitter aftertaste.”

She turned her head to me, her lips parting and her tongue darting out for the briefest of moments.

“Is that so?” she murmured.

“Oh yes. You better not keep him waiting, Miss Carver, he’s not known for being lenient if you’re tardy with his coffee first thing.”

“And what about you, Mr Beaufort? Are you as picky as him?”

It was almost like an invitation to press closer, but I didn’t. I stayed where I was, inches away from her body. No, I wanted to tease her, taunt her, make her come to me. And then I’d take everything I wanted, needed, pleased.

“Perhaps, perhaps not… you’ll just have to find that out for yourself.”

I pulled back and stepped away, noting the way she exhaled sharply. I smiled to myself, rubbing my thumb over my bottom lip. The Scarlett I’d once known never backed down from a challenge. I wondered how much of that girl remained all these years later. After she’d lost everything.

“You too chicken?” I teased, as Scarlett stared up at the dilapidated building in front of us.

Her head turned towards me, and she glared.

“Hell no, you’re the one who doesn’t want to go inside with the rest of them.”

I shrugged and walked up to the open front door where Drake, West and Prescott had disappeared into a couple of minutes ago.

“No, I was being nice and staying outside with you, but if you’re going to be a scaredy-cat, then maybe I should leave you to it.”

Scarlett barged past me and walked into the building, turning her head back as her eyes glinted with mischief.

“Now who’s the scaredy-cat, Frankie?”

“Well, thank you for the lesson,” Scarlett said, as she pulled the mug from the coffee machine and
replaced it with Drake’s. “I appreciate it.”

I shrugged and grabbed my own mug from the cupboard. The white one with two black horses rearing in opposite directions and the words *It’s Feast or Famine* underneath it. Even though I didn’t find Prescott’s mugs amusing, it didn’t stop me from using mine.

“You’re welcome.”

She fiddled with the coffee machine before she turned around and leant back against the counter. Her blouse was dark purple and clung to her breasts, which you could see the tops of because she hadn’t buttoned it up the whole way. Perhaps a little inappropriate for a work environment, but I didn’t give a shit. I wasn’t going to tell her not to wear something less… provocative. Hell, I could quite happily stare at her tits all day, but then it’d make me want things I couldn’t yet have. And fill my head with dark thoughts of what we were going to do to her.

“Should I make tea or coffee for everyone whilst I’m here?”

“Well, if you want to get your head bitten off by venturing into West’s office without an invitation, then by all means.”

She raised an eyebrow.

“An invitation?”

“Yes. He doesn’t like anyone invading his space unless it’s strictly necessary, but if you really want to know, he takes his coffee spiked with whisky.”

Scarlett’s eyes widened, and she tapped her hand against her thigh.

“I don’t know whether or not to take that seriously.”

I knew for a fact West kept the bottom drawer of his desk stocked with alcohol. He likely spiked his own damn coffee. A sober West was a bitch to deal with. I never told him off for drinking at work as long as he kept his drug use outside of hours. That’s if he was even at work today. He’d not reappeared from his room after he went to smoke a joint last night and I’d stormed off to work out my frustrations on the running machine in our home gym.

“I never joke about West.”

“Maybe I won’t disturb him.”

I grinned.

“Probably wise not to.”

The coffee machine stopped whirling. Scarlett turned, picking up Drake’s mug. She eyed me for another moment before making her way towards the door. My eyes fell on her swaying hips. My hand tightened around my mug as the urge to stop her from leaving overtook my self-control.

“I’m sure Prescott won’t mind you making him tea… it’s milk and two sugars for future reference.”

She paused in the doorway.

“And you?”

“You’ll work it out… eventually.”

Scarlett turned her head and bit her lip. Soon, I’d have that lip between my own teeth, biting down so hard, I’d draw blood. The thought made my body thrum with anticipation of listening to her cry of pain.

“Well, I’ll just have to surprise you then.”

She walked away, leaving me alone with the distinct impression she knew I was flirting with her. I shook my head and turned to the coffee machine, pressing down on the button for a cappuccino.
I couldn’t help looking forward to the thrill chasing her down and making her ours completely would bring.
I wasn’t sure what to think of what occurred in the kitchen. Annika had only told me Drake expected them at certain times of the day, not his exact coffee preference. I should have asked her before making it. And I hoped Francis Beaufort wasn’t messing with me over this because I didn’t like getting things wrong. Fucking up on my second day wouldn’t be a good look.

My thoughts ran wild, as I walked down the hallway, from the obvious way he’d been outright flirting with me. Just as Prescott had been yesterday, although, as he was the face of Fortuity, I expected as much from him. Francis had been friendly with me the first time I’d met him at my interview. His behaviour today was unexpected, to say the least. I didn’t know what to make of him. The way his grey eyes glinted gave me goosebumps.

Shaking myself, I found Drake’s door open. I walked straight in without knocking. He didn’t raise his head from his computer as I approached his desk. I set his coffee down on the coaster, not knowing whether to say anything or not. He seemed intent on what he was doing. A little furrow appeared between his dark brows, and his fingers moved across the keyboard with speed. He had large hands with long fingers. I could imagine them curled around my arms, holding me down on his desk.

*Where did that come from?*

“Thank you,” he murmured, startling me. My hand shook around the mug. I released it and looked at him. Drake’s eyes were on me, those indigo irises flickering with an emotion I couldn’t put my finger on. “You’re welcome.”

He reached out, taking the mug and bringing it to his lips whilst his eyes remained fixed on me. I couldn’t help feeling hot and overexposed, as if he was stripping me bare with his gaze. As if he could see everything I kept hidden beneath the surface. I clenched my hands in my skirt to stop myself from trembling.

*Jesus, I need to get a grip.*

Something about Drake set me on edge. I couldn’t put my finger on why. Being around him lit my body up in ways I hadn’t experienced before. It shouldn’t come as a surprise, given I’d never spent much time around the opposite sex if you discounted Mason. And honestly, I found Drake incredibly attractive, as I did with Francis and Prescott. It made me wonder what West looked like. I’d yet to meet him.

I shouldn’t find any of them attractive. I was here to bring them down. To ruin them completely for the things they’d done. Perhaps I could use it to my advantage. What better way to wrap them around my little finger than to make them want me? The problem with that plan was I didn’t know how to go about it. Making men want me wasn’t exactly something I had any experience in.

*Maybe you should ask Mason, though I doubt he’d be very impressed with you taking this course of action.*

His misgivings couldn’t stand in the way of me getting things done. Maybe I wouldn’t tell him. Maybe
I should attempt this on my own. How hard could it be? Francis and Prescott seemed inclined to flirt with me. I should flirt back... if I could work out how.

Drake sipped his coffee before placing it back on the coaster. His lip curled up, but not with disgust, more amusement.

"Is... is it okay?" I asked, unable to stand the silence between us any longer.

"You look like I'm about to throw the mug across the room and demand you make me a new one."

"Mr Beaufort said you're picky about your coffee."

I don't know why I told him. Guess he had that way about him. The kind which told me if I lied to him, I wouldn't like the consequences. Perhaps I should provoke him. I didn't think I could take the same approach to Drake as the others. He didn't seem inclined to be anything other than professional. It made me wonder what he was like under the mask he wore. Whether or not he was as dark and wild as his eyes and reputation suggested.

"Did he, now?" He flexed his hand on the desk. "What else did he tell you?"

I shrugged.

"You wouldn't like it if I didn't stick to your schedule."

"No, I wouldn't." Drake's eyes roamed across me, lingering on where I'd left more cleavage on show than I should have. "In fact, it would displease me greatly. I suggest you heed his warning."

I released my skirt from my fists and smoothed it down.

"I'll keep that in mind."

He put his hand up and beckoned me closer.

"Should I not be getting back to Annika?" I asked, hesitant to get any closer to this man. I had no idea what was running through his mind.

He merely gave me a look that screamed 'do not test me'. My feet carried me forward, walking around his desk and coming to a standstill next to his chair. Drake turned towards me, his hand shooting out and curling around my wrist. He dragged me closer to him until our faces were level with each other. Heat spread up my arm from the feel of his skin on mine. I had no idea what he was doing, but I couldn't move or look away.

"Tell me, Scarlett, do you think this is appropriate?" he murmured.

"What is?"

He let go of my wrist, only to reach up and touch his fingers to my blouse. My legs almost buckled. Did he mean my blouse being undone?

_God, why is he touching me?_ It was at odds with the closed-off man he'd been so far.

"This."

He fiddled with the buttons of my blouse, covering my breasts up before he released me and turned back to his desk. I stared down at where his fingers had been, unable to comprehend what just happened.

"Do you think I'll ever find a boyfriend?"

"Why wouldn't you?"

"No one seems to find me attractive."

"You're pretty, Scar. Anyone would be lucky to have you."
The voices rang in my ears, my own and another. I had no idea of the context or where it'd come from. They almost didn’t feel real because I had no visual indicator attached to them. Not being able to remember anything about the first sixteen years of my life, except for small flashes, frustrated me.

“Sorry,” I whispered.

“You should get back to Annika now,” was all he said in response, not even bothering to throw a look my way.

I straightened and backed away, swallowing hard. Not wanting to earn another reprimand, even though this hadn’t really been one, I walked out of the room, worrying at the fabric of my blouse with my fingers.

My interactions with the Horsemen had been strange so far. I didn’t know what to make of them. And I certainly didn’t understand why I kept getting weird flashes of voices from the past in my head. Nothing about this made sense.

“Hello, Scarlett.”

I jumped, almost stumbling on my heels, as I reached out and caught the wall to steady myself. Looking around, I found one of them leaning up against the doorframe of his office, staring at me with a smile.

“Oh… hello, um, Prescott.”

“My apologies if I startled you.”

I let go of the wall and straightened my spine, forcing a smile on my face.

“I’m… fine.”

He raised an eyebrow, indicating he knew it was a lie. I’d already been rattled by both Francis and Drake today. My mind was all over the place. I wanted to get back to work, then perhaps I could calm myself the hell down.

“You sure about that… sweetness?”

A horrible wave of familiarity rushed down my spine at that word. Amused blue eyes. The smell of freshly cut grass. The sun beating down on my skin.

“You expect me to believe you’re innocent? You forget how long we’ve known each other, sweetness?”

He called me sweetness and light.

A sharp pain radiated out from my temple, making me reach up and rub it. The memory faded as soon as it came on, leaving me thoroughly unsettled and unnerved.

“You want to sit down for a bit?”

I blinked before my gaze settled on Prescott again. He indicated his office with his hand, inviting me into his domain. I nodded without thinking. One foot moved before the other. I found myself following as he backed away into his office, wondering all the while why now, of all times, did flashes of my past seem to be seeping back into my consciousness. And whether or not it meant my memories would finally return to me in full.
Scarlett seemed rather out of sorts when I’d said hello to her. It made me want to find out what was going on in her head. It’s why I’d invited her in despite knowing we both should be working. I shouldn’t treat Scarlett like I’d known her most of my life, even though I had. She didn’t know who we were and it bothered me. However, I couldn’t allow her to see how uneasy she made me feel.

She followed me over to my seating area by the windows. I sat down, setting my ankle on one knee. I leant back and appraised her. Scarlett sank down into one of the armchairs and rubbed her temple again.

“Headache?” I asked.

I had a feeling I should not have called her sweetness. It came out without me thinking. We had this stupid joke between the two of us. Scarlett was sweetness and light and all things nice because she was lovely to people, even those she hated. Behind closed doors, Scarlett could be as savage as they came. A side of her only we got to see. It’s what made her one of us. She revelled in the darkness, even if she never saw how fucked up the four of us were. Scarlett kept us from sinking into hell and without her, we’d only got worse.

*Is she the same now? Does she still put on an act for the world? Fuck, I want to ask her everything.*

“A little,” she replied. “Just came on.”

“Do you need some water or painkillers?”

She shook her head.

“Something stronger?”

Her eyes raised to mine, widening slightly.

“It’s barely nine-thirty.”

I shrugged, resting my arm on the back of the sofa.

“Always five o’clock somewhere.”

Scarlett’s lips curved up.

“You got booze stashed away in your desk then?”

I ran my tongue over my bottom lip, noting the way her eyes tracked its progress.

“Maybe I do… want to check?”

I waggled my eyebrows, which only made her snort.

“You giving me permission to rifle through your drawers?”

“Depends on what type of drawers we’re talking about.”

It took her a second to get my innuendo. Then her face flushed and her hands curled into her skirt. She let out a nervous laugh as if she wasn’t sure whether to take me seriously or not. I never joked about sexual matters. Hell, I wouldn’t object to her sliding her hand under my clothes. In all honesty, I wanted her to. Lying about it seemed futile. The image of her hitching up her skirt and straddling me assailed my senses. Her running her fingers down my chest, flicking open the buttons on my shirt and scraping
her nails down my skin. I fought to keep my face clear of my wayward thoughts.

“You’re funny,” she mumbled before looking away.

Was I making her uncomfortable? If I was, I didn’t care. In fact, I welcomed it. We’d agreed to fuck with her as much as we could. Scarlett might have been one of us long ago, but it wasn’t the case now. It was so far from the case, it was fucking laughable… except it made me feel shit instead.

When she’d been torn out of our lives, it had left a gaping hole in our little group of five. One we’d never attempted to fill because no one could replace her. No one knew us in the way she did. And now she couldn’t remember a single thing about it. We were all strangers and it fucked with my head. More than I’d admitted to the others. I wanted her to look at me with a spark of recognition. I needed to see the way her hazel-green eyes twinkled whenever they fell on me.

“What do you say, Pres? Should we break into West’s dad’s drinks cabinet and get wasted?”

Scarlett’s eyes were bright with mischief, making me grin.

“You already know what I’m going to say.”

It didn’t matter that we were only fourteen. Nothing mattered when it came to Scarlett, me and the guys having fun and doing whatever the fuck we wanted.

“My dad is going to kill me,” West muttered. “Let me get something to jimmy the lock.”

“I’ll help,” Scarlett said, giving me a wink before she and West disappeared into the kitchen.

This whole fucking situation frustrated the hell out of me, but I couldn’t afford to let it impede our plans. We’d waited long enough to return her to our sides. Two weeks was nothing compared to ten years of biding our time.

“You feeling any better?” I asked, wondering what she was thinking so hard about.

She had small frown lines between her brows.

“A little, I guess. I don’t know what came over me.”

She had just left Drake’s office. I could only imagine what he’d said or done. He might like to hide his dark urges under his mask of indifference, but Drake was as fucked up as they came. There was no doubt in my mind when he got his hands on Scarlett, she’d be in for a surprise. Then again, I was slightly more concerned about her being around West. His penchant for violence scared a lot of people. Mixed with the obvious repression of his feelings for Scarlett, it could be a deadly combination.

Fuck it. Scarlett had been as tough as fucking nails when we were kids. Even if she couldn’t remember a single damn thing, I was sure that girl still lurked somewhere inside her. She could fucking take it.

“I should really get back to work,” she said, standing up abruptly.

For a moment, I stared at her whilst she fidgeted under my gaze, her eyes darting away all over again. Then I rose to my feet, noting the way she watched me under her lashes. Closing the distance between us, I looked down at her. Her lip trembled as if nerves had spiked in her system, and my proximity made her wary.

I noticed a figure in the doorway behind her, which made my lip curl up. West stood there, his eyes intent on Scarlett. So many emotions burned in those amber depths. Lust, hatred, violence, pain, desire, need. I’d noticed the way he’d looked at her our whole lives. As if she was the sun and he was basking in her fucking glory. Well, now West could bask in her all over again, but this time, the rest of us would too.

I was about to open my mouth to introduce him when he shook his head. West didn’t want her to
know he was standing there. I decided to fuck with him. Perhaps then he’d have the balls to introduce himself to her.

I reached up, my fingers finding the small strands of hair framing her face and curling it around them. Scarlett sucked in a breath. West gripped the doorframe, irritation and rage painting his features.

*Good. Let it the fuck out, West, just like you always do. Fuck knows we can’t deal with you when you’re bottling shit up.*

Scarlett stared up with me, her eyes wide and her expression one of confusion mixed with caution.

“I do hope you didn’t take my joke seriously, Scarlett.”

“About the drawers?”

“Mmmhmm.”

“I didn’t.”

I leant closer, turning my face so I skimmed past hers. Her breathing stuttered as my lips brushed over the top of her ear. I watched West’s fingers around the doorframe go white.

“I wouldn’t want you to think I was being inappropriate.”

What I was doing now was probably entirely inappropriate, considering she was our employee. I didn’t give two flying fucks. Scarlett was ours. We needed to take her and make her realise it… over and over again.

“I-I wasn’t thinking anything of the sort,” she stammered.

“Good,” I murmured, my fingers tightening around her hair. “We take cases of sexual harassment very seriously here. If I say anything you feel crosses a line, please don’t hesitate to tell me.”

Her breath fluttered across my neck, making me aware of how affected by me she was. Fuck, I could barely control myself now I was inches from her body. She wore this spiced scent, which I couldn’t help but want to inhale from her neck. I clenched my free hand so I wouldn’t act on the urge.

“I will.”

“Good girl.”

She let out this little sound which was a mix between a moan and a squeak, but it was so quiet, I had to strain to hear it. And it made my dick fucking hard. I wanted to know what she was wearing under her skirt. To run my fingers up her inner thigh and brush them across her underwear. To see if she was soaked for me.

I hadn’t looked at Scarlett this way when we were younger. It never occurred to me I could. She was one of the boys. The moment I’d seen her again as Scarlett, the fully grown woman, all I wanted to do was pin her down and infect her mind with dirty, deviant desires so she’d be as corrupted as the rest of us. I wanted to drag her down into the dark and keep her there forever.

*She’s ours. She belongs to us. She always has.*

Only now, we all wanted her to belong to us in a very different way.

Biting my lip as I stared at West, who looked like he wanted to outright murder me, I stepped back. I gave him a smile, which I don’t think helped matters.

Scarlett blinked, her eyes still fixed on me with her fists curled around her skirt as if she was trying not to act on the potent lust permeating the air.

“I’ll see you later then, shall I… sweetness?”

“Ah, yes. Thank… thank you for letting me sit for a few minutes.”
I licked my lip as my hand dropped from her hair.

“You’re welcome.”

When I looked over at the door again, West had disappeared. No doubt to go deal with his anger. I pitied the poor fool who got caught in the crossfire. Maybe it would be Tonya. The bitch needed taking down a peg or two. I wished we didn’t have to keep her around. She was always trying to stick her nose into business she shouldn’t. I was pretty sure the fact she was shit scared of West was the only reason she ever stayed in line.

I watched Scarlett leave the room, her hips swaying with each step. It didn’t help my current predicament. Adjusting myself, I walked over to my desk and sat down. It’s not as if I could take her the way I wanted yet. Patience wasn’t exactly my strong point. I’d have to do something about this later.

Soon, I’d be able to indulge in the desires running rampant through my head when it came to Scarlett. Soon, all of us would have her right where we wanted her. And it kept me from doing anything stupid.
Fucking Prescott. The prick decided to taunt me, using his proximity with her to his advantage. Of course he fucking well did. He knew how I felt about her. How I’d always felt about Scarlett. And I hated everything about it.

It wasn’t just me. Prescott liked to push everyone’s buttons because he could. This shit didn’t surprise me in the slightest. Didn’t stop it from winding me the fuck up. I wanted to smash his face in, but I refrained. No, I walked away. I couldn’t afford to show that side of myself. Especially not when she was right there.

Scarlett.

The epitome of beauty and fucking pureness. She had a brutal side too. A darkness we’d brought out in her when we’d been younger. Seeing her neck exposed as her hair was up made me want to wrap my hands around it. To show her she was at my fucking mercy.

And this is why you’re staying away from her until Annika leaves. Until we’re all free to do what the fuck we want.

We couldn’t afford to let Drake’s current PA see who we were. She was innocent in this shit. I didn’t have a fucking conscience, but Drake didn’t want to subject her to it. And I respected Drake’s wishes… most of the time. I didn’t give a fuck what Tonya thought about us, though. She was fucking expendable, in my opinion, though Drake wouldn’t agree with me on that point. I made sure she knew my feelings about her. Whilst she feared me, she’d quite happily spread her fucking legs for Prescott. I’d caught her staring at him with bedroom eyes on more than one occasion. He had women falling at his feet wherever he went. The fucker could drown in pussy if he wanted.

I stalked away from Prescott’s office, forgetting entirely I’d been going down to see Francis to discuss the Bykov account. Seeing Scarlett had me losing my self-control. I’d just reached my office door, throwing it open when I felt another presence in the hallway. I couldn’t help glancing left and spied her walking towards me.

My skin prickled. My mouth went dry. All of my senses homed in on her.

The moment she looked up and our eyes met, it was as if all the air had been stolen from my lungs. And for a second, there was recognition in those hazel-green depths. Recognition of who I was to her and who she was to me. The moment it left her expression, my body tensed. I needed to be away from her. If I didn’t, I’d be a fucking animal, pin her to the wall and do something I shouldn’t. Do something that would scare the shit out of her.

She had no fucking clue who I was. Not really. It was a damn fluke.

Scarlett didn’t remember any of us. She didn’t know what we’d all been to each other. She didn’t know a thing.

She took another step towards me, curiosity blazing all over her face. That fucking beautiful face I’d branded into my retinas all those years ago. The dimple in her left cheek when she smiled. The dusting
of freckles across her nose she’d always hated, but I found so damn alluring.

Fuck. I want you. I fucking want you. I can’t stand it.

I couldn’t move as she approached me. She seemed cautious in her steps as if she knew danger surrounded me, warning her away. And yet, it didn’t stop her standing before me, tipping her head up and meeting my eyes.

“You’re Mr Greer… right?”

Her voice surrounded me. The sweet melodious tone made my blood pump harder around my body. My chest tightened to the point of pain. And I didn’t say a damn word. Just stared at her. The girl I could never forget. The girl who fucked me up way worse than anything else in this godforsaken shitshow of a life we all lived.

“I’m Scarlett.”

Oh, I know who you are, but you don’t know me. Not really. You don’t remember. And I don’t know if I even want you to.

“I wanted to introduce myself since I’m new… and well…” she trailed off, fidgeting under my gaze.

I wasn’t supposed to have this fucking confrontation. I thought I could avoid her. Yet… here she was. Right fucking there. Staring up at me with those damning eyes of hers, that sinful body so close to mine. My instinct was to take her. To take her and fucking break her into tiny pieces. Make those fucking pieces mine. All mine.

If anyone saw what happened next, I’m pretty sure they would’ve told me to go back upstairs and chill the fuck down.

No one was around to censor me.

My hand snapped up and enclosed around her neck, pulling her closer. Scarlett’s eyes went wide and her mouth parted.

“Hello, Scarlett.”

“What—”

“I’d say it’s a pleasure to meet you, but it would be a lie.”

“I—”

“If the rest of them didn’t give you a warning about me, then it’s too fucking bad.” I stroked a thumb down her skin, revelling in the softness of it. “You’ve introduced yourself, now run back to your office… if you don’t, you won’t like the consequences.”

I released her, my hand dropping to my side. Scarlett remained where she was, her mouth still parted with shock written all over her features. I leant closer until we were at eye level.

“Run… whilst you still can.”

I should not have come to work today. I knew I wasn’t in a fit state to be around people, let alone her. The way she was staring at me had me wondering whether she was scared, confused, or intrigued.

“You… you… you…”

“I, what?”

She swallowed, her hand going to her neck as I straightened again. Perhaps she felt the phantom of my fingers around it, squeezing her precious airway. It made me want to do it again.

“You can’t just manhandle me.”

“Can’t I?”
“That’s not appropriate.”
I couldn’t fight the grin spreading across my face.
“I’m not really one for being appropriate. Rules are so restrictive, don’t you think?”
Scarlett blinked as if she wasn’t expecting my answer at all. Her hand dropped to her side.
“Is this something you do to everyone you’ve only just met?”
I leant against my door frame, shrugging as I did it.
“Sometimes.”

_We haven’t only just met, Scarlett. We’ve known each other our whole lives. You used to know all my secrets and I knew yours. We were as close as two people could be. And then you were gone… you left me behind. It’s not your fault, but I can’t help resenting you for it._

She swallowed yet again, her eyes searching my face as if she was trying to work out what the hell my deal was. Pity for her, she wouldn’t see a damn thing. Not least because now she’d forgotten me, she wouldn’t be able to read me like an open book any longer.

“Well, don’t do it again.”
I almost laughed. She didn’t look angry, more curious.

“Why? You going to run off and tell HR? You should see all the people who’ve run from me in tears. I don’t do nice and polite. I never have.”
Scarlett cocked her head to the side, narrowing her eyes a little.

“I’m beginning to understand why you all have a reputation.”

_The stupid fucking shit we’d been branded with. Of course she’d be aware. I rolled my eyes, thinking of how much Prescott loved to play up to it. Sat on my desk right now was the idiotic mug he’d bought. A deep red colour with a lone rider on top of a white horse and the words _There is no peace in War_ underneath it. Even though I thought it rather apt since I was never at fucking peace, I wouldn’t tell Prescott. The prick would only gloat about it._

“And yet you don’t seem to want to heed my warning.”

“You don’t scare me.”

My eyebrow rose.

“I think you’ll take those words back one day… but for now, I’ll leave you with a piece of advice. If you want to survive here, stay away from me.”

I shoved off the doorframe and walked into my office, throwing the door shut behind me. It’s not her who should stay away from me, but the other way around. I had to stay away from her. The urges driving through me right then had me walking over to my desk, picking up my mug and downing the whisky I’d poured in there earlier.

Who gave a shit if it wasn’t even ten in the morning. After our encounter, I didn’t know if I could trust myself not to storm back out there, drag her in my office, force her down on her knees, fist her hair in my hand and shove my cock down her throat. I’d do it to scare some sense into her, but I wouldn’t care how much she gagged. Nor if she pressed against me, begging me to stop. I wouldn’t even care if she screamed. She’d take every fucking inch. She was made to be ours. She was fucking born to be with us. Scarlett would be subjected to everything we wanted to give her. That’s how it should be. How it would’ve been before if things had been different. If everything hadn’t gone to hell and left us without her for ten fucking years.
“Fuck,” I muttered, running my hand through my hair. “Fuck.”

I stared at my desk, but all I could see were images of her naked and tied down on it. How I’d bury myself so deep inside her, she’d scream and cry about how much it hurt. But I’d make it feel fucking good too. She’d been in ecstasy by the time I was done with her. But I’d never really be done with her.

I had to stop these thoughts. They’d fucking well consume me if I didn’t. Picking up my phone, I sent a text to my dealer because I was fucking done. This day had already set me on edge. If I let this shit go on for too long, no one would like the outcome. Blood, violence and everything in between. And I wasn’t sure the guys would want to pick up the pieces yet again.
The moment I got in the front door, I could smell the comforting warmth of pasta sauce and garlic bread wafting from the kitchen through into the hallway. After the day I’d had, I needed a home-cooked meal and to put my feet up. After kicking off my heels and hanging up my coat, I trudged into the kitchen, finding Mason in front of the stove.

“You are my hero,” I announced, falling into a chair at the table.

Mason turned, his lips quirking up at the sides.

“Bad day?”

“You could say that.”

I had no idea what to make of my encounters with the Four Horsemen. They were all so different yet had this undercurrent of darkness and menace surrounding them. As if they were hiding their true nature behind a mask of civility.

Well, I could say that about three of them. My hand shook, remembering the way West Greer had wrapped his around my neck as if he had any right to do so. Like it was something normal to do to a person you’d only just met. Except there was something familiar about him. I couldn’t put my finger on it.

Perhaps it was the colour of his eyes. They were an unusual amber that had darkened and heated when I’d been in his presence. As if the man didn’t attempt to hide who he was, nor the thoughts he was clearly having about me. I wasn’t sure I wanted to know what exactly had been running through his mind.

I should have been far angrier than I was about him handling me in the way he had done. It had only made me curious. Made me want to ask him why he would do that. Why had he looked at me as if he’d seen a ghost? I’d barely spent five minutes in the company of this man. Yet… I couldn’t help wanting to know everything.

Probably sounded absolutely crazy. It felt crazy. It’s as if a part of me knew him. And yet which part I had no idea because this was the first time in my life I’d ever laid eyes on West Greer.

“What happened?”

I shook myself, turning my attention back to Mason, who was watching me with concern.

“Nothing really. I mean, other than I’ve finally met them all and they’re… I think I know why they have the reputation they do.”

“Scar…”

I looked at my hands, knowing if I told Mason about what happened today, he wouldn’t be happy. Nor with my plan on making them all want me. It’s why I’d not done anything when West manhandled me. I didn’t think antagonising him or making him think I wouldn’t welcome his advances would fit with my agenda.
“They’re just intense, Mase. That’s all.”

I almost scoffed at myself. Intense would be an understatement. They had this magnetism about them, drawing people into their net so they could take advantage of them. I wasn’t fooled in the slightest. Walking into the lion’s den unarmed would be stupid. I knew what I needed to do. Seeing the way they’d made some effort to be close to me today made me aware they all saw me as their prey.

Such a pity they wouldn’t see what I intended. How I’d ingratiate myself into their lives and tear the rug out from underneath them. Take them down so they’d burn with me. Then I’d be free. At least, it’s what I’d been promised. The only reason I’d agreed to any of this. To exact my parent’s revenge on them.

For now, if they thought I was amenable, meek and could take advantage of me, all the better. You didn’t show your enemies the truth behind your intentions. You didn’t show them the real you.

“It’s not as if you weren’t aware of what you’d be walking into.”

I shrugged, tapping my fingers on the table.

“I know. It’s more I’m still working out how to make them trust me.”

West’s warning was still fresh in my mind.

“If you want to survive here, stay away from me.”

I couldn’t listen to it, even if everything about him screamed I would not like the consequences of provoking the man.

Looking over at Mason, I found he’d turned back to the stove and was busy dishing up dinner for us. My phone buzzed in my handbag, which I’d plonked on the table when I’d sat down. I tugged it towards me and pulled it out.

**Drake:** Annika can’t stay late tomorrow. I need you to.

I swallowed. Annika had made sure to get my number, as according to her, Drake needed to be able to contact me at all times. She’d given me his, so I’d know it was him.

**Scarlett:** I can do that.

**Drake:** Good.

No please or thank you. I wasn’t sure what else I expected. I didn’t want to think too hard about the fact he’d reprimanded me for having too many buttons undone on my blouse. And how I’d felt like shit for displeasing him. I shouldn’t, but I couldn’t help it. Something about him set me on edge. It was as if my body instinctively wanted to do everything he said.

*That’s a little fucked up, isn’t it?*

Mason brought the plates over to the table. I put my handbag in a free chair, setting my phone down with it. He sat down and dug in. I picked up my fork, staring down at the food without really seeing it.

“How do you know if a man likes you?”

Mason almost choked on his mouthful, his brown eyes bugging out as he turned to me. A second later, he swallowed.

“What?”

“Well, do you guys make it obvious? Do all men flirt with women they like or do they flirt with anyone in a skirt?”

He blinked and set his fork on his plate. Mason was the only guy I could ask these sorts of questions.
He might be uncomfortable answering, but I needed to know.

“It depends on the man. Some do flirt with anyone and some don’t. Why are you asking me this?”
I pushed my food around my plate.

“Isn’t it obvious?”
He frowned.

“Is this about… them? Have they been inappropriate with you?”
I almost blurted out that all four of them had got way too up and personal with me today in different ways. It wasn’t as if I expected it. It was only my second day and in a lot of ways, I didn’t know what the hell to make of them doing it.

“No, not inappropriate.”

“Scarlett.”
He used his stern tone he liked to bring out when I’d stepped out of line. I hated it because it made me feel small. The people in my life had a habit of making me feel like I was nothing.

“I’m asking the question since I don’t know how to interpret the opposite sex in the way normal people do. Excuse me for not understanding social cues.”
Mason had the decency to look contrite, lifting his hand to rub the back of his neck.

“Sorry… I forget Stuart refused to let anyone come around you.”
I snorted.

“Only you and the staff were allowed within ten feet of me.”
He reached over and stroked his fingers across my hand as if attempting to soothe me.

“I know it’s been hard for you. I just don’t like the thought of you getting involved with or close to those… men.”

“I don’t know that I have any other choice in the matter here.”
I turned my palm up and he slid his against it. Mason had always made me feel safe to tell him whatever was on my mind, even if he didn’t always like what I came out with.

“You’ll know if someone likes you, Scar. They’ll make it obvious by the way they act around you. Learning to read the cues can take time. And if you need help, then I’m here, okay?”
I nodded. It didn’t make me eager to reveal my plans to make the Horsemen want me. And if I was going to do that, I might as well prepare myself for the very real possibility I’d have to give up my virginity. It’s not as if I had any desire to remain innocent of a man’s touch, nor had any romantic notions about it being with someone I loved.

“I know… thank you. Don’t know what I’d do without you.”
Mason smiled at me, but it didn’t meet his eyes. He pulled his hand away and went back to his food. I knew he didn’t like what my parents wanted me to do any more than I did. Yes, I had agreed to it, but liking any of it was a very different matter.

The cost of my freedom was a high price to pay. I’d give anything for it. The cage I’d been trapped in wasn’t one of my own making. Enduring it for the past ten years had given me the determination to do whatever was necessary to secure my future. Then I could walk away from this madness and never look back… if this madness didn’t consume me first.

After today, I’d been left with the impression it might actually be a very real possibility. And I wasn’t sure how I’d cope if all my hope was ripped away from me.
FOURTEEN
FRANCIS

I could hear the screaming before I even stepped off the lift. The scene that met me was like a kick in the fucking teeth. Drake and Prescott were sat on the sofa with beer bottles in their hands. In the middle of the living room, a plastic sheet was laid out, which already had blood splatters on it.

For fuck’s sake, not what I wanted to come home to.

A man was sitting in a chair in the middle of the plastic sheeting. West was behind him, holding what looked like a hammer in his right hand.

“It’s the screamers who like the pain the most,” I heard Prescott saying to Drake, who gave him a grim smile.

“What the fuck is going on?” I demanded, throwing my hands out to gesture at West and the man with blood running down his arm.

Drake and Prescott’s heads turned to me, but West kept staring down at the man in front of him with violence in his eyes. Nothing could pull him out of it when he was in a trance-like state. The rush of adrenaline shooting through his system was too strong.

“West is fucked up on some shit,” Prescott said with a shrug. He took a swig of his beer, looking completely at ease despite the fact our friend was torturing someone in front of him.

This shouldn’t surprise me. I never know what the fuck I’m going to encounter with this lot. I swear they get more fucked up as the days go by.

I was under no illusions about my friends. We weren’t good men. We never claimed to be behind closed doors. The world knew us as ruthless. They’d branded us the Four Horsemen after all. What they didn’t realise was we had lost all our morality and qualms over the years. Mine resurfaced on occasion when the others sunk to new lows. It was my fight to deal with. No doubt I was a depraved, fucked up bastard who liked to dish out pain with the rest of them, but I didn’t like to admit it to anyone but these four.

“On what shit?”

“Don’t know, we found him like this.”

I rubbed my face, not knowing what the fuck to say or do about this situation.

“Did something happen with him today?”

It could be the only explanation as to why he’d gone off the rails like this yet again.

Drake looked nonplussed by the whole thing, then again I didn’t expect anything else from him when it came to West’s violent side. Prescott eyed West for a moment with a knowing look.

“I may have been partially responsible.” He shrugged as if it was no big deal.

I wondered at my three friends sometimes. Then again, I couldn’t exactly call myself any better than them. We’d already established long ago I wasn’t.

“Let me guess, it has something to do with our new employee, huh?”
Prescott gave me a wide grin, which only made me want to throw him off the roof of our building. He had no shame and took pleasure in winding up West to watch him explode. I, on the other hand, got pissed off with West’s erratic behaviour. He needed to be kept on a short leash.

“Bingo.”

I rolled my eyes, skirting around West and his latest victim, and walked into the kitchen.

“You know, I’m surprised no one has investigated us over all the seemingly random killings which happen in this city,” I muttered as I opened the fridge and took out a beer.

I used the opener on the fridge to flip the cap and chucked it away before taking a seat next to Prescott and Drake.

Honestly, I dread to think about the death count between us. We hadn’t cared about who got in our way back when we were at our worst. I wasn’t going to start caring now. No point. We were who we were. None of us apologised for it.

“We’re careful. Besides, I doubt West is going to kill him.” He waved at a document sitting on the coffee table in front of us. “The guy signed an NDA, he wants this shit.”

I frowned.

“What?”

“West’s dealer knows this guy who facilitates this kind of thing. Can’t know his name, but he’s a big player. The kind who gives people a chance to indulge in their most fucked up fantasies and desires.”

I leant forward and picked up the NDA, scanning my eyes over it.

“You’re seriously telling me people actually sign up to get their fucking bones broken for shits and giggles?”

Prescott shrugged again. Drake was staring at the blood on the guy’s arm, his eyes full of repressed desire. The man had some fucked up fascination with death and blood. He said he liked to watch it run down a person’s skin, staining it red whilst the life drained from their eyes. I didn’t understand it myself, but each to their own.

“Apparently so. You can ask West about it when he comes down.”

Our fucked up friend had set the man’s hand on a small table next to them. The sound of the hammer whooshing through the air followed by bones cracking filled the air. The man howled, tears streaming down his face.

“More,” he cried. “More!”

Prescott cocked his head to the side.

“See, told you he wants it.”

I didn’t know how to respond. It’s not like this was giving West some sort of sexual high since he wasn’t into guys. He merely liked violence and causing pain. It’s the guy he was hurting I didn’t understand. Who wanted all the bones in their hand broken?

“So what? He gets off on this shit?” I asked a moment later.

“Yeah, haven’t you noticed?”

Prescott indicated the guy’s crotch with his hand. I didn’t particularly want to look, but I did.

Well, what do you know? The sick fuck likes this a little too much.

“Huh? Well, suppose this is a safer way for West to indulge in his sport, unlike his usual ventures.”

I wasn’t sure I wanted to know what type of conversation West had with his dealer to prompt him to
mention this shit. West knew some pretty shady people with the circles he ran in. People like us, except they didn’t hide who they were from the world.

“Plus, this guy has a hardon for blood.” Prescott pointed his thumb towards Drake. “Kills two birds with one stone.”

Drake gave Prescott a dark look.
“Fuck off,” he muttered. “I do not.”

Prescott snorted.

“Yeah, okay, Drake, you keep telling yourself that. Not like Francis and I can’t see the look in your eyes.”

I didn’t look at Drake. I’d seen enough from the guy in the chair this evening. Instead, I watched West continue to break the bones in the guy’s hand. It looked like a mangled mess already. Seeing those broken bones made my lip twitch. I didn’t have a thing about that. It was the harsh pants of pain a woman made when her arms were tied too tightly behind her back. When the pressure got too much. When her bones almost popped out of their joints. I swallowed, trying to dissipate the images assaulting my mind. Images of her.

West dropped the hammer on the table, looked up at the ceiling, and sucked in a breath.

“Fuck,” he growled. “I need some pussy.”

“Well, we all know whose pussy you want,” Prescott said.

West dropped his head and stared at Prescott with this manic look in his eyes. He pointed his blood-splattered hand at our friend.

“Do you want me to break your fucking hand too, Pres? I will next time you pull that bullshit in front of me with Scarlett.”

Drake and I both looked at Prescott.

“What did you do?” Drake asked.

“Taunted him a little is all,” Prescott replied with another shrug as if West’s threat meant nothing.

To be fair, West had threatened to hurt all of us on many occasions. We’d been known to throw a few punches at each other from time to time when things got too heavy.

“And for your information, I’m not on a single damn thing. This is a favour for Gary. The NDA is to keep us safe, not him.” West waved at the man whose hand he’d destroyed. “He needed to be shown what happens when he steps out of line.”

“So, he’s not getting off on it?” Prescott asked with a raised eyebrow.

West looked down at the man and smirked.

“Never said he wasn’t. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ve got to deliver this fucker to his owner.”

I didn’t know what West meant by ‘his owner’, but I didn’t have time to ask. He hauled the man up out of the chair and took him over to the lift and stepped in, hitting a button. The last thing I saw before the doors closed was the glint of satisfaction in West’s amber eyes, like messing this guy up had soothed something deep within his soul.

No doubt, West is a sick, twisted deviant who will debase just about anyone to keep on an even keel, but it’s not like I’m any better.

“Wait, did West say excuse me?” I asked, staring at the other two.

West never said his pleases and thank yous… like ever.
“He did,” Drake said with a frown. “What did you do to him, Pres?”
“Me?” Prescott pointed at himself.
“Yes, you. Why is he being polite to us?”
“I did nothing other than talk to Scarlett. Maybe I got a little too close.”
He shrugged as if it didn’t make a difference either way. Drake looked at me, his eyebrow quirking upwards.
“Something else must have happened.”
When it came to West, all bets were off.
“Do you think he spoke to her?” I asked.
Drake nodded slowly. West had been pretty insistent he wasn’t going near Scarlett until the two weeks were up. What had prompted him to go back on his word?
I guess we were going to have to wait until he returned to get the answer out of him. I sure as shit hoped he hadn’t done anything fucking stupid. If he ruined this for us, I wasn’t going to hold back. He would get a taste of my fist, repeatedly.
I’d known setting off West was never a good idea. It hadn’t stopped me. The guy needed to let it the fuck out. Besides, I’d quite like to watch what happened when he did get his hands on Scarlett. The way he’d use and fucking abuse her in the best way possible.

_Stop thinking about it or you’ll pop a fucking boner like Drake has, the sick fuck._

Maybe I enjoyed being the voyeur from time to time. I also liked to hunt, chase, and catch my prey. And I liked it when they screamed for mercy. It was the best and sweetest fucking sound in the world. How I fucking adored it. Every part of it. I needed it. Craved it. Fucking wanted it like nothing else.

_She’ll scream. She’ll scream so fucking loud for the entire world to hear. But she’ll love it too. Love it just like I will._

“Close your fucking mouth, Pres, you look like you’re about to drool all over the carpet,” Francis’ voice rang in my ear. “Dread to think what’s running through your mind.”

I shrugged and sipped my beer.

“Oh, just imagining the way she’ll scream, cry and beg for mercy that will never come.”

“Gutter minds, the lot of you.”

I slapped his shoulder.

“Don’t act all high and mighty, Francis. You’re one sick fuck yourself. You almost broke Chelsea’s arm the last time she was here.”

Francis glared at me whilst Drake snorted.

“She slapped you so hard, she left a handprint. Shame she had to go overdose on whatever shit West gave her to help with the pain. She was quite something,” he mused a moment later, his indigo eyes glittering with amusement.

“You two can fuck off with your useless reminders,” Francis barked, before getting up and pacing away. “She’s still breathing, unlike some of the others.”

Drake and I exchanged a look. Chelsea was the only one Francis cared about out of all the girls we hired to please us. The girl was twisted as they came. She didn’t care about us sharing her, but she and Francis had been close. She told us all to take a hike after the last time when she almost died. We let her go. She had signed an NDA. She knew we would come for her if she divulged any of our secrets. We did unspeakable things to those who crossed us. And we all liked it when we punished our enemies together as a group.

“Have you even stuck your dick in a woman since then? Is that why you’ve been such a grumpy bastard?” I asked, knowing Francis would probably deck me for the question but not caring in the slightest.

When we didn’t let our inner beasts come out to play, we all got a little antsy and irritable. Well, except for West. He never held back. He was a fucked up psycho, but he kept his shit together the best he could with all the self-medicating he did.
“Not that it’s any of your fucking business, but yes, I have. I’m not fucking Mr Celibate like this guy.”

Francis waved a hand at Drake. “If anyone needs to get laid, it’s Drake.”

“I’ve had women,” Drake muttered, giving Francis a disparaging look.

I nudged his shoulder.

“Oh yeah? When?”

“The night before Scarlett had her interview.”

I hadn’t expected him to give an answer. Drake kept quiet about his lady friends. We’d all shared Chelsea and other women. Drake couldn’t hide his twisted kinks from us.

“So, let me guess, when you saw her again it was like no other woman would do?”

Drake didn’t respond immediately. His eyes darkened, and his fingers tightened around his beer bottle. A sure sign my question had irritated him. He’d never been the type to get emotional or let much rattle him. But she had. She’d fucking well rattled us all.

“As if you, West and even Francis didn’t have the same reaction.”

“Difference is I’m not hiding it. I want her to be our little lamb. One we’ll sacrifice and use every way possible. I want her to understand our pain.”

We all fell silent then. Loss does funny things to people. It brought the four of us closer together. As if we hadn’t been close enough before. It twisted our already fucked up minds. Lured us into the darkness. We knew what type of men we’d become. And we weren’t sorry for it. Not even Francis, with all his morality. Some fucking morality. He’d hurt, maimed, tortured, and killed alongside us. He liked it. We all did.

The lift doors sliding open broke the silent but tense atmosphere. West strolled out without a fucking care in the world, looking mighty pleased with himself.

“What’s with the miserable as fuck faces in here?” he commented as he walked over to the plastic sheeting and started tidying up the mess.

Francis stopped pacing and glared at West.

“You care to explain what the fuck this was all about?” He waved at the shit West was cleaning up.

“You don’t usually do favours for Gary.”

He was West’s drug dealer. He knew a lot of people and was quite the fountain of knowledge. Probably why West kept him around. You didn’t kill the useful fucks even if they were cunts.

“Oh well, it was for one of Zayn Villetti’s clients, but Gary fobbed it off on me for obvious reasons.”

“Zayn Villetti?”

“That’s the guy,” I said, waving a hand. “The big player who deals in fantasies and desire, right?”

Francis raised his eyebrow.

“You’re telling me one of the sons of the Italian mafia is some kingpin pimp?”

West snorted.

“Yeah, Frankie, if you want to put it that way, but it’s more than being a pimp. He’s made his fortune catering to the rich and depraved. The ones who want something more than your regular BDSM shit. Trust me, no one else delivers what he does.”

Francis glared. His knuckles were going white with the way he clenched the beer bottle in his hand.

“Speaking from experience, are we?”

“Nope. I wouldn’t fucking touch that guy and his business with a bargepole. Like I said, a favour to
Gary, nothing more. I ain't dealing with the fucking mafia if I can help it. Not when there's a turf war going on now Russo is out of the picture.”

None of us were unhappy about that cunt being taken out. We didn’t get involved in the petty squabbles of the criminal underworld or the crime families of London, but we knew the big players. It was safer that way. No one wanted to get inadvertently involved in a shit situation with them.

“Did you speak to her today?” Drake asked, cutting through the discussion about Villetti.

West paused as he was folding up the plastic sheeting. His expression turned sour, meaning yes, he had spoken to her.

“What’s it to you?” he grunted.

“Did you fuck with her, West?” Drake’s voice was cold.

It took a minute for West to respond whilst he finished dealing with the plastic sheeting. He stuffed it in a bag and placed it underneath the sink in the kitchen. It would be something he’d dispose of later to destroy the evidence. When he straightened, he washed his hands in the sink. Then he leant against the counter and smiled at Drake in this maniacal way he’d perfected over the years.

“Perhaps I did, but don’t worry, I doubt she’s going to run. She didn’t want to heed my warning. I reckon we’d have to do a lot more to scare her away. A whole lot fucking more.”

“You think she’s just as fucked in the head as we all are?” I asked, already knowing the answer.

“We’ll have to find out now, won’t we?” West pulled out a baggy from his pocket and waved it at us.

“You all look like you could do with a hit. Take the fucking edge off for a while, you know, before we all do something we shouldn’t.” He extracted four joints from the baggy and set them on the kitchen island, along with his lighter. “It’s Gary’s best shit. What do you say?”

Francis was the first to walk over and pick one up. He shoved it in his mouth and lit up, taking a long drag. He let out a sigh with the smoke. Drake and I rose at the same time, wandering over to the kitchen island and setting our bottles down. One by one, me, Drake, and West lit up, the sweet smell of weed permeating the air.

“I have an idea about how to celebrate when our two weeks are up,” Francis said, leaning his elbows on the counter and playing with his beer bottle label.

“Oh yeah, you finally going to drop your bullshit morality act then?” I asked.

Francis didn’t even spare me a look.

“I think we should show her exactly what all of us are made of… at the same time.”

West threw back his head and laughed. Drake smirked, and I licked my lip.

“Oh yeah, you want to tag-team her, Frankie?” West asked through his laughter.

He shrugged, ripping the label from the bottle. For once, he wasn’t giving West shit about calling him, Frankie. Sometimes those two were civil, sometimes not. Tonight it appeared to be the former.

Thank fuck.

“It’s what we want, isn’t it? No fucking point denying it.”

There was never any point denying what we wanted. We’d never let anything stop us before. Nothing would stop us now.

“I’m in,” I said. “I’m always fucking in.”

“You already know I’ll be there,” West said once he’d settled down and taken another drag.

We all looked at Drake. It was all of us or nothing. That was the deal. It’s how we fucking worked. We
all had to be in when we made a decision.

“As if I was ever going to say no,” he murmured before swigging from his beer. “But that being said, I don’t think it’s a good idea.”

The three of us stared at Drake.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

Drake putting the brakes on our plans was something we had to talk about.

“I’m not saying never, just not yet. We need more time to observe her. It’s been a couple of days. We need to make sure she doesn’t run back to where she came from.”

“You going soft on us?” West asked, but his eyes betrayed his own concern about what Drake had said.

“Fuck no. I’m merely saying we need more time, then we take her and… tag-team her as Francis suggested.”

“Fine,” I said, feeling the drugs hit my system. “More time it is. Maybe we can see if she’ll be… willing or not.”

“Doubt any woman would be willing if they knew what this fuck really wanted to do to her,” Francis muttered, indicating West with his head.

West reached out and clipped Francis around the ear. I spoke too soon. Francis and West weren’t being civil at all.

“You cannot fucking talk,” West grunted.

“Would you two chill the fuck out for one night?” Drake said, giving them both a dark look.

West took another drag of his joint.

“Fine, why don’t you call Rina? We could all use a distraction if we’re not going to get what we want because you want to pump the fucking brakes.”

Drake pulled out his phone.

“You sure?”

West gave him a sharp nod. I had not anticipated this, but I wasn’t complaining. We could all use an outlet right now.

“Okay, is everyone wanting a turn?”

“Why the fuck not,” Francis said. “In for a penny, in for a fucking pound.”

Then he stalked off with his joint hanging from his lips to the sofa, throwing himself down on it.

“You know I’m never going to say no,” I said with a shrug.

“Way to sound fucking excited,” West said.

“Fuck off. I said yes, didn’t I?”

Drake rolled his eyes and put his phone to his ear. No doubt Rina would be pleased with the handsome sum we’d provide, so who gave a shit? It might keep us from doing something stupid as fuck. Then again, it was us. Nothing kept us in check except the need to keep up appearances. And maybe now more than ever, we needed to remember that.
His scream echoed around the room, ringing in my ears like a fucking siren.

“Please, please, no more.”

Standing with my hands behind my back, I eyed Den with no small amount of disgust. The man was bound to the table he lay on. Blood dripped down the sides of it. He wouldn’t survive this ordeal, but I didn’t exactly care about the waste of life in front of me. He didn’t matter in the grand scheme of things. No one did except the four of us and what we were searching for.

West stood beside him, his amber eyes full of violence. Something he revelled in. In some ways, all of us did. He trailed the knife he held up Den’s chest. The one he’d used to bleed the man. West liked to get his hands dirty. Shit like this got him going. None of us gave him a hard time for it. We were all sick in our own ways.

“It’s really very simple,” I murmured, my voice soft and unassuming. “Tell us where she is.”

We’d searched high and fucking low for almost three years. The four of us were done waiting. It had gone on long enough. She was out there somewhere and we were going to get her back no matter what it took.

Francis leant against the wall, a joint dangling from his fingers, watching the scene without a trace of emotion on his face. He’d found this fuck after months of chasing down dead ends. Getting this lead meant everything to us. It was the only thing we had left to cling onto. We needed this. It was our fucking chance to make things right.

Only Den didn’t want to talk. No, he wanted to be a fucking martyr for whoever had a hold of our missing piece.

“I can’t tell you.”

Den needed to get with the program. We would be keeping him alive until he told us the truth. If he wanted us to end it, he needed to give us what we came for.

Prescott stepped forward, twirling around a hammer in his hand. His blue eyes betrayed his ire. He was about as done with this shit as I was.

“No? Have we not given you enough incentive?” he taunted.

Before Den could say another word, Prescott brought the hammer down on his fingers in one fell swoop. The noise of bones shattering made me smile. A scream followed seconds later. And he soon dissolved into sobbing.

“Please.”

“Begging doesn’t work on us, or have you not got that into your thick skull yet?”
We weren’t always like this. The loss of something precious twisted us into men who were unrecognisable from the boys we’d been. Ones with no morals or decency left inside. She’d been our humanity. And with her gone, we had no reason left not to give into our baser needs. Our sick, fucked up desires. We did as we pleased. We cared little about the consequences. All we cared about was getting back our Little Nyx.

Francis stepped forward when Den kept his mouth firmly closed, except for his whimpering. He tilted his head to the side, observing the bloodied man on the table without a hint of remorse for what we’d done to the guy. Well, mostly for what West had done, considering he was the reason for the deep cuts across Den’s chest.

“We’ll put you out of your misery if you tell us the truth,” Francis said, his voice hard.

“Just do it now, end it,” Den cried out. “I’m done.”

A slow smile spread across Francis’ features. His silver eyes glinted with something akin to excitement.

“Oh, Denny, we want to. Trust me, we’ll take great pleasure in ending your sad, pathetic life.”

West set the knife down next to Den’s torso before picking up a different one. A butcher’s knife. He showed it to Den, whose eyes widened.

“Fingers or toes? I wonder which will hurt more… though I suppose it doesn’t matter since you’re going to lose them all one way or another if you don’t talk.”

Den’s only response was to cry. He must think we were complete psychopathic monsters. Pity he didn’t understand. He didn’t know how many times we’d gone through this same process only to reach a dead end. We’d do this a thousand times over if it meant we got Little Nyx back.

A man who has lost it all is deadly.

Four men who have lost everything is a recipe for carnage and complete annihilation.

“What’s it to be, Den? A quick death or a long, slow, drawn out one?” I asked, wanting this to be over and fucking done with.

Silence descended over the five of us for a long minute. I could feel West growing impatient but he would have to wait.

“I’ll tell you,” Den whispered. “I’ll tell you everything… but you’re not going to like it.”

The four of us stiffened at his words. We knew she was alive. She had to be. We wouldn’t entertain any other option.

“And why is that?”

Den closed his eyes as if what he’d say next would change everything for us, and he didn’t want to see the result.

“She doesn’t remember anything from the first sixteen years of her life.”

Confirmation she was alive filled me with a sense of relief. But Den’s other words? Those filled me with fucking dread.

“What do you mean?”

“The accident… it left her with amnesia.”

The four of us looked at each other. We couldn’t afford to deal with that revelation right then. We needed to know the rest. All of it. Who had her. Why they had her. And what the fuck we were going to do next.
“Who took her?”

Den opened his eyes, staring at us with abject misery on his face. And when he uttered the words none of us wanted to hear, West brought the butcher’s knife down. It dug into the wood, leaving a huge indent. He stalked away the next moment. His fist hit the wall, and a harsh, guttural moan of agony fell from his lips.

Den continued talking, but I was only half listening. My attention was on West and the way his body trembled with anger as he flattened his palms on the wall and bowed his head. There was no mistaking a man in immeasurable pain.

“I need the truth,” Francis asked.

I turned my attention back to the bloody mess in front of me.

“Is that everything?” Francis asked.

“Den replied.

Knowing West wasn’t in a fit state to do a thing, I rounded the table, picking up the knife left there on my way. My hand wrapped around Den’s face, tipping it backwards to expose his neck. He stared at me as if resigned to what would happen next.

“Death comes for all of us,” I murmured as I sliced across his neck, digging the knife in deep enough to make it quick.

Blood spilt from the wound. I let go of his face, placing the knife down on the table. Den gurgled. I watched the life draining from his eyes, feeling nothing at all. He mattered not to me and the others.

“What do we do now?” Prescott asked.

I raised my head and met his eyes. They were full of conflicting emotions. In all honesty, I had no idea how to feel about the information Den had provided us with.

“We can’t go after them head-on. You know that as well as I do.”

Francis dug something out of his pocket and walked over to West. He placed a hand on his shoulder, making West tense.

“I have something to take the edge off.”

West let go of the wall, his arms dropping as he turned to Francis, who put his hand out. Sitting in it was a single pill. West grabbed it and stuffed it in his mouth, swallowing it dry. Sometimes those two could be at each other’s throats, but they always had each other’s backs. We all did.

“We do what we always do,” I said, turning back to Prescott. “We find a way.”

He nodded as the other two joined us with grim expressions on their faces. We had to clean up this mess. Then we needed to evaluate what our next steps were.

One thing was for sure… we would have to play the long game if we had a chance in fucking hell of getting our girl back.

I swear, Little Nyx, I fucking swear we’ll come for you. And we’ll remind you exactly you who are if it’s the last fucking thing we do on this godforsaken piece of shit we call Earth.
The rest of the week and the one after passed without incident, leaving me wondering if I'd imagined them taking a liking to me. Sure, Prescott continued to chat to me, but there was none of the flirtatious tone he'd used before. I hadn't seen hide nor hair of Francis and West. And Drake had been cordial but quiet with me.

Mason had asked a million and one questions about them. I had little to relay to him. He was only getting on my case as my father likely was getting on his. I hadn't spoken to my parents since I'd left their estate. In many ways, I had no interest in doing so. They had kept me chained to a life I didn't want any part of. Where I had no freedom. Now I could roam where I wanted, talking with them would only land me with the uncomfortable reminder of what they expected from me. How they'd dragged me into their revenge plot.

Shaking myself, I gripped the mug I was holding tighter. My palms had become a little sweaty and I didn't want it to slip. I took a breath and knocked on the door frame as the door to his office was wide open. Prescott looked up, those blue eyes narrowing for a moment. His expression cleared when he saw it was me.

"Scarlett."

I'd thought long and hard about who I should go after first, especially now Annika had left. It was my first day without her. I could finally enact my plan to make them want me.

Prescott was the most amenable to me in so much he wasn't closed off like the others. I could use it to my advantage. Knowing I would have to be careful kept me from doing anything drastic, but I could talk to him at the very least.

I walked in, approached his desk, and set the mug down on a coaster. I'd just taken Drake his morning coffee. He hadn't asked me for anything else. I figured the best way to have an excuse to stop and chat with Prescott was to make him a hot drink.

Prescott’s eyes flicked down to the mug.

"Is this for me?"

"Yeah… I thought maybe… I mean, I made one for Drake and…"

He picked it up and took a sip, watching me over the rim. There was a hint of amusement in those blue depths. Why was I acting so weird? I needed to have more conviction. Maybe I should be the awkward girl who he had to rescue. Maybe it would make him let his guard down.

"Thank you, I appreciate it," he told me as he placed the mug back down. "I see someone has told you how I like my tea."

"Mr Beaufort did."

He gave me a nod. I fidgeted. My brain had taken a hike and all my thoughts were scrambled. *Ask him something stupid!*
“Did you have a good weekend?”

I licked my lip. Prescott’s eyes followed its path, darkening at the sight of it.

“I did,” he replied, his voice gruffer than before, whilst his eyes remained fixed on my lip. “How about you?”

“Oh well, it was okay. Didn’t do much. Still getting used to all the noise here, it’s much quieter in the country.”

He leant back in his chair.

“Mmm, I imagine so. Where did you live before?”

“Kent.”

Those blue eyes of his roamed down my body, perusing every inch.

“You don’t seem like you’d be at home amongst trees, fields and farm animals.”

I stared down at myself. My black skirt was form-fitting, my red blouse had no sleeves and my heels were probably too tall to be work appropriate.

“No? Can’t imagine me in wellies and tweed?”

He snorted.

“Is that what you used to wear?”

I shrugged and ran my fingers along the glass top of his desk.

“Maybe… if I showed you a photo, you wouldn’t recognise me.”

“Are you offering?”

I licked my lip again. His fingers tapped on the glass as if impatient for my answer. Pulling out my phone from a pocket in my skirt, I circled his desk and stopped next to his chair. He turned to look up at me whilst I found an appropriate photo. My hand landed on the back of his chair as I leant down. My other contained my phone. I showed him the photo, allowing him to see me when I’d been a little younger.

For a moment, his eyes were on my face, now inches away from his. I recognised the emotion displayed across his features. Curiosity at why I was being so friendly.

“This is Chocolate.”

Prescott looked at my phone. I stood with a dark brown horse, dressed in jodhpurs and riding boots. Whilst I could ride, I never competed or anything. I wasn’t allowed. Going horse riding was the only time I was ever allowed to roam freely on the estate.

“You have a horse.”

“Had.”

“Is Chocolate no longer with us?”

I sighed, drawing my phone back to me, but I didn’t straighten.

“No. He passed away a year ago.”

“I’m sorry.”

He looked at me with a sort of sympathy in his eyes, but somehow, I didn’t think it was genuine. It’s as if he knew he had to show it, but he didn’t feel it. It should unnerve me. Everything about him should but, instead, I wanted to know more.

“It’s okay… so, was I right? Do you recognise me?”

I was a couple of years older than the photo.
“I can tell it’s you, but you’re different now. You look innocent and free in that.”
I raised an eyebrow.
“Oh, am I not innocent and free now?”
He reached out, curling a lock of my hair around his finger.
“No, I don’t think you are.” Those long fingers tightened in my hair, pulling me closer. “Tell me I’m wrong.”
“Depends on what you mean by innocent.”
I had no idea where this conversation was going or what he was doing. A part of me was drawn to him, and not because I had to get close to him for my parents.
It wasn’t the first time he’d touched my hair. On my second day here, he got awfully close to me. And I liked it more than I should.
“Innocent can mean many things, but I think we’re referring to something of a… sexual nature, am I wrong?”
The seductive note of his voice made me tremble. My fingers curled tighter around my phone.
“Then I hate to break it to you,” I murmured. “But you are wrong.”
For a long moment, Prescott didn’t react. Then a slow smile spread across his face.
“They tell me it’s the innocent ones you have to look out for. They offer themselves up like little sacrificial lambs before the slaughter.”
I shivered at his words, dripping with innuendo. Whilst I might have no experience, I had read a lot… a heck of a lot. It had been my form of escapism. One my parents hadn’t tried to curb. Then again I’m not sure they realised what I was reading and how I’d become fascinated with the dark and morbid.
“Is that what you’re interested in? Lambs to hunt?”
I’m not sure if he was surprised by my direct question or not. His expression hadn’t changed.
“Perhaps.”
For the first time in my life, another person’s mere presence had the space between my thighs tingling. Not to mention the sensuous notes of his voice slowly melting me into a puddle of desire.
His fingers slid deeper into my hair, dusting across my scalp. My mouth went dry, my eyes falling on his lips.

Where is your head at? You can’t let him seduce you like this. He’d be in control and you’d be at his mercy.
Maybe I wanted to be at his mercy. Perhaps I was desperate for it. The darkest parts of me were unlocking as if the key had finally been shoved into the lock. As if the freedom from my oppressive life on my parent’s estate had allowed me to spread my wings.
“Are you a lamb, sweetness?” he whispered.
I had to remember whilst I needed to get them on my side, I had to stop myself from falling under their spell. Right now, I was too busy thinking about being taken and ravaged by the man in front of me. I shouldn’t want that. It had nothing to do with revenge. It was a selfish desire I only just realised I had.
“Maybe.”
The wicked smile he gave me had my blood pounding.
“Mmm, you are quite something, aren’t you.”
I didn’t know what he meant by that, but I didn’t ask, merely waited for his next move.
A low growling sound from behind us had me pulling away, forcing his fingers to drag through my
hair. Prescott kept his eyes on me for a long moment before he dropped his hand and turned his gaze to the newcomer.

“Yes?” he asked, a smirk forming on his lips.

I turned around and found West standing in the doorway. Those amber eyes looked downright deadly. His expression made me swallow. The fury emanating from him had my heart firing on all cylinders. I could hear its drum beating in my ears. He could have stalked into the room, shoved me up against Prescott’s desk, told me to spread my legs and I wouldn’t have objected. In fact, I would have done it willingly.

*What the… you barely know this man! And be put his hand on your damn throat the first time you met without saying a word.*

Maybe my conversation with Prescott had stripped me of my inhibitions. I couldn’t censor my thoughts. They were running amok and there was nothing I could do about it.

West didn’t say a word. I couldn’t look away nor think of anything suitable to say myself.

“Did you want something, West?” Prescott asked.

West’s jaw ticked, then he raised his finger and pointed at me.

“You, come here.”

Whatever possessed me to obey, I had no idea. It was only when I was standing a foot away from him, my phone still clutched in my palm, I realised I’d walked across the room on command.

His gaze roamed over the length of me.

“Don’t indulge Pres, he uses any excuse to flirt with women,” he said in a hushed voice full of irritation.

“He wasn’t flirting with me.” My voice came out squeaky and if I’m honest, a little indignant. Prescott and I had been more than flirting. “It’s my fault, I started a conversation with him.”

I looked down at the floor. Why on earth was I defending myself to him? Drake was my boss, not West. My chin was forced up by his hand gripping my jaw.

“Go back to work, Miss Carver, or I may have to tell Drake… though you’d likely prefer his version of discipline to mine.”

I swallowed. My skin burnt under his touch and the way he stared at me with intense hatred. Was it hatred though? Or was it something else? Something much darker and more… nefarious.

“Yes, Mr Greer.”

He let out a harsh breath. Then he dropped his hand, gripped my arm and shoved me out of the door. The next thing I knew, it slammed shut behind me, making me flinch.

I had no idea what had just happened. My body shook. The man had literally no qualms about manhandling me.

There was no point standing here trying to work out what was going through West’s head or even Prescott after my conversation with him. On shaky legs, I made my way back to the office and sunk down into the chair at my desk. I bent my head back and stared at the ceiling taking several deep breaths.

I’d discovered two things. Firstly, Prescott was definitely my easiest target, but I couldn’t let my guard down with him. And secondly, West was clearly unhinged and had a problem with me. What it was I had no idea, but I would have to tread carefully with him or something might happen to me. Something I might not like. The thought of it made me shiver and Prescott’s words about me being a little
sacrificial lamb came back. Perhaps if I played at being their little lamb, they wouldn’t see the wolf
hiding behind it. I could do that. Be an innocent girl who didn’t know any better.

Lowering my head, I smiled. They had no idea who they’d let into their company. And I would keep it
that way until I was ready to strike at the hearts of the Four Horsemen.
The fire in West’s eyes when he turned after kicking Scarlett out of my office and slamming the door shut had me biting my lip. It wasn’t my intention to provoke him at all. In fact, I’d been so intent on Scarlett, I hadn’t noticed him until he’d growled.

“Before you go off on one, I didn’t start anything with her.” I waved my hand at him. “She came in here and spoke to me.”

West stalked towards the windows, tension radiating off him in waves. He folded his hands behind his back in a rather Drake-like manner and stared out at the city skyline.

“Two weeks are up.” His voice had lost the note of irritation he’d used when he’d spoken to Scarlett. “And?”

Annika’s last day had been on Friday. Now we had nothing left holding us back other than Drake wanting to wait before we did anything to Scarlett. Well, anything too drastic. We were meant to be messing with her head.

“And… did you see how sweetly she obeyed?”

It had surprised me how willingly she’d gone over to West as if she didn’t fear what he might do to her. As far as I knew, they hadn’t seen each other since her second day here. West had been calmer for the past couple of weeks. And what I meant by calmer was, he’d been doing a fuck load of weed whilst keeping to himself. I swear it made Francis suspicious as fuck. He kept watching West like he was waiting for the guy to explode on us.

“She did.”

He turned his head towards me, a deadly glint in his eyes.

“Pity her fake little submissive act doesn’t fool me. That woman is fucking with us.”

I rubbed my chin.

“I did wonder why she was being so forward with me.”

He scoffed.

“Did you forget why she’s here?”

In the moment, I had. Scarlett had successfully distracted me with her words and her closeness. The way she’d pretty much insinuated she would be interested in being a sacrificial lamb had me thinking of all the deviant things I wanted to do to her.

“No.”

West narrowed his eyes.

“I don’t believe you.”

“Like you can talk. You growled at her. What are you, a fucking animal?”

He flashed his teeth at me.

“We’re all animals, Pres. Beasts who crave violence and kinky fuckery. You’ve spent too much time in
those suits acting like a pretentious prick to appease the masses. I think all that praise they shower on you has gone to your head. Maybe you need to screw it the fuck back on before she winds you around her finger.”

I leant back in my chair and folded my arms over my chest. Whilst he might have had a point about what just happened, I wouldn’t give him the satisfaction of knowing how right he was. The psychotic fucker wouldn’t make any bones about gloating if I told him he was correct about Scarlett.

“At least I’m not out here smoking weed all day and breaking guy’s hands with a hammer after one encounter with her.”

West’s amber eyes darkened with annoyance.

“Fuck you.”

“I’d rather be fucking her than myself, would be far more enjoyable.”

I swear to god he was going to launch himself over the desk and strangle me.

“You not got enough pussy to be getting in right now? I’m sure Tonya would gladly take you up on the offer.”

I made a face. I was well aware of her intentions towards me but she was one woman I wouldn’t touch. You would have to give me a pretty good incentive. The woman reeked of desperation and was a little snake. The only reason we kept her around was because she knew too much. Drake couldn’t get rid of her because of who she was. I would do it in a fucking heartbeat, but I didn’t want to cause Drake trouble with his family.

“Fuck off, West. I would rather break my own hand than touch her.”

“A little extreme.”

“Oh no, should I get you to break it for me?”

“I’d do it in a heartbeat, you just need to ask.”

I stuck a finger up at him.

“No thanks, rather not end up permanently mutilated. We both know you have no fucking restraint.”

West’s maniacal smile made me grimace.

“I had some with her, didn’t I?” He waved at the door.

“Only because you have a soft spot for her.”

His smile faded.

“I do not have a fucking soft spot for anyone. You just wait until we take her, I’ll show you how little restraint I have with that woman.”

“That woman? You can’t even say her name, can you? Ha, you are so predictable. Trying to deny how you really feel about her when we all know the truth.”

I knew I shouldn’t have provoked him. There was a part of me that loved to watch West explode because it amused the shit out of me, but it was also hazardous.

He was across the room in a flash and hauled me up off my chair by my tie. The rage in his eyes betrayed how much Scarlett’s mere presence had affected him. He slammed me up against the wall behind my desk and glared.

“You are playing with fucking fire, Pres. I swear to god you want me to punch your damn lights out.”

“I see I touched a nerve.”

His fist wrapped around my tie, pulling it tight against my neck. West would beat the shit out of me,
of that, I had no doubt. It wasn’t the first time any of us had come to blows with him. He’d even decked Drake once. I secretly thought Drake had deserved it after he’d gone behind West’s back and got him banned from his favourite underground fighting ring. Even Francis hadn’t wanted to interfere with West’s outlet. He craved violence and it gave him a good excuse to beat the shit out of people. It was only when he’d almost killed a guy Drake had put a stop to it. We didn’t need to bring down that kind of heat on us.

“Jesus, Pres, what did you do to provoke him this time?”

Both West and I turned our heads finding Francis standing in the doorway. Neither of us had heard the door open.

“Me? I’m innocent.”

Francis scoffed and rolled his eyes.

“Innocent is not a word I would ever use to describe you. In fact, it shouldn’t even be in your vocabulary given how un-innocent you are.”

West stepped back, letting go of me. I huffed and smoothed down my clothes.

“What do you want, Frankie?” West grunted, pacing away with his hands dug in his pockets.

“Nothing that concerns you.”

West cocked a brow.

“No? Well, I’ll leave you two little bitch boys to it then.”

He stalked out of the room, deliberately barging past Francis, who stared at his retreating back. Then he turned and came into the room.

“You really did a number on him.”

I shrugged and took a seat behind my desk again.

“Oh, that? Reckon it had more to do with Scarlett being in here than me… though I will admit I didn’t help matters.”

Francis gave me a look.

“What was she doing in your office?”

“Bringing me a cup of tea.”

I snagged said mug and brought it to my lips. She’d used the right one. It was dark green with a white horse which looked as if it was decaying and the words The weak yield to Pestilence were below it. I’d bought us these mugs as a joke. Even West used his despite his misgivings about the name we’d been branded with.

“Is that all?”

I smiled.

“Maybe. Maybe not.”

“No wonder you pissed West off, you’re in one of those moods.”

He made air quotes with his fingers. I popped the mug back down and leant my chin on my fist, fluttering my eyelashes at him.

“And what kind of mood is that, Francis?”

He pressed his mouth into a thin line. Maybe I was in a mood. Knowing I shouldn’t have allowed Scarlett to get under my skin had me deflecting. None of them needed to know about the way she’d affected me today. They’d only give me shit over it. I had to do better. Didn’t matter how much I wanted
her. How desperate I was for her to remember me. I couldn’t let my guard down.

“You want to cause mischief and I’m not having it. You can fucking rein it in because we need to talk business, unless you forgot we’re supposed to be working right now.”

I refrained from rolling my eyes and put my hand out, waving at the chairs in front of my desk. Francis probably wanted to talk to me about money and it was always fucking boring. He should just fund what I asked him to without arguing with me over it. I’d never steered us wrong.

I put Scarlett to the back of my mind. What I’d discovered about her today could wait. Business came first, I supposed, and the knowledge she’d not been with a man before wasn’t going to give me pause over what we planned to do with her. But… I would have to inform the rest of them sooner rather than later. No point keeping secrets over it. No point at all.
“Have you had enough yet, little lamb?” came the sinister and disjointed voice from behind me.

My legs urged me on faster, dashing through a never-ending dark tunnel. I don’t know how long I’d been going, only that everything burnt.

*Keep running.*

My chest heaved with the exertion. I pressed on, my arms flailing at my sides as my feet pounded the dirt floor.

“I’m going to catch you, little lamb. And when I do, you’ll feel it for days.”

I couldn’t let him catch me. My choked cry came out hoarse and gravelly. The voice chuckled as its brokenness echoed around the tunnel.

“Are you crying, little lamb? Will you beg? You’re running now, but we know you want it. You want the pain.”

“No,” I moaned, urging myself on.

I was exhausted. My body ached everywhere. It hurt in the worst way but I had to keep going. If I didn’t, they’d destroy me.

“You think you don’t want it now, but you will, little lamb. You’ll remember.”

*Remember what?*

“You’re ours, Scarlett. Ours.”

I shot up in bed, sweat pouring from my body as my heart pounded in my ears. That wasn’t the only sound. My mouth erupted in these tiny whimpers. I’d learnt a long time ago not to scream when I had a nightmare. I didn’t want anyone getting angry with me for waking up the household, especially since they happened all the time. Like my subconscious trying to force my past memories lost to me back into my head but failing to join the dots together properly. They were all jumbled up and made no sense.

This wasn’t like those nightmares. It felt different. And I was terrified for a reason that had me staring down my hands trembling as I brought them up towards my face.

*Why am I having this reaction?*

Yes, I was a sweaty mess, my breathing erratic and my pulse skittering, but all that paled in comparison to the way my nipples had hardened. My hand dived under the covers to confirm my theory. I let out a choked gasp when my fingers were met with my wetness. The crazy, fucked up nightmare I thought I’d been in turned out to be a wet dream.

I flung the covers from my body, stumbling out of bed on shaking legs as I fought to regain some semblance of control. Making my way into the bathroom, I flipped on the shower and peeled off my damp pyjamas. They’d need washing. I had at least seven or eight pairs for that reason. Mason had stopped saying anything about it. He knew it wasn’t something anyone could fix. I was broken. At least, I felt that way considering I had sixteen years missing from my memory and no way of knowing if wha
anyone had told me about what happened was true or not. I had taken it on faith, but there were times I questioned the things my parents had told me. Only ever in my head, because questioning them out loud led nowhere good.

Who knew what time it was. I hadn’t checked, but I needed to wash away the clamminess from my skin. I stepped into the shower, tipping my head up to the spray. The hot water hammered down, soothing me a fraction.

I braced my hands against the dark grey tiled wall and bowed my head, closing my eyes. My hair stuck to my skin, but I paid it no mind. The only thought I had was being scared had excited me on some level.

Was I always like this? An adrenaline junkie? Needing fear to feel alive.

It didn’t feel alien to me. Like my body and mind finally remembered a concrete aspect of my past before the accident. Before I was left in a coma with no memories of what happened to me.

Don’t fight it, Scarlett. You’ll never remember if you fight it. Let yourself feel the fear. Let yourself go.

A hand left the wall and snaked down my body. I let out a whimper when my fingers met my clit. The voice kept calling me a little lamb. He said they’d make it hurt.

My fingers circled the small bundle of nerves on instinct. The memory of the dream flooded me. The way I’d been scared out of my mind only fuelled my need.

I could hear footsteps behind me this time. I let the fantasy take me under, not caring I knew in my mind who those footsteps belonged to. Who I wanted them to belong to. And how I shouldn’t want that at all.

“I think you like being scared, Scar,” he said, his voice echoing around the pitch-black room.

“What gives you that idea?” I asked.

His hands snaked around my waist, holding me against a solid body. I let out a breath. I’d known he was there, but in the dark, I’d lost a vital sense.

“You run headlong into danger instead of away from it.”

I laughed. They made me brave. I was safe if I had them. They’d never let me fall or flounder.

I moaned as the memory and the voices dissipated. My fingers worked faster. I was right. I liked the fear. The excitement. The need to feel alive. It was the opposite of the girl I knew now. The one who’d spent the past ten years locked away from the world. Who didn’t know who she was at all because she couldn’t remember a thing.

If I embrace the past, will that change who I am now? Do I even want to be this woman?

I had no answers to either of those questions.

I was so close to the edge, wanting to free fall into the abyss.


The explosive sensations washed over me. My knees threatened to buckle but my hand on the shower wall kept me upright. I let out a cry of relief. Letting it all out felt good. As if I was embracing who I was inside.

I stood for a long moment, trying to catch my breath. Then I straightened, dropping my hand from the wall and picking up my shower gel. My next step was to wash thoroughly since I had work today.

I had been at Fortuity for just over two weeks now. And after yesterday’s encounter with Prescott, I shouldn’t be surprised by my dream. We’d talked about lambs and hunting. No fucking wonder I’d
dreamt of it. Of him chasing me. Of them all chasing me.

Shaking myself, I stepped out of the shower and dried myself off before going into my bedroom to get dressed. When I was done drying my hair and putting makeup on, I walked out into the kitchen, finding Mason sat at the table.

“Why are you up so early?” I asked as I flipped the kettle on.

I’d checked the time when I was getting dressed. It was only six.

“The shower woke me up. I’d ask you the same question, but I already know the answer.”

“They’re never going to end.”

I got two mugs out of the cupboard and chucked tea bags in them.

“Don’t say that. They might.”

“We both know they’ll only end if I get my memories back. I’m not going to fool myself into thinking otherwise.”

As I glanced back at him, I noticed his contrite expression.

“Do you want them back?”

“Are you really asking me that?”

I want them restored more than anything.

It wasn’t Mason’s fault I was tired and snappy. I shouldn’t take it out on him, but he knew the answer to that question already.

“It’s been ten years. The doctors said it’s unlikely they’ll return.”

“They’ve said a lot of things. Some of them turned out to be bullshit.”

They thought I might not walk or talk again. I’d proved them wrong. I’d proved everyone wrong since none of them knew my inner thoughts and feelings. The ones I’d kept hidden for good reason. I could never afford to forget who Mason reported to. I wasn’t about to tell him my past had started bleeding through into my consciousness. No one could know about the tiny snippets I’d had since returning to London. The city I knew I’d grown up in even if it was alien to me now. It felt familiar at the same time. I belonged here more than I ever did on my parents’ estate in Kent.

“Scar, I didn’t mean…”

“Didn’t mean what? I want to remember. I need to. I’m missing a vital part of myself. You can’t possibly understand what that’s like. No one can.”

The kettle boiled. I picked it up and poured water into the two mugs.

No one got it. They just expected me to go on with life since it was like starting with a clean slate. It didn’t work like that for me. I didn’t feel whole.

“I know. I’m sorry.”

‘Sorry’ wasn’t good enough any longer, but I didn’t say that to him. I’d had too many people apologising to me over the years. Especially my parents. Pity their apologies were hollow and meaningless.

“I’m sorry we can’t let you leave the estate, it’s too dangerous.”

“I’m sorry I have to ask you to do this.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry.”

I slammed my hand down on the counter.
“I’m tired. Adjusting to working every day is taking a toll on me.”
It wasn’t a lie but it wasn’t the whole truth either.
“It’s okay, I get it.”
But he didn’t. No one did. I carried this burden alone. All alone.

*I don’t want to be alone anymore. I want to know who I am. Maybe then I can find my way home.*

My home sure as shit wasn’t with my parents. All I had to do was this one complicated task then I could be done with all this fucked up revenge business. I didn’t believe it ever really gave anyone closure, but I would do it, anyway.

That was the price of freedom.
TWENTY

WEST

I wandered into Drake’s office after being summoned there by the man himself. He stood by the window, staring out at the city like it would give him the answers he sought. Prescott was lounging on a sofa, and Francis had propped himself up on Drake’s desk.

“I see you finally decided to grace us with your presence,” he muttered.

I shot Francis a glare. If he wanted to give me shit today, so be it. I wasn’t in the mood for him. Not after yesterday and Prescott’s fucked up need to press my buttons. The guy was a damn fool.

“His lordship requested my presence, so here the fuck I am. Want to make any more sarcastic comments, or are you done?” I ground out.

“Your mood hasn’t improved since yesterday. Wonderful. Do I need to loosen my tie?” Prescott said with an eye roll.

I would have strangled the little shit yesterday until he passed out if Francis hadn’t walked in.

“Why? So you can tie your own fucking noose for me?”

“Did the three of you wake up and choose violence this morning?” Drake asked, turning around and looking between us. “If so, why didn’t I get the memo?”

“I choose violence every day.”

That earned me a hard stare from Drake. I shrugged and leaned against the wall by the door. He knew all too well violence and I went hand in hand.

“Is this a business meeting or personal? I’ve got shit to do,” Francis huffed.

Something had crawled up his arse this morning. He looked about ready to start throwing fucking knives or some shit. Or maybe he’d be the one tying nooses. Francis was dead handy with knots. Had everything to do with his obsession with tying up women. It went beyond Shibari or Japanese bondage. I swear he knew more knots than the average sailor and then some. I personally preferred holding a woman down with my bare hands, but each to their own.

“Personal,” Drake replied, eying Francis with curiosity as if he was also wondering why our friend was in a mood.

“Can’t it wait until this evening?”

“No,” Drake turned his attention to Prescott. “You said you had something important to talk about. Spill before this one gets too antsy.” He stuck a thumb out, directing it towards Francis.

Oh, but the glare he earned in return. I couldn’t help smiling. Even Drake wasn’t above winding Francis up, and the two of them had been friends since birth. Their mothers got pregnant at the same time. Best friends who lived next door to each other. And their sons became close too.

“Oh well, I didn’t expect you to call us all together over it,” Prescott mused with a suspiciously smug grin on his face.

“I will choose violence like West if you don’t get to the point,” Francis all but barked.
Prescott looked contrite as if sensing Francis was at the end of his patience.

"Okay, okay, Jesus. Chill the fuck out." He waved a hand at Francis. "Scarlett told me something rather interesting yesterday."

I watched both Drake’s and Francis’ eyes narrow.

"Told you what, exactly?" Drake asked.

"She’s not had sex before. Well, she insinuated it, anyway."

"Are you serious?"

Prescott shrugged.

"Why wouldn’t I be? What do I have to gain by lying about that, huh? Nothing."

I stared hard at Prescott. For a moment, I wondered how the fuck she could outright lie to him that way. Then I remembered she was lying to all of us about her real reasons for being here. Followed by the other realisation that she wouldn’t know the truth. She’d lost the part of her memory containing the four of us. And thus, lost her knowledge of the night we’d spent together when we were sixteen, not long before her accident.

Not only had I kissed Scarlett multiple times when we’d been teenagers, but I’d had sex with her too. The memory of it was far too painful for me to even think about. It only tormented me with what I’d lost. And what I’d waited ten years to find again.

"Fuck. That complicates matters."

Prescott frowned.

"Why?"

"What do you mean, why?" Francis interjected. "Isn’t it fucking obvious?"

Prescott frowned.

"No. What does it matter?"

Francis straightened and glared harder at Prescott.

"Are you really going to sit there and tell me you’re okay with introducing her to sex the way we all like it when she has zero experience?"

Prescott sat up and gave Francis an incredulous look.

"Oh, what, you want it to be all romantic and loving for her, do you?"

"I didn’t say that."

"Then what the fuck is your problem?"

Drake took a step forward and held his hand up.

"Hey, no need to start giving each other shit. Both of your opinions are valid. We need to think about how to play this."

"You agree with him, don’t you?" Prescott fired back, waving at Francis.

I watched them battle it out for a long minute. Drake was clearly trying to referee, but it wasn’t working.

Scarlett thought she was a virgin, huh? Well, we’d fucking see about that shit. These three could argue all they wanted. I had no patience for it. What I did have was the desire to fuck some sense into that girl. She was mine. Whilst she’d forgotten who I was and what we’d done, it didn’t negate that fact.

I’m going to show you why you should not have told Prescott about it.

I was silent as I pushed off the wall and backed out of Drake’s office. If anyone was going to have he
first again, it would be me and only me. Taking care of our little problem would be a bonus. She
wouldn’t think she was a virgin, and the rest of them would have nothing to argue about. Wasn’t like I
could tell her we’d already fucked once ten years ago. We were keeping her in the dark about who we
were for good reason. And I wasn’t prepared to tell the boys about what had happened between Scarlett
and me, either.

I stalked down the hallway to her office, but she wasn’t in there. I found her in the kitchen a few
minutes later, setting out mugs on the counter. Before she had a chance to turn around and say hello, I
gripped her by the arm and tugged her out of there. She let out a squeak of surprise but was likely too
shocked to push me off. By the time we’d reached my office and I’d shoved her inside, locking the door
behind us, she’d regained her senses.

“What are you doing?”

“I suggest you shut the fuck up and do as I say.”

Her eyes bugged out. I stalked towards her, causing her to back away until she hit my desk. A scared
little rabbit afraid of the man coming after her. Good. She should be fucking well afraid.

“But what are you doing?”

I got right up in her face, my body inches from hers, and wrapped my hand around her jaw, forcing
her face up towards mine.

“Whatever I want. I did tell you I don’t like to stick to the rules, didn’t I?”

She swallowed.

“Yes, but—”

“No buts, Scarlett. I don’t want to hear the words but or no from you.”

I didn’t think her eyes could get any wider. They were like saucers. Her pupils dilated to their fullest
extent. Whether it was fear or arousal coursing through her veins, we would just have to wait and see.

“I don’t understand.”

My hand tightened around her jaw, my fingers making indents into her skin. She winced.

“No, you don’t, and you probably never will, but I don’t really give a shit. In fact, I’d go so far as to
say I don’t care about anything you have to say right now.”

Her breath whooshed out of her chest. I smiled, leaning closer until my nose hit her cheek. I ran it up
the length of her skin, making her shudder. It was time to initiate her into our little club. No doubt the
only thing she knew about us was our reputation. I intended to live up to it…and then some.

“You want to know what I’m doing, do you?” I murmured, nipping at her ear.

“Yes,” she whispered, her body tensing and her breathing shallow.

“A little birdie told me you’re inexperienced. Consider what happens next a lesson.”

“What? I… he… he told you that?”

I nuzzled her hair, breathing her in.

“You should be careful about what you say to men like us, Scarlett. Did you never wonder how we
came to be in the position we are? Power comes with ruthlessness.”

For a moment she said nothing as if she was processing my words. Her body shifted against the desk,
but I didn’t think she was trying to escape me. She’d know better than that. At least she should.

“Are… are you… what are you going to do to me?”

If she needed to hear the words out of my mouth, then fuck it. It’s not like it would make a difference
“Oh, Scarlett, I’m going to fuck you. And make no mistake, begging me to stop won’t work. I gave you a warning when you introduced yourself to me. Now you’re going to learn why you should have heeded it.”
TWENTY ONE

SCARLETT

My body shook with his words, like a trembling leaf blowing in gale-force winds. It was violent and unforgiving. I couldn't even form a sentence in my head, let alone open my mouth. When he'd warned me about himself, I'd wondered how serious he was. And now I realised this man was actually a full-on predator.

Here I was, pinned to his desk by his bulk and his hand wrapped around my jaw. I hadn't even made an attempt to push him off me or struggle in his grasp. I'd been too shocked by the entire thing to get my head on straight. Now, it was impossible to think at all.

He just told you he's going to fuck you.

A man I'd talked to twice. Who the hell did he think he was? It's not as if I hadn't thought about sex with the Horsemen. It had crossed my mind I might have to sleep with them to get close to them. It happening so soon, and with West, who intrigued and terrified me at the same time? I had no fucking words to describe my feelings. All I knew was I had no control over this situation.

“I'll take your silence as compliance.”

I wanted to scream. My mouth opened, but no sound came out. He stepped closer, right up into my personal space. I choked on my own breath. For the first time in my life, a hard solid body pressed against mine and I didn’t exactly hate it.

“I'm not going to hurt you,” he murmured, turning my head to the side and trailing his lips down my neck. “At least, not this time.”

I gripped the edge of his desk to stop my knees from buckling.

“I don’t believe you,” I whispered, finding my voice.

His low chuckle had my heart pumping harder in my chest.

“Good, you shouldn’t. Now, be a good girl and spread your legs.”

I didn’t want to obey him. He couldn’t possibly think he could drag me into his office and expect me to pull my skirt up for him, could he? My brain didn’t want to believe what was happening.

“No.”

It’d been my intention to do whatever it took to get close to these men, but the reality was far different from thinking about it in your head. This wasn't on my terms. Not at all. It was on his. Maybe I should have known better than to think it would be easy. West was right. Their reputation preceded them. Mason had warned me. My parents had warned me. None of that prepared me. I was so out of my depth.

“No? Oh, Scarlett, that was the wrong thing to say.”

He moved away so fast, I barely had time to blink. West spun me around and had me face down on his desk, his hand around the back of my neck, pinning me in place.

“I don’t think you realise who you’re talking to, so let’s get a couple of things straight before you piss
me off. And trust me, making me angry is the last thing you want to do. I will hurt you and I’ll fucking enjoy it.”

I shuddered, his harsh words piercing at my very being. West wasn’t playing around. I wouldn’t be leaving this room with my innocence intact.

“We don’t use the word no in this room. If I tell you to do something, you’ll do it. And you want to know why?”

I nodded. He leant over me, his body heat warming me from the inside out.

“You’re mine.”

I opened my mouth to object but was unable to utter a word. I had nothing. Only the stark realisation I’d bitten off way more than I could chew by coming here. By returning to the city and finding these men. I knew for a fact I’d grown up in London. My parents hadn’t hidden that from me, but after my accident, they’d taken me to the countryside to recover. Really, it was to keep me locked up in a comfortable prison. An excuse to keep me from the wider world. I had questioned in my head why they’d done it, but no answers were forthcoming.

Now I was in a situation I didn’t know how to navigate. They hadn’t given me the skills to deal with the opposite sex. The only person who had taught me anything was Mason, and even he’d been reluctant. I had a feeling he didn’t want me getting too intimately involved with the Horsemen. I’d resigned myself to the knowledge there would be no other way around it. I just hadn’t expected it to play out like this.

“Now, you’re going to stay right here. If you move…”

He would hurt me.

“I get it,” I whispered.

“Good.”

He released me. I stayed on the desk, planting my palms flat on the solid surface. Unlike the Prescott and Drake’s glass-topped desks, West’s was a dark solid wood. In fact, from what I’d seen, his whole office was full of dark colours. I turned my head, resting my cheek on the cool wood, and stared out of the window, not that I could see much from this angle.

I flinched when I felt his hands on my skirt, hitching it up my legs. Rather than rip it off me, he was taking care not to tear the fabric. When his fingertips met my bare skin, I bit the inside of my cheek to prevent myself from making any noise, but it didn’t stop me from shifting my feet. I heard his warning growl. It only made me tremble with its deep, resonating sound.

My skirt soon sat on my waist. His fingers stroked over my underwear before he peeled it down, leaving me entirely exposed to him. I stepped out of it with no fuss. West laid it on the desk right next to my face so it was all I could see.

“Well, look at you being such a good girl.” The taunting note to his voice had my pulse racing.

His hands landed on my behind, which made me jolt, and he spread my cheeks. I could feel my face flaming, and not just because he was staring at me. As much as I wanted to hate this, my body responded to him. Especially when his hot breath dusted over my backside. Then he bit down on my skin, making me cry out from the sharp points of pain.

“As much as I want to tease the living shit out of you until you’re begging for it,” he told me, his voice gruff. “We don’t have time for niceties.” His thumb brushed along my slit. “Besides, I think I’ve discovered what turns you on.”
I wanted to ask him what the fuck he meant by that, but his thumb dipped between my lips with ease, the slickness of my arousal guiding him in.

"You’re scared… terrified… and yet, you want this."

My teeth dug harder into my cheek, almost drawing blood. After this morning’s wet dream, I was pretty sure fear played a factor in getting me wet. In my body preparing itself to get railed. I had a feeling West was going to show me no mercy, despite knowing I’d never been with a man before.

He released me, chuckling as he did it. I heard the distinctive sound of a belt buckle clinking, followed by a zip. His hand landed on me again, gripping my hip in an iron hold. Then I felt it… hot skin against my most intimate parts. His cock slid between my lips, making me choke out a gasp. I should fear the fact he was doing this without protection, but the surgeries I’d undergone after my accident had left me infertile. Something I didn't want to think too hard on when the man behind me was about to stick his cock inside me.

I tried to relax when he pressed against my entrance. Tried to imagine what it would feel like, but nothing prepared me for the stretch and the sensation of him slowly but surely filling my pussy with his cock. A cross between a cry and a moan erupted from my lips. My hand curled into a fist, my nails digging into my palm.

"Not too loud now, Scarlett," he hissed. "Wouldn't want anyone getting the wrong idea if they walk by and hear us."

His other hand landed on my behind, gripping the cheek to gain more leverage. I had no idea what the hell to do or say, only it didn’t feel as I thought it would. I didn’t expect to want him to go faster. To give me it all.

"Please," I whimpered.

He leant over me but didn’t increase his pace.

"Are you trying to beg?"

"Please."

His low growl made me press back against him, trying to show him what I wanted. As if getting the message, he shunted forward, impaling me completely. I bit my lip, trying not to moan or be too loud.

"Is this what you wanted, huh? You want to be fucked, Scarlett? You want to be filled with cock and railed until you’re crying?"

I choked, not wanting to answer him. He pulled back and made me whimper when he slammed back inside me, all the gentleness he’d exhibited before disappearing completely. His hand left my behind and curled around the back of my neck, holding me down whilst he gave it to me. My hips dug into the desk with each thrust, but I didn’t care. All I could feel was his body colliding with mine. The sensation of his cock buried deep inside my pussy. It ached but in the best way.

"I knew this pretty pussy was going to feel good, you’re so fucking wet," he told me, his breath dusting over my cheek. "Do you hate this? Do you want me to stop?"

I cried out with the force of his thrusts, my hands scrabbling against the desk.

"I don’t think you do. You want me to fuck you harder."

And he did. The brutality he used my body with was unlike anything I’d ever experienced before. Sure, I’d read about rough sex and violent men before, but actually being taken by one was on a whole new level of fucked up.
“West,” I choked out. “Please.”

I didn’t know if I was asking him to keep going or to stop. My nerve endings were firing in all directions. I no longer knew what was up or down.

“Now you want to use my name, do you? Say it, Scarlett, tell me to fuck you. Go on, beg for what you want.”

He pressed his cheek against mine, the bulk of him covering my body, whilst he continued to use me for his pleasure.

“Beg. Me.”

“Please… please fuck me, West,” I whispered, unable to say it any louder.

He didn’t respond, but his hand slid from my hip, curling underneath me and touching the spot where we joined. His fingers moved higher, finding my clit. I bucked against him, moaning far too loudly. Nothing else but his fingers on my clit and his cock pounding into my pussy registered with me. I let myself be drowned by the man on top of me. And when I came, the wild bliss rushing up my spine, eyes rolling back in my head and my body violently shaking, I cried. A tear ran down my cheek unheeded.

Catharsis. The state of purging your emotions, letting go of everything, and giving in.

“Good girl,” he murmured in my ear.

He pressed his lips to my cheek and then licked the tear from my face. I shuddered, not hating it at all. He kissed my cheek once more before pulling away. Both his hands wrapped around my hips and he really fucking went to town on me. I didn’t know what had hit me, only it felt good. I squirmed on the desk, never wanting the sensations to end.

West abruptly pulled out of me, grabbed hold of my hair, and tugged me up before pressing me down on my knees. I looked up at him. His amber eyes were dark, his expression wild and unhinged.

“Open.”

I did it on instinct, my mouth falling open with his command. And I didn’t look when he shoved his cock in it. My eyes were on his face, watching him, needing to see what would happen when he emptied himself inside me. I had to open my mouth wider to accommodate him. He thrust a few times before I felt his cock throb and spurt with hot, salty liquid. But his expression held me captive. The tightness of his jaw and the satisfaction and heat radiating from him. I choked on his cum, trying to swallow, but finding it impossible with his dick still jammed in my mouth. It’s not like he’d shoved it down my throat or anything, but he wasn’t exactly small.

When he pulled away, his cock popping out of my mouth with an audible sound, I was able to swallow. He let go of my hair and moved away. I only got a second to glimpse what he’d fucked me with before he tucked it back in his trousers and zipped himself up.

“Sort yourself out and go back to work.”

I stared at him, unable to comprehend what the hell had happened. His voice came off cold and unfeeling.

“What?”

“You heard me.”

“Is that it?”

He glanced at me, his eyes losing their wildness.
“Is what it, Scarlett?”
On shaky legs, I rose to my feet, shoving my skirt down.
“You have your way with me, then dismiss me?”
The smirk that appeared on his face pissed me off.
“Yeah, that’s it. And for the record, I did not have my way with you. I fucked you. You should count yourself lucky I went easy. The shit I really like would make you scream and not in a good way.”
My fists clenched at my sides.
Calm down, don’t let him get to you.
How could I not? The man had given me my first sexual experience, and it was way more than I could’ve ever imagined. And now he’d made me feel like I’d been… used. I should have known better than to expect anything else, given the way he’d manhandled me the first time we’d met.
“Easy on me? You call that easy on me? It hurts… down there.”
The way his eyes lit up with my words had me wondering what was going through his head.
“Good. Now your pussy knows who she belongs to, and when she’s ready for more, you merely have to ask. Maybe I’ll oblige her, but only if the woman she’s attached to is good for me.”
A suitable response completely eluded me. Instead, I picked up my knickers from his desk, made sure my skirt was covering my intimate parts and stormed over to his door. I tried the handle but found it locked. A small squeal of frustration left my lips.
“Turn the lock in the handle.”
I didn’t turn around nor thank him. My fingers fumbled with the lock, then I ripped open the door and walked out. My feet carried me to the bathroom where I shut myself in a cubicle, kicked the lid of the toilet closed and sat on it. My eyes fixed on the grey door in front of me.
I’d allowed a man I barely knew to have sex with me. Even though my mind told me it was necessary, it still made me feel as though my world was coming apart at the seams. When I’d agreed to my parent’s stupid revenge plot, I hadn’t realised I would have to go to these lengths. And the worst part about it all? I hated how much I’d enjoyed it. The way he spoke to me. The way his body felt against mine. The harsh sound of his breath. All of it had turned me on.
Of all the ways I thought I would experience sex for the first time, that had definitely not been it. And now I was left wondering if I had made any progress at all with West by letting him fuck me. Because the real thoughts about how much I wanted him to do it again, regardless of the fact it was meant to be a part of making him trust me, were ones I didn’t want to entertain or acknowledge. They would lead down a dark path. One I had a feeling I’d end up walking down, anyway.
These two had been at it over Scarlett for far too long. When it became clear neither Prescott nor Francis wanted to back down, I’d turned away and left them to it. Sometimes it wasn't worth intervening unless they started beating on each other, which wasn’t exactly uncommon amongst the four of us. It wouldn’t do to have them fighting during work hours.

“Your self-righteous bullshit is exhausting, you know that, right?” Prescott said, his voice full of irritation. “You’re no better than the rest of us. Save your fucking morality for the masses out there.”

“I never said no. I said we had to take it into consideration,” Francis retorted. “You all seem so willing to forget she was our friend, our best fucking friend. She meant something to us. Do you even care now?”

I flinched. I hadn’t forgotten who she was to us. How she’d been so fucking integral to our lives. We’d searched for her when she disappeared, tearing apart half of London to find out where she’d gone. Then we’d discovered the truth. It was the most depressing day of all our lives. Well, except for the day Scarlett got into her accident. That was worse. Much fucking worse. I would count that as the worst day of all our lives.

“You think this has anything to do with not caring? Fuck you. I care. She was the best part of us, but that was ten years ago. Things are different now. You’re the one who wants to forget everything and bury your head in the damn sand.”

“I do not! I remember all too fucking well how we’ve risked everything to get her back. Everything, Pres. We let a fucking mole into our lives who has the potential to destroy us because she can’t fucking remember who we are.”

I turned in time to see Prescott flinch. Francis had a point. We had lured her here. We were letting her into our lives when we knew the danger she posed. It wasn’t something any of us could afford to forget. The five of us growing up together didn’t change our current circumstances. But, at the same time, she was the key component missing from our lives. The final piece to our puzzle. She represented a sense of nostalgia for us. A time when our lives hadn’t been violent and unforgiving.

I was about to open my mouth when my eyes were drawn to West strolling back into the room. I hadn’t realised he’d left. The smirk on his face made me suspicious. Where had he disappeared off to, and what had he done?

“Are you still arguing?” he asked, leaning up against the wall by the door, his hands dug in his pockets.

Both Francis and Prescott turned their heads and glared at West. He looked outright amused by their stares.

“Where have you been?” I asked, wondering whether I wanted to know or if West had done something fucked up. Knowing him, he likely had.
A cold bead of sweat ran down the back of my neck.

“What problem?”

I swear to god if he says what I think he’s going to…

“Our Scarlett problem Pres brought to our attention.”

“Jesus Christ, West.”

I threw my hands up and paced away.

“You did fucking what?” Francis asked.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Prescott throw back his head and bark with laughter.

“Did fucking whom would be the correct term and yes, there was fucking involved.”

I turned to find Francis gripping some papers on my desk as if he was holding back from decking West.

“You fucked Scarlett?”

West shrugged. Prescott was still chucking, but I ignored him. No doubt he was amused because he kept winding West the fuck up over Scarlett. And now West had taken matters into his own hands.

“You didn’t want to take her and tag-team her unless she had some experience. I handled it. Plus, I discovered she’s a kinky little thing under that façade she puts up, but it doesn’t entirely surprise me. She’s always had a reckless streak.”

“I don’t even know what to say to that.” Francis turned to me, waving his hand at West. “What the fuck do we even do with that? Do I even want to know what you did to her?”

I raised my hand to my mouth and swiped my thumb over it, holding back a smile. Should I be pissed at West? Perhaps. Then again, we wanted to mess with her, didn’t we? That was the deal. And what better way to mess with Scarlett’s head than to set West on her.

“You worried she didn’t like it? I assure you, she did… but I’ll leave exactly what I did to her up to your imagination.”

Francis blinked but kept his attention on me. I had a feeling West hadn’t gone overboard with her quite yet. He had, after all, been the most devoted to Scarlett. And Prescott pointed out to me the fact that West had deeper feelings for her. There was no doubt in my mind, West was in love with the girl and had been since we were kids. Out of the four of us, he took her loss the worst. The biggest reason he was so unhinged could be tied back to what happened that night.

“I’m sure she did,” Prescott said, giving West a wink.

“And I’m fucking sure you’d loved to have been a fly on the wall,” West replied with a raised eyebrow.

No fucking surprises there. The four of us had no qualms about fucking women with each other, but Prescott had a thing about watching. Voyeurism was only one of his kinks. Chasing was another. I couldn’t deny our tastes ran on the more extreme side of sex.

I didn’t know why West was acting so casually about giving it to Scarlett. Underneath his calm exterior, I had a feeling there was a dangerous edge to his mood. We’d have to monitor him this evening lest he did something reckless.

“Well, it proves she’s willing to do whatever it takes to get close to us,” I mused. “Maybe it’s time we escalate things.”
“In what way?” Francis asked, narrowing his eyes at me. “You were the one who wanted to pump the brakes.”

He’d clearly resigned himself to the whole West deal. Not like we could change it, only use it to our advantage.

“Let’s use the rest of this week to push her buttons, and then Friday night, we take her. We’ll have to be careful, wouldn’t want her little lap dog getting suspicious now, would we?”

Prescott smirked.

“We need someone to run inference with him.”

I nodded slowly. West’s contacts came in handy for that. He was our in with the criminal underworld. He thrived in that environment. Up here in our ivory tower, he was stifled by the suits and pretence of civility.

“I’ll handle it,” West said without hesitation.

“Good. Now, kindly fuck off back to work. I’m going to seek out our prey.”

“And do what?” Francis asked.

“Wouldn’t you like to know?”

My friend raised his brow but didn’t question me further. The three of them left the room, Prescott throwing a “She’s not going to like what you’re planning,” over his shoulder at me. I smiled, rubbing my lip again.

I gave it a few minutes before I walked out of my office and along to Scarlett’s. She was sat at her desk, but her eyes weren’t on her computer, they were on the windows. I looked at my watch.

“Are you making a habit of being tardy with my mid-morning coffee?”

She almost jumped ten feet out of her chair.

“Oh, Jesus, you scared me.” She put a hand to her chest, then her expression became contrite. “No, no, I’m sorry, I… I… I got distracted.”

She stood up, smoothing down her skirt. “I’m really sorry, I’ll do it now.”

I remained in the doorway as she walked over to it. Before she could leave the room, I reached out, planting my hand on the other side of the frame, effectively barring her path. Scarlett looked up at me with wide eyes.

“Did I or did I not tell you I value timekeeping?”

“You did.”

Her voice was hushed and brimming with nervousness.

“It’s your third week here, Scarlett, are you getting complacent already?”

“N-n-no. I swear I was in the middle of doing it and then…”

“And then what?”

I kept my voice cold and emotionless. She was losing her composure, her hands worrying at the fabric of her skirt. I knew exactly what or should I say who had distracted her.

“Mr Greer wanted something.”

“Did he now?”

She nodded, her eyes wide and full of fear.

“Yes.”

“And what, pray tell, did he want?”
Scarlett swallowed, but I could tell she couldn’t tear her eyes from mine no matter how much my line of questioning was making her uncomfortable. Watching her squirm gave me a sick sense of satisfaction.

“He… wanted…”

“Yes?”

“To… he wanted to… show me something.”

If I was in any doubt of West’s assertion about fucking her, I wasn’t now. It was so damn clear she didn’t want to tell me what they’d done.

“Something.” Was that something his dick by any chance, Scarlett?

“Yes.”

I leant closer, crowding her personal space.

“Was this something work-related?”

“No,” she whispered.

I wanted to smile so fucking badly, but I didn’t. The fact she was trying so hard not to lie to me was amusing. Clearly, she realised messing with me would be a mistake. I wouldn’t hesitate to punish the fuck out of her if she did.

“I’d remind you, you’re here to work, but I think you know that already, don’t you?”

“Yes, Drake.”

The way my name sounded on her lips in that deferent tone had me gripping the doorframe harder. I was cool, calm and collected at all times. Scarlett was disarming. Not only because I’d grown up with her, but the way she didn’t hesitate to do as I told her was far too damn intoxicating. Like a drug flooding my system and dragging me under. It’s why I left the harder shit to West. I didn’t like feeling out of control. Weed soothed me, but anything else, well, it was like a fucking riot in my head. Especially E. Fuck, the last time I’d done E… the less said about that, the better.

Maybe I should ask West to get a supply. Now I was thinking about it, I wondered what would happen to Scarlett if she took it.

Would she beg for it? For us? Would her body crave all the depraved things we wanted to do to her?

I schooled myself before my thoughts got out of hand. There would be plenty of time for me to thin about that when she wasn’t in front of me.

“I need you to stay late on Friday night. I have an important speech to prepare for next week and that’s the only time I can compose it.”

“Of course, I’ll stay late. That’s absolutely fine.”

I gave her a sharp nod.

“Go make me a coffee and don’t let this happen again.”

“I won’t, I promise.”

I didn’t move away immediately, captivated by her fearful expression. Loving the fact I’d put it there. I wasn’t jealous of West fucking her, but the thought of being able to had me reining myself right the fuck in. Her tears would be so damn sweet.

I let go of the doorframe and shifted back, allowing her to walk out. My eyes fixed on her back as she scurried down the hall towards the kitchen. I let myself smile then. The girl had no idea what we had in store for her. West’s little revelation that she was kinky had my mind running riot. There were so many things we could introduce her to. So. Fucking. Many.
I was going to enjoy watching her squirm, pant and beg. Friday couldn’t come soon enough.
The moment I got into the flat, I let out a long sigh of relief. I was safe here. Today had been fucked up in so many ways, I could no longer count them. I hung up my coat and dumped my bag down on the side table, wanting everything and everyone to disappear for a few hours.

“Mase?” I called out as I kicked off my heels.

There was no answer. I trudged down the hallway to the kitchen and found it empty, as was the living room when I checked it. Who knew where he’d got to. He was usually here when I got in, and wanted to know all about my day, whether I’d got any information they could use and what the Horsemen were up to.

Deciding it was for the best he wasn’t here as I didn’t feel like dealing with the inquisition, I went into the bathroom and started running myself a bubble bath. I snagged a bottle of white wine from the fridge along with a glass before undressing in my bedroom and pulling on a robe. I padded out back to the bathroom, shut the door and poured myself a glass of wine. Then I put my hair up in a bun. The robe fell to the floor the next minute. Sinking into the hot water with my glass, I let out a deep groan of pleasure. After the shit I’d dealt with today, I needed this.

I sipped at my wine and stared up at the ceiling. My mind ran riot with thoughts of both West and Drake. The former for obvious reasons. He’d taken me into his office, bent me over his desk and fucked me. It didn’t matter to him we’d only shared a few words between us. The man claimed I was his. And I had no idea why I hadn’t disputed it. Well, the situation had got out of control so fast, I didn’t have time to tell him he was crazy. I also didn’t have much of a choice but to give in to what he wanted.

Be honest… you wanted it too.

I shivered. I wasn’t meant to find them attractive. Wanting any of them went against everything. I was here to destroy them, not catch feelings. Not that being fucked by West had caused such a thing. You could have sex with someone without liking them or wanting more out of the relationship.

The thing was, I didn’t hate it. The sex. I’d never experienced such intense pleasure before. Never craved the feel of a man against me. I hadn’t been allowed to be around them. Now I had four of them I had to get close to. And I had to admit to myself I wanted to be close to West again. Intimately.

Say it. You want him to use you again.

I set the glass on the counter next to the bath and rubbed my face. My wayward thoughts were not leading me anywhere good.

It hadn’t only been West. Drake had caused me heart palpitations today. I’d been so flustered after my experience with West, I’d hardly had a chance to gather myself together. When Drake had stared me down and was questioning me, I’d almost wilted. The intensity of him made my knees go weak. He had such an intimidating presence. And the way he’d demanded I answer him without words… I had no idea what to do with myself. It was almost as if he was trying to get me to admit to the sex with West.
Did he know? Had West told him and the others?

I sank lower in the water, my cheeks flaming at the thought of them discussing it. It led me back to the dream I'd had. And how I had to admit to myself it hadn't only been Prescott chasing me in it. It had been all of them.

Before I could stop myself, I ran my fingers over my breasts, moaning when I flicked my nipples. The very idea of being chased by them turned me on. Especially in light of what happened today. My mind fired off, erotic images filling my senses and making me ache for a repeat. Of West pinning me down and taking me. This time he was brutal, making it hurt whilst Drake whispered in my ear all the ways he was going to punish me for being a bad girl.

My fingers slid lower across my stomach until they met my clit. I stroked myself, remembering the way I'd been filled earlier. The horrifying but beautiful experience of being taken by a man who should, by all accounts, terrify me.

“West,” I moaned.

His unhinged nature called to me as if on some level we were kindred spirits. I didn't know how. It made no sense, but I felt it anyway.

_Fuck me, West, please._

I was too far gone to care that I should not be getting myself off to thoughts of my employers doing deviant things to my body. These were the men I'd been sent to destroy. But did it mean I couldn't enjoy myself with them before I had to turn them over to my family?

Why did everything about this leave me conflicted? And the guilt flooding my system over craving more experiences with them did nothing to temper my desire. If anything, the guilt fuelled it.

“Bad girl,” I whispered. “Such a bad girl.”

I closed my eyes, letting the fantasy of them carry me under. To drown me in their sea of fucked up depravity.

“Scar, are you in… oh, oh shit.”

My eyes snapped open. For a moment I froze in place, then I abruptly pulled my hand from my pussy and turned my head. Mason stood in the doorway, his brown eyes wide like a deer in headlights. I hadn't heard him open it. He dragged his eyes from me and coughed, rubbing the back of his neck as he turned away. My body was covered by the bubbles. I'd kept my modesty, but it didn't make this any less awkward. He'd caught me masturbating. He had no idea what I was thinking about but it didn't stop my face from burning.

“Haven't you heard of knocking?” I asked, dipping even lower into the water.

“I didn’t think, shit, Scar, I’m sorry.”

I let out a huff and crossed my arms over my breasts under the water.

“Did you want something?”

“I… uh… no. I mean, did you want dinner?”

Having the man who was like an older brother to you walk in whilst you're getting yourself off to your employers in the bath was not the way I wanted to spend this evening.

“Yes… now, can you please leave?”

When he didn’t move, I frowned. Didn’t he realise how embarrassing this was for me?

“Your father called. He wants to know why you’ve not responded to their messages.”
I sighed. Both my parents had texted me in the past few days. I hadn’t wanted to deal with them, not when I had nothing to report. Not like I was about to tell them I’d decided to get close to the Horsemen by essentially seducing them. Though, right now, it felt like it was the other way around. They were after me. Well… West was. And he was the type of man who took exactly what he wanted without a care in the world.

“I don’t have anything to tell them.”

“They want to know how you’re doing.”

“You didn’t tell them already?”

“From you, Scar, they want to hear from you.”

“Fine. I’ll call them after I’m done in here. Now, can you leave?”

My voice was laced with irritation. I didn’t care to mask it. I wanted to be left in peace. Not like I would be able to continue what I’d been doing before, but he needed to get out.

“Oh, okay, sorry again.”

He walked out, shutting the door behind him. I glared at it. I resented the fact they didn’t trust me enough. They had to send a babysitter. Whilst Mason was here for my protection, he was also my keeper. There wasn’t much I could do without his knowledge, except for when I was at Fortuity. They couldn’t infiltrate the building or its security. I was their only way in. And it meant they had to rely on me to do my part. Something I knew they weren’t happy about. It was my only way to freedom, or I’d never get away from their oppressive regime. I had to do what they’d asked of me.

I didn’t linger in the bath, making sure to wash thoroughly. I’d spent the rest of the day smelling of West after our encounter. No way I wanted Mason to get suspicious. No one could find out about me having sex with one of them.

Letting out a sigh when I got out and dressed, leaving my hair wet, I knew I couldn’t put this off any longer. I sat on the end of my bed and dialled my father’s number.

“Scarlett,” came his disapproving voice the moment he answered.

“Hello.”

“You haven’t been answering my messages.”

“I’m sorry.”

I didn’t come up with an excuse. Wouldn’t be any point. He’d merely get on my case about it. It was better not to antagonise Stuart Carver, or his wife, Phoebe. They weren’t my birth parents. I’d been adopted. They hadn’t given me details about my birth family. The one time I’d asked, I’d received the worst imaginable response of them. I’d never tried to ask again. Dad got mad and Mum cried. All it did was leave me with a boat load of guilt. As if they couldn’t possibly understand why I’d want to know when they were my ‘real’ family.

“Mason said you’re struggling.”

I gritted my teeth. Trust him to have told them that. Whilst Mason and I were close, I was always reminded where his loyalties lay.

“I’m not. It’s going to take time to get them to trust me, is all.”

“Yes, yes, of course, that isn’t what I was talking about.”

“Then what?”

I tried to keep the bite out of my voice.
“The nightmares, Scarlett.”
I flinched.
“They’re not that bad.”

It was a lie. Over the weekend I woke up screaming two nights in a row. Mason had rushed in and wrapped me up in his arms, telling me it was okay. I hadn’t cried, but my body shook for several minutes until I calmed down. And I couldn’t remember what I’d been so scared about.

“I think you should come home this weekend. Let Karl look you over.”

As if I wanted to go back home to my prison, neither did I want to see Doctor Leonard either. He gave me the creeps and was too friendly with my father.

“I’m fine, Dad, I promise. There’s nothing to worry about. I can handle it.”

“If you’re sure…”

The fake concern in his voice made me roll my eyes. I’d always had a feeling he only said these things as a way of making me think he cared. The truth was… he’d shown me enough times he didn’t.

“I am.”

Besides, I’d agreed to stay late on Friday at work. I didn’t want to have to travel down to Kent the next day.

“Fine. I have to go. Don’t ignore our messages again. Is that understood?”

“Yes.”

“Good.”

He hung up without saying goodbye. I dumped my phone on my bed and lay back, digging my hands into my eyes. Talking to him always made me wary. You never knew what type of mood he’d be in. I was glad he’d not given me a lecture. After the day I’d had, there was no way in hell I wanted to sit and listen to that.

Now I had to go make small talk with Mason knowing he’d dobbed me into my father. To say I was irritated was an understatement, but such was my fucked up life. And little did I know, it was about to get so much worse.
Dealing with West yesterday evening was an absolute fucking nightmare. He’d left work early after he’d gone ahead and fucked Scarlett. Then he’d arrived home high as a kite on something he’d clearly taken whilst he was out. He proceeded to tell us all about how wet Scarlett had been for him. Prescott had been in his element. The sick fuck wanted all the details, but West had been strangely cagey about the rest. He, Prescott and Drake had started making a plan for Friday. And that had got out of hand. I’d left them to it, not wanting to deal with their shit even though it’d been me who suggested tag-teaming Scarlett in the first place.

My conflicted feelings regarding Scarlett were getting in my way. Every time I looked at her, I was reminded of the girl she’d been. The one who had been reckless and free. Who’d walked into the fire alongside us. The girl had kept us grounded. We’d been lost without her. They didn’t want to see it, but I did. I fucking well saw the carnage we’d left in our wake. Whilst I didn’t feel remorse over the shit we’d done in the past, I understood actions came with consequences.

Luring Scarlett here when we were aware of the reasons why her family wanted her to come after us was the biggest risk we’d ever taken. And whilst having her back was worth every fucking minute, the fact she had no idea who we were was clearly taking a toll on the four of us. Especially when we couldn’t say a damn thing about it. Couldn’t remind her who we’d all been to each other. Five best friends who’d spent their formative years together. We didn’t function right without our fifth. I knew that. They knew that. But she didn’t. She had no fucking clue. And it killed me.

I sighed, running my hand through my hair as I wandered out of my office. I had a meeting to get to. It was a miracle we’d managed to set this up but securing the Bykov account had opened doors for us. I had to give it to Prescott. He knew how to lure clients to us like moths to a flame. We had to tread carefully with this lot. There had been a lot of gossip circulating about them after the now infamous massacre at Instinct Investments.

When I reached Prescott’s office, our guests were already seated. A man with dark hair and dark eyes. Next to him sat a petite woman with long blonde hair and crystal blue eyes. To say they made a striking couple would be an understatement. However, rumour had it the five owners of the Syndicate were in a polyamorous relationship with each other.

Prescott stood up and waved me over.

“This is Mr Beaufort, our finance manager. Francis, this is Mr Knox and Miss Bykov.”

I approached the sofas and shook both their hands.

“It’s nice to meet you, but please call me Ash,” the woman said. “I’m still getting used to the change in my last name.”

I gave her a smile, whilst the man, one Mr Quinn Knox, gave her a sharp look. She merely rolled her eyes when he looked away as if she dealt with his seemingly severe demeanour all the time. I was used to
men like him. Didn’t worry me too much.

“Of course. Did Prescott offer you refreshments?”

“Yes,” Prescott said. “Scarlett’s making them right now.”

I almost faltered midway into sitting down in one of the vacant armchairs. He’d not asked Tonya who usually took care of that stuff for us. I gave him a curious look as I made myself comfortable. Prescott merely shrugged in response. I suspected Drake had told him to use whatever was in our arsenal to bring them onboard as clients.

I turned to our guests, giving them a smile.

“So, do you have any questions before we begin with our proposal?”

I always liked to check in with potential clients to make sure I caught any concerns they had so we could deal with them immediately. Thankfully, neither of them had any. Prescott and I dived straight in, showing them what we wanted to do with their current portfolio if they were to join us. We only presented to high profile clients ourselves. We had a whole team who managed clients and acquisitions for us. When you wanted someone’s business with a reputation like the owners of the Syndicate, it was always better to give them the personal touch.

The moment Scarlett walked in, my skin prickled with awareness. Prescott glanced at me, a smirk appearing on his face as if he’d had the exact same reaction. The anticipation of what we’d do to Scarlett on Friday was high.

She carried a tray over to the coffee table and set it down. Then she handed out the drinks she’d made, including one for me. I eyed it, biting my lip as I tried not to smile. It reminded me of our conversation in the kitchen when she started a couple of weeks ago. How I refused to tell her how I took my coffee.

She picked up the tray after responding to our guests thanking her, but she didn’t leave immediately. Scarlett stopped next to me, rested her hand on the arm of the chair and leant closer. Our guests were occupied by Prescott, so I wasn’t too worried about them.

“Did I get it right?” she murmured.

I leant forward and picked up my mug. After taking a sip, I ran my tongue along my bottom lip. Oh, she definitely had.

“Perhaps,” I responded in an equally hushed voice.

“I think I did.”

“Did Pres tell you?”

She shook her head and gave me a sly smile.

“Dare I ask how you worked it out?”

“I’m good at my job, Mr Beaufort, that’s all.”

She straightened, intending to leave but I caught her by the wrist. Her eyes fell on my hand, her skin flushing at the direct contact.

“Call me Francis, Scarlett.”

I wasn’t about to mention I wouldn’t mind if she called me Frankie. No one else but Scarlett had ever had the privilege. West, the psychotic fucker, called me Frankie to wind me up. In a lot of ways, I didn’t blame him for wanting to punish me, but I wouldn’t give him the satisfaction of knowing I understood his reasoning.
Scarlett stared at me for a moment. Then a sly smile crossed her features.

“You sure about that? Don’t want to request that I call you sir, or something?”

I almost choked, immediately dropping my hand from her wrist. The twinkle in her eye had me at a complete loss for words. Where on earth would she get that idea from? I wasn’t the type to need honorifics. That was definitely more Drake’s thing. I doubted he had told her to use one, since I’d heard her call him by his name.

There was a snort from the sofa. My eyes went to Mr Knox who was eying me with a rather knowing look on his face. I had no idea what he was thinking, but it couldn’t be anything good.

“No, Francis is fine.”

“As you wish… Francis.”

Then she sauntered out of the room. My eyes followed her progress, my head turning to keep looking at her. Her hips swayed as if she knew I was watching. It had me wondering if she was doing all of this on purpose. Most likely. We knew she was here to get close to us. Perhaps she’d decided to use her assets to lure us in. Too bad for Scarlett, we already knew who she was.

The fact she’d allowed West to fuck her yesterday started to make sense in my mind. Would it mean she would let what we were planning on Friday happen without complaint? It gave me an idea. A fucked up idea, but one of the other three would be on board with it if I told them.

I turned back to the meeting at hand, knowing I shouldn’t be thinking about her or what we had planned.

The rest of the hour went by in a flash and soon we were saying goodbye to Mr Knox and Miss Bykov. I stood by Prescott’s door, shaking Mr Knox’s hand and thanking him for coming. He let go of my hand and levelled me with a rather intense gaze.

“Perhaps you should consider letting her call you sir.” His eyes flicked to Miss Bykov. “Not every day a woman wants to play those sorts of games with a man.”

Before I had a chance to respond, he gave me a sly smile, grabbed hold of his woman’s hand and walked out. I stared after him, having no fucking clue what the hell to make of what he’d just said.

“Well, they’re clearly into kinky shit,” Prescott chuckled.

I glanced at him. He’d been standing next to me the whole time. He had a huge grin on his face and a damn look in his eyes told me he’d overheard what had been said.

“You think?”

“If they aren’t, I’d be surprised. After all, she’s getting a dicking from four guys, isn’t she?”

“What the fuck, Pres? You don’t know that.”

“Come on, Francis, weren’t you listening? She all but admitted it when we asked about the other owners.”

I must have not been paying attention because I certainly hadn’t heard anything of the sort out of Ash Bykov’s mouth.

“So what if she is? Not our fucking business.”

“More power to her. Reckon a lot of women would love to get dicked down by more than one guy at the same time, they just don’t want to admit it.”

I almost cuffed him around the back of the head. I dug my hands in my pockets instead and thought about my idea for Friday.
"Speaking of dicking down, I take it you heard what Scarlett said."
"Mmm, she’s a little flirt."
"Well, she is trying to get us to trust her. But that’s not why I brought it up."
Prescott raised an eyebrow.
"Oh? Then pray what’s going in that moral brain of yours."
I rolled my eyes and walked further into his office.
"First of all, we definitely need to tell Drake about the sir business, you know what he’s like about that shit."
I turned back to find Prescott giving me a wink.
"And I think we should teach Scarlett a lesson for trying to use her sex appeal on us. I mean, fuck, it’s working, but the girl has no idea what she’s letting herself in for."
"What did you have in mind?"
"We deprive the girl of her senses, then she won’t have a fucking clue what’s coming."
The maniacal look in Prescott’s eyes told me he was fully on board.
"Oh, you want to blindfold her."
"To start with… perhaps we don’t talk too, and then she’ll have no idea who is about to give it to her."
"You’re such a deviant little fuck, Francis. It’s a wonder people think you’re a nice boy. They have no fucking idea."
I grinned. They called me the moral one, but I wasn’t. If I was being entirely honest, a lot of our idea for group activities during sex came from me. Maybe I was a deviant little fuck, but I liked it. And perhaps I needed to embrace who I was inside a little more. I would certainly get less shit off Prescott and West if I did.
"No, they don’t. And she won’t either.” I waved a hand at him. “You in then? Should we tell the others?"
"Oh, fuck yeah, I’m in. All the way in."
"Good."
I walked out of his office, throwing a wink his way. I’d have words with West and Drake tonight. No doubt there would be no complaints from them either. My misgivings about what we were doing could go fuck themselves right now. All I wanted to focus on was getting exactly what we wanted from Scarlett. And that was her giving in to all of us.
TWENTY FIVE

DRAKE

There was something about being in the office when everyone else had left for the day. The silence and stillness in the air calmed me, kept me centred. However, having Scarlett at my desk, her fingers working across the keyboard as I stood staring out at the darkening skyline dictating this fucking speech I had to give next week was certainly testing my ability to keep myself under control. I prided myself on self-restraint. Right now, I was itching all over with urges I’d always kept hidden from the outside world.

Tonight was the night. And it was all I could do to keep talking.

“Actually, could you scratch that last line,” I told her, rubbing my chin. “I need something more… punchy.”

“Yes,” she murmured.

In the relative quiet of the room other than her fingers tapping on the keyboard, I heard it loud and clear.

I turned away from the window and looked at Scarlett. Her light brown hair was half falling out of the messy bun she’d put it in. A lock of it had fallen on her shoulder. I wanted to brush it away. To fix her hair for her. A stupid urge. I shouldn’t give a shit about her comfort, but Francis’ words from a few days ago kept ringing in my ears.

“You all seem so willing to forget she was our friend, our best fucking friend. She meant something to us.”

Caring about someone you knew had been sent here to ruin you was a paradox I hated. I could care about Scarlett and want to ruin her at the same. How I wanted to tear her open and destroy every little piece of her soul. The others gave me shit for my fascination with the human mind. My addiction to ripping apart a person’s reality so it would feel as though they were dying on the inside. It made me feel so fucking free knowing I had that much power over another person.

Now was not the time to be getting wrapped up in those thoughts. I had to play my part in this evening’s festivities.

“We should eat something.”

Scarlett’s head whipped up and she blinked.

“We?”

I looked at my watch. It was time to get this show on the road.

“Yes, it’s after seven.”

“I hadn’t noticed the time.”

We’d been working on this speech for the past hour. I hated doing them, but in business, they were necessary. We had to maintain our professional image. Couldn’t go showing the world just how fucked up we all were. They might decide to take their business elsewhere and we couldn’t have that. They’d certainly regret doing so if they did decide to fuck us over.

I moved towards the door, expecting her to follow me.
“Where… where are you going?”
Pausing in the doorway, I turned my head back.
“Upstairs.”
“Should I wait here then?”
I reached up, running my fingers across my bottom lip. Her eyes tracked their path.
“No, Scarlett, you’re going to come with me.”
Would she say no? It wasn’t as if I ever invited employees up to our penthouse. Scarlett wasn’t just an employee. She belonged to us. And tonight she’d be taught a lesson in just how integral she was to her former best friends. Only we weren’t really friends any longer. More like the men who would fuck her up in ways she couldn’t begin to comprehend.
“Bring my tablet, we can continue working on it upstairs,” I said when she didn’t respond.
I walked out of the room, leaving no room for disagreement. A minute later, I heard her footsteps behind me. And her body heat when she caught up with me.
“I don’t… I don’t know if this is… I don’t know if I should come upstairs with you.”
“Why? Do you think I’m planning something nefarious?”
“Well, no. I don’t think that.”
Her eyes betrayed her. She was wary about why I wanted her to come upstairs. Well, she should be. In fact, if she had any sense, she would have run.
“I like to take care of my employees, Scarlett. That’s all this is.” The lie rolled off my tongue with ease.
We reached the lobby. I went over to the lifts, hitting the button and stepping back. I glanced at her. She had a tentative expression on her face. Her hands clutched the tablet to her chest as if it was the only thing shielding her from me. I smiled, knowing nothing would save her. Nothing at all.
When it arrived, I stepped in with Scarlett following behind me. After punching in the code for the penthouse, we didn’t let just anyone up there, I placed my hands behind my back.
“Will the others be around?” she asked when the doors shut and the lift began to move.
“Most likely.”
“Oh.”
“Don’t worry, they won’t mind you joining us.”
I watched her swallow, her fingers tightening around the tablet. The lift didn’t take long and the doors slid open a minute later after it stopped revealing our open plan living space. I strolled out, digging my hands in my pockets. I spied Francis setting out the takeaway boxes on the kitchen island. He’d changed into a more casual outfit of a t-shirt and chinos.
“We have an extra mouth to feed this evening,” I said, waving at the lift doors behind me without looking to see if she’d followed me out.
Francis looked up, his grey eyes glinting.
“Hello, Scarlett. There’s plenty, please come in and take a seat.”
I pointed at the table, unbuttoning my suit jacket and sliding it off my shoulders before slinging it over the back of one of the dining chairs.
“Where’s Pres and West?”
Francis shrugged as he reached up to get another plate out of the cupboard.
“Off doing whatever the fuck they want.”
I snorted, opening the fridge and grabbing a few beers out of it. As I set them on the counter, I looked over to the lift. Scarlett stood just outside the door, her eyes darting around the room with the tablet still clutched to her chest.

“This is where you all live?” she asked, her voice full of wonder.

My eyes roamed around our space. The wall in front of me had floor to ceiling windows with a view of the city. We had three dark grey sofas with teal cushions, a large flatscreen TV and a huge mahogany dining table. Our kitchen was black with chrome finishing. Francis and Prescott had decided on all this shit. West didn’t give two fucks about what the place looked like, only his personal space upstairs.

“Yes,” Francis said. “We don’t let just anyone up here either. You must’ve got in Drake’s good books if you snagged an invite.”

She let out a nervous laugh but didn’t move from her spot by the lift. I didn’t bother saying anything, merely popped the bottle caps with the opener and picked up two of the bottles. I approached her. She watched me, nibbling on her bottom lip in the most fucking distracting way. When I came to a standstill in front of her, I offered her the second bottle in my hand. She released her tight hold on the tablet, taking it from my hand. Her eyes tracked my movements as I brought my own up to my mouth and took a swig.

“Sit down, Scarlett.”

It wasn’t a request but a command. She fidgeted before doing as I told her. I stepped back, watching her walk over to the dining table, set the tablet down on it before taking a seat. She fiddled with the beer bottle.

“Um, I don’t like beer. Could I have some water please?”

I gave her a nod. Francis was dishing up plates for the three of us. I wandered back over to help him and get a glass for Scarlett.

“All set?” I murmured, my voice low enough not to carry across the room.

“Mmm, Pres texted. He said our little problem is occupied for the rest of the evening.”

“Good.”

The lift doors closed and we heard it descending. Clearly, one of them was back.

I poured Scarlett some water before I carried mine and Francis’ plates over to the table, leaving him to bring Scarlett’s. Setting them down, I went back over to snag her drink. Placing the glass next to her hand, I took a seat and watched Scarlett stare down at it. I grabbed the beer bottle and set it next to Francis’ plate. He’d be happy to drink it instead of her.

“Do you live alone?” I asked.

“No. I, uh, live with a friend of my family.”

I glanced over at Francis who set Scarlett’s plate down in front of her along with a knife and fork. His eyes were dark. We both knew who she was referring to. A slight thorn in our sides when it came to Scarlett, but we had our ways of dealing with men like him.

Francis came around the table and sat down next to me, handing me the cutlery he’d brought over. He started in on his meal straight away. I watched Scarlett pick up her fork and stare down at the food we’d ordered.

“What is it?” she asked.

“Thai. You not had that before?” I replied as Francis had his mouthful.
“No… but guess I’m all about new experiences these days.”
She let out another nervous laugh. She was in for one hell of a new experience this evening. I watched her pick up a forkful of curry and rice before sliding it between her lips. She chewed, swallowed then smiled.
“It’s good.”
Francis gave her a wink. I sat back and started eating myself, relieved she liked it, otherwise we might have run into a problem.
Francis made small talk with her whilst I watched Scarlett’s every move. The lift doors slid open a few minutes after we’d started, revealing West, who strolled in without even looking our way.
“Food’s on the counter,” I said, my eyes still fixed on Scarlett.
West grunted in response. I didn’t look around to see where he was going. I didn’t need to. Scarlett’s eyes tracked him into the kitchen. Her skin flushed, betraying her feelings towards our friend. He had fucked her a few days ago. She was probably remembering it. I held back a smile. The girl couldn’t hide her interest in West’s movements and he was probably completely ignoring her. That was one way to lure a woman in. Act like you didn’t give a shit about her after you’d rocked her world.
He came over to the table a few minutes later and sat right next to Scarlett. Something I don’t think she was expecting, especially not when he slung his arm over the back of her chair. He leant closer to her, but his eyes were on me and Francis.
“Hello, Scarlett,” he murmured. “Did you beg one of them to give you an invitation up here so you could see me?”
She choked on her mouthful. West merely smirked and moved his hand to her shoulder, stroking his fingers along it. She swallowed hard and then picked up her glass, taking a long gulp before setting it down. She turned to West, her hazel-green eyes betraying her ire.
“Excuse me?” she hissed.
With his other hand, he reached up and tucked one of the tendrils of hair framing her face behind her ear.
“Mmm, I think you did.”
Her hand snapped up and curled around his wrist. She shoved it back into his chest before releasing him.
“Don’t touch me.”
“You were very willing to let me on Tuesday… in fact, you begged.”
Her eyes widened and her face went a deep shade of red. She didn’t respond to him, merely turned back to her plate and avoided everyone’s gaze.
I eyed Francis. His eyebrow was raised and I could see him holding back a smile. The whole thing amused me too, watching West give Scarlett a hard time. He’d unsettled her, as if she wasn’t already nervous about being up here with us.
West shifted back and started on his own plate, but not before he grinned at me and Francis.
The rest of the meal passed in relative silence. I continued to watch Scarlett. Her eyes had started to droop and her movements became laboured. Her head kept snapping back up every so often as if she was trying to stay awake.
Abruptly, she stood up and looked at me.
“Should we… should we work on… on…”
Her words became slurred. I rose from my seat as she swayed on her feet. I made my way around the table, catching her right when her knees gave out. She stared up at me, realisation dawning on her features. I smiled at her.
“It’s okay, Scarlett, close your eyes. You’re safe here.”
She didn’t have a choice. The sedative Francis laced her food with had set in. For a moment, she struggled to stay conscious. Her mouth opened, but she said nothing. I held her against my chest, waiting until she closed her eyes and went completely limp. I picked her up and carried her over to the sofas, laying her down on one of them. Straightening, I stared down at her beautiful features.
“She’ll be out for an hour, right?” I asked.
“Yes, I gave her the right dose,” Francis replied.
“Good.”
I turned in time to see the lift doors slide open. Prescott walked in without a care in the world.
“I see you started without me.” He nodded at Scarlett as he walked by into the kitchen.
“Did you handle Mason?” I asked.
“Of course, I texted Francis to let him know. He’ll be occupied for the rest of the evening.” Prescott winked. “If you know what I mean.”
We’d sent Prescott to make sure Scarlett’s little bodyguard wouldn’t be an issue. West had secured Zayn Villetti’s details from Gary, his drug dealer and we’d paid Zayn a handsome sum to use one of his girls. She’d be keeping Mason Jones very busy this evening. West hadn’t particularly wanted to get on one of the mafia kingpin son’s radars but we needed a way of keeping Mason away from their flat that didn’t tie back to us. We had to tread carefully when it came to Mason because of who he was.
“Good. We’ve got less than an hour until she wakes up. Let’s get our shit together.”
I stared down at Scarlett again. She looked so peaceful. Pity we would be disturbing that peace. She wouldn’t know her own name by the time we were done with the girl. And I was so ready to start the fun.
The moment I regained consciousness, I sat bolt upright. The last thing I remembered was eating dinner with Drake and Francis whilst West had taunted me with the sex we’d had earlier in the week. The next thing I knew, I was fainting in Drake’s arms whilst he stared down at me with a dark glint in his indigo eyes. One that told me I was in a fuck ton of danger.

Opening my eyes, I found I couldn’t see a damn thing. Something was covering half my face. I tried to reach up and tear it off, but I found my wrists wouldn’t move very far. Tugging on whatever was holding them down, I let out a little squeak of frustration.

What the fuck?

I felt below me. The material I sat on was very soft. I was on a bed or at least, it felt like I was on one. And it was the moment I realised I didn’t have a stitch of clothing on me.

“You’re awake,” a rather disjointed sounding voice rang in my ears.

I looked left and right, wondering where the hell it had come from until I realised I had headphones on.

“Who are you? Why can’t I see? Why… why am I tied up?”

The voice chuckled. Fear raked up my spine, making me aware of how vulnerable I was. Naked and bound on a bed, unable to see or hear anything other than the voice in my ear.

Why had I agreed to go upstairs with Drake earlier? I’d known it was a mistake the moment I stepped into the lift with him, but my need to get close to these men had me throwing my instincts out the window. Now, I was pretty sure I was going to regret that decision.

“You know who I am, Scarlett.”

A hand landed on my ankle, fingers stroking down my skin. I jerked my foot away only to have the hand grip it and hold my ankle down on the bed. Another hand did the same to the other one.

“Now, now, you aren’t going to be trouble, are you?” the voice said, making me flinch.

“What do you want?”

“You.”

I had no idea if the voice belonged to the person touching me or someone else. The whole situation was incredibly disorientating when you couldn’t see or hear anything other than the voice in my ear.

“My mind blared the answer at me, but I didn’t want to believe it. There couldn’t be any other explanation for why I was naked and tied to a bed. And yet, the idea of it made my insides coil. I didn’t know if it was sickness or desire. Perhaps it was both.

“All the things you could possibly imagine, and everything in between.”

I shuddered as the hands on my ankles moved higher. They didn’t belong to one person, but two. Their body heat seared into me from both sides and the bed shifted underneath their combined weight.
One of the hands was slightly calloused whilst the other was softer. I didn’t recognise either of them.

“What are you doing?” I whispered, knowing they could hear me even if I couldn’t hear them.

No response came, but the calloused fingers slid between my thighs, stroking along the sensitive skin. I gasped and tried to shut my legs, but they held them open, not allowing me any dignity or modesty. My fingers curled into the fabric below me, knowing I had little choice but to let them touch me. Hot breath dusted over my bare nipple, making me shiver before a mouth enclosed it. The way he sucked the hardened nub had my body bowing. Teeth dug into it, the sharp pain making me cry out.

“That’s it, Scarlett, let them make you feel good.”

I didn’t want to like the sensations they were eliciting from me, but my body was on fire, wanting so much more. Wanting everything they had to offer me.

One of the hands left me. The one with calloused fingers. The bed shifted again as they moved behind me. I found myself tugged against a bare chest as whoever it was sat up against the headboard.

There was one clear explanation for what was going on. I hated it, but there was no other. One of them had laced my food with something and made me pass out. And now… now two of them were naked with me.

Oh fuck. Fuck… what… oh god, they’re going to…

The Horsemen had drugged and tied me up on a bed. I struggled against the person holding me. The other one knelt in between my legs. I could feel his knees pressed against my inner thighs, keeping my legs spread. Fingers traced the largest scar on my abdomen from one of the multiple surgeries I’d had after my accident. The one that reminded me I couldn’t have children.

“No, please, don’t,” I whimpered, hating they’d seen it, hating them for touching it.

“Shh,” came the voice. “Shh.”

I had a feeling it wasn’t either of the men who were touching me. It was someone watching us. That accounted for three of them. Where was the fourth? He was lurking somewhere. I could almost feel his presence in the room burning into me. His gaze seared into my skin.

West.

“Don’t touch me there.”

They didn’t listen, continuing to stroke the scar and making me want to cry. It was the gentle touch decimating my soul. As if it hurt them to see it as much as it did me. The man behind me stroked my shoulders, the callouses soothing me as he nuzzled my neck with his lips. He must have said something, the words vibrated across my skin but I couldn’t hear them.

The one touching the scar leant over me, his mouth latching onto my nipple. I jerked upwards, my wrists rubbing against whatever secured them. I didn’t want to get lost in his mouth on me, but it was hard not to. Pleasure bloomed over my chest when he bit me. The way his teeth dug into my skin felt like he was trying to mark me. His fingers left my scar and dived between my legs. It’s not like I could close them, so I didn’t bother trying. I groaned when they slid between my lips, seeking out my clit and my wetness.

None of this should turn me on, but it did. Being taken by two men when I couldn’t even see or hear them should make me scared. I should be screaming and telling them to stop. I didn’t want to. For the first time since my accident, I felt a sense of freedom. The ability to do what I wanted without thinking about the consequences.
“Oh fuck,” I cried out, feeling his teeth dig in harder and his fingers on my clit, stroking and coaxing me along.

Who was touching me like this? And who was at my back? I had three options because neither of them were West. I knew what his hands felt like on my skin and between my legs.

“Our little lamb on our altar, ready for her slaughter,” came the voice in my ear.

Well, that cleared one thing up. The person watching us was Prescott. The lamb reference gave him away. The firm grip of the man behind me had me suspicious it was Drake. It meant the one between my legs was Francis. And I was pretty sure I was about to get very intimately acquainted with him when he pulled away.

There was movement in front of me, but I had no idea what was happening. Only when the man behind me shifted did I understand what they were doing. He pushed me forward and encouraged me onto my knees. The one in front pulled me into his lap, my breasts brushing against his chest. The new sensation made me shudder. Being deprived of two of your senses intensified the others. Every touch was like an electric shock running through me.

He gripped one of my hips, whilst his other hand was between us. I didn’t struggle when he shoved me down on his cock, impaling me in one brutal thrust. It knocked the air out of my lungs. My hands clenched into fists. It didn’t exactly hurt, but the shock of it had me struggling to regain my composure.

“He wants me to tell you how good you are for taking it so well.”

I had no idea what the fuck to say to that. I was a little distracted by the fact he’d pulled my hips up and slammed me back down his cock. I cried out when he did it again. Then I gritted my teeth.

“Slow down.”

The voice chuckled.

“Oh, little lamb, can’t you take it? We’re only just getting started.”

The taunting note to his voice made me shiver and want to give him a piece of my mind. However, the way I was getting fucked made it hard to think about anything else. Especially when calloused fingers slid along my back and a warm body pressed itself against me, sandwiching me between the two of them. Those calloused fingers wrapped around my throat, pulling me back against him. I wondered how I’d never felt those before, but then again, I’d only ever shaken Drake’s hand once. I’d been too intimidated by him to pay much attention to what his skin felt like.

“I can,” I ground out. “I can take it.”

Why the hell had that come out of my mouth? It wasn’t a challenge, was it? Why did I feel the need to prove myself?

“Mmm, we’ll see about that,” the voice told me.

Never in my life did I imagine I’d be stuck between two men, one of them forcing me to ride him whilst the other held me against him to steady me. I couldn’t exactly put my hands on them considering they were tied down, but I had some give. Reaching out, I gripped the one in front’s sides. The hard muscle of his back under my fingers had me wondering what the hell they all looked like underneath their clothes. It didn’t seem fair they could all see me, but I couldn’t see them.

Abruptly, he lifted me off him. I let out a squeak of surprise when I was shoved down on another cock, the one belonging to the man behind me. He was thicker. My pussy fluttered around him, trying to accommodate the new sensation. I didn’t have to do any work at all, he thrust up into me, eliciting a
moan from my lips. I should not be enjoying this. It shouldn’t have turned me on, but my body had other ideas. It wanted more of their touch. The whole thing was madness, but if I struggled, screamed and told them to stop, would they? And wouldn’t it be lying if I told them I didn’t want them to continue?

The one in front of me took my nipple in his mouth again. My fingers tightened around his sides when his hand slid between us and he stroked my clit whilst the other fucked me from behind. The new sensation had me struggling against them. It was too much. Too overwhelming.

“I’m going to… going to… come,” I cried out in halting tones.

I closed my eyes and let go. If the person in my ear said anything, I didn’t hear it, too lost in the intensity of my climax. I’d never experienced anything like it, not even when West fucked me. Perhaps it was the denial of two of my primary senses that heightened everything else. I could do nothing but give in and let the waves of pleasure drown me.

The depths they dragged me down into were dark and twisted. Tendrils curled around my legs, keeping me captive in their embrace. The abyss had never looked so fucking tempting before. I couldn't deny wanting to dive in and sink to the bottom. If I let this be what it was right now, I could deal with the consequences later. I could allow myself to fall for tonight. But I could never allow myself to forget who I was dealing with and why I was here.

If this was my fate, to be taken and used by them so they’d learn to trust me, so they’d let me in, I’d gladly walk down this fucked up path. At the end, the promise of freedom awaited. And the heavy price I had to pay was a burden I had to live with.
I don't think words could describe the sheer pleasure of watching Francis and Drake take Scarlett between them. Her body was made for sin and seduction. She dripped with lust and depravity. West had been right. She was a kinky little thing, only she hadn't seen anything yet. This was merely a warm-up to get her ready for the main event.

West sat in an armchair in the corner of the room with the shadows curling around him. I didn’t have a fucking clue what he was thinking about the display in front of us. He’d not said a word. I had a closer view, having set up a seat on the side of the bed. It helped me communicate with Scarlett via the microphone attached to my lapel, which I could turn on and off with the clicker in my hand. We’d given her noise-cancelling headphones. The only thing she could hear was me through a voice distorter. I was relatively sure she was clever enough to have worked out who had her, but the girl had given nothing away.

“Fuck,” Drake grunted as Scarlett came all over him.

His hand around her throat tightened whilst Francis continued to suck her nipples and play with her clit.

We’d agreed we wouldn’t take it too far this time. The full extent of the kinky shit we were into would be kept under wraps. Pretty sure getting fucked by four men in one night was enough for one girl to take when she had minimal experience in matters of a sexual nature.

I didn’t care. Getting to watch her was a turn on all by itself for me. Seeing the guys touch her body. Listening to her moan. The very idea of watching a girl be fucked by your best friends appealed to me on a primal level. My dick strained in my boxers, desperate for touch, but I wanted to wait until I could get my hands on Scarlett myself. When I could impale her on it and fuck her until she cried. I wanted her tears. There was nothing sweeter than a woman overwhelmed by an experience you were giving her. And Scarlett? Well, she was the sweetest damn woman of all.

Francis was definitely enjoying the fact she was tied down by the silk rope around her wrists. The two lengths were secured to rings on either side of the bed. We’d had everything in this room custom built and designed to suit all of our tastes in sexual depravity.

Scarlett struggled between Drake and Francis as if she couldn’t take it any longer.

“Please, it’s too much,” she whimpered.

“Shut her up, Francis,” Drake said. “She’ll take what we give her.”

“Savage,” I chuckled, which only gained me a smirk from Drake.

“Always.”

Francis released Scarlett and gave Drake a look, but he stood up and cupped her face. Who knew what she was thinking when he stuck his fingers in her mouth and hooked her jaw open. She let out a muffled cry when he shoved his dick in her mouth. He took a hold of her face and shoved it deeper.
“That’s a good girl, Scarlett, take his dick,” I said into the mic, grinning all the while. “Take them both.”

I could almost feel her straining against them. Fuck, the sight of her was magnificent. I couldn’t help running my hand over my cock, wanting to be in there with them, but also savouring watching the scene play out in front of me.

“You going to sulk in the corner all night, West,” Drake called to the shadows. “Or you going to come join in the fucking party?”

“You seem to be handling her fine on your own,” West said, coming into view as he leant forward in his chair. “Or did you want me to make her scream, is that it? I’m more than happy to oblige.”

“She’s not going to do much screaming with my cock down her throat,” Francis said with a smirk. Scarlett choked on his length. Her body jerked and her wrists moved as she tried to free herself from their grasp, but it was futile. Francis had tied the knots too tight. She was only making it worse for herself.

West got up from his chair and stalked towards the bed like a fucking hunter about to pounce on his prey. He was shirtless. On the back of his right hand was a skull with smoke coiling around it. Curling around his right forearm were the words mors tua, vita mea, Latin for your death, my life. And on his left forearm, the words read mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur meaning the world wants to be deceived, so let it be deceived. He had another more sinister tattoo on his left hand. Twin axes crossing each other, dripping with blood. There were symbols tattooed on his fingers as well. They represented the lives he’d taken.

He made a rather imposing image to anyone who didn’t know him as intimately as Drake, Francis and I did. His amber eyes glinted in the low light as he knelt on the bed next to the other three. The next thing I knew, he’d stuck his head between Scarlett’s legs. My hand tightened around my cock as he bit down on her clit with his teeth. The muffled scream erupting from her throat had us all watching her with rapt attention.

Saliva dribbled out of her mouth as Francis fucked her throat. Drake continued to thrust up into her. And then we had West torturing her clit with his teeth. I was going to bust a fucking nut at the sight of it.

“Shit, she’s coming again,” Drake ground out through gritted teeth. “I can’t fucking hold out.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll happily take your place,” I said, wanting to be nestled deep inside her pussy like they had all been. West had already sampled it earlier in the week.

Drake groaned whilst Scarlet thrashed against the three of them, her climax driving through her like wildfire.

“Fuck,” Francis grunted, shoving his dick as far down Scarlett’s throat as he could go before emptying himself in her.

A minute later, he pulled his dick from her. She choked and spluttered, cum and spit dribbling out of her mouth. Francis stepped away and sat down on the edge of the bed, panting heavily. West sat up and watched her as she struggled to regain her composure.

“Messy girl,” I said into the mic.

“Fuck you,” she choked out. “Fuck all of you.”

“Mmm, did you want to take four at once, Scarlett?”

She tugged on her bonds, clearly wanting to be free of them, but she didn’t respond to me.
Drake pulled her off him. West helped him put Scarlett on her hands and knees. She complained about it, but they ignored her. Neither of them bothered to clean her up.

“You want her pussy, Pres?” West asked, giving me a wink.

“Fuck yes, I do.”

“Have at it… you can prepare her for what she’ll get from me.”

I knew very well what he had in mind when he slapped a bottle of lube down next to Scarlett’s leg. I removed the mic from my lapel and dumped the equipment on the bed. My clothes came next, then I knelt behind Scarlett and gripped her hips. She yelped when I shoved my dick inside her in one brutal and unforgiving thrust. I didn’t care if Drake had just come inside her, she felt good. Her pussy was hot, wet and tight as fuck.

“Shit, this pussy,” I groaned.

“Quite the fucking prize,” Drake said.

He and Francis had pulled on boxers and had taken a seat on one of the sofas. West picked up the discarded mic. He gave me a grin as he turned it on.

“You like that, Scarlett?” he taunted. “Dirty girls like you need to get fucked and covered in cum.”

I laughed, proceeding to fuck Scarlett harder. She gripped the covers below us and didn’t respond to him.

“You all shy now? Won’t be for long… we’re going to have you screaming.”

He flipped the mic off and gave me a look.

“You want to DP her?”

“As if I’m going to say no.”

I slid out of her. Scarlett let out a whimper as if she didn’t want me to stop. The girl was going to get more dick than she bargained for. I got underneath her and pulled her down on my cock, impaling her once more. She let go of the covers and placed her hands on my sides, the rope pulling taut. Her little squeak of frustration made West chuckle.

“She doesn’t like not being able to touch us properly.”

“Did you let her touch you when you fucked her on Tuesday?” I asked, wrapping my hands around her hips and encouraging her to ride me.

“No. I had her bent over my desk. She just had to take it.”

He knelt behind her and picked up the lube. Then he shoved her down on my chest. Her tits rubbed against me as I thrust upwards. This was likely uncomfortable for her, but West and I didn’t care about that.

“What are you—” she started but was cut off by West touching her, presumably running his lubed finger over her little hole. She squealed when he penetrated her, shifting against me as if she was trying to get away. I held her hips tighter, refusing to allow her an inch.

“Please, no, don’t… don’t do that.”

Considering both our hands were occupied, neither of us could talk to her. I could feel West’s fingers through the thin barrier separating her two holes. Not like it was the first time we’d fucked a girl this way. We liked to share our women with each other.

“Please, I can’t… it’s too much.”

I looked back at Francis and Drake who were watching, both their expressions dark with desire even
though they’d already emptied themselves inside our girl.

When West was satisfied she was ready, he pulled his fingers from her and coated himself in lube. He placed a hand on her back and shifted closer to her. Her strangled cry of pleasure mixed with pain when he pressed against her and breached her tight entrance was music to our ears. I could feel him impale her slowly and fuck, if it didn’t feel good. Made her so much fucking tighter.

“It hurts! Fuck, please!”

I held her still, letting West press deeper, his fingers rubbing her lower back as if to reassure her. The man might be a psychotic bastard, but he cared about Scarlett in his own way. He loved her even if he wouldn’t admit it to the rest of us.

“So. Fucking. Tight.” The words came out of his mouth all strained as if he was having a hard time holding back. “I want to tear her apart. You ready to make her scream, Pres?”

“Fuck yes.”

He pulled out and pressed back in. It wasn’t rough at first, but as his pace increased, I started moving with him. Scarlett cried out, jerking in her restraints as the two of us fucked her tight holes together. West pulled her up from my chest and held her against his, thrusting up into her, forcing her to take more of his cock. It gave me room to touch her body, running my hands up her stomach and pinching her nipples between my fingers. I twisted them, making her cry out. She gasped and spluttered, her senses clearly overloaded by everything we were doing to her.

West wrapped a hand around her throat, squeezing her airway to show her who the fuck was in charge. He nodded at her headphones. I gave him a nod back. He slid them from her ears and tossed them away.

“Do you like that, hmm?” he murmured in her ear. “You’re saying no, but we don’t believe you. Dirty girls like to get used and fucking abused, don’t they, Scarlett?”

She whimpered, shifting against him.

“Answer me.”

“Yes,” she whispered. “I’m a dirty girl.”

“Tell us what you want.”

I twisted her nipples harder. She bucked, letting out a small cry of pain.

“Fuck me, please.”

West smiled at me over her shoulder. He wrapped his free arm around her waist for leverage before thrusting up, harder than before. The combined sensations of him fucking her, that tight pussy clenching around my cock as I fucked her were making me crazy.

“That’s not good enough, Scarlett. Tell us what you really want.”

“I want… I want you to make me scream,” she choked out. “Use me… come in me… fill me up with cock and cum.”

I groaned at her words whilst West’s smile grew devious.

“Such a bad girl.”

None of us said another word whilst West and I hammered into her. The only sounds were our skin slapping together and Scarlett’s moans. My free hand slid between us, my fingers landing on her clit. It took a few minutes before she detonated. Her scream echoed around the room. West grunted, fucking her ever harder and I just lay there, watching her tremble, her pussy clenching so hard around my cock, I
thought I’d died and gone to heaven.

West fell over the edge next, pressing as deep as he could go before erupting inside her tight little hole. He held onto her, biting down on her shoulder to prevent any sounds from leaving his mouth. She let out a sharp cry of pain from his teeth. The sight of it set me off. I groaned, emptying myself in her thoroughly used little pussy.

Scarlett was limp when we all came down from mutual highs. She’d been used every way she could be. Whilst we’d not introduced her to our darker desires, we’d certainly shown her what it could be like to get fucked by the four of us.

West pulled out of her before lifting her off me so I could move out from under her. He settled Scarlett down on the bed. She lay there, her breathing shallow and her hands still tied to the bed. Francis and Drake had got up off the sofa and came closer. The four of us watched her as she fell asleep, clearly worn out from our fucking session.

“Well, that was quite the adventure,” I said. “Now what?”

“We clean her up and take her home,” Francis said.

“Looks like we have a volunteer for that then,” I said, slapping his back. He gave me a dark look but didn’t say a word.

West looked at us for a moment before he walked out of the room, not even bothering to pick up his clothes. It was better to leave him to deal with whatever shit was going through his head.

“We’ll handle her,” Drake said. “You can go after that one.” He waved at the door.

“Fuck off, I am not dealing with his shit tonight. Not after this.”

“We should leave him alone,” Francis said, moving away to tidy up the room. “Unless you want to get a fist in your face. I’m definitely not volunteering for that.” Drake gave us both a dark look, but he nodded.

“Fine, go get a damn cloth so I can sort her out.”

I gave him a wink before snagging my clothes, pulling them on and wandering out to fulfil Drake’s request. This evening had been more than I could have ever imagined. Who knew what we would deal with come Monday morning when Scarlett arrived back at work. All bets were off now we’d drugged and fucked her. We would have to wait and see what she would do next. And the thought of it excited me far more than it should have.
I jerked awake from the sound of birdsong. Opening my eyes, I found myself tucked up in my own bed in the flat I shared with Mason. The curtains were open along with the window and the light streamed in, hurting my eyes. I rubbed my face before shifting. My body ached with the movement.

I brought my hands away from my face and stared at my wrists. There were faint marks around them. I swallowed, the memories of the previous night flooding back to me in a rush. No wonder my body hurt. I’d been drugged and fucked by four men who had given me so much delirious ecstasy I’d passed out. The worst part was, I couldn’t be sure who was who. Well, at least not until West had pulled the headphones off and taunted me whilst he fucked me from behind.

I covered my eyes with my hands, remembering where his dick had been. It fucking hurt at first, being impaled on two cocks, especially since I’d never done anal before. Hell, the first time I’d ever had sex was earlier this week. The pain of the experience had somehow morphed into pleasure. And I’d been utterly lost in what they were doing to me.

I dropped my hands and sat up. How did I get home and into my own bed? Did they bring me here? How did they even get in?

Looking around, I found the clothes I’d been wearing neatly folded on the chest of drawers, along with my bag sitting next to it. My keys had been in there. I stared down at myself. They’d dressed me in pyjamas.

I sat there, absolutely dumbfounded. Given the way they’d handled me last night, the fact they’d brought me back here and dressed me was beyond my comprehension. There was no way this was West. The fucker didn’t have a tender bone in his body. The only one of them who I could envision taking any care over my wellbeing was Francis. I might not know him very well, but he appeared to be kinder than the others.

Well, if he had been the one who jammed his cock down my throat and painted my damn chin with his cum, then perhaps not.

Did it even matter? I was home now. The problem was, I felt kind of used. They hadn’t even bothered to talk to me afterwards. I’d fallen asleep, but they could have woken me up. They could have said something rather than drugging me, fucking me and putting me in my own bed to sleep it off. What the hell was their game? Why would they even do this to me in the first place? It made no sense. None of it did. The whole thing confused me. Why had they decided to fuck with me? It made me feel like they knew something I didn’t. They had reasons for their behaviour I wasn’t privy to. And it made them even more dangerous than I’d anticipated.

I got out of bed, taking tentative steps towards my chest of drawers. My body ached with the movement. I checked through my bag. Nothing was missing. Knowing one or more of them had been in
my room and gone through my things made me uneasy. I didn’t know what they wanted with me. Well, other than they clearly wanted to defile me in ways I could barely begin to comprehend.

How on earth would I face them on Monday? I’d have to pull myself together and deal with it. My mission here was too important for me to run away and hide. No matter how uncomfortable I felt about what they’d done, I had to stay the course.

First things first, I needed a shower. No way I wanted to walk around today still smelling of them even though they’d cleaned me up whilst I’d been passed out. I grabbed my robe and a towel before dashing into the bathroom. The hot water soothed my aching muscles.

When I stepped out, I looked at myself in the mirror. One of my nipples was darker than the other like it’d been bruised. They’d been rather insistent on the whole biting thing last night. The marks on my wrists were still there. Long sleeves were a must until those faded. Couldn’t have Mason asking me questions about them. I didn’t want to tell him what happened last night. He would lose his shit over it. To be honest, the whole thing made me want to do the same, but I couldn’t afford to fall apart.

I dried myself off, pulled on some comfy clothes along with a hoodie to hide the marks on my wrists, and went out into the kitchen to find Mason. He wasn’t in there nor in the living room and when I checked his bedroom, I found his bed neatly made. Made me wonder where he’d got to. Padding back out into the kitchen, I made myself some tea and cereal, taking a seat at the table to eat.

A few minutes later, the sound of the front door opening rang through the flat. I barely had time to swallow when Mason walked in, looking a little dishevelled. His brown hair was messy and his clothes were rumpled.

“What’s this?” I asked. “You a dirty stop-out or something?”

He gave me a dark look and went over to the kettle, flipping it on.

“Or something,” he muttered.

“Where you been?”

If he’d been out all night, I could use it to my advantage. He might not ask about what I’d done last night.

“Nowhere.”

The way he said it told me it was not open for discussion. I frowned. It’s not like I knew a lot about Mason’s life outside of his work for my father, but I thought we were friends. It wasn’t like him to be so cagey or out of sorts.

“Did you come home last night?”

He turned and gave me a look.

“Shouldn’t you know the answer? You were here, right?”

I swallowed, my words getting stuck in my throat, having not expected him to turn it around on me.

“I told you I was staying late at work.”

He raised an eyebrow.

“What time did you get in?”

I shrugged and looked at my mug.

“Guess it was like after ten.”

In all honesty, I had no fucking clue what time it had been. I hadn’t been conscious.

“They should not be keeping you that late. Did you even eat?”
“Of course, I did, Mase, they’re not completely heartless.”

Though, after last night, I was beginning to wonder if they weren’t the most psychotic men I’d ever met. They’d acted one way with me in the office, and a completely different way when they’d had me alone in their penthouse. Well, except for West. He made his intentions towards me very clear. He didn’t care about me, but he saw me as his and wanted to use my body for his pleasure.

Mason narrowed his eyes.

“Not heartless? You do remember why we’re here, Scar, right? Those men are not right in the head. Not after what they did as teenagers, and I dread to think what they’ve done since.”

I flinched, not wanting the ugly reminders of the past. The one I’d only heard about and not seen with my own eyes. It was the reason I was here, however, being lectured over it had got old fast. I wanted to see for myself who the Horsemen were and why everyone seemed to fear them.

“As if you’d ever let me forget,” I muttered.

I wasn’t exactly scared of Prescott, West, Francis, and Drake. They were an enigma I hadn’t yet worked out. It didn’t help that I was drawn to them. There was a sense of familiarity between us, which was fucking crazy, but I felt it all the same. I wanted to find out why they’d taken me last night. Why they’d decided to use me for sex.

“I’m worried about your safety, Scar.”

“Safety? Are you kidding me? If you cared so much about my safety, I wouldn’t be here.”

He gave me a wounded look.

“You know I don’t have a choice.”

I went back to my food, wanting this conversation to be over. It was the very last thing I needed, Mason giving me a hard time. He had no clue what I’d been subjected to by them. And how much I’d liked it when I shouldn’t have.

“Scar…”

“Don’t, Mason. I don’t want to hear it.”

“I’m sorry.”

I scoffed.

“Yeah, so sorry you came home and started on at me when you’re the one who spent the night out doing god knows fucking what, huh? You don’t get to give me shit. I’m an adult, I don’t need you babysitting me.”

I shoved my chair back, picked up my mug, and stormed out of the kitchen, not caring if he followed me or not. My feet carried me into the living room. I sat on the sofa, pulled a blanket over me and switched on the TV, cuddling the mug to my chest as I flipped through the channels. For a moment, I wished they hadn’t brought me home. Right now, I’d much rather be dealing with my four psycho, but attractive as hell, bosses than Mason. And that was too fucked up for words. At least I knew I shouldn’t trust them nor like them. With Mason, I didn’t know how to feel. I loved him like a brother, but his behaviour always made it very clear where his loyalties lay, and they weren’t with me. They were with my parents and their insane schemes. Their damn revenge plot they’d dragged me into… well, more like blackmailing me into going along with. Dangling freedom over my head and making me jump way too high to catch it.

“Scarlett.”
I didn’t look at Mason, even though I knew he was standing in the doorway.

“Go away.”

“I really am sorry. I shouldn’t have had a go at you.”

My eyes fixed on the screen, ignoring his presence because his apologies were meaningless to me. They didn’t make a difference. Didn’t change a fucking thing.

“I was with a girl last night.”

“Well, good for you.”

“Scar, please, I’m trying here.”

“What do you want me to say, Mase? You aren’t making my life any easier, you know.”

He sighed. It wasn’t his fault I’d had a night of it, but he’d given me a hard time for no reason.

“I just… I hate that you have to be near them. I hate it so much.”

I looked at him then, not understanding why he sounded so distressed.

“It’s not like I enjoy it either.” Liar. You want them. You crave what they give you.

I hated my brain telling me things I didn’t want to hear or admit to.

Mason came into the room and sat down next to me. He took the mug from my hands and placed it on the coffee table. Then he wrapped them in his own hands.

“You think you have to get them to want you, but you don’t. I… I don’t want you doing anything with them like that.”

I’d only ever hinted at getting the Horsemen to want them so I could manipulate them. I’d not outright told him it was my plan. Somehow, they’d turned the tables on me, but I wasn’t going to think about that. Not when Mason was staring at me with a look I’d never seen on his face before.

“It makes me sick to think of them touching you.”

“They haven’t.”

The lie didn’t stick on my tongue. I’d said it out of self-preservation. For some reason, I knew telling Mason the truth would not end well for me.

“But what if they do?”

“I’ll deal with it. You heard Dad. He said by whatever means.”

“Fuck what Stuart said, Scar. You do not have to use your body to get them to trust you.”

Too late. Way too fucking late.

I tried to pull my hands from his grasp, but he held them tighter.

“Please, find another way, okay? You’re smart. You’ll think of something.”

“I don’t think I can.”

He shook his head, his eyes growing pained.

“You can… just try, please… for me.”

The last part came out all shaky as if he was trying to confess something to me. A thing I didn’t want to think about or even consider. And I couldn’t promise him I would try. There was no retracing my steps. The wheels had already been set in motion. If the only way to get the Four Horsemen to let me in was to allow them to use my body any way they wanted, I’d do it in a fucking heartbeat. As messed up as it sounded, after last night I couldn’t deny how much I liked it. How much I wanted it. How I needed it all, even though I shouldn’t.

“This is how it has to be. It’s my way in. You have to understand, I need this. I need my freedom. I
can’t live another day locked up on their estate. It almost killed me, Mason. I was drowning. I can’t do it
again.”

His expression fell and he let go of my hands, only to wrap me up in his arms. I gritted my teeth as my
bruised nipple rubbed against his chest. Damn the Horsemen for their biting.

“I know… fuck, I know, Scar. I’m so sorry. You don’t have to go back. I promise. Whatever it takes, I
won’t let them lock you up again.”

I wanted to cry. I bit the inside of my cheek to keep my emotions at bay. Instead, I let Mason hold me,
all the while wishing I could be holding a different man… if I was honest, four different men. And I
realised I hadn’t had a nightmare last night. I hadn’t dreamed of the past, nor woken up covered in
sweat.

I couldn’t help wondering if it had something to do with the Horsemen and why they felt so familiar
to me. What it all meant and whether the reason I kept remembering things from the past was because
of them, even though I had no clue why it would be that way. Nothing about my life had made any sense
since I’d come here. And I wished more than anything I could remember what happened all those years
ago before my accident had changed my life for good.
Monday rolled around, leaving us all curious about Scarlett’s next moves. Whether she’d turn up today after what we’d done on Friday night. Well, the only person who didn’t seem to care was West, but he’d spent the weekend in a drug-induced haze. The Scarlett thing had fucked him up way worse than he was willing to let on. Sharing had become like second nature to us, but she was different. Scarlett was the only woman any of us had ever felt connected to. The only one we’d allowed in. She was ours on a fundamental level. It was fucking destiny.

I heard my office door close and the lock flip. Looking up, I found a rather determined Scarlett striding towards me.

“To what do I owe this pleasure, sweetness?”

“Don’t you sweetness me. I have a bone to pick with you.”

I remained expressionless, but inside I was a mess of emotions. The way her eyes flashed and the anger in her voice brought back memories of the old Scarlett. The girl she’d been before the accident. The one who stood up for herself and never backed down from a challenge.

“What am I going to do with you, Pres?”
I shrugged and gave her a wink.

“Go along with my batshit crazy idea, anyway?”
She shoved my arm and gave me a look.

“You’re lucky I care about you enough not to let you do a stupid thing alone.”
I wrapped my arm around her shoulder.

“You care? How sweet.”
She grinned and spun away from me.

“The sweetest damn thing you’ll never taste.”

The memory dissipated as Scarlett rounded my desk and came to a standstill by my chair. I turned to face her. Those hazel-green eyes blazed with fury, but there was something else in them. Trepidation mixed with desire. It made me smile. She couldn’t hide it. We knew each other on an intimate level now, after all.

“Well, spit it out then. What did I do to earn your ire? I assume you’re pissed at me for something.”

To my surprise, she stepped between my spread legs, placed her hands on the arms of the chair, and leant closer.

“You know exactly why.”

“I don’t think I do.”

“I am not in the mood for games. You and the rest of them owe me an explanation.”

I shifted in my seat. Her closeness combined with the memory of her coming over my cock had i
thickening. Not to mention her smell. Cinnamon. Fuck. I loved the way she smelt.

“We do? What for?”
She lifted a hand and stroked it down my tie. Then she gripped it in her small fist.

“For what you did to me.”

“And what was that?”
Her fist around my tie tightened. She pulled me towards her until our faces were inches apart. I wasn’t afraid of what she’d do, merely curious.

“Do not play dumb, Prescott.” Her eyes flicked down to my mouth and back up. “You’re going to tell me why and who did what to me.”

“Oh, I am, am I?”

“Yes.”
I reached up and tickled the inside of her wrist where she was holding my tie. She shivered at the simple touch, her eyes growing darker.

“And what will you give me in return for the information you’re seeking?”
Oh, but the fire in her eyes at my question had me biting my lip. If I had less self-restraint, I would pull her closer and kiss the living shit out of that mouth of hers. But no, she didn’t yet deserve the pleasure of my lips on hers. I only gave kisses to women as a reward for good behaviour.

“You expect me to give you something?”
My fingers left her wrist and stroked her jaw instead.

“Yes, sweetness. I don’t give things away for free.”
Her eyes narrowed.

“What do you want?”
I had the advantage here. If she desired the information that badly, she’d do as I asked and deal with it.

“Pull up your skirt, sit on my desk and spread your legs.”
The door was locked. No danger of anyone walking in on us. Wouldn’t matter if one of the guys did but I didn’t want Tonya getting an eyeful. The bitch would likely give me shit over it and get in a mood. No doubt she craved my dick. I wouldn’t give her a seeing to, even if she was the last woman alive. Fuck that. Besides, I was no longer interested in what was between other women’s legs. Not when the one in front of me had such a delectable little pussy. One I could spend forever with.

“What?”
“You heard me.” My fingers curled around her jaw. “If you want me to answer your questions, you’ll do exactly as I tell you.”

For a long moment, she merely stared at me. The range of emotions flickering across her face gave away her conflicted feelings. She let go of my tie and smoothed it down before straightening, forcing me to drop my hand from her face. Scarlett took a deep breath, then tugged on her skirt, pulling it up slowly as if to tease me. My dick was already straining against my zipper.

“Take those off before you sit down.”
I pointed at the lacy little knickers she’d revealed. She clenched her jaw but said nothing, merely tugged them down, bent over and picked them up. She set them on my desk before she hopped up on it, her bare behind pressing against the glass. I turned my chair so I could face her. Her legs were squeezed
together as if she didn’t want to open them and let me see.

“Show me your pussy, Scarlett.”

It took her a second to do as I asked, spreading her legs and showing me the pussy I’d watched my friends fuck on Friday. The one I’d had around my cock whilst West fucked her tight little arse. It was as fucking sweet as I remembered.

She gave me a look as if to say what next. Her compliance was intoxicating. Right now, she would do anything for me to get what she wanted.

“I want you to slide your fingers between your lips and show me how wet you are.”

Her hand lifted from the desk and she used two fingers to spread her pussy for me. I moved closer and stared at her arousal glistening in the light streaming in through the windows.

“You can’t hide it, can you?” I murmured. “You like being told what to do.”

“Fuck you.”

I smiled.

“Mmm, as much as I’d love that, it’s not what we’re here for. Fuck yourself on your fingers.”

The mutinous look she gave me had me biting my lip again. She slid her fingers lower and impaled herself on them. My mouth watered at the sight of her thrusting them in and out of herself. She let out a pant a moment later. No matter how she tried to hide it, Scarlett wanted to be on display for me. She wanted to be told exactly what to do, when and how.

“You can do better than that. Show me how you liked to be fucked.”

Her fingers worked faster. I leant closer, my hands landing on either side of her on the desk. I could smell her arousal, and it almost did me in. My tongue wanted to taste her essence from the source. My primal instincts flared, wanting to pin her down and take my little lamb as she offered herself up to me.

Fuck, how I want to chase her down and fuck her like an animal until she’s a sobbing wreck.

It would be the sweetest damn hunt I’d ever had in my life.

A moan left Scarlett’s lips. My restraint was shot to pieces at the sound. As her fingers moved out of her pussy, I dove in and licked them. I groaned, my hands landing on her spread thighs, gripping them tightly. My tongue sought out her clit, running over the hardened bud.

“Prescott,” she whimpered, continuing to fuck herself.

I didn’t get to hear her moan my name on Friday. This was more than I could fucking take. One of my hands left her thighs. I gripped her wrist, pulling it from her pussy. I replaced her fingers with my own, shoving them deep and making her buck in my grasp. My tongue bathed her clit. She panted, her hand landing on my head and digging into my hair. It only spurred me on, made me want to give her more.

“Sweetness,” I groaned against her clit. “You’re so fucking delectable.”

I’d never tasted a better pussy in my life. Never wanted a woman this much. I was almost desperate to have her. I didn’t have to share her with the others right now. Her moans and pants were just for me. All for fucking me. I wanted to drown in Scarlett’s pussy and never come up for air. This girl I’d known my whole life. She might not know me right now, but we were fucking bound. The five of us were essential to each other. I couldn’t live without her for another ten years. Not now that I’d had her like this.

It didn’t matter that she was here to destroy us. All that mattered was having her back. Having her
here with me where I could feel her, see her, and be near her.

“Don’t stop,” she cried, her nails scraping across my scalp. “Please.”

I thrust my fingers harder. This Monday morning was proving to be one of the best of my life. Usually, I fucking hated coming down for work after the weekend, but this… I could get used to this.

“Fuck! Pres… oh fuck.”

She shuddered, her body clenching around my fingers with her climax. I was lost in it. In her calling me Pres. In the memory of the way she’d been when we were younger. All of it crashed down on me. I couldn’t help it. I was utterly fucked for Scarlett.

I’ve missed you.

But there was no way I could reveal that shit to her. No way I could let on how I felt about our girl. I had to get my shit together and bury it. There was no room for emotions when it came to Scarlett.

I pulled my fingers from her pussy and rose to my feet. She was still panting, her eyes closed. I grabbed her face with one hand. With the other, I shoved my fingers in her mouth, the ones coated with her cum. I watched her eyes snap open and widen.

“Suck them.”

Her tongue curled around my fingers, tasting herself on them. I brought my face to her ear, my breathing laboured. I couldn’t hide how turned on I was. My dick was fucking painful with the way it ached to be inside her.

“Do you want me, sweetness?” I pressed my fingers deeper, wanting to make her gag on them. “Want me to fuck you so good, you forget your own name?”

She moaned around my fingers.

“Mmm, my little lamb, you’re such a good girl.”

I kissed her ear before shoving my tongue in it. She whimpered around my fingers when they hit the back of her throat.

“Get my cock out. Now.”

Her hands went to my belt, unbuckling it. She unbuttoned and unzipped me next, her hands fumbling in her desperation to do as I told her. My fingers went deeper and she gagged on them. The sound was fucking everything.

The moment she had me free, she was guiding it to her pussy without being told. My hips shunted forward, shoving my cock deep into her pussy in one thrust. She gasped around my fingers, her spit dribbling out of her mouth as she continued to gag on them. Her fingers curled around my waist, pulling me closer so our bodies were almost flush with each other.

“You’re so wet, you’re soaking my dick. This is what you wanted, isn’t it? You came in here, all riled up because you wanted to get *fucked*. You wanted me to punish your sweet little pussy with pleasure.”

I pulled back and thrust deep, eliciting more moans and gags from her. I fucked her mouth with my fingers in time with my cock in her pussy. She had no idea how much I wanted to wreck her. I wanted her makeup running, her lipstick smeared all over her face. There was no hotter sight than a woman ruined after getting railed. She’d been a mess on Friday, cum running down her face and leaking from her well-used holes.

Her hands slid from my waist and under my clothes. She gripped my behind, her nails digging into my skin. I grunted in her ear, loving the pain they caused. Wanting her to drag her nails down my back
whilst I took her with savage brutality after I’d chased her down. You can make her your prey and wreck your woman with your cock soon.

“You want the truth, hmm?”

She nodded and whimpered around my fingers.

“We’re not nice men, Scarlett, but you already knew that, didn’t you? When we want something, we take it. And you just happen to be our latest possession. We own you.”

It was a partial truth. As if I was ever going to tell her the real reason. The others would crucify me.

“Now, my little lamb, it’s time for you to come again, and maybe I’ll tell you whose dick you took on Friday. Be a good girl and rub that clit for me.”

There was no point denying it. She knew it was us. We’d fucked her so good, she’d come multiple times and passed out on us.

She released my behind and dug her fingers between us, stroking herself. I punished her sweet pussy and mouth with my cock and fingers, driving her ever higher. When she snapped, she choked around my fingers, her spit running down her chin. Her climax set me off. I groaned in her ear, emptying myself in her. There was nothing like fucking a woman bare, coating her insides with cum and watching it spill out afterwards.

We’d all seen the scars on our woman on Friday. We knew what happened to her. We knew everything. There was no danger of us knocking her up. Seeing the evidence of her accident had made my chest burn, but I’d shoved it away. The pain of that night was a memory I’d rather forget.

Scarlett whimpered when I pulled my fingers from her mouth. She slumped against my body, pressing her face into my neck and wrapping her arms around me. I didn’t know what to do or say. The gesture was entirely unexpected.

“Please,” she whispered against my skin. “Please… hold me, Pres.”

The desperate note to her voice made a long-dormant part of me expand in my chest. The one I’d buried after she disappeared. I held her against me despite knowing it would be a mistake to be remotely soft with her. I stroked her hair, trying to soothe her after what I’d done to her.

“Shh, I’ve got you, sweetness.”

What the fuck? Who are you right now?

“Will you tell me… please?”

“Are you sure you want to know?”

She nodded into my neck, keeping her face buried in it.

“Francis, Drake, me, then West.”

For a moment she said nothing, then she clutched me tighter as if she never wanted to leave my embrace.

“Thank you.”

With her words, a small crack appeared in the shell around my heart. And I knew it meant one thing and one thing alone.

The crack spelt disaster.
The office had been quiet yesterday. I had seen no one but Drake. When I asked him, he assured me Scarlett was here and didn’t appear to be annoyed. If anything, she was acting like nothing untoward had happened. The knowledge of that didn’t sit well with me. The Scarlett I’d known ten years ago didn’t take anything lying down. Had she changed that much or was I just trying to see glimpses of the girl I’d once known like the back of my hand?

Later on, when we were upstairs, Prescott had been oddly quiet. Drake asked him what the fuck was up with him. Prescott merely shrugged and went back to his phone. His behaviour made me suspicious, but if he wasn’t going to answer Drake, he certainly wasn’t going to talk to me.

Everything about Prescott being weird and Scarlett’s lack of reaction to what we’d done made me uneasy. Probably why I’d made her tea as an excuse to talk to her. I wanted to see for myself how she was dealing with what we did. The whole tag-teaming thing had been my idea after all, along with the blindfolding, binding her wrists and restricting her hearing.

Her door was wide open when I approached. Scarlett sat behind her desk, her eyes intent on her screen. She didn’t immediately look up when I walked in. When she did as I stood in front of her desk and set the mug down, her eyes widened.

The last time I’d seen her was when I tucked her up in her own bed on Friday night. It had been me who’d taken her to her flat after Prescott retrieved her things from her office. Having her keys made it easy for me to carry her in from the car. It’d been late so there weren’t many people milling around to see me with her cradled in my arms.

When I got her inside, I’d found her bedroom and set her on the bed. It didn’t feel right to leave her naked. We’d wrapped her up in a blanket to take her home. I folded her clothes, placed them and her bag on her chest of drawers before rooting around in them to find her pyjamas. I could imagine what the others would say about me dressing her and tucking her up in bed, but I didn’t care. I had an urge to take care of her. To protect her. To keep her safe.

It was stupid. I couldn’t save her from any of this shit. Fuck, I fully participated in it. I wanted it. But seeing her bare before us and the evidence of her accident almost fucking killed me. The way she’d told me to stop touching one of the scars on her abdomen was soul-destroying. Having to shove down my misgivings took some effort because it made me sick. Because we were all responsible for what happened to Scarlett that night.

There was no point in thinking about how if we’d made smarter choices things could have been different. It wouldn’t bring any of us peace. It only led down a dark path I’d already travelled along before. One I was stuck on. We were all glued to it. Me, Drake, Prescott and West. None of us could deviate from it. It was all or nothing.

“Is that for me?” Scarlett asked, her voice sounding shy and hushed.
I nodded, not yet trusting myself to speak.

“Thank you, Francis.”

My heart thumped at her using my name. I’d missed the sound of it on her lips.

“You’re welcome.”

She gave me a smile and picked up the mug, bringing it to her lips. Her eyes glinted over the rim as she sipped at it. I glanced over at her door before deciding I didn’t want to leave. Her presence was equally soothing and damning.

“Are you okay? Did you want something else?” she asked, cocking her head to the side as she put the mug on a coaster.

I’d seen a few sides to Scarlett since she’d returned to us, but this one… it didn’t feel her.

A part of me was terrified about opening up to Scarlett. The only women I’d ever cared about I’d fucked up with. The first being Scarlett herself, who I’d only ever seen as a friend until now, and the second… Chelsea. What I did to her I couldn’t take back. I was usually so fucking careful, but that day, I’d been distracted. And the cause of the distraction happened to be in front of me. The knowledge we were almost at the point where we could get her back had me reeling. Ten years of being without the woman who belonged to us was a nightmare I thought would never end. Chelsea had suffered for my lack of concentration. And West’s solution to the problem hadn’t helped either.

“I’m… fine.”

“You sure? You don’t look fine.”

I frowned. Were my emotions displayed all over my face? I wanted to laugh it off but found myself unable to crack a smile.

“No, I’m good.” I waved a hand at her. “What about you? I didn’t see you yesterday.”

“I’m okay. Drake kept me busy, so I didn't have time for chitchat.”

She nibbled on her bottom lip, which told me that was a lie.

“Did he? Bit of a taskmaster that one.”

She eyed the open doorway as if making sure no one was lurking.

“I’m kind of intimidated by him if I’m honest.”

I almost snorted. Drake’s aloof nature most likely. He wasn’t known for opening up to anyone. Instead, people told him their secrets. He gave off that locked fortress vibe, making it easy for them to think they could trust him.

“He is rather stoic.”

She shook her head.

“It’s not that. More the ‘if you fuck with me, I’ll ruin you’ vibe he gives off. I dread to think what would happen if I did something he didn’t like.”

I backed away towards her door and closed it. Then I wandered back over to her desk, but this time I walked around to her side of it. Leaning against it, I placed my hands at my sides, gripping the edge.

“I don’t suggest you try his patience, but he’s not so bad when you get to know him.”

She looked up at me. Flashes of Friday night appeared in my brain. Particularly the part where I’d pulled my dick out her mouth and cum had run down her chin. The next time that happened, I wanted to see her eyes staring up at me like they were now. Wanted to see her full expression.
“No? How long have you known him?”
“Drake? Since we were babies. Our mothers were best friends.”
That was probably safe enough to tell her. If I went into any more detail, it would be a mistake. I might want Scarlett to remember us, but it didn’t serve our purposes. We were keeping her in the dark for good reason. There would be a massive fallout if she discovered our secrets too soon.
“That long? Wow... and the others?”
I shrugged.
“We met in primary school.”
“You’ve been friends a long time. I don’t even remember that far back.”
I nodded, wanting to reach out and touch her. The sadness in her eyes felt like someone had dug a knife in my chest.
“No?”
She shook her head.
“I have retrograde amnesia... they don’t know if my memories will ever return.”
It felt strange to have a normal conversation with her after we’d been intimate, but she didn’t appear to want to acknowledge the events of Friday night. And for her to admit her condition so readily to me? It was unexpected.
“I’m sorry. Can’t be easy for you.”
She gave me a smile.
“No... that’s why...” she faltered and looked away. “Why I have so many scars... because... because I had an accident.”
The air refused to leave my lungs, my chest constricting at her words.
“I know you saw them,” she continued, her voice quiet. “We don’t have to pretend it didn’t happen.”
I couldn’t help reaching out then, my hand catching her chin and turning her face back towards me. Her expression made me stroke my thumb across her jaw. Scarlett looked like a little lost girl in a world she didn’t understand. I couldn’t allow myself to get sucked into her beguiling gaze no matter how much I wanted to take away the pain lingering there. She wasn’t innocent. She wasn’t on our side. And I certainly couldn’t forget the fact she was here to tear us apart.
“No one here is pretending anything of the sort,” I murmured.
I wasn’t going to insult her intelligence. Not after West had taken her headphones off and made it very clear who had a hold of her.
“Why did none of you kiss me?”
My hand fell from her face, her question startling me.
“What?”
“None of you kissed me. I don’t know what it feels like to be kissed and I guess I was kind of disappointed.”
I had no fucking clue how to answer her. We weren’t the type to do the whole kissing thing. And Friday had not been about anything other than using her body for pleasure. To mess with her head. But the Scarlett I saw in front of me didn’t seem particularly put out by what we’d done to her. Was this how she thought she could manipulate me? Or did she genuinely want to experience a kiss? I hated not knowing. Hated navigating this path when her intentions weren’t clear.
“Are you asking me to kiss you?”
I figured being direct was the best option.
“No.”
I raised an eyebrow.
“No? Then why bring it up?”
She blinked.
“Curiosity.”
“Did no one tell you curiosity killed the cat, Scarlett?”
She licked her bottom lip.
“I guess not.”
Her tongue peeking out was all I could concentrate on. Fuck. I wanted to taste her. And I didn’t
believe her. Scarlett wouldn’t have brought it up if she didn’t want to experience it.

Leaning down, I gripped her wrist and pulled her up out of her chair. I straightened and backed her
towards the shelves behind her desk. Before she knew what was happening, I pinned her wrists above
her with one of my own against the shelves. Scarlett’s eyes snapped to mine as I leant into her, pressing
my leg between hers.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to kiss you?”
She sucked in a breath, her lips parting, but no sound came out. I shifted closer, our breathing
mingling together, lips inches apart, ready and waiting to taste each other.

“If you want something, you merely need to ask, Scarlett,” I whispered. “I’m in a giving mood.”
My mouth dusted over hers, waiting for her response. She shuddered against me. I expected her to try
to escape my hold, but she didn’t. My eyes flicked up to where I held her wrists. I could imagine ropes
around them, intricate knots running down her arms, keeping her bound and unable to move. She’d
hang there, suspended in the air whilst I knelt at her feet and feasted on her essence.

“You want to kiss me?” Her mouth formed the words over mine, her lips brushing against my skin.
“There are many things I want to do to you, but none of them are appropriate at work.”
She inhaled, almost as if she was breathing me in.
“You smell of apples and cinnamon.”
I eyed her, wondering why she’d brought that up. They had been Scarlett’s favourite scents when she
was younger. To remind me of her, I had my cologne specially commissioned. It was my way of staying
connected to the girl I’d grown up with. Did she retain her tastes even after her accident? I couldn’t
think of any other reason she’d have commented on it.

“I like it,” she whispered.
Then she kissed me. The press of her mouth against mine awakened all my senses. My free hand went
to her face, fingers gliding along her soft skin. I tipped her head to gain a better angle. There was a sense
of clumsiness to the way she kissed me like it was alien to her. To ease her into it, I took control,
dominating her mouth with mine. The moan leaving her lips a minute later had me gripping her tighter.
Fuck, did I want more. Her mere presence sent me into a tailspin, desire leaking from my pores and
infusing with hers.

I parted her lips with my tongue, tasting her with practised care even though I wanted to kiss this
woman with savage brutality and drown her. Scarlett was the light in the darkness. A beacon shining so
fucking bright. I watched her closed eyes and listened to her make these adorable noises of pleasure. There was no more beautiful sight than her losing herself in me.

Her tongue tangled with mine in a mess, but I didn’t care. Scarlett tasted sweet. She was compliant, her body rocking into mine, almost as if she was trying to grind herself on my leg. The one situated between hers. It made me smile with how easily I could make her give in. Make her want more. Fill her with a need she couldn’t contain.

I sucked her tongue into my mouth, making her eyes flick open. She stared at me, the ring of hazel and green almost invisible with her blown pupils. Releasing her tongue, I nibbled on her bottom lip, drawing a gasp from her.

“Did I disappoint you further?” I murmured, my teeth making indents on her lip.

“No,” she whispered back.

“Good.”

I dove back in, taking her mouth without any sort of restraint. She could do nothing but give in and let me wring every ounce of pleasure from her lips. The two of us were out of breath when we finally drew apart.

“Your scars make you who you are, Scarlett, and who you are is perfect. Never forget that.”

I kissed her cheek then released her and backed away towards the door. Her eyes tracked my movements as she dropped her arms to her sides like she couldn’t keep them off me. I opened the door and was about to step out when her voice brought me up short.

“Thank you.”

“For what?”

“Showing me what a real kiss should feel like.”

I bit my lip but said no more. We stared at each other for a long moment before I strolled out.

As I walked down the hallway back to my office, I rubbed my bottom lip with my thumb. That had been some fucking kiss. I didn’t know where it had come from nor why I’d allowed it, but I didn’t regret it. Getting to taste her was in some ways far sweeter than fucking her with the others on Friday. It was just me and her in that moment. It made me feel like we were in a little bubble of our own, where the outside world and all the shit that came with it didn’t exist.

I knew I couldn’t lose my damn head to the woman but fuck it. If we were going to burn the world down, then I might as well enjoy myself in the process. Sharing a kiss with Scarlett wasn’t going to derail our plans. And so fucking what if I indulged myself a few more times after this. She was ours. And I wasn’t going to be the one to let that girl forget it.
I watched Scarlett move towards my desk, her hands clutching the mug she was carrying and her cheeks holding a slight flush to them. My eyes roamed over her face, taking in the swollen nature of her bottom lip.

Had she been nibbling on it?
Or had someone else?

I shoved the fleeting thought away as she set the mug down on my desk. I looked at my watch. Exactly on time. The way she averted her eyes had me wondering if she feared me. I didn't want to make her afraid. No, I wanted her to obey. And after Friday night, I knew she could if she was so inclined.

Thoughts of her coming over my cock twice had it rising to attention. I clenched my jaw and tried not to shift in my seat. The woman had an effect on me I didn't appreciate. The desire coursing through me was evidence of her strange power over me. Her mere presence made it difficult for me to think about anything else other than holding her down on my desk. Of making her do exactly what I wanted. Of punishing her, making her skin break out in welts. Making her bleed for me.

The others gave me shit about my fascination with blood and death. It was a rather fucked up thing to be turned on by, but I wasn't normal by any stretch of the imagination. None of us were. Still, the others had more palatable kinks. It'd always been a challenge finding a woman who wouldn't baulk at the thought of blood mixed with sex, let alone be willing to indulge me.

“Can I get you anything else?”

Scarlett’s eyes were still averted. She fidgeted, her fingers gripping her skirt.

“Can you pick me up lunch today? I don’t have time to go upstairs.”

This event we were going to on Thursday evening was taking up far too much of my time. Yes, I was pleased I’d been asked to open this business awards ceremony, but it was a pain in the arse at the same time. It was some fancy black-tie event with cocktails, canapes, a band and dancing. West complained last night when I told him there was no excuse for him not to attend. After we’d announced our new employment scheme, we’d been nominated for an award in the financial services, banking and insurance category. Prescott had organised all that shit, but they wanted the opening speech from me, the CEO. The one who they thought ran the company. In reality, the four of us did so equally, all playing to our strengths.

“Of course, the usual?”

I gave her a nod and picked up my mug.

“Did you get the tuxes back from the dry cleaners yet?”

“They said they’d arrive tomorrow morning.”

I sipped my coffee.

“Good.”
Setting my mug down, I opened my drawer and pulled out an invitation. Scarlett watched me slide it across the desk towards her.

“I spoke to the others and we all agreed you should attend with us.”

Her eyes scanned over the invite.

“Is it mandatory? Like a work thing?”

I didn’t want her getting out of it even though I didn’t strictly need her to come with us.

“Yes. I need you there.”

She gave me a nod but didn’t meet my eyes.

“Okay… it’s black-tie, right?”

“Mmm. It won’t all be work. You’re welcome to enjoy yourself too.”

I couldn’t deny I was looking forward to seeing Scarlett in a dress. Would she wear her hair up? No doubt it would please West if she did. He had a thing about necks. And I had a thing about women kneeling for me. The thought of her doing so with her beautiful wavy hair spilling down her back waiting for my command had me clenching my fist. I shook it out the next moment.

Scarlett picked up the invite and scanned it before giving me a nod.

“Anything else?”

I breathed out through my teeth, jaw clenching because I wanted to hear her at least say my name or call me something else. Francis had mentioned she’d joked to him about the ‘sir’ business. And fuck, if I didn’t want her saying it to me. Obeying me. Being mine.

“Yes. Come here.”

Her eyes flicked up to mine, apprehension in them. Scarlett had been content to ignore what happened on Friday, but I wasn’t. Whilst I might have retained my self-control, there was no doubt now I’d had her, I wanted the woman again. The need to touch her pounded in my veins, making me drunk off it.

“Now, Scarlett.”

*My little wisp.*

She came around the desk with no further hesitation. She let out a yelp when I gripped her wrist and tugged her closer.

“Sit.”

I released her and sat back, rubbing my hand over my lap to indicate where I wanted her. Her hazel-green eyes widened and she blinked.

“What?”

“Do I have to repeat myself?”

Scarlett swallowed, her eyes flicking between my lap and my eyes. I waited, knowing she would eventually do the right thing.

“Why?”

I didn’t expect her to talk back. Scarlett had been a fiery little thing when she’d been a teenager, but every time we’d interacted now she was an adult, she’d deferred to me. It gave me a sick thrill to see the old Scarlett remained somewhere inside her. I wanted to rip it out of her. Have her disobey me only to punish her for it.

“My patience is wearing thin. Sit down.”
There was a moment’s hesitation before she finally conceded and perched herself on my lap as far away from me as she could possibly get. Her small act of defiance made me want to smile, but I refrained, keeping my face void of expression. She folded her hands in her lap and stared at me, waiting for me to speak.

My hand flicked up and I caught her chin, tugging her face closer to mine.

“You’ve been awfully quiet these past two days.”

“You kept me busy,” she retorted.

“Don’t talk back to me, Scarlett, you won’t like the consequences if you do it again.”

Her mouth snapped shut and thinned. The woman was walking a fine line with me as it was. My free hand wrapped around her waist and pulled her body closer, seating her more firmly in my lap. She put her hands out to steady herself, her two palms landing on my chest. The touch had me gritting my teeth. This woman would be the fucking death of me if I wasn’t careful. I itched to run my hands over her body, underneath her clothes to feel that soft skin. To make her scream.

“Here’s what’s going to happen. You’re going to answer my questions with complete honesty. If you lie to me, I’ll know. If you hide anything from me, I’ll know.” I gripped her chin harder and ran my thumb over her still swollen bottom lip. “I won’t hesitate to deal with you in a manner I see fit if you decide to keep anything from me. I don’t like liars. They meet with the rough end of my form of justice.”

“Am I making myself understood?”

She nodded.

“I’m going to need verbal confirmation.”

“Yes, Drake.”

My chest tightened.

“Oh no, you don’t get to use my name when we’re alone. Not any longer.”

“What should I call you?” she whispered, her body trembling in my hold.

“I think you know.”

She swallowed and as she did, her tongue brushed over my thumb again as I hadn’t removed it from her lip.

“Yes… sir.”

Keeping my cool with her words took a considerable effort. It fed the darkest parts of me, taunting them to come out and play with her.

“Why is your lip swollen?”

Her eyes grew conflicted, but I didn’t allow her to respond.

“And what did you do to Prescott yesterday?”

“What makes you think I did something to him?”

Pulling my thumb from her mouth, I tightened my grip on her face further. She winced, but I didn’t care. She needed to learn a lesson.

“What did I just tell you?”

“Not to talk back to you.”

The challenge in her eyes was like lighting the fuse to the detonation button on my temper. My fingers dug into her waist, the only sign of how her words affected me.
Breathe. Stay calm. Do not allow her to rattle you.

Having her in my lap didn’t help matters at all. Her pert behind was far too close to my dick. Fuck. I wanted to rip her skirt off and plunge inside her. Punish her with cock so she’d know her damn place.

“This is not a game, nor will you like it if you continue to push me.”

She pursed her lips. Fuck me. Had the others encountered her attitude? It shouldn’t surprise me. Scarlett had never been one to let anyone walk all over her. She was strong as fuck. Our equal in every sense of the word. And yet, I wanted to fuck that attitude out of her so damn bad, I could barely think straight.

“Francis kissed me.”

I raised my eyebrow.

“Just now?”

“Yes. He brought me tea, we talked and… I may have asked him to kiss me in a roundabout way.”

I rubbed her bottom lip again.

“Why did you want him to kiss you?”

Her cheeks flushed in the most adorable fucking way.

“I wanted to experience a kiss. Prescott—”

She looked away, closing her mouth.

“Prescott what, Scarlett?”

“He didn’t kiss me yesterday,” she whispered, still not meeting my eyes.

I had a feeling the reason Prescott was quiet had something to do with her. Getting answers out of him was like pulling teeth. Better to go to the more pliable source. Scarlett would tell me what happened if I pushed her hard enough.

“Explain.”

Her eyes flicked back to mine and there was resignation in them.

“I asked him to tell me why you took me on Friday and who did what to me, and in exchange he made me…”

She nibbled on her lip.

“He made you do what?”

“Let him do what he wanted.”

I wanted to shake my head. For a girl who’d demanded she get fucked and filled with cum on Friday night, she was rather reticent now. And the fact she’d gone to Prescott for information concerned me. Why would she think she could manipulate him in that way? What exactly had he told her about Friday?

“And what was that?”

“To… to…”

“Did he want to fuck you, Scarlett?”

The way her pupil’s dilated told me exactly what I needed to know. She was remembering what he’d done. And what we’d done to her too.

“Yes… and I let him.”

“And what did he tell you afterwards?”

She took a breath.

“That you all wanted me… that I’m your possession… that you own me.”
“Is that all?”
“Well, he told me who did what to me on Friday, but yes, that’s it.”

Typical. Prescott lured her into thinking he’d tell her the truth of why we decided to fuck with her head. She had no clue and it would stay that way for now. Scarlett didn’t remember who we were. When she did find out, there would be hell to pay.

“Did you like it?”
“Like what?”
I drew her closer to me.
“The way he fucked you.”
A shiver ran through her.
“Yes, sir.”
“Do you want him to do it again?”
She nodded as I loosened my grip on her chin, caressing her skin with my fingertips. I almost smiled. She could hide her real intentions for being here, but she couldn’t hide her desire. It was written all over her face.

“Do you want to get fucked by all of us again?”
Her lips parted with her breath.
“Answer the question.”
She fidgeted in my lap. It didn’t help with the need to fuck her into next week lacing my body. If she moved any closer, she’d be right on top of my dick. Then I’d have no self-control left. I’d force her down on my desk and make her scream so loud, it would carry down the hallway.

“Yes, sir,” she murmured.

I needed her off my lap and as far away from me as possible. I was so close to calling the rest of them in here, making Francis tie her down on my desk and for us to use her until she was crying and begging for it to end.

“Go back to work, Scarlett.”
I released her. She blinked and the disappointment flooding her features gave me so much fucking satisfaction. She would have to wait because she sure as fuck did not deserve a reward right now. Her attitude would need an adjustment first.

“Now.”
There was no more hesitation. She jumped off my lap and walked away. I turned back to my computer, but it didn’t stop me from watching her leave. At the door, she glanced back at me, confusion spreading across her features. Probably wondering why I demanded answers from her before sending her away with nothing to show for it. Well, other than her likely drenched knickers. There had been no mistaking the desire and arousal flickering in the depths of her irises, no matter how hard she tried to hide it.

When she left, I let myself smile and adjusted my cock. Our plan to mess with her head was working perfectly… even if it was giving me a fucking headache in the process. No matter how I wanted to use her little wisp of a body for my pleasure, I wouldn’t. Not yet. Not until she proved herself worthy of such a fucking privilege. And she would… eventually. Because that girl was nothing if not resourceful. After all, she’d come here to battle against the four of us. It took a special sort of woman to have the
balls to take on the so-called Four Horsemen. And Scarlett was the only girl in this entire world who could match us blow for fucking blow.
THIRTY TWO

SCARLETT

I walked into the huge room set up for this business awards thing the Horsemen had insisted I attended. My eyes searched the room, looking for the men I worked for. When I saw them, my jaw almost dropped. They stood in a group, all with tumblers between their fingers. Their tuxes fit them to perfection, highlighting every inch of their powerful frames.

_Holy shit on a stick._

I pulled my arm out of Mason’s hold, meaning to go over to them.

“What are you doing?” he hissed, gripping my hand to stop me.

I looked up at him, feeling incredibly frustrated I even had him here. When I told him about the event, he insisted he come with me. The invitation said I could bring a plus one if I wanted. I had not bargained on Mason wanting to go with me. Probably had everything to do with the fact he hated me being alone with the Horsemen. And the events of last Friday. Whilst he didn’t know about the whole being drugged and fucked incident, his guilt regarding spending the whole night out hung around his neck like a damn lead weight.

“My job, Mase. Did you forget I told you I’m here to work?”

He scowled.

“No.”

“Stay here.”

He let go of my hand, but not before giving me a warning look. I rolled my eyes as I walked away, pushing through the crowd of people towards the men who had done a number on me. Having Mason here made me far more uneasy than I’d been before. I couldn’t stop him from attending. He wanted to keep an eye on the Horsemen. I thought he was being stupidly overprotective, but whatever. He’d taken it upon himself to be my bodyguard. Little did he know, the men he was trying to prevent me from getting too deeply involved with had already fucked me every way a man could. They’d already played with my head and got me hooked.

I hadn’t forgotten why I was here and what I had to achieve. Didn’t mean I couldn’t enjoy myself at the same time. They’d awoken my hidden desires. Putting those back in the box would be impossible. I wanted to drown in their depravity. But I knew I couldn’t give in. There was only so much I could allow them to see. If I fell any further, I’d have no hope of digging my way out of this mess.

My eyes were drawn to West first. The way he rubbed his tattooed hand across his chin. I’d never paid attention to the fact he had them across the backs of his hands before, not to mention the ones on his fingers. Too busy staring into his amber eyes and being distracted by his words. The man had a way of commanding all of my attention. And holy fuck, he scrubbed up well. He wore all black with a crisp white shirt. His muscles strained against the fabric, making me want to run my hands over them. Would he ever allow me the freedom to explore his body?
What the fuck? Why are you thinking about that?

I clenched my fists, turning my attention to Francis. He had a purple bow-tie on, his grey eyes dark with irritation as he stared out across the room. Who knew what was going through his mind. Prescott was the only one who looked relaxed, his tumbler dangling precariously from his fingertips as he murmured something to West. The beast of a man gave him a dark look, his amber eyes full of violence. Prescott merely grinned at West, giving him a wink. The man had a bow-tie that matched his blue eyes and his tux was like a second skin. I couldn’t help swallowing at the memory of him shoving his fingers in my mouth whilst he fucked me on his desk. How he’d ordered me around and made me desperate for him. The man was like a damn predator. And I wanted to be his prey. His little lamb.

Lastly, there was my boss, Drake, who’d given me whiplash on Tuesday when he told me I would need to attend the event with them. The way he demanded I tell him what happened between me, Francis and Prescott gave me heart palpitations. And it made me want to disobey him for some reason. Yes, Drake intimidated the fuck out of me, but at the same time, I wanted to push his buttons. I wanted to see the man underneath his stoic and intense demeanour. The only way I’d get him to open up was by cracking that shell and forcing his hand. Even so, the thought of what he’d do when I did, terrified me to my very core.

Drake had an indigo bow-tie, matching his eyes like Prescott’s. All in all, the four of them were certainly striking. All eyes were on them, watching their every move. They commanded the room as if they were gods. And I supposed in a lot of ways, they were. Gods of their industry. Ruthless men who would stop at nothing to get what they wanted. And right now? That was me.

I arrived in front of them. All four sets of eyes fell on me. Prescott gave me a sly smile as if he was impressed by the way I’d scrubbed up. Francis’ eyes softened a fraction. Drake remained expressionless. And West? Well, he looked like he wanted to rip my dress off and fuck me in front of all these people. I tried not to react to their presence, but it was almost impossible. These men had done things to my body that would make most women blush.

“Evening, Scarlett,” Prescott said, reaching out and taking my hand. He brought it to his lips and kissed the knuckles, eyeing me with deviancy in his eyes. “You look… delectable.”

“Sweetness, you’re so fucking delectable.”

His words from Monday rang in my ears. The man knew exactly what he’d said and what it had conjured up for me.

“Thank you, Pres.”

As he dropped my hand, his tongue ran over his bottom lip. I couldn’t help my own lips parting in response. The tension in the air was charged with sex and lust. It pulsed between the five of us, drenching the room with its potency.

My eyes dropped, staring down at the dress I’d picked out. It was black and clung to my figure, falling to just below my knees with a slit up the back. I picked out sky-high black peep-toe pumps and painted my nails dark red. My hair was down with my natural waves curling around my face.

Mason had told me to change when I’d come out of my room earlier but I ignored him. He didn’t want them seeing me like this. Little did he know, they’d all seen me bare and dripping with need for them.

I raised my eyes again, meeting Drake’s. He didn’t give me a reaction, but I hadn’t expected it. As if he
would allow his control to slip even a little.

“Come here.”

It wasn’t a request. No, Drake didn’t request anything. He demanded and expected me to obey. I stepped over to him. His eyes roamed down my body, taking in every inch of me, but his expression remained the same. The only indication I had that he liked what he saw was the way his pupils dilated, the indigo taken over by the black. It made him appear almost menacing. Like the man would break me in half if I displeased him.

“Is my tie straight?” he asked.

I reached up and fiddled with it, not strictly needing to, but wanting to touch him all the same. My insides clenched. Even though it was the briefest of touches, it was significant for me.

“It is now.”

He gave me a nod. I dropped my hands and bowed my head. It was the first time I’d been around the four of them at the same time since Friday. Their mere presence was making me have flashbacks. I hadn’t been lying when Drake asked me if I wanted them all to fuck me again. No way I should want it. Not knowing who these men were and what they’d done. I didn’t care though. Not right then.

No doubt Mason would remind me of my goals. Why we were here. I didn’t want to be constrained to them, but I had no choice. If I didn’t do what my parents wanted, they would take me back to Kent. They would lock me up on the estate and never let me go again. Their threat weighed heavily on my mind. It kept me from entirely giving in to my bosses and their plans for me. I had no idea what they were, but I knew they couldn’t be anything good.

Something caught Drake’s eye. He took my hand and pulled me with him. I looked back at the others. All of their eyes were on the slit at the back of my dress. It went higher than was appropriate, hence why Mason didn’t want me going out in it.

Drake took me over to the raised platform and let go of my hand when he stopped.

“Do you have my speech?” he asked, looking down at me with a hard expression.

“Yes, hold on.”

I’d brought a larger bag than necessary to make sure I had everything he needed. Fishing out the tablet, I brought up the speech we’d finished yesterday and handed it to him. He scanned the screen.

“Prescott is better at this shit,” he muttered.

I didn’t think he meant for me to hear it. My eyes scanned the room. The other three were watching us. And Mason was glaring, his dark eyes full of unrepressed rage. He didn’t like them touching me at all. It’d been a terrible idea to allow Mason to come with me, but what else could I do? He was outright threatening to keep me at the flat. It wasn’t worth the aggravation.

“Wait here whilst I do this,” Drake said to me as the announcer got up on the platform.

A minute later, he was called up. A mask fell over his face as he walked away from me. The smart but ruthless businessman took the stage and started to talk. I barely listened, having heard the thing too many times to count. I’d helped him compose it. Instead, I watched West who was staring right at me. His gaze made my back stiffen. I didn’t know if it was hate or lust in those amber depths burning into me. Those tattooed hands flexed at his sides, reminding me of the way they’d wrapped around my throat.

_Chris, stop thinking about it._

I couldn’t deny I liked it. The first time he’d done it when we met, I was shocked by his blatant
disregard for polite societal standards. He was the type of man who cared little for anyone else’s opinions of him. The one who did whatever the fuck he wanted without bothering to think about the consequences. He’d ruin anyone who got in his way. No wonder he’d told me people were afraid of him. Hell, I was, on some level. Afraid and turned on as hell by the violence simmering underneath the surface.

I was so busy staring at West, I didn’t realise Drake had joined me again until he shoved the tablet into my hands. My eyes flicked up to his as he leant closer.

“Go have fun, Scarlett,” he murmured. “I’ll find you when I need you again.”

“Yes, sir,” I whispered back.

His lip twitched, but he didn’t smile. I stuffed the tablet back into my bag. Hastily, I retreated towards where Mason was standing, feeling Drake’s eyes on me the entire time.

“Are you fucking kidding me, Scar?” Mason hissed when I reached him. “They’re like vultures circling around you.”

I shrugged, placing my bag on the small table he was standing by.

“What do you want me to do? Tell them all to go fuck themselves? Doubt that would go down well.”

Mason said nothing, silently seething next to me. He’d got me a glass of champagne. I sipped at it, my eyes roaming across the room as I tried not to look at the four men who made my pulse race out of control every time I was near them. The award presentations would happen later in the evening, so the band started up and a few people started dancing on the floor set out for it.

Mason grabbed hold of my hand and tugged me over to the floor with him.

“What are you doing?”

“Dance with me.”

I sighed, but went along willingly, sure my bag would be fine where it was for now. We weren’t far from the table. There was no point making a scene and Drake had told me to have fun. Doubt he was referring to me dancing with Mason.

I let my friend take me in his arms and sway to the music with me. He was probably holding me way closer than was necessary or appropriate. I frowned but didn’t comment. Did he want to piss them off? If he did, I would be in big fucking trouble. Mason didn’t realise the Horsemen saw me as their possession. And I had an awful feeling about Mason’s actions and the repercussions they might have.
Raising my whisky tumbler to my lips, I watched Scarlett walk across the room and stop by a table next
to a man I knew all too well. My hand curled tighter around the glass as I lowered it.

“What the fuck is he doing here?”

Francis looked at me with a raised eyebrow.

“Who?”

“Mason,” I ground out.

Both he and Prescott looked over at where Scarlett was standing with the man tasked by the Carvers
to watch over her.

“Huh. Didn’t think she’d bring him,” Prescott said, eyes narrowing.

“He looks pretty pissed,” Francis commented, giving me a sideways glance.

Prescott grinned.

“Maybe he doesn’t like us.”

Francis snorted and rolled his eyes.

“Of course he doesn’t. We’re a threat to the girl he’s sworn to protect.”

“Looks like he wants to do more than just protect her.”

I watched the man drag Scarlett onto the dancefloor. Setting the tumbler on the table beside me, I
clenched my fists. If I kept it in my hands, it would have been smashed against the wall, the pieces
littered on the ground and the liquid dripping down it. The way the prick held Scarlett against him had
me taking a step towards them.

“Easy there,” Prescott said, setting a hand on my shoulder as Drake joined us again.

I growled at him, wanting to tear apart the dickhead holding my woman limb from limb. Especially
when he had the fucking audacity to look over at us with a smirk on his face.

“Is that cunt for fucking real?” I ground out.

For a moment I forgot where we were. All I could think about was tearing across the room to get my
woman away from the fuckface holding her like he damn well owned her. She wasn’t his. She was mine.
All fucking well mine. She’d been mine since the day I laid eyes on her. No one else except for the three
men standing beside me could touch her. I’d kill every motherfucker who thought they could put hands
on the woman belonging to me.

I strained against Prescott’s hold, rage filling my veins as the fucking piece of shit ran his hand down
Scarlett’s back. It was too damn close to parts of my woman he should not be touching. I would brand
myself on her damn skin as a warning to anyone else to stay the fuck away.

“He has a death wish,” Francis muttered.

“You’re telling me,” Prescott replied, keeping a tight hold of my shoulder. “I’d quite like to punch his
pretty-boy face in myself.”
“I’m going to kill him. He can drown in his own fucking blood,” I outright growled.

“Hey, none of that,” Drake interjected, placing his hand on my other shoulder. “We can’t touch him, you know that.”

“I don’t give a shit. He doesn’t get to touch her like that.” I raised my arm, waving my hand at the display. “She is ours.”

“And you need to calm the fuck down, West.”

I shoved Drake and Prescott’s hands off me, glaring at the two of them.

“Or what?”

“Did you forget where we are? Do not make a scene. This is fucking important. We cannot afford to screw it up.”

I hated how right Drake was. Hated it so fucking much. The anger and rage inside me burnt hot, flooding me with the need for violence. The need to take it out on the piece of shit who’d caused it. Fuck, I wanted to hurt him. To make him regret ever taunting me. The prick had no clue who he was messing with. He didn’t want to see the monster inside me. The one who would ruin his entire fucking existence.

Not like I could allow Scarlett to see how she affected me either. She had no idea of the man lurking beneath my skin. How he’d had such intimate access to her thoughts and feelings when we’d been younger. How he fucking well bled for her every day of his life. And how he would kill everyone who hurt her. It pained me, knowing she had no fucking clue who I was to her. Who we were to each other.

“You’re the whole world to me, West. I don’t know why you can’t see that.”

I almost snarled with the memory, her voice echoing in my ears. Scarlett had ruined me. Seeing her now, aware she couldn’t remember ever saying those things was decimating.

No fucking wonder people said I wasn’t right in the head. How could I be? How could I ever fucking well be normal when the light in my life had been torn away from me? From all of us.

“How can you stand there and not give a shit about this?”

“Who said I didn’t give a shit?” Drake hissed. “Do you think I like seeing him touch her? I’d quite happily help you rip his limbs off, but unlike you, I understand our position is precarious. We kill him, we bring down a world of trouble on our heads. I’m not going to let you fuck this up.”

I wanted to punch him in the face. Drake didn’t fucking get it. None of them did. None whatsoever.

You haven’t told them, that’s why. If they knew, they’d understand.

As if I was going to reveal the truth about Scarlett’s feelings towards me. It hurt too fucking much already. I couldn’t speak of it.

I didn’t care what Drake said. There was no way in fucking hell I would stand here whilst the worthless fuckhead danced with her and watched us with that damn smirk on his face.

“West.”

I’d taken a step forward and Drake’s tone brought me up short.

“Don’t.”

I glanced at him, baring my teeth.

“Lighten the fuck up, Drake, I won’t do anything to him.”
My feet started forward again.
“What are you going to do?”
I turned my head back, looking at the three of them with no small amount of smug fucking satisfaction.
“I can’t hurt Mason, but no one said anything about Scarlett.”
If any of them had a response, I didn’t hear it. I stalked across the room, not giving a shit what I looked like. My damn woman would pay the price of allowing him access to her body. I didn’t care if she wasn’t fucking him. His meaty palms did not get to feel her up.
Halfway across the room, one of them caught up to me and directed me away from Scarlett and Mason. I glanced at Prescott. His mouth was a thin line and his expression dark. I didn’t stop him from bringing me over to the bar area.
“What are you doing?”
“Making sure you don’t do something stupid.” He glanced at me. “Look, I’m with you. The fucker deserves a beating, but Drake is right. Now is not the time.”
“I wasn’t going to touch him.”
Prescott curled an eyebrow up. The fucker didn’t believe me. Probably wise.
“If you want to take it out on her, then by all means. Just do it when he’s not hovering over her like a guard dog, eh?”
I leant up against the bar, glaring over at where the prick was still dancing with my woman.
“You’re right.”
“Did you just agree with me?”
“Don’t push your fucking luck, Pres.” I cracked my knuckles. “I’m not above decking you as a substitute for him.”
Prescott merely snorted before ordering us more drinks. I sipped mine and watched Mason take Scarlett back to their small table. She was giving him a hard time or at least, it looked like they were having a heated conversation. Made me think she wasn’t so happy about his presence here either.
“Do you think she knows?” I asked Prescott a moment later.
“Knows what?”
“His real reason for being here.”
“No. And we’re not going to tell her either. Let him dig his own grave.”
“Mark my words, one day, I’ll help him into it.”
Prescott grinned and shook his head.
“We can’t and you know it, but we can fuck with him.”
I grunted in response. Oh, I would be fucking with Mason Jones all right. He had thrown the first stone. All bets were off. I would take pleasure in torturing him with mind games if I couldn’t hurt him any other way.
Prescott and I stayed by the bar. I didn’t feel like dealing with Drake. He’d forced me to attend this event. Being here in this stuffy room full of stuck up rich pricks and business types made my skin itch with the need for violence.
The announcer started up with the award presentations. Prescott wandered off to find the others whilst I watched the crowd gather by the raised platform. My eyes found Scarlett. She stood near the
fringes of the crowd, her guard dog nearby.

I dropped my glass on the bar and stalked towards her. The woman didn’t stand a chance nor did she see me coming. I came up behind her and wrapped my hand around her wrist.

“Come with me.”

She looked back at me, her eyes wide.

“What?”

I smiled before dragging her away from the crowd. She stumbled trying to walk with me. Those heels she wore were death traps. I kept her upright because I couldn’t have her falling over and making a fucking scene.

“West, what are you doing?” she hissed.

I didn’t reply, merely tugged her into an alcove and shoved her up against the wall. Leaning over her, I trapped her body against mine. My hand wrapped around her throat, the skull tattooed there gleaming in the low light.

“Do you think it’s acceptable to let another man touch you?” I asked her in hushed tones.

“What?”

“I saw his little display. He thinks he can start a pissing contest with me. And you allowed it.”

Scarlett’s eyes widened. She swallowed against my palm.

“We were just dancing.”

My hand tightened around her throat.

“You are mine, Scarlett. That means you don’t let anyone else touch what’s mine.”

Her breath came out halted and erratic.

“You’re crazy,” she whispered.

I grinned.

“You think this is crazy? Don’t try me. I will show you fucking crazy if you do that again.”

Her expression darkened.

“So what? You let your friends touch me, but when my friend dances with me, it’s not allowed?”

“Yes, exactly.”

She looked incredulous.

“You have some fucking nerve, you know that? All of you do.”

There was that temper I remembered all too well. Scarlett had never been the shy, retiring, obedient type. She had sharp claws. Ones she’d shred you with. And I’d always found it incredibly alluring. A woman who matched my own insanity.

“Is that so?”

“Yes. You think because I let you fuck me, I’m now your property. Well, fuck you.” She shoved at my chest. “I don’t want to deal with your bullshit right now.”

She said the wrong thing and she knew it. I wasn’t about to let it slide even though we were at a public event and Drake’s warnings blared in my head. My free hand slid down her leg and underneath her dress, pushing it up as I ran my fingers up her inner thigh. She let out a gasp.

“You are mine and the sooner you get that into your skull, the better. You think us being in a public setting will stop me from taking what I want?”

“West—”
I squeezed her throat, cutting off her airway for a moment so she couldn’t continue.

“Oh no, now isn’t the time for talking.”

My fingers met her knickers. I rubbed the front of them, right over her pussy lips. She stared up at me with fear in her eyes.

**Good. Be fucking scared. I’m going to make you come in a room full of people and there’s nothing you can do about it.**

I dipped my fingers underneath her knickers, stroking down her slit and finding the beginnings of her wetness. It made me smile and lean closer to her.

“I see how it is,” I murmured. “Your mouth likes to say one thing but your body tells me another. You want this.”

“No,” she whispered.

Seeking out her clit, I circled it. She bucked her hips into mine in response.

“Mmm, do you get off on telling me to stop, huh? Want to pretend I’m making you do this? Is that the type of game you want to play?”

“No.”

I bit my lip. The lust mixing with fear in her eyes gave her away. It made me shove three fingers inside her wet pussy and thumb her clit.

“I bet you wish it was my cock buried in this tight little pussy right now, don’t you?”

She shook her head, gulping down air as I squeezed her throat again.

“What if I fucked you in front of everyone? Showed them who owns your tight little holes, hmm? Would you like that, Scarlett? I’ll make you cry out my name whilst I wring every fucking climax out of your body until you’re a mess of tears and shame.”

The way she panted and ground against me told me everything she couldn’t voice out loud. The thought of me doing it turned her on. Made her want to sink into the deep, dark pit of depravity I lived in. There was no room for morals here. No room for airs and fucking graces. Only corruption, debauchery and sin.

Leaning ever closer, I ran my tongue up her cheek.

“Tell me who you belong to,” I whispered. “Tell me and I’ll let you come.”

She shuddered, her body bucking as her hands gripped my waist to anchor herself.

“West.”

“Tell. Me.”

“You… I belong to you.”

I buried my face in her hair, breathing in her spicy scent and thrust my fingers harder.

“That’s right. You’re mine.”

Her body tensed and she came apart. Whether she’d said it so she could come, I didn’t care. Letting her pleasure wash over me was fucking everything. I allowed myself a moment to bathe in her body before I pulled back, slipping my fingers from her dress. She stared up at me, her eyes unfocused.

“Open.”

She did as I asked, allowing me to slide my fingers inside her mouth. I didn’t have to ask her to clean them. She did that all by herself.

“If you let him touch you like that again, Scarlett, there’ll be worse consequences for you. Do you understand?”
She blinked, my fingers sliding out of her mouth. Then she glared at me.
“That’s my friend. What you’re asking is ridiculous.”
I shook my head, my fingers flexing around her throat.
“I don’t get what your problem is. You don’t even know Mason. Why do you care?”
I laughed and dropped my hand from her neck.
“I don’t take kindly to anyone messing with my belongings. You’d best remember that in the future.”
Before she could say a word, I walked off. If I stayed any longer, I would fuck her in front of the whole room and then Drake would have my head. It was lucky everyone was currently distracted by the awards presentations. I might be unapologetic about who I was, but I did understand the importance of this evening. It’s why I was even here in the first place or I’d have stayed home and got high.
I could do with a hit right now. It would calm the raging storm brewing inside me. I didn’t pity the fool who got in my way. They would regret it, of course, but I would enjoy ripping them to shreds without a single shred of remorse. The only thing I regretted this evening was not pulling Scarlett from the room and shoving my cock so far down her throat, she’d feel it for days.
You’re going to get it worse next time, Scarlett. Mark my fucking words. You fuck with me, I’ll fuck with you right back, only I’ll do it dirtier and meaner. Then you’ll really see who you belong to.
I couldn’t move away from the wall. If I took a step, my knees would buckle and I’d collapse on the ground. Never in my life had I been so terrified and turned on at the same time. Not even when I’d been drugged and fucked by the four of them. West had turned my whole entire damn existence upside down in those moments he’d pinned me here and made me come on his fingers. He hadn’t done it to please me. He’d done it to punish me. I hadn’t wanted to come in front of all these people. It was humiliating how much his words and behaviour turned me on. How his actions drove me insane with lust and desire for the man who was turning out to be my worst nightmare.

What woman wanted someone who fucked with their head the way West did to me? Every time he walked away felt like a punch to the gut. I was dismissed. No longer on his radar now his lesson was over. And what a fucking lesson it was.

West’s possessiveness made my heart pound. I didn’t understand it. He didn’t know Mason and he barely knew me. Would it have mattered if it was another man? I doubted it. West didn’t want anyone touching me by the sounds of it other than Drake, Prescott and Francis. The whole thing made absolutely no sense to me. None. The way these men had come after me was the most confusing part of it all. I’d come here to catch them, but they were catching me instead.

I pulled myself together. Not like I could hide in this alcove for the rest of the night. Drake would need me later or maybe now.

Shit, I need to get back out there.

I straightened my dress. My underwear was drenched but there was nothing I could do about it. Fucking West. Why did he have such a profound effect on my senses? Why did he make me wet and achy? I got off on his crude language and downright degrading behaviour. The way he told me he’d fuck me in front of the whole room and make me cry out his name had me completely lost and at his mercy.

Shaking myself, I walked out of the alcove on wobbly legs, trying to regain my composure. The presentations were still going on. I wandered back over to the small table where I found Mason waiting with my bag. His expression made me flinch.

“Where have you been?” he hissed, brown eyes flashing with anger.

“Nowhere.”

“No? You weren’t dragged off by one of them then? What the fuck did he want with you?”

I took my bag from him, not wanting to have this conversation. No way I would tell him how West had stuck his hand under my dress and made me come all over his fingers. How horrified I’d been about the way it turned me on. Mason didn’t get to know those things. He would lose his mind. West had mentioned Mason had tried to start a pissing contest with him. It didn’t surprise me considering how much Mason hated the Horsemen. If he found out what was really going on, I was pretty sure he would wind West up further. And no doubt I would get the brunt end of West’s wrath. His parting words to
me had served as a warning. One I took seriously.

“What he wanted with me is none of your business.”

I wasn’t going to deny being dragged off. Mason had clearly seen it.

“Everything to do with them is my business, Scar. You know the deal.”

My hand curled into a fist.

“Oh what? Because Dad said so? Fuck you. It’s my arse on the line, not yours.”

Mason’s eyebrows shot up.

“What the hell has got into you? Where has this attitude come from?”

I should walk away from him before I said something stupid. Something I couldn’t take back. Anger and frustration flooded my body, making me sick to my stomach. I’d already had to deal with West and now Mason was giving me shit. I didn’t have the energy for it.

“What’s got into me is that I’m sick and tired of you giving me a hard time. You didn’t have to come with me today. In fact, I told you I didn’t want you here.” I pointed at my chest. “I am the one who has to live with all of this, Mason. Me. If you can’t handle watching them with me, then that’s on you, not me.”

Before he could say another word, I stormed off, hating the way he’d made me feel. Like I was fucking this all up. And in reality, I was. The Horsemen were formidable opponents who always appeared to be ten steps ahead of me.

I’d planned on going to the ladies to calm down when someone wrapped their arm around me and led me away from the crowd towards the bar. Looking up, I found it was Prescott. His blue eyes were dark and his expression hard. He ordered drinks when we reached the bar, keeping me pinned to his side.

When the bartender set them down, I picked one up and raised it to my lips. Prescott watched me as I took a sip. I almost spluttered as the alcohol burnt its way down my throat.

“Jesus,” I coughed. “What is that?”

He gave me a smile.

“Whisky to calm your nerves.”

“More like to choke me.”

Prescott’s eyes twinkled.

“That’s West’s thing, not mine.”

He set the glass down and picked up his own.

Didn’t I fucking well know it? Every time I was alone with the damn man, he put his heavily tattooed hand around my throat. I couldn’t deny it got me hot and bothered. But after the stunt he’d just pulled, I was not inclined to admit such things to anyone.

“Don’t talk to me about him.”

Prescott’s hand around my waist tightened.

“No? What has my unhinged friend done to cause that murderous look in your eyes, hmm?”

Unhinged was an appropriate word to describe West and his bullshit.

I picked up the glass and sipped at the whisky, not caring how strong it was, nor the burn it caused. It was the distraction I needed from my chaotic thoughts.

“Do you really want to know?”

“Of course, sweetness, I wouldn’t have asked otherwise.”
I looked up at him, raising an eyebrow. His grin was making my heart do somersaults in my chest. There was a hint of longing in them, making me aware there was far more to this than him just lending me his ear.

“Hmm, I’m sure.”

He leant closer to me.

“Tell me what’s wrong.”

A part of me wanted to sink into Prescott, but I didn’t want an audience for it. I could feel Mason’s gaze boring holes into my back. Picking up my glass once more, I indicated the doors leading out of the room with my head. Prescott got the hint. He picked up his own glass and encouraged me away towards the doors. We were outside in the hallway the next minute and walking towards a seating area in the reception by the windows. He set our glasses down on a high table and turned to me.

“Are you sure this is okay? Aren’t you guys up for an award?”

He grinned. Prescott was the head of marketing. This type of thing was his responsibility.

“Francis and Drake can handle it if we win.” He tucked an arm around me, tugging me closer before placing his fingers under my chin, tipping my head up towards him. “Now, my little lamb, what made you so angry?”

My arms went around Prescott’s waist without me thinking about it. His body radiated heat, warming me from the inside out. He dropped his hand from my chin and put his other arm around me, holding me against him.

“West punished me for dancing with my friend.”

Prescott’s blue eyes twinkled with my admission.

“Punished you how?”

I couldn’t look up at him any longer. Instead, I buried my face in his shoulder, feeling my cheeks growing hot.

“He made me come in front of all those people in there,” I whispered. “It was humiliating.”

Prescott nuzzled the top of my head, a completely unexpected gesture.

“Mmm, tell me more.”

I shivered in his arms. Somehow I had a feeling Prescott got off on this shit. The way he’d watched me finger myself had shown exactly how much he liked to be the observer. It didn’t take a rocket scientist to put two and two together. The man had voyeuristic tendencies.

“You expect me to believe you don’t know he got crazy jealous over me dancing with Mason?”

“I never said I didn’t. And I can’t say I liked it either.”

“You didn’t?”

He slid his hand from my back to my behind, pressing me harder against him.

“No. Why the fuck would I want to watch that, sweetness? You’re mine.”

For some reason, when Prescott said I was his, it didn’t make me mad. If anything, I was safe here in his arms. And I really shouldn’t feel safe with him at all. The man was a predator wrapped up in an incredibly attractive outer package. He’d feed on me until he bled me dry if I let him.

I turned my head up, finding his blue eyes intent on me, full of possessiveness that should have made me run away. Instead, I found myself wanting to run towards him. To drown in him.

“Pres, I don’t want to go home. I don’t… I don’t want to be around Mason tonight.”
He cocked his head to the side, a frown appearing on his brow.

“Why not?”

“We got into a fight, but I don’t want to talk about it and I don’t want to deal with him either.”

“So, it wasn’t just West who pissed you off.”

I shook my head. For a moment, he was silent, merely observing me with a curious expression on his face. It was obvious what I was asking for even if I hadn’t voiced it. He leant closer, his lips brushing over my ear.

“You do know what will happen if I take you back with me, don’t you?” he whispered.

I nodded. There was no doubt in my mind. Prescott would want something in return. And I’d give it to him willingly.

“Yes.”

His arms tightened around me.

“Then let’s get the fuck out of here, sweetness. This shit is boring anyway.”
Scarlett clutched my hand as we rode up in the lift to the penthouse. Leaving the awards event would land me in hot water with Drake and Francis, but I didn't give a shit. West had already disappeared from it after he'd got his own back on Scarlett for dancing with Mason. Those two could hold down the fort just fine without us. As if I was going to pass up on the opportunity for some alone time with Scarlett.

The doors opened as we stopped on our floor. I pulled Scarlett out into our open plan living area. She looked around, her expression darkening as if she remembered what happened when she was last here. How Francis laced her food with a sedative to knock her out and we'd taken advantage of her.

To distract the girl, I tugged her against me, tipping her face up to mine. She blinked, those hazel-green eyes full of emotion.

“Do you want something to drink?”

She shook her head. I stroked her jaw, unsure of where this tenderness had come from. I didn’t treat anyone with care. Somehow, Scarlett made me soft for her without even fucking trying. Her fragility made me want to wrap her up in cotton wool and shield her from everything coming her way. And yet… I wanted to wreck her too.

My knowledge of her from when we were kids made this complicated. Made it hard for me to bury my feelings towards her. She’d been one of my closest friends. My confidant. And I couldn’t stop all the memories of our childhood flooding my brain whenever she was around me. The way she’d smile and challenge the four of us. Our Little Nyx had such a beautiful soul. She was the brightest part of us. The one we’d lay down our fucking lives to protect. And now… well, we weren’t protecting her at all. We were using her as a means to an end. But it was to keep her by our sides too. None of us wanted to live without Scarlett again. She completed us.

“Should I give you a tour?”

She reached up and fiddled with my bowtie.

“Of your bedroom?”

I couldn’t fight my smile.

Oh, my dirty little lamb, you are asking to get railed.

“Is that what you want to see?”

“I thought…”

“Thought what?”

“That you’d want something for letting me stay with you.”

I didn’t blame her for thinking that given our last encounter. And she’d be right too. She owed me for this. The shit I’d get off Drake and Francis would be fucking annoying, but they’d be directing their ire at West too. I might get off lightly this time.

“Mmm, last time you weren’t so… willing.”
Her cheeks went a rather fetching shade of red.

“I liked what you did to me,” she whispered.

And fuck if her admission didn’t rattle me. I shoved my whirling emotions away, concentrating on the fact she wanted me to fuck her again.

“Did you now? Well, perhaps we’ll play a little game.” My hand left her back and curled into her hair.

“It’s called…” I tugged her head back by her hair. “Good girls who beg get rewarded.”

Her eyes widened and her lips parted.

“What do you want, little lamb?”

“I can ask for anything?”

I chuckled.

“Anything within reason, sweetness.”

Her hands slid down my chest and underneath my lapels.

“There are three things I want.” She nibbled on her bottom lip, gazing up at me with hesitation in her expression. “I want to see all of you… I want to touch you… and I want you to kiss me.”

I expelled a breath. Those were very simple requests. And I wasn’t sure what to make of them, especially the kissing part. Whilst I prided myself on my skilled mouth, I rarely allowed such… intimacies. Kisses had always been a reward for good behaviour. Somehow, I didn’t think Scarlett wanted me to kiss her as part of a game. No, she wanted me to kiss her purely because I wanted to. And that fucking terrified the shit out of me.

Instead of answering her, I let her go, only to take her hand and pull her towards the stairs. Scarlett followed me without hesitation. Taking her into my sanctuary was something I shouldn’t allow but fuck it. I wanted her in my bed, her naked body spread out for me. To fuck her where I slept every night. And I wanted her scent on my sheets to remain long after she left.

We walked up the stairs and down the hallway together until we came to my door. I opened it and strolled into the dark room, shutting it firmly behind me and flipping the lock. I dropped her hand and hit the switch, bathing the room in light. The floor to ceiling windows spread across one wall, giving an impressive view of the city. The rest of the walls were a dark grey. One had shelves with a huge TV in the centre mounted on the wall. The shelves contained many trinkets I’d acquired over the years. Scarlett made a beeline for them, running her fingers over a steel skull with gold snakes coiling out of it.

On the other side of the room sat my bed, its pale green sheets neatly folded across it. I was in the habit of making it just right every morning. West told me I was anal about appearances, but he was a fucking idiot. I liked things being in their place.

“What’s this?” she asked, picking up a small statue of a crowned rider with a bow on his back seated on a white horse.

I made my way over to her, curled myself around her back and plucked it out of her fingers, setting it back on the shelf in its rightful place next to the other three riders on horses.

“Pestilence.”

She turned her head, looking up at me with wide eyes. I pointed at the next horse, which was red and the rider carried a sword raised high in the air as if charging towards something.

“War.”

My hand fell next to the merchant upon a black horse.
“Famine.”
And I indicated the final horse with my fingers, pale green with a cloaked figure carrying a scythe.
“Death.”
Scarlett looked at them and swallowed.
“Did you get these before or after people started calling you the Four Horsemen?”
I chuckled and wrapped my arms around her waist, tugging her back against my front. My nose went to her ear, nuzzling it.
“Before. I’m far from religious, but they fascinate me. Would they be flesh and blood mortals or beings of a higher power? Who knows. I like to think they’re symbolic of humanity’s greed and corruption… how it infects everything, seeping into your soul and making you weak to your baser desires. They’re sent to punish the wicked. To tear them to pieces for their wanton desires.” I stroked her stomach, needing to be skin on skin with this woman who I shouldn’t want to get closer to. “But little do they know, the Horsemen are just as wicked and destructive as they are.”
“Wicked men hiding in plain sight,” she whispered.
“Exactly.”
She turned around in my arms and pressed her face to my chest, her hands slipping under my tux jacket again. In that moment, I let myself feel the sense of belonging she brought on. Scarlett should be in my arms. She was a part of me. A part of us. She was home.
“Be wicked to me, Pres.”
“Ask nicely, little lamb, and maybe I will.”
“Please show me your wicked side.”
Leaning down, I gripped her legs and picked her up. She yelped, wrapping her legs around my waist and her arms around my neck. I carried her over to my bed and laid her down with me covering her body. I ran my hand down her bare leg, watching her parted lips, her hands gripping my collar to keep me close. Then I ran my fingers down the centre of her chest, making her shudder.
“Do you wish Pestilence would infect you, sweetness?”
She panted out a breath and didn’t respond. My fingers paused between her breasts.
“Use your words… I won’t reward you otherwise.”
“Yes, I want you to infect me, please.”
Did she have any idea what she was doing to my self-restraint? The neediness in her voice had my dick throbbing, desperate to be in her. Whilst I loved to watch and hunt, there were times like this where I wanted to indulge myself in touch, taste and the sounds of begging, pleading wantonness from a woman.
My fingers resumed their path. This dress needed to come off. I needed to see her exposed. All of her on show.
“Mmm, me? Do you think I’m your Pestilence? Am I going to corrupt you?”
“Yes,” she gasped, hips bucking into me. “Please, fuck, please, Pres.”
Her fingers tightened on my clothes, her eyes wide with an intense craving for me. I leant towards her and nuzzled my nose along her collarbone before pressing a kiss to the bare skin above her dress.
“Say it,” I murmured against her skin. “Fucking say it, little lamb.”
Her hands slid from my collar up to my neck and into my hair. I groaned with the feel of her nails against my scalp.
“Fuck me, Pestilence.”

I’d died and gone to fucking heaven. Never in my wildest fantasies did I ever imagine how damn sweet it would be to hear her call me that. I was going to ruin this woman completely tonight. Break her apart piece by piece until she could do nothing but give in to me.

Reaching behind her, I unzipped the back of her dress before tugging it down her shoulders and off her body. My mouth watered when I realised she wasn’t wearing a bra, her full breasts on display. I took her heels off her feet and discarded them with the dress off the end of the bed. Her little lacy knicker were drenched in her arousal, no doubt from West’s earlier exploration and my own right now. I ran a finger through them.

“Such a dirty little lamb.”

She squirmed before pushing herself up on her elbows.

“Can… can I touch you… please?”

I smirked.

“If you wish.”

As quickly as I answered, she was on her knees with me, her hands splayed out across my chest. First, Scarlett undid my bowtie and threw it away. Next, she unbuttoned my jacket and I shrugged out of it. Her fingers made quick work of my shirt. She pulled it open and stared at my bare chest.

“Fuck,” she whispered, her fingers tracing lines down my skin.

All of us utilised our home gym downstairs to keep in shape. I wasn’t crazy about working out, but I had a routine to maintain my appearance.

“Do you like what you see?”

She bit her lip and nodded, her eyes intent on me as if she couldn’t tear her gaze away. I undid my cufflinks and threw them on the bedside table before pulling my shirt off completely. Her hands went to my belt, unbuckling it before she unzipped me. I watched her tug my trousers off my hips. Pulling away, I slipped off my shoes, socks and trousers. I stood in front of her in my boxers, the clear outline of my hard cock straining against them. Her eyes were on it, her hands fisting in her lap as if she was struggling not to reach out for me. As if she wanted everything I had on offer.

Don’t worry, sweetness, I’ll give it to you. All of it. Just be a good girl for me, hmm? Do as I say and beg me for my dick. Beg me to kiss you. Beg me for it all. I want to do my worst to your sinful little body. To my Little Nyx.

“So, little lamb.” I ran my hand over my dick. “If you want this… you’re going to have to make me believe it.”

Her eyes flicked up to mine, widening slightly.

“Beg.”
Scarlett’s expression darkened with need. Her lips parted, and her chest heaved. Those fucking tits of hers had me holding back from stepping closer. I wanted to bite down on those hard nubs and make her scream. Brand myself all over this girl. She was fucking well mine.

“I want you to fuck me. Use me… please. Take me whatever way you want. I want your cock in me, in every part of me. Please, please give it to me. Let… let me suck it. I want to taste you… please, Pres please.”

Holy. Fuck.

The desperate pitch of her voice was damning. I curled my finger, beckoning her over as I stepped up to the end of the bed. She crawled to me before she turned her head up to mine. I slid a hand around her jaw, stroking my thumb down her cheek.

“Such a good little lamb.”

“I want to be your dirty little lamb. I’m… I’m burning for you.”

I licked my lip.

“Mmm, go on then, suck my dick and show me how dirty you can be.”

Reaching for me, she slid my boxers off my hips, making my cock pop out right in her face. She slipped them down my legs and I kicked them away. Her small hand wrapped around my dick, stroking up and down in the softest, most torturous manner. I groaned, digging my fists into her hair.

“No teasing. Wrap those pretty lips around it before I get impatient and shove it down your throat.”

Her eyes were like saucers, but she leant closer and licked the tip. I shuddered, not giving a shit about showing her how much I wanted this. How she turned me on to the point of insanity.

“In your fucking mouth. Now, Scarlett, right fucking now.”

And oh, how she took me. Her soft lips slid over my dick like they were made to. Her hand curled around my waist as she took me deeper. A grunt left my lips from the intensity of the wet, warm mouth encasing my cock.

*I’m burning for you too, sweetness. Burning like a fucking inferno.*

My hands tightened around the strands of her hair, pulling it tight and making her wince. But not once did she stop taking me.

“What a corrupt little thing you are already. You were fucking made to serve at my feet.”

She moaned around my length, agreeing with me. And to reward her for it, I shoved her face down hard, making her take me down her throat with no warning. Her choking sounds were fucking everything. Her eyes were on my face, the beginnings of tears forming in the corners of them. When I pulled my dick out of her mouth, she spluttered, spit spraying across me and dripping down her chin.

“Mmm, messy girl. I like seeing you struggle.” I let go of her hair. “On your hands and knees.”

She was quick to comply, turning around and presenting herself to me. My fingers hooked into her
knickers, and I slid them down her legs, throwing them halfway across the room. She wouldn't be needing those any time soon. I spread her cheeks with both my hands, staring down at her two beautiful holes on full display. Leaning down, I tasted her, my tongue running from her clit all the way up to the puckered skin where I knew the darkest delights lay in wait for me.

“Tell me what you want,” I murmured, my tongue focusing on her last hole I had yet to sample with my dick.

“You,” she breathed, her body jerking in response to my stimulation. “Please don’t stop.”

I dipped two fingers into her pussy, groaning at how sopping wet she was. Thrusting a few times, I slid them out and pressed them against her beautiful little arse, circling the tight hole I would be fucking without any damn restraint soon.

“Oh god, Pres, fuck!” she cried out when I slid a finger inside her.

“Hold on to the covers, little lamb.”

Her fingers fisted them. I wasn’t going to let her touch herself to ease her into this.

I straightened and leant over to my bedside table, ripping open the drawer and extracting a bottle of lube. She was going to need it to take my cock. Dumping it next to me, I gripped her hip and shoved my dick deep into her pussy in one brutal thrust. She lurched forward, letting out a cry of pleasure and pain.

Whilst I fucked her pussy with my cock and her little arse with my finger, I leant over her and pressed my lips to her shoulder.

“Mmm, your needy little pussy is so hungry for dick, isn’t she?”

“Yes,” she whined, pressing back against me. “Punish her for it.”

For the first time in my life, I wanted to kiss the shit out of a woman. I wanted to taste her dirty words right from the source.

“Has she been a bad girl?”

“So bad, please, please punish her.”

I kissed her shoulder again, the temptation to grab her face twisting my gut up in knots. Instead, I straightened and fisted her hair, pulling her head back.

“Dirty little lamb.”

Another finger joined the first in her tight little arse before I picked up the pace, fucking my woman with brutal and unforgiving strokes. Her cries fed my damn soul. Made the darkest, most primal part of me come out to play. I leant over her again, my mouth landing on her ear.

“One day, I’m going to chase you, Scarlett. Chase you until your legs give out and you can’t run any longer. Then I’m going to fuck you in the dirt like an animal. I’m going to mark your skin over and over with my teeth, litter you with damn fucking bruises and show the entire damn world you’re mine. My sacrificial lamb. I’ll lay you down on my altar and devour you whole.”

“Pres,” she whimpered. “Please.”

“Mmm, you want that. You want me to destroy you.”

Her cries as my fingers tightened in her hair, straining her neck with the way I held her head back and thrust deeper in her tight, wet pussy fed me. The noises of our skin slapping together were fucking magical. They echoed around the room, ringing with my savage brutality.

“Please.”

“What do you want?” I growled in her ear.
“Kiss me, please.”

Fuck, how I wanted to give in. Wanted to give her exactly what she asked for.

“How desperate are you for my lips?”

“I want them so bad. I want you to kiss me, please, Pres, I’m begging you. Please.”

She was eroding my self-control. Eroding everything inside me. The walls I kept build up around my fucking soul. Only Scarlett had the power to dig her way inside me and tear me to shreds. And for some fucked up reason, I wanted to let her.

Releasing her hair, I pulled myself back up and out of her completely. I scooped up the bottle of lub and slathered it all over my dick before pressing some inside her. She looked back at me, those hazel-green eyes wide.

“You want a kiss, hmm? Then you’re going to take my dick without complaint, you hear me? Take the whole fucking thing.” I rubbed my thumb over her rim. “All up inside this tight little hole.”

Her body trembled.

“I will,” she whispered before biting down on her lip.

“Spread those cheeks for me. Show me where you’re going to take my dick.”

She shifted, leaning on her shoulders so she could reach back and spread herself for me. And fuck if I wasn’t the most stunning sight I’d ever beheld. I couldn’t take another moment to admire it because my cock wanted in her. I wanted to come in her tight little arse and paint her insides.

Notching the head of my dick against her, I pressed forward, leaning my free hand on the small of her back to steady her.

“Bear down, little lamb, let me in.”

When she complied, the head of my dick lodged itself inside her. The pained whine coming from her lips had me smiling. She didn’t tell me to stop or attempt to move away. No, my girl took my dick like she’d been told. I grunted as I pressed deeper, my cock being enveloped by such tight heat. I couldn’t get enough of it.

“Pres,” she whimpered.

“Is that a complaint I hear?”

“No! No… please, I want it. I want it so bad.”

Another inch slipped inside her. Fuck, nothing else could compare to the way her tight walls gripped my dick. Her whole body strained with the effort of holding herself open there for me. Letting me sink my cock deep inside her hot little arse.

When I finally bottomed out, I slapped her hands away from her cheeks and gripped her hips, holding myself inside her so she could get used to being filled. She shifted back up onto her hands, looking back at me with hazy, lust drunk eyes.

“Does that feel good, hmm? Do you like my dick all up in your arse?”

“Yes, I want you to fuck me hard, please. Give it to me.”

Slowly, I inched out, listening to her moan with the sensation of my dick rubbing along her hole. Then I thrust back in, taking her deep. The rhythm I built was steady, letting her adjust to my size and length until there was no resistance left.

My fingers tightened around her hips. I gave her no mercy as I pounded her tight hole, making her cry and gasp, her fists clenched around the covers.
“Rub that needy clit, little lamb. Come all over my dick.”

She let go and slid her fingers between her legs. A choked moan erupted from her lips as she stroked herself into a frenzy. Her body bucked and she thrust back against me, trying to take more, trying to make me go faster. I obliged, giving her it all. Then I leant over her and bit down on her shoulder, marking her with my teeth.

“Pres,” she all but screamed. “Fuck!”

Her climax followed, her whole body trembling with the intensity of it. And fuck if she didn’t squeeze my dick hard. I bit down harder on her shoulder, trying to starve back my own need to come. I couldn’t help it. My balls ached with the need to explode. Her scream was the final damn straw. I had no control left. None whatsoever.

I groaned around my teeth on her shoulder as I kept pounding her tight hole and my dick erupted, spurting inside her like wildfire. Letting go of her shoulder, I pressed my face into her hair. Her scent flooded my veins, making me want to hold her close and never let my girl go. Never allow her to leave me again.

“Little Nyx,” I breathed into her hair, forgetting for a moment I should not have voiced that name out loud to her.

When I realised, I almost fucking lost my shit, unsure if she’d heard me or not. I couldn’t afford to let her remember us. Not yet. Not now. The others would crucify me.

Pulling out of her, I flipped her over onto her back and covered her body with my own. Her eyes were wide when I took hold of her face and pressed my lips against hers. Warmth and fucking need spread through me at the touch of her mouth. Scarlett had no choice but to kiss me back, her hands threading into my hair. It only made me delve into her mouth with my tongue and taste her. The moan leaving her lips encouraged me. I kissed her deeper, taking and taking until I was breathless and needing air, but I couldn’t stop. This was nothing like kissing other women. Scarlett felt so fucking different. She was everything to me. Absolutely fucking everything. The strain of my lungs was the only thing to pull my mouth from hers. I let the air fill them, panting with the effort of trying to breathe normally again.

“Pres,” she whispered, her own breathing heavy. “Kiss me again, please, kiss me until I don’t know my own name.”

“I thought my cock already did that,” I murmured, smiling at her.

“Please.”

Her hazel-green eyes were full of need. I did as she asked, taking my time to explore her mouth with mine, loving the way she moulded to me completely. And when we came up for air, her smile lit my whole fucking world on fire. I stroked her hair back from her face and wanted to drown in her. The scent of her. The beauty of this woman below me.

I slid off her and reached over, grabbing the wet wipes I kept on my bedside table and handed them to her. The two of us cleaned ourselves up before chucking that shit in the bin. Then I pulled back the covers and tucked Scarlett up in them with me. I lay on my back whilst she pressed her head to my chest, tucking herself into my side and stroking her fingers down my pec.

“I don’t know why, but you feel so familiar to me,” she murmured after a long silence.

I tried not to stiffen at her words. My fingers danced along her shoulder, stroking her perfectly soft skin, whilst my other hand curled around her waist, keeping her pinned to me.
“That’s odd.”
She nodded, sliding her hand from my chest into my hair and stroking my scalp instead.
“It’s stupid really, probably wishful thinking on my part. Hoping I can find a connection to the person I was before my accident. Before I lost all my memories.”
The way my heart lurched with her words had my hand tightening around her waist. My jaw clenched, preventing the words to soothe her aching soul from coming out of them.

_You know me, Scarlett. You know all of us. We’re your best friends. And now we’re so much more than that._
“I’ve been getting these weird flashes of conversations and pictures in my head. I don’t know if they’re real or not, but… they feel real. Maybe I just want them to be real.”

I pressed my mouth to her hair. Why did this hurt so fucking much? Like taking a damn sledgehammer to my chest. Scarlett fucking decimated me with her words.

“Maybe they are real, little lamb.”

I shouldn’t have said it. I knew that, but the desperate part of me wanted her to remember me. Wanted her to look at me with recognition in her eyes.

“I hope so. All I’ve ever wanted is to remember who I am.”

And that was the final fucking straw. I pressed my face harder against her head, trying not to let my emotions out. The utter devastation of knowing she suffered as much as we had, even though our suffering was different. And I think if she knew the truth, she’d want to remember us. She’d want to break free of the prison her mind held her in.

Releasing her for a moment, I clapped three times and the lights went out, plunging us into darkness. Then I turned on my side and wrapped myself around her small frame, cradling her against my chest. Pressing my face back into her hair, I breathed in her scent of cinnamon, letting it soothe me. Allowing her body and fucking soul to damn well fill the void inside me that her words had caused. And when Scarlett drifted off, I kept holding her, listening to the steady rhythm of her breathing.

“You will,” I whispered into her hair. “One day, you will remember it all. I promise.”
Waking up having spent the night in Prescott’s bed, curled up against the man himself was an experience in of itself. I’d never slept next to a man before, especially not one who knew my body as intimately as he did. His body heat radiated off him, keeping me warm and cosy beneath his covers. And I hadn’t dreamt. The haunting nightmares didn’t plague me. His presence kept them at bay.

Peeking my head out of the covers, I looked up at Prescott who was fast asleep. The morning sun dappled across his face, highlighting all the curves and edges. His dark blonde hair was rumpled from sleep. A hand rested on his chest, right over his heart, as it rose and fell at a steady pace. The other was curled around me in a manner I could only describe as possessive.

The man was undeniably attractive in every sense of the word. He was built to beguile and lure the unsuspecting in. The perfect male specimen. And yet there was a peacefulness to him in slumber I’m sure few ever had the opportunity to witness. Like his perfect mask slipped away and the deadly man underneath was finally visible.

And what a man he is.

The way he’d looked at me last night as if I was something precious to him. No matter the way he spoke to me or treated me, his blue gaze gave him away. It spoke of secrets kept, desires hidden and loss, soul-destroying loss. I had no idea what it meant, but a part of me broke inside for him. The part of me that had started to care for Prescott.

I knew I shouldn’t. He was my enemy. Somehow, the lines between friend and foe blurred until I could barely see them.

Why does it feel like I’ve known you forever? Why does my heart yearn for you? Why am I falling under your spell with so little resistance?

I didn’t know how to stop my descent into madness. Into the trap he’d laid so expertly. And at this point, I had no idea if I even wanted to. All I knew was I wanted to stay in this bed with him, away from the world outside. Savour this stolen moment where I didn’t have to guard my secrets and lie to him.

Without thinking about it, I pressed a kiss to his chest and placed my hand over his. My head settled in the crook of his shoulder, my eyes drawn to his features, wanting to document each and every one to keep as a memento of the first time I’d felt safe and secure in years.

“I don’t think I can do this,” I whispered into his skin, a tear slipping from my eye. “I can’t hurt you even though I know you’re going to hurt me.”

The words were fucking damning. They wrecked me. The guilt overwhelmed my being. My hand around Prescott’s tightened. I didn’t want to wake him and allow him to see me like this but fuck if the pain in my chest didn’t half burn with its intensity.

I wanted to scream and rage at my parents for putting me in this position. They’d sent me to destroy the Horsemen. To tear them apart. To bring them their heads. And instead, the Horsemen had infected
I had no idea who I was. Who this woman inside me had become, or who she wanted to be. The real Scarlett was locked away behind a wall of bulletproof glass. No matter how many times I smashed my fists against it in desperation to unlock my secrets, it never cracked. There was no chink in its armour. The wall remained an impenetrable force in my brain. And I hated everything about it.

I’d been so overwhelmed by the sex with Prescott last night, my words about wanting the truth came spilling out without me thinking about it. Without me considering what it meant to reveal to him that I’d had flashes of the past seeping into my head. They had to be real. There couldn’t be any other explanation for the vivid nature of the memories. But why did being around these men cause them? It was a question I hadn’t yet found an answer to.

“Little lamb.”

His melodic voice brushed across my ears. Opening my eyes, which I’d closed when my tears slipped out, I found Prescott’s blue ones staring down at me.

“Hey.”

He slid his hand from underneath mine and brushed away the tear leaking from my eye. The skin below me was damp. I hadn’t realised I’d started crying in earnest. Prescott didn’t say another word. He merely leant closer and pressed a kiss to my hair and cupped my face with his large palm as if to tell me it was okay. That I could cry and he wouldn’t belittle me for it.

I gulped down a breath of air, my heart aching with the tender care the man was showing me. A side of him I didn’t know existed until the day in his office when he’d fucked me on his desk.

“I don’t understand you,” I whispered. “Any of you, but right now, especially not you, Pres. How can you be so cruel with one hand and give me so much care with the other?”

He wasn’t going to answer me. I knew it. But the words came out anyway. They made me sound so fucking broken. And I was. Inside held a mess of conflicting feelings, emotions, and guilt.

A sob left my lips, the dam breaking and opening up the void in my chest. Prescott turned on his side and tucked me up against his chest, stroking my back and letting me cry on him. Allowing me to fall apart in his arms as the stress of the past few weeks with these men bore down on me.

“Shh, sweetness,” he whispered into my hair as he pressed his face into it. “I’ve got you.”

His words only made me cry harder. I clutched him to me as if my life depended on being close to this man who was slowly destroying me from the inside out.

Who knew how long we stayed like that, me lost in misery and him taking care of me. It was only when a loud noise blared next to us, I realised today was Friday and we had work. Prescott shifted, reaching over to turn off his alarm. He settled back down and pressed a kiss to the top of my head.

“Feel better, my little lamb?”

I nodded.

“Thank you,” I mumbled into his skin.

He reached up and pulled my face away from his chest. Both his big palms cupped my cheeks, and he wiped the tears from under my eyes with his thumbs. The softness of his expression rendered me utterly damned for this man. I couldn’t destroy Prescott for my parents. Not when he’d let me purge my emotions on his chest. Not when he made me feel safe.

“Let me make you breakfast, hmm? Then I’m giving you the day off. Drake can just deal without...
“Are you sure about that?” I sniffled.

“He can’t fire me.”

I snorted and shoved at his chest.

“He can fire me.”

“But he won’t. Not if I have something to do with it.”

I didn’t want to create conflict between him and Drake. I imagined there might already be given
Prescott had skipped out on the awards ceremony for me.

“As sweet as that is, Pres, I think I need to be here, though I have nothing to wear. I’ll just nip home
for a change of clothes even if it means I’m late.”

He smiled.

“You can’t get out of breakfast.”

I gave him a nod. As if I would turn down his offer when he’d been so nice to me this morning.

He let me go and slid out of bed, stretching. I tried not to drool over his beautiful, very naked form
He went around the bed, picking up our clothes and straightening them out. I watched him take his tux
over to hidden wardrobes in one of the walls. He hung up the items. Everything was so neat and had its
exact place. Next to the wardrobe was another hidden door, which he opened and disappeared into.

I slipped out of his covers and padded over to it, stopping in the doorway. The secret bathroom had a
large rainfall shower. It was decorated in slate grey tiles with pale green accents in the towels and toiletry
holders. Prescott had turned the shower on. He glanced back at me with a twinkle in his eye.

“Are you joining me?”

He stepped behind the glass separating the rest of the bathroom from the shower without waiting for
a response. The water cascaded down his body, making my mouth water. My feet carried me into the
room, around the glass, and then I was wrapping myself around his back, my fingers running along the
grooves of his stomach. The water hit me, washing away all evidence of my tears. He didn’t say a word
merely pulled me around to his front and grabbed the shower gel.

He didn’t allow us to linger in the shower after he’d washed me and then himself. Afterwards, he
dried me with a fluffy towel and tucked me up in his giant dressing gown. My hair was damp, but I
couldn’t do much about that. I sat on the end of his bed, watching him dress for the day in a dark grey
suit with a waistcoat and a dark blue tie. The man moved with liquid grace. The whole experience of
seeing him ready himself for his day was a treat for me in a lot of ways. It was the first time I’d had such
intimacies with a man.

He styled his hair before coming over and pulling me up. Prescott clasped my hand in his and we left
the room. I could hear the sound of voices spilling up from the floor below as we got nearer to the
stairs. It made me falter in my steps. Prescott glanced at me with concern in his eyes.

“Are you sure about this?” I whispered. “Aren’t they going to be mad that I’m here?”

He gave me a wink.

“If they are, fuck ‘em.”

I swallowed when we descended the stairs together. Prescott didn’t let go of my hand, even as the
voices stopped. When I looked over, Drake and Francis stood in the kitchen with mugs in their hands
and West standing by the windows, his hand up against the glass as he stared out at the skyline. Francis’
eyes narrowed as we reached the bottom of the stairs. Drake remained expressionless and I'm not sure West had even registered we were there. The last time I'd seen that damn man was when he stuck his hand up my dress and forced me to come in a room full of people. My face grew hot at the memory.

“Morning,” Prescott said with a sunny smile on his face, which I’m pretty sure pissed Francis off, judging by the way his face soured.

Prescott made me sit down at the dining table, stroking my shoulder and giving me a wink before he wandered over to the kitchen.

“Did we win?” he asked as he opened the fridge, clearly not caring about what my appearance had caused. I could feel the disapproval radiating off Drake in waves, not to mention the irritation from Francis.

“Yes, which you would have known if you’d been there,” Francis said through gritted teeth.

Prescott merely shrugged as he pulled out some items from the fridge and set them on the counter next to him.

“I’m sure you handled it just fine without me.”

Francis’ scowl only deepened.

“It’s your fucking—”

“Francis,” Drake said, cutting him off. “Enough.”

His voice sent a chill down my spine. The absolute command and control in it silencing the entire room. West turned his head, looking at the others with a raised eyebrow. Then he spied me sitting there. A slow smile curved along his lips, making me grip the dressing gown tie in fear of what he would do. Shoving off the window, he stalked over to me. I swallowed hard when he approached my back and leant over me, placing his palms on the table in front of me.

“Hello, Scarlett,” he murmured in my ear. “Fancy seeing you here.”

I clenched my jaw shut, trying not to show how much he terrified the shit out of me. Especially after what he did last night.

“Did you not get enough from me, hmm? Or did Pres take it easy on you?”

Prescott had not taken it easy on me at all. I had a bruise on my shoulder from his teeth. He marked me as his, claiming my whole damn soul and binding me to him. It’d felt like that to me anyway. I had no idea of how Prescott felt about it, as he didn’t exactly voice his feelings aloud.

The fact West had decided to taunt me in front of the rest of them irritated me. Instead of doing what I should have, which was to remain silent, I turned my head up towards him and met his amber eyes.

“If you must know, I begged for his dick, which is more than I’ve ever done for you.”

As soon as the words left my lips, I regretted them. The way West’s eyes flashed had me shrinking back. And the silence echoing around the room told me the rest of them had heard me.

Do you ever learn? Do not antagonise the psychopath who thinks you’re his.

“Is that so?”

The deadly calm of his voice made me tremble. Every part of me screamed to run very, very far away from this man. I was trapped between his arms and the table. And his vicious smile made my heart pound so hard the beat of it rang in my ears. He leant closer, his face right up in mine.

“You say that,” he told me, his voice low and full of deadly violence. “But mark my words, you’ll be singing to a very different tune soon.”
His hand left the table and he curled a lock of my wet hair around his finger. For a moment I thought he might stop, but he tugged on it hard, making me yelp.

“And by soon, I really mean right now.”

I barely had a chance to take a breath when he ripped me out of my seat, slammed me against the table, and winded me. His hand curled around my neck as he pressed my face into the wood. The man leant over me, his breath dusting across my cheek.

“I should fuck that attitude out of you, Scar,” he whispered. “I should teach you a fucking lesson in front of him.”

The next thing I knew, he’d stabbed a knife into the table right by my face, making me flinch. His fist clenched around it, the tattoo of two bloody axes stark against his skin.

“But I have a feeling Drake and Frankie might have something to say about that… so here’s what’s going to happen. You’re going to get on your knees and apologise to me or I will make you bleed out all over this table whilst I fuck you into a stupor.”
The way she trembled below me with my words had the darkness inside me smiling. How she continued
to defy me when she knew exactly what I would do had me thinking she did this shit on purpose. She
wanted me to punish her. Her guilt was showing. The whole fucking reason she was here was clear as
day. It seeped out of her pores. Scarlett had not re-entered our lives with good intentions. And whilst I
knew it wasn’t all her fault, she still carried the fucking responsibility of going along with it.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered. “Please don’t hurt me.”

“Now, now, what I did tell you about your apology?”

She shivered. I could feel her heart hammering against me. Her fear was fucking intoxicating. I got
drunk off the terrorised woman below me.

“I’ll do it, just please, don’t hurt me.”

I caressed the skin on her neck.

“And here I thought you weren’t going to beg me, Scar. Is that not reserved for Pres?”

“No,” she whimpered. “Please, West. I’m sorry.”

I nuzzled her hair. Fuck, her fear smelt so sweet. I dug my knife out of the table and ran the edge
across her bottom lip.

“If I cut you right now, you know what would happen?”

She shook her head.

“We’d make Drake hard as fuck. Then you’d be in bigger trouble.”

“What?”

“Mmm, I’ll leave you to work that one out.”

I released her and pushed myself up off the table. Then I straightened my clothes. Scarlett didn’t
move, frozen on the table where I’d pinned her. My eyes went to the others. They hadn’t heard the full
extent of my conversation with her. Prescott looked like he wanted to deck me. Drake had his arms
crossed over his chest with a dark expression. And Francis? Well, he had his fists clenched on the
counter. I was in for quite the conversation when she left.

“On your knees, Scar. You wouldn’t want to keep me waiting now, would you?”

She scrambled to obey, pushing herself off the table onto the floor and kneeling at my feet. Her head
raised slowly, her hazel-green eyes meeting mine. I put the tip of my knife under her chin and forced her
head up further.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have spoken to you in the way I did, West. I didn’t mean it.”

“And… what else?”

She reached out and gripped my belt between her fingers. Her expression was full of earnestness and
stark honesty.

“I want your dick as much as I want Pres’. I need it.”
I fought my smile so fucking hard.
“Who is allowed to touch you?”
“You, Drake, Francis and Pres.”
“And who do you belong to, Scar?”
“You.”
I stroked my knife down her cheek.
“That’s right. You best not forget that again, you hear me?”

She nodded, her fingers tightening around my belt. There was nothing sweeter than watching her beg me to forgive her with her eyes. Beg me to not unleash my inner deviant and wreck her soul. It was only a matter of time until I did. Until she saw the monster living inside me. The one who had no mercy for anyone. Not even her.
“I won’t.”
Before I could stop her, she’d released my belt and took my hand. She pressed her lips to my knife. Then she licked it, her tongue running up the smooth side of the blade. And finally, she kissed my knuckles where I had symbols tattooed representing the lives I’d taken. The important ones and the scum of the earth who didn’t deserve to breathe air.

Dear fuck, I have no words.
“Yours, West,” she whispered. “I’m yours.”

Then she let go and rose to her feet. Her actions proved to me the real Scarlett was still in there. The one who was as fucked up and psycho as the rest of us. We had to tear her out somehow. Not yet, but soon.

She stared up at me, a fucking queen in her own right but she didn’t know it yet. I flicked my knife closed and slipped it back into my pocket. Stepping closer to her, I wrapped my hand around the back of her head and leant down, watching the others over her shoulder.

“We’re going to fuck you all together again, Scar. Not now, but soon. And this time you’re going to watch every moment. See the way your body strains and struggles to take us all at once.”

Slipping my free hand beneath her dressing gown, I cupped her bare breast. My thumb flicked over the hardened peak.

“We’re going to fuck you until you’re crying and then I’ll lick away your tears. They taste so damn sweet.”

She shuddered and let out a little gasp.

“Don’t piss me off again, Scar, or I won’t let any of them make you come when we use you for our damn fucking pleasure.”

I pinched her nipple for good measure. She squeaked, rocking back on her heels.

“And I really, really want to make you come so many times, you pass out again.”

I released her, stepped back and pointed at the dining room table.

“Sit.”

She obeyed straight away, taking a seat and stared down at the wood. I took a seat next to her, stroking my fingers along her shoulder as I leant my arm over her chair. And I fucking dared the rest of them to give me shit with my eyes. None of them did. They wouldn’t in front of Scarlett.

I watched Prescott shake his head and give me a dirty look before he turned away to continue making
her breakfast. Something had happened between him and Scarlett last night. I wasn’t sure what, but he kept glancing at her as if to reassure himself she was okay.

Drake and Francis were clearly unimpressed with both me and him. They were having a rather heated whispered conversation and kept giving us disapproving looks.

“They’re not very happy Pres let you stay,” I murmured in Scarlett’s ear.

She looked at me.

“Are you?”

I gave her a smile.

“Pres can do whatever he wants. I’m not his fucking keeper.”

“Can I ask you something?”

I curled my hand around her shoulder.

“If you want.”

She searched my eyes for a long moment.

“Why are you okay with them touching me?”

I shrugged.

“We’ve always shared our toys.”

“That’s all I am to you? A toy for your amusement?”

She was far from a fucking toy. Hell, this woman was my damn soul, but until she remembered who the fuck I was to her, I wouldn’t be giving her anything.

“Aw, Scar, am I destroying your fantasies of a loving, caring relationship or something? Hate to break it to you, but I don’t do romance or any of that other bullshit.”

She frowned.

“No. And I didn’t say you could call me Scar.”

My hand tightened around her shoulder.

“I don’t recall needing your permission.”

“You’re not big on asking for anything.” She reached out and curled her fingers around my thigh.

“You take what you want and don’t care who gets hurt in the process.”

I licked my lip. Raising my free hand, I curled it around her neck, stroking her pulse point. She didn’t try to stop me or push me off. I cocked my head to the side and gave her a sly smile.

“I like hurting you, Scar. You cry so sweetly on my dick.”

She pursed her lips, clearly trying to refrain from giving me a smart remark back.

“I won’t punish you if you tell me what you’re thinking right now.”

Her nails dug into my leg. I didn’t wince. No, I fucking loved the sharp pricks of pain.

“I want more than good dick,” she whispered. “But I don’t think you’re capable of giving it to me.”

“You have the others for conversation if you need it.”

Her free hand curled around mine around her neck, fingers caressing my skin.

“One way or another, West, you’re going to show me who you really are. Don’t kid yourself into believing you won’t.”

Such a bold little thing she was. And I fucking loved it.

“We’ll just have to see, won’t we?”

Her eyes darkened. There she was. My girl showing her true colours once again.
I released her and leaned back in my seat as Prescott approached with a plate for her. He set it down and returned to the kitchen to get his own. Then he sat on her other side and stroked a hand down her back.

“Eat, little lamb,” he murmured.

Had this prick gone soft for her? Was that why he kept giving me those murderous looks? He needed to chill the fuck out. I wasn’t actually going to cut her with my knife. A little pain didn’t kill anyone, but I’d already hurt her enough to last a lifetime. As if I would endanger her life again.

My eyes went to Francis, annoyance flooding my veins. If it wasn’t for… I stopped my thoughts in their tracks. No point taking a trip down memory lane. It wouldn’t do me any good.

Scarlett and Prescott shared a whispered conversation with each other whilst they ate. I’d already had a liquid breakfast after my workout. I’d been waiting to go downstairs with the others when these two had shown up.

When they were done, Prescott took her back upstairs to dress. I stood up and leaned against the table, eyeing Drake and Francis warily. They didn’t say a single word, only looked at me with reproach in both their eyes.

Scarlett and Prescott returned a few minutes later, Scarlett in her clothes from last night. She left Prescott to approach Drake with cautious steps. He stared down at her, his expression blank as usual when she stopped in front of him.

“I have to go home and change. I’ll be a little late, but I promise I’ll make up the time.”

Drake said nothing for a long moment. The only reaction he had was the flexing of his hand, something only I noticed. Drake’s tells were so fucking obvious. He wanted to tell her it wasn’t okay, but I had a feeling he was way more pissed with Prescott right now.

“Don’t let it happen again.”

She gave him a nod. Prescott walked over to the lift and pressed the button for it. Scarlett gave Drake a tentative smile before saying good morning to Francis. Then she retreated to Prescott’s side as the lift arrived. He leaned down and whispered something in her ear, stroking her lower back with his fingers. She smiled up at him, touching his arm before walking into the lift and pressing a button, presumably for the ground floor.

The moment the doors closed and the lift descended Prescott turned around. There was a certain fire in his eyes I rarely ever saw. The next thing I knew, he’d closed the distance between us in three long strides and his hand came up. I didn’t have a chance to duck as his fist collided with my jaw. My head snapped back, pain radiating up my face from the impact.

Lowering my head, I put my hand to my jaw and rubbed it. Fuck me, Prescott had a decent right hook. I’d been on the receiving end of it before, but I forgot how damn fucking strong the guy was.

“What the fuck was that for?”
This morning had turned into one huge shitshow and it had barely begun. Prescott had taken it upon himself to let Scarlett stay in his fucking room last night. Then West had to go psycho on her for talking back to him. And now Prescott had decked West for fuck knows what reason.

“You did not need to take it that far,” Prescott ground out through his teeth, staring at West with murder in his blue eyes.

West shoved Prescott away from him and bared his teeth. There was blood on them. Prescott’s right hook had always been deadly. He rarely hit anyone. The man was almost as calm as Drake, too busy making idiotic jokes to get mad, but when he did, it was sure as shit a good idea to run as far away from him as possible. Even then, you weren’t guaranteed to escape his wrath. The man was damn fast. He needed to be, given he was into primal play. I did not envy the woman who ran from him. I’d seen Prescott in action and he was fucking deadly.

“Me? Take it too far? What the actual fuck, Pres? What’s got into you?”

Prescott stabbed a finger into West’s chest, getting up in his face.

“Threatening her like that. She’s been through enough already without your psychotic bullshit on top of it.”

Drake leant over to me.

“You grab Prescott, I’ll handle West.”

We didn’t need this to dissolve into an all-out war between them. Being at each other’s throats wasn’t helpful in the slightest. Especially not when it was clear Prescott was in the mood for violence.

Drake and I walked out from behind the counter towards the dining table. Before West could get another word in, Drake dragged him away from Prescott, who tried to go after them, but I stopped him with an arm around his chest.

“Take a breather, Pres,” I hissed in his ear.

“He needs to learn some fucking self-restraint.”

“We all know that, but you need to calm the fuck down. Kicking the shit out of him isn’t going to change the way he is. You know better.”

Prescott shook me off and paced away, but not before I got a death glare off him. Drake had pinned West against the window, who was grinning at him in that fucking manic way of his.

“What the fuck has got into you?” Drake asked, his voice a quiet calm that told me he was close to losing his temper.

“Me?” West scoffed. “What about him? He’s gone all fucking soft over her like she’s a porcelain doll.”

That comment made Prescott start towards him, but I grabbed his shoulder to stop him from going after West again. We did not need to go downstairs with black eyes or any other sort of facial bruising. If we did, Scarlett would know we’d been fighting when she returned later. And it would be obvious it
was over her. Something we did not need to deal with on top of everything else.

“Trust me, I want to know the answer to that too, but this isn’t about him. It’s about you.”

West glared at Drake but didn’t answer. Who the fuck knew what went on in his brain. West had never exactly been what anyone would call sane, and it got worse after Scarlett disappeared. As if the only thing holding him together was gone. I thought when she came back, he might regain his equilibrium, but it was wishful fucking thinking on my part. If anything, it had only exacerbated his psychotic nature.

“West.”

“Nothing has got into me, Drake,” West ground out. “Nothing at all.”

None of us believed him, but it wasn’t worth pressing the subject. If he didn’t want to talk, he wouldn’t. West could be a locked box. He had many secrets, things he’d hidden from the three of us. No doubt they were things we should know, but the man was a law unto himself.

Drake let West go, the latter smoothing down his suit and walking it off. I kept hold of Prescott just in case. I could feel his anger radiating off him next to me. Drake turned to Prescott, his indigo eyes narrowing.

“You have some explaining to do.”

“I don’t want to do this anymore.” Prescott shoved my hand off and walked away into the kitchen, leaning his hands on the counter and taking a deep breath. “I can’t hurt her… I won’t hurt her.”

“What?”

I couldn’t believe my ears either. What the hell happened between him and Scarlett? He’d always been fully on board with all our plans right from the start. He even argued with me over taking Scarlett when she’d told him she hadn’t been with a man before. He advocated for taking her, regardless. And now here he was dropping a huge fucking bombshell on us like he’d undergone a personality transplant in the last twelve hours.

“Last night, she told me her memories are bleeding back into her present. She fucking told me she wants to remember who she is.” His voice shook with his words. “She sounded so… broken. So lost. Fuck, I can’t look at her without thinking about how we used to protect her with our lives. How we’d do anything for that girl.” He dropped his chin to his chest. “And look at us now, what the fuck are we all doing? We’re fucking her up worse and for what? For fucking what?”

I couldn’t remember the last time I saw Prescott look so defeated.

“You know what, Pres. You know exactly why we’re doing this.”

I flinched at Drake’s hard tone like he couldn’t believe that out of all of us, it was Prescott who’d cracked. For a moment Prescott did nothing, then he spun around, his blue eyes full of turmoil.

“They stole her from us. They fucking stole her away. They took her before she even woke up. We never stood a chance. One day she was there, the next she was gone. And now she doesn’t know us. She doesn’t know who I fucking am.” He slammed a fist against his chest. “She was everything, fucking everything. The sweetness and light I never got anywhere else. She understood what it was like to grow up the way I did, something none of you fucking well gets. So no, you don’t get to stand there and tell me I know why. You don’t get it. I can’t turn off my feelings at the fucking flip of the switch like he can.” He waved at West who was leaning against the wall by the staircase. “I care. I fucking care and I can’t hurt her.”
The brokenness of his tone had me walking over to him. I understood his pain. I got it. It was the exact same pain festering inside me. Prescott looked at me when I stopped in front of him. The haunted expression on his face echoed the ache in my chest.

“I know,” I murmured. “I know they took her and it destroyed all of us.”
“I want her back, Francis. I just want her back.”
Prescott didn't stop me from pulling him against me and holding him. He looked like he was about to break apart.

“I want her back too.” I sighed, hating myself for what I had to say next. “But you realise we can't deviate from the plan, right? There’s too much at stake.”
To his credit, he nodded on my shoulder, which actually made me feel worse.

“What really happened last night, Pres? Why did you leave with her?”
He pulled away from me and stared out the window, swallowing hard as he dug his hands in his pockets.

“I wanted to pretend for one night she was still our Little Nyx.”

The low growl emitting from the other side of the room told me West wasn’t happy about Prescott calling her that, but fuck if his words didn't rip into me too. I didn't know what the fuck to do with him. Prescott had clearly been harbouring these feelings for longer than just last night.

“She’s not the same girl we knew,” Drake said.

“Like fuck she isn’t,” West retorted. “She’s still in there. I see her. Every time she fights us, those snappy fucking remarks she makes… that’s our Scarlett, our fucking girl. We need to remind her of who she is. We need to fucking undo what they did to her before it’s too late.”
Drake glared at West.

“And how the fuck do you suggest we do that? We can't just sit her down and tell her the truth. She’s not going to believe us. Ten years, West, ten fucking years they’ve had her. Do you really believe we can undo that without ruining her?”
West shoved off the wall and stabbed a finger in Drake’s direction.

“Did I say we tell her? No.”

“Then what?”
“I don’t have the fucking answers. If I did, we wouldn’t be in this situation.”
Drake turned away, clenching his fists at his sides.

“Then we need to stick to the plan. We can't afford to have feelings like this. We can't afford to care about her.”

Prescott stepped around me and gave Drake a dark look.

“So what? That’s it? You’re asking me to stop caring and just go along with this shit?”

“Yes, that’s exactly what I’m asking you to do.”

“Fuck you, Drake. She cried in my damn arms this morning.”

That made Drake’s expression falter and his mask slipped. My ever calm and controlled friend’s eyes filled with pain.

“What?”

“She asked me how I could be so cruel to her in one breath and treat her with care in the other. Not like I could answer that damn question, but it made her cry. I made her fucking cry. She’s broken inside.
She wants to know who she is. Desperately. It’s all she wants.”

I stared at Prescott’s back. It finally made sense. His behaviour and reaction. Prescott had never been able to stand it when Scarlett cried. He’d always been the one who was most affected by her tears, her pain. At least when they were tears of misery. He liked it when he made women cry during sex, but that was different.

“You are cruel, Prescott, don’t fucking stand there and deny it’s who you are. It’s who we all are.”

It would be pointless to refute his statement. We couldn’t pretend otherwise.

“She’s one of us, Drake. One of us.”

“No, she’s not. She’s their agent and you know it. Until she remembers who she is, we can’t trust her. And even then, there are no guarantees she will choose us or even want to be near us. You know this.”

“Drake’s right,” I said, my voice quiet. “I hate it, but he’s right. We can’t trust her.”

I couldn’t see Prescott’s expression, but his shoulders sagged. The truth hurt like a bitch, but none of us had ever sugar-coated anything. It would be doing a disservice to each other if we did.

“Fine,” Prescott said, his voice echoing with his resignation. “Stick to the plan it is.”

He walked away towards the lift then, slamming his hand down on the button.

“Pres—” Drake started.

“No, don’t you fucking well make it worse, Drake. Just don’t.”

Silence descended upon us as the lift opened. Prescott walked into it, pressed the button for our floor. When the doors closed, Drake sighed and walked over to the table. He ran his finger over the dent West had made with his knife in it.

“Did you really have to mark our damn table?”

West smirked and shrugged. Drake tsked before picking up the plates on the table and taking them into the kitchen. He bent down to put them in the dishwasher.

“What are we going to do about Pres?” I asked.

“Nothing. We’re doing nothing.”

“We’re just going to leave him like that?”

Drake looked at me when he straightened, his eyes full of sadness.

“Yeah, Francis, we are. There’s nothing any of us can say. He doesn’t like this, fine, but he knows we have no other choice. He thinks I don’t care, but I do.” He rubbed his chest. “I care about her more than he realises. This shit keeps me awake at night. No matter how much I wish things could be different, they are what they are.”

Didn’t I fucking well know it. Things were shit, but Drake had a point. We didn’t have another choice. If we had any chance of getting all of us out of this mess, we had to do as we set out to. We’d risked everything to get Scarlett back. If we handled this wrong, all our cards could come tumbling down. We could lose everything. The company we’d built. Our livelihood. Our fucking lives. And I wished we had another option or path in front of us… but we didn’t.
The whole way back to the flat, I kept running over what happened this morning in my head. What West had done shook me to my core. The fact he’d threatened to bleed me was a line I didn’t think he would cross, but it turned out I didn’t know what the hell I was talking about when it came to him. The man was unhinged and terrifying. One minute he’d be fine and the next he’d go full-on psycho on me before returning to normal again. And yet… and fucking yet, I wanted to know him anyway.

Maybe I was certifiable, because no normal girl wanted to get close to a man like him, let alone the rest of them. But I couldn’t help it. Something about Prescott, West, Francis and Drake drew me in. I recognised them on a fundamental level. It didn’t make any sense. How could it? They didn’t know me from before. If they did, they would have said something. They would have told me.

I sighed as I unlocked the front door of the flat and trudged inside. Kicking off my heels, I walked into my bedroom and discarded my clothes. Walking over to my wardrobe, I selected an appropriate outfit for work. A three-quarter length sleeved dark blue blouse, black wide-leg trousers and a pair of nude heels. I’d just finished drying my hair and perfecting my makeup when Mason barged into the room with a face like thunder.

“Where the fuck have you been?”

The venom in his voice made me take a step back. He’d never spoken to me like that in all the years I’d known him. After last night, I thought he might have calmed down, but clearly not.

“Excuse me?”

He descended on me, taking me by the arm and getting up in my face. I swallowed when I saw the rage in his dark eyes and the vein popping in his temple.

“Where have you been, Scarlett?”

After the shit I’d been through with the Horsemen this morning, I was not in the mood to entertain Mason and his jealousy act. That’s what this was. I couldn’t deny it any longer. He didn’t want me near the Horsemen. He knew they wanted me. And it pissed him off.

“Where do you think I was?” I spat back, wrenching my arm out of his grasp.

“I swear to god, Scarlett, if you tell me you spent the night with them…”

“Or what, Mason? Or fucking what? You don’t get to walk in here and start on me first thing in the morning. This has nothing to do with you.”

I shoved past him, knowing I needed to get back to work. No way in hell I wanted to be later than I already was. Mason didn’t like that at all. He grabbed my arm again and spun me around. His grip was harder this time, his fingers digging into my skin. It made me let out a whimper from the pain. And he didn’t stop at the noise like I expected him to.

What the fuck?

Mason had never handled me this way before. Not once had he got remotely physical with me. He
knew better. I wanted to tell him to stop, but I was frozen on the spot, too shocked to do a thing about it whilst he squeezed my arm tighter. It was like he was trying to hurt me. To make me feel his anger.

“This is my fucking business and you know it. Did you spend the night with them?”

I’d had enough of this. All of it. Something inside me snapped. My emotional breakdown in Prescott’s arms, West’s threatening behaviour, the way it’d made me want him to take me on that dining room table and punish me for talking back to him, how fucked up that all was, and now Mason. It was too much for me to handle. Too much for me to keep a lid on.

“Yes. Yes, I fucking well did. I spent the night with Prescott and guess what? I don’t regret it. And you know what else? Huh? You know what fucking well else? All four of them fucked me last week. And I don’t regret that either.”

Mason reared back with my words as if they were a physical blow.

“What did you just say to me?”

I pulled my arm from his fingers again, not wanting him to touch me any further. West’s words about no other men being allowed near me rang in my ears. I took his warnings seriously. And in all honesty, I had no interest in being touched by anyone else but him, Prescott, Francis and Drake. I didn’t care if they hurt me, but I sure as shit cared about Mason doing it.

I rubbed my arm where his fingers had clasped it, hating him for it.

“You heard me.”

For once I didn’t care what I’d said to him. I didn’t give two shits. I was done. Mason could go fuck himself.

“You had sex with… all of them?”

I crossed my arms over my chest and glared at him. If he was going to start up with how I shouldn’t have sex with four guys, he could save it.

Mason turned away and dragged his fingers through his hair. It was almost as if I’d broken his mind when I’d blurted that shit out. As if he couldn’t believe I would do such a thing. The problem was, Mason didn’t know who I truly was, because neither did I. There was a part of me kept in a locked cage. She was rattling her bars, screaming at me, telling me to break her out. And I wanted to. I wanted that girl back.

“Why? Why would you do that, Scar? Why would you let them touch you in that way?” His voice was quiet, but in no way calm. It shook with his words. His questions.

“I didn’t exactly have a choice.”

His eyes met mine. The concern and anger in them had me digging my nails into my elbows.

“Did they force you? Are you telling me they raped you?”

“No! They didn’t force me to do anything.” Well, they kind of did, but you liked it. “Do you think I’d be standing here telling you I don’t regret what happened if they had?”

“No… but I don’t understand.” He reached his hands out to me, but I took a step back, not wanting any more physical contact with him after the way he’d manhandled me. “You didn’t need to take it that far.”

I shook my head. He had no idea what the Horsemen were like. He didn’t know the allure they held for me. The way they demanded things from me. How I was helpless, trapped in their web and my need to be closer to them. How being around Prescott made me feel safe and wanted. He made me feel…
“I did what I had to, Mase. I did what I fucking well had to. I’m earning their trust the only way I know how. The only way that’s going to work.”

“No. No, it’s not.”

“You don’t know them!”

He poked a finger in my direction.

“I know they’re no good for you. They’re making you think if you give up your body to them, they’ll trust you. Well, that’s bullshit and I won’t have it.”

He paced away again.

“I’m done with this, Scarlett. I’m fucking done. It’s gone too far. The fact you let them have sex with you tells me they’re getting inside your head, making you believe shit that’s not real.”

His fists clenched at his sides before he looked at me again.

“I’m calling Stuart and we’re pulling the plug on this shit.”

I staggered back, my arms falling to my sides as his words sliced right through me.

“No. You can’t do that. You can’t, Mason.”

He’d promised me I’d never had to go back. That he’d do anything in his power to keep me away from the estate. How could he go back on his promise now?

“I can and I will.”

He pulled his phone out of his pocket. I couldn’t let him call my father. Not when it would only send me back to my prison. There were bars on my fucking bedroom windows, for crying out loud. Not to mention the place they locked me in when they thought I was being insolent. I trembled, the memories flooding my vision. The anger and rage in my father’s eyes when I told him no. The bruises he left. The way my mother would turn a blind eye to her husband’s temper tantrums. And how Mason knew the truth, but he didn’t do a single fucking thing to stop it.

Yet, despite all of that, he’d been my only friend for the past ten years. He’d held me when I cried and patched me up when the beatings went too far. I didn’t hate Mason for not stopping it. His hands were tied just as much as mine.

“Mason, please,” I choked out. “You know what will happen if I go back there. You know. Please, don’t call him. Don’t do that to me.”

The agony in Mason’s eyes decimated me. I couldn’t move. If he did this to me, I would never forgive him. Never. Now I’d had a taste of freedom, I would fight tooth and nail to keep it.

“I have an in with Prescott, okay? He’ll give me what I need, I promise. Please, just give me a little more time. I’ll get them to trust me enough to let me in.”

There was no way in hell I wanted to use Prescott like that, but the threat of my family was too damn terrifying for me not to. He couldn’t protect me from them. No one could. And I didn’t think Prescott would anyway. We might be building something, but it was on lies. I wasn’t being honest with him and I was damn sure he wasn’t being honest with me either. Yet, it didn’t matter. My feelings overrode my common sense. My connection to him was a thread I wanted to tug on until it all unraveled and the truth laid bare before our feet. And if I had to damn myself for him, I would.

Mason lowered the phone. His gesture filled me with relief. If I could convince him to give me another chance, I could work this out, couldn’t I? Somehow I had to make the Horsemen trust me. And
get me the fuck away from this shit. I didn’t care if they were all a little psychotic and possessive over me. I was safer with them, wasn’t I?

Don’t kid yourself. You’re no safer with them than you are here with Mason or back with your parents.

“You have until Monday, Scar, you hear me? Until then. I don’t want to call Stuart. I don’t want you to go back there, but you get me something to work with and I won’t tell Stuart what you did with them.”

I nodded, going over in my head how I could persuade Prescott to trust me.

“I promise, I’ll make it work.”

“Good.”

“I have to get to work.”

He gave me a grunt, the conflict in his eyes clear, but he wasn’t going to stop me from going. He’d given me a lifeline and I was going to grab it by the horns.

I left the room, pulling on a coat and snagging my bag before leaving to get the tube. The whole way to Fortuity, I was trying to work out how the hell I would approach this conversation. I rubbed my arm, wincing at the pain from Mason’s grasp. He’d betrayed me today. He’d physically harmed me and threatened to send me back to my parents. In all honesty, I wanted to get away from him as much as I did my parents.

When I got to the building, I went straight upstairs to my office and hung up my coat. Then I pulled up my sleeve and looked at my arm. There were the beginnings of faint bruises on it. I put my hand to my mouth. They reminded me too much of my father. Of what he’d done to me. How could Mason think this was okay after all the times he’d taken care of me? He’d taken it too far. I didn’t think I could forgive him for this.

I steeled myself. There was nothing I could do now but throw myself at Prescott and hope to god he had a heart in there somewhere. Because I had no idea what the hell I would do otherwise.
FORTY ONE
PRESCOTT

Fuck Drake. Fuck West. And fuck Francis. Fuck them all.

Rationally I knew I shouldn’t be mad at them, but after the conversation we’d just had, I didn’t give a flying fuck about being rational or sane. I wanted to kick the shit out of something. Take out my anger on anything. Decking West hadn’t made me feel better. The fucker deserved it. In fact, I should have hit him again for good measure. Normally, I wouldn’t care about how far he took things, but Scarlett’s emotional state was fragile right now. She didn’t need West unleashing his psycho nature on her.

I sat at my desk, staring out the window. I couldn’t concentrate on work. All I could do was seethe in anger and hope to fuck Scarlett was okay. She’d not said anything to me about it when I took her upstairs to get dressed. But what could she say? She’d got on her knees and begged him for forgiveness. He’d not given her any other choice. And whilst I knew she felt something for West as she did for me, it didn’t make me feel any better.

I was fucked over the woman. Utterly fucking. She’d made me feel things I’d kept buried. Having her around reminded me I still owned a heart, even if it was black, and she was tugging on its strings.

Dragging my hands through my hair, I let out a huff. What was I going to do? I had to act like nothing had changed. But last night and this morning had altered everything irrevocably. I wanted to protect Scarlett, but I couldn’t. My hands were tied behind my back.

The boys were right. They were and I hated them for it. I couldn’t trust her. Couldn’t allow myself to put my faith in the girl I’d known since I was a kid. She was with the enemy, the people actively trying to ruin us. Trusting Scarlett would be a mistake. A lapse in judgement. But everything I’d done recently with her had been exactly that. I’d ignored my better judgement and allowed my emotions to fuel me.

It was time to lock this shit down and remember why we were here. Why the fuck we were even doing this. To anyone else, it would seem insane and batshit crazy. We’d done all of this for her. Everything we’d achieved was for our girl. To return her to our sides.

My office door opened. I glanced over at it, dropping my hands from my hair and found Scarlett closing it behind her and turning the lock. My heart lurched when she looked at me. Her eyes were haunted and her whole demeanour was somehow more broken than she’d been earlier.

What happened between when she left the office to go home and now?

“Pres.”

Her beautiful voice carried across the room to my ears, warming me from the inside out. Why did she have the power to render me helpless for her?

I didn’t respond. My tongue got stuck to the roof of my mouth trying to prevent everything shouldn’t say from spilling out and ruining everything.

Her feet carried her over to me and when she dropped to her knees by the side of my chair, I swallowed. She placed her hand on my knee and stared up at me.
“What are you doing on the floor, little lamb?”
“I need your help.”
“And you think you need to be on your knees to ask me?”
She nodded, her eyes turning haunted again.

I didn’t want her down there. During sex, yes, I would have her on her knees for me in an instant, but this didn’t feel right. And why on earth would she need my help?

I refrained from reaching out and stroking her hair, Drake’s reminder about the plan still fresh in the forefront of my mind. No more casual affection or being ‘nice’ to her. I couldn’t allow her to see how much I cared or she might pierce through my damn barriers. She might take advantage of my feelings towards her.

“Spit it out then.”
She looked away, her hand tightening on my thigh. Her touch was not doing my self-restraint any good.

“I can’t…I don’t know what to do.”
“About what?”
“Mason doesn’t like me working for you.”

Of course that prick didn’t like it. He was jealous. The way he’d smirked at West yesterday whilst dancing with Scarlett was like waving a red flag at a bull. And made it very obvious he wanted her for himself. Too fucking bad she was ours.

“So what? You’re a grown woman. Where you work is your choice.”
She blinked before looking at me again.

“I know, but…”
“But what?”

I sounded impatient, but I didn’t see how this had anything to do with me. What did she expect me to do about it? I didn’t need this shit when I was already in turmoil about her and the fucking things we had to do next.

“He…he said some really terrible things to me this morning.”
Her bottom lip trembled and when she looked up at me again, tears welled in her eyes.  
Fuck, please don’t cry again, sweetness. I’ll fucking break if you cry.

“Pres…he…he…” she choked out, making me stiffen.

“He did what?”

“He hurt me,” she whispered, a tear sliding down her cheek. “And I’m scared he’ll do it again.”

“He hurt you.”
My tone was completely flat, but she nodded, causing more tears to roll down her face. I didn’t know whether to believe her or not. Why the fuck would she even tell me that? What was her game here?

“You expect me to believe your friend hurt you?”
Her eyes widened and more tears fell. There were more fucking tears. The sight of them made my chest constrict. Were they real tears or ones she was putting on? This morning in my bed they’d been very real, but after everything else, I couldn’t tell what was up or down any longer.

When she didn’t respond to my question, it pissed me off. This woman was a fucking menace to my damn emotions. I couldn’t take this conflict inside me. It was driving me crazy.
“Answer me, Scarlett.” I took hold of her arm and tugged her closer. “You expect me to believe that?”

She let out a pained yelp and winced. I looked down at her arm, a suspicion rising inside me. She didn’t stop me when I laid her arm in my lap and gently pulled up her sleeve. On her forearm, there were finger marks. Fucking faint bruises. I knew for a fact they were not there earlier. Nor did I believe West had been that rough with her. The man might be unhinged, but even he had restraint. He was deliberate about the pain he caused.

Scarlett stared at me, her tear-streaked face evidence of her misery. Betrayal was written all over her face. Her friend… fucking Mason had betrayed her trust and hurt her.

“He did this to you? This is how he hurt you?”

“He was so forceful with me. He’s never been like that, but he was so enraged and I couldn’t stop him. I’m… I’m scared he’ll do it again. I can’t stay with him. I can’t…”

I couldn’t take her words or the way she looked at me. The cunt had hurt her. He’d bruised her skin. And for what? It wasn’t part of a fucking game like when me or the others did it. No, he’d lashed out at her in anger.

“Come here, little lamb.”

Scarlett hesitated, but I opened my arms to her and she crawled into my lap. I let her rest her head on my shoulder.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered on a sob.

“Shh, don’t apologise.” I stroked her hair, trying to soothe my girl.

“I can’t stay with him. He wants me to quit. He doesn’t want me to be here with any of you.” Her hand curled around the back of my neck. “I don’t want to leave you.”

“No one is taking you away from me, you hear me? No one. You’re mine and I won’t let anyone else have you.”

She shifted, burying her face in my neck and let out a shuddering breath as if my words brought her some relief. I shouldn’t have said those things. Scarlett was my weakness. The one damn person in this world who could pierce through my armour and render me unable to do anything but give in to her. And yet I had no idea what the fuck to do about this situation.

I couldn’t make Scarlett any promises. Not when we had a plan to stick to, but if she was going to get ripped away from us again, I couldn’t have that. None of us could. If Mason was hurting her, I didn’t want him anywhere near our girl. She wasn’t safe with him. She wouldn’t be safe with us either, but that was hardly the point.

“Do you trust me, Pres?” she murmured against my skin.

“Do you want my honest answer?”

“Yes.”

I leant my head against hers.

“No, I don’t.”

There were already enough lies between us, this didn’t need to be another one. I didn’t trust her because I couldn’t afford to.

“Does that mean you won’t help me?”

“What exactly are you asking me to do, sweetness?”
She pulled away so she could meet my eyes. I couldn’t help reaching up and wiping away her tears with my thumb.

“Protect me from Mason.”

I searched her face, reading between the lines of her words. The implications of them. Was she doing this to get closer to us or did she want me to keep her safe? Was it both? I couldn’t just invite her into our lives, our fucking sanctuary. Inviting the enemy in any further would prove disastrous. Having her working here was already precarious when we all knew she’d been sent to destroy us. It was impossible to give her that… wasn’t it?

“Do you fully understand what you’re asking of me, little lamb?”

“I know you don’t trust me. I get that. And I’m willing to do whatever it is you need me to… anything, Prescott, I’ll do anything you tell me to, just please, get me away from him… please.”

You’ll do anything, will you? Anything at all?

I wasn’t sure I believed that. We had set out to test how far she’d go to settle their vendetta against us. It’s not like we didn’t know their plans. We knew. We had been two steps ahead of them this time. Laying the fucking trap and reeling them in. Forcing their hand. Making them use their greatest weapon against us.

Her.
Scarlett.

She was their weapon.

But they had no idea of the lengths we were willing to go to return her to us. To sever her connection to them. To have her back by our sides where she fucking well belonged.

“I’m not going to make you any promises… but I will speak to the others.”

“Pres—”

“No, little lamb, it’s that or nothing, do you understand? I cannot offer you anything else.”

For a second I thought she might argue with me, but she bowed her head.

“I understand.”

“Good. Now, go back to work before I have Drake in here giving me a hard time about keeping you from your duties, hmm?”

The only way I could resolve this was by speaking to Drake, Francis and West. She’d basically thrown herself at my mercy. Told me she’d do anything. If I put that to them, then maybe they’d do something about it. Perhaps we could use it to our advantage. Drake might have been adamantly about sticking to the plan, but it didn’t account for this outcome.

“Okay,” she whispered.

She crawled out of my lap, stood and straightened out her clothes. I got to my feet with her and pulled the box of tissues on my desk towards me. Plucking one out, I took her face in my hand and dabbed away her tears. She would need to fix her face herself, but I wasn’t going to send her out there with tear tracks.

I threw the tissues in the bin but didn’t release her. Instead, I brought her arm up to my face, tugged up her sleeve and watched her as I pressed kisses to her bruises.

“No one is allowed to hurt you like this,” I murmured. “No one but us.”

She trembled, her eyes widening at my statement.
“You’re mine, little lamb. I protect what’s mine.”
The implication was there. I would do my best to protect her if I could.
“Yours,” she breathed.
And fuck if it didn’t make my heart hurt. We stared at each other for a long moment. There was no way in hell I could stop myself from feeling things for this woman no matter why she was here. I couldn’t stop myself from falling.
I dropped her arm and directed her towards the door before I said something which would fucking damn me. She walked away, unlocking the door when she reached it and tugging it open. She paused there and looked back at me.
“Whatever happens, thank you for trying.”
I didn’t have time to say anything to it as she walked out of the room. My breath left me, the heaviness of it settling over my lungs. This was a fucked up situation, but when had our lives ever not been fucked up.
Grabbing my phone, I opened up the group chat between the four of us and typed out a message. One way or another I had to convince them doing something about her situation was in our best interests. I wasn’t going to let her stay with someone who had the potential to abuse her. I couldn’t allow it and if I knew anything about the three of them, they wouldn’t either.

Prescott: Meeting in Drake’s office. Right now. No excuses.
I stared down at Prescott’s message with concern. After our argument earlier, I didn’t think he’d be in the mood to talk to me, let alone call a meeting. He’d been seriously pissed off, and quite frankly, I didn’t blame him. It’s not like I wanted to rain on his parade, but we couldn’t deviate from our plans. Not when there was no alternative.

Setting my phone back down on my desk, my eyes flicked to the door. Francis strolled in, waving his phone at me.

“Did you read Pres’ message?”

“I did.”

“What do you think he wants?”

I shrugged.

“Fuck knows. I just hope it has nothing to do with her.”

Francis gave me a look as he folded himself into one of my armchairs, crossing his arms over his chest.

“You and me both.”

West walked in next, looking around the room before he let out a huff of annoyance.

“Where is that narcissistic fuck then?”

“Don’t start on him,” I warned. “We’ve already had enough shit today without you two fighting again.”

West rubbed his jaw.

“Wouldn’t mind if he hit me again.”

“I mind. Do not antagonise Pres, you hear me?”

He rolled his eyes but gave me a nod, seating himself on the sofa near Francis, who gave him a sharp look. We didn’t need to dissolve into punching each other’s lights out. The four of us were supposed to be a fucking team, not fighting amongst ourselves.

A minute later, Prescott walked in. He shut the door, dug his hands in his pockets and leant up against it. He looked down at the floor for a long moment before he sighed.

“We have to do something about Scarlett.”

Francis scoffed.

“Well, there’s a fucking surprise. I knew this was about her.”

I sent a glare his way, telling him to shut up without words. After I’d had to shut down his damn conscience earlier, the least we could do was to hear Prescott out.

“Go on, Pres,” I said. “We’re listening.”

Prescott raised his head and met my eyes head-on.

“You’re not going to like what I have to say.”
I leant back in my chair.  
“Do I ever like the ridiculous schemes you drag us into?”  
He smiled, but it was a sad one.  
“No, but you trust me to get results, which I always do.”

I spread my hands. When it came to business, I trusted Prescott’s judgement implicitly, even if I thought he was reckless as fuck at times. He didn’t steer us wrong. When it came to Scarlett, it was another matter entirely.

“She isn’t a game, Pres.”  
“Don’t I fucking know it.” He cracked his neck and shoved off the door, but didn’t move away from it, his eyes flicking over to West and narrowing like he was concerned the guy would try to leave at any moment. “We need to bring her here… to stay with us.”

“What the fuck?” West interjected, sending a death glare Prescott’s way. “Why the hell would we do that? You don’t invite the girl who wants to bring us all down into our fucking house to live with us.”

Prescott put his hand up.  
“Jesus, calm the fuck down, I’m getting to that.”  
“You better have a good fucking reason.”

Prescott visibly steeled himself, his mouth thinning into a narrow line. And I knew what he said next wouldn’t be good.

“Mason hurt her.”

“What?” Francis said, sitting up and dropping his arms from his chest.

“Mason fucking well hurt her. He left bruises on her arm.”

For a moment, we were all silent, then West was out of his chair and stalking towards the door. Prescott pressed himself back up against it, giving West a warning look.

“Move out of my way.”

Prescott shoved West back.  
“No. You are not leaving right now.”  
“Move. Now. I’m not kidding.”  
“You cannot go after him, West.”

West growled and clenched his fists.  
“He put his fucking hands on her. He’s a dead man walking.”

“Trust me, I want to beat the crap out of him too, but we can’t do that and you know it.”

For a second, I thought West might pull Prescott away from the door, but he huffed and paced away.

“Fuck!”

I didn’t want to point out that we’d all put hands on Scarlett nor how West had threatened her this morning. It was a double standard, but she was ours and we were the only ones who were allowed to do what we wanted to her. Another person doing it, man or fucking woman, I would be out for blood like West was right now. But I had to remain calm because there was more to what Prescott had told us.

“How do you know about this?” I asked, ignoring West’s angry pacing a few feet away from me.

“She showed me,” Prescott replied, eyeing West with a wary expression on his face. “And she asked me to protect her from him.”

“You believe her?”
His eyes flicked to me.
“Of course I fucking believe her, Drake. There are finger marks on her arm. West didn’t touch her like that this morning so who else could have done it? Huh?”

I drummed my fingers on the arm of my chair. Whilst I didn’t think Prescott was bullshitting us, I didn’t trust Scarlett.
“She wants you to protect her.”
“That’s what she asked for.”
“She must be desperate if she’s asking you for help,” Francis said with a snort.

Prescott turned his gaze onto Francis and I flinched at the venom there.
“Fuck off, Francis. If it wasn’t for you, none of us would be in this situation in the first place.”
His words caught West’s attention. He glared at Francis as well.
“Pres has a point on that one.”

Francis jumped up and clenched his fists, giving both of them a wounded look. This was getting out of hand way too fast.
“Oh well, yes, just blame me when it was you who fucking well—”

“Would you three stop it,” I said, trying to keep my voice calm and level. “That’s not fucking helpful.”

All three heads turned to me. I almost sighed. This was getting us absolutely nowhere. Slowly, I rose from my seat and leant on my desk with both hands.
“We can’t invite her into our home, Prescott, that’s asking for trouble.”

Prescott stepped away from the door and put his hand up.
“She said she’d do anything we ask in return. You should have heard her. She’s desperate. I don’t know what the fuck went on with her and Mason this morning. I can hazard a guess at him being pissed over her spending the night with me. They argued last night as well. It’s another reason I brought her back here.”

She told him she’d do anything we asked. It was… unexpected. Was she really that desperate to get into our fold? Were they putting pressure on her? I could well imagine they wanted results from Scarlett, but it’d only been just under a month since she’d joined Fortuity.

“I’m not leaving her with him,” he continued. “I know it’s fucking dangerous to have her here. Do you really think I would ask you three to allow her to stay with us after this morning if there wasn’t a real threat to her safety?”

“As if she’s any safer with us,” West scoffed.

I sent a glare his way.
“We can’t trust her, Pres.”

“Test her. She said she’d do anything. I don’t really give a shit how you want her to prove herself, just fucking do it. I want her here where we can keep an eye on her and that cunt can’t hurt her again.”

The vehemence in Prescott’s voice had me pausing and actually taking stock of what he’d said, of what he was suggesting we do.
“How is testing her going to prove anything?” Francis asked. “She still answers to them.”

None of us spoke for a long minute. Francis was right, but Prescott was also right. We couldn’t leave her with Mason. Not if he’d hurt her the way Prescott said he had. Even I wasn’t willing to leave our girl
with a man who was capable of that. And we couldn’t do anything about Mason, as much as I would love to take the cunt out. If we touched him, the house of cards would come tumbling down. They’d know we knew what they were up to. We would no longer have the upper hand after moving mountains to gain it in the first place. I was not willing to take the risk.

How could we test her though? We couldn’t outright tell her the truth. It would only end in tears. Scarlett needed to remember what happened herself. It was the only way she’d ever take what we said as real and true. But I didn’t know where to even start with another suggestion.

I had to find a way out of this but didn’t change the facts.

Scarlett wasn’t trustworthy.

She answered to our enemies.

And she could be telling us this to worm her way into our inner circle further. To find out our secrets. But she wouldn’t fake bruises, would she? I could believe a lot of things about Scarlett. That wasn’t one of them.

“I know how we can kill two birds with one stone,” West said, giving all of us one of his manic grins.

West’s ideas and suggestions were usually batshit crazy. You never knew what you were in for when it came to him.

“How?” I asked.

“Pres said she will do anything. I say we push her boundaries far beyond anything she could ever imagine, and in turn, it will give us something we can hold over her in case she tries to run back to them.”

I raised an eyebrow. If we had something we could hold over her, it would make it safer for us to have her here.

“Go on then, tell us what crazy idea you have in that fucked up brain of yours.”

West’s smile turned deviant. I knew whatever he suggested, Scarlett would hate every moment of it. And perhaps… it was exactly what we needed.
I’d seen neither hide nor hair of the Horsemen yesterday after I’d left Prescott’s office. It made me nervous as fuck. Having basically thrown myself at Prescott’s mercy, I’d spent last night and today on edge. Sharing a rather tense meal with Mason hadn’t been easy either. He didn’t ask me what happened when I went into work, but I knew he was still unhappy with me over what I’d done with them.

I lay back on my bed, staring up at the ceiling. Mason had left for the evening an hour ago. I didn’t ask him where he was going. To be honest, I didn’t want to be around him. He hadn’t apologised for hurting me, but I hadn’t shown him what he’d done either. It was a conversation I didn’t want to have. Not when it would remind me of how Prescott had kissed the bruises on my arm and told me he would protect what was his.

I didn’t trust Prescott, nor any of the others, but the way he’d reacted to the knowledge Mason had hurt me made my heart ache. It brought out his possessive instincts. Whilst he wasn’t overt with them in the same way West was, it was clear Prescott viewed me as his woman. And he’d fuck up anyone who tried to muscle in on his territory.

The doorbell rang. I sat up and frowned. Few people knew we lived here and we rarely got visitors. Climbing off my bed, I trudged out into the hallway and checked the intercom camera. My stomach dropped out from underneath me when I saw both Prescott and Francis standing at the front door of the building. What were they doing here?

I pressed down on the intercom.
“Hello?”

Prescott looked up at the camera and gave me a smile.
“Are you going to let us in, sweetness?”

I swallowed. Had he convinced them to help me? His voice gave nothing away. I pressed down on the button to open the front door and watched them walk in. Then I went over to my door, pacing the hallway until they knocked on it. Pulling it open, I stared at Prescott and Francis. I thought it was odd they were both dressed head to toe in black, but I didn’t comment on it. It was the first time I’d seen them in something other than suits.

“Evening, little lamb.”

They didn’t so much as wait for me to invite them in, both stepping through the open doorway and forcing me to take a step back.
“What are you doing here?”

Francis took the door out of my hand and shut it behind him. His grey eyes roamed over me, but his expression gave nothing away.
“We’re here to get your things.”

“What way to her room?” Prescott asked Francis.
“Third door on the left.”

The two of them walked past me. I stood there for a full minute, not understanding what was going on. Then I chased after them. When I stepped into my bedroom, Francis had my chest of drawers open and Prescott was sliding my wardrobe door to the side. I realised they had brought bags, which they’d set out on my bed.

“What… what are you doing?”

“If you’re coming home with us, you need your things,” Prescott said like it was obvious.

He tugged my clothes out with their hangers attached.

“Hold on, what do you mean I’m coming home with you?”

Francis looked over at me with a smirk.

“Exactly what you think it means. Now, if you have toiletries, I suggest you retrieve them unless you want to steal Pres’ shower gel for the rest of the weekend.”

I didn't know what to think or say. They hadn't given me any warning or indication they were coming over. Now they were here, packing up my clothes to take me away from my flat.

“How… how did you know Mason wouldn’t be here? He wouldn’t let you do this, you know.”

The two of them exchanged a glance and Francis shrugged.

“Lucky coincidence.”

I put my hands up.

“Is this not up for discussion?”

“No, little lamb, it’s not. You asked me to protect you. This is the deal. You can stand there or you can help us. Either way, you’re coming home with us to Fortuity,” Prescott said, shoving more of my clothes into one of the bags.

This wasn’t what I had expected, but knowing the Horsemen, they wouldn’t take no for an answer. They would drag me kicking and screaming if they had to. And Prescott was right. I had asked him for protection.

I turned around and went into the bathroom, collecting up my toiletries.

What is Mason going to say when he finds out I’ve left?

Why was I even thinking about that? He was threatening to send me back to my parents. I shouldn’t give a shit what he thought. But I kind of did. I still cared about him, even if he was acting like a dick right now, not to mention how he’d hurt me. I stroked my fingers along the bruises on my arm, wincing at the sight of them. They made me sick. It wasn’t like the bruise Prescott had left on my shoulder. That one made me tremble at the memory of the way he’d fucked me. How when he bit down on my skin, I’d come violently. No, the bruise he’d left was a symbol of passion, not violence.

I stuffed my toiletries in their bag and took them out into the bedroom. They were still going through my things, and Prescott had got my suitcase down from in the wardrobe. They weren’t playing around. My whole life was basically in those bags. I didn’t exactly have much to start with so it all fit into three large bags and my suitcase. I handed Francis my toiletries bag. He stuffed it into the last bag and zipped it up. Then he turned to me, a storm brewing in his grey eyes. He took my arm and brought it closer to his face. I winced when he ran his fingers over the bruises Mason had left on it.

“No one hurts what’s ours,” he murmured before he dropped my arm and leant closer to me. I didn’t have a chance to stop him from pressing his mouth to mine. His kiss wasn’t soft. It was all-consuming.
My blood pumped wildly around my body, making me grow hot and achy with need. Only when he pulled back and gave me a smile did my knees almost buckle. He caught me around the waist and his smile widened. “Don’t fall now.”

I didn’t know what the fuck to say to him. And I hadn’t forgotten Prescott was right there. When Francis let me go and picked up two of the bags they’d packed, I glanced at Prescott. His eyes were dark, but not with irritation. No, I recognised his expression all too well. The deviant had surfaced having watched Francis kiss me. If I wasn’t sure of his voyeuristic tendencies before, I was in no doubt now.

“Do you want to check we’ve got everything whilst I take these down to the car?” Francis said, raising an eyebrow at me. “I’m sure you and Pres can manage the rest.” He waved at the other bag and my suitcase.

“Um, okay.”

He gave me a nod before disappearing. Prescott stalked towards me. I was caught up against his chest the next moment and his face was buried in my neck. He inhaled me like he was starving for oxygen.

“Mmm, if we didn’t have places to be, I’d bend you over this bed and fuck you right now, little lamb,” he murmured, nibbling my skin as his hand cupped my arse and pressed me into him. “I should tell Francis off for kissing you and getting me hard.”

I could feel him pressing into my stomach. My body responded to his touch without me wanting it to. I melted into him, wanting him to do exactly what he’d threatened. However, I didn’t think it was part of the plan. He said we had places to be. What had he meant? I thought we would be going back to Fortuity. Back to their home.

“Maybe I should get you to suck his dick in the car for me.”

“What?” I squeaked.

“Fuck, it would be hot.”

He ground into me, his teeth grazing across my neck. I tried to escape his hold, but he only held onto me tighter.

“Pres!”

“I can’t stop thinking about your pretty lips around his cock. Mmm, I want him to make you gag so fucking hard.”

I shoved harder and Prescott let me go. The predatory glint in his eyes made me tremble.

“I’m not going to suck Francis’ dick in the car, Pres. What the hell? That’s… no. I can’t do that in front of you.”

He licked his bottom lip and gave me a grin.

“I’ve watched you get fucked by Drake and Francis. What’s different about this?”

I looked away, shuffling my feet and wringing my hands.

“I couldn’t see when you did that.”

He tucked a finger under my chin, forcing it up towards him.

“I’ll reward you if you do.”

“What kind of reward?”

I don’t know why I was even entertaining this shit. They’d turned up to take me away. Should we really be talking about sex right now?

“My lips, sweetness. I’ll kiss you until you’re breathless with need.”
When Prescott kissed me after he'd fucked me on Thursday, I'd almost died and gone to heaven. His reward for me being a good girl and doing what he told me to. For begging him. Somehow it made it so much hotter.

“You’ll kiss me if I give Francis head?”
“Yes.”
“I’ll think about it.”

I moved away from him, going through the room to check they’d got everything I needed. Prescott said nothing, merely watched me whilst I gathered up a few more bits and put them in the last bag. The two of us took the rest of the bags and my suitcase out of the flat. I stared at the door, wondering what Mason would do when he found me gone. Who the fuck knew?

They’d parked on the road and Francis was leaning up against the car when we got there. Prescott had a whispered conversation with Francis as I got in the back seat. Then he walked around to the driver’s side and got in. Francis dumped the last bag in the front seat as there wasn’t any more room in the boot, before he got in the back with me. He was in the middle seat which made me highly suspicious of what Prescott had said to him.

Prescott set off, eying me in the rearview mirror and winked. I glared at him and looked out the window. Then I felt fingers brushing over my hair and running down my arm. Glancing over, I found Francis watching me as he touched me. Those grey eyes of his were so damn intense. And for the first time, I noticed he’d not gelled his dark brown hair today. It was a little wilder than normal. I wondered what it would be like to run my fingers through it.

He wrapped a hand around the back of my neck, drawing me closer to him and eyed me for a long moment.

“You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to.”

My eyes went to Prescott who was half paying attention to the road and half paying attention to us. My hand went to Francis’ chest. It wouldn’t be the first time his dick had been in my mouth.

“It’s what he wants.”

Francis’ eyes darkened significantly. I shivered and swallowed, rubbing his chest with my fingers. He closed the distance between us and kissed me again. His mouth was so soft as his tongue explored every inch of mine. I couldn’t help moaning. I’d only kissed two men in my life, but damn if they didn’t know how to dissolve me into a puddle at their feet with their mouths.

My hand left his chest, running down his stomach until it landed in his lap. He let out a grunt when I rubbed it against his cock. Lust flooded my veins from feeling how hard he was for me. I didn’t want to think about what Prescott was doing in the front. All I could feel was Francis’ body, the warmth of it and his demanding mouth on mine.

Francis wrapped my hair in his fist and dragged my head back. The wildness of his silvery-grey eye had me parting my mouth in response, but nothing left my lips.

“Your mouth is only good for one thing right now,” he murmured. “A fuck-hole for my cock.”

The harshness of his words had my eyes widening. Them coming from his rather prim and proper mouth made my pussy throb in response. I fumbled with his clothes and somehow managed to free him. Before I could even take a peek at what I’d revealed, his hand was shoving me down towards his crotch. Since my mouth was already open, his cock slid straight in. I tried to wrap my hand around the base, but
Francis grabbed it with his free one and held it down on the seat next to us.

“No,” he growled. “You stay still unless it’s to use your tongue.”

He used my hair as his anchor to force me into taking more. I gagged when he hit the back of my mouth, but it didn’t stop him. If anything, it made him press deeper, forcing me to open my throat.

“Fuck,” came Prescott’s voice.

“Pay attention to the fucking road, Pres.”

I couldn’t respond as my throat was full of Francis’ dick. It wasn’t easy for me to take, but somehow I managed. After all, it wasn’t the first time I’d done this. Francis pulled me up and forced me back down, building a steady rhythm. I could do nothing but let him use my mouth for his pleasure. The only noise I could hear was the wet sucking sounds of my lips around his dick. Everything else was muted. Maybe I was so focused on trying to breathe, I couldn’t pay attention to anything else.

“You expect me to not watch you face-fucking our woman?”

I heard Francis chuckle.

“No… just don’t crash, yeah? I’d rather not explain to the police why my dick is out and lodged down Scarlett’s throat, thanks.”

Prescott laughed. I didn’t know what was so fucking funny, but what could I even do? My mouth was currently very full. Francis’ hand tightened in my hair, making me aware of how much he was enjoying this.

“That’s it, Scarlett, take my dick.”

“Mmm, dirty girls get all the dick,” Prescott chimed in. “You’re being such a good girl, sweetness. Make him come for me.”

His words made Francis increase his pace as he fucked my mouth, his hips shifting up to meet my lips. I gagged and choked around his length again, but I was stuck taking it. Being used by him. And hell, if my pussy wasn’t drenching my knickers with my arousal. I couldn’t touch myself, with the way he had my hand pinned and our position. My legs rubbed together, trying to get some friction between them. It wasn’t nearly enough. I let out a frustrated squeak around Francis’ dick, which was completely ignored. It must be obvious to him what I was doing, but this wasn’t about me. It was entirely about Francis getting off. My reward would come from Prescott.

The only warning I got when he was about to come was a low groan, then an explosion of hot liquid spurted in my mouth. There was nothing left to do but take what he gave me. He let go of my hair and rubbed my scalp in a soothing motion as his cock throbbed inside me. Only when he released my hand did I pull back and sit up. His eyes met mine. I swallowed hard at the way his pupils were blown and his wicked smile.

For a moment I stared at him until I realised we were no longer moving. I looked around out the window, finding we were parked next to some large dark buildings. They appeared to be warehouses. I frowned then met Prescott’s eyes through the rearview mirror.

“Where are we?”
Prescott didn’t answer me, merely gave me a wink and got out of the car. Francis was busy tucking himself away next to me. I looked at him, wondering if I should say something. He unbuckled our seatbelts and leaned over me to open my door.

“Get out, Scarlett.”

His tone brokering absolutely no arguments. I slid out and shivered at the cool air, wrapping my arms around my chest. Francis got out behind me and closed the door. There was another car sitting in front of ours. I frowned but didn’t get a chance to ask what was happening. Francis wrapped an arm around me and led me around the vehicle. We met Prescott by the door to a big warehouse. He tugged me away from Francis and waved him inside.

“Two mins,” he said when Francis gave him a look.

Francis rolled his eyes and shoved open the door. He disappeared into the building, leaving me alone with the man I’d become enamoured with, despite the fact he was dangerous and I shouldn’t trust him. Prescott dug his hands in my hair and pulled me closer. He leaned down, rubbing his nose against mine.

“Time for your reward, little lamb.”

I didn’t have a chance to object to the fact he was kissing me right after I’d had Francis’ cum in my mouth. His lips were on mine, stealing my breath and making me dizzy. He parted my lips with his tongue, tasting me with unrestrained passion. I gripped his clothes to steady myself, allowing him to take me away on a sea of bliss.

When he released my mouth, he smiled and his eyes softened a fraction. My heart lurched and I wasn’t sure I could hold myself up. I was glad he still had a grip on me.

“Where are we, Pres?”

“You’ll see.”

“I thought we were going back to Fortuity.”

“We will, sweetness.”

He dropped his hands from my hair and took my hand. I was dragged through the door to the warehouse the next moment. It was dark, dank and cold. I shivered, feeling incredibly uneasy about why they’d brought me here. In front of us, a light glowed and three figures stood bathed in it. My fingers tightened in Prescott’s as he drew me over to the men waiting for us.

“Hello, Scar,” West said, drawing my attention to the fact it was him, Drake and Francis.

I glanced up at Prescott as we came to a standstill, but his expression was entirely blank.

“What’s going on?” I asked, turning my attention back to West.

His smile was sinister. I swallowed, my palms turning sweaty despite the cold air enveloping us in the dark warehouse.

“Well, you asked our boy here for protection.” West indicated Prescott with his hand. “You didn’t
think it wouldn’t come at a price, did you?”

I’d been fully prepared for them to want something from me in exchange, but this situation made me suspicious and wary at the same time.

“I did.”

“And is it right you told him you’d do anything to prove you’re worthy of our trust?”

“Yes.”

It was then I realised the three of them were standing in front of something. This couldn’t be good. Not at all. They wouldn’t bring me all the way out to a warehouse for something normal and nice. My hand shook in Prescott’s, my fear bleeding through even though I was trying not to show it.

West cocked his head to the side.

“Well, Scar, it’s your lucky day. We’re happy to protect you… on one condition.”

Prescott let go of my hand and pushed me closer to West, Francis and Drake.

“W-w-what’s that?”

I couldn’t help the way my voice shook on the words.

“We need you to do something for us.”

West stepped towards me, took my chin between his fingers and stroked my jaw. The gesture was entirely at odds with the manic look in his eyes. With his other hand, he slid something from his pocket and licked his lip.

“Put your hand out.”

I did as he asked. He placed something hard and cold into it before curling my fingers around the handle of whatever it was.

“You’ll need this.”

Then he dropped his hand from my face and stepped away from me. I hadn’t noticed Francis and Drake had moved out of the way too. It took a moment for me to register what was in front of me. A man with a hood on his head was sat on a chair. His hands were behind his back and his legs tied to the chair. My eyes fell down to the object in my hand. It was a knife. And not just any knife. It was West’s knife. The one I’d kissed and licked yesterday. Of all the scenarios I imagined playing out, this wasn’t even on my radar. My mind screamed in protest of what it thought they were asking for. They couldn’t be serious. They weren’t asking me to do… that… were they?

“Why… why is he tied up?”

“I think that’s rather obvious, Scar, don’t you?”

My eyes went to West. He was smiling at me, his amber eyes glinting in the low light. They were full of violence and glee.

“What do you want me to do with this?” I asked even though it was fucking clear.

West snorted, whilst the others remained silent as statues, waiting for things to kick up a notch.

“We want you to kill him.”

I stared hard at West before a wild, choking laugh erupted from my lips. I took a step back, putting a hand to my chest.

“You… you can’t… you can’t be serious. This is some kind of joke, right?”

West shook his head very slowly.

“No joke, Scar. You want to prove yourself to us. Prove we can trust you. This is the price.” He
waved at the man. “His life in exchange for our protection.”

I took another step back, but I was prevented from going anywhere by Prescott, who pushed me towards West and the man in the chair. I daren’t look back at him, worried what the hell I’d see in his expression.

Sucking in a breath, I clutched the knife tighter in my hand. The one they expected me to use. “Why would you make me do this? What the hell is wrong with you?”

West didn’t respond, merely kept smiling at me as if this was perfectly normal. Nothing about this situation was fucking normal. Who asks someone to kill another person in exchange for protection? Then again, what else did I expect coming from the men with a reputation such as theirs? They hadn’t been branded the Four Horsemen for nothing. I’d been warned so many times they were ruthless and fucking with them would end up in a death sentence. Only I hadn’t realised it wouldn’t be my own life at stake here.

“What did he even do?” I pointed at the man. “Who is he?”

West dragged his finger across his bottom lip. “Oh well, that’s the best part now, isn’t it, boys?”

I looked around at the other three, but they were all expressionless. As if this didn’t bother them at all. Maybe killing people was commonplace to them, but it wasn’t for me.

“Why?”

“I warned you about allowing another man to touch you, Scar. I told you there would be consequences you wouldn’t like.” He stepped closer to the man. “Consider this your punishment… and his.”

I swallowed as the cogs turned in my head and spat out an explanation. One that made me absolutely sick to my stomach.

“Who is it?”

I needed to hear the damn name with my own ears. West strode towards me, took my arm and forced it up to my face. My eyes went to the bruises shaped like finger marks. He stared at them for a long moment before meeting my eyes over the top of my arm.

“The man who had the audacity to put hands on you.”

“M-M-Mason… that’s Mason?”

West’s grin only confirmed it. I shook my head before I ripped my arm from his, backing away as my hand went to my mouth.

Mason. They wanted me to kill Mason for them. What the actual fuck was wrong with the four of them? This was insane. Absolutely fucking insane.

“No,” I moaned. “No… you can’t make me do that.”

I backed up right into Prescott, who steadied me with both hands on my shoulders. My head snapped up to his, finding none of the softness in his eyes I’d experienced after he’d kissed me. There was a hard edge to his expression. I dropped my hand from my mouth and turned around.

“Pres, please tell me this isn’t real.”

He didn’t answer me.

“You can’t make me do this. You can’t make me kill him.”

The lack of reaction from him broke something inside me. Tears burnt in the corners of my eyes
They couldn’t make me kill Mason. They just couldn’t.

“Prescott, please.”

“As West said, this is the price, Scarlett. Either pay it or you’ll never see any of us again.”

I froze despite the way my heart was pounding in my ears. Not only could I not afford to never see any of them again, the thought of being separated from Prescott felt like I’d taken the knife in my hand and stabbed it into my own chest. I cared about him, even though he was being cold and unfeeling right now. Even though he was showing me his worst side.

“You really want me to kill someone for you? To kill Mason? My only friend?”

He gave me a sharp nod, his eyes darkening with what could only be described as irritation. My hands dropped to my sides. I wasn’t going to get any fucking sympathy from Prescott. And I didn’t imagine I’d get any from Drake and Francis either. They’d remained silent this entire time. To think, Francis and Prescott knew they were bringing me here. They fucking knew what they were about to ask me to do and they’d not given a shit about it. Instead, they’d asked me for a fucking sexual favour like I was their toy to use and abuse. I shouldn’t be surprised, but I was.

I didn’t stop the tear from falling out of my eye as I stared up at Prescott, my heart fucking breaking with its path down my cheek.

“I hate you,” I whispered, then I turned away, unwilling to see his reaction.

Making my way over to the man in the chair… to Mason, I let the tears fall. I looked down at the man I’d known for ten years of my life. The one who’d picked me up when I was broken. Who’d nursed my battered and bruised body from the day I’d woken up from my coma at sixteen years old. No matter how much I hated him for hurting me yesterday, the thought of killing him forced a wave of pain to rush through me.

West came up behind me and stood at my back. I could feel his breath against my ear.

“Don’t worry, he can’t hear you nor can he speak. We didn’t think you’d want to hear his screams.”

I choked out a sob. I had no choice but to go through with this no matter how much it hurt me. No matter how much I was dying on the inside. If I was ever going to fulfil my parent’s desires and be free of them, I had to prove myself to the Horsemen. I had to show them they could trust me.

West’s hand slid along my arm and he gripped my hand holding the knife. He surrounded me with his body, sheltering me from everything else. It shouldn’t fill me with comfort, but it did. It was the only shred of fucking sanity I had left to hold on to. He forced me closer to Mason. Then he brought our joined hands up and pointed them at Mason’s chest.

“You hit him here if you want a quick, clean death. Right between these two ribs, you stab him right in the heart,” West murmured in my ear. “But if you want to make him pay, if you want to hurt him like he hurt you, then you hit wherever you can.”

“West,” I whimpered, more tears spilling down my face. “I can’t do this.”

He pressed a kiss to my neck.

“Shh, you can, Scar. I know you can. You’re strong as fuck, you know that?” He ran his tongue along my skin. “Be a good girl for us. Show us the woman I know you are inside. Show me you’re one of us.”

My heart burnt in my chest. A flood of images crossed my mind, but they were too hazy for me to make out properly. The only thing I could focus on was the words ringing in my ears.

“You’re one of us, Scar. Always and forever.”
I raised my hand with the knife in it. The one West was still holding on to.
“Kill him.”
And with that, I brought my hand down, sealing my fate once and for all.
Chaos is coming next…

*West Greer - War.*

They say violence is never the answer. I beg to differ. There’s no peace without a little pain. Drake, Prescott, Francis and I are monsters who live up to their name. The Four Horsemen. Gods reincarnated as men.

Scarlett returned to the fold, but not as the girl we once knew. The girl I’d been obsessed with my whole life. The one I’d have given everything for.

Everything changed when she walked into Fortuity and gave us a run for our money. Battle lines were drawn. Flags erected. And we were at a stalemate.

If she thought we were backing down, she was in for a wakeup call. It was time Scarlett learnt who she really was. And why we would never let her go again.

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Thank you so much for taking the time to read this book. I really appreciate all of my readers and hope this book gave you as much joy reading it as I did writing it.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah writes dark, contemporary, erotic and paranormal romances. She adores all forms of steamy romance and can always be found with a book or ten on her Kindle. She loves anti-heroes, alpha males and flawed characters with a little bit of darkness lurking within. Her writing buddies nicknamed her ‘The Queen of Steam’ for her pulse racing sex scenes which will leave you a little hot under the collar.

Born and raised in Sussex, UK near the Ashdown Forest where she grew up climbing trees and building Lego towns with her younger brother. Sarah fell in love with novels when she was a teenager reading her aunt’s historical regency romances. She has always loved the supernatural and exploring the darker side of romance and fantasy novels.

Sarah currently resides in the Scottish Highlands with her husband. Music is one of her biggest inspirations and she always has something on in the background whilst writing. She is an avid gamer and is often found hogging her husband’s Xbox.

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